

TAMÁNWIT

There is so much to this word or this way, this Tamánwit. It's how we live. It's our lifestyle. There is so much that we as Indian people are governed by, through our traditions, our culture, our religion and most of all, by this land that we live on. We know through our oral histories, our religion, and our traditions how time began. We know the order of the food, when this world was created, and when those foods were created for us. We know of a time when the animals and foods could speak. Each of those foods spoke a promise. They spoke a law—how they would take care of the Indian people and the time of the year that they would come. All of those foods got themselves ready for us—our Indian people who lived by the land. It was the land that made our lifestyle. The foods first directed our life. Today, we all have these traditions and customs that recognize our food; our first kill, first fish, first digging, the first picking of berries. All of those things are dictated to us because it was shown and it directed our ancestors before us.

The songs we sing with our religion are derived from how we live on this land. Our cultural way of life and the land cannot be separated. Even though we recognize that our life is short, it all goes back to that promise that was made when this land was created for us Indian people, the promise that this land would take care of us from the day we are born until the day that we die.

When we recognize our foods, we recognize our ancestors, we recognize the language. It's all within the same context and teachings that we live day by day. The promise that this land made and the promise that we made as Indian people to take care of this land, to take care of the resources, and to live by those teachings is the grander principle of the bigger law that was put down on this land when this world was created. This is the law that we recognize on Sundays, that we recognize when we lose a family member, and that recognize when the seasons changes. When we can live by those traditions and customs, then we're fulfilling that law, we're living by that law.

These few thoughts I try and bring out to do a little bit of justice for this big word, this big way, this Tamánwit.

ARMAND MINTHORN, AS DAYS GO BY