

The teachings of the ancients make my heart sing and my connection to the Earth Mother meaningful.

Most readers will be familiar with Scott King as our regular Animal Totems columnist. He is also the author of the book *Animal Dreaming*, and runs a shop, Circle of Stones, in Warburton, Victoria, where he facilitates courses on shamanism and does clairvoyant readings. Scott's connection with animals is a fascinating gift, and he generously uses it to help us learn about our selves and our place in nature and the cosmos.

How did you come to be an animal oracle?

Since the age of eight I've been able to see animal spirits. I have always loved animals and had them around me, so I guess it is safe to say that I was born an "oracle". I believe that everyone is born with psychic ability, but to hone the skills takes commitment, passion and a deep respect for Spirit's ways. For me, Spirit has chosen the form of animals. I have learned, through observation and my deep love of animals, to interpret their secret language and to integrate it into my life.

Did you study under a particular teacher or tradition? Or do you rely on personal gnosis for your interpretations of the meanings of animals?

I spent 12 months intensively studying under an Elder who is recognised both in Australia and America as a powerful medicine woman – a "pipe carrier", dreaming woman and healer – who had spent time training under Maori, Aboriginal and Native American Elders in earth medicine.

Under her guidance I trained almost 24/7, remembering my connection to the earth and my relationship with Spirit. I was taken through sweat lodge and pipe ceremonies, we discussed my dreams, visions and personal journeys, and explored Spirit via the drum and

sacred prayer. It was an amazing, confronting time that helped shape my spiritual path and view of the world.

Since then I have developed my own unique relationship with animals which, while still encompassing traditional interpretations and symbolism, has helped me to develop a much deeper, personal bond.

Your writing displays familiarity with both Native American and Australian Aboriginal spirituality. Are these your main cultural influences, or do you have others too?

I have no blood-ties with Aboriginal people or their culture, however their philosophy, relationship to the land, and stories of creation inspire me to look deeper within myself at my connection to Spirit. My original teachings were rooted in Native American culture, but I have no personal connection to their ways.

I tend to look generically to the earth-ways of ancient cultures, relying on the land for sustenance, and the relationship to animals for spiritual insight. The teachings of the ancients make my heart sing and my connection to the Earth Mother meaningful. Their philosophy speaks to me, it confirms what I feel on an intuitive level and what I know to be true.

How would you describe your personal spiritual path?

I was trained in "earth medicine", a path that explores the fundamental aspects of shamanism, while taking the concept to a deeper, more personal level. I call my path "earth dreaming" because while it remembers and honours my teachings and my interest in shamanic lore, it also allows my personal, ancestral relationship to the Earth Mother in Australia to evolve, independent of any one tradition, legend or cultural viewpoint.

