

Animals Used in First Nations Symbolism – Generalized (not necessarily North American First Nations

Alligator - Survival, strength and aggression.

Avanyu - the feathered skysnake - Frequently found in Tewa, Keres and Zuni pottery and in some jewelry. He is the storm bringer, the changer of seasons. Connected with lightning, thunderstorms and violent, sudden change.

Antelope - Symbolized partnership, grace and speed.

Badger - Fierce hunters and honorable healers. Also have spiritual powers. Their tracks may signify health and strength as well as a way of summoning the power of the animal spirit, or as an indication of the presence of the spirit. Badgers are revered as healing animals and as tenacious hunters. Their tracks may signify health and strength. Bear Paws/Tracks are also symbols of authority and leadership.

Bear - Symbolized steadiness, patience, pragmatism, balance, big hearted and secure, first helper, direction protector from the west Bear Paws are usually considered a way of summoning the power of the animal spirit, or as an indication of the presence of the spirit. Bear Paws/Tracks are also symbols of authority and leadership.

Beaver - Symbolizes busy, in charge, efficient, strategic, wit and untiring.

Birds - Bird feathers represented creative ideas, honor and prayer.

Buffalo - Symbolically and realistically prized and equated with medicine and honor. The buffalo signified all good things such as sacred prayer, goodness, reverence and honor.

Bull - Represented richness in life, wealth, courage and strength.

Crane - Symbolized the end of the growing season.

Cricket - Symbolizes a singer, is connected with springtime, fertility and water.

Deer - Represents speed, alertness, institution, purity, sense of humor, quick wit and protector. Deer Tracks, are symbols of prosperity, safety, shelter, and also of the proximity to prey. Also used as a directional indicator, and as a clan symbol.

Dragonfly - Connected with water and Springtime, fertility, renewal; considered a messenger.

Coyote - Symbolized a powerful prey animal, an excellent tracker, associated with unpleasant happenin, a trickster.

Eagle - Symbolized as one who carries prayers, vision, possesses courage, wisdom and directional protector close to the gods The master of the sky. The eagle is often confused with the "thunderbird" image concept. Almost universally, the Thunderbird as a Native American symbol conveys concepts such as: Power, provision, expansiveness, transformation, divine dominion, indomitable spirit, unquestioned authority and messages from the otherworlds.

Elk - Represented freedom, majesty, power and stamina.

Feathers - Symbols of prayer, ideas, honor, creativity.

Falcon - Symbolized a natural leader, clear judgment, efficient, effective, active, persistent, passionate and compassionate.

Fox - Symbolized intelligence, elusiveness, cleverness, cunning and discretion. Also the fox was symbolic of feminine "magic," and still is!

Frog - Symbolized fertility, the coming of the spring and renewal.

Goose - Symbolized ambition, business sense, staying power or driven.

Horned Lizard - Symbolizes lizards. Significant in some [Navajo](#) stories connoting perseverance and keeping ancient secrets. They are also used in story telling to be an annoyance to the Coyote!

Horse - Symbolized purity, nobleness, courage, power, independence of spirit, freedom to roam and pride. Horses were also used to attribute special qualities that people possessed such as the ability to be sympathetic, loving and giving--always offering a helping hand.

Hummingbird - Symbolized as ferocious fighters and defenders. Represented devotion, the cycle of life, permanence and eternity.

Moose - Symbolized wisdom, spontaneity, integrity, stubbornness, positive self-image and unpredictability.

Otter - Symbolized honesty, unconventional behavior, effective, imaginative, intelligent and perceptive.

Owl - Warm, changeable, enjoys life to its fullest, good listener, a teacher, an excellent hunter. Can be excessive and mean at times. Some tribes associate the owl with death and darkness. Among the Zuni and Keres Pueblo people, the owl is respected as the guise of departed, wise elders and leaders' spirits. **Parrot**- Symbolized the coming of the rainy season and the sun, spiritual, symbol of beauty. Parrots were considered carriers of these specific prayers and would confer blessings. Kept for their feathers and color, by many Pueblo people (secured through trade with people to the far South), and also considered a very expensive possession thereby denoting prosperity.

Pheasant - Represented a warning sign. Silver feathers of the pheasant symbolized prosperity.

Quail - Symbolized in mated pairs: devotion, permanence, eternity and the life cycle. These are often modified in many simple forms.

Raven - Symbolized enthusiasm, charm, energy, creative ideas, idealism, diplomacy and ingenuity. Also symbolized vindictiveness and abrasiveness.

Salmon - Symbolized focused, purposeful, goal oriented, intuitive, creative, stable, a motivator and different.

Snake - Symbolized spiritual, healing powers, passionate, fertility, lightning, speed and stealth.

Tadpole - Immature frogs that connote fertility and renewal. Because they change, they are considered very powerful.

Turkey - Represented resourcefulness, freedom, courage, sustenance (food for life) and faith. The turkey is mentioned in several Tewa Pueblo stories. Its feathers have many ritual uses.

Turtle - Symbolized strength, fertility, long life, and staying power. Considered to be able to defy death, and is also an annoyance to Coyote.

Water Birds - Symbolized renewal of life, wet seasons, rivers distant travel, long vision, wisdom. often inaccurately called "thunderbird", which is not a Southwestern tradition, but rather one of the plains people. In that context, connected with lightning, thunder and visions. Those who dream of the thunderbeings must become Heyokas -- those who live out their dreams backwards ([Lakota](#) tradition). The image has also been modified and used as the symbol of the Native American Church, founded by Comanche Quannah Parker around 1910.

Wolf - Symbolic of a tracker, directional finder, leader, loyalty, intuition, a problem solver, stability communicative skills and teacher. Wolf Tracks, or any other predators tracks usually signify a direction rather than simply the spirits presence. These also are a clan short hand indication of kinship - "wolf clan", for example. Also symbols of authority and leadership.

Woodpecker - Symbolic of a nurturer, listener, empathizer, supporter, organizer, and resourceful. Frugality is also symbolic of the woodpecker.