

Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change

Sherri Mitchell

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This will be a rewarding book for anyone looking for a way to engage in less conflict-based, more effective community change.

Lawyer and activist Sherri Mitchell was raised on a Penobscot reservation in Maine. She translates years of education and spiritual investigation into a call for action in *Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change*.

The book explores thousands of years of history and accumulated wisdom from indigenous people, principally from the Americas, and offers lessons for transforming the interrelated societal and environmental problems of modern society. Her discussion of the different values held by Euro-American and indigenous cultures is particularly illuminating.

While themes are sweeping, Mitchell deftly and patiently deconstructs “the wayward path” that patriarchal, colonial, and elite systems of social control have forced across the globe, bringing us all to our ecological tipping point. She writes clearly and with passion, but also with empathy for those who are oppressors, writing that we all carry deep spiritual wounds born from generations of violence and divisiveness.

This refreshing restraint from villainizing “opponents” and puffing up with self-righteousness keeps Mitchell’s message on point and appropriately in tune with her overall message of compassionate, heart-based community change.

Prose is punctuated with personal anecdotes, Native American mythology, and inspirational quotes from thinkers and changers from many cultural traditions and eras. At times it even soars into the poetic, as when she describes how powerful and needed feminine nurturing abilities are: “Women possess a unique magic. As women, we are able to call forth life from the other side, and cultivate that life in the quiet space below our hearts.”

Wrapping up Mitchell’s analysis are many concrete prescriptions for change that anyone can do at the personal level, from divesting in global conglomerates, avoiding bottled water, eating less meat and processed foods, and making sure to take time out for self-care.

Sacred Instructions is an important book that synthesizes a wealth of information in an approachable and empowering way. Mitchell’s steady, assured tone and recommendations for action makes this a rewarding book for anyone looking for a way to engage in less conflict-based, more effective community change.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (January/February 2018)

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