

North American  
Indian Medicine  
Powers



# North American Indian Medicine Powers:

*Spirit Talkers*

By

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# Dedication

This book is dedicated to all the American Indian medicine people who persistently serve to bring hope and peace of mind to humankind, and to Prem Rawat, recognized “Ambassador of Peace” to the world, for doing the same.



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# Spirit Talkers

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## Preface

The sources in this book come from many different historical and ethnographic accounts. Much of the material gathered here lies outside the usual sources produced by scholars of the American Indians, a fact one might expect given the earliest records predate such studies. Many of the references are from early writings by trappers, traders, missionaries, travelers and explorers. Other references cited here are drawn from relatively obscure newspapers or magazine articles, now long forgotten. In these early accounts details are often lacking to such an extent that they serve only to demonstrate the American Indian's utilization of medicine powers. Greater detail appears in the later ethnographic accounts, but even these are of somewhat limited value due to the secrecy that usually surrounds the performance of medicine-power ceremonies. The task at hand is to put this fragmentary data over time into a coherent overview.

Because this is an introductory coverage of American Indian medicine powers, no effort has been made to cite all the possible references that may apply to any footnote. In many cases, only one author is given by way of example where many others could have been cited. That is to say, the bibliography is more of an overview of the subject and would be much longer if this book were intended to be a strictly scholarly manuscript. Many applicable and worthwhile publications are not included here. Nevertheless, the view set forth here will hopefully set into motion different lines of inquiry

regarding their medicine powers and the bibliography should aid in that regard.

I have relied heavily on quotations throughout the text, letting others speak in their own words. In some cases I have inserted a word or explanation to help clarify a quotation. This is especially true of the earliest accounts where the writer used terms and assumed perspectives no longer familiar to us. For example, “juggler” was the earliest common term used for Indian medicine people. To distinguish certain notations of my own from the quoted material to which they have been added, I have used brackets [...], while interpositions by the original author are contained within parentheses (...).



## Introduction

This book is unlike any book ever written on the American Indians. It is an alternate approach that calls for a 180° change in the way we view the very heart and core of American Indian cultures. I began working on this book in 1992, thus it has taken many years to manifest before the eyes of the general public. The view I have taken is based on four decades of personal participation in traditional Indian ceremonies led by powerful medicine men, many years scouring through the historical records on Indian medicine powers of the past, and a recent monumental discovery in quantum physics. The subject at hand is American Indian medicine powers of North America, from earliest contact times through the present. Many books have been written on Indian medicine people, but there has never been an in-depth coverage of all their medicine powers per se. Most readers will be surprised at the variety and extent of their use. More importantly, I take the opposite view generally held and approach their powers with the assumption they are real. Using this approach I believe it provides a clearer understanding of exactly why medicine people do what they do. This is another first in respect to Indian medicine powers.

One might wonder why, after over a century of studies on American Indian cultures, no book has focused only on their medicine powers. After all, the Indians themselves held their medicine powers in such high regard that attention to them influenced nearly every daily activity that took place. Furthermore, nothing occupied more constant attention than following the sacred rules of life that enabled them to wield such powers. Nothing took up more of their time and

effort. Nothing was more sought after. The sheer diversity of their medicine powers clearly informs us to what extent they touched daily life. They were so very important that I see them as nothing less than the heart and deepest core of every Indian nation.

The answer for this void is simple. Medicine powers are seen as unreal. That assumption has been around for so long, that it eventually came to be seen as fact. However, any assumption turned into fact is really nothing more than a superstition. The real fact is any notion that medicine powers are merely superstition is based on faith instead of evidence. So why did I choose the opposite view? The answer is, the “skeleton in the closet” of physics changed my view. Chapter 1 makes clear the direction I have taken and why.

The “superstition” explanation for medicine powers gave rise to a taboo that is still alive in academia—it is forbidden to view Indian medicine powers (magic) as real. If you do, you are certain to come under attack. For example, during the 1980’s Canadian anthropologist David Young undertook a government-funded study on the efficacy of a Cree healer in Alberta, named Russell Willier. When it was discovered that taxpayer money had been used to study a “superstition” there was a public outcry from leading Canadian scientists.

I met with a similar fate in attempting to publish this manuscript. Originally this book was a 700-page manuscript submitted to the University of Oklahoma Press. It was no surprise to me that Director John Drayton approached the manuscript with a great deal of caution. After all, I was taking a taboo point of view, but I had physics on my side. Consequently, they were open-minded enough to submit it for reviews. Normally that means two scholars familiar with shamanism and outside their university must approve the

scholarship of the manuscript. However, my manuscript went through five reviews stretched out over a three-year period—first three scholars, then a nuclear physicist, and finally an American Indian. All five reviews came back approving the manuscript for publication with the last reviewer being the most enthusiastic. Confronted with these reviews the press finally accepted the manuscript for publication. However, within a week, their Faculty Review Committee refused to allow it to be published because of the view taken. Academic freedom has its limits.

Then I decided to submit it to the UC Press at Berkeley, a university filled with radical ideas. After all, they were the first to publish Castaneda's *The Teachings of Don Juan*. They passed as well. Then I cut the manuscript in half and tried submitting it to private presses—they passed, agents passed. Finally, I submitted the manuscript to the National Museum of the American Indian in March 2010. Having no decision from them by August 2010, a Lakota medicine man and friend asked his spirits, during a sweat lodge ceremony, what was up with the delay. Typical of spirits, the answer was simple and curt, "Go in another direction!" By December a staff member of NMAI notified me that they really liked where I was coming from, but all their funding was tied up in collection projects. That is the short version of a decade-long publishing journey this book has been on. It then took several more lodges to figure out just what direction the spirits had in mind for this book. They eventually confirmed it was to be published as an eBook and also how it was to be introduced to the public. Perhaps they see the Internet as getting the word around to a wider audience at the speed they move.

It is important to point out that this book is not to be taken as a scientific proof that Indian medicine powers are

real. Rather it merely contends that there is more evidence to assume they are real than to assume they are not. Here is nothing more than a new hypothetical approach that strives to better explain why shamanism has so many cross-culture similarities. Why are there core similarities to all their power ceremonies? Why do shamans do what they do during ceremony? So proof is not the concern here. Before one can prove medicine power to be real or not, scientists must first come up with a scientific means for measuring human consciousness. Until then, proof is a moot question.

Medicine power ceremonies are a combination of art and science. In fact, shamanism is best seen as the first form of science practiced by human beings. That is, if you trace the roots of any science back to its origins, you will find they all began in prehistoric shamanism. In a bit of irony, physics has returned us to the original view held, namely that we live in a fluid reality, not a solid one.

Chapter 2 provides a brief history of our dealings with Indian medicine powers since first contact. Naturally “first contacts” spread over nearly two centuries as we expanded westward. Consequently, our views have differed over time and also among different sectors of our culture.

Chapters 3 and 4 are an application of the view developed in Chapter 1 to the realm of humans. Here I discuss how the activation of medicine powers is directly related to the quality and quantity of focused human consciousness present at any medicine power ceremony. Indian medicine people are well aware of this necessity, and have many different cultural ways of dealing with it. All of their efforts have to do with focusing one’s consciousness down to a single point of intent and then applying that intent in ceremony. The power of human will is the cornerstone of success of any ceremony. That application



comes mainly in the form of prayers and songs that must come from one's heart. These two chapters serve to give reason to ceremonial preparations and actions.

The remaining chapters deal with the many different ways in which medicine powers are known to have manifested. Given no one has ever made a study of medicine powers, there is no recognized classification system for them. Consequently, I have simply grouped their powers according to their use—powers for war, for hunting, for finding lost persons, for weather control, for healing, etc., even though in this system there are still many overlaps among shamans. For example, weather control medicines are often used in warfare as well as for crops. Furthermore, any shaman can have different powers for numerous uses. Although every individual medicine power differs in how it is acquired and how it must be used, there is continuity in how all of them are activated. It has long been known that shamanism around the world exhibits certain core features, such as trance-induction. Many of these core features are clearly related to the interplay between consciousness and matter. Consequently, in choosing examples of the many different types of medicine powers for this book I have tended to select those examples that best document this interplay.

A word of caution about just how much we can rationally understand about these powers. Let me begin by pointing out that Indian medicine people were never interested in understanding how their powers worked. They were regarded simply as a mystery. Their focus has always been on what does work, not how it works. Our own understanding of such powers is limited in part by the nature of our language. We know that the way in which we use words plays a significant role in how we view reality. I recall a Hopi woman once warning French-born

Robert Boissiere, "Words are only boxed-thoughts." I believe it was Alfred Korzybski who coined the phrase "the map is not the territory" that expresses this same warning. It means we frequently fall prey to essentially fake explanations where a boxed-thought serves as an explanation for something. For example, to say that medicine powers are merely the result of superstition is not an explanation for medicine powers. It is merely the application of a boxed-thought. In many cases boxed-thoughts have been misapplied. Another example is Indians seen as being very religious, yet they have no organized religion in our sense of the word. Basically, there is no such thing as an "Indian religion," there are only conglomerations of medicine powers. Therefore I also deal with our problems of understanding. My own view is that our language is currently void of the necessary words and concepts to fully understand medicine powers. One goal here is to simply arrive at a better understanding of them given what we do know and are capable of expressing in words.

The use of medicine powers is still found among traditional-living American Indians, but today they are extremely rare compared to a century ago. Currently there is but a remnant of Indian medicine people left as compared to former times. However, their powers are never in danger of extinction for the simple reason a medicine power once lost can be regained at any time by another person through visions or dreams. It is a current tragedy that most Indian medicine people are held in contempt and live in abuse, whereas in former times they were well respected by their own people. I have heard from more than one medicine man that he has the hardest time with his own people. In fact, the internal strife that arose on reservations between traditional medicine people and those who adopted a western lifestyle became

very intense in the 19th century, especially after our government declared traditional ceremonies illegal to perform. This lengthy conflict between “traditional” versus “progressive” American Indians is discussed in Chapter 3. Unfortunately, it has resulted in a lack of any cultural protection or preservation efforts for Indian medicine people, at least at the national level. There are countries, such as Japan, that view their shamans as rare national treasures.

I would like to comment on my own experiences with Indian medicine men. They began in 1972 when I met an Apache medicine man named Ernie Rainbow (aka Ernest P. Rodriquez). Early in life he had spent five years living completely alone in the Trinity Wilderness area of northern California. During those five years in isolation from civilization, he learned more than most men learn in a lifetime. Throughout his entire adult life Ernie never lived with the comforts of running water, electricity, telephone, indoor plumbing, and the like. He preferred to live the old way. He was a most humble man and never spoke of himself as medicine man. Eventually he led an annual Sun Dance in southern Oregon up until his untimely death in 1992 at age 61.

As an anthropologist, Ernie intrigued me from the onset. As time passed we became the best of friends and he began to teach me of his world, a world that my graduate training never embraced. I still remember my first lesson—a tree-hugging session. Over the years I came to know that he wielded abilities our scientists said were not possible.

In August of 1978 I first met Wallace Black Elk, a Lakota medicine man from the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. By then he was living in Denver, Colorado. During the course of the next decade he thoroughly convinced me of the reality of medicine powers. Wallace began his shamanic

training at the early age of five and had been assisted along the way by eleven “grandfathers,” one of them being the now famous Nicholas (“Nick”) Black Elk of *Black Elk Speaks* fame. From this humble and kind medicine man I gained a formidable knowledge of Indian medicine powers. I documented his intriguing life and use of medicine powers in *Black Elk: The Sacred Ways of a Lakota*. The works of John Neihardt, Joseph Epes Brown, Thomas Mails, Richard Erdoes and others have documented the reality of Lakota medicine powers as well.

Working with Wallace I realized early on that my research efforts were being scrutinized by his spirits. At one point I made a journey to Los Angeles with Wallace, his wife Grace Spotted Eagle, and others for a healing ceremony. We needed two cars to accommodate everyone, driving there during the winter because it was too cold on the reservation to hold the ceremony. In the other car was Steve Red Buffalo, who was conducting the ceremony, along with his ceremonial assistants. We set up camp in an isolated site in the mountains just north of Los Angeles that had a cabin on the property. There were about fifteen people in the camp, among which were only two white men, myself and a Los Angeles songwriter named Duncan Pain. By then I knew enough not to sit in a ceremony and take notes as most of the early anthropologists had done. So I did my note writing in private on the following mornings.

On the morning after the first night of our four-night healing ceremony, I sat alone in the nearby woods to work on my field notes. Part of my notes included a drawing of Steve’s ceremonial altar, but I could not remember all the details. That night I saw what was missing from my drawing.

The next morning I was having breakfast with Wallace and Grace before going off to work on my notes. At one point

Wallace suddenly said, “Those spirits. Those spirits came in there last night. They said that white guy is drawing a picture of that altar. They didn’t say his name, just said white guy. He’s putting all that stuff there on paper. He’s going to put that picture in a book. He probably shouldn’t do that. Someone might see that picture and put up that altar. They could hurt themselves that way. (Long pause.) Must be that Duncan guy.” Naturally, I was too stunned and horrified to say anything, but at least I did throw my drawing into a fire that day. So there are no secrets being told here.

By the 1990’s I began working closely with Benjamin Godfrey Chips, Sr., a fourth-generation Lakota medicine man of great power. His great-grandfather, Woptura (eventually known as “Old Man Chips”), was an adopted brother of Crazy Horse and responsible for Crazy Horse’s invulnerability to bullets. His grandfather, Horn Chips, brought the *yuwipi* healing ceremony to the Lakota. Today it is their most powerful shamanic healing ritual. It can also be used for other purposes as well, such as finding lost objects (covered in Chapter 6). My work with Godfrey has continued to the present. So you can expect to hear accounts of my own experiences with Wallace, Godfrey, and other medicine men over the years throughout the text. The most important thing I have learned through these experiences is that in order to understand medicine powers one has to understand that reality is not fixed. Wallace often told his audiences, “You people need to make a 180° turn.” It was his way of saying we need to understand that reality is fluid, not solid.

In 1991 I read physicist Fred Alan Wolf’s notion that shamanism and quantum mechanics were interrelated. Although I didn’t agree with most of his contentions regarding shamanism, things began to click. At about the same time

I started on another project that involved an intensive review of any and all published materials that pertained to American Indian medicine powers. It was designed to document the diversity and range of their medicine powers. That effort resulted in the publication of the *Encyclopedia of Native American Healing* (1996) and *Encyclopedia of Native American Shamanism* (1998). Throughout this research period it became obvious to me that the historical reports based on direct observation gave much more credibility to medicine powers than is found today. The records also confirmed that shamanism contains core characteristics that are related to quantum mechanics, but the scientific proof for those relationships was still undergoing tests at this time and were not completed by physicists until 1998.

It is important to understand that medicine powers and spirits go hand-in-hand. One early description notes, “There can be no question but that as a race the Indians are born mystics, and it is the mystic consciousness—in trance and vision—which is the most impressive feature of their religious life.” There is little doubt that their contact with spirit powers was indeed what really made their cultures so very different from our own. Medicine power was the common ground that linked every Indian culture across the barriers of language and space. Furthermore, there is a core understanding among them about dealing with such powers. Indeed, this understanding is what allowed medicine powers to be exchanged between cultures in the first place. Because medicine traditions are at the very heart and core of every Indian culture, to disregard them as merely superstition is to lose sight of the basic nature of traditional American Indians.

We should allow, as well as encourage, traditional American Indian life styles to exist within our own culture.

On purely Darwinian grounds, such diversity enhances the probability of our survival in these uncertain times. On a deeper level, their fundamental view of reality renders a unique wisdom and understanding that can contribute to our own cultural enrichment and enhancement. We would be better off with an understanding that would not only embrace this mystery aspect of all American Indian cultures, but would rightfully return the dignity and respect to all medicine people they deserve and formerly held. And, yes, there will be condescending assaults from those who have never witnessed a shamanic ritual in their life. But those of us who have been fortunate enough to witness their medicine powers, facts are facts. Real shamans can do exactly what they claim they can do, regardless of our current lack of a scientific explanation for how it is done. Hopefully, this book will provide sufficient evidence for readers to justify such a view.

I fully understand that what is being presented here is a view of our American Indian cultures that will be highly controversial, mainly because it involves a radical change in our view of reality. Presented here is a reality we no longer believe in, so much so, that we find it difficult even to imagine. Nevertheless, it is a reality in which all traditional American Indians flourished for thousands of years and a reality that still exist. Once accepted, this view also redefines human potential. It speaks to a mystery that resides deep within each person, beyond words to describe. Traditional Indians know of this personal connection to the Great Mystery. Much of their daily life involved aligning themselves, in one way or another, with the powers of the Great Mystery. This is expressed today through such terms as “walking the Good Red Road,” “following the Sacred Pipe,” or “walking in Beauty.” These expressions indicate that being “Indian” has more to do

with the way you live your life than the color of your skin. Therefore, on a deeper level, this book is about all human beings.

One might say that I have spent nearly four decades preparing to publish this book. Along the way Wallace was given a Lakota name for me by one of his helping spirits—*Hohu sha*, which means “Red Bone.” He told me that it meant that I looked like a white man, but on the inside thought like a red man. So, again, I am indebted to the many American Indian medicine men and women that have seen fit to patiently teach me about their ways.

Over the course of this book hopefully you will come to understand why the American Indian’s use of medicine powers is both art and science. In a reality seen as fluid and filled with spirits, one is compelled to deal with medicine powers. However, what we have come to think of as “magic” turns out not to be all that magical. Instead it involves a tremendous amount of concentrated effort, so much so, that one may wonder in some instances if such effort is even worthwhile. Nevertheless it gave them a world filled with hope, where magic was an everyday affair. What we call their taboos actually reveal their rules for handling medicine powers. Be assured that many misconceptions still abound about shamans and their powers, and there is still much to learn about this human phenomenon. However, if we are to ever fully understand our American Indians, I believe we must begin with the assumption that their medicine powers are a reality.



# Chapter 1

## Superstition — but whose?

Our laws of men change with our understanding of them. Only the laws of the Spirit remain always the same.

— White Wolf, Crow

### Bending the Rules of Science

“I decry supernaturalism in all its forms,” declared Richard Dawkins in his attack on belief in God.<sup>1</sup> Most contemporary scientists adhere to this view of supernaturalism, an assumed view that came to dominate science during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Carried through time, the assumption that supernatural events are impossible eventually came to be seen as fact. Today this view of supernaturalism is a virtual requirement of professors in almost all major American universities. Among the general public we even have those who see themselves as professional “skeptics” or “debunkers” whose task it is to dismiss any accounts of supernaturalism. One might wonder how it came to pass that this mere assumption about reality came to be seen as fact. On one level all Dawkins is really saying is, “I declare my assumption.” Something here is amiss.

To unravel how this situation arose one needs to start with the philosophy of science, the basic rules of how science is done. When it comes to the supernatural, it would seem that scientists have distorted the ground rules. Nevertheless, scientific inquiry does have rules of procedure. One begins

with an observation about external reality. In the case of supernatural events there are an overwhelming number of recorded observations that have been made throughout history. No one really questions that. Is it not a “miracle” that bestows priests and nuns sainthood among Catholics? The history of the world is replete with detailed, eyewitness accounts of supernatural events. Among the North American Indians, supernatural events were a daily affair. Obviously, that’s not the problem. The problem, then, has always been something else: namely, “How do I scientifically explain a supernatural event?”

Now the rule of science in this case dictates that if you cannot scientifically explain supernatural events, you cannot declare them to be real. No problem there. However, that is only half of the rule! It is the other half that scientists have chosen to ignore. That part says that you cannot dismiss any observed phenomenon until you prove that it does not exist. In the same manner then, there is no scientific proof that supernatural events do not occur. Consequently, without scientific proof either way, one can only make assumptions. You can either assume supernaturalism is not real or you can assume that it is. In either case, your belief is based on faith, not *fact*. In both cases you only have a working hypothesis. Most scientists have taken the assumption that supernaturalism is not real for nearly two centuries. After such a long period of time this view has become so entrenched, they now take their assumption as fact. For example, I have never read of an anthropologist declaring that spirits and their powers are real because science cannot prove their non-existence. That sounds absurd. Equally absurd is the notion that spirits do not exist because science cannot prove they do.<sup>2</sup>

There is a certain irony in all of this. If you trace the

history of science back to its very beginning, you'll discover that shamans, the masters of the supernatural, were really the first scientists. This is evidenced by the fact that there is a core set of procedures to shamanism that crosses all cultures throughout time (discussed below). This means the practice of shamanism is an art instead of merely random acts of superstition. Furthermore this art has been successful for at least 20,000 years. From shamanism we first reached out to the stars, which gave rise to astronomy and astrology; then came mathematics, alchemy, chemistry, physics, and the many other new and specialized ways of viewing nature at all her various levels of operation. Over the course of the last 3000 years, beginning mainly with the Greeks, science became ever more concerned with controlling the material world around us rather than tapping into the powers of the shamanic realm that lie within the human body — a looking ever more outward over time rather than a looking inward to control the world. Socrates' repeated Greek admonition to look within ("Know thyself.") grew ever more faint on our ears and the *rites of renewal* at Delphi that connected initiates to the *other world* eventually disappeared forever. As we left the shamanic world behind, our disdain for supernaturalism grew.

Eventually shamans came to be seen as evil, and we entered a witch-burning phase of history. As our scientific, ever-outward quest expanded, materialism became the predominant philosophy. So confident was the scientific community in their search for the laws of nature that by the early 1800's they were convinced that all such laws would be discovered by the end of that century. Unfortunately, Madame Maria Curie's discovery of radium discredited that notion. Nevertheless, the contempt for shamans remained such that

the practice of shamanism still merited a death sentence in many lands. Even as late as the 20th century shamans were put to death for their practice in Russia and Central America. Here in North America, as soon as the American Indians gained U.S. citizenship in 1924, Herbert Work, the former president of the American Medical Association, called for the authorizing of the States to license Indian doctors as a means of eliminating them.<sup>3</sup> Soon thereafter Indian medicine people were prosecuted for practicing medicine without a license.<sup>4</sup> This assault on shamans has wiped out any memory concerning their former, widespread ability to wield medicine powers. Once most of the shamans were either destroyed or driven into hiding, we began to believe that such powers were never real in the first place despite the many, recorded accounts to the contrary.

Supernaturalism has always been a part of human history in North America. When the first humans set foot on this continent, medicine powers were already in hand, and they remain here to this day, albeit in only a few secluded areas. So how did it come to pass that the scientific community rejected supernaturalism with such vehemence that an assumption came to be seen as a fact? I see it mainly as the result of the 19<sup>th</sup> century spiritualist movement. Few people remember that during the early 1800's scientists began to debate seriously the reality of spirits. Those who believed in the existence of spirits were labeled "spiritualists." Therefore, a belief in Indian medicine powers meant you believed in "spiritualism."<sup>5</sup> This debate had little to do with the spirits called upon by American Indians and their medicine powers. The focus was mainly on local white mediums, who would go into trance in order to contact the spirit world. Many of them turned out to be fraudulent, while some were not. As the

debate became more intense, more scientists began to investigate mediums. Naturally, other interested persons sought them out as well. Some of the more prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century investigators who became spiritualists include Cambridge-educated mathematician Augustus De Morgan who became Dean of University College in London; Robert Hare, M.D., who was a Professor of Chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania; Nassau William Senior, Professor of Political Economy at Oxford; Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst; New York State Supreme Court Justice J. W. Edmonds; Oliver J. Lodge, Professor of Physics at Liverpool University College; Johann C. F. Zöllner, Professor of Physical Astronomy at University of Leipzig; and Professor Challis, the Plumierian Professor of Astronomy at Cambridge, to name but a few.<sup>6</sup>

It was a strange state of affairs. In the one camp were the spiritualists. They had conducted many investigations and had become convinced of the ability of mediums. In the other camp stood those who had never bothered investigating the matter and those who had studied fake mediums. Alfred Russell Wallace, co-discover with Charles Darwin of natural selection, authored the above list of spiritualists. Perhaps the most famous scientist among the spiritualists, he had conducted his own experiments, much to the embarrassment of his colleagues. In 1874, he wrote:

I am well aware that my scientific friends are somewhat puzzled to account for what they consider to be my delusion, and believe that it has injuriously affected whatever power I may have once possessed of dealing with the philosophy of Natural History...Up to the time when I first became acquainted with the facts of Spiritualism, I was a confirmed philosophical skeptic...I was so thorough and confirmed a materialist that I could not at that time find a

place in my mind for the concept of spiritual existence, or for any other agencies in the universe other than matter and force. Facts, however, are stubborn things...The facts became more and more assured, more and more varied, more and more removed from anything modern science taught or modern philosophy speculated on. The facts beat me. They compelled me to accept them, *as facts*, long before I could accept the spiritual explanation for them.<sup>7</sup>

Wallace was keenly aware that the scientists who were most quick to denounce spiritualism were also the very ones who had never bothered to investigate the matter.<sup>8</sup> In addition, one can conjecture that Wallace's interest in spirits derives from the four years (1848-1852) he spent among Amazonian Indians, participating in their ceremonies.<sup>9</sup> By 1882 the British Society for Psychical Research was formed, and Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) was among its members.<sup>10</sup>

The scientists demanded scientific proof for the existence of spirits, but over many years of investigation they continually failed in this regard. As for Indian medicine powers, there were plenty of spirit accounts on record, but no explanation for them. With no scientific proof forthcoming, most scientists turned to ridicule to silence the spiritualists. Any scientist who believed in the reality of spirits was automatically tagged as delusional and his research discredited. Once this attack began, it did not let up. By the end of the 19th century this ridicule served to create an atmosphere of fear among scholars. No longer would a professor be free to express any belief in the supernatural without having his career destroyed. What had begun as a point of view, an assumption, had now turned into an abusive superstition that served to suppress academic freedom.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this form of suppression became