

Commitment Stake

There is a story, told about a Warrior, whose village was facing a serious attack by an enemy. This Warrior was committed to facing the enemy, and protecting the people.

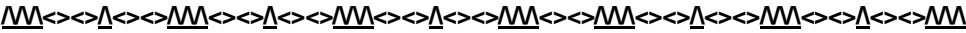
So the Warrior, took the Commitment Stake, & placed it in the ground, to symbolize the commitment, to stand firm, and do whatever was needed to keep the people safe.

These stakes were passed on to me, they were made by an elder from Alaska, they have been blessed, and I have been instructed to share them with others who wish to pick up this commitment. Another way they are used is to be given to a person who is in Recovery from Alcohol or Drugs. It is important to realize that the person can choose not to accept the Commitment Stake, also to inform them that it is okay to return the stake if they feel so inclined. Asking for help or admitting when we are not ready is an important part of our healing and recovery, when they are ready they can ask for you to return the stake.

This is NOT an item to be disrespected...It has a spirit, it is intended to be used as a tool to aid the our people to find blessings of health, help and happiness....

You will notice the 4 colors painted on them: These colors represent the 4 Directions, but more importantly they represent the people who come from these directions, if you mix these colors in different amounts you can match the skin color of any person on the earth – we are all related. It is a prophecy that we are to one day live in peace and harmony, to help one another. This item is one visual symbol to represent that endeavor.

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Many of the beads and shells we use to create our jewelry have a cultural significance. They are specific to certain Native American cultural beliefs as well as beliefs from other Cultures. My teachers have instructed me to identify similar beliefs between the people. I draw from my spiritual beliefs, which are a combination of Lakota Sacred Pipe, Buddhism, and Native American Church.

Abalone, clam and olivella shells were often used for ornament and to create dance regalia. Clam shells (*Saxidomus nuttalli*), Abalone and Dentillium have long been known as a form of money, given to the people by the Creator. Often they were traded as a means of compensation

for offenses by a group or person, to a victim, and often prevented feuds between tribes (Blood Money, 2001). The Wintu and Shasta also used clamshell beads as money, but counted them as coins rather than measuring them by the string length.

Money- Values for clamshell disc beads were: once around hand without crossing the wrist, 25 cents; five times around the hand, \$5.00. Traders brought back shell beads and sea shells, *traw-neck* [abalone], *cawm-sool* [clam], and *caw-sool* [olivella or periwinkle].
californiaprehistory.com/reports01/rep0014.html
gerlecreek.com/documents/yokutsmonoethnography.htm

When I use Red beads, they often represent the Blood of our Ancestors, or the Red Road (spiritual path). Black beads I use to represent the opposite, the trickery (negative aspect) of the "other" road/choices. My teachers tell me that it is important to know where we have been, in order to clearly see where we are going. We must look to the past, and seek out the wisdom of the Ancestors. Skull beads represent our Ancestors, & our obligation to remember their contributions & sacrifices, so we can make choices that will make them proud. They also give an example of how other cultures (Hispanic "Day of the Dead" Buddhist "prayer" beads) acknowledge sacrifices of the Ancestors. We also use Dzi (zee) beads, called "eye" bead, it is a bead used by middle eastern culture, worn to protect the user from the evil eye, or bad medicine. We use all these beads as we think of blessings for the wearer, sharing so you can gain the knowledge of how "Prayer" beads are used to represent the Ancestors and our life choices. We often also use Trade beads to represent the Ancestors, such as the Carnelian "square tubes", (traded in Africa - over 100 years old) and the large Red "Trade" bead too represent family – Your Blood relatives and as per the Sacred Pipe prophecy, all our relatives who live on this Earth Mother planet.

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