



## Indigenous Perception in a Modern Body, by Jon Young

I was similar to other suburban kids and was moving towards more involvement in sports when I happened to meet a person on a street corner who changed the direction of my life. He was a tracker who himself had been specially mentored for eleven years in his early boyhood by an elder Apache tracker. He began to cultivate awareness in me through a series of practices that I now call "core routines." One of them was adopting a particular spot to sit in and explore every day. In my case, it was a small clearing on a hill in a forest with an old ash tree bending towards the west. I used to sit with my back to that tree for an hour or two at a time, sometimes tending a little campfire or working on crafts, and then I would go home. That doesn't seem like much of a practice, but what brought it to life was that around dinnertime I would often get a phone call from my mentor. He'd ask me three bands of questions that were designed to pull me past my edge of awareness. The first questions would awaken what I knew and felt solidly. The second set brought me to an edge where I was guessing or hypothesizing about what my observations and memories were. And the third set of questions would always take me beyond that edge. From my earliest visits to my secret spot, I'd come home and he'd call me up and ask me what I did there. "Well, I leaned against my tree." He'd ask, "Your tree...what kind is it?" I would think about it and say, "A big tree." That was really all I was capable of; but I was confident that it was a big tree. "Is it a pine tree, or does it have leaves that fall off?" "Um, it has leaves that fall off." He'd continue, "What kind of tree would that be?" "I'm not really sure." In my mind, I'd picture that tree as hard as I could to be sure I was remembering correctly. This is an important frontier for developing knowledge and skill--this phase of guessing from experience. That is the edge of knowledge that naturally inspires research. He'd go on: "Is it an oak, or is it a maple, or something else?" "I don't know." So that question brought me past my edge. Then he said, "See if you can find out for me what kind of tree it is. I'm really interested." I figured it out the best way I knew how, and told him the next time that it was an ash tree. He'd then ask, "What kind of ash tree?..." And the cycle began all over again. Over seven years my world expanded through a variety of awareness and other related practices, until I had developed an "indigenous" perception in a modern body. --Jon Young