

Resource book on indigenous cultures and belief systems world wide?

From: **Michelle Brenner** <brennermichelle@hotmail.com>

Dear Louise,

I hope this is a good year for you and your projects.

Rabbi Shimon Cowen has asked me a question and I wondered if you could answer it or put it out to the group?

Is there a comprehensive book which surveys indigenous cultures and belief systems world wide -an accessible, known book which surveys indigenous cultures and beliefs around the world. An encyclopedic work, hopefully in one volume.

Is there? Could you get back to me?

kind regards michelle

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From: [Ron Boyer](#)

Sent: Tuesday, January 07, 2020 12:24 AM

Michelle,

I'm not aware of any such single resource, which would probably be impossible to encompass in any single work because of the vast scope of the topic. Do any IP colleagues know of such a work?

That said, if the Rabbi is merely curious about how many indigenous (i.e., aboriginal, first nations, etc.) tribal nations there are, a good place to start might be on Wikipedia. There is a List of Indigenous People I found there years ago. It's not reliable and can't be used as a formal research source, but it will get you in the ballpark. There are hundreds and hundreds of

indigenous tribes listed in every part of the world. And that can lead for more formal primary sources if that's of interest.

I am aware of an excellent encyclopedia of Native American tribes by Pritzker that will provide more substance. But again, there are more than 500 federated Indian tribes in the US alone, not including the First Nations people of Canada, Meso-America, or South America or the Polar regions. It's a huge topic, but this is one good source for this continent.

If the main interest is beliefs, for example, religious beliefs, there are a couple of excellent sources to consider:

The historian of religions Mircea Eliade published two important sourcebooks in single volumes that cover a lot of territory here. The first is *From Primitives to Zen: A Thematic Sourcebook of the History of Religions*. And a second volume, *Essential Sacred Writings from Around the World* (much originally published in *From Primitives to Zen*). Again, not a primary source, but an insightful and extensive resource.

A complementary source is by Eliade's colleague, comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell's *Atlas of World Mythology*. This source is wonderful but encyclopedic, i.e., consists of many volumes and can only be found in research libraries.

All of these sources systematically address/organize essential features of the sacred beliefs of indigenous and ancient peoples all over the world. Even so, they are drops in the bucket--the scope of the subject is truly vast.

If the Rabbi has a more specific purpose in mind, please feel free to mail me here.

Ron

From: [Jurgen Kremer](#)
Sent: Tuesday, January 07, 2020 1:09 AM

The best resource I can think of is *Shamanism - An encyclopedia of worlds beliefs, practices, & cultures* (2004), by M. Walter & E. J. Neumann Fridman (eds.), ABS CLIO, Santa Barbara, CA,

best, Jurgen Kremer

From: [Dr. Gayle Morse](#)
Sent: Tuesday, January 07, 2020 1:51 AM

This one might be helpful from 2014

Richards, S. & Bergin, A.E. (Eds.) Handbook of Psychotherapy and Religious Diversity (2nd edition). Washington,DC: American Psychological Association.

From: [Harris Friedman](#)

Sent: Tuesday, January 07, 2020 7:41 AM

It's not a book, but the basis of many books and scholarly products, and it is the most comprehensive resource I know on this topic: Murdock's *Human Relations Area Files* -- see

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Relations_Area_Files

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