

# The Great Spirit speaks

## A story from the Native American tradition

**Key Ideas: religion; organisation; leaders; community; revelation**

In the not far distant past, the Great Spirit began to speak to the native people in the north, in the western coastlands and on the eastern flats of North America. Little bands began to meet in their tepees to rediscover their common life in the Great Spirit and to make deep friendship. They held meetings, spoke wisdom and smoked the pipe of peace. Each group a band of equal brothers freely serving and sharing gifts with each other.

After a while each band began to recognise a warrior who seemed to have a deeper knowledge of the Great Spirit, to whom they would listen with respect, go to for advice and look to for organisation. They gave him a feather to wear and he was soon known as 'One Feather'. After three moons 'One Feather' ceased to hunt and fish. The others brought him gifts. He told them Great Spirit's words, how to plan their lives, how to bring up their children. Some people found it more difficult to hear the Great Spirit for themselves, finding it easier to listen to 'One Feather'.

It was not long before a 'One Feather' with a larger band than most was given a pony by his people and he began to travel. He met with other bands and eventually called a meeting of 'One Feathers'. 'We need to get more organised', he told them, 'the present situation is badly organised.'

'Didn't the great spirit bring it about?' asked one brave.

'Of course,' replied the pony rider, 'but he has told me that things must change.'

So the 'One Feathers' decided, as leaders, that they themselves should have a leader. So it was that the pony rider became 'Little Chief Two Feathers' with an appropriate headdress and a special tepee. He would not have much time to share with the 'No Feathers' now, but would instruct the 'One Feathers' who would pass his teaching down. Some 'One Feathers' now found it more difficult to hear the Great Spirit for themselves and found it easier to listen to 'Little Chief Two Feathers'.

Some moons later 'Two Feathers', who now had a horse and travelled more widely holding many gatherings for 'One Feathers', came across others like himself. They met together in solemn conference and decided that they, too, must have a leader. After some fuss and a lot of talk, 'Big Chief Many Feathers' emerged. He was given a many-horsed chariot and a team of 'Two Feathers' to travel the country giving advice and guidance. Some Two Feathers now found it more difficult to hear the Great Spirit for themselves and found it easier to listen to 'Big Chief Many Feathers'.

Meantime, the Great Spirit began to speak to many no-feathers in the north and in the coastlands and on the eastern flats. Little bands began to gather in their tepees to share their common life in the Great Spirit and to enter into deep friendship....