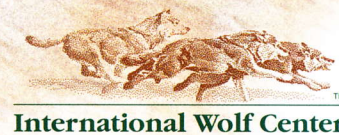


INTERNATIONAL WOLF



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Jim Cumming

Ma'iingan and Other Cultural Wolves

In the Ojibwe world view, the Great Spirit placed original man on earth, and the wolf became man's guide and brother. Tovar Cerulli explains that this spiritual understanding of the wolf can also be considered in secular terms, and that all of us—including wolves—might benefit if we did just that.

by Tovar Cerulli

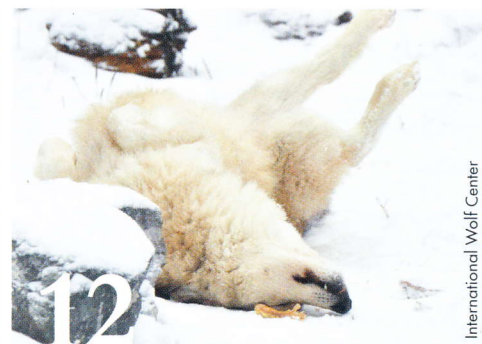


Courtesy Of US Fish & Wildlife Service

Wildlife Research: From Ear Tags to Armchair

In part 2 of this real-life story, wildlife biologist Dave Mech continues his entertaining description of methods used by scientists to track, study and ultimately help preserve various species of wildlife. The process has changed dramatically over his lengthy career, going "from ear tags to armchair" with advancements in tracking technology. (Find part 1 in the summer 2017 edition of *International Wolf*.)

By Dr. L. David Mech,
U.S. Geological Survey

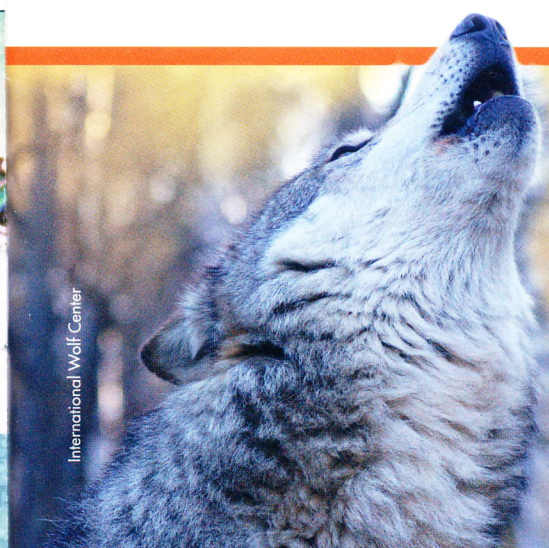


International Wolf Center

Wolf Communication: We Still Have Much to Learn

The eerie, thrilling sound of a wolf's howl is both familiar and mysterious to humans. We know that wolves communicate with each other, and that howling is a form of communication they understand. But what we don't know—and biologists are still learning—is all the other ways they share essential messages that keep the pack together, and foster safety and survival.

By Tracy O'Connell



International Wolf Center

On the Cover

A wild gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) runs from a charging bull bison who is defending an injured cow bison along the banks of Otter Creek in Yellowstone National Park.

Photo by Dave M. Shumway. Dave is a photographer, director of communications for Volunteers of America and adjunct professor of photography at Rocky Mountain College. His collection of photographs of wild creatures and fragile places from around the world can be seen at www.DaveShumway.com

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Ma'iingan Other Cultural

by TOVAR CERULLI

In July 2012, when the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board met to determine harvest quotas for that year's wolf hunting and trapping season, most people who testified spoke in terms of personal or professional opinion and experience, with frequent references to science. In marked contrast, Joe Rose, Sr.—representing the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and the Voigt Intertribal Task Force of the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission—told a creation story.

Rather than talking about population, predation, depredation or ecology, Rose spoke of the relationship between Anishinaabe (Original Man) and Ma'iingan (the Wolf). He told the 100-plus people attending the meeting how the Great Spirit placed Anishinaabe on Mother Earth and how Ma'iingan became Anishinaabe's guide and brother. He spoke of similarities between Anishinaabe and Ma'iingan, and of how the Great Spirit later set them on different but parallel paths. And he explained how it was prophesied that if the wolf passes out of existence, then the Ojibwe people will soon follow, as will all other humans and all wild nature represented by Ma'iingan.

Bad River Chairman Mike Wiggins then spoke. He began by saying that Joe Rose, as his elder, had set the "context and foundation" for understanding the Ojibwe worldview concerning wolves and wolf hunting.

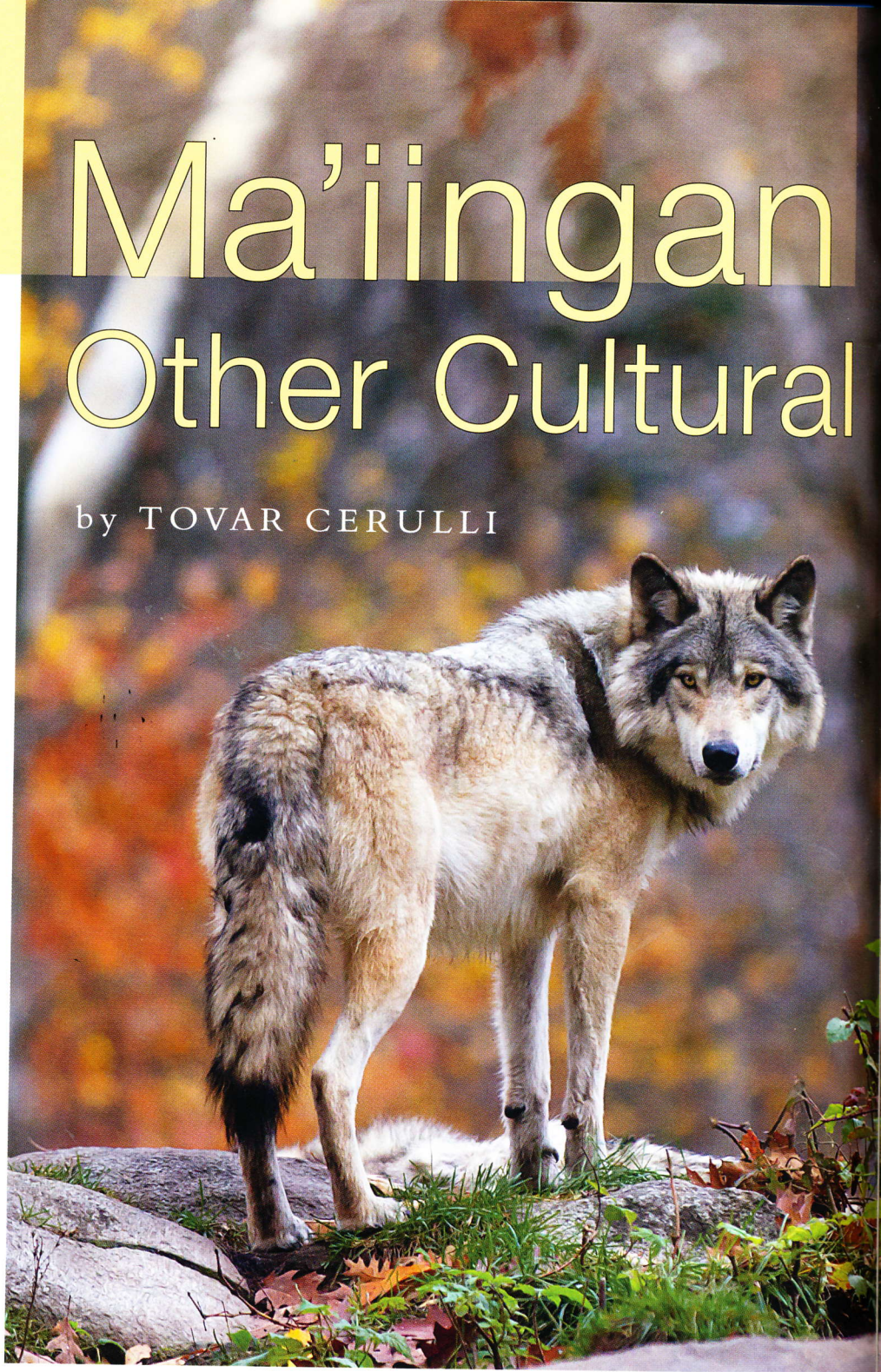
On hearing Rose's story—versions of which are often told by Ojibwe elders and leaders—non-Ojibwe listeners like me are apt to think, "Ah, this is a unique spiritual and cultural understanding of the wolf." And indeed, it is. Unless we

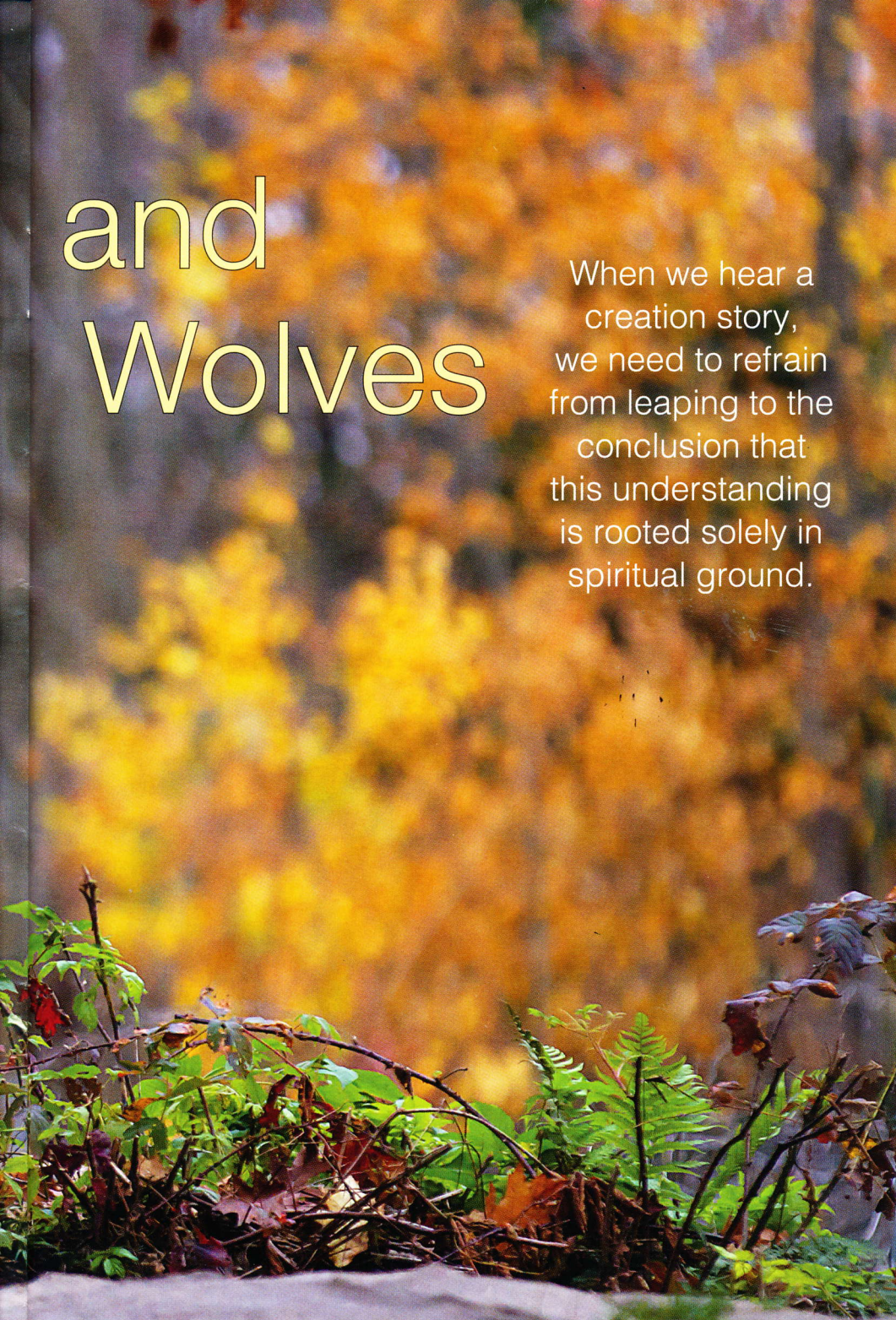
are careful, however, this line of thinking can diminish and distort what we hear.

One risk is that, in focusing only on the spiritual, we may fail to recognize that much of this perspective can be understood in secular terms. Part of what Rose and others are saying, for instance, is that they see the wolf as a companion—not a competitor. In their eyes, wolves are fellow hunters who pose no threat, with whom harmony rather than conflict is the

norm, and whose presence signals that a place is whole and healthy for many others, including humans. Becoming aware of such beliefs can help us understand this Ojibwe view more clearly. It can also help us recognize common ground; as it happens, some Euro-Americans speak of wolves in similar ways.

A second risk is that when we think of another group's view as shaped by cultural values, we tend to assume that





and Wolves

When we hear a creation story, we need to refrain from leaping to the conclusion that this understanding is rooted solely in spiritual ground.

virtually impossible to imagine this issue being addressed in Wisconsin or Minnesota wolf plans. To most Euro-Americans, wolves are mere animals. What becomes of their carcasses is of little consequence, except that biologists might want to examine them. In marked contrast, this Ojibwe understanding holds that wolves are relatives whose remains are to be cared for in particular, respectful ways. Both of these understandings—the familiar and the unfamiliar—are deeply and equally cultural.

We would do well to realize that all wildlife conservation is profoundly shaped and driven by culture. Some of our values and practices remain relatively stable. State wildlife agencies have long sought to maintain healthy, sizable deer populations not because scientific analysis has told them they must, but because we, as hunters and as appreciators of wildlife, continue to want substantial numbers of deer despite the fact that high deer populations come with ecological and social costs. Other cultural values and practices change dramatically. Less than a century ago, it was commonplace for Americans to kill predatory birds like hawks, owls and eagles. Today, such behavior is illegal and widely reviled, even though some populations could be hunted sustainably in regulated seasons.

If we fail to recognize these facts, we are liable to think that unfamiliar “cultural” understandings are irrelevant to wildlife conservation. We are likely to exclude them from consideration in decision- and policy-making processes. We are especially apt to exclude perspectives we hear as “spiritual” or “religious” if we claim a cultural commitment to

our own perspective is less so. This was illustrated in 2012, when the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa sent a letter to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), objecting to hunting and trapping seasons. In response, a DNR representative stated that wolf management could not take “cultural issues” into account and could hinge only on “issues of conservation, public safety and public health.”

We make this assumption habitually: Our own ways of thinking and doing things are neutral. Other people’s ways are “cultural.”

For instance, the Leech Lake Reservation’s draft wolf management plan expressed concern for the respectful handling and treatment of wolf parts possessed by tribal members and raised the question of how those artifacts would be passed down to descendants. It is

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rationality, science, and separation of church and state. And we are apt to forget that Euro-American understandings of animals, including wolves, are partly rooted in a history of Judeo-Christian beliefs about human superiority and dominion over other beings.

A third problem is that thinking of this Ojibwe view as spiritual and cultural deafens us to its deep, historical significance. The idea of Ma'iingan and Anishinaabe's parallel paths or shared fates—often expressed as “what happens to one of us happens to the other”—is not some abstract, fanciful notion. It is an understanding grounded in concrete experience.

Listen closely to these speakers and you will catch references to historical events: loss of land, violent persecution by settlers, the boarding school era, prohibitions against languages and religious practices and the like. The references are often brief and oblique; when these speakers say that something “happened” to them in the past, they rarely mention Euro-Americans. But they understand, and sometimes say, that wolves and Indians have long been treated similarly—as threats and competitors to be controlled or eliminated.

The Ojibwe and other tribes are not alone in drawing this parallel. A 17th-century Massachusetts law, cited by Barry Lopez in his classic *Of Wolves and Men*, imposed a five-shilling penalty for shooting within town limits “on any unnecessary occasion, or at any game except an Indian or a wolf.” A 19th-century article reprinted in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* praised a Mexican policy toward the Apache: “It puts a price upon an Indian’s scalp the same as upon that of a wolf.” A 2012 letter to *Wisconsin Outdoor News* expressed anger at how non-tribal hunters and anglers have been “kicked in the teeth” both by the Ojibwe spearing fish and by wolves hunting deer. And the phrase “the only good wolf is a dead wolf” still appears online regularly, as does its equivalent, “the only good Indian is a dead Indian.”



Is it any wonder that many Ojibwe object to wolves being removed from the federal endangered species list and to states issuing permits to white hunters and trappers? Is it any wonder that the language of institutionalized “management” so central to state wolf plans strikes many Ojibwe as distinctly cultural and decidedly disturbing? Is it any wonder that the idea of keeping or driving down wolf numbers to specific goals may “broaden the divide” (as it is understated in the wolf plan of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa) between tribal and non-tribal natural resources agencies?

The parallel paths walked by Ma'iingan and the Ojibwe have had a brighter side. The wolf received protection under the Endangered Species Act in the 1970s—the same decade marked by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and the American Indian Movement’s occupation of Alcatraz Island. Since then, wolf populations in the western

Great Lakes region have rebounded significantly. Since then, the Ojibwe have experienced cultural and political resurgence, including reaffirmation of treaty rights related to hunting, fishing and natural resources. As one tribal chairman put it to me, “The wolf population, when we were depressed, was way down, on the verge of extinction, endangered species. Wolf population’s coming back, tribes are doing better. For us, that’s what it’s about.”

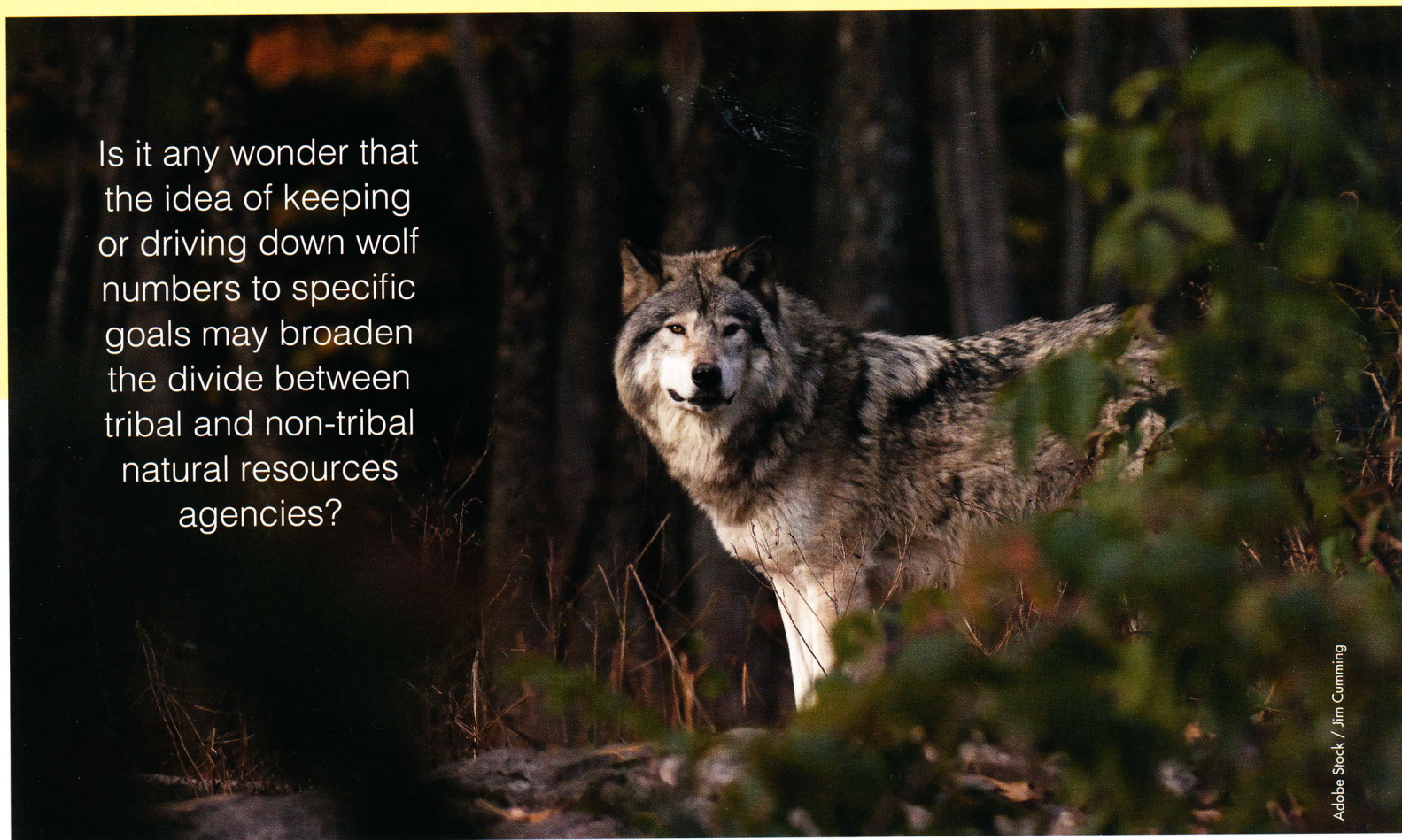
There is, of course, no single, unified view of wolves among the Ojibwe. Like any group of people, they have diverse perspectives. Yet the understanding expressed by Rose and many others is the one put forth publicly by Ojibwe communities in the western Great Lakes region in recent years.

If non-Ojibwe people want to understand this view, and perhaps be able to discuss wolf issues with Ojibwe communities in a constructive way, we need to



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Is it any wonder that the idea of keeping or driving down wolf numbers to specific goals may broaden the divide between tribal and non-tribal natural resources agencies?



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listen carefully. When we hear a creation story, we need to refrain from leaping to the conclusion that this understanding is rooted solely in spiritual ground.

To fathom how such a story sets the “context and foundation” for understanding the way many Ojibwe see wolves and wolf hunting, as Chairman Wiggins put it, we need to realize that this story speaks not only of a mythical past, but also of the historical past. And we need

to recognize that our own perspectives are just as cultural as anyone else’s.

To listen and think in these ways, we must dig deep. If everyone involved can do this, perhaps we can begin to treat each other with mutual respect. Together, perhaps we can come to understand wolves better than any of us can on our own. Together, perhaps we can relate to these four-footed hunters with greater grace and wisdom. ■

Tovar Cerulli is a writer, speaker, conservation-communication consultant and author of The Mindful Carnivore. He is grateful to Mike Swan, Reggie DeFoe and Peter David for their generous assistance with this article, which is based on research he conducted as a doctoral student at University of Massachusetts-Amherst.