

**NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES  
BASIC TRAINING MANUAL**

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**FOR USE BY  
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD US MISSIONS,  
THE INTERCULTURAL MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD,  
THE NATIVE AMERICAN FELLOWSHIP OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD,  
AND ANY WHO FIND IT BENEFICIAL FOR MINISTRY.**

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## I. The Purpose of Your Presence

This manual is only intended to serve as an introduction to the subject of Native American ministry and as such, is not a comprehensive guide. Instead, it is meant to point the reader in the right direction as he or she prepares to minister to Native American people.

It is important to know the reason for your presence and the purpose of your ministry. Your ministry purpose is a foundational anchor for what you do, how you do it, and why you do what you do. Historic missionary missteps have hampered effective ministry among Native Americans and created barriers to leading Native people to Jesus. If you focus on pointing people to Jesus and establishing indigenous Kingdom communities, then it is possible to avoid the missionary mistakes of the past.

The Apostle Paul serves as a primary model for all missionaries. Paul's purpose was to expand Jesus' Kingdom in a culturally meaningful way. The his approach included:

1. **Evangelization** – Proclaiming the gospel to those who had never heard it before to persuade them to follow Jesus and make Him Lord and Savior.
2. **Discipleship** – Growing new converts into spiritually mature followers of Jesus.
3. **Starting churches** – Creating communal gatherings of those who are seeking to serve and follow Jesus.
4. **Training leaders** – This requires one-on-one mentorship and a small group approach to training. Raising leaders involves “apprenticeship” which applies knowledge to real life.<sup>A</sup>
5. **Turning over the keys** – Trained indigenous leaders is the end-goal of missional activity. The missionary who does not train and release others to run the church and serve as leaders has failed to fulfill the missionary commission.
6. **Beginning the process again elsewhere** – Continually spreading the gospel to new areas and to others who have not heard the gospel message.
7. **Remaining a resource for further encouragement and mentorship** – Paul's letters demonstrate his ongoing relationship with the churches he founded and individuals he trained. He advised the churches and leaders, providing additional teachings on practical and theological matters. However, he never undermined the authority of the local leaders of the churches.

The task of a missionary is not to change how people do things or who they are. Every culture has a unique personality, a unique approach to accomplishing goals, and a unique mindset regarding what is important in life. To demand change in cultural practices that are not identified as sin in the Bible as a condition of salvation is to proclaim a false gospel. Paul fought against this practice at the Jerusalem Council and condemned it in Galatians. "The white man's gospel" and "missionary colonialism" refer to the practice of substituting

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<sup>A</sup> An apprentice works under another who is proficient in his or her trade. An apprenticeship may involve book learning, but it is primarily hands-on training intended to develop the apprentice's skill-sets. The goal is to teach mastery. Supervision of an apprentice should decrease as his or her mastery increases. An apprentice is considered fully trained when they have mastered enough skill sets. However, continued learning and further honing and acquisition of skills should remain a life-long process.

culture for Christ and adding unbiblical conditions to salvation.<sup>B</sup> Such efforts undermine the gospel of Jesus. A missionary's task is to present Christ and ground people biblically. Biblical grounding includes empowering new disciples to recognize what in their culture points to Christ, what is neutral, and what stands in contradiction to the gospel.

The Indigenous Church Principle is the gold standard for US Missions and Foreign Missions in the Assemblies of God.<sup>1</sup> This principle includes developing churches that are:

1. Self-supporting
2. Self-governing
3. Self-propagating

However, it is possible to establish churches that fulfill these three items that are not indigenous churches, but imitations of the culture of the person that planted the church.<sup>2</sup> For a church to be truly indigenous, it must also:

4. **Reflect an indigenous approach to worship.** This will include music, dance, body posture, and gathering formats that are a normal part of the culture.
5. **Be self-theologizing.** A church that is self-theologizing is one that considers what Scripture says and analyzes its own culture against scriptural standards. Scripture prohibits idolatry and sexual sin in all cultures. However, there is a wide array of cultural items that may be considered sin in one culture but not in another. Additionally, Scripture does not explicitly address many cultural practices.<sup>3</sup> Indigenous Christians who understand what is at stake must determine for themselves how scriptural principles should inform their cultural practices.
6. **Be self-contextualizing.** A church that is self-contextualizing will develop within its own space, place, context, environment, and culture. A self-contextualized church will make sense within its own culture and will not be a foreign intrusion.

If a church reflects all six of the above principles, it will be genuinely indigenous and more likely to thrive in its cultural setting. One of the most important aspects of a missionary's task is to empower the indigenous people to reach their people. Substituting culture for Christ will hinder this process. Missional church planting includes a process of leadership development that reflects the culture in light of the gospel. Salvation, discipleship, and leadership maturation involve growth and development over time. A missionary's task is to encourage things that foster healthy growth. Fostering healthy growth means graciously allowing others to grow at their own pace, learn by their own mistakes, and achieve victories in their own way. If this occurs, then the missionary will have succeeded in his or her task.

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<sup>B</sup> Cf. Acts 15 and the Epistle to the Galatians, especially Gal. 2:11-21. The issue that Paul addressed was an attempt to force Gentiles to receive circumcision and keep the entire Law of Moses, including all the Pharisaic traditions, as a necessary aspect of salvation. In essence, Gentiles were told to give up their culture and join the Jewish culture to be saved. In American history, a similar problem occurred. Native people were forced to give up their language, manner of dress, long hair, and a host of other non-relevant items as part of salvation.

## II. Overview & Importance of Pre-field Training

As a missionary candidate, you should be biblically grounded and able to help others to become grounded in the Bible. Biblical grounding includes:

1. Being familiar with Scripture as a whole, both Testaments, leading to a broad understanding of biblical history and God's plan of salvation.
2. Having a strong knowledge of the individual stories and content of the specific books that comprise the Bible.
3. The ability to rightly interpret the biblical text and explain it to others so that they can apply it to their lives in a meaningful way.

A missionary is someone who desires to bring Christ to people in other cultures. The required foundations to do this include:

1. **Cross-cultural training** – This training addresses an oft un-examined attitude that others “think like you.” Cross-cultural training exposes this un-examined mindset and provides generalized insights into how people from other cultures think and approach life and specific life-tasks. It also will expose you to the different value systems of non-western societies.
2. **Developing a broad understanding of Native History in the USA** – This must be from the Native American perspective. This overview will allow the missionary candidate to understand the trauma inflicted on Native American people. This trauma is both historic and ongoing, with consequences that reverberate today.
3. **Developing specific knowledge of the particular Nation/Tribe/Reservation targeted** – This will enable the missionary candidate to understand and appreciate the history, culture, and personality of the specific people among whom they desire to minister. Knowledge of the People/Reservation enables the missionary to avoid the pitfalls of others, build on the success of others, and bear witness for Christ in a way that is meaningful to the particular Native group.
4. **Language training** – Most Native communities in the USA today speak English. As a result, competency in the target group's mother tongue, though helpful, is not required. Even so, the missionary is highly encouraged to learn some language basics such as greetings, food names, etc. Willingness to learn some of the language demonstrates that you are willing to learn and meet Native people where they live. If you are teachable, then further avenues of ministry will open.
5. **Mentoring** – This is perhaps the most crucial aspect of your training. Each missionary candidate or candidate couple will be assigned a mentor from their target Nation/Tribe/Reservation. The mentor will work with the candidates before their arrival to prepare to guide and direct their cultural preparation. Additionally, the missionary candidate will serve under the mentor for one year to gain hands-on experience on how to effectively minister within the culture.

The importance of understanding and appreciating the history and culture of the people one desires to minister among is a foundational cornerstone to Native American ministry. Knowing the history and culture of the particular people one proposes to minister among

will help the missionary candidate to avoid unnecessary offenses and mistakes that will hinder ministry. Additionally, such knowledge will enable the missionary candidate to understand the particular problems and concerns of their Native target group. Understanding these problems and concerns should enable the missionary to minister with sensitivity rather than judgment.

Pre-field training will include:

1. Being assigned a Native mentor or Native-approved missionary from the reservation/area where one proposes to minister. The candidate is expected to communicate with the mentor regularly by phone, e-mail, or other forms of electronic communication.
2. Individual reading of assigned books pertinent to Native history and culture.
3. Watching assigned documentaries and Native movies that will provide further insight into Native perspectives, thinking, and concerns.
4. Classroom training including:
  - A. A weeklong initial orientation exposing the missionary candidate to itineration strategies and some basics of Native ministry. Missionary candidates will receive a list of required readings and viewings at this time.
  - B. A one- or two-week field training approximately one year into the fund-raising process.
  - C. Candidate internship debriefings held three months and six months into the internship and again at the end of the internship period (one year).

After missionary candidates complete their fund-raising, they will be assigned the status of nationally appointed missionary within the Assemblies of God and will serve under a mentor for one year.

1. The missionary's mentor will guide the trainee into the particulars of ministry on their reservation or area.
2. As the trainee gains cultural competencies, the mentor will provide growing ministry opportunities for the trainee until he or she is ready for independent ministry.
3. During the training period, the trainee will join with other trainees after three and six months for debriefing, and again at the end of the training process.
4. At the end of the training process, the mentor will determine in conjunction with the trainee and the US Missions Screening Committee if the trainee is ready and suitable for Native American ministry. Upon a majority approval, the missionary will be released into independent ministry to Native Americans. After the training period is complete, the newly appointed missionary should continue to work with his or her mentor as needs and opportunities arise.

If a missionary candidate seeks to teach at a Native Bible College, their mentor and internship will be selected from among the Nations/Tribes/Reservations from which the college draws its students.

### **III. Short Outline for Preparation for Native Ministry**

#### **Phase 1:**

1. Recruitment
2. Initial Springfield meeting
  - a. Meeting of missionary candidates with US Missions officials for Q&A and initial acceptance as missionaries.
  - b. Initial acceptance
  - c. Week of Training.
3. The first year of itineration
4. One week of Training in Native Country
  - a. Pre-meeting assignments in preparation for Native ministry and the week of training.
  - b. Training includes hands-on ministry and class style discussions.
5. Debriefing

#### **Phase 2**

1. The second year of itineration
2. One week of follow up training.
3. One year mentorship under a Native leader or approved missionary on the candidate's specific field after itineration is complete and before beginning independent ministry.
4. Debriefing
5. Final Approval for Ministry

#### **Phase 3**

1. Release to independent ministry
2. On-going mentorship
3. Four year ministry review

**The internship must be among the particular group to whom the missionary proposes to minister. The internship mentor should also be the person assigned to mentor the missionary candidate at the beginning when the candidate is initially accepted. The mentor should act as an on-going resource of help and guidance once the missionary is released for independent field ministry.**

#### **IV. Cross-Cultural Thinking: Not Everyone Thinks the Way You Think**

Most will recognize that others do not necessarily think as they do. This understanding is often compartmentalized and kept segregated from the real world and practical application. Many conflicts, misunderstandings, and offenses are the results of the failure to recognize that others have different perspectives and different priorities than we do. When ministering to others of a different culture, failing to actively account for the fact that the people in the host culture think differently than the missionary coming from mainstream America will multiply difficulties.

Generally, people are most comfortable with those who are like themselves. Often, we do not mingle with those who are different from us, or if we do, we expect them to become like us if they want to join us. Such an attitude may be acceptable in the fallen world, but in the New Testament, many different parts, including different ethnicities, come together to comprise Christ's Body (1 Cor. 12:12-26; cf. Rev. 7:9). In Acts, Jewish Christian insistence that Gentile Christians keep the Law and receive circumcision as a condition of salvation was a misguided attempt to substitute culture for Christ (Acts 15:1).<sup>4</sup> This activity was called Judaizing (Gal. 2:14, literally "to live like Jews"). In Native American history, the Europeans and their descendants (us) talked about needing to "civilize" and "Christianize" Native American people. This "civilizing" and "Christianizing" was, and is, substituting culture for Christ. Christianizing and Judaizing are different words for the same phenomena. Judaizing and "Christianizing" demand, "Become like us to become a part of us." As Paul said, this is not the gospel. It is another gospel, and as such, it is a false gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). A false gospel is an accursed thing (Gal. 2:11-13, 21; 3:10-14), those who espouse a false gospel are accursed (Gal. 1:8-9; 3:1-5; 5:10), and those who buy into a false gospel come under a curse (Gal. 2:4; 5:2-4, 7). Therefore, it is imperative not to confuse evangelism with Christianization.

Instead, as John Stott notes,

"Identification without loss of identity" is the model for all evangelism, especially cross-cultural evangelism. Some of us refuse to identify with the people we claim to be serving. We remain ourselves, and do not become like them. We stay aloof. We hold on desperately to our own cultural inheritance in the mistaken notion that it is an indispensable part of our identity. We are unwilling to let it go. Not only do we maintain our own cultural practices with fierce tenacity, but we treat the cultural inheritance of the land of our adoption without the respect it deserves. We thus practice a double kind of cultural imperialism, imposing our own culture on others and despising theirs. But this was not the way of Christ, who emptied himself of his glory and humbled himself to serve.<sup>5</sup>

Cross-cultural communication involves learning to think the way the people in the culture you go to think. Fruitful missional ministry includes adapting to the thought style and approach to doing things of the people rather than demanding they adapt to you.



## V. Native History in Broad Strokes

Columbus made his historic voyage and “discovered the new world” in 1492 seeking a short cut to India. He desired fortune and fame but also claimed that he wanted to further the gospel. Although the indigenous people he met in South America initially welcomed him warmly, he, for his part, treated them harshly, enslaved, and exploited them. The Spanish government Columbus served colonized and created policies that furthered exploitation and enslavement, while at the same time sending Catholic missionaries to Christianize the indigenous population.<sup>6</sup> In North America, European contact with Native Americans began in the early 1600s. The French explorer Samuel de Champlain explored and colonized in the Northeast, establishing the city of Quebec in 1604. Jamestown, founded in 1607, was the first permanent English colony. The Mayflower arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620.

The European explorers of North America sought land to colonize and perpetuate their particular cultures and values. The colonizers wanted to establish new domains for their countries and themselves. The explorers also pursued wealth in the form of gold, silver, jewels, and other material resources. Many of the explorers, and the colonies they established, also attempted to evangelize, or Christianize, those they encountered. Christianizing Native people was generally viewed as part of “civilizing” them.<sup>7</sup> Thus, early on in the history of North America, European culture and biblical Christianity were confused as being virtually synonymous.

The Pilgrims survived their first winter only with the help of Chief Massasoit and the Wampanoag Tribe. He and the Pilgrims made a peace treaty that remained in effect throughout his life. The Wampanoag ceded land to the Pilgrims and taught them how to survive in their new homeland. The Pilgrims and Wampanoag lived as distinct communities, but over time each adopted some terms, tools, and approaches to dress and to doing tasks from the other. The European settlers were never entirely comfortable with their new neighbors and regularly sought additional territory as more European immigrant arrived. The peace held throughout Massasoit’s and the original Pilgrim leaders’ lifetime. When the second generation of Pilgrims arose, they began to treat the Wampanoag and other Native tribes as inferior. They became more aggressive in forcing Native people, including the Wampanoag, from their lands. King Philip, Massasoit’s son, reluctantly engaged in a war against the growing wave of Europeans as a result of their aggressive attempts to dominate the indigenous people. The European settlers killed King Philip in 1676 because of his efforts to protect his people. His head was impaled on a pike and left in the open to warn other Native people of their need to submit to the European settlers.<sup>8</sup>

The tragedy of this piece of history is three-fold. First, greed impelled the European settlers to repay Native faithfulness and hospitality with treachery, including extreme hostility against the son of the very person who enabled the Europeans to survive. Second, King Philip represents what could have been. He was comfortable walking in both the European and Native American worlds, but the European settlers were unwilling to treat him, or the Native people, as equals in a shared world. Finally, this early development of greed,

hostility, and treaty breaking on the part of the European settlers became the norm. Greed-driven betrayal became a common and acceptable approach, both on the part of the government and individuals, to handling Native people for the remainder of the United States' history. In short, dominant culture's attitude has been, "might makes right."<sup>9</sup>

Many factors play into the issues of European America's treatment of Native Americans. The most dominant problems include greed for land and resources, prejudice, and viewing Native people as being in the way of European desires and goals coupled with the willingness to use raw power, deceit, and betrayal to remove the Native American obstacle. The diminishing land and resource holdings of Native people stain North American history. The theft of Native lands is the result of the activities of individuals, state and federal governments, and corporations. The reason for this land theft was always the result of the European settlers desiring more territory and newly discovered mineral resources (gold, silver, etc.) in Native tribal areas. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 resulted in the forced removal of the Cherokee Nation and other Native people in the eastern US known as the Trail of Tears. This Act established by federal decree that all the land west of the Mississippi River was Indian Territory. The Act was designed to placate the greed of the European settlers and to remove Native Americans from the colonized areas.<sup>9</sup>

The ongoing waves of European immigrants into America and the constant lust for land and resources resulted in further US expansion and the concept of Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny is the idea that God had ordained that the European settlers should own the entire area now known as the United States of America.<sup>10</sup> In 1851 the Indian Appropriations Act was passed by congress. This act forced Native peoples onto reservations and paved the way for European expansion across the rest of the nation.<sup>11</sup> The reservations were never "land given" to Native people; they were land prisons, and Native people were not allowed off these lands until 1924 and the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act.<sup>12</sup> Native people were not allowed to leave their reservations without permission.<sup>13</sup> The reservations typically represent unwanted areas and often some of the worst of available lands. Federal and state governments did not invest in developing infrastructure on most reservations. After establishing the reservation system, federal and state governments, corporations, and individuals used a variety of tactics to reduce Native territory further and isolate Native people from one another. Efforts to reduce Native land holdings continue today.<sup>14</sup>

One of the most devastating attempts to "civilize" and "Christianize" Native people came in the form of the Indian Boarding Schools started by General Richard H. Pratt. Pratt infamously stated, "Kill the Indian and save the man." The boarding schools were primarily an attempt to strip Native people of their culture. The boarding school period began in the 1870s, and the last federally run boarding school closed in 1973. Only in 1978, with the passing of the Indian Child Welfare Act did Native American parents gain the legal right to deny the placement of their children in off-reservation schools.<sup>15</sup> There are still boarding schools in operation today. However, the tribal governments and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) control their operation. The boarding school process included forcefully removing Native children from their homes and moving them hundreds of miles away. The "educational" focus of the boarding schools was primarily on learning industrial skills

needed to work in blue-collar type labor. Classrooms were usually run only in the morning. In the afternoons, the children had to do hard, menial labor connected with the upkeep of the schools and cultivating the food required to feed them. The remaining boarding schools, because Native people run them, now seek to foster Native culture. However, the long-term removal of children from their parents and family does not nurture well-rounded children.

Historically, those running the boarding schools did not allow the Native children to speak their Native languages, wear Native style clothing, or wear their hair long. Instead, they were forced to wear military-style uniforms, were severely punished and beaten for speaking their Native language, and had their hair forcefully cut. In many tribes that wore long hair, cutting hair was a sign of deep mourning for a major life tragedy. Therefore, the children were left wondering what unknown trauma had occurred. The federal government enlisted the help of Protestant and Catholic ministers and lay workers to run the boarding schools. Psychological, physical, and sexual abuse were common in boarding schools. Such abuse leaves life-long scars. Typically, unless there is serious intervention, those who experience abuse either go on to seek out further abuse or become abusers themselves. Much of the abuse the children suffered was at the hands of those who claimed to represent Christ. Once children graduated from their schools and returned to their reservations, the harm done to them continued to spread. The effects of this historical trauma have become generational hurts that underlie many of the social issues that continue to exist on reservations today.<sup>16</sup>

The idea of Christianizing and civilizing Native peoples is a typical historical expression, which is a result of the coupling of Christianity with Anglo-European culture throughout Native American history. This substitution of culture for Christ, combined with the violence and deceit used against Native people, has made Native Americans resistant to the gospel. This unwarranted coupling of European social norms with Christianity is what a Native people mean when they say that they are not interested in "the White man's gospel." Native Americans have been exposed to the gospel for four hundred years. Even so, depending on the source consulted, only 1 to 7 percent of Native Americans claim to know Jesus as Lord and Savior today. This brief history is intended to help you understand why this is so and the distrust you will encounter.

One additional note, many Native Christian leaders note the need of their people to move past the generational hurts of the past. However, telling someone who has suffered abuse, including historical or generational abuse, to "get over it" is offensive and shows a lack of compassion and understanding. The Lord Jesus calls us to be part of His healing process in the lives of others, but often healing is a process, as is learning to forgive. This brief history is intended to bring awareness of the brokenness and distrust you are likely to encounter. As a representative of Jesus, you must become a part of the healing process, knowing Native history will help you to understand the historical trauma that you will encounter.

## VI. The Importance of Specific Histories

In broad strokes, the history of the treatment of Native American people is consistent across the country. Likewise, to a certain extent, there is overlap and some similarities between the various Native American cultures and spirituality. At the same time, it is entirely incorrect to maintain a point of view that does not recognize that each Native American nation and tribe is different from the others. Each tribe has its heroes, villains, history, culture, and approach to life and living. To discuss Native people as though they were a homogenous group is as incorrect as it is to discuss Europeans, or any other continental group, as a homogenous group. Each continental group comprises many nations and many cultures. Failure to recognize and honor this on the foreign mission field would be disastrous. Although a missionary might be adept at a ministry in China, should they transfer to Japan, they will need to learn a new language and adapt to a new culture, because Japanese culture is different from Chinese culture. This type of difference exists in Native American ministry; each tribe and nation is a unique culture.

Some Native nations are patriarchal and patrilineal, while others are matriarchal and matrilineal. The personality of some Native nations includes outspokenness and willingness to engage in confrontation. Other Native groups are withdrawing and unwilling to debate matters in a confrontational style. Some tribes are impoverished; some have become relatively wealthy because of natural resources, astute leadership, and wise stewardship of Casino earnings. Some reservations are in desert areas, others in the mountains, on the plains, or by the ocean or other large bodies of water. All of these items impact how one approaches ministry and the specific ministry challenges that will be faced. In any given culture, one must bear in mind that it is not a missionary's job to change the personality of the people or the particulars of how they face life.

Some tribes embraced the gospel early in American history. Today, these may know and cognitively accept the gospel, they may know biblical basics, but this does not necessarily mean that they are actively living for Jesus. In such areas, there may be little or no traditional Native spirituality present. In other Native regions, biblical knowledge may be limited or nonexistent, and Native spiritual practices may be practiced extensively among the people. Some areas will be more open to the gospel and outsiders; others will be more closed or even openly hostile. The specific history of each tribe and nation impacts who they are today and how best to minister to and among them.

Learning about the specific histories and cultures will help a missionary to understand the people better. Discovering who the tribe's heroes and villains are and studying the stories that tell what the people have been through is indispensable for connecting to the people. Reading and viewing documentaries and dramas concerning such things is helpful. Asking the people to tell you the stories themselves is even better because it will enable you to see the living history. Asking others will also demonstrate that you are teachable. If you are teachable, then the people will teach you and be willing to show you more in the future.

## VII. Native vs. Dominant Culture Thinking

There are culturally informed differences between how Native Americans think and how those raised in the dominant culture of mainstream America think. It is again critical to recognize the limitations of making generalizations about Native American people in terms of what is important and how each group thinks and expresses itself. Each group is different and will exhibit differences from the discussion that follows.

Language is the gatekeeper of culture. How one thinks and what one considers important becomes visible in how one frames thoughts. The words available in a language to discuss any given topic demonstrate the relative importance of the subject and the people's approach to thinking about that topic. Therefore, any language learning you can do will help to understand the people's values and mindset.

Native people often refer to mainstream America as “dominant culture.” This terminology is indicative of the tensions that exist between Native ways of life and mainstream America. In broad strokes, mainstream American culture is highly individualistic, work-oriented, and materialistic – seeking to collect and hoard possessions. The driving forces in dominant American culture include hope for reward and fear of punishment. Success, popularity, and wealth define a person socially. It is possible to move from a lower social status to a higher one. It is also possible to descend from a higher social status to a lower one. Mainstream American laws and the consequences of breaking them are relatively homogenous across the country. In any particular area, the laws, in theory, apply equally to all. Although family is still considered important in dominant American culture, the extended family gave way to the nuclear family. The nuclear family has given way to broken (divorced) and reconstituted (remarried) families. Some families live near one another, but many move hundreds and thousands of miles from where they were raised. Mainstream Americans tend to segregate their religious beliefs from daily living. One's spirituality does not necessarily inform one's life in the way advocated in the Bible, even among Pentecostals.

In contrast, Native cultures tend to be more family and group-oriented. Although divorce, cohabitation, and out-of-wedlock children are as prevalent in Native country as they are in dominant culture, the extended family remains an integral part of Native life. Native people tend to take great pride in their family, tribe, and relationships with others within their tribe. This pride in relational connections informs and affects Native thinking in ways that are not easily understood by those from the dominant culture. Treating elders, tribal leaders, and one's parents in an honorable and respectful fashion is an essential aspect of Native cultures. Showing proper respect affects how others view you, and it improves your chances of obtaining the desired outcome. For example, showing up on a reservation and beginning ministry unannounced is unwise, because the tribal leaders view this as disrespectful. Instead, you should approach the tribal council; tell them who you are and what you would like to do. Then ask how you can best help the people of the tribe. A respectful approach like this is likely to garner needed help and support from the tribe.

Many Native American spiritual belief systems involve the belief in many different spirit beings and various types of spirits. Native people view some spirits as friendly and helpful

but others as harmful and hostile. Most Native cultures have medicine men and women who others seek for help with physical and spiritual ailments. There are many different types and categories of medicine men and women. Some focus more on naturalistic cures, others on guidance, others on spiritual help, and some on spiritual harm (e.g., cursing). As a whole, Native people see the spiritual world all around them and view every day as a miracle. They do not segregate their spiritual life from everyday life the way those in dominant culture do. Overt spiritual activity is common in many Native areas. It is wrong to assume that Native spiritual beliefs and practices are simply superstitions. They are not. A missionary needs to be prepared to engage in real spiritual warfare. Native ministers and missionaries tell many stories of medicine men seeking to curse the minister and the minister's family, of spirits showing up in their homes and churches, and of ministering to demonized individuals. Spiritual warfare takes many forms – some subtle, some overt. Those ministering to Native people must be able to recognize and confront the demonic. Traditional Native spirituality has an upside. When signs and wonders accompany the gospel presentation, then Native people are receptive. Power encounters prove that Jesus is truly Lord of all.

Every reservation is considered a sovereign nation. Though Native people often speak of tribal sovereignty, the reservations are federal lands. Tribal sovereignty is a complex issue. As Rev. James Kallappa, a Makaw minister and elder statesman among Native people notes,

Tribal sovereignty in the United States refers to the inherent authority of indigenous tribes to govern themselves within the borders of the United States of America. The federal government recognizes tribal nations as 'domestic dependent nations' and has established a number of laws attempting to clarify the relationship between the federal, state, and tribal governments. The Constitution and later federal laws grant to tribal nations more sovereignty than is granted to states or other local jurisdictions, yet do not grant full sovereignty equivalent to foreign nations, hence the term "domestic dependent nations." Not all indigenous nations agree with the United States' view of them.<sup>17</sup>

Kallappa also cites Josh Richman, who states,

At its simplest, "sovereign" means independent and self-ruled. A completely sovereign nation is an equal to all other sovereign nations in all respects, from foreign policy powers to economic self-sufficiency to citizenship. So tribes might best be called "quasi-sovereign," (as though; almost but not quite) though in recent decades they've been striving to regain or protect what powers they've had.

Tribal laws and tribal authority are different from those found in mainstream America. It is critical to learn and obey the tribe's laws. The FBI, under the auspices of the federal government, always has jurisdiction in tribal areas since reservation lands are federal lands held in trust by the US government. The particular interchange between state, tribal, and local legal jurisdiction depends on the arrangements agreed upon between any given tribal government and the state and local authorities. In some areas, state and local police have no jurisdiction on tribal land and can only work in tribal lands by invitation, but this is

not always the case. In some regions, tribal police cannot arrest tribal members off the reservation, but in other areas, this is not the case. Often, the tribal government cannot prosecute non-Native people who commit crimes on a reservation. Non-Natives also have the option to request a trial by the federal government, where they are likely to experience greater leniency, rather than in tribal courts. The interchange between tribal and federal laws is complex and differs on every reservation. Sometimes, neither the state nor tribal governments can prosecute crimes against Native people committed on tribal land by non-Native people because of the complexity of the laws. The tribal government governs Native lands, but because of the way the reservation system was set up, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Department of the Interior also control Native lands.

The issue of land ownership is very complicated. On many reservations, an outside group or individual cannot own tribal land. Because of the history of territorial loss, it is often actually offensive to seek to purchase land that belongs to the tribe or a tribal family. In many areas, a church will need to lease rather than purchase property. When a lease expires, the land and buildings erected return to the tribe or the tribal family. Leases can be renewed, but many districts are reluctant to invest in church building projects because of concerns for lost investment. The traditional reversionary clause in a church's bylaws cedes property back to the district, but this cannot be the case on most reservations.

When you enter a reservation, you are entering a different culture that you do not know or understand. The best way to learn about the specific differences in thinking is to observe others and ask questions. Many things are not discussed because they are taken for granted as "how one lives." Finding someone within the culture who is willing to take the time to teach and correct you when you make cultural mistakes is critical. It is also essential to apologize for any unintended offenses as quickly as possible. As an outsider, a missionary's task is to share the gospel, share Jesus' love, and embrace the people and their culture, not vice versa. Accepting others, their approach to life, and what they hold dear will serve a missionary well. Offering your "better way," especially repeatedly is likely to be offensive.

## VIII. The Place of Language

Culture is embedded in language. Language is always structured to highlight what is significant and valued among the people. For instance, there are fifty Inuit words for snow, each describing a different quality and potential use. Among Southeastern Americans, there is only one word for snow. Historically, the Lakota had no word for “peace,” instead they used something like “not war” or “anti kill” as a substitute. Although today there is a word for “love” in Lakota, historically there was not. Instead, love was demonstrated rather than discussed.

Similarly, the Lakota think differently about God than those in mainstream America. Their words only express a small fraction of who they understand Him to be. There is no word for Holy Spirit in Lakota: *Wankan Tanka* (the Great Mystery) is perhaps the closest approximation. The differences between languages mean that when translating, a full equivalent expression is rare. As a result, we are always interpreting, and we must bear in mind that more than one word or set of words might be needed to enable comprehension.

All languages are constantly evolving. Although historically there was no word for “love” in Lakota, today there is. Whether this captures the full richness of the Lakota understanding of love or is an accommodation to the Western idea of love is another matter and best explored with someone from a Lakota culture.

Today, most Native Americans know English, and many in the younger generation cannot speak their traditional language.<sup>c</sup> On the other hand, in some areas, some elders speak only their traditional language. In highly isolated areas, the traditional language might be the primary or only language spoken.

Natives whose first language is their tribal language must translate back and forth between languages. Although there are many younger Native Americans who do not speak their original language, they often understand the language and think in it. Individuals who think in their tribal language must translate back and forth between languages. This phenomenon has significant ramifications for communication. First, even if the Native person speaks English fluently, there is still a communication barrier. Some words and phrases that you use may not be understood or understood as you intend. Likewise, additional time might be needed for the Native person to formulate a response. Outsiders may think they know what a Native person is saying, but cultural skewing may prevent real understanding. Therefore, it may be necessary to repeat information in different forms and to ask questions to make sure that both parties understand one another. Appreciating how another thinks is essential in ministry, especially cross-cultural ministry. You might not learn to speak a Native language fluently, but you can (and should) develop a Native understanding of life. You can discover what is significant and valued by learning how the people communicate, both verbally and non-verbally.

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<sup>c</sup> This loss of language is a concern for many within Native American communities. As a result, many Native schools now include learning the tribe's traditional language as part of their curriculum.



While it is possible to minister to Native people without learning any of the tribal language, this is not advisable. You show that you appreciate the people and want to honor and understand them by asking them to teach you basic greetings, food names, etc. Learning some words and phrases demonstrates that you want to live honorably with the people. A missionary's willingness to learn some Native language indicates that he or she is teachable. As a general rule, if you show that you are willing to learn, the people will happily teach you more. Openness to learning opens relational doors and enables effective witness for Jesus.

Many Native people appreciate an outsider's willingness to learn some of their language. On the other hand, there are some Native cultures where the tribal language is limited to tribal members because the language is the tribe's domain. Here again, it is necessary to ask someone in the culture what is appropriate. One of the issues at stake, in such instances, is coming off as a "wannabe." One Nez Perce-Sioux woman tells of an individual who came to minister on a Nez Perce reservation. The individual came with long hair, braided in Native fashion, and then wanted to learn the language. The Nez Perce Christian lady described this individual as "an offensive poser." She highlighted the importance of asking how to speak and behave and asking what is appropriate for you to do or not do, as an approach to honoring the people and their cultural values.

Ultimately, honoring the people and tribe is what is at stake. Seeking to understand is always acceptable. Asking for permission is always appreciated. It is dishonoring to Native people, and to the Lord, to approach relationships and ministry with indifference, presumption, or arrogance. Language learning can serve as a tool to understand and know the people better. But like all other tools, it must be accessed and used rightly. It is appropriate and honoring to ask to learn the language and cultural customs. However, there will always be some areas that are off-limits for those who do not belong to the tribe.

## IX. Foods, Customs, Hospitality, and Offense

The Apostle Paul wrote,

For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some (1 Cor. 9:19-22; NASB).

Paul was the premier missionary and hopefully the model we use to guide our missional activity. Paul became all things to all men, that by all means he might win some to Jesus. Paul's epistles and Acts illustrate that Paul was willing to move beyond his comfort zone and ethnic and religious upbringing to minister effectively to others. He changed his Jewish name (Saul) to a Greek name (Paul). He mixed with Gentiles, which was unlawful for Jews to do (Acts 10:28), and engaged in table-fellowship and egalitarian ministry with Gentiles from across the Mediterranean seaboard (Acts 13:1-2). He fought for the right of Gentile Christians to remain in their cultures, rather than give up their cultures to become like the Jewish Christians (Acts 15; Galatians). Paul consented to some necessary dietary restrictions for the Galatian Christians so that they could engage in table fellowship with Jews. He ignored these restrictions and provided a broader standard for table fellowship for Gentile Christians in Corinth, who continued to maintain relationships with unsaved family and friends (1 Cor. 8-10; cf. Rom. 14).

Peter's rooftop vision was intended to teach Peter not to consider Gentiles "unclean." The practical outworking of the vision included the lifting of dietary and cultural prohibitions (Acts 10-11; cf. Mark 7:19). One of the first offenses many missionaries commit is to refuse to eat the food offered to them by their indigenous host. Often the Native American host is offering their best food and has taken much time to prepare it. To refuse the food is an insult and treats the host's sacrifice as irrelevant. Refusing to try the food of one's indigenous host is generally perceived as looking down on them as though their cooking and way of life are below the dignity of the missionary. In many Native cultures, there is a wide variety of foods that differ from mainstream American fare. Historically, Native cultures sought to make use of every usable item. When the federal government enacted the reservation systems, many Native people starved because the federal government failed to provide promised food and resources. As a result, careful use of all resources remained a priority for survival. Those who wish to minister effectively to Native people will need to adjust their dietary habits to include Native foods.

One does not have to like every food item or even eat every food regularly. However, it is necessary to try the food offered to you. As you develop relationships with individuals and families, it is generally acceptable to tell the other person that you like certain foods but not others. Those who are unwilling to try the food offered to them dishonor and offend their

hosts. Closing our mouths to indigenous foods often means closing off relationships and ministry opportunities also.

Diet is only the beginning of a people group's customs. The customs of a people group are many and far-ranging. Customs include how and where one eats one's food. In some areas, the people may eat on the floor. Some may eat with only a fork or a spoon, others without any utensils at all. Traditional Native American music differs significantly from mainstream American music. Some tribal music is explicitly spiritual, used in worshipping Native spirits, but other tribal music is not. Some tribal dancing is spiritual, but in other tribes, the dance is social and helps ground the people in an awareness of who they are. Native people may wear traditional Native attire for special occasions. Some of the items connected with Native dress are spiritual, such as the medicine pouch, but other items are not, such as a ribbon shirt. Customs can also include such things as ceremonies used to open public gatherings, wedding ceremonies, and ceremonial customs performed at wakes and funerals.

Learning about the various customs and their significance is an integral part of ministry to Native people in terms of understanding who they are and what is important to them. The tribe's cultural norms provide guidelines for behavior, speech, and what to avoid. The customs of each Native culture will vary, so it is not possible to give specific guidance here. Instead, it is vital to find a Native person who can guide you in learning and understanding the customs of the people where you minister. However, you should be aware that many cultural traditions are taken for granted, so they are not generally discussed. Therefore, observation and questions are particularly important. Understand that you will make mistakes. Often, you will know you have made a mistake if someone reacts poorly to you or corrects you. If you offend, apologize quickly and ask forgiveness.

At the heart of acceptance into any culture are hospitality and offense. As a missionary, you will be dependent on the hospitality and goodwill of others. In Native Country, offenses will close relational and ministry doors quickly, and potentially irrevocably. The highest form of acceptance is to be "adopted" by a Native individual or family. To be "adopted" means the individual or family takes you under their wings and invites you into their lives. A family that adopts an outsider enables the outsider to learn more quickly because the family will take on the role of teaching what is not known. Additionally, an adopting family "stands for" the person they adopt. They encourage others in their community circle to accept and help the outsider to learn the things necessary to live as an acceptable member of the community.

Hospitality is a two-way street. The missionary must be self-giving, but must also be willing to receive what others have to offer. It is humbling to receive a gift from another, especially if they are in more difficult straits than you financially. However, to refuse a gift or hospitality is an insult. It behooves the missionary to learn to courteously receive from others, whether in the form of help or a gift. The missionary must also learn to give to others graciously, without strings attached.

Offenses come in many forms. A missionary coming into a Native culture will be extended a certain amount of grace as a newcomer who does not know any better. At the same time, a white missionary coming into Native Country carries the baggage of being part of a historical river of missionaries. Historically, missionaries to Native people are a mixed bag – they have done much good but also committed much harm. Many Native people associate white missionaries with attempts to eradicate their culture, their language, and their way of life. White missionaries are associated with the physical, sexual, and psychological abuse of the boarding schools as well as the loss of Native lands through lies, manipulation, and the use of raw power.

One earns trust over time in Native ministry. Trust is won by keeping your word and by genuinely caring for and identifying with the people. Trust will open relational and ministry doors with individuals and groups. Trust is hard to earn but easily lost. The loss of trust can result in the loss of one's ministry. Trust is broken when the missionary is deceitful, behaves selfishly, or fails to honor and adapt to the culture's way of doing things. Missionaries will fail to earn trust if they speak or act in a condescending manner. Again, it is essential to apologize quickly and meaningfully if and when you offend another. The nature of the apology must rise to the nature of the offense. Deal with private offenses privately and deal with public offenses publicly. Ask how you can make things right to restore relationships and trust.

This discussion about food, hospitality, and offense is meant to help you to begin thinking about the new culture you seek to enter and in which you hope to minister. The discussion is not comprehensive, nor is it intended to be. Your best learning will occur “hands-on” within the specific culture that you enter. If you are wise, you will make every effort to become like those among whom you minister. Like Paul, we must become like those to whom we minister to win some to Christ (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

## X. Finding God's Smudge in the Culture

"God's smudge"<sup>18</sup> refers to the things within individuals and cultures that point to God and that represent the presence of the One True God. The topic of "finding God's smudge" in Native cultures is a hot-button topic that is not agreed upon from one Native culture to the next and from one Native Christian to the next. Missionaries to Native people, including Assemblies of God missionaries, have often taught Native Americans that they needed to give up everything in their culture if they wanted to follow Christ. This abandonment of culture was common teaching right into the 1980s. Most of the time, the teaching that Native Christians needed to give up their culture included giving up their language. Questions like, "Can Native cultures be redeemed?" and "Is there anything in our culture that can be redeemed?" have often framed the discussion. These are "wrong questions." They force answers into a closed and illegitimate category. The short answer to both questions is, "Jesus did not come to redeem cultures. He came to redeem individuals. He came to redeem people." Although this answer is correct as far as it goes, the answer does not go far enough, and it misses the angst underlying the questions it seeks to answer.

Theologically, every human being is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7). Although sin disfigured God's image in humanity, the image of God remained even after the Fall and is the basis for the prohibition against murder (9:6). The image of God remains in humanity. All people, regardless of their relationship with Jesus, have the smudge of sin and Satan in their lives but also the smudge of God.

Humans comprise and create culture. Any given culture represents the customs and rules, often unwritten, which govern the people so that they can live together in relative harmony. Culture represents the corporate personality of the people. Like individuals, all cultures have both the smudge of sin and Satan and the smudge of God in them.<sup>19</sup> For example, every culture in the world has a story of an ancient worldwide flood. Though these stories differ from the biblical account, they represent the smudge of God because they represent an early, albeit distorted, memory of a time when a flood destroyed the world. In Athens, Paul made use of the smudge of God by discussing the idol to the unknown god he had seen (Acts 17:23). He quoted what Greek poets had said about God that aligned with biblical beliefs (vv. 24-29, esp. v. 28). Like Paul, our evangelistic efforts must take into account God's accommodation for the fallen understanding of individuals and also the often-overlooked collective smudge of God in culture.

God graciously condescends to all human attempts to grope after Him (Acts 17:27). Consider the woman who was healed when she touched the hem of Jesus' garment (Mark 5:25-29). She sought to access God's healing touch through a magical ritual.<sup>20</sup> In magical practices, things that have touched a person contain the essence or power of the person. The attempt to receive a touch from God through magical practice is also seen in the healings associated with Peter's shadow (Acts 5:14-15).<sup>21</sup> In magical practices a person's shadow is believed to contain the essence or power of a person. The healings connected to Paul's filthy sweat rags and work-apron scraps (19:11-12) is another attempt to access God through magical practice.<sup>22</sup> God healed in each of these instances. Although the approach was wrong in each case, the heart of the people involved was to get ahold of God, a desire

that God honored. We should not encourage such wrong practices, especially since Scripture forbids witchcraft (Deut. 18:10; 2 Kings 21:6; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8). However, these accounts illustrate God's graciousness. God honors the groping of those who honestly seek Him (Acts 17:27). The Apostles focused on the gospel and God's desire to see all people saved, in spite of wrong cultural beliefs and practices. We should do the same.

There is no culture in this world that God wholly approves, and there is no culture that He entirely condemns. In truth, although God did not create human cultures, He did create the humans that comprise these cultures and expressly allows for the different types of cultures. The Genesis 10 Table of Nations catalogs different people groups and languages (cf. Gen. 10:5, 20, 31). This list precedes the Tower of Babel and the diversification of language. The Bible's notation of these distinct cultures and languages before the Tower of Babel suggests God's approval of human cultural diversity. This approval is fully confirmed in Revelation. John notes that the people who populate heaven come from every people, nation, tribe, and language, thus every culture and sub-culture (Rev. 5:9; 7:9). Our various cultures and sub-cultures remain in heaven, and the differences between the cultures and sub-cultures will remain recognizable.

Western missional activity has wrongly condemned Native cultures as demonic. Euro-American Christians have often failed to explore what in Native cultures might point to the True God, what might be neutral, and what is problematic. As a result of this teaching, there are some Native Christians today who claim there is nothing in their culture that honors God or that is acceptable to Him. Others seek to discard the wrong teachings of colonialism by inappropriately intermingling Native spirituality with Christianity. This creates various forms of syncretism.<sup>23</sup> At this time, although there is some interest in coming to a more biblical understanding and approach to Native culture and the gospel, the conversation remains tentative and a source of friction. Underlying the problem is the erroneous historical assumption that Western civilization was not fallen and the equally mistaken assumption that everything within Native cultures is demonic. No quick or easy solution is likely to be found for negotiating this curve. Answers to the issue must arise from Native people who are grounded in their cultures and God's Word. Although well-versed missionaries may be able to speak into this issue, final understanding must arise from biblically grounded Native Christians.

The ultimate goal of seeking God's smudge in a culture is to help those within the culture to understand the true and living God. Seeking God's smudge in a culture enables us to use the things in the culture that point towards Him as points of contact, as Paul did on Mars Hill. We must yield the things in our lives and cultures that do not align with God's nature and Word. God's Spirit will never contradict God's Spirit-inspired Word and will never direct His people into immoral or idolatrous behaviors. If an activity is not immoral or idolatrous, then keeping or abandoning the activity is probably a matter of personal preference.

As a missionary, it will be your task to ground Native Christians in God's Word. They must consider for themselves what in their culture points to Christ, what is neutral, and what they must reject as inappropriate as they seek to live for Christ in this world. Such self-theologizing must be encouraged and allowed to happen. The process of self-theologizing is

likely to be messy and laden with further controversy, but it is an essential part of establishing a genuinely indigenous work. Missionaries can facilitate and encourage this process by looking for the smudge of God in the cultures they enter. They must then use these smudges to point people to Christ in the same way Paul did in Athens.

## XI. Spiritual Warfare

The Bible openly discusses not only the things of God but also the realm of the demonic. In the Garden of Eden, Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:1-7). God outlaws necromancy and witchcraft in the Old Testament (Deut. 18:10-14; Isa. 8:19). These prohibitions remain in the New Testament (Gal. 5:20; Rev. 9:21; 21:8). People in both Testaments engaged in occult practices, and such occult practices can be found in every region and people group today. The upside of occult practice is that it demonstrates spiritual hunger and awareness. The downside of the occult is that demonic forces are being invoked.

Missionaries to Native Americas must take the reality of demonic activity seriously. Paul warns that we do not fight simply against flesh and blood, “but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*” (Eph. 6:12, NASB). Jesus cast demons out of people (Matt. 9:32-33; Mark 5:1-16; Luke 4:33-35, etc.), as did the Apostles (Acts 5:16; 8:7; 19:12). Scripture presents Simon (Acts 8:9-13) and Elymas (13:6-11) as real sorcerers accessing real spiritual authority. The sons of Sceva were real exorcists capable of casting out demons. However, when they sought to use Jesus’ name as part of an exorcism formula, they failed miserably (19:13-17). One sees the widespread use of magic in Ephesus when the people came and burned their magical books and other occult paraphernalia (Acts 18:18-19). In the Old Testament, King Saul became demonized (1 Sam. 16:14-15) and later visited the witch of Endor, who raised the dead prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 28). That this really was Samuel is evidenced in the woman’s response to Samuel (vv. 11-14) as well as the writer’s identification of Samuel (vv. 15-16), Samuel’s self-identification (vv. 16-18) and the prophecy that he gave regarding Saul’s death (vv. 18-19). The biblical point here is that demonic activity is real and some people genuinely access demonic power. If we ignore God’s Word regarding spiritual warfare, we will be vulnerable to the enemy’s attack.

Beginning at the time of the Enlightenment, Western higher critical thinking disallowed the supernatural and miraculous, demanding scientific proof as an explanation of all phenomena. No doubt, some beliefs are little more than superstition, but others are quite real. Pentecostalism takes the gifts and presence of the Holy Spirit seriously. However, there are many, even in Pentecostal circles, who dismiss the authentic nature of the demonic and the ability of some to access genuine, but demonic, spiritual authority.

The presence of the demonic is quite real in Native country. Medicine men and women access real spiritual authority. Stories abound about demonized individuals, demons showing up, or living in, homes and churches. Reliable Native ministers, Native Christians, and missionaries tell these stories. One missionary stated that when a new minister comes to his reservation, several medicine men will show up for a Sunday church service to decide if the man is a spiritual threat. If he is not, they usually leave him alone. If he appears to be a threat, then they discuss how to target him through his wife, his children, or some other means. They will then seek to curse the minister or his family members. Another missionary elaborated this in terms of children becoming sick, the mother becoming



anxious, and the missionary deciding to return to dominant culture to seek healing for his family.

It is necessary for a missionary entering Native country to take the threat of spiritual attacks seriously. An attack can take the form of demons visibly appearing in your home or church. An attack can also take the form of sickness, financial issues, or other sorts of physical problems. Some ministers in Native country discuss unreasonable thinking patterns within their family, leading to family fights that move beyond what is normal. Fetishes might be left on one's doorstep or around the church or house that are intended to bring a curse. Native pastors and missionaries warn about purchasing crafts or receiving gifts that have been dedicated to Native spirits. Items inspired by a spirit, or dedicated to a spirit, have demons attached to them. Sometimes demonic attacks come in the form of an overwhelming sense of fear or uneasiness.<sup>24</sup>

The primary purpose of any spiritual attack is to cause fear, doubt, confusion, and discouragement. The devil and his cohorts, both human and spiritual, do not want people to live for Jesus. Therefore, they will seek to neutralize men and women of God by driving them out or paralyzing them with fear. It is vital to bear in mind that you are a child of God and that the devil has no authority over you. He cannot harm you unless you have opened a door through sin. When sin is present, confession and repentance are needed. In every case, it is crucial to stand on the authority of Jesus (Matt. 28:18), not one's own authority. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). We call on the name of Jesus when facing the demonic (Acts 16:18; Phil. 2:10). We plead the blood of Jesus over people, situations, places, and ourselves as part of spiritual warfare (1 John 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:17-21). We consciously take up the full armor of God, including the Sword of the Spirit – God's Word (Eph. 6:11-18).

As God's people, we are always in spiritual warfare, but in Native country, it is more overt than in mainstream America. It is necessary to be aware of this as part of preparing to minister among Native people. You are likely to see more miracles, but you are also apt to experience stronger and more overt forms of spiritual attack. It is necessary to remember who you are in Christ and that at the name of Jesus every knee must bow, whether in heaven, on earth, or below (Eph. 2:10-11).

## **XII. Creating Durable Indigenous Kingdom Communities**

Creating permanent indigenous Kingdom communities is the ultimate goal of missionary work. A durable community is one that remains over time. An indigenous community is one that makes sense, is appropriate to, and reflects the greater culture to which it belongs.<sup>25</sup> A Kingdom community is a community that finds its core values in Christ and God's Word. If a church cannot function properly after the missionary leaves, then the missionary has failed. The lesson of the parable of the soils must be considered (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23). Only one in four seeds became a productive member of God's Kingdom. A missionary must sow plentifully in the hopes of producing a bountiful harvest. Developing an enduring work means staying long enough to train godly leaders to guide the maturing community. However, missionaries must not remain so long, or minister in such a way, that the work becomes dependent upon them and their resource base.<sup>26</sup>

An indigenous Kingdom community is one that reflects the culture to which it belongs. A church should not draw individuals out of their natural communities and into a new artificial community. Instead, God's people, both individually and corporately, should remain in their natural communities. They should infect those communities with the proclamation of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit in word and deed (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-10).<sup>27</sup> Spirit-led Bible reading should lead to thoughtful consideration of the things within the culture and how these things can be used to promote Christ's Kingdom. As a general rule, things like music, dress, décor, approach to gathering communally, and prayer posture should reflect the habits of the people. As long as such things are not overtly or covertly sinful, they are a matter of personal preference, not scriptural command. Western churches are performance-based and reflect the industrialized culture of the West. They use a lecture hall format, music that reflects current secular musical trends, modern technology, and electronic instruments. In the West, "bigger is better" but this is not necessarily true in other cultures. Worldwide, larger churches often have difficulty developing committed Christian disciples. In another culture, communal gatherings might be "in the round" and focus on mutual interaction rather than a lecture format. The music of the people will sound different than Western music, but it is the heart music of the people. As long as it is used to glorify Jesus, it is acceptable and desirable. David danced in worship to God (2 Sam. 6:12-15), but until recently, American Pentecostals considered dance sinful. Other OT cultures also used dance as part of their idol worship. It is not the act of dancing that is sinful; it is the intention it is used for and the focus of the activity that God takes into account. In establishing indigenous Native Kingdom communities, the indigenous Christians within the community need to be granted the primary voice in developing indigenous theology and indigenous forms of worship.

Ultimately, the goal is to establish Kingdom communities. It is quite possible to have an indigenous gathering in any culture that is not honoring to the Lord. A Kingdom community is one whose central focus is Jesus and whose primary concern is honoring Him. A Kingdom community gathers to worship the Lord, to draw near to Him, to touch and be touched by Him. Proclamation of the Word, worship, fellowship, and giving of one's resources are each central components of our gathering as God's people. However, these must not be allowed to usurp the primary reason for gathering – to meet with God to be transformed into His

likeness. Gathering as the church is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end – meeting with God. Anything that distracts from this, or usurps this goal, needs to be re-evaluated and corrected. Likewise, if a church community comprised primarily of “mature believers,” those who have been serving Jesus for some time, is filled with pride, gossip, contention, power struggles, and other forms of sin, we must question whether a real Kingdom community exists. Such carnal behaviors derail the goal of discipleship and establishing the counter-culture of God’s Kingdom.

The Great Commission is not primarily a call to evangelize or establish churches; it is a call to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). A disciple of Jesus will reflect His heart, values, and behaviors. The church must make disciples. Discipleship is a process. God delivers some from sinful habits immediately, but no one is ever entirely transformed overnight. Discipleship is a process, and spiritual growth occurs over time. The litmus test for spirituality is not measured in external practices only. Genuine spirituality involves a change of heart and habits, so that we reflect the very nature of Jesus more and more in our lives. A Kingdom community will include immature Christians, but these should be moving in a Christ-ward direction. Mature members of the community are not those who have been Christians the longest, though ideally, this should be the case. Mature Christians are those who most thoroughly and comprehensively live for Christ and live according to God’s law of love.

Both in mainstream America and Native cultures, there is a consensus that genuine discipleship is not occurring in the lives of the majority of those attending church today. Disciple-making must be engaged in intentionally and systematically. Disciple-making does not primarily occur in large group settings. Working with individuals and small groups fosters discipleship. The missionary must adapt his or her approach to ministry and focus on strategies that best foster discipleship. The approach to discipleship must be able to be duplicated by those within the community so that ongoing discipleship can occur.

Establishing permanent, indigenous Kingdom communities is the central task of a missionary. Missionaries must continuously keep this goal in mind. We must pray over and worked towards this goal. Our goal as missionaries, like Paul, is to evangelize, disciple, establish worshipping communities, raise leaders, turn over the reins to the local people, and leave. If we do this, we can and will see enduring, indigenous Kingdom communities established in Native communities. In the past, missionaries to Native people evangelized, engaged in some discipleship, and established churches. Unfortunately, too many did not entrust the church to the local people. Such distrust represents a failure to trust God. It also represents a failure to disciple and trust the Native Americans whom He saved and filled with His Spirit in the same way that He fills the rest of us. From this point forward, let us determine to follow the biblical pattern to work and trust God to build indigenous Kingdom communities, comprised of Christ-centered disciples, among Native people.

### **XIII. Changing Generations, Changing Approach**

Much of this training manual has focused on the past. All people and all cultures change over time. The reservations appear to have helped Native Americans to preserve various aspects of their cultures by forcefully isolating them from the dominant culture. In this specific way, the reservation system served to undermine the attempt of the boarding schools and state and federal governments to destroy Native cultures and cultural identity.

Today, in spite of the efforts of many tribes and Native individuals to reconnect with their cultural language, mores, habits, and customs, there is a growing loss of these very things because of the widespread use of cell phones, social media, and other forms of electronic communication and information gathering and sharing. The passing of the oldest generation and the loss of their values and knowledge also impacts changing Native cultures.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 32percent of Native Americans are under the age of 18, compared to 24 percent in the general population. Additionally, 42 percent of Native Americans are 24 years of age or under, compared to 34 percent in the general population.<sup>28</sup> Thus, by far, the largest population group among Native Americas is those most influenced by technology and social media. These devices and communication outlets are dramatically impacting Native cultures by exposing those living in relatively isolated reservation areas to dominant culture technology, thinking, language, and values. Often the values promoted are driven by companies seeking to sell their product. Western consumerism and selfishness are displacing traditional concern for family and tribal welfare. Social media presents the opportunity to air one's opinion as often and in as disrespectful and angry a manner as one may choose, with little discernible or immediate consequence. Such practice can migrate into face-to-face contacts and undermine traditional values like respect for leaders and elders. Learning and information gathering have become driven by technology. Young people are more likely to challenge information given by those who are older. The traditional method of learning from elders, who passed along traditional skills, crafts, concerns, and wisdom, is happening less as time passes.

Additionally, none of the previous discussion about Native cultures has addressed those raised in cities and mainstream America. In many ways, those thus raised will think and reflect the values and approach to living modeled by mainstream America. Be that as it may, there are always aspects of the individual's unique identity and history as a Native person that impacts who they are. Likewise, it is possible for those who are not raised in the culture to experience demonic manifestations from the culture without having been directly exposed to Native spirituality.<sup>29</sup>

Another issue driving change in Native country is the absence of parents, especially fathers, in the lives of Native children. Parental substance abuse, imprisonment, and divorce create troubled environments for children on reservations. Children without the nurture, discipline, and affirmation of both parents are less likely to succeed in school and more likely to become involved in substance abuse and other illicit activities. Because of a lack of employment on the reservations, fathers are often forced to seek work off the reservation.

Frequently, this means the father lives away from his family to support them financially. In such instances, the mother functions as a single mother raising the children on her own. Without the presence of the father, it is more difficult for the mother to enforce discipline, especially as the children grow. As one Native pastor noted, "The reservations need both education and structure. These are necessary for discipleship." Children who grow up without the support and structure provided by two-parent families are less likely to become healthy, balanced adults. They learn their values and behaviors from other sources, thus further fueling social and spiritual change in Native country.

It is not in the scope of this manual to engage in a large-ranging discussion of how technology and changing times are changing Native cultures. However, those entering Native ministry must be aware that the largest population group of Native Americans are young people. Technology is influencing Native youth, so they are more like their dominant culture counterparts than ever before. Native young people are generally proud of their tribal heritage and remain Native but in a new way. What worked to present Jesus to one generation will not necessarily work to lead the next generation to Jesus. The concerns and cutting edge ministry issues of one generation are not necessarily the concerns or challenges of the next generation. Those entering Native ministry will have to adjust their approach to ministry for each generation to minister in a way that helps each to appreciate the other. Jesus spoke of a fully trained disciple as one who makes use of both old and new treasures (Matt. 13:52). Finding new cultural contact points will be necessary to minister to the new generation. A wise minister will integrate the best aspects of each age group to help build neither an aged culture nor a youth culture. God's Kingdom culture is one where there are males and females, barbarians and Jews, slave and free (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:13), as well as young and old.

## XIV. Recommended Reading Resources

### Theology of Missions

Allen, Roland. *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* 1912. Reprint. London: Pantianos Classics, 2016.

Richardson, Don. *Peace Child*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 1974, 2005.

Hodges, Melvin L. *The Indigenous Church: A Complete Handbook on How to Grow Young Churches*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976.

Hunter, George G. III. *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010. Ignore the title. This book discusses the indigenous approach to evangelism and discipleship in an extremely relevant way.

Johnson, Jean. *We Are Not the Hero: A Missionary's Guide for Sharing Christ, Not a Culture of Dependency*. Sisters, OR: Deep River Books, 2012.

Winter, Ralph. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: Reader and Study Guide*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009.

Elmer, Duane. *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting In Around the World*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

### Native American Christian Writings

Rausch, David A. and Blair Schlepp. *Native American Voices*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994.

Des Gerlaise, Nanci. *Muddy Waters*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2012.

Smith, Craig S. *The White Man's Gospel*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Indian Life Books, 1997.

Smith, Craig, Peter Greyeyes, Keith Bailey, Herman Williams, Doug Haskins, and Mike Owen. *Boundary Lines*. Colorado Springs, CO: The Native American Association of the Christian & Missionary Alliance, 2004.

### **Non-Christian Native American Writings**

Deloria, Vine Jr. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966.

Deloria, Vine Jr. *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999.

Eastman, Charles A. *The Soul of the Indian*. 1911. Reprint. Wilder Publications, 2014.

Zitkala-Ša. *American Indian Stories and Old Indian Legends*. 1901, 1921. Reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2014.

### **Native American History**

Brown, Dee. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1970.

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2014.

## XV. Recommended DVD Resources

### Documentaries

*American Outrage*. Directed by Beth Gage and George Gage. 2007. This documentary focuses on the 2000 theft and destruction of Shoshone Tribal lands at the hands of a gold-mining company with the help of the federal government.

*The Great Indian Wars*. Mill Creek Entertainment, 2005. This 5-part documentary focuses on various Indian Wars from 1540 – 1890.

*The Poverty Cure*. Directed by Michael M. Miller. Action Media, 2012. This 6-part documentary focuses on missional problems in Africa. Many of the items discussed are pertinent to Native ministry.

*Trail of Tears: A Native American Documentary Collection*. Directed by Chip Richie. Mill Creek Entertainment, 2009. This 4-part series focuses on the removal of Southeastern Native Americans known as the Trail of Tears.

*We Shall Remain: America Through Native Eyes*. Directed by Ken Burns. PBS *American Experience*, 2009. This 5-part documentary focuses on different tribes, times, and policies in Native history.

### Movies

*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. Directed by Yves Simoneau. 2007. This movie dramatizes the real-life events surrounding the life of Lakota Sioux medical doctor Charles Eastman, Sitting Bull, the reservation system, and the Wounded Knee massacre.

*Dance Me Outside*. Directed by Bruce McDonald. Res Films Limited, 1994. This movie depicts reservation life in northern Ontario and is written and directed by Native people.

*Flags of Our Fathers*. Directed by Clint Eastwood. Dreamworks Video, 2006. This movie documents the raising of the American flag at Iwo Jima and the life of Ira Hays from the Gila River Pima tribe.

*Skins*. Directed by Chris Eyre. First Look Media, 2002. This movie depicts contemporary reservation life and is written and directed by Native people.

*Smoke Signals*. Directed by Chris Eyre. First Look Media, 2002. This movie depicts contemporary reservation life and thinking. The movie is highly appreciated by many Native people and it is written and directed by Native people.

*Thunderheart*. Directed by Michael Apted. Tribeca Productions, 1992. This fictional mystery film revolves around events connected to the American Indian Movement and the Wounded Knee incident of 1973. Some Sioux indicated it as incorporating a relatively accurate portrayal of Sioux thinking.



## XVI. Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church: A Complete Handbook on How to Grow Young Churches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976); Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (1912; repr., London: Pantianos Classics, 2016); Alice E. Luce, "Paul's Missionary Methods," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, no. 374-375, January 9, 1921, 6-7; no. 376-377, January 22, 1921, 6-7; no. 378-379, February 5, 1921, 6-7 (*Assemblies of God Publications Pre-WWII DVD*).

<sup>2</sup> Former Assemblies of God missionary Jean Johnson describes planting a "successful" church in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, but describes it as a failure. The church was self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing. However, it reflected Western culture rather than Cambodian culture. She had also used Western resources to expedite the work of establishing the church, resources that the Cambodians could not access. Jean Johnson, *We Are Not the Hero: A Missionary's Guide for Sharing Christ, Not a Culture of Dependency* (Sisters, OR: Deep River Books, 2012) 16-17, 50.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Winter, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: Reader and Study Guide* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), Loc 12865 ff, 17518 ff, 26257 ff, Kindle; H. Yung, "Theological Issues Facing the Asian Church" (paper presented at ALCOE V, August 2002, Seoul), 2. See also his more detailed proposal in *Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Craig S. Smith. *The White Man's Gospel*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Indian Life Books, 1997, 46-51; Vine Deloria, Jr. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 105.

<sup>5</sup> Ralph Winter, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Locations 6016-6022, Kindle.

<sup>6</sup> Brian Larkin, "Christianity Converted," *Christian History*, no.130, (2019): 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> "After the Mayflower," episode 5 in *We Shall Remain: America Through Native Eyes*, directed by Ken Burns, PBS *American Experience*, 2009. Cf. note 4.

<sup>8</sup> "After the Mayflower."

<sup>9</sup> Lindsay G. Robertson, "Unintended Consequences: Johnson v. M'Intosh and Indian Removal," in *Nation to Nation* (Washington, DC: National Museum of the American Indian, 2014), 68-84.

<sup>10</sup> Joel Morales Cruz, "Strangers in a Strange Land," *Christian History*, no. 130 (2019): 30-31.

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<sup>11</sup> History.com editors, "Indian Reservations," A&E Television Networks, 2017, updated 2018, accessed September 5, 2019, <https://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/indian-reservations>.

<sup>12</sup> History.com editors, "Indian Reservations," A&E Television Networks, 2010, updated 2019, accessed September 5, 2019, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-indian-citizenship-act>; "Native American Citizenship," accessed September 5, 2019, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-indian-citizenship-act>; NCC Staff, "On This Day All Indians Made United States Citizens," National Constitution Center, June 2, 2019, accessed September 5, 2019, <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/on-this-day-in-1924-all-indians-made-united-states-citizens>.

<sup>13</sup> History.com editors, "Native American History Timeline," A&E Television Networks, 2018, updated 2019, accessed September 6, 2019, <https://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/native-american-timeline>.

<sup>14</sup> For one example, watch *American Outrage*, 2007. This documentary is about two elderly Shoshone women who had their tribal property stolen and their horse herds destroyed by a gold company seeking to mine gold particles. The federal government aided the theft. In the process of mining, the gold company destroyed the land and water supply because of the cyanide used to harvest the gold.

<sup>15</sup> "History and Culture: Boarding Schools." Northern Plains Reservation Aid, accessed November 6, 2019, [http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=airc\\_hist\\_boardingschools](http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=airc_hist_boardingschools).

<sup>16</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999), 162-165; Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 211-214; David A. Rausch and Blair Schlepp, *Native American Voices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 99-105; Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories and Old Indian Legends* (1901, 1921; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2014), 1-86.

<sup>17</sup> Personal correspondence, November 2, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Author's term.

<sup>19</sup> Don Richardson's book *Peace Child* is especially helpful in pointing out this principle and showing how to apply it. The book also includes an appendix that lists numerous examples of the smudge of God in many different cultures. Don Richardson, *Peace Child*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> David E. Garland, "Mark," in *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, vol. 1 of *ZIBBCNT-26*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 238.

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<sup>21</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, "Acts," in *John, Acts*, vol. 2 of ZIBBCNT-26, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 254.

<sup>22</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, "Acts," in *John, Acts*, vol. 2 of ZIBBCNT-26, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 408; I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 328-329.

<sup>23</sup> Nanci Des Gerlaise's entire book *Muddy Waters* addresses the subject of Native-Christian syncretism and Native spirituality. Nanci Des Gerlaise, *Muddy Waters* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2012). Richard Twiss is a half-Native raised outside of his tribal culture who sought to rediscover his Native heritage. He makes some valid points in his book *One Church, Many Tribes*, but is also often syncretistic. Many Native Christians who were raised within their cultures vehemently reject Twiss's conclusions. Richard Twiss, *One Church, Many Tribes* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2000). A consortium of Christian Missionary Alliance Native ministers as well as Des Gerlaise roundly condemn Twiss's teachings as syncretistic. Craig Smith, Peter Greyeyes, Keith Bailey, Herman Williams, Doug Haskins, and Mike Owen, *Boundary Lines* (Colorado Springs, CO: The Native American Association of the Christian & Missionary Alliance, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Nanci Des Gerlaise's book, *Muddy Waters*, focuses on this topic a great deal.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, *We Are Not the Hero*, 29.

<sup>26</sup> Hodges, "Developing Leadership," in *The Indigenous Church: A Complete Handbook on How to Grow Young Churches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976).

<sup>27</sup> Johnson, *We Are Not the Hero*, 54, 57, 64-65, 66-69.

<sup>28</sup> "Indian Country Demographics," Washington, DC: National Congress of American Indians, accessed November 6, 2019, <http://www.ncai.org/about-tribes/demographics>.

<sup>29</sup> One recent graduate of American Indian College in Phoenix, AZ, was primarily raised in city areas. He discussed having a repeated spiritual visitation in his bedroom at night in the form of a mountain crown dancer spirit. When he told his parents, they recognized the nature of the spirit and were able to help him deal with it.