



NATIONS



INTERVARSITY

Multiethnic Ministries

Native Culture and Faith

How does Christianity fit into who I am as Native person?

Notes from Someone on the Journey: The journey of integrating the Christian faith and Native culture is not a simple one; however, it is a very important one. The notes below are meant to help guide you in a conversation about what it means to be both a Native person and a follower of Christ. As you walk through this resource remember the importance of patience. This is just one step in a longer and larger journey. Be prepared for mistakes – made both by you and others around you. The answers to these questions won't come right away, but it helps to be respectful, to learn together, to lean on the Holy Spirit, to give each other space to get things wrong and above all, to love one another through the journey.

Guiding Questions:

1. Where do my traditions focus on, point to or honor Christ?
2. How do I see Christ or the Creator reflected, honored or represented in my culture?

Concepts to consider:

“Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the mankind by country, tribe, speech, language, customs or culture. They do not live in cities of their own. They do not speak a special language. They do not follow a peculiar manner of life. They take part of everything as citizens and endure everything as aliens. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They obey the established laws but through their way of life they surpass these laws.”¹

Concept 1: It is important to live in your culture as a Christian and as a Native. Christians don't have to have the same language, we don't all live in the same city, we don't have to be the same! The variety and uniqueness of our worship is beautiful to God as long as we can remain united as the body of Christ.

*“They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.”
- 1 Timothy 4:3²*

Concept 2: Our Pow-Wows, ceremonies and food are important parts of our culture. They can be used to worship God and because of this are important to remember. Maintaining the nuances of different tribes, tongues and nations allow for beautiful variety in the ways we worship God.

“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.” - Colossians 2:16³

Concept 3: Don't let other's judgment of your traditions, your celebrations and special days get in the way of your understanding of them. Take stock of them and see how they can be used to honor God. When we focus on Christ in our ceremonies they can honor him.

¹Taken from Page 21 of *Christ, Culture and Kingdom Seminar: A First Nations Perspective* by Richard Twiss. Published by Wiconi International

²Taken from Page 33 of *Christ, Culture and Kingdom Seminar: A First Nations Perspective* by Richard Twiss. Published by Wiconi International

³Taken from Page 33 of *Christ, Culture and Kingdom Seminar: A First Nations Perspective* by Richard Twiss. Published by Wiconi International

Notes about this resource:



This resource emerged from a 2012 workshop delivered by Celeste Handy at the “WJEF - Would Jesus Eat Frybread? And Other Native Questions About Jesus” Conference. As someone who has spent many years wrestling with incorporating her faith in Jesus with who she is as Native person, Celeste’s offer to share notes and wisdom from her journey was a huge gift to those at the conference.

Celeste Handy is from the Eastern Band of the Cherokee and grew up among the Lumbee people in North Carolina. She has worked in Campus ministry for 15 years under South West Campus Christian Fellowship and InterVarsity Christian fellowship. Celeste is currently attending Fuller Theological Seminary and working on her Master's in Divinity degree. She is a candidate to be a deacon in the United Methodist Church.

¹Taken from Page 21 of *Christ, Culture and Kingdom Seminar: A First Nations Perspective* by Richard Twiss. Published by Wiconi International

²Taken from Page 33 of *Christ, Culture and Kingdom Seminar: A First Nations Perspective* by Richard Twiss. Published by Wiconi International

³Taken from Page 33 of *Christ, Culture and Kingdom Seminar: A First Nations Perspective* by Richard Twiss. Published by Wiconi International