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Indigenous Bible College

INDIGENOUS VOICES



**Core Value #3
Incarnational
Evangelism**

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INDIGENOUS VOICES

Who we are

Indigenous Voices (IV) is published by Indigenous Bible College (IBC) in Flagstaff, AZ. Articles are usually written by IBC students and staff from various North American tribes.

Our Mission

Serving the Indigenous church in North America through publishing Christian literature written or produced mostly by Native authors to strengthen churches and personal faith in a Native context.

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Indigenous Bible College staff & students

I first learned about incarnational theology in a doctoral class taught by Michael Frost in 2005. It was so motivating that my wife and I—in the first year of our marriage—moved from Portland to Phoenix to help plant a church. Two years later we relocated to Flagstaff to begin the rest of our lives—ministering to and with Native peoples. Incarnational theology is what brought me to Indigenous Bible College.

I soon learned how critical incarnational theology was to Native peoples. There is a massive divide (war, even) over the subject of culture and contextualization. What is often missing in the discussion is dialogue over how to follow Jesus in His “incarnational way”. **See the next page for the definition of a few terms that will be used repeatedly in this journal.**

Many of the early Anglo missionaries to Native peoples were so afraid of syncretism of the *receiving* culture that they fell into the ditch of syncretism of the *sending* culture. Both of these “ditches” are in error; the “middle of the road” is to **follow Jesus—the master communicator, evangelist, servant, and contextualist** (Luke 19:10; John 20:21).

This journal is the result of many years of praying and fasting over these matters. We hope and pray that it catalyzes many new conversations and friendships, and helps build the kind of unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17:20-23.

*Dr. Jason Koppen
IBC President*



Early in my ministry I heard a quote from Billy Graham saying “Native Americans are the sleeping giant.” He believed Native Americans would lead a spiritual awakening. But after many years of ministry, I have found the majority of Native people have not chosen to follow Christ. Why?

The term “silo” is sometimes used to describe groups or communities who function independently from each other. These groups might be separated by culture, religion, or politics, and communication between them is difficult if not impossible. Fierce loyalties to one group can result in treating other groups as enemies. I see two silos in the Native American landscape today. I call them the Traditional Silo and the Christian Silo.

The Traditional Silo is made up of people who have a negative view of Christianity. They understand that the Europeans came to America seeking to expand their resources. Once here, they sought to dominate the land by removing Native people from their homelands. Later they sought to eliminate Native culture and assimilate Indigenous people through boarding schools and relocation. The same people sought to convert Indigenous people to Christianity.

The Christian Silo is made up of a remnant of people who, because of the power of the gospel, chose to follow Jesus. Initially, Christianity was introduced by Anglo missionaries who did not understand Native culture. Native believers love the Lord sincerely, but they were taught to practice their faith the way Anglos did. As Native people became leaders in the church, they were trained in Anglo institutions and a schism developed between Christians and traditional Native Americans.

These two silos treat each other with suspicion and hostility. **How do we overcome this divide? I believe the answer is incarnational evangelism.** In the incarnation of Christ, God became man – a Jewish man. Initially, Christianity was contained in a Jewish silo. The Greek world was in a different silo. In order for the gospel to become incarnate in the Greek world, the Lord asked Peter to start eating non-kosher food (Acts 10). This was necessary for the gospel to become incarnate in the Greek world.

Our task is not to call Indigenous people into our silo, but to incarnate the gospel within theirs. I have hope for the students at Indigenous Bible College. They have a commitment to Christ and are comfortable in their culture. I believe they understand the mission of making disciples among our own people. **Listen to their voices as you prayerfully read this journal.**

*Dr. Emerson Falls
Sac & Fox
IBC Board of Trustees*



Glossary of Terms & Additional Resources

Incarnational: This word refers to a way of relating and communicating with people modeled after the incarnation of Christ. In the incarnation, God took on human flesh and came to earth to experience everything we experience, even to the point of death. This extremely relational act of love and compassion gives us a model for how we ought to engage with people outside the community of believers. In the Latin, *incarnatio* means literally to place into flesh. Jesus is the ultimate example of an “incarnational” way of ministry.

Form vs. Function: A key principle in incarnational theology. Function refers to an unchanging meaning, truth, or purpose rooted in Scripture. Form refers to the cultural expression or method used to communicate that meaning. Biblical faithfulness requires preserving function while allowing form to adapt to cultural context.

Redeemed: Throughout the Bible, this word typically refers to the restoration of a person or thing to its rightful place or owner. The word is often applied in the context of restoring an enslaved person to freedom or returning lost or seized property to the family estate. The word is also frequently found in biblical poetry, celebrating God's rescue of his people from danger or death and delivering them into life and safety. In this conversation, the word carries the idea of an item or ceremony being reclaimed for use outside of its original function for the purpose of worshiping God. It generally refers to something that has been used for, or intended for, evil that is now repurposed to be used for good. This assumes the item or ceremony is not inherently evil and can acquire a new association with that which is good for the purpose of preserving elements of a culture without preserving any evil associations.

Contextualization: Is the process by which a particular item, custom, or activity is studied in the light of the understanding of a given people and utilized to effectively communicate the gospel. Contextualization is the process of communicating the truth of the gospel - which is unchanging - in the language, imagery, or symbolism of human cultures - which vary widely across space and time. Good contextualization clearly communicates the identity of Jesus and the message of the gospel in terms, images, or expressions that are relevant and familiar to the listener.

Syncretism: Syncretism is the attempt to blend two mutually exclusive worldviews or ideas, typically religious ideas. Communication would be considered "syncretistic" if it compromises the message of the gospel through an attempt to combine the gospel message with elements of either the sending or receiving culture that conflict with, or are in opposition to, the gospel.

How does IBC define Incarnational Evangelism?

Jesus came to us (Luke 19:10), as one of us, but was without sin. He then sent us as the Father sent him (John 20:21). Like Jesus, the church needs to be a “friend of sinners” (Matthew 11:19), serving those around us, and establishing meaningful relationships through which we can share Christ. This means serving the lost, not just preaching at them. The primacy of relationship should not be missed. Native life centers around the family and community relationships, through which a “friend of sinners” approach can be much more effective.



Scan this QR code to watch sessions from IBC's 2025 Fall Conference on incarnational theology

Scan here to access “Culture, Conscience, and the Bible” - an excellent resource on this topic!





INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

INCARNATIONAL

EVANGELISM

My experience with incarnational evangelism as it pertains to my tribe is that we are taught to be welcoming- *paas tavi*- towards one another. *Nami'nangwa* is having a mutual concern for others' welfare, and showing love not just towards those who are family or clan related, but strangers - *nami'nangwat yankyangw um kwilalatani*. || **Mikal Poleahla (Hopi; 2024 BBS Graduate)**

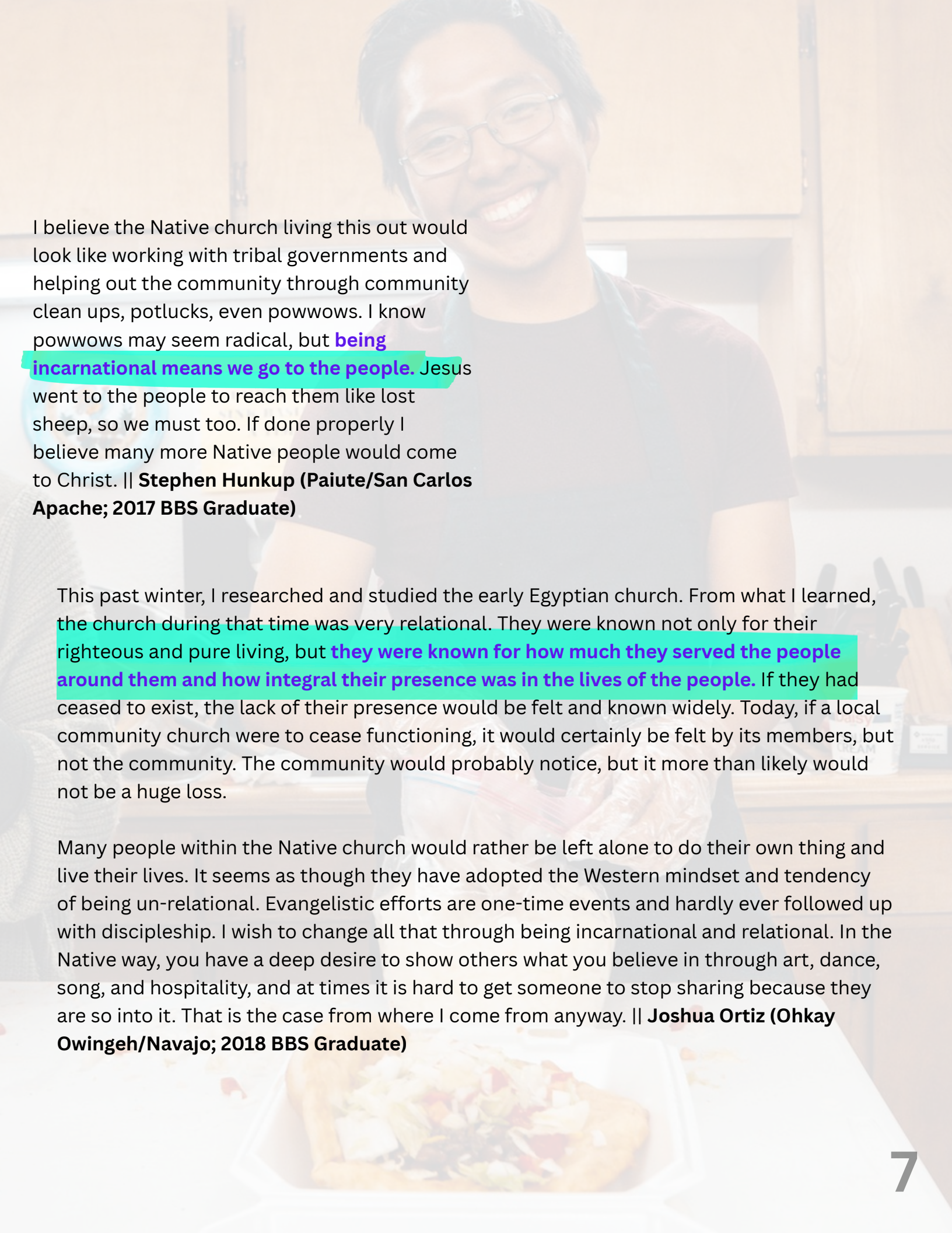
INCARNATIONAL EVANGELISM ISN'T ABOUT EVENTS OR METHODOLOGY - IT'S ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS.

The church is messy and inefficient, but it is God's wonderful mess - the place where He radically transforms hearts and lives. I am deeply persuaded that the foundation for transformational ministry is not only sound theology, it is love.

Without love, our theology is like a wagon without wheels. Love is what

drove God to send His Son. Love led Christ to subject Himself to a sinful world and the horrors of the cross. Love is what causes Him to seek and save the lost, and to persevere until each of His children is transformed into His image. Yet this is where we often get stuck. We want a ministry that doesn't demand love that is, well, so demanding. We don't want to serve others in a way that requires so much personal sacrifice. We would prefer to lob grenades of truth into people's lives rather than lay down our lives for them, or we just lob scriptures at them in hopes that it will do the job, instead of truly getting involved in their lives as true brothers and sisters. But this is exactly what Christ did for us. Can we expect to be called to do anything less? || **Larry Whitehair (Navajo; 2016 BBS Graduate)**

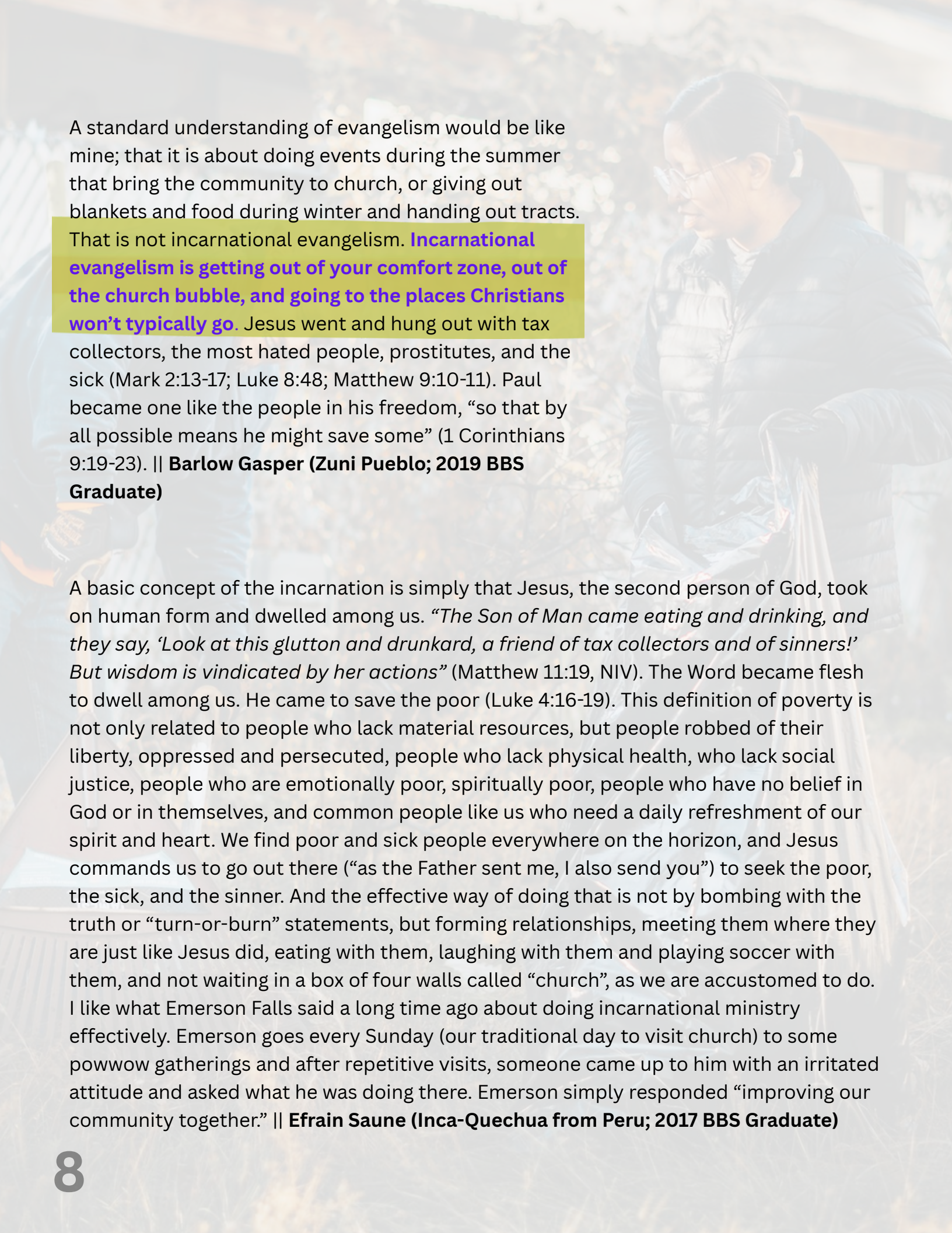
My heart becomes heavy when I think about how the gospel came to Indigenous people. It came in such a broken way, which has resulted in the hate and bitterness towards Christianity that you see on reservations today. Churches on the reservation sometimes add insult to injury by pushing legalism and divisiveness in the community. The goal of Incarnational Evangelism is to share Christ to our own people but through the meaningful relationships we have already built or are building. **Our true testimony is for them to see the change Christ has made in our lives and how we choose to serve them** with a servant's heart. || **Kelly Johnson (Navajo; 2023 BBS Graduate)**



I believe the Native church living this out would look like working with tribal governments and helping out the community through community clean ups, potlucks, even powwows. I know powwows may seem radical, but **being incarnational means we go to the people.** Jesus went to the people to reach them like lost sheep, so we must too. If done properly I believe many more Native people would come to Christ. || **Stephen Hunkup (Paiute/San Carlos Apache; 2017 BBS Graduate)**

This past winter, I researched and studied the early Egyptian church. From what I learned, **the church during that time was very relational. They were known not only for their righteous and pure living, but they were known for how much they served the people around them and how integral their presence was in the lives of the people.** If they had ceased to exist, the lack of their presence would be felt and known widely. Today, if a local community church were to cease functioning, it would certainly be felt by its members, but not the community. The community would probably notice, but it more than likely would not be a huge loss.

Many people within the Native church would rather be left alone to do their own thing and live their lives. It seems as though they have adopted the Western mindset and tendency of being un-relational. Evangelistic efforts are one-time events and hardly ever followed up with discipleship. I wish to change all that through being incarnational and relational. In the Native way, you have a deep desire to show others what you believe in through art, dance, song, and hospitality, and at times it is hard to get someone to stop sharing because they are so into it. That is the case from where I come from anyway. || **Joshua Ortiz (Ohkay Owingeh/Navajo; 2018 BBS Graduate)**



A standard understanding of evangelism would be like mine; that it is about doing events during the summer that bring the community to church, or giving out blankets and food during winter and handing out tracts.

That is not incarnational evangelism. **Incarnational evangelism is getting out of your comfort zone, out of the church bubble, and going to the places Christians won't typically go.** Jesus went and hung out with tax

collectors, the most hated people, prostitutes, and the sick (Mark 2:13-17; Luke 8:48; Matthew 9:10-11). Paul became one like the people in his freedom, “so that by all possible means he might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). || **Barlow Gasper (Zuni Pueblo; 2019 BBS**

Graduate)

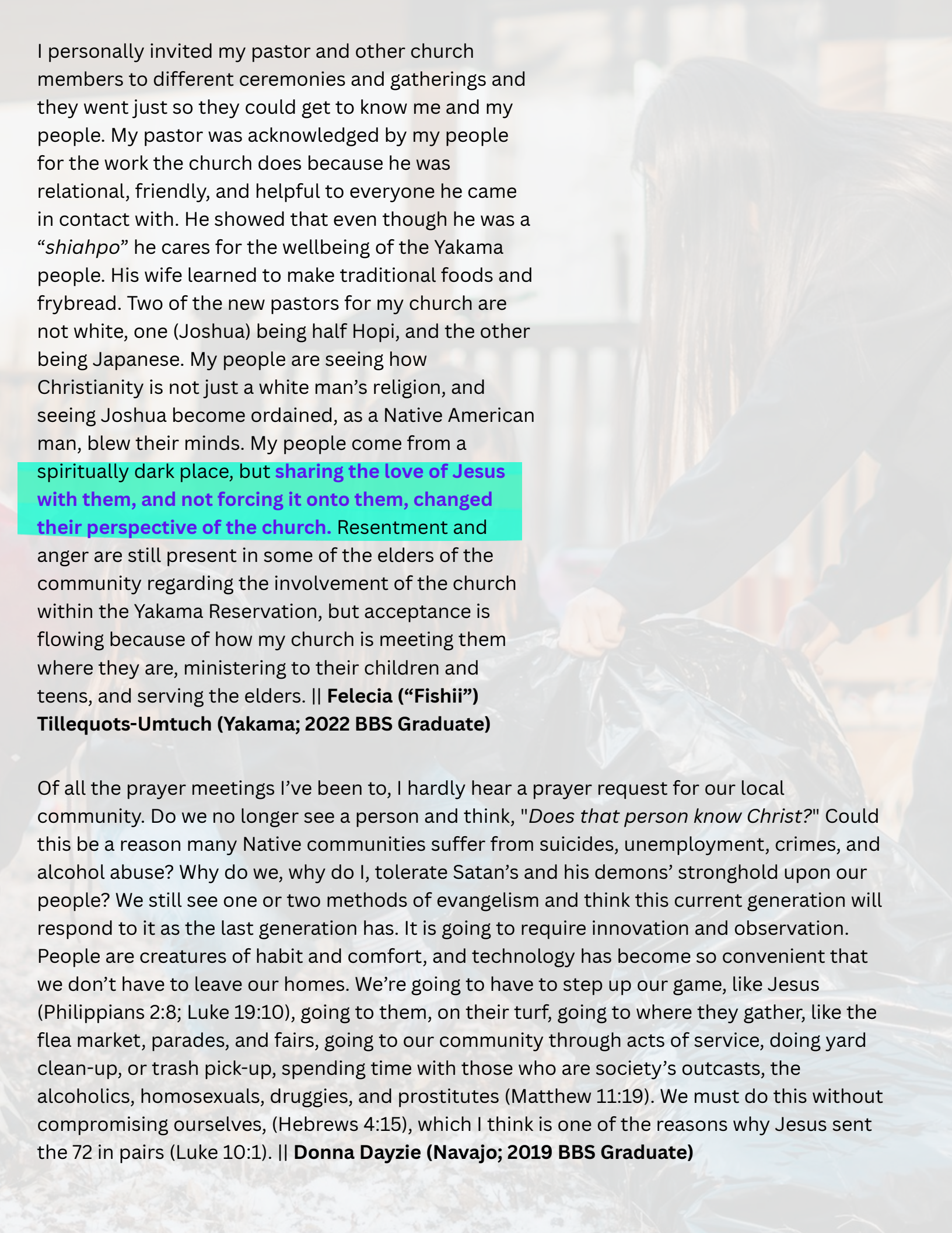
A basic concept of the incarnation is simply that Jesus, the second person of God, took on human form and dwelled among us. *“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at this glutton and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and of sinners!’ But wisdom is vindicated by her actions”* (Matthew 11:19, NIV). The Word became flesh to dwell among us. He came to save the poor (Luke 4:16-19). This definition of poverty is not only related to people who lack material resources, but people robbed of their liberty, oppressed and persecuted, people who lack physical health, who lack social justice, people who are emotionally poor, spiritually poor, people who have no belief in God or in themselves, and common people like us who need a daily refreshment of our spirit and heart. We find poor and sick people everywhere on the horizon, and Jesus commands us to go out there (“as the Father sent me, I also send you”) to seek the poor, the sick, and the sinner. And the effective way of doing that is not by bombing with the truth or “turn-or-burn” statements, but forming relationships, meeting them where they are just like Jesus did, eating with them, laughing with them and playing soccer with them, and not waiting in a box of four walls called “church”, as we are accustomed to do. I like what Emerson Falls said a long time ago about doing incarnational ministry effectively. Emerson goes every Sunday (our traditional day to visit church) to some powwow gatherings and after repetitive visits, someone came up to him with an irritated attitude and asked what he was doing there. Emerson simply responded “improving our community together.” || **Efrain Saune (Inca-Quechua from Peru; 2017 BBS Graduate)**

Evangelism always meant to me that someone would go out and share about Jesus. This shows what many people think of when they think of evangelism: preach, not serve. I did not realize that evangelism could be done in other ways, like by being incarnational, **going and being with people rather than waiting for people to come to the church.** Today, I see that there are churches that want to reach the lost and now they know that doing the same old thing and keeping the same old traditions is not what is going to impact their communities. To me this means that we have to take the first step and meet people right where they are: work, community events, schools, community centers, and tribal events. To me this sounds like a big undertaking, which it is, but it is a challenge that I feel that God has been preparing me for. || **Samantha Coon (Muscogee Creek; 2019 BBS Graduate)**

Incarnational evangelism means to be relationship-oriented as opposed to event-oriented. Many Native cultures are relationship-oriented. Everything happens in relationships or communities. When a birthday, graduation, or ceremony happens, the community comes together to celebrate. Likewise, the teachings connected with Native culture are shared through relationships. This is different from the Western culture where learning occurs in the classroom with backs turned toward one another. This is not the way of evangelism or mentoring. Both need to happen in the context of relationships, not just because Scripture mandates and models it, but because it is effective. || **Brina Ortiz (Navajo; 2022 BBS Graduate)**

A significant moment in my life where I can look back and see that I was being “incarnationally evangelized” was when I was in jail. This lady named Joann came to where I was; she was a friend to me, and began to build a relationship with me—even while I was not a believer. This woman came and hung out with me while I was in jail; she got me out for the day and we went to the Pow Wow Grounds to decorate the tee-pee. **Although I do not remember what Joann had to say, I remember her actions—spending time talking and sharing with me** (Matthew 9: 10-17).

At Warrior Leadership Summit 2014, I was challenged through a talk called “Rez Jesus” to be like Jesus to the people on my reservation. The guy said that we could be the only Bible people have ever seen or will get close to (Matthew 9:20). Soon after that I began that challenge by going to the neighborhood store on my lunch break and sitting with some of my old acquaintances; old friends from school and their homies. I just started talking with them and hanging out with them; we swapped stories, laughed, and shared. After a while I started surprising them with little gifts (homemade crafts or cards). I learned that incarnational evangelism is being with people, among the people, not all just hanging out together in the church or inviting people to church events. Followers of Jesus have to be out with people, meeting others right where they are and building relationships. || **Jamie Covington (Spokane; 2019 BBS Graduate)**

A person wearing a black hoodie and a black face mask is shown from the side, leaning over and handling a large, crumpled black plastic bag. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden fence and some foliage. The lighting is bright, suggesting daylight.

I personally invited my pastor and other church members to different ceremonies and gatherings and they went just so they could get to know me and my people. My pastor was acknowledged by my people for the work the church does because he was relational, friendly, and helpful to everyone he came in contact with. He showed that even though he was a “*shiahpo*” he cares for the wellbeing of the Yakama people. His wife learned to make traditional foods and frybread. Two of the new pastors for my church are not white, one (Joshua) being half Hopi, and the other being Japanese. My people are seeing how Christianity is not just a white man’s religion, and seeing Joshua become ordained, as a Native American man, blew their minds. My people come from a

spiritually dark place, but **sharing the love of Jesus with them, and not forcing it onto them, changed their perspective of the church.** Resentment and

anger are still present in some of the elders of the community regarding the involvement of the church within the Yakama Reservation, but acceptance is flowing because of how my church is meeting them where they are, ministering to their children and teens, and serving the elders. || **Felecia (“Fishii”) Tillequots-Umtuch (Yakama; 2022 BBS Graduate)**

Of all the prayer meetings I’ve been to, I hardly hear a prayer request for our local community. Do we no longer see a person and think, “*Does that person know Christ?*” Could this be a reason many Native communities suffer from suicides, unemployment, crimes, and alcohol abuse? Why do we, why do I, tolerate Satan’s and his demons’ stronghold upon our people? We still see one or two methods of evangelism and think this current generation will respond to it as the last generation has. It is going to require innovation and observation. People are creatures of habit and comfort, and technology has become so convenient that we don’t have to leave our homes. We’re going to have to step up our game, like Jesus (Philippians 2:8; Luke 19:10), going to them, on their turf, going to where they gather, like the flea market, parades, and fairs, going to our community through acts of service, doing yard clean-up, or trash pick-up, spending time with those who are society’s outcasts, the alcoholics, homosexuals, druggies, and prostitutes (Matthew 11:19). We must do this without compromising ourselves, (Hebrews 4:15), which I think is one of the reasons why Jesus sent the 72 in pairs (Luke 10:1). || **Donna Dayzie (Navajo; 2019 BBS Graduate)**

Spreading the good news of Jesus does not always have to start with mentioning His name or sharing the gospel. Setting the groundwork on a solid relationship will lead to deeper conversations because, let's face it, talking with others about their need for salvation is not a hot topic. A good method should be wielded, which ought to complement, not compromise, the message of the Savior. We are called to reach the lost, not condemn them.

An interesting part of my past is that I used to make hip-hop music. I started making instrumentals when I was seventeen years old and began to develop songs into albums in my early twenties. The topics I wrote about were clearly worldly and gave no positive message. I am thankful that God brought that path to an end, but I wondered, “Why do I still like hip-hop? Why do I still enjoy making instrumentals?” After a year of re-dedicating my life to God, my nephew challenged me to make music about Jesus. I considered it and found it to be a battle because my mind wanted to gravitate to a secular worldview.

As I have learned how to collect a Christ-like vocabulary that represents Him, I have revamped rhythm and poetry (rap) in order to make Christian hip-hop. I hold to my personal standard, “*Create only what communicates value to the Kingdom.*” Music is a language, and I intend to edify believers and hopefully reach those who do not know Jesus through my music. I have a deep passion for music. I believe God has placed a gift in me to be creative and expressive. Therefore, I ought to glorify Him with it and utilize it to further His kingdom. || **Tim Key (Navajo/Anglo; 2025 BBS Graduate)**

On my mom’s side of the family, they still follow traditional ways. I can use Jesus’ model to share the gospel and His love by honoring my family like Jesus did with Mary and many others. Jesus entered people’s stories and revealed the gospel meaningfully according to their culture and setting. I want to grow in this area and continue sharing the gospel non-threateningly with my family and other traditional Native people.

Jesus showed what contextualization is at its core. In John 1, He’s called “the Word”, a term loaded with meaning for both Jews and Greeks. To the Jews, it referred to God’s revelation. To the Greeks, it pointed to reason and divine order. Jesus used both frameworks to tell people about Himself. We see this again in John 2 at the wedding in Cana. Weddings were week-long events, and running out of wine was a major social failure. Jesus honored and met the need with grace and power by answering His mother’s request to turn water into wine.

The Gospels are full of these moments. Jesus was a master of cultural intelligence. He loved people enough to meet them where they were. **Understanding a culture’s values, language, and customs doesn’t water down the message; rather, it makes the message come alive!** || **Karen Begay (Navajo; 2025 BBS Graduate)**

THIS IS HOW I SEE JESUS -



INTIMATE, CARING, AND PRESENT.
THE ONE WHO MEETS ME
EXACTLY WHERE I AM.
HE IS NEAR...
HE IS MY TRUE HEALER,
AND HE INVITES ME INTO
ABUNDANT LIFE.

WORDS & ARTWORK BY CHRISTINA TREE-LASILOO (NAVAJO)



CULTURAL *apologetics*

To share the gospel with Indigenous people in a meaningful way requires understanding and dialogue. Tribal people across the world have their own unique cosmologies, philosophies, and worldviews which shape their understanding of the world and themselves.

Upperclassman students at Indigenous Bible College develop a “cultural apologetic” in dialogue with their own people which communicates the unchanging truth of the gospel using the widely varied language, imagery, and symbolism of their cultures. These narratives are meant to clearly communicate the identity of Jesus and the message of the gospel in terms, images, and expressions that are relevant and familiar to the listeners.



A Cultural Apologetic for the Zuni People

by Sheldon Tamez

For the Zuni people, things like animism, historical abuse from the time of the Conquistadors, the effects of white supremacy, and dependence on government welfare have caused generations of abuse and family dysfunction. There are also stories of demonic spirits causing Zunis to practice many rituals and ceremonies out of fear. I recently had the privilege of attending a Zuni traditional funeral service. The person who passed away was my sister-in-law. I was sad and shocked at her passing, but I am also at peace because I know that she was a believer in Christ. Her family, who were unbelievers, hosted the funeral at her mother’s house.

Zuni funerals are unique and involve washing the body with soapy water and cornmeal, as well as putting two bowls of cornmeal at the left and right side of the head. At one point in the funeral, my brother grabbed cornmeal from both bowls – a handful in each hand. He then made some hand motions with the cornmeal and sprinkled it on his wife's face. Everyone followed after him and did the same. After everyone had done this it was time to cover up her face and bury her. No one was allowed to see the burial except for those who brought the body. In a nearby area they also buried some of her belongings with some cornmeal and prayer sticks.

I was confused about all that had happened. My mother and my aunt explained it to me. After handling the body, the others and I could not touch anyone for the whole night because it would bring bad luck to anyone we came in contact with.

When they started to undress the body for washing, my brother could not watch because he was in a vulnerable state. My family believed that my sister-in-law's spirit didn't want to go to the afterlife and that she would try to take someone with her. The spirit's first target would be my brother since he was her husband, and anyone who was sleeping would be the next target. They were keeping my nephew awake to keep the spirit from taking him. After the funeral, my brother told me he had to stay in the same house for five days and couldn't look or go outside. His wife could be roaming outside and would bring him with her. So my mom and grandma watched over him for those five days. I appreciated how much my Zuni family cares for each other. They could have just come and paid their respects and left, but instead stayed up all night, then protected my brother and nephew from being taken by a spirit. That was touching, but I was saddened because they were all driven by fear in caring for my brother and nephew.

Zunis are driven by fear from spirits on a daily basis. They find peace with the spirits by practicing their dances, prayers, taboos, and the use of cornmeal. I always wondered why cornmeal was used a lot. It is used in all Zuni practices. One of my friends explained to me its use to bring protection to Zunis. I asked my friend if it is used as a covering for bad luck in Zuni and she said yes. The same way animal sacrifices were practiced to be a covering for sin in the Old Testament, cornmeal is used to cover up Zuni sin. I can use this concept to explain to the Zuni people that Jesus' blood is like the cornmeal they use. Jesus' blood washed all our sins clean. We have no more sin. All we have to do is believe in what Jesus did. Believe in the cornmeal He provided for us. His cornmeal is better.



I want to live out my Christian faith in this way of contextualizing Zuni culture. The Zuni culture is not bad. I see how much the people care for each other. They have great potential to be leaders. They have good, practical ways to teach the younger generation their ways. The way they teach by mentorship is very biblical and relational, like the way Jesus was as a mentor. I want to build relationships not only with the men in Zuni, but also healthy ones with the women and also the community. I want to be involved in as much Zuni culture as I can so that I learn more about Zuni and their needs and how I can love them and be one of the Zuni male role models that the boys and men can look up to. I also want to be strong in my apologetics for the Christian faith. I know I'll be stepping on some toes and not all will accept the faith that I have. I will practice my apologetics in order to reach out to the Zuni in hopes of leading them to God.

A Cultural Apologetic for the Navajo People

by *Kyon Yazzie*

My name is Kyon Yazzie I am an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, a third generation believer in Christ, and descending from a beautiful family of believers. Although my thoughts and heart were not consistent, the Good Shepherd guided me through a harrowing way to get me to a place where I now see the world differently by his grace. I am of the *Tsinnaajinii* (Black Horizontal Forest People) which is my mother's clan, I am born for



the *Kin yaa'áanii* (The Towering House Clan) which is my father's clan, my maternal grandfather's clan is *Kin yaa'áanii* (The Towering House Clan), and my paternal grandfather's clan *Honágháahnii* (The Ones Who Walk Around Clan). This is how I am *Diné* (the People). I come from *Bidahóchii' yázhí* in the community of Indian Wells. My mother and father are Lorena and Leonard Yazzie, my maternal grandparents are Louise and Lee Jackson, and my paternal grandparents are Nancy and Sam Yazzie, Sr.

My goal is to bring the gospel message to a non-believing Navajo with cultural awareness and to deliver the message humbly and respectfully as Christ would have done, to present Christianity not as an enemy and harbinger of cultural assimilation, but to begin the conversation about God and his eternal love for the world, "that he gave his only Son, that whoever

believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” and also to assure the individual that “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16-17).

The Navajo belief system cannot be termed a “religion”, even though the Western world has come to see it that way. For the Navajo, it is not a religion but a way of life. John Walton in his book “Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament” provides an explanation of this.

“There is no such word as “religion” in the languages of the ancient Near East. Likewise there is no dichotomy between the sacred and secular, or even between natural and supernatural... In the end, there is a distinction between the heavenly realm and the earthly one, but events in the two were often intertwined or parallel. It would be difficult to discuss with the ancients the concept of divine intervention because in their worldview, deity was too integrated into the cosmos to intervene in it. For the most part, deity is on the inside, not the outside. The world was suffused with the divine. All experience was religious experience; all law was spiritual in nature; all duties were duties to the gods; all events had deity as their cause. Life was religion and religion could not be compartmentalized within life” (47).¹

The Beauty Way prayer forms the basis for the Navajo individual’s traditional worldview and their journey in life:

In beauty I walk.
With beauty before me I walk.
With beauty behind me I walk.
With beauty above me I walk.
With beauty around me I walk.
It has become beauty again.

Today I will walk out, today everything
negative will leave me
I will be as I was before, I will have a
cool breeze over my body.
I will have a light body, I will be happy
forever, nothing will hinder me.
I walk with beauty before me.
I walk with beauty behind me.

I walk with beauty below me. I walk with
beauty above me.
I walk with beauty around me. My words
will be beautiful.
In beauty all day long may I walk.

Through the returning seasons, may I walk.
On the trail marked with pollen may I walk.
With dew about my feet, may I walk.
With beauty before me may I walk.
With beauty behind me may I walk.
With beauty below me may I walk.
With beauty above me may I walk.
With beauty all around me may I walk.
In old age wandering on a trail of beauty,



lively, may I walk.

In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk.

My words will be beautiful...



This prayer fundamentally forms the Navajo identity and is the core of the Blessing Way ceremony that helps individuals “to discover answers to some of life’s basic questions of who we are, why we are here and what our destiny is” (Benally)². Lacking a clear definition of these things causes “confusion and stifling of intellectual and emotional development” which results in addictions, personal imbalances, and disordered lifestyles (Benally).

The main objective of the Navajo person is to ascribe to a life of *hózhó* (beauty, happiness, peace, joy, confidence). The state of *hózhó* is evident in a person’s actions and the way they relate to others. Individuals walking contrary to this lifestyle are considered to be in disharmony with family, community, and their respective environment. Navajo elders are seen as the full embodiment of this lifestyle. It is manifested in their life history and the main reason they are highly respected is not only for their age but their pursuit of *hózhó* and *Sq’ah Naghái Bik’eh Hózhóón* (“The Way of Happiness Beyond Old Age”).

In the Navajo creation story, the Creator fashioned four gods according to the same elemental powers by which he himself was created: wind, light, mist, and moisture. These gods are Peace-Talking-god (*Haashch’éełtí’í*), Peace-House-god (*Haashch’éejí Hooghan*), Water-Sprinkler-god (*Begochidí/Tó neinilí*), and Black-god (*Haashch’éełzhiní*). Peace-Talking-god will be the central focus as his role within the Navajo cosmology speaks great volumes about Jesus Christ. This is not to say that Peace-Talking-god is the same as Jesus Christ but that this deity typifies Jesus in some respects. Before discussing Christ-like motifs, it is important to note that Jesus, the Son of God, has no beginning to himself and was not created, and that he shares in the likeness of his Father in his deity and attributes (such as omniscience and omnipotence).

The name assigned to Peace-Talking-god is purposeful, although the gods are believed to be unable to speak (their language is that of the wind). The actions of this god are considered peaceful, and through his actions he communicates peace over creation and man under the banner of “walking in beauty”.

When Peace-Talking-god was created, the Creator placed him to the east. From here the Navajo people were first greeted by him and began making their morning offering of sprinkled corn pollen and reciting the traditional prayer making requests from each direction

for their thinking, planning, life, and faith, which are the four principles of *Sá'ah Nagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón*). These requests are made known to Peace-Talking-god and he answers their prayers. When seeking him in prayer, the supplicant asks for knowledge for the day, to develop awareness throughout the day, that their thoughts would be reflected through their actions, and that their minds would be pure and true. Peace-Talking-god acts for the benefit of the Navajo people in alignment with the philosophy of the Beauty Way. Christ most truly embodies this role of advocate and intercessor as he mediates for us according to the will of God and guides our thoughts and actions through the Holy Spirit.

During the winter season, an important ceremony is conducted called the Nightway ceremony. Peace-Talking-god plays a major role in this ceremony, restoring balance and harmony by casting out any curse or illness. White cornmeal, which is symbolic of life, fruitfulness, provision, and sustenance also plays a major role. But no longer is there any need to call for further ceremonies, no more corn pollen to sprinkle or offer, no cornmeal to bathe in to restore order and balance in the life or home of the Navajo person because Christ became all by his sacrifice to make a brand new way by his shed blood sprinkled for us. Jesus seeks to restore man to his former state that he lost in the beginning, to bring harmony and balance. Reciting the Navajo litany of the Beauty Way prayer, Christ brought a restored balance to mankind for him to live and breathe God's beautiful way of life once and for all. There is lasting beauty because of what Christ has done for you and me.

¹ Walton, J. H. (2018). *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*. Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group.

² Benally, Herbert. (1994). *Navajo Philosophy of Learning and Pedagogy*. Journal of Navajo Education. 12.

A Cultural Apologetic for the Navajo People

by Brina Ortiz

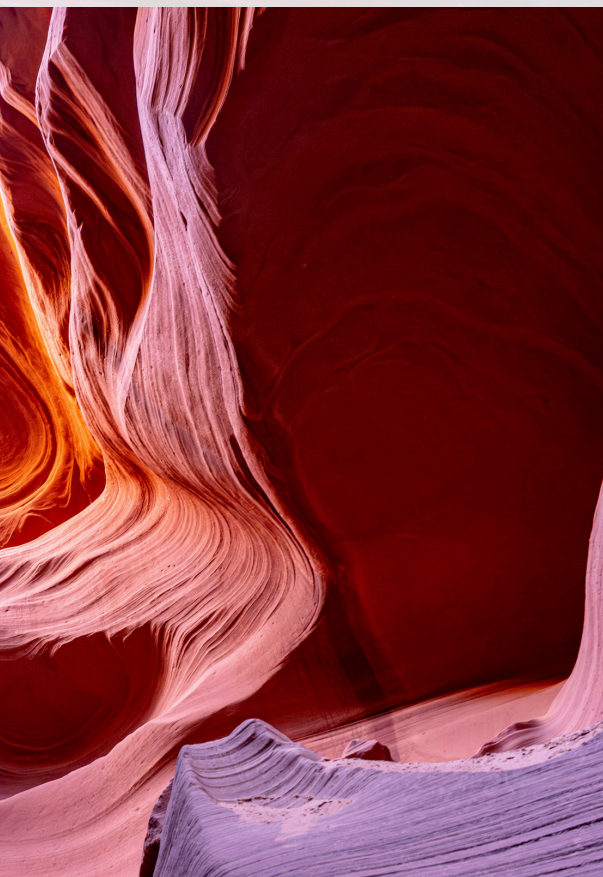
My name is Brina Ortiz (formerly Brina Lee), and my parents are Amanda Tahe and Leon Lee. My clans are Salt People, Bitter Water Clan, and Red Running into the Water. My maternal grandparents are from Crownpoint and Twin Lakes, NM while my paternal grandparents are from Kinlichee, AZ. Most of my childhood was spent in one of two places: St. Michaels, AZ or Mariano Lake, NM. I was raised with both a traditional background and a Christian background. We visited the medicine man during the week, but on Sundays we would be sitting in the pews at church.



First we went to a Catholic church and then later we became a part of a nondenominational Bible church. The values my parents taught me were simple: respect others, love your family, do good, work hard, and do not complain. But when we would ask why, their answer was “because I said so.”

My aim is for Navajo people to have a better understanding of Christianity and to know the God of the Bible more. This task should be done with grace and compassion because God has made man in His image, making him worthy of dignity and respect, and because of the forgiveness extended to me by grace through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8). The darkness surrounding Navajo people is undeniable. The witchcraft, fear, bondage to alcoholism, generational trauma, boarding school incidents, and abuse within homes have all taken their toll of demonic strongholds on my people. This alone should move my heart to share the good news of the gospel so that my people can experience the same freedom and forgiveness I found in Christ.

Emerson Falls, church planter in Oklahoma, made the point that when we ask people to come to church, we are asking them to leave their culture for ours, feel uncomfortable and awkward for two hours, and then leave. We should be the ones to leave the safety of our Christian culture and feel uncomfortable for as long as it takes so that some might be saved. It might mean asking the tribal worker or alcoholic to share a meal and watch a movie or a basketball game. It might mean visiting and serving at the powwow grounds, Native American Church meetings, and sweat lodge, but without participating in the worship. This way the community does not feel threatened by Christianity any longer.



With the history between the church and Native America, it makes sense why no one would want to believe in the White man's God who destroyed their language, culture, land, and people. This is the power of Incarnational Evangelism, which is to open my wounds and my heart with people, so they will see that the White man's God is really not a White man's God at all. He is God of all people who has compassion on everyone and desires to help everyone. Some people might see this in the church on Sunday mornings, but think about how many more people would witness God's glory right where they are if we just went to them.

Creation Story: The creation story held by the Navajo people includes four worlds created out of nothing by the holy people. The story includes animals and acknowledges the existence of evil. When things got so bad, a flood occurred by the workings of gods or water monsters. I believe that the details found in the creation story like the world being created out of nothing, the world being made by a creator, the world experiencing significant problems, and a flood are details that align

with the Bible's account of creation. Genesis is clear that God is the creator who spoke the world into existence. Genesis 1:1 (ESV) exclaims, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Then in verse 3, "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." The phrase "and God said" coupled with "and there was" illustrates God creating something out of nothing. He spoke the waters, the heavens, the dry land, the vegetation, the stars, the living creatures, and finally, man into existence, and everything He created was good (Genesis 1:31). Sadly, we later find out that after the first man and woman sinned in the Garden of Eden (the beginning of sin), and corruption and violence filled the earth. The corruption and violence was so great that God sent a flood by means of a rainstorm (Genesis 7:11).



Social Values: Harmony, prayer, and relationships are the sum of traditional Navajo values. Harmony is the absence of disunity and imbalance. It is the absence of chaos and the manifestation of order and fellowship (the state of being at peace, typically between two or more entities). Jesus, the Son of God, declares, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:11). Again, He states, "...that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you" (John 17:21) Genesis 1:26 remarks, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" (ESV). Unity and oneness are the definition of the fellowship between God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The harmony pursued and encouraged by Native people comes from the triune God. Their innate knowledge of God and their knowledge of good and evil makes the argument for harmony possible.

Prayer and relationships are the same in that our prayers for harmony, peace, unity, justice, healing, or whatever else, comes from being made in the image of God. It comes from a knowledge of good and evil, and understanding that things are not the way they are supposed to be. Moreover, being created in God's own image and God admitting that it is not good for man to be alone is the direct reason why human beings desire relationships. Human beings were meant to operate within community lest serious mental, emotional, and spiritual health concerns stir up.

1 Peter 3:15 says, "but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (ESV). The hope in me is Christ. The hope my people need is in Christ. What they are searching for in ceremonies and rituals, what the traditional teachings are offering, and what they seek to be freed from the most are all found in Jesus Christ. I will close with this quote:

“When ministering to [Native people], the goal isn’t to get them to see the contradictions of their traditions with other beliefs...The goal is to help them understand the issues with the individual that can’t be fixed with ceremony and ritual. Traditional beliefs and upbringing may only deal with the external relationships to people and nature, perhaps even touch on positive thinking, but no ceremony can remedy the arrogance of a proud heart or restrain the adulteries of a lustful one. Traditional teachings can make bad people act good, but no ritual can raise a dead person back to life. The gospel aims at helping people understand that God doesn’t simply make bad people good, rather He causes dead people to live” (Mekale Tree, Navajo).

A Cultural Apologetic for the Kainaiwa (Blood Tribe) People

by Logan Davis

Oki (hello), my name is Logan Davis. I am an enrolled member of the *Kainaiwa* (Blood Tribe) First Nation located in southern Alberta, Canada. I also belong to the Kingdom of God.

My mother is Maria Davis (*Ots’skoipiks’saki* - Bluebird Woman). My maternal grandparents are Gerald Wells (*Stomiksoomaapi* - Old Sitting Bull) and the late Olive Davis (*litspookkoomiakii* - Calling From Above Woman). My mother comes from the *linakaiksi* - Small Robes, or *Akaipookaiksi* - Many Children clan from her father’s side and the *Mamioyiiksi* - Fish Eater clan from her mother’s side. My paternal grandparents are Wilfred Blood and the late Martina Weasel Moccasin. The Blood Tribe is my home and where my history and origins begin. The Blood reserve is the largest reserve in Canada in terms of land and people. It is a beautiful place with lush prairies and rolling hills on one side, and the breathtaking Rocky Mountains on the other. Many call it God’s country because it truly is. The Blood Tribe is one of four tribes that make up the Blackfoot confederacy.



My purpose in writing this is to understand the Blood people on a deeper level, and to explain why Jesus is not a White man’s God, but the God and creator of all living things. I hope to give proof that eternity is written on the hearts

of all His creation (2 Corinthians 3:3) and to give proof that His Holy Spirit works through interceding in the lives of believers (Romans 8:26-27). I hope and pray to show what the living God can do in the lost hearts and lives of all people, including the Bloods.

Who is better to reach someone than their own people? It can be done by building relationship and community with them, showing interest in their life. Reaching people for the Kingdom of God does not necessarily mean preaching to them and expecting them to turn. It's about starting a relationship and being interested in their passions and goals. After we establish that relationship and prove to them we are worthy of being trusted, then we can start the conversations of the cross and the healing that comes with it. We can also help them understand the different names of Jesus, and help them heal from hurts and trauma! Through relationship and food, and the interceding power of the Holy Spirit, communities will see the love of Christ expressed in knowledge, kindness and shared life.



Incarnational evangelism with Native tradition is very tricky. Some practices can be redeemed, and others cannot. I will examine the Blood Tribe's traditions as an example. The first example is the Blackfoot naming ceremony; we receive three names in our life: at birth, when we come of age, and when we become an elder. The first name is given by the spirits in a medicine man's ceremony. This first name reminds me of how we are all born into sin. The second name is given when one comes of age. We are given a new name by an elder from our tribe who knows us personally. After the elder gives you a word, you turn around, and he pushes you, symbolizing you are no longer the old name or person, but pushing onwards as this new person. After the elder pushes you, the tribe or witnesses do a war cry for you, followed by a round dance and feast. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The old name is gone, and behold, the new man or woman is in front of you. We celebrate new beginnings through dance and food. It reminds me of the verse in Luke, "I tell you, in the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). The heavens celebrate the one who comes to know him as Lord; our name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We are given a new identity. We are no longer seen as the world sees us, but we are seen as Jesus sees us; what a wonderful scene in both contexts!

The best way to reach the Blood Tribe is to be incarnational with them, to meet them, build friendships, and experience life with them. I fully believe it's okay to meet people in any context and in any environment, and if that means going to help out in a ceremony, I'll go with the understanding that I'm not going to participate in the religious part but to help in other areas, like set-up or cooking or even being a support person. I'll make it fully known that I am a Jesus-follower and that my faith is in Him. But doing this shows that I'm here for the long run, and this speaks volumes. My hope in being incarnational is to lead others to Christ and help them walk in the freedom that only Jesus can offer. I'm willing to put in the work to see the lost saved and be restored.

I used to think that being incarnational was terrible. I thought that once we became Christians, we had to leave our culture altogether and embrace the Western worldview. However, that's not the case; and now that I fully understand being incarnational, I realize that my thinking was backward. Unfortunately, many Christians still have this mindset. They think going to powwows or dressing in our traditional clothes is wrong. But that's not the case, and I think it's beautiful to be a Christian, embrace our culture, and delight in being a Native believer. We are few. But Jesus came to die for everyone and I fully believe it's time for Native people to start being the missions force and not the missions field.



A note to the reader:

The cultural apologetics you have just read are excerpts from papers written by graduates of Indigenous Bible College. To access the full papers, please email info@indigenousbible.edu

language revitalization

IN NATIVE AMERICA

"To lose your language is to lose the soul of your culture, and when the language is gone you are forever disconnected from the wisdom of ancestors; the loss of language inevitably results in losing the gods you pray to, to the land you live on, and your own government and sovereignty." (Aguilara)

As years pass in many cultures of the world, a little piece of who one is passes away as well. Slowly but surely, languages begin to fade like a mist early in the morning. But like the mist, they can come back day after day. There is a need today to keep something alive that seems to be holding on by a thread. Many of the languages in the world are in danger of being lost forever and this is a discouraging fact, but there is hope. Young Native people need only to see that their tribal languages are worthy of preserving. Native language is a key piece of one's history and way of life. For many years in the lives of the older generations of Native peoples, language was life, but to a younger generation, this is not always true.

Worldwide there are over 6,800 languages spoken. Approximately 43% of those spoken languages are considered endangered or threatened. These statistics are becoming more and more a reality to many tribes in the United States. The truth is that some of these endangered languages will one day become extinct, even with diverse resources available to the tribes that speak them. The threat is real for many Native American tribes in which only a few fluent speakers are left to carry on the language, and it is up to younger generations to take up the task of preserving it. One wonders if ministry can also be a resource in helping prevent the loss of languages among Native peoples. This paper will demonstrate the importance for Native peoples to learn, to speak, and to understand their own tribal languages, not only to preserve their culture but also to use as a tool in ministry.

Classifications of Languages

Endangered and Extinct

"Revitalizing critically endangered Native American languages is not on the list of urgent public policy priorities. Yet to the Native Americans whose languages are just a few years away from extinction, the loss goes to the heart of their identity. It's a matter of cultural survival." (Lutz)

Throughout the world there are many different languages for distinct and diverse people groups, and therefore, there is a need to know where these languages stand in their growth and sustainability to be cultivated for future generations. To understand why languages die, we need to understand the language classification groupings used by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), ranging from vulnerable to extinct. According to the Linguistic Society of North America, an **endangered language** is defined simply as "a language that is likely to become extinct in the near future" (Woodbury). These endangered languages may face challenges such as a lack of fluent speakers, few or non-existent child learners or adult speakers, outright genocide, pressure for communities or people groups to integrate with a larger language group, or the adoption of outside languages (Woodbury).

According to UNESCO, a language is endangered when its speakers cease to use it, use it in fewer and fewer domains, use fewer of its registers and speaking styles, and/or stop passing it on to the next generation. As stated previously, of the approximate 6,000 languages spoken in the world today, about **43% are considered endangered**, meaning they face the threat of becoming extinct (Moseley). Research shows that in 2010 there were approximately **421 endangered languages** ranging from "vulnerable to extinct" in North America, and that the United States of America alone is home to roughly 199 endangered languages (Moseley). Of those languages, there are around **150 classified as critically endangered**, and by 2050 approximately 130 of those languages will cease to be spoken (Hagen). There are several conditions that a language must "meet" before it becomes classified as extinct, but there are also steps to prevent this.

What Can Be Done: Language Revitalization?

*"The status of the cultures and languages of Native Americans is unique, and the United States has the responsibility to act together with Native Americans to ensure their survival."
(National Association of Language Advisers)*

There are several factors that determine the success of language preservation or revitalization efforts. These factors include: number of speakers, community members' attitudes toward their own language, the amount and quality of documentation of one's language, and resources available to those that want to be learners or teachers of the language (Simons). Across the United States, tribal governments and communities are seeking innovative ways of preserving their native tongues, including immersion schools and other tribal programs geared towards educating and influencing the younger generation to carry on the language. But one must also wonder what is being done by the federal government to prevent the loss of tribal languages or at the very least, to help tribes preserve them.

"Act together" - with two simple words in the quote above, the National Association of Language Advisers describes what can be done by tribal citizens and the federal government

to preserve languages that may be endangered or threatened. In the battle for language preservation and revitalization, tribes are not alone. It is true that at many times the fight to preserve one's language seems endless and without help, but there is hope. There are many different strategies for saving a language, but these should come from more than just a "sense of duty" to see the language survive.

Many tribes have very few fluent, native speakers of their language and are doing whatever they can to help them teach the next generation, but for these speakers to become teachers of the language, what first must they do? Additionally, is it simply out of a sense of honor or respect that people will learn their language or is it important that they have a desire to be a part of something bigger than themselves? What motives make a learner a good learner?

Motives and Goals for Learners and Teachers of Languages

Motives and Goals of Learners

"Learners must be able to determine why they want to learn their own language, or that of another culture. Some learners may have personal reasons for wanting to study the language while others might see it more as a duty or obligation to their culture." (Hinton, 10)

What causes a learner to have a passion for learning? One must first have **motives** for their goal of learning a new language. Motives and goals come from different places at different times in one's life, but in language preservation, they come about within the context of **duty, responsibility, or passion** for one's language. There may be personal reasons for wanting to learn the language or there might be a motivation to "**regain a sense of [one's] native identity and belonging in a community** or a desire to assert cultural autonomy or sovereignty" (Hinton, 10). Hinton states, "The individual's motivation to learn and teach indigenous languages is primarily extra-economic; it is a counter-movement against the forces of assimilation and is related to people's desire to maintain or regain their identity, spirituality, cultural knowledge, and autonomy as indigenous peoples" (37). Such goals are very effective for motivating learners, but they may come from a place of deep-rooted hurt that could either be a help or a hindrance in the learning process.

Regarding personal motives, Hinton states, "Learners must determine why they want to learn a language" (10). In an interview with The Grand Forks Herald, Steven Lohnes stated that his motivation for learning his native language (Dakota) was "to inspire other people to learn the language and... to one day become a teacher and mentor in his community" (Hazzard). It is not just for selfish reasons that an individual might want to learn their tribal language, but out of a desire to help others. This models for others that learning their own language is not selfish, but aligns with values of **encouraging, serving, and teaching** others so that they might one day be able to do likewise and keep the language alive.

For learners of the Mvskoke (Creek) language, Mvskoke Language Instructor Rebecca Barnett

shares that "a learner must have a desire and commitment to learn the language" (Mvskoke Interview). This is a simple statement, but this ideology is also a stumbling block that many might face.

These statements from instructors and learners are key to understanding what it takes for someone to be impacted with a desire to learn and speak their native language. This leads to the question of what motivates someone to transition from learning a language, to wanting to become a teacher of that language. How do learners become teachers? Do motives and goals make a difference?

Motives and Goals of Teachers

Teachers might have goals and motives similar to those of their students. Sonny Skyhawk of the Lakota tribe describes her motivation to teach her native language to younger generations saying, "I can't stress enough the importance of reviving our tribal languages when it comes to the core of our being, our identity, and who we people are. Our languages can teach us and teach each other; our elders deserve nothing less than to have the things that allowed us to exist. Our children deserve nothing less than to have those things in their own language. You could argue that **when a tribe loses its language, it loses a piece of its inner-most being, a part of its soul or spirit**" (ictnews.org).

In an interview with an instructor of Mvskoke Language, Rebecca Barnett, she described that one of the driving forces for her to become a teacher of the language was simply being a speaker herself. Barnett stated that she saw the need for fluent Mvskoke speakers to be available to teach, and recognized that this was an opportunity for her to help her people with the continuation of the Mvskoke language. Barnett also stated that one of her goals is to help develop a fluent speaker of the Mvskoke Language, which is something she hopes to achieve soon with several prospective speakers (Mvskoke Interview).

What Holds Learners Back?

Understanding what motivates learners and teachers of languages helps us understand what it takes to preserve a language, but there is a factor that needs to be taken into consideration: what holds one back from learning their native tongue? This question is one that many need to take into consideration because of the impact it can have on their ability to see the need for preserving their language.

Factors that might hold one back from learning their language include the **shame, prejudice, or unacceptance** associated with speaking a non-dominant language, an inability to understand the importance of learning the language, or at times, some psychological hinderances. These may just be a few of the reasons Native people feel that they are not

capable of learning their tribal languages. During an interview with the Muscogee (Creek) Language Preservation Department, several instructors were asked what they saw as obstacles to their students learning the Mvskoke language. One of the biggest hinderances was the lack of understanding how important the language is. "Students do not understand that the language connects them to who they are as a Muscogee; there is no self-pride in who they are," said Instructor Phillip Harjo (Interview). Not understanding the language's importance may be one of the largest hurdles that learners must overcome, but this is something that can be addressed.

Even with the heartache that many instructors feel when their students lack passion for learning and preserving the language, there is still hope. These learners may be a small group, but there are actions that can be taken to inform and demonstrate to them why learning their language is vital not only to their tribe, but also to themselves.

Language Preservation: There is Hope

Steps Forward

Throughout the United States, there is the desire to know how one's language is a part of the past and present of one's culture. But language does not just involve the past and present – it takes a significant role in the future of a culture. Within many tribes, there has been a rise in language preservation programs seeking to pass tribal languages on to the next generations. These programs are not without their hardships in finding qualified teachers and funding but many are showing initiative and being strategic in implementing different teaching styles to create an effective learning environment in addition to employing technological advances and other creative approaches.

Teaching the Language: The Who and How

In many places around the world, linguists are considered the ultimate teachers of languages. Linguists have vast knowledge in language preservation, but it comes from a "westernized" point of view. The teaching strategies of many linguists are based on language types and classifications, but are these the only strategies that could or should be used by Native speakers of native languages? Qualifications for instructors of language vary, but for many tribes within the United States, the regulations are set by the tribe itself. To become certified as a speaker and be able to work within the Muscogee Language Department one must be able to carry on a conversation with instructors of the Mvskoke language at tribal headquarters, but in order to work within the public schools or colleges, instructors must meet the regulations of the Education Department's State or Federal level requirements for teaching (Montiel).

For Mvskoke Language Instructors Rebecca Barnett and Phillip Harjo, the teaching styles they

use in their instruction are not bound to any basic English-speaking laws. Instructor Barnett describes her teaching style as a common, general conversation, which is how she grew up learning the Mvskoke language herself. Mrs. Barnett said that in her home growing up, Mvskoke was her first language and she did not formally learn it or have it taught to her. It was her heart language, and she just spoke it (Mvskoke Interview). She believes that one of the best ways students can learn the language is by being surrounded by it so that it becomes something they use daily. "It's a daily effort that learners must choose over convenience," Barnett stated when asked how that learning strategy could be accomplished. Seeing that there needs to be a connection between the Mvskoke language and the English dominant language that many Muscogee citizens use today, Instructor Harjo shared, "Learners need to take the opportunity that they have to interact with speakers and allow themselves to see, hear, taste, and touch what the Mvskoke language is about" (Mvskoke Interview). Mr. Harjo added to Mrs. Barnett's statement that "learners need the exposure to speakers as much as they would need to have the desire to learn" (Mvskoke Interview).

Effective Programs: Past and Present

While progressive and innovative changes in language preservation have been made, tribes are still in a position of needing more involvement from tribal citizens if these programs are to thrive, not just survive. There are great examples of tribal language programs among the Five Tribes of Oklahoma, including my own Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Within those are examples of innovative ways of encouraging and reaching tribal members to keep the language alive.

Tribal Language Programs

Muscogee (Creek) Nation Language Program

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Language Program website lists several major goals when it comes to preservation of the Mvskoke language. "To preserve, maintain, and revitalize the language of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, by **connecting with tribal elders, encouraging adult citizens and teaching our children the significance of reading, writing and speaking the language of our ancestors**" (mcn-nsn.gov). Potentially serving over 80,000 tribal members, the Language Program has a staff of seven, including three administrators, three language instructors, and one graphic designer. The instructors have gone through certification from the tribe to become Mvskoke language instructors, but to become a certified language speaker, one must simply apply at the language department and carry on a conversation with the staff there in the Mvskoke language.

In wanting to serve the Muscogee people, the Language Program has helped tribal members become certified speakers and eventually instructors of the language through classes offered within Muscogee communities, and at the College of the Muscogee Nation, which can be taken for credit or for self-enrichment. The staff at the Language Program have worked

alongside the tribe and other outside resources to develop new language programs and materials to be utilized within the Muscogee (Creek) public school systems, developed language apps for iPhones, instructional games and books for children, and audio and visual instructional videos. In addition to these resources, the Language Program has also begun to implement a "support network" of Mvskoke language speakers and connecting them to younger generations of learners.

Language Programs as Ministry Tools

Seeing the need for language learners and speakers, one might wonder how this need could be met within the context of ministry. Language programs have the potential to be influential in developing younger generations by connecting the past to the present through relationship building.

In meeting and discussing with some of the Mvskoke Language instructors, it became clear that the most important factor for communicating the importance of language learning is relationship. Establishing relationships with learners allows for a connection to be built and provides a model for the learners to see the importance of and cultivate a desire for the preservation of their native language. Kyon Yazzie (Navajo, IBC class of 2025), articulates the connection between language preservation and ministry:

Language is the foundation that establishes our connection with other people and fuels our understanding of how to best serve and establish meaningful relationships with them. It is not just a tool for communication, but the vehicle for a culture's worldview, giving meaning to their cultural outlook, and is the lifeline between this world and the spiritual world. Observing the life of Christ we see that he "emptied himself" and was "born in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7, ESV). He took on the language of the Jewish people - a social marker which established a sense of belonging and solidarity among them.

Part of Christ's coming in the likeness of men included language learning, which allowed him to immerse himself in the traditions, oral histories, and values of the Jewish people. Jesus' integration into the culture shaped his perception and interactions with the Jewish world. It also factored into the shaping of the new identity of the kingdom family - one that included relationships across social classes, ethnic groups, and diverse languages. Had Christ not become integrated, not only culturally but linguistically, the formation of this new kingdom family would have been obstructed and he would be "unable to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Hebrews 4:15, ESV). Without language, Jesus would not have been able to relate to mankind in any meaningful way.

Throughout my research on the importance of knowing one's native language, the desperate need to engage younger generations of learners such as myself was a somewhat saddening revelation. Within many tribes, the urgency of keeping the language alive is crucial, but the desire to learn the language and preserve the culture is lacking within the younger generations. Through the eyes of older generations, young people simply lack the desire, and this is something that they may just need help in pushing past.

Learning one's language can be difficult, but it can be done. **Where there is hope, there are always hardships.** Understanding that the younger generations will be the ones to determine the future of many tribal languages and yet are not fully aware of their impact, I challenge readers to learn about their own tribal languages. See where you can be influential and strive to be someone that has a desire to preserve your tribal language. Make connections with who you were destined to be. You are not going to lose who you are if you pursue who you have always been.



Samantha Coon (Muscogee Creek)

Samantha is a proud tribal member of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma and a 2019 graduate of IBC. Driven by a deep family legacy, Samantha is a passionate advocate for language revitalization. Though not a first-language speaker, she believes that reconnecting with the Mvskoke language creates vital opportunities for shared experience, community success, and collective healing. Guided by the philosophy that "if you know the language, you will know the people," she bridges gaps between culture and community in her current role with the Muscogee Nation Department of Health.

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Vision Board

By Shawna Baloo (Navajo)

I desire to be a noble woman who stands firm in her faith during struggles and successes.

I want to glorify God through my actions, words, mind, heart, and spirit.

I aspire to reflect Jesus in every aspect of my life,

To be filled with the fruits of the Spirit that overflow onto others.

I want to grow a deeper connection with God and accept his truths and grace.

I want to be vulnerable and humble before God, taking heart of his restoration and healing.

I want to love others wholeheartedly despite differences.

I aspire to use my gifts and talents to serve others with humility,

To stand up and be a voice for the weak and lost.

I want to share the gospel with truth and grace and build disciples with Native people.



CULTURE IS A *gift*, NOT A GOD

Culture is a gift, not a god. Many Native American Christians have asked themselves this question at least once: *“What parts of my culture are accepted, and what parts are not acceptable in my Christian faith?”* Many have battles regarding what parts of their culture can be redeemed in Christ and what practices are completely out of the question. For example, powwows and particular Indigenous songs hold significance to Native Americans. Some songs hold stories of their people and all that they withstood. Some tell creation or origin stories about how their people came to be. Tragically, Native Americans have long been persecuted for their culture and were forced to assimilate into Western American culture. Colonization, boarding schools, abusive uniformity, and harsh views against Native Americans were a tremendous part of Native American history.

Christians throughout time have faced the temptation to let their cultural norms determine what practices were acceptable in other cultures. Some have held views against Native American culture and tend to deem it all as demonic or “un-Christlike”. Many are reluctant to see how **culture itself is not an oppression, but an expression of Native people’s uniqueness as God has made them to be.** With help from the Holy Spirit, we can understand what is and is not acceptable in our culture, use Native American songs to encourage other believers in Christ, and innovate ways of contextualizing Native American music to bring those who do not know Jesus to Him. Native American Christians can redeem the form of traditional

music by understanding its origins and purpose, why it is important to redeem, and methods for accomplishing its contextualization.

An example of where traditional music can be redeemed is powwows. The origins of powwow music hold great significance for Native Americans. The term “powwow” carries a lot of history, both good and bad. According to the *Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage*, the word “powwow” originated from “*pau wau*”, which meant “medicine man” in Natick, an Algonquian language. Unfortunately, the term was misused many times by early European settlers, and its misuse increased as society evolved from the 19th century to the 20th century. “Powwow” was used to describe a gathering or a group meeting together in one place. For example, people would say, “Let’s get together and have a powwow (birthday party).” In addition, early Hollywood movies, such as western films, would stereotype Native Americans, and powwow settings were often depicted as violent or feral in their activities.

Powwows originated mostly from the Plains Indian Tribes in the 1800s. It is said that the first powwow to be recorded was in 1879. The Ponca Powwow took place after the formation of Indian Territory (Gambino). Others believe that powwows emerged as a result of the American government oppressing Native American tribes. Intertribal dances were born during these harsh oppressions, as many Native people were

forced into distant lands without consent, abused by power, and robbed of their lands, culture, and belief systems. Two traditions were born during these harsh times for the Northern and Southern Plains: the drum religion and the grass dance. The drum religion was a ritual that brought friendship and harmony. According to *Folklife*, “The grass dance was an adapted form of ancient warrior dances.” Their gatherings were a reminder of healing, unity, and remembrance of their culture despite being attacked by the American government.

The purpose of powwows is to bring cultures and nations together, reminding us of our resilience and perseverance. It is a beautiful reminder of the history and roots that shape us into who we are today. Traditional Native American music reveals great stories of our people, including the stories that have been passed down of how our people and the world were created, and songs meant for healing.

Many songs performed at a powwow have spiritual or social meanings for participants, reinforcing important cultural values and teachings. For example, the Veterans’ Song acknowledges the role of warriors and veterans in protecting communities and fighting for freedoms, while also continuing pre-contact traditions of singing to recount war exploits or preparing for battle. Healing Songs are performed upon request, often to offer prayers to a sick family or community member. Flag Songs serve as a kind of “national anthem” for the hosting community or nation, and Honour Songs pay tribute to an individual and

his/her contribution to the community. The Grand Entry is the visually stunning opening of the powwow activities, and Grand Entry songs are performed to accompany the entrance of the dancers to the dance arena. Songs are often named for their purpose (e.g., “Grand Entry Song,” “Intertribal Song”), but some are given titles that reflect their meanings or the lyrics of the song. Some songs are interchangeable, in that the same song can be used to accompany different dance types, as long as the drumbeat and tempo of the song suit the dance.” (Hoefnagels)

Natives who have decided to follow Jesus have been challenged with the question of what they can and cannot do. What in their culture is honoring and what is not glorifying to God? Music is a big part of our culture; it has shaped how our people live, and music retells our history. What is it about these traditional songs that makes Native American Christians doubt their use in their walk with Christ? Recalling the history of the minds that formed the American country and culture will reveal what they valued and why they committed such malevolent acts.

Unfortunately, Christians were often the ones persecuting Native Americans throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The historical relationship between Native Americans and Christianity was rough and gruesome at times. From colonization to the boarding schools, the results of the early churches’ “mission” were devastating. Europeans desired to share the gospel with Native Americans, but as “Native American History: A Chronology of a Culture’s Vast Achievements and their Links to World Events” states,

“Europeans... saw Indians as savages, as a people without a culture, valuable only as a source of slave labor.” Not all Europeans held this belief, however it is no wonder this view increased against Native Americans, becoming well-known throughout American history.

In American history, some leaders who played a major role in building the United States held a common view of Native Americans as nuisances or inhuman beings in need of assimilation into American culture. Craig Smith, author of “White Man’s Gospel”, recorded what Thomas Jefferson Morgan, commissioner of Indian Affairs under U.S. President Benjamin Harrison, stated. “The Indians must conform to the white man’s ways, peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must. They must adjust themselves to their environment and conform their mode of living substantially to our civilization... they cannot escape it, and must either conform to it or be controlled by it.” Clearly, Thomas Jefferson Morgan’s goal was to enforce laws that would inherently force and threaten Native Americans to let go of their traditions and beliefs and to adopt Christianity (or the “white man’s ways”) as their new way of life. As a result of this view, boarding schools were created.

Late in the 1800s, boarding schools were “key components in the process of cultural genocide against native cultures, and were designed to physically, ideologically, and emotionally remove Indian children from their families, homes, and tribal affiliations” (Archuleta, 19). Boarding schools created harmful effects by eradicating Native Americans' cultural lives, and at times, tragically took their lives. Many churches took

the opportunity to religionize these school systems. Many Native Americans have shared what life was like during their time in boarding schools, if they survived to tell their story. Along with countless gruesome things that Natives were forced to do, many have shared that they could no longer speak in their native language or have long hair, that their name was changed, and they were separated from their families for 4 to 12 years or longer, depending on the school's policies.

Native Americans endured much trial, pain, abuse, and persecution from the American government and the early European settlers. Many Christian European settlers held the belief that Native Americans were to relinquish their culture to become believers in Christ. Sadly, the cost of this movement caused many Native Americans to lose their culture and some, their lives. They were forced in horrendous ways to let go of the culture that they had founded long before settlers encountered Native Americans and were tasked with assimilating to European ways and beliefs.

The sacrifice Native Americans were forced to make has created confusion around which parts of their culture are acceptable as Christians, and which ones are not. Today, we seem to struggle with that same question. However, this time, we see Native American Christians informing or judging as to why we are to eradicate some Native American practices. The fear that led American Christians early on to oppress Natives to assimilate into the “American culture” is the same fear that moves Native American Christians today to assimilate into the “Christian culture”. How then are we to accomplish the contextualization of

powwow music? Music is widely subjective, holding numerous opinions and interpretations. Music holds power; it is a universal language that is understood by all, regardless of their cultural background. This power that music holds, however, needs to be handled with caution and discernment, especially in the realm of worship.

Christians have adopted music in various ways, and it has progressed since the time Joshua led the Israelites and marched around Jericho with trumpet sounds and shouts, to Brandon Lake playing songs of worship in stadiums. Countless battles throughout history about what is acceptable in Christianity and what is not have led people to either hold tightly to their hymn books or to innovate new ways of making music that are relevant to today's culture. "Music is creative and constantly borrows from many sources. Christians have argued about the appropriateness of musical styles for Christian communication and have missed the point of the purpose of music. We have made the medium the message by limiting its forms. We have failed to communicate the message to many people as it has tended to be expressed in an out-of-touch style", states Elder Sam Chapman. The "style" seems to be what is argued about the most, considering the form of "Christian music" and how it should be expressed in a certain way. This tends to be tailored towards what the congregation itself finds acceptable or comfortable.

The late Richard Twiss, a member of the Rosebud Lakota/Sioux tribe, was well-known for his methods of contextualizing the gospel using Native American culture. In his book,

"One Church, Many Tribes" he argues,

It is most difficult for any of us to resist the temptation to attach a biblical value to our own cultural preferences or distinctives, as though no other culture could be as biblical or valuable as ours. Many Western missionaries over the past few centuries have couched the gospel in their own cultural distinctives - language, musical instruments, housing structures - as though these preferences were biblical or holy, often declaring outright that the cultural preferences of the indigenous peoples were in fact unbiblical or unholy. Because we are all so prone to be culturally egocentric, the temptation is to consider our worldview the biblical and correct one, shunning all others as unbiblical and wrong. Worse yet is our habit of judging cultural ways - songs, dances, rituals, etc.—to be sinful when there is no clear violation of Scripture. (Twiss, 113)

However, certain aspects and practices or rituals of Native culture are unbiblical: the ones that replace or manipulate biblical truth. It is dangerous to read from your cultural lens (eisegesis) rather than from the author's intent (exegesis). This is another reason to practice and attain good hermeneutics, a point Twiss may be communicating. Western missionaries clung heavily to their view and ways of worshipping God, especially with music. Today, people are only willing to let worship songs exist in the form that is familiar and suitable to their ears and the congregation as a whole. To venture out into various genres or different expressions of

worship music is daring and, in some people's minds, demonic. However, the origins of today's Sunday services and worship songs hold roots not many of us are aware of.

In Frank Viola's "Pagan Christianity", we see that today's "Christian worship" services are influenced by paganism. "It is clear that the Protestant order of worship did not originate with the Lord Jesus, the apostles, or the New Testament Scriptures! This in itself does not make the order of worship misguided. It just means it has no biblical basis" (Viola, 74). To say that today's view of church service and "Christian music" is biblical and the only way we are to worship God is futile. "Not only is the traditional order of service unscriptural and heavily influenced by paganism (which runs contrary to what is often preached from the pulpit), it does not lead to the spiritual growth God intended" (Viola, 75). For someone to hold fast to a "Christian culture" that suits their comfort misses countless and great opportunities to share the gospel in unique ways.

During the Indigenous Bible College 2025 Fall Conference, Dr. Jason Koppen and Joshua Ortiz presented a simple way of explaining how and why we should accept various forms of worship, "Methods are many. Principles are few. Methods may change. But principles never do." They demonstrated in Psalm 150 that the doxology written in scripture is a command to the followers of God, "Yahweh", to praise Him with instruments. What is profound about this passage are the instruments stated. These instruments were not "made in Christianity" or in Old Testament Judaism. These instruments were used in pagan worship before they were used by the Jews.

"When Israel incorporated these instruments into worship, they became 'the Lord's instruments' by virtue of their use – not their origin. **Sacredness isn't about invention. It's about intention,**" declares Ronald Allen. "In reality, instruments have no moral value in themselves. Their purpose and placement determine their sanctity. A saxophone in a jazz bar may serve one end; the same instrument in a worship service, another."

All of us are susceptible to succumbing to our "social imaginary" - the assumptions, expectations, and worldview through which our culture understands reality, relationships, and meaning. At the 2025 Mosaix National Conference, Jay Kim's presentation "Here, There, Everywhere" made the point that "social imaginary" limits us to a narrow and often selfish earthly perspective. He quoted Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, saying, "[Social imaginaries are] the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them... and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations." Then he brought up a passage from Acts 1:3-8, where for 40 days, Jesus reveals that He is alive, speaks to the disciples about the kingdom of God, says they will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and gives final directions before he ascends to heaven. Kim points out in verse six the "social imaginaries" of the disciples when they ask Jesus, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to *Israel*?" The disciples were asking Jesus when He would restore the kingdom "to Israel", the place the disciples lived in, were familiar with, and only knew. Kim says that it was not the disciples' fault for asking this question or thinking this way. This is a social imaginary; a literal future expectation. The

Apostles translate what Jesus is saying through their lived experience. It is programmed in their bodies, eyes, and thoughts. They know no other way of what Jesus may be talking about. They are simply speaking from what they know in their culture and from Old Testament biblical prophecies!

Furthermore, to Kim's point, the Israelites were restricted to their ways, and the only way they were able to get out of that view or mindset is revealed in verses 7-8. Jesus responds, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." **The solution to everyone's restricted cultural worldview is the Holy Spirit!**

It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are not only able to be free from our personalized, comfortable cultural view, but we can also accomplish witnessing in our local known community ("Jerusalem"), discern various cultural views or ways among our neighbors ("Judea"), share the gospel with people we are not fond of or do not agree with (the Jews' view of "Samaria"), and all nations and people groups across the world, "to the ends of the earth". We need help from the Holy Spirit to find ways to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Alone with our theologies, ideologies, philosophies, and cultural practices, we are not capable of reaching people who have different ways from ours. Which is why it is not about the method but about the principles, the truth, the meaning.

Indigenous Bible College roots itself in five

biblical core values, and one of them is incarnational evangelism. "Jesus came to us (Luke 19:10), as one of us, but was without sin. He then sent us as the Father sent him (John 20:21). Like Jesus, the church needs to be a "friend of sinners" (Matthew 11:19), serving those around us, and establishing meaningful relationships through which we can share Christ. This means serving the lost, not just preaching at them." (IBC Core Value #3). Serving often means sacrificial love, *agape*. Paul uses this term many times in his epistles when addressing the division and judgments in the church due to cultural differences. "Leon Morris pointed this out many years ago. Paul uses the noun *agapē* (love) 75 times, the verb *agapaō* (to love) 34 times and the adjective *agapētos* (beloved) 27 times. This totals up to over 42% of the usage of these words in the NT." (Mitchel

Chapters 12 through 14 of the book of Romans talk about how we, as believers, are to understand that **the body of Christ is about unity, not uniformity**. The power of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for our dissonance to become consonance in the body of Christ. Paul addresses the church demanding that they should not judge one another based on their cultural differences or put a stumbling block towards one another. "Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother" (Romans 14:13). It is important, as believers, to recognize where our brothers and sisters fall away from God and to not encourage practices or behaviors that become a hindrance to their walk with Christ. We are one with Christ, not against. Therefore, if certain forms of contextualization become distracting or a

stumbling block to another believer, it is wise and loving to consider their needs.

As mentioned many times before, we can cling so deeply to our worship, our songs, our style, our culture, our worldview, and ultimately our way. I do not believe we should die on a hill that prevents us from innovating new ways we can worship God *with* our culture, not *for* our culture. Carefully incorporating things like drums, chants, flutes, rattlers, and dances are beautiful, unique, and gorgeous ways of showing and communicating to Jesus that “Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, qtd. in Guinness, 26).

The fear of contextualizing should not prevent us believers from being united with people we do not like or do not agree with because they have a different way of worshipping Jesus. As long as we recognize that Jesus is the only way, truth, and life (John 14:6), placing our faith in Him (Ephesians 2:8-9) is where we attain the beauty of eternal life and a relationship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14). Ultimately, how we worship should not matter, but to whom we give our worship matters. Worship is not limited to music; it is a way of life, of living. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

A theology of incarnation will help us contextualize biblical truth for various relevant ways of worship in the church and effectively reach many communities that are lost without Jesus. The ministry of

incarnation is uncomfortable, challenging, and immensely difficult. Jesus showed us how difficult but rewarding incarnation is to allow the message of the gospel to be impactful. Philippians 2:1-11 perfectly states the importance and impact of Jesus’ incarnation.

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:1-11, ESV)

Therefore, we are not to have a “my way or the highway” mindset, especially when it

comes to the method and not the meaning. Fight for Jesus, not for cultural ways. Die to sin and partiality. Live for Jesus, and not for comfort or conformity.

In conclusion, Native American Christians are able to redeem powwow and traditional music by the power of the Holy Spirit and great discernment for the congregation, out of love, respect, and encouragement. We should not shy away or be afraid to innovate new ways to strengthen our walk with Jesus and to introduce Native Americans to Christianity through contextualization. God can do wonders in and through Native Americans. As Coreen Esplin stated at the Mosaix National Conference 2025, “Well, Billy Graham, the giant is awake, we are here. We are not sleeping, and we are taking our place at the table.” We, Native American, First Nations, Aboriginal, Indigenous peoples, belong to Christ.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, do not be afraid of the home and land you come from. God has placed us in this skin, in these bones, in this culture for a reason. I do not believe it was to be eradicated, as the early settlers horrendously believed. I do not believe our culture came from the devil, but has been tampered with. Men who lack holiness and purity easily succumbed to the sin of this world and used culture to feed their flesh, make false idols, and create spaces for demonic activity to gain power. I do not believe that is how we are to use our culture, nor express it. Do not let the devil have our people and pervert how God made us.

Revelation 7 is a vision of what is to come when God reminds us of the beautiful body

we are a part of, the body of Christ. If your neighbor (a believer in Christ) starts hitting a powwow drum and singing for Christ, praise God. If your neighbor (an unbeliever) starts hitting a powwow drum and singing to Native American deities, pray for him, ask the Holy Spirit to help you minister to him. Do not judge him, love him. Go to him, do not condemn him. Ask questions, get to know him. Stand firm in truth, but do not be stingy with it. Be intentional with your interactions with your unbelieving neighbor. Listen for the Holy Spirit to tell you what to do and how to present the gospel. You might be amazed by the Holy Spirit's pure creativity, but only if you lay down your ways and follow Christ's way. Who knows, you might influence your neighbor to sing songs to a living, breathing, loving God rather than to false idols. What was deemed as demonic can be redeemed as holy harmonics.

Root your identity in Christ, put the kingdom of God above everything else (Matthew 6:33). It is time for Native Americans to see culture as a gift, not as a god. Ask the Holy Spirit to use music, in whatever way or form, to reach people in need of Jesus.



Kai Legend Lucio (Navajo/Zuni)

Kai is a junior student at Indigenous Bible College and serves the IBC community on the chapel worship music team. Kai is passionate about finding uniquely Native expressions of Christian worship and produces original music about freedom in Christ written in a traditional Native American musical style.

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