SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IN MODERN-DAY NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE AND APPROACHES TO NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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This report is dedicated to my grandfather, Lawrence “Bud” Wallette, who attended Marty Indian Boarding School and Haskell Indian Boarding School, and to my great grandfather, John Wallette, who attended Carlisle Industrial Indian Boarding School.

ABSTRACT

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This qualitative study focuses on the modern-day approaches to Native American religion and Christianity in the Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN metro area. The spiritual leaders interviewed were asked about the varieties of spirituality practices in the Native American community today, the potential conflicts or areas of compatibility among these various spiritual practices, and the role of spiritual practices in cultural revitalization and community activism. The results of the study present a spectrum of spiritual practices and approaches to Native American religion and Christianity including those who practice Christianity exclusively, those who blend Christianity with Native culture and practices, and those who practice Native American religion exclusively. Those who are represented on either end of the spectrum experience more conflict between the religious perspectives and those in the middle of the spectrum experience more compatibility. Native American spiritual leadership seems to have direct impact on cultural revitalization.

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Introduction

When my daughter was born, we had her baptized in the United Methodist Church. We also had a traditional Ojibwe (Native American) naming ceremony for her. These two ceremonies were important to me for the sake of her spiritual development as well as for our identities as both Christian and Native American. However, this was not the case with my son born 15 years prior. He did not receive baptism until he was 13, and he was not given his Ojibwe name until he was 15. The reason for the delay in getting his name was my resentments against Christianity and lack of connection with traditional Native spirituality. I now know the significance and beauty of both these spiritual ceremonies. Some Native Americans receive baptism or an Indian name; some receive neither, and some like my children receive or both. The difference is that now we have a choice when some generations ago baptism was forced on us and traditional ceremonies were forbidden.

Native American and religious identities are often unique or confusing for Native peoples. Treat (1996) "acknowledge[s] that the idea of a native Christian identity is problematic, both culturally and historically" (p. 2). The problem, according to Treat (1996), is that "'native' and 'Christian' are mutually exclusive identities: a native who has become wholeheartedly Christian has lost some measure of native authenticity; a Christian who is still fully native has fallen short of Christian orthodoxy" (p. 6).

Indian identity is problematic, both culturally and historically, due to the complex relationship between Native American religion and Christianity which developed during colonization of North America. The first settlers in America had both friendly and violent interactions with the indigenous peoples. For various reasons, the early history includes atrocities like forced conversions, forced attendance at Christian boarding schools, loss of Native culture, a

dichotomous polarization, inferiority ranking, and violence for adhering to Native American religious beliefs. Conversely, some of the history between the two religions includes mutual acceptance, syncretism, reconciliation, and harmonious blending of both types of practices.

Native Americans have good reason to resent organized religion, particularly Christianity, due to the way Christian missions took place generations ago during colonization in the U.S. This history will be explained in more detail in the review of literature. However, despite the harsh and violent history, a number of Native Americans identify themselves as Christian today (Treuer, 2012, p. 44). Therefore, it is important to examine how spiritual leaders address Christianity in modern-day Native communities. There is considerable potential for good as well as potential risk for spiritual leaders who attempt to reconcile Native spirituality and Christianity because of a long history between the two religions which set them in opposition to one another although they do have some similarities in spiritual values.

The risk for spiritual leaders who preach Christianity in Native communities is that the religion could be rejected because of the history of colonization being tied so closely to Christianity and subsequent loss of culture. Bringing up this resentment could possibly reinforce it and the negative feelings surrounding Christianity and cultural identity. Some leaders use cultural revitalization to promote turning away from Christianity in favor of traditional Native American religion; however, this may produce more divisiveness within the community among those who still consider themselves Christian.

The potential for good for spiritual leaders who attempt to reconcile Native spirituality and Christianity lies in the considerable capacity for healing. Coming to terms with Christianity's role in Native American history includes some positives. Various spiritual practices include elements of healing and forgiveness. There is great need for healing of the past and letting go of

resentment within the Native American community. Religious organizations can, and have, helped people gain developmental tools and resources in communities that struggle. I know from personal experience how much it hurts to realize the connection between the history of religion and colonization and the current struggles of Native people today. I also know from personal experience how freeing it is to heal and let go of those hurts. I do not mean that we should forget our history, but that we do not have to keep hurting. We can move forward into a new, enlightened future of religious co-existence.

There are many ways in which religion and spirituality can help Native American communities starting with filling a great need for resources. Often, basic survival needs must be met before one can work on oneself. Some of the current-day issues facing Native Americans as an ethnic group and as individual communities are great disparities in life-expectancy, education, income, crime rates, and overall health between them and other minorities or whites in the U.S. (These disparities will be discussed later in the literature review.) Beyond eliminating disparities, the desire for progress in Native culture includes campaigns for decolonization, self-determination, and cultural revitalization (Peelman, 1995, p. 69). There are varied philosophies and approaches to furthering these causes among leaders. Some of these philosophies include using religion's role in Native American culture to help return to traditional values. In light of these current struggles and goals, it will be important to look at how spiritual leaders view spirituality as relating to cultural revitalization in particular.

As I mentioned, as a Native American and a Christian, I have personal reason to research the relationship between Native American religion and Christianity. I was raised as a Catholic, but my family left the church when I was nine. As it was, we attended church only on Easter and Christmas anyhow. By the time I was in high school, I learned more about the history of

colonization and religion's role in assimilation efforts by the government. I became resentful toward Christianity for forced conversions and the resulting loss of culture from ethnocentric missions work in early American history. I had a deep sense of loss and grieved being denied knowledge of my language and cultural traditions. By my twenties, I had tried a variety of spiritual experiences. I took a class in world religions after which I found myself attending a Native American Christian church regularly in search of healing this dichotomy within my soul.

The Native church provided healing for my resentments and brought me peace with my spirituality. However, as I progressed on my spiritual path, I noticed that other Native Americans treated me differently depending on how Christian or Indian they perceived me to be. Eight years after my return to church, or true conversion according to a more evangelical perspective, I feel compelled to look further at the two religions and how they are blended or polarized in the Native American community today.

There is little research on Native American spiritual leadership in the Twin Cities metro area. Therefore, this qualitative study will have implications for spiritual leaders and the Native American community there. The state of Minnesota has over half a dozen federally recognized reservations and the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area has a high population of Native American residents. Overall, in the U.S., "60 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives live in metropolitan areas" (www.hhs.gov Office of Minority Health). It is, therefore, important to know the variety of spiritual practices of Native Americans in this region. This information is important to both spiritual leaders as well as community members to increase their understanding of the current spiritual practices and approaches to the relationship between Native religion and Christianity. It is also important to identify how to bring healing to Native Americans regarding our religious and spiritual history.

This project will attempt to outline what kind of spirituality exists in the Native American community today. Is there compatibility or conflict between Christianity and Native American religion? I will also look at how spiritual leaders in the Native American community address these historical and present-day realities in leading their churches and community members—are they facilitating healing, co-existence, and/or cultural revitalization activism through spiritual practices and what does that look like? This research will increase understanding of these issues for leaders and community members alike. As such, this report will explore the following research questions:

- What are the varieties of spirituality practices in the Native American community today?
- What are the potential conflicts among these various spiritual practices?
- What are the areas of compatibility of these various spiritual practices? and
- What is the role of spiritual practices in cultural revitalization of Native Americans?

See *Appendix B: Interview Schedule Questions* for full detail on subsets of these primary questions which were used in the interviews.

Literature Review

The topic of the relationship between Native Americans and Christianity is addressed from several academic disciplines including history, anthropology, theology, and political science. However, the review of literature includes a great deal on the history of Native Americans and Christianity. It would be difficult to understand the full spectrum of spiritual practices in the Native American community today without fully comprehending the significance of the past with respect to religion and spirituality. Therefore, in order to place this study in the proper context, the literature review will begin with the history of Native Americans encountering Christianity in the U.S. and Canada. After reviewing the history, the literature review will focus on the various approaches to Native American religion and Christianity in the U.S. and Canada as well. However, the actual research for this case study is based modern-day Native American culture and approaches to Native American religion and Christianity in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area.

The terms Indian, American Indian, Amerindian, Native American, Native, indigenous, aboriginal, and first nations are found throughout the various literary sources and will be used interchangeably throughout this report to describe the same ethnic group—*the various indigenous tribal peoples who inhabited the U.S. and Canada prior to colonization.* In some cases, the specific names of tribes, bands, clans, or reservations will be used to identify the group of people being discussed. A **tribe** is large community with an ancestral name that gives recognition to the previously nomadic groups that are now living on reservations. For example, my tribe is Ojibwe. A **reservation** (or “reserve” in Canada) is an area of land reserved by tribes when they ceded the rest of their lands to the Federal government for expansion of the U.S. For example, Minnesota has several reservations that are reserved for people of the Ojibwe tribe,

such as Red Lake, Leech Lake, and White Earth reservations. Each reservation has its own government and is considered a sovereign nation. Originally, Native Americans were restricted to reservations, due to the nomadic structure of tribal life prior to colonization, but in the second half of the 20th century, individuals were encouraged to live off the reservation and relocate to nearby urban centers; therefore, the Twin Cities has a large Native American population.

The literature review may also contain some instances of British spelling, but only within some of the quotes coming from Canadian sources. Theological terms that will be used are defined as follows:

- **Monotheism**: the belief in a single all-powerful god.
- **Pantheism**: the belief that the universe (or nature as the totality of everything) is identical with divinity.
- **Pan-en-theism**: believing that God both is the universe and is greater than the universe.
- **Animism**: the worldview that non-human entities (animals, plants, and inanimate objects or phenomena), possess a spiritual essence.
- **Mysticism**: the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience (as intuition or insight).
- **Dualism**: coexistence of two opposing religions that run parallel without any real integration.
- **Syncretism**: real merger of two religions; open incorporation of other ideologies.
- **Inculturation**: the process by which a person adapts to and assimilates the culture in which he lives (a process of engagement between the Christian Gospel and a particular culture).

- **Pluralism**: the worldview according to which one's religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth, and thus the acknowledgement that at least some truths and true values exist in other religions.

The History of Christianity and Native Americans

There is a great deal written about the history of North American colonization, Native Americans encountering Christianity, Indian wars, etc. These historical records are told from many perspectives and would be too great in number to fully cover here. Therefore, the history accounted for in this report will be brief and focused on the religious aspects of first nation encounters with European settlers and Christians. The literature reviewed will only include the North American countries of Canada and the United States of America due to the close proximity to the Twin Cities population being sampled in this research.

Divine Right and Ethnocentricity

From the beginning, discovery of the new world was linked to religious symbolism. First contact with the indigenous people in North America took place in 1492 with Christopher Columbus, and in Canada in 1543 “with the planting of a cross” (Peelman, 1995, p. 19). Many of the new world colonizers believed that the indigenous were “destined to meet with western civilization and Christianity” (Peelman, 1995, p. 19). Some felt that it was divine right that they came to the Americas and that this was the new land of Canaan being given to the people of God (Peelman, 1995, p. 15). Manifest destiny is a term often used to describe these acts of imperialism.

Martin and Nicholas (2010) recognize that “globally, missionaries, for the most part, have believed that their interpretations of the world—their concepts of space, time, and the human condition, and an ability to read and write, to reason and worship God—make their

cultural systems superior to those of indigenous populaces" (p. 277). Peelman (1995) writes that the Christian message during colonization was "realized within a framework of imperialist state expansion, with European missionaries imposing, in an aggressive manner, a veritable change of civilization on the non-civilized peoples of other continents" (p. 62). This mentality persevered throughout U.S. history and policies until recent times and has had a big impact on where Native Americans find themselves today as we will see later in the review of literature.

Peelman's (1995) compilation of historical essays document the fact that to many missionaries, "Natives were deemed inept peoples because they could not read and write and thus were presumed not to be capable of reason" (p. 281). They were considered "savages" and "pagans" who lacked signs of civilization such as "literature, law, government, art, commerce, agriculture and religion" (Peelman, 1995, p. 62). In fact, "the first nations of North America had developed complex systems of highly theological and philosophical thinking" (Peelman, 1995, p. 45). It is documented that early colonizers of the Americas "met with very spiritual peoples who knew God well before the arrival of the first Christian missionaries" (Peelman, 1995, p. 15). Native Americans also had tribal forms of governing although different from Western concepts of government, as well as commerce, agriculture, etc.

Despite a pre-existing civilization with its own religion, many historical and anthropological studies show that "the churches fulfilled their [evangelical] mission [among Natives] in a culturally aggressive way" (Peelman, 1995, p. 20). Native Americans found themselves confronted with "hypocrisies of white religionists who preached universal salvation while practicing exclusionary racism" (Treat, 1996, p. 8). Due to ethnocentric views, the gospel mission was "not just a spiritual enterprise but also a cultural conquest" (Peelman, 1995, p. 62). The view of Natives was so lowly that Pope Alexander VI's papal bull had to assert that they

were in fact “truly human beings” and were “capable of being civilized and Christianized” (Peelman, 1995, p. 62).

It is acknowledged that “under the guidance of most missionaries, ‘conversion’ was more than just learning the faith […] For a number of denominations, conversion meant an attempted stripping away of indigenous lifeways in order to replace them with a new culture” (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 279). Although it is typical that “educators have often claimed some type of cultural dominance over the educated” and that “Missionaries, Protestant and Catholic, have typically viewed their cultural capital as putting them in unchanging positions of power and authority as they Christianize indigenous populations,” the essays show that in a few cases the cultural capital was given to the missionaries from the indigenous (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 277). Usually, the missionaries “educating peoples judged as subordinate, weighed Native American passion and reason according to where they existed, intersected, or parted ways” with their own thinking (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 279).

Divine right was established in 1492 with the Papal Bull of the Catholic Church which declared that any Christian explorer encountering non-Christian inhabitants was within their rights to take that land for their own (Christian) kingdom. The concept and law of Divine Right was propagated with legislation like the Indian Removal Act and the General Allotment Act resulting in the displacement of hundreds of tribes from land that they had already been sequestered to on reservations. The General Allotment Act was intended to aid assimilation of American Indian people into the dominant culture. However, land issues caused “loss of access to important sacred sites” among other problems (ILTF.org). In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act into law allowing negotiations with tribes for their removal from their homelands. The treaties were supposed to be voluntary. By 1902, “legislation known as the

'Dead Indian Act' was passed that allowed Indian landowners to sell lands they inherited even if they were still in trust" (ILTF.org).

Proselytizing and Boarding Schools

In the 1600s, John Elliot established "praying towns" for indigenous people to "receive Christian 'civilizing' instruction" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 89). This led to the eventual implementation of government-run religious boarding schools. By the 1800s and throughout the 1900s, "American Indian children were forcibly abducted from their homes to attend Christian and U.S. government-run boarding schools as a matter of state policy" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 89).

Legislated Proselytizing

Martin and Nicholas (2010) remind historians "not [to] whitewash the broader impacts of, say, the legal Doctrine of Discovery applied to Indian Law in the 1820s, or the Religious Crimes Code of the 1880s, or the boarding schools experiments, each of which is, in no small part, the legacy of missionary activities" (p. 301). The authors also recognize that "historians, in large part, remained bound by the dictates of the missionaries' sources on emotions in asking questions about 'conversion' and whether 'Christianized Indians' outwardly expressed that they were truly acting as Christians, thus meeting the missionaries' standards of Christian feeling" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 280).

President Ulysses S. Grant implemented a peace policy in the 1860s and there was a formal end to treaty making in 1871, which made way for an official assimilation policy designed to "kill the Indian" but "save the man" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 293; A. Smith, 2004, p. 89). Under the Peace Policy of 1869, Grant designated the "administration of Indian reservations to Christian denominations" and "Congress set aside funds to erect school facilities to be run by churches and missionary societies" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 89). This policy of

"denominational allotment" meant that "each reservation was supervised by a single denomination and rival groups were forbidden to maintain churches or to proselytize on reservations from which they were excluded"—an attempt on the government's part to "control denominational rivalries;" however, in 1881, the Grant Peace Policy was done away with and all denominations had freedom to proselytize on any reservation (Cochran, 2000, p. XIX).

Government-Run Religious Boarding Schools

The boarding school movement, was introduced by Colonel Pratt and "was a major part of assimilation policy […] to rip away Native children from the tight weave of extended family, ancestral land, and traditional practices on that land and place them in totalizing institutions that rewarded them for becoming women and men on the model of Anglo-American and capitalist norms of gender and labor" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 293).

The U.S. and Canada dealt with the indigenous peoples in similar ways. In government-endorsed religious boarding schools, Native children were "forced to worship as Christians and speak English (native traditions and language were prohibited)" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 91). Physical threats and punishment were used to enforce these rules and "sexual, physical, and emotional violence was rampant" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 91). In more recent history, the Canadian government has started to investigate and to take some responsibility for some of these offenses.

In Canada in 2001, the Truth Commission on Genocide listed the following "offenses committed by church officials [...in boarding schools] murder by beating, poisoning, hanging, starvation, strangulation, and medical experimentation" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 91). The Truth Commission's report also included incidents of torture, involuntary sterilization, pedophile rings, and "unmarked graveyards of children who were murdered, particularly those born due to the rape of Native girls by priests and other church officials at the school" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 91).

The human rights violations incurred at boarding schools had continued effects. A. Smith (2004) lists the following issues in Natives as documented by the Canadian government: "physical and sexual violence perpetrated by survivors, underemployment or unemployment, depression, suicide, substance abuse, loss of language, and loss of cultural and spiritual traditions" (p. 93). The damage done by being "told to change sexual behavior, gender roles, family structures […] lead to a mishmash of emotions, from hatred to happiness, sexual desire to sexual apathy, spiritual elation to hollowness within the soul" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 279). It is for these reasons that "much, if not most, of the current dysfunctionality in Native communities can be traced to the boarding school era" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 91).

The harmful effects of the Boarding School policies of the U.S. and Canadian governments, including forced conversion to Christianity, seem to be reverberating through spiritual communities still today. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada completed its five-year study of the country's Indian Residential School legacy. The Commission was formed as a result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement after a class-action lawsuit was filed against the government for boarding school abuses. Canada admittedly modeled their boarding school policies after the U.S. policies. The seven-volume report that came out of the Commission included one whole volume dedicated to missing children and unmarked burials. When the Commission presented their final report at their closing ceremony in December 2015, the Canadian Prime Minister, the Commissioners, and Tribal Leaders all spoke. When church leaders got up to speak, people started exiting the conference hall en masse signaling the existence of harbored and ongoing resentment against the churches.

Further Assimilation and Adoption of Christianity

In addition to campaigns for conversion, there was the issue of land being inhabited by Natives. In the fight for land, two camps formed to deal with the "Indian problem:" one was to try and rid the new territories of Indians all together; the other was to "Kill the Indian and save the man" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 89). This resulted in "cultural rather than physical genocide" and gave rise to a strategy to "inculcate Christianity and white cultural values" into the Natives of that time (A. Smith, 2004, p. 90). Canada had similar policies and, by 1920, the superintendent-general of Indian Affairs said, "our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question and no Indian problem" (Peelman, 1995, p. 22).

Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker (2001) point out "It was missionaries of all denominations who pressed the U.S. government to promulgate the so-called 'Religious Crimes Codes' forbidding practice of Native religious traditions" (p. 177). The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) generated a report grading tribes on assimilation and "giving up" their culture (Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 2001, p. 177). It wasn't until later that this was undone with the creation and passing of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978. The act was put into law to protect the right of American Indians to practice their traditional and cultural religions, including: freedom of worship in traditional ceremonies; protection of access to sacred sites; and the use and possession of objects considered sacred, such as eagle feathers. The mere existence of such a law concedes the fact that these rights were previously violated.

Peelman (1995) points out "Christianity has been adopted by many Amerindians to assure their survival in the larger Euro-American society" (p. 81). The Native Americans started

to adopt Christianity in some numbers despite ongoing resistance to conversion by some as Cochran (2000) describes among the Dakota tribes:

> The early missionaries did not meet with much success except among some of the mixed-blood population and a few of the Dakota women. Only after the Dakota Conflict did many Dakotas adopt Christianity. While a multitude of motivations—religious, social, political, economic, and cultural—prompted the Dakotas to make this transition, Bishop Jones's narrative focuses on the spiritual dynamism of Christianity that helped the people to reconstruct their shattered lives. (p. XVI)

Some Natives even entered political and religious conversations in the public square. Martin and Nicholas (2010) point out that:

> The early American Republic was a Protestant national experiment and could be inclusive or exclusive, depending on where people stood on the Protestant spectrum. Understanding the Republic's Protestant experimentalism, Native ministers entered such debates, innovating and constructing Christianity to intellectually attach the challenges that beset their communities. […] Native spiritual leaders sought to create religious ideologies to salvage themselves, educate their own people, and engage in white American religious forums. […] the Mahican Hendrick Aupaumut drew on several religious ideologies to create his own version of Christian republicanism, on inclusive for Native peoples that would help protect the homelands. (p. 282)

The New Missionary Landscape

In the 1950s, some churches adopted new culturally-aware vocabulary for missions' work (Peelman, 1995, p. 84). Many of the vocabulary being anthropological terms, such as "adaptation, accommodation, localization, indigenization, acculturation, enculturation, [and]

contextualization," however, "despite the efforts to renew itself, the theology of mission remains a church-centered theology [where...] discourse continues to be structured form the vantage point of the churches which proclaim the gospel rather than from the vantage point of the people who receive it" (Peelman, 1995, p. 84).

By the 1960s, 83 percent of the Oglala Lakota were Christian (Catholic or Episcopalian); however, many still practice traditional Native religion (Peelman, 1995, p. 139). Once many Natives converted to Christianity, they were met with racial discrimination (Peelman, 1995, p. 63). This will be explored in more detail in a later section of the literature review.

In recent history, the Episcopal Church repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery. Colonists used the Doctrine of Discovery to validate the decision to take land by force from the native people. The Web site for the Episcopal Church states "Repentance and amendment of life are the answer, and God asks us all – this Church, our partners and neighbors, and the nations which were founded under the Doctrine of Discovery - to the challenging work of reconciliation" (www.episcopalchurch.org).

The Catholic Church has also made progress with inclusiveness of Native Americans in the church. In October 2012, "Pope Benedict XVI named 17th century Mohawk Kateri Tekakwitha the first Native American saint" (Smith-Spark, 2012). Kateri was credited with miracles and living a life dedicated to God. Kateri lived from 1656 to 1680.

Regarding modern Native Christians, Peelman (1995) states, "the majority of the North American native peoples have become Christian;" however, "native cultures and their God-experience have not disappeared from the face of the earth […] the fact that they have survived the colossal shock of western civilization and that they are now enjoying a remarkable rebirth constitutes a 'moral victory' of unique dimensions" (p. 15). Some Native American tribes may

have avoided extinction for the time being, and they may be working towards self-determination, cultural revitalization, and the preservation of their traditional spirituality, but there are still major disparities between Native and non-Native populations in many areas including, economically, health, and quality of life, etc.

Some recent statistics showing the health and welfare issues facing Indian Country today are as follows:

- "28 percent of this racial group lives at the poverty level, as compared to 10.6 percent of non-Hispanic Whites, in 2010;"
- "77 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives alone, age 25 and over have at least a high school diploma, as compared to 91 percent of non-Hispanic Whites;"
- "American Indians and Alaska Natives have an infant death rate 60 percent higher than the rate for Caucasians. AI/ANs are twice as likely to have diabetes as Caucasians;"
- American Indians and Alaska Natives "also have disproportionately high death rates from unintentional injuries and suicide;"
- "American Indian/Alaska Native men and women are twice as likely to be diagnosed with chronic liver disease, as compared to non-Hispanic Whites […due to] conditions such as chronic alcoholism, obesity, and exposure to Hepatitis B and C viruses;" and
- "The overall death rate for American Indian/Alaska Natives is 2.6 times higher than for the White population." (www.hhs.gov) which translates to lower life expectancy for Native Americans versus other ethnicities.

Additionally, some statistics showing the health and welfare issues for Indians according to Canadian records in 1987 are as follows:

- "70 [percent] of the Indian population living on the reserves was institutionally dependent on the government;"
- "90 [percent] of the adults were underemployed or without employment;"
- The "native infant mortality [was] twice that of the rest of Canada;"
- "Violent native deaths [were] more than three times the national average;"
- The "native suicide rate [was] three times the national average among adults and seven times the national average among youth;"
- "47 [percent of houses were] deteriorated or beyond repair;" and
- "45 [percent] of the native population (national average 17[percent]) [was] functionally illiterate" (Peelman, 1995, p. 35).

Some blame the forceful tactics of assimilation and conversion by the government and organized religion for the current disparities faced by Native American communities. However, some churches have become beacons of hope and great resources for Native Americans to overcome these disparities. The question is: Has Christianity hurt or helped Native Americans on the whole? This will be explored in more detail later in the next section titled "Claiming Christianity and Missions of the Church."

Regarding Native American religion and Christianity today, many of the authors on the subject have "a striking respect for [these] various strategies of response […] whether Native people remain card-carrying Christians of the missionary churches, whether they seek to cleave or create semiautonomous institutions and movements of Native Christianity, or whether they disclaim Christian affiliation altogether in favor of 'traditional' spirituality" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 300). These three general responses create a good starting point for exploring

the spiritual landscape for Native Americans today. Therefore, the remainder of the literature review will fall under the following headings: Claiming Christianity and Missions of the Church; Blending Native Movements and Christianity; and Disclaiming Christianity for Traditional Spirituality.

The review of the following literary examples of spiritual practices should provide a spectrum from which to view the case studies we will hear about from the research participants later in this report.

Claiming Christianity and Missions of the Church

Despite some harsh circumstances during colonization and subsequent campaigns to evangelize Native Americans, some did convert to Christianity whole-heartedly. Their participation in the missions of the church within their own Native communities was essential for the growth of the church among Native Americans. Many of these Native missionaries used the church's resources and organization to help improve the conditions of the Native communities. However, some of the following examples will show that the Native missionaries were met with resistance from both whites and Natives alike.

Unfriendly Attitudes Towards Native Missionaries

Peelman (1995) writes "in the eyes of civil and military authorities, the only good Indian was a Christian Indian" (p. 81). Due to church structures and hierarchy, Native Christians were "doubly marginalized or excommunicated" (Peelman, 1995, p. 63). In the "great family" of Christian brotherhood, "with the bishop and missionaries as the parents, and the white Catholics as the elder children supporting their lesser brethren (the Indians)" Natives were often outcast (Peelman, 1995, p. 63). The "colonialist attitude" towards Native missionaries allowed them to question how "hordes of formerly cruel and barbarous men be counted on to build up the Body

of Christ" (Peelman, 1995, p. 63). Native Christian missionaries also met with difficulty from non-Native Christians when "in the hope of removing God's curse of racial difference in citizenship [they moved elsewhere] only to find their attempts at inclusion repeatedly smashed by American migration and removal" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 286).

For some Natives, adopting Christianity meant being less Native. "Although benevolent, many missionaries demoted Native peoples and their tribal standing" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 283). "Native peoples lost land, intermarried with outsiders, and entered new coercive labor markets but upheld their own churches and beliefs even though they had been subsumed as distinctively non-Indian" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 283). The problem of identity as dichotomous between Native American and Christian persists and will be explored in more detail in this report.

Among missionaries, it was summed up that "the overall Christian results are among the least impressive of all mission labours" among Native Americans due to "the types of Christian developed by the aboriginal peoples themselves" (Peelman, 1995, p. 65). This was due to the fact that "Conversion did not have the same meaning for the Indians as it did for the missionaries" and the Indians "understood Christianity to be a new way of praying which had come to them not to replace but to enrich their own prayer life" (Peelman, 1995, p. 66). Peelman (1995) writes that "one of the most interesting, but the least expected, results of the missionary epic in native North America is the formation of specific Amerindian expressions of Christianity, inside and outside the official boundaries of the churches" (p. 67). However, this was often not accepted within the conventional church doctrine at the time and will be discussed more under the section "From Dualism to Syncretism."

Despite the less than friendly treatment of some Native missionaries, "it is obvious the *active participation* of the Indians in the Christian missions not only allowed numerous generations of missionaries to survive in the hostile territories of North America, but that it also contributed to the survival of Christianity itself" in the U.S. (Peelman, 1995, p. 61).

Working with the Indians

Some non-Native Christians were helpful as well as respectful to Native Christian communities. A missionary named Frederick Baylies "helped Native Christians fund schools and keep their churches intact while never undermining the Native peoples' social structure of church leaders and cultural ways of learning and praying" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 286).

Contact between Native and non-Native Christians produced mixed results for Native communities with some positive and negative effects:

> Missionary encounters have led to the tragic loss of many Native languages: missionary encounters have also led, through the mechanisms and practices of literacy, to the retention of Native languages […] The encounters could introduce or exacerbate divisions in Native communities and families, fomenting disastrous results, if not violence; through those encounters could also emerge novel social networks and institutions around which fragmented Native peoples could restore their communities. (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 289)

In light of some unsavory history, the book *Dakota Cross-Bearer* "provides an apology for Christianity alongside a healthy critique of church policies and practices […] At the same time, it steadfastly maintains a respect for traditional [Native] religious practices and beliefs" (Cochran, 2000, p. XIII). The dichotomy of the two perspectives in the book is often lived out in Native lives. Cochran (2000) writes of Harold Jones, a Dakota Episcopalian Bishop whose "church

raised up leaders within Native communities to help spread the Gospel message and incorporated these communities into the existing church structure" (p. XVIII).

The biography is meant to show "the complex interrelations of Christianity and Native belief," encounters of racial discrimination, and dealings with "a church that strongly desired a native clergy but was often ill equipped to negotiate cultural differences […] for native priests" (Cochran, 2000, p. XII). The title is meant to show the paradox in Jones' life of "a cross-bearer [being] both one who leads the people in liturgical procession and one who follows Christ in his sufferings" (Cochran, 2000, p. XIII). Jones also states that over the years and history of colonization, with Christianity, Native Americans have also been able to "create their own history and transform their own culture" (Cochran, 2000, p. XIII).

The question is whether Christianity and Native American culture can co-exist or intermingle and to what extent. Often there is a dichotomous duality of the two.

Religious Dualism and Division

Peelman's definition of dualism is when "two religious systems coexist without mutual compenetration," and he often interchanges the terms dualism and syncretism (Peelman, 1995, p. 81). Thus, dualism includes elements of opposition, contrast, or division. Peelman describes a "reinterpreted" Christian faith by Native Americans as sometimes creating "their own expressions of Christianity on the fringe of the official churches [*syncretism*] and often in opposition to them [*dualism*]" (Peelman, 1995, p. 83). Syncretism is more blending and acceptance of two different religions in the same practitioner. What this gives us is a "wide spectrum of cultural and religious developments" from dualism to syncretism (Peelman, 1995, p. 83). Syncretism will be discussed in more detail later in the section titled "Blending Native Movements and Christianity."

Some Native Americans opt for one religion over the other because of the nature of Christianity being that "Christian faith constitutes a fundamental and exclusive option (one does not believe in two religions at the same time)" (Peelman, 1995, p. 81). In some cases, the church asserted that Native spirituality was pagan (Peelman, 1995, p 63). Many of the aspects of Native spirituality involve unnamed spirits, and as William Stolzman (1989) said, "Some people are fearful of visions lest they come from an evil spirit. Even if a particular vision is not from God, human beings have the ability to turn even sinful things into things of spiritual profit" (p. 2). However, missionaries were still aimed at getting rid of the Native Americans' "barbaric and satanic practices" and superstitions (Peelman, 1995, p. 78). Treat (1996) writes that, Native Christian, Dr. Eastman "diagnosed the colonial myopia that envisioned Indians as vanishing Americans, the cultural narcissism that branded them as primitive savages, [and] the religious arrogance that christened them as devil-worshipping pagans" (p. 3).

The *Body of Christ Independent Church* on the Pine Ridge Reservation carries on this exclusionary belief-system; the church is Pentecostal in origin and is "radically opposed to the traditional Lakota religion" although it considers itself a Native American religious organization (Peelman, 1995, p. 77). The members of this Lakota church believe "that Christ had more power than the Sacred Pipe" and they fulfill "the cultural needs of its members through a deep religious experience of commitment to Christ (Peelman, 1995, p. 77). The Sacred Pipe will be discussed in more detail later in this report.

C. Smith (2001) wrote a booklet defining the "***Boundary Lines*** of Biblical Truth relating to Christ, Indigenous Worship and the Native American Culture" in response to "the growing movement spreading across Native America that promotes the redeeming of Native American animistic practices for Christian worship" (p. v). The booklet, a summary of a report to "the

Native Theological Task Force" in 2000, is used as "official guidelines" by spiritual leaders in the Native American District of the C&MA in Canada (C. Smith, 2001, p. v). The preamble clearly states a boundary as follows:

> Recently, there has been introduced in the native evangelical church community the concept that drums, rattles, and other sacred paraphernalia formerly used in animistic worship can be 'redeemed' for use in Christian worship. This position does not enjoy consensus among native evangelical church leaders. (C. Smith, 2001, p. 1)

The booklet also mentions demonology in that Satan and his demons "oppose Christ and His church and attempt to deceive the church" and that the Bible condemns animism (C. Smith, 2001, p. 16). Furthermore, "material artifacts (sacred objects) used by animists are never neutral, but dedicated to the demons" and that Christians are "to destroy them and forever distance [themselves] from the evil they represent" (C. Smith, 2001, p. 18). C. Smith (2001) describes "sacred objects" as used in Native ceremonies as "made animate by indwelling demonic powers" (p. 28).

The list of sacred objects to avoid include common plants like tobacco, sage, and sweet grass as well as drums, carvings, dream catchers, and pow wow regalia (C. Smith, 2001, p. 33). C. Smith (2001) also makes clear that the items used in the Sundance ceremony, "an animistic spiritual ritual," are demonic sacred objects (p. 33). In an interview with a Native elder, C. Smith (2001) asks if any cultural "tools" (like sage for smudging) can be used "to cleanse one's self in the same way the blood of Christ cleanses" to which the elder replies "no" (p. 42). C. Smith (2001) gives few examples of Native cultural forms that are not demonic to include the Navajo "laughing baby" and "changing woman" ceremonies.

C. Smith (2001) also makes it clear that animistic worship cannot be redeemed, that salvation "by general revelation" is biblical misinterpretation and "the first steps towards universalism" (p. 18). The Bible verse 2 Corinthians 5:17 is quoted as an example of misinterpretation of the words "all things become new"—C. Smith (2001) says that it "declares the removal of the old behavior replacing it with the new life in Christ" and that there really is not "ground for the redemption of culture in this passage" (p. 24).

Furthermore, C. Smith (2001) defines "syncretism" as "the subtle attempt to integrate biblical truth and faith in Christ with non-biblical native religious beliefs, practices and forms," which results in "an adulteration of biblical truth and the birth of 'another gospel'" (p. 26). The booklet makes clear that "Scriptures are our final authority" and quotes both the Old and the New Testaments to back up nearly every concept and statement made (C. Smith, 2001, p. 18). C. Smith (2001) also makes the point that Natives themselves made the determination "of what could be embraced by native believers after their conversion" (C. Smith, 2001, p. 39). The booklet ends with a statement that the Task Force prayed about and agreed to; they "believe that the teaching of redeeming of sacred objects used in traditional or contemporary Native animistic practices and worship constitutes unbiblical, heretical, and false doctrine" (C. Smith, 2001, p. 45).

Des Gerlaise (2012), a Native American Christian from the Cree nation, writes of her experience growing up with her father who was a medicine man. Des Gerlaise writes:

> Many Christians see no problem combining the beliefs and practices of Native American Spirituality with their view of Christianity. This book was written to assist such believers who do not understand the subtle snares of the devil and Christ's call to complete

> holiness and truth. Like them, I ignorantly engaged in Native Spirituality without prior assessment of the spiritual consequences of this false worship. (p. 9)

Des Gerlaise (2012) specifically condemns "Native spiritism, Roman Catholicism, [and] paganism" (p. 9). She also states that she had been "suffering…from the results of involvement in demonic activities" but was "freed from Satan's prison" (Des Gerlaise, 2012, p. 10).

In a chapter titled "A Counterfeit Versus the Real Thing" Des Gerlaise (2012) writes that just because some forms of Native religion demonstrate spiritual power doesn't mean it is good and that the "bible is full of warnings about the subtlety and dangers of demonic powers and deception" (p. 61). Des Gerlaise (2012) also mentions the "ungodly mixture of occultism and works, as a means to obtain spiritual power" in the Roman Catholic Church is "unbiblical doctrine" (p. 63). Des Gerlaise (2012) lists opposing interpretations between the biblical view and the Native Spirituality view of the "creation of the world," the "fall of mankind," the "nature of good & evil," "sin & redemption," the "afterlife," and spiritual "protection while living on earth" (p. 65-69).

While these types of Native American Christians make no room for syncretistic or polytheistic incorporation of Native religion, Peelman (1995) quotes John Webster Grant as saying "If the measure of success is that most Indians have become Christian, the measure of failure is that Christianity has not become Indian" speaking to the fact that cultural exchanges did not go both ways (p. 67). Despite religious strictness, Christianity has been an important vehicle helping Native communities.

Christian Origins of Indian Activism in the U.S.

Evidence suggests that assimilation through Christianity contributed to the evolution of Native American activism. Take the example of David Brown, a Cherokee Christian who

graduated seminary in 1823 and went on a speaking tour for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to "promote the cause of missions to Native Americans" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 67). Brown ended up speaking to white audiences "to induce a sense of moral obligation" in which he stated the fact that Natives inhabited the land prior to colonization, endured centuries of war on all fronts, were still present with spiritual values of their own, and yet were capable of further assimilation and value to society (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 73). The speech balanced a great deal of ugly truth with promotion of missions' work among Native communities. Brown saw Christianity as a benefit to Native Americans for "economic, civic, ethical, and religious" success and called the family of Christ to his cause (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 73).

Martin and Nicholas (2010) give an example of a Native American named Occom who adopts Christianity and uses it to help his community (p. 280). Occom used his literary skills for activism and wrote "of the emotional trauma he felt—in hurt, suffering, and absolute despair […] he tapped his emotions not to feel victimized but as a source to motivate and take what he had learned from missionaries to help other Natives use the Christian message in struggles for self-preservation and autonomy" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 280).

Another Native Christian, considered somewhat of a prophet, Hendrick Aupaumut, moved around "seeking to pass his Native Christian message along traditional routes of Native American intertribal diplomacy" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 285). Others also traveled around "to spread their brand of racial-difference Christianity and find a place for their people" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 286).

Much like the early settlers in the U.S. using the Catholic Doctrine of Discovery to rule over legal land issues, the U.S. government funded religious boarding schools to deal with the

"Indian Problem" in early U.S. history. In fact, many churches today still incorporate political issues into their religious campaigns. Peelman (1995) points out the fact that "it is almost impossible to isolate [the] religious dimension from the other political, social and economic aspects of the Amerindian reality" (p. 16). Peelman also states that "Christological questioning is an intrinsic dimension of the contemporary Amerindian renaissance with all its political, social and economic implications" and that while natives "cannot escape the impact of western culture and the dominant society," they "can claim the right to be different and to control their own future" as part of a "spiritual adventure" (Peelman, 1995, p. 17).

Martin and Nicholas (2010) depict how Natives and Christians worked together, in some cases, "against the grain of a new, powerful cultural capital—the racial construct of the 'vanishing Indian'" (p. 284). Thus, some new movements developed as ways to revitalize the traditional culture and blend them with the new ways of Christianity. This leads us to our next category along the spectrum of spiritual practices regarding Native American religion and Christianity found in the review of literature.

Blending Native Movements and Christianity

Despite the difficulty in doing so, some Native Americans and churches have been successful with the syncretistic blending of such things as animism, mysticism, and monotheism.

In 1984, Pope John Paul II said to a crowd in Midland, Ontario that Christ was a Native American. This sounds a lot like syncretism. His exact words were as follows:

> Thus the one faith is expressed in different ways. There can be no question of adulterating the word of God or of emptying the Cross of its power, but rather of Christ animating the very centre of all. Thus, not only is Christianity relevant to the Indian peoples, but *Christ in the members of his Body, is himself Indian*. (Peelman, 1995, p. 13)

The Pope's statement sounds like an appeal to Christ's universal suffering to unite all the nations on earth as one people in the Body of Christ as members of His church. This is a change in perspective from the either-or outlook of dualism.

From Dualism to Syncretism

For some, rather than dualism creating a polarized dichotomy of religions, *dualism* between Christianity and Native American religion occurs as the peaceful "coexistence of [the] two religions" that run "parallel [just] without any real integration;" whereas *syncretism* is the real merger of those two religions (Peelman, 1995, p. 78). Cases of Native American religion and Christianity can fall into either classification, but it seems an evolution to move from dualism to syncretism and Native American culture seems to lend itself to the open incorporation of other ideologies or at least a tolerance of them.

Peelman (1995) gives examples of dualism that act more like syncretism. Peelman writes that religious dualism is "a widespread phenomenon, not only in Canada but also in the United States of America and other parts of the world where indigenous peoples have embraced Christianity in the context of colonialism [...with] cultural adaptation or as a transitory phase within the acculturation process" (p. 80). Peelman (1995) also points out that some "Anishinabe native medicine men can now also be ordained deacons in the Roman Catholic church" and that some "native shamans use Christian symbols in their rituals and that Catholic priests introduce native symbols in their liturgies" (p. 81). The question being, is that dualism or syncretism?

An example of harmonious dualism is as follows:

> The Cree of Mistassini in Quebec [who] switched from the Anglican religion to their indigenous one with the change of the seasons. From May to August, the Cree are to be found at the trading post of Mistassini searching for part-time jobs: their social life is then

> entirely organized around the Anglican Church; they practise the Anglican religion (prayers, sacraments and so on) just like Anglicans elsewhere in the world. But, when autumn comes, they leave Mistassini and make for their hunting grounds. Their life is then entirely conditioned by their ancestral religion, which provides them with a vision of the world, rituals and prayers which are suitable for people who live by hunting and fishing, in profound communion with nature. (Peelman, 1995, p. 78)

This example is true dualism, without conflict, as the two religions never intersect or mingle with each other, but have their own separate space and time.

Perhaps Native American religion finds its way into Christian practices because of the nature of Native American culture. Peelman (1995) states that "Christianity has not been able to displace the traditional Amerindian religions" and that "Ancestral spirituality continues to play a significant role in the lives of many native Americans and in their communities […] even in the lives of many Amerindians who consider themselves faithful members of the Christian church" (p. 15). For many Native Americans, the fact is that they "became Christians but that Christianity was unable to change drastically their religious worldview" because traditional Native "spiritual values were diffused throughout the entire cultural system" (Peelman, 1995, p. 64). Peelman (1995) also points out "Indians' ancestral spirituality must be considered as the principal axis of their nascent Christology" and that their "ancestral spirituality remains the true place where we will eventually discover the hidden face of the Amerindian Christ" (p. 20).

Martin and Nicholas (2010) compile essays from the last two centuries that describe examples of how Native Americans and Christian missionaries interacted. In their conclusion, they cite a study done on the Native American Church, also known as Peyote religion, which reveals that "Native American religions are characterized by what Joseph Epes Brown called

‘cumulative non-exclusive adhesion’” (p. 297). The authors note that “in anthropologist Pamela Amoss’s words, Native religions are ‘religiously musical’” and that they “are artful, resourceful, and adept in the way they’ve drawn on the repertories of multiple historical traditions to fashion a working synthesis characterized more by what Pierre Bourdieu called the ‘logic of practice’ than by the logic of orthodoxy or theological consistency” (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 297).

Peelman (1995) states “interreligious dialogue is perceived by many Native Americans, not as the encounter between parallel religious systems, but as a personal experience of integration” (p. 17). Peelman (1995) writes that members of the Navajo tribal nation call themselves “Diyin dine’ é” which blends religious language and translates to “the Children of the Holy People” and they believe “the most important thing about [the] native way is that it is a spiritual way” (p. 22). Native American religion, by nature of its pantheistic or inclusive theology, is more able to incorporate other belief systems than some other religions.

The movement from dualism to syncretism has been also a survival mechanism for Native Americans, not only religiously, but also culturally. James Treat’s anthology suggests “Native Christians have somehow had to get their heads and hearts around being authentically Native while being authentically Christian” (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 299). Furthermore, the authors note, “Roman Catholic scholars and leaders […] have most clearly extended the postconciliar liturgical and theological reforms to articulate an enculturation or inculturation of the gospel in and through Native languages and cultures” (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 299). Martin and Nicholas also quote Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker on identity with the “ultimate question in the relationship between contemporary Native people and organized Christian churches […] can one be Christian and Indian simultaneously in contemporary society” (p. 299). Cochran (2000) states that “being Indian is a matter of behavior, not blood […] to honor one’s

relatives, to be generous, to open one's home to strangers are all marks of being Lakota and Dakota" (p. xx).

Besides cultural evolution, some Native Americans are tired of the polarization between religions and the subsequent rejection of religion which dualism creates. An Episcopal Ojibwe, James Allen, Jr., and others from Leech Lake, MN, "have founded a project that aims to eradicate barriers between the various religious alternatives, Christian and non-Christian" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 300). Allen and Anishinaabe elders want their people to "find *a* spiritual path—not *the* spiritual path"—a reference to the often exclusionary doctrine of Christianity (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 300). Martin and Nicholas (2010) also note "elders and leaders hewing to the Midéwiwin and other traditional Anishinaabe practices generally share such a position of respect for Anishinaabe people who identify with the Christian tradition, despite often frequent criticisms of Christianity" (p. 300).

Whether they have completely replaced Native religion for Christianity or blended the two, Peelman (1995) states "Amerindians welcome all roads leading to the Great Mystery [...and] this attitude has profoundly influenced their relationship with Christianity and their conversion to Christianity" (p. 49). Peelman (1995) quotes Chief Harold Cardinal at an assembly of Catholic Bishops in 1983 as follows:

> For many years, the church and others as well have asked the Indian People to give up their traditions in order to embrace Christ; but now, allegedly, we seem to have reversed the situation and the Indian People are being asked to give up Christ in order to embrace their own traditions […] The ways of our people CAN be brought together with the ways of other peoples. Our elders do in fact respect your church as being one of the institutions to whom our Father gave a certain knowledge and a certain truth. And they believe and

> accept in their own way that they too have been given a knowledge and a vision of Our Father. And they recognize that it is time … at least that it is almost time … to begin bringing these two traditions together so that we may be able to enrich each other […]. (p. 132)

Stolzman (1989) states that "A primary value of [his] book is the ability to show clearly that there really are radical differences between the Lakota and Christian way, **and** it is possible for a person to draw spiritual good from both traditions without sacrificing one's authentic participation in either religion […] In this way, a person is able to receive and share **all** the revelation which God has give to those whom He has called to be spiritually and culturally one with the Lakota people, as blessed by both the Pipe and Christ." (p. 220).

However, blending the two religious views is not easy, and "discussions showed that there were many similarities and differences" in Lakota and Christian religions (Stolzman, 1989, p. 219). "While one group saw no difference between the two religions, another group emphasized the differences and encouraged a separation of the two religions. Most of the Indian participants of the dialogue, however, were living in such a way that the two religious traditions found a spiritual harmony." (Stolzman, 1989, p. 219) Therefore, when "faced with the radical difference between the Lakota and Christian world views, many people end up opting to follow one religion or the other" (Stolzman, 1989, p. 14). Stolzman (1989) recognizes the tensions between the two religious and cultural views, and he ultimately suggests that pluralism of religion and identity can exist between the two. Even with pluralism, it still seems an either-or proposition, defining which practices and beliefs come from which religion.

Among some Native Americans, "dualism is not viewed as a contradiction or as a source of conflict, but as a mutual enrichment of their religious practices" (Peelman, 1995, p. 78). A

number of case studies gathered from 1982 to 1995 depict Native Americans who were deeply involved in the renewal of their church [...and] who are achieving a personal integration of their ancestral spirituality and the Christian faith" (Peelman, 1995, p. 13). Peelman's (1995) study uses the "deductive method to present and analyze the testimonies" of "religious pluralism" in the Native communities in Canada (p. 13). However, Peelman (1995) writes that he is not studying the difference in "Amerindian and Christian doctrines or rituals, but […] the mysterious presence of Christ in the Amerindian spiritual process" (p. 43). Peelman's case studies reveal a great deal of syncretism.

Peelman (1995) states that the "ongoing interaction between the gospel and the Amerindian cultures" is a "complex religious situation" (p. 15). Amerindians create "a unique kind of Christology" where "Christ is profoundly incarnated in the Indian consciousness" and "local theologies [are] based on life experience of those who welcome the gospel and let Christ challenge them in the spirit" (Peelman, 1995, p. 14). Peelman's research is not concerned with "how the Amerindians have integrated our western images of Christ, but to underline the specific contributions they are making to a deeper and larger vision of the Christ mystery" (p. 14). Therefore, Peelman (1995) stresses the term "inculturation" as describing the "encounter between Christ and the Amerindian cultures" (p. 16). Peelman states that "the church's missionary activity (evangelization) does not end with the proclamation of the gospel and the integration (assimilation) of new members in a dogmatic religious system whose boundaries have been fixed once and for all" but that the "fruit" of this "harvest" is the unexpected result that "the mystery of the crucified and risen Christ [is] perceived and visualized by different peoples and cultures" (p. 16). Due to the strong oral tradition in native cultures, "Native

American theology […] remains experiential in orientation" and "like the contextual theologies of the Third World, it remains a communitarian enterprise" (Peelman, 1995, p. 17).

Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker (2001) discuss syncretism and dualism as they format their book based on "Christian systematic theology" (p. ix). They followed Christian theology to make the book more accessible to non-Natives; however, to fit the needs of Natives, they added categories of "land and trickster" to the systematics (Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 2001, p. ix). The traditional Christian categories explored include, "Deity, Christology, Sin, and Eschatology" (Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 2001, p. 3). Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker (2001) encourage readers to renew their Christian faith, follow traditional ways, or find a "syncretic merging of Christianity" and Indian culture, but they do not make any recommendations on which is best (p. 4).

The intent of Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker's (2001) book is "to challenge the traditional categories of Christian theology with a new understanding of Native views and to bring new insights to an understanding of Native theology, in its broadest sense" meaning both historically and contemporarily (p. ix). Their purpose "is to create a dialogue in which Indian people can speak as equals to Christians, and where we can encourage a creative, new, visioning process for Native people where they can recognize the uniqueness of their practices with regard to Christianity…[with] renewed health for Indian cultures and each Indian national community" (Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 2001, p. 1). The authors note that, most importantly, the vision "must be built on Indian cultures, values and religious traditions, even as it responds to the devastating history of colonialism (Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 2001, p. 1).

The United Methodist Church sponsored Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker's (2001) book (p. xi). Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker (2001) are three professors of American Indian studies and

theological studies whose book was reviewed by an advisory committee of Native scholars and religious practitioners prior to publishing (p. xi). The authors acknowledge that Christian theology has become a large part of Native culture in some cases (and they discuss comparisons), but they also "challenge them and propose Indian theological categories that might serve us far better" (Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 2001, p. 2). The authors ask, based on the proclamation of freedom in Christ from Galatians 5:1, "How free are Indians to interpret Christianity for themselves (whether biblical text or Christian doctrine)" (Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 2001, p. 2).

The authors' interpretation of Christian theology "move[s] beyond the traditional logical limits of Christian interpretation. This leap of understanding means, at the least, that Indian Christians will no longer merely accede to being consumers of Amer-European theological ideas. We seize responsibility for our own spiritual well-being and generate our own interpretive theologies—whether Christian or traditional" (Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 2001, p. 2).

Furthermore, the authors assert "the Christian claim to exclusive access to spiritual truth is less and less tenable in today's world" (Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 2001, p. 2). The authors acknowledge the use of oral tradition in Native culture and include it in the definition of ancient "sacred texts," and assert that "this means that the exclusive privileging of the Christian Bible (Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament) must also give way to a recognition of the numerous ways in which the Sacred Mystery/Sacred Other/God has chosen to communicate with the Sacred's children in different parts of the world" (Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 2001, p. 3). Similarly, Cochran (2010) writes that a Native Bishop sees "Christianity not as belonging to white people but as a universal religion [...and that] the sufferings of Christ are joined to the suffering of the Indian people" (p. XVI).

An example of syncretistic blending is "Douglas Winiarski's turn toward the 'supernatural economy' in Plymouth, New England, for example, shows that in explaining away ghosts and demons, healing unknown ailments, and dealing with terrifying natural disasters, missionaries and Native Americans together, at the local level, actually reconciled out elements of Christianity with other forms of spirituality" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 278). The essays show that Native Americans "borrowed, adapted, and accommodated various Christian routines, with or without the help of missionaries, to make sense out of the tactile or the audible, the visual or the olfactory" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 279). The editors note that "Tracy Neal Leavelle's essay strongly warns that Christian material culture oftentimes lost some of its Christian meanings and symbols in Native rituals […] Rosaries, crucifixes, and Bibles could all be consumed on indigenous terms, transformed into spiritually charged objects of meaning, performance, and intertribal conflict" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 281).

Treat (1996) includes a section of essays written by Native Christians that address the blending of Christianity and Native religion. Treat says that these essays are "addressing the practical consequences of a phenomenon that church administrators and academic scholars variously refer to as indigenization or inculturation, syncretism or acculturation" (p. 21). There are plenty more examples of syncretism between the two religions. The following section will explore them in greater detail.

Native Christian Identity and Syncretism

This report has already mentioned cultural reasons for Native American acceptance and adoption of Christian symbolism and ideology. The following section will give more examples of what this looks like in religious practices. Regarding the blending of theology and religious symbols, Peelman (1995) states that "We must consider whether we are dealing here with a

simple accumulation of religious symbols (cumulative acculturation) or with true forms of religious integration" (p. 210).

Treat (1996) compiled a book of articles and essays "by native writers that focus on the problem on native Christian identity" (p. 2). He points out "historical, social, and cultural factors have quieted native Christians in many tribal and religious contexts" but that "many native Christians will be the agents of their own religious destinies; they have chosen to be theological and literary subjects, not the objects of missiological [missionaries] or anthropological [anthropologists] or any other form of colonial or neocolonial domination" (Treat, 1996, p. 3).

Treat (1996) gives three primary examples in his introduction of native Christians who are pioneers in the area of native Christian identity and maneuvering; Charles Alexander Eastman, a Santee Sioux physician in the 1890s; Liliuokalani, a Hawaiian queen in the 1890s; and William Apess, a Pequot Methodist minister in the 1820s were among the pioneers who published their experiences in native Christian identity.

Treat (1996) writes that Eastman lived with his tribe until his father, who had been Christianized, showed up to take him elsewhere to receive an education and learn Christianity. Eastman (1977), himself, writes that he "continued to study the Christ philosophy and loved it for its essential truths […] though doctrines and dogmas often puzzled and repelled" him (p. 71). Eastman took to "speaking and writing about Indian life and government policy," and he "worked with a variety of organizations including the Society of American Indians, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Boy Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs" for the betterment of Indian country at the time (Treat, 1996, p. 4).

Eastman (1977) noticed religious hypocrisy and said "it appears that [Christians] are anxious to pass on their religion to all races of men, but keep very little of it themselves" (p.

193). Treat (1996) writes that “Eastman struggled throughout his life to reconcile two seemingly contradictory allegiances; native and Christian” (p. 5). Eastman (1995) observed that Christianity had an “open contempt of all religions but its own;” (p. 19). A major act of hypocrisy was that ministers and bishops made treaties with Indians “and pledged to them in solemn treaty the national honor with prayer and mention of their God” but “such treaties, so made, were promptly and shamelessly broken” (Eastman, 1995, p. 20). Eastman (1995) asks in response to broken treaties if “is it strange that the action should arouse not only anger, but contempt” in Native Americans (p. 20).

Although Eastman lived in both native and Christian cultures, Treat (1996) writes that “both in Eastman’s time and today […] ‘native’ and ‘Christian’ are mutually exclusive identities: a native who has become wholeheartedly Christian has lost some measure of native authenticity; a Christian who is still fully native has fallen short of Christian orthodoxy” (p. 6). Perhaps his success in crossing cultures was that Eastman “recognized the folly of maladaptive dogmatism in a rapidly changing world” (Treat, 1996, p. 6). However, Eastman (1995) writes, “the spirit of Christianity and of our ancient religion is essentially the same” (p. 24).

Treat (1996) also wrote about Liliuokalani, “the last reigning monarch of the Hawaiian kingdom” in the late 1800s who was indigenous as well as Christian (p. 6). Liliuokalani wrote an autobiography about the overthrow of her monarchy by the “missionary party” in an “indictment of American imperialism and white religious hypocrisy” (Treat, 1996, p. 7). As a Christian, Liliuokalani “identified herself with the Protestant mission church as well as Episcopals, Catholics, Mormons, Eastern mystical traditions, and Hawaiian traditional religion” through which she formed “a synthesis of her own, which she felt was the basis of mysticism, hidden in all religions” (Treat, 1996, p. 7). Liliuokalani described that Hawaiian people had been adopted

"in substance" but that "the habits and prejudices of New England Puritanism were not well adapted to the genius of a tropical people, nor capable of being thoroughly engrafted upon them" (Treat, 1996, p. 7).

Along with Eastman and Liliuokalani, Treat (1996) wrote about William Apess, "a Pequot from New England and an ordained Methodist minister" in the early 1800s (p. 8). Treat (1996) wrote that "Apess condemned the hypocrisies of white religionists who preached universal salvation while practicing exclusionary racism," and Apess thought that Christians needed to act like civilized people themselves (p. 8). Apess used his identity as a Christian to emphasize his identity as a Native American and to present native Christians as more than just culturally Christian.

Treat (1996) states that the missionaries in Native communities preach "a gospel of cultural conformity, condemning native religious history on the basis of ignorance, and dictating artificial criteria for institutional acceptability" (p. 8). Anthropologists have made the mistake of "looking for pure, primitive culture, dismissing native religious adaptability as tragic acculturation" (Treat, 1996, p. 9). Hoyer (1998) mentions that many anthropologists viewed "Indian cultures as either dying or already dead, and spurred the desire to preserve Indian culture through what became known as 'salvage anthropology'" (p. xvi).

Treat (1996) writes, "radical activists have defended native communities against these and other [religious] impositions, calling for the outright rejection of 'the white man's religion' and the immediate revival of esoteric indigenous traditions" (p. 9). Treat (1996) writes that native Christians "face a fundamental existential dilemma in attempting to resolve their hybrid identities into an organic unity" and that "native Christian identity is both historically and culturally problematic" (p. 9). Treat (1996) describes a poster in an Episcopal church which

addresses the question of being native and Christian; the poster acknowledges that one might not want anything to do with Christianity due to the heartbreaking history with Native Americans, and ends with the idea of Christian forgiveness as well as courage to claim both native and Christian identities (p. 9).

Treat (1996) points out the potential for good in that "Christian institutions can mediate social power and material resources and provide avenues for the development and recognition of religious leadership" (p. 9). Churches can also "facilitate community reconciliation and allow for the fulfillment of ceremonial obligations," and "provide direction in daily life and in overcoming personal struggles" for Native people (Treat, 1996, p. 9).

The Native American Theological Association was created "in 1977 to promote leadership development among native Christians in mainline Protestant churches" as an expression of self-determination through "theological expression" (Treat, 1996, p. 11). Treat (1996) writes that theology is a Western concept and does not fit Native religion (p. 11). Baldridge (1989) agrees that theology "is a decidedly non-Indian thing", that it is "not natural nor a normal product of Native American culture", and that "when Indians theologize they must place one foot into the Euro-American culture; and if they are not careful they will soon have both feet outside of their own culture" (p. 228). Treat (1996) explains that the difference between Native theology and Christian theology is experiential where "conventional Christian theology is typically doctrinal and rational, native Christian reflection is experiential and performative; while conventional Christian theology is often dogmatic, native Christian discourse is confessional" (p. 13). These are fundamental differences in the paradigm of how religion interfaces with doctrine and practice.

Hoyer (1998) wrote about Mary Austin, a non-native writer in the late 1880s whose writing shows syncretism between Christianity and Native religion. Austin was "influenced by her Midwestern Methodist upbringing and manifests a thorough knowledge of the Christian bible" (Hoyer, 1998, p. xviii). Austin lived in the Southwest among Native people (Hoyer, 1998, p. xviii). Through Austin's "many allusions to Christian and Native American mythologies she is exploring yet one more border that must be recognized and discarded—the boundary erected between the religious philosophies and practices of Native and Euro-Americans" (Hoyer, 1998, p. xviii).

Additionally, syncretic practices include some native people who associate the central sun dance pole with the Christ figure and the tree of life with the center of the cosmos in the traditional sun dance ceremony. The sacred tree at the center of the Sun Dance Lodge sometimes symbolizes the return of Christ and is venerated as a source of new life (Peelman, 1995, p. 189). The native side of this ceremony is that the "Sun Dance is not just a ritual that promotes the vegetation and animal life during the new year that it introduces, it is a recapitulation of the creation; in fact, it is creation, and its effects concern the whole evolution and sustenance of the universe" (Hultkrantz, 1987, p. 274).

Peelman (1995) explains the blending of Christian symbolism with the use of the sacred pipe in Native American ceremonies (p. 139). The pipe was used throughout Native history, as confirmed by archeologists, but the *sacred* pipe was given in a vision of the White Buffalo Woman—the timing of which coincided with the beginning of evangelization of the Lakota (Peelman, 1995, p. 139). The connection of the pipe to Christ was "made by the medicine men themselves who consider the Lakota religion, centered on the sacred pipe, to be an authentic pre-Christian religion" which Peelman (1995) states "finds its fulfillment in Christ" (p. 141).

Stolzman's (1992) recounting of the Rosebud Medicine Men and Pastors Meeting reveals the following theology behind the pipe blending with the Christ:

> Some dialogue participants compared the Spirit of the West with God the Father. Both mark the beginning of all things and help make them grow. The Spirit of the North, like the Son of God, shows that good comes from a life that is obedient and straight. Both show the tremendous good that flows from sacrifice for the sake of one's people. The Spirit of the East, like the Holy Spirit, is associated with wisdom, leadership, understanding, prayer, and effective communication in the spiritual order. But what about the Spirit of the South, the place where, according to the Lakota, the animal spirits live and where the human person, in ghost form, will experience earthly happiness with relatives and all the animals? […] The "communion" which exists among all the spirits in the South, according to Lakota mythology, could help Christians to highlight the corporate mystery of the "Mystical Body of Christ" more effectively. (p. 142).

> Because of its four directions the cross of Christ is often interpreted as the centre of the universe. The cross finds itself, so to speak, midway between the tree of paradise (Gen. 3:24) and the tree of the apocalypse (Rev. 22:1-2). […] The cross of Christ, with its four directions and it central cosmic symbolism, has a special meaning for native people who have integrated Christ into their sacred pipe rituals. (p. 210).

The Lakota "visualize Christ as the true fulfillment of the sacred pipe" (Peelman, 1995, p. 139). In a funeral ceremony combining Christian elements and Native elements the pipe was given a new ritual with the following prayer: "I am the Living and Eternal Pipe, the Resurrection and the

Life; whoever believes in Me and dies shall live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never suffer eternal death" (Peelman, 1995, p. 140).

The famous book about Native ways and spirituality by Black Elk (1863-1950) never mentions his conversion to Christianity and baptism in 1904 (Peelman, 1995, p. 141). Black Elk helped to grow and develop the Catholic church on the Pine Ridge reservation, and his son carried his legacy saying that "the sacred pipe and Christ really were one [...and] the sacred pipe had led the Lakota people to Christ as the living and eternal pipe" (Peelman, 1995, p. 140). Black Elk had a vision of Christ during a Ghost Dance where he "saw a man with outstretched arms standing against the centre pole of the lodge which had become a tree in full bloom" (Peelman, 1995, p. 141). Black Elk's "Messiah manifestation" confused him at first and he "wondered whether he should follow the Messiah of the Ghost Dance or the Christ of his Catholic faith," but later it was clear that the "Lakota Christ had come to Black Elk in a Lakota vision" (Peelman, 1995, p. 141). Whether the vision, the pipe, and Christ were just symbolic comparisons or the "affirmation[s] of the universal presence of the Risen Christ in the world" (Peelman, 1995, p. 141) the two religions were mixing on a deep and theological level.

Peelman (1995) describes the story of an Ojibwe woman, "a member of the Sisters of Saint Joseph since 1960, [who] understands that Jesus came into the world not only to complete the cultural and religious history of his own people, but the history of all peoples" (p. 128). Using the bible story of the woman at the well, she compares Native Americans to the Samaritan woman who is outside the church, but not judged by Jesus because she spoke the truth (Peelman, 1995, p. 129). The sister says that the mountain Jesus speaks of in Jerusalem when he says "The day will come when you will neither worship on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, but you will worship in spirit and in truth" is also comparable to "Spirit Mountain" in Ontario where "those

who follow the traditional way go for their vision quest and for other rituals" (Peelman, 1995, p. 129). The woman says that in a vision Jesus said to her "Give me to drink from this well of your ancestors […] Allow me to fulfil what the Creator has given you in your past" (Peelman, 1995, p. 129).

More examples of compatibility from Peelman (1995) are as follows:

- The majority of Oglala accept the Trinity and maintain that their traditional God is identical to the God of the Christians, but the name of Christ seldom appears in their prayers (p. 39).
- Some Lakota easily pass from the traditional to the Christian religious system, and vice versa according to the spiritual needs of the moment (p. 47).
- Because their traditional religion offers limited information on the final destiny of souls, they welcome the resurrection of Christ as a guarantee of eternal life (p. 50).
- The members of the Cross Fire section of the North American native church identify the sacrament of peyote with Christ, just as other Lakota identify him with the sacred pipe (p. 195).

Peelman (1995) wrote about an entertaining example of modern Native Christianity as follows:

> During the 1990 Ontario Kateri Tekakwitha Conference, Lillian McGregor asked a group of teens to visualize Jesus in a prayer experience, to see if he came to them wearing the robes of the New Testament times or in white buckskin and an eagle-feather bonnet to the ground. The teens come back after doing the experience and said: You aren't going to like what happened. Jesus came, they said, but our Jesus was wearing a sweat shirt, jeans, and sneakers! (p. 131)

Stolzman (1989), a Jesuit priest, blended Catholic Christianity with Native religion. He held meetings with and participated in ceremonies with medicine men of the Lakota on the Rosebud reservation in South Dakota from 1973 to 1979. During this time he went on four vision quests, brought Catholic and Lakota spiritual leaders together for discussions of mutual understanding, included community members in committee meetings, and walked a path with one foot in two different cultures. He earned the respect of the community members by participating in their ceremonies, thus when he had a message from a vision to share, they believed him (Stolzman, 1989, p. 7).

Abenaki Catholicism is an example of syncretism between Native and Christian religions which mixes Jesuit practices and Abenaki mythology in “present-day Quebec, Maine and New Brunswick” (Peelman, 1995, p. 68). The Abenaki tribe did “not practice religious dualism or dimorphism” but created “a syncretic intensification and a revitalization of their traditional religious life” and culture (Peelman, 1995, p. 68). The syncretic mixture includes the inclusion of “Gluskabe, the central figure of Abenaki mythology” who is basically equal with Christ in that “they were both sent into the world to improve the peoples’ understanding of right and wrong and they both had similar missions for human well-being” (Peelman, 1995, p. 69). Peelman (1995) also writes that “Gluskabe was just like Jesus” because Gluskabe also promises to return some day to his people (p. 69). The result is that the Abenaki “remain faithful to their traditional God (the Great Spirit), but admitted at the same time the primacy of the Christian God” (Peelman, 1995, p. 69).

Of independent Native Christian churches, Peyote religion is “the most significant and widespread pan-Indian religion in the twentieth century in the United States of America and Canada” with “approximately 250,000 members” (Peelman, 1995, p. 74). The name for the

church has developed from its beginnings in 1919 as the *Native American Church* to its current name as the *Native American Church of North America* (Peelman, 1995, p. 75). Structured like the Christian church out of both necessity and belief, the Peyote religion views the flesh of the peyote cactus as "the flesh of God" given to them for communion with the great divine (Peelman, 1995, p. 74).

Peelman (1995) writes that "the peyote was given to the Indians just like Christ was given to the white race […and that] God has truly revealed himself in the peyote cactus which has become a sacrament of communion with him and with the spiritual universe" (p. 76). The prayers are directed towards "the Christian God as well as Mother Earth, who is sometimes understood as a pantheistic symbol" and there is "a central place for Christ, Christian symbols, biblical values and certain theological doctrines (sin, redemption);" however, the "theology has remained non-dogmatic, flexible, and syncretic" (Peelman, 1995, p. 76).

The use of the hallucinogenic cactus by practitioners of the Peyote religion is protected by the American Indian Religions Freedom Act (1978), is used for prayers and healing, and is seen as a "spiritual substance […for the] personal (psychic) experience of the supernatural" (Peelman, 1995, p. 76). One member of the Native American church described the experience saying, "peyote is not a drug but a powerful means which turns the mind to the Great Spirit and to Jesus Christ" (Peelman, 1995, p. 76). Another member compares the "seven stones in his drum, which are the seven Indian sacraments (the holy peyote, the dirt Half Moon, the fire, the water, corn, meat and fruits) to the seven sacraments of the Catholic church" (Peelman, 1995, p. 76).

Another aspect of Native American spirituality that changed and blended with the introduction of Christianity is the naming ceremony. In traditional cases "Families sought a name

for their young children and older individuals for themselves by offering tobacco to respected and powerful elders, both women and men, seeking a share of their power and stature through the naming ceremony and the name that had come to them through the properly ordered ritual process" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 292). In 1893, an Episcopalian missionary in Leech Lake, Minnesota wrote about an Ojibwe Christian couple whose "baby will soon be baptized and receive a Christian name;" the missionary also "observed how Ojibwe names would not suffice in the official world of the mission or schools" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 292).

Names were important to the introduction of Christianity because "Baptismal records in missionary churches became crucial in bureaucratic efforts by the United States to regularize and regulate Native American lives in such a way as to incorporate Native peoples and identities into the broader American political, religious, and cultural economy" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 293). In Martin and Nicholas's (2010) historical essays it is also documented that these "missionary agendas and legacies became part of colonization through these [naming] policies" (p. 293). Gus Beaulieu, of White Earth, said, "A name is one of the most sacred privileges accorded to any person" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 295). As such, some Native American Christians received both a Christian name and traditional tribal name, and some of the missionaries or ministers also received ceremonial tribal names (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 296). The keeping of some traditional ceremonies have become part of the activist movement for cultural revitalization—an important development in light of the significant loss of culture during colonization.

Activism and Cultural Revitalization

Among Native American activist movements, the campaigns to improve community conditions had simplistic beginnings as described by Eastman, Liliuokalani, and Apess (Treat,

1996). Activist movements evolved into campaigns for cultural revitalization and, eventually, decolonization. A. Smith (2010) says, “decolonization is articulated as a political project that is not simply about cultural revitalization, but that also transforms the current political and economic world order” (p. 587). Spirituality and religion have played crucial roles in the various “movements of religious revitalization and restoration” (Peelman, 1995, p. 70). This includes the Prophetic movement that is “typically composed of traditional and Christian elements” (Peelman, 1995, p. 70). Peelman (1995) writes that Prophetism “must have been part of Amerindian culture since the beginning” but that it has be “extremely powerful in the nineteenth century” and has “directly or indirectly prepared the Amerindian renaissance we are witnessing today” (p. 70).

One of the early documented prophets was Neolin, or “the Delaware Prophet” who spoke out about the loss of land, “the adoption of Euro-American customs, the devastation caused by alcoholism, and the abandonment of the [Native] traditions” (Peelman, 1995, p. 70). Neolin “proposed a radical return to ancestral traditions” (Peelman, 1995, p. 70). The prophet also had influence on “the policies of nearly twenty tribes from Lake Ontario to the Mississippi River” in the late eighteenth century, and Neolin encouraged them to preserve Native traditions (Peelman, 1995, p. 70).

Another prophet in the eighteenth century was “Handsome Lake (Gamo Dai Lo), the great Seneca prophet, shaman and sachem of the Six Nations of the Iroquois” (Peelman, 1995, p. 70). Handsome Lake’s message was called the “Good Word” and was “aimed at the reform of the Longhouse religion” instead of the total rejection of the new influences (Peelman, 1995, p. 70). Therefore, Handsome Lake was considered an “ethical-eschatological prophet” and he maintained “the idea that the holy was both a transcendent being and an immanent presence and

power" (Peelman, 1995, p. 70). Handsome Lake "prepared his people to live in a world more and more dominated by Euro-American civilization" and reformed "the communal rituals of thanksgiving centered on the agricultural cycle" while condemning the "corruptions of Iroquois culture [such as] alcohol, witchcraft, abortion, the neglect or abuse of children, women and the elderly" (Peelman, 1995, p. 70). Peelman (1995) writes that Handsome Lake differed from biblical prophets in that "his message was not accompanied by a desacralization of nature, but maintained the traditional link (cosmic harmony) with the spiritual powers in the universe" (p. 71).

One of the strongest of prophetic movements is the Ghost Dance "revitalization movement with a messianic and millenaristic connotation" (Peelman, 1995, p. 71). There were actually two Ghost Dance movements, but the more notorious one is the one associated with the "assassination of the famous Lakota leader Sitting Bull […] and the massacre at Wounded Knee, December 19, 1890" on the Pine Ridge reservation (p. 71). The Ghost Dance movement is called "messianic […] because of its spiritual and moral message and its socio-political implications" (Peelman, 1995, p. 71). Peelman (1995) describes the basics of the Ghost Dance movement as follows:

> [R]ooted in the prophetic visions of Wodziwob who predicted the restoration of the old tribal life, and in the eschatological visions of Wovoka who announced the imminent coming of a new world where the living would be guided by a celestial spiritual (Jesus) and be reunited with the deceased in a state of eternal happiness. (p. 71)

Peelman (1995) writes that within the Ghost Dance movement "the ritual is profoundly shamanistic" yet the message "implies an understanding of the Supreme Being and an ethical program that bears many resemblances to the Judeo-Christian tradition [and] ideology […yet]

contains a linear eschatology (future liberation, retribution, new earth) which is different from the traditional native eschatology" (p. 72).

Indigenous people around the world who are involved in, or recipients of, missions are having conversations about Christianity and decolonization. A. Smith (2010) reports on the Native American Institute of Indigenous Theological Studies (NAIITS) and how they are working to use evangelism to work towards decolonization. A speaker at a NAIITS conference suggested that "for Native peoples to follow Jesus, they can best do so, not by becoming Christian, but by following their traditional ways" and that "any religion that is based on exclusivist notions of salvation necessarily becomes a religion tied to conquest and empire" (A. Smith, 2010, p. 578).

A. Smith (2010) states that "Liberation theology has also rearticulated Christianity to support social justice...However, Christian evangelicalism in particular, has generally articulated itself as hostile to the interests of liberation theology and has largely served as an apologist for colonialism and capitalism rather than its critic" (p. 571). However, A. Smith (2010) does not give specific examples of how articulation or rearticulation has occurred. A. Smith (2010) wrote about a leader who:

> [U]napologetically criticized the complicity of Christendom in genocide and slavery, which has "allowed the whites to go on pretending that no wrong was committed in the theft of the land and even of labor since this was the way God had planned the matter…If people were killed, maimed, decimated, oppressed, dislocated, etc., this was part of the predestined reality and not because some wrongs were committed…We forget that the cross was an instrument of torture, murder, and political oppression." He then concluded

> that all Christians have a biblical mandate to oppose and organize against imperialism. (p. 573)

The decolonization movement seems to be centered on "de-westernizing" Christianity and undoing the effects of Christian missionaries who historically destroyed indigenous cultures and religions (A. Smith, 2010, p. 573). They are "redefining what it means to be an evangelical" Christian (A. Smith, 2010, p. 574). A leader of NAIITS "called on evangelicals to move from a position of certainty to one of comfort with out knowing all the answers in advance…[because] one cannot have a true dialogue if one presumes an outcome before the conversation is started" (A. Smith, 2010, p. 575).

NAIITS uses "disidentification" as an evangelical decolonizing methodology (A. Smith, 2010, p. 577). Disidentification is different from assimilation or counteridentification because it is a "third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology" (A. Smith, 2010, p. 577). NAIITS seeks to "decolonize the process of theologizing itself" (A. Smith, 2010, p. 576). A. Smith (2010) notes that with disidentification in evangelical missions, "Christian missionization is simultaneously presumed and contested with a politics of decolonization" (p. 577). The goal is not for "sovereignty" which suggests adopting the imperialist paradigm of government forced upon native peoples, but for deconstructing the paradigm itself (A. Smith, 2010, p. 575). Additionally, NAIITS's goal is for "Jesus and the bible [to] become disarticulated from Christianization and colonization" (A. Smith, 2010, p. 582). A. Smith (2010) suggests NAIITS is not "seeking recognition from the settler state" but is rather seeking a "dismantling [of] the state itself" (p. 587).

Another activist movement aimed at gaining religious reparations in the U.S. is the Boarding School Healing Project (BSHP). BSHP has sought reparations such as "language and cultural revitalization programs, counseling and other healing services, or culturally sensitive economic development programs" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 93). The BSHP is a "coalition of several organizations […seeking] to document these abuses so that Native communities can begin to heal from boarding school abuses and demand justice from the U.S. government and churches" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 95). The organizations in BSHP's coalition include "The South Dakota Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, Tribal Law and Policy Institute, Indigenous Women's Network, American Indian Law Alliance, First Nations North and South, Seventh Generation Fund, Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, and the Indian Desk of the United Church of Christ" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 95).

The BSHP's accountability strategy includes a section on churches, which states several requests and demands for reparations (A. Smith, 2004, p. 97). Some of BSHP's demands include "setting up a reparations fund" and getting the "Catholic church to rescind the papal bulls that set the legal precedent in the U.S. for the doctrine of discovery that holds that Native peoples only have the right to occupy the lands, but do not have ownership over them" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 97). Currently, the BSHP has "succeeded in organizing the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church to pass resolutions in support of boarding school reparations" (A. Smith, 2004, p. 97).

Part of the documented loss of culture as well as crucial part of cultural revitalization is the use of Native language in spiritual practices. Martin and Nicholas (2010) wrote that "With their eventual English-only policies, and the frequent abuse and shaming of Native children, these [boarding] schools did much to undermine the continued practice of entire Native

languages" (p. 293). Later in the history of colonization, Christianity was used to preserve Native language, as was the case with Suzanna Wright Roy. Suzanna was a Native American Episcopalian from White Earth, MN who influenced the singing of "Ojibwe language [Christian] hymns rooted in the missionary exchanges of the nineteenth century" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 298).

More recently in church history, ethnic minorities have formed caucuses "to make their voices heard within religious structures" (Treat, 1996, p. 14). Various denominations which have formed Native caucuses include:

- The Episcopal church "organized the National Committee on Indian Work in 1969;"
- The Presbyterian church "formed the Consulting Panel on Indian Ministries in 1969;"
- The Methodist church "created the National American Indian Committee in 1970;"
- The Anglican church "established the Sub-Committee on Native Affairs in 1970;" and
- The Catholic Church "revitalized the Tekakwitha Conference, which had been a support group for missionary priests" (Treat, 1996, p. 15).

Treat (1996) states that "Native Christians became increasingly outspoken during the seventies and eighties by advocating for native concerns through their denominational caucuses" and institutions like the Native American Project of Theology and Native American Theological Association were created (p. 17).

These campaigns for cultural revitalization and decolonization sometimes highlight the historical tensions between traditional Native religion and Christianity. This leads us to our last category along the spectrum of spiritual practices found in the literature about Native American religion and Christianity—renouncing Christianity in favor of a return to traditional Native religion.

Disclaiming Christianity for Traditional Spirituality

Despite the many Native Americans who take the church's mission upon themselves or blend Christianity with traditional Native religion, there are many who disavow Christian ties and opt for solely Native religious practices. Robert Two Bulls, a Lakota Episcopal priest, says of Native Americans leaving the church, "This comes as no surprise to me, given the general history of Christianity and its dealings with Native Americans […] why be part of a community which does not follow the teachings of its teachers" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 298). The author notes "all the churches had walked hand in hand with the federal government as they implemented the policy of assimilation, often with disastrous results" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 298).

Native Religion

Treuer (2012) writes about Native Americans but says it is hard to define Native American religion on the whole because of the variation in spiritual practices from tribe to tribe (p. 51). Reasons for difficulty defining Native religion are as follows:

> Because there is so much diversity in Indian country, there is no such thing as an "Indian religion." Customs and traditions vary significantly from tribe to tribe. In the Great Lakes and other regions, some tribes have societies that require a religious initiation. Such initiations are conducted entirely according to ancient tribal customs but function much like baptism and confirmation do for Christians. Those ceremonies serve to place the initiates on a particular religious path and are often accompanied by instructions and expectations for a certain code of conduct. Other tribes have societies that are spiritual in nature but do not serve to induct someone into a particular religious belief system. For most tribes, though, religious belief is less focused upon specific ceremonies or induction

> into specific groups than on a set of values, beliefs, and rituals that are infused into everyday life. As such, Indian religion, spiritual perspective, and custom tend to be organic, somewhat fluid, and integrated rather than exclusive. (Treuer, 2012, p. 51)

Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker (2001) state, "there cannot be a single Native American theology…The histories and experiences of the indigenous peoples of this continent are too diverse to be accounted for in any such enterprise" so they present "a" theology of Native American views, not "the" theology (p. ix). Treat (1996) seems to agree that theology is a Western concept and that Native American religion is better described as a "spiritual way-of-life" (p. 11). Peelman (1995) also agrees that "Amerindian religious experience is not a homogenous phenomenon" and the many tribes mean that Indian religions are not one "static and uniform reality" (p. 40). Despite the lack of one uniform religion among Native American tribes, there are similar theological traits among practices such as animism, pantheism, pan-en-theism, and mysticism. Examples of these will be discussed later in this section.

In defining traditional Native religion, Peelman (1995) calls it "pan-en-theism, borrowed from Christian mysticism" because "it is not easy to express the Amerindian God-experience with western concepts of polytheism and monotheism" (p. 46). Natives have more of a "*spiritual journey* and a *religious process*, rather than a religion, because of the experiential relationship the native person has with the supreme being and the spiritual world" (Peelman, 1995, p. 41). Native spirituality is "very sacramental and deeply mystical" (Peelman, 1995, p. 41). Being a mystical religion, their concept of God is different; "they know God as an intrinsic dimension of all their relations" (Peelman, 1995, p. 41). The Great Mystery is the "vital centre and source of energy" which are the "intimate links which exist between the human being, all other living

beings of the universe, and the earth itself" (Peelman, 1995, p. 41). Amerindian religions can be described as a "metaphysics of nature" as well as "a spiritual journey" (Peelman, 1995, p. 42).

Peelman (1995) also says the following about Native American religion:

> The native religions, which are quite charismatic in nature, leave much room for personal experience, dreams and visions, especially during long periods of social, economic and political crisis. In these situations native prophets and spiritual leaders produced new rituals and ceremonies which allowed the community to maintain the meaning of life despite the inevitable transformations of its environment. (p. 41)

> The experiential and existential orientation of the Amerindian religions immediately suggests that this God experience occurs in the ordinary elements of daily life. The supreme being is not first perceived and experienced as the origin (protology) and the end (eschatologoy) of the world, but as the foundation of everything that is, here and now. It is perceived as the very centre of each living being and as a *presence* in the universe. We can truly experience the supreme being once we have found our right place in the universe and once we have developed right relationships. This God experience is basically a matter of internal and external harmony, because the entire universe is perceived as a sacred reality filled with spiritual powers. (p. 46)

The spiritual leadership in Native religion doesn't come from an organized entity such as the church and a priest or pastor, but from the community and its revered elders, such as medicine men/women or shamans. Shamans are regarded as "mystical intermediaries between the physical and the non-physical world for specific purposes, such as healing" (Fisher, 2002, p. 63). Fisher (2002) writes "Spiritual power is neutral; its use depends on the practitioner […]

What Native Americans call ‘medicine power’ does not originate in the medicine person” (p. 63). A medicine person may treat physical, psychological, as well as spiritual problems through various methods such as “therapeutic herbs, dietary recommendations, sweatbathing, massage, cauterization, and sucking out of toxins” as well as “metaphysical divination, prayer, chanting, and ceremonies in which group power is built up and spirit helpers are called in” (Fisher, 2002, p. 64). Fisher (2002) also notes that “in addition to healing, certain shams are thought to have gifts, such as being able to talk with plants and animals, control the weather, see and communicate with the spirit world, and prophesy” (p. 64).

Among other practices in Native religion is animism, the belief in spirit animals and that “supernatural beings [can] come dressed in animal attire” (Hultkrantz, 1987, p. 273). Besides animals with souls, or as souls, other inanimate objects have life or power. For example, “feathers manifest spiritual essence, particularly of beings on high” (Hultkrantz, 1987, p. 272). Stone or rocks are not always alive, but in some cases “can be seen rolling of their own accord, and a medicine man or a medicine woman can talk to them and receive their answers” (Hultkrantz, 1987, p. 273). Hultkrantz (1987) also points out that Indians are not ecologists, but “care about trees, because trees give evidence of the supernatural; they care about animals, because animals may represent spirits; they care about the vast lands, because the lands may reveal God” and “nature is potentially sacred, or rather, it turns into sacred matter when humans experience the supernatural in vision, meditation, or ritual” (p. 274).

Examples of Cultural and Theological Differences

Cochran (2010) writes that the past “remains important in contemporary Indian life: Why should the Dakotas and Lakotas, who have often been betrayed by the new settlers, accept these people’s religion and cultural ways” (p. XVI). Cochran (2010) also points out that “Natives

themselves were content to incorporate the best elements of the two cultures and religious systems. Today, when the Churches have become more tolerant and respectful of traditional beliefs and practices, a growing number of Native peoples are drawing a rigid line between the two belief systems and insisting on adherence to one or the other" (Cochran, 2010, p. XVI).

Philip "Danny" Kier of White Earth, MN was brought up as an Episcopalian, but turned away from Christianity to "Anishinaabe medicine and the religious traditions and ethics that stand behind that medicine" later in life (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 298). He also questioned "when did *gichi manidoo* become the Great Spirit" suggesting that the English interpretation "for the totality of being indicated by the sovereign Ojibwe term, was seriously reduced in the process of translation in to the Christian God" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 293). This may be due to the difference in the view of deity between pan-en-theism and monotheism—pan-en-theism believing that God both is the universe and is greater than the universe.

Spirits and ancestors also play an important role in Native religion. Many of these ideologies and beliefs are very different than Christian ideology and worldview. In some cases, this can create conflict. In traditional Native ways, "safety and success depended on the guardian spirit acquired through the vision quest […which] was closer at hand than the High God or other spirits" (Hultkrantz, 1987, p. 279). Hultkrantz (1987) notes that "the relationship to a guardian spirit through vision is evidence of the importance of spiritual contact in American Indian religion" and that "Indians 'believe' when they see or feel the supernatural being" (p. 279). An example of this is given as follows from the seventeenth century:

> [A] Spanish missionary Fray Alonso de Benavides tells us how he was visited by a Jicarilla Apache chieftain who much admired his altar and was informed that God was on that altar. However, the Apache was not satisfied, for God was not visible on the altar.

> When he left he was very disappointed, for he wished to have seen God. In Indian religion, the vision quest provided an opportunity for direct contact with the supernatural. (Hultkrantz, 1987, p. 279)

In addition to straight theological distinctions, there are some differences that the role of culture plays between the two religions. In Native American culture time is not "the material measurement (*chronos*) of successive events, but as the intensity (*kairos*) of the events themselves" and Native time is viewed "as cyclical, spiral and rhythmic rather than as linear and progress-oriented" (Peelman, 1995, p. 42). Peelman (1995) also writes that native enculturation is experiential and that "native religion, as in all other aspects of native life, the process is more important than the content" (p. 42).

Another element of Native culture that is not easily supported in Christianity is how natural elements are viewed. Peelman (1995) writes that "elements (earth, rocks, plants, trees, water, fire), which are used in the rituals, are not material objects but living beings whose spiritual power is tied to the place they come from" and "the very gathering of these elements is an important dimension of the Amerindian rituals" (p. 42). Both of these aspects of culture would affect how Native Americans participate in Christian and Native American ceremonies. Another difference is that the "native American view of nature is much more alive and filled with spiritual activity than the western view of nature" (Peelman, 1995, p. 50). These reflect practices of animism.

For some Native Americans, the differences are not just cultural, but theological and remain irreconcilable. Peelman (1995) writes about some inherent differences between Native American religion and Christianity and says that in Native American religion, "there is no clear separation between the visible and the invisible world, between earth and heaven, between the

living and the dead, between past, present and future generations" which is why the Lakota use the phrase "mitakuy oyas'in" meaning "all my relations" to end all "rituals, prayers, and public speeches" (p. 42). Christians, however, use "amen" to end prayer which "accentuates the importance of the one who speaks" outlining the fact that in Christianity there is "a radical separation and distinction between God as supreme being and the universe as created by, but separated from God" (Peelman, 1995, p. 42).

There is also a difference between the importance of the written word for Christianity and the spoken word for Native Americans (Peelman, 1995, p. 42). The spoken word for Native Americans "is perceived as a sacred reality produced by the breath of life within the centre of the human person" not as an "external element, separated from the human" (Peelman, 1995, p. 42). Within Christianity, the written word of the bible is the ultimate authority as the word of God (Deuteronomy 17:19; 28:58; 29:29; and 31:12) and Jesus is "the word made flesh" (John 1:14). However, Peelman (1995) writes "while the western and Christian worldviews see God as the absolute being who is at the beginning and at the end of the world, the Amerindians concentrate on the unlimited abundance of spiritual powers within the universe itself" (p 50).

The Lakota name for God is "Wanka Tanka," meaning "Great Holy Being" and the Ojibwe name for God is "Gitchi-Manitou," meaning "Great Spirit," both of which have been influenced by Christianity (Peelman, 1995, p. 47). These names are "polysynthetic and all-inclusive" (Peelman, 1995, p. 46). In Navajo, "the supreme being had no proper name" and was "celebrated as the Great Invisible Power, universally present in nature, which refused to be named" (Peelman, 1995, p. 46). This is not completely unlike the Judeo-Christian name for God, "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14). The difference is that the Native American view of God is that

"the supreme being is perceived as impersonal, because it is supra-personal" (Peelman, 1995, p. 49).

Furthermore, God is a *presence* versus a *person* in that Native Americans were "not interested, as such, in a personal relationship with God [...but] they perceived the supreme being as an indiscernible and indefinable presence" (Peelman, 1995, p. 47). Lakota and Ojibwe have a ritual of "Vision Quest," an "individual quest for spiritual power," in which the purpose is not a personal relationship with God, but "to become attentive to its presence, when and where it manifests itself, and to look for the spiritual powers which it puts at the disposal of the humans" (Peelman, 1995, p. 49). Thus, Peelman (1995) describes Wanka Tanka as "many-in-one" and "more than the union of all things" (p. 47).

There is also a reluctance to share information about spiritual practices in Native religion due to the rise of new age religions that imitate and misinterpret Native religion. Ironic that what once was almost eradicated by earlier generations is now being imitated by the descendants of those who tried to do away with it. For purists of Native religion, the Sun Dance not being associated with Christ has other significance and meaning. Instead of the center pole representing Christ, it represents the World Tree "which is an uprooted tree" kept alive for the duration of the ceremony (Hultkrantz, 1987, p. 275). Hultkrantz (1987) also notes the following about the meaning of the Sun Dance:

> The three levels of the universe are marked on the Sun Dance post: The eagle at its top manifests the sky world, the buffalo skull on its trunk or at its base is the world of animals and humans, and the offerings of tobacco and water on the earth close to the base, destined for Mother Earth, symbolize the relations to the underworld. The myths of

> the tree or vine on which the ancestors climbed up from the underworld(s), according to Southwestern Indians, also remind us of the idea of the World Tree. (p. 275)

As we have already seen in some of the literature, the practice, preservation, and return to traditional Native American religion has inspired some activist movements for cultural revitalization and decolonization. However, some of the activism has taken a more extreme form and opinion about the role of Christianity in Native culture.

Militant Activism and AIM

Peelman (1995) writes that European missionaries did not come to "discover a new world, but to impose their won world and worldview on the aboriginal peoples," and "evangelization […] was impossible without challenging [Indians'] entire socio-cultural life" (p. 65). Sometimes Christianity was met with aggressiveness "caused by the classical competition between the spiritual power of the shamans and the Catholic priests" (Peelman, 1995, p. 65). Cultural and religious differences also included the roles of women: "women were very influential" and powerful in some tribes but not as much in European culture (Peelman, 1995, p. 65). Some Native Americans believed Christianity excluded them because of its tendency to have an imperialist doctrine. At an interreligious symposium the following was said about Christian syncretism: there is the "difficulty of fostering and sustaining firm Christian identity while fostering and sustaining openness to and even affirmation of pluralism" (Religious Education, 1995, p. 170).

The various Native American "movements of religious revitalization and restoration" can be "political, nativistic, militant, and even millenaristic" (Peelman, 1995, p. 70). By 1923, "anthropologists, missionaries, medical doctors and politicians" said the indigenous were "vanishing peoples" due to low numbers and intermarriage and "the only survival open to them

was through total assimilation or individual integration" (Peelman, 1995, p. 21). Historians around the world started filling museums with Indian artifacts and "digging up native burial grounds" in an effort to "save their cultural treasures, their spiritual heritage, legends and myths, their songs and music, their ceremonial and ritual art" (Peelman, 1995, p. 21). However, by the 1960s a cultural revitalization movement was underway with "many political, social, economic and religious ramifications" (Peelman, 1995, p. 22). With the resurgence of their own cultural preservation, Native Americans started fighting to reclaim their own artifacts and the protection of their sacred sites. They had the "desire and [the] right to control their own future;" not to mention the right to "political self-determination, control of their economic development, and the respect for their cultural identity" all of which has spiritual impacts (Peelman, 1995, p. 37).

Stolzman (1989) said that at "the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, the younger [Indian] people were very critical of Christianity and every White institution" (p. 220). Regarding some militant beginnings, he says that they "are now less militant but maintain a stance of respectful aloofness, desiring to develop their own cultural way and their own Indian identity […but they] are now increasingly admitting that there are some worthwhile things in the non-Lakota culture, but they are stating verbally and non-verbally that they want to do it their own way" (Stolzman, 1989, p. 220).

Treat (1996) writes that "contemporary Native activism developed against the backdrop of the civil rights movement and black power movements" to be called "the 'Red Power' movement" (p. 14). One of the activist organizations that came out of the Civil Rights era was the American Indian Movement (AIM). AIM was organized in Minneapolis, MN in 1968 to fight against police brutality. AIM evolved into an organization that tried to right many wrongs throughout history which contributed to the current state of Indian country. In 1972, AIM

performed “a march on Washington, DC ending in the occupation of [Bureau of Indian Affairs] BIA headquarters and resulting in the presentation of a 20-point solution paper to President Nixon” called the Trail of Broken Treaties (Aimovement.org). The 20-point list of demands included “Indian religious freedom and cultural integrity [be] protected” (Aimovement.org). AIM’s own description of its activism includes a strong spiritual component as it relates to traditional Native religion:

> Indian people were never intended to survive the settlement of Europeans in the Western Hemisphere, our Turtle Island. With the strength of a spiritual base, AIM has been able to clearly articulate the claims of Native Nations and has had the will and intellect to put forth those claims. The movement was founded to turn the attention of Indian people toward a renewal of spirituality which would impart the strength of resolve needed to reverse the ruinous policies of the United States, Canada, and other colonialist governments of Central and South America. At the heart of AIM is deep spirituality and a belief in the connectedness of all Indian people. (Aimovement.org)

Russell Means (1995), a Lakota Indian who was with AIM at the occupation of the BIA in 1972, said of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978:

> When the act had become law, Indians around the country had rejoiced. We thought it meant that no longer would we have to hide in remote reservation gullies to hold our sacred ceremonies, that we wouldn’t have to mute our drums to avoid discovery by vigilantes, or beg permission from the Indian Health Service to hold a sun dance. (p. 422)

However, Means (1995) still found himself fighting with lawsuits and other means of activism for the rights protected by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. The activism he describes includes marches, demonstrations, lawsuits and trials, as well as seizures of Federal

agencies. Whether this kind of activism is described as militant or not, it is far from passive. Much of the language of these activists is also much more incendiary than their Christian predecessors. For example, Means describes a scene as follows: “they had to pass through the ugly sprawl of cheap tourist attractions that white men had erected along the roads leading to the abomination of Mount Rushmore” (Means, 1995, p. 422).

LaDuke (2005) outlines modern-day agendas for Native Americans to protect what is sacred to the culture and is clear about the origin of these struggles. LaDuke (2005) summarizes the past and its significance to these issues today with the following introduction to her book as follows:

> Xenophobia and a deep fear of Native spiritual practices came to the Americas with the first Europeans. Papal law was the foundation of colonialism; the Church served as handmaiden to military, economic, and spiritual genocide and domination. Centuries of papal bulls posited the supremacy of Christendom over all other beliefs, sanctified manifest destiny, and authorized even the most brutal practices of colonialism […] Religious dominance became the centerpiece of early reservation policy as Native religious expression was outlawed in this country. To practice a traditional form of worship was to risk a death sentence for many peoples. The Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 occurred in large part because of the fear of the Ghost Dance Religion, which had spread throughout the American West. Hundreds of Native spiritual leaders were sent to the Hiawatha Asylum for Insane Indians for their spiritual beliefs. (p. 12)

LaDuke’s (2005) passionate words made it clear that there was a strong desire to tell history through a different perspective without softening what happened to Indian people. These

unwavering activists make no room for inclusion of Christianity or colonialist attitudes as they call for a wholehearted return to traditional Native culture and spirituality.

Martin and Nicholas (2010) make a keen observation in that "many of the Native intellectuals most vocally critical of colonization, missions, and the erosion of cultural and political sovereignty past and present themselves emerge from either a Christian or post-Christian background" (p. 300). Authors like "Vine Deloria, Jr., George Tinker, Robert Warrior, and Jace Weaver all received seminary training, which helped give shape to their Christian or post-Christian criticism of missionary Christianity" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 300). These are just some of the views of those who oppose Christianity in Native culture and their various reasons for doing so, including lack of forgiveness of past wrongs and desire for purity in cultural revitalization.

George Tinker wrote "Both Indian and white must confront the lie...that finally results in both the oppressor and the oppressed blaming the oppressed for their own oppression" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 290). In speaking of Native peoples' perspective of the introduction of Christianity, Martin and Nicholas (2010) note that "Native communities can experience 'the pastness of the past of missionary encounters in dramatically different ways, not only because of the profound presence of the past through oral tradition but also because Native lives are still powerfully circumscribed by the legacies of colonialism in all its forms" (Martin and Nicholas, 2010, p. 291).

Summary and Analysis of Literature Review

Peelman (1995) and Martin and Nicholas (2010) gave the most examples of the modern day conflicts and harmony of Native American Religious and Christianity and thus were relied upon for a large part of the narrative in this literature review. The majority of the literature was

helpful in mapping the landscape of religious practices in Native communities up to the turn of the century, but less literature that captures the various religious practices of the last decade.

According to the literature, Christian missions are one of the biggest lenders of aid and help to Native communities in the last centuries; however, they contributed to the reasons (loss of land and culture) Natives are in a position to need aid. The very thing that was used as a tool to break their spirit and assimilate them to a new culture is the same tool, which is being used to renew their spirit and promote cultural revitalization in some cases. By learning to assimilate, speak English, read, write, and practice Christianity, Natives were able to navigate the new society and social structure they were expected—or not expected—to survive in. The Natives who became early leaders in the church helped their people and communities greatly by bringing the churches resources, organization, and partnership with whites that was needed to thrive in the new world.

Overall, there is evidence of significant cultural differences as well as acceptance and synchronization between Native American religion and Christianity by some in the Native American community. However, there are still Christians and Natives who view traditional Native religion as pagan and not in line with the teachings of the bible. There seem to be more examples of blending the two spiritual perspectives rather than practicing one over the other religion exclusively.

Based on the literature reviewed, there are significant cultural and historical factors to consider in a Native American spiritual leadership, including current cultural realities, church structures, education, assimilation, and cultural identity. There are more than 566 federally recognized tribes in the U.S., and “Native religion” can vary among tribes making defining the religion particularly challenging without narrowing by tribe or region.

The use of Divine Right to take indigenous peoples' land and the use of religious boarding schools to force conversion to Christianity has seemingly led to the formation of American Indian Activism as Native peoples seek to restore their human rights and 1st Amendment rights in the U.S. At the same that the church was a target for some backlash from activists, Native American Christians used the church as a platform to further advance their cause and address issues of injustice within church and political communities. It is also worthy of note that despite nearly all denominations having a Native American delegation of some sort, the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church are the only denominations to pass resolutions in support of boarding school reparations.

Research Methodology

This proposal describes a qualitative study using case studies to research *Spiritual Leadership in Modern-Day Native American Culture and Approaches to Native American Religion and Christianity*. The research consists of interviews of five spiritual leaders in the Native American community, analysis of the data, and interpretation of the results. The data documents the varieties of approaches for Native American spiritual leadership.

The justification for this research is the importance of this qualitative study and its implications for spiritual leaders and the Native American community. The state of Minnesota has over half a dozen federally recognized reservations and the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area has a high population of Native American residents. It is therefore, important to know the variety of current spiritual practices of Native Americans in this region, both for spiritual leaders and for community members to increase their understanding of the spectrum of spiritual approaches.

This research will fit well within the context of previous studies looking at the spiritual practices of Native Americans with respect to Christianity in that it will hone in on a specific metropolitan area.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The research questions for this proposal are as follows:

- What are the varieties of spirituality practices in the Native American community today?
- What are the potential conflicts of these various spiritual practices?
- What are the areas of compatibility of these various spiritual practices?
- What is the role of spiritual practices in cultural revitalization?

Furthermore, is religion viewed as part of cultural revitalization? Does one approach, Native religion versus Christianity, lend itself better than another to furthering this campaign?

How do these leaders communicate this with their communities? See *Appendix B: Interview Schedule Questions* for full detail on subsets of these primary questions which were used in the interviews.

Based on the existing qualitative research in the area of Native American spiritual leadership in North America as shown in the review of literature, the research data for this study in the Twin Cities Metro area should show similar varieties of approaches to Native American spiritual leadership as in other parts of the U.S. and Canada. The hypothesis is that Christian churches can help Native Americans in cultural revitalization if they incorporate Native spiritual practices.

There may be Native American spiritual leaders who emphasize Christianity or Native American spirituality over the other. Leaders may also limit followers' perspectives to one religion or the other exclusively. Some spiritual leaders may focus more on community involvement as it relates to cultural revitalization or on individual spiritual and cultural identity rather than on traditional Christian doctrine of church affiliations or vice versa. Additionally, while there may be some syncretism between the two religious perspectives, the leaders and followers will have to choose between one theology or the other in some areas such as animism, role of spirits, forms of prayer, etc.—leaders will likely have a variety of approaches to making these theological decisions as well.

The result of the study should present a spectrum of spiritual practices and approaches to Native American religion and Christianity as follows:

- Those who practice Christianity exclusively;
- Those who blend Christianity with Native culture and practices; and
- Those who practice Native American religion exclusively.

Of course some data points may fall in between these marker points on the full spectrum and cultural revitalization and activism should show up to some extent within all areas of the spectrum.

Participants and Setting

The participants were all spiritual leaders of Native American churches and/or community members and were both Native American and non-Native American. Potential benefits as a result of participating in this study were that it may increase understanding of spiritual leaders of the variety of spiritual practices and approaches to spirituality within the community in which they serve.

Potential risks were minimal. This study only observed and recorded spiritual practices and approaches to spirituality, which already existed within the Native American community. Therefore, it did not seek to change or influence existing practices of the participants. This study included minimal risk for invasion of privacy due to small community from which sampled and small sample size; therefore, although pseudonyms may have been used for interviewees, there was some risk that they might be identifiable among community members due to relatively small population of Native Americans in the Twin Cities community.

Because this study seeks to describe spiritual practices with regard to Native American religion and Christianity, spiritual and professional affiliation disclosure is vital information to analysis and description of research data. Because there was already some risk that subjects might be identifiable among community members, due to relatively small population of Native Americans in the Twin Cities, some have chosen not to disclose their name and were given a pseudonym. Direct quotes were used when given permission.

Interview protocol was written as follows: If subject becomes uncomfortable or upset by interview questions, we will skip to the next set of questions or discontinue the interview. Investigator will inform subject prior to start of interview that they have these options during interview.

Interviewer deemed that subjects were used to discussing religion due to their profession and leadership role so it was unlikely there would be a problem during the interview with the subject matter and questions.

Selection of Sample

The interview subjects were determined by the researcher, had experience with leadership in the Native American community. Criteria for selection included the following: spiritual leaders of people in the Native American community. I.e., either pastors of churches with mostly Native American congregation or traditional medicine person in the Native American community. Definitions used were as follows:

- **Spiritual leader** is anyone in charge of ministry for a church of congregants or a medicine person designated by community members and elders for healing and ceremonies.
- **Christianity** is represented by any church organization identified as Catholic, Protestant, or non-denominational Christian religious institution.
- **Native Americans** for the purpose of this study can be either enrolled in a Federally-recognized tribe or identify with a Native American way of life.

Populations targeted in this study are Native Americans and leaders in the Native American community. This sample of population is not proportionate to the gender, race, or ethnicity of the general population because it is a study of this specific ethnic group.

Disclosure of relationships: One subject was a former pastor of the investigator and is currently an acquaintance on Facebook. Another subject was also known by the investigator in community gatherings is also an acquaintance on Facebook.

The subjects were recruited by the researcher using email and written correspondence. I personally possessed the contact information for the following participants: one subject was a former pastor of investigator; one subject introduced himself at an evangelical outreach event in the Native American community; and another potential subject was listed in a letter sent to the investigator by the American Indian Education office, but this subject was not available for interview. The researcher's advisor provided contact information for one subject. A snowball method of recruitment was used for the last participant—one or more subjects will likely have contact information for traditional medicine person due to networking and knowledge of Native American community.

In order to gain an accurate gauge on modern perspectives of Native American religion and Christianity it will be necessary to compare and contrast similarities, differences, and conversations between leaders with different perspectives. Therefore, the researcher selected leaders that might fit into the following categories:

- Church leader who renounces aspects of Native religion and theology in favor of Christianity;
- Spiritual leader who renounces aspects of Christianity for Native religion/theology; and
- Church leader who blends the two religions to some extent or another.

The researcher conducted interviews with each of the following: a Native American Lutheran pastor who blends spirituality; an evangelical pastor who renounces some Native spiritual

practices; a Catholic priest of a church with a predominately Native American congregation; and a traditional Native medicine person who may or may not blend Christianity.

Materials (or Treatment Conditions)

Materials included a confidentiality agreement as found in Appendix A, a list of interview questions as found in Appendix B, a digital recorder, pen and paper for written notes, and both the researcher and the interview participant. Subjects were given the control of deciding time and location for interviews. One interview took place in a public café, two interviews took place in the church office of the subject, and one interview took place in the subject's hospital room after being rescheduled.

Research Strategy

Results will be published and made available to those who participated in the research. The participants will be identified by title and spiritual affiliation. Pseudonyms will be given unless the participant agrees to the use of his/her real name. Anonymity will be protected by the researcher and this anonymity will be acknowledged to participants with a statement explaining the aggregation of data and following precautions: The researcher will include tribal enrollment status, if applicable; profiles of leaders interviewed will be kept generic enough to avoid identification; for the interview subjects, a statement of confidentiality will be signed by the researcher and a copy will be given to the subject; interview participants will have the opportunity to provide feedback/clarification after the interview is complete; the researcher and her advisor will be the only persons who read transcripts or hear the recorded interviews as the researcher will do all the codification and analysis; and recordings and transcripts will be destroyed by the end of the year for further protection of the participants' privacy.

Data Collection Procedures

One-hour interviews were conducted in person of spiritual leaders of Native American community members. Investigator asked participants to sign a consent form of which a copy was given to them and was kept three months after the project was finished.

Questions that were asked were derived from the original research questions in order to determine the leader's perspective on Native American religion and Christianity. The research questions can be found in Appendix B. The interview questions were composed with a phenomenology approach in mind. The researcher asked improvisational questions when deemed appropriate during the interviews. There was not a test pilot subject due to the small number of interviews that were conducted. The interview subjects had the choice of participating in the interview in the subject's own office location or in a public location chosen by the researcher.

The interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed. Once transcribed, the data was codified, categorized, and used to document Native American spiritual leadership and approaches to Native American religion and Christianity.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis for the qualitative study was based on Creswell's (1998) Data Analysis Spiral of organization, perusal, classification, and synthesis.

Data was organized by case study and answers to interview questions were explored and compared. Common themes were also identified and analyzed.

Limitations include acknowledging that the researcher is part of the cultural group being studied and the probable presence of bias exists as well as the possibility of rejection by the Native American community of the findings and interpretation of data. Population being sampled is relatively small compared to the total population of Native Americans.

Research Findings

I interviewed spiritual leaders of Native American churches and of the Native American community. These spiritual leaders were either Native American or non-Native American and were either pastor of churches with mostly Native American congregation. One spiritual leader was a traditional medicine person in the Native American community. I will use the following pseudonyms to describe the interview results with each spiritual leader:

- **Progressive Priest**: a **Non-Native priest** of a mostly Native congregation;
- **Pearly Pastor:** a **Native American pastor** of a mostly Native congregation;
- **Passionate Preacher:** a **Non-Native pastor** of an equally mixed Native and Non-Native congregation; and
- **Peoples' Pipe Carrier:** a **Native American pipe carrier** of the Native American community only.

The responses to the research questions were as follows.

What are the varieties of spiritual practices in the Native American community today?

The Progressive Priest described participation in the Eucharist, gospel readings, smudging, offering of tobacco, water ceremonies, singing of hymns in Ojibwe and Lakota, and other prayer offerings. I attended a service for observation. The mass combined Native practices with traditional Catholic liturgy. I observed smudging with sage, use of an eagle feather fan, a drum, acknowledgement of the four directions, a water blessing by elder, offerings of cedar and tobacco with prayers, playing of flute music, and both Dakota and Ojibwe language in prayers and songs. In the traditional Catholic liturgy, everyone stood for the reading of the gospel, there was traditional call and response like "Lord, hear our prayer,", and there was Communion. There was a life-size crucifix on the wall of the sanctuary.

The Pearly Pastor said her congregation participated in Communion, Gospel Readings, Smudging, inipi (sweat lodge) ceremonies, singing of hymns in Ojibwe and Lakota, playing the sacred drum, and prayer circles.

The Passionate Preacher said his congregation practiced Communion, Gospel Readings, participating in sermons, modern evangelical worship, bible studies, Sunday school for the children, water baptisms and spirit baptisms, lying on of hands, anointing with oil, tithes and offerings, and spiritual mentoring.

The Peoples' Pipe Carrier described participation in various tribal ceremonies from his tribe, naming ceremonies, blessings of houses, singing and drumming, sweat lodge, Mede (Midéwiwin) lodge, and other traditional ceremonies only.

I found similar varieties of approaches to Native American spiritual leadership in Twin Cities, as in other parts of the U.S. and Canada based on the literature review. The spectrum of spiritual practices and approaches to Native American religion and Christianity followed what Martin and Nicholas (2010) described as claiming Christianity and missions of the church, blending Native movements and Christianity, and disclaiming Christianity for traditional spirituality (p. 300).

The spectrum of practices which I found by interviewing spiritual leaders started with one end of the spectrum being those who practice Christianity exclusively and the other end of the spectrum being those who practice traditional Native American religion exclusively. Those who blend Christianity with Native culture and practices were found at varying points between the two extreme ends of the spectrum.

What are the potential conflicts of these various spiritual practices?

The Progressive Priest only mentioned other Christian denominations as having areas of conflict with traditional Native spirituality. The Pearly Pastor talked about how U.S. Christian boarding schools were used to assimilate American Indians "and the way they had to do that was to take everything away from the Indian people that was their culture" including language and

ceremonies. As a result, although the language is being used more in the churches today, many elders who attended boarding schools are still too traumatized and afraid to speak their language in public.

The Pearly Pastor also mentioned that “the Catholic church or some of these other churches had such a strong hold on people about what they should and shouldn’t do.” She shared that there was conflict among a Native Catholic family who wanted to bring back the sun dance ceremony. One family member told another relative “You’re really making me nervous. You shouldn’t be doing this.”

An elder man once told the Pearly Pastor “I don’t understand why they didn’t feel that we knew about God.” She added “they–meaning the white church or the white people or the colonizers.” The elder asked her “You know? Why did they think that we didn’t have a God? That we understood.” And he said, “Didn’t the bible say that there’s only one God? And I believe that there’s only one God, it’s just that we have different ways to express worship towards that one God.”

The Pearly Pastor stated:

> “There will always be some resistance right now with some of the traditionalists saying you shouldn’t bring this into the church because they’re hearing some of the old messages. There’s a separation that happened, probably up to a hundred years ago when it first started getting missionized. And I’d say that, for the most part, we probably didn’t have the missionizers come to tell us about Christ, because if you look at the things that are in some of our cultural, tribal cultural things, they’re the same things. Love God, love your neighbor. It’s just told in different ways. It’s told in different languages. And so I don’t see a conflict in

> some of that. Now, we also have some of our tribal religions, our tribal beliefs, you know, spiritual beliefs, that do want to be separate and they do want to be secret. You know, because they don't want any of this to be taken away. And I respect that, you know. I respect that."

Regarding some tribal traditions that pray to and call on ancestral spirits for help and guidance, the Pearly Pastor said:

> "From what I'm understanding is that we have an angelic realm all around us, you know, from the Christian tradition…I would say that these people don't pray to the spirits, there a misunderstanding, and I think maybe missionaries thought that these Indian people were praying to the spirits or to these other entities, but I don't think that was the situation. I think the situation was acknowledging that all these other things are out there with me and I'm thankful for it, because there are always songs of thankfulness, always songs of how we're all here together. And when you look at some of these tribal traditions, there's a whole beautiful sense that actually flushes out what this all meant from a biblical point of view, but maybe didn't come out the same way because of the oral versus the written tradition. But I really believe that a lot of our tribal traditions understood that we're not here alone, that everything around us is a relative. It doesn't have to be a person, a human being that we consider a relative. But we're relative to the water, we're relative to everything. We all have to live in this together."

The Pearly Pastor also shared a story of religious conflict when she saw "an invitation from one of the local churches in Rosebud inviting people to come and worship with them." She said it was interesting because what caught her eye on the bottom was a statement that read "you must sign a paper saying you will not attend or dance at sun dance." She summed up that

experience by saying “we have some very fundamental churches on our reservations, they’re Evangelicals, that still keep that gap really wide about choosing between one or the other and I think maybe that’s where it might have been coming from.”

The Pearly Pastor mentioned that the Episcopal Church repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery saying, “We’ve probably had the worst holocaust in the history of the human community happen here in American because of the death of so many Indian people. We had the government and the church that came in to destroy the culture of Indian people and to take over the lands of Indian people.” She stated that the Doctrine of Discovery was used to steal the land from tribal nations, and kill people because they were “savages” and not Christian. She also said:

> “Some of those practices have continued on, that have touched our generations, when you look at what boarding schools have done to Indian people where they literally kidnapped children out of their Indian homes—to take a child off to someplace else and punish them for speaking their language or trying to practice their religion or punishing them because they were going to run away and go back home. So we were the victims of horrible atrocities and some of that has been done by the church, the cultural church, not the theology of the church.”

To contrast, the next interview subject, the Passionate Preacher, started the interview by asking what literature I had reviewed. He recommended a book called “Boundary Lines” aimed at “helping Natives understand the boundaries within Christian beliefs.” When I asked him how he would define his spiritual leadership he defined it as Christian only and clarified that in his church “we believe the bible is the authority and so we go to the bible first so it’s not a leader or a denominational or traditional beliefs it’s the bible which is the final authority that we

understand. Understanding that it's through Jesus Christ that we're saved and that He is all man and all God and he came to reconcile us with God. So he's the perfect sacrifice."

When asked directly about conflicts between Native Spirituality and Christianity, the Passionate Preacher said the following:

> "There are conflicts. Um because we look at the bible our understanding and I guess our worldview isn't a personal worldview. Isn't about that. It's not about cultural worldview, but we really want to preach from a biblical worldview. So when we're trying to see even an American culture and a Native American culture, that we're gonna find conflicts. There just will be and so, I guess the best and easiest example that I can give and try to help even other Native Christians or other Native people in the community understand us as a church and what we want to do. Our desire is to honor God. To honor His wishes, honor His desire, Honor his will. And so in doing that, um, when we look at something like burning sage for the purpose of cleansing, and that sage is used for that cleansing purpose to cleanse things, to kind of what it comes against is the fact that God sent his son Jesus Christ to be the perfect sacrifice, the perfect cleansing for us. So he's perfect, he's done it once and for all it tells us in scripture and so when we come along and try to cleanse things after him, really believe that that communicates to God that what you did was not enough. And so, in a sense that we're coming up and cleaning up behind God because he didn't do it completely. So when we continue to cleanse things with sage, believe that's offensive to God. Offends Him it doesn't honor Him as what he has done, has showed us in scripture and through his son Jesus Christ and so our desire is to honor him and so we don't, we don't remove those things with just saying well God hates that, but he's taken care of it."

Additionally, when asked about the role of spirits in spiritual practices, the Passionate Preacher was the only research participant to talk about demons. He seemed to condemn the practices of traditional Native religion with the following statement:

> "What I see biblically is that there's only one spirit and when it talks about spirits that's usually referring to demonic spirits—those that aren't aligned with God. So when we're talking about the sweat lodge or a drum, beating the drum as a Midéwiwin, calling on spirits, my understanding and what I see biblically is that those are not um, that they're deceptive spirits. And what we see in scripture is there is only one spirit, the Holy spirit which is different from the traditional practices and the calling on and the experiences within that um and so they don't align… there are some that say everything can be redeemed and all those practices, the sweat lodge, the drumming, and I just think it's a dangerous place to be."

The Passionate Preacher also gave an example of conflicting spiritual practices when he shared the following story about teaching a believer in Christ how to pray properly:

> "I had a woman that wanted me to pray with her that's been part of our church and she just kind of off the whim said 'well you know, pray in Jesus name and whoever else, you know, and the creator and…' and then she mentioned a couple others and so I had to stop her just because in scripture it clearly tells us that we pray and we ask in Jesus' name and because of what he's done. He's made it that way…God can be graceful and answer our requests even in we're foolish and we don't ask in the right way, but I just took time to explain to her why. Why it's important to ask in Jesus' name and what he had done and because of that we can ask in His name."

The last interview subject was the Peoples' Pipe Carrier. In contrast to the other interview subjects, he said his is not a church or religion, but "just spirituality, Ojibwe spirituality." As such, there is no congregation or regular weekly/monthly meetings, but rather when the occasion and/or the request arises for a particular ceremony. He has no regular meeting place or building where people can congregate which can make it difficult for people find the spiritual guidance they seek. Instead the community relies on word of mouth. He also mentioned that churches do not recognize his status as a spiritual leader because it's not church affiliated. For example, he said the following about the hospitals:

> "They got a parking spot for the clergymen and they got places for the clergymen, they got a church in here and everything for that, but when it comes to the Natives, they don't allow me to smoke a pipe, they don't allow me to sage, you know, and then when a spiritual person comes to help somebody grieving… you know, they gotta park way away, and run around and find the patient, and then come in here and get your pipe and sage ready and they say, 'Oh, you can't do that here.' And if I was laying on my death bed, that's what I would want to hear, I wanna hear the prayers, my sage, and the songs. That's what would help me, just like the Catholic priests would come in and do the last rites and, you know, say prayers over you, and if you're strictly Catholic, you're gonna feel good about it. But if you're Native, you can't do that. Unless a couple times they had to take the patients outside in the summer time to do the smudging and stuff. And they don't do that to the Christian people."

The Pipe Carrier described a time when he shared a spiritual experience he'd had and a Christian told him "you better open your life to Jesus and God will get you when, you native always practice hocus pocus ways and all this stuff, it's all devil-worshipping stuff." He went on

to say “so I said, well I’m sorry you feel that way, but I said you call our spirituality hocus pocus. I said, look at your Jesus, he walked on water. That’s kind of hocus pocus. He fed millions of people with the fish and bread. Then he died and came back to life; that’s kind of hocus pocus too. So how come you believe that way and not our ways? And he didn’t hear it, he just said ‘my God is my God’ and that was it.”

The Pipe Carrier also told story about a friend whose “ears stuck straight out, and I used to always tease him about it… but after a while he shared his story about, he said that at, at the Catholic schools, they would stretch an ear out if you started talking Ojibwe, to grab them and hold ‘em up by his ears, and that tore it, and that was all scar tissue back there. He didn’t, he didn’t, he didn’t like, like the Catholic schools at all.”

Another story he shared of incompatibility between the Christian and traditional spiritual practices was when he gave an elder some tobacco and the elder threw it on the ground and said “I don’t do that stuff, I’m in the Native American Church [we do peyote ceremonies] and we don’t use tobacco.” He said, the elder started “talking about the meanings of each of the teepee poles as the thirteen apostles of God, and I’m sitting there going holy smokes, this guy was so Christian that he took that vortex of that teepee and then pointed to the stars, for the star world, but couldn’t take tobacco.”

The Pipe Carrier said about spirits, “What really helps me when I think about spirits and spiritual helpers. I think that spirits are there for you either bringing a message in a dream or they want you to know that they’re close to you. And a lot of times people don’t want to believe that, they want to believe the Christian way, that there’s no such thing as ghosts.”

He continued to emphasize conflict between the two religions:

> "There's always going to be a conflict there. I think that the way that you live, you live an example. If you go to church and you think Christian, then your kids are gonna go to church and be Christian. And then when the time comes for them, they say 'hey, this is not my way,' and they're gonna have all this Christianity stuff packed in their head and they're gonna get so confused. I think that's a big conflict right now because a lot of people are just starting to go back to spiritual ways, native ways. A lot of kids these days that grow up in the city, you know, they're seventeen, eighteen years old, they don't even know how to split wood, you know, they've never been out of the city and they don't know how to split wood or nothing. And they grow up like that, and once they go back, you know, and they have to go back into the woods and stuff, you know, who's going to teach them all of that stuff? That's our responsibility as spiritual leaders, not to just teach spirituality but teach them how to survive, make fires, do the ceremonies, and there's always good. There's actually good in everybody. You know, since I worked in the prison system some of the, probably ninety-nine percent of them guys were drunk or on drugs when they did their time. That doesn't forgive what they did, but you know, sober they're different people, you know, good people. So the conflict of Christianity and spirituality always is gonna be a main thing, especially if you grew up in a Christian, a Christian home. Like, a lot of foster kids did, and were forced to church, and forced to learn Christianity and just like they did at those boarding schools, they were forced. They forced them."

What are the areas of compatibility of these various spiritual practices?

Both the Progressive Priest and the Pearly Pastor incorporated tribal language and ceremony into their church services. The Pearly Pastor showed me a hymn book that her

congregation uses with traditional Christian hymns in both Ojibwe and Lakota language stating that many of the spiritual values were compatible between Christianity and traditional Native religions. The Pearly Pastor also stated that Christian symbolism was compatible and being incorporated by some in the sun dance ceremonies she has attended.

Even the Pipe Carrier said “we’re all praying for the same thing, you know, pray for good health, and pray for people, and Christians do the same thing… it’s just like the sun dancers when they go sun dance that one time a year, they gotta live a healthy lifestyle that whole year, no alcohol, no drugs, treat the woman right.” He also observed similarities and compatibility when “the pope or the priest blesses a house with the holy water and we use plants from Mother Earth—sweet grass, the sage, the cedar.” Stating that he went to Catholic Church when he was growing up on the reservation, he also mentioned that after doing a sweat lodge in Red Wing, MN “the chaplain there would take my sweat lodge that I had for the Natives and use it in her church ceremonies.”

The Progressive Priest said his congregation integrated some Indian traditions with traditional Catholic practices, adding that “even non-Catholic or non-Christian spiritual leaders gave some feedback and some guidance with these integrations.” He stated that where Catholics have “entered into different cultures they’ve always kind of adapted or inculturated.” For example, he said, when the Catholics “entered different cultures they added incense for instance. Jesus never used incense. They added candles. Jesus, they didn’t have candles. When they went up to Northern Europe they started using candles just because it was dark. And now we use candles just because that’s a churchy thing to do.”

The Progressive Priest listed the role of spirits as compatible between Catholicism and Native religion:

> "One very strong resemblance between Catholicism and Indians is the spirit world, you talk about the ancestors, we talk about the saints. Same thing really. I like to say that they pray with us. You know, they're praying with us. And like when they play the drum, the spirits you know come, you know the ancestors come at the playing of the drum, things like, those kind of traditions that's very Catholic. You know. Like at a wake ceremony. That's one believe that's been shared. That happens with the calling song. We don't have any problem with that as far as Catholicism goes. Others they would say that's demonology and that's witchcraft and all of that kind of craziness."

When asked further about compatibility between religions, the Progressive Priest said "no one religion has a monopoly on God" and "to box in God like that is just so sad." He added:

> "We are a basic Christian church with means we try to follow the example of Jesus and we think Jesus fits very well with the traditional values of the Indian people and there's no problem with that. It doesn't mean the Indian people have to be Christian, but it just means I think that some of the, you know like some people that get to the sun dance, they see a lot of similarities between the sun dance and Jesus. The suffering and pain, the acceptance. And all that."

The Passionate Preacher offered the analogy of a teepee to describe his congregations' values: "we use the base of a teepee to communicate our core values and what we are as a church. So just like there are 3 poles that are bound together to set up a teepee, we believe that's the basis of us and our core values and we build upon that. But that we need fellowship together, we need to know God's word, study it, encourage one another, and then pray together and pray for each other." But he only gave one example when asked specifically what areas of the two

religions were compatible—he said, “One of the things that we value too is honoring the elders and believe that that’s a shared thing” then he added the qualifier “and that’s very biblical.”

Interestingly, when asked about compatibility, the Progressive Priest gave the following example of conflict within Christian denominations:

> “Catholicism is quite often criticized by other stricter, I guess you’d call them stricter Christian denominations for being pagan for having rituals or having objects that are considered kind of sacred, for using pictures for using different ritual practices with water, holy water and things like that. And so there are some, some Christian denominations that are strictly pretty much literally by the book, meaning the bible. The bible is everything. And they’ve added music, although originally some of those groups were even against music.”

What is the role of spiritual practices in cultural revitalization?

The Positive Preacher listed activities at his church throughout the week such as drum and dance classes, language classes, regalia making groups, and traditional Native ceremonies throughout the year. He seemed to have an understanding of the history of the church and Native religion and said the following about prohibition:

> “I guess I can respect the fact that some people were raised with very narrow perspectives and it’s very hard for them to change. On the other hand some of these are very sacred things to the Indian people and some of the practices were even taken away, you know, the Indian Religious Act was…so that um, some of these things were practices that were you could get in trouble for with the authorities for practicing. So some Indian and I can understand why they feel that they want to control so it’s not misused. Obviously there’s big misuse by the new age religion.”

The Progressive Priest saw his church's role as important to cultural revitalization, saying "We are a Catholic so we're not gonna you know, deny that we're gonna continue our catholic identity but we're going to show respect for the Indian spirituality and the fact that the Indian spiritual teachings can be a great guidance and help for the rest of our culture." However, the Progressive Priest did not seem to understand the generational impact that boarding schools have had on Native peoples when he said the following:

> "I have quite a few people here for instance who were educated through Catholic schools and things, some were boarding schools though some weren't and some speak very positively. They don't have any need for reparations or whatever you know. They feel that they were…they love the sisters that taught them and everything. That was obviously not universal, but I mean that is the reality for some. There were places that have kind of a mixed bag with mixed feelings."

While interviewing the Pearly Pastor she mentioned that in Minnesota some years ago, the Episcopalian and Catholic Indian congregations incorporated the vision quest into the confirmation ceremony. She said, "The vision quest is a very important aspect of many of our tribal traditions that was usually done at puberty out in the wilderness by yourself without food or water when you would pray and cry for a vision from God." She also mentioned the "communal process" in many Christian or Native ceremonies, stating that "We tend to live by ourselves, you know, and what these ceremonies do is that it brings the community back together again, because ceremonies are not done individually. And when you're in a church community, it's a community that sticks together to help pray, to help make things happens. Those are similarities in how these work."

The Pipe Carrier said traditional spiritual practices are paramount to cultural revitalization because the culture and spirituality are not separate things. He said “when we bless our food at our feast night we always do it in Ojibwe, we have an elder to do the prayer and we’re just showing the people that we still here and this is the way we do stuff, you know.” Said his title was Pipe Carrier [for the people] and mentioned being actively involved in his tribal language, ceremonies, and teaching traditional culture to others.

The Passionate Preacher could not list any activism or revitalization movement going on at his church when asked. He said he encourages the use of Native language hymns, but is not hosting a Native language class. Both the Progressive Priest and the Pearly Pastor hosted language tables and classes at their church locations. The Pipe Carrier also encouraged learning tribal language and had personal and familial involvement with the American Indian Movement.

All subjects, with the exception of the Passionate Preacher, recognized and acknowledged the role of the church and Christian missions in the U.S. history with Native Americans—most notably, the prohibition of Native religious traditions in Indian boarding schools and the passing of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.

Leadership Elements

The four subjects interviewed held positions or titles of leadership. However, in several of the case studies congregants who may have lacked official title still held referent power and contributed greatly to leadership within the church. For example, the Positive Priest talked at length about the beginning of that particular congregation and how several community leaders were critical in making the church experience what it was today—a blend of Catholicism and Native spirituality. Similarly, the Pearly Pastor relied heavily on spiritual leaders from the Native community to assist with or direct traditional Native ceremonies. The Peoples’ Pipe-Carrier had

one of the most interesting perceptions of leadership in that he didn't really consider himself a leader, but rather a servant to the people which fit the description of Servant Leadership as defined by Robert Greenleaf.

Conclusions and Summary

Overall, those who landed at the two ends of the spectrum of Native American spiritual practices seem to exhibit less tolerance for those at the other end than those who were blending practices to varying degrees along the middle of the spectrum. The Passionate Preacher made little to no room for other interpretations of traditional Native culture and didn't see traditional Native way of life as being compatible with Christianity. When asked for examples of compatibility he didn't mention prayer or belief in a Great Spirit as compatible among the two religious views. He kept saying "the bible is the authority."

Similarly, there were multiple times the Pipe Carrier mentioned Natives being "Christianized" in a negative connotation. He cited many more examples of conflict than compatibility between the two religions and most examples of conflict were related to animism and freedom of choice in religious practices. The Passionate Preacher was not comfortable with the idea that everything has a spirit or spirits attached to it because it's not biblical. Whereas, the Pipe Carrier practiced pantheism, animism, and mysticism as demonstrated by his statements that God was like the sum of the universe and everything has a spirit and his non-commitment to knowing any ultimate answers. Additionally, the Pipe Carrier seemed to resent the Christian and Catholic churches and their followers imposing their spiritual views on Native Americans. The biggest area of conflict seemed to revolve around the role of spirits, angels, demons, and ancestors in spiritual practices.

To contrast, those whose practices blended Christianity and traditional Native spirituality (the Progressive Priest and the Pearly Pastor) were much more tolerant of other peoples' spirituality and religious practices. These churches had cultural activities and language classes being hosted in their buildings. Both Pastors tended to call it "Native culture" versus "Native religion." I assume this was so that their churches can look at it as inculturation or a blending of cultures versus syncretism or a blending of religions.

Of the two churches blending religion, the Progressive Priest was more willing than the Pearly Pastor to identify the different aspects of Christianity versus Native religion taking place within their respective congregations. I believe the reason behind that is that the Progressive Priest being Non-Native was proud to talk about incorporating Native traditions whereas the Pearly Pastor being Native was apprehensive about reliving the past judgements that the church has exhibited on blending practices. An example of this is when the Pearly Pastor said I was asking the wrong questions when I persistently asked for examples of conflict between religious practices. She seemed to emphasize compatibility verses differentiation of the spiritual viewpoints. I believe this can be just as dangerous as creating a dichotomy between the two religions. There has been a deep divide throughout history, and just pretending that there is no longer any difference between the two religions does not make those differences go away as is evidenced by the perspective of evangelicals like Passionate Preacher and traditionalists like the Peoples' Pipe Carrier. These differences need to be addressed rather than swept under the carpet.

The history of the church and Native Americans cannot be overlooked, and in fact must be addressed, for the well-being and spiritual health of Native American people. The church and its leaders should not ignore their role in the history of assimilating Native Americans in North America and the cultural and spiritual devastation these actions brought. When spiritual leaders

like the Passionate Preacher thinks sharing the gospel is reparation enough they are really just perpetuating and continuing the religious and spiritual oppression of Native peoples dating back to the Doctrine of Discovery. Whereas, taking an active role in reconciliation and reparations as a spiritual leader can help heal generational trauma caused by boarding schools and other historical traumas and can produce healthy Native Americans inside and outside the church. Churches today should play a supportive role in cultural revitalization and social justice movements for Natives within their congregations as part of ongoing reparations. It also appears that church communities can help Native Americans in cultural revitalization and healing historical trauma when they incorporate Native spiritual practices into modern worship services.

But the major obstacle has been Christianity itself because its dogma is often intolerant to Christian syncretism where there is the "difficulty of fostering and sustaining firm Christian identity while fostering and sustaining openness to and even affirmation of pluralism" (Religious Education, 1995, p. 170). And the Progressive Priest, himself, confirmed this when he said:

> "Too many Christians have a very narrow view of religion—Jesus had wine and bread and said 'do this in remembrance of me' and didn't give any other instructions…the addition of music, candles, and incense are all not biblical."

Church leaders who continue to teach that Native American culture is non-biblical or "evil" may be perpetuating the cultural genocide and human rights violations of Indian boarding schools and other Christians who have criminalized Native religion. These spiritual leaders seem to be out of sync with the egalitarian implications of the gospel—that Christ died for everyone and did not put so many conditions as they have on being accepted into the family of Christ. And traditional Native religious leaders who condemn Christian practices and beliefs by Natives are

committing the same injustice as those who imposed forced conversion on Native people in the boarding schools.

In conclusion, it appears that leaders on both ends of the spectrum exhibit less religious tolerance than the middle of the spectrum. The research shows that some spiritual leaders are still using Christian doctrine to maintain religious purity and avoid religious syncretism or pluralism and other spiritual leaders are still resentful at Christianity for proselytizing and evangelizing without room for inculturation and have created a backlash for anything Christian in their religious practices. The leaders in the middle of the spectrum encourage pluralism and/or tolerance of other religious or denominational practices. Therefore, there is still much room and need for healing among Christians and Natives; and Native Christians in the middle of the spectrum of these spiritual practices seem to be the bridge between the two extremes.

> *"For Native peoples to follow Jesus, they can best do so, not by becoming Christian, but by following their traditional ways…any religion that is based on exclusivist notions of salvation necessarily becomes a religion tied to conquest and empire."* —Speaker at a NAIITS (Native American Institute of Indigenous Theological Studies)

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Appendix A: IRB Consent Form

Consent Form: Spiritual Leadership in Modern-Day Native American Culture and Approaches to Native American Religion & Christianity Project

You have been invited to participate in a research study looking at the varieties of spirituality practices in the Native American community today as well as the potential conflicts and/or areas of compatibility of those practices. The goal of this research project is to document the current spectrum of spiritual practices in the Native community in the Twin Cities metro area. You have been selected for participation because you have been identified as a spiritual leader in the Native American community. This form outlines the details of the study and acknowledges your consent to participate. Please feel free to ask me any questions after reading the form prior to consent and agreement to participate.

Christine McCleave is conducting this study as part of the degree requirements for obtaining a Masters Degree in Leadership (MAL) at Augsburg College. My advisor is Norma Noonan, Ph. D., Professor of Political Science.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in this study, I will conduct a one-hour interview with you. If granted permission, I will audiotape the interview.

RISKS AND BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

The risks involved with participation are slight risk of invasion of privacy due to the limited number of interviews (small sample size) and small community being studied. Direct benefits are that a copy of the final report will be provided to each interview subject. Indirect benefits are that the data collected from the interviews will contribute to the knowledge base in the MAL program at Augsburg as well as

greater knowledge and understanding of religious approaches for spiritual leaders and Native American community members alike.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept confidential, unless required by law. The results will be disseminated in a final report and presented to the faculty of the MAL program and will be made available through the Lindell Library at Augsburg. The results may also be published in a book, professional journal, or at local, regional, national, or international conferences via a poster or oral presentation. Direct quotes may be used and pseudonyms may be used if requested. However, absolute anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the limited number of interviews and small community being studied. I will also be transcribing the audio recordings of the interviews, which will be kept in a locked file. Only my advisor and I will have access to these recordings and transcriptions. The recordings will be destroyed no later than December 31, 2013.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THIS STUDY

Your decision to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Augsburg College, the researcher (Christine McCleave), or the MAL program. If you decide to participate, you are free to skip questions during the interview or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

You may ask me any questions that you have at this time. If you have any questions at a later time, you may contact me at 612-810-1283 or mccleave@augsburg.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Norma Noonan, at 612-330-1198 or noonan@augsburg.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or want to discuss any problems/complaints about this research project, send an email to IRB@augsburg.edu. You will be provided with your own copy of this consent form for your records.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to any questions I had and I consent to participate in this study.

Subject Printed Name: _____

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator Printed Name: _____

Investigator Signature: _____ Date: _____

I consent to be audio-taped.

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

I consent to allow use of direct quotes of my interview.

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

I consent to allow use of my ☐ **name** ☐ **title**
in this research report.

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Interview Schedule Questions

Questions for Interviews

Demographics

- Do you have an official title as a spiritual leader? If so, what is your title?
- And what is the name of your spiritual organization (or church)?
- How would you describe your organization (and/or denominational affiliation)?
- How would you describe the make up of your community/congregation?
    - o What percentage of them are Native American?
    - o What tribes are represented? Etc.
- Are you an enrolled member of a tribe or affiliated with any tribes?
    - o If yes, can you describe that in more detail?
    - o (What tribe, affiliation, etc.?)

What are the varieties of spirituality practices in the Native American community today?

- How often/when do you and community/congregation members meet?
- What are the types of spiritual practices taking place?
    - o What does a typical meeting/ceremony look like?
    - o What do you do?
    - o What takes place?
    - o Who participates?
    - o Can you provide examples and describe the spiritual significance of these actions/words/rituals?
- Would you describe these spiritual practices as Christian, Traditional Native American Religion, or a combination of the two?
    - o What aspects and why are they described as such?
    - o Can you give me some examples?

What are the potential conflicts of these various spiritual practices?

- Are there any potential conflicts between some of these spiritual practices, Native American culture, and/or the church/denomination?
    - o How would you describe them?
    - o Can you give me some examples?
- How are these potential conflicts addressed with your congregation/community members?
- Has your denomination participated in reconciliation statements/movements?
    - o What does your denomination do to reach out/make reparations to Native Americans?
- Do you have any other thoughts on the subject of potential conflicts between spiritual practices in Native Americans and Christianity?

What are the areas of compatibility of these various spiritual practices?

- Are there any areas of compatibility between some of these spiritual practices, Native American culture, and/or the church/denomination?
    - o How would you describe them?
    - o Can you give me some examples?
- How are these addressed with your congregation/community members?
- Do you have any other thoughts on the subject of compatibility between spiritual practices in Native Americans and Christianity?

What is the role of spiritual practices in cultural revitalization?

- Does your congregation/community participate in any Native American cultural revitalization activities?
    - o If so, what are they (examples)? How are they important to your congregation/comm.
    - o If not, why not? Are there specific obstacles/conflicts of interest? Can you describe?
- Are you familiar with the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978?
    - o What role does it play, if any, in your congregation's/community's spiritual practices?

- Does your congregation/community participate in language revitalization?
    - How so? Can you give me some examples?
- Are there any other items you'd like to add? Or any questions for me?

Thank you so much for your participation and your time. I will be in contact with the final report.