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LAKOTA CULTURAL FUSION AND  
REVITALIZATION OF NATIVE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

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Our stories are important. They help us hold onto our history, they help us laugh, they bring us tears, but most importantly help to ground us and hold close what is important. So, to those who shared your experiences, your life, your stories, Thank You. To my family, my Grandparents, and the many elders in my family, I have learned a lot and because of you I have a deep connection to many of our ancestors, and to that I am grateful.

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And finally, I am grateful to Wakantanka. The true author of the community in which we all live in. Our Creator has called us into these communities and to our path as Disciples of Christ. Within the Creator, our community is formed. Within the Creator walls are broken down. Within the Creator we have peace. It is my hope that my thesis will invite and open doors to a new conversation and path that will bring new depth to the community we live in.

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## INTRODUCTION

For over five hundred years, the Lakota people have endured problematic religious, cultural and historical experiences since the arrival of the Europeans to this land in the form of colonization, creating historical trauma that is endured still to this day. Because of this history of trauma, Lakota Christians have struggled with being labeled as having a double identity as both Lakota and Christian, when in reality it is a natural cultural fusion. On one hand, Lakota Christians struggle with acceptance among most Christian circles because of our Lakota Spiritual beliefs that do not fit within what is perceived as common Christian practices and beliefs. On the other hand, we struggle with being accepted with some Lakota Christians whose Christian beliefs have them separated from their many of their Lakota spiritual beliefs and practices.

### *Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian*

*Identity* will recommend that in order to equip Christian Native leaders, a deep understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery and the tragic biblical narratives that were misappropriated and brought about Christian supremacy must be unearthed. Opposing the notion that we as Lakota Christians need to live within the standards of a European derived idea of what a Christian should be like, *Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian Identity* will argue that a further inquiry into the traditions and values of the Lakota people and the roles we play in the life of the church will show how the *Woniya* (Holy Spirit) works in and around a community gathered and how Lakota Christian practices can be a model for other ministries reaching out to Lakota people. In sum, *Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian*

*Identity* will make the case that respectful cultural fusion of Lakota Spirituality within established Christian practices can create a healing narrative that moves beyond the oppressive missionizing and assimilation that Lakota people have endured for generations, and to revitalize and bring forward a conversation of Christianity through the lens of Lakota people.

*Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian Identity* is grounded in a Native methodology that is non-standardized, yet reflective of thousands of years in which my ancestors developed theology and their resulting social structures, based on a rich and complex system of oral history.<sup>1</sup> The method I am using allows for the respectful engagement of life and storytelling, our traditional way of compiling research. Historically, colonizers, which includes academics, benefitted from the knowledge, language, art and culture without the respect of, consent or acknowledgement of Native people, which in turn has created a distrust of people researching and studying faith and Native spirituality. This practice must stop. In her book *Indigenous Methodologies*, author Margaret Kovach puts forward the idea that from an epistemology and ontology based on relationships, an Indigenous methodology emerges that encompasses a relational and tribal knowledge worldview, this can be achieved by using a qualitative approach to gathering information.<sup>2</sup> Lakota values are based upon an accountability that is relational, this helps to bring forward what is more important, which holds us accountable to *Mitákuye Oyás'íŋ* (all our relations). Lakota values recognize

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<sup>1</sup> “The life story is inherently interdisciplinary; its many research uses directly parallel the four classic functions of sacred stories. Telling a life story can help one to know one’s self, others, the mystery of life, and the universe better than before and can also provide the researcher with a better understanding of how the teller sees him or herself within and in relation to these domains,” Robert Atkinson, *The Life Story Interview* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 34.

this connection in all we do. In *Research as Resistance*, Robina Thomas explains that, “Traditionally, storytelling played an essential role in nurturing and educating Indigenous children.”<sup>3</sup> With the use of the framework from Kovach’s epistemology of tribal knowledge (relations and connection) and Thomas’ method to receive teachings through storytelling, this research can honor the respectful values of my Lakota people.

The Indigenous methodology I have used has allowed me to remain authentic in my research with a deeper understanding of how to utilize the resources available and uplift my people, the Lakota. It has to be acknowledged that the compilation of my research that I received from many Lakota people, needed to be translated from my perspective as a Lakota Christian in order to find answers to my research questions.

Respected Sičangu Lakota elder Albert White Hat Sr., educator and activist for Lakota traditional culture, wrote about his personal experience in research and methodology within the Lakota culture,

Since the early reservation days, non-Indian were placed in charge of our education. That process is known as acculturation and assimilation, the eradication of our “Indian-ness.” Despite the damage done there are tools and skills that Western education can provide. However, achieving desired results requires a careful balancing between these skills and a strong Lakota value system. I have struggled to find this balance in my own work. It is an ongoing process which I hope others can continue to improve upon. If this text inspires other Lakota people to pursue self-determination in the field of education, my work will have been successful.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Leslie Bown and Susan Strega, *Research as Resistance: Revisiting Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2015), 237.

<sup>4</sup> Albert White Hat Sr., *Reading and Writing the Lakota Language* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 1.

This paper is written in first person. The more I continued deeper into this research, it was obvious my lived experience and knowledge of my Lakota people I have learned in my lifetime was a necessary element to my work.

Other Lakota published academics such as, Vine Deloria Jr. (Standing Rock Lakota), Jace Cuney DeCory (Lakota/Cheyenne River) and Richard Twiss (Sičangu Lakota), are changing the cannon of academic by claiming first person and the power of story as legitimate research and methodology, and I am building upon it. The canon for academic excellence was established predominantly by white, European, mainstream approaches and it is paramount that other cultures and methodologies contribute to making it more inclusive.

Through a thematic analysis of the research obtained, *Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian Identity* will reveal that the Lakota people have endured problematic religious, cultural and historical experiences since the arrival of the Europeans to this land in the form of colonization. To equip Native leaders, a deep understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery<sup>5</sup> must be unearthed. The early Christian colonizers consciously and intentionally engaged in activities that were oppressive and genocidal all in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Doctrine of Discovery gave credence to these horrific tactics, behaviors, and beliefs such as giving colonizers superior rights to all other religions and therefore

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<sup>5</sup> “England and France, along with the rest of the Northern Europe, were not going to be left out when claiming their fair share of the lands and riches the New World had to offer. England and France both claimed, ‘the rights and powers of the first discovery in North America.’ They based their territorial claims on the ‘Doctrine of Discovery.’ In 1493, France, England and Spain were all Catholic countries. The kings of France and England would risk excommunication if they violated Spain’s rights that granted them by papal bull under the rule of Alexander VI.” Robert J. Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark and Manifest Destiny* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 17-18.

permission to demand the Lakota people to assimilate and denounce our Spirituality, customs and traditions. This shameful act, which is at the root of all the discrimination and marginalization Lakota people have endured, has created a loss of identity throughout generations of Lakota people, and today many struggle to reconcile being Lakota and Christian. *Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian Identity* explains that it is possible to be a Traditional Lakota and Christian.

Throughout my life, I was taught my Lakota traditions through ongoing exposure to various ceremonies and spiritual moments, which allowed me to understand and appreciate these practices more in depth.

Part of my research for *Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian Identity*, was to witness something more than just a dual-spirituality<sup>6</sup> amongst Native Christians, one day practicing Christians and the next using Native traditions. I set out to see if there are other people like me, who fully live in their Native traditions and completely embody the sacredness of a Christian life. This journey explored how Lakota people can be the Christian children of God the way we were meant to be both within community through shared stories and through our own individual lives.

In a broader scope, Native leaders are reframing the gospel narrative as part of a postcolonial decolonization<sup>7</sup> in ways that are unique to our own cultural context and bringing healing. Often Lakota people experience a gap between culture and Christ because we have been taught we can only practice one or the other.<sup>8</sup> Native Theologian,

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<sup>6</sup> Dual-spirituality is defined as a balance between Native tradition and Christian theology and practice.

<sup>7</sup> Postcolonial decolonization involves looking at the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism, primarily focusing on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of colonized people and their lands. In this case, Native Americans and recognizing the work of undoing colonialism.

<sup>8</sup> See Ella Deloria, *Speaking of Indians* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1998). Her scholarship in this book provides a plea for assimilation to be done in the right way, with due respect for those people who must be

Richard Twiss reveals in one of his accounts, his personal struggle with reconciling his Native traditions and being a Christian child of God by saying, “I conformed to the expectation to accept interpretations of the Bible that said ‘old things had passed away and all things had become white.’ Regarding my following Jesus in the context of Native ways of music, dance, drumming, ceremony and culture.”<sup>9</sup> However, for some Native Christians, such as myself, there is a fusion happening with our spiritual life which is intertwined with Lakota traditions and living as a disciple of Christ. To help make my case in *Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian Identity*, I have three chapters.

Chapter One establishes how the Doctrine of Discovery was used against Native people by providing evidence of the genocide of the Lakota people and how the historical trauma brought about distrust towards Christianity.<sup>10</sup> I will show in this chapter through a Native trauma theory that trauma can be confronted and moved beyond in order to create a path for healing and forgiveness. Lakota people live with the ongoing effects of intergenerational and historical trauma caused by colonization as well as ongoing systemic oppression, but that does not mean we need to stay there.

Chapter Two will argue that Lakota spirituality only deepens the relationship with God and allows Lakota Christians to have an authentic and meaningful spiritual experience. Using Native theologian Steven Charleston’s Native Theology theory, my

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assimilated into a larger group and with a sympathetic, accurate understanding of how those people have lived and felt in the past and how they have been asked to choose between cultures.

<sup>9</sup> Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, 82.

<sup>10</sup> “Conversion, the ultimate goal, was a process of removing these differences and distinctives and assimilating them into the moral economy and civilization as measured against a single value of absolute truth. For the Puritans, the Pauline model of conversion had become deeply enshrined in modern Western thought.” Richard Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press), 83.

research for this chapter will explore Lakota thought and philosophy and demonstrate that it is not at odds with Christianity but share common and critical tenants through shared stories. *Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian Identity*, will show that Jesus Christ is embodied in and around Lakota spiritual traditions and ceremonies, naming the existing spirituality and how it is integrated into Christian customs and spirituality. This chapter will seek to find Jesus and change the current narrative to a healing narrative that shows how the fusion of Lakota spirituality provides healing, and Lakota Christian's do not need to live in to a false spiritual duality.

Chapter Three will take an in-depth look at Lakota teachings that offer healing and what they can show us that coincides with how Christ talks about forgiveness and reconciliation. Acknowledging the wrong doings and making amends by using examples of lived experiences of reconciliation with the Lakota people.

I will also focus on a Lakota Cultural Fusion theory which respectfully uses traditions, beliefs and language of my Lakota people into a worship service. This chapter will focus on an example of a liturgy that was put together in a meaningful way that fuses Native culture and spirituality while keeping the boundaries of the Lutheran Christian traditions. *Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian Identity*, will show that cultural fusion aims to deepen the spiritual life of the assembly through a fuller experience of Christ who is revealed in Lakota people's language, rites, arts and symbols.

Conversations among Lakota people from Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Cheyenne River, Standing Rock and Lower Brule Reservations in North and South Dakota, as well as other Indigenous leaders lend to the overall substance and credibility of the claims within *Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian Identity*.

## CHAPTER 1

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE CREATION OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA

#### **Introduction**

When we look at the history of Lakota people, we see countless injustices that have occurred all throughout history and continues today. Lakota people were forced to endure daily mental and physical abuses that brought a proud and spirited people crumbling down because of the conquest and dominance that the colonizers practiced.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will focus on the historical education of what happened to the Lakota people when every aspect of life known was challenged, changed and almost fully replaced by people who justified their egregious acts of genocide and assimilation all in the name of Jesus Christ. From the Doctrine of Discovery to present Christian missionary practices all have played a role in the historical trauma Lakota people endure to this day.

How can healing happen for Lakota Christians like me, who are reminded daily of our people's history that includes so much trauma? Do we allow this trauma to dictate who we are as Lakota Christian's, or do we bravely confront this historical trauma so that we can create our own narrative? This is a question this chapter aims to confront by

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<sup>1</sup> "Imagine a non-Aboriginal . . . worker whose job was taken away by all-powerful outsiders. Imagine that he knew he had no realistic chance of ever qualifying for another one. Imagine he was unable to go for comfort and help to his own churches and his own psychiatrists and hospitals, because those same outsiders had made them illegal. Imagine that, whenever he went to their versions of such helping places, the professionals who staffed them could not speak his language but demanded that he learn theirs. Imagine, as well, that all those powerful outsiders held him, his language and his culture in such low esteem that they forcibly removed his children, to raise them to be just like them. Imagine . . . waking up to silence throughout your entire community where only the week before there had been the raucous voices of new generations." Ruppert Ross, *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* (Saskatchewan: University of Saskatchewan Press, 2006), 123.

using the research of Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, PhD., Hunkpapa/Oglala Lakota, professor and clinical social worker. Yellow Horse Brave Heart would contend that confronting our historical trauma is necessary to become a *Takini* (survivor). Through the explanation of Yellow Horse Brave Heart's trauma theory, an assessment can be made that unless the Lakota people face the assimilation, genocide, oppression and destruction found within our history, and allow ourselves to grieve these injustices, healing will not transpire, and the historical trauma that continues to move down from generation to generation will continue its path and further impact Lakota people. "Historical trauma is a cumulative and psychological wounding across generations, including one's own lifespan, because everything up to a minute ago is history."<sup>2</sup>

Before we progress into the topic of historical trauma, it is important to introduce who the Lakota people are, so we can understand why this history had such an impact.

### **The Lakota Sioux Origin**

The name Sioux comes from *Nadowe Su*, which is Algonquin meaning "Little Rattle." The story, as recorded, says the phrase comes from the rattling sound a snake makes before it bites. French traders and trappers changed the spelling from Su to Sioux and dropped *Nadowe*. This is how the great *Oceti Sakowin* became commonly known as Sioux.

Sioux language has three dialects: Lakota, Dakota and Nakota. These dialects developed because the Sioux were spread out over the vast plains region of North

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<sup>2</sup> Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, "From Intergenerational Trauma to Intergenerational Healing: A Teaching About How It Works and How We Can Heal," *Wellbriety: White Bison's Online Magazine* 6, no. 6 (May 23, 2005): 4, accessed April 10, 2018. <http://www.whitebison.org/magazine/2005/volume6/wellbriety!vol6mp6.pdf>.

America. Today, Lakota and Dakota are the two main dialects, with the Nakota being the least frequently used. Speakers of the dialects have no difficulty understanding one another. Before colonization, the Sioux tribe was made up of Seven Council Fires, or the *Oceti Sakowin*, known by the Sioux. These were individual bands of tribal members that were based on kinship, dialect and geographic proximity. The *Oceti Sakowin* are:

*Mdewakanton* - Dwellers by the Sacred Lake  
*Wahpekute* - Shooters among the Leaves  
*Sisitonwan/Sisseton* - People of the Marsh  
*Wahpetonwan* - Dwellers among the Leaves  
*Ihanktown/Lower Yankton* - People of the End  
*Ihanktowana/Upper Yankton* - People of the Little End  
*Tetonwan/Teton* - People on the Plains

For the purposes of this thesis, the knowledge and reference shared about traditions and experiences mostly comes directly from the Teton band of Lakota Sioux which is where my tribe, Oglala (Scatters His Own), is within. Other tribes within the Teton Lakota Sioux are:

*Hunkpapa* - Camps at the Horn (Standing Rock & Wood Mountain, Canada)  
*Sicangu/Brule'* - Burnt Thigh (Rosebud & Lower Brule)  
*Itazipo/Sans Arc* - Without Bows (Cheyenne River)  
*Sihasapa* - Blackfeet (Cheyenne River & Standing Rock)  
*Oohenumpa* - Two Kettles (Cheyenne River)  
*Mniconjou* Planters by the River (Cheyenne River)

Lakota means "allies, friends or those who are united." Dakota comes from the word Da meaning "considered" and Koda or "friend." Most Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people live on South Dakota's nine reservations. There are also Sioux reservations in North Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Minnesota and Canada. Today, as a result of the Indian Reorganization Act, about one-third of the total Indian population lives off reservations in urban areas.

South Dakota is home to more than 71,000 American Indians, many of whom live on South Dakota's nine reservations. Most of the state's Native American population are affiliated with tribal bands like Oglala, Sicangu, Santee, Brule. South Dakota's landscapes play an important role in the lives of the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota. Each tribe has a unique story that sets each apart from the other Sioux Nations. The traditional home of the Sioux was located in Minnesota along the headwaters of the Mississippi and the woodlands. The Sioux were great hunter and gatherers with a vast knowledge of horticulture. Eventually the Teton Sioux moved further west into the plains and the plains culture was developed because of the change in the land. Living in peace and relatively undisturbed until the 1850s even though the United States government had authority over them due to the Louisiana Purchase in 1804. Once my Lakota ancestors had regular contact with colonizers, this is when trauma really ensued with the slow loss of traditional and spiritual teachings that for Lakota were a form of healing. The importance of our traditions and spirituality of the Lakota people can best be described in this manner:

Since the time of creation, American Indian people have known that memory is stored in the blood and bones of the people. For thousands of years before the arrival of the non-Natives, elders passed on traditions in the language of the people, recording bone memories through oral traditions and on material objects made of wood, skins, rocks, textiles, basketry, and ivory. These items reminded the people of their memories, brought them to light again. The source of this knowledge is found in the bones of the people.<sup>3</sup>

Lakota traditions and spirituality have continued to this day because they have been shared through the oral traditions of our Lakota elders. However, the same has

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<sup>3</sup> Eric Gainsworth, *Sovereign Bones: New Native American Writing* (New York: Nation Books, 2007), 149.

happened with our historical trauma: “Through the oral tradition, my mother taught me about the great epidemics that killed so many Indian people. She told me about the smallpox, measles, influenza, and other plagues Europeans brought to Native America.”<sup>4</sup>

Yellow Horse Brave Heart contends that as the oral tradition of the historical trauma is shared from generation to generation they become “stored in the blood and bones of the people.” She continues to explain that the historical trauma that is moved from each generation is cumulative, chronic and severe, and “contributes to the current social pathology of high rates of suicide, homicide, domestic violence, child abuse, alcoholism, and other social problems among American Indians.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Doctrine of Discovery**

This section will show that through history of my Lakota ancestors, many tactics were used to assimilate that were aggressive and brutal to the first inhabitants of this land. It was through these harsh tactics that historical trauma has been able to move from generation to generation of my Lakota people. More than five centuries, the Doctrine of Discovery has served as the religious and moral framework of the United States, and the creation of countless laws based upon the foundation of the Doctrine, which made it legally possible for the theft of land and resources, of not just the Lakota, but Indigenous people worldwide.

This papal bull originating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century Christian church, gave advantages to the colonizers while at its root is the cause of the generational historical

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<sup>4</sup> Gainsworth, *Sovereign Bones*, 154.

<sup>5</sup> Yellow Horse Brave Heart, “From Intergenerational Trauma to Intergenerational Healing: A Teaching about How It Works and How We Can Heal,” accessed April 9, 2018. <http://www.whitebison.org/magazine/2005/volume6/wellbriety!vol6mp6.pdf>.

trauma that my Lakota people struggle with today. And as Lakota Christians, the Doctrine of Discovery continues to be a barrier for many Christian's to accept us fully if we choose to fuse both Lakota and Christian traditions and spirituality:

To invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit.<sup>6</sup>

These are the words of Pope Nicholas V, who wrote an official papal bull of the Catholic church in 1452. This papal bull and others like this written between 1450 to 1493 are collectively called the Doctrine of Discovery. Education into understanding the historical trauma of Lakota people and our tragic history with early Christians, must begin with the Doctrine of Discovery, a worldview that a certain group of people based on their religious identity (primarily Western Christendom), had moral sanction and the support of international law to invade and colonize the lands of non-Christian peoples, to dominate them, take their possessions and resources and enslave and kill them.

If a person was a non-Christian, this papal bull created various theological and legal doctrines that said they were considered enemies of the Catholic faith and, as such, less than human.<sup>7</sup> Claims of Christian dominion over Indigenous Peoples and their lands served European monarchies as a means of fending off competing monarchies and de-

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<sup>6</sup> Pope Nicholas V wrote the bull *Romanus Pontifex* on January 5, 1455, which extended to the Catholic nations of Europe dominion over discovered lands during the Age of Discovery. Along with sanctifying the seizure of non-Christian lands, it encouraged the enslavement of native, non-Christian peoples in Africa and the New World.

<sup>7</sup> Steven Newcomb, *Five Hundred Years of Injustice: The legacy of Fifteenth Century Religious Prejudice*, Accessed April 10, 2018. [http://ili.nativeweb.org/sdrm\\_art.html](http://ili.nativeweb.org/sdrm_art.html).

legitimizing the long-established autonomous Indigenous Peoples' governments. Steve Newcomb, contributor of the documentary, explains that the Doctrine of Discovery was used by former British colonies, specifically, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America.

To begin a healing journey, Native and non-Native people need to consider the moral and spiritual implications of how they as individuals and as a church community benefited from the genocidal nature which continues to plague Lakota people with psychological wounds, and how all people have been harmed by the doctrine. Article 2 of United Nations General Assembly's Convention on Genocide states:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, and includes five types of criminal actions: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>8</sup>

Yellow Horse Brave Heart continues to explain in her trauma theory that the cultural genocide Indigenous people endured which included the eradication of Indigenous people's spirituality and ceremonies, was vital to the Indigenous people, such as the Lakota, that the destruction was treacherous. To this day, we can see the effects of the Doctrine of Discovery within our communities:

- The development of policies without the full knowledge and prior informed consent of Indigenous Peoples.

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 260 (III), *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, December 9, 1948, Accessed April 9, 2018. <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html>.

- Diminished protection of human rights.
- The “New Jim Crow” and mass incarceration of people of color as modern slavery. (Thirteenth Amendment)
- The diminished and impermanent status of Indigenous Peoples under the Doctrine of Discovery, is contrary to their right to sustain themselves in perpetuity as distinct peoples.
- A concept of occupancy (“Indian title”) is inconsistent with the constitutional status of treaties. (Treaties are the highest law of the land, equal to the constitution.) Conflicts arising when Indigenous Peoples exercise self-determination bring them in conflict with governments and corporations that rely on the legal lineage of the Doctrine to assert claims on natural resources, such as coal, oil, uranium, natural gas and water.<sup>9</sup>

Steven Newcomb, a historian on the Doctrine of Discovery, contends that in a country set up to maintain a strict separation of church and state, the Doctrine of Discovery should have long ago been declared unconstitutional because it is based on a prejudicial treatment of Native American people simply because our Indigenous ancestors were not Christians at the time of European arrival. By penalizing Native people on the basis of their non-Christian religious beliefs and ceremonial practices, they were stripped most of their lands and most of their sovereignty, and he feels it stands as a monumental violation of the "natural rights" of humankind, as well as the most fundamental human rights of indigenous peoples.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land*, 27.

<sup>10</sup> Newcomb, *Five Hundred Years of Injustice*, Accessed April 10, 2018.

Yellow Horse Brave Heart's trauma theory and healing explains that past events that continue to profoundly impact the present need to be confronted, encouraged with dialogue of sharing which includes reflections that are personal and communal in nature. Speaking to a Lakota elder, she shared her thoughts as a Lakota Christian woman who has the lived experience of having to hide her language and spirituality, and what it is like when Christian missionaries visit her church on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, "I have seen clergy people and missionary type people who come to serve us, don't really know anything about who we are as Lakota people, or how we live and view the world. They come in with a plan and a vision of how we should see Wakantanka, and their mission always fails because they do not take the time to see us as we are. They want to assimilate us more. This white model or vision doesn't work and so they fail and leave, but we get blamed for it not working out the way they wanted."<sup>11</sup>

Yellow Horse Brave Heart has created a model of intervention that could be used by Native and non-Native people in increasing awareness of the effects of historical trauma and the resolving grief by going through a communal mourning and the use of Lakota traditional healing practices.<sup>12</sup>

### **Declaration of Independence**

However, the historical trauma of Lakota people does not just stop with the Doctrine of Discovery. This doctrine was at the heart of every move that the colonizers took to secure their new homelands from the Indigenous people that already occupied the

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<sup>11</sup> Conversation with Lakota Elder, Oglala South Dakota, July 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, *Healing from Historical Trauma and Grief: American Indian and Alaska Natives in Health Careers*, accessed April 17, 2018, <http://aianhealthcareers.org/page7/page58/page95/page95.html>.

land. “. . . He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose, obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.”

In 1763 King George told the colonizers that they no longer had the right of discovery of all Indian lands west of Appalachia and the right belonged solely to the crown. This move by King George angered the colonizers and they wrote the letter above which is known as the Declaration of Independence.<sup>13</sup> The declaration continued to go on to accuse the King of domestic insurrections amongst the colonizers, and that he has “[e]ndeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.”<sup>14</sup>

Yet, at the beginning of the declaration, they write, “all men are created equal,” and within that same document they dehumanize Native people by calling us “merciless Indian Savages.” This type of colonizing and dehumanizing acts only continued to get worse for my Lakota ancestors.

### **Indian Removal Act and Trail of Tears**

Taking a more in depth look throughout the history of the United States, the abuses and exploitation of Native Americans and the Lakota people is an ongoing list. During the 1600s, colonizers endeavored to enslave Native people while infecting them

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<sup>13</sup> Scott Douglas Gerber, *The Declaration of Independence: Origins and Impact* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2002), 24.

<sup>14</sup> Gerber, *The Declaration of Independence*, 24.

with their deadly diseases and started cultural genocide by completing mass killings. President Andrew Jackson, nicknamed “Indian Killer” and “Sharp Knife” by the Cherokee Natives,<sup>15</sup> was a forceful proponent of Indian removal and created a policy in order to relocate Native Americans east of the Mississippi River, so that an expansion could be made for the nation going west. A year after that policy was created, Jackson’s Indian Removal Act was passed through Congress and for twenty years, between 1830 to 1850, it is estimated around one hundred thousand Native people were relocated west of the Mississippi. This led to strong-arming Natives to sign treaties with the United States, as well as those who resisted were met by the army. The “Trail of Tears” as this is called in history, was the catalyst for brutality against Native people, many of whom were shackled and chained while an estimated ten thousand died.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Louisiana Purchase and 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty**

As the colonization continued westward, the Lakota people’s way of life was disrupted to make space for the colonizers. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 allowed for the sacred lands of the Lakota to be jeopardized. The *tatanka* (bison) was an integral part of my Lakota ancestors and their life, providing spiritual and physical nourishment. The expansion began to decrease the bison herd dramatically<sup>17</sup> and the loss of such a sacred

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<sup>15</sup> Angari, “Unsettling America: Decolonization in Theory and Practice,” accessed March 29, 2018. <https://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/2012/01/21/newt-gingrich-andrew-jackson-the-metaphysics-of-neoindian-hating>.

<sup>16</sup> Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas 1492 to the Present* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1998), 144.

<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 25-38.

animal to the Lakota created warriors and leaders who put their people first and tried to protect themselves against the colonization that was happening.<sup>18</sup>

Then came the 1868 Fort-Laramie Treaty which gave the Sioux people, home of the Lakota, most of the land west of the Missouri River, which included the *Paha Sapa*<sup>19</sup> (Black Hills). The United States Government promised in this treaty to keep settlers away from the lands given to my Lakota ancestors. Not long after, people began to discover gold in the sacred *Paha Sapa* and created a gold rush. With the loss of once mass amounts of bison, now my ancestors were faced with losing their sacred lands.<sup>20</sup>

### **Reservation System Created 1876**

My Lakota ancestors fought to protect their lands and people. Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, leaders of the Sioux tribe during this time, strongly resisted the efforts of the U.S. government to confine their people to reservations. In 1875, after gold was discovered in the *Paha Sapa*, the U.S. Army ignored previous treaty agreements and invaded the region. This betrayal led many Sioux and Cheyenne tribesmen to leave their reservations and join Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse in Montana. By the late spring of 1876, more than 10,000 Native Americans had gathered in a camp along the Little Bighorn River, which the Lakota and other Native tribes call Greasy Grass, in defiance of

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<sup>18</sup> “Some Lakota Leaders believed it was best to negotiate and make accommodations with Americans in order to avoid bloodshed and prevent catastrophic losses, while others adopted a more militant approach and were willing to take up arms to roll back the threat from U.S. expansion,” writes anthropologist Kathleen Pickering. Kathleen Pickering, *Lakota Culture, World Economy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 81.

<sup>19</sup> Paha Sapa, the Black Hills, are a small, isolated mountain range rising from the Great Plains of western South Dakota and extending into Wyoming. Considered sacred by many Plains Indians, the region is accurately described as an island of trees in a sea of grass.

<sup>20</sup> Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 29.

a U.S. War Department order to return to their reservations or risk being attacked.<sup>21</sup> My Lakota ancestors defeated George Armstrong Custer at the Battle of Greasy Grass (Little Big Horn), however that win did not last.

The U. S. Congress forced my Lakota ancestors off their lands once again, this time it included the *Paha Sapa*, and in 1889 land allocations made by the government created what is now the modern reservation system. This act weakened my Lakota ancestors. And so, begins what is often termed, “the Age of Assimilation” due to the rapidly progressing western expansion by the colonizers. The reservation system that was created could be described as more of an extermination and deculturation period. However, the various attempts to eradicate my Lakota ancestors failed, and they survived.

### **Wounded Knee Massacre 1890**

The final blow to my Lakota ancestors that stalled their resistance to forced colonization and assimilation was on December 29, 1890. Soldiers surrounded my Lakota ancestors who were camped out along the Wounded Knee Creek. The Calvary went from tipi to tipi looking for weapons. A shot rang out and the Calvary open fired upon the Lakota and in just a matter of minutes, over 300 Lakota men, women and children were murdered. Over half killed that day were women and children. Hundreds of years my Lakota ancestors lived a peaceful and spiritual way of life and in one day, in a series of events all was lost.<sup>22</sup> Days later, a burial party arrived and dug a large pit and dumped

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<sup>21</sup> History Channel Article, *Battle of the Little Big Horn*, accessed March 29, 2018. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/battle-of-little-bighorn>.

<sup>22</sup> Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 68.

the frozen bodies of the murdered Lakota into the ground. Lakota Holy Man, Black Elk, was just a boy when this happened. He told John Neihardt that, “When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young.”<sup>23</sup>

A generation of broken treaties, traditional hunting grounds depleted, as colonizers decimated the bison population. The great Lakota who once were roaming free across the beautiful plains were finally confined to reservations.

### **Boarding Schools, Assimilation and Loss of Identity**

The unmistakable trauma of the previous years would only be just the start of a list of injustices. My Lakota ancestors began to suffer a loss of identity, spirituality, culture and traditions between 1890 to 1950 with factors such as forced colonization, decline in bison, religious assimilation, boarding schools, racism and continuous relocation. The policies that were created to reign in Indigenous people such as my Lakota ancestors, were created with the thought that eventually through assimilation, Indigenous people would be transformed into the mainstream, and the culture and spirituality of my ancestors would be eradicated. These policies carried with them the idea that one culture was significantly superior to another which set up a choice of death or being assimilated. The idea of conquering Indigenous people to force the colonized

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<sup>23</sup> John G Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, 8th ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 89.

people's cultural values is what created the first Indian boarding school in Carlisle Pennsylvania in 1879. This idea was funded federally into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup>

Lakota elder Basil Braveheart, shared a memory of his experience in a federally funded Christian boarding school. English was not his first language and spoke very little of it. When he arrived, they were bathed, given clothes and haircut's. A particular memory that stood out about this experience was that his long hair was cut short. He remembered being told about Jesus whom they were told they were supposed to be like him. And then he saw a picture of Jesus on a wall, and the Jesus that he was being told about did not have short hair, he had long hair.<sup>25</sup>

This memory that Brave Heart speaks about was part of a process called, "civilization process," that was an assault on cultural identity. Christian colonizers at these boarding schools sought to eliminate all outward identifiable evidence of tribal life, after that was done, they pressed their dominate culture and values that were deemed acceptable in society. "As the savage's selves gave way, so the civilized selves would emerge"<sup>26</sup> Historian David Adams continues to write about the boarding school experience:

The first step in removing tribal influences was to cut the Native Americans' hair. The long hair was a symbol for savagism which had to be removed in order to make way for their new identities. The second change that occurred was the uniform of the students. All native clothing was discarded in exchange for suits for the boys and dresses for the girls and for each a nicer set of cloths for church. Next was the loss of the name. Attempts were made to change the names of

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<sup>24</sup> Karl A Hoerig, *Remembering Our Indian School Days: The Boarding School Experience*, accessed April 18, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2002.104.2.642>.

<sup>25</sup> Conversation with Basil Braveheart, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, July 2017.

<sup>26</sup> David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 101.

Native Americans in ways that allowed them to keep some of their tribal identity but in most cases, names were too difficult for whites to pronounce.”<sup>27</sup>

During this time many Lakota people secretly engaged in ceremonies which created a disconnect of our traditional ways for so many of my ancestors, because they were no longer shared. Native Dakota Theologian Vine Deloria Jr wrote that the decline in the numbers of Lakota *Wičasa Wakan* (Holy Man), began during this time.<sup>28</sup> The colonizers recognized the collective strength our Lakota *tiospaye*,<sup>29</sup> and many of their actions sought to destroy the Lakota way of life. When the colonizers arrived, the Lakota people’s lives began to change drastically. This time in history and as Lakota Christians now, our relationship with our church and the United States, could be seen as the assimilation was done because the colonizers and people in our churches today were not comfortable and did not understand, so the assimilation was not about benefit but one of comfort. A culture of dominance has always been the model for which the United States was created upon.

The ancestors, if allowed their spiritual freedom, could have been able to cope with the trauma that was inflicted upon them. The elders brought the wisdom, the knowledge and honesty. Everyone knew their function in the community, each person had their role; everyone had a place of importance.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 108.

<sup>28</sup> J.R.Walker, *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota* (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1991), 44.

<sup>29</sup> Lakota word for “extended family.”

<sup>30</sup> Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, 76.

## Historical Trauma

As a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, I come from a tribe who people continuously say we are the poorest in America. As a New York Times article stated, “It is as poor as America gets.”<sup>31</sup> People not from the reservation, often talk about Pine Ridge and the Lakota people in terms of pity, people living in a desolate place that has no beauty. When attending a seminar about the Doctrine of Discovery I heard the response from an attendee after the showing of a documentary, “Look what we did to those poor Indians.” Typically, in my experience, when someone speaks of Native Americans in general, it has been said with something very specific in mind such as being less than, not as good, separate than. It is a historical trauma that is continuously being played out every day.

It is almost as if Native Americans are property, albeit human property, to be possessed by those who would observe, pity, assist or praise them as figments of a vanishing race. Native Americans can then be safely relegated to the role of mascots<sup>32</sup> for America’s fun and games. Native people can then be honored for what “we used to be” not for what we are today in modern America. Native people become warriors, chiefs, redskins and braves, everything but human beings. Jo-Ann Episkenew explains the

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<sup>31</sup> Peter T. Kilborn, *Life at the Bottom—America’s Poorest County/A Special Report: Sad Distinction for the Sioux: Homeland Is No. 1 in Poverty*, accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/20/us/life-bottom-america-s-poorest-county-special-report-sad-distinction-for-sioux.html>.

<sup>32</sup> “Supporters of the ban to stop Native mascots assert that even if the schools, teams etc that use them harbor no ill-intent, the images themselves are caricatures that perpetuate stereotypes. Opponents of the ban suggest that these names celebrate, rather than disparage Native American culture.” Sam Sommers, *The Native American Mascot: Tribute or Stereotype?*, accessed March 15, 2018, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/science-small-talk/201205/the-native-american-mascot-tribute-or-stereotype>.

current historical trauma that Native people face today, stating, “Today, multiple generations of Indigenous people deal with intergenerational post-traumatic stress disorder, which is the direct result of multiple generations of colonial policies all focused on dealing with the “Indian problem.”<sup>33</sup>

However, there is an element of hope that persists in the face of such oppression, marginalization, cultural disruption and structural violence is powerful. The mistrust from Christianity that some Lakota people feel today is a direct result of the impact of the Doctrine of Discovery and the many injustices that were created from the papal bull’s existence. In light of the spiritual and cultural trauma, I had to ask myself in the midst of this research, “Is it possible to change the narrative and find hope amongst a history of such horrific oppression?” An ELCA pastor, Joan Conroy, from the Oglala Sioux Tribe shared some wisdom:

I believe the Holy Spirit surrounds me and my people and connects us with a source of power which allows our people to survive so much racism and trauma of the past and present. We do not pity ourselves. We celebrate each other’s victories and mourn each other’s losses. We see the beauty of who we are and where we are from. God gives us visions of a good life. God has given us inspiration and hope through our visions. We are strong and resilient. So, when you think of us, when you speak of us, please do not speak in terms of pity or sadness. Do not make us tokens of “sad or lost” people.<sup>34</sup>

So where do Lakota people begin? Yellow Horse Brave Heart has a second trauma theory model that is based upon healing rituals that can be practiced in groups. The model is approached by, “sharing experiences, providing hope, collective mourning,

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<sup>33</sup> Jo-Ann Episkenew, *Taking Back our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009), 9.

<sup>34</sup> Pastor Joan Conroy is one of only four Native women ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She currently works as a pastor in St. Paul, Minnesota, and is the President of the American Indian/Alaska Native Lutheran Association of the ELCA.

and social support.”<sup>35</sup> This model is relevant today in the relationship Native Christians have with the non-Native members within the church. This is where conversation is important for the use of healing. Yellow Horse Brave Heart has created a model that relies upon the collective memories and mutual identification between people that can aid in healing.

Conversing with a Lakota elder from the village of Wakpamani Lake on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, this traditional elder shared that where our Lakota people are today, the historical trauma is really felt in and amongst everyone. He felt that it was crucial to make a return to our traditional teachings and practices if we want to overcome the historical trauma that has been inflicted upon us. This renewal of traditions and spirituality and the acknowledgement of our past, can bring back hope.<sup>36</sup>

This conversation shows that Lakota people can embrace Yellow Horse Brave Heart’s trauma theory and healing process. A return to Lakota traditional ways allows for healing through Yellow Horse Brave Heart’s communal healing theory by restoring Lakota culture. The acknowledgement of the history of the Lakota is important because it encourages healing and can move us past the trauma. Eduardo Duran writes,

One challenge for healing the Lakota historical trauma response is the subjugation and distortion of historical facts about our genocide and the lack of awareness and sensitivity in the general population. As validation of the trauma and giving testimony are germane to the healing process, the lack of acknowledgement of our trauma is a barrier to our liberation from the effects of our historical legacy and the trauma response.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Russell Thornton, *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 13.

<sup>36</sup> Conversation with Lakota Elder, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, July 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Priscilla A. Day, *Health and the American Indian* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 16.

With the understanding of Yellow Horse Brave Heart's theoretical model for healing of historical trauma, Lakota and non-Native Christian's can work to confront the history of the Doctrine of Discovery and move past it and embrace the Gospel and be renewed in our identity. Yellow Horse Brave Heart's model guides us towards reconciliation and healing which is based within the Lakota communities themselves, therefore releasing the oppression and everyone can be freed from their past. Duran explains this transformative process: "Through a gradual transformation of consciousness via ongoing deconstruction of the life experiences of oppressed persons, the entire community that is adversely affected by systemic forms of oppression and injustice can begin to liberate itself and, in that process, liberate the oppressor."<sup>38</sup>

This transformation that can take place through the use of Lakota culture and spirituality allows the liberation of our historical trauma. Yellow Horse Brave Heart sums it up beautifully, "The connectedness of past to present to future remains a circle of lessons and insights that can give us both the consciousness and the conscience to heal ourselves."<sup>39</sup> When we as Native Lakota Christians see and experience the Gospel first and eliminate these doctrines that tried to "kill the Indian and save the man."<sup>40</sup> We can get to know the Gospel and start again and work out how God is speaking to us directly

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<sup>38</sup> Eduardo Duran, "Liberation Psychology as the Path toward Healing Cultural Soul Wounds" *Journal of Counseling and Development* 86, no. 3 (2008): 289.

<sup>39</sup> Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, *The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief*, Accessed April 9, 2018.  
[http://www.theannainstitute.org/American%20Indians%20and%20Alaska%20Natives/American\\_Indian\\_holocaust.pdf](http://www.theannainstitute.org/American%20Indians%20and%20Alaska%20Natives/American_Indian_holocaust.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> "Kill the Indian and Save the Man": Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans Beginning in 1887, the federal government attempted to "Americanize" Native Americans, largely through the education of Native youth.

and not through European derived preconceptions. As Lakota we can bring all of who we are, which includes our Native spirituality and traditions, and interact with the Gospel in a new way.

CHAPTER 2  
A LAKOTA THEOLOGY

**Introduction**

Theologian Steven Charleston, an elder of the Choctaw Nation, offers his interpretation of what it means to create a Native theology by suggestion a Native theology is a communal process that includes storytelling. The first step towards articulating a Native American Christian theory is the awareness that storytelling continues to be a definitive for Native culture, we are a people of oral tradition. He explains that oral tradition is a crucial starting point in the process of theology making that is fundamental to the core principals of Native Americans.<sup>1</sup>

A different approach to understanding Lakota spirituality is needed when wanting to speak about a Lakota theology. Author Clyde Holler, backs up Charleston's theory by prefacing his study of Lakota spirituality as a theology expressed in ritual and storytelling.

. . . the study of Native American religion stretched the methods and techniques that are generally employed in the humanities. Humanists are trained primarily to work with texts. The study of a religion whose theology is expressed in ritual and storytelling rather than in sacred literature requires something different in method and approach.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Charleston and Elaine Robinson, *Coming Full Circle: Constructing Native Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Clyde Holler, *Black Elk's Religion: The Sun Dance and Lakota Catholicism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), xvii.

Past and present, people will find that the Lakota use oral tradition to spirituality. It is this very same use of the oral tradition that early Christianity relied upon. The apostles and disciples who witnessed Jesus' teachings, travelled and shared their wisdom and knowledge using expressed ritual and storytelling. Eventually those oral traditions were written down as gospels because those who were present for Jesus' teachings began to die and people wanted the message to continue. Lakota spirituality and traditions have been written about, but you will find that very few literary books that contain a guide to the Lakota customs are written by Native people because of the deep respect in wanting to keep it *wakan*. Charleston describes this respect as a sense of spiritual intimacy. The most critical levels of spiritual awareness occur on ever-more intimate spheres of contact.<sup>3</sup>

The Lakota hold strong to the oral tradition to this day and continue to pass these *wakan* traditions through storytelling or as The Reverend Dr. Martin Brokenleg calls it, *Lakol Wicho'an kin*, "The Lakota Way" of living and being.<sup>4</sup> *Lakol Wicho'an kin*, carries a belief that when words are spoken, that speaker's soul and spirit are attached to those words. When a Lakota elder speaks, their words are taken very seriously as the person(s) are listening carefully.<sup>5</sup> Jesus' apostles listened intently as did the people Jesus spoke to

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<sup>3</sup> Charleston and Robinson, *Coming Full Circle*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> "When my father and I drove up to the Beard's house, my father would remind me of how I was to behave to show respectful attention. . . . The power of the spoken word was to be treated with respect and reverence. I was to remember exactly what he said, in exactly the way he said it. These are the teachings that compromise a portion of the *Lakol Wicho'an kin*." Martin Brokenleg, *The People's Theology Journal: Wowapi Wakan: The Word of Scripture* (Tempe, AZ: The Indigenous Theological Training Institute of America, Inc), 48.

<sup>5</sup> "O Grandfather and Father *Wakantanka*, maker of all that is, who always has been, behold me! And you, Grandmother and Mother Earth, You are wakan and have holy ears: hear me! We have come from You, we are a part of You, and we know that our bodies will return to You at that time when our spirits travel upon the great path." Said by Black Elk a Lakota *Wakan*; Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred*

because that is how the doctrine of the apostles was created, through oral tradition directly from Jesus. We could argue that the entirety of our message that Christianity is built upon is based on the oral tradition. From the oral tradition perspective, author David J. Palm writes, “From this perspective, perhaps ninety percent of the New Testament is based on authoritative oral tradition from Jesus, and the remaining ten percent is from written sources.”<sup>6</sup>

A Lakota child, for instance, begins to learn *Lakol Wicho’an kin* over a period of time as they participate within community and practice listening to what is said to them. Lakota children are surrounded by constant oral tradition at home, gatherings and ceremonies that help teach and guide them in traditional ways of the Lakota. Oral tradition brings the *wakan* into daily context and as Rev. Brokenleg explains, “What is heard in an oration, a teaching, or a conversation is remembered uncritically. Intentionally there is no criticism, analysis, nor disagreement with what the speaker says.”<sup>7</sup> Rev. Brokenleg explains that *Lakol Wicho’an kin* and oral tradition brings a mystical analysis that is wordless, non-judgmental and becomes a treasure that is told as a life lived. It is through this high respect for Lakota tradition that our spirituality lives on and the deep intimate relationship we have with *Wakantanka* is constant.

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*Pipe: Black Elk’s Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Chicago, IL, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 31-32

<sup>6</sup> David J. Palm, *Oral Tradition and the New Testament*, May 01, 1995, accessed March 09, 2018. <https://www.catholic.com/scriptures-and-tradition>.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk’s Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, 49.

Lakota Theology is a lived experience that brings an understanding with it through continuous active discernment of one's experiences in life. This same lived experience and discernment we find within the bible and the gospels.

Western anthropologists struggled because when they study traditional Native stories, they often come in multiple variations. They even can contradict one another. Charleston explained that for someone seeking precision and conformity this brought about confusion and sought a resolution of the contradictions. "If the stories could not agree, how could they be true?"<sup>8</sup>

As my studies progress me deeper into the understanding of my Lakota Spirituality, there is a revelation that has begun to form, which is an entirely new way of thought of the definition of Christianity that has been taught to me. As Lakota, our spirituality that has been shared through generations of storytelling, can be seen as a deeper understanding of what Creator God has always intended, by the consistent lived experience of *Lakol Wicho'an kin*. Each Lakota person who experienced the ritual of storytelling, found what they needed to hear, and a personal theology was created. The truth never changed but spoke to each individual personally. The many stories of the Bible are held as an expression of truth by Christians, even though they can vary and contradict one another. They are "canonical," embodying broad truth claims, because they are accepted by the majority of the Christian community as the accurate expression of God's activity and purpose in human history.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Charleston and Robinson, *Coming Full Circle*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

Charleston's Native theology theory explains that the stories that are passed from one to another, are open to debate and interpretation, even though they are recited as the tradition of the community. He explains:

Truth therefore, is understood in Native theory in much the same way that it was understood by the first followers of Jesus: it is a living presence among the People (John 15:26) made manifest by the actions of the people themselves (John 14:17). In other words, truth is an object of our faith, but also a subject of our process.<sup>10</sup>

### **False Duality: Lakota or Christian**

Throughout my life, I was taught my Lakota traditions, which was handed down through our oral tradition from generations before me. My education was taught through ongoing exposure to various ceremonies and spiritual moments, which allowed me to understand and appreciate these practices more in depth. This is an example of what is at the heart of my Lakota community, which is the importance of the oral tradition. This tradition is part of the *Lakol Wicho'an kin*, that brings about an empowerment for each individual to discern who we are as Lakota Christians. It is a process that allows for the whole community itself to be empowered to explore and "try on" new concepts, and every teaching thus received is constantly measured against how well that story continues to speak truth to *Wakantanka's* people.<sup>11</sup>

Part of my research was to witness something more than just a dual-spirituality<sup>12</sup> amongst Native Christian's, one-day practicing Christians and the next using Native traditions. I wanted to see if there were other people like me, who fully live into their

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>11</sup> Charleston and Robinson, *Coming Full Circle*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Definition in this dialogue is dual-spirituality, a balance between Native tradition and Christian theology and practice.

Native traditions and completely embody the sacredness and be the children of *Wakantanka* the way we were meant to be, and how it presented itself within community and through individuals. How are Native leaders reframing the Gospel narrative as part of a postcolonial decolonization<sup>13</sup> in ways that are unique to our own cultural context? In 1805 a great Seneca Nation leader, Red Jacket, wanted to witness how Christian missionaries lived out the truth they spoke of from the Bible, with how they treated his people.

Brother we are told that you have been preaching to the white people in this place. These people are our neighbors, we are acquainted with them, we will wait, a little while and see what effect your preaching has upon them. If we find it does them good, makes them honest and less disposed to cheat Indians, we will then consider what you have said.<sup>14</sup>

This is an example of living out Charleston's Native theory, because he accepted the truth claim and was willing to adapt and try something new, but first needing to witness what that truth looked like when it was physically put into practice. "Truth in Native American theory, is not an ideal to be professed, but a path to be followed." An important insight shared by Charleston

Often Lakota people experience a gap between culture and Christ because we have been taught we can only practice one or the other. However, for some Native Christians, such as myself, there is a fusion happening with our spiritual life which is intertwined with Native American traditions and living as a disciple of Christ. We are

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<sup>13</sup> Definition of postcolonial decolonization is looking at the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism, primarily focusing on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of colonized people and their lands. In this case, Native Americans and recognizing the work of undoing colonialism.

<sup>14</sup> History Matters, *The U.S. Survey Course Online: A Project of the American Social History Project*, accessed April 15, 2018. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5790/>.

practicing a new understanding of our *Lakol Wicho'an kin*, in the same way as the Gospel stories seeks a way to bring understanding of life. Lakota thought and philosophy can create a way for Christians to deepen our own understanding and relationship with Christ, because Lakota spirituality models Christ's teachings powerfully. As Steven Charleston explains in his theory, it "reveals new dimensions of classic Christian thought." In their essence, both Lakota Spirituality and Christianity have the same goal, to bring the individual into harmony with eternal truth and with God the Creator.

If we are to use Charleston's Native theory, that explains as Native people we collectively use cultural memory to tell our story, then can a Lakota Christian not buy into the Doctrine of Discovery and the colonialism that is deeply embedded within the Christian culture and is a part of our collective story? Many Lakota people today are rediscovering who we are as Indigenous people. And as believers in Christ we are learning that to follow Christ in no way should put us at odds as Lakota people. In a documentary about the Doctrine of Discovery created by Native people, explained that the Western Hemisphere was home to tens of millions of Indigenous peoples when European settlers arrived, but less than a century later the number had dropped by ninety five percent, a survival rate of one in twenty due to the genocide and forced assimilation from many Christian colonizers.<sup>15</sup> Native culture, according to early missionaries, did not fit the Christian religion, and belief in the Gospel required my Native ancestors to give up who they were in order to become something they could never be, white.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *The Doctrine of Discovery: Unmasking the Domination Code*, written by Steven Newcomb and directed by Sheldon Wolfchild, DVD (38 Plus 2 Productions, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Colorado Springs: Fulcrum, 2003), 38.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say to be a Christian we have to be defined solely by northern European, cultural identity markers. An example of this would be exclusive liturgies that are created to leave no room for other options. “The very questions of authenticity placed to colonized people is a form of continuous appropriation into the identity/identical forms of liturgical thinking and action and its ambivalent forms of power.”<sup>17</sup> Lakota and the Gospel texts, project a new horizon and when they fuse together, there can become a new understanding of who we are as Native Christians. If we use Charleston’s theory, we could work to heal the historical trauma and the divisions that were brought on by the colonizers. His theory allows Native people to speak in a unified way, but one that relies on diversity as one of its prime strengths.<sup>18</sup> Thus eliminating the phrase of dual spirituality and live into the fusion of deeper sacredness and relationship with *Wakantanka* with no explanation.

According to Western theological thought, feminist theologian, Elizabeth Johnson talks about a triad of relationships, human beings to the earth, among each other, and to God, “have been conceived primarily according to the values of patriarchy.”<sup>19</sup> Johnson critiques this traditional understanding and uses the Wisdom tradition to construct a new form of understanding the radical connections which bind all three of these together. This turning to the ‘circle of the earth’ becomes “the most basic one of all” she states, and the use of her Wisdom view can also work within Charleston’s Native theory and bring Lakota people into conversation with *Čangleska Wakhán*<sup>20</sup> (Sacred Circle) and our

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<sup>17</sup> Cláudio Carvalhaes, *Liturgy in Postcolonial Perspective: Only One is Holy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Charleston and Robinson, *Coming Full Circle*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *Earth and Creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> This is based on the Sioux concept that everything in the universe is interrelated, human beings and all things which exist in their environment are connected in one continuous process of growth and

relationship with God our creator.<sup>21</sup> Through our ceremonies we are connected to *Wakantanka*, and in all things just as the contemporary Christian practices. Johnson's idea offers a fresh vision of life for the entire community of *Wakantanka*'s creation.

Respected Lakota Holy Man, *Caga Mato Wanbli* (Grandfather Eagle Bear) Frank Fools Crow<sup>22</sup> explains the Lakota Trinity which fuses both Christian and Lakota tenets and further confirms that a lived fusion of both cultures is already intrinsically woven into who we are as Lakota Christians.

Wakantanka is like the Father. Tunkashila is like the Son. The Powers and Grandmother Earth together are like the Holy Spirit. Wakantanka and Tunkashila, think, act and watch over as One. So, there is only one God. The same God as Christians know. Whenever Wakantanka or Tunkashila is used, they are one in the same.<sup>23</sup>

#### Native Prophecy and Vision

“Something big like this, to change the world is needed. I think that’s how we can change the world, by everybody coming together. The Yellow Nation, the Red Nation, the Black Nation, and the White Nation,<sup>24</sup> all came together. This is the first time in history all four

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development. Čangleska means “circle” and Wakan means “holy” or “sacred.” Jael Kampfe, phone interview by author, February 20, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson, *Earth and Creator Spirit*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Fools Crow was an Oglala Lakota Holy Man. “Grandfather,” or “Grandpa Frank” as he was often called, was a nephew of Black Elk who worked to preserve Lakota traditions, including the Sun Dance and Yuwipi ceremonies. He supported Lakota sovereignty and treaty rights.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas E. Mails, *Fools Crow: Wisdom and Power* (Broken Arrow, OK: Millchap Books, 1991), 24.

<sup>24</sup> When the Lakota people pray or do anything sacred, they see the world as having four directions. From these four directions come the four winds. Each direction has a special meaning and color associated with it. The cross symbolizes all directions. East (Yellow) - The direction from which the sun comes and represents the beginning of a new day. South (Red) - Because the southern sky is when the sun is at its highest, this direction stands for warmth and growing. West (Black) - To the west, the sun sets, and the day ends. For this reason, west signifies the end of life. North (White) - North brings the cold, harsh winds of the winter season. These winds are cleansing. When the Lakota pray with the Sacred Pipe, they add two other directions: Sky and Earth. The Great Spirit - Wakǵáŋ Tháŋka- dwells high above like an eagle in the sky; this direction's color is blue. Earth is our Mother and Grandmother from whom we receive our nourishment. The color of this direction is green for all growing things.

have come together.” Philip Wright, Lakota Sioux mentioned about the gathering with many Indigenous Nations at Standing Rock, North Dakota in 2016.

*Wakantanka* sent prophets throughout history to guide and warn His people: “I will raise up for them a prophet[a] like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command” (Deuteronomy 18:18).

However, our Creator did not choose just a handful of people to speak to. Charleston explains that, “The whole reason for the Incarnation is so that God could enter into the vision quest and speak to us all. The experience God had as a human being is the same experience you and I have as human beings; We enter the world of vision. We see and hear in a new way. We understand more deeply. We are transformed.”<sup>25</sup>

*Wakantanka* has always been present in the lives of Lakota people. The experiences of the prophets conveyed in the Bible, were the stories of just some of the people *Wakantanka* reached out to. This section seeks to introduce the individuals whom *Wakantanka* chose to communicate with, just as we read in the Bible. This also reiterates Charleston’s Native theory explanation that creating a Native theology is bringing in shared wisdom comes from the entire community. And the storytelling is important to the understanding of each individual’s quest to create their theology.

An example of this shared wisdom and sacred connection to *Wakantanka* that has been passed from generation to generation, is of a Lakota leader who prophesied a coming of change and community. These two prophesies are talked about often. In 2016

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<sup>25</sup> Steven Charleston, *The Four Vision Quests of Jesus* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), 63.

when many Native nations gathered together to protest a pipeline being built on sacred land, the pipeline was referenced by my Lakota people as the Black Snake, in keeping with a Lakota prophecy envisioned by the Oglala Lakota<sup>26</sup> Holy Man Nickolas Black Elk. Black Elk was part of the last generation of Lakota people who had lived freely on their own land before colonization and the reservation systems were put into place. One of the most influential books about Lakota spirituality was *Black Elk Speaks*, on the life accounts of Black Elk by author John G. Neihardt.<sup>27</sup> Another book among the most referenced is *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, by Joseph Epes Brown.

However, it is also important to use these literary examples, to bring an understanding into the mistrust many Lakota people have for scholars who come to research about Lakota cultural traditions and spirituality. This is part of our collective story that needs to be included when discerning a Lakota theology. The Venerable Paul Sneve, Arch Deacon of the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota, and member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, explains the mistrust,

It is unfortunate that neither author ever mentioned Nick Black Elk's conversion to Roman Catholicism and only focused on the first third of his life. Black Elk not only converted to Catholicism, but also became a Catechist and was an effective evangelist. Black Elk also experienced much of the non-Lakota world through his travels with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show tours throughout the United States and Europe. When one reads either Neihardt's or Brown's perspective on Black Elk, it would be wise to keep in mind the agenda that they kept in their writing. Neihardt offers a view of an old defeated Holy Man and warrior who has failed his vision. The final like of Neihardt's book neatly sums

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<sup>26</sup> Black Elk was Oglala Lakota which many mistakenly refer to as the Sioux Nation. Lakota is the Nation and Oglala is a band within that Nation.

<sup>27</sup> It is important to note that many believe that although *Black Elk Speaks* is a stunning literary contribution about Black Elks beliefs and look into the world of traditional Native Americans, it is difficult to know if it reflects more of Neihardt's interpretation or the true meaning and nature of Black Elk. Neihardt struggled with Black Elks full life journey of a traditional Native man and a Christian and at the time of his writing he chose to only focus on the traditional way of life.

up his desire to portray the mythical noble savage, so popular during his life; “And I, to whom so great a vision was given in my youth, you see me now a pitiful old man who has done nothing, for the nation’s hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.”<sup>28</sup>

Rev. Sneve continues to explain that the words shared in Neihardt and Brown’s literary works, hardly convey the Black Elk that his friends and family knew. Brown approached Black Elk with a more scholarly anthropological view, but the absence of Black Elk’s Catholicism hardly allows for a true and balanced portrayal. Black Elk’s transformation from Lakota Holy Man to Roman Catholic Catechist is sparsely documented.<sup>29</sup>

But as we continue looking into Black Elk’s visions, he saw that his people, the Lakota, would lose heart from the ordeals that they were encountering and that the Sacred Hoop of his Nation would be broken. He also saw that his people would suffer from famines, sickness, and wars. Black Elk also saw hope for the future of his people. After seven generations, had passed there would be a reuniting of not only his own people but of all peoples creating a new Sacred Hoop comprised of all nations of the Earth. He saw a star rising in the East that would bring wisdom. At the time, Black Elk felt that meant there would be a great Prophet that would come to help the formation of the new Sacred Hoop.<sup>30</sup>

Of course, there was very much in the vision that even I cannot tell when I try hard, because very much of it was not for words. But I have told what can be told. It has made me very sad to do this at last, and I have lain awake at night worrying and wondering if I was doing right; for I know I have given away my power when I have given away my vision, and maybe I cannot live very long now. But I think I have done right to save the vision in this way, even though I may die sooner

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<sup>28</sup> The Rev. Paul M. Sneve, *Black Elk as Pauline Prophet: Challenge to Indigenous Christians* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, Indigenous Theological Training Institute, 2005), 96.

<sup>29</sup> Sneve, *Black Elk as Pauline Prophet: Challenge to Indigenous Christians*, 96-97.

<sup>30</sup> John G Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, 8th ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 25.

because I did it; for I know the meaning of the vision is wise and beautiful and good; and you can see that I am only a pitiful old man after all. Black Elk.

This particular vision talks of a dark and worrying omen, but in the end the vision is redeemed by a promise of healing: “Then when the many little voices ceased, the great Voice said: ‘Behold the circle of the nation’s hoop, for it is holy, being endless, and thus all powers shall be one power in the people without end.’”<sup>31</sup> The Grandfathers in Black Elk’s visions spoke to him about the mysteries of his life, including his role as a healer. The Grandfather, “he of where the sun shines continually,”<sup>32</sup> gives Black Elk a sacred pipe and tells him “With this pipe you shall walk the earth, and whatever sickens there you shall make well.”<sup>33</sup> Another Grandfather says, “he who was the Spirit of the Earth,”<sup>34</sup> appears to Black Elk with “hair long and white, his face was all in wrinkles and his eyes were deep and dim,” and slowly transforms before him into a young, boy, which Black Elk recognizes, “. . . I knew that he was myself with all the years that would be mine at last.”<sup>35</sup> This spirit tells Black Elk he is receiving his vision because his people will have great need of him in the days to come.

Black Elk’s visions were intricate and have carried through the generations as a guide and promise of hope to the Lakota people. They help us as Lakota to discern who we are today.

I will use the comparison of Black Elk’s epic prophecies with the Book of Daniel. Just like Daniel, the visions are beautifully expressive, poetic in nature. Deeply spiritual with a guide into a much deeper theological meaning that walks into the mystical, and at

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 29.

the same time circling around the essential theme of revelation. If time is taken to read *Black Elk Speaks* and learn of his visions, you will read about animal figures, angelic beings, a host of elders, colors, and mystic words of what he saw was to come to his people. In all of this, it was connected to Black Elk just like Daniel's visions, and he invites Lakota people into the Great Mystery through his prophecies.

As a Lakota Christian I am inspired by Black Elk's prophecies. Lakota Christians, we are given prophetic visionaries not just coming from the Hebrew scriptures, but also through Black Elk and other strong Lakota Prophets. These visionaries take us deeper into our own theological questioning, just as Charleston's theory suggests we do. The Holy Spirit is at work in and amongst all people. As we see the similarities of the prophetic voice in the Bible and within the Lakota people, we can look to our Lakota spiritual ceremonies and find *Wakantanka* within them as well. While elders in the community are honored for their wisdom, a recognition of the depth of their experience, in Native religious tradition every human being can participate in a personal quest to encounter *Wakantanka*.<sup>36</sup>

### **Onikare and Inipi—Sweat Lodge and the Rite of Purification**

We see this example of a relationship with *Wakantanka* and deep discernment within a person's individual experience, of participation within Lakota ceremonies. An explanation of these ceremonies shows how Charleston's Native theory can bring a priority of maintaining community through the remembrance of Lakota sovereign unity which is created by these ceremonies. His theory honors and incorporates the religious

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<sup>36</sup> Charleston and Robinson, *Coming Full Circle*, 5.

traditions of the Lakota people and strives to do what Jesus asks, “to do this in remembrance so God’s people might have a future.”<sup>37</sup> Lakota ceremonies are an integral part of the health and well being of Lakota people. So deeper discernment and knowledge of these ceremonies play a role in the sacred relationship Lakota Christians have with *Wakantanka*.

The Lakota term for *Inipi* means “to live again.” *Inipi* is a purification rite and is necessary to help the participant enter into a state of humility and to undergo a kind of spiritual rebirth.<sup>38</sup> The *onikare*,<sup>39</sup> sweat lodge, is central to Inipi. Prayers offered there draw on all the powers of the universe, earth, water, fire and air. In years past, Inipi was done before any major undertaking to purify the body and gain strength and power.

The actual lodge itself is a dome frame constructed of 16 young willow branches that represent renewal and the cycle of life, an ever-lasting cycle of nature. The willows although young, teach us about death and life, in the fall their leaves will die and are returned to *Wakantanka*’s creation, but when spring comes the leaves return to life once again. It is through this continuous cycle of life that we purify our bodies and minds to bring us closer to our Creator. The willow branches are placed in a *čhaŋgléška* (circle), traditionally covered with hides so no light could penetrate inside.

On the outside, the formation of the site encompasses an earth mound just outside the door of the sweat lodge, facing east, which contains a fire pit with *Pǎéta* *Owihankeshni* (sacred stones). The stones that are used represent Grandmother earth and

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<sup>37</sup> Charleston and Robinson, *Coming Full Circle*, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 26.

<sup>39</sup> Onikare is the Lakota terminology for Sweat Lodge. (See Appendix A for in-depth definitions of sweat lodge elements and symbolism for the Lakota.)

the Great Spirit because they give life with the help of the *Pǎ́éta Wakǎ́áj*<sup>40</sup> (sacred fire). Keeping of the *Pǎ́éta Wakǎ́áj* is an important activity. Coals from the previous *Pǎ́éta Wakǎ́áj* can be preserved and used to rekindle the *Pǎ́éta Wakǎ́áj* at the next Inipi. There is a *Pǎ́éta Yuha*<sup>41</sup> (fire keeper) who keeps the fire going and continuously prays over it and offers sacred elements such as *hante* (cedar), *čhanli* (tobacco) or *phezihota* (sage). The fire is representative of the sun. Another mound partially encircling the *Pǎ́éta Wakǎ́áj* represents the crescent moon. This is the outer world or cosmos; the inner world is the *onikare*. It represents the womb of the universe from which we are created anew.

Prayers are said at each stage of the construction of a sweat lodge. When it is completed, a burning coal is brought in and sweetgrass or sage is burned by the leader of the Inipi to purify the lodge. Participants enter in from the east, from this direction light of wisdom accompanies. The heated rocks are placed at the center within the *onikare*. This is important because it represents the center of the universe where Wakantanka dwells within and the creator's spirit is flamed by the fire. Then, the door is closed, and the ceremony takes place. During the ritual, the door is thrown open four times to represent the four ages described by the oral wisdom brought to the Lakota people by the White Buffalo Calf Woman. The fourth time, participants leave the lodge, emerging from dark to light which represents the liberation from the physical universe. All that is impure is left in the sweat lodge and our relationship with our Creator becomes one of pure love.

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<sup>40</sup> The original Sioux Nation was made up of Seven Council Fires. Each of these Council Fires was made up of individual bands, based on kinship, dialect and geographic proximity. Sharing a common fire is one thing that has always united the Sioux people. Fire is a gift from the Creator. It is spirit made manifest. It is untouchable yet touches us with its warmth and light.

<sup>41</sup> *Pǎ́éta Yuha* in Lakota is Fire Keeper. The fire keeper watches of and protects the sacred fire.

Water plays a very spiritual role with the Inipi. Water is sprinkled onto the sacred rocks once they are placed within the center of the onikare. Wakantanka is represented within the water, as the steam rises from the water on the rocks, we are reminded of our Creator's ever flowing presence, giving of power and life to all. It is through the rising water onto the bodies present, we feel the purification and liberation through Wakantanka.

The elements and ritual within the participation of the Inipi is much like that of our sacred Christian ritual of Baptism. In Holy Baptism, Wakantanka liberates us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Born children of a fallen humanity, in the baptismal waters we become God's reborn children and inherit eternal life. By water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the Church, which is Christ's body. As we live with him and with his people, we grow in faith, love and obedience to *Wakantanka's* will.<sup>42</sup>

While participating in the Inipi and Baptismal Rituals, Native Christians acknowledge *Wakantanka's* acts, initiative and gifts. Participants are connected to Jesus, a living and beloved community of Wakantanka and eternal life. In the Old Testament, Word meant the activity and voice of Wakantanka. We see Wakantanka present and active in the Inipi just as the Holy Baptism. Martin Luther spoke about water, **Wakantanka's** Word and Baptism, which in his description, he could easily be speaking about the Inipi,

The Word is everything. Without it, and no Christian would deny this, the water is nothing and Baptism does not exist. Connection with the Word thus means that Baptism relates a person to the whole plan of God. This is why the ancient baptismal commands are of considerable importance to moderns who stand in the

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<sup>42</sup> ELCA Service of Holy Baptism (paraphrased), *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 121.

same need. . . “In the name of the Father” relates Baptism to the whole of creation - and its water; “in the name of the Son” calls to mind the whole personal relation of the baptized community to God in Christ; and “in the name of the Holy Spirit” means that God takes the initiative, turning the (Word) into Spirit and creating the church.<sup>43</sup>

Relation to the “whole of creation” is seen with every use of elements and explanation of ritual, “in the name of the Son” which is the community we see of the participants that come together to pray for those who seek purification, “in the name of the Holy Spirit” *Wakantanka* taking the initiative is seen in every action that is taken just as through the “Word” is seen from people’s actions in participating in the Inipi. Luther’s Large Catechism instructs that Baptism “overcomes and takes away sin.” The water of the old creation and the Word of the new achieve the new creation in human beings through the rituals of Inipi and Baptism. We see in this ceremony a natural spiritual and cultural fusion presenting itself. In line with Charleston’s Native Theory of a common story shared amongst *Wakantanka*’s faithful.

### **Haŋblečeya—Vision Quest**

Lakota people embody prayer in all that we do. Many Lakota’s are taught that we walk in a constant time of prayer and ceremony, which Native elders describe as part of an essential process of personal and collective healing, helping us to stay strong in the face of the long struggle ahead.

My great uncle Harvey Ross who practiced a fusion of traditional Lakota and Christian spirituality, once explained to me that when a person goes on a *Haŋblečeya* (Vision Quest), there are many reasons in which a person can lament such as, strength for

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<sup>43</sup> Martin E. Marty, *Baptism*. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1977), 96.

a difficult path ahead, asking to help a relative or a person simply wants does this as an act of thanksgiving for the life *Wakantanka* has given us. It is necessary for the person walking the path of the *Haŋblečeya* to do this alone when the time comes. This isolation is also a time of oneness with *Wakantanka*. A seeker's many senses begin to transform with the aid of *Wakantanka* through the sacredness of the lament and the oneness with creation they are surrounded by. The seeker becomes open to experiencing something much more than just the ordinary. Charleston explains that the impact of the vision is determined by the reception it receives from the community. Just as the gospel narratives describe the experience of Jesus in sharing his message, there might be times when many people would respond and other times when the words would be questioned or even rejected, for once those words are released into the community they become part of a living story.<sup>44</sup>

Jesus himself embodied a life of prayer just as the Lakota do.<sup>45</sup> His passion and love for all of *Wakantanka*'s creation was modeled in his prayer life. His prayers were of lament, of thanksgiving, of the need for help. In the Garden of Gethsemane, we see the act of a *Haŋblečeya*, the most powerful and meaningful act of worship and prayer to *Wakantanka*. Jesus' disciples prayed and waited for him, just as those who go to support a *Haŋblečeya* seeker do. In the bible we learn that Jesus prayed often and very intently. He prayed in the desert and other secluded places,<sup>46</sup> and He prayed for long period of times.<sup>47</sup> In the New Testament, Luke even describes Jesus praying with intensity and

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<sup>44</sup> Charleston and Robinson, *Coming Full Circle*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> "In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed" Mark 1:35 NRSV.

<sup>46</sup> Luke 5:16 NRSV.

<sup>47</sup> Luke 6:12 NRSV.

focus near the end of his life,” In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.”<sup>48</sup> It is this intensity while seeking a *Hanblečeya*, the seeker’s relationship with *Wakantanka* becomes like a oneness in order to experience the vision needed or requested.

Preparations for a *Hanblečeya* begin a year in advance. There are many varied factors into the type of *Hanblečeya*, such as what tribe the *Wičasa Wakan* (Holy Man)<sup>49</sup> is from, culture and the purpose for seeking a vision, as well as purification of the mind and body. The seeker begins a journey to what will become a spiritual refuge of sorts which will bring about mental and physical healing and guidance.

A person usually begins a *Hanblečeya* in an area outdoors isolated from people, generally without food or water. The "seeker" remains isolated as long as it takes to achieve the desired goal; the quest may last up to three or four days. During this time there are people praying at a location near the seeker asking Wakantanka to bring the needed wisdom, strength, emotional growth and healing for the seeker. This beloved community of support is central to the *Hanblečeya*.

All men and women can "cry for a vision" or what Black Elk calls "lament," but what is received through the lamenting is determined in part by the character of the person who does the lamenting.<sup>50</sup> A person wanting to do a *Hanblečeya* will find a

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<sup>48</sup> Luke 22:44 NRSV.

<sup>49</sup> *Wičasa Wakan* is the Lakota word for Holy Man which Christians would call a pastor or priest. There is a difference between a Holy Man and a *Pejuta Wičasa* (Medicine Man). People unfamiliar with the terms often intermix the definitions which is a mistake. A Holy Man is knowledgeable in Lakota traditional ways. In a conversation, an Oglala Sioux man named Sword explained this, “The white people call our Holy Man a Medicine Man, which is a mistake. They often say the Holy Man is making medicine when he is performing ceremonies. This is also a mistake. The Lakota call a thing “medicine” only when it is used to cure the sick or wounded.” J.R. Walker, *The Sun Dance of the Teton Dakota* (New York, NY: AMS Press), 152.

<sup>50</sup> Brown, *The Sacred Pipe*, 44.

*Wičasa Wakan* and ask that the *Wičasa Wakan* be his guide and pray for them. Then the *Inipi* ceremony is conducted to purify them. Traditionally, the seeker builds the sweat lodge by himself.

The most important reason for the Vision Quest is so a person can understand better his/her oneness with all things and gain knowledge of *Wakantanka* through the vision which is interpreted by the *Wičasa Wakan*. The vision seeker after this experience may bring a new truth, but the prophet does not own the truth. Its meaning is not contained only in the speaking, but in the hearing.

Charleston's Native theory can be found again within Lakota ceremony because in a *Hanblečeya* is played out in a spiritual dialogue of the community. Charleston explains that just as the New Testament offers numerous examples of the way Jesus sought to teach a single concept, such as the Kingdom of God, through many different stories and metaphors, so Native theory understand that theological concepts are like pebbles in a stream: they may be core truths of a spiritual nature, but they do not exist independent of the interpretive process that constantly flows over them, that refines, polishes and re-presents them to succeeding generations. Each speaker of a sacred truth, just like the vision seeker or Jesus did, must stand within the active presence of community. There are no disembodied messages from on high, only intimate messages from within.<sup>51</sup>

Through the experiences of Lakota ceremonies, we find not only a fusion of Lakota and Christian tenets, we learn how these ceremonies create an approach to healing which we spoke about with Yellow Horse Brave Heart's trauma theory.

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<sup>51</sup> Charleston and Robinson, *Coming Full Circle*, 7.

CHAPTER 3  
HEALING, FORGIVENESS AND CULTURAL FUSION

**Introduction**

Our Lakota people have survived generations with the guidance of seven values which were brought to the Lakota people by a holy woman<sup>1</sup> generations ago. As this Lakota prophet spoke to the people, she also taught spiritual practices which are still used today. Charleston writes that the religious instructions by which Native people shape our communal spiritual existence are not written into dogmas but contained in the stories.<sup>2</sup> In the oral tradition the holy woman brought a wrapped bundle to the Lakota people. She unwrapped the bundle, giving the people a sacred pipe and teaching them how to use it for prayer. "With this holy pipe, you will walk like a living prayer," is said she told the Lakota. Spiritual practices are an important part of Lakota and life.

Lakota Elder and teacher Basil Brave Heart spoke about the relationship of Lakota spirituality, Christ and healing, "Ceremony and ritual is a deep reverence for spirit to participate in healing. These rituals can be seen as a container. And I use the word container as 'sacred space.' When you make a sacred space, or a container, that's ancient teaching that the Holy Spirit will come in the form, whatever form, to do the healing."

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<sup>1</sup> According to oral tradition, the White Buffalo Calf Woman was a holy woman that visited the Lakota over a four-day period about 2000 years ago. White Buffalo Woman, or Ptesan-Wi, as she is called in the Lakota language, taught them sacred ceremonies, songs, and dances. She gifted the people with a sacred bundle containing the White Buffalo Calf Pipe, which still exists to this day and is kept by Chief Arvol Looking Horse of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

<sup>2</sup> Charleston and Robinson, *Coming Full Circle*, 7.

Lakota people incorporate strong sensory perspectives through singing, dancing, and ritual practice which are all elements that are seen in the worship practices of various Native churches and Ministries. Brave Heart continued to share his wisdom about the cultural fusion of Lakota spirituality in the church:

If you go to an organized church, you'll see incensing. Smudging incense is a very ancient ritual. What it really means is the spirit within the essence of an herb like sweetgrass or sage or cedar. Our belief system is that God, the Creator, reveals divinity within all Creation. So, when you honor yourself and smudge yourself, and you burn something, you're extracting the spirit of the Great Spirit onto you, and so you're able to get that smoke and rub yourself and purify yourself. And it's also used to prepare for ceremony.<sup>3</sup>

Incorporating cultural symbols and traditions to enhance the spiritual life of the Lakota people and our relationship with *Wakantanka* is a necessity for most ministries to Lakota Christians.

### **A Path to Healing**

Education and cultural fusion are stepping stones to forgiveness and reconciliation amongst the Lakota and Christians. Reconciliation involves both the wrongdoer and the wronged taking steps towards each other to restore or establish a relationship after conflict. When we talk about reconciliation in the context of the Lakota people, we talk more in the “sorry” part but we do not talk much about the forgiveness part. Big steps of remorse and amends, both symbolically and practically should be made.<sup>4</sup>

The Lakota practice what is called a *Wopila*. This special ceremony is a *Wakan* sharing of gratitude, a connecting with all beings including *Wakantanka* through giving

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<sup>3</sup> Basil Brave Heart, interview by author, Pine Ridge, SD, July 11, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> “Before any final solution to American history can occur, a reconciliation must be effected between the spiritual owner of the land, American Indians and the political owner of the land, American Whites. Guilt and accusations cannot continue to revolve in a vacuum without some effort at reaching a solution.” Vine Deloria Jr, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 30th Anniversary Edition (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 68.

thanks. It is an expression of wisdom, strength, and compassion. Lakota people have experienced centuries of genocide and assimilation and still to this day we carry this sacred tradition which models a respectful way of living reconciliation and forgiveness.

This is another example of Charleston's Native theory and what he calls a methodology of repair. He explains that Colonialism sought to erase traditional memory of Native people and, consequently to eradicate its story. Native theory applied to both traditional and Christian theology of the Native community, is a process of reconnection those bridges, the cultural synapses that were severed historically and intentionally. Charleston's Native theory is a healing of the story, and a way to revive the ancient narratives and then to apply them to the story of the survivors of our nations holocaust.<sup>5</sup>

Christian rites for reconciliation and healing are intimately related to one another in that individuals and communities are healed and made whole through divine action. In ecclesial rites, this divine response is in cooperation with prayer and ritual that operate within understandings of health and salvation for the whole person, inclusive of spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, and social healing.<sup>6</sup> In the Lutheran Church, Confession is the method given by Christ to the Church by which individual men and women may receive the forgiveness of sins; according to the Large Catechism, the third sacrament of Holy Absolution is properly viewed as an extension of Holy Baptism.<sup>7</sup> It is through this communal experience, such as the Native theory describes, we begin to find healing.

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<sup>5</sup> Charleston and Robinson, *Coming Full Circle*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Lizette Larson-Miller, *Rites of Reconciliation and Healing in Christian History* (Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion, July 2, 2015), accessed November 2, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.71>.

<sup>7</sup> Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 62.

### Healing through Story

An example of a communal experience and a community acting on forgiveness and reconciliation, would be in November 2016 I traveled to Standing Rock, North Dakota and the *Oceti Sakowin* Camp, which means Seven Council Fires. I stood with over six hundred clergy from more than twenty different faith traditions who gathered at the camp to stand in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in their public fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline, and to publicly denounce the Doctrine of Discovery as fundamentally opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Armed with the power of prayer, tradition and ceremony we stood together as one. The Holy Spirit was in and around us all bringing healing and acting towards reconciliation.

The clergy members, laity, and Native water protectors gathered around the sacred fire at the camp to sing hymns and burn copies of the Doctrine of Discovery. This was a symbolic and spiritually healing moment as white members of different Christian denominations who have repudiated publicly the Doctrine of Discovery, read the words to Native elders and then handed the documents over to them. When Christian people enter into an ethnic community, the first thing they want to do is make changes. But what is needed is to listen, and keep listening and it is through that, they will learn. This is what happened during this sacred ceremony. That very experience is a powerful witness to Christ's mission and ministry to all.

“While we were here, by burning copies of the Doctrine of Discovery we were signaling an end to a past that has affected millions and millions of people,” Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus, an Episcopal bishop from California. “People who have been

colonized and people who have been enslaved, but also the enslavers and the colonizers, it's affected us all."

Change is difficult and welcoming the other is not easy. By becoming a part of a community that allows different cultural traditions, some Christians may feel it will diminish what has already been taking place. However, if you were to ask a child what it feels like when they must play alone while other kids are playing. They will tell you it is no fun. Being excluded is lonely. A child will carry with them when they grow older the model of inclusivity that they learned at church and from people around them. That they were accepted for who they are.

With God's help, we can create a lifestyle within our communities that include Lakota people, such as the Standing Rock gathering, that can truly reflect love of *Wakantana*, the Creator and neighbor. We can help everyone to see that their voices and actions are valuable assets in healing. When we help each other enter the story of *Wakantanka*, we cannot help but encounter Jesus. Dr. Carl Jung stated that, "in the divine order there is no such thing as coincidence, but that when things intercept at the same time it is called synchronicity," Under that law, there is a plan, purpose and reason for everything that happens. Jung's statement reflects the premise of this thesis in that the inclusion of Lakota Christian people brings an understanding of the Lakota world view and that our wakan ways are a part of the synchronicity that he speaks of.

Jesus did not go to one particular ethnic group, He embraced everyone He encountered no matter what culture they were from. "Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him; hearing all that he was doing,

they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon” (Mark 3:7-8).

Christ’s disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to minister to all peoples. Jesus showed us what multicultural ministry is, and we witness this even further by the disciples’ work and missionary actions. For Lakota people and Christian Lakota people, a missional perspective is a way of life. We make it a priority to nurture all creation. This is a vital part of our Lakota culture.

When all generations are brought together such as were at the gathering at Standing Rock, community brings forward many benefits and blessings to all who are present. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This promise that was given is showing us that as Christians we have a responsibility to mission and ministry and we need to do it together. When we use this philosophy, the Holy Spirit works with us and in us to create valued relationships. There are transformative possibilities when it comes to Lakota sacred traditions. So as guests who enter Lakota Ceremonial traditions, embrace the spirituality you are experiencing, whether you understand it or not. By doing so you are accepting that Christ and the Holy Spirit are present there.

### **Healing through Elements**

While visiting the gathering at Standing Rock, I witnessed the traditional healing of the Native leaders within the camp using earth, fire, water and prayer, overwhelmingly showing how the Holy Spirit works in and around a community gathered and how these practices facilitate healing. While looking for connections of Lakota and Christian

spirituality, healing is at the heart for Lakota people and is intrinsically intertwined in all actions. This experience helped me to identify the presence of the Holy Spirit in the sacred traditions of my Lakota people. “And everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done among the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common” (Acts 2:43-44).

For three years the disciples had walked with Jesus. After Jesus had ascended into Heaven and they had received the Holy Spirit, they still were uncertain of the promise. They wondered if Jesus would be with them. The book of Acts was written to a people who were experiencing persecution. They had never walked with Jesus. Instead they responded in faith the message shared with them by the disciples. As they faced challenges and difficulties of life, they to wondered if Jesus was with them.

The community that was formed during the gathering at Standing Rock as well as many current Lakota leaders, have found themselves in the same predicament as these early Christians. Lakota Christian leaders are looking towards their sacred teachings to guide them and heal their community as they face challenges and difficulties of life. The sacred events that were happening at Standing Rock, even without the direct knowledge of all the participants, were loudly proclaiming the presence of Wakantanka. So, when I am asked, “How do Lakota people experience the Holy Spirit in our sacred traditions?” This is the answer. Wakantanka is present and intimately involved in the lives and sacredness that is present in Lakota communities. Through witness, people could see that what happened at Standing Rock and in the community that was created of prayer and ceremony, Wakantanka is a Wakantanka who has intersected with the history of the Lakota’s and is involved in the everyday life.

Several efforts have been made within our Christian traditions to name or describe the Holy Spirit. We have used the words “teacher” (John 14:26), “love” (1 John 4:13), and “gift.” Each description is useful however, this thesis focuses on the earthly elements of earth, fire and water that are represented in sacred ceremonies of my Lakota people for the use of healing, knowledge and wisdom.

“We’re praying to the rising sun. We’re praying to the setting sun. We’re bringing in the sacred songs. We’re building the sacred fire,” mentioned Uqualla, a Havasupai Nation Holy Man as we walked to the sacred fire at the gathering at Standing Rock, “So what we’ve created here is a huge vortex of such intensity that is growing skyward.” He also mentioned that sacredness is not reserved for the Creator, but is shared among people, plants, animals and the elements. The harmony of the world and its survival, as we know it is a question of balance. Balance is power, and power enables a person to embrace change. Without change, life is dead, ceremony is dead. We must endeavor to find within ourselves the capacity for change, so that we can heal together and become a part of a larger ceremony. We must realize that we are all part of something “great and inclusive of everything.”<sup>8</sup> A part of our shared story is laying the groundwork for cultural fusion.

### **Groundwork of Cultural Fusion Theory**

Anscar Chupungco, a Filipino Benedictine monk, noted liturgist and theologian wrote,

Among Lutherans liturgical inculturation is not a novelty. When Martin Luther translated the Latin liturgy into German and adopted popular songs for church

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<sup>8</sup> Mike Kirby, *Cultural Inclusion as a Necessity* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, Indigenous Theological Training Institute, 2005), 80.

services, he embarked on liturgical inculturation. The vernacular, unlike Latin, is a living language and is thus a sure vehicle of culture. It expresses the people's thought and behavioral patterns and is an established bearer of their values and institutions. In short, the use of the vernacular in the liturgy is a sign that inculturation has taken place.<sup>9</sup>

As I witness many Lakota mission ministries struggle to stay afloat because there is not a clear understanding of the culture that people come to serve, I need to ask, how do we transform a Lakota ministry and beloved community that does not appropriate our culture and is respectfully inclusive of traditions and beliefs? For me, my faith and spirituality are core to who I am, and it appears reasonable to turn my attention towards theological, missional and ecclesiastic views for an inclusive response to the issues I have found by deeply discerning in my home church back near the Pine Ridge reservation where I am from. Native Theologian George Tinker writes, "Every Tribal community in North America had a healthy and responsible relationship with the Sacred Other long before it knew of, or confessed, the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>10</sup>

This section lays the groundwork for a theoretical framework that creates a new theory that is a fusion of cultures, in this case, Lakota and Christian cultures. Through several conversations during this research with Lakota Christians, it became abundantly clear that the terms inculturation or acculturation were controversial. The meanings of the controversial terms are can be described as:

Enculturation is both a conscious and an unconscious conditioning process whereby people acquire competences in their own culture. What anthropologists call enculturation, sociologists may call socialization. The conditioning process begins in childhood and involves internalizing symbols, rituals, expectations,

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<sup>9</sup> Anscar J. Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: The Future that Awaits Us* (Valparaiso, IN: Valparaiso University Institute of Liturgical Studies Occasional Papers, 2003), accessed December 15, 2017, <https://www.valpo.edu/institute-of-liturgical-studies/files/2016/09/chupungco2.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> George E. Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation* (Minneapolis, MN Fortress Press, 2004), 89.

rules, and requirements not only related to the society as a whole but also for every specific required speech and behavior within the whole.

If enculturation is learning appropriate behavior of a person's own culture, acculturation is learning appropriate behavior of a host culture. Often the acculturation process is hindered by one's tacit assumptions about the structures and relationships of the former society.<sup>11</sup>

Much of the concerns of the use of these terms from Lakota Christians, brought about the historical trauma of continued assimilation. It is hard to say whether inculturation was imposed by the Natives or, on the contrary, contrived by the Church to cope with decolonization and maintain its supremacy in non-European cultures by agreeing to take their beliefs and practices into account.<sup>12</sup> My intention is to respect Lakota and Christian traditions, and so my cultural fusion theory borrows from various theoretical frameworks. This allowed me to create a theory that is a realistic description of the respectful Lakota Christian Spirituality.

My working cultural fusion theory would allow Lakota Christians to fuse aspects of our Lakota Spirituality and traditions, by utilizing an act of preservation of our *Lakol Wicho'an kin*. This cultural fusion encourages Lakota Christians to affirm spiritual truths that were never accepted before and assert the we have the right to use our cultural symbols and practices that were passed down to us from both our Christian and Lakota traditions and spirituality. This brings witness to our faith that truly represents who we are as Lakota Christians.

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<sup>11</sup> Copilot Creative, *Enculturation and Acculturation*, accessed April 18, 2018. <http://www.gpccolorado.com/enculturation-acculturation/>.

<sup>12</sup> Bernadette Rigal-Cellard, *Katerian Catholicism: The Travails of the Global Church in Native North America*, accessed April 16, 2018, [http://www.cesnur.org/2006/sd\\_rigal.html](http://www.cesnur.org/2006/sd_rigal.html).

Unquestionably, my Lakota culture and the wide array of influences within my western and Christian cultures are significant influences in the shaping of the person I am today and the kind of ministry I would like to see happening. The Venerable Paul Sneve, Lakota Archdeacon of the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota spoke about the challenges of fusing cultures, “A challenge arises when either group enculturates or inculturates so radically that syncretism occurs, and the results become a completely different religion that is neither host nor guest but a third entity.” Taking this into account, and my responsibilities as a member of my Lakota community, my deep desire and commitment is to live this out in a way that will truly honor who I am with my Lakota cultural heritage, but also can stay true to Christ’s teachings and ministry. George Tinker goes on to explain that Native people as Christians in society today claim their histories, cultural traditions, narratives and traditional ceremonies just as I was taught to do, as the appropriate traditional covenant within the Old Testament, for their communities.<sup>13</sup>

Having been nurtured and formed early on at Holy Cross Episcopal Church on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, I grew up with certain expectations that a church is a place where all belong regardless of gender, class or racial background. Implied in such expectations is an understanding of a church that is ethnically inclusive and inviting, and that the specific mission is to model that inclusiveness and inviting nature to the community and world that surrounds it.

A Jesuit Priest I spoke with on one of my many travels back to Pine Ridge, South Dakota, shared about ministry on the Pine Ridge reservation by saying that clergy must

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<sup>13</sup> Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance*, 89-90.

build trust among the Lakota people who have had a long history of being deceived and have had bad experiences with some church groups treating them as projects, not people. Many churches I visited on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation are actively practicing respectful and authentic cultural fusion of Lakota and Christian culture and spirituality. When we take the time to look at the core purpose of church today, Theologian Emil Brunner wrote, “The church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning.”<sup>14</sup>

When we think about purpose or mission of our church, what we are needing to talk about is the church’s nature. This is also relevant to ministry to the Lakota people because many of our traditions and values comes naturally in our daily lives. Looking at the Biblical and ecclesial narrative in the New Testament helps us with insight into the larger church’s nature and purpose. We can find four themes within the New Testament:

- The Church as the People of God,<sup>15</sup> stresses the notion of God’s “new chosen people” sharing in the promises made to Israel.
- A Servant People<sup>16</sup> which illustrates a community called by God to humble “wealthy service” and to serve God in worship and prayer and the world in word and deed.
- The Body of Christ is an image of the church as a community with diverse gifts all united in Christ.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (New York, NY: Student Christian Movement Press, 1931), 108.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (NRSV).

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 20:25-26 “But Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 26 It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant’” (NRSV).

<sup>17</sup> Galatians 3:28, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (NRSV).

- Community of the Spirit affirms the presence and activity of the Spirit in the community. Creating a viable form of communal life that would not only meet the needs of the people but serves the purpose of discipleship.<sup>18</sup>

These insights into the church that we find within the New Testament continue to shape our thinking to this day. Deeply rooted within the New Testament we also find affirmation that the Holy Spirit can move communities to bear witness to Christ and bring unity with all, and within that unity communities are able to be accepting and respect cultural uniqueness, such as what the Lakota people bring to the ministries in South Dakota. Often when non-Native people have come to do mission on the reservations in South Dakota, there are walls that are up that can keep the community separated from each other and from *Wakantanka*. Accepting the cultural uniqueness of ministry and community with the Lakota people we can begin to find affirmation and understand *Wakantanka*'s providence that we are called to bear witness in a multicultural world and society to Christ's power.

### **The Process of Cultural Fusion**

The clergy in the ministries I visited on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation, though many of them are non-Native, have worked in a very meaningful way to bring about a fusion of a culture that is not theirs and keep some boundaries of the Christian traditions. Cultural fusion theory gives strength to Lakota Christians to advise on matters of fusion, and the use of our Lakota traditions and ceremonies where we deem appropriate.

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<sup>18</sup> Amos Young, *Who is the Holy Spirit? A Walk with the Apostles* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2011), 29-30.

Perhaps the “decoration” of most worship spaces I visited is very Christian traditional, with a few paintings that tell Christ’s story in a Native lens or icons here and there.

However, what these worshiping communities have managed to do is incorporate Christianity into the lens of the Lakota people by directly adding the Lakota spirituality and ritual into the daily Christian practices. I feel like this is a step forward past the old missionary style of thinking of trying to eliminate the Lakota culture to introduce them to the Christian belief. The Lakota culture has made an impact on Christian worship styles and practice in many of the ministries on the reservation. God has come to the people and is speaking to the Lakota in our own cultural ethos.

What I also learned through my conversations, is that like me and my personal experience, many Lakota Christians I spoke to do not struggle with the contrast between our Christian and Lakota beliefs regardless of the historical trauma that our people continue to endure with past and present Christian supremacy. The greater acceptance of the differences and similarities in our Lakota culture is essential to the success of Christianity on the reservation. In turn, a profound and deeply spiritual experience is created for all involved in not just the worship practices but their relationship with *Wakantanka* and the other.

Spiritual practices are an important part of the Lakota and life on the reservation. Through my lived experience, Lakota people incorporate strong sensory perspectives through singing, dancing, and ritual practice which are all elements that are seen in the worship practices of various churches I visited this summer. When creating a ministry that seeks to fuse Lakota spirituality and traditions, I have created three steps to follow. Before a ministry begins the cultural fusion process, always make sure there are Lakota

people involved. The first step is learning which Lakota rituals could be used in prayer and liturgical services. Step two is taking an in-depth look at what elements from the Lakota, language, music and symbols can be used that can also speak to the Gospel and how it is expressed in church. Step three is the understanding of Lakota thought and philosophy.

### **Native Liturgy**

Liturgy is a celebration of our faith. Using the cultural fusion theory, a liturgy was created that has been put together in a meaningful way to fuse Native culture and spirituality and keep some boundaries of the Lutheran Christian traditions. No child of *Wakantanka* should be disassociated from their culture and way of life. Cultural fusion theory helps us to remember liturgy is not just a celebration of a person's faith and relationship with *Wakantanka*, it is also a celebration of our way of life and our relationship with each other and keeping with the inclusion of our cultural realities that we are a part of.

My Native ancestors who embraced the Christian faith that was introduced to them, had an antithetical view of the use of their traditional cultural practices. Many Lakota Christian elders that I spoke with were also reluctant just as our ancestors were, to fuse some of our traditional Lakota practices in their Christian faith. This Indigenous liturgy was done with the aid of many Native people and countless conversations that helped me to prepare a respectful liturgical experience. The result is a profound and deeply spiritual experience that has been created for all involved in not just the worship practices but their relationship with God and the other. Cultural fusion, in other words, aims to deepen the spiritual life of the assembly through a fuller experience of Christ who

is revealed in the people's language, rites, arts, and symbols. God has come to the people and is speaking to the Lakota in our own cultural ethos.

Within the liturgy, the Call to Worship is a creation of both Native values and respectful language that expresses a context that both Native and non-Native participants experience an engagement of both Native and Christian cultures while being faithful and acknowledging the relationship we have with *Wakantanka*.

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

The Spirit of God be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Come, let us worship the Creator with hearts open to all peoples,  
where pride and prejudice once dwelt;**

Let us worship Creator with minds open to the wisdom of Native peoples,  
where listening and respect once had no place.

**Let us honor the One who freely gives by showing honor  
to those who were once and still remain oppressed.**

Let us worship the God of diversity,  
who made the world in colors, in seasons, in endless variety;  
Who created the diversity of the earth's peoples in His image.

**ALL: All were created to honor one another  
and in so doing the Creator honored. Let us honor Him today by reflecting in our  
worship  
and in life His image—love. Amen.**

The prayers of the Four Directions illustrate Lakota values in relationship with the Gospel and Christ's teachings, and the respectful use of imagery to connect people with the symbols and values Lakota use.

### **PRAYER TO THE FOUR DIRECTIONS**

Creator, the strength of the people, we honor you.

Listen to the thoughts of your people.

Together let us respect the truth of your spirit and care for your

Creations to the east, to the south, to the west and to the north.

Together let us live by the ways you have entrusted to us

Within the circle of life.

Come Great Spirit as all are gathered in your name.

FIRST READER: We face East: To your symbol color gold,  
 The place of dawning, there is beauty in the morning, there the Seeker finds new  
 visions as each sacred day is born. All who honor life around them, all who honor  
 life within, shall shine with light and glory when the morning comes again.  
 And we pray,  
     Come Holy Creator's Spirit, Come

SECOND READER: We turn to the South: To your symbol color red,  
 In the South, the place of growing there is wisdom in the earth,  
 Both the painful song of dying and joyful song of birth.  
 As the earth gives up her lifeblood so her children's hearts may beat.  
 We give back to her our reverence for the holy ground beneath our feet.  
 And we pray,  
 Come Holy Creator's Spirit, Come

THIRD READER: We turn to the West: To your symbol color black,  
 The place of seeing, there is born a vision of the servant of the servants, who  
 proclaimed  
 The Gospel to us. Guide us at the end of each day and fill us with your peace.  
 And we pray,  
 Come Holy Creator's Spirit, Come

FOURTH READER: We turn to the North: To your symbol color white,  
 We look to God our Creator who cleanses our earth with snow, wind, and rain.  
 To Jesus who fills us with the wideness of mercy and grace and lovingly  
 embraces all the people. And the Holy Spirit who comes to inspire us.  
 And we pray,  
 Come Holy Creator's Spirit, Come

Yellow Horse Brave Heart's trauma theory is important to acknowledge in the use  
 of the repentance section of the liturgy that was adapted from the Joint Catholic-Lutheran  
 Commemoration of the Reformation Liturgy. In order for healing to happen, it is  
 important to acknowledge the history and historical trauma that was caused by the  
 Doctrine of Discovery. This area of repentance allowed for the doors of healing to be  
 open.

### **REPENTANCE**

PRESIDER: Creator and Redeemer,  
 As we approach you in prayer,

Make us walk in beauty and balance.  
 Make us open our hearts and minds.  
 Make us speak the truth.  
 We pray first for your Community, the Church,  
     The Body of Christ.  
 We pray for all our relatives in the circle of life  
     Throughout all Creation;  
     For those chosen to be our leaders;  
 In peace, we pray to you, Lord God:

VOICE 1 (Native): An excerpt from the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery from the Churchwide Assembly in 2016. “To repudiate explicitly and clearly the European-derived doctrine of discovery as an example of the “improper mixing of the power of the church and the power of the sword”, and to acknowledge and repent from this church’s complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, which continue to harm tribal governments and individual tribal members.

VOICE 2 (Non-Native): Christians have often focused on what separated them from Native people rather than looking for what united them. Their failures to find a uniting front resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Native people and the forced assimilation of people. We deeply regret the decisions that resulted in these atrocities. Following the 2016 Resolution we affirm that our congregation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will eliminate the doctrine of discovery from its contemporary rhetoric and programs, electing to practice accompaniment with native peoples instead of a missionary endeavor to them, allowing these partnerships to mutually enrich indigenous communities and the ministries of the ELCA.

PRESIDER: Let us pray (*moment of silence*)

**O God of mercy, we lament that even good actions of reform and renewal had often unintended negative consequences.**

We bring before you the burdens of the guilt of the past when our forbearers did not follow your will that all be one in the truth of the gospel.

**Teach us and show us the way.**

We confess our own ways of thinking and acting that perpetuate the divisions of the past. As communities and as individuals, we build many walls around us: mental, spiritual, physical and political walls that result in discrimination and violence. Forgive us, Lord.

**Teach us and show us the way.**

Christ is the way, the truth and the life. He  
is our peace, who breaks down the walls  
that divide, who gives us, through the Holy  
Spirit, ever-new beginnings.

**Teach us and show us the way.**

In Christ, we receive forgiveness and reconciliation and we are strengthened for a  
faithful and common witness in our time.

**Teach us and show us the way.**

PRESIDER:

We pause now to add our own prayers, either silently or aloud.

PRESIDER,

Creator, you made the world and declared it to be good:

The beauty of the trees, the softness of the air,

The fragrance of the grass speaks to us;

The summit of the mountains, the thunder of the sky,

The rhythm of the lakes speaks to us;

The faintness of the stars, the freshness of the morning,

The dewdrops on the flower speak to us.

But above all, our heart soars, for you speak to us

In your Son, Jesus Christ,

In whose name we offer these prayers.

AMEN

The cultural fusion theory and its use in the Indigenous liturgy is also a way of creating a contemporary culturally relevant Christology. Because the Native values, traditions and spirituality were deeply discerned within the process, it resulted in a growth through the fusion of cultural norms which created a positive expression of Lakota and Christian way of life through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and thus a deeper discernment of the identity of Jesus Christ within a Native context.

The Creed was created to express the Native cultural values in connection with *Wakantanka*'s creation. We once again see a rich imagery created within the context of Genesis,<sup>19</sup> which brings an appropriate and respectful fusion of cultures.

### **CREED STATEMENT**

We believe in Creator, Father-Mother Spirit, who called the world and all that is in it, into being, who spoke the creative-forming word, and all came forth who created women and men and set them free to live in love, in obedience to the will of supreme love and in community with all.

We believe in Creator, Son and Brother, who, because of love beyond our understanding, love for creation, entered the world to share our humanity, to rejoice and to despair; to set before us the paths of life and death, and walk them with us; to be rejected and die, but finally to conquer death and bind the world to himself for all time.

We believe in Creator, In-Dwelling Spirit, who invites us into community, that we may through faith and that community of oneness, experience uplifting and sustaining grace; that we may fulfill our human responsibility to reach out to our neighbor, whoever that may be; that we may rejoice in the constant nature of creation and the wondrous joy of life itself.

We believe in Creator, whose word teaches us that all things grow together, the Circle of Life; that the paths of life and death, good and evil, too often come together, that choices are not clearly defined; but that we confidently and responsibly tread the path we choose and only the true One can be our judge.

We believe in Creator, who is present and working in this world through all creation. AMEN

Cultural fusion of this liturgy uses Native contemporary language that brings a description of the attributes of Jesus Christ into a cultural affirming context. This affirms

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<sup>19</sup> Genesis 2.8-26 describes God's creation as being a garden over which humanity is given oversight—shown by the authority to 'name' each of the animals in this account of creation, and by a direct commission to subdue and have dominion over creation (Genesis 1:28) in the first account of creation (Genesis 1:1-2.4).

the relevancy of Christ's teachings in our world today, and allows for a contemporary Christology to be expressed in relationship with Native and non-Native Christians.

## INDIGENOUS LITURGY

### PRELUDE

Where I Sit is Holy  
Great Spirit, Now I Pray  
Livingston

Circle of Song  
arr: G Theisen & David

### GRAND ENTRY, PROCESSION SONG (*All Stand*) **DEPENDS IF WE HAVE DANCERS. IF WE DO THIS WILL TAKE THE PLACE OF THE PRELUDE**

Many and Great, O God (Wakantanka taku nitawa) text: Joseph R. Renville

### CALL TO WORSHIP

The Spirit of God be with you.  
**And also with you.**

**Come, let us worship the Creator with hearts open to all peoples,  
where pride and prejudice once dwelt;**

Let us worship Creator with minds open to the wisdom of Native peoples,  
where listening and respect once had no place.

**Let us honor the One who freely gives by showing honor  
to those who were once and still remain oppressed.**

Let us worship the God of diversity,  
who made the world in colors, in seasons, in endless variety;  
Who created the diversity of the earth's peoples in His image.

**ALL: All were created to honor one another  
and in so doing the Creator honored. Let us honor Him today by reflecting in our  
worship  
and in life His image -- love. Amen.**

*(Adapted from UMC Native American Ministries Sunday's Call To  
Worship)*

### PRAYER TO THE FOUR DIRECTIONS

Creator, the strength of the people, we honor you.  
Listen to the thoughts of your people.  
Together let us respect the truth of your spirit and care for your  
Creations to the east, to the south, to the west and to the north.  
Together let us live by the ways you have entrusted to us

Within the circle of life.  
Come Great Spirit as all are gathered in your name.

*(We turn our bodies to the Four Directions as we pray the following prayers. Begin by turning toward the East and continue to turn, with each prayer, in a clockwise direction. We invite you to participate by reading one of the prayers aloud, if you feel so called.)*

*Music arrangement to be briefly played between each reading or at the end of all readings:*

***Song at the Center by: Marty Haugen***

FIRST READER: We face East: To your symbol color gold,

The place of dawning, there is beauty in the morning, there the Seeker finds new visions as each sacred day is born. All who honor life around them, all who honor life within, shall shine with light and glory when the morning comes again.

And we pray,

**Come Holy Creator's Spirit, Come**

SECOND READER: We turn to the South: To your symbol color red,

In the South, the place of growing there is wisdom in the earth,  
Both the painful song of dying and joyful song of birth.

As the earth gives up her lifeblood so her children's hearts may beat.

We give back to her our reverence for the holy ground beneath our feet.

And we pray,

**Come Holy Creator's Spirit, Come**

THIRD READER: We turn to the West: To your symbol color black,

The place of seeing, there is born a vision of the servant of the servants, who proclaimed

The Gospel to us. Guide us at the end of each day and fill us with your peace.

And we pray,

**Come Holy Creator's Spirit, Come**

FOURTH READER: We turn to the North: To your symbol color white,

We look to God our Creator who cleanses our earth with snow, wind, and rain.

To Jesus who fills us with the wideness of mercy and grace and lovingly embraces all the people. And the Holy Spirit who comes to inspire us.

And we pray,

**Come Holy Creator's Spirit, Come**

PRESIDER:

Creator, you bent the earth like a bow

Until it was one, round, shining planet.

At your word the land was drawn into mountains and deserts,

Forests and plains;

The waters were gathered together into rivers, lakes and seas.

Many times, when people crossed these seas from other lands

They broke the circle of your creation

By their greed and violence

And they shattered the lives of others.

Creator, renew the circle of the earth

And turn the hearts of all people to one another;

That they and all the earth

May live and be drawn toward you

Through the power of your Son,

Who lives with you and the Holy Spirit

In the circle of the Trinity, forever One. **AMEN**

*(A prayer to the Four Directions written by Pastor Joan Conroy, Oglala Sioux)*

MUSIC: Behold A Sacred Voice (Verse 1) Marlena Fontenay

Adapted for Native Flute by David

Livingston

*(Please be seated.)*

READING

A reading from Isaiah 40.25-31

*To whom then will you compare me,  
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.*

<sup>26</sup> *Lift up your eyes on high and see:*

*Who created these?*

*He who brings out their host and numbers them,*

*calling them all by name;*

*because he is great in strength,*

*mighty in power,*

*not one is missing.*

<sup>27</sup> *Why do you say, O Jacob,*

*and speak, O Israel,*

*“My way is hidden from the Lord,*

*and my right is disregarded by my God”?*

<sup>28</sup> *Have you not known? Have you not heard?*

*The Lord is the everlasting God,*

*the Creator of the ends of the earth.*

*He does not faint or grow weary;*

*his understanding is unsearchable.*  
<sup>29</sup> *He gives power to the faint,  
 and strengthens the powerless.*  
<sup>30</sup> *Even youths will faint and be weary,  
 and the young will fall exhausted;*  
<sup>31</sup> *but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
 they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
 they shall run and not be weary,  
 they shall walk and not faint.*

*(After the reading)*

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

MUSIC: **Behold A Sacred Voice (Verse 2)**

#### THE GOSPEL READING

*(Please Stand)*

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord and Jesus Christ, according to John 17: 20-23.

**Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

<sup>20</sup> *“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*

*(After the Gospel has been proclaimed)*

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

MUSIC: **Behold A Sacred Voice (Verse 3)**

#### HOMILY

*(Please be seated)*

Kelly Sherman-Conroy

Luther Seminary Mth

#### MUSIC

We Are One in the Spirit

Kate Marks/ Text Adapted

#### SMUDGING CEREMONY

*(Please Stand. During this time, a Native person(s) lights sage/cedar and quietly walks around the sanctuary to bless the grounds and all participants. Native person reads the explanation.)*

The smudging ceremony is likened to a prayer of confession, as we purify our minds and hearts. Reach out for the smoke and draw it into your heart.

CREED STATEMENT **THIS CAN BE DELETED FOR TIMING IF NEEDED**

**We believe in Creator, Father-Mother Spirit, who called the world and all that is in it, into being, who spoke the creative-forming word, and all came forth who created women and men and set them free to live in love, in obedience to the will of supreme love and in community with all.**

**We believe in Creator, Son and Brother, who, because of love beyond our understanding, love for creation, entered the world to share our humanity, to rejoice and to despair; to set before us the paths of life and death, and walk them with us; to be rejected and die, but finally to conquer death and bind the world to himself for all time.**

**We believe in Creator, In-Dwelling Spirit, who invites us into community, that we may through faith and that community of oneness, experience uplifting and sustaining grace; that we may fulfill our human responsibility to reach out to our neighbor, whoever that may be; that we may rejoice in the constant nature of creation and the wondrous joy of life itself.**

**We believe in Creator, whose word teaches us that all things grow together, the Circle of Life; that the paths of life and death, good and evil, too often come together, that choices are not clearly defined; but that we confidently and responsibly tread the path we choose and only the true One can be our judge.**

**We believe in Creator, who is present and working in this world through all creation. AMEN**

*(Lutheran Church of the Wilderness Liturgy, Bowler WI, Stockbridge-Munsee Reservation)*

MUSIC

*(To be played during smudging)*

Great Spirit, Now I Pray  
Livingston

G Theisen & David

REPENTANCE

PRESIDER: Creator and Redeemer,  
As we approach you in prayer,  
Make us walk in beauty and balance.  
Make us open our hearts and minds.  
Make us speak the truth.  
We pray first for your Community, the Church,  
The Body of Christ.  
We pray for all our relatives in the circle of life  
Throughout all Creation;  
For those chosen to be our leaders;  
In peace, we pray to you, Lord God:

VOICE 1 (Native): An excerpt from the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery from the Churchwide Assembly in 2016. “To repudiate explicitly and clearly the European-derived doctrine of discovery as an example of the “improper mixing of the power of the church and the power of the sword”, and to acknowledge and repent from this church’s complicity in the evils of colonialism in the Americas, which continue to harm tribal governments and individual tribal members.

VOICE 2 (Non-Native): Christians have often focused on what separated them from Native people rather than looking for what united them. Their failures to find a uniting front resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Native people and the forced assimilation of people. We deeply regret the decisions that resulted in these atrocities. Following the 2016 Resolution we affirm that our congregation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will eliminate the doctrine of discovery from its contemporary rhetoric and programs, electing to practice accompaniment with native peoples instead of a missionary endeavor to them, allowing these partnerships to mutually enrich indigenous communities and the ministries of the ELCA.

PRESIDER: Let us pray (*moment of silence*)

**O God of mercy, we lament that even good actions of reform and renewal had often unintended negative consequences.**

We bring before you the burdens of the guilt of the past when our forbearers did not follow your will that all be one in the truth of the gospel.

**Teach us and show us the way.**

We confess our own ways of thinking and acting that perpetuate the divisions of the past. As communities and as individuals, we build many walls around us: mental, spiritual, physical and political walls that result in discrimination and violence. Forgive us, Lord.

**Teach us and show us the way.**

Christ is the way, the truth and the life. He is our peace, who breaks down the walls that divide, who gives us, through the Holy Spirit, ever-new beginnings.

**Teach us and show us the way.**

In Christ, we receive forgiveness and reconciliation and we are strengthened for a faithful and common witness in our time.

**Teach us and show us the way.**

PRESIDER:

We pause now to add our own prayers, either silently or aloud.

PRESIDER,

Creator, you made the world and declared it to be good:

The beauty of the trees, the softness of the air,  
 The fragrance of the grass speaks to us;  
 The summit of the mountains, the thunder of the sky,  
 The rhythm of the lakes speaks to us;  
 The faintness of the stars, the freshness of the morning,  
 The dewdrops on the flower speak to us.

But above all, our heart soars, for you speak to us

In your Son, Jesus Christ,

In whose name we offer these prayers.

AMEN

*(Adapted from Joint Catholic-Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation  
 Liturgy, October 31, 2016)*

### THE PEACE

As a community let us embrace the ongoing work of reconciliation.

**God makes peace within us. Let us claim it.**

**God makes peace between us. Let us share it.**

Let us make reconciliation visible by greeting each other as a sign of God's peace, love, forgiveness and grace.

The peace of our Creator be with you in all things.

**We give thanks to our Creator.**

You are invited to share peace and reconciliation with your neighbor.

*(We exchange peace with one another. Say "Peace be with you")*

### THE OFFERING

*(Today's offering will be going to the American Indian/Alaska Native Lutheran Association to be distributed among the Native Ministries)*

### THE OFFERTORY/ PREPARATION HYMN

Prayer of Peace

Navajo Prayer)

David Haas (Based on

### THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

**The Spirit of God be with you.**

And also with you.

**Lift up your hearts.**

We lift them up to the Lord.

**Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.**

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Father, our Great Spirit, from the depths of our hearts we give you thanks. We say thank you, now and forever. From the place of the rising sun in the East, to the South where the warm winds blow, from the West where the soft rain comes, to the coldness of the North.

We unite with all creation from the four directions to join in the everlasting thanksgiving and praise for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ. With hearts lifted, we join with the angels, the guardian spirits, the saints, and all our ancestors as we sing:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest,  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

Grandfather, you have called us to honor presence of your Son in this feast of sacred food and drink. We are honored also by your invitation and we wish to bring the gift of ourselves to you in joy.

Blessed are you, Lord in heaven and earth.  
In mercy for our fallen world you gave your only Son,  
That all those who believe in him should not perish,  
But have eternal life. We give you thanks for the salvation  
You have prepared for us. Accept our praises, Creator God,  
For Jesus Christ, the one Perfect offering for the world, who  
In the night that he was betrayed, took bread, and when he  
Had given thanks,  
Broke it, gave it to his disciples and said:  
Take, eat, this is my body given for you, do this to remember me.  
After supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks,  
He gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you. This is my blood of the new Covenant which shed  
For you and for many, to forgive sin.  
Do this as often as your drink it, to remember me.  
Bread and wine, Body and Blood, the gifts of God for the people of God.

Send your Spirit upon these gifts of your people,  
Gather into one all who share this bread and wine;  
Fill us with your Holy Spirit to establish our faith in truth,  
That we may praise and glorify you  
Through your Son Jesus Christ;  
Through whom all glory and honor are yours,

Almighty Creator, with the Holy Spirit,  
In your holy church both now and forever. AMEN

THE LORD'S PRAYER

And now we say the Nez Perce version of the Lord's Prayer:

**Oh Great Spirit,  
You are our Shepherd Chief,  
In the most high place whose home is everywhere,  
Even beyond the stars and moon.  
Whatever You want done let it be done everywhere.  
Give us Your gift of bread day by day.  
Forgive our wrongs as we forgive those who wrong us.  
Take us away from wrong doings.  
Free us from all evil,  
For everything belongs to You.  
Let your power and glory shine forever. Amen**

*(Written by Hattie Corbett Enos -Nez Perce Elder)*

PRESIDER: In Ezekiel 38:23, "I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD." As we come together in unity to praise you God our Creator, let us pray each in our own language as Jesus has taught us...

*(Lord's prayer will be spoken together as people speak it in their own language)*

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

PRESIDER: So, come to this table,

You who have much faith and you who would like to have more.  
You who have been to this sacrament often,

And you who have not been for a long time.  
 You who have tried to follow Jesus, and you who have failed.  
 Come. It is Christ who invites us to meet him here.  
 These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

*(From Communion Blessings, Christopher Peters)*

*(A Native American hymn may be sung or Native flute may be played as prelude to the Holy Feast.)*

### DISTRIBUTION & MUSIC

Water Prayer

by David Livingston

### POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

**Jesus Christ, our leader, you are the Son of the Creator.  
 Today we became your children. Today we became your grandchildren. We will  
 live as you have taught us. We will follow your commandments. Watch over us.  
 Speak to us from the trees, from the grass and herbs, from the breeze, from the  
 passing rain, from the passing thunder and the deep waters. Before us there is  
 beauty, behind us there is beauty. Allow us to walk a long life in happiness,  
 completed in beauty.**

**Creator together our breath is a prayer to you. As we prepare to leave this sacred  
 space, give us your peace as our time together in this sacred and holy space is done.  
 Grant us rest on this earth, and give us rest we get to heaven once our time on your  
 wondrous Creation is finished.**

**AMEN**

*(Adapted from the Liturgy of St. John's, Red Lake MN- Red Lake Band of  
 Chippewa &  
 Elizabeth Gaskins, Muscogee (Creek))*

### BLESSING

**PRESIDER:**

Great Spirit, our Creator God, look upon these faces gathered in holy community together  
 and send them anywhere you would have them go, so that they may embody the word of  
 reconciliation through their actions. Walk with them so that they may face the winds of  
 change and walk the good road.

Enlighten them. Sustain them. May God our Creator be with you this day and always.

**AMEN**

*(Kelly Sherman-Conroy, Oglala Sioux)*

### POSTLUDE

Heleluyan

arr: G Theisen & David Livingston

### DISMISSAL

**PRESIDER:**

We have honored Christ our brother and chief. All my relatives, go in peace.

**Thanks be to God.**

## CONCLUSION

*Lakota Cultural Fusion and Revitalization of Native Christian Identity* has shown a unique perspective through a Native methodology that used respectful cultural fusion of Lakota Spirituality within established Christian practices. In this thesis, Lakota Christian's can create a healing narrative that moves beyond the oppressive missionizing and assimilation that Lakota people have endured for generations, and in community together can revitalize and bring forward a conversation of Christianity through the lens of Lakota people. This thesis changes narrative of a relationship that has never been equal in the eyes of many.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to bring a new voice and conversation to the table and encourage people who are like me, to hear the voice of *Wakantanka* anew. If people are willing to give an ear to a Lakota person, such as myself, who has given thought to and put work into wrestling with these issues that my thesis has worked to discern from a Lakota perspective guided by scripture, people may be challenged by what they hear and take the time to look at scripture and Christian practices in a new way. I am not calling into question the authority of the sacred text and scripture in forming our life and faith but seeking a way to challenge how our life and faith is to be lived in community with each other and our shared stories. As further inquiry into the traditions and values my Lakota people and the roles we play in the life of church, has shown how the Holy Spirit

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<sup>1</sup> Lakota Holy Man Black Elk lived the first years of his life as a traditional Lakota and when his people were moved to reservation, Black Elk became a Catholic. It has been widely debated amongst Native and non-Native people if he carried a bi-spirituality and the authenticity of his Christian identity was constantly since he practiced a mystic tradition: "Black Elk cannot have been a traditionalist; he was a sincere Catholic. Black Elk cannot have been a sincere Catholic, for he was a traditionalist." Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks, *Sioux Indian Religion: Tradition and Innovation* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 89.

(*Woniya*) works in and around a community gathered, and how Lakota Christian practices can be a model for other ministries reaching out to Lakota people.

As Lakota people, we have a spiritual heritage that has never disappeared regardless of the genocide and assimilation that has occurred. In my ancestor's beliefs, they lived their lives with an openness to all living things and lived with a life of purpose and dignity.

The purpose of my study has been to aid the next generation of Lakota Christian leaders in seeing the value of faith found within our shared stories and community. Through a person's authentic faith, they can be an instrument of change within themselves and their community. Amongst our Lakota Christian and Christian leaders there is a need to heal, forgive and be forgiven. This thesis has shown that healing of historical trauma is possible through confronting history to heal and moving past it together with our neighbor in community.

The cultural fusion of Lakota spirituality and culture with Christianity, is an uplifting approach that revitalizes how Lakota Christians can see ourselves. By rescinding the Doctrine of Discovery in how we see our faith, an opportunity to be instrumental in healing generational trauma is created. By having Lakota Christian leaders understand our shared stories between our people and Christianity and embrace our collective path forward, we can provide a higher caliber of spiritual leadership for the next generation.

## APPENDIX A

### Onikare Knowledge

Compiled from shared knowledge of Black Elk & Fools Crow & other Lakota Elders

ELEMENT	SYMBOL
Onikare (Sweat Lodge)	All powers of Grandfathers
Door to the East	Direction of woksape (wisdom)
Water	Thunderbeings Goodness
Willow branches	Spring; rejuvenation cycle of life
Circular pit for stones	Center of the Universe
Rocks for heat	Grandmother Earth
Peta owihonkeshni (Heated stones)	Fire without end; power to heal
Sweet grass/sage/cedar/tobacco	Purification
Clockwise entry	Sun movement; Natural order
Darkness	Ignorance
Four Intervals (Door Openings)	Four ages of knowledge
Function of the Four Intervals	First- Center of Universe
	2-5= Sacred Directions
Sacred Directions	North= Purity
	South- Source of Light
	East= Light, Wisdom
	West= Setting Sun
Sacred Pipe	Gift of Wisdom

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