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# INDIGENOUS VOICES

The Journal of IBC  
for Church Ministry  
and Personal Growth

**Focus:**  
**The Haudenosaunee**

**Devotional:**  
**Know Your Father**

**Poetry:**  
**A Perfect Girl**



Indian Bible College

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## INDIGENOUS VOICES

### Who we are

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

### Our Mission

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

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### Orders and Contributions

ID is a free journal. For orders and contributions please contact Indian Bible College.

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Cover Photo: Seneca women in traditional clothing

Dear Reader,

For years now, Indian Bible College students have been producing amazing work: creative and academic, deeply personal and academically excellent. From honest and genuine poetry of pain and praise to the beginnings of a discipleship resource for Native men to a unique apologetic understanding of one tribal people, these works tell the wonderful stories of God's redemptive goodness in the lives of our Native students and also of their love for Him.

As you read through this sampling of original work, I am sure you will understand why we at Indian Bible College believe we are training exceptional thinkers and ministry leaders of our day who will someday lead the way in the Indigenous church and also the global Body of Christ! Within five to ten years, it is our hope to compile original resources for Native ministry with our students as contributing authors! Our ultimate dream is to work with our students and graduates to create a Native American application commentary. It is exciting and a great privilege to be a part of God's work in the lives of our Native students and his plan for the greater Indigenous community and the world!

My prayer is that, whether you are an Indigenous believer or a non-Native person who desires to better understand your Indigenous brothers and sisters in Christ, you will be blessed through this collection.

***Regarding the 2022 second edition: This journal continues to provide a level of "shock and awe" for those who read it. The depth of insight, heart, and scholarship is significant. We are re-issuing the journal as a catalyzing step in our commitment to release a new edition every year for the next five years.***

***Much has changed since this journal's publication eight years ago: Joshua Ortiz is on staff and pursuing his master's degree. Hazel Alsum has five children and is living in the United Kingdom. Connie Thompson is with the Lord, sadly (for us). And a new generation of Native Christ-followers and Bible scholars are being trained and developing original content—that I can't wait for you to see in upcoming editions.***



Gratefully serving Christ by serving the Native church,

Dr. Jason Koppen  
Indian Bible College President

Dear Reader,

The Black Hills of South Dakota is home to Mt. Rushmore which was carved in recognition of great American Presidents. The Crazy Horse monument down the road from Mt. Rushmore was started at the request of Chief Henry Standing Bear to let the world know "that the Redman has great heroes also."

After hundreds of years of mission work among our First Nations/Native American people it's time for the Church to hear from another generation of Native American heroes. These heroes have not fought in any great military battles nor have they reached the fame of the public spotlight. No, their purpose is much greater: to make the way of salvation known to the tribes of the earth! I pray you will be greatly blessed in the following pages of this publication as you partake in a piece of these heroes' life work.



Blessings in Christ,

Joe Donnell  
Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota  
Member, IBC Board of Advisors

### **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to all the Indian Bible College board, staff, and faculty who sacrifice so much of their lives to invest in Native Christian leaders. Profound gratitude to all the financial supporters and volunteers who help make student costs low enough that they may graduate debt free. Most of all, praise and worship to our Lord Jesus Christ who is forming HIS character and wisdom in the lives of Indian Bible College students.

# VICTORY

Every day death stalks us like a hungry cougar.

In a sudden ambush, it claims another life.

The helpless prey is quickly caught and devoured,

its desperate flight in vain from the predator's lightning-fast attack.

I am powerless to prevent death so it leaves my heart heavy with grief,

my very bones ache from the loss of my brother; sadness pierces my heart.

My joy is shattered by grief, and I am overwhelmed by it.

My light of peace has been snuffed out and is consumed by darkness.

Although death is just one step away, my faith will carry me over into eternity.

I may be slaughtered like a sheep, but my next step is eternity with my Deliverer! You have rescued me from the jaws of death by your strength.

I do not live in fear now because You have heard my cry and provided salvation. You did not leave me defenseless and vulnerable to the enemy;

Your love compelled You to defend me with Your life.

My sorrow is turned back to joy, and my fear is consumed by Your loving mercy.

My body is healed from the affliction of sorrow, peace is restored to my soul.

My spirit rejoices in Your mercy and compassion, and my heart sings praises to You.

I will forever praise You because death is consumed by Your love!

You alone are worthy of praise because Your power at the cross brought salvation.

I will forever thank You for Your love because now I have eternal life in You!



**Wilford (Wolf) Bilagody – Navajo** Wilford is a 2014 Bachelor graduate from IBC. He is Navajo and works with a church in Tuba City, AZ which is on the Navajo reservation. Wilford is married to Lily and has one son who assists him in ministry; he has three grandchildren as well. This psalm reflects the deep pain and loss Wilford has experienced in his life, as well as the great healing and salvation that God has provided.

# “KNOW YOUR FATHER”

The unique struggles of Native men are well known. The effects of European settlement and the reservation system decimated the man’s role within his own culture. In 2011, Navajo staff member Daniel Esplin began a collaborative effort with students to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges that Native men face and to generate a set of discipleship materials that would be uniquely designed for them.

What follows is the leader’s guide for the first devotional of the materials. It provides a sampling of the collaborative work in progress, which will ultimately result in 8-12 devotionals.



## 1<sup>st</sup> Devotional – Leader’s Guide

### A WARRIOR’S STORY

*“From a very young age I had a distorted view of women. My paternal grandfather had two wives which made me very confused. I saw women more as objects to be used. My mom and dad both had drinking problems. My mom was fine when she was sober, but very harsh when she was drunk. My dad made me have my first drink at ten, and by seventh grade I was drinking to escape life and mask anger, anger towards my father for simply not being a father. This carried on into me having a short temper towards my wife and children.”*

David, from the Apache Tribe

1. In Acts 9:1-9, what kind of man was Paul on his way to the city of Damascus?

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Paul was a zealous Pharisee dedicated to wiping out the new Christian church called “The Way”. He obtained a letter from the high priest authorizing the arrest of any followers of Jesus in the city of Damascus. Read also Galatians 1:13-14.

*“For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”*

1. In Philippians 3:5-7, in what did Paul find his identity?

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Paul found his identity in his prestigious education, cultural heritage, and in being a religious man, but he considered it all rubbish for the sake of knowing Christ Jesus. For Paul, having a relationship with Jesus was the starting point for understanding true masculinity.

2. How do you think Native men define their masculinity (manhood)? (e.g. possessions, money, etc.)

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The Native man continues to be like a "caged lion". He has so much power to lead and influence others around him but he is emasculated by alcoholism, drugs, sex, domestic violence, gangs, anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, irresponsibility, etc.

3. What do these verses say about a man's relationship to God the Father?

Genesis 1:26-27  
Colossians 1:16

Genesis 2:7  
Ecclesiastes 12:13

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You see, true masculinity starts when men begin a relationship with their Heavenly Father, God, through Jesus Christ. Every man was created to have a relationship with his Heavenly Father.

1. In Acts 9:20-22, what changes do you see in Paul's life after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus?

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Just as a boy learns how to be a man from his earthly father, every man must look to God the Father for the answer to true masculinity.

2. How has this truth about masculinity impacted you? Explain.

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Despite growing up without a father figure (earthly father), I can learn and grow in true masculinity through a relationship with my heavenly Father (God).

3. What are ways you can personally cultivate your relationship with Jesus?

- |                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Confess sins _____               | Memorize bible verses _____   |
| Begin daily devotions _____      | Forgive another person _____  |
| Recommit life to God _____       | Deepen prayer life _____      |
| Seek godly men for counsel _____ | Turn from sinful habits _____ |
| Other: _____                     |                               |

## A WARRIOR'S STORY

*When I came to Christ in my thirties a lot of my anger subsided through God's grace. I sought forgiveness from my wife and kids, and I reconciled my relationship with my father. A man that played a large role in me becoming a godly man, father and husband was my wife's grandfather. Through scripture and God's grace and mercy I found healing from my past.*

David, from the Apache Tribe

## Knowing your Heavenly Father ...

... through Jesus Christ is the starting place to understand true masculinity. If you want to place your faith in Christ, you may begin by praying a prayer something like this:



*“Dear God,  
I believe You sent Your Son, Jesus, to die for my sins. I ask You now to forgive me for the things I have done wrong and be my Lord and Savior. Thank you for saving me, Lord! Amen.”*

## A WARRIOR'S PRAYER

*“Lord Father, help me to surrender the sins in my life that suppress my relationship with You so that I will be able to draw close to You. Help me to cultivate my relationship with You. In Jesus Name, Amen.*



**Daniel Esplin – Navajo** Daniel was born in Tuba City, AZ on the Navajo Reservation. He is a 2005 graduate of IBC and is currently serving as Director of Admissions. He is married to Coreen who also works at the college. Growing up without a father, he developed a passion to see Native men fulfill their roles following Jesus as their model for masculinity. Springing from this passion, Daniel, with assistance of IBC students, is developing the Native Masculinity Collaborative.



# WISDOM

Praise the Lord God in the morning  
as the sun rises above the earth.  
Praise the Lord God in the evening  
as the sky deepens into darkness.

Shout to the Lord God in your youth  
with your joy in your heart.  
Shout to the Lord God in your end  
as your hope is fading.

Evil cannot prevail over the Lord;  
the righteous are empowered in His strength.  
The Lord is righteous and strong to save us,  
and His power is above all evil.  
The time of evil will fade away and set like the sun,  
but the fruit of the righteous will rise with sweet joy and hope.

Those who fear the Lord are secure in His power,  
they are safe in the knowledge of God.  
Those who fear the Lord are assured of His truth;  
they are joyful in His wisdom and righteousness.



**Hazel Alsum – United Kingdom** Hazel was born in the United Kingdom and is married to James from Washington State. She is a senior student at IBC and graduates this year in May with a Bachelor in Biblical Studies. She and James are planning to serve Native American people as a family, specifically using training she has in linguistics. While expecting their first child, Hazel wrote this psalm to express her faith in the Lord's ability to overcome evil and provide safety and security to those who are His. She has since given birth to a lovely baby girl, named Skylar Rose Jeanne.

## Llipu tutapi wañuruchkaq hina achki (Text in Quechua)

Anaqpachapi taytallay kay mana tukuriq  
nanaymantaya urquykullaway, punta  
warmaykikunata hinaya qawariykullaway.

Kay sunqullaymi yawarta waqan, kay almallaymi  
maskasunki tuta punchau mana samarispas, pero  
manama qawariykullawankichu.

Taytay amaya ñawikita huklawman qawarichiychu.  
Kay millakuypaq uchasapa warmallaykim  
maskasunki, yaqa tullu paquipasqa hina nanaywan  
kawsaspa.

Ari, kay llapa-aychaymi uchallikurqa qampa  
contraikipi, taytan pampachaykuwaya hinaspaya  
suma-sumaq yuraq pachaykiwan pacharachiway,  
amañachiki kay pachapiqa uchallikusaqñachu  
puntata hinaqa.

Taytay amaya azutewaychu wañuywanqa, ichaqa  
azuteykullaway kuyakuykiwan. Amañachiki  
ukpatayta uchallikusaqchu puntata hinaqa, pero  
aslla-asllamantachiki mana uchayuq warmayki Jesus  
hina puntaykipi kausasaq, yacharuniña mana  
qamwan kaspayqa wañusqam kani.

Salvawaqniyuq, amaya qunqarullawaychu, amataq  
wischurullaqaychu, kay pachapiraqmi kausani, kay  
pachaqa manamiki ñuqapaqchu.

Taytay amaya sutikita qachachaychu  
wischuruwaspayki, manamiki warmallaykiqa  
yanqapaqchu suma-sumaq yawarninta  
chaqchurachu pero chakatamiki qamlawman rurarqa  
qamllapaqña kawsuqunaypaq.

Kay pachapimiki mana allinkuna kausan,  
runamasiypas chiqniwan, liunkunapas atikapakamun  
mikorullawanampaq, kiruntaya wichichiy astawanqa  
urquykuway kay pachamanta.

Taytallan kutimuya hinaspaya kay wiqiyta  
nanayniytawa apakuy, hinaspa chaqchuruy. Kay  
pacham teqoruwachkanña.

Apakuwaya wasikiman, qamllapaqñachiki  
kausakusaq, qamllatañachiki adorallasayki,  
qamllatañachiki kuyakusayki, qamllatañachiki  
yupaychallasayki, anaq pachaman yaykuykuspayqa.  
Taytay apakuway.

## Twinkling Light in the Darkness

Celestial Father, if only You delivered me from this  
unending pain, just as You did with Your sons of old,  
You watched over them.

This heart is shattered and bleeding, this poor soul of  
mine seeks You day and night, but no answer.

Father please do not turn Your eyes from me, this  
sinful servant of Yours seeks Your comfort, attached  
with a pain that pierces through the bones.

Yes, I have sinned with my whole being against You,  
if only You would forgive me and clothe me with  
Your mercy and Your spotless white robe.

I won't make the same mistake, but sin less and less  
till I become as Your son in Your presence. Father do  
not punish me with death, but correct me with love.  
For I know without You I am lifeless.

My redeemer, do not forget, nor forsake me, I still  
remain in this world that does not belong to me.

Father, do not alter Your reputation by forsaking me  
because I believe Your Son shed his precious blood  
with a purpose: to build the bridge for me to see  
You.

This world is evil. Lions surround me ready to  
devour. Father, break their teeth, otherwise make  
my way home.

Father come back and take this pain and these tears  
away. This world is smothering me.

Take me home. For You alone will be my praise. For  
You alone will be my worship. For You alone I will  
live. For You alone will be my song when I enter to  
Your presence. Father, take me home.

*By Efrain Sauñe*

## Gritos de glamor y exhortación

(Text in Spanish)

Maravilloso es mi Padre, todopoderoso es mi Padre.

No hay nadie como Él, ni hubo, ni lo habrá en toda la existencia del universo y más allá.

Él fue quien dio la vida y la luz a este mundo sin vida, Él fue quien dio vida a este ser tan pecador, que nunca mereció su amor.

Hermanos y hermanas en el horizonte despiértense, levántense, alabemos todos juntos a nuestro Padre todopoderoso y amoroso.

Su creación que no habla le alaba y enaltece su nombre de su supremo creador en todo el universo. Por qué nosotros que fuimos creados con lengua para hablar, no podemos alabar y proclamar a nuestro dador y fundador de nuestra vida?

¡Hermanos y hermanas en el horizonte despiértense! Hasta cuándo dormirás en el silencio, hasta cuándo dormirás en los sueños sin esperanza?

Mi redentor he aquí te damos nuestras vidas. Tómalas en tus preciosas manos, porque un día derramaste tu preciosa sangre por estos pecadores que somos.

No hay palabras para describir lo muy feliz y contento que mi corazón siente por que moras en mí y moras junto a nosotros.

Mi espíritu se deleita morar en tu voluntad por que ni la muerte nos arrancará de tu voluntad.

Mi Señor y mi Salvador cuando regresas? Ya no puedo esperar más para verte y morar eternamente en tu presencia.



**Efrain Sauñe – Quechua (Peru)** Efrain is IBC's only Indigenous student from outside the USA. He is a Quechua from Peru. Efrain is the 2014-15 Student Body President and has had a very positive affect on his peers. Many have spoken of his willingness to help them and share his own struggles. Efrain is trilingual and is learning the Bible at IBC in his third language of English.

## Shouts of Joy and Exhortation

Marvelous is my Father, almighty is my Father.

There is none like Him, there was none, and there will be none like Him in all the existence of the universe and beyond.

He was the one who gave life and light to this lifeless world, the one who gave life to this poor sinful being that never deserved His love.

Brothers and sisters to the horizon and beyond, I tell you to wake up, get up, let us praise and worship all together our Almighty and lovely Father.

His creation that does not speak proclaims His name on high with praises and worships in the whole universe. Why then don't we who are created with tongues to speak, worship and praise our founder and Life-giving Father?

Brothers and sisters to the horizon and beyond wake up! How long will you sleep in silence? How long will you sleep in hopeless dreams?

My Redeemer, here we give You our very lives. Take them in Your precious hands because one day You purchased us, we who are sinners, with Your very blood.

There are no words to describe how happy and content my heart feels because You dwell in me and among us.

My spirit is delighted to live in Your will. Not even death will snatch us from Your will.

My Lord and my Redeemer when do You return? I can no longer wait to see You and dwell in Your presence eternally.

# Vessel

A crystal clear vessel restricts your vision of the outside world.

It is strong enough to withstand the raging winds and unrelenting summer showers.

But it is weak, so weak that a single stone can shatter it and render it virtually useless.

It makes you feel safe and secure, as if everything between you and its presence is confidential and sacred.

At the same time, though, it can blind you while others can still see you.

And if their senses are keen enough, they can hear your secrets and smell your treasures.

Covered with stains and streaks, protected by layers and screens, useful and worthless wherever it goes.



**Joshua Ortiz – Navajo / San Juan Pueblo** Joshua, a Sophomore at IBC, is from the Navajo and Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan Pueblo) nations. He has proven himself to be a serious student as well as a sensitive and keen observer.

# A Perfect Girl

The door closes behind me, and I'm alone again. Always alone, even in a room full of people. Always hiding, smack dab in the middle of everyone's view. I try to remember what others have said before, try to remember all the people who say they are my friends. But it's all

fake. Everything about me is fake. As I stand just inside my room thinking all of this, my eyes instinctively go to the drawer in my bedside table. It's the only thing I lock. It's my safe, secret place. It is my refuge.



I never meant to start this. A suggestion, a curiosity—I can't remember how it became a part of me. Somehow it just happened. To be perfectly honest, it seemed like it had to happen.

I am Annie, the perfect girl. I smile big, and I laugh loud, and I keep up the dance as if the steps are effortless. Everyone is my friend, and I am everyone's.

Picture perfect. *Don't ever stumble, Annie. Don't ever fall. This is what you're worth.*

My eyes are still on that drawer. *No*, I think, *this is what I'm worth*. I walk to my bed, sit down, unlock the drawer, and pull it open. Everything is neat, right in its place. Bandages. Antiseptic. Some napkins. And blades—sharp, bright; they catch the light, and I wonder if I wasn't already under their spell whether they would mesmerize me anew. It doesn't matter. Nothing really does. Not anymore. It's almost a relief to grasp the Exacto knife in my palm. My shoulders sag as the tension drains out of me. *Hello, friend. I've missed you.*

I push up my shorts exposing old scars that I wear as a badge of honor. These have healed over so there's room for more—unlike my stomach which still has red, angry lines crisscrossing it. I like the Exacto blade because it gives the cleanest lines with the most amount of blood: maximum efficiency with minimum effort. I never cut where anyone is likely to see. No

one can ever know. That would be a misstep in the dance. No one can see the effort that goes into being perfect.

Before I cut, I think back to what went on tonight. The party was supposed to be fun—that's what all my friends said. People probably had fun. There was drinking, and somebody brought some weed. Guys and girls flirted and made out. There even was a fight, but no cops were called this time. My mouth curls sardonically. How many people at school would have been surprised to see Miss Honor Roll there?—Extra funny considering the number of these parties I go to nowadays.—I stare down at my legs and wonder what those people would say if they ever saw me like this.

The question is moot. No one will ever see me like this.



I put the blade to skin, intent on the emotions the pain produces. I always wonder if the pain will get easier, but it never does. Again, it doesn't matter. What I want to see is blood.

But the rush is slow in coming today. I cut more than usual; trickles run down my legs. It doesn't feel the same. I want it to feel the same. Why doesn't it feel the same? I almost want to laugh, but I can't even cry anymore.

Lying back on my bed, I let the pain seep into me not caring that the blood is still flowing. What would it be like to die, I wonder. Would it be like going to sleep? Dying ... the thought comforts me. I know I haven't cut deep enough to be in danger yet, but the thought makes me oddly happy. How much would it hurt? A lot? I close my eyes and drift off. Right now, I can't even care that if my mom walked in she'd see everything. A heavy, black blanket falls down around me ... oblivion.

I hear someone calling my name. Who is it?

*Annie*, I hear it whispered.

I don't want to wake up.

*Annie. Talk to me.*

Why?

*I want to talk to you.*

Who are you?

*You know who I am ... since you were a little girl.*

I don't know who you are.

*Yes, you do.*

How do you know who I am?

*I've always known who you are, Annie. I've always seen you, and I have always loved you.*

You see me?

*Yes. I see you when you think no one else does. I see everything. Nothing is hidden from me.*

How is that possible?

*I made you, Annie. And there is nothing I cannot do.*

But there's so much pain, so many scars. I'm so broken.

*I know.*

I've made so many mistakes.

*I know. I even know what it feels like ... to be broken and bloody.*

You do?

*Of course. Annie, I hung on a cross for you. They beat me and cut me and laughed at me. I did it all so you wouldn't have to bear it. I can bear any pain, Annie. Even yours.*

But it's been so long.

*I can bear any pain, Annie.*

But what if people find out?

*They have to, Annie. But I am with you always, no matter what.*

It hurts all the time. It never stops.

*I can bear it.*

What do I do?

*Believe in me. Put your trust in me. There is a place inside you that has been empty for so long. I am supposed to be there. Take me in. Who am I, Annie?*

Is it true?

*Every word.*

You can fix me?

*I've already fixed you.*

*You just have to accept it.*

*Who am I, Annie?*

Jesus.

I open my eyes to a knock on my door. “Annie, can you come help with the groceries?” my Mom asks. My eyes land on the old Bible on my bookshelf. It’s dusty. I look at the door and then down at my legs. A strange feeling in my che... wait ... I feel something? I stare at the Bible again. Why do I feel ... what is the word ... joy?

*I have always loved you.*

I’d forgotten. And this other feeling? It scares me, almost, this new feeling. Love? Excitement? “Mom!” I call out getting up. I don’t bother wiping the blood from my legs. I don’t push down my shorts or hide anything. *Okay, Jesus, I think, I trust you. Help me.*

I open the door.



**Connie Thompson – Wichita / Seneca** Connie, a sophomore at IBC, loves to read and write. In this piece, which is partially autobiographical, she skillfully and poignantly paints a picture of deep pain and suffering ultimately illuminated with the hope of Jesus.



# LORD ... turn, come, guide, save

O Lord, You have no shame in loving me.  
Your faithfulness is pure, and You are amazing.

Deliver me from my darkness;  
I feel like my heart is rushing,  
and I have no say in what to do.  
How can I allow this to control my life?

Save me, O Lord, from this abyss of hurts.  
The back of my head is a target for my enemy,  
and who can I run to?

Lord, hear me cry out to You.  
I cannot walk any more;  
when I look back, there is a chain on my legs.  
God, break this chain from my enemy.

Lord, I know that You are powerful.  
You were there when I was born,  
and You were there when I surrendered  
my life to You.  
I know You are powerful and almighty.

Lord, save me from this sadness and guilt.  
Do you hear me cry to You?  
Deliver me from my enemy telling me  
that I am not worthy enough to serve You.

O Lord, my enemy whispers words to me.  
Are you allowing his words to get into my heart?  
Lord, I know that You are mighty;  
You can deliver me from this hurt and pain.  
Lord, come down,  
and show your power to the enemy.

Lord, guide me to You,  
and I will praise You throughout all eternity.  
Turn to me, Lord;  
hear my praise to You.



**Fredericka Toledo – Navajo** Freddie is a junior at IBC and is from the Navajo nation. Her life prior to college was not easy but the Lord has produced tremendous healing in her life. In the first semester of this college year she was the roommate of a girl who took her own life in the dorm; Freddie was the one to find her. She wrote this poem as a testimony to her pain following this terrible event. It expresses her lack of control over the darkness that possessed her following her discovery of her roommate and her helplessness in the grip of pain, guilt and despair. This psalm bears powerful testimony to the faithfulness of God in our darkest times.

# The Haudenosaunee

Our Native people are dying every day with no acknowledgment or desire to know of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Personally, my own immediate family members are in this camp of denial. The gospel has been presented to Native America



for over 500 years, with very little conversion. Who better to present the gospel to Native America than Native Americans themselves! However, in order to effectively share the gospel, one must have an understanding of the belief each unique tribe camps in. This particular research paper will study the religious beliefs and practices of the Haudenosaunee, “People of the Longhouse”.

Before I knew Christ, I knew in my heart there was a truth. I believe we have an innate knowledge of God, the Creator. We are an intelligent species, Romans 1:18-23 “the wrath of God is being revealed ... for although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him ... their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Men want wisdom, they are boastful and arrogant. In our pride we deny there is a power greater than ourselves. Do you see what man has created? Skyscrapers, technology, look how far we have come! Indeed – we are an intelligent species! But our intelligence didn’t protect us to destroy the relationship of vital significance, the relationship we were created to have.

## My Challenge

*We exist to bring the hope of Jesus Christ to the unsaved, that they may understand the truth. If I have this hope in me, why would I keep it to myself? Further, it is not an option, it is a command. Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. To evangelize is to obey. One clear example of evangelism being commanded is in 1 Peter 3, where Peter commands believers to “always be...prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” We share because, like Jesus we are to have a love for the lost. Apart from God’s grace, the sinner will never stop sinning. God’s judgment will never end. Their rejection of God never ends. They will be in hell forever.*

*Jesus is the way, but how do we help others understand this hope and not only understand, but believe in their hearts? Arguing a person to Christ will not change the depth of their heart; we have merely persuaded them to agree. Instead we must direct them to a relationship that we were created for, a transformation of the heart to know the truth of Jesus Christ.*

## THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY<sup>1</sup>

The Iroquois Confederacy is comprised of six tribes: the Seneca, Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga, Tuscarora & the Oneida. We are known as the Haudenosaunee, which means “People of the Longhouse”. For the Haudenosaunee, law, society and nature are equal partners and each plays an important role. An essential value which forms the foundation for much of the Haudenosaunee ways is the duty of preparing for the seventh generation. The nations of the Haudenosaunee believe that we borrow the earth from our children’s children and it is our duty to protect it and the culture for future generations. All decisions made now are made with the future generations in mind who will inherit the earth in mind.

### CREATION STORY

The Haudenosaunee creation story follows that before human beings existed there were beings called the Sky People who lived in the celestial world. On earth there was no sun, all light came from white blossoms on a celestial tree outside Sky Chief’s lodge. Sky Chief married a young wife who came to be known as Sky Woman. Soon she began to show signs that she was pregnant but Sky Chief, listening to rumors from an evil being known as Firedragon, began to believe that the baby would not be his. In anger Sky Chief pulled up the celestial tree and pushed his wife through the dark hole.

Sky Woman would have fallen to the dark waters below and drowned had it not been for the birds catching her and carrying her safely down. The water animals all hurried to prepare a place for her to land, with the turtle offering to carry her on his back. Plunging deep into the

water the animals searched for earth for the woman and succeeded in bringing earth up in their mouths. The light from the blossoms of the celestial tree became the sun, and grass and trees began to grow in the earth on the turtle’s back. Eventually Sky Woman gave birth to a daughter who later became pregnant with her own child. The daughter gave birth to twin boys, one good and one evil. The good twin was born easily with no harm to his mother but the evil twin was impatient to be born and pushed through his mother’s side killing her.

Sky Woman buried her daughter from whose body sprang a tobacco plant, a cornstalk, a bean bush, and a squash vine. This was the origin of all the plants that would be most important to the human beings who would come later.

The good twin and the evil twin grew quickly and were true to their names. The good twin created good things like plants, animals, medicines, rivers, and streams while the evil twin spoiled his brother’s work by putting rapids and boulders in the rivers, creating poisonous plants, diseases and monsters. The twins fought to see who would rule creation but evil could never overcome good. Finally the good twin created human beings to enjoy all the good things he had made for them. And that is how it all began.

### CREATION

The Peacemaker was sent by the Creator to spread the “good mind”. With the help of Hiawatha, the Peacemaker taught the laws of peace to the Haudenosaunee. Traveling from community to community they both succeeded in persuading the Chiefs of each nation to join in the Great League of Peace and founded the only government with a direct connection to the Creator.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.ca>

Asking the Clan Mothers of each tribe to present their Chiefs, he placed deer antlers on each of their heads to symbolize to the five nations their authority. The Mohawks had nine Chiefs of the bear, wolf and turtle clans; the Oneida also had nine of the bear, wolf and turtle clans; Onondaga presented 14 of the turtle, snipe, bear, hawk, deer, wolf, eel, and beaver clans; Cayuga had 10 from the heron, deer, turtle, bear and snipe clans and finally Seneca presented eight Chiefs from the bear, snipe, turtle, wolf and eagle clans. The Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca and Onondaga accepted the long house as a symbol of their unity. In the Onondaga community the Peacemaker planted a tree, naming it the Great Tree of Peace. He directed the Chiefs of the council to sit beneath the shade of the tree and watch the council fire of the confederacy of the five nations. He told them that all issues concerning the confederacy would be discussed and deliberated under this tree.

The roots outstretching from the tree reached north, south, east and west and were labeled the Great White Roots. The Peacemaker declared that any nation choosing to follow the guidelines of the Great Peace should follow the Great White Roots and make themselves known to the Chiefs of the confederacy. If they promised to obey the laws of peace they would be welcomed beneath the shade of the tree.

Above the tree an eagle was placed to see far and alert of approaching enemies. Beneath the tree the Peacemaker asked that all men throw in their weapons to bury any greed, hatred and jealousy. Finally the Peacemaker took an arrow from each of the five nations and bound them together. In this way the nations were united in their powers and the union was complete. Each nation retained its own council with Chiefs chosen by Clan Mothers of families holding hereditary rights to office titles. The rights and duties of Chiefs are explained

to them as they stand up as Chiefs and it is the Clan Mother who maintains his moral obligations and keeps him in a straight line.

## GREAT LAW OF PEACE

Simply put, the Great Law of Peace is the founding constitution of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and is the underlying basis for Haudenosaunee society. Originally it outlined the path to harmony and unity among the warring nations and set out a proper form of government which allowed for the ideas of peace, power and righteousness.

Throughout its verses it explains the function of the Grand Council and outlines a plan for nations to resolve disputes and uphold the peace. It outlines all processes which may face the Haudenosaunee as explained by the Peacemaker. Leadership within the system is from the ground up making the leaders truly accountable to their people. It outlines the responsibilities of all Chiefs as well as the method of impeachment in the event that a Chief does not perform his duties to the satisfaction of his people.

Within the text it also highlights many of the symbols of the Haudenosaunee including the Great Tree of Peace. As a symbol of peace all the Chiefs stand around it in a circle, arms linked, to support it and prevent it from falling over. Atop the tree sits an eagle to see far and wide and warn of danger.

Because Haudenosaunee history is an oral history there have been many versions of the Great Law written. It is shared from generation to generation through oral tradition using a series of wampum belts, held by the confederacy, to help share the story. No one version of

the Great Law is preferred over another as all the same themes still exist to emphasize its main principles.

## MAIN PRINCIPLES

Outlined in the Great Law, also known as Gayanashagowa or The Great Binding Law, are many of the teachings provided by the Peacemaker. Within the text are three main principles which stand out to govern the rest: peace, power and righteousness. Each principle depends on the other to support the framework of the constitution. The peace element signifies one's own peace and being of a good mind and the ability to use our minds to negotiate rather than going to war. In order to have peace one must have balance in their life with health of mind and body. This peace allows one the good mind needed for the next principle, power.

Again power does not necessarily mean having power over another. Among the Haudenosaunee, power comes from unity for there is strength in numbers. Living a family-based existence with unity at its core, the power comes from the unity of each nation into a family. Like the symbol of the five arrows bound together, singularly we are easily broken but together we are unbreakable. Being of a good mind one is able to use reason in their decisions and respect this power.

The Haudenosaunee believe that the Creator has for us all a life path and a responsibility. It is by achieving these goals outlined for us that we gain the final principle of righteousness. Righteousness is found through living a proper life and following the will of the Creator as set out in the original instructions.

The main idea is that peace is the overall will of the Creator and using the tools of peace, power and righteousness it can be attained.

## PEACEMAKER

Born of a Huron virgin, The Peacemaker, a man whose name is never spoken, as a mark of respect, other than under special circumstances, was the main figure in the Confederation story. Labeled the Peacemaker, and only called such now by the Haudenosaunee people, his story really began when he left the Huron people.

Prophesizing that a baby would be born that would be indirectly responsible for the fall of the nation his grandmother decided to destroy the child. Three times she tried to drown him but each morning upon waking up she would find him nestled safely in his mother's arms. Realizing they could not defeat the prophecy they raised him as best they could.

Growing up he was an outsider because he talked only of peace, friendship and unity. He also caused resentment and jealousy among his people because he offered advice on how to live and govern themselves. Finally he told his mother and grandmother that it was time for him to embark on his journey and crafted a canoe out of white stone and crossed Lake Ontario.

He first happened upon a party of hunters who doubted his abilities. After proving to them his powers he shared with them the word of peace and encouraged them to spread the message among their people. Leaving them he traveled further and happened upon the house of a woman along the hunting path. She provided him with food and accepted the message he shared. Because of her acceptance the Peacemaker declared that when the nations were united it would be the women who would possess the titles of chieftainship and impart them on the men.

He then entered Mohawk territory and set up camp at the edge. Alerted of his presence the leaders of the Mohawks approached him to find his intent. When approached he proclaimed himself to be sent by the Creator to establish a great peace. The five nations, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca had long been in a circle of hate and war, constantly battling each other. The Peacemaker shared with them a plan to unite the nations and bring about peace.

Adopted into the Mohawk nation, it is among them that he met Hiawatha, meaning "he gets up early". While mourning the loss of his daughters Hiawatha stumbled upon the Mohawk territory. Brought to the Peacemaker, he was consoled for his loss and his sorrow was removed to allow his mind the capability of accepting the message of peace. Hiawatha joined him in his quest and aided him in uniting the five nations. He spoke for him as the Peacemaker had a speech impediment.

Traveling from nation to nation Hiawatha and the Peacemaker shared their message and one by one each decided to join except the Onondaga. Finally, after healing the mind of Todaharo, a powerful shaman, the Peacemaker broke down the resistance of the Onondaga nation and succeeded in uniting the five nations. The Peacemaker placed antlers on each of the leaders' heads to signify their authority within the confederacy and henceforth making them chiefs and taught them the Great Law.

## CLAN SYSTEM

Among the Haudenosaunee are groups of people who come together as families called "clan". As a matrilineal society, each clan is linked by a common female ancestor with women possessing a leadership role

within the clan. The number of clans varies among the nations with the Mohawk only having three to the Oneida having eight. The clans are represented by birds and animals and are divided into the three elements: water, land and air. The bear, wolf and deer represent the land element; the turtle, eel and beaver represent the water element; and the snipe, hawk and heron represent the air element.

Each member of a clan is considered a relative regardless of which nation they belong to. A wolf clan member of the Mohawk and a wolf clan member of the Seneca nation are still considered relatives. Family names and clans are passed down from mother to child. For example if a man belonging to the turtle clan were to marry a woman of the wolf clan the children would be of the wolf clan. Within certain clans there may also be different types of one animal or bird. For example, the turtle clan has three different types of turtles, the wolf clan has three different types of wolves and the bear clan includes three different types of bears allowing for marriage within the clan as long as each belongs to a different species of the clan.

In Haudenosaunee society each person has their own family, which includes their mother, father, and brothers and sisters. But with this comes their extended family including everyone else belonging to the same clan. This system was especially helpful when traveling from nation to nation as people would search out members of their same clan who then would provide food and shelter and care for them as part of their family. Because people of the same clan are considered family, marriages within the same clan are forbidden. The clan system still survives among those who follow the traditions.

## TRADITIONAL LIFESTYLE

For the most part the Haudenosaunee way of life was built upon a series of values like respect for all including the natural world and respect for the seventh generation of children. The Haudenosaunee lived off the land and what was provided for them by the Creator. They wanted for nothing as they could attain what they needed from their crops and the food they hunted, gathered or fished.

Haudenosaunee communities consisted of several long, bark covered structures called long houses. These cylindrical buildings often up to 200 feet long housed entire families all linking back to one common female ancestor. There were no locks on doors or really any doors other than flaps of hides. Stealing was nonexistent as the moral shame of it was enough to keep anyone from trying.

Crime in general was not a problem, leaving little need for police or prisons. Murder however was at one time punishable by death. In that time the family of the murderer would offer the victim's family white wampum as repentance. If the victim's family accepted it the murderer was forgiven. If not the family was allowed to punish the murderer.

Unlike the Europeans of the time, Haudenosaunee children had a prominent voice within the communities. Children were educated by their Elders in the traditional teachings, and stories were used as a way to create their individual awareness of the importance of culture and community.

Also in opposition to the European settlers the Haudenosaunee viewed women as leaders within the communities. Perhaps the most significant difference

was that Haudenosaunee families are matriarchal with the women controlling the main titles and passing them on to the men. Both men and women had their roles within the community with the men acting as the hunters and protectors and the women managing the household. Even children had their chores working in the fields or learning various skills to help them in adulthood.

Viewed often by settlers as savages needing to be taught the civilized ways of the Europeans it was the settlers who took many traits from the Haudenosaunee. The game of lacrosse observed early on has been adapted into one of Canada's national sports and even the treatment and stature of women among the Haudenosaunee was used as a basis for women suffragists. Throughout the years since contact, non-Aboriginal people have tried to assimilate the Haudenosaunee but the traditions have lived on with Haudenosaunee culture influencing that of the non-Aboriginal.

## CULTURE

Haudenosaunee culture has many unique and interesting facets. Perhaps the most notable part of Haudenosaunee culture is the spirituality which is shared among the nations. This spirituality is seen through expressions of thanks for all we have and hope to have. Throughout every ceremony there is a respect for each living thing and thanks is given out of respect for all that has been received. In giving thanks the Haudenosaunee follow a cycle of ceremony, holding rituals which follow the seasons.

Spirituality is a central part of the lives of the Haudenosaunee people but parallel to this is a respect for other religions. Unlike many religions which promote

the recruitment of new followers, the Haudenosaunee have never tried to force their beliefs on anyone and allow for their own people to follow their own beliefs without criticism. The Great Law of Peace itself has built into it freedom of religion which is respected by all its followers.

An essential value which forms the foundation for much of the Haudenosaunee ways is the duty of preparing for the seventh generation. The nations of the Haudenosaunee believe that we borrow the earth from our children's children and it is our duty to protect it and the culture for future generations. All decisions made now are made with the future generations who will inherit the earth in mind.

## CEREMONIES

The Haudenosaunee have 13 ceremonies throughout the year representing the 13 moons throughout the year. These ceremonies occur at various times of the year often following seasonal changes. Most ceremonies are a way of expressing thanks to the people, the natural world, the spirit world and the creator. It is hoped that this will help to maintain the health and prosperity of the nations. Each ceremony includes an opening and closing prayer followed by dances and songs.

The ceremonies are:

- Midwinter– Second week in January and lasts for approximately eight days.
- Maple Ceremony – Second week in February and lasts one day.
- Thunder Dance – First week in April to welcome back the thunder.
- Seed Ceremony – Middle of May and lasts 1 day

- Sun and Moon dance – Beginning of May to give thanks to the sun and second week of May to give thanks to the moon in the morning and evening respectively.
- Planting Ceremony – End of May
- Strawberry Dance– Middle of May and lasts one day
- String bean – First week in August and lasts one day
- Corn – Middle of August
- Harvest – Middle of October and lasts four days.
- Thunder - November
- End of seasons – December

## STORY TELLING

Story telling is an essential part of Haudenosaunee culture. It isn't just about telling stories, it's a positive way to teach the beliefs and values the Haudenosaunee hold. Through each story the listener can learn the values, laws and acceptable behaviors of a community without having them simply listed off as rules.

Today story telling is a thriving art form whereby the Haudenosaunee people express legends to future generations. Some make their livelihood as story tellers who continue to share the culture of the Haudenosaunee.

## VALUES

Among the nations of the Haudenosaunee is a core value called the Seventh Generation. While the Haudenosaunee encompass traditional values like sharing labor and maintaining a duty to their family, clan and nation and being thankful to nature and the Creator



for their sustenance, the Seventh Generation value takes into consideration those who are not yet born but who will inherit the world.

In their decision making Chiefs consider how present day decisions will impact their descendants. Nations are taught to respect the world in which they live as they are borrowing it from future generations. The Seventh Generation value is especially important in terms of culture. Keeping cultural practices, languages, and ceremonies alive is essential if those to come are to continue to practice Haudenosaunee culture.

## MEDICINE

Among the Haudenosaunee, male and female healers used many methods to cure the sick, care for the injured and maintain overall health. Skilled in the use of plants and herbs, healers knew which herbs would alleviate which illness. They knew how to set broken bones, dress wounds and even perform some kinds of surgery.

But the Haudenosaunee believed that sicknesses were caused as much by magical causes as natural. To chase away evil spirits causing sicknesses and heal the ill, the Haudenosaunee employed spells, dances, ceremonies, sacred instruments and secret societies. Medicine societies have sacred masks which are used to heal the ill and chase away sickness.

Thanks and prayer was given to all herbs and berries used as medicine to ensure that they would work the way they were intended. Each community has its own medicines and traditions and it's important to seek out the elders to learn these practices and keep the traditional medicines alive. Healing is as much a spiritual process as it is a natural and people must believe in the power of medicine and allow the Creator to heal them.

## WOMEN IN HAUDENOSAUNEE CULTURE<sup>1</sup>

In Haudenosaunee culture, the clan is the strongest element in determining people's identity. One's immediate community is next in importance, followed by the reservation to which they, or their ancestors were born, followed by nation or tribe. Again, the ties of kinship form the basic organization of society; a clan functions just as the American family does – it is the central source for economic, moral and emotional support, defining status and interrelationships. The Haudenosaunee divide their society into two main descent groups (anthropologists call each half a "moiety") of four clans each; in the bird group are the snipe, heron, hawk and deer; in the animal group are the wolf, beaver, turtle and bear. A Seneca is directly related to any member of his or her clan, and members can include other Senecas, or other members of the League: Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga or Tuscarora tribes. Historically, the two groups of Haudenosaunee clans have been exogamous, meaning that their tradition demanded that members of the bird clans marry members of the animal clans, never within their own clan. A man would retain allegiance to the clan of his birth, but live "matrilocally" in the longhouse of his wife's clan. Descendants of a marriage between a woman of the Turtle clan and a man of the Hawk clan would belong to the Turtle clan. Thus, kinship ties were spread across all eight clans in a wide kinship structure, resulting in a cohesive group, unlikely to wage war internally.

Women are highly respected in Haudenosaunee society because of the roles they have played in the creation (Sky Woman) and in the formation of the Great Law. The earth itself is seen as a woman from whom all things are

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<sup>1</sup> [www.pbs.org/warrior/content/modules/women.pdf](http://www.pbs.org/warrior/content/modules/women.pdf)

born, creating new life that allows all of the living things on earth to continue into the future. In Haudenosaunee society, clan, national/tribal identity, and property rights are all determined through the maternal line; this is in keeping with the Six Nations' Great Law, which emphasizes a balance of male and female roles. Historically, Haudenosaunee women took care of all things that concerned village life, such as internal affairs, property and crops. Men took care of the group's

external factors, such as hunting/fishing, warfare, diplomacy, etc.

In Native culture we see many similarities to Christianity, ultimately these similarities will not save our people from hell.

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

## BRIDGING CHRISTIANITY WITH THE HAUDENOSAUNEE

Since cleansing and purification seems to be a big part of our cultural ceremonies this would be a good place to begin connecting and bridging Christianity with the Seneca people. The foundational thinking of cleansing and purification comes from an imbalance or disharmony with the creator or higher being. Without cleaning oneself with ceremonial objects, there seems to be a fear of missed blessings. Ash and smoke are used during a ceremony to attain internal cleansing or receive the blessings of the higher being.

Using this concept of internal cleansing and purification would be a great way to connect the impact of Jesus' sacrifice for us. Jesus' ultimate sacrifice on the cross is the only to cleanse the inner part of a person and wash away all mistakes to become in right standing with the one true God. Just as the Jews in the Old Testament looked towards the sacrifices of bulls and goats to cover their sins, many native tribes seem to be stuck in this rut of looking toward sacrifices and ceremonies for cleansing instead of accepting the ultimate sacrifice which bring life.



**Coreen Esplin – Tonawanda Seneca** Coreen was born into the Tonawanda Seneca tribe in New York State. She is married to Daniel and they both serve at IBC; Daniel as the Admissions Counselor, Coreen as the Dean of Women. Both are also graduates of Indian Bible College. When she wrote this paper she was a junior at IBC. The paper is part of an ongoing work focusing on the development of an apologetic understanding and response of the traditional Native beliefs. She has a passion to help her people understand the gospel without denying their cultural background.



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# *Through my Eyeglasses*

If I were to put an item into a time capsule, it would certainly be my eyeglasses. To tell the world one hundred and fifty years from now “this is how it was” might seem to be a strange and insignificant piece of information, but please stay awhile and hear me out.

You probably have to own a pair of eyeglasses and use them frequently, or at least have had a pair and used them at some point in your life before getting contacts or having laser eye surgery, to fully understand and appreciate the importance and value they possess. Sometimes you cannot trust your eyes, more so if they have been damaged and have lied to you before. But your glasses help you see the truth and assist you in observing things, both far and near, with a clearer perspective, depending on your sense of sight and what it prefers.

Not only do eyeglasses help you tremendously in so many ways, but they reflect your personality. They almost mirror your thoughts, emotions, and intellect. Sure, others might not be able to see the eyes of your face through those thin pieces of glass or plastic, but if they, and even yourself, look hard enough, they can peer into the soul and almost, in a very dim light, into the future.

I would leave my eyeglasses in a time capsule so that those in that future can see the world how I saw it.

*By Joshua Ortiz*