

Walking Holy Ground Together
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Throughout American history, civilizing the Indian has been synonymous with evangelizing the Indian. Early Protestant missionaries regarded European civilization as the cultural expression of Christian teachings and perceived indigenous cultures as primitive at best and satanic at worst. Missionaries insisted that indigenous converts abandon their indigenous way of life and adopt the customs, habits, and modes of thought that defined colonial society. This attitude prevailed through the formative years of the United States and into the Twentieth Century, as the Federal Government looked to Christian denominations and mission agencies, at various times and in various ways, to instruct Native peoples in the arts and practices of civilization and assimilate them into the values and lifestyle of American society. Today, many Native American Christians are seeking to follow Christ in ways that are authentic to the customs and traditions of their people, but face longstanding attitudes that regard their cultures as incompatible with Christianity.

After almost four centuries of missionary efforts, only three to five percent of the five and a half million Native people of the United States identify themselves as Christian. They are part of a community that suffers the effects of a massive historical trauma precipitated by the loss of lands, resources, and livelihood, and persistent efforts to obliterate their cultures and identities. Hope for healing has arisen, however, as Native Americans, along with indigenous peoples around the world, are recovering traditions, customs, and ways of thinking that had been dismissed as backward and savage. As this recovery takes its course, Native Christians are exploring ways to faithfully incarnate the gospel in the forms and customs of their cultures and bring the healing presence of Christ to their communities.

Ashland Theological Seminary has the privilege of hosting a unique gathering for all who have been stirred to walk with Native American brothers and sisters in the Jesus Way. We invite you to join us for a time of listening, learning, and challenge, as we welcome faithful followers of Christ who will speak from the richness of their experiences and cultures. We also ask for your prayers as we put our minds, hands, and hearts together to exalt Jesus Christ and unite in mission and ministry.

Snapshots of Native America

- There are 565 tribes recognized by the United States government, and hundreds of others recognized only by states
- Two-thirds of Native Americans do not live on reservations; most reside in urban centers, where they are separated from their people and culture
- More than 34,000 Native North Americans reside in Ohio
- 60% of the food consumed in the world today was originally cultivated by the indigenous peoples of the Americas, including corn, potatoes, tomatoes, maple syrup, and many varieties of beans and peppers
- The system that governs the Six Nations of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) Confederacy – in particular, its ideas of representative democracy and the division of powers to central and local entities – influenced the development of the American political system
- Native Americans have the highest per capita rate of service in the U.S. military
- 1 in 10 Native Americans has been the victim of violent crime. 3 out of 4 Native women have been the victims of sexual assault. The vast majority of violent crimes against Native Americans are committed by non-Natives.
- Native Americans suffer rates of diabetes, tuberculosis, suicide, substance abuse, infant mortality and a host of other health problems that are significantly higher than the general U.S. population
- The poverty rate among Native Americans is well over double that of American society as a whole.

L. Daniel Hawk is Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Ashland Theological Seminary and an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church. His scholarship explores the relationship between violence and ethnicity in the Hebrew Bible and the ways that communities construct their identities through narratives. These interests converge in his most recent book, *Joshua in 3-D: A Commentary on Biblical Conquest and Manifest Destiny* (Cascade, 2010), which uses the book of Joshua as a biblical lens to read the American story of conquest and expansion.