

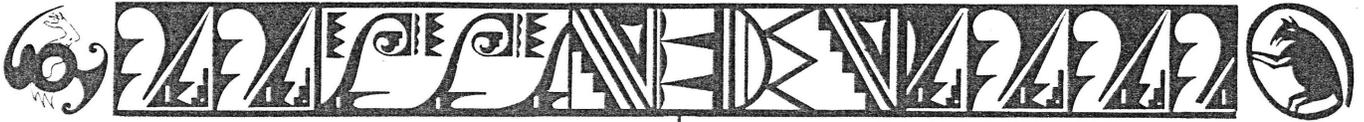
# The Sacred Circle of Life: *A Native American Vision*

Presented by The Native American International Caucus, 1988



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Presented to  
The United Methodist Church  
by  
The Native American International Caucus  
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## Introduction

The saga of the Native American might best be summed up or articulated in the plight of Peggie McIntosh, the wife of William McIntosh (Chief of the Creek Nation), who signed a treaty relinquishing the lands of the Creek tribe:

"I do not blame the Creeks, the Creeks treat me well, the Cherokee treat me well—it was Government caused me to suffer, it was by Government my Husband (William McIntosh) lost his life—Government say to my husband, 'Go to Arkansas, go to Arkansas and you will be better off.' My husband wished to please the Government—my home is burned, myself and children run—my children naked—no bread—one blanket, is all—like some stray dog, I suffer; with one blanket I cover my three children and myself—Government say 'Go!' The Indians kill him; *between two fires my husband dies*; I wander—Government does not feed me—Creek does not feed me—no home, no bread, nothing! nothing!"<sup>1</sup>

William McIntosh lost his life trying to stand between the "fires" of the Federal Government and the "fires" of his own people. It is rather ironic, to say the least, that those fires continue to burn in contemporary society and within the Native American community. Frequently however, decisions are made for the Native American and the "fires" of the dominant culture most often prevail. Today there are unresolved problems facing the Native American that prick the heart and consciousness of non-Native Americans. This is especially true whenever The United Methodist Church examines the notion of authentic ministry for and with the Native American. This should not be. Nonetheless, this is the reality and the fate of the Native American within modern society.

In 1976, the General Conference responded to the urgent appeal of the Native American constituency and *once again* called for a study. The report was presented to the 1980 General Conference. It indicated the immediate need for Native American leadership development and social justice ministries. The study was received by the 1980 General Conference. Twelve years have elapsed, since the Study began, and the Native American crucial request for The United Methodist Church to develop a balanced and comprehensive approach for Native American ministries that addresses the problems and social justice issues raised in the Study Committee's Report continues to go unheeded. Over the past eight years some programs have been developed and initiated because of the visible presence and persistence of the Native American community. For example, there is now a National United Methodist Native American Center and the General Board of Global Ministries' Native

<sup>1</sup>Foreman, Grant, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), page 20.

American Urban Initiative. The changing trends, within the Native American community, necessitate a reaffirmation of the call for the development and establishment of appropriate models of ministry that address the socio-economic, legal, political and spiritual needs of the Native American.

The U.S. Census reported that the Native American community experienced a population growth of 270% between 1970 and 1980. The government data indicate there are more Native Americans living in urban communities than ever before. It would be unfair to say The United Methodist Church has not made deliberate efforts to deal more effectively with the Native American. The United Methodist Church has responded in some ways that exemplify a sensitive and positive reaction to the plight of the Native American. Due to the response of The United Methodist Church, Native Americans are more visible in the church today than ever before; more intentional ministries have been developed; more appropriate ministries have been developed that are sensitive to the indigenous culture of the Native American.

Today even greater opportunities for ministry with the Native American exist. The United Methodist Church must come to grips with the reality that the Native American is no longer an invisible presence within the church—no longer overwhelmed by the institutional structure of the church. The Native American today calls for change—change that addresses indigenous needs effectively. The church is called by the Native American International Caucus to respond to the critical needs of Native American people.

Ministry is a response to the expressed needs of people throughout the world. The challenge facing the church, in our technological and electronic age, is to initiate and develop appropriate models of ministry that are relevant and sensitive to the Native American. The church must not forget that its mission is to respond by proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples. The notion of discipleship was initiated by Jesus and involves a commitment to his person. It is apparent that The United Methodist Church has not been successful in articulating its mission in a language that is relevant and appropriate to the socio-economic, legal, political and spiritual needs of the Native American. In his book, *Recovery of the Protestant Adventure*, Niell Hamilton claims: "...discipleship, and accurate appreciation of the standard of justice in the world provides one of the major entrees to the world. Discipleship's love of neighbor begins expressing itself by insisting that one's neighbor be treated at least as fairly as justice requires,...."<sup>2</sup>

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul sees the church "...as a plan...to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth..." (Eph. 1:10), and this is a sound theological foundation for the church to take seriously when considering

<sup>2</sup>Hamilton, Niell, *Recovery of the Protestant Adventure*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981), page 191.



the diversity of our society. This acknowledges the uniqueness of diverse cultures and people of color. God creates out of love, and desires that all creation be in harmony with Him. The church is made up of people who covenant together, under the Lordship of Christ, to seek appropriate channels to address the needs of all. There are unharvested fields and uncultivated horizons within the Native American community. The materials contained in this

document reflect intentional efforts by the Native American International Caucus to address, within the context of The United Methodist Church, current issues, trends and future needs for ministry with Native Americans that will go beyond the year 2000. We offer this document *The Sacred Circle of Life: a Native American Vision*, with the heartfelt appeal to The United Methodist Church to respond in a positive manner to all that is contained within.

## Purpose and Brief History of the Native American International Caucus (NAIC)

*The Native American International Caucus (NAIC)* is a caucus of United Methodist Native American people dedicated to the improvement of the place of Native American people in The United Methodist Church, the preparation and freeing up of Native American people for greater service under God to His church and to our people while preserving for the good of all the distinct and excellent qualities of our culture.

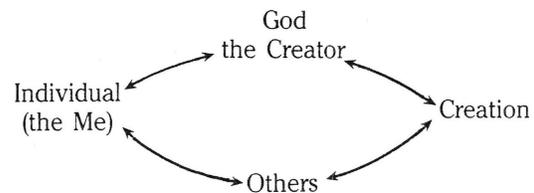
This is a brief statement of the history and development of the NAIC: A series of meetings with Native American people in selected locations sponsored by the National Division of the Board of Global Ministries culminated in Farmington, New Mexico in February of 1968. An "American Indian Advisory Committee" was formed as a result of the urging of Native American participants. This advisory committee was "attached" to the National Division, which administers the bulk of Native American Ministries, for functional purposes. In 1970, a National Methodist Native American caucus recommended that the "Advisory Committee" become an all-Native American Committee and changed its primary role to one of advocacy. By 1972 that recommendation had been carried out. The organization scrapped its title of "advisory committee", adopted the name National American Indian Committee and created a system of representative membership based on the identification of five Native American (UMC) population regions. The NAIC also called for the staggered classification of its membership and established the principle for its implementation. A second major reorganization occurred in 1976 when the NAIC perfected the rotation system of its membership, equalized the voting power of its five United Methodist Native American population regions, and adopted a new name. The Native American International Caucus with 40 members (8 from each region) now stands as the major representative caucus of Native American United Methodists in the church.

## Theological Statement

The theology of Native Americans within The United Methodist Church has been born out of pain: the pain of oppression; the pain of knowing that missionary efforts at "Christianizing the Indian," actually meant "civilizing the heathen"; the pain of powerlessness. Yet, even pain signifies life and provides for growth. Therefore, theology for the Native American is alive and open to wrestling with understandings, of God, His creation, and Others that are constantly being brought into proper focus.

To grasp an understanding of how God is understood by Native Americans, one must examine the dynamics of relationships between God (the Creator), His creation, Others and the individual (the Me). Native American theology can best be understood graphically, in what can be best described as **The Sacred Circle of Life**.

When these linked relationships are in balance, or in



harmony, there is shalom, wholeness, salvation. **The Sacred Circle of Life** contains, when not distorted, the basic elements in God's plan for humankind.

The United Methodist Church, in applying this to the task of proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples, (as stated



in the 1985-1988 Missional Priority—duty of the General Board of Discipleship) must affirm the spiritual values of Native Americans. Accepting the spiritual values of Native Americans will become a stabilizing force that can bring the Native American and the world into balance and hold our families together. In this scheme there is an understanding of universal relatedness of all God's creation that can be learned and shared by all.

The church's role in affirming the tribal identity of Native Americans, and giving affirmation to their cultural and spiritual values will provide the arena where new concepts may occur. For example, new concepts of land stewardship and new forms of worship become possible. The integration of Christian and Native American traditional spiritual teachings can bring excitement, healing and renewed efforts for self-determination to a people frustrated by the lack of sensitivity to them as people and to their culture.

The affirmation of cultural values will enable the forming of ministries and leadership development programs that are compatible with traditional Native American leadership styles. The affirming of Native American spiritual and cultural values will begin to move us, as a church, toward the creation of a Sacred Circle of Life.

## Futures: Relighting The Fire

*A Second Look.* The United Methodist Church in America had been in existence for about 35 years before it became formally involved in missions among Native Americans. That was in the year 1820. Now, 168 years later, this generation of Native Americans, within The United Methodist Church, must review the fruits of those labors and seek an honest balance of judgment in the good and bad which must find expression in our time. The intent of such a critique would be to recommend to Native American people and the whole church, what trails must be taken to prepare the way for Christ to visit His scattered people in the tribal lands, the countryside, and the cities.

The Native American International Caucus has spent considerable time discussing these matters and the fruit of those discussions is contained in this comprehensive document.

The purpose of this section is to state the future context within which the ministry must take place.

### *NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE AND MISSIONARY EFFORT*

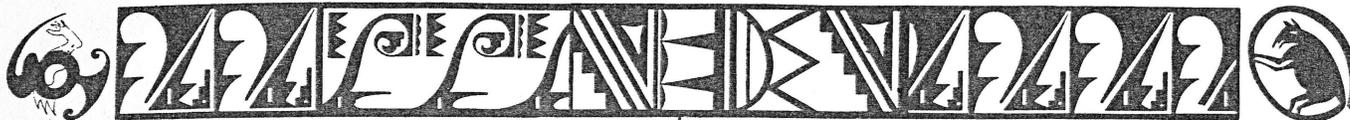
The Achilles' heal of the Christian movement among Native Americans is that it is regarded among traditional people as a "White man's religion". The problem is that if one were to affirm the work of the missionaries, it would imply an affirmation of the intrusion of Europeans into this continent. Most Native Americans would not do that. The

notion of Christianity, as it has impacted our societies, as a "White man's religion", must not be shrugged off as if it were not important. From the second century on, European thought has dominated formal statements of Christian belief. White missionaries were obviously products of their own culture and the Christianity they knew and practiced was of their own cultural fashioning. The traditional Native peoples in America were, and are, right in that sense. On the other hand, the universality of Christianity is its most compelling feature. Its genius is that it transcends the cultural vehicle within which it is delivered and offers life to all people. The missionaries were, for the most part, shackled by the culture which formed them, but that does not diminish the validity of the Gospel itself. The missionaries did not bring Christ to the Native American people. They brought the Gospel—and the Gospel is the good news of Christ. Having received the Gospel, they were then ready to receive Christ and that came about as an initiative of Christ Himself.

### *PERCEIVING THE MISSION: VISION OF A TASK COMPLETED*

Visions in Old Testament times are associated with prophecy, and one cannot think of one without the other. But visioning was also a means of establishing trends of preparation for expected events. Visioning an event in its completion can help a community as it plans for a time yet to come. The Native American International Caucus has sought to define its goals for future ministry and has established the basis for envisioning the near future. A review of dialogue material shows that three basic questions are being confronted: (A) What do we want to happen between 1988 and the year 2000? (B) When do we want it to happen? (C) Who do we want to do it? Basically what is wanted is for *Christianity to be expanded among Native American people*. But, that expansion as well as all future work must be genuine and not superficial. It is superficial when it is imposed within an absolute cultural vehicle that is foreign to the recipient culture. The cultural implications of contemporary American Christianity must be neutralized. That is, **cultural conversion as an imperative in Christian evangelism must be eliminated. Christian ideology must impact the culture—not the other way around.** Culture must not masquerade as Christianity to fulfill ulterior motives.

means increasing the overall membership of Native Americans within the church. This cannot be done by simply revitalizing existing churches. This can only be done significantly by substantially increasing the number of new local churches and other forms of ministries. The reason is that many existing churches do not have numerical growth potential, due to sociological reasons, and could not contribute significantly to the overall goal.



*Leadership* is greatly needed. It is a special kind of leadership that is now desired. Appropriately trained indigenous leaders are needed to assist in the expansion. One or more of the United Methodist schools of theology will help lay the groundwork for developing an appropriate Christian ideology compatible with the United Methodist heritage and Native American spirituality. Seminary education is desired, but present day seminary training is not helpful or appropriate for Native American clergy going into Native American churches or ministries. There needs to be educational opportunities in addition to, or in place of, contemporary theological school training.

The church must give more than sympathetic attention to issues affecting the quality of life of Native American people. Primary among many issues is the land base of Native American tribes. Protection of the existing land base of each respective tribe and the consolidation as well as the expansion of the land base are desired. The church should review its land holdings on or adjacent to tribal reservations and turn over any land that is no longer used for mission purposes to the tribes without compensation.

*The Task of Envisioning the Future* was achieved in a series of dialogues in the annual meetings of the Native American International Caucus, but it is the whole church that needs to provide spiritual and material nurture. The Native American International Caucus, in cooperation with the Claremont School of Theology, is exploring ways to establish the theological and ideological base for the future. In June 1988, professional theologians will dialogue with a select group of Native American United Methodists in anticipation of a larger National Forum on Native American Theology to be held in 1989.

It is expected that the National Forum on Native American Theology will be the ongoing vehicle for developing a new theology for Native American ministries. It is hoped that by working with professional theologians in a graduate school of theology, a systematic approach to the dialogue and formulation of faith statements will be done with care and with great seriousness.

The literary product of the National Forum on Native American Theology will be available to the whole church as well as Native Americans and will be the basis for proclaiming the Gospel and establishing new churches and ministries.

The effort of Native American leaders in the church will be to guide the church in its relationship to Native American people throughout the remainder of this 20th century. The church will be asked to be more sensitive to the humanity of Native peoples and decline all invitations and temptations to join in such dehumanizing celebrations as the landing of Christopher Columbus (1492-1992) on this continent.

The church must also avoid participating in any event designed to compromise the humanity of Native peoples in the Americas with special regard to the free expression of

traditional views and the exercise of traditional freedoms in religion and culture.

**Most important for a vision of things to come is that Native Americans should be people united in a common goal and purpose—the betterment of life for all Native American people and a working reconciliation among all people in the whole church.**

## Communications

Since the beginning of time, persons have become increasingly aware of the importance of communication.

The Apostle Paul communicated with the members of the newly established Christian churches at Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus through letter writing. He continued his contact with them through the only method left to him while imprisoned. Through communication, the new churches were kept alive and survived during those times when he could not physically be with the people.

Inasmuch as Native Americans are the most oppressed group within our society, and inasmuch as their isolation contributes to many negative factors within their community as a whole, the Native American International Caucus has set *Better Communications* as one of its primary goals.

Even though the Native American Community is known as a community of oral tradition, many other ways of communication existed within the culture. Some of these were sign language, petroglyphs, wampum, and smoke signals. Symbolic writing was used by the Incas and the Maya in South and Central America and the "Walum Olum" was a pictograph style of writing used by the Delaware people to store information. Unlike those days, Native Americans feel that the modern methods of communication are imperative to the continuation of the isolated ministries across the United States.

Also, Native Americans need to use modern methods of communication to get their message to the Church. Too long Native Americans within The United Methodist Church constituency have been without voice.

Therefore, we are asking the General Church to re-establish the communication network which was lost with the influx of Europeans to this continent.

In addition to *The Echo of the Four Winds* newspaper, the main communication tool of Native Americans within The United Methodist Church structure, modern technology needs to be utilized in the implementation of a viable method of communication among Native Americans throughout the country, and also as a linkage to and from the church in general.

**OBJECTIVE:** Establish better communications among



Native Americans within the church structure as well as the United Methodist constituency in general.

**GOALS:** Develop modern methods of networking to meet the spiritual and cultural needs of the Native American people. Bring awareness to the general church of the unique gifts Native American people have to offer the church.

**RATIONALE:** To undergird the isolated Native American churches/ministries throughout the United States. To keep the whole church informed and updated on the progress and status of those ministries.

**STRATEGY:** Establish permanent funding for *The Echo of the Four Winds* newspaper. Increase circulation of *The Echo of the Four Winds*.

**GOALS:** Establish an expedient, viable way of obtaining information which will help the ministries address the needs as the needs arise or surface.

**STRATEGY:** Establish a computer network between Native American ministries as well as general boards and agencies and the National United Methodist Native American Center.

**GOALS:** (1) Establish a method of recording the cultural stories and traditions of the Native people for historical reasons. (2) Bring awareness of the parallels between the traditional Native American religions and the Christian religion. (3) Create a teaching method to enable Native Americans to be trained for leadership roles as well as pastor a church, at or near their homes.

**STRATEGY:** Establish a satellite downlink, possibly through the National Native American United Methodist Center which could act as a resource bank as well as establish a teaching method through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to meet the needs of the Native people seeking to become pastors or take leadership roles within the church.

## Congregational Development

**GOAL:** By the year 2000, to double the number of Native American churches and/or ministries within The United Methodist Church.

**RATIONALE:** The Native American community is made up of about 400 different tribes with many languages and varying cultures. According to the published figures of the 1980 U.S. Census, 1,920,824 persons are reported as American Indians and 38,468 persons are reported as Aleut and Eskimo. However, according to the same census,

6,715,819 persons claim American Indian ancestry through one or more parental routes. The same is true for 50,555 persons who claim Aleut or Eskimo ancestry. The difference can be startling. This being the case, The United Methodist Church has an unusual opportunity to keep faith with its mission to develop new churches and/or ministries that can empower Native Americans.

The American Indian population has become increasingly urban in the past 40 years due in part to the relocation programs of the 1950's and 1960's. The population was divided 50-50 between urban and rural areas in 1980, compared to a 44-56 urban-to-rural division in 1970. The rural to urban shift will continue within the American Indian community. Two important factors contributing to this shift will be (1) the lure of jobs in the nation's economically developing urban areas, and (2) the expanding network of ties and kinship support between Indians living in rural areas and those residing in or near cities. The United Methodist Church needs to focus its attention on the total Native American population so as to provide and enable the mission and ministry of the church among Native Americans.

### STRATEGIES:

1. Affirm the present GBGM Urban Initiative Plan, and request the expansion of target cities and an increase in funding.
2. Affirm the current OIMC Comprehensive Plan and Alaska Missionary Conference Ministries Plan, and request GBGM to move quickly to implement.
3. Develop a Native American National Mission Implementation Team.
  - a. General Church Responsibilities:
    - survey Native American population to determine where Native American ministries need to be developed or revitalized.
    - develop a process in consultation with annual conferences to revitalize or develop new Native American ministries and/or churches.
    - assess the needs of these churches/ministries to determine what resources are needed.
    - develop a process to access the resources of the total UMC (general boards and agencies, jurisdictional, and annual conference structures) to address these needs. (i.e., US-2 Mission Interns, STVM, community developers, church & community workers, church school teacher training, laity training, local church work teams, etc.)
    - Share plan with annual conferences.
  - b. NAIC Responsibilities—1988: develop a pilot program in response to God's call to make disciples.



4. Develop a process to enable use of World Division resources among "Indian Nations within the U.S."
5. Continue the historical survey by GBGM of Indian land use by the UMC. Report to the 1992 General Conference.
6. **Request the General Conference to mandate that the establishment of Native American Church growth/revitalization within The United Methodist Church be given high priority.**

## Issues

Native Americans are encountering more issues today than they have ever encountered before. Such issues as; Native land claims, fishing and hunting rights, jurisdictional disputes, self-sufficiency, and those problems that the rest of society deals with: alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, nuclear war, changing family systems, etc.

With these ever-changing and continuing problems, we have an urgent need to improve our communication skills across the church so that accurate information can be shared and a support network be formed. This needs to occur among the Native American constituency as well as the non-Native.

In Proverbs 2: 2-8 it says, *"Listen to what is wise and try to understand it. Yes, beg for knowledge: plead for insight. Look for it as hard as you would for silver or some hidden treasure. If you do, you will know what it means to fear the Lord and you will succeed in learning about God. It is the Lord who gives wisdom: from Him comes knowledge and understanding. He provides help and protection for righteous, honest men. He protects those who treat others fairly, and guards those who are devoted to him"*.

We feel that we all need to be aware of Native American issues in this way. We need to reach out and begin to learn what the facts are on each issue. We need sharing of information and time for discussions. Various options, alternatives, and solutions need to be talked over. Decisions need to be made only after having heard or having seen a good share of information that is fair and just.

In the traditional Iroquoian culture, there is a practice called "Consensus Decision Making". This process allows for all voices to be heard before a decision is made. No decision is final until all of the people are in agreement. If only one does not agree, an attempt must be made to compromise with that person. This calls for giving up and taking in various ideas and/or concepts that other members or groups have to offer. It gives everyone a sense of "ownership" and, therefore leads to a deeper commitment to follow. We can

achieve this through a strong supportive base within our Christian family. This is the way of the Native American. We help each other out in times of struggle, hardship, or pain; and in the same way, we come together to celebrate and feast in times of happiness and good fortune from our Creator.

How can we accomplish such a task? James 1:25 says, *"But whoever looks closely into the perfect law that sets people free, who keeps on paying attention to it and does not simply listen and then forget it, but puts it into practice—that person will be blessed by God in what he does."* This Bible verse shows us how important it is for us to keep ourselves abreast of current Native American issues and to pass that information on to others. We cannot simply read it and put it aside. We cannot listen to a guest speaker on Sunday morning in our local church and then forget about it. We cannot listen to one side of an issue and avoid the other.

A current example of this is the Robeson County hostage situation. There are many underlying facts that most of society has not heard about. They have not heard the allegations that the two young captives have made against the local government for their injustice and racial bias against Native Americans. They have not been informed of the circumstances that led to the young Native Americans' plea for help, questioning the conduct of the local government in handling Native Americans in criminal justice matters. God calls on all of us to listen to our fellow Christians when they are in need. We need to show action! We need to reflect on our past for what it was and to continue forward to overcome these setbacks. For instance, the Northwest Ecumenical Association has written an apology to the Native Americans within their area for all of the injustices that they have incurred over the years, and they gave their pledge to discontinue such treatment of Native Americans.

We, as a church, need to do something with the information we are receiving or creating on Native American issues. We must help enlighten others on the real issues; we must challenge them to take further steps at being educated or in being supportive; we must allow room for debate, for hearing all sides of an issue; we must circulate our knowledge and spark the interest of others who have not been aware of the issues that modern Native Americans are dealing with.

We believe that this task must be shared by all, not only because the Native American constituency is small, but because God instructs us to work together. In Exodus 18:18 it says, *"You will wear yourself out and these people as well. This is too much for you to do alone."* In sharing this responsibility, God says, *"That will make it easier for you as they share your burden."* Exodus 18:22.

Therefore, we are asking that the following recommendations be carried out by the proper boards and agencies of The United Methodist Church.



**I. GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES**

- A. Add a Native American Staff person.
1. To obtain first-hand information on Native American grass roots issues.
  2. To identify and respond to critical issues.
- B. Health & Welfare: provide programs to educate local church communities on health and welfare issues they are facing.

**II. GENERAL COMMISSION ON RELIGION & RACE:** continue to monitor other boards and agencies to be sure they are fulfilling their mandate to the Native American issues.

**III. GENERAL COMMISSION ON STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN:** create a quadrennial strategy to confront the issues Native American women are facing.

**IV. UNITED METHODIST COMMUNICATIONS:** devise a plan to disseminate information to the "church at large" regarding current Native American issues.

**V. GENERAL COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES & HISTORY:** record the Native American Cultures and History, to be used as a reference in current issues and understanding.

**VI. GENERAL COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN UNITY AND INTERRELIGIOUS CONCERNS**

1. Enact a process for placing Native Americans' spirituality in its traditional and Christian context.
2. Educate the "church at large" on this concept.

**VII. GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH & SOCIETY**

1. Add a Native American staff person to deal with current issues in the legislative process regarding Native Americans.
2. Plan/develop open forums for Native American issue discussion.
3. Provide Native American issues information to the "church at large".
4. Develop at least one national forum in the 1989-1992 quadrennium for Native American issues discussion.

**VIII. GENERAL BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP**

1. Provide funding for programs addressing "issues" that Native American churches are facing.
2. Add a Native American staff person to consult with Native American churches to discover needs and issues and varying possibilities or alternatives needed to address these needs and issues.

**GOAL 1:** Add a Native American staff person to general program boards and other agencies and monitoring commissions.

**RATIONALE:** This will enable better communications among the boards, agencies, and commissions and the "grass roots" Native American community. The Native American staff would, as one responsibility, have an advocacy role and would relay first-hand information on issues and needs to their respective board, agency, or commission.

**STRATEGY:** Request that the General Board of Global Ministries, General Board of Discipleship, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, General Commission on Religion and Race, and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women and other general agencies add a Native American to their staffs.

**GOAL 2:** Develop programs to educate local Native American communities on health and welfare issues.

**RATIONALE:** These programs would help address critical medical issues that Native Americans are facing in epidemic proportions, such as diabetes, kidney failure, and drug and alcohol abuse. The programs will also help in educating Native Americans in recent medical issues such as AIDS.

**STRATEGY:** Request that the General Board of Global Ministries, Health & Welfare Department work with Native American communities to develop programs that will provide education in areas listed above.

**GOAL 3:** Continue to monitor boards and agencies to be sure they are fulfilling their mandate regarding Native American issues.

**RATIONALE:** It is very important that The United Methodist Church continue to be inclusive of all its ethnic membership so that their voices can be heard and their needs addressed. This is true for the Native American constituency, since the Native American voice has been unheard for so long.

**STRATEGY:** Request the General Commission on Religion and Race be aware of this concern and to develop monitoring measures that will ensure that Native American issues and concerns are responded to and implemented with intentionality. Also, monitor the involvement and participation of Native Americans within the boards and agencies of the church.

**GOAL 4:** Create a quadrennial strategy to confront the issues that Native American women are facing.

**RATIONALE:** Native American women within The United Methodist Church have not had the opportunity to meet together until recently at the Native American Women's Consultation. As a result of this consultation (which included women from more than 40 different tribal backgrounds), it was found that there are many issues that Native American women have in common. These issues need to be addressed.



**STRATEGY:** Commend the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women for its support of women's issues during the 1985-1988 quadrennium. Request that COSROW develop a 1989-1992 quadrennial strategy to confront the issues that Native American Women and families are facing.

**GOAL 5:** To develop a process that will enable the general church to be aware of Native American issues.

**RATIONALE:** Many times the general population is unaware of the circumstances that underline Native American issues. There is a great need for the support base to be broadened in order for Native American issues to be heard and acted upon.

**STRATEGY:** Request United Methodist Communications develop a comprehensive plan to enhance present methods of communications and to develop new and creative ways of networking within the Native American community and within The United Methodist Church.

**GOAL 6:** Develop and maintain permanent record of Native American culture and history within The United Methodist Church.

**RATIONALE:** It will be important to have a permanent record of Native American culture and history. In some instances it is being lost or has already been lost. A permanent record would prevent this from happening. It would also provide understanding of the Native American past, which often helps in understanding current Native American issues and needs.

**STRATEGY:** Request that the General Commission on Archives and History develop a plan to record, maintain, and share, on a continuing basis, the history of Native American culture and an up-to-date history of Native Americans in The United Methodist Church.

**GOAL 7:** Develop a process for placing Native American spirituality in its traditional and Christian context and educate the "church at large" on this concept.

**RATIONALE:** Native Americans and The United Methodist Church need to respect traditional Native American spiritual values and Christian values. The church has an obligation to examine both to understand how one can enhance the other.

**STRATEGY:** Request that the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns sponsor, in consultation with the Native American International Caucus and a school of theology, a forum on traditional Native American and Christian spiritual values.

**GOAL 8:** To develop open forums across the denomination that would discuss Native American issues.

**RATIONALE:** It is essential that there be a process of better communication, understanding and empathy in regards to Native American issues.

**STRATEGY:** Request the General Board of Church and Society plan for open forums on Native American issues across the denomination. The plan shall include a process that will provide information on Native American issues on an ongoing basis to both The United Methodist Church and ecumenically.

**GOAL 9:** Develop a national forum on Native American sovereignty and related issues.

**RATIONALE:** This is an emerging issue within society and there is much false information that causes interracial conflict.

**STRATEGY:** Request that the General Board of Church and Society develop and sponsor a National Forum on Sovereignty and Related issues to be held during the 1989-1992 quadrennium.

**GOAL 10:** Develop a plan to discover needs and issues of Native Americans and to implement and fund various program options that will address these needs and issues.

**RATIONALE:** Native Americans need to be better educated on the options available to address the needs and issues they are facing.

**STRATEGY:** Request that the General Board of Discipleship provide staff assistance in discovering the needs and issues of Native Americans and the various alternatives available in dealing with the needs and issues. The General Board of Discipleship will then develop a curriculum on Native American issues and options.

## Leadership Development

Native American leadership development must be biblical and people-centered. The Church is a living organism reaching out to impact the lives of people. The Native American community is a diverse community: a community rich in history, rich in family ties, rich in its association with nature, and rich in spirituality. In his book, *The Community Called Church*, Segundo reflects upon the complexities of our society and concludes:



The world does not shatter (our) faith, it opens unsuspected horizons to it. And within these horizons (we) will understand the enormous importance of (our) mission and exclaim serenely: 'Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel'.

In Mark's Gospel (Mark 1:16-20), Jesus called the disciples and they followed. Jesus continues to call today! However, one of the indictments against The United Methodist Church has been its failure to develop and train Native American "community leaders" who are sensitive to the culture, sociological, political, and economic needs within the Native American community. **The future of the United Methodist Native American Ministries is dependent upon developing indigenous leadership**—indigenous leaders who are sensitive to the expressed needs of "grassroots" Native Americans. In his book, *Hope For The Church*, Moltmann asserts:

The renewal of the church finally depends upon what happens at the grass-roots level. And renewal at this level awaits, it seems to me, the conscious reclaiming of the gifts of the Spirit on the part of the laity. These gifts, which in the New Testament are always identified as signs of the coming kingdom of God, are given to the whole people of God for ministry, for *diakonia*.

The following materials are the results of data gathered from members of the Native American International Caucus. Native American people who live and move within their respective communities bring to this plan their particular insights and needs relating to leadership development.

**GOAL:** Develop an indigenous approach to Native American ministries.

**RATIONALE:** The majority of Native American leaders today, having completed theological training, have little or no training from a Native American perspective. This trend continues to be true. The majority of non-Native American pastors serving within the Native American communities receive little or no cross-culture training. Theological education caters to non-Native American students for example, the present missionary programs for non-Native American is "on-the-job training". Frequently non-Native Americans bring with them their biased concepts of ministry and do not take into consideration the culture of the people to be served. In his book, *Recovery of the Protestant Adventure*, Hamilton substantiates this point:

"European Biblical and Theological Scholarship...has largely dominated our theological education for a hundred years".

The need for The United Methodist Church, to develop a sound and balanced approach for Native American ministries is long overdue. It's time to develop "new" methods to train Native Americans leaders that takes into consideration the traditional leadership style of Native Americans. We must stop allowing Western culture to

dominate and shape present trends of leadership development.

**STRATEGY:** Hold two awareness convocations on Native American culture and community (1989 and 1991). The purpose of these awareness convocations would be to educate Native Americans and non-Native American persons serving Native American communities. Potential seminarians and diaconal ministers should be invited. Included in this process would be the development of continuing education programs for non-Native American persons.

**GOAL:** Hold a national convocation on the ordained ministry.

**RATIONALE:** Native American communities need to be educated and informed on the United Methodist resources available.

**STRATEGY:** Request the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry develop a continuing educational program for non-Native American persons. The plan would include the utilization of the National United Methodist Native American Center and Native American leadership. A strategy for continuing education development would be to incorporate this into annual conference summer schools for pastors.

**GOAL:** Recruit and train more Summer Youth interns. Provide youth exchange programs.

**RATIONALE:** Opportunities of this nature will provide "on-the-job" training for potential Native American leaders. Potential seminarians would have the opportunity to attend a theological school to find out what is involved in theological training.

**STRATEGY:** The United Methodist Native American Center to coordinate, seeking funding from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

**GOAL:** Place at least 3 US-2s in Native American communities—two of them Native American. Identify interested youth/young adults by Spring 1990.

**RATIONALE:** Exposure, on-the-job training, and educational experience.

**STRATEGY:** Utilize National Division's Program for US-2s.

## THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

**GOAL:** Develop appointment process for Native American pastors.

**RATIONALE:** Native American ministries within annual conferences are invisible, an appointive process of this nature



would allow for Native American pastors to serve where the needs exist. It would ensure Native American pastoral leadership for Native American churches.

**STRATEGY:** Petition the 1988 General Conference to develop a National Appointment System for Native American pastors.

### THE GENERAL COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE

**GOAL:** Sponsor a convocation for Native American general board membership.

**STRATEGY:** Request the General Commission on Religion and Race develop and fund a convocation for Native American general board members, which will be held at the beginning of the 1989-1992 quadrennium.

### GENERAL BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP

**GOAL:** Develop a relevant approach to evangelism with Native Americans.

**RATIONALE:** The existing approaches of evangelism are insensitive to Native American culture and frequently they are unproductive due to a lack of awareness and understanding of Native Americans. Native Americans have deep and unique values that should not be lost.

**STRATEGY:** Develop a National School of Evangelism in 1990 to which pastors would be invited.

**GOAL:** Develop a National Pastoral Care convocation for Native American pastors/community workers/diaconal ministers.

**RATIONALE:** Provide nurture for Native American pastors. Continuing education for local pastors. Most pastoral care approaches are designed for non-Native Americans.

**STRATEGY:** Request the General Board of Discipleship develop a National Native American Pastoral Care convocation to be held in 1989.

**GOAL:** Hold a National Native American Family Camp each year to strengthen Native American local churches and families.

**RATIONALE:** For the past two years the previously funded National Native American Family Camp brought together Native American families from across the nation, and provided leadership training, fellowship and encouraged youth involvement, etc.

**STRATEGY:** Request the general church assist in sponsoring a National Native American Family Camp with each local church sponsoring a family from their community of faith.

### NATIVE AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL CAUCUS

**GOAL:** Enhance the networking of women within the United Methodist Church.

**RATIONALE:** A networking system must be developed within the United Methodist Church that promotes the inclusion of Native American women.

**STRATEGY:** Create a structure for women within the Native American International Caucus that will follow-up on the National Native American Women's Consultation.

**GOAL:** Develop an enhanced communication network with the Native American constituency that allows each region to have more ownership in all Native American International Caucus programs.

**RATIONALE:** There needs to be a better working relationship and more ownership from "grass-roots" Native Americans.

**STRATEGY:** Provide funding to regional leadership that will provide leadership training.

**GOAL:** Develop a Native American theological base for mission and ministry.

**RATIONALE:** Most western approaches to ministry among Native Americans are insensitive to the culture of the people. A Native American theological base would allow grass-roots people to be a part of "their" ministry, and would foster the self-empowerment of Native Americans.

**STRATEGY:** Hold a forum sponsored by the General Board of Global Ministries in cooperation with the Native American International Caucus and Claremont School of Theology.

**GOAL:** Develop a Leadership Bank

**RATIONALE:** To share leadership responsibilities with input from the regional caucuses.

**STRATEGY:** Each regional caucus will provide names.

**GOAL:** Utilize the resources of the general boards, agencies and commissions to strengthen existing Native American ministries.

**RATIONALE:** The church involved in mission and ministry.

**GOAL:** Advocate for equity in salary for Native American ministers.

**RATIONALE:** Whenever an imbalance exists in salary, Native Americans are considered second class.

**STRATEGY:** Policy changes at the annual conference level. Continue to advocate on the national level as well.



## Conclusion

**Congregational Development, Leadership Development, Communications, Issues, and Future Developments for Native American ministries for 1988 and beyond can be implemented only with the combined efforts of the Native people and friends within The United Methodist Church.**

The church is strengthened when tensions based on misunderstandings and neglect are released and when mutual love and respect are present. The United Methodist Church

has rich traditions and spiritual values, which we as Native Americans wish to share. And likewise, we want to share those rich spiritual qualities inherent in the traditions of our forefathers and the present generation. We are mutually blessed.

**The Christian faith and the Native American "traditional" beliefs walk a parallel path. The "Good" has been part of our culture since the time of Creation. In Christ's name we pray for the continued support of the church for Native American Ministries and we pray for a great blessing for the whole church.**

## Executive Committee

### **Chairperson**

Marvin B. Abrams (Seneca)

### **Vice-Chairperson**

Juanita Wolfe (Cherokee)

### **Secretary**

Deborah Doxtator (Oneida)

### **Treasurer**

Samuel Wynn (Lumbee)

### **Parliamentarian**

Homer Noley (Choctaw)

### **Committee Chairpersons**

#### **Communications**

Ila Dunzweiler (Quechan)

#### **Congregational Development**

John Lowe (Creek)

#### **Issues**

Edith George (Nez-Perce)

#### **Leadership Development**

Harriet Alicea (Oneida)

#### **Futures**

Homer Noley (Choctaw)