

Religion of the native americans

Religion



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Native Americans (Religions issues)

Native American spirituality in general is not regarded as a “ religion” in the full meaning of this word. Beliefs and practices of Native Americans form a seamless part of their very essence and their style of life. Religious customs of aborigines all over the world frequently are a depiction of their hunting and agricultural traditions; Native American spirituality is not an exception. Although belief systems vary widely between tribes and depend on geographic area, in general, Native American rituals promote preserving of horticulture; Indian customs teach interconnectedness of all things on the planet, close relationship between God (Creator), nature, and a fellow man. In many Indian tribes healing, spiritual belief or power, and community are not separated. Often the cause of a disease is considered to be an imbalance between spiritual, physical, mental aspects of a personality; Indian medicine is a medicine of spirit that restores order in a human soul by ceremonies, special forms of prayer, honoring the sacred and herbal remedies. Many Western pharmaceuticals are actually based on Native American Herbal medicine.

Dietary rules of Indians largely depend on the geographic area. Location is the major determinate of the way a tribe acquired food; in some tribes the major source of food was hunting, whereas others specialized in fishing, gathering, planting, desert farming. Native American food can be dangerous, traditional ethnic food involves risk, as home processed sea mammal blubber “ foster continuation and growth of Clostridium botulinum. These bacteria produce the deadly botulinal toxin that causes the disease.” (Segal, 1992) This disease, botulism, affects nerve transmission what results is paralysis and possible death. Even though cultural traditions die hard and some just <https://assignbuster.com/religion-of-the-native-americans/>

cannot give up eating fermented fish heads and seal flippers, in general, Native Americans adjusted to modern food customs. (Segal, 1992) It is ironic, that the most sacred Christian substance - wine has caused such dramatic consequences among the Indians. And tobacco, the most sacred substance among Native Americans, has caused major health problems for so many Christians.

Unlike major religious branches, Native American traditional holidays are not expressed in terms of time but rather in terms of location. These sacred places are experienced by Native Americans as alive where unknown becomes known. In such way, Indians have no Sabbath Sunday every week, but they do have every day prayer and rest when there is a need in it.

Native American Vision Quest is a substitute for Baptism in Christianity. Boys at puberty " are encouraged to enter into a period of fasting, meditation and physical challenge. He separates himself from the tribe and goes to a wilderness area. The goal is to receive a vision that will guide his development for the rest of his life." (Robinson, 2005) Vision Quest is obligatory only for Indian boys; girls usually get their ears pierced at the same age.

Indian medicine man is called Shaman. This holy man not only healed the sick by smoking tobacco, performing dances, burning sweet grass and praying to the spirits, but also could interpret dreams and signs, change weather and foretell future. Indians also used medicine bundles that contained unusual rocks, herbs, animal skin, and strand of hair. As the owner of the bundle grew older, more items were added. A medicine bundle could be passed to friends and was buried together with the owner. Mortuary customs of Indians vary from tribe to tribe and in every specific occasion

<https://assignbuster.com/religion-of-the-native-americans/>

different rituals are carried out depending on social and moral condition of a person, ethical conduct of a tribe. (Yarrow, 2005) Good Indians after death are believed to go to the distant West, where their original ancestors used to live, whereas bad Indians have to serve another earthly life reborn in a body of a grizzly bear as a punishment. That is why Indians do not eat meat of grizzly bears.

High suicide rate among Native Americans is often attributed to suppression of their religion identity by Federal Government that is still seen in prison administrations. (Robinson, 2005)

Cultural traditions do die hard...

Reference list

Robinson, B. " Native American Spirituality" Consultants on Religious Tolerance 2005 Copyright © 1995 to 2005 <http://www.religioustolerance.org/nataspir.htm>

date accessed: 9. 14. 2005

Segal, M. " Native food preparation fosters botulism - Alaskan Natives, dried fish" 1992

Copyright 1992 U. S. Government Printing Office Copyright 2004 Gale Group FindArticles - research-quality articles from trusted sources

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1370/is_n1_v26/ai_11819300/pg_2

date accessed: 9. 14. 2005

Yarrow, H. " Introduction to the Study of Mortuary Customs Among the North American Indians" 2005 Copyright 2000-2005 by NaNations. com, Native American information for personal research <http://www.nanations.com/burialcustoms/index.htm>

<https://assignbuster.com/religion-of-the-native-americans/>

Summary

Beliefs and practices of Native Americans form a seamless part of their very essence and their style of life. Native American rituals promote preserving of horticulture; Indian customs teach interconnectedness of all things on the planet, close relationship between God (Creator), nature, and a fellow man. The cause of a disease is considered to be an imbalance between spiritual, physical, mental aspects of a personality; Indian medicine is a medicine of spirit.

Many Western pharmaceuticals are actually based on Native American Herbal medicine.

Location is the major determinate of the way a tribe acquired food. Native Americans specialized in hunting, fishing, gathering, planting, desert farming.

Traditional ethnic food involves risk: fermented fish heads, seal flippers, home processed sea mammal blubber may result in botulism. This disease affects nerve transmission and leads to paralysis and possible death.

Wine brought by conquerors led to dramatic consequences for the Indians, and Native American tobacco is causing major health problems for people all over the world.

Native American traditional holidays are not expressed in terms of time but rather in terms of location. Indians have no Sabbath Sunday every week, but they do have every day prayer and rest when there is a need in it.

Native American Vision Quest is a substitute for Baptism in Christianity. The goal is to receive a vision that will guide development of a boy for the rest of his life.

Shamans (medicine men) not only healed the sick by smoking tobacco,

<https://assignbuster.com/religion-of-the-native-americans/>

performing dances, burning sweet grass and praying to the spirits, but also could interpret dreams and signs, change weather and foretell future.

Medicine bundles that contained unusual rocks, herbs, animal skin, and strands of hair were also used in healing.

Good Indians after death are believed to go to the distant West, where their original ancestors used to live, whereas bad Indians have to serve another earthly life reborn in a body of a grizzly bear as a punishment.

High suicide rate among Native Americans is often attributed to suppression of their religion identity by Federal Government.