

Book report for native  
american religious  
traditions by suzanne  
j. crawford



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Native American Religious Traditions by Suzanne J. Crawford This book enlightens the reader to Native American religious traditions. This book dispels myths about Native American religious rites, by showing that Native Americans have a religion too. Historical, social, and political influences on Native American religion are explored in this book. Three main tribes are focused on, the Northern Plains Lakota, the Southwest Navajo (Dine), and Pacific Northwest Coast Salish. The oral tradition, ceremonial practices, and colonialism impact on both are explored in this well researched novel. Oral tradition is very important to Native American tribes. Due to their tradition, oral tradition is a way of passing down history, laws, and religion. For an example, the Lakota people tell Ehanni stories to explain creation, or how everything and the world was created. Ohunkakan stories give guidelines on good behavior. Ehanni Wicowoyake relates the stories of Lakota history. In Native American Religious Traditions, Crawford explains how the three tribes focused on for this book use oral tradition uniquely. An example would England and Russia both have literary history, but the way it is written or presented is different.

Like with the oral tradition, the Lakota, Dine, and Coast Salish have diverse ceremonial practices. The Lakota has one of the most recognized ceremonial practices of the Sun Dance. The Sun Dance has been portrayed in different movies inaccurately as a ceremony an adolescent man is forced to dance around a pole with needles embedded in his body hooked by string to the pole. Crawford explains the Sun Dance better. The needles are actually bones, the strings are leather thongs, and the pole a tree that never touches the ground specially prepared for the event. After the pole is erected dancing begins at sunrise with the dancers looking at the sun. Anyone can dance with <https://assignbuster.com/book-report-for-native-american-religious-traditions-by-suzanne-j-crawford/>

short breaks, but no food or water. This lasts four days. The self-sacrificers prepared during this time. Then male volunteers who wanted something like a cure for a sick relative, tribal purification, and so forth would be pierced in both sides by buffalo bones tied to leather straps. The goal is to get the bone from your body by dancing around the pole. It is a purification ceremony.

This and other ceremonies are explained in Crawford's book.

Finally, Crawford looks honestly at a shameful part of American history; the colonization of the Native Americans. All Native Americans encountering European settlers faced the civilization process of Christianity. The Europeans felt that all of the Native American culture was barbaric. The majority, without taking the time to appreciate the new cultures of Native Americans, decided to change the Native Americans to fit their society. This meant their clothes, hair, speech, religious convictions, educations, and so forth. The effect was devastating. Most of the Native Americans lost their way in the new white world.

Not only did the Europeans change the lifestyle of Native Americans, but forced them from their land onto smaller reservations. Since the Native American felt as special bond with the land, the white man in effect raped the Native American of an integral part of their religious belief. It would be like the Native Americans taking over Vatican City, forcing the Catholics away from what they consider to be a holy place. This injustice was never made right, despite the continued observance of white treaties.

Commodities, free education, free health care, and monetary supplements to the descendants are not enough to pay them back for stripping them of part of their religious belief system, the connection to the land. Crawford explains this well in her book.

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Work Cited

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