

Chapter 4
The Indian Ecumenical Conference
as an
Intertribal Gathering

The Indian Ecumenical Conference brought together native people and their religious leaders from communities throughout Canada and the United States. Participants travelled to Crow Agency and to the Stoney Reserve from Florida, New Mexico and California, from Alaska, the Northwest Territories and the Maritime Provinces, bringing with them a tremendous diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds. Conference leaders believed that, despite this diversity, native communities face many of the same social problems and that these problems can be addressed most effectively by cooperating across tribal and religious lines. When several hundred native people representing at least forty-seven tribes met at Crow Agency in 1970, it was probably one of the most diverse religious gatherings in the history of North America. It was certainly a unique and novel experience for those who participated.

The founders of the Conference specifically intended that participants reflect the tribal diversity present among native people in Canada and the United States; the Conference eventually made the Stoney Reserve its permanent home, but it never lost this intertribal focus. The original proposal by Bob Thomas and Ian MacKenzie stressed the need for an intertribal event that would involve as

many tribes as possible. The 1971 Conference announcement reaffirmed this position by stating:

A few tribes did not have religious representatives at the [1970] meeting but we hope to have an even bigger turn out this year and to see every tribe in North America represented there.

. . . Every North American Indian community has a right and a duty to be represented at this Conference. We don't want to make any hard decisions or take action unless the people are all represented.

Attendance at the 1971 meeting was more widely representative than the year before, though still not as comprehensive as some had hoped. Ernie Willie said in 1974 that the Conference "has not encompassed as many tribal traditions as is possible, and if it is to be a true ecumenical endeavor it must begin to look at this."

The Conference was intertribal by design, and this orientation was also one of the things participants appreciated the most. Louis Amiotte, a Lakota from the Pine Ridge Reservation, attended the Conference twice, in 1975 and 1980. The most valuable part of the experience for him was to meet native people from so many different tribes.

I enjoyed talking to a lot of those Canadian Indians that I'd never met before. . . . At the time I didn't know that much about a lot of the Indian traditions [of other tribes], you know, it was just amazing, everything behind it. Well, just the fact that everybody got together and did it.

One of my biggest surprises was when I saw these two Navajos talking [in Nadene], and later on, that day or the next day, I found out one of them was an Athabascan from Yellowknife, way up there in the middle of nowhere, and the

other was Navajo.¹ They were just having a good old time, chit-chatting.

Amiotte particularly enjoyed the intertribal powwows held during the evenings:

One thing that struck me was their powwows at night were very very good, very very non-competitive, good drumming, lots of different drumming, almost like an old-time powwow, very very traditional.²

Sam Stanley suggested that the most important thing that happened at the 1970 meeting was that "many Indians from tribes in Canada and the United States met and exchanged information for the first time." Vine Deloria described the Conference as "intertribal" and wrote that it was formed "to discuss ways of keeping the people focussed on the nature of tribal religions and their meaning for the future of the tribes."³

The Indian Ecumenical Conference brought together native people from various tribes for what was designed to be, and what was experienced as, an intertribal gathering. Many non-native scholars, however, have insisted on labelling it a "pan-Indian" phenomenon, even though I have not uncovered a single instance of any native person ever referring to the Conference in this way. Paul Steinmetz, Harold Turner and Janet Hodgson each renamed it the "pan-Indian Ecumenical Conference." Hodgson went on to say that Conference participants were "touched by the vision of a pan-Indian spiritual consciousness," and to suggest that the Conference created this consciousness

perhaps for the first time in history . . . sinking all the petty tribal feuds that have bedevilled native unity in the past and have prevented them from confronting the might of the white settlers.

Calvin Martin called it "an effort at pan-Indian spiritual rejuvenation," and John Price interpreted it as "a conscious attempt at pan-Indian religious integration."⁴ Each of these writers used the term "pan-Indian" to describe this intertribal gathering, though none of them explained what quality or characteristic it is which makes an event (the Indian Ecumenical Conference), a process (spiritual rejuvenation, religious integration), or a state of awareness (spiritual consciousness) a pan-Indian phenomenon.

These examples would seem to indicate that when scholars use the term "pan-Indian" they are referring to what many native people consider to be intertribal experiences. The two terms are hardly interchangeable, however, at least when they are examined etymologically. The prefix "inter-" means between or among, while "pan-" means all or general;⁵ "tribal" describes a communal ethnic identity, whereas "Indian" refers to a racial designation. Interactions between people from different ethnic communities may be "intertribal"; the term "pan-Indian" invokes an inclusive (and exclusive) racial category.

Steinmetz, Turner, Hodgson, Martin and Price are independent scholars working in several distinct disciplines (history of religions, social science, history) and none of them cited the others' work for their interpretation of the Conference as a pan-Indian phenomenon. This is hardly coincidental; their use of this term

reflects the extent to which the theoretical construct of "pan-Indianism" has been accepted (by scholars) as an accurate description of contemporary native life. Theories of pan-Indianism have emerged during the last forty years as scholars have sought to understand the sociocultural complexities of native identity in the post-war period. These theories are based on ideas of acculturation, tribalism and race which are themselves problematic interpretations of native life. Theories of pan-Indianism also rely on the assumption that communal and individual identities are comprehensive, cohesive, and complete--that identity is a singular noun.

Theories of Pan-Indianism

The concept of pan-Indianism has become so popular as a convenient description of contemporary native life, and is used so widely in both scholarly and popular literature, that it is commonly regarded not as theory but as sociocultural fact. Many writers who use the concept define it in such broad terms (and without regard for its theoretical basis) that it has become a meaningless category. William Powers surveyed the history of pan-Indianism theory in an attempt to understand how the concept has achieved "generic status." "Even the most cursory scan of the literature shows that Pan-Indianism is regarded, particularly in recent literature, as a generic fait accompli."⁶

The term "pan-Indianism" was not used until the 1950s, although by 1961 at least one influential book accepted "the notions

of Pan-Indianism" as an established fact. Ten years later, the first book-length work on the subject defined and used the term so broadly that it "covers all possible options for American Indians and therefore is scientifically meaningless."⁷ Other scholars offer vague or circular definitions for the term; in a recent article on native political mobilization the author defined "pan-Indian" organization in this way: "Mobilization is along *pan-Indian* lines when it involves organization and action by individual Indians on the basis of Indianness and in pursuit of pan-Indian goals."⁸ Powers showed that "A sample of textbooks on American Indians since 1967 demonstrates adequately the extent to which the ideas of acculturation and Pan-Indianism have become integral to the study of contemporary American Indians." For example, in The First Americans (1981) William Hodge⁹

believes that Pan-Indianism is an important part of Indian life, and defines it generally as "joint activities performed by Indians outside of an overtly tribal context" (p. 530). But this could also apply to beet picking or going to a movie.¹⁰

These writers and many others seem to believe that the term "pan-Indian" should be applied to any situation of intertribal interaction.¹¹

Powers suggested that pan-Indianism, as a theoretical construct, is the product of two distinct schools of thought. It is the logical result of cultural evolution, with its emphasis on acculturation and assimilation, and Boasian historicism, with its idealized view of tribal identity. Both schools share "a

philosophical and epistemological grounding" in the ideology of progress. Theories of pan-Indianism also rely on the concept of race, insofar as they posit "the creation of a new ethnic group, the American Indian," making pan-Indianism "a racist doctrine, . . . one of its major criticisms by native people themselves."¹²

It is true that expanding opportunities for interaction with other native people and with the dominant society have led to changing expressions of native identity, just as all human communities experience an ongoing process of cultural adaptation and change. Increased mobility, urbanization, institutional education, and English fluency have been particularly important influences among native people during the post-war period. Native life today takes place in a variety of tribal, intertribal, and mainstream society contexts, including intertribal social contacts (powwows), intertribal political organizations (the National Congress of American Indians), and intertribal religious groups (the Native American Church). The idea of pan-Indianism has developed into a comprehensive theoretical interpretation of the process by which native people have availed themselves of these opportunities for intertribal contact and cooperation.

Why these contemporary cultural interactions have been designated "a distinctive phenomenon in the field of culture contact and culture change"¹³ is not entirely clear, since native people have always interacted with other people across cultural, geographic, and linguistic boundaries. Native people became familiar with other tribal communities long before the twentieth century, as a result of

such activities as signing treaties, living on reservations, attending boarding schools, and performing in "wild west" shows. In fact, native people experienced intertribal contacts long before they encountered Europeans; continent-spanning trading networks, intertribal marriage and adoption, and tribal confederation and warfare were part of normal life for many native communities before 1492.

The basic premise behind the concept of pan-Indianism is that contemporary native people are undergoing a process of identity substitution: various tribal ethnic identities are slowly being superseded and replaced by a generic racial identity. Scholars have formulated this description of native acculturation by assuming that communal and individual identities are comprehensive, cohesive, and complete--that identity is a singular noun. It may be the case, however, that contemporary native identity can be better understood as a collective noun. Native people have responded to the complex and conflictual sociocultural milieu in which they find themselves by making use of a variety of group boundaries: tribal, racial, national, religious, and linguistic. Many native people assert that the process of adaptation they are engaged in involves a strategic expansion of identities, not a substitution of one identity for another. It is not so much that native people have substituted one singular identity (tribalism) for another (pan-Indianism) as it is that they refer to a multiplicity of identities in negotiating their way through contemporary society. Hopi/Miwok writer Wendy Rose was asked in a recent interview whether contemporary native

literature develops "a sense of Pan-Indianness," to which she replied:

Possibly, yes. But it should be also made really clear that to be Pan-Indian is not to become less tribal. To be tribal and to be Pan-Indian exist side by side, and in fact Pan-Indianism is intended to protect those tribal identities, not to replace them.¹⁴

Nowhere is this theoretical shortcoming more evident than in the scholarly literature on native religious identity. Many native people participate in two or more distinct religious traditions at the same time, but few scholars have ventured to explain why this is or how these individuals understand their own religious identity. Powers discussed the practice among the Oglala Lakotas in an article on "dual religious participation."

Simultaneous participation in two discrete religious systems is a widespread phenomenon found in those parts of the world where native peoples have been subjected to colonization and missionary influence. . . . Despite the ubiquity of dual religious participation, it has not been properly explained in anthropological literature. . . .

Our willingness to note participation in more than one religious system as a by-product of culture contact, and then to be puzzled by it, is rooted in the catholic dictum that, just as God is victorious over Satan, Christianity likewise conquers paganism. Anthropologists often have been chained by Christianity to preconceived notions about the ultimate and inevitable assimilation of American Indian belief systems.¹⁵

It may be that a model for understanding intertribal activities among contemporary native people based on the idea of multiple identities, rather than such notions as pan-Indianism and

syncretism, will help explain the commonplace practice of multiple religious participation.

Acculturation

Powers credited James Howard¹⁶ as "the first consciously to use the term 'Pan-Indian' in a published work,"¹⁷ though Howard acknowledged the work of several scholars who had developed similar concepts in their studies of native acculturation. Howard wrote as an anthropologist; he asserted that the various tribes now living in Oklahoma (some originating there, others forcibly relocated to Indian Territory during the nineteenth century) have experienced a loss of "tribal distinctiveness" since "the collapse of the old tribal life." In many areas of life,

the various Indian tribes seemed to be rapidly approximating white culture.

This was, however, more apparent than real, for, rather than becoming nondistinctive members of the dominant culture, many Indians have instead become members of a supertribal culture, which we here term *pan-Indian*.

Howard defined pan-Indianism as

the process by which socio-cultural entities such as the Seneca, Delaware, Creek, Yuchi, Ponca, and Comanche are losing their tribal distinctiveness and in its place are developing a nontribal "Indian" culture. Some of the elements in this culture are modifications of old tribal customs. Others seem to be innovations peculiar to pan-Indianism.

Howard suggested several factors contributing to the rise of pan-Indianism and identified a few ways in which it is expressed. He regarded pan-Indianism as a response to oppression and deprivation,

"a function of initial intensive acculturation, followed by a later 'regrouping' as conditions became more stabilized." Howard concluded his article by arguing that pan-Indianism represents a transitional step in the irreversible process of acculturation.

Pan-Indianism is, in my opinion, one of the final stages of progressive acculturation, just prior to complete assimilation. It may best be explained as a final attempt to preserve aboriginal culture patterns through intertribal unity.¹⁸

Howard thus introduced the concept of pan-Indianism and provided its first systematic treatment. His analytical emphasis on "old tribal customs" and "aboriginal culture patterns" grounded pan-Indianism in anthropological theories of acculturation and assimilation. He also managed, in this brief article, to highlight the other key theoretical assumptions on which the concept of pan-Indianism is based: tribal distinctiveness and racialism.

Later scholars critiqued theories of acculturation in general and the concept of pan-Indianism in particular. Elizabeth Rosenthal¹⁹ argued that her fellow anthropologists needed a broader understanding of cultural history. "We have carried along an outdated interpretation of culture change which may be summarized in the following standard formula: 'old culture - transition - breakdown - disappearance'." The traditional focus on cultural traits rather than community life, and the preference for "real Indians" rather than actual communities, has meant that "a great deal was left out" of traditional ethnographies. Rosenthal continued:

We could tell exactly what percentage Indian blood each member of the community had, officially on the record and also what he "really" was. We distinguished full, three-quarter, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, thirty-second, sixty-fourth. We knew which families were "old-timers" and which Indians were socially white and which whites were socially Indian, and when, because that varied with the occasion. Yet this was not tribal, not racial, not even intercultural. In its own terms, this was one community, experienced by its members as a cultural whole.

We have not sensed that people are at home in the culture of their own time. As a result, there are very few descriptions of Indian life in which the total local community is taken as focus, in its own right, to be examined as a going concern, including all its members, of whatever tradition.²⁰

Scholarly literature on tribal cultures is a chapter in the cultural history of the scholars, not native people. Chippewa writer Gerald Vizenor described the situation this way:

Traditional tribal people imagine their social patterns and places on the earth, whereas anthropologists and historians invent tribal cultures and end mythic time. The differences between tribal imagination and social scientific invention are determined in world views: imagination is a state of being, a measure of personal courage; the invention of cultures is a material achievement through objective methodologies. To imagine the world is to be in the world; to invent the world with academic predications is to separate human experiences from the world, a secular transcendence and denial of chance and mortalities.²¹

Tribalism

One of the most influential articles on pan-Indianism was authored by Robert Thomas²² (five years before he helped found the Indian Ecumenical Conference). Thomas conducted field work among

several native communities and he based this article on his "impressionistic contacts" and "intimate involvement in Indian affairs," yet he offered few specific examples to support his argument. Thomas called pan-Indianism "a complex social movement,"²³ and he considered it to be "the expression of a new identity It is the attempt to create a new ethnic group, the American Indian." He shared Howard's view that pan-Indianism represents a transitional phase of native acculturation: "these urban 'Indian' communities may, of course, be only temporary stopping places for individual Indians who will later become part of the more general middle class." Carol Rachlin disagreed, in an article that appeared in the same issue of Midcontinent American Studies Journal, and argued that Oklahoma native life "is not a pan-Indian culture."

Tribal identification remains the predominant theme of Indian society. Ethnic personalities are very pronounced, despite inter-tribal marriages, inter-tribal activities and relocation.²⁴

Thomas did recognize that pan-Indianism may actually strengthen individuals' ties to their tribal communities, and he imagined "a resurgence of local tribal identity in response to these conditions."²⁵ Nancy Lurie made a similar observation:

Promotion of Indian causes by means of organized intertribal activities coupled with the increased diffusion of Pan-Indian traits can suggest two quite different final results for the movement. . . . Tribal distinctiveness may give way to a general Indian social identity, an "Indian nationality," as an adjustive way station to the long

predicted assimilation of Indians into the general society.

On the other hand, . . . Local Indian communities may remain viable in part by maintaining and controlling their own channels of communication to urban centers for the selective adaptation of technological and other innovations.²⁶

Thomas's basic argument, that pan-Indianism is a new development unlike anything experienced before contact with Europeans, relies on anthropological conceptions of tribal identity which deserve closer attention. Thomas believed that "At contact, most American Indians lived in small closed tribal groups"; intertribal consciousness emerged in response to European invasion.²⁷ I. M. Lewis argued that the most useful criterion for identifying tribalism is that of "scale."

Ideally, tribal societies are small in scale, are restricted in the spatial and temporal range of their social, legal, and political relations, and possess a morality, religion, and world view of corresponding dimensions. . . . Tribal societies are supremely ethnocentric.

Lewis acknowledged that all human communities engage in a constant process of adaptation, that they exist in a state of "dynamic rather than static equilibrium." Even he admitted that his conception of tribal society, therefore, is little more than "an idealized type of society" and "can be regarded at most as a loosely bounded area at the opposite end of the continuum to that of 'modern society.'" The idealized tribal society, "isolated and self-contained," has "a common awareness of social and cultural identity--a common

set of values--and no dispute about the social frontiers of the community." But in the real world,

this no longer applies. Instead, there is a lack of generally accepted, precisely defined limits to consciously recognized social and cultural identity. In these cases, the frontiers of cultural and social interaction are ill-defined, shifting, and inconsistent.²⁸

The anthropological concept of tribe, then, is a theoretical construct which attempts to describe communal identities on the basis of distinctive cultural traits and an idealized view of tribal societies as isolated, static, and self-absorbed communities. Thomas relied on linguistic evidence--native peoples' names for themselves and for other tribes--in attempting to show that modern intertribal interactions are a qualitatively new phenomenon. What is not clear, however, is how such indirect and fragmentary evidence can be used to reconstruct tribal identity formation and, in turn, a theory of modern pan-Indianism. Native communities define group boundaries on the basis of a tremendous variety of sociopolitical systems: confederacy, nation, town, band, family, clan, moiety, gender, class, and society, to name just a few. Communal identities are more complex than cultural traits and linguistic labels; a narrow conception of tribe is a crude approximation for the multifarious factors which contribute to a subjective sense of community. Theories of pan-Indianism overstate the significance of modern intertribal interactions insofar as they are based on such an idealized view of tribal isolation.

Race

Nancy Lurie contributed to the pan-Indianism debate in several articles on contemporary native life.²⁹ In 1964 she conducted a survey of people "familiar with Indian affairs" in order to determine the nature of the "renaissance" taking place among native people since about 1960. Respondents agreed on one thing, that "*something* is going on," though they differed as to what this is or what it means. Lurie suggested that tribal identity is "inseparable from Indian identity," a comment which she apparently intended to mean that intertribal cooperation does not compromise tribal distinctiveness, at least not according to native criteria for tribal identity. Intertribal organizations

have always tended to pattern action on recognition of tribal distinctiveness and cooperation between tribes as tribes rather than generalized 'Indians' although objectives may have general Indian significance.

Lurie saw this renaissance taking place on four levels: nationalism, intertribal, tribal and grassroots. She called these "modern Indian activities," when taken together, an "articulatory movement."³⁰

Lurie acknowledged that native people dislike the term "pan-Indian"; as one survey respondent said, "they fear the entity-dissolving implications."³¹ Others have also recognized the racialism behind theories of pan-Indianism; One scholar observed that "Pan-Indianism is deeply concerned with questions of race, ethnicity, and nationality," and that the term "pan-Indian" "is seldom used by Pan-Indians, except by a few anthropologists and other intellectuals."³² Nevertheless, Lurie employed anthropological

constructions of native identity--which are based on cultural traits and behaviors--and asserted that "a generalized Indian identity which derives most of its external symbols of song, dance, costume and ritual from the Plains area is indeed developing and spreading."³³ Lurie viewed pan-Indianism as "a persisting core of values and related, predictable behavior" which "would seem too widespread and predictable to have developed recently or solely as a result of similar experiences in contact with whites."³⁴

Individual and communal identities, however, are subjective and imaginative acts which cannot be reduced to objective criteria scaled by cultural spectators. Theories of pan-Indianism create a human category which is racist because of its "purely external character--a label applied to religiously and culturally varied peoples for the convenience of an outside group."³⁵ Pan-Indianism does not describe contemporary native life so much as it summarizes and reflects ongoing scholarly attempts to define contemporary native identity, authenticity, and reality. Lurie concluded one of her articles with the following comments:

Perhaps in the last accounting, the renaissance is the change in the non-Indian world in regard to the Indian world rather than the reverse, as I first perceived it. . . . Indian people are among us and becoming more visible as Indian people wherever they are--and not simply in their "proper" historical, social or cultural setting. It behooves us to know them on their terms.³⁶

Multiple Identities

Hazel Hertzberg wrote the first book-length work on pan-Indianism;³⁷ the book was widely read and helped bring the term

"pan-Indian" into common usage. She called the book The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements, an unintentionally ironic title since the search was more hers than it was her native subjects. Hertzberg studied several twentieth-century pan-Indian organizations and she referred to their leaders as "Pan-Indians." Powers correctly pointed out the absurdity of such usage: "There are tribal members who participate in Pan-Indian events, but this [using the term "pan-Indian" to refer to an individual] makes as much sense as referring to a New Yorker who participates in the Philadelphia Mummers' Parade as a Philadelphian."³⁸

Hertzberg began her book by discussing "The Roots of Modern Pan-Indianism." She believed that "the Pan-Indian response" represents a new form of identity for previously isolated tribal communities. She tried to show that European identity was qualitatively different from native identity at first contact. The book begins this way:

The men who rediscovered America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had names for themselves which indicated some recognition of a common identity. Whatever part of the Old World they came from and however deep their divisions, they were also Europeans, sharing a sense of place and differentiating themselves from men elsewhere. . . . Their nationalist rivalries were intense, but nevertheless they were conscious of a shared historical experience.

The men whom the Europeans discovered on these continents seemed to have no such common ideas of themselves. . . . Aboriginal loyalties rested with band, tribe, village, and locality.

Hertzberg went on to argue that "the Indian response to European penetration was thus cast largely and almost inevitably in tribal terms," though she overlooked the fact that the European invasion was accomplished in nationalist terms. She pointed out that "the Indians were conquered tribe by tribe, locality by locality. Never was there a continental Indian war or a continental Indian peace," though she failed to mention that the same can be said of European colonial activity. She continued: "Rivalry among the European powers with whom the Indians came into contact promoted inter-tribal hostilities, for each state eagerly sought Indian allies."

The whites with whom the Indians came into contact in an unofficial capacity were also divided among themselves. The Christian missionaries represented a bewildering variety of religious persuasions, each contending for the Indian soul and for exclusive conversion rights.³⁹

Hertzberg thus based her argument for contemporary pan-Indian identity on a contrived, semantic distinction between native and European communal identities.

Hertzberg accepted the orthodox view that "Pan-Indian organizations will often serve as a decompression chamber for individual Indians from which they vanish into the larger society," but she did suggest the possibility that pan-Indianism may foster an identity "distinct from or complementary to tribal loyalties." Earlier she described the problems faced by the first generations of "educated Indians":

Many of them felt the need for a more generalized Indian identity within which a tribal identity might also function.

They lived in two, or three worlds, and most of them were not quite comfortable in any.⁴⁰

Hertzberg thus looked beyond a crude interpretation of contemporary native life as a process of identity substitution and pointed toward the idea of multiple identities. Lewis discussed the relationship between tribal identity and urbanization; he observed that when individuals "move out of their native society to join, however peripherally, a larger multitribal or plural society" they retain their tribal ties. These "original tribal links" become a principle of association, "a situation that implies something more than dual citizenship."

Contrary to the deep-seated traditional view, many tribal societies do not disintegrate or lose their identity in these situations of contact or acculturation between widely diverse cultures. . . .

When tribal identity and cohesion persist outside towns, those tribesmen who move into the industrial areas in search of work do not necessarily become "detrribalized." . . . In the multitribal or plural society of the town itself, tribal identity is now enlarged to the limits of the individual's tribal society as a whole. It becomes a category of social interaction competing for the townsman's allegiance with other social categories, such as residential ties, class, and modern nationalism.

Hence, what is carried forward into the mixed and often polyglot urban community with all its new values is not tribal allegiance at the level of "tribe" in the strict sense, but tribal institutions and patriotism on the wider scale. For the townsman, and also to an increasing extent for the tribesman who remains at home, the tribal way of life and system of values are now one institution among several that are variously opposed and conflicting.⁴¹

Tribal identities and "Indianness" are not mutually exclusive categories, though they can be complementary or conflictual. Stuart Levine reported this conversation with two Haskell Institute students in Lawrence, Kansas:

I was curious about whether they thought of themselves "tribally" first or as "Indians" first. They produced no clear answer, but got to talking about what their two tribes had in common. It was evident that they had discussed this before. Finally one of them said, "You know what all Indian people have in common? They fight and argue all the time. Never agree on anything. Talk, talk, talk." The other laughed in agreement.⁴²

Religious Pan-Indianism

Hertzberg and other scholars have studied pan-Indianism by distinguishing between different types of pan-Indian organizations, including those with political, social, and religious orientations. Powers suggested that "it would be rewarding to understand if there are relationships between these types of Pan-Indianism, and if so, just what they are."⁴³ Hertzberg mentioned the 1890 Ghost Dance briefly, saying that "the rituals themselves combined personal, tribal, Pan-Indian, and some white and even Christian elements," and that Wovoka's teachings "neatly [combined] tribalism and Pan-Indianism."⁴⁴ Her two chapters on religious pan-Indianism, however, focussed on the peyote religion and the Native American Church.

Most native people who participate in or know about Native American Church ceremonies consider it to be an intertribal

religious tradition. Hertzberg, however, analyzed it as a pan-Indian phenomenon, calling it "the Pan-Indianism of the reservation."

The use of peyote in religious ritual is an ancient practice among the Indians of Mexico. Its first appearance in the United States seems to have been around 1870, when it was acquired from Indians in northern Mexico by the Mescalero Apaches who used it to reinforce the traditional religious values of their own tribe. However, the religion took on a Pan-Indian character and in the process became radically transformed from a tribal to a societal religion. The Comanche acquired it around 1873 or 1874 and the Kiowa about 1875. Both tribes were important in its subsequent diffusion among Indians in the United States.

This short history of the peyote religion adequately demonstrates its tribal, not pan-Indian, orientation. First practiced in Mexico by tribal people (not just "Indians"), it was adopted by Mescalero Apaches and then by Comanches, Kiowas, and other tribal communities. Hertzberg later referred to "the Winnebago version of the peyote religion," and she quoted the 1918 charter of the Native American Church, which was incorporated "to foster and promote the religious belief of the several tribes of Indians in the State of Oklahoma." Nowhere did she elaborate on her assertion that "the religion took on a Pan-Indian character," or on her contention that it "retained" this pan-Indian character while "adapting itself to particular local and tribal conditions."⁴⁵

Hertzberg's interpretation of the peyote religion as a pan-Indian phenomenon is hardly unusual; most scholars describe it in similar terms.⁴⁶ Sam Gill called it "a widespread pan-Indian religion" and "the most significant pan-Indian religion of this century." He contended that "it is 'Indian' as opposed to 'tribal' in

character," yet he also listed as two of its positive effects the following: "it has created a new base for communal organization to support the continuity of tribal identity; it fosters the growth of 'Indian' identity."⁴⁷ Peggy Beck and Anna Lee Walters, on the other hand, followed the lead of native people when they discussed peyotism in terms of its tribal variations. The origins of peyote "are described differently by different tribes," and Beck and Walters presented three different origin narratives. They also discussed the history of the Native American Church according to its spread among various tribal communities. The term "pan-Indian" appears only once, in a passage taken from the writings of anthropologist J. S. Slotkin, and with Slotkin's notation that he meant only that the movement was "intertribal and widespread."⁴⁸

The concept of pan-Indianism has been used as an interpretative framework by many scholars interested in contemporary native religions. Jordan Paper studied the use of sacred pipes among native people; in one article he offered this absurdly broad definition: "The term 'pan-Indian' refers to any aspect of Native American culture which bridges one or more Native cultures."⁴⁹ Richard Gardner wrote about an urban "pan-Indian" church in the Los Angeles area. He argued that "the emphasis at this church is on Indianism, not in the sense of an attempt to revive and/or perpetuate selected Indian customs or institutions, but rather in the sense of an Indian 'racial' identity." Gardner offered no evidence to support this thesis, though he did provide an informative description of an intertribal congregation. The pastor encourages

members "to sing and testify in their native tongues," and several musical groups sing in their tribal languages (Navajo, Sioux, Pima/Papago). The Navajo members have "their own Sunday school class conducted in Navajo, a Navajo Sunday evening fellowship group, and prefer to sit together as a group in a particular section of the church." One member "believes that the church can help Indians of all tribes to get along with one another." Native people attend the church because it gives them "an opportunity to socialize with other Indians of [their] own and/or different tribes."

This is an attraction based on a sense of belonging, a commonality of attitudes, sentiments, and sympathies which are themselves a result of a sense of shared experiences. From this participation the members derive a strong sense of community.

This church emphasizes "Indian" identity only as a way of distinguishing itself from white churches, as this anecdote demonstrates:

The members of [the intertribal] choir were discussing the possibility of purchasing choir robes when one of them, a Navajo, rose and said, "I don't want to bust your bubble, but this is an Indian church, not a white church, and we should keep it like an Indian church."⁵⁰

The Indian Ecumenical Conference

Theories of pan-Indianism have been and are used by many writers as an interpretation of contemporary native identity. The concept has been defined so broadly and used so inappropriately, however, that it has become a category which is frequently meaningless. Nevertheless, it is easy to understand why five

scholars working independently would describe the Indian Ecumenical Conference as a pan-Indian phenomenon. The Conference involved native people from throughout Canada and the United States, and Conference leaders affirmed the importance and relevance of native identity. Distinguished leaders were honored on the final evening of each Conference, when they were presented with "peace pipes, buffalo robes, headdresses, and other Indian things." Many Conference participants acknowledged their shared religious beliefs and practices. Edward Fiske reported on the 1973 Conference:

Indian religious practices vary widely from tribe to tribe, but spiritual leaders say that all share certain common elements. Among these are belief in a single Great Spirit who created the world, tolerance of other people's beliefs and respect for one's neighbors and the natural order.

John Snow echoed these sentiments in his book on the Stoneys: "We were aware of the diversity of forms of worship among the various tribes, but the Supreme Being was the Great Spirit. We had been taught not to question various forms or ways of worshipping the Creator." Donna Kisto said, "I am an Indian. . . . All Indians are blessed at birth, with the precious heritage of independence and pride."

Conference leaders and elders encouraged native people to participate in the revival of "Indian religion," but they used this term as a collective, not singular, noun. John Snow wrote that at the 1970 Conference,

concern was expressed about the future and the need to revive our native religion. There was also concern

expressed about Indian language and culture, which are essential to our religion.

The 1971 Conference featured "admonishments to young people to return to their native traditions [and] talks on history, language, culture, and spirituality, prophecies, healing rituals, and traditional native ceremonies." Some scholars might interpret such references to "native religion" as indicating that Conference participants were involved in the creation of a generalized "pan-Indian" religion. But there is no such thing as a generalized native language, and a generalized native history exists only in the sense that most native communities have experienced the same series of crises: epidemic disease, territorial invasion, warfare and occupation, land dispossession, collapse of the traditional economy, poverty and malnutrition, and social marginalization. Conference leaders were obviously not advocating that native people speak a pan-Indian language or recall a pan-Indian history, and they were also not creating a pan-Indian culture or religion.

What the native people who participated in the Conference were seeking was a spirit of unity, "a community of interest," that would bring them together across tribal and religious boundaries. Conference leaders were aware of the differences between tribal religious traditions, but they believed that the "mutual problems" their communities face can best be solved through intertribal cooperation. Conference resolutions addressed issues which affect specific communities and tribes on a local level, such as hunting and treaty rights, as well as issues affecting all native people. Native

people who travelled to the Conferences contributed by sharing their own tribal traditions: Iroquois social dances, Dogrib tea dances and hand games, Ute sweat lodge ceremonies. Conference announcements and reports repeatedly emphasized the importance of tribal representation and encouraged native people from all tribal communities to attend.

The religious leaders who participated in the Conferences, whether they were traditional or Christian, came representing specific tribal communities; one of the 1970 resolutions referred to them as "Indian religious leaders of the tribes." Sunrise ceremonies held each morning and other ceremonies conducted throughout the Conferences were led by religious leaders according to the traditions of their own tribes. Cherokee religious leader Andrew Dreadfulwater conducted a ceremony lighting the sacred fire in 1973, and "Indian religious leaders of many different North American tribes" were still talking about his spiritual power a year later.

Conference leaders thus placed a high value on tribal contributions to their shared religious experiences at these intertribal gatherings. They also allowed for a high degree of freedom in how particular communities and individuals would negotiate the process of religious healing and revival.

Everyone agreed that modern Indian religious life must be a furthering of the historic continuity of time-honoured Indian values and philosophical concerns; that both modern Indian ceremonies and Indian Christianity must be part of that continuity; and that both native ceremonials and Indian Christianity can be mutually supportive or parallel and co-

operative or integrated according to the desire of the particular tribe involved.

John Snow described his approach to the situation:

We had been taught not to question various forms or ways of worshipping the Creator. Who were we to question? It was up to the Great Spirit and the tribe or the individual who was given a vision on the mountain top or other sacred ground. We were not there when the religious experience happened to the individual or group. Therefore, we felt we were not qualified to question or dispute.

John Hascall served his community as an Ojibwa medicine man and as a Roman Catholic priest; both of these religious identities have specific histories, worldviews, and customs. Hascall worked at "blending" his tribal traditions with the Mass, but he was no more "pan-Indian" than he was "pan-Christian."

Interpreting the intertribal context of contemporary native life in terms of multiple identities, rather than as an example of tribal acculturation and identity substitution, may help us to understand the religious identity of Hascall and other native people who participate in more than one religious tradition.⁵¹ Many of the Conference organizers and leaders believed that religious leadership should be functional, not institutional, and that it is a product of a local community, not a doctrinal affinity; Andrew Ahenakew served Crees and other native people as an Anglican priest and as a Cree medicine man. Many Conference participants believed that religious identity is a function of participation, not affiliation, and that it should be inclusive, not exclusive; Sam Stanley commented about the 1970 Conference:

the basic Indian tolerance for others' religious experiences became the spirit of the meeting. Christian Indians acknowledged that being Christian did not negate the older truths by which their ancestors had lived. Traditionalists could tolerate Christianity as an adjunct to their own religion. Peyote was seen as another form of spiritual medicine suitable for its Indian practitioners.