QuickSheets
Fast and fabulous ideas for ministry
PRESBYTERIAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSICIANS
Office of Christian Formation

Many and Great: Native Hymnody as an Invitation to Allyship

Songs for the Journey of Solidarity, Words for the March for Justice

Here is a list of resources from North American Natives which invite congregations and choirs to learn, sing, and be allies.

Resources for Education and Solidarity
North American Native Hymns in *Glory to God*

Highly recommend Carl P. Daw, Jr.'s *Glory to God Companion* (WJK, 2016) for brief histories and culturally-sensitive performance suggestions.

Non-Native Hymn written for Native Audience:

- #142 "'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime" written by French Jesuit priest in 1641 in Wendat (Huron), an attempt to tell the Nativity story in a way that was culturally relevant to Indigenous inhabitants of North America. Tune is a French folk song from the same era.

Non-Native Hymn translated into Native Language:

- #649 "Amazing Grace" *GTG* has verse 1 in phonetic transcription for Chahta (Choctaw), Mvskoke (Creek), Diné Bizaad (Navajo), Tsalagi (Cherokee), and [Gáui[dóñ:gyà (Kiowa).
  - Native Intervarsity Fellowship has a video and text for all 5 verses, split between Diné Bizaad (Navajo), ʾŌlelo Hawaiʾi (Hawaiian), and English: https://library.intervarsity.org/library/amazing-grace

Native Hymn Text set to Familiar Euro-American Tune:

- #441 "Wotanin waste nahon po *(Hear the Good News of Salvation)*," Original Dakota text written by John Renville (Dakota) in 1879, set to NETTLETON. English versification by Jane Parker Huber.
- New transcription of "Trust in Creator (Ps. 27)" from the 2016 edition of the *Cherokee Hymnbook*. Original text from 1819 is by Lydia Lowery (Cherokee), set to BLESSED ASSURANCE (the last system of the verse repeats to fit the meter). A public domain version with an older transliteration and English translation) is available at https://sites.google.com/site/cherokeesongs/1896-hymnal/19 but is missing the refrain.

Native Text set to Native Tune:

- #454 "Dawkʾyah towgyah thawy báht-awm *(Take the Saving Word of God)*," original Kiowa text written by Pawltay (late 19C), set to Kiowa traditional tune.

- #642 "Heleluyvn Yvhikvres (Heleluyan, *We Are Singing)*," Mvskoke (Creek) text.
  - This is one of the "Trail of Tears songs," written as an expression of protest, defiance, and hope (expressed in locational terms of "there," finding joy even in the place they were being forcibly removed to), which comes across a bit more clearly in this version: https://muskogee.pages.wm.edu/songs/mus16006-05/ .
- #21 "Wakantanka taku nitawa *(Many and Great, O God, Are Thy Works),"* text and tune by Joseph Renville (Dakota).
  - Beginning in 1836, Renville translated the Bible from French into Dakota with the assistance of Presbyterian and Congregationalist missionaries, and this text is intended as a setting of Jeremiah 10:12-13. *GTG* translation is by Francis P. Frazier (Dakota).
  - Over time, the Dakota were squeezed off their hunting lands into a narrow reservation along the Minnesota River in exchange for guarantees for food, farming supplies, and financial support from the Federal government that failed to materialize. In 1862, starvation conditions set in, and a Dakota delegation was told by the US Indian Agent, "so far as I am concerned, if they are hungry let them eat grass or their own dung." Out of desperation, a group of young Dakota attempted to steal eggs from a white settler's farm, resulting in an escalating cycle of violence in which Union troops were pulled from Civil War battlefields to crush the uprising. 300 Dakota men were sentenced to death, and Dakota and white missionaries began a campaign pleading with President Lincoln for clemency. Lincoln pardoned all but 38, who were hung in Mankato, MN, on 12/26/1862 in the largest mass execution in American history. On their way to the gallows, the men sang this hymn in Dakota. The *New York Times* reporter on the scene didn't understand Dakota and called it "the mournful death-song," but the record was corrected by Abraham Crawford, grandson of one of the condemned men, who pointed out that it was a hymn of praise to Creator, sung with resolution and faith. Crawford was later ordained as a Presbyterian minister.

Small Acts of Solidarity
Meaningful Land Acknowledgements

> *"While we recognize that land acknowledgments can frequently feel rote and perfunctory, we could as Christians say the same thing about calls to worship, about the Lord's Prayer said together, and any other number of things that become regular parts of our collective gathering. It is the work of individuals and communities to continue to imbue importance into these aspects of communal life. Land acknowledgments remind us of the community of creation that we are a part of. They are reminders that every place we are, whether at home or in travel, is a storied place, full of history, life, and relationships. In colonized spaces such as Turtle Island (the Indigenous designation for North America), it is a reminder for Indigenous peoples that our stories and histories matter and that our ancestors have known, shaped, and been shaped by the land we are in. For some non-Indigenous folks, it may serve as a reminder that they know very little of the history of the lands they occupy and hopefully as a moment of gratitude for the way the land takes care of us, as well as gratitude for the original inhabitants who were caretakers of the land prior to colonization."*
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> --Christopher Hoklotubbe & Daniel Zacharias, *Reading the Bible on Turtle Island* (IVP, 2025)

Tips on a Meaningful Land Acknowledgement (from the Native Governance Center):

- Start with self-reflection
  - Ask "why am I doing this?" If your answer has to do with empowering Native people, you're on the right track.
- Do your homework
  - Learning whose land this is can be very complicated. Check resources like https://native-land.ca, an Indigenous mapping project that uses languages and cultural connections to help determine the traditional lands of various peoples, with links to cultural resources from the nations, tribes, and pueblos themselves.
  - Take care to correctly pronounce names of peoples, places, and individuals you mention. Use Indigenous names when appropriate (e.g., "this is the land of the Diné, also known as Navajo).
  - Take some time to learn about the history of the land and related treaties. Individual nations, tribes, and pueblos have this information on their websites, as do state historical societies and universities.
- Use appropriate language
  - Don't sugarcoat the past. Name ethnic cleansing, stolen land, and forced removal for what it is.
  - Avoid the temptation to thank a Native people for "stewarding the land until we could show up".
- Use past, present, and future tenses
  - Don't treat Native peoples as relics of the past. Indigenous peoples are still here, and they're thriving.
  - Be honest about the past, but don't be grim. Provide a positive focus on Native people in the present and future.
- TAKE ACTION!
  - Allyship always goes beyond just words and needs to result in concrete acts of solidarity.
  - Identify ways in which to work with Native people on pressing issues, like Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR), government approvals of mining and drilling on sacred lands, environmental racism, breaking cycles of systemic poverty, land return, etc.

Recommended Resources

NATIVE LAND DIGITAL: https://native-land.ca
Mapping project to learn more about Indigenous inhabitants of various places

GUIDE TO INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:
https://nativegov.org/news/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER:
https://www.niwrc.org/
Great resource for MMIWR advocacy

FIRST NATIONS VERSION OF THE BIBLE:
https://firstnationsversion.com/
Ongoing intertribal effort in US and Canada to produce an English Bible informed by Native culture.

NAIITS: AN INDIGENOUS LEARNING COMMUNITY
https://naiits.com/
ATS-accredited theological education institution with programs in US, Canada, and Australia

PC(USA) DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY REPORT (2018):
https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Doctrine-of-Discovery-Report-to-the-223rd-GA-2018-FINALIZED-COPY_As-Approved.pdf

Book Recommendations

Reading the Bible on Turtle Island : An Invitation to North American Indigenous Interpretation by Daniel Zacharias (Cree-Ashinaabe/Métis) and Chris Hoklotubbe (Choctaw), IVP Academic, 2025.

Native Nations: A Millennium in North America by Kathleen DuVal (Cherokee), Random House, 2024.

An Indigenous People's History of the United States by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Beacon, 2014.

Our Fight Has Just Begun : Hate Crimes and Justice in Native America by Cheryl Redhorse Bennett (Diné (Navajo)), U. of Arizona, 2022.

Wait – Is this Racist? A Guide to Becoming an Anti-Racist Church by Kerry Connelly, Bryana Clover, and Josh Riddick, WJK, 2022.

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