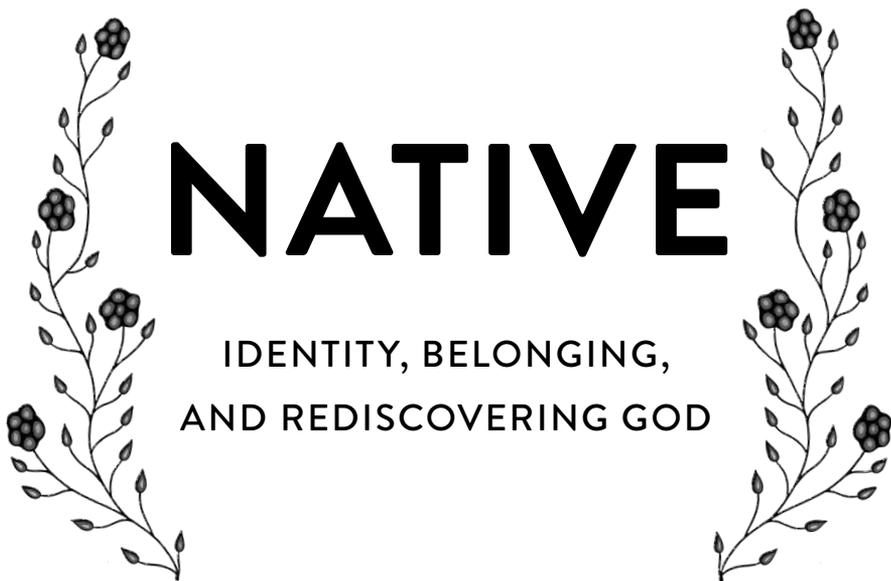


IDENTITY,
BELONGING,
AND
REDISCOVERING GOD

NATIVE

Kaitlin B. Curtice



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Introduction

WHEN YOU ARE BORN, you come into the world connected to somebody. Once that umbilical cord is severed, you become a little more distanced from the woman who birthed you, but your DNA still leaves an eternal fingerprint, your soul born to belong to this thing we call family. Sometimes those ties are broken, damaged, or met with challenges, but they are still there, asking us to look deeper, to remember how they formed us in our original state. Sometimes family becomes the people we choose, the people who move in and out of our lives to remind us that we are not alone, that we are beloved along the journey.

I was born in 1988 in an Indian hospital in Ada, Oklahoma, born to a quiet father who sang and played guitar and knew the Oklahoma red dirt we called home. I was also born a person of European descent to a mother who taught me to appreciate opera, the Eagles, and poetry in all its forms.

I was born into an America established by whiteness. While for generations, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color have struggled to be noticed, seen, and valued, we live in a nation that, from its origin, has given priority to people with white skin and

Western European ancestry. Systems of whiteness, like white supremacy itself, reward those who invest in what whiteness produces: the idea that anyone who isn't white is less-than. Whiteness both forces people into assimilation and *rewards those who stay assimilated*. Much of my life has been dictated by this, and more so because I am a white-coded Potawatomi woman. But as an adult, after I married and had children, the need to know myself outside the language and control of whiteness became an urgent matter, because to know myself is to teach my children to know who they are, to journey together toward that wholeness.

On a walk one winter day, I realized that the deep roots of my identity were coming to the surface, making themselves known in my daily thoughts, actions, and life choices. I was choosing to look back and remember, to understand, to ask the questions I had never asked before.

I began the journey backward, which, for me, was the miraculous journey forward.

As I put roots into the ground, every step I take brings more roots up to accept and welcome me in—into my heritage and into the woman I am slowly becoming, even in this very moment. Those roots are embedded in the soil of who God is and who God has always been, in the moments when I call *Papa* or *Kche Mnedo*, when I whisper in Potawatomi, *Migwetch*, *Mamogosnan*. *Thank you, Creator.*

I walk with my sons across the Chattahoochee River Trail in Atlanta where we live, and we feel the mud pulse with memory. We feel the trees tell us stories of Muscogee Creek and Cherokee people, somehow, far across time and space and blood. *They tell us stories of Natives, the original inhabitants, who walked this land and who walked with Creator.* In our Native, or Indigenous, identities all over North America, we are diverse, unique, with histories, languages, and stories that belong to us as peoples.

So I honor the truth: I am *Potawatomi*, belonging to my people, my tribe.

I belong to Turtle Island (North America), to the land that I stand on, as did my ancestors. That journey takes me deeper into myself, deeper into the heart of Mystery, the origin of everything, who knew the land's essence before any of us did. Suddenly, I see the full circle. To find our origins, even the histories of darkness that precede us, we find truth and we expose ourselves to the reality of those who walked before us and what that reality means for our lives today.

I wanted to write a book that would bring together my own reality as an Indigenous woman and the reality that I belong to the people around me, to humanity. We are responsible for the way we treat one another and the way we treat the earth, and the aim of this book is to display my journey toward what it means to be human in all of that nuance and fullness.

Every day I find intersections with other people through conversations, through the work of storytelling. And the reality is that we all began somewhere, and every person's story affects how and with whom they interact. So we remember where we come from and where it takes us. Who are you, and what were you birthed out of? Who holds you, who have you distanced yourself from, and what are you learning from those who came generations before you? In remembering these things, we recognize that believing in Creator-God-Mystery, whatever that looks like, means we believe that somewhere, at some point, God breathed. Somewhere, at some point, there was the reality of God and nothing else. So with that in mind we journey through our own stories, carrying our own experiences, living lives beyond the times of our own ancestors. We step through that reality in trust, and we find a depth of God we could not have known existed—a depth that holds us in a space where we can speak the truth to a time in which the powerful express their power through oppression and not compassion.

To know Mystery and to know ourselves is to know what it means to fight against any system that would oppress this earth

we live on and every creature, human and nonhuman alike, who lives here; in knowing ourselves, we wrestle with the hard questions and seek out the hard truths. God, the *Mystery*, *Mamogonan*, walks our journey and lives our history and hopes our futures just as we hope.

We start at the beginning.

We ask questions along the way.

We arrive at ourselves.

Mystery is always there.

And then we start all over again.

So I hope that in these pages, you find yourself. You may not be Native in the way that I am Native, but you belong to a people as you long for a space to know what it means to hold the realities of love, mystery, and hope. I pray that you find your own soul-origins, those origins that help you trace your steps back to those early moments of your being when you were formed and spoken to in the depths of your soul. I pray that when you journey back and find yourself there, you find the mystery of who God is and has always been. As you journey there, I am on my own journey, a Potawatomi woman's journey, and I will share with you what it means to be a woman who is a citizen of the Potawatomi Nation and descended from European people, a woman who is a Christian and yet who fights against systems of Christian colonization that do not reflect the Christ who lives in beloved unity with everyone and everything.

This book is guided by the Potawatomi flood story. I chose to use this particular story for the book because it is a story of beginning again, something that many of us have a hard time doing. We do not hold much grace for ourselves or for others, and so we do not understand what it means to start anew, to try again, to re-create, and to imagine something that has been lost. In the flood story, Creator sees that on the earth the people are causing destruction instead of sustaining peace, and after the flood, with the help of the turtle and the muskrat, the land—

Turtle Island—is created once again, a new promise for a new beginning.

Right now, we are in a flood. Right now, we are asking to begin again, to re-create and sustain what it means to be people of peace. May the flood story guide us in that pursuit.

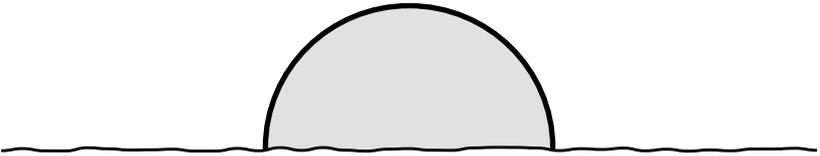
Then may we walk into tomorrow together, side by side, with a deep and sacred knowledge burning in our bones. This is the gift of our humanity, the unfiltered essence of sacredness that we belong to and that belongs to us.

Journey with me.

We begin at the beginning.

PART 1

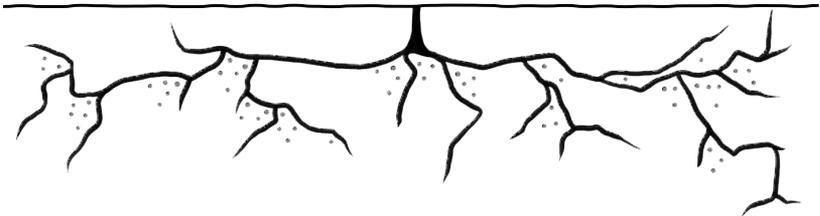
Beginnings



Kche Mnedo flooded the earth.

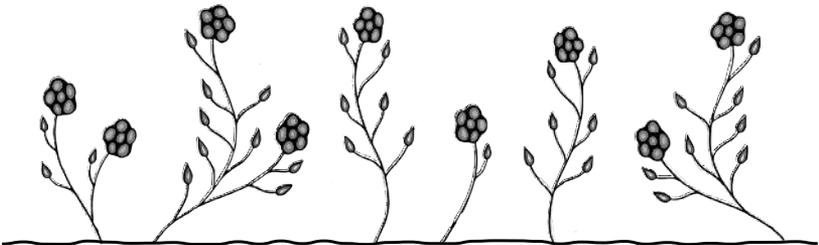
Original Man sat on a tree, floating in the water, a few animals
beside him.

They longed for land again.



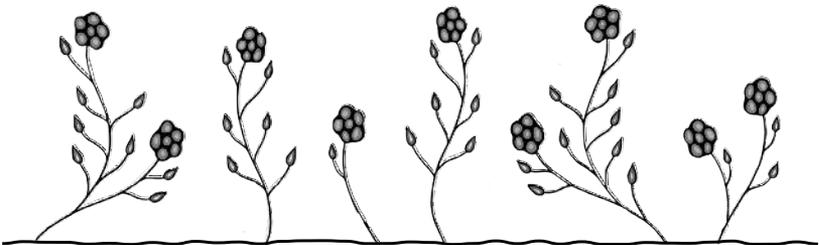
Before there was everything,
there was nothing.
But before there was nothing,
there was Something.
Something Other,
Unbound,
Beyond,
Above—
Mystery.

No one could grasp it then,
and no one can grasp it now,
not even with these
realities
coming among us
and creating
something new
day in



and
day out,
despite
our dry and weary
bones.

Because before us,
there was everything,
and before everything,
Nothing was Something,
and Something was
The Beginning,
and we are
just dust
from
Its
long,
flowing
robe.¹



1

Land and Water



INDIGENOUS BODIES are bodies that remember. We carry stories inside us—not just stories of oppression but stories of liberation, of renewal, of survival. The sacred thing about being human is that no matter how hard we try to get rid of them, our stories *are our stories*. They are carried inside us; they hover over us; they are the tools we use to explain ourselves to one another, to connect. We cannot take away the experiences of others, but we can learn from them. We can take them and say, *What's next to make the world better? What's the next step in recognizing the sacredness of this place we've been given?*

I often wonder if we underestimate the power of epiphany. Many Indigenous cultures seek wisdom, the Great Spirit, or even the spirits of our ancestors, those who have gone before us, through visions, dreams, and prayers, through the gifts given to us in this world. This idea of longing for a vision or learning to listen to our ancestors is often lost in American society, within modern American Christianity, but what if God still speaks in

dreams and visions? What if Mystery still comes to whisper to us while we are still, while we are begging for a new beginning?

Some of us might call such moments revelations, times when the lightbulb turns on and we suddenly see what we did not see before. Perhaps those revelations are spiritual, and we are just recipients of sacred whispering, heard simply because we are longing to know more.

That's how it happened for me, at least, one cold January day in Atlanta, Georgia. I currently live on land traditionally inhabited by the Muscogee Creek and Cherokee peoples. If you hike at various places throughout Georgia, you'll see tiny signs along the trails pointing to the original peoples who spent generations on the land. And in the grace that only land can give, she has held me, a Potawatomi woman, and has reminded me of who I am. After living here for a few years, our family went hiking at Sweetwater Creek, a spot of land with a long, steady stream of water surrounded by rocks and the ruins of an old cotton mill that was burned down by Union soldiers in 1864. Before that, before a history of African enslavement and years of white supremacy encroaching on this sacred land, Southeastern tribes inhabited the space, living along the shores of the creek before they were forcibly removed from Georgia during the Trail of Tears.

While hiking with my partner, Travis, and our two sons on that cold January day, I had an epiphany, that moment when the lens of my life zoomed out and I saw, truly, for the first time, what Potawatomi people once experienced—a history of forced removal from Indiana into Kansas with the Trail of Death. In that moment I was reminded of the women who walked, nursing their babies along the way (some 660 miles), just as I stood there nursing my one-year-old son in the middle of a wooded area, the trees breathing over and around us. There, standing over crinkled wet leaves, I suddenly understood what it meant to be Potawatomi. Growing up we said, “We are Potawatomi,” but these words did not carry weight in our lives. We didn't name

ourselves as Indigenous people or as citizens of a nation, living into our resilience. But that changed as I got older, and I have more fully come to understand that *I am Indigenous. I belong to the land, as others belong to the land.* I felt the weight of my entire body center down in my feet, as if my steps were slow motion, engaging the pulse of the earth with every movement. I suddenly understood that ancestors sometimes come to us in the oddest ways, and Mystery speaks to us when we are least expecting it. There, with one son by my side and one at my breast, I knew that the journey ahead of me would be different from the one behind me—that is how epiphanies work, after all.

We got back into the car that day and drove away from Sweetwater Creek. While Travis drove, I pulled my journal out of my bag and wrote. I wrote about those women who spoke to me. I wrote about what it might mean to embrace a part of me that had been silenced for much of my life, silenced by a culture and a country that says being Native doesn't really matter, or that all Native Americans disappeared from the face of the earth like the dinosaurs. I wrote for my own children, out of a desire for them to know who they are at the young ages of one and three, so that being Potawatomi might define something in them. I wrote about hope and about that new beginning birthed along the edge of the creek on a cold winter day, a hope that transformed the entire world right before my eyes and brought me to myself in a way that I'd never known was possible, that brought me to the reality of a God who sees and gives us the gift of seeing.



We have to remember that physical places are spiritual places. We cannot disconnect the physical from the spiritual, because the spiritual is all around us, often moving like a light wind, without us even noticing. Just so, we cannot say that the earth is not speaking, teaching, leaning in to whisper something to us at any moment that we are willing to listen. Potawatomi plant

ecologist and writer Robin Wall Kimmerer says, “If all the world is a commodity, how poor we grow. When all the world is a gift in motion, how wealthy we become.”¹ In America we view the land as a commodity, giving it labels like “parcels,” cutting it into pieces and selling it to the highest bidder. This in itself is a refusal to listen to the land. It is a refusal to hear the voices of the earth calling out, not only to one another but also to us in a spirit of kinship and belonging.

When I was young, I loved playing with grasshoppers because they became like friends. When you are a young child living in poverty, you don’t have much choice but to become good friends with the creatures of the earth because they are simple, and they will always make room for you. I played with my siblings and creature friends in the red dirt of Tishomingo, Oklahoma, in the desert of New Mexico, and in the tall grasses that grew in my father’s backyard in Tahlequah when he moved there after he and my mother divorced. The earth is always speaking, but over time, we lose the ability to listen. If we are lucky, we return again. If we make room inside of ourselves for childlikeness, we will make room for the ability to learn again, to be small, humble people who ask questions instead of making demands, who listen to the land instead of carving it into pieces for profit. This is the way of being Indigenous. This is the lesson learned again and again.

Lisa Dougan, president and CEO of Invisible Children, says in an essay on innocence, “Lasting change comes most assuredly when the oppressed are central agents in addressing the problems they face.”² When it comes to the earth and the creatures around us, we should be listening. Because we, as humans, have oppressed them, we should be listening to their voices as they tell us their stories. We should pay attention to the way the birds chatter on the power lines or to their migration patterns in the winter. We should watch the ants work and remember that we are called to pick up heavy things and move them for the sake of community. We listen to water as it runs in the creek,

and we listen when God whispers through tree branches on the wind. And if we desire to be people who love one another well, we have to begin with our creature kin, with the ones who crawl and slither and swim and fly, the ones who are different from us but who hold deep knowledge and incredible stories about this earth we live in.

We talk about things like climate change as if they matter, not just to us but to this earth we inhabit. As adults, we can return to the canopy of trees and rejoice in feeling small, because that is where we find the humility that grounds us in our place. We can be like children, and we can be like the dust. We cannot outrun the voice of *Segmekwe*, Mother Earth. She will always be reminding us of the dirt we were born from and the dirt we will return to. May we listen in the meantime.



I grew up being really afraid of water, and yet we have always had a fascinating relationship. When I was very small, I waded into a pool that was too deep for my tiny body, and I fell under. I watched as the glossy surface hovered above my eyes, and I saw the outline of my sister's body come in for me. I was lifted out in time, and I was fine, but a fear was instilled in me that I couldn't shake for many years. I didn't learn to swim until I was thirteen, and after I had children, my worst nightmares were of a child's death by drowning, by currents that are too strong for my little ones to fight against.

Water can be a dangerous thing, but water is also the lifeblood of us all. It is why flood stories are so powerful and so sacred; the earth gets destroyed by water, and it gets rebuilt by that same water as it gives life to everything again. So we must hold great respect for the water, because her power is fierce, yet humble. But so often, because we do not see water as a living being, we use her, monetize her, and, in essence, lose our ability to see her as sacredly created at all.

In 2018, thirteen-year-old Autumn Peltier (from Manitoulin Island in Canada) shared her wisdom and experiences with world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly, reminding them of their responsibility to protect the water, to treat the water in a way that reflects a sacred creation, as Anishinaabe people believe. Autumn represents the future generations of our children and grandchildren who are inheriting a world that is tired (yet resilient) and has been abused for centuries. Indigenous peoples, who practice kinship with creation, can help reorient all of us to the importance of caring for the earth's water, our lifeblood.

In Western thought, fear and a mentality of scarcity distort our reality. This makes everything an enemy, instead of reminding us that all creatures of the earth, all parts of creation, have roles and abilities that can be manifested to hurt or to heal. How do we view a flood as it destroys everything we hold dear? How do we view a drought, and what is our place in it? Human beings have been destroying the earth's natural ability to make her own decisions for centuries, and she is beginning to let us know that our actions have harmful consequences.

Climate change manifests in ravaging earthquakes and tsunamis; harsh winters claim our homeless populations because our systems do not support them; insects are disappearing and crops are drying up; people go hungry in droughts that last for months on end; and we continue to poison the waters for future generations with oil pipelines. We care more about our capitalistic profit than about protecting the creatures of the earth. How do we expect *Segmekwe* to react when we treat her this way? How do we ask Creator to forgive us when there is nothing left of the earth to care for?

In Potawatomi culture, women are water protectors. To be women who are water protectors means that we know that the water that runs through our bodies is connected to the sacred waters that give sustenance to the lands around us. We lay tobacco

down on the water's surface and pray. Potawatomi women in the Great Lakes region practice water ceremonies to protect the water from poison, from pollution, so that our children inherit something better. In New Zealand, the Māori tribe of Whanganui fought for the legal recognition of the Whanganui River as a person, as a part of the tribe. It's a beautiful story of overcoming colonial systems, a story of recognizing the rights of the water and of the people who care for those waters.

What if our stories of baptism in the church were rooted in that same idea of new beginnings, of personhood, just like the new beginning after a flood, after everything is drenched and overcome? What might we learn from the water? What might we learn if we listen, if we wade in—unafraid, untethered, and uninhibited—ready to become the ones we were created to become?

Journeying Stories



NO MATTER WHO WE ARE or where we come from, we are people who journey. We long for community; we long for oneness with the sacred. We long to be seen and known and to see and know the world around us. Part of the human journey is knowing what it means to grieve, to celebrate, to get lost and be found again and again. If it weren't so, we wouldn't be human.

And to be human is to know the journey of transformation, to know what it means to change and become, and often to step back into who we were before. In my life, journeying has meant telling the truth, coming to terms with the trauma in my own story, and leaning into the trauma and pain of others with honest listening so that, together, we learn how to be people who walk alongside one another in order to heal.

One rainy January afternoon a few years ago, I received an email from a Diné woman, thanking me for my online presence: "I have grown up in the church, but it was very much influenced by a dated missionary and/or colonial mindset. So much so that for much of my life I stayed away from engaging my Native

community outside of the church. I have learned the value that comes from acknowledging and learning my culture and how those teachings can affirm my faith in a way that, I believe, God intended when he created me.” She continued, “I know now that I was not created a Navajo woman to conform to a majority culture way of life but to allow my heritage to shape my faith and help and encourage other Native people, especially women. However, it has been very difficult to communicate that balance of culture and faith to those who are ingrained with an Americanized or colonized view of Christianity.”

A thread runs through the history of America, a thin line that connects people, places, moments, cultures, and experiences. This thread started when Columbus arrived and deemed Indigenous peoples savage and unworthy of life, a thread that continued as African peoples were enslaved and forced onto this continent. We see it today in hate crimes against people of color and religious minorities. It is a thread of whiteness, of white supremacy, that aims to erase culture, to assimilate those deemed “unworthy” of humanity. It is the greed of white men who have stolen land and committed genocide against Indigenous peoples and have for centuries suppressed our cultures. The thread of white supremacy did not end there; we continue to see its effects today, not just in KKK rallies but in everyday experiences, in systems of oppression that leave out the most vulnerable among us, that ignore and seclude Indigenous peoples and pay no mind to what justice might actually look like.

This email reflects my journeying story and the story of so many of us—people who have lived in colonized Christian circles throughout our lives and are working to *decolonize, to dismantle systems of empire and colonization around us*. Instead of living into a colonized version of Christianity in which my Indigenous self is villainized, I choose to live a life of constant *decolonizing*, the process in which my spiritual Potawatomi tradition enhances the celebration of God as liberator and the person of Jesus as

a partner in that liberation. Nick Estes, citizen of the Lower Brule Sioux tribe, in his book *Our History Is the Future*, says this: “Indigenous peoples are political by default. They continue to exist as nations when they are supposed to have disappeared, and they have to fight, not only for bare survival but also for accurate representation. They incarnate the inconvenient truth that the United States was founded on genocide and the continuing theft of a continent.”¹

So we send each other emails to remind each other who we are. We write books so that the truth of the Indigenous experience is not forgotten. We tell our stories so that no one forgets that we are still here and that we’ve always been here. In a world in which white supremacy still holds power, we remain because our words remain, just as our stories remain to tell us who we have always been, and all of that is political because our very existence works as a larger narrative of liberation, freedom, and peace.



Identity does not come to us without journey, because to learn who we are means we face difficult truths in our own lives and imagine what life might look like as those truths work themselves out inside of us. In her book, *I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, Austin Channing Brown describes the first time she attended an all-Black church with her father. “The Black church gave me the greatest sense of belonging I had ever experienced.”² Austin, after years of growing up in a white, middle-class part of the country, discovered what it means to be a Black woman and to *journey as a Black woman*, just as my Diné friend discovered what it means to be Diné, just as I began to understand what it means to be Potawatomi as an adult. Because whiteness takes so much from us, journeying (in particular for Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color) means that finding our way back may come in the most unexpected ways.

But the return is the key. Have you heard the story of the prodigal son, found in the New Testament (Luke 15:11–32)? In the story, a son demands to receive his inheritance from his father early, runs away from home, wastes all the money his father has given him, and returns home, weary and lonely, after he has nothing left. In the end it isn't that he ran away or that he wasted money and years of his life. The thing we notice is the journey home, the return, that open-armed father with tears streaming down his face, that son being beckoned back again. *That is the sacred power of coming home*, even if it's a home you don't recognize but long to be part of.

I did not grow up knowing that the Potawatomi people are originally from the Great Lakes region of the US. I did not know to call this land Turtle Island. I did not know that I have both a physical and a spiritual place to return to, a place that was created for me inside the breath of Mystery, just as who you are was created uniquely inside the breath of Mystery. Returning home, whether it's a physical home or spiritual home, is holy work. It is a sacred journey.

As I study the creation stories of different traditions with my sons—the Hebrew creation stories found in the Bible, or the Seven Grandfather Teachings of my Potawatomi culture alongside the teachings of the Gospels of Jesus—I find that we must learn what it means to live in an integrated way that honors the cultures and the people around us so that we can, together in solidarity, learn to go home. This means we pay attention to the horrors of cultural appropriation and that as we engage with one another and honor one another, we do not steal from one another and further continue cycles of colonization. We decolonize along the way.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings from my tribe call us back to the important and central tenets of our culture—to humility, honesty, wisdom, bravery, truth, love, and respect. In other words, through these teachings we work out the meaning of our

own identity. We are taught to carry these gifts in the right way, with the right heart, to honor this earth, her creatures, and the people we encounter along the way. The deeper I lean into these teachings, the more I find the interconnectedness among all religions, all faiths, all cultures. Our work is to call each other home, to call to one another's spirits and say, "This is for you. This is what it means to be human, to love and be loved. Let's learn from one another as we go."

In living a holistic life, I engage in a holistic faith in which I cannot compartmentalize or separate the various parts of who I am or what I believe, which means journeying must include *all of me, all of us*. If we were all to engage in this way of belief for ourselves and those around us, we would see that God is truly in our midst. We would see that the Spirit is one of inclusion within our cultural boundaries but also one who calls us to so much more outside of that, to see the lives and experiences of others as beautiful and necessary aspects of our collective wholeness. *That, perhaps, is the greatest journey of all.*



Because being human and discovering the constant layering of identity is a journey, so too religion is about journeying. My experience with Christianity is a journeying story. I believe it is a story full of rights and wrongs, but for me, the origin is always the love of God—a love that has been greatly distorted by the colonizer church throughout the centuries. I believe that Christianity rooted in the love of Christ has no room for power that oppresses but advocates for power that breathes only humility, a vision of the feminine Divine, as author Mirabai Starr articulates so well in her book *Wild Mercy*.³

And yet, over the years, Christianity has become a thing of empire, so much so that it's difficult to tease out what is good about a religion created for following the person called Jesus, for knowing the Christ. Richard Rohr, in his beautiful book *The*

Universal Christ, says, “Our faith became a competitive theology with various parochial theories of salvation, instead of a universal cosmology inside of which all can live with an inherent dignity.”⁴ This is the faith I am called back to again and again, despite being brought up in a conservative evangelical faith. This, the universal Christ who, in grace and love, holds all things and all people and all creatures in that grace, is what gives me hope in this world. The universal Christ, who is not a colonizer, who does not seek after profit or create empires to rule over the poor or to oppress people, is constantly asking us to see ourselves as we fit in this sacredly created world. It is what my Potawatomi ancestors saw when they prayed to *Kche Mnedo*, to *Mamogosnan*, and is what our relatives still see when they pray today, a sacred belonging that spans time and generations and is called by many names. Today, it is what I continue to see in my own faith—not a Christianity bound by a sinner’s prayer and an everyday existence ruled by gender-divided Bible studies and accountability meetings but a story of faith that’s always bigger, always more inclusive, always making room at a bigger and better table full of lavish food that has already been prepared for everyone and for every created thing. *That is the journey*, ever evolving, ever creating, ever giving hope and tethering us back to ourselves and to one another.

And so, I loosely call myself a Christian. And so, I also call myself Indigenous. I am Potawatomi, constantly being called to my belonging with the love that only Creator, *Mamogosnan*, can hold, has always held, and always will hold for all of us. It is a difficult journey, and I don’t know where it will lead. Years from now, I may no longer call myself a Christian, no longer engage with the church, and if so, I will still call this journey sacred as the thing that it is, the truths it has taught me, the people it has brought into my life. My faith is not a faith to be held over others or a faith that forces others into submission but an inclusive, universal faith constantly asking what the gift of Mystery truly is and how we can better care for the earth we live on, who

constantly teaches us what it means to be humble. The older I get, the more I realize how wired I am for community, for relationship, for *belonging*.

Sadly, the church isn't always that place. Sadly, institutions are often run more by their rules and regulations than by a desire to accept and hold people where they are, with all that they are. So my community is the birds who chirp outside my window, wherever they are on the journey. Community is the people I've found online, who teach me something new every week, if not every day. Community is the neighborhood we live in, and it's the Oklahoma dirt that still claims me and the waters of the Great Lakes who call to me. Community is the human family and my creature kin. Community is *journey* in and of itself, and that may be one of the greatest and most challenging calls of our lives. It is the thing that sharpens us, hurts us, heals us. It is the thing that leads us home or to a new home we did not know we longed for. Community is the miracle that reminds us we are still looking, still searching, and that faith can be a partner in that journey.