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Wednesday, 31 October 2012 09:16

"Whose gonna take back those stories?" The challenge was simple. Who is going to take back the stories that have been entrenched in American culture about Native Americans for so long? Stories of how Native Americans are pagan, how they are less than human, and how Indian customs just do not fit with Christian beliefs. The solution, however, is not simple. The stories are out. They are in people's minds, and it is our job, in this day, to put aside the old ways of thinking, and embrace reconciliation with the first people of America.

Richard Twiss walked onto the stage at the CCDA conference in Minneapolis last week with a message of reconciliation and a challenge and left the stage with the deafening roar of an excited crowd at his back. Twiss, a Lakota Sioux educator and author, captured the CCDA audience right away and did not let them go until the last words had left his mouth. "A separation exists between a broken, fallen humanity and God," he said, adding that another separation exists between God's people.

To most Americans, it has been years since the oppression of Native Americans, noted Twiss, but for the Native Americans, the oppression never ended. "The story of oppression and colonization is still alive," said Twiss. It is vital, for reconciliation and change, to redeem the stories that have been told for years. Then, with God's power, restore relationships and find change.

Many Americans are committed to pursuing the "American Dream," he said, but it is a dream that is a nightmare to Native Americans who are isolated on reservations, where no one seems to lend a helping hand, and where poverty, alcoholism, and drug abuse destroy lives. "People don't have time for us," said Twiss. "They say that Indian culture doesn't belong in Christianity." But just because a culture is not conservative, doesn't mean it is not Christian, he challenged his audience. And just because Native Americans praise Jesus with song and dance and passion, does not mean they are doing it wrong.

According to Twiss, reformation within the church didn't end with Luther in Europe. Redemption will come when Christians learn to seek the least, listen like a brother, fight like a warrior and stand as a group, he concluded. Together, we can achieve reconciliation.