

Twiss: Treatment of Native Americans as pagans and less than human

Written by Katherine Kirby

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The dances of the tribal members on stage at the beginning of the CCDA convention Wednesday night was enough to get the hundreds of people present focused and attentive when a young lady approached the podium to introduce Richard Twiss. "Reconciliation is impossible without the creator's blessing," said the tribal leader's granddaughter as she recalled her family's life of exile from Minnesota and how reconciliation has been on her people's hearts since Europeans first came to Turtle Island, U.S.A.

Richard Twiss, a Native American educator, author, and pastor, told "stories" concerning reconciling and reconciliation, noting that God loved stories so much that he created humans. "There is brokenness in humanity with our God," Twiss said, adding that due to the fall, humans are sinful and separation occurs when they don't stay connected to Him. Citing John 1:14. Twiss said Jesus wasn't afraid of His ethnicity and that no one story in the Bible captures the entire world.

Twiss reminded listeners of how stories connect us to our ancestors. He recounted the example of the Dakota War of 1862, with the mass hanging of 38 Dakota men near Mankato. The pain of that historical event and the disastrous history in this country around the treatment of Native Americans has resulted in their being caricatured as pagans and less than human. Such things will never be forgotten, he said, because "stories" live on and shape who we are.

As a final challenge, Twiss asked: "How do we hear stories as Christians?" Because the story of life never stops, he said, reconciling Christians are called "to redeem it."