

Where in the World Is Waldo?

When my boys were young, we used to have fun trying to find Waldo. Waldo is a cartoon character in a popular series of illustrated children's books. He always wears a red-and-white striped shirt, stocking hat, glasses and blue pants.

The goal of our game was to spot Waldo amid a sea of faces and figures. Sometimes he was easy to find and other times quite hard. I'd ask my boys, "Where in the world is Waldo?"

I'd like to ask the North American church a similar question: "Where in the world are the First Nations Christian leaders in the body of Christ?" Please join me in a simple "game," and let's see if we can find out.

First, thumb through this issue of Charisma and find a picture of a prominent Christian Caucasian leader. Did you find one? Maybe you saw Jack Hayford, Marilyn Hickey or Tommy Tenney, to name a few.

Second, find a prominent African American Christian leader. I'm guessing you found one—perhaps Joseph Garlington, Juanita Bynum or T.D. Jakes. You probably found a well-known Spanish or Asian American leader, too.

Next, search for a prominent First Nations leader in this issue. By "First Nations" I mean people who identify themselves as "Native"—not people with a degree of Native blood. Take all the time you need on this last search.

My guess is, you didn't find one. Why—after 400 years of an unwavering commitment by the North American church to win the lost, disciple believers, and raise up capable and empowered new leaders—are there no recognized national First Nations leaders in the body of Christ today?

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 12 for some insight. The apostle Paul—using the human body as a metaphor for the church—warns us not to think that one part of the body is more important than another. He says, “And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the hand to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’” (v. 21, NKJV).

Yet the absence of First Nations leadership in the North American church says to the Native expression of Jesus Christ and His kingdom: “I have no need of you. I don't need your customs, arts, music, language or perspectives.”

I believe the church needs the First Nations community and won't be fully edified and equipped without it. Here's why:

Culturally and spiritually, First Nations people place a greater emphasis on family and relationships than on ecclesiastical dogma or denominational allegiance. Being a follower of Jesus is not about adhering to positive life-principles but about living in intimacy and fellowship. Our emphasis is on corporate well-being, not individual achievement.

Sharing wealth—not acquiring it—is the most important pursuit of First Nations people. If the idol of Native religions is the worship of creation, as some say, then the idol of Western

culture is the worship of what can be manufactured from creation—that is, materialism, or “mammon” (see Matt. 6:24). The great Native leaders were measured by the wealth they shared, not by what they accumulated.

First Nations people are prophetic. Many Native people are anointed with a powerful gift of “seeing.” We are gifted with dreams and visions, as well as with insightful prayer and intercession.

The supernatural world isn’t foreign to us. Nor do we have a “dualistic” view of reality, in which the world is divided into sacred vs. secular or spiritual vs. natural spheres. We regard all of life as part of our journey of faith.

First Nations people have strong historical roots. We have a deep history in the land as original inhabitants. Therefore, we have much to contribute to environmental, social and economic issues.

In addition to the Native elders, to whom we owe a great debt and who have faithfully kept the faith, there is a whole new generation of Native Christian leaders who have risen in the land today. But, like Waldo, they are hidden amid a sea of faces.