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Chapter 1 : Sun Dance - Ritual and Ceremony of Native Americans

Sun Dance, most important religious ceremony of the Plains Indians of North America and, for nomadic peoples, an occasion when otherwise independent bands gathered to reaffirm their basic beliefs about the universe and the supernatural through rituals of personal and community sacrifice.

It was a time of renewal for the tribe, people and earth. The village was large, as many bands came together for this annual rite. Each tribe camped within their own circle, which was part of another circle. A large circular arena was cleared, and a double ring of sticks was erected around the outside. Branches were placed on the top as shelter for the dancers, singers and spectators. The Holy Men went to the forest and selected a large cottonwood tree to be used as the central pole. A man was selected because of a great deed or feat of bravery to count coup on the tree that was cut down. The tree was trimmed and taken back to the dance site, where it was decorated and erected in the middle of the arena. The ceremony began at sunrise the next day, and anyone could dance. Dancers looked at the sun as they danced, and short breaks without food and drink were allowed. This went on for four days - usually while the self-sacrificers prepared themselves. Usually these men, as it was rare for a woman to participate, wanted something specific - good hunting skills, better fighting skills or healing powers. Their bodies and spirits were purified through the Inipi ceremony before the dance. Each dancer had a mentor to help him through the ceremony. This would be a Holy Man or someone who had already danced. The Holy Men prepared buffalo skulls and placed them around the arena. Long lengths of rawhide were tied to the central pole. Dancers wore rings of sage on their heads and often around their wrists and ankles; each man carried a whistle made from the wing bone of an eagle. As the dancers stood around the arena, the holy men approached them and pierced each side of their chests with a length of bone. Next, the rawhide thongs were attached to the bone. The dance began as a slow shuffle. Some chose not to be tethered to the pole. Instead, they had the bones pierced through their backs, and then buffalo skulls were attached with thongs. The dancers drug these heavy skulls around as they danced. Dancers at the pole pulled themselves backwards, trying to tear their flesh and release themselves. Those with skulls attached to their backs danced over rocks and through bushes. They hoped to catch the skulls on something and rip them from their bodies. Dancers who had not released themselves close to sundown received help from their mentors. The mentors grabbed the dancers from behind and jerked them backwards in an effort to tear the bones from the skin. Many Sun Dancers were traumatized and shocked by the experience. After the ceremony, they went to the dancers lodge where medicine men cared for them. Also in attendance were the Holy Men, singing their praises to the Gods and praying for the dancers to recover swiftly. Mails, Graphic Publishing Co. Edited and Illustrated by Vera Louise Drysdale.

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Chapter 2 : Native American religion - Wikipedia

The best known and most dramatic of North American Indian ceremonies, the Sun Dance ceremony and religion is an important part of both Native American and American history.

Instead they felt that their beliefs and practices helped to form an integral and seamless part of their own being. Here are some of the interesting practices and ceremonies that they took part in. Death Ceremonies Instead of mourning the loss of a loved one, Native Americans celebrated death, knowing that it was the end of life here on Earth, and believing that it was the start of the new life in the Spirit World. Many tribes thought that the journey may be very long, so after life here has ended, rituals were performed to make sure that the spirits would not still roam about the earth. Different Native American tribes would honor the dead in many ways, by giving them food, herbs and gifts to guarantee that they had a safe journey to the other side. These death ceremonies are still common today and are big celebrations where other members of the community can visit, eat, and take part in the ceremony. The Green Corn Festival This event is held as both a celebration and a religious ceremony. The ceremony takes place late in the summer and is associated with the ripening of the corn crops. There is dancing, food, fasting and religious observations during the festivals, which often last for about three to four days. Activities would vary from one tribe to the next but the common thread was that the corn was not to be eaten until the Great Spirit has been given his proper thanks. During the festival, tribe members would give thanks for the corn, rain, sun and a good harvest. Some Native Americans even believed that they were made from the corn of the Great Spirit. The festival was also a time for religious growth and spiritual ceremonies. There would be cleansing and purifying activities such as cleaning out homes and burning waste. At the end of each day, a feast would be held to celebrate the good harvest. The Green Corn Festival is still practiced today mainly by those of the Southeastern Woodland tribes. Healing Rituals A healing ritual was a symbolic ceremony that would help bring participants into harmony with themselves. They were used to help groups of people return to harmony and large ceremonies were typically not used for individual healing. The basics of these rituals varied from tribe to tribe. The Sioux and Navajo would often use a medicine wheel which was a sacred hoop, and would sing and dance in ceremonies that would last for days on end. Centuries ago, many Native Americans would use plants and herbs as remedies or for spiritual celebrations. They felt that these herbs could help them create a connection to the spirits of the afterlife. The healing process for Native Americans is much different than how we perceive it today. It included beliefs and practices that would combine religion, spirituality and herbal remedies. From their perspective, the Native Americans believed that the medicine was more about healing the person than curing the disease. Before the term became so popular, other words were used to describe these gatherings such as celebration, doing, fair, feast, festival and more. Today it is an event where any Native American and non-Native American people can come together to dance, sing and socialize in honor of American Indian culture. These events could last for several days. The largest pow wow in the United States is the Gathering of Nations. It is held annually on the fourth weekend of April in Albuquerque, New Mexico. More than tribes from all across the United States and Canada come together to participate. There are competitive events with 32 dance categories as well as other competitions for singers and instrument players. There is also a pageant for Miss Indian World.

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Chapter 3 : The History of Native American Religion

The sun dance is a ceremony practiced by some indigenous people of United States of America and Canada, primarily those of the Plains cultures. It usually involves the community gathering together to pray for healing.

Rather, their beliefs and practices form an integral and seamless part of their very being. Like other aboriginal peoples around the world, their beliefs were heavily influenced by their methods of acquiring food, from hunting to agriculture. They also embraced ceremonies and rituals that provided power to conquer the difficulties of life, as well as events and milestones, such as puberty, marriage, and death. Taos Indian with peace pipe The arrival of European settlers marked a major change in Native American culture. Some of the first Europeans that the Indians would meet were often missionaries who looked upon Native American Spirituality practices as worthless superstition inspired by the Christian devil. These early missionaries then determined to convert the Native Americans to Christianity. As more and more Europeans flooded North America, US and Canadian governments instituted policies to force Natives onto reservations and to encourage them to become assimilated into the majority culture. This also changed their spiritual traditions and when, in , the U. Federal Government began to work towards banning Native American Religious Rights, which impacted their ceremonies. At that time, U. Interior Secretary Henry M. When the Seventh U. Though some traditions were lost along the way, many others survived despite the ban, and various tribes continue to follow many spiritual traditions. Some Native Americans have been devout Christians for generations, and their practices today combine their traditional customs with Christian elements. Other tribes, particularly in the Southwest, have retained their aboriginal traditions, mostly intact. Tribute to the Dead Death Ceremonies Native Americans celebrated death, knowing that it was an end to life on Earth, but, believing it to be the start of life in the Spirit World. Most tribes also believed, that the journey might be long, so after life rituals were performed to ensure that the spirits would not continued to roam the earth. Various tribes honored the dead in several ways, by giving them food, herbs, and gifts to ensure a safe journey to the after life. The Hopi Indians believe that the soul moves along a Sky path westwards and that those who have lived a righteous life will travel with ease. To ensure a safe journey, they wash their dead with natural yucca suds and dress them in traditional clothes. Prayer feathers are often tied around the forehead of the deceased, and they are buried with favorite possessions and feathered prayer sticks. Traditional foods and special herbs are served and placed at the grave side. The Navajo perceived that living to an old age was a sign of a life well lived, thus ensuring that the soul would be born again. After life rituals could last for several days with careful thought given to foods and herbs chosen for the celebration, a reflection on how the deceased lived their life. Many believe, that on that day, the spirits return to visit family and friends. In preparation various tribes would prepare food and decorate their homes with ears of corn as blessings for the dead. The ceremony typically coincides in the late summer and is tied to the ripening of the corn crops. Marked with dancing, feasting, fasting and religious observations, the ceremony usually lasts for three days. Activities varied from tribe to tribe, but the common thread is that the corn was not to be eaten until the Great Spirit has been given his proper thanks. During the event, tribal members give thanks for the corn, rain, sun, and a good harvest. Some tribes even believe that they were made from corn by the Great Spirits. The Green Corn Festival is also a religious renewal, with various religious ceremonies. Others also signify the event as the time of year when youth come of age and babies are given their names. Several tribes incorporate ball games and tournaments in the event. Cleansing and purifying activities often occur, including cleaning out homes, burning waste, and drinking emetics to purify the body. At the end of each day of the festival, feasts are held to celebrate the good harvest. Green Corn festivals are still practiced today by many different native peoples of the Southeastern Woodland Culture. Incense over a medicine bundle, by Edward S. Curtis, Healing Rituals Symbolic healing rituals and ceremonies were often held to bring participants into harmony with themselves, their tribe, and their environment. Ceremonies were used to help groups of people return to harmony; but, large ceremonies were

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generally not used for individual healing. Varying widely from tribe to tribe, some tribes, such as the Sioux and Navajo used a medicine wheel, a sacred hoop, and would sing and dance in ceremonies that might last for days. Historic Indian traditions also used many plants and herbs as remedies or in spiritual celebrations, creating a connection with spirits and the after life. The healing process in Native American Medicine is much different than how most of us see it today. Native American healing includes beliefs and practices that combine religion , spirituality, herbal medicine , and rituals, that are used for both medical and emotional conditions. From the Native American perspective, medicine is more about healing the person than curing a disease.

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Chapter 4 : Encyclopedia of the Great Plains | SUN DANCE

The best known and most dramatic of North American Indian ceremonies, the Sun Dance ceremony and religion is an important part of both Native American and American history. Performed by the Plains Indians, including the Sioux, Dakota, Cheyenne, and others, the dance involves fixed gazing at the sun.

Native American Indian Culture: Divided into more than a thousand different tribes, Native Americans have a rich, diversified culture that is still very much alive today. Native American Tribes Across the U. Tribes and their cultures varied depending on the region of the country. Northeast The northeast consisted of two primary groups: Groups in this region lived in small fishing and farming villages along the coast. They grew crops like vegetables, corn and beans. Southeast The southeast consisted of several well-known indigenous tribes, including the Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw and Seminole. These groups were known as the Five Civilized Tribes, and they each spoke a variation of the Muskogean language. After Europeans settled in the region, groups like the Blackfeet, Crow, Comanche, Cheyenne and Arapaho became nomadic. The peoples in this region had two very distinct ways of life. The Zuni, Hopi, Yuma and Yaqui were sedentary farmers that grew crops and lived in permanent settlements with kivas, or ceremonial pit houses, at the center of the village. The Apache, Navajo and other similar tribes were more nomadic. They hunted, gathered and raided established neighbors for their crops. There were believed to be over tribes and groups that spoke over dialects in the region. Despite the complex linguistic landscape, most of the peoples living in this region lived similar lives, with family-based groups of hunters-gatherers. Native American Dances, Rituals and Ceremonies Dancing is an integral part of the Native American culture and their rituals and ceremonies. Dances and religious ceremonies are often centered on The Great Spirit, believed by many Native Americans to be the creator of life, or the supreme being. Other Native American traditions, beliefs and religions were based on the culture of shamanism, under which the Shaman or Medicine Man of the tribe served as a medium between the spirit world and the visible world. It is believed that Shamans and Medicine Men had the power to heal the sick, see the future and control the hunt. Rituals, dances and ceremonies were performed to appease The Great Spirit or the spirits of their ancestors. Festivals and ceremonies include chanting, singing and dancing. The clothing worn by both the males and females of the tribes were extraordinarily detailed. Some were adorned with furs and feathers, others with color beads and metallic baubles. Some of the most famous Native American dances include:

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Chapter 5 : The Native American Sun Dance

Sun Dance is the traditional dance of Native American Indians of the plains territories, closely connected with the celebration of Sun, Earth, well-being of entire tribes and wishes of the individual tribe members.

Zoe Kian Santos Peyote in Native American Traditions Peyote is a small cactus, rarely larger than 15 centimeters, found on both banks of the Rio Grande and in scattered places across Mexico. Mexican Indians have been using the narcotic plant for over 20 centuries to cure any number of ailments. Peyote is an extremely common medicine in Mexico and is sold at drug markets across the country. For nearly 2 centuries, Peyote use has been noted among Native Americans, mostly tribes located in the Southern Plains. This is mostly due to the United States government relocating tribes more north, so the spread of Peyote to others tribes occurred. Between the s and s, the US government attempted to ban peyote, but with the establishment of the Native American Church, this did not happen. Peyote is applied externally for rheumatism, wounds burns, snakebites, and skin diseases. When steeped in hot water to make Peyote Tea, it is ingested for illnesses such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, scarlet fever, intestinal issues, diabetes, and colds. The dried Peyote crowns, or buttons, are applied to a toothache or, more commonly, consumed in ceremony. Though the ceremony differs among tribes, it is always for the purpose of healing a chosen individual. Everyone circles a fire and sings songs to drumming while consuming peyote. This is a healing ceremony, so during the ritual, everyone is to pray for the present individual who is ill. Most often, this person has been undiagnosed. This is their purpose for the ceremony. Taking the peyote and participating in the meeting, their illness is supposed to be revealed to them so they may diagnose themselves. Peyote, in this sense, is more therapeutic. It is important to remember, although peyote is very powerful as a medicine, it is also very powerful as a narcotic. In ceremony, there is no indication for pursuit of visions, more introspection and praying for the ill individual. There is evidence that, in its early use, people would consume peyote on vision quests, but not in modern times. With the law on peyote, the NAC is very careful with how it is shared within and outside of the Native American tradition. Peyote is, first and foremost, a medicine and important healing method among Native Americans and Mexican Indians.

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Chapter 6 : Ghost Dance and Sun Dance | Indigenous Religious Traditions

Sun Dance. The sundance is the predominant tribal ceremony of Great Plains Indians, although it is practiced by numerous tribes today as a prayer for life, world renewal and thanksgiving.

Sun Dance The Sun Dance is one of the seven sacred rites given to the Lakota people by White Buffalo Calf Woman, a legendary figure said to have lived some "nineteen generations ago. The first two rituals usually involve the sweat ceremony, which prepares people for purification, both spiritually and physically. During the sweat ceremony, one can also prepare for the Vision Quest, which is undertaken for the purpose of acquiring power and seeking a vision that will inform or facilitate benevolent privileges to the seeker. The seeker of a vision will try to find a person to guide them in a spiritual sense through the visionary experience. For societies that practice the Sun Dance, it is often the most important ceremony within their set of regularly practiced rituals. Offerings or vows made by the people during the year are, through prayers, supplications, and rituals, fulfilled during the annual celebration. There might be variations in details from tribe to tribe and even within a tribe, yet the principle structure of the ceremony remains similar in terms of its function and rationale. In the past, there are references that attest to the fact that the Sun Dancers maintained their spiritual relationships to the sun by praying, scarifying their bodies, and fasting alone on a mountain away from the people. They would seek signs from the Great Mystery, Wakantanka, through dreams or visionary experience. An experienced Sun Dancer would care for them periodically by bringing them water and checking on their well-being. Usually a pit was dug, and the dancer entered the pit unclothed and covered himself with a buffalo hide for protection against the weather. Members of different tribes would come together to participate in the ritual. As people arrived from different Native Nations, they were instructed as to where the ceremony would be held. Guests then set up tipis in an outer circle around the ceremonial area. Then they would dismantle their tipis and move to the ceremonial area, with the people making four ritual pauses along the way for the purpose of honoring the four sacred directions, the Four Winds. Today the Sun Dance requires selecting a sacred ceremonial place that is considered clean and in its natural state. The Sun Dance usually is held during the summer months. Prior to the ceremony, religious authorities known as wakasa wakan, or "sacred persons," are responsible for the performance of the ceremony, which lasts for four days. After the camp circle of tipis is in place on the first day of the ceremony, a person is elected to dig a hole in the earth for the sacred Sun Dance pole, which was selected earlier and will be erected as the central pivot of the ceremony. Soil taken from this hole is used to form a square mound of earth on the west side of the Sun Dance pole. A lodge or arbor is then constructed, which surrounds the sacred hole in the center of the camp circle. The person who digs the hole is then instructed by the Sun Dance leader, who walks from the hole in the center toward the east for the purpose of placing wood stakes in the earth at every four paces. After sixteen wood stakes have been placed in position, the last one designates the placement of the sacred tipi. A special sweat lodge is created on the north side of the sacred tipi in the center of the dance grounds. Here the Sun Dancers and their ritual accoutrement are then purified and prayed over. Sage is used to cover the ground inside the tipi, where an altar is created on the west side and a buffalo skull is adorned with sage, facing to the west. Tobacco offerings are placed on the sixteen stakes by the dancers. The people know that they must not pass through the marked stakes, which mark the path that the sun makes as it moves across the sky. During the ceremony, prayers are made to the spirit of the buffalo for the sustenance of the people and to ensure that there will be no shortage of food in the year after the Sun Dance. The next day, preparation begins for the selection of the sacred tree, and rituals involved in the cutting of the tree are begun. The ceremonial leader blesses the tree with the pipe and sacred tobacco. A ritually pure girl is prompted to "count coupe," or strike, the tree four times with a ceremonial hatchet. Then, while songs are sung in praise of it, the tree is felled onto a bed of boughs and carried to the center of the Sun Dance grounds, all the while never once being allowed to touch the ground. The next morning the sacred pole is decorated and people place offerings on it. Then the pole is raised and the end is

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slid into the hole and firmed up by placing soil around it to hold it in place. During these first three days, the dancers, who have promised to sacrifice by piercing their bodies, are instructed and they pledge to make the sacrifice to the sun. They pledge to dance in one of four ways: On the last day, the dancers leave the sacred tipi and prepare for their ritual sacrifice. They are again led by the ceremonial leader as they all leave the tipi circling sun-wise four times. As the first Sun Dance song is heard, they dance in place and blow eagle-bone whistles as the drums begin to play and they turn to the four directions of the winds, symbolically emulating the movement of the sun. During the ceremony, the dancers do not drink water and they fast. Periodically they are allowed to rest. The dancing continues for four segments and they, the singers, pray as they ritually smoke the pipe. As the singers finish the pipe ceremony, the dance begins again. As the time approaches for their ritual sacrifice, the dancers take turns lying on the buffalo robe as the Sun Dance leader prepares the dancers and pierces their skin. Others from the community may also ask to be pierced in symbolic support of the dancers. As the dancers complete their sacrifice, the Sun Dance comes to its conclusion. The dancers have now gained the sacred power of the ceremony, and people step forward to be blessed by them. Some of them receive ritual objects that were used during the ceremony because they also contain power. The pole is left in place, as is the ceremonial arbor, until they erode or decay and return back to the earth. Bibliography Brown, Joseph Epes. *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe*: With a biographical sketch of the author by Agnes Picotte and an afterword by Raymond J. Talamantez Pick a style below, and copy the text for your bibliography.

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Chapter 7 : Respect runs deep in ancient native american spirituality

Native American healing includes beliefs and practices that combine religion, spirituality, herbal medicine, and rituals, that are used for both medical and emotional conditions. From the Native American perspective, medicine is more about healing the person than curing a disease.

Native American religion is hard to explain. This is because there were very many tribes the religious principles were passed down verbally. Many of these groups had their own beliefs though many of them were similar in the major aspects. Native American religion tends to focus around nature. The landscape, animals, plants, and other environmental elements play a major role in the religion of Native Americans. Many of the legends passed down were an attempt to explain events that occurred in nature. Native American religion includes a number of practices, ceremonies, and traditions. These ceremonies may be in honor of a number of events. The practice of taking certain hallucinogens was commonly used to gain greater insight or communicate with the gods. Ceremonies may include feasts, music, dances, and other performances. Symbolism, especially with animals, is often a common part of Native American religion. Animals were used to represent certain ideas, characteristics, and spirits. Some Native American tribes used animals to tell the story of creation. Some creation stories, one by the Tlingit Indians, were centered on a raven. In the past, Native American religion was not classified as a religion. Their beliefs were not understood and the complexity of their religion was not seen. This was partly the result of not having a written set of guidelines. In the place of preachers and clergymen were shaman and medicine men. These men were sometimes said to communicate with the gods. They were wise and experienced and they enjoyed a higher level of status among their groups. They had important roles in decisions, ceremonies, and traditions. Native American religion is something that is hard to define. To gain a full understanding you really need to grow up submersed in the beliefs, practices, and traditions of a tribe.

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Chapter 8 : NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGION – Ancient gods

Today, many Native American tribes still hold Sun Dance ceremonies, many of which are open to the public as a means of educating non-Natives about the culture. If you get the opportunity to attend one as a spectator, there are a few things to keep in mind.

Some of these practices continue today in private tribal ceremonies. From the 17th to the 19th century, European Catholic and Protestant denominations sent missionaries to convert the tribes to Christianity. This forcible conversion and suppression of Indigenous languages and cultures continued through the 19th century. Native American spiritual leaders also note that these academic estimates substantially underestimate the numbers of participants because a century of US Federal government persecution and prosecutions of traditional ceremonies caused believers to practice their religions in secrecy. Many adherents of traditional spiritual ways also attend Christian services, at least some of the time, which can also affect statistics. Since the 1980 years of those prior legal persecutions ended with AIRFA, some sacred sites in the United States are now protected areas under law. Bole is a Wintun word a Penutian language, maru is a Pomo word a Hokan language; both refer to the dreams of medicine people. They both draw on traditional as well as Christian beliefs and ethical guidelines, with revelations from dreams playing a central role. In these dances, dancers wore large headdresses. Christianity European Christian missionaries were very active and established missions and religious schools among Native peoples. Many native Christians accomplish this identification without abandoning or rejecting native religious traditions. It involved the power of dreams and visions of the dead. Unlike the Klamath and Modoc religions the Dream Dance did not predict an apocalypse and return of the dead. The religion was only practiced a short time in Oregon in the early 20th century. One of the founders was the Modoc medicine woman commonly known as Alissa Laham. It was a religious revitalization movement created to encourage a sense of unity of Native peoples through rituals. These rituals included the playing and keeping sacred drums and the passing of sacred knowledge from tribe to tribe. It spread to tribes such as the Achomawi, Shasta, and Siletz, to name a few. The religion was founded in by Jake Hunt a Klickitat medicine man. It is also referred to as the Feather Dance or the Spinning Religion. Ghost Dances influenced many Native American religions. Ghost Dance practices are meant to serve as a connection with precontact ways of life and honor the dead while predicting their resurrection. Upon his recovery he claimed that he had visited the spirit world and the Supreme Being and predicted that the world would soon end, then be restored to a pure aboriginal state in the presence of the messiah. All Native Americans would inherit this world, including those who were already dead, in order to live eternally without suffering. In order to reach this reality, Wovoka stated that all Native Americans should live honestly, and shun the ways of whites especially the consumption of alcohol. He called for meditation, prayer, singing, and dancing as an alternative to mourning the dead, for they would soon resurrect. In fact, some bands of Lakota and Dakota were so desperate for hope during wartime that they strengthened their militancy after making a pilgrimage to Nevada in 1890. They provided their own interpretation of the Gospel to their people which emphasized the elimination of white people. The Caddo Nation still practices the Ghost Dance today. The name comes from the shaking and twitching motions used by the participants to brush off their sins. The religion combines Christianity with traditional Indian teachings. This religion is still practiced today in the Indian Shaker Church. Longhouse Religion This replica of an Iroquois longhouse represents where the traditional practices of the Native religion took place. The Longhouse Religion is still practiced by the Iroquois today. Mexicayotl Mesoamerican symbol widely used by the Mexicas as a representation of Omoteotl. Mexicanidad; see -yotl is a movement reviving the indigenous religion, philosophy and traditions of ancient Mexico Aztec religion and Aztec philosophy amongst the Mexican people. It has also developed strong ties with Mexican national identity movements and Chicano nationalism. The Wanapam Indian Smohalla c. Smohalla claimed that visions came to him through dreams and that he had visited the spirit world and had been sent back to teach his people. The Waashat Dance involves seven drummers, a salmon feast, use

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of eagle and swan feathers and a sacred song sung every seventh day. Each tribe that has some type of sun dance ceremony has their own distinct practices and ceremonial protocols. In most cases, the ceremony is held in a private, or even secret, location, and is not open to the public. Most details of the ceremony are kept secret out of great respect for, and the desire for protection of, the traditional ways. Many of the ceremonies have features in common, such as specific dances and songs passed down through many generations, the use of traditional drums, the sacred pipe, praying, fasting and, in some cases, the piercing of skin. It is also practiced by the Canadian Dakota and Nakoda, and the Dene. Religious leaders Tenskwatawa, by George Catlin. From time to time important religious leaders organized revivals. In Indiana in 1805, Tenskwatawa called the Shawnee Prophet by Americans led a religious revival following a smallpox epidemic and a series of witch-hunts. His beliefs were based on the earlier teachings of the Lenape prophets, Scattamek and Neolin, who predicted a coming apocalypse that would destroy the European-American settlers. The revival led to warfare led by his brother Tecumseh against the white settlers. American Indian Religious Freedom Act The American Indian Religious Freedom Act is a United States Federal Law and a joint resolution of Congress that provides protection for tribal culture and traditional religious rights such as access to sacred sites, freedom to worship through traditional ceremony, and use and possession of sacred objects for American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and Native Hawaiians. It was passed on August 11, 1978. Cultural items include funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. Religious Freedom Restoration Act Main article: It was held unconstitutional as applied to the states in the *City of Boerne v. Flores*. However, it continues to be applied to the federal government—for instance, in *Gonzales v. O Centro Espirita Beneficente Uniao do Vegetal*—because Congress has broad authority to carve out exemptions from federal laws and regulations that it itself has authorized. In response to *City of Boerne v. Flores*, some individual states passed State Religious Freedom Restoration Acts that apply to state governments and local municipalities. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Main article: Article 31 in particular emphasises that Indigenous Peoples have the right to their cultural heritage, including ceremonial knowledge, as protected intellectual property.

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Chapter 9 : Native American Dances – Legends of America

Ceremonies and rituals have been a part of the Native American lifestyle for centuries. While their traditions are often referred to as religion, most Native Americans didn't consider their ceremonies and rituals in that sense.

Some of the tribes who performed the Sun Dance included: In however, the Canadian government followed by the United States in , banned the more torturous aspects of the ritual on humanitarian grounds. As a result, and under the threat of prosecution from the Department of Indian Affairs, for many years the full ritual was only practiced in secret. Today with a better understanding of Native Indian beliefs and traditions, both governments ended their restrictions. This granted Native American Indians the right to freely practice their own traditional religious ceremonies. Today the annual Sun Dance is a great social occasion lasting from four to eight days, during which, the whole community takes part in its preparation. Once the tribe has gathered, a Sun Dance leader usually one of the Elders is selected to organise the event. A large circular area is cleared on which the ritual itself will later take place, and around this a large temporary lodge is constructed. This consists of a double row of wooden posts that are covered to create a shaded area from where spectators can watch the proceedings. Younger men from the tribe, particularly those who had distinguished themselves in some way, are then given the honour of cutting the tree down. After being trimmed, the tree is taken back to the dance site where sacred and symbolic objects are secured between its forks. Under the direction of the Sun Dance leader the tree is then ritually erected in the middle of the dance area. Before the main ritual, anyone wishing to dance can do so. Many do so wearing costumes representing important leaders or animal spirits; others wear body paint indicating honours and achievements symbolic of their family lineage and position in the tribe. This social part of the celebration can go on for as many as four days, during which gifts are exchanged, tribal disputes are discussed and traditional pipes are smoked. In the meantime those who have pledged to dance in the main ritual would have been undergoing supervised preparation by a mentor, usually someone who had already been through the ordeal. Each would have been fasting for several days prior to the event, and before the dance will undergo a spiritual purification ritual in a specially constructed sweat lodge. For many of the participants the Sun Dance is an opportunity to give thanks to the tribal Gods for blessings received, to fulfill a vow or pledge, or to petition help for specific purposes, be it protecting loved ones or for aid in healing a sick family member or friend. It is hoped that during the ritual and through enduring its sacrificial pain and torture, they would be rewarded with a vision from the Gods containing answers. As the participants dance to the drumbeats, they keep their gaze firmly fixed on the Sun while reciting prayers and singing praises; at the same time, they continually pull backwards against their tethers in efforts to tear themselves free. Later, whatever visions they may have experienced while enduring the pain of the Sun Dance are discussed with their mentors who help in their interpretation. While not everyone experiences a life changing vision, all those taking part in the dance bring away some kind of reward. And for the tribe as a whole, the end of the Sun Dance brings a sense that the relationship between their people and the Guardian Spirits has once again been reaffirmed.