



## Native American and Non-Indian Cultural Comparisons

Native American	Non-Indian
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasis is placed on age.</li><li>• Excellence is related to a contribution to the group not to personal glory.</li><li>• Children participate in adult activities.</li><li>• Family life includes the extended family.</li><li>• Clock time is whenever people are ready; when everyone arrives.</li><li>• People express their ideas and feelings through actions.</li><li>• Present orientation.</li><li>• Oral tradition.</li><li>• Giving, sharing.</li><li>• Patience.</li><li>• Listening skills.</li><li>• Religion is a way of life.</li><li>• Modesty.</li><li>• Work limited to meeting the needs of the family.</li><li>• Harmony with nature.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasis is placed on youth.</li><li>• Competition and striving to win or to gain status is emphasized.</li><li>• Adults participate in youth activities.</li><li>• Family includes the Nuclear family.</li><li>• Clock time is exactly that.</li><li>• People express themselves and attempt to impress others through their speech.</li><li>• Future orientation.</li><li>• Written word.</li><li>• Taking, saving.</li><li>• Aggression.</li><li>• Verbal skills.</li><li>• Religion is a segment/part of life.</li><li>• Self-attention.</li><li>• Work is focused on getting ahead or getting rich.</li><li>• Mastery over nature.</li></ul>

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## Cultural Traits to Consider When Ministering to Native American People Groups:

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**GREETINGS:** The handshake is an acceptable greeting for Native Americans. Handshakes range from light to a full and firm hand grasp.

**EYE CONTACT:** Sustained direct eye contact is a form of disrespect to many Native Americans.

**COMMUNICATION:** Native Americans are very comfortable with silence. Silence does not indicate a lack of understanding or disinterest.

Be a good listener. If a Native American feels rushed or brushed off, they will not trust you.

When you speak, speak slowly, simply, clearly, and softly. When a relationship is developed with a Native American family, making an effort to learn an Indian greeting or a few Indian words is usually appreciated by the person or family.

If a Native American is not eager to talk about life practices, be cautious and respectful when pursuing personal information.

DO NOT, invade a Native American's personal space. Be sensitive. Respect the person's space and don't be 'touchy feely.'

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**TIME:** Time standards are not the same for Native Americans as they are for non-Indian society. Don't let a missed appointment interfere with your relationship. Be aware of time, but not restricted by time.

**WE ARE ALL ONE FAMILY:** The basic relationship between the family and community is one of mutual equality and respect. Without respect, it is hard to have a good, healthy relationship.

The family is the basis for the Nation. It is understood that without the family, there would be no community, and without the community, there would be no Tribal Nation.

**FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS:** Extended family relationships are very important to Native Americans. Treat the entire family with respect. Be careful what you say about another relative or friend of the family.

Be careful what words you use to describe the environment of the individual, the family, the community, and a Native American Tribe. Avoid the usage of negative words and descriptions.

**COMPLIMENT:** Find a way to 'truthfully' compliment the person. Compliment their jewelry, etc. A simple "you look nice in your dress or jewelry" is an acceptable compliment.

Note: A refusal to accept food or a gift is unacceptable. This might be seen as an insult.

**SHARING:** Sharing of material items is held in high esteem. (No expectation that favor will be reciprocated by person or persons).

**SOCIAL ETHICS:** To be humble is valued. To overdo anything is to invite criticism. Do not put yourself above anyone.

Source: <https://www.montanaindianministries.org/>, Hays, MT

