

Cultural Conflict during Contact between Civilizations on Turtle Island

- Europeans assumed that they were superior to Indigenous civilizations, viewing them through their own lens. Thomas King provides some context in his Massey Lecture *The Truth About Stories*:

So the Puritans saw the world at war, a holy war, a war that was both philosophical and physical. Philosophically, God and the Devil were engaged in a spiritual battle for the souls of humans. Humans, in turn, fought a physical battle that pitted God's troops, in this case the Puritans, against the Devil's mercenaries. While they were in England, the Puritans had seen the manifestations of the Devil in the pomp of the Catholic church and in the impurity of the Anglican order. Transplanting themselves to America did not take them out of the battle. It simply pitted them against an old enemy in a new guise.

- Context: Many European Nations were in the midst of the Protestant Reformation, a traumatic period of history in which Christians' relationship with the church, and how that church would be structured, was being questioned.
- Whatever technological advantage the Europeans had over the Indigenous Peoples the environment of North and South America rendered many of them redundant (useless). Successful Europeans had to adopt Indigenous technologies and ways of knowing to survive in North America.
- First encounters were largely conducted using hand gestures and body language which was problematic:
 - Hugging, kissing, and touching various body parts carry different connotations in different cultural groups.
- Dealing with completely different languages was very complicated. Concrete objects (knife, rock and tree) could be learned through pointing, but abstract ideas (love, family, friendship, weather) were much more difficult. Gradually, pidgin languages developed (a hybrid of two or more different languages).



Example: During the fur trade a pidgin language developed that merged French, Gaelic, English, Cree and Anishinaabemowin.

- Indigenous civilizations had different governance structures, often without the hierarchies common throughout European civilizations (example: the Haudenosaunee Confederacy).
- Indigenous Peoples practiced war according to different rules than those employed in Europe, where institutions of church and state went to war for ‘reasons of state.’
 - Indigenous Peoples, with their own independent agendas, were not vassals of European monarchs – rather they were allies.
- Indigenous and Europeans civilizations had much different relationships with the land – the English and Dutch brought with them ideas of private property ownership that were developing in Europe (replacing notions of common land and tradition rights to land). Most Indigenous civilizations had relationships which were intimately tied to the land.
- Formal religious ceremonies were not readily apparent to Europeans.
- That some Indigenous Peoples had no permanent buildings, no clerical hierarchy (apparent to the Europeans), disoriented the Europeans. Even though Europeans were undergoing a religious crisis (Catholic versus Protestant) they agreed that Indigenous worldviews were less-than, or even evil, and in many cases needed to be absorbed or eliminated.
 - That Europeans could not agree on what form of Christianity was right confused Indigenous Peoples (who encountered both Catholics – French, Spanish, Portuguese – and Protestants – Dutch, English, Swedish).

Europeans were trying to define Indigenous Peoples using a European cultural lens – something that ensured that their understanding of Indigenous culture would prove impossible.



SHOULD I BOW OR JUST PAT THAT BELLY?

A quick primer on how people greet each other in the countries where Heifer works.



United States

In the United States, **shaking hands** is usually a pretty safe bet.



shake hands

UNITED STATES

AMERICAS

Latin America

If you're headed to Latin America, get ready for some kissing. Standard practice is for men and women to greet women with a **cheek kiss to the left**. Men usually greet other men with a standard handshake.



left cheek

handshake

Andean Countries

One notable exception comes from **Peru** and **other Andean countries**. A man there might greet a good friend first with a handshake and an arm around the shoulders, then rest the right hand on a **buddy's stomach** for a bit while they chat.



hands on shoulder

1 shake hands

2 hands on stomach



1



2

extra kiss

Haiti

In Haiti, tradition mirrors its French colonial past—Latin American rules apply here, but with an **extra kiss on the right cheek**.

Good friends of the same sex might hold hands while they walk and talk.



In Asia, **variations of bowing** are common where we work. The most common practice is probably a small bow of the head with hands pressed together and placed in front of the chest.



ASIA



China

In China, there's a **little bit of bowing** and then **hand shaking**. If you're close, you might hold both hands. Do not make eye contact, and execute the handshake lightly and with constant shaking.

Philippines

In the Philippines, younger people **bow slightly** and then **place the right hand of their elder on their forehead**. There might also be a pat on the shoulder for good measure.



India and Nepal

Although **Namaste** is the more familiar greeting for yoga practitioners, **Namaskar** is as common in India and Nepal. The latter is the more formal of the two.



Cambodia

It might be ok in Kenya and Tanzania, but **do not touch anyone's head** in Cambodia. That's really disrespectful.



Cameroon, Ghana & Senegal

There's a lot to keep straight in Africa: In Cameroon, Ghana and Senegal, bow slightly when you come into the room and **wait for elders** to extend a hand first. Sometimes, you might **clap three times** for the elder instead. Greetings are never rushed.

AFRICA

Zimbabwe & neighboring countries

A **couple of handclaps** are a good way to greet somebody.



Kenya & Tanzania

In Kenya and Tanzania, children and youth **bow** their heads so their **elders might tap their head or place their hand on their head**.

For everyone, **handshaking is done with the right hand**, with your left hand holding the right elbow. **NEVER** shake with the left, as that hand is reserved for bathroom duty.



Zambia

Zambians might include a **thumb squeeze** when saying hello.

