

A Brief Guide to Spotting Offensive Ceremonies

There is an increasingly disturbing trend of people who are selling so-called “Celtic” ceremonies, advertised as “authentic” and “genuine” rituals, when they are nothing of the sort. This is nothing new, perhaps, but with more awareness of issues surrounding cultural appropriation, many who are now falsely claiming to be “tradition-bearers,” for instance, are often the same people who previously promoted themselves as “Shamans.” Some of what they're selling may seem familiar to Native Americans, in particular, but that's usually because they have stolen it from Native Americans, and are lying that it is “Celtic” or “Gaelic.”

In an attempt to try and legitimise their business, it's becoming increasingly common to find these people attaching themselves to interfaith events for peace, or political actions that include a spiritual element. Although the labels may have changed, what they are doing is no less immoral, damaging, or offensive to our traditional ways and the people they are taking advantage of in the process. ***Giving them a platform risks undermining the aims and message of the events they are attaching themselves to.*** If you are organising an event and find someone who does any of the following, you can be certain that they are not genuine.

They claim to be Celtic but:

- They start ceremonial fires with metal.
- They bring edged weapons or firearms into the ceremonial space.
- They don't speak any Celtic language.
- They don't make offerings to the spirits.
- Or they offer inappropriate things.
- They say, “all our ways died out, so we can just make stuff up.”
- They talk about “the healing energy of crystals.”
- They talk about the ancient ways of Atlantis and Lemuria.
- The ceremony involves smudging.
- Or talks about “Mother Earth and Father Sky.”
- They call themselves Celtic Shamans and talk about mandalas, etc.
- They advocate using Tibetan singing bowls at sacred sites.
- They charge for ritual or engage in spiritual tourism.
- They worship the “Triple Goddess and Horned God.”
- They invoke the four directions, and elements/watchtowers.
- They attempt to invoke or command the gods, spirits, and ancestors.
- They don't know any real traditions, so get angry at those who do, and demand they be given all the knowledge, right now, so they can sell it.
- They think protecting our ancestral traditions from degradation is “angry” and not “spiritual.”
- They react negatively to this poster, and say it is “mean,” “elitist,” or “judgemental.”