

Celebrating National Native American Heritage Month – November 2025

Share, Learn, and Celebrate

The Share, Learn, and Celebrate initiative of The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington aims to promote multicultural awareness and understanding in our diverse communities. We want to engage Archdiocesan parishes, ministries, and the faithful in relevant activities to increase knowledge and appreciation for diverse cultures. Participants will be encouraged to share the achievements, identity, beauty, and richness of our communities during celebratory and historically significant occasions. To celebrate National Native American Heritage Month, please consider the following Share, Learn, and Celebrate recommendations.

National Native American Heritage Month - History

Every year we celebrate National Native American Heritage Month or, as it is commonly known, American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month, to affirm the gifts and acknowledge the contributions made by Native people to the founding and development of our nation, and to honor their culture and traditions. It all started in May 1916 when New York was the first to have a national observance with their celebration of American Indian Day. Several states followed by designating Columbus Day as the day to celebrate Native American Heritage. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush approved the designation of National American Indian Heritage Month to occur in November.

Archdiocesan -Level Activities and Resources

Share

Resources have been prepared for parishes and schools in the celebration of National Native American Heritage Month. The Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach (OCDO) can assist in providing these materials. Please contact culturaldiversity@adw.org for more information.

Learn

As the Archdiocese celebrates National Native American Heritage Month, it is important to highlight the presence Native Americans in the Catholic community. To begin understanding, we suggest the resources at the bottom of this document about the presence of Native American Catholics in our nation.

This understanding is not complete without appreciating the intersection of the Catholic Church with Native American culture. We advise you to also explore the “Two Rivers” report published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and learn about the merging of Native American faith and culture with the gifts of Catholic Native American Ministry To read the report, click [here](#).

Celebrate

The Martyrs of La Florida: Lessons On The New Evangelization. Join us for a special conversation with Dr. Mary Soha, vice-postulator for the Canonization Cause of the Martyrs of La Florida, as she explores the New Evangelization within Native American communities and the meaningful lessons it offers for today. This event, part of the National Native American Heritage Month celebrations, will take place at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine on Tuesday, November 20, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET. Sponsored by the National Shrine with support from the Office of Cultural Diversity in the Church (OCDO), the discussion promises to be both insightful and inspiring. We encourage your presence and participation in this meaningful dialogue. To learn more, click [here](#). You can [download the flyer](#), [RSVP](#) and [access the livestream](#) of the presentation.

Parish-Level Recommendations

Share

Invite parishioners with Native American background to tell the stories of their connections to the church. This is an opportunity to learn about one another, how Catholicism has shaped Native peoples, and how culture and actions have contributed to the faith and that of their family. These dialogues can help to build community in the parish.

Learn

Host a gathering at your parish to discuss the history, diversity, and complexity of Native American culture. We recommend that you use the resources below to help open this dialogue. For further assistance, please contact culturaldiversity@adw.org.

Celebrate

Plan liturgies to celebrate the cultural expression of Native Americans in the Church and our country. This can be done with opening/closing Masses for National Native American Heritage Month, or with services recognizing Native American communities and traditions. Engage your parish's intercultural committee or others to plan and participate. Please contact the Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach at culturaldiversity@adw.org for assistance with liturgical resources such as prayers of the Faithful and Prayer cards.

Share

In 2012, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha was canonized, becoming the first saint of Native American heritage in the Catholic Church. Read below to learn about her life, and about the lives of other Native Americans on the path to sainthood.

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

Known informally as Lily of the Mohawks, Saint Kateri's family died in an outbreak of smallpox, leaving her permanently scarred. Still, she lived her young adult life diligently, denouncing marriage to any suitors brought forth by her tribe. At age 19, she vowed a life of chastity and converted to Catholicism. Saint Kateri is the patron saint of traditional ecology, Indigenous peoples, and care for creation.

"St. Kateri Tekakwitha showed us that ordinary acts can achieve great holiness." Pope Francis.

We celebrate the feast of St. Kateri Tekakwitha on July 14, the day we also celebrate Catholic Native American ministry.

Causes for Canonization

Servant of God Nicholas Black Elk

Born in the 19th century, Nicholas Black Elk was struck with severe illness at an early age. In this time of crisis, he experienced visions, which allowed him to ponder faith. Black Elk then worked as a skilled and devoted medicine man for the Lakota people, eventually converting to Catholicism, living as a catechist. In his time as a catechist, he embraced the traditions and practices of both the Catholic Church and the Lakota people.

The Martyrs of La Florida

From the 16th to the 18th century, more than 1,000 people in the Atlantic Southeast, including priests, religious, and laypeople, were martyred for their faith. Those under examination for sainthood include almost 100 Native American Catholics, predominantly of the Apalachee Nation. One of the most well-known martyrs is layman Antonio Cuipa, who was second in command to the largest Christian Apalachee Mission in La Florida.

Learn

We invite you to dive deeper into the lives of these inspiring Native American Catholics and the causes that support them. See the links here to explore more: [Saint Kateri](#) – Servant of God [Nicholas W. Black Elk](#) – [Martyrs of La Florida](#), Servants of God Antonio Cuipa and Companions.

Celebrate

Plan event(s) with parishioners to discuss their favorite aspects of Native American heritage. This can be an opportunity to talk about the unique expression of culture and faith within the Indigenous American community. The activity can include the screening of a movie that educates on Native American traditions. Host these events at your RCIA, religious education, or parent education programs. For movie recommendations, see the resource list at the conclusion of this document. Contact the Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach at culturaldiversity@adw.org for assistance.

Share

Native American culture is rich and diverse in its traditions. Share these by hosting a Native American heritage festival featuring art, music, and gastronomy. In addition, invite them to create exhibits of Native American traditions to further exemplify the influence of their culture in the community. Finally, highlight influential Native Americans in our nation seen [here](#).

Learn Host a panel discussion virtually or in-person with organizations that are a part of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. These dialogues are opportunities to learn more about people's origins and how you can advocate for Native American Catholics. History, resources, and affiliate organizations can be found [here](#).

Celebrate Let us continue celebrating beyond this month and join the Tekakwitha Conference for its annual gathering to reinforce Native American Catholic Identity and advocate for Indigenous communities. Learn more about the organization and the other events it hosts by clicking [here](#).

Share The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington has created a commemorative 2023 National Native American Heritage Month prayer card to share with your parishioners. To submit your request, click [here](#).

Learn Consider sponsoring a field trip or encourage families in the parish to visit some of the following **historical and educational sites**:

1. [Keeping Christ's Sacred Promise: A Pastoral Framework for Indigenous Ministry](#) - USCCB
2. [National Museum of the American Indian: Washington, D.C.](#)
3. [Baltimore American Indian Center: Baltimore](#)
4. [National Park Services Parks, Monuments, and Historical Sites: Virtual/Nationwide](#)
5. [Saint Kateri National Shrine & Historic Site: Fonda, New York](#)
6. [Servant of God Black Elk- Canonization: Diocese of Rapid City, Western South Dakota](#)

Documentaries:

1. [Walking the Good Red Road: Nicholas Black Elk's Journey to Sainthood](#) - DRC
2. [Convocation: Black Elk: Colonialism and Lakota Catholicism](#) – University of Mary
3. [Martyrs of La Florida](#)

Mass Resources

1. [Prayer Card](#)
2. Native American Rosary Booklet
[Youth Edition](#) and [Traditional Edition](#)
Catholic Indian Missions

Catholic Schools and Religious Education

Share We encourage you to share the Archdiocesan Native American heritage historical facts in school newsletters, announcements, and social media. You can find a list by clicking [here](#).

Learn Help students learn more about our Native American saint with a fun and affordable art project by having them create their own image of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha. Various ways to depict her can be found [here](#). Create a curriculum that teaches the origins and life story of Saint Kateri and other Native American Catholics.

Celebrate Develop art projects for students to celebrate Native American Heritage Month and display them throughout the school building. We encourage you to turn this into a contest, with the winner's works published on the ADW website and archdiocesan newspapers. You might organize a [play](#) or host a festival featuring the art, music and gastronomy of the many tribes that make up Native American heritage. For more details or recommendations, please email culturaldiversity@adw.org.

Share Celebrate a special Mass to commemorate National Native American Heritage Month. Engage the parish and faculty staff, students, and parents to plan and participate in the liturgy. For resources, contact the Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach. To order copies of the 2024 National Native American Heritage Month prayer card, click on the link [here](#).

Resources

Use these resources to explore and celebrate Native American Heritage through a Catholic lens.

- Demographic Resources

- [Race, Ethnicity, and Ancestry of American Indian/Alaskan Natives - U.S. Census Bureau](#)

- Native American Heritage Literature

- [Native American Resource Guide](#) - University of Maryland
- [Native Voices in November Book List](#) - New York Public Library

- The Vatican

- [Holy See: Indigenous women should be protagonists of a better future](#)
- [Message of the Holy Father Leo XIV on the occasion of the Jubilee of Indigenous Peoples, 16.10.2025](#)

- Educational Websites

- [Native American Heritage Month](#)
- [Black and Indian American Mission](#)
- [Native American Affairs](#) - USCCB Resources
- [Two Rivers](#) - USCCB
- [Resources on National Native American Heritage Month](#) - Smithsonian
- [Native American Heritage teacher's guide - National Endowment for the Humanities](#)
- [Biggest Native American tribes in the U.S.](#)

- [Tribal Nations and the United States](#) - NCAI
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#)
- [Catholic Indian Missions of the United States: Detailed History of Catholic Missionary Activity to the Native Tribes of America](#)
- [History of Piscataway Indians in Maryland - Piscataway Conoy Tribe Museum and Cultural Center](#) – Waldorf, MD
- [Native American Collections](#) Marquette University, Raynor Library

- Videos / Movie Resources

- [Native American Films to educate on traditions - Learning for Justice](#)
- [Indigenous Peoples Across America – Catholic Extension](#)
- [Native American History of Washington DC](#) - Dr. Armand Lione
- [Dr. Mary Soha on the Florida Martyrs at the KOC Museum](#) - [The Martyrs of La Florida: Lessons On The New Evangelization](#) -St. John Paul II National Shrine.