



## **5 Facts to Know About: The Native American Church**

1. The Native American Church is a hybrid faith tradition of indigenous thought and rituals and Christianity. Different tribes have incorporated more or less of Christianity into their practice based on history with missionaries and shared beliefs. It was officially established in Oklahoma. Some NACs do not acknowledge Christianity as part of their belief. The first Native American Church was officially established in Oklahoma.
2. The Church is a monotheistic tradition with its deity referred to as the Great Spirit.
3. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978) was passed by Congress to protect traditional religious rights, sacraments and cultural practices of Native Americans, Eskimos, Aleuts, and Native Hawaiians, including preserving access to sacred sites, repatriation of sacred objects from museums, freedom to worship, and use and possession of sacred objects
4. . Ceremonies in the Native American Church are held at various times of the year and moon cycle or at the request of members. Ceremonies are often held at night and can last all night. They often include the use of peyote which is a controlled plant medicine that heightens perception and encourages introspection. They are led by a Roadman or medicine person. Other people support those attending by pouring water, keeping the fire or supporting or guiding other members. Ceremonies can also occur to celebrate holidays or personal achievements.
5. The plaintiffs of the Supreme Court Case *Employment Division v. Smith* were members of the Native American Church. Losing this case prompted Congress to pass the Religious Freedom Restoration Act., clarifying the rights of members of the Native American Church to partake of their sacraments and medicines and keep the traditions.

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Learn more at:

<https://nativeamericanchurches.org/>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Native-American-Church>

*These five points are not meant to be comprehensive or authoritative. We hope they will encourage you to explore this tradition more deeply and seek out members of this community to learn about their beliefs in action. It is our firm belief that in understanding our differences we will better understand our common humanity.*

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