



5 Starter Facts About The Native American Church

1. The Native American Church is a monotheistic, hybrid faith of indigenous thought and rituals and Christianity. It was first established in Oklahoma.
2. The deity is referred to as the Great Spirit. Different tribes have incorporated more or less of Christianity into their practice based on history with missionaries and shared beliefs. Some NACs do not acknowledge Christianity as part of their belief.
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 are held at various times of the year and moon cycle or at the request of members. They are often held at night. They often include the use of peyote, 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 celebrate holidays or personal achievements.
5. The plaintiffs of the U.S. 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 Church to partake of their sacraments and medicines and keep the traditions.

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 encourage you to explore this spirituality more deeply and seek out members of this community to learn about their beliefs in action. In understanding our differences we will better understand our common humanity.

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