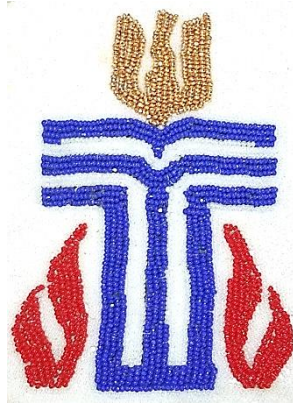


Native American Day in the Presbyterian Church, USA



Native American Day is celebrated in the Presbyterian Church, USA on September 22nd or 23rd (Fall Equinox). You may celebrate the day on the Sunday before or after or on another appropriate day. Worship resources follow.

Since 1994, Native American Day appears on the Presbyterian Calendar as the day to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Native Americans/American Indians to the life of the church and community. The date of September 22nd or 23rd was selected and established the date for Native American Day. Ironically, Fall Equinox is noted on one or the other date. The Fall Equinox has marked “harvest time” for many Native American tribes for centuries and is a time of celebration and preparation for winter.

Native American Day is usually celebrated with a worship service held at the Presbyterian Center in Louisville, Kentucky. Rev. Irvin Porter, Associate for Native American Intercultural Congregational Support has responsibility of planning the service and usually has Native American leaders help with liturgy, preaching and the Sacrament of The Lord’s Supper.

The ninety-five Native American congregations and chapels are located on reservations, in rural areas and two urban congregations. There are sixteen presbyteries and six synods which have Native American constituents in their bounds. Some of the churches are isolated due to location.

Very few ordained Native American clergy still serve these congregations. The churches are dependent upon Commissioned Ruling Elders because they cannot meet the presbytery minimum salary necessary to pay a full-time pastor. Most of these congregations are comprised of low-income Native people so consequently do not have the resources to sustain full-time ministries. The loss of national and mid-governing body mission funding has contributed to an already acute leadership crisis in these churches.

*First Indian Presbyterian Church
Kamiah, Idaho est. 1871
(Nez Perce Indian reservation)*



Did You Know?

- ❖ As of 2021, there are 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages. A federally recognized tribe is an American Indian or Alaska Native tribal entity that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, with the responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations attached to that designation, and is eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Federally recognized tribes have certain fundamental rights of self-government (i.e., tribal sovereignty) and may receive a variety of federal benefits, services, and protections because of their relationship with the United States. American Indians and Alaska Natives live and work just as other citizens do. Many leave their reservations, communities or villages for to seek education, medical services and employment. The 2010 Census, for the first time, indicated that over one-half of the total U.S. American Indian and Alaska Native population now live away from their tribal lands. The 2020 Census indicates that 78% of Native Americans now live outside reservations and 72% live in urban or suburban locations.
<https://www.bia.gov/frequently-asked-questions#:~:text=At%20present%2C%20there%20are%20574,Alaska%20Native%20tribes%20and%20villages.>
- ❖ Allotment land: Break up of Indian territories through the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 resulted in land being distributed to individual Native Americans (180 acres). The “surplus land” was sold by the federal government to non-Native buyers.
- ❖ Relocation: A government program relocating Native Americans to urban areas of the country in the 1950’s and early 60’s under the guise of assisting families with employment and education for single adults. Some stayed and others returned to their homelands when the promised jobs never materialized. Often they were given bus fare to the city and a small stipend and expected to support themselves without training for jobs or preparation to live an urban existence. The experiment failed.
- ❖ There are 571 American Indian gaming operations owned by 245 tribes. Many of the Acts which created the gaming operations require they give-back to surrounding municipalities a percentage of their earnings annually. Some tribes do not have gaming operations. The idea that “all Indian tribes have casinos” is false.
https://www.500nations.com/Indian_Casinos_List.asp#:~:text=Indian%20gaming%20is%20played%20in,are%20owned%20by%20245%20tribes.

Connections and partnerships between congregations and these Native American churches around mission projects have been ongoing for several years and mutually beneficial. Groups have worked together in the local community, help with church building needs and conduct Vacation Bible School. Others have given toward national gatherings for Native American youth, young adults and leadership development opportunities. A better understanding between both cultures has developed as well.

Diversity exists in the languages, cultures, and tribal governments but a common history is their faith journey. Native American Presbyterians love to tell the story and welcome opportunities to do so.

*“May the warm winds of heaven blow softly upon you
and the Creator make sunrise in your hearts.”
(Cherokee Prayer)*

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Native American Intercultural
Congregational Support with
Members of the Native American
Presbyterian Women's Conference*



*American Indian Youth Council
Class of 2021*

