

USCCB Catholic Cultural Diversity Convocation 2010
Native American Witnesses - Presentation Outline

We are a people who are made in the image of God.
We are a people of faith who love God.
We are the original inhabitants of Turtle Island – North America and Central America
We are a people who love family.
We are a people who are respectful.
We are a people who honor traditions.
We are a people who believe in connectedness.
We are a people who love to laugh.

We come from Turtle Island - North America.
We come from more than 550 Federally recognized Tribes and Nations.
We come from many other communities and groupings of people who are not recognized by the Federal Government
We come from reservations and cities and villages located in every part of the United States and Canada.
We come from parishes and dioceses located in every part of the United states and Canada.

Our journey has been blessed by:

- The love of God.
- The gift of faith that was first brought to us by Catholic missionaries over 500 years ago.
- The life and example of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.
- The lives and examples and generosity of many other faithful Native American Catholics.
- The ministry of many thousands of Catholic missionaries during the last 500 years.
- The ministry of countless bishops, priests, religious sisters, and religious brothers.
- The recent renewal of interest in Native American culture.
- The opportunities to share the gifts of ourselves with people of other cultures and traditions.
- The gifts of the cultures and traditions of other people that have been offered to us.

We have faced these obstacles in our path:

- The separation of families
- The tyranny and abuse suffered in Government and Church run Boarding schools
- The loss of our languages and cultures due to assimilation
- The struggle to find where we belong in contemporary American society
- A history of lies and broken promises and broken treaties.
- Being viewed as a monolithic, homogeneous group of people with one culture and one set of ideas and beliefs.
- Racism and prejudice and discrimination
- Being viewed by fellow Native Americans as traitors for leaving behind our own traditional beliefs for Catholicism

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Today we want to seize these opportunities...

- Full and active involvement in all levels and areas of the Catholic Church in the United States – in our parishes, dioceses and at the national level
- Increasing our profile and visibility in the Catholic Church of the United States
- Assuming leadership in Native American Catholic communities
- Guiding our young people towards achieving higher levels of education
- Ongoing reclamation of our tribal cultural identities and teachings

Our vision for the future is...

- Surviving and flourishing as unique Native American peoples from many different tribes and nations and cultures
- Growth in the number of Native American Catholics in the United States by means of evangelism and natural growth
- Increased involvement by Native American Catholics in all aspects of the life of the Catholic Church in the United States.
- Facilitating the sharing of the gift of our Native American cultures and values with the other peoples who are part of the Catholic Church in the United States