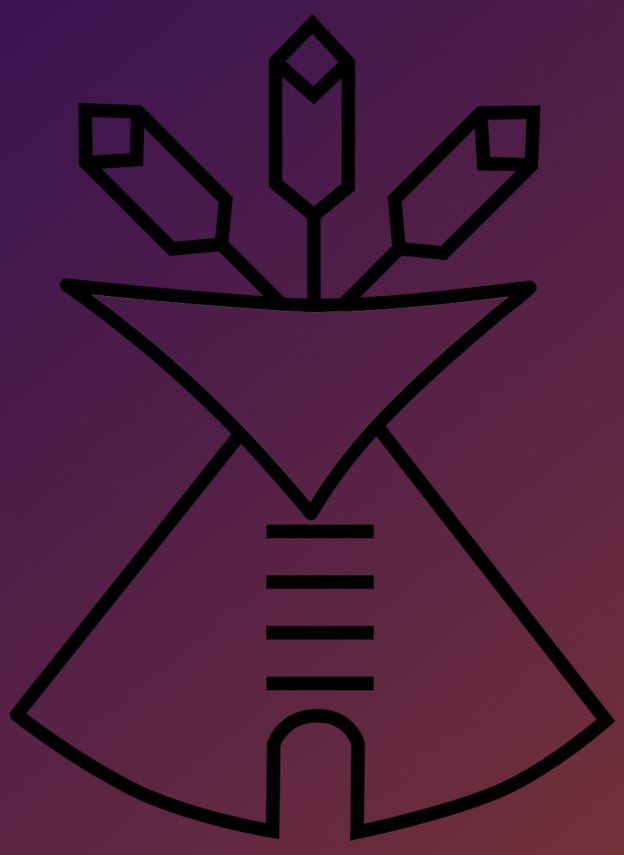
The Native American Church and its significance in the 21st century



Wolters, O. (2007, May 27). Native american church - emblems of belief available for placement on USVA headstones and markers. [Illustration]. Wikipedia. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/06/USVA_-headstone_emb-12.svg

The Native American Church is a Pan-Indian religion practiced among the natives of North America, and was developed into a distinct religion in 1885 in Oklahoma. It is a a mixture of Native American Religion and Christianity, though Christian influence varies. The Great spirit is analogoous to the Christian God, and is an example of the incorporation fo Christianity into Native traditions.



Lophophora williamsii (Peyote cactus) in New Mexico US. |Source= [http://images.fws.gov/default.cfm?fuseaction=records.display&CFID=486125&CFTOKEN=95146170&id=B4C563D2%2D6B6A%2D4696%2DB74AEA40CF7120C9] |Date= 02 November 2001

Peyote was criminalized in the United States, though as it is used within the organised religion of the Native American Church, its use was made legal for members of the church as the argument was made that it was constitutionally protected as it is part of a religious practice. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978) was passed to protect the rghts of indiginous peoples in the United States to practice their religion freely, witht he Religious Freedom Restoration Act working to clarify the rights of the Native American Church in regards to their medicines

Peyote Ceremonites usually take place around a crescent shaped altar and a fire, and services are meant to include prayers, singing, water rites, contemplation, and the eating of peyote, and lasts all night.

The Native American church is also known as Peyote religion, or Peyotism, as the use of Peyote, which is a hallucinogenic substance derived from cactus, plays a large role in the practices of the religion. Along with playing a prominent role, the peyote is also personified, and is known by followers as the Peyote Spirit, which is either the equivalent to Jesus within the group, or is Jesus himself.