

Supporting Native American Cultures and Religions

Any successful effort to help repair and strengthen Native cultural and spiritual values will need to be Native led. Many Native organizations are working hard to reclaim their traditions and would benefit from recognition of their work and financial support. Again, the first step by religious and spiritual communities who want to help this work needs to begin with education and truth telling about the oppression and pressure to assimilate that Native peoples faced, and continue to face. It needs to come from a spirit of justice, not charity.

There are too many Native-led programs doing good work to provide a comprehensive list. Here are a few programs and issues to get you thinking about how your community might respond.



[Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center](#): The Center’s mission is “to empower American Indian women and families to exercise their cultural values and integrity, and to achieve sustainable life ways, while advocating for justice and equity.” A number of its programs aim to heal women and families from chemical dependency and mental health problems that are disproportionate in the community, the result of generational trauma. It’s one example of a Native-led program doing good work in the community and deserving support.

[Dream of Wild Health](#): Dream of Wild Health’s mission is “to restore health and well being in the Native community and by recovering knowledge of and access to healthy Indigenous foods, medicines and lifeways.” It owns a 40-acre farm near Hugo which serves both as a Community-Supported Agriculture program and provides internships for Native youth to learn traditional ways.

[Returning the Dakota People’s Sacred Red Rock](#): In Ya Sa, or the sacred red rock, was a sacred object to the Dakota people before settlers arrived. After the Dakota-U.S. War and the Dakota exile, the Methodist church appropriated the rock as symbolic for its bible camps. It currently resides in front of Newport United Methodist Church. A group of Dakota leaders have asked for the rock’s return. The **[United Methodist Church](#)** recently committed to do so. It is in the process of trying to educate its members, build new relationships with Dakota peoples, and return the rock in a good way.

[Honoring traditional place names](#): Settlers renamed everything when they arrived here, one of many forms of domination. Native-led efforts are moving forward to restore the original name of Bde Maka Ska (or White Earth Lake) to Lake Calhoun. Restoring place names is one way to honor the original peoples. The First Universalist Church in Minneapolis, located y near Bde Maka Ska, opened its space for many Dakota/Lakote led community dialogues about the lake’s name and culture. It is building relationships with local Dakota and Lakota people. It played a significant supportive role in helping launch the Dakota/Lakota led **[Mni Ki Wakan: The Decade of Water Summit](#)**.