

**75 Years of History in 2000 Years of Christianity:
Why Fargo and the Tekakwitha Conference It Launched**

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2000 Years of Christianity**

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Part 1, Frame 01 (Title): For over 25 years at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I've served the Tekakwitha Conference, the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, and other Catholic Native groups by preserving archival records and making available. For this PowerPoint, I've been mindful of the many people who have shaped the Conference, and in particular, I'm constantly reminded of Bishop Aloysius Muench who launched it 75 years ago, because my office window overlooks Marquette's Gesu Church, where 79 years ago, he was ordained the Bishop of Fargo, and yes – like me – he was Milwaukee-born and raised.

But why did the Conference begin in Fargo and why did Bishop Muench found it? The reasons were not random. Rather, the First People of the Fargo Diocese experienced a number of unique events, which began during their first years as Christians. By 1884, when Fargo was still a tiny town, all of the bishops of the United States gathered in Baltimore for their third plenary council to discuss and act on several common concerns. One of them was to sign the postulation brief or petition to ask the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, to initiate Saint Kateri's canonization cause, which would be accompanied by supporting documentation about her life. Still to be added were support letters from Native people. So early the next year, in collaboration with church officials and missionaries in Canada and the United States, many Native people were asked to sign one of what became a series of 27 letters signed by 906 native people.

Before Fargo: *Saint Kateri's Cause*



Frame 02: The first letter was written in Quebec, Canada, at Kahnawake in Mohawk and Latin. 26 Mohawk people signed it and theirs was the one written farthest east.

Image: Anne M. Scheuerman Collection, Marquette University Archives

Before Fargo: *Saint Kateri's Cause*



Frame 03: To the west and south in present-day South Dakota, 27 Lakota men signed one in Lakota and English, depicted by this group of chiefs. Their letter was the one written farthest south and among its signers was Black Elk, then a young medicine man and later a prominent catechist best remembered for his teachings with the pipe. Here he's on the far right in the regalia of the popular grass dance, the forerunner of today's powwow.

It appears that Black Elk, and possibly the other signers, signed just east of the Missouri River, while gathered to rendezvous with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Then, they were bound for performances in Europe, which included Rome, where Pope Leo XIII gave them a special blessing.

Image: St. Paul Mission Collection, Marquette University Archives



Frame 04: In the Far West on Puget Sound, in present-day Washington State, 71 Lummi people signed another in Lummi, depicted by this Lummi sculpture of two canoeists bringing a “Black Robe” priest to them. Their letter was the one written farthest west and among its signers was Charles F. Finkbonner, a Great-Great Grandfather of the boy Jake Finkbonner cured, we believe, by Saint Kateri’s intercession with Jesus in 2006.

Image: Photo by author (St. Joachim's Church, Lummi WA, Marquette University Archives



Frame 05: To the Northeast in Manitoba, Canada, 35 Ojibwe people signed one in their language. Their letter was the one written farthest northern and they are depicted by Ojibwe people in their regalia.

Before Fargo: Saint Kateri's Cause

The diagram illustrates the interconnectedness of the events and figures mentioned in the text. It features five images arranged in a circle, connected by yellow arrows pointing clockwise. The images include a group of people in traditional Lakota dress, a painting of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, a painting of a Native American woman, a group of men in traditional Lakota dress, and a painting of three people in a landscape.

Frame 06: Among the native people in the center, in present-day North Dakota, 150 Lakota men signed their letter in Lakota, and in so doing, they signed as chiefs, traditional society leaders, and grass dancers. Their letter contained far more signatures than any of the others.

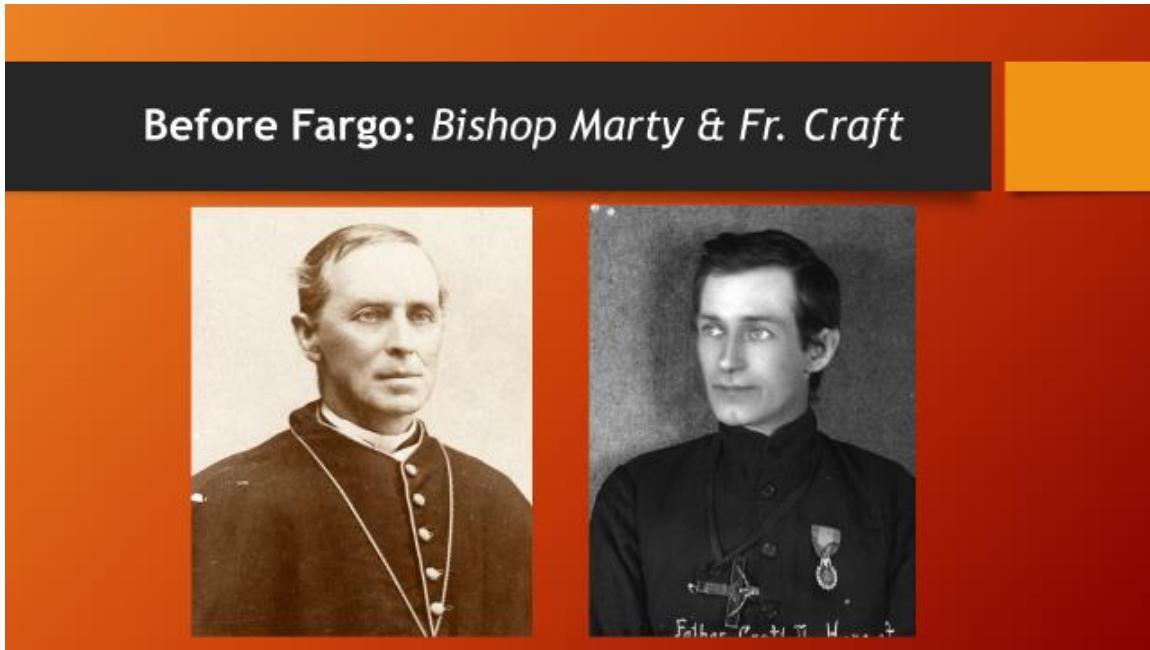
Native people at communities located in between these five places wrote 22 letters more, which together, formed a great circle. But beyond them in Alaska, Northern Canada, and the Southern United States, no letters were forthcoming, which likely reflected the overall lack of priests in these regions, as well as, the U.S. government had regulations that barred Catholic priests from many Indian reservations.

Before Fargo: Fr. De Smet, S.J., & Two Bears

The diagram features two portraits side-by-side. On the left is a portrait of Father Pierre-Jean de Smet, S.J., a Flemish Jesuit. On the right is a portrait of Chief Joseph Two Bears, a Native American leader.

Frame 07: Years earlier in North Dakota, the itinerant Flemish Jesuit, Father Pierre-Jean de Smet, and Chief Joseph Two Bears became friends. Together, they planted the seed for the Church.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives



Frame 08: Under their first bishop, the Benedictine Martin Marty, his fellow Swiss Benedictines, Father Francis Craft, and the Dakota-Lakota people nurtured and grew the Church, which then encompassed all of North and South Dakota as one diocese. In 1883, Bishop Marty ordained Father Craft as his first diocesan priest. He was energetic and innovative, a devotee of Saint Kateri with some Mohawk ancestry, and he had extensive Jesuit multi-cultural training from studies in Europe.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records and Thomas W. Foley Collection, Marquette University Archives

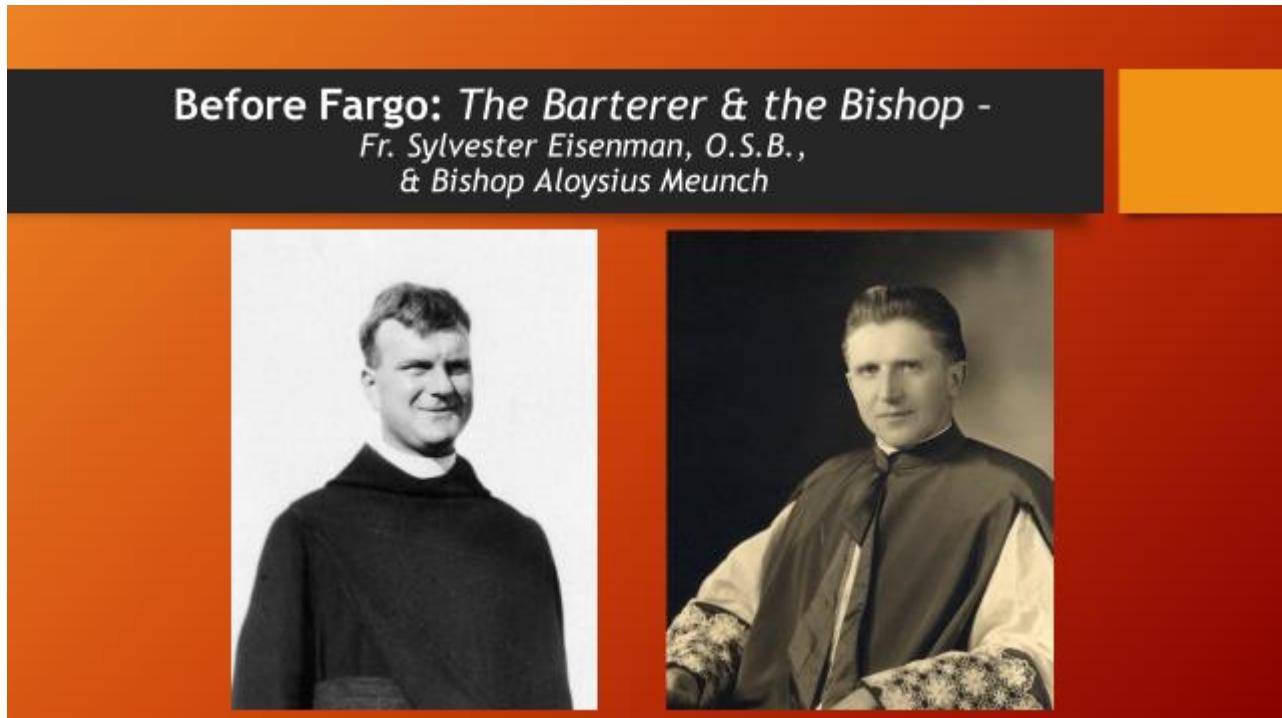


Frame 09: Father Craft saw the caring and sharing towards others expressed in the popular grass dance as the same virtues promoted by the Church. So he joined that society, and in 1884 when Bishop Marty launched the Saint Mary's and Saint Joseph's church societies at Spirit Lake, North Dakota, he encouraged grass dancers to

get involved in organizing them. Shown here are latter-day pictures of Saint Mary's and Saint Joseph's societies with their bishop at Spirit Lake and Spirit Lake grass dancers. It is likely that the grass dancers who organized the church societies were the same ones who signed Saint Kateri's letter early in the following year.

But in western South Dakota, government Indian agents had barred and expelled Catholic missionaries from reservations, including Father Craft, who was expelled from the Rosebud Reservation because he danced the grass dance with the people. In 1890, Father Craft would serve as a peace mediator to Wounded Knee, South Dakota, and when the U.S. Cavalry massacred the Ghost Dancers, he was among the wounded survivors. Months later, he and these Standing Rock Lakota women launched the Congregation of American Sisters, a religious community inspired by Saint Kateri and Sacred White Buffalo Woman of their Lakota tradition.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives



Frame 10: Also at Spirit Lake, an energetic and innovative Benedictine Father Sylvester Eisenman began his missionary career, and then was transferred to South Dakota. When meeting people, he listened and exchanged insights, and became – in the words of the late Benedictine historian Father Stan Maudlin – “a barterer in ideas”. In the summer of 1939 while visiting the Fargo Diocese, he learned that it was planning a 50th anniversary celebration. So he shared with Bishop Aloysius Muench the idea of launching a missionaries’ support group during the anniversary, which would give more attention to both events.

Bishop Muench liked these ideas. He was a staunch social justice advocate, who years earlier in Europe, saw comparable self-help efforts during equally hard times. Now, with the Great Depression hurting the Great Plains, the notion of a missionaries’ conference had special merit.

Images: St. Paul’s Mission Collection, Marquette University Archives, and Archdiocese of Milwaukee Archives

1939, Fargo: 1st *Tekakwitha Conference*

<Bishop Meunch & Benedictines, Fr. Elsenman;
Bishop Meunch, Pope Pius XII & Ignatius Court>



Frame 11: To launch the event, Bishop Muench sent invitations to leaders among the clergy and Native laity to gather at the Cathedral in Fargo on October 4th and 5th. 29 men responded, who comprised a diverse mix of clergy from dioceses and religious orders, three native laymen, and two Benedictine abbots. Together, they represented most Catholic missions and Native communities in the adjacent states of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Bishop Muench opened the meeting with words of welcome and prayer. He appointed Father Sylvester as chairman, and turned the program over to him with some advice. He advocated "a little organization" and a united front on issues in spite of differences, and therefore, the Conference "just might grow".

Father Sylvester introduced his vision of the conference and stressed the importance of a missionaries' gathering. He identified difficulties and communication problems with the Government and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, and the need for mutual help between missions and candid discussion among missionaries. Thereafter that day and the next, the attendees discussed the importance of native languages, Catholic schools and religious sisters, and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions as their advocate to the Government. They closed with liturgy and agreed to meet again the next year.

One invited lay elder who supported the conference idea, but did not attend, was Ignatius Court. Bishop Muench knew him well, but this long-time Spirit Lake leader and catechist suffered from failing health. So when in Rome the next week, he gave a photo of him to Pope Pius XII with a report on his life-long church service, which pleased the elder very much.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives

Lily of the Mohawks School Play

*<Little Flower School, Spirit Lake, 1934 &
Holy Rosary/Red Cloud School, Pine Ridge, 1938>*



Frame 12: For the next year's conference, Bishop Muench again invited attendees to a two-day meeting in October. Hoping for more participants, they moved the site to Jamestown, North Dakota, in the center of the state. But fewer members attended, and no Natives were among them.

Immediately after opening prayers, Benedictine Father Justin Snyder, suggested they name the conference in honor of Catherine Tekakwitha, which he quickly rephrased as a motion. Another seconded it, and the motion carried unanimously without any discussion noted in the minutes. Such apparent quick action is not surprising, since Saint Kateri's life-story then was well-known through stories and school plays in North and South Dakota.

Thereafter, the Conference gained added purpose in spite of the challenging times. In 1943, Pope Pius XII's declared Kateri venerable, and by then, the members had developed a brotherly "boys' club" rapport that enabled them to share travel expenses and overcome the wartime rationing of gasoline and tires. Similarly, expenses for room and board were minimal and largely borne by the Catholic host sites as an extension of their mutual hospitality. As such, the Sacred Heart Fathers hosted the 1941 Conference at Saint Joseph's School in Chamberlain, South Dakota, which was expanded to three days for the first time. However, some missionaries who staffed schools would not attend, fearing that discussions about schools might lead to criticism of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and jeopardize their essential funding. No meeting was held in 1945, but in 1947, the attendance rebounded with a record 50 attendees at the Benedictine's St. Michael's Mission at Spirit Lake. Only once thereafter would attendance reach 50 people until it reorganized in 1978. Paradoxically, the same brotherly relationships that sustained the Conference during the 1940s would postpone its future transformation.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives

To 1947: Reservation Concerns



Frame 13: Initially, all Conference discussions were held in general assemblies and focused primarily on reservation-related challenges, such as schools and youth recreation, family life and the sacraments, priesthood vocations, and alcoholism. But beginning in 1948, concerns grew in response to growing populations and off-reservation resettlement. Helping families adjust to city life and government cooperation emerged as new topics.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records and Holy Rosary Mission-Red Cloud Indian School Records, Marquette University Archives

<Congressman Ben Reifel & Commissioner Robert Bennett >



Frame 14: In 1956 for the first time, the Conference featured Native American keynote speakers who addressed the new concerns. They were South Dakota U.S. Congressman Ben Reifel of the Rosebud Lakota, and Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner Robert L. Bennett of the Wisconsin Oneida.



Frame 15: The next year, the Jesuit-run Mother Butler Center in Rapid City, South Dakota, hosted the Conference. Dedicated in 1949, Mother Butler became the first urban Indian Catholic center in the United States.

That year for the first time, the Conference shifted its dates to September, to better accommodated participants from distant locales, and thereafter, its dates continued to shift towards the summer months. It attracted 30 to 40 some participants from throughout the Great Plains and the Southwest, including Los Angeles, and featured reports and discussions about how relocated families adjusted to cities such as Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Salt Lake City, and Rapid City; what the people themselves and the urban parishes did to help; and what missionaries could do to help as well. When reporting on Los Angeles, they acknowledged the initiative of Mrs. Etta Roubideaux, a Rosebud Lakota laywoman from South Dakota, who with support from a downtown Franciscan pastor, served as president of a “Catholic Indian club” that provided mutual help and support to relocated native families throughout the area.

Images: Holy Rosary Mission-Red Cloud Indian School Records, Marquette University Archives

1964, Chamberlain: 25th *Tekakwitha Conference*

<Fr. John Brown; Fr. Stan Maudlin & Fr. Dan Madlon>



Frame 16: In 1963, while the Second Vatican Council was in progress, the Conference reassessed the question: “Who should be members?” They agreed that its focus should remain the Northern Plains, comprised of North and South Dakota and adjacent states plus the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan; that the membership should be open to all active Indian missionaries, the major superiors of their respective religious communities, and all diocesan priest with native parishioners. Furthermore, they acknowledged the importance of religious sisters as missionaries. But they felt that the sisters’ ministry, which largely focused on schools and youth, was *so specialized* that they should form their own separate organization, and if they did, the Tekakwitha Conference would support them.

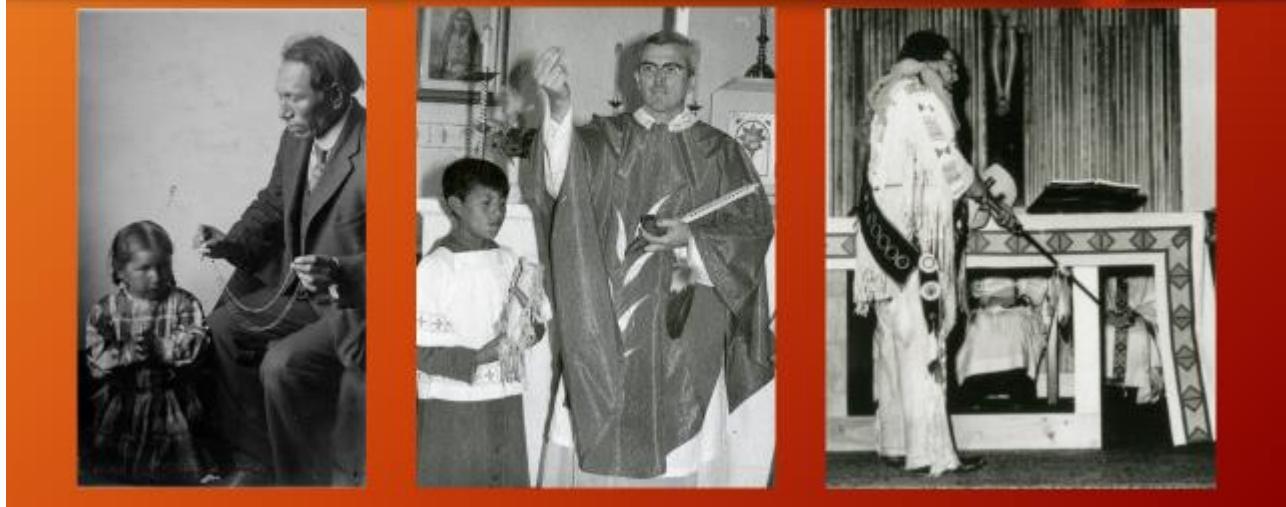
Also that year, Jesuits from South Dakota expanded their Northern Plains Dakota-Lakota language radio ministry into Canada. In so doing, they networked with Oblates of Mary Immaculate and invited them to the Conference. Three Oblates did attend, and in 1967, they reciprocated and hosted the first Tekakwitha Conference in Canada at Villa Maria Retreat House in St. Norbert, Manitoba.

The next year in 1964, the Conference celebrated its 25th anniversary, again at Saint Joseph’s School in Chamberlain. 39 members attended from 14 states, which included Benedictine Fathers Dan Madlon and Stan Maudlin, who were still with us at the 50th anniversary celebration, and Jesuit Father John Brown, a newly ordained priest and member of the Blackfoot Nation. Father Brown became the first Native priest to attend, and thereafter, a few native laymen and religious brothers attended as well.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives

1965: Fr. Paul B. Steinmetz, S.J., & the Pipe

<Black Elk inspired & Fools Crow approved>



Frame 17: Although the Conference balked at admitting women religious, it did respond to the Second Vatican Council by offering increasingly thoughtful programs. Beginning in 1965, Jesuit Father Paul Steinmetz, a Pine Ridge pastor with extensive theological background, presented repeatedly on the sacred pipe as a prayer instrument, which led to the writing of a very preliminary pastoral handbook on inculturated liturgy. Father Steinmetz first became acquainted with the pipe through his pastoral work and the teachings of catechist Nicholas Black Elk. Then his own reflections led him to pray with the pipe at mass, which received approval from local medicine men, including Frank Fools Crow, who while praying with his pipe, later blessed the altar at St. Isaac Jogues Church in nearby Rapid City.

Images: Holy Rosary Mission-Red Cloud Indian School Records, Marquette University Archives

1969-1976: Cultural Engagement & Self-Determination

<Br. Edward Red Owl, Birgil Kills Straight, Dn. Steven Red Elk & Bishop Harold Dimmerling>



Frame 18: In 1969, Benedictine Brother Edward Red Owl of the Sisseton Dakota, chaired the Conference. It's likely that he was not the first Native American chair, since he appears to follow a Native layman as part of an earlier reorganization attempt. But at this point, the record is sparse and unclear. That year, Blue Cloud Abbey hosted the event and Brother Edward presided over a presentation on "Red Power" by representatives of the Minneapolis American Indian Movement and a South Dakota Indian-controlled school, which was followed by a discussion on Indian civil rights with the attendees comprised of several non-Indian clergy plus Capuchin Father John Hascall of the Ojibwe in Michigan and North Dakota high school student John Cavanaugh from Spirit Lake. Brother Edward then developed and distributed the Conference's first newsletter. But then, he inexplicably disappears from the minutes.

In 1971 at the Jesuits' Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, Birgil Kills Straight, a local lay leader, presented with discussion, "How Missionaries can best Support Indian Self-Determination". Also discussed was the permanent diaconate for Native men, which was a new and experimental Jesuit-led program in the Rapid City Diocese that then was only found in Alaska.

Regular diaconate discussions then continued over the next few years, which were enriched by the 1973 formal establishment of that ministry in Rapid City by its Bishop Harold Dimmerling, and by letter, the Jesuit Bishop Robert Whelan of Fairbanks, Alaska, described the development of a comparable deacon program there, which began three years earlier. In 1975, Rapid City ordained Deacon Steven Red Elk, who became its first deacon. Four years later at the Conference, Bishop Dimmerling said this on empowering Native leadership: *"I have great confidence in the Indian people and the Spirit that works among them. You are perfectly capable of forming strong Catholic communities. You are perfectly capable of leading these communities. If we set aside our fears and believe instead, in the powerful Spirit which has been given to the Indian communities, the Catholic Church will thrive in Native American communities..."*

Images: Public domain, Don Doll, S.J., Collection, Holy Rosary Mission-Red Cloud Indian School Records, and Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives

1977, Rapid City: Reorganizing Begins

*<Francis Hairy Chin, Sr. Genevieve Cuny, Fr. Gil Hemauer & Msgr. Lenz
Fr. Edmund Savilla>*



Frame 19: In 1977 for the first time, the Conference invited a number of Native clergy religious, and laity, as well as the new director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Monsignor Paul Lenz. With 46 attendees, it opened with a lament about the Conference's ineffectiveness and stagnation. That prompted Monsignor Lenz for the first time, to pledge funding for a Conference transformation, and several Native attendees spoke on why the Conference should expand its membership and renew its purpose.

After the discussion, the attendees reached a historic moment and voted on what to do. A majority **voted out** the current operating board, which resigned, and they **voted in** an interim task force charged to plan a comprehensive reorganization as well as the next year's meeting. Francis Hairy Chin and Franciscan Sister Genevieve Cuny, two South Dakota Lakotas, and Capuchin Father Gil Hemauer, comprised the task force, which met with Monsignor Paul Lenz to plan for establishing a professional executive director and expanded conference programming. That year, Father Edmund Savilla, of Isleta, Oneida and Quechan heritage, became the first Native priest to preside over celebrating the mass, which included the first signing the Lord's Prayer in Plains Indian sign language.

Images: of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives

1967-1978: Women & Change

<Sr. Christine Hudson, Sr. Jose Hobday & Milwaukee group>

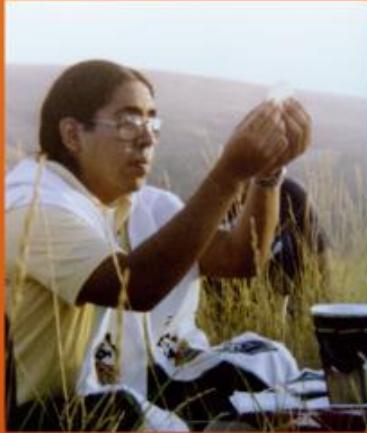


Frame 20: Earlier in 1967, Father Stan Maudlin had chaired the Conference. Because he was impressed with the scholarship on reservation school administration by Benedictine Sister Inez Hilger, he quietly sent invitations to a few Benedictine sisters. Although none attended that year, the records show ongoing networking with women religious, who provided data on reservation Catholic and government schools. Then five years later in 1971, three women religious attended, and two years after that, four attended, and among them was Oblate Sister Christine Hudson of Marty, South Dakota, who became the first Native sister to attend.

In 1978, the task force sent invitations to Native Catholics throughout the United States and a record 220 participants attended. School Sister of St. Francis Sister José Hobday of the Seneca Nation served as a keynote speaker and became the first woman to do so. She asked, “*We've come to the whole campfire of the Lord's presence and allowed ourselves to burn out in each other's dreams and hopes in the Spirit. And what does this all mean?*” Several concurrent discussions then followed, which helped to chart the Conference’s new course of action. Among those attending was this urban group from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, comprised of Ho Chunk and Oneida Catholics.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives

Association of Native Religious & Clergy



Frame 21: Meanwhile, the Association of Native Religious and Clergy formed in 1971 as a mutual support group with an annual retreat, and eight years later in 1979, it began to schedule its retreats just prior to the Conference. That year, they met at Red Cloud Indian School on Pine Ridge, where Father Savilla celebrated mass for them at sunrise. Thereafter, its members began to participate actively in the Conference and to contribute to its new leadership.

Images: Association of Native Religious and Clergy Collection, Marquette University Archives

1979, Yankton: Circle of 66

<Sr. Kateri Mitchell & Msgr. Lenz; Dn. Ben Black Bear, Fr. Charles Leute, ___,
Fr. Edmund Savilla, ___, Fr. Georges Mathieu & Fr. John Hascall>



Frame 22: That year in Yankton South Dakota, the Tekakwitha Conference gathered for its 40th annual meeting. About 200 people attended, including 66 Native Catholics of many backgrounds. After listening to several presentations, an Ojibwe laywoman from Minnesota, Bea Swanson, asked to speak, and she said from

the heart what many were thinking. “*Bishops, you are so nice. But you always say the same things. Can we Indians talk to you ourselves? You say you are our pastors. Can we just be alone with you? Can the priests and sisters go out? We have something to say to you ourselves.*”

In response, the Conference suspended its agenda, and under the leadership of Sister José Hobday, Bea Swanson, and Harold Condon, a South Dakota Lakota, this “Circle of 66” met with the three bishops in attendance and Monsignor Lenz. They articulated their concerns and composed a formal statement with five principal points. It cited the lack of native ministers in rural and urban native communities and the lack of sensitivity shown to native people and their heritage by many who minister to them. Furthermore, it cited their support of the Tekakwitha Conference; the need to canonize Kateri Tekakwitha, and the need to promote healing and well-being among native people. Thereafter, the Native Catholic attendees possessed new confidence and the tenor of the Conference was changed permanently.

Later that year, the Conference incorporated as a non-profit corporation with an executive director and a board of directors, and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops appointed an Episcopal Moderator. The Tekakwitha Conference thereby gained status as an official Catholic organization with a listing in *The Official Catholic Directory*, and now after 40 years, the Tekakwitha Conference had truly “come of age”.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives



Frame 23: In 1980, Pope John Paul II beatified Saint Kateri, and during the ceremony, Pale Moon and Francis Hairy Chin, as Conference representatives, presented gifts of appreciation. In Denver that year, 600 people gathered to give thanks, on this 300th anniversary of Saint Kateri’s death. For most attendees, this was their first conference, and for the first time, native people comprised a majority. Cardinal John Krol, the Archbishop of Philadelphia and chairman of the board of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, presided over a mass concelebrated with all clergy, and Father Edmund Savilla, presided over an inculcitated mass concelebrated with all native clergy.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives

Kateri Circles; Mini & Regional Conferences



Frame 24: Later that year, the Conference established its national office, first in Bozeman, and then in Great Falls, Montana, and it began to encourage the formation of local groups, called Kateri circles, and the organization of state and regional conferences. Within a decade, over 100 circles were registered.

Images: Anne M. Scheuerman Collection and Herman D. Ray, Jr., Collection, Marquette University Archives

Pilgrimages

<Santo Domingo, San Xavier del Bac, Ysleta del Sur, Auriesville & Kahnawake>



Frame 25: At the following year's Conference in Albuquerque, nearby Santo Domingo Pueblo hosted a pilgrimage to its church, which enabled attendees to capture a glimpse on how one people lived as Christians

and native people. Thereafter, pilgrimages became regular features. In 1985 from Syracuse, the Conference visited Saint Kateri's homeland for the first time.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records and Anne M. Scheuerman Collection, Marquette University Archives



Frame 26: Very quickly the Conference established new regular features, such as liturgies with native languages and local customs, sunrise services, healing services, shrines to Saint Kateri by the host committees that honored her from their local native perspective, processions led by Saint Kateri's reliquary, a youth agenda, and native regalia worn at several activities.

Images: Anne M. Scheuerman Collection and Tekakwitha Conference Records, Marquette University Archives



Frame 27: Growing out of experiences at the conference annual meetings, the Tekakwitha Conference recognized that many Catholic Natives had difficulty reconciling their Catholic and Native American beliefs and traditions. From 1983 to 1992, the Conference responded by providing ***native-centered*** Catholic leadership training on inculcating native traditions within a Catholic context. These were one and two-week summer training institutes led by Father John Hascall, Sister Jose Hobday, and others, held at several places throughout the United States. Thereafter, in cooperation with the Conference, the Sioux Spiritual Center in South Dakota has continued to offer these crucial native-centered religious training workshops.

Images: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives



Frame 28: For its 50th anniversary, the Conference returned to Fargo for the first time, and as Bishop Muench had hoped, it had grown. Father Gil Hemauer, who had served as Executive Director for nine years, bid farewell, and Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria's Igbo people and the representative of the Holy See, expressed his enthusiasm and offered words of encouragement for the future.

Images: Anne M. Scheuerman Collection and Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Marquette University Archives

2005, 2012: *Hope & Anticipation*



Frame 29: For years, Saint Kateri's devotees had wondered when Rome would accept as a miracle one of the many cures attributed to her intercession. Each year at the Conference, devotional prayers and reenactments of her life took place and one of the two vice-postulators gave an update on the research, saying more investigations were under way and that the faithful should keep praying for a break-through.

Then in February 2006, while planning was underway for that year's Conference in Seattle, Sister Kateri Mitchell, now the Executive Director, scheduled a planning visit to that city. Then she was called to pray over Jake Finkbonner, a five-year old Lummi Nation boy hospitalized with an aggressive life-threatening infection on his face. With his parents and Saint Kateri's relic, they prayed to Saint Kateri to intercede with Jesus so that Jake would be cured. Minutes later, nurses took Jake to his daily surgery to slow the progress of the disease. But when they removed the bandages covering his head and upper body, they found no disease and further studies confirmed that the disease was gone completely.

At that Conference, with Jake, his family, and his pastor at his side, Seattle Archbishop Alexander Brunet announced that Rome had begun to investigate Jake's instantaneous cure. Then five years past, and while planning was underway for the 2012 Conference – the third one to be held in Kateri's Mohawk Country – Rome announced its findings. It authenticated Jake's cure as the essential miracle required for Saint Kateri's canonization, which it set for the following October. Consequently, that Conference acquired the atmosphere of a pep rally, and at its conclusion, Jake presented Saint Kateri's reliquary to a representative of the next year's host committee as Sister Kateri watched.

Images: Anne M. Scheuerman Collection and Herman D. Ray, Jr., Collection, Marquette University Archives

2012, Rome: Canonization



Frame 30: At the canonization mass, Jake and his family had the honor of receiving communion from Pope Benedict whereas others active in her cause were extensively involved in the thanksgiving events.

Images: Anne M. Scheuerman Collection and Herman D. Ray, Jr., Collection, Marquette University Archives

2013-14: Thanksgiving & New Home



Frame 31: Last year, 2013, the Conference achieved another major goal by purchasing an affordable and cost-effective national office, which was dedicated early this year.

Images: Herman D. Ray, Jr., Collection, Marquette University Archives

Leadership



Frame 32: Since its inception, under Saint Kateri's protection, leaders have come forth to serve the Tekakwitha Conference, and with continued faith, discernment, and her protection, our Conference will thrive.

Images: Herman D. Ray, Jr., Collection, Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Tekakwitha Conference Records, and Anne M. Scheuerman Collection, Marquette University Archives

1989, Back to Fargo: 75th Tekakwitha Conference The Legacy of Saint Kateri's Conference



Frame 33: In 1939, the Conference began at a crucial time among Saint Kateri's western devotees. It had some of the best leadership then available and its brotherly rapport gave members the commitment necessary to survive the difficult early years. But that same rapport impeded later growth towards its greater purpose, until

outside financial support provided an essential catalyst. After 40 years, the Conference incorporated and "came of age", and since then, it's become a transformative force in Native Catholic communities across North America.

Sources

- Archdiocese of Milwaukee Archives: Bishop Muench photograph
- Association of Native Religious & Clergy Collection (Marquette University)
- Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records: various photographs (Marquette University)
- *Decretum Quebecen. beatificationis seu declarationis martyrii servorum Dei Ioannis de Brébeuf, Gabrielis Lalemant, Caroli Garnier, Natalis Chabanel, Isaaci Jogues, Renati Goupil et Ioannis de la Lande e Societate Iesu.* Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1916
- Doll, Don, S.J., Collection: Birgil Kills Straight photograph (Marquette University)
- Eisenman Family Papers: Rev. Sylvester Eisenman, O.S.B., Papers (Marquette University)
- Foley, Thomas W., Collection: Rev. Francis Craft Papers and photograph (Marquette University)
- Holy Rosary Mission - Red Cloud Indian School Records: various photographs and Jesuit papers (Marquette University)
- Maudlin, Rev. Stanislaus, O.S.B., Papers: Tekakwitha Conference minutes (Augustana College, Center for Western Studies)
- Saint Paul Mission (Marty SD) Collection: photographs of Rev. Eisenman and Lakota chiefs & Black Elk in regalia (Marquette University)
- Scheuerman, Anne M., Collection: various photographs (Marquette University)
- Thiel, Mark G., and Christopher Vecsey, editors. *Native Footsteps along the Path of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha*, Marquette University Press with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 2013
- Tekakwitha Conference Records: various photographs and records (Marquette University)

Frame 34 (Sources): This brief history has been made possible by many resources at Marquette University and elsewhere. Most notable were the archival records and photography of the Tekakwitha Conference and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions as well as the photography of Anne Scheuerman and Herman Ray, our Conference photographers who have given so generously. Hereafter, this history will linked online near the top of Marquette's history page about the Tekakwitha Conference Records. To find it, type into your browser, "Marquette Archives Tekakwitha history". Thank you for your interest, and may we all "Walk humbly with Saint Kateri!"

- Archdiocese of Milwaukee Archives: Bishop Muench photograph
- Association of Native Religious & Clergy Collection (Marquette University)
- Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records: various photographs (Marquette University)
- *Decretum Quebecen. beatificationis seu declarationis martyrii servorum Dei Ioannis de Brébeuf, Gabrielis Lalemant, Caroli Garnier, Natalis Chabanel, Isaaci Jogues, Renati Goupil et Ioannis de la Lande e Societate Iesu.* Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1916
- Doll, Don, S.J., Collection: Birgil Kills Straight photograph (Marquette University)
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