

**Dear Friend of Las Casas:**

In June 2021, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative; a comprehensive effort to recognize the troubled legacy of federal Indian boarding school policies with the goal of addressing their intergenerational impact and to shed light on the traumas of the past. The report was released in May 2022. In response to the recommendations from the report, Secretary Haaland launched “The Road to Healing”, a year long commitment to travel across the country to give boarding school survivors the opportunity to share their stories, help connect communities with trauma-informed support, and facilitate collection of a permanent oral history.

As Deb approached this journey she indicated that “the Department’s work thus far shows that an all-of-government approach is necessary to strengthen and rebuild the bonds within Native communities that federal Indian boarding school policies set out to break. With the President’s direction, we have begun working through the White House Council of Native American Affairs on the path ahead to preserve Tribal languages, invest in survivor-focused services, and honor our obligations to Indigenous communities”.

Pope Francis was in Canada in July 2022 for an historic visit in which he fulfilled his promise to manifest by his presence a heartfelt and solemn apology to Indigenous People on behalf of the Catholic Church. During this visit, he expressed profound sadness at the lasting impact of colonization and the catastrophic impact of the residential school system, which led to abuses. “I humbly ask forgiveness for the ways in which many members of the Church cooperated in those projects of cultural destruction and assimilation stipulated by the government, which culminated in the system of residential schools”.

People in ministry with Native Americans continue to deal with the tragedies of the boarding schools as well as the COVID pandemic. Reservations are responding with wholistic responses to these realities. Inadequate housing and lack of federal services has been addressed with creativity and ingenuity. Since education for the children has been remote through this pandemic, reservations have received some funding to improve internet services. As a result, Las Casas is now holding quarterly ZOOM sessions with Dominican Sisters ministering on reservations. This has resulted in better communication and an opportunity to discuss challenges and share ideas. The sisters’ energy and enthusiasm for ministry is enlivening and life giving.

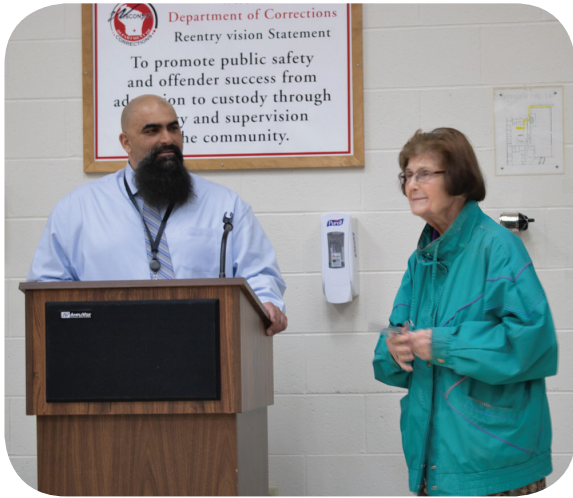
Thanks to the generous support of the Dominican Sisters, Friars and other generous donors, Las Casas has sent funds in January and May 2022 to all Dominicans who minister with Native/Indigenous people. Our deepest thanks for your financial, prayerful, and moral support.

Saint Kateri and Bartolomé de Las Casas, pray for us.

*Nathalie Meyer, OP*

Nathalie Meyer, OP  
President for the Las Casas Board





**PHOTO:** ©Alex Rodriguez, Racine Journal Times  
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In February of 2020, we submitted a “Reaching Out” grant request and received funds from Las Casas to help support the ministry we are engaged in at the Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility (RYOCF), the Racine Juvenile Detention Center and the Racine County jail...then the Covid pandemic took over life as we knew it and presented unprecedented challenges.

Since March of 2020, things drastically changed and we have not been able to be present to the Native American population to support them and affirm that they are valued and to encourage them to live meaningful lives. There are approximately 40+ Native Americans from numerous Tribes among the approximately 450 young people who reside at the RYOCF. We were not allowed to visit for over two years and all

classes and ceremonies came to a halt. Chuck (Lakota) who traveled several times a month to provide spiritual ceremonies (sweat lodge, smudging, drumming, etc.) with the Native Americans at the RYOCF could no longer enter the facility. As you can imagine, this was very difficult for the Native Americans who have always welcomed us.

I am sure you know that Native/Indigenous People have been among the most vulnerable population amidst the Covid pandemic and the prison situation only complicates the situation. Beginning in March of this year, we are once again able to provide conflict resolution and restorative justice classes several times a month. Chuck is now able to gather and provide spiritual ceremonies. We have been warmly welcomed back and are grateful for the opportunity to once again gather with the youth and assure them that they are not forgotten as well as to offer support and hope amidst the ongoing challenges of the Covid pandemic. Like Las Casas, we affirm their right “to express their culture” and to celebrate and to gather for their sacred rituals and celebrations during their time of incarceration. Chuck was recently able to complete the building of a sweat lodge on the RYOCF campus.

Thanks to Las Casas for your support, which helps us to support and encourage Native Americans, especially the youth that we have the opportunity to collaborate with and assure them that, they are not forgotten.

**NOTE:** On Wednesday, April 20th, the RYOCF surprised and honored Lois as she celebrated her birthday. They expressed gratitude for her longtime volunteer commitment and threw a surprise birthday party for her.

*Lois Aceto, OP*

Lois Aceto, OP [Racine]  
Chuck Davis [Lakota]

## Tekakwitha Annual Conference

July 19-23, 2023

Double Tree Hilton Hotel

Bloomington - Minneapolis South

**Tekakwitha Conference National Office**

2225 North Bolton Ave. • Alexandria, LA 71303

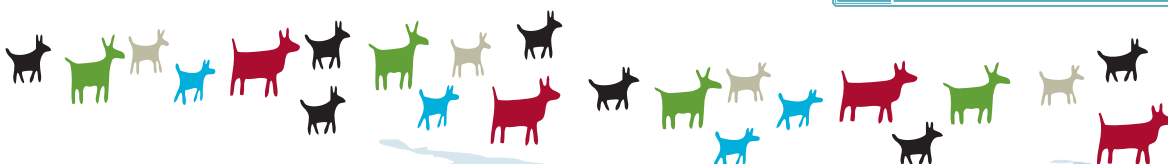
email: [tekconf@gmail.com](mailto:tekconf@gmail.com)

[www.tekconf.org](http://www.tekconf.org)

1.844.483.3900



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# The Voice and Presence of Native/Indigenous People in Chicago

**T**he St. Kateri Center of Chicago serves the community of Native American Catholics and thanks the Las Casas Board for continuing to financially help Dominicans ministering with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. This last year was no exception. I am honored to serve on the Leadership Circle of the Center. Our director, Jody Roy (Ojibwe), annually searches for grants for various projects and programs. The funds from Las Casas help support the Center and also provided scholarship funds for our youth. Some reflections of scholarship recipients are...



"I am very proud to be a St. Kateri Scholarship recipient & graduate from Marian Catholic High School in Chicago Heights...I am forever grateful for this gift which allows me to attend such a good school. At the St. Kateri Center...I meet other Native American youth and continue to learn. As a St. Kateri scholar, I made a commitment of getting good grades while being dedicated to embracing the connection between my Catholic faith and my traditional Native values." ~ Dasia Marie Lopez, Standing Rock Sioux

"These years have been different because of the Covid pandemic. I attended Sacred Heart School...I enjoy learning new things, especially math ... My Catholic faith and my Native American traditional values are very important to me. Through faith I know the Creator will continue to protect me and my family through Covid..." ~ Mateo Lopez, Standing Rock Sioux



"I attend Resurrection College Preparatory High School and have learned more about God and the Bible ...The people at St. Kateri Center are great role models for me and inspire me to be the best version of myself and speak up... they have helped me grow as a person...Before and during Covid, the Center helped me and others stay strong..." ~ Samantha Taylor, Ojibwe

"I attended Resurrection College Preparatory High School and it has helped shape my faith...I am thankful to be at a Catholic school and part of a Catholic youth leadership program. Not only does it help my faith but it helps me grow as a person...Living in an urban area has made it difficult to connect with my cultural roots...the St. Kateri Center has taught me so much about Native American traditions and customs...Being able to bridge my faith with my culture has given me a deeper sense of purpose." ~ Abbygail Taylor, Ojibwe



Thanks to Las Casas and to those who continue to support Las Casas and make these funds possible. A-Ho!!

*JoAnn Fleischaker, OP*

JoAnn Fleischaker, OP (Adrian)  
Jody Roy, Ojibwe



# Adrian Dominicans Invite Jody Roy [Ojibwe] to General Chapter

**J**ody Roy, director of the St. Kateri Center in Chicago was invited to attend the opening of the Adrian Dominicans General Chapter in Chicago on June 27, 2022. Jody led the prayer of the Directions. Pat Sieman, OP, Prioress of the Adrian Dominicans, led the Native Land acknowledgement and gave an apology to Native People for boarding school abuses. Jody was presented with a white prayer shawl.

- Does your congregation acknowledge the Native Land you now occupy?
- How might you be engaged and/or apologize for boarding school abuses to Native/Indigenous People?



Consider membership in The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition  
[www.boardingschoolhealing.org](http://www.boardingschoolhealing.org)



Photo courtesy of the Adrian Dominican Sisters

## HONOR NATIVE LANDS

- Do you know what Native/Indigenous People lived on the land you now occupy?
- Do you name and honor them when you gather together?
- Some resources for consideration:  
<https://usdac.us/nativeland>  
<https://native-land.ca>

## Scholarship Program

Dominicans in ministry with Native/Indigenous People, or preparing for this ministry, may apply for a scholarship (up to \$500) to be used for:

Annual Tekakwitha Conference

Completed applications are accepted annually and must be received by March 15th.

Applications are available at:  
[www.domlife.org/lascasas](http://www.domlife.org/lascasas)



## Annual Celebrations

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Feast Day • July 14  
Indigenous Peoples' Day • 2nd Monday of October  
*Observed in many cities and states in the Americas on Columbus Day*  
Native American Heritage Month • November





## Challenging Times and Generous Responses

**I** wish Las Casas donors could be with me when I experience the joy and gratitude of the families that Las Casas funds help support. I hope these stories will help the donors to experience some of the appreciation that their gifts bring to others. A Tribal leader who oversees Tribal social services referred both of these needs to me. She is also a faithful practicing member of our community, St. Ignatius Catholic Mission, on the Flathead Reservation in Montana. I am confident when she refers someone to me for assistance that the financial need is authentic.

The funds helped a father whose child needed immediate medical care. The father was employed but his insurance was not able to cover all the medical expenses his child needed. Las Casas helped the family with the financial burdens not covered by other resources. The Tribe also gave financial support.

Another family of five – mother, father and three children – had an urgent need. The father was injured and unable to work. The family had to move back to the reservation. The mother found employment with the Tribe but had to drive a distance to work. The car, like many cars on the reservation, was old and required repairs. The cost of repairs was beyond the family budget and they were already juggling the father's medical bills, house payments, a transition period between employment, and waiting for the first check from the mother's new job. Help was needed to cover car repairs and the car was needed for the mother to get to work. It brought comfort to me to know that Las Casas funds were available to augment the support the Tribe provided. Car repairs and payment meant the mother could reclaim the car and continue driving to work. She was grateful that as a resourceful parent, she could continue to fulfill her responsibility to care for her family amidst numerous challenges.

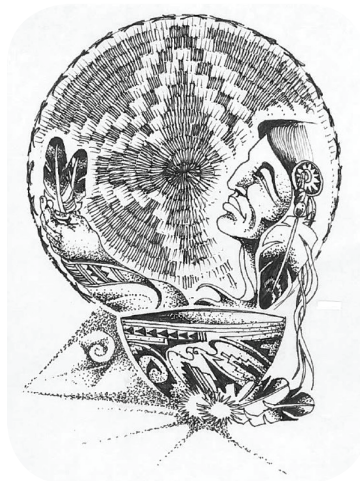
The joy, humility, and sincere gratitude expressed by these recipients brought reverence and happiness in my heart. I always mention the gift was made possible by generous Las Casas donors. They told me to thank the Las Casas donors for them. We all are grateful for the generosity of Las Casas and appreciate the time devoted to raising and distributing funds as well as the opportunity to share these real life stories.

*Margaret Hillary, OP*  
Margaret Hillary, OP (Grand Rapids)



## Dominicans in Ministry with Native/Indigenous People

**F**or the third year in a row, Las Casas has suspended the ordinary grant application process from Dominicans ministering with Native/Indigenous People. We are in direct contact with each sister via phone, email and zoom gatherings. This continues to help bridge communications and respond to needs as we strive to fulfill the mission of Las Casas.



Artist: Gus Antone, used with permission

Funds were given to all in the ministry (see letter from Nathalie Meyer, OP, president). The priority of the sisters in ministry is on being present with the people and responding to critical needs amidst the numerous and ongoing challenges of the Covid pandemic. Native People continue to suffer disproportionately and this reality continues to expose the racial divides and inequities in our country.

Native/Indigenous People are resilient and Dominicans walk with them as they respond to immediate needs and help people with needed funds for food, fuel, funerals, and programming for all age levels as they deal with grief, suicides, and addictions. Where the sisters are, hope steps in...

**A**s the Dominican Sisters celebrate the 200th Anniversary of our presence in this country and Las Casas celebrates 45 years ...

**LAS CASAS honors ...** and is aware of the following Dominicans currently serving among Native/Indigenous People. They represent approximately 264 years of service! They have been involved in the ministry from 12 – 50 years. Please keep them & the people they walk with in your prayers during these ongoing challenging times. LasCasas also acknowledges that there have been numerous other Dominican women and men who have previously been involved in ministry with Native/ Indigenous People.

Barbara Bogenschutz, OP  
Edith Marie Schnell, OP  
Francisca Quintero Osorio, OP  
Helena Im, OP  
Jean Glach, OP  
JoAnn Fleischaker, OP,  
Kathleen Kane, OP  
Lois Aceto, OP  
Margaret Hillary, OP  
Monica Dubois, OP  
Rachel Sena, OP  
Susan Gardner, OP

Springfield  
Grand Rapids  
Mission San Jose  
Mission San Jose  
Peace  
Adrian  
Sparkill  
Racine  
Grand Rapids  
Roman Congregation  
Peace  
Adrian

Oglala Sioux  
Confederated Salish & Kootenai  
Tzotzil Speaking Mayas  
Tzotzil Speaking Mayas  
Northern Cheyenne  
Urban-Ojibwe, Lakota, Dakota, Menominee, Choctaw  
Chippewa-Cree & Metis  
Ojibwe, Mohican  
Confederated Salish & Kootenai  
Navajo  
Tohono O'odham  
Chippewa & Odawa

If you are aware of other Dominicans serving among Native/Indigenous People  
please contact:

Nathalie Meyer, OP [Grand Rapids] at: [nmeyer@grdominicans.org](mailto:nmeyer@grdominicans.org)

YOUR generous donations directly support Dominicans in ministry with Native/Indigenous People.



## Las Casas is grateful for the generosity of our Financial and In-Kind Donors

July 1, 2021 through June 2022  
We regret any errors or omissions.  
Please report discrepancies to:  
[lascasasop@gmail.com](mailto:lascasasop@gmail.com)

Dominican Sisters of Adrian  
Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt  
Dominican Sisters of Caldwell  
Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids  
Dominican Sisters of Hope  
Dominican Sister of Mission San Jose  
Dominican Sisters of Oakford  
Dominican Sisters of Peace  
Dominican Sisters of Racine  
Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena  
Dominican Sisters of San Rafael  
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa  
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill  
In Memory of Mary Hourigan OP  
Dominican Sisters of Springfield  
Dominican Sisters of Tacoma  
Dominican Nuns of the Monastery of the  
Blessed Sacrament  
Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic CLT  
Dominican Friars, St. Albert the Great Province  
In Memory of Chuck Leute, OP  
Dominican Friars, Western Province  
Anonymous  
Grace Augustine, OP [Blauvelt]  
Aneesah McNamee, OP (Adrian)  
Joyce Roach, OP [Tacoma]  
Sisters of St. Anne



### In Honor of:

Adrian Dominican Jubilarians 2022  
Marilyn Winter, OP  
Mary Ann Cirillo, OP [Hope]  
Mr. and Mrs. William O'Donnell  
Grand Rapids Dominican Jubilarians 2022  
Nathalie Meyer, OP  
Racine Dominican Jubilarians 2022  
Diane Poplawski, OP  
Sinsinawa Dominican Jubilarians 2022  
Mary Therese Johnson, OP

### In Memory of:

Michael Fleischaker  
Robert and Carolyn Ballmer  
My Pottawatomie Ancestors, Bourassa Clan  
Marilyn Francoeur, OP [Adrian]

**Las Casas** gratefully acknowledges the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill for their 2020-21 donation which was inadvertently missed in the 2021 Las Casas Newsletter.

## Contributions to support Las Casas and Dominicans in ministry with Native/Indigenous People

☐ \$100    ☐ \$200    ☐ \$300    ☐ \$500  
☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_    ☐ Anonymous

My contribution is made [please print]

☐ In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

☐ In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

## Thank you!

Check payable to: Las Casas  
Contributions are tax-deductible  
to the extent allowed by law.

Mail donations to:

Las Casas  
c/o Diane Poplawski, OP  
5635 Erie St.  
Racine, WI 53402-1900



# Las Casas

c/o Diane Poplawski, OP  
5635 Erie Street  
Racine, WI 53402-1900



## Las Casas Board

**JoAnn Fleischaker, OP**  
Adrian

**Marie Michelle Hackett, OP**  
Springfield

**Mary Therese Johnson, OP**  
Sinsinawa

**Nathalie Meyer, OP**  
Grand Rapids

**Kateri Mitchell, SSA**  
Sisters of St. Anne

**Diane Poplawski, OP**  
Racine

**Marilyn Winter, OP**  
Adrian

visit us at: [www.domlife.org/lascasas](http://www.domlife.org/lascasas)