



Rev. Ann Fuller

There is no such a thing as *the* "Native American" wedding ceremony. There are, of course, ways in which couples that cherish their Native American ancestors can honor their heritage. Native American refers to hundreds of tribes, each with their own traditions and beliefs. If you wish to have a wedding ceremony recognized by a specific tribe, you should contact the tribe directly to inquire how that would be done. If you wish to include earth-based spirituality or Native American elements in your wedding ceremony, than I can be of assistance.

The Manataka American Indian Council has a wonderful on-line reference for couples interested in [American Indian wedding ceremonies](#).

Below is an example of a ceremony I performed for a couple wishing to honor their shared Native American spirituality. The groom had been raised on a reservation, but the wedding was held here in Florida at the beach. They wanted to use elements that come from a variety of tribes and we did not have permission to use fire. We adapted to their circumstances and ended up with an absolutely gorgeous ceremony at sunset.

- Smudging
- Words of Welcome
- Reading: *Commitment Reading of the Pueblo Indian*
- Placing of the Blankets
- Affirmation of the Couple
- Exchange of Vows
- Blessing of the Rings
- Exchange of Rings
- Exchange of Blankets
- Native American Wedding Vase
- Blessing of the Marriage: *Cherokee Prayer*
- Declaration of Marriage

Smudging

There was no processional for this wedding ceremony. When the guests had gathered, an elderly female relative circled the pavilion fanning the smoke from the burning dried sage with a feather fan. Then the bride and groom entered together with their parents.



Rev. Ann Fuller

Words of Welcome

It is with great pleasure we gather this day to witness the joining of two beautiful and loving people in marriage. ____ and ____ have opened their hearts to one another, and today we are blessed as they open their hearts to us as well, inviting us to witness and share in this glorious moment. We celebrate their union in a natural setting to honor the gifts of the Creator--the gifts of nature's bounty and the gift of love between man and woman. ____ and ____ bring the fullness of their being as a treasure to share with one another. Their marriage is being entered into reverently, with the recognition of a true and faithful union. For what greater joy is there for two human souls than to join together to strengthen each other in all their endeavors?

Reading Commitment Reading of the Pueblo Indian

At this time I invite ____ to come forward to read.

Before we met, you and I were halves unjoined except in the wide rivers of our minds. We were each other's distant shore, the opposite wings of a bird, the other half of a seashell. We did not know the other then, did not know our determination to keep alive the cry of one riverbank to the other. We were apart, yet connected in our ignorance of each other, like two apples sharing a common tree. Remember? I knew you existed long before you understood my desire to join my freedom to yours. Our paths collided long enough for our indecision to be swallowed up by the greater need of love. When you came to me, the sun surged towards the earth and moon escaped from darkness to bless the union of two spirits, so alike that the creator had designed them for life's endless circle. Beloved partner, keeper of my heart's odd secrets, clothed in summer blossoms so the icy hand of winter never touches us. I thank your patience. Our joining is like a tree to earth, a cloud to sky and even more. We are the reason the world can laugh on its battlefields and rise from the ashes of its selfishness to hear me say, in this time, this place, this way - I loved you best of all.

Placing of the Blankets

The bride and groom's parents placed blue blanket shawls over their children's shoulders. The blankets represent their lives before they found one another.

Affirmation of the Couple

(Section of personalized content for the bride and groom that included what they cared most about each other, what they wanted for their marriage and their commitment to honor their ancestors, the environment and their descendents.)



Rev. Ann Fuller

_____ and _____, make the meaning of the vows you are about to share with one another deepen as the years pass and seek to discover the endless possibilities of this life together. Your love and your union must endure through daily routine, but flower in both adversity and joy. Throughout your marriage, embrace your passion, revel in your companionship and cherish your intimacy. Give to one another new experiences of joy. Challenge one another so that you may grow. Never take each other for granted, but truly experience the wonder of your union. Be slow to anger, quick to forgive, leaving no traces of resentment behind each day. Be a source of strength and inspiration to yourselves, your families, your friends, and to all whose lives you touch. Love is stronger than your conflicts and grander than life's changes. It is a gift always inviting you to learn and to grow. It is to love that you must always return.

Exchange of Vows

The couple chose to read self-written vows to one another followed by a combined responsive vow.

Bride, please share with us your vows to Groom.

The bride read her vows.

Groom, please share with us your vows to Bride.

The groom read his vows.

Do you, ____ and _____, pledge to treat one another with respect and compassion; praise one another often and criticize rarely; quarrel in private and tell no strangers of your discord; support and encourage your individuality within the context of a strong and loving union of equals? ~ *We do.*

Blessing of the Rings

_____ and _____ have chosen wooden rings as an outward sign of their internal commitment. The material used to make these rings had a previous noble life before its transformation to a new life of beauty reminding us that the gifts of nature and the creativity of humankind can come together in ways that ennoble us and honor our world. These rings are symbols that remind us of the sun that shines above us and the Earth beneath us. They are freely offered as gifts of faith and hope as visible signs of the promises given this day. In this moment, bring blessings to these rings to be symbols of unity, commitment and renewal.



Rev. Ann Fuller

Exchange of Rings

____, please look into ____'s eyes repeating after me as you place the ring upon his/her finger.

*Come health, happiness, and prosperity,
I will stand with you;
come illness, trouble, or poverty,
I will stand with you.
I give you this ring
as a sign of my love and commitment.*

Exchange of Blankets

The parents stepped forward and removed the blue blanket shawls from the bride and groom's shoulders. The grandmother's stepped forward and placed one large white blanket shawl around both of them representing their unity and wishes for a happy future together. It made the wedding vase a little tricky so I would recommend moving this portion of the ceremony to just prior to the blessing of the marriage.

Native American Wedding Vase

____ and ____ have just sealed their relationship with the giving and receiving of rings. Today their union is further symbolized by partaking from the Native American wedding vase. The wedding vase has two spouts coming from the same vessel. As individuals, you have had different experiences and bring together different strengths. The two spouts of the wedding vase represent each of you as individuals. As husband and wife, you will continue to be individuals, yet you will always drink from the same vessel of life. ____ and ____, as you share this one water from two spouts, so may each of you share contentment, comfort and happiness from the common cup of your marriage. May you find life's joys great, its bitterness sweetened and all things enriched by your companionship and your love.

The bride and groom each drank from the wedding vase while a friend played a Native American flute.

Blessing of the Marriage

Great Spirit protect the ones we love. We honor all you created as we pledge our hearts and lives together. We honor mother-earth and ask for our marriage to be abundant and grow stronger through the seasons; We honor fire and ask that our union be warm and glowing with love in our hearts. We honor wind and ask we sail through life safe and calm as in our father's arms. We honor water to clean and soothe our relationship that it may never thirst for love. With all the forces of the universe you created, we pray for harmony and true happiness as we forever grow young together. Amen.



Rev. Ann Fuller

Declaration of Marriage

As ____ and ____ have pledged their lives to one another in our presence, it is with great honor we recognize them as husband and wife, now and forever.

Brevard Minister