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## Cuny, Sr. Genevieve [dictionary entry]

Mark G. Thiel

Marquette University, [mark.thiel@marquette.edu](mailto:mark.thiel@marquette.edu)

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**CUNY, SISTER GENEVIEVE** (b. 1930) is a Franciscan educator and administrator who herself was a product of a Franciscan education. She was one of fifteen children born into an Oglala Lakota family homesteading the Badlands of Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota. She attended Catholic boarding schools staffed by Franciscan Sisters, first in Pine Ridge for twelve years, then in Sioux City, Iowa, for college. In 1954 she professed her vows. For several years thereafter she taught, and later administered, at Franciscan-staffed schools in the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservation vicinities and furthered her studies with a BS degree in history from Regis College, Denver, Colorado, and an MS degree in business education from the University of Detroit.



*Sr. Genevieve Cuny*

During the 1970s, the Catholic Church created new opportunities for Indian church leadership and participation in response to demands for self-determination and the declining availability of non-Indian church personnel on reservations. Cuny reacted to these needs by redirecting her work toward religious education, where she became an advocate for including Native spirituality and values in the teaching of the Catholic faith. She first served as a local church educator and pastoral minister in the Rosebud Reservation area. Then, after completing an advanced religious education degree at Loyola University, Chicago, she became a Native religious education consultant for the diocese of Rapid City, South Dakota, a support position for local educators within five rural reservations and one urban Indian church.

Since 1976 Cuny has been a national advocate for more Indian self-determination within the Catholic Church. As a member of the Tekakwitha Conference Board of Directors, she has been a principal architect in transforming it from a regional missionary support group into a Native North American Catholic association for revitalizing local urban and rural Indian Catholic parishes. Moreover, she has served on several teams to further religious education among Native American Catholics, including a traveling national training team for catechists, the U.S. Catholic Conference Multi-Cultural Catechesis Task Force, and a writing team for Seasons of Faith, a preschool-to-adult textbook series for family-centered multicultural catechesis. From 1989 to 1991 she served as director of catechetics at the Tekakwitha Conference National Center, Great Falls, Montana. This was followed by five years as province secretary-treasurer for her religious order in Denver. In 1996 Cuny returned to the Pine Ridge Reservation to coordinate the training of catechists for the sixteen Catholic parishes across the reservation.

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—Mark G. Thiel