

Justice and Healing for Native American Children

The Native American International Caucus invites United Methodists to observe a special time of prayer and action from Sept. 30 to Oct. 6, as they remember the atrocities associated with tribal children once taken from their families and placed in boarding schools.

“Justice for our Children: Healing for Our Communities” is the theme of this year’s observance, which pays particular attention to those children who died at the schools and whose bodies were buried far from their homes. The observance also marks the “spiritual deaths” of hundreds of Native children whose culture and spirituality were taken from them.

Information about this dark chapter of history can be found at <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/>.

During the week this year, Sept. 30 is the official National Day of Remembrance for U.S. Indian Boarding Schools. Oct. 6 has also been designated as a Day of Remembrance because on that day, in 1879, General Richard Pratt took children from First Nations and opened a boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

The observance, sponsored by the [Native American International Caucus](#), is illustrated by art made by Paige McNatt from the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape tribe. Churches are welcome to use this art to raise awareness of the need for justice, and healing, even today. [Download the art.](#)

The Caucus also recommends a number of other activities for churches to raise awareness. They include:

- Sign this Petition and invite others to sign on -- "[A Call to Truth Telling and Repentance](#)"
- Choose a location such as your church lawn, a government building, or park and hold a prayer witness.
- Invite people who will stand in solidarity with you. Perhaps there is a Native American drum group or a singer and dancers who could invite. Consider someone who can speak briefly on the purpose of the meeting. Invite a spiritual leader or pastor or a singer to say/sing a prayer.
- Wear orange. It’s a strong color to draw attention to the event and it symbolizes the sun as it sets and rises.

- Collect children’s shoes or moccasins. The more tattered the Place a circle of shoes on the earth near your prayer station or on your church steps. Empty shoes represent children who never came home.
- Make little orange birds out of felt or paper to bring to the event. These can be hung on a tree or on a wooden stand or worn as pins. The birds represent the spirits of children as they take flight. Gather all the birds together and photograph them. (Please send photos of your gathering and of the birds to Ragghirain@gmail.com with permission to share them in future promotions of this cause.)

In addition, churches are also encouraged to:

- Host a study at your church on Native American culture
 - “Giving Our Hearts Away” by Rev. Dr. Thom Whitewolf Fassett is an excellent resource.
 - “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” by Ward Churchill is an excellent in-depth historical account.
 - “Education for Extinction” by David Wallace Adam is another good in-depth historical account.
- Review the U.S. Department of the Interior’s [2022 Report on Indian Boarding Schools](#).
- Read the [news article from Reuters](#) documenting Secretary Haaland’s first visit with survivors
- Host a movie or film night at your church.
 - [Buried Truths: America’s Indigenous Boarding Schools](#)
 - [Unseen Tears: The Native American Boarding School Experience](#)

Additional Resources:

- [NAIC Facebook Page on the work of healing from Boarding School trauma](#)
- [NAIC Resources on NEJNAMC website](#)
- [NAIC Advocacy Letters to leaders of the UMC](#)
- [The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#)