



**NAIC
Native American International Caucus
of the
United Methodist Church**

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**Native American International Caucus of the United Methodist Church—A Call to Truth Telling and Repentance
October 6, 2021 A Day of Truth and Repentance for Our Children**

To: The Bishops of The United Methodist Church and the Conferences of The United Methodist Church

How many more lost lives are needed before Native Americans are made visible and their voices are heard?

The bones of over 1,000 children have been found in mass graves owned by church run schools in North America, with some as young as three years old, have been found. As the tally of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, which is already 10 times the national average, grows; and as the echoes of historical trauma toward our children, as forced removals continue to this day, reverberates throughout Native American communities in North America, and the call to address the horror of abuse and the consequence of genocidal policies is once again brought to the forefront.

Between 1869 and the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Native American children were removed, often violently, from their homes and families and placed in these schools. There were 367 government-funded Native American Indian Boarding Schools, according to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABSHC). Many of these were run by the Church. Children at many of these schools were regularly beaten, had their hair forcibly cut and their traditional expressions of sacred identity stolen and destroyed. They were starved, physically abused or mutilated for speaking their native languages or for attempting to preserve their culture. They were emotionally and sexually abused. The schools were typically overcrowded, unsanitary and provided poor education and medical services, resulting in the rapid spread of disease and illness. Children were frequently hired out to local landowners and residents to perform forced labor and then treated as animals, or worse, by their overseers.

This unresolved historical trauma associated with the cultural genocide and years of stripping Native Americans of their culture, land and language through the church and government sanctioned boarding schools with the motto "Kill the Indian, Save the Man," has wreaked havoc on Native American families. From addictions and domestic abuse to suicide and mental illness, insufficient acknowledgement of the harm perpetuated, and the lack of reparations have damaged Native American communities for generations.

A 2016 resolution states, the “General Conference of The United Methodist Church affirms the sacredness of American Indian people, their languages, cultures, and gifts to the church and the world.” The resolution recognized the common experience of Native families that “to assimilate our peoples into mainstream cultures, many of our ancestors as children were forcibly removed to boarding schools, often operated by religious institutions, including historical Methodism. The Doctrine of Discovery facilitated a climate of hostility and genocide. Native peoples were targets by those seeking land and other natural resources.”

Our Call to Action--

1. We call on the Church to commit to **discover the locations and records from the Methodist run boarding schools**, to search the physical properties for individual or mass graves by whatever means necessary and to make a determined effort to provide surviving family members with the information found. We demand that the Church search out, listen to and collect the oral stories of those family members whose ancestors were impacted by a Methodist boarding schools.
2. The Boarding School Healing Project has designated **October 6 as a Day of Remembrance**. On that day in 1879 General Richard Pratt took children from First Nations and opened the boarding school in Carlisle, PA. **This year, we call on the Church to observe October 6, 2021 as a day of Truth and Repentance for Our Children**. These are the concrete acts that will begin a process a healing, justice and reconciliation for families and communities to heal as the voices of the lost children are heard once again, as they are honored with the respect and love they did not receive from the Methodist Christians of the time.

The Native American International Caucus prays that you will listen to our pleas and hear the cries of the children who were lost, killed and died from the church’s horrific past.

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