



Native American International Caucus of the United Methodist Church

July 19, 2022

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Boarding School Task Force

Rev. Carol Lakota Eastin
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Rev. Jennifer Kerby
Ragghi Rain
Rev. Thomas Rawlinson
Rev. Adrienne Stricker

To Our Esteemed United Methodist Colleagues,

Ms. Harriet Olson, General Secretary/CEO, United Women in Faith
Mr. Roland Fernandes, General Secretary, General Board of Global Ministries

Dr. Ashley Boggan Dreff, General Secretary, General Commission on Archives and History

We greet you in the name of the One and Only and offer blessings for our shared work and ministry.

We are in receipt of Ms. Olson's emailed letter of July 1, 2022 and thank each of you for your commitment to action in this vital work of truth-telling and seeking justice and healing from the travesty of Native American Boarding Schools. The active support of the General Secretaries of our United Methodist agencies that goes beyond words, as indicated in their letter of last year, is crucial in this work. We are grateful that the three agencies of UWFaith, GBGM and GCAH are now engaged in dialogue and initial planning on how to proceed.

Since last year's horrific revelations of the mass graves at several Canadian Boarding Schools, our Native communities have been asking about our denomination's efforts to search out the church's historical role. Many have wondered why there has been such silence from the UMC regarding the overwhelming intergenerational grief that our people live with daily. The need for the church's ongoing action, clear communication and transparency with this work is urgent. We urge the newly formed cooperative structure of your three agencies to issue a statement outlining the steps to be pursued and the Native partners with whom you will be consulting. Additionally, we hope that you would provide regular updates on an ongoing basis.

We also want to express our clear interest and expectation that members of the *Native American International Caucus* would be actively engaged as consulting partners with the work your agencies are pursuing. Collectively, our members have extensive experience with and knowledge of the horrific practices at and impact from Native American Boarding Schools. For decades long before the revelation of the Canadian mass grave sites, members of the Native American International Caucus have worked to raise awareness and seek justice with Native youth, adults, elders as well as non-Natives. Yet the general church has not seen or heard this work. Now, we are hopeful that your agencies will expand these efforts. Appropriate cultural sensitivity and Native perspectives are essential if this work is to be helpful and

healing rather than harmful. We would ask that your designated agency representatives work with NAIC chairperson, Ragghi Rain (Cherokee) at ragghirain@gmail.com, Rev. Adrienne Stricker (Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe) at (847) 309-7340 or adrienne.stricker@gmail.com and Rev. Thomas Rawlinson (Shawnee) at (312) 520-2783 or rawlinson.rev@gmail.com. We would appreciate having access to and review of source documents so that those with a deeper historical understanding of Native/non-native relationships might assist with a more accurate interpretation of the information uncovered. You can further acquaint yourselves with the work of the caucus at <https://www.naicumc.com>.

Perhaps most critically, we urge your utmost sensitivity to and care of those who have been victimized by the damage of Native American Boarding Schools, both those who are still living as well as the families and communities that are living with the historical and intergenerational trauma. Just as most media and many organizations practice the withholding of information regarding victims of crimes or those killed in accidents or military operations until family members are notified, we would urge extreme restraint and consideration in the publishing of your future findings. In truth, we would request that a culturally sensitive protocol for contacting family members and communities be developed in partnership with Native consultants for how and when details of any research are released. We know too well the collateral harm that comes from being treated as “historical figures” and “objects of curiosity” from the past. We are still here; your living and breathing human flesh and blood relatives in the here and now.

We commend you for the efforts you are beginning as we continue the work of repentance and reconciliation initiated by the Act of Repentance in 2012. We know that these labors of seeking justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with our Creator God are part of the church's larger work of ending racism and we give thanks that your agencies are committed to walking this road of truth-telling and making right the wrongs of white supremacy and Christian arrogance.

We ardently pray that you and your agencies will actively join with us in a church-wide campaign this fall to continue working for “Justice for Our Children; Healing for Our Communities.” This work raises awareness, educates our society and pursues action with our local churches regarding the damaging impact of Native American Boarding Schools, our denomination's role in that harm and possible steps for healing work together.

We look forward to working with each of you and your agencies in the months ahead and pray Creator's blessings on this work of truth-telling, repentance, healing and restoration.

May We Always Pray
to
Walk in a Good Way

Nasgigwo Winigalsd
>>>>-----RagghiRain----->

cc: Bishop Elaine Stanovsky, Greater Northwest Area
Rev. Chebon Kernell, Executive Director, Native American Comprehensive Plan
Rev. Fred Shaw, President, Board of Directors of the Native American Comprehensive Plan
Bishop Thomas Bickerton, President, Council of Bishops, Episcopal Leader, New York Annual Conference
Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society
Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo, General Secretary, General Commission on Race and Religion
Madam Secretary Debra Haaland, US Department of the Interior

NAIC ADDENDUM – Resources

FIRST EDITION 2022



Justice for Our Children: Healing for Our Communities For Remembrance and Action

A Week of Prayer and Action: September 30 to October 6

Sponsored by the Native American International Caucus

CREATE AWARENESS by holding an event to remember those Tribal children who were taken from their families and placed in boarding schools. Particularly, we remember those who died while at the schools, and whose bodies were buried far from their homes. We remember that another death happened, a spiritual death, for many children who had their culture and spirituality taken from them.

SEPTEMBER 30 is the National Day of Remembrance for U.S. Indian Boarding Schools designated by boardingschoolhealing.org. The Boarding School Healing Project also designated **October 6** as a Day of Remembrance since that day in 1879, was the day that General Richard Pratt took children from so many First Nations and opened the boarding school in Carlisle, PA. We recommend a week of Prayer and Action.

MAKE a PLAN for YOUR EVENT:

- **Produce and distribute the “Justice for Our Children: Healing for Our Communities” 5x7 cards.** You have permission from the **Native American International Caucus** and the artist to print and distribute. Feel free to be creative with the image by Paige McNatt. You can make t-shirts, posters, flags or whatever! You can use your local printer to make these.
- **Choose a location** such as your Church Conference Center, Government Capital building, a busy city corner, on a church lawn, a park. Choose somewhere that it is visible to the public. Be sure to check if you need a permit.
- **Invite people** who will stand in solidarity with you. Perhaps there is a Native American drum group or a singer and dancers who can be with you. 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 to us at the NAIC it symbolizes the sun as it sets and rises. We are praying that the sun has not completely set on this concern, but new hope comes as we remember and take action. You could make ribbon shirts/skirts.
- **Collect children’s shoes or moccasins.** The more tattered the better. 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 for us to share these in future press releases and promotions of this cause)
- **Bring all the birds to your worship** so that everyone who gathers can have a special time of prayer.
- **Invite the local news media** to come to your event.



RESOURCES: Find the 5X7 card, Little Bird Pattern, and more on Facebook: [Justice for our Children: Healing for our Communities, \(20+\) Justice for Our Children: Healing for Our Communities | Facebook](#)

WHAT TO DO NOW – Pray and Take Action

1. **Contact your Bishop and conference director. Let them know that you want to know where the Methodist Boarding Schools were and that any children's remains have been properly returned to their families/Tribes.**
2. **Begin collecting tattered children's shoes and moccasins, orange clothing and making orange birds for your demonstration of prayer and solidarity.**
3. **Host a study at your church on Native American history.**
"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.

Host a Native History Learning Experience:

Contact Suanne Ware-Diaz, Toward Right Relationships Friends Peace Team at swdiz@icloud.com

Contact your Conference Committee on Native American Ministries for additional resources.

Review the U.S. Department of the Interior's 2022 Report on Indian Boarding Schools:

https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bsi_investigative_report_may_2022_508.pdf

News article from Reuters documenting Secretary Haaland's first visit with survivors

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/native-american-boarding-school-survivors-tell-abuses-2022-07-09/>

4. **Host a movie or film time at your church with any of these options:**

Sec. Haaland on healing from the indoctrination, dehumanization at Indian boarding schools | PBS NewsHour

Utah History | Unspoken: America's Native American Boarding Schools | PBS (56 minutes)

Buried Truths: America's Indigenous Boarding Schools, <https://youtu.be/AY8WVxOAUNQ>

Unseen Tears: The Native American Boarding School Experience <https://youtu.be/ioAzggmes8c>

5. **Other Resources**

NAIC Facebook Page on the work of healing from Boarding School trauma

[\(20+\) Justice for Our Children: Healing for Our Communities | Facebook](#)

NAIC Resources on NEJNAMC website

<https://www.nejnamc.org/call-to-action-on-legacy-of-boarding-schools1.html>

NAIC Advocacy Letters to leaders of the UMC

https://www.naicumc.com/uploads/9/0/9/9/9099638/advocating_for_our_children.pdf

https://www.naicumc.com/uploads/9/0/9/9/9099638/justice_for_our_children.pdf

The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition

<https://boardingschoolhealing.org/>