



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

April 29, 2021

**NAIC Chairperson:
Ragghi Rain**

33164 Lighthouse Road
Selbyville, Delaware 19975

NAIC Vice Chairperson:

Rev. Charles Brower
1316 Gilmore Trail
Fairbanks, Alaska 99712

NAIC Secretary:

Helen Cheromiah
P.O. Box 1616
Shiprock, New Mexico 87420

NAIC Treasurer:

Rev. Alvin Deer
616 SW 70th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73139

NAIC Members at Large:

Pam Brayboy Baker
Rev. Neal Christie
Rev. Carol Lakota Eastin
Luke Lakota Eastin
Bishop Peggy Johnson
Rev. Jennifer Kerby
Cynthia Mosley

As Native Americans who are proud of our culture, history, spirituality and our ancestors who still guide us today, we condemn the recent statement made by former Senator Rick Santorum that "there isn't much Native American culture in American culture" and that white Europeans "came here and created a blank slate." <https://www.newsweek.com/rick-santorum-native-americans-cnn-speech-1586646>

We are outraged by yet another inaccurate and divisive comment that reinforces how Native people are made invisible and blatantly attempts to erase our history. The fact that Mr. Santorum made this comment to a group of young people makes it all the more damaging to our communities.

He went on to say, "We birthed a nation from nothing. I mean, there was nothing here." Currently, there are about 4.5 million Native Americans in the United States. There are more than 570 federally recognized tribes, which of course does not count all those who are not recognized. With these many tribes come their own cultures, languages, spiritualities and histories. Despite over 600 years of occupation and genocidal policies, Native Americans continue to make enormous contributions to the church and to American society.

Leaders like Santorum, who has expressed racist and homophobic beliefs before, would like you to believe there was "nothing here," because if there was "nothing here," then the blood on their hands would not exist, and they could absolve themselves of their complicity. By erasing us from their history, they seek to render us invisible, and they smother our voices as well as the hearts and voices of our children. This is what real cancel culture looks like.

With the installation of former Congresswoman Deb Haaland as the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, we are filled with hope as she brings her own Laguna Tribal background, her veracity and wisdom to restore the dignity, safety **and** land, too often systematically stripped from Native American-tribes.

Comments like those made by Santorum cannot be ignored, nor can they be seen as an anomaly in our society. Complicity and a divisive ploy to influence our youth need to end today by calling out the damage done by his words. To that end, we call on CNN to immediately remove him from their employ.

We invite all persons of good will to learn more about accurate depictions of Native American history [here](#).

In solidarity with Indigenous people everywhere and in defense of truth,

The Board Members of the Native American International Caucus (NAIC)