

**A PUBLIC DECLARATION TO THE TRIBAL COUNCILS AND TRADITIONAL
SPIRITUAL LEADERS OF THE INDIAN AND ESKIMO PEOPLES
OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST**

November 1987
c/o Jewell Praying Wolf James, Lummi

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This is a formal apology on behalf of our churches for their long-standing participation in the destruction of traditional Native American spiritual practices. We call upon our people for recognition of and respect for your traditional ways of life and for protection of your sacred places and ceremonial objects. We have frequently been unconscious and insensitive and not come to your aid when you have been victimized by unjust federal policies and practices. In many other circumstances we reflected the rampant racism and prejudice of the dominant culture with which we too willingly identified. During this two hundredth anniversary year of the United States Constitution we, as leaders of our churches in the Pacific Northwest, extend our apology. We ask for your forgiveness and blessing.

As the Creator continues to renew the earth, the plants, the animals, and all living things, we call upon the people of our denominations and fellowships to a commitment of mutual support in your efforts to reclaim and protect the legacy of your own traditional spiritual teachings. To that end we pledge our support and assistance in upholding the American Religious Freedom Act (P. L. 95-134, 1978) and within that legal precedent affirm the following:

- (1) The rights of the Native Peoples to practice and participate in traditional ceremonies and rituals with the same protection offered all religions under the Constitution.
- (2) Access to and protection of sacred Sites and public lands for ceremonial purposes.
- (3) The use of religious symbols (feathers, tobacco, sweet grass, bone, etc.) for use in traditional ceremonies and rituals.

The spiritual power of the land and the ancient wisdom of your indigenous religions can be, we believe, great gifts to the Christian churches. We offer our commitment to support you in the righting of previous wrongs: to protect your people's efforts to enhance Native spiritual teachings; to encourage the members of our churches to stand in solidarity with you on these important religious issues; to provide advocacy and mediation, when appropriate, for ongoing negotiations with State agencies and Federal officials regarding these matters.

May the promises of this day go on public record with all the congregations of our communions and be communicated to the Native American Peoples of the Pacific Northwest. May the God of Abraham and Sarah, and the Spirit who lives in both the cedar and Salmon People, be honored and celebrated.

Sincerely,

Thomas L. Blevins

The Rev. Thomas L. Blevins, Bishop
Pacific Northwest Synod -
Lutheran Church in America

Robert Bradford

The Rev. Dr. Robert Bradford,
Executive Minister
American Baptist Churches of the Northwest

Robert Clarke Brock

The Rev. Robert Brock
N.W. Regional Christian Church

Robert H. Cochrane

The Right Rev. Robert H. Cochrane,
Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

W. James Halfaker

The Rev. W. James Halfaker
Conference Minister
Washington North Idaho Conference
United Church of Christ

R. G. Hunthausen

The Most Rev. Raymond G. Hunthausen
Archbishop of Seattle
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle

Elizabeth B. Knott

The Rev. Elizabeth Knott, Synod Executive
Presbyterian Church
Synod Alaska-Northwest

Lowell E. Knutson

The Rev. Lowell Knutson, Bishop
North Pacific District
American Lutheran Church

Thomas J. Murphy

The Most Rev. Thomas Murphy
Coadjutor Archbishop
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle

Melvin G. Talbert

The Rev. Melvin G. Talbert, Bishop
United Methodist Church -
Pacific Northwest Conference