

A Statement from the Interfaith Network for Indigenous Communities regarding Indigenous Boarding Schools, September 2021

While we know that any response to the horrible news of unmarked mass graves at Residential Schools in Canada is inadequate, we also know that our lament must lead to action. We recognize that, though these atrocities are making headlines and receiving the attention of the world now, tribal communities have been testifying for years to the truth of forced removal, assimilation, abuse, and death perpetrated through boarding schools. We also know that within the developmental history of the United States, several Christian-based denominations were complicit in the cultural genocide of indigenous people in the United States and that the full story and truth has not yet been told in our country.

Tribal communities have been calling upon complicit Christian-based denominations and state and federal governments to respond to these atrocities for many years. We also know that the trauma of this history lives on in the lives of people and communities, and all of us are affected. Telling the truth is a critical step to healing. So, our first commitment as the Interfaith Network for Indigenous Communities (INIC) is to listen to our indigenous siblings, to hear the truth they have been telling, to do what they have been asking, and to do all we can to advocate for this truth to be heard.

We call upon our member faith communities here in the Northwest and throughout the country to tell the truth about their own association with Indian Boarding Schools in the United States. We pledge to advocate and work within each of our jurisdictions to identify boarding schools sponsored by or in any way associated with our faith communities. Though in many cases records of these schools have been lost or intentionally destroyed, another sign of the devaluing of indigenous lives, we call upon our various faith bodies to do all they can to conduct research in order to reconstruct this data, make the history of indigenous boarding schools public, and take this important step towards acknowledging accountability.

We pledge to work closely with the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition in their efforts to document these truths and advocate for a National Truth and Healing Commission. We support and pledge to work with Interior Secretary Deb Haaland as she establishes a Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. We call upon all our member faith communities to establish their own boarding school truth and healing initiatives to proactively work with, provide information to, and complement the work of Secretary Haaland's initiative.

INIC also pledges to make available on its website (fanwa.org/INIC) a list of boarding schools by faith community, as an aid in our efforts to advocate and raise awareness and work toward healing. We also will gather resources for liturgies of lament and make these available as communities continue to do the hard work of telling the truth, moving through pain, trauma, and sorrow toward healing.

Finally, we know that a radical shift must occur in our own theologies as we seek to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery and the way Christianity has been used to justify colonialism, domination, slavery, and genocide of indigenous people. We will make available the growing list of faith communities who wholly reject the premise of the Doctrine of Discovery as we collectively take steps to listen and speak the truth to heal the legacy of boarding schools that are a direct result of this racist theology of domination.

We pledge ourselves to discovering anew the Spirit that unites us all, in whom we live and move and have our being, and we pray for the continual transformation and healing of all.

Originated by Interfaith Network for Indigenous Communities (FANWA.org/INIC), and signed by:

This list represents multi-faith leaders and faith community members who endorse this statement. Please note that some Christian denominations restrict statements on their behalf to those endorsed by their general legislative assemblies. A lack of representation in the organizational category should not connote lack of support for this important work. Faith leaders identified by their denomination or community are for identification purposes only.

Organizational signers:

Between the Ridges, Yakima
Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji Temple, Seattle
Ethnic Ministries Circles of Color, Episcopal Diocese of Olympia
Faith Action Network
First AME Church, Seattle
Great Spirit United Methodist Church, Portland OR
Greater Northwest Area of the United Methodist Church Circle of Indigenous Ministries
Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Kirkland
Interfaith Works, Olympia
Learning Right Relations
Northwest Intermountain Synod, ELCA
Northwest United Protestant Church, Richland
Ocean Park Lutheran Church
Parallax Perspectives
Queen Anne Baptist Church
Saint Mark's Episcopal Church, Seattle
Seattle Mennonite Church
Sravasti Abbey, Newport
Stepping Stones to Re-Entry
Unidos of Snohomish County
Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, Spokane

Faith Leader signers:

Rev. Carey Anderson, First AME Church, Seattle
Rev. Liv Larson Andrews, Salem Lutheran Church, Spokane
Rev. Paul Benz, Co-Director, Faith Action Network
Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee, Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA
Rev. Dr. Allen Buck, Great Spirit United Methodist Church, Portland OR
Pastor Louise Buckles, Ocean Park Lutheran Church
Rev. Lauren Cannon, Keystone United Church of Christ, Seattle
Abbess Bhiksuni Chodron, Sravasti Abbey, Newport
Rev. Gail Crouch, United Church of Christ
Rev. Michelle de Beauchamp, Saron Lutheran Church and First Presbyterian Church, Hoquiam
Elise DeGooyer, Co-Director, Faith Action Network
Thomas Ewell, Quaker
Rev. Miriam Gentle, Northwest United Protestant Church, Richland
Ms. Kristina Gonzalez, Director of Leadership Development for an Inclusive Church, Pacific NW
Conference of the United Methodist Church
Rev. Jan Griffin, Regional Developer for the Southwest Region, Episcopal Diocese of Spokane
Rev. David Hacker, St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Yakima
Rev. Holly Hallman, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Fr. Blaine Hammond, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Seattle

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Rev. Anja Helmon, Northlake Lutheran Church, Kenmore
 Bishop Rick Jaech, Southwestern Washington Synod, ELCA
 Bishop Katherine Keough, Ecumenical Catholic Communion Diocese of the Pacific Northwest
 Rev. Erik Kindem, Peace Lutheran Church, Seattle
 Stacy D. Kitahata, co-Executive Director, Holden Village, Chelan
 Bishop Kristen Kuempel, Northwest Intermountain Synod, ELCA
 Rev. Katy Lloyd, Welcome Table Christian Church, Seattle
 Abbot Genjo Marinello, Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji Temple, Seattle
 Rev. Kara Markell, Lake Washington Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
 Rev. Richard Matters, Episcopal Diocese of Spokane
 Rev. Wakil David Matthews, Retired Interfaith Minister
 Rev. Kathleen McCallum Sachse, Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Kirkland
 Rev. Sandy Messick, Northern Lights Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
 Rev. Cynthia Meyer, United Christian Church of Renton
 Pastor Phil Misner, Assistant to the Bishop, Northwest Intermountain Synod, ELCA
 Jonathan Neufeld, Seattle Mennonite Church
 Rev. Corey Passons, Community for Interfaith Celebration, Olympia
 The Rev. Dr. Marcia Patton, New Beginnings Christian Fellowship, Kent
 Juan Peralez, President of Unidos of Snohomish County
 Chaplain Mir Plemmons, Ecumenical Catholic Communion Diocese of the Pacific Northwest
 The Rt. Rev. Gregory H. Rickel, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Olympia
 Rev. John Rosenberg, Retired, Southwest WA Synod, ELCA
 Pastor Pamela Russell, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Shoreline
 The Rev. Sonja Selboe, Retired, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Rev. Patricia Simpson, retired, United Methodist Church
 Rev. Linda Smith, retired ELCA, Olympia
 Bishop Elaine JW Stanovsky, Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church
 Rev. Nigel Taber-Hamilton, Retired, Episcopal Church
 Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton, Trinity Episcopal Church, Everett
 The Rev. Steven L. Thomason, Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Seattle
 Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, Queen Anne Baptist Church, Seattle
 Rev. Andrew Yee, Assistant to the Bishop, Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA
 The Rev. & Mrs. Phil and Kathe Yokers – Retired, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Individual signers:

Mr. John Alder	Ms. Jennifer Estroff	Sandi Nolte
Ms. Barbara Anderson	Elder Linda Gaines	Michael O'Neill
Brian Anderson	Mary Sue Galvin	M Christina Perez
Mr. Glen Anderson	Br. Stephan Gerhardt	Mr. Thomas Peterson
Ms. Katherine Andringa	Ms. Rachel Geyer	Ruby Phillips
Ms. Shary B	Ms. Sandy Goodwick	William Phipps
Ms. Marilyn Bode	Eileen Gormly	Kristina Plemmons
Capt. Tika Bordelon	Mr. Julien Goulet	Dr. Susan Ratner
Ms. Marilyn Bosckis	Roberta Greenwood	Ms. Kelle Rose
Patti Brandt	Dr. L Heidenreich	Mary Rupert
Ms. Pat Braten	Mr. Richard Heinbaugh	Ms. Beverly Saling
Mr. Robert Brown	Barbara Heins	Ms. Carol Schneider
Mr. Christopher Buckley	Ms. Nancy Horman	Ms. Susan Schwartz
Ms. Sherry Bupp	Ms. Linda Hosea	Mr. John Simanton

<p>Ms. Lauralee Carbone Ms. Jeanne Carroll D'anna Clark Ms. Terri Cole Ms. Carol Colleran Ms. Amy Compestine Elsie David Ms. Ann Davidson Sonya Davis Ms. Paula Kathleen Dawson Mrs. Canth Decided-Baldwin Sarah Detweiler Mrs. Rachel Doyle Mrs. Suzanne Duncan Laurie Edwards Mr. & Mrs. John Ellingboe Ms. Heidi Erdmann</p>	<p>Clay Jackson Marva Janik Julie Johnson Ms. Lorraine Johnson Julie Kageler Ms. Oolaa Kaplan Carol Larkin Mrs. Carol Luthra Dr. Marilyn Mayers Ms. Laura McHenry Mrs. Susan McNamara Mr. Brett Menaker Mariah Mitchell Ms. Sharon Moon Kathleen Morefield Ms. Margaret Neighbors Dr. David Newman</p>	<p>Mrs. Marissa Singleton Amy Sommers Ms. Helen Spalding Mr. & Mrs. Devan and Alexandria Steele Ms. Carolyn Stevens Dr. Sidney Stock Karen Studders Ms. Lisa Sweet Ms. Paula Townsell George Unruh Ms. Eleanor van Noppen Maria T Ventura Mr. James M Wallrabenstein Patricia Whitefoot Ms. Alice Woldt</p>
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