

Apology to Native Americans, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiians

We apologize for the pain and suffering that our church's involvement in the Indian boarding school system has caused. We are aware of some of the damage that this cruel and ill-conceived system of assimilation has perpetrated on United States citizens of Native American ancestry. For this we are truly and most humbly sorry.

To those individuals who were physically, sexually, and emotionally abused as students of the Indian boarding schools in which the PC(USA)³ was involved, we offer you our most sincere apology. You did nothing wrong; you were and are the victims of evil acts that cannot under any circumstances be justified or excused.

We know that many within our church will still not understand why each of us must bear the scar, the blame for this horrendous period in U.S. history. But the truth is, we are the bearers of many blessings from our ancestors, and therefore, we must also bear their burdens.

Our burdens include dishonoring the depths of the struggles of Native American people and the richness of your gifts. Therefore, we confess to you that when our Presbyterian ancestors journeyed to this land within the last few centuries, we did not respect your own indigenous knowledges and epistemologies as valid.

In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ, our hearts and minds were closed to the value of your epistemologies and lifeways. We did not understand the full extent of the Gospel of Christ! We should have affirmed the commonality between your spirituality and our understanding that God's sovereignty extends with length from East to West, with breadth from North to South, with depth throughout the Earth, and with height throughout the Sky and Heavens.

Even worse, we arrogantly thought that Western European culture and cultural expressions were necessary parts of the Gospel of Christ. We imposed our civilization as a condition for your accepting the Gospel. We tried to make you be like us and, in so doing, we helped to diminish the Sacred Vision that made you who you are. Thus, we demonstrated that we did not fully understand the Gospel we were trying to preach.

We know that apology is only a first step in the larger hope of repentance and reconciliation. We seek the guidance of relationships with your people within and beyond our church as we seek to identify and act on restorative practices and policies at the relational, communal, and national level.

We are in the midst of a long and painful journey as we reflect on the cries that we did not or would not hear, and how we have behaved as a church. As we travel this difficult road of repentance, reconciliation, and healing, we commit ourselves to work toward ensuring that we will never again use our power as a church to hurt others with our attitudes of racial and spiritual superiority.

We seek God's forgiveness, healing grace, and guidance as we take steps toward building mutually

respectful, compassionate, and loving relationships with indigenous peoples.

We also seek your forgiveness and hope you will walk together with us in the Spirit of Christ and partner with us as equals as we participate in God's redemption of the world so that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed.

Finally, we pray that you will hear the sincerity of these words and that you will witness the living out of our apology in our actions in the future.