



A Statement from the Center for Indigenous Ministries (DOC) regarding Indigenous Residential / Boarding Schools of Canada and the United States

Over the last several months nearly 1,000 unmarked children graves were discovered at former residential schools in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, Canada. This unspeakable news is not lost on US Indigenous parents whose children were also forced to attend Boarding Schools.

There is no acceptable response to the appalling reality that Canadian Residential Schools and US Boarding Schools interred hundreds of Indigenous children in unmarked graves. Nor to the “why” Christian institutions developed theologies supporting political mandates of separating Indigenous children from their parents. In the wake of such horrendous news, Christian congregations must begin to critically question their colonial-settler history of place and the theology on which it is predicated: Who are the ancestral occupiers of the land? How was the land obtained on which the building stands? How does Christian theology support Indigenous removal? How was God experienced before Christianity? This surely is not easy work. However, not do so is to mire our children in the muck of false goodness.

When Christians reflect on their institutional structures, historically, they soon learn to recognize instances where these institutions participated in the colonization of the Canadian and US landscape. Understanding Christian complicity in the destruction of Indigenous familial and community structure give Christians the moral authority to compel Church and Government(s) to become accountable for acts of colonization. This obligation is all the more relevant for Christian institutions who have recognized their complicity by repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery.

Becoming institutionally accountable to the Indigenous landscape allows Christians to move beyond statements of apology, confession, or solidarity (like this one). Becoming accountable to the landscape shifts Christianity theology to a hermeneutic of indigeneity; where Indigenous well-being is valued over agendas and outcomes; where Christian institutions publicly name their participation in the evil of colonization; and where the Indigenous landscape is known as family.

The Center for Indigenous Ministries (DOC) believes such justice work is possible by collaborating with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to establish a ***Truth and Healing Council*** who will: Openly listen to Indigenous voices; hear how Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)’s work impacted Indigenous lives, the lives of their ancestors, and the lives of their children; gather historical and current Christian Church (DOC) institutional documents authenticating Disciples colonial-settler relationship with the Indigenous landscape and her People(s); Document and Record the haunting stories and histories arising from colonial-settler relationship; AND create a *generational* restorative and reparative path toward harmony.

Admittedly, *Truth and Healing* work is not easy. Truth will surely expose and publicize the contagion of institutional harm and open wounds of historical trauma. This is why the work must engage acts of healing, be watchful for the indwelling of grace, and constantly welcome the transformative love of Creation.

As people of an Indigenous landscape who have experienced false promises, we call on our Church kin to help us become a people of action and change and accountability. For if we fail, as we noted earlier, we will mire our children in the muck of false goodness.

Center for Indigenous Ministries (DOC)

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