

February Signpost

for the

GOOD RED ROAD



St. Tekakwitha

Opening prayer:

God of all nations
and peoples. You
have filled Your
Creation with

Your mighty presence. Through Your handiwork You speak to our heard words that satisfy our every desire.

You called Your servant the Mohawk maiden Saint Kateri Tekakwitha to embrace the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ to do Your will and to serve others with the gifts You gave her.

May she who held tight to the cross of Your Son through her short life marred by sickness suffering and persecution, be our intercessor during our own trials. May her embrace of the Catholic faith and her openness to sharing Jesus with others inspire us to be new evangelizers to all cultures and peoples.

**Winter
North
Black**

Sin/ Hopelessness-/Despair

Fruits of the Holy Spirit /

Joy/ Gentleness/

Redemptive suffering

Gifts of the Holy Spirit/

Fortitude/ Fear of the Lord



Who do we need to bring in the circle?


Who do we need to pray for?

Family members who are sick.

Family members who have died.

Struggles that we are facing?

Let us bring our joys and sufferings
onto this circle.



Boarding School Period and the Bishop's Response

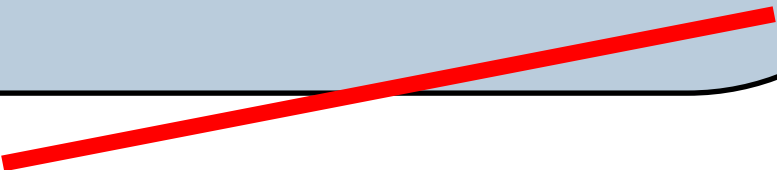
In November of 2021, Archbishop Coakley, the Chair of the Committee on Justice, Peace and Human Development, and Bishop James Wall, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs, sent out a joint statement to all of the Bishops. The statement outlined concrete steps bishops can take to address the boarding school period in their Diocese. The document aims to give the bishops a common response to their Native communities and the general public. Bishop James Wall and Archbishop Coakley wanted to make sure that there is a Catholic apology and regret on record for the suffering of those Native and Indigenous during the boarding school period from the highest level. However, they wanted to go beyond a statement of apology and regret. They set out concrete and specific steps that Dioceses can take to heal the relationship between the Catholic Church and Indigenous communities.

Archives

One would think it is easy to find information regarding Native Catholic boarding schools and give it to the public. However, there is no complete list of the archives and who has them. There is no comprehensive list of Catholic boarding schools. When schools close, their archives are sent to religious orders, sometimes the Diocese or destroyed. Also, boundaries between diocese changes and the new Diocese come into being.

We are not finding detailed information about the boarding schools, but even a little information helps heal.

How do we make the information public? Some things should never be made public, such as students' medical records. Who and how are these decisions made?





Tribal Relationships

The document stresses the need to improve relationships with tribes. These relationships are not just with the elected members of Tribal councils, although this is also important, but to recognize that most Natives live in cities. The document invites the Catholic Church to increase connection and develop important ways to minister to Natives in reservations and the major cities in the United States. Most bishops prioritize it, but if a diocese has a large native population, they need someone devoted to working with the tribe.

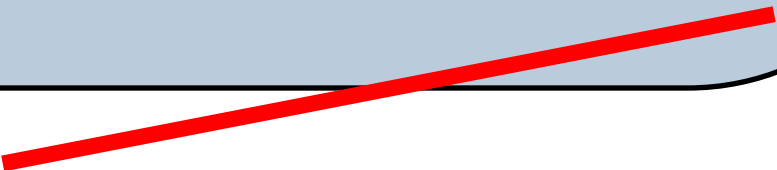
Many dioceses have also already taken the steps necessary to develop relationships with tribes. The document reinforces the need to listen to the narratives of those who have attended boarding schools to understand the pain and then work to change.

Wider Cooperation

For healing to take place, the document also calls for broader cooperation. Cooperation must happen with the ongoing investigation by the Federal Government and collaboration with those Native individuals seeking more information concerning Catholic Native boarding schools. The document stresses truth over hesitation from working with others.

Pastoral plan

We are working on a comprehensive pastoral plan for Natives. It is entitled "Keeping Christ Sacred Promises, A Pastoral Plan for Native Americans and Alaska Natives." In the Plan, there will be a review of the Native boarding school issue, including the steps needed for accountability and healing.





Catholic Boarding School Apologies

An essential part of any instructions of the Catholic Church that issues an official apology is for that institution not to use an apology to be dismissive of the pain and suffering shared by so many Native boarding school survivors.

In the healing process, their narrative has to be centered on moving forward. Healing always means some things need to change. The stories of boarding school survivors are drivers of change in the Church to prevent past sins and direct the Catholic Native ministry in the future.

When we respond with empathy, we also respond with humility as a Church. We become active listeners, able to take responsibility for the suffering inflicted by our ministers, and also be able to respond with actions that those who tell their stories suggest.

The responsibility of the Church is to be responsive not only with words but also with actions that become the basis of healing.

This is demonstrated by the apology extended by the American Indian Catholic Schools Network:

The American Indian Catholic Schools Network expresses our deep sorrow regarding the tragic news of Kamloops Indian Residential Boarding School. As a community of seven Catholic schools serving Native students – some of which are former boarding schools themselves – this news resonates deeply with us. Such stories do exist in some of our communities, and this is why we as a network implemented truth and healing as a core pillar in our strategic plan in 2019. We recognize our special responsibility to do better, and we have committed to specific actions rooted in truth and healing through our shared Catholic faith. We know we have much work to do in order to move forward, and we humbly acknowledge where we have fallen short. Indeed, this sacramental work is a most pressing opportunity to truly live out the Gospel message of love and compassion.

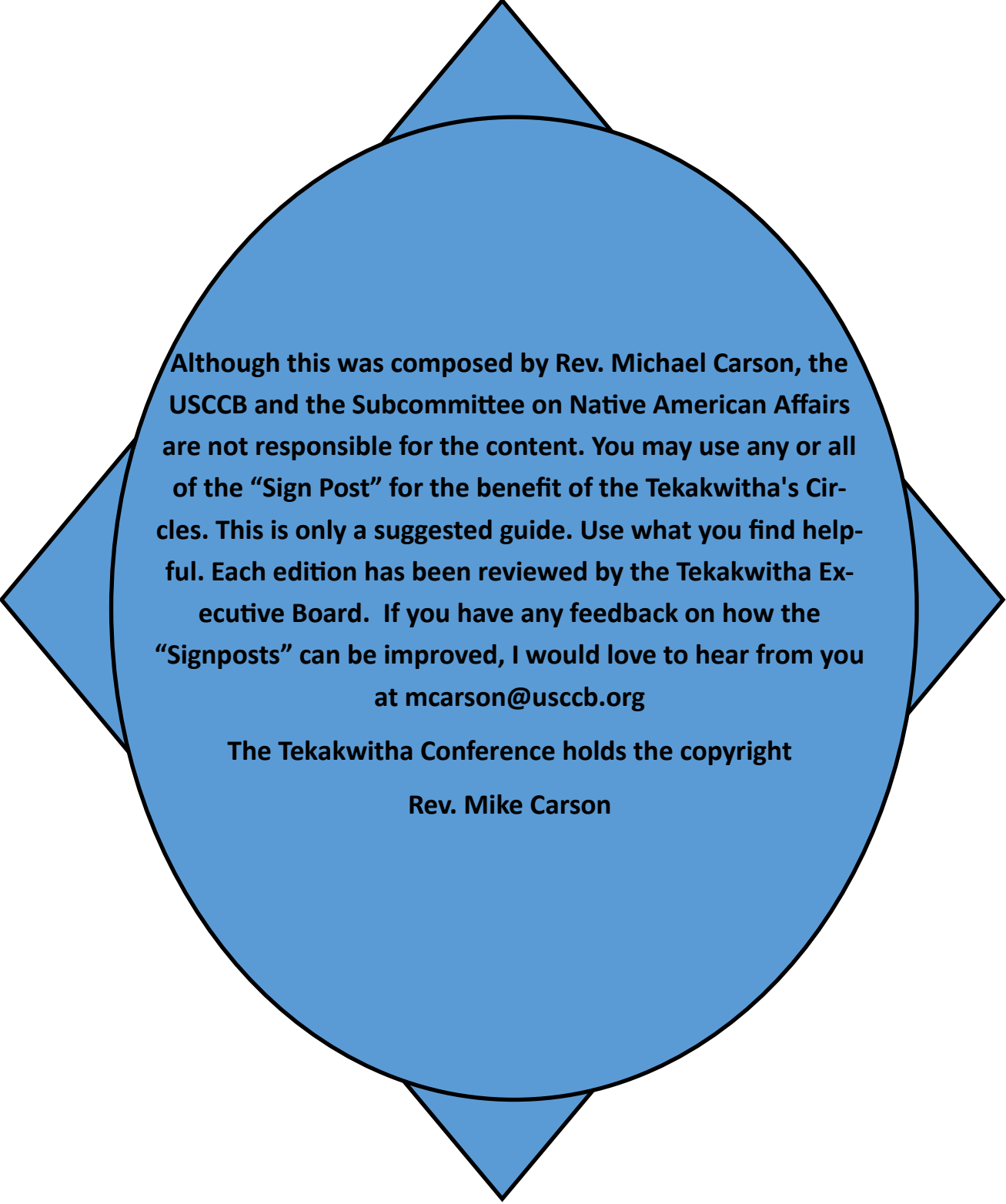


Closing prayer from the Black and Indian Mission Office:

God of all nations and peoples. You have filled your creation with Your mighty presence. Through Your handiwork You speak to our hearts words that satisfy our every desire.

You called Your servant, the Mohawk maiden Saint Kateri Tekakwitha to embrace the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ, to do Your will and to serve others with the gifts You gave her.

May she who held tight to the cross of Your Son throughout her short life marked by sickness, suffering, and persecution, be our intercessor during our own trials. May her embrace of the Catholic faith and her openness to sharing Jesus with others inspire us to be new evangelizers to all cultures and peoples. May she who sought our Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament lead up to similar reverences for the Eucharist so that, like Saint Kateri, our last words may be, "Jesus, I love You." Amen.



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