



Media Release

For Immediate Release
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An American Indian Non-profit Organization

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INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE

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SIGN THE PETITION AT: —————>

Journey to Heal Historic Indian Boarding School Abuses, *Including Request for U.S. Government Apology, Set to Begin May 16*

The Wellbriety Journey for Forgiveness begins on Saturday, May 16 at the Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon and concludes a continent away on June 24, 2009 in Washington, DC. The 40 day, 6800 mile transcontinental event will visit 24 historic Indian Boarding School sites to promote learning, emotional healing, and forgiveness of the harm done to American Indians during the almost 100 year boarding school era that began in North America in 1879. **A petition will be presented in Washington to President Barack Obama on June 24, 2009 requesting an apology on behalf of the U.S. government for the abuses of Indian children during the American boarding school era.** There are presently about 3000 signatures, towards a goal of 10,000.

It is now widely accepted that the historic and intergenerational trauma suffered by American Indians, First Nations people, and Alaska Natives throughout North America has been propagated down the generations and is a major cause of today's social and health problems experienced by indigenous peoples. Afflictions such as alcohol and drug abuse, mental health issues, diabetes, chronic ill health, incarceration, poor job opportunities, and numerous co-occurring disorders have been traced to the culture cleansing and assimilation abuses of both missionary schools and government schools during the boarding school era, approximately 1879-1970.

There is a growing precedent for apologies to indigenous peoples by heads of state and other institutions.

- ✓ In February of 2008, the Australian government apologized to its aboriginal people for abuses to children during the Australian Stolen Generations period of the 19th and 20th Centuries.
- ✓ In June of 2008, the Government of Canada apologized to its indigenous people for the abuses of its residential school era.
- ✓ More recently, on April 29, 2009 Pope Benedict XVI expressed his sorrow at the anguish caused by the deplorable conduct of some members of the Church in the Canadian Residential School System and offered his sympathy and prayerful solidarity for healing, according to a Vatican communiqué released on April 30.
- ✓ Most recently, on April 30, 2009 U.S. Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas re-introduced the Native American Apology Resolution, which offers an apology from the United States government to American Indians. Companion legislation was also introduced in the House by Representative Dan Boren of Oklahoma, according to an April 30 news release.

MORE

To prepare local indigenous communities for the coming of the Wellbriety Journey for Forgiveness, 12 Historical Trauma workshops were held across the U.S. in April of 2009. Attendance, enthusiasm and healing experiences were strong at each event. Hundreds availed themselves of the opportunity to prepare for the coming of the Journey to their communities. For example, on April 18 over 100 participants attended the Historical Trauma workshop in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, site of the former Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School, which operated from 1893 to 1933.

Everyone, American Indian or otherwise, is encouraged to express their solidarity with the request for a U.S. government apology by signing the online petition for **Apology for Abuses at US Indian Schools**, available by visiting www.whitebison.org. Much more information on the upcoming event, including dates for each of the 24 site visits in various states, is also available on the website.

The Wellbriety Journey for Forgiveness is sponsored by White Bison, Inc., an American Indian non-profit organization. *The Journey is being funded by grassroots efforts.* All those believing it is time for the U.S. government to step up and make an apology to its indigenous people are invited to help fund this historic event by **contributing at the website** and also **signing the petition**.

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