

Native Americans Show the Heart of Reconciliation – By Forgiving Before Our Apology

There are 562 federally recognized Indian nations within the United States—about half of which are represented in my home state of Alaska. It wasn't until this July that the Lord made the First Nations people a more intimate matter in my life. I previously lived under the assumption that Native American affairs were someone else's responsibility—surely not mine.

This July, my work in the U.S. Senate provided opportunity to participate in a Congressional tour of the National Archives. We were led on a private tour through vaults and long hallways with documents on display, most of which were confidential at some point in history.

To my surprise, the tour guide presented an old petition from 1881 bearing 32,000 signatures—rolled up and sealed with red ribbon, which today we know as red tape. Every state in the Union was represented in this petition: men, women, black and white. Their signatures revealed not only mass agreement to a common cause, but a far greater agreement through prayer and a common plea.

I listened to my guide explain the common practice concerning petitions brought before Congress. Oftentimes, petitions refused to be heard on the House or Senate floor would be tabled in a corner near the clerk's desk to eventually serve as firewood to warm the chambers when the winter chill came through. But this one survived.

The official Congressional Record states that on Jan. 29, 1881, Gilbert de la Matyr, an Indiana Congressman, spoke on the House floor saying, "I ask unanimous consent to present the petition of 32,000 signatures of the United States,

praying that such steps shall be taken as will prevent the encroachment of white settlers on Indian reservations, and that the treaties with the Indians be faithfully executed."

This petition riveted me—that it was not burned, but preserved. I somehow felt I could attach my faith to prayers heard in Washington a long, long time ago. I could almost hear the prayers still alive and still with a voice.

It seemed no coincidence that two large Native American gatherings were to take place in the following months. Friends of mine from Lou Engle's team scheduled The ANNA Call, an event on the Cherokee Nation cultural grounds in Tahlequah, Oklahoma in early October. Then, a few weeks later, in my own front yard, the All Tribes DC event took place on the National Mall.

These events were no mere excuses for Native peoples to put on their colorful regalia. The purpose in both was to come with repentant hearts, ready to forgive—to forgive before the apology. What a powerful concept!

In the midst of the shifting political and spiritual winds of this nation, this message of forgiveness and reconciliation has become the very point of the arrow, piercing through the current events of our day.

Now more than ever, the ministry of reconciliation must be at the forefront. Look in any direction and you'll notice brother against brother, skin against skin. What seemed to be of the past and only in our history books has come full circle in this nation.

It takes a listening ear to hear the heart cries regarding three specific concerns: the First Nations, the races throughout the nation, and what Bound4LIFE has so faithfully given their lives to: the unborn in the womb. Three very specific issues, one common denominator: the injustice of innocent bloodshed.

The shedding of innocent blood is not a common topic for the pulpit, but it is one we must be willing to confront as believers who are to hate what the Lord hates (Ps. 97:10).

Not one means of bloodshed mentioned above is more devastating than the other. All are meant to be addressed. I confidently believe the opportunities to address such issues are being handed to the Church first and foremost. The responsibility is ours.

Since its genesis, America has permitted breaches in our governmental systems specifically concerning the mistreatment of Native Americans. There have been more than 500 treaties between the U.S. government and native tribes—all have been nullified, amended or intentionally broken.

One of the most significant breaches was the Indian Removal Act passed by Congress and signed by President Andrew Jackson in 1830, which permitted white settlers to take over all Native land east of the Mississippi. As a result, many Indians were coerced to either relocate—or die standing up for their rights to freedom and land. This act forced the relocation of the Cherokee nation in 1838, historically known as the Trail of Tears.

Approximately 16,000 Native Americans journeyed west 1,200 miles; they suffered disease, malnutrition and intense warfare along the way.

There is still today a tearful journey with the Native Americans in this land. In just the last year, I have heard three firsthand accounts from Alaska Natives: one at a dinner table in Alaska, one during work in the U.S. Senate and the last from the waking of a dream—only to run into the very woman in the hotel lobby that morning. For me, their tears were worth a thousand words.

Though their stories may seem beyond our ability to understand, we must listen with intentionality and

compassion-seeking in any way what we can do as ones called to reconcile, repair and restore. As Isaiah 58:12 proclaims: "Those from among you shall rebuild the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Paths in which to Dwell."

As we carry these matters through prayer and action, may we not be too weighed down by the insurmountable amount of injustice and blood shed on our soil, but remember a greater blood shed centuries ago: that of Jesus, the small-town Nazarene. Jesus, the Son of God, was sent to earth to live a sinless life and die a blameless death.

We are talking about a man who came to redeem all people unto Himself. Imagine the lives found in Him, through His blood. Every drop of His blood was purposed to bring forgiveness and reconciliation to a world that never fully knew Him, even to this day. His crucifixion is the ultimate hallmark of purity, innocence and true justice.

Jesus' blood on the cross of Calvary was, and always will be, the only innocent bloodshed permissible by the Father. The prophet Isaiah states, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; He has put him to grief. ... thus he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors" (Is. 53:10-12).

The church has an amazing responsibility to cover innocent bloodshed with the Highest and most redeeming blood we know. Allow our present-day issues to challenge you. Ask the Lord to share how He wants you to respond. What will it take to resolve the tensions of our culture and, just like many tribes across America have set such an example, to forgive before the apology?

Forgiveness is always the remedy. A massive wave of forgiveness will be what precedes the massive wave of revival we have been contending for. A revival across bloodlines,

political party lines, and denominational lines is what we can expect.

In the face of opposition, impossibility and hopelessness, we have seen the Lord lead His people with His hand of mercy. Many church leaders back me up in saying that the ecclesiastical church is in a *kairos* moment.

Kairos is a Greek word that means “strategic or opportune time”—not chronological time, such as when you plan to meet a friend. And *ekklesia* speaks of the church’s role to bring heaven’s divine order to earth.

This Greek word is used in Hebrews 4:16: “Let us then come with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Notice the context in which this “time of need” was mentioned: it was in order to obtain mercy.

America needs mercy. Let us be given ears to hear the blood crying out from the First Nations people. Let us yield to the Lord’s holy invitation to pray into such issues but also not to neglect the responsibility to speak out in public as well.

May the Lord find you as a solution and remedy to a nation in need of reconciliation, even among those with political differences. You are called to repair, restore and reconcile in every area where there has been injustice, both past and present.

Be the first one to forgive. Usher in this new year with a massive wave of forgiveness—forgiveness given before the apology.

Points of action through prayer:

1. Pray the First Nations would receive the first fruits of the coming Great Awakening, that they may be honored as the first shareholders of our great nation. Pray they

would realize they have an inheritance that is rightfully theirs.

2. Ask the Lord for more of His heart regarding the shedding of innocent blood.
 3. Actively seek out how He wants you to both practically and spiritually respond to the issues of our day in regard to reconciliation.
 4. Search your heart and discover if there are any individuals the Lord may ask you to forgive. You will likely be the first one to take that step of humility.
- {eoa}

Krystal Edens lives in Washington, D.C., serving as a Congressional staff member in the U.S. Senate. She is a graduate of Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, Texas and originally hails from Homer, Alaska. She loves God and is jealous for His Church to walk in its purpose for this generation.

Reprinted with permission from Bound4LIFE International.