

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA MORRIS

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

Colleagues and Students,

At the beginning of this month I wrote to you when the discovery of the remains of 215 First Nations children at a residential boarding school in British Columbia was made public. In that communication I noted that

This horrific discovery only highlights the need for transparency on the United States' own history with what were often called Indian Residential Boarding Schools. The [National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#) has identified 15 American Indian boarding schools that operated in Minnesota and 367 schools across the U.S. These institutions were part of federal policies that separated children from their families and attempted to eliminate Native languages and cultures, with intergenerational impacts still felt across Indian Country.

One such school was established by the Sisters of Mercy Order in 1887 in Morris. As you know from our own history, this site went through several transitions, ultimately becoming the University of Minnesota Morris in 1960.

Yesterday Secretary of the US Department of the Interior Deb Haaland announced the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, launching a formal and detailed investigation of the Indian boarding schools that existed in the US between 1869 and the 1960s. In her announcement Secretary Haaland articulated her hope that understanding the true scope and traumatic impacts that the boarding schools have had will ultimately create healing.

We stand ready to support the Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative in collaboration with the Tribal Nations impacted by the boarding school in Morris.

Three years ago, UMN Morris joined the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition to further our community's learning about the Indian boarding schools that were located on the site of our campus. We value the critical work in truth telling, understanding, and fostering healing from these heartbreaking traumas and losses being undertaken by the Boarding School Healing Coalition.

With the guidance of our campus American Indian Advisory Committee and Dakota and Anishinaabe elders, UMN Morris hosted a ceremonial gathering to inaugurate an era of truth telling, understanding, and healing regarding the history of this land in April 2019. It was a first step in remembering the children, and their families and communities that have been negatively impacted by the boarding school on this site and all those across Minnesota and our nation. We have held subsequent campus gatherings for truth telling and healing in November 2019 and November 2020. The third annual gathering for healing will be held in November 2021.

Secretary Haaland's announcement and the knowledge--and ultimately healing--that will come from it concerning an insufficiently understood piece of the history of our country, our state, and our campus marks an important moment. I know that you all join me in our appreciation for this important federal initiative.

Michelle

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