

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA MORRIS

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

July 22, 2021

Colleagues and students,

I recently became aware of an online petition asking that we make immediate plans to search campus grounds for any unmarked burial sites that may exist from the period of the Native American boarding schools. As you know, in June 3 and June 25, 2021 messages to campus (<https://morris.umn.edu/about/organizational-structure-and-campus-governance/chancellor/statements>), then-Chancellor Michelle Behr wrote to acknowledge the painful and heartbreaking discoveries of more than 1,148 unmarked graves at residential schools across Canada and to update the campus community about UMN Morris's ongoing work with our Tribal partners in relation to our own boarding school history. We hosted in spring 2019, as Chancellor Behr stated, a "ceremonial gathering to inaugurate an era of truth telling, understanding, and healing regarding the history of this land. 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." I add my voice, as acting chancellor: I am--we are, as a campus and community--committed to continuing action, including but not limited to our annual ceremony for truth telling and healing, the third of which will take place this November. We continue to consult with and be guided by the UMN Morris American Indian Advisory Committee and Anishinaabe and Dakota elders. Students, staff, and faculty will also help us move forward in collaboration with Tribal nations.

As we identify and act on next needed steps regarding the possibility of unidentified burial sites in Morris, we will continue to honor Tribal sovereignty and remember the children who were here as beloved members of their families and communities. We are seeking deeper collaborations with the Tribal Nations impacted by the boarding schools in Morris to guide us with the critical expertise, cultural and jurisdictional knowledge, and care needed to create a shared vision for next steps wrapped in support, understanding, and ultimately healing. We will continue to be guided by our American Indian Advisory Committee, Dakota and Ojibwe elders, and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition of which we are a part. We know that Interior Secretary Haaland has directed the Department of the Interior (<https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretary-haaland-announces-federal-indian-boarding-school-initiative>) "to prepare a report detailing available historical records, with an emphasis on cemeteries or potential burial sites, relating to the federal program school program." We welcome and will support this federal initiative to learn more about the 14 known boarding schools in Minnesota and more than 350 across the country. We will not, however, delay our current work.

We will ensure the Native children who were here from 1887 to 1909, the voices of our Indigenous community today, the guidance of elders, and Tribal expertise continue to be at the heart of our work. We are grateful to the elders who have led efforts with us to care for the children who were here, their families and communities, these lands, and all of us who are here today.

Janet

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This message was sent to the UMM-ALL-EMPLOYEES mailing list.