

Blackhawk Presbytery Acknowledgment of Native Lands and Peoples

This morning as we gather as Blackhawk Presbytery, we acknowledge that “We have participated actively and passively throughout our history in discriminatory behavior directed against indigenous peoples. We have stood by while they were killed and their lands taken, while the story of their participation in the history of our country was distorted and suppressed.” (GA 222 Overture 11-17)

Our Presbytery is spread over much of Northern Illinois. This is what once was home to many native peoples and tribes. That includes the: Bodwéwadmí (Potawatomi), Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Kaskaskia, Peoria, Sauk and Meskwaki, Ho-Chunk (Winnebago), Myaamia (pronounced mjɑ:mia), and the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (pronounced oh-chey-tee shah-koh-ween).

Even the name of our Presbytery – Blackhawk – bears witness to this truth. And so, we acknowledge this territory’s significance for the Indigenous peoples who lived upon this land. We want to be honest about the ways our religious tradition has been used to colonize, to abuse, and to oppress people.

Today we again declare our respect for these children of God and our desire to honor them and the truth of their lives and their history, our shared history including the broken promises and other sins for which the dominant culture must repent.

We affirm our responsibility to those who are still here, sometimes unseen, and we look for opportunities for true reconciliation, which we acknowledge will involve further action by, and change for, those in the dominant culture. Among our transgressions are the harmful stereotypes created for our entertainment.

We honor our Native siblings and seek to work for healing and justice that is truly “for all.” Let us pray:

**O Great Spirit, God of every people and every tribe,
we come to you as your many children,
to ask for your forgiveness and guidance.
Forgive us for the colonialism that stains our past,
the ignorance that allowed us to think
that we could claim another’s home for our own.
Heal us of this history.
Remind us that none of us were discovered
since none of us were lost,
but that we are all gathered within the sacred circle of your community.
Guide us through your wisdom to restore the truth of our heritage.
Help us to confront the racism that divides us
as we confess the pain it has caused to the human family.
Call us to kinship.
Mend the hoop of our hearts
and let us live in justice and peace,
through Jesus Christ, the One who came
that all people might live in dignity.
Amen.
(From the Episcopal Church)**