

**Touchstones Faith in Action**

**In-Reach / Out-Reach / Justice-Making**

**Worth & Dignity**

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Link: <https://www.uusc.org/initiatives/climate-forced-displacement/special-rapporteur-letter/>

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**1.0: Introduction**

While there is not an obvious focus for worth and dignity for September, apart from the Jewish day of Atonement, Yom Kippur on September 28, 2020, there is a compelling focus: Native Americans and Canada’s Indigenous peoples. In America, the occasion of this focus is the Cherokee National Holiday in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. In 2020 it will be held virtually from September 1-6 to mark the September 6, 1839 signing of the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation after the Trail of Tears Indian removal ended. (See <https://thecherokeeholiday.com/>) Among all of the horrific assaults on Native Americans, the Trail of Tears remains infamous. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz writes, “The 1838 forced march of the Cherokee Nation, now known a s the Trail of Tears, was an arduous journey from remaining Cherokee homelands in Georgia and Alabama to what would later become northeastern Oklahoma.” Happening in the dead of winter, she notes that close to 8,000 of the 16,000 Cherokee men, women, and children died on the march. Other tribes including the Muskogees, Seminoles, Chickasaws, and Choctaws (who actually were removed first) traversed the Trail of Tears from the southeastern United States across the Mississippi River to Indian Territory. They all lost thousands of tribal members. Notably, these removals resulted in additional plantations being created with a commensurate increase in slavery.

The UUA’s Common Read for 2019-2020 supports this focus: *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. It was published by Beacon Press in 2015. In 2019, Beacon Press published *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States for Young People* adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese (Beacon Press, 2019). For an overview of First Nations in Canada see a History in six periods at <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1307460755710/1536862806124#chp0>. While the colonialization in Canada was relatively peaceful, large amount of land was taken through treaties followed by sustained efforts at assimilation, including Residential schools to assimilate indigenous children.

Dunbar-Ortiz’s history is readable, compelling, and essential if America is to transform itself into a more perfect union. As might be assumed, most Americans don’t know the true history of America. Beacon Press is working to address this reality through their ReVisioning History series. The other books focus on Black Women, Queers, Disability, and African American & Latinix.

Beacon Press writes, “Today in the United States, there are more than five hundred federally recognized Indigenous nations comprising nearly three million people, descendants of the fifteen million Native people who once inhabited this land. The centuries-long genocidal program of the US settler-colonial regimen has largely been omitted from history.”

Dunbar-Ortiz makes the point that the lens of racism is not adequate to understand the experience of indigenous peoples in America. Hence, her focus is on land theft from and genocide of Native Americans through the process of settler-colonialism, which shatters the myth of American exceptionalism. She also argues that the focus on multiculturalism that emerged in the revision of US history in response to the civil-rights movement further disenfranchised Native Americans by making them an oppressed racial group, a move that ignored the fact that they were and are territorially and treaty-based peoples.

Native Lives Matter! With this as a focus, we have an opportunity to place our first principle in support of America’s and Canada’s First Nations.

**2.0: Observances**

**2.1:** *National Indigenous Peoples Day, Canada, June 21*

A day for all Canadians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. In 2018, the day was officially renamed from National Aboriginal Day to National Indigenous Peoples Day.

Link: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/national-aboriginal-day#:~:text=National%20Indigenous%20Peoples%20Day%2C%2021,and%20M%C3%A9tis%20peoples%20in%20Canada.>

**2.2:** *United Nations* [*International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, August*](https://www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day) *9* (established in 1994)

“There are an estimated 476 million indigenous peoples in the world living across 90 countries. They make up less than 5 per cent of the world's population, but account for 15 per cent of the poorest. They speak an overwhelming majority of the world’s estimated 7,000 languages and represent 5,000 different cultures.”

Link: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day>

**2.3:** *Cherokee National Holiday, September 1-6, 2020*

Website: <https://thecherokeeholiday.com/>

**2.4:** *Native American Month, November*

Link: <https://nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov/>

**3.0: Resources and Activities**

**3.1: Background**

**3.1.1:** *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

This was adopted on September 13, 2007, by a majority of 144 states in favor, but there were four votes against: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States). Both Canada and the United States endorsed it in 2010.

Link: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf>

# 3.1.2: *Remarks by President Obama at Tribal Nations Conference, September 26, 2019*

Link: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/26/remarks-president-tribal-nations-conference>

**3.2:** **Unitarian Universalist Initiatives & Resources**

# 3.2.1: *Fair Treatment for Native Americans1998 Action of Immediate Witness*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/fair-treatment-native-americans>

# 3.2.2: *Unitarian Universalist Grounding & Policy: Justice for Native Peoples*

a compilation of short excerpts from relevant Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) social justice statements passed by General Assembly, listed chronologically.

Link: <https://www.uua.org/racial-justice/history/uua/nativeamerican>

# 3.2.3: *UUSC working with U.S. Tribes Facing Climate Crisis Unite to Address Human Rights Violations*

UUSC is currently working with five tribes in the US on this issue, four in Louisiana and one in Alaska

Link: <https://www.uusc.org/initiatives/climate-forced-displacement/special-rapporteur-letter/>

# Link: <https://www.uusc.org/initiatives/climate-forced-displacement/special-rapporteur-letter/>

# 3.2.4: *How to Partner with Original Nations & Peoples: Protect Cultures & the Earth*

GA workshop from 2015 in Portland. See How to Partner Guide at <https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/1/150627_410_partners_indigenous.pdf>

Link: <https://www.uua.org/ga/past/2015/partnering>

# 3.2.5: *Focus of Native Americans: What Can Unitarian Universalists Do?*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/racial-justice/dod/acting-locally>

**3.2.6:** *UU World Articles regarding Indigenous American*

Link: <https://www.uuworld.org/sourcetradition/indigenous-american>

**3.2.7:** *The Ute Indians*

# Faith in Action: Native American Justice

Workshop #2 for Youth from Building Bridges regarding the Ute Indians

See Handout <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges/workshop2/handout5>

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges/workshop2/186388.shtml>

Background regarding connections between Unitarians and the Ute Indians

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/river/workshop15/uus-and-unitarians>

**3.2.8:** *Timeline of Unitarian Universalist Relationships with Native American Peoples and Nations*

Link: <https://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/histories-new/timeline-of-unitarian-universalist-relationships-with-native-american-peoples-and-nations/>

**3.3: Educational Resources**

**3.3.1:** *Discussion Guide for* *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (Beacon Press, 2015)

Link: <https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/c/cr_disc_guide_indigenous.pdf>

**3.3.2:** Book presentation on C-Span by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

Video Link: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?321631-1/an-indigenous-peoples-history-united-states> (1:19:48)

**3.3.3:** Teacher’s Guide for *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States for Young People* adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese (Beacon Press, 2019)

Link: <http://beacon.org/Assets/PDFs/IndigenousHistoryYAtg.pdf>

**3.3.4:** *Native Knowledge 360° from the National Museum of the American Indian*

Extensive resources for teaching and learning.

Website: <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360>

**3.3.5:** *Zinn Education Project Teaching People’s History / Native American Teaching Resources*

Link: <https://www.zinnedproject.org/?s=native+american>

**3.3.6:** *Honoring Tribal Legacies*

Materials focused on indigenous Nations along the trail traveled by Lewis & Clark from St. Loui to the Oregon shore.

Website: <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/honoringtriballegacies/>

Video Overview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYpTwmJh8C4> (8:20)

Curriculum materials

Link: <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/honoringtriballegacies/teachings/>

**3.4: Timelines**

**3.4.1:** *Native America Timeline in the United States (1492-1999)*

Link: <https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/imperialism/notes/nativeamericanchron.html>

**3.4.2:** *Canadian First Nations Timeline*

Link: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/timeline/first-nations>

**3.4.3:** *Timeline: Key dates for Canada’s dealings with First Nations*

Link: <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2012/01/24/timeline_key_dates_for_canadas_dealings_with_first_nations.html>

**3.4.4:** *Timeline of First Nation Governance in Canada*

Link: <http://www.fngovernance.org/timeline/timelinewindow>

**3.4.5:** *First Nations in Canada: A History in six periods*

Link: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1307460755710/1536862806124#chp0>

**3.4.6:** *Plain Talk’ First Nations Timelines in Canada*

Link: <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/6-191a85f36ce9e20de2e2fa3869197735/2017/07/Plaintalk-7-First-Nations-Historical-Timelines-and-Maps_oa.pdf>

**3.5: Canadian & American Residential Schools of Indigenous children**

**3.5.1:** *Discussion: American Indian Boarding Schools*

*Death by Civilization* by Mary Annette Pember, March 8, 2019, *Atlantic Magazine*

Thousands of Native American children were forced to attend boarding schools created to strip them of their culture. My mother was one of them.

Link: <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/03/traumatic-legacy-indian-boarding-schools/584293/>

**3.5.2:** *Canadian Shame: A History of Residential Schools | Ginger Gosnell-Myers | TEDxVancouver* (15:25)

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1EDbbse2BM>

**3.5.3:** *Canada’s Dark Secret* (47:30)

The story of Canada’s residential school system and the indigenous survivors who bear witness to its abuses.

Video Link: <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2017/01/canada-dark-secret-170130091149080.html>

**3.5.4:** *Away From Home: American Indian Boarding School Stories*

Text, quotes, and videos present the experiences of Native American students who were forced to attend these boarding schools where their culture and language were tripped away.

Video Link: <https://heard.org/boardingschool/student-experiences/>

**3.5.5:** *Native American Boarding Schools* documentary (56:43)

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo1bYj-R7F0>

# 3.5.6: *Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola I. Campbell, author and Kim LaFave, illustrator (2005)

# “Shi-shi-etko just has four days until she will have to leave her family and everything she knows to attend residential school. She spends her last precious days at home treasuring and appreciating the beauty of her world — the dancing sunlight, the tall grass, each shiny rock, the tadpoles in the creek, her grandfather’s paddle song. Her mother, father, and grandmother, each in turn, share valuable teachings that they want her to remember. Shi-shi-etko carefully gathers her memories for safekeeping.

# “LaFave’s richly hued illustrations complement Campbell’s gently moving and poetic account of a child who finds solace around her, even though she is on the verge of great loss — a loss that native people have endured for generations because of Canada’s residential schools system.”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ha6vMDGmzYo> (7:18)

# Film of story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKErhCGjSDE> (6:05)

# Song about story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRu0IT0Pd50> (3:16)

# 3.5.7: *Shin-chi’s Canoe* by Nicola I. Campbell, author and Kim LaFave, illustrator (2005)

# “When they arrive at school, Shi-shi-etko reminds Shinchi, her six-year- old brother, that they can only use their English names and that they can’t speak to each other. For Shinchi, life becomes an endless cycle of church mass, school, and work, punctuated by skimpy meals. He finds solace at the river, clutching a tiny cedar canoe, a gift from his father, and dreaming of the day when the salmon return to the river — a sign that it’s almost time to return home. This poignant story about a devastating chapter in First Nations history is told at a child’s level of understanding.”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktV1CdIUEIY> (7:34)

**3.6: Navajo Code Talkers**

**3.6.1:** *Code Talkers: An Overview*

How Navajo Code Talkers helped the United States win World War II

Link: <https://americanindian.si.edu/education/codetalkers/html/index.html>