



NETWORKING THE BAPTIST FAMILY TO IMPACT THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

BWA General Council Resolution 2023.1

DIGNITY AND JUSTICE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The Baptist World Alliance General Council, meeting in Stavanger, Norway, July 2-5, 2023:

ACKNOWLEDGES the Sámi people of the Sápmi region, some of which overlaps with the modern nation in which we gather.

CELEBRATES the rich diversity of humans made in the image of God around the world, as seen in every nation, tribe, people, and language.

CONDEMNS centuries of mistreatment of Indigenous peoples around the world, especially the genocide and settler colonialism that decimated entire communities and cultures. Additionally, we denounce the seizure of land, treaty violations, forced migration, segregation, employment and religious discrimination, mistreatment by law officials, contamination of vital natural resources, and other injustices to which Indigenous peoples have been and are subjected.

REPUDIATES the "Doctrine of Discovery" and any theological interpretation by Christians to justify the abuse, enslavement, and slaughter of Indigenous peoples.¹ Such efforts to bless the dehumanizing of people and the theft of their lands are fundamentally in opposition to the gospel of Jesus.

RECOGNIZES that despite the growing community of Christians renouncing such theology, the principles from the Doctrine of Discovery remain embedded in some national laws, societal attitudes toward Indigenous peoples, and even in some Christian resources.

LAMENTS that some Baptists and other Christians participated in the injustices against Indigenous peoples, including killing people, seizing land, kidnapping children, running residential schools or other institutions to eliminate cultures and languages, and restricting civil and religious rights.

¹ For background about the "Doctrine of Discovery," see <https://humanrights.ca/story/doctrine-discovery>



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LAUDS those Baptists and other Christians who advocated for Indigenous rights and treated Indigenous peoples with dignity and respect, including Roger Williams (Turtle Island/North America), John Saunders (Australia), and Silas Rand (Canada).

HONORS Indigenous Baptist leaders who have faithfully ministered even amid difficult circumstances, inadequate and inequitable support, and discrimination from other Baptists. Among the many in the great cloud of witnesses are Joseph Amos (U.S.), John Chilembwe (Malawi), Graham Paulson (Australia), and Truby Mihaere (Aotearoa/New Zealand).

SUPPORTS evangelistic and discipleship efforts to all peoples, provided that such methods respect the humanity, culture, language, conscience, and land of each person.

CALLS on Baptist churches, colleges, unions, and other institutions to study their own historical and present complicity with discrimination against Indigenous peoples, and urges more work toward restorative justice efforts to end discrimination against Indigenous peoples and repair the damage from past wrongs.

COMMENDS continuing Baptist efforts to acknowledge past injustices, apologize to Indigenous peoples, advocate for justice, and work toward building more inclusive fellowships. For instance, we applaud the work of Te Hāhi Iriiri o Aotearoa (The Baptist Churches of New Zealand) and Canadian Baptist Ministries.

LOOKS forward to the participation of Indigenous peoples during the 23rd Baptist World Congress in Brisbane, Australia, in 2025, and celebrates that the logo for the gathering is designed by Australian Indigenous artist Mariah Sweetman with an artistic style unique to Australian First Nations people.

ABOUT THE BWA

Since its formation in 1905, the Baptist World Alliance has networked the global Baptist family to impact the world for Christ with a commitment to strengthen worship, fellowship and unity; lead in mission and evangelism; respond to people in need through aid, relief, and community development; defend religious freedom, human rights, and justice; and advance theological reflection and leadership development.

For more information about Baptist World Alliance resolutions, visit BaptistWorld.org/resolutions.