

Highlands Presbyterian Church
2309 Pattison Avenue
Cheyenne, Wyoming

Rodger McDaniel, Pastor

Highlands United Presbyterian in Cheyenne, has begun to systematically pay reparations to the Indigenous Peoples of the Wind River Indian Reservation. For more than a year, most Sunday morning worship services at Highlands begin with an acknowledgment that members are worshipping on land stolen from the Tsétséhéstaestse (Cheyenne), the Hinono'eiteen (Arapaho) and other Native Peoples.

Rev. Rodger McDaniel, pastor at Highlands, said, "Indigenous Peoples have suffered from historic injustices, including being dispossessed of their ancestral lands and forcing their children to attend boarding schools designed to 'kill the Indian to save the child.'" Some of these schools were sponsored by Presbyterians and other Christian churches.

Between the 2020 onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the end of 2022, Highlands has given nearly \$48,000 for Reservation causes. That includes the endowment of a \$35,000 permanent fund at Central Wyoming Community College to help Indian students stay in school when financial emergencies might otherwise force them to drop out. Highlands provides financial support to the Riverton Peace Mission work to address anti-Indian racism in that community.

In January of this year Highlands took the extraordinary step of voluntarily assessing on itself a land tax or reparations payment of \$500 per month to be set aside in an Indigenous Reparations Fund. Some have made additional personal donations. As of the end of April the four-month-old fund already has a balance of \$7,500.

McDaniel, said "It is not our intent to decide how the money will be used but to listen to Native voices and follow their lead." The fund will be used for projects identified by Tribal members on the Wind River Indian Reservation. Currently, both Tribes have been working to create two food banks in response to concerns about hunger among their people. The Highlands Hunger Action Team meets monthly with those involved in the planning. Once they are ready, they may ask Highlands for financial contributions to the project.

Others are invited to contribute. If you would like to donate to the Indigenous Reparations Fund, please note that intent on the memo line of a check made out to Highlands and sent to the church at 2390 Pattison Avenue, Cheyenne, 82009.