

Oct. 29, 2021

U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin
210 7th Street South, Suite 3
La Crosse, WI 54601

Dear Senator Baldwin,

As a religious congregation with a history of administering a Native American boarding school during the era of assimilating Indigenous children into Euro-American culture, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration support the legislation to establish the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy in the United States. We appreciate your co-sponsorship and reintroduction of *The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act*.

We acknowledge our own history and are researching our archives and studying the impact of our operation of St. Mary's Boarding School in Odanah, Wisconsin, from 1883 to 1969. We recognize that the work of truth and healing cannot wait any longer. As a congregation we are members of The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition and are proactively,

- working to contribute our archival records to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition's online database resources center, while working with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer in Odanah to explore how materials and artifacts are pertinent to both FSPA and the people of Odanah.
- reading FSPA congregation diaries authored during 1883-1969, collating information specifically related to big events, sickness, deaths and parish events.
- enriching our internal committee membership by including a member of the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa who is also a graduate of St. Mary's Boarding School.
- serving in new ways at St. Mary's Parish in Odanah, having recently accepted an invitation for Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Roselyn Heil to fill a position of pastoral associate.
- inviting our sponsored Franciscan spirituality centers to consider their support of FSPA's Truth and Healing journey, starting with education, including hosting an interactive exercise that traces the historic and ongoing impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery.
- committing ourselves to transparency in the process, sharing our progress at fspa.org.

Our hope is that as we listen to the painful and tragic experiences of Indigenous communities and take responsibility for the role we played, we can take action in dismantling systemic racism and white supremacy in ourselves and our areas of influence. Our intention is to address our complicity in unjust systems, both historically and now, and strive to enhance dignity and wholeness to those who have suffered for generations.

We ask for your continued support for this legislation. As you stated on September 30, 2021, the National Day of Remembrance for U.S. Indian Boarding Schools, "We cannot gloss over this dark and tragic period of our nation's history."

Sincerely,



Sister Eileen McKenzie, President, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration Truth and Healing Team

Sisters Mariana Ableidinger, Georgia Christensen, Celesta Day, Carolyn Heil, Roselyn Heil, Catherine Kaiser, Marla Lang, Eileen McKenzie, Kristin Peters, Donna Stevens, Marlene Weisenbeck; Affiliate Marge McCardle; Partners in Mission on staff Pat Ruda and Meg Paulino; and Gary Robbins, collaborator and consultant, and Steve Boulley, Associate Judge, Bad River Tribal Court