

**ITEM C.108
FOR ACTION**

<i>FOR PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S OFFICE USE ONLY</i>			
	A. Finance		E. Corporate Property, Legal, Finance
	B. Justice		F. PC(USA), A Corporation
X	C. Leadership		G. Audit
	D. Worshipping Communities		H. Executive Committee
			J. Board Nominating & Governance Subcommittee
			P. Plenary

Subject: Comment to the 222nd GA (2016) – Overture 065 (Business Item #11-08) On Offering an Apology to Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians – From the Presbytery of Baltimore

Recommendation:

That the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board approve the following comment on Overture 65 (Business Item #11-08) On Offering an Apology to Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians – From the Presbytery of Baltimore

Comment:

There has been a Presbyterian presence in Native American communities and reservations in the United States since the late 1600’s. When the first presbytery in this country was formed in 1706, it is believed that there were thirty-seven Native American Protestant ministers in Eastern America. While the history is complex as well as long, one thing is clear: Presbyterians have had a long connection to Native American ministry, and Native Americans have long identified as Presbyterians.

In this history, there have been wrongs committed against Native Americans. Church leaders from different ecumenical groups have apologized to Native Americans for their participation in removing traditional ceremonies, rituals and language from Native communities, not valuing the personhood and spirituality of Native peoples, and neglecting to recognize and affirm the great gifts that Native peoples offer to the church and society.

In the period following World War II, Presbyterian General Assemblies consistently took positions supportive of Native American land rights and by 1983, the reunited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) supported the concept of self-determination, as well as freedom for Native Americans to practice traditional religion. The Native American Consulting Committee (NACC) was formally established in 1977 to provide counsel to national church agencies and mid councils on matters affecting Native peoples. And, the 1983 reunion resulted in a total of 109 Native congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Office of Native American Congregational Support in the Presbyterian Mission Agency has assisted the PC (USA) to respond to Native American congregational issues and to enable Native American

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Presbyterians to participate actively and effectively within the PC (USA) at all levels. The office also serves as an important source of information and orientation for national church agency and mid council staff in the PC (USA).

This overture calls for an apology to Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians and to United States citizens of Native American ancestry, both those within and beyond our denomination. However, the content of the apology seems to be directed toward one group. Much of the content does not apply to Native Hawaiians, for instance. Thus, the apology should be revised, so that it is broad enough to apply to each of the groups listed in the overture.

A number of groups have issued apologies and letters to Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians and have committed to support Native peoples in the righting of previous wrongs. The language of these apologies could be reviewed in order to help perfect the apology, as it is difficult to address each specific situation and circumstance, which is so varied. The spirit of the overture is helpful, however, the apology requires editing, in order to speak more broadly on behalf of the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians and their experiences in the church and in their communities. Thus, it may be helpful to look at apologies that have been issued by other groups to find wording that provides clarity, addresses different Native communities, and affirms the PC (USA)'s support of members of its Native American family.

Link to Overture - <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/6350>