

Today we begin by acknowledging with humility that the land where we gather is the traditional territory of the Cheraw, Sugaree, and Catawba nations, who stewarded this land for more than 6,000 years.

In that time, Indigenous communities learned to live with the land in a good way, cultivating it into an abundant landscape that provided for all their needs.

Today we appreciate that this same land provides us a secluded and quiet space within the city of Charlotte to pursue theological education and live out what it means to be the Church in the world.

We are grateful that the Catawba, or Ye Iswa, which means People of the River, survived US government policies and Church complicity that aimed to remove them from the land and deny them basic human rights and sovereignty.

Our acknowledgement repudiates the Doctrine of Discovery and reminds us, as an act of our Christian faith, to strive for respectful partnership with God's creation, all lands and all peoples.

## Learn More about the Catawba Nation

The Catawba Nation is the only federally recognized tribe in the State of South Carolina. Today the Catawba have an enrolled population of over 3000 members. [www.catawba.com/about-the-nation](http://www.catawba.com/about-the-nation)

“The ancestral lands of the Catawba Nation extend through the Piedmont region of North and South Carolina and into southern Virginia. We have lived on these lands along the Catawba River for thousands of years.

“The Catawba Nation became an essential stop on the route from Jamestown to Charlestown (now Charleston). The Catawba became skilled traders which allowed them to acquire weapons, tools, blankets, and cloth in exchange for furs and other wares like Catawba pottery. Catawba bowls and pots became a sought-after commodity for the settlers due to their quality.

“In 1763 much of the land was ceded to the British Crown through the Treaty of Augusta. The remaining land was illegally ceded to the state of South Carolina in 1840 through the Treaty of Nation Ford. When other tribes were being moved west on the Trail of Tears, the state of South Carolina decided not to spend the money because the tribe membership was so low in numbers at the time that it was expected the



Catawba would be extinct soon. That warrior spirit and resiliency of the Catawba have helped us through many hard times.

“After our federal status was removed in 1951, we reorganized and fought to regain that status. And though it took over 20 years to accomplish this, we achieved it. That same heritage is within the tribe now. We are warriors and are a strong, resilient people...



“We still live on our beautiful ancestral lands along the banks of the Catawba river today. Due to growth and development in our area, we are now close to the thriving city of Rock Hill which is a suburb to the Charlotte metropolitan area.”

*(text and photos used with permission)*



Visit the Catawba Cultural Center ([catawbaculture.org](http://catawbaculture.org)) located at 1536 Tom Steven Road, Rock Hill SC 29730. The center contains a trading post, library, archives, and the Tribal Historic Preservation Office. Cultural classes and public programs are offered regularly.

Learn the Catawba Language: [catawbalanguage.org](http://catawbalanguage.org)

Indigenous peoples of the Americas are the inhabitants of this continent before the arrival of European settlers in the 15th century and the ethnic groups who identify themselves with these peoples.

Although some indigenous peoples of the Americas were traditionally hunter gatherers, and many especially in the Amazon basin still are, many groups practiced agriculture and aquaculture, and some lived through cultivating a mix of farming, hunting and gathering. Indigenous peoples created monumental architecture, large scale organized cities, city states, chiefdoms, states, kingdoms, and empires. Some had varying degrees of knowledge of engineering, architecture, mathematics, astronomy, writing, physics, medicine, planting and irrigation, geology, mining, metallurgy, sculpture, and gold smithing.

Many parts of the Americas still are populated by indigenous peoples, especially Bolivia, Canada, Guatemala, Equator, Mexico, Peru, and the United States.

At least a 1,000 indigenous languages are spoken in the Americas. This land, from Alaska to Patagonia, was not “wilderness”, uninhabited or wasteland. It was, and continues to be, the home of millions of indigenous peoples placed here by our Creator.

We are reminded of the words of Tecumseh, Shawnee Chief and Warrior, who said, “The Master of Life has appointed this land for us to light our fires and here we shall remain.”

Rev. Irv Porter

PC(USA) Associate for Native American Intercultural Congregational Support

## Learn More about The Doctrine of Discovery and the PC(USA)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called the church to confess its complicity and repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. This doctrine laid the groundwork for the genocide of indigenous peoples around the world, the colonization of Africa, Asia, Australia, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas, and the transatlantic trafficking in persons used as slave labor.

### Weblinks

[www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/racial-equity-womens-intercultural-ministries/gender-and-racial-justice-ministries/doctrine-of-discovery](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/racial-equity-womens-intercultural-ministries/gender-and-racial-justice-ministries/doctrine-of-discovery)

[www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000375](http://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000375)

[www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000383](http://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000383)

[www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/racial-equity-womens-intercultural-ministries/native-american-intercultural-congregational-support](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/racial-equity-womens-intercultural-ministries/native-american-intercultural-congregational-support)

[www.pc-biz.org/#/search/6350](http://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/6350)

## Support PC(USA) Indigenous Churches

The 223rd General Assembly (2018) directed the Presbyterian Foundation to create an ongoing fund for urgent and immediate repairs and improvements for Native American churches and chapels.

[www.presbyterianfoundation.org/nativeamericanchurches/](http://www.presbyterianfoundation.org/nativeamericanchurches/)

[www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Background-text-for-NAANP-Fund.pdf](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Background-text-for-NAANP-Fund.pdf)

