



## **STATEMENT FROM THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' INITIATIVE LEADERSHIP ON THE RECENT DISCOVERY OF UNMARKED NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES**

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARIZONA- From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 First Nations children were required to attend state-funded christian school as part of a program to assimilate them into Canadian society. They were forced to convert to christianity and not allowed to speak their Native languages. Many were beaten and verbally abused, and up to 6, 00 are said to have died. In May and June of this year, nearly one-thousand graves have been discovered near two schools in Canada. These findings are part of a larger tragedy that spans across Canada and the United States. The following statement was issued by president Baca and vice president Jones.

Statement from president Baca, “ Today’s findings compound what First Nations and Indigenous Peoples’ everywhere have known all along. I am deeply saddened by today’s findings as it reminds me that the actually painful history of Indigenous people was not long ago. All citizens of the world should reflect on what has been discovered. Great nations do not shy away from the truth, truth strengthens us, truth emboldens us, and truth fortifies us. It is an act of patriotism to understand our collective responsibility to do so as citizens of an interconnected global community. We cannot correct the past, but we can work together to make sure that the lives of all Indigenous People are improved.”

Statement from vice president Jones, “ The recent discoveries of the graves of Indigenous children are tragic and horrific events, but they are events we need to learn about. The only way to even begin to atone for the horrors committed in the past is to learn about them. That is why history is so important, especially to people of color who have suffered so immensely in the past and continue to suffer from the effects of horrors like these today.”