

**ITEM P.201
FOR INFORMATION**

REAC Letter to OGA and PMA

12 February 2021

Dear PMA and OGA colleagues,

We write to you today requesting your partnership in advocacy for our Shinnecock Nation siblings, 60% of whom are living below the poverty line as they struggle against continued efforts to deny them sovereignty over Shinnecock land.

We are grateful for our denomination's Matthew 25 identity and commitment to working toward the elimination of racism and poverty, which was displayed during the 224th General Assembly (2020) in the passage of the [Native American Coordinating Council Report](#) (Item 00-95). In that report, the General Assembly directed the PMA and OGA to:

Support the efforts of Indigenous Nations to gain local, state, and federal recognition as sovereign nations (4a).

and Support Indigenous Nations' full expression of their inherent legal sovereignty in civil criminal spheres, including but not limited to Violence Against Women Act, Indian Child Welfare Act, state and federal actions aimed at abrogating or diminishing Indigenous sovereignty, legislative efforts to support their inherent sovereignty, local, state and federal actions that impact Indigenous peoples protection and control over their environment and sacred places (4e).

And,

Encourage the congregations, mid councils, and other groups in the church to develop partnerships with organizations, universities (including PC(USA) seminaries), and Indigenous leaders (5).

The Shinnecock Nation is currently struggling against attacks on their land sovereignty, attacks which seek to deny them the right to erect monuments on their own land and to secure income for those within the Shinnecock Nation. We've included a brief summary of that struggle here:

-The Shinnecock Nation built two 61-foot billboard monuments along State Route 27 on Shinnecock land to:

1. Mark their sovereign land (monument carries the Shinnecock seal)
2. Generate revenue

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-State Route 27 leads to vacation spots in the Hamptons, and some don't care for the aesthetic of the monuments.

-May 2019 NY State Department of Transportation issued a temporary restraining order on building the first monument, citing unfounded safety concerns.

-May 2020 Suffolk County Supreme Court denied the restraining order, citing state's claims as baseless.

-After the completion of the first monument, NY State filed another lawsuit and continue to seek removal of the monuments with a new stop-work order issued January 28, 2021.

-NY State Department of Transportation has threatened to bulldoze the monuments or fine the Shinnecock \$2000 a day if the monuments remain 30-days past January 28.

For more information:

[State Threatens To Remove Shinnecock Nation's 2 Large Billboards | Southampton, NY Patch](#)

<https://newrepublic.com/article/160310/vacation-enclave-hamptons-two-61-foot-billboards-endless-fight-tribal-sovereignty>

The Racial Equity Advocacy Committee and the Native American Consulting Committee request of the PMA and OGA that you assist us as we seek to advocate alongside the Shinnecock Nation. We request that you connect with mid-councils local to the Shinnecock Nation to encourage them to partner with the Shinnecock Nation and follow their lead in this struggle for Shinnecock rights.

Perhaps these same Presbyterian partners can also advocate locally for systemic change that would ensure no one in the Shinnecock nation lives below the poverty line.

We are happy to partner with you in this work and would welcome further conversation.

Your partners in ministry and mission,

Rev. Michelle Hwang, Chair
Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

CRE Fern Cloud, Moderator
Native American Consulting Committee (NACC)