

The GATHERING

"Do not be afraid, for I am with you, I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west"

—Isaiah 43:5-7

When We Return, We Demonstrate Hope for Our Oppressors

For a people to gather, they must first endure being scattered.

Indigenous peoples in North America and around the world have endured a diaspora brought about by settler colonialism. It is estimated that we numbered 100 million before Europeans developed nautical technology to transport armies across oceans. By 1900, only about 5 million Indigenous people had survived the assault of settlement.



"Orange Shirt Day" march in Ontario, September 30 2025. Orange Shirt Day commemorates the history of boarding schools in Canada and honors Indigenous children forced into these schools. Photo by Sarah Augustine

By that time, the allotment and assimilation era was well-underway in the United States. Removing us from our lands and scattering us was a policy priority. A primary tactic of assimilation for my people is child removal. The federal government removed children from our lands, tribes, and families and incarcerated us in boarding schools. We were denied access to our families; we were punished for speaking our languages and praying the way we had been taught to pray. To this day, our children are removed from our homes to foster care in greater numbers than any other group.

Isaiah 43 has been a source of great comfort over hard years of struggling for decolonization. Decolonization I define as the relinquishment of a subjugated people; my people. *I have called you by name, you are mine*, the psalmist writes. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.* I have held these words in my heart during difficult times.

And these words I have dreamed: *Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, "Give them up!" and to the south, "Do not hold them back." Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth.* I have dreamt of Indigenous Peoples returning, gathering on our lands, which to us are sacred.

In my dream we demonstrate a pathway toward hope for the mighty who have scattered us, for they are without hope.

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Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery

