



## United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

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### **USET Resolution No. 2014:044**

## **SUPPORTING THE NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL HEALING COALITION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL COMMISSION ON AMERICAN INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL POLICY**

- WHEREAS,** United South and Eastern Tribes Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-six (26) federally recognized Tribes; and
- WHEREAS,** the actions taken by the USET Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member Tribe, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member Tribes' leadership; and
- WHEREAS,** the United States, at the urging of and in support of the Christian Churches of the time, adopted the Indian Civilization Act Fund of 1819 to provide financial support for church-run schools to "civilize" Native American children through education; and
- WHEREAS,** in 1869 the United States, in concert with and at the urging of several denominations of the Christian Church, adopted the Indian Boarding School Policy (also known as the Peace Policy) which was a deliberate policy of the removal and reprogramming of Native American children, the purpose of which was the systematic destruction of indigenous cultures and communities; and
- WHEREAS,** between 1869 and the 1960s as many as 100,000 Native American children were removed from their homes and families, often involuntarily, and placed in boarding schools operated by the federal government and the churches; and
- WHEREAS,** Native children who were voluntarily or forcibly removed from their homes, families, and communities were taken to schools far away where they were punished for speaking their native language, banned from acting in any way that might be seen to represent traditional or cultural practices, stripped of traditional clothing, hair, and all things and behaviors reflective of their native culture, and commonly abused and neglected by inadequate and hostile staff; and
- WHEREAS,** the prevailing attitudes of the time allowed neglect and abuse of children who were overseen but not parented, who were bullied and assaulted not only by the adults but also by older children under the modeling and instruction of the caretakers and staff, and who were neglected en masse. These children observed and suffered physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse, punishment by physical restraints, beatings and isolation in inhospitable surroundings, such as unlighted cellars, and unlighted and unventilated outbuildings designed as jails; and
- WHEREAS,** these children, their children, and now their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, have become the legacy of the boarding schools and the federal policy that established and sustained those schools, where the trauma the children suffered has gone unrecognized and unresolved, and the trauma is passed onto each subsequent generation where this historical and inter-generational trauma continues to work in, undermine, and devastate Native American individuals, families, and communities; and

- WHEREAS,** neither the United States nor any national denomination of the Christian churches in the United States has offered a meaningful apology or offered to provide any restitution for the generations of harm caused by the deliberate imposition of the policy of cultural genocide on the Native American children, families, communities, Tribes, pueblos, or Alaska native villages; and
- WHEREAS,** the facts and history about the pervasive harm caused and continuing to be caused by the trauma and continuing intergenerational trauma attributable to the Boarding School Policy are poorly understood by the American public, the Congress, and the Executive Branch of the federal government; and
- WHEREAS,** in order to begin a healing process to address the harms suffered and endured as a result of the boarding school policy, a comprehensive national study is needed of the history of the policy; such study should include complete documentation of the fate of each of the students and the events that took place at each of the schools, gathering of testimony from those that suffered from abuse, neglect, or other trauma, and recommendations to Congress based on the information gathered from individual victims, communities, and experts concerning the nature of the harms and potential paradigms for healing and reconciliation; and
- WHEREAS,** similar events in the past have been successfully addressed through Congressional authorization of a Commission to study and report on the issue; and
- WHEREAS,** in December 2010, the United States recognized the rights of its First Peoples through its support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), whose provisions and principles support and promote the purposes of this resolution; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED** the USET Board of Directors supports the enactment by the United States Congress of a bill to create a Commission on American Indian Boarding School Policy, the majority of the members of which shall be members of federally recognized Tribes, to be charged with investigating and reporting back to Congress on the history of the boarding school policy, the impacts of that policy on communities, Tribal nations, and individuals, and suitable methods of support for healing and reconciliation with the communities and Tribal nations impacted by the policy.

**CERTIFICATION**

This resolution was duly passed at the USET Impact Week Meeting, at which a quorum was present, in Arlington, VA, on Thursday, February 6, 2014.



Brian Patterson, President  
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.



Brenda Lintinger, Secretary  
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

*“Because there is strength in Unity”*