



GREAT LAKES INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL, INC.

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Resolution No. 2013-09.05

Support for the Enactment by the United States Congress of a Bill to Create a Commission on American Indian Boarding School Policy

Whereas, the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc. is an intertribal consortium whose membership is comprised of twelve federally recognized Indian tribal governments located in the States of Wisconsin and Michigan; 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 the 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 that 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, Native children were sent under the “outing system” to work as farm and domestic help during school vacations at exploitive wages instead of to their homes; 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 exploited and 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, Pueblos, Tribes, or Alaskan 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 or the Executive Branch of the federal government; and

Whereas, in order to begin a healing process to address the harms suffered and enduring 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.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc. Board of Directors does hereby support 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; and

Be it further resolved that this Resolution shall be the policy of the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc. until otherwise amended or rescinded, or until the goal of this Resolution has been accomplished.

CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned Executive Director of the Board of Directors of the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc., do hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was proposed and adopted at a duly noticed and convened meeting of the Board of Directors, held on the 5th day of September, 2013, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and that the resolution has been entered upon the minutes of the Board of Directors without addition or amendment.


Michael W. Allen, Executive Director