



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #PHX-16-063

### **TITLE: Call for the United States to Acknowledge its Role in the U.S. Boarding School Policy and to Account for the American Indian and Alaska Native Children Who did not Survive as a Result**

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**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, the promotion, protection and preservation of Tribal members' health, welfare and human rights is a priority for all Tribes; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States attempted deliberate eradication of Native American culture and forced assimilation through the Boarding School Policy of 1869 also known as "President Grant's Peace Policy;" and

**WHEREAS**, American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children were required by law to attend boarding schools with the stated purpose of "Kill the Indian, Save the Man;" and

**WHEREAS**, AI/AN parents were under this policy required by law to allow their children to be taken from them, and were threatened with the loss of commodities and/or incarceration for withholding their children from removal to the Boarding schools; and

**WHEREAS**, the Policy resulted in the isolation of thousands of children from their parents and communities for long periods of time where children were discouraged from communicating with their parents, and parents were discouraged from visiting or communicating with their children often for several years so that they did not and could not know the treatment of fate of their children; and

**WHEREAS**, the Policy's deliberate intention was the separation of Native American children from their families, cultures, and Tribal communities through removal, cutting their hair, taking their clothing and issuing uniforms, forbidding them to speak their language or engage in any cultural practices, and carrying out severe and often brutal punishments constituting, in some cases, physical, emotional and mental torture for non-compliance; and

**WHEREAS**, the failure of the United States to provide for adequate physical, emotional and medical care for the children taken into their custody under US law resulted in inadequate nutrition, illness, neglect, and emotional, physical, mental, sexual and spiritual trauma, all contributing to mortality rates significantly in excess of contemporary non-Indian children; and

**WHEREAS**, the information collected by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the Indian Residential Schools in Canada documented that thousands of children, approximately 4000 children taken into custody under that policy which was modeled on the US Boarding School Policy, perished in the Residential schools as a result of inadequate nutrition, untreated illnesses, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and despair; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States has never provided an accounting for the actual number of American Indian and Alaska Native children removed to Boarding schools between 1869 and 1972, or the identities, numbers, Tribal identities or causes of death of the children who passed away while in the custody of the schools; and

**WHEREAS**, many of these children are buried in cemeteries at or near former school sites and significant numbers are in graves marked as "unknown;" and

**WHEREAS**, having taken these children from homes and communities and held them in federal custody, the United States is obligated to account for their fate under federal responsibilities pursuant to treaties and agreements with the Tribes, the federal trust obligation to honor and protect the children of the Tribes, and principles of international human rights law regarding Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances that require governments to account for the fate of all persons taken into governmental custody who have not yet been returned to their families and communities, and pursuant to principles of justice and common decency; and

**WHEREAS**, it is incumbent upon the United States to account to the individual victims, the families, communities and AI/AN governments concerning the identity of each student taken into federal custody whether voluntarily or involuntarily, and the fate of each student; and

**WHEREAS**, NCAI has, in Resolution ATL-14-016, previously called for a beginning to the process of healing from the historical and intergenerational traumas brought on by the Boarding School policies and the harms it caused our people, families, communities, Nations, the United States, and the various Churches, and in pursuit of healing, NCAI expressed support for development of more knowledge and education about what happened during the boarding school era, how it continues to create impacts for the descendants of survivors, and how meaningful healing paradigms can work to turn back the ongoing effects of historical and intergenerational trauma that currently continue to plague our communities; and

**WHEREAS**, receiving full and complete information as to the fate, whereabouts and/or final resting places of the children, and achieving repatriation as appropriate and requested, for the children who did not survive the Boarding Schools is an essential aspect of the healing of families, descendants, communities and Tribal Nations impacted though inter-generational trauma as a result of the Boarding School Policy.

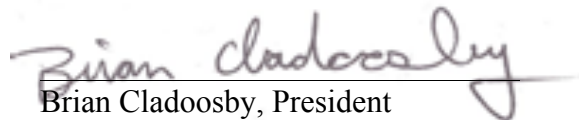
**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians requests that the United States government provide a full accounting including the total number of students removed to the custody of boarding schools operated by the federal government, or remanded to churches that operated with federal funding, including the fate and final resting place of each child that did not survive; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the NCAI supports the efforts by Tribal Nations, Families and organizations seeking this information through national and international mechanisms, including the Federal Freedom of Information Act and the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances and calls upon the US Federal Government to comply with all requests and efforts to obtain this information by families, decedents, Tribal Nations and Alaska Native Villages as well as Indigenous organizations and coalitions working on their behalf; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

### CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2016 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Phoenix Convention Center, October 9<sup>th</sup>- 14<sup>th</sup> 2016, with a quorum present.

  
Brian Cladoosby, President

**ATTEST:**

  
Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary