



2022 Virtual Winter Convention

RESOLUTION #2022 – 00

“SUPPORT FOR THE “TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION ON INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL POLICIES ACT” (S. 2907 AND H.R. 5444)”

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest 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 rights secured under Indian Treaties, Executive Orders and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) are representatives of and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and tribes in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of ATNI; and

WHEREAS, introduced by the Indian Civilization Act Fund of March 3, 1819 and Peace Policy of 1868, the United States government, in alliance with and at the urging of the Christian Church denominations, adopted an Indian Boarding School Policy; and

WHEREAS, the federal Indian Boarding School Policy was expressly intended to accomplish cultural genocide—the systematic destruction of indigenous identities, beliefs,

languages, and cultures—by removing Native American children from their homes and assimilating them with non-Indigenous beliefs, practices and values; and

WHEREAS, between 1819 and the 1960s hundreds of thousands of Native American children removed from their homes and families and placed in Indian Boarding Schools operated by the federal government and churches; and

WHEREAS, Native children that were voluntarily or forcibly removed from their homes, families, and communities were taken to the boarding schools where they were punished and abused, primarily by non-Native staff for speaking their indigenous language, stripped of traditional clothing, hair and personal belongings and banned from practicing their traditions, cultures or behaviors reflective of their Native ways of life; and

WHEREAS, the prevailing attitudes of the time accepted the abuse and neglect of Native children who were supervised by the boarding school adults and older children under the modeling and instruction of staff and caretakers; and

WHEREAS, many children placed in these schools observed and suffered physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse, where some were punished 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 are the legacy of the boarding schools and the federal policy that established and sustained them, where the trauma they suffered has gone unrecognized and unresolved to today; and

WHEREAS, the survivors of Indian boarding schools are victims of crimes that the United States has never acknowledged or accounted for; and

WHEREAS, it has been established the trauma experienced by the children who were abused and neglected in these schools has passed onto each subsequent generation where this historical and inter-generational trauma continues to have lasting consequences and devastates Native American individuals, families, and communities; and

WHEREAS, the facts and history about the pervasive harm caused continues in the historical and intergenerational trauma attributable to the Boarding School Policy and is poorly understood by the American public, the Congress and the Executive Branch of the federal government; and

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2021, Secretary of the Interior Debra Haaland announced the “Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative” that directs “an investigation of the loss of human life and the lasting consequences of residential Indian boarding schools” with a primary goal to identify:

- boarding school facilities and sites,
- location of known and possible student burial sites located at or near school facilities, and
- the identities and Tribal affiliations of children interred at such locations; and

WHEREAS, the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of the Interior to share records and information in support of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative; and

WHEREAS, while the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative is an important first step, Indian country needs a comprehensive national investigation of the history of the policies, complete documentation of the fate of the students and events that took place at each school, gathering of testimony from those that suffered abuse, neglect, other trauma and its effects on these individuals, families and communities; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI does hereby support the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools Policies Act” (S. 2907 and H.R. 5444);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, ATNI urges the House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over S. 2907 and H.R. 5444 to schedule field hearings at the Indian boarding schools to better understand the experiences of Native children who were forced or coerced to attend these Indian boarding schools;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, ATNI calls on President Joe Biden and Interior Secretary Debra Haaland to garner the full authority of the Biden Administration to support these bills.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2022 Virtual Winter Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, Portland, Oregon, on January 24-27, 2022, with a quorum approving.

Leonard Forsman, President

Norma Jean Louie, Secretary