



# Red Cloud Indian School

Office of the President

June 07, 2022

Red Cloud Indian School  
100 Mission Dr  
Pine Ridge, SD 57770

RE: H.R. 5444 Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act

To Whom It May Concern:

Red Cloud Indian School, Inc. would like to express our full and enthusiastic support for the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools Policies Act. This act will create the necessary infrastructure for the United States to fully explore the deeply traumatic and complex impact of the Indian Boarding Schools on the Indigenous peoples of this nation. As a former Indian Boarding School operated by the Society of Jesus in partnership with the Sisters of Saint Francis we understand full well that this act is necessary for the truth to be revealed and the impact to be understood.

As a Catholic institution we recognize that the United States policy toward the creation of Indian Boarding Schools laid the foundation for deeply harmful and traumatic experiences that many Indigenous communities faced as a result of the boarding schools. As described in volume 1 of the report on Indian boarding schools from the Department of the Interior, these schools, including ours, engaged in "identity-altering practices" that were meant to eradicate Indigenous communities of their language, culture, and spiritual traditions. The focus on children as the means of implementing these practices amounts to nothing short of cultural genocide.

Pope Francis said in a direct apology to the Canadian Indigenous community about the residential schools in Canada;

*All this has made me feel two things very strongly: indignation and shame. Indignation, because it is not right to accept evil and, even worse, to grow accustomed to evil, as if it were an inevitable part of the historical process. No! Without real indignation, without historical memory and without a commitment to learning from past mistakes, problems remain unresolved and keep coming back.*

On our own, we have begun engaging in a process similar to the one proposed by this legislation. We are gathering the testimonies of our boarding school alumni and survivors and opening our records and archives so that the full story of our history and impact can be understood. This is a difficult and challenging process for all involved. It recalls harmful memories for boarders and can mean difficult conversations for our communities. However, we fully believe this process is necessary in order for individuals and communities to find closure and healing. Acknowledgement and ownership of the impact of this harmful history is only the beginning but offers a crucial first step in the effort to overcome.

This act represents the opportunity for the United States to take the first step in acknowledgment and ownership of the harmful impacts of boarding school policy on Indigenous peoples. This act will pave the foundation for healing that many in our indigenous communities need in order to overcome this painful legacy. We at Red Cloud Indian School, Inc, implore members of congress to support this bill and its passage.

Sincerely,



Maka Black Elk  
Executive Director for Truth and Healing