



Washington Mental Health Counselors Association
11410 NE 124th St. #658
Kirkland, WA 98034
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(508) 779-6422

WMHCA Endorses the Truth & Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy in the United States

Whereas, the United States government created and implemented a system of over 500 Indian Boarding Schools in 38 states - including at least 17 in Washington State - that sought assimilation of Native children through structures designed explicitly for cultural genocide for a period of over 150 years.

Whereas, these institutions were enacted by Congress through the Indian Civilization Act of 1819; with some schools being administered federally, and outsourcing others to be administered by religious groups including those of the Roman Catholic Church, Quakers and other Protestant Christian groups.

Whereas, these schools were united in their aim to eradicate Native culture, and to severely weaken the family and community bonds that would restore it.

Whereas, many Native children were severely mistreated and abused in these institutions; including physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and with sexual violence – in some cases arising to an internationally established standard of torture.

Whereas, many Native children also died in these institutions – either as a direct result of the institutions' actions, punishments, neglect; or dying later because of harms suffered while in the institutions.

Whereas, there has been no complete accounting of the abuse, neglect and deaths of Native children occurring in these institutions; and there have been reports of hundreds of unmarked graves in and around these institutions;

Whereas, these federally administered and funded institutions were subjected to questionable Oversight and accountability – leaving many Native families without contact, knowledge or recourse as to what happened to children left in their care.

Whereas, these institutions and policies have resulted in serious psychological and social impacts among Native peoples – including a legacy of profound intergenerational, complex trauma which continues into the present; and as described through the public testimonies of survivors, high rates of mental illness, domestic violence and suicide among Indian Boarding School survivors, their families and communities who have also been impacted vicariously.



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Whereas, the United States government has issued no formal apology or redress for the grievous harms and injustices perpetrated on Native peoples through these institutions and policies; and that it has a responsibility to investigate its role fully, its oversight failures, and the lasting impacts of its Indian Boarding School policies.

Whereas, the impacts of intergenerational, complex trauma are established in scientific literature and well known to us in our work as mental health counselors; these injuries require substantial resources to treat in order to ameliorate symptoms and suffering.

Whereas, it is the mission of the Washington Mental Health Counselors Association (WMHCA) to influence public policy consistent with our professional ethics and in accordance with our stated values of social justice/empowerment and the reduction of suffering.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of the Washington Mental Health Counselors Association (WMHCA) and its members do hereby support Congressional and Executive Administration efforts to pass legislation establishing the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools Policies in the United States (currently as S. 1723).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we endorse and support the Commission's primary objectives: to formally investigate, document and report on the history and policies of Indian Boarding Schools in the US, and their long-term, systemic effects on Native peoples; to develop recommendations for federal action based on the Commission's findings; and to promote and provide for culturally desired and appropriate healing resources for survivors of Indian Boarding Schools, their descendants and communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that WMHCA denounces the goal of assimilation of Native Peoples through cultural genocide and supports the Native right to sovereignty and healing according to their values and traditions.

Sincerely,

The Washington Mental Health Counselors Association

Shannon Thompson LMHC, CMHS
Executive Director