



The Presbytery of Western New York

3014 Delaware Avenue
Unit 4126
Kenmore, NY 14217

(716) 668-1995
office@pbywny.org
www.pbywny.org

Resolution to Support the Legislation to Create the Truth and Healing Commission on Federal Indian Boarding School Policies Act in the United States

The Presbytery of Western New York is a body of the Presbyterian Church (USA) made up of 45 congregations, including two Seneca congregations on two of the three Seneca reservations in our region.

During the last three years, we have been studying the consequences of the destructive assimilationist practices that were at the foundation of the Native American Boarding schools, five of which were located in our region, two of which survived into the Twentieth century. One of the schools (Thomas Indian School) was not closed until the 1950's. This school was founded by our denomination until it was taken over by the State of New York.

We have come to recognize that these schools were expressly intended to accomplish genocide – the systematic destruction of Indigenous identities and beliefs and the taking of Native lands.

We recognize that the removal of 100,000's of children from their homes and families had incredibly destructive consequences on American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities.

But this is not just an abstract injustice to us. We have seen and heard firsthand the intergenerational trauma and the cultural and familial disruption experienced by the children, their descendants and entire communities. The policies that were at the foundation of these schools divided family structures, damaged cultures and individual identities, and inflicted chronic physical and psychological damage. And then, there are the many children who never made it home and far too many of these children lie in unmarked graves.

Children were forcibly removed from their parents, or tricked into leaving their homes and parents were prohibited from visiting or communicating with their children.

The descendants of these children, spanning across multiple generations, bear the legacy of Indian boarding schools and the enduring federal policy that established and perpetuated them, and the trauma they endured remains unacknowledged and unresolved to this day.

We believe that the federal government has a responsibility to fully investigate its role in, and the lasting effects of, the Indian Boarding School Policies. These schools may be closed, but the consequences of these horrific policies live on. The survivors of Indian boarding schools are victims of crimes that the United States has never acknowledged or accounted for.



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.

With all of these facts in mind, we support the establishment of a **Truth and Healing Commission** on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States including other necessary advisory committees and subcommittees to:

- formally investigate, document, and report on the histories of Indian boarding schools, Indian Boarding School Policies, and the systematic and long-term effects on Native American peoples;
- to develop recommendations for federal action based on the findings of the Commission;
- to promote healing for survivors of Indian boarding schools, the descendants of those survivors, and the communities of those survivors;

We urge the House and Senate to pass S 1723 and HR 7227 and call on President Joe Biden and Interior Secretary Debra Haaland to garner the full authority of the Biden Administration to support these bills.



The Rev. Robert Hagel
Presbytery Council, Chair
Presbytery of Western New York
3014 Delaware Avenue, Unit 4126
Kenmore, NY 14217

