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The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #NO-23-008

TITLE: Endorse S. 1723, A Federal Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act

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 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 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, attempts to destroy Native American cultures, religions, and languages through assimilationist practices and policies can be traced to the early 17th century and the founding charters of some of the oldest educational institutions in the United States; and

WHEREAS, as early as 1819, and until 1969, the Federal Government directly or indirectly supported approximately 523 Indian Boarding Schools across 38 States; and

WHEREAS, American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children, as young as 3 years old, were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to Indian Boarding Schools located throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, Indian Boarding Schools used systematic, violent, and militarized identity-altering methods, such as physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect, to attempt to forcibly assimilate Native children and strip them of their languages, cultures, and social connections; and

WHEREAS, the violent methods referred to in subparagraph were carried out for the purpose of:

- Destroying the cultures, languages, and religions of Native peoples;
- Dispossessing Native peoples of their ancestral lands; and

WHEREAS, many of the children who were taken to Indian Boarding Schools did not survive, and of those who did survive, many never returned to their parents, extended families, or communities; and

WHEREAS, many of the children who were taken to Indian Boarding Schools and did not survive were interred in cemeteries and unmarked graves; and

WHEREAS, American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities continue to experience intergenerational trauma and cultural and familial disruption from experiences rooted in Indian Boarding Schools Policies, which divided family structures, damaged cultures and individual identities, and inflicted chronic physical and psychological ramifications on American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children, families, and communities; and

WHEREAS, the ethos and rationale for Indian Boarding Schools is infamously expressed in the following quote from the founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Richard Henry Pratt: “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”; and

WHEREAS, the children who perished at Indian Boarding Schools or in neighboring hospitals and other institutions were buried in on-campus and off-campus cemeteries and unmarked graves; and

WHEREAS, parents of children who were forcibly removed from or coerced into leaving their homes and placed in Indian Boarding Schools were prohibited from visiting or engaging in correspondence with their children; and

WHEREAS, parental resistance to compliance with the harsh, no-contact policy of Indian Boarding Schools resulted in parents being incarcerated or losing access to basic human rights, food rations, and clothing.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Federal Government has a responsibility to fully investigate its role in, and the lasting effects of, Indian Boarding School Policies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) supports the endorsement of S.1723, a bill to establish 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 of those schools and policies on Native American peoples;
- to develop recommendations for Federal action based on the findings of the Commission; and
- to promote healing for survivors of Indian Boarding Schools, the descendants of those survivors, and the communities of those survivors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI endorses the federal legislation S.1723, a bill to establish a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act; 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 2023 Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians, held November 12-17, 2023, in New Orleans, Louisiana, with a quorum present.



Mark Macarro, President

ATTEST:



Nickolaus Lewis, Recording Secretary