

**H.R. 5444, “TRUTH AND HEALING
COMMISSION ON INDIAN BOARD-
ING SCHOOL POLICIES ACT”**

LEGISLATIVE HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE
UNITED STATES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

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**LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON H.R. 5444, TO
ESTABLISH THE TRUTH AND HEALING COM-
MISSION ON INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL
POLICIES IN THE UNITED STATES, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES, “TRUTH AND HEALING
COMMISSION ON INDIAN BOARDING
SCHOOL POLICIES ACT”**

**Thursday, May 12, 2022
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC**

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:03 p.m., via WebEx, the Honorable Teresa Leger Fernández [Chairwoman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Leger Fernández, Gallego, Soto, McCollum, Case, García; Obernolte, Rosendale, and Bentz.

Also present: Representative Sharice Davids of Kansas.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. The Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States will now come to order. The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on a single bill, but a very important piece of legislation. It is H.R. 5444, the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Polices Act,” introduced by Representative Sharice Davids of Kansas.

Under Committee Rule 4(f), any oral opening statements at hearings are limited to the Chair and the Ranking Minority Member or their designees. This will allow us to hear from our witnesses sooner and help Members keep to their schedules. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that all other Members’ opening statements be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted to the Clerk by 5 p.m. today, or the close of the hearing, whichever comes first. Hearing no objection, so ordered.

Without objection, the Chair may also declare a recess subject to the call of the Chair. Hearing no objection, so ordered. And I want to note that we will be having votes later on so I might need to call that break, and I thank everybody for their patience.

As described in the notice, statements, documents or motions must be submitted to the electronic repository at HNRCDocs@mail.house.gov. Members physically present should provide a hard copy for staff to distribute by e-mail.

Please note that Members are responsible for their own microphones. As with our fully in-person meetings, Members can be muted by staff only to avoid inadvertent background noise.

Finally, Members or witnesses experiencing technical problems should inform Committee staff immediately. I also ask unanimous consent that Representative Sharice Davids of Kansas have

permission to sit on the dais and participate in the hearing. Hearing no objection, so ordered.

I will begin by recognizing myself for my opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE TERESA LEGER FERNÁNDEZ, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Good afternoon. Today, we are dedicating our full hearing and attention to H.R. 5444, the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.” This bill is imperative to recognize the atrocities of the Federal Government’s Indian boarding school policies. It is critical to provide a voice to survivors, their family members, and Tribal Nations.

It is necessary for us all to better understand this dark history so that we can grow and heal from it. Along with this bill, I am very proud of the work that my hermana, Secretary Deb Haaland, and the Department of the Interior are taking to begin to address this issue.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Leger Fernández follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. TERESA LEGER FERNÁNDEZ, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Today, we have listened with tears in our eyes and purpose in our heart to tragic stories of the treatment of young Native American children, who were torn from their parents, torn from their culture, torn from their homelands, and forced into conditions that would be decried as torture today.

The generations of young children who suffered this tortuous treatment had done nothing more than be borne to Native American families and tribal members.

Congress played a role in this in 1819 when it passed the Indian Civilization Fund Act to appropriate funds to church-run schools to ‘civilize’ American Indian and Alaska Native children. By 1925, 60,889 American Indian and Alaska Native children were forcibly taken to Indian boarding schools.

Our own country allowed children to die in federally funded schools. At least 53 burial sites for Indigenous children in marked and unmarked graves exist across this country.

Yesterday, the Department of the Interior released a report that confirmed that the United States directly used Federal Indian boarding schools as a system to dispossess tribes: 76 schools were in present-day Oklahoma, 47 in Arizona, and 43 in my own state of New Mexico. The Report further calls for an investigation on the legacy impacts of Federal Indian boarding schools.

It is undeniable that these events have led to intergenerational trauma. American Indian and Alaska Native children experience post-traumatic stress disorder rates at the same rate as veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Of course they do, they suffered this harm as young children, torn from their families.

H.R. 5444 will establish a much-needed Commission to formally investigate and document the stories of survivors and human rights violations that occurred against American Indian, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

This bill also includes a nationwide hotline service for survivors, family members and other community members. H.R. 5444 will focus on the historical and intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities.

Again, I want to thank the witnesses, especially the survivors here today, for sharing their deeply powerful and personal experiences.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. With that, I will turn over the remainder of my time for the opening statement to Representative Sharice Davids, who is the sponsor of this legislation and an incredible leader on this issue as one of the first Native American women in Congress. Representative Davids.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHARICE DAVIDS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF KANSAS

Ms. DAVIDS. Thank you, Chairwoman Leger Fernández, and also to Ranking Member Westerman for holding this hearing today. I appreciate the opportunity to provide brief remarks in support of my bill, H.R. 5444, the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.”

I am a proud member of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin. My mom is Crystal Herriage. My grandparents are Ruth Stacy and Lawrence Little George who were both survivors of boarding schools. I am also honored to be one of the first two Native American women ever elected to Congress. I would not be here today were it not for the resilience of my ancestors and those who came before me.

The policies and assimilation practices of the United States had the sole purpose of culturally assimilating American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian children in residential boarding schools across the country. Children were coerced and compelled to attend boarding schools away from their homes. Many children did not return to their families or their communities. Those that did return lost generations’ worth of cultural knowledge, stories, and traditions, and communities lost their language keepers, cultural practitioners, and future leaders.

As a Co-Chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus, I work with other Native members and our colleagues to ensure that the needs of Tribal Nations and communities are prioritized and that our voices are included in discussions when developing legislation.

That is why I worked with Native American Caucus Co-Chair Tom Cole to introduce H.R. 5444 and worked across the aisle to gather bipartisan support.

This legislation will establish a formal commission in the United States to investigate and document the attempted termination of cultures and languages of Indigenous Peoples and assimilation practices that occurred against Native people through U.S. Indian boarding school policies.

This investigation will be documented through culturally respectful and meaningful public hearings, and the Commission will receive guidance from a Truth and Healing Advisory Board to develop recommendations for the Federal Government in a final report due no later than 5 years after enactment.

This legislation builds on the important work being done at the Department of the Interior. We saw yesterday, in Volume 1 of their Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, that the separation of Native children and families in the name of civilized assimilation caused significant impacts. This bill does not duplicate the efforts of the Department of the Interior, but rather expands and continues to acknowledge that legacy with the help of survivors, tribal leaders, policy experts, and communities that can help guide this process.

And I am sure you will learn more from our witnesses today about how the impacts of boarding school policies have touched all Native peoples both past and present. And I would like to acknowledge how painful and uncomfortable these and future conversations

are going to be. I honor and thank the witnesses and survivors who are here today who are brave enough to inform my colleagues about the impacts that boarding school policies have had on their lives and their communities.

There were 14 Federal Indian boarding schools in Kansas. One sits in the Kansas 3rd District and is the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School located in Fairway, Kansas. It is now preserved as the Shawnee Indian Mission State Historic Site. According to the Kansas State Historical Society, it operated from 1838 to 1862, and at one time had nearly 200 children there. And in Lawrence, Kansas, Haskell Indian Industrial Training School was one of the largest early boarding schools in the country.

While I was fortunate to attend what is now Haskell Indian Nations University, there still resides a history that must not be forgotten. The campus includes known gravesites of over 100 Native children who died at the school when it was implementing its assimilationist practices.

This Commission will build off Secretary Haaland's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative by collecting documents and testimony outside the Federal boarding school system. The Department of the Interior's efforts, along with the bipartisan support of this bill, shows that the branches of the Federal Government are ready to work toward fully acknowledging its contribution to this history.

As Federal partners, we owe the Native children and lost relatives the time and resources to investigate and fully understand how we got here. Establishing a Truth and Healing Commission will bring survivors, experts, Federal partners, and tribal leaders to the table to continue this investigation and develop a culturally respectful healing process.

If Native children were able to endure and survive the Indian Boarding School Era in our nation, we should be able to find it in ourselves to fully investigate what happened to our relatives and work toward a brighter path for the next seven generations.

Thank you again to Chairwoman Leger Fernández and Ranking Member Westerman for calling this hearing today. I am looking forward to working with the Subcommittee and with my colleagues. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Davids follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. SHARICE L. DAVIDS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF KANSAS

Thank you, Chairwoman Leger Fernández and Ranking Member Obernolte, for holding this hearing today. I appreciate the opportunity to provide brief remarks in support of my bill, H.R. 5444, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act of 2021.

I'm a proud member of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin. My mother is Crystal Herriage, my grandparents are Ruth Stacy and Lawrence Little George, who are both survivors of Indian Boarding Schools. I'm also honored to be one of the first two Native American women ever elected to Congress. I would not be here today without the resilience of my ancestors and those that came before me.

The policies and assimilation practices of the United States had the sole purpose of culturally assimilating American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children at residential boarding schools across the country. Children were coerced and many times compelled to attend boarding schools away from their home. Many children did not return to their families or their communities. Those that did return

lost generations' worth of cultural knowledge, stories, and traditions; and communities lost their language keepers, cultural practitioners, and future leaders.

As Co-Chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus, I work with the other Native members and our colleagues to ensure that the needs of Tribal Nations and communities are prioritized, and our voices are included in discussions when developing legislation. That is why I worked with Native American Caucus Co-Chair Tom Cole to introduce H.R. 5444 and worked across the aisle to gather bipartisan support.

This legislation will establish a formal commission in the United States to investigate and document the attempted termination of cultures and languages of Indigenous peoples and assimilation practices that occurred against Native people through U.S. Indian boarding school policies.

This investigation will be documented through culturally respectful and meaningful public hearings and the Commission will receive guidance from a Truth and Healing Advisory Board to develop recommendations for the Federal Government in a final report due no later than 5 years after enactment.

This legislation builds on the important work being conducted at the Department of Interior. We saw yesterday in Vol. I of their Federal Boarding School Initiative Report that the separation of Native children and families in the name of civilized assimilation caused significant impacts.¹ This bill does not duplicate the efforts of the Department of Interior but rather expands and continues to acknowledge that legacy with the help of survivors, tribal leaders, policy experts, and communities that can help guide this process.

As I am sure you will learn from our witnesses today, the impacts of Boarding School Policies have touched all Native peoples both past and present. I would like to acknowledge how painful or uncomfortable these and future conversations will be. I honor and thank the witnesses and survivors today who are brave enough to inform my colleagues about the impacts Boarding School Policies had on their lives and communities.

There were 14 Federal Indian boarding schools in Kansas.^{2,3} One that resides in the Kansas Third District is the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School. Located in Fairway, Kansas, it is now preserved as the Shawnee Indian Mission State Historic Site. According to the Kansas State Historical Society, the school operated from 1838 to 1862 and at its largest enrolled nearly 200 children.⁴

In Lawrence Kansas, Haskell Indian Industrial Training School was one of the largest early boarding schools in the country. While I was fortunate to attend what is now Haskell Indian Nations University, there still resides a history that must not be forgotten. The campus includes known gravesites of over 100 Native children who died at the school when it was implementing assimilationist practices.⁵

This Commission would build off Secretary Haaland's Federal Boarding School Initiative by collecting documents and testimony outside the Federal boarding school system. The Department of Interior's efforts along with the bipartisan support of this bill shows that the branches of the Federal Government are ready to work towards fully acknowledging its contribution to this history.

As Federal partners, we owe Native children and lost relatives the time and resources to investigate and fully understand how we got here. Establishing a Truth and Healing Commission will bring survivors, experts, Federal partners, and tribal leaders to the table to continue this investigation and develop a culturally respectful healing process.

If Native children were able to endure and survive the Indian Boarding School era in our Nation, then we should be able to find it in ourselves to fully investigate what happened to our relatives and work toward a brighter path for the next seven generations.

I'd like to thank Chairwoman Leger Fernández and Ranking Member Obernolte once again for calling this legislative hearing today and I look forward to working with the Subcommittee in advancing this important legislation.

Thank you.

¹ https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bsi_investigative_report_may_2022_508.pdf.

² https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/appendix_c_school_maps_508.pdf.

³ https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/appendix_a_b_school_listing_profiles_508.pdf.

⁴ <https://www.kshs.org/p/indian-mission-schools-collection-1837-1879/13767>.

⁵ <https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article38114166.html>.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you, Representative Davids. This will be, I believe, a very powerful hearing that we hear today from all witnesses.

I would now like to recognize Acting Ranking Member Obernolte for his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JAY OBERNOLTE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to you and to the author for bringing this bill forward and for convening this hearing on a very important topic.

The events that catalyze the need for a hearing like this are nothing short of horrific. And I think if you look at the report that was just issued yesterday by the Department of the Interior, it seems very clear that the harm that was done to Native American tribes was unfortunately inflicted deliberately with the goal of not only forcing cultural assimilation but also of achieving territorial dispossession.

So, I expect that we are going to hear some horrifying things in this hearing, and rightfully so. And I also really like the title of this bill because I think this is what we are all after, the Truth and Healing Commission. We need to achieve both of those things to not only right the wrongs of the past, but to try to achieve some kind of healing so that we can emerge together as one society, which I think is the goal of everyone in this room.

I would like to add some respectful suggestions both to the author and to the Chair, because I would like to see this legislation be bipartisan, and I think it deserves to be.

One of the things that I hope we are going to have a discussion about today is whether or not this Commission should have subpoena authority. As I am sure most in the room are aware, it is not the norm for a commission like this to have subpoena authority. In fact, there are standing committees here in the House of Representatives that don't even have subpoena authority. I understand the goal of having subpoena authority—I mean when we are the Truth and Healing Commission. However, I would like everyone to think about the fact that assuming that this is going to be an adversarial relationship with the people that testify before the Commission, it might be doing a disservice to the goals of the Commission.

Subpoena authority, while it might serve the goal of truth, might be adversarial to the goal of healing. And I think that we should have that discussion because I am not sure that that serves the purpose of the Commission.

I also think we need to be very clear about the taxpayer resources that are being expended here, and appropriately so. I think we need to have a discussion about whether or not service on the Commission should be compensated. As the bill is written right now, it is compensated at level IV of the executive schedule, which is almost \$200,000 a year. I would hope that it would be more of a community service role. I think we should have that discussion.

And I also think we need to talk about the total cost of the bill. I am not opposed to investing substantial taxpayer resources in this Commission, but I think we need to be explicit about what those resources are.

And right now, at the end of the bill, it merely says that the necessary resources, such sums as may be necessary, or made available until expended. So, I think we need to quantify exactly what those sums are and write it in the bill so that everyone is clear on that, so that it would withstand challenges in the future.

So, those are just a couple of respectful suggestions, Madam Chair, but I am very much looking forward to the testimony today. It is a very difficult topic for all of us, but I am very supportive of the goal of achieving both truth and healing here and looking forward to our time together. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Obernolte follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. JAY OBERNOLTE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Today, we are considering H.R. 5444, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

The bill would establish a 10-member Commission—To document, investigate, and provide recommendations on actions the Federal Government can take to address Indian boarding school policies.

Provisions regarding Indian education date back to the some of the earliest treaties and statutes after the formation of the United States.

In 1819, the Federal Government began funding the education of Indian children as a way to accelerate the assimilation of Indian people.

Over the next 150 years, it is estimated that more than 300 Indian boarding schools were established across the country, both on and off Indian reservations.

During this time, many Indian children were taken from their communities, forced into western education, forced to forget their culture, all while living less than subpar conditions.

There has been little question that Indian boarding school policies during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century impacted American Indian families.

Assimilation policies today are viewed as a failure in Federal policy.

This hearing will be an opportunity to discuss whether the establishment of a commission is the correct solution.

From a good government perspective, I do have some concerns about the authorization of “such sums” to carry out this Act and the precedent of granting subpoena power to a commission.

Congress should exercise great care in the consideration of these authorizations.

Further, this Committee last authorized the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children in 2016 and Congress has yet to receive its report.

Some of the challenges that commission has experienced should be weighed as we consider the creation of another.

I would also be remiss if I didn’t make a comment regarding Indian Education in the modern era.

The Bureau of Indian Education at the Department of Interior provides education support to more than 30,000 students in 23 states through its 183 elementary and secondary schools located on or near Indian reservations.

The BIE also oversees Indian boarding schools that are still in operation today.

Countless reports in recent years from the Government Accountability Office detail that much work remains to be done to improve Bureau of Indian Education schools.

In hearings over the past several Congresses, witnesses described the deplorable conditions Indian children today endure and blamed a bungling Federal bureaucracy for failing to provide a safe and healthy place for these students to learn.

This body should be spending more time ensuring that the current Indian education system is functioning in the best interests of native children and discussing whether there are better solutions that haven’t been considered.

It will be critical we work with the Education and Labor Committee, which has primary legislative jurisdiction over Indian education policy.

While I do appreciate the Majority working to receive some statements from the Administration for the hearing record on a few of the legislative proposals before the Committee this session,

I am disappointed that DOI wasn't invited to testify today as the Administration established a Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative in 2021 and released Volume 1 of their report yesterday.

The Administration's views would certainly be valuable here today, to ensure that this bill is not duplicative of current efforts already underway.

I sincerely hope we can invite the Administration to future hearings before this Subcommittee.

Thank you.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you, Representative Obernolte. Now, I will transition to our panel of witnesses for today. Before introducing them, I will remind our witnesses that they are encouraged to participate in a witness diversity survey created by the Congressional Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Witnesses may refer to their hearing invitation materials for further information.

Under our Committee Rules, oral statements are limited to 5 minutes, but you may submit a longer statement for the record if you choose. And I would simply note that we have received your statements, and we have read them. Thank you for the witness statements that you have already sent us.

When you begin, the onscreen timer will begin counting down, and it will turn orange when you have 1 minute remaining. I recommend that Members and witnesses joining remotely lock the timer on their screen. When you go over the allotted time, I will tap my gavel and kindly ask you to please wrap up your statement.

After your testimony is complete, please remember to mute yourself to avoid any inadvertent background noise. I will allow the entire panel to testify before we begin the question portion of the witnesses.

Now, as we have noted, we are asking for testimony from survivors and those who have firsthand knowledge of a very difficult and dark period of our history. Before I introduce our first witness, I want to advise Members, viewers, and listeners that some of the testimony we are about to hear today may be graphic and disturbing. We are simply noting that so that everyone tuning in and listening will be aware of such a possibility.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. James Labelle, Sr. who is the 1st Vice President of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, and a boarding school survivor. Mr. James LaBelle, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES LABELLE, SR., 1ST VICE PRESIDENT
AND BOARDING SCHOOL SURVIVOR, NATIONAL NATIVE
AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL HEALING COALITION,
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA**

Mr. LABELLE, SR. Thank you. My name is James William LaBelle, Sr. In my culture, I am also known as Aqpayuq which means Fast Runner. I was named after an uncle who had passed away, and it is a tradition in our culture to be named after someone who came before us.

I am a product of a mixed marriage. My father was French and Irish, and my mother was Eskimo or otherwise known as Inupiaq as we say. She came from a little village called Kotzebue above the Arctic Circle on the Bering Sea coast. I was born in Fairbanks, Alaska in 1947, and I just turned 75 years old a few weeks ago.

I come to you as a very assimilated and acculturated man. When I first went to boarding school, I believed I was truly bilingual. I could speak Inupiaq and I could speak English, but I quickly suppressed my wishes to speak Inupiaq because of the horrors I saw and witnessed when other children were severely beaten for speaking their language.

I am also a Vietnam Era Veteran. I have a younger brother who was killed in Vietnam. I am married for 52 years. I have three children and seven grandchildren. I am part of the Port Graham Village Tribe and a shareholder in one of our ANCSA Corporations called Chugach Alaska.

I have been waiting 67 years to tell this story. While I might have received an education, or a white man's education, in the process, I lost my own language, my own culture, and my traditions. And today, I cannot speak my language, nor could I conduct all of those wonderful traditional activities we call subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering.

I guess I would like to give you an idea of how I got started. When my father died, my mother was immediately asked to give us up to adoption or to boarding school, and she chose to give us up to boarding school. In 1955, I went to Wrangell Institute for the first 6 years that I was there and witnessed so many atrocities it almost became normal or normalized.

At the Fairbanks airport, we were given name tags, and we were set on our way to all of our flights. It was terrifying for many because transportation in the mid-1950s was not what we know today. I met other children that were tethered together with ropes, and I was tied together with ropes to the other children. It took almost 2 days to get to Wrangell, the institute I was at.

While there, we were stripped naked at the boys' dorm and had our hair shorn to where we were bald. All of our clothes were confiscated. We were standing naked among other children who were foreign to each other, put into showers that was strange to us. We were given numbers for names and many children had difficult names and were oftentimes only referred to by their number.

Every step of the way, there were punishments for speaking our language, either in the dormitories, or in the classroom, or in the mess hall.

Boys and girls were both equally sexually, physically, psychologically, and spiritually abused. And I have many, many witnesses to those atrocities.

[The prepared statement of Mr. LaBelle, Sr. follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES "JIM" LABELLE SR., BOARDING SCHOOL SURVIVOR

My name is Jim Labelle Sr., in my Inupiaq language my name is Aqpayuq or "Fast Runner." My family originated in Kotzebue, Alaska, and I was born and raised in Fairbanks, Alaska. I am a member of the Native Village of Port Graham and a shareholder in the Chugach Alaska Corporation. I am a Vietnam veteran of the United States Navy and have been married for 50 years to my wife Susan. We have three children and seven grandchildren.

I have been waiting to tell this story for my entire life. I come to you as an assimilated man, as an acculturated man. While I received an education and met all of the economic standards of your culture, I lost my family. I cannot speak my language. I cannot do the traditional fishing and gathering I learned as a child.

I was born to a white father and an Inupiaq mother. My mother's people came from above the Arctic Circle on the Bering Sea. My parents met in Nome, Alaska, and were married in Fairbanks where I was born. Before I went to school, I was bilingual and spoke both Inupiaq and English. My dad died at the very young age of 41 from cancer when I was 6 years old. My mother sent us to boarding school, thinking that we would at least be together in the summertime. That plan did work out for a few years, but one year I was met by strangers at the airport who said they would be our foster parents for the summer. I became an unpaid worker on a Fairbanks farm called Cramer's Dairy where I was basically an indentured servant to that farm. I have recently come to learn that this was an "outing" program which was a common practice for the government to send out boarding school students as unpaid laborers during the summer months.

I was a product of two BIA Boarding Schools from 1955–1965. The first six years I was at the Wrangell Institute in Wrangell, Alaska. I later went to Mt. Edgecumbe in Sitka, Alaska. We were sent to Wrangell by plane when they first took me to the airport, I was looked on with a roster, and they saw my name and immediately tied me together with other children with pieces of rope. They fixed a yellow name tag to our clothing and on that yellow name tag was our name, our destination, and our flight information. Speaking English was a commodity. I could see fright in the faces of children who did not speak English. Some children would curl themselves up in a ball and close their eyes and rock back and forth, others would close their eyes and try to blink you out like toddlers do, not wanting to believe they were there. Most of us had never ridden on airplanes before, only increasing the terror.

In Anchorage, we were met with even more children coming from all over. It was like an annual migration, every fall there would be these hordes of Native children coming from all over Alaska into hubs like Fairbanks, Juno, and Anchorage. At Juno, we were placed on PBY planes which are amphibious. We took off from the water which, again, added to the terror. The entire trip was over a two-day ordeal.

When we arrived at Wrangell, we were bused to the Institute and the tempo began to change. There was an angry urgency in the Matron's voices. The school, like other government institutions, had massive signs that said, "United States Property, keep out." It was very imposing. We were taken into an open area and divided by gender. We were stripped totally naked, our hair was cut, and we were marched to the shower. Many of my classmates had never seen running water before and were frightened by the showers. One boy was hesitant to scrub his body, so a Matron scrubbed his skin until he bled. It sent a message to the rest of us. That first night in our barracks, and for many nights after, we called out for our mothers and cried ourselves to sleep.

Each of us was given a two-digit number marked on our government issued clothing which corresponded with our names. If you forgot your number, you were spanked. Many children had difficult names to begin with, so matrons found it easier to simply refer to them by number. The children who could not speak English did not know how to follow the rules and every time they opened their mouths they spoke in their own language. They were constantly beat. Those who spoke their language were placed on a high stool and given dunce caps. We unwittingly became part of the process of helping our classmates assimilate.

We were used to eating traditional foods such as moose, caribou, salmon, reindeer, berries, and grains. Now we were forced to eat industrial foods in one-pound cans. We had severe stomach issues, diarrhea, vomiting, sometimes all at once. We soiled our pants and beds, and the Matrons would force us to clean our own mess. For those that were deemed uncompliant for speaking their own language, they had to "run the gauntlet." It became a spectator sport. Little five and six year olds had to disrobe in front of other children who were ordered to hit those running the gauntlet with belts, and as hard as they could, otherwise they were next. When I was forced to run down the line, it was never a single run, it was often two or three times.

The most violent thing that will forever be sealed in my memory is, when I was ten years old, I was punished for horseplaying with a friend by a Matron. He forced us into the open shower unclothed and naked as he shielded the open door with his body. He reached in the back and pulled out a firehose. He turned a firehose on me and my friend. The firehose came from a water reservoir on the mountain top above the school which was always caked with ice and snow. I can still remember the incredible pain and shock of not being able to breathe from the force of the

firehose. My friend had an ear infection and icy water was getting into his infected ear. He screamed louder than I did.

I witnessed the same matron punch out another friend of mine so hard that he splayed my friend's cheek open all the way up to his ear and half of his face fell open. He was immediately unconscious and came back from the hospital with his mouth wired shut. He could only drink through the straw. This violence became a daily reminder of the Matron's enjoyment for inflicting pain on children. Today, we call them sadists.

There was also sexual abuse. These schools were magnets for pedophiles. At lights out, Matrons would start molesting the youngest children in the lower bunks and bathrooms. There were two or three Matrons on duty, and we were an open field of candidates they could abuse at their whim. As these children reached their early teens, many of them began molesting the younger children as well. So began the cycle of sexual violence in the school. In the girl's dorm, I can still remember girls going home as young as 11 years old and they were pregnant. One girl told me that she was a favorite of an administrator, and he would call her down from class and molest her every single day in his office. She admitted to me that she cut herself to relieve the pain and had maybe more than one personality. She passed away a few years ago now, and I think she is in a better place.

On our first summer returning home, my younger brother Kermit and I were eager to see our family again. Yet, because of how long we had been away, he asked, "I wonder if our mother will remember us?" During our ten years in boarding school, we indeed became estranged from our mother. We lost our ability to speak our language and do our traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering. At the end of 10 years, I did not know who I was as a Native person. I didn't know who I was because they never told us who we were. I learned American history, world history, math, science, and English, but never who I was as an Inupiaq person. I did not know what it was like to have a father figure or mother figure.

When I had children, I did not have the toolset that could make a parent. That lasted from when my children were 8 to 18, the years I was at boarding school. I could only relate to them when they were younger and when they became adults. I passed down to my children their own inabilities to speak their language or know their traditions as well. Some of them have children, and now that I am a grandparent, I can see some of my own grandchildren also not having any idea how to speak their traditional language.

Everything I have described happened to thousands and thousands of Alaskan children for generations. You have generations of children each experiencing the same kind of thing at boarding schools. It wasn't just BIA schools, there were also many Mission schools. Almost every denomination in Alaska had a boarding school, whether it be Presbyterians, Quakers, Lutherans, Methodists, Moravians, even Baptists. At Wrangell every fall the school would have the local churches come out to the school and we were divvied up to a denomination. My mother was a Quaker, but there were no Quakers who came to Wrangell. My brother and I were arbitrarily assigned to the Southern Baptist church, were we had religious instruction every Wednesday night and every Sunday morning for six years. These were federal schools, but yet they had an open-door policy with the local churches. Many times, I was told my mother was a product of the devil because she could speak her language and practice her traditions. I became ashamed of her, and never had the chance to apologize to her for that.

I have experienced large chunks of missing time in my memory, and many of my classmates became street people or alcoholics and committed horrible crimes they were incarcerated for. Some committed suicide. I have experienced many adverse health effects for my entire life because of poor nutrition and lack of proper healthcare at boarding schools. I have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder, type II diabetes, thyroid illness, shingles, and cataracts. It took many years of learning and therapy to undo the things at boarding school which I thought were normal.

This history has been forgotten and washed away. This Congress must confront our stories and the painful history of boarding schools.

Thank you.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO JAMES LABELLE, SR.

Questions Submitted by Representative Grijalva

Question 1. For how long have you shared your story?

Answer. I first began sharing my boarding school stories in 1969 with my wife Susan (Tabios) LaBelle. Susan also attended Wrangell Institute and Mt. Edgecumbe. As our family grew, I began sharing some stories with my sons Kermit, James, Jr. and daughter Maleah beginning in their adolescents.

In the mid to late 1990s I sat on the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) Sobriety Committee (later renamed Wellness Committee). It was toward the late 1990s that AFN was successful in obtaining some \$30 Million dollars from Congress in order that Indigenous people in 229 Alaska villages' could address alcohol problems in their communities. A small portion of money was used was used to hold a statewide conference to kick off the entire program. The conference was attended by over 200 people from across the state.

Collectively, conference participants began rousing discussions as to what were some of the underlying reasons for such maladies caused by alcohol abuse. The overarching reason was attributed to Historical Trauma (HT). The consensus of HT was **Boarding School**. A local reporter attempted to interview me at the close of the conference, but the interview was cut short as I could not answer her questions. All the memories of accumulated abuses that I experienced at Wrangell Institute (1955 to 1961), came flooding back. I choked, I could barely breathe, and unexpected tears came. I had never told my story outside of my family before. Clearly, I needed help.

I began seeking counseling and therapy at the urging of my wife. I was becoming abusive to my family and others around me. Taking her advice I began sharing my boarding school stories in 'Talking' and 'Healing Circles' and a faith-based program called "Beauty for Ashes," There, we shared many traumatic childhood experiences. In that setting I shared my stories of boarding school—including being physically, mentally, spiritually and sexually abused. I was beginning to learn where my anger at the world was coming from.

Question 2. Are there characteristics or patterns you see in your grandchildren because of your boarding school experience?

Answer. Yes. I entered boarding school as an eight-year-old bilingual speaker of both English and Inupiaq. After 10 years in two BIA boarding schools, I could no longer speak Inupiaq. I consciously suppressed speaking that language because I did not want to get punished like the many other children I witnessed get beaten and shamed. When my own children were born I did not nor could not speak Inupiaq to them. Nor did I encourage them to speak my language either. Upon deep reflection, maybe erroneously, I thought my kids would suffer the indignities by speaking Inupiaq. Now of course my adult children have passed down the same pattern of being English speakers to their own children, my 5 grandchildren.

Questions Submitted by Representative Leger Fernández

Question 1. How should we get churches to acknowledge their role in forming and implementing boarding schools for American Indian and Alaska Native children?

Answer. Some churches have made apology to various Indigenous people across the country for the role they played in acculturating and assimilating Indigenous children. That was a first good step. The next step is for those churches to take active ownership going forward. By that I mean that apology should then come with an agreement to respond to questions asked from your committee also to freely sharing their boarding school records. Those records should include **contracts** made with applicable federal agencies and any subsequent subcontracts made with third parties: roster(s) of children—their names, tribal affiliations, times of attendance by year(s), classes attended each year, whether they were part of an 'Outing Program,' whether they received any medical examinations and any records of items brought with them to the school. What was the disposition of those items? I would ask the churches to provide a list of any student(s) who died while in their custody. They should volunteer questions to burial; whether they were buried on campus grounds or in a nearby community cemeteries.

Many religious denominations had national, if not regional headquarters across the country. All churches who had contracts with the Federal Government should provide church names, their contact addresses and roster of their staff by name and position should be provided.

Question 2. What does it mean to you when religious institutions continue to withhold records from this era?

Answer. They may be hiding a shameful past. Like our Federal Government churches are good at record keeping; especially if it means the possibility of receiving more money from those federal agencies. It is my belief that churches should not be exempt from providing those records; Afterall, it was the **Taxpayers who ultimately footed the boarding school tab.**

I believe your subcommittee should be granted **Subpoena Powers** to seek truth and information from those churches, and any of their subcontractor(s) who refuse to freely respond for information requested.

Again, I attended two BIA boarding schools; Wrangell Institute from 1955 to 1961 and Mt. Edgecumbe High School from 1961 to 1965. Wrangell Institute administrators invited the local church groups to come on the campus every fall. It was then that all 300–400 boys and girls got divvied up between the churches, without permission from our parents. During those six years at Wrangell Institute the Southern Baptist Church affiliate began my brother's and I's religious instruction by shaming my mother's traditional culture; her language, traditional singing, dancing and drumming, especially her Spirituality. I was told my mother was evil and practiced Satanic rituals because she continued her cultural ways. In time I began avoiding being seen with my mother in public. I was ashamed.

I am most grateful to have been asked to provide oral and written testimony to your subcommittee. I have waited for over a half century to share my early childhood stories with you and the subcommittee. I remain available to answer additional questions you might have.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you, Mr. LaBelle, for sharing the story that you have been waiting to tell for so long, of your loss.

The Chair will now recognize Mr. Matthew War Bonnet who is a boarding school survivor and a citizen of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

Mr. Bonnet, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MATTHEW WAR BONNET, BOARDING SCHOOL SURVIVOR, ROSEBUD SIOUX TRIBE, SNOHOMISH, WASHINGTON

Mr. WAR BONNET. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony in support of the Indian Boarding School Bill. My name is Matthew War Bonnet. I am of the Sicangu Lakota people who now call the Rosebud Sioux Reservation home. I am the son of Matthew War Bonnet and Julia Swalley, the grandson of Joseph War Bonnet and Jenny Yellowhair, and the great grandson of Folding Throat and Pretty Bird. I am 76 years old.

The topic I am speaking about today, the boarding schools and my experience with them, is a difficult topic to talk about. It is hard to speak about it without making myself feel bad by bringing up these memories. But I agreed to speak only because my sisters gave me permission to speak. I am one of 10 siblings, and we all attended the same boarding school. My mother and my father also attended boarding schools.

I was only 6 years old when I was taken to the Saint Francis Boarding School in South Dakota in 1952. I attended this boy school 24/7 for 10 months out of the year for 8 years total, the majority of my childhood. I left Saint Francis Boarding School after the eighth grade in 1960.

My boarding school experience is very painful and traumatic. I remember when I first got to school, the priests took us to this big

room which had six or eight bathtubs in it. The priests took all of us little guys and put us in one tub, and he scrubbed us hard with a big brush. The brush made our skin and our backsides all raw. And we had to have our hair cut.

The school then put all of the little guys in the same dormitory. We were together, the first through fourth grades. At nighttime, you could hear all of the children crying, lonely for their families. I remember seeing my sisters.

During my stay at the school, corporal punishment was common. The priests would often get impatient and discipline us by hitting us with a leather strap or a willow stick. There was also a punishment tool that we called the Jesus rope, which was a rope with several strands coming off of it. We were hit with this and the razor straps. And one priest sometimes used a cattle prod on us.

Another way the priests disciplined us was to lock us out of the school during the cold weather. When this would happen, the little guys would be shivering and crying. Some of us older boys would take our coats off and cover them.

One time, a priest threw my older brother, Joe War Bonnet, down a flight of stairs, and he broke his arm. I think the priest was also abusing him in other ways.

The priests also punished us by isolating us and limiting our access to food. One time, I got in trouble and my punishment was for 10 days I was separated from other kids and given only bread and water to eat. I don't even remember what I did to deserve this type of punishment.

Each June, every parent would come and pick us up to go home for the summer. My parents were Lakota speakers at home. Because we were at school, we were not allowed to speak and learned to speak English and Latin. Sometimes they taught us Spanish as well. It was difficult to speak with my parents in my Lakota language. That got away from us, the Lakota language, but we are still trying to catch up with that ever since.

Once I got out of boarding school, I went to high school at the Pine Ridge Community High School in Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

I was always very, very proud of our service people, our Lakota people who served in the military, and others. One day I was talking to some fellow high school students and told them about my Dad's service in the Army, and how he got captured by the Japanese. I said that he was captured and tortured by the Japanese, and each day, they cut off a toe until all his toes were gone.

One guy, who was my cousin, said to me, "Your Dad never was in the Army." Of course, I said, "You're calling my dad a liar?" And we got in a fight.

When I went home, my dad told me that when he was in the first or second grade and in the school he ran away. And because of that, he froze his toes off. And when he died it was because in his toes gangrene set in.

All of us kids that attended the boarding school, we never speak about our experience in the school. Our family has never spoken to each other about it, and our parents have never talked to us about it. I guess we just didn't want to hurt each other.

Now, I am hoping that by doing this discussion that many would recognize that what happened to them those many years later these boarding schools have caused a long-term trauma for our kids. Many tried to cope with this trauma through alcohol, and these same people who were abused then became abusers of themselves, their families, and their communities.

Regarding my healing, I credit my dad for being there for me and helping me. Because of him, I turned out the way I did. When I was in the boarding school, my dad taught me a song that gave me spiritual strength to hang on every day. This song has a very simple translation. The song simply says, "Friend, the dawn has arrived, I live again." Every day, I would sing this song to myself before I went out to play.

The boarding schools were sanctioned by the U.S. Government. The government gave the churches our land so that they can Christianize, modernize us, and civilize us. But the church treated us wrong. I thank you for letting me testify today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. War Bonnet follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MATTHEW WAR BONNET

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of the Indian boarding school bill. My name is Matthew War Bonnet. I am of the Sicangu Lakota people who now call the Rosebud Sioux Reservation home. I am the son of Matthew War Bonnet and Julia Swalley, the grandson of Joseph War Bonnet and Jenny Yellowhair, and the great grandson of Folding Throat and Pretty Bird. I am 76 years old.

This topic I am speaking about today, the boarding schools and my experience with them, is a difficult topic to talk about. It is hard to speak about it without making myself feel bad by bringing up these memories. But I agreed to speak only because my sisters gave me permission to speak. I am one of ten siblings, and we all attended the same boarding school. My mother and father also attended boarding schools. I was only 6 years old when I was taken to the Saint Francis Boarding School in South Dakota in 1952. I attended this boarding school 24/7 for ten months out of the year for eight years total, the majority of my childhood. I left St. Francis Boarding School after the eighth grade in 1960.

My boarding school experience was very painful and traumatic. I remember when I first got to the school, the priests took us to this big room which had six or eight bathtubs in it. The priest put all of us little guys in one tub, and he scrubbed us hard with big brushes. The brushes made our skin on our backsides raw all over. We then had our long hair cut.

The school then put all the little guys in the same dormitory. We were together, first through fourth grade. At nighttime you could hear all the little children crying, lonely for their families. I remember seeing my sisters at the school, from across the room. I wanted to talk to them, but boys were not allowed to have any contact with girls at the school, even our own relatives.

During my stay at the school, corporal punishment was common. The priests would often get impatient and discipline us by hitting us with a leather strap or a willow stick. There was also a punishment tool called "the Jesus rope," which was a rope with several strands coming off of it. We were hit with that and their razor straps as well. One priest even used a cattle prod to hit us.

Another way the priests disciplined us was to lock us out of the school during the cold weather. This would happen and kids would be shivering and crying.

One time, a priest threw my older brother, Joe War Bonnet, down a flight of stairs and broke his arm. I think that priest was abusing him in other ways.

The priests also punished us by isolating us and limiting our access to food. One time I got in trouble and my punishment was for 10 days I was separated from the other kids and given only bread and water to eat. I don't even remember what I did to deserve that type of harsh punishment.

Each June, everyone's parents would come and pick us up to go home for the summer. My parents were Lakota speakers at home. Because we were at the school and were forced to speak English and only taught English and Latin, it was difficult

to speak with my parents in our Lakota language. That got away from us. We have been trying to catch up ever since.

Once I got out of the boarding school, I went to high school in Pine Ridge. I was always very proud of our service people, our Lakota people who served in the military. One day I was talking to some fellow high school students and told them about my Dad's service in the army, and how he got captured by the Japanese. I stated that the Japanese tortured my Dad and cut off his toes. One guy I said that to said, "Your Dad never was in the army." We got in a fight right there.

I went home that night and spoke to my Dad. I directly asked him, Dad, what happened to your toes? My Dad told me. Dad said that his toes froze off when he ran away from the boarding school in his youth. Dad died later on from gangrene in his toes.

All of us kids that attended the boarding school, we never spoke about our experiences. We said nothing.

I still think about all the kids I went to school with. All the things they went through. All the hurt and the rage, and the feeling of nothingness that these schools caused them. Many didn't even recognize what had happened to them until many years later. These boarding schools caused long term trauma. Many tried to cope with this trauma through alcohol, and these same people who were abused then became abusers themselves, of their families and their communities.

Regarding my healing journey, I credit my Dad for being there for me and helping me. Because of him, I turned out the way I did. When I was in the boarding school, my Dad taught me a song to give me strength, spiritual strength. This song in a very simple way says, "Friend, the dawn has arrived, I live again." Every day I would sing that song to myself and then go play with my friends.

The boarding schools were sanctioned by the U.S. Government. The Government gave the churches our lands to christianize us, modernize us, and civilize us. But the churches treated us wrong. The kids that went to these schools, they were good spirits and then the church did things to them and made them the way they were.

The Government and the churches need to be held accountable for what happened at these schools.

I'm here today to acknowledge what happened to me and countless other Indian children and resolve the problems that the boarding schools caused. The Government needs to help those children and grandchildren of the boarding school survivors, so that these children and grandchildren will know that their grandparents were not just mean all the time. I want them to know that their grandparents loved them, but we were struggling from the abuse we went through at the boarding schools.

I also want the churches to meet with Native people in their areas, sit across the table from them, and make a plan for the children and grandchildren. Our children need help. The churches need to take responsibility for the pain they caused so many Indian children and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO MATTHEW WAR BONNET

Questions Submitted by Representative Grijalva

Question 1. How long did you attend the St. Francis Boarding School?

Answer. I attended the St. Francis Boarding School from 1952 to 1959 or 1960. This was 8 years. I first went to the school when I was six years old and left the school ready for high school. Each year I was at the school I was there for 10 months out of the year.

(a) How often were you required to attend church services?

Answer. I had to attend church services every day, 7 days a week. On Monday through Saturday we had "low mass," which was services at the chapel every morning for 45 minutes to an hour. On Sunday, we had "high mass," which was a longer service on Sunday morning. Many of us kids were altar boys during these services. In addition to these services, we also had religious classes during school.

Question 2. Your testimony mentions how generations of youth withstood abuse at Indian boarding schools, including the generations in your own family.

(a) In your experience, what has helped you and your family the most in the healing process?

Answer. My parents were instrumental in the healing process for me, my mother and father. The both went to boarding schools and you could see in my father's eyes, what had happened to him, he had rage in his eyes. During my time at the school, I had this rage too. My father saw this and he helped. He gave me songs to sing, and these songs gave me spiritual strength. This strength helped me during my time at the school.

Talking about my experiences has also helped with the healing process. My siblings and I did not speak about our experience for so long, for me it has been 70 years. This long time of not speaking about our experiences allowed the hurt to just stay with us. By now speaking on it, we can hopefully help clear out our hurt.

Questions Submitted by Representative Leger Fernández

Question 1. Based on your research, how did boarding schools begin? What was the purpose behind their creation?

Answer. On the beginning of boarding schools, this happened in the 19th century. Back in this century, Tribes were under the War Department and certain government officials were assigned to handle the "Indian problem." These officials noticed that religious groups were encountering Tribes and living besides Tribes. The officials decided to implement a policy that allowed these religious groups to work with Native people in their corresponding areas. The Government then allocated a certain number of Tribes to certain religious groups within the area. This is how everything was set up. For example, in the Dakota Territory, the Catholic Church was the main religious group and they worked with the Government in receiving Indian lands and setting up schools.

As far as the purpose behind their creation, it was about assimilating Indians. The Government viewed us as savages, and we needed to Christians and civilized. This is why we were forbidden to speak our native languages or engage in any cultural activity. The Government also gave our lands away to the churches and gave money to the churches.

Question 2. Your testimony notes how the St. Francis Boarding School forced you to speak English and Latin as a student.

(a) If you are able to, can you speak further on this experience and how important Native language preservation is to tribal communities?

Answer. Both of my parents were fluent Lakota speakers. At the school however, we were forbidden to speak Lakota and were taught English, Latin, and Spanish instead. The time at the school made me forgot my Lakota language and this greatly hurt me as a Lakota person. I felt inadequate. I remember in high school there was a ceremony in the gym and Old Man Red Cloud was speaking in Lakota. I could not understand all the things he was saying because I had lost some of the language. He sang his grandfather's song and this made me want to study who the Lakota people were, and not who the Church and others said we were.

Language preservation is very important to tribal communities because language is a core component of our culture. It is who we are. Lakota people have always had our languages, our traditions, and ceremonies and these things have remained intact for several millennia. I sat on my Tribe's Tribal Council for many years and we always supported the Lakota language.

Picture below was taken at the St. Francis Boarding school of Mathew War Bonnet and sent out for donations. Mr. War Bonnet did not receive any of these funds accepted on his behalf.



Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you, Mr. War Bonnet, for that moving testimony and sharing with us the songs that have helped you in your process.

The Chair will now recognize Dr. Ramona Klein, who is also a boarding school survivor and a citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.

Dr. Klein, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF DR. RAMONA KLEIN, BOARDING SCHOOL SURVIVOR, TURTLE MOUNTAIN BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS, MEDINA, NORTH DAKOTA

Dr. KLEIN. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the Indian Boarding School Bill. I am Dr. Ramona Klein, an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa based in Belcourt, North Dakota. I am a living survivor of the United States Indian boarding school policies and practices. I am a real human being who was placed in a boarding school away from my

parents when I was 7 years old. I am now almost 75 years old, and that experience has impacted my entire life.

What impact has it had? I ask you to remember your own child or perhaps a grandchild going to school for the first time. The special moments when a child goes to school, but with the confidence that his mother or a relative will come back to pick up the child at school. Remember that feeling. Now imagine that experience if you would not see that little child for the rest of the year or perhaps even years for no other reason except that child is an Indian child.

I remember seeing my mom crying as she stood and watched six of her eight children being placed on a big green bus and taken to Fort Totten Indian Boarding School in Fort Totten, North Dakota. That image is forever imprinted in my mind and in my heart.

I remember arriving at Fort Totten and my long hair being cut very short, much like a boy's haircut, and being fine-combed with kerosene under the assumption that I had head lice. I remember being given the nickname Butch by other children because of that haircut. I remember being scrubbed regularly, with dirty brown soap, and my skin becoming dry and chapped. I remember that they used a stiff brush and that soap was made with lye.

I remember arriving at the dormitory, which was so big and cold, feeling so scared and alone among only strangers. I remember scratchy woolen Army blankets. I remember being afraid to sleep at night fearful of the matron's son, who walked the halls that night, using a flashlight to spot me in bed. He touched me like no child should ever be touched. As a little girl, those hands were huge.

I remember being hit by the matron with a big green paddle that everyone called the board of education while I knelt on either a broomstick or a mop stick with my arms outstretched from my body. I remember thinking you will not get the best of me, and I was determined not to cry. I would not cry. And I didn't cry for many years after I left Fort Totten. Today, I would say you will not take my dignity.

I remember being hungry, very hungry, hungry enough that my tummy hurt. I remember looking out the cold, frosted window and saying to myself, "Maybe tomorrow I will see Mama and Daddy." Only to wait for months for a short visit before I was made to board the big, green school bus again.

This is only a snippet of my memories, as there is not enough time to share, like witnessing a murder outside of the dormitory or being told by my teachers that I was dumb and I could not learn. Being in that boarding school was the loneliest time of my life. It has made it difficult for me to trust other people, including people on this Committee, with my emotions, my thoughts, my dreams, my physical being. And how could that not be the result?

In spite of that boarding school experience, I became an educator myself. I have taught kindergarteners through graduate students, in public school, private school, and tribal colleges. I tried to create for my students an educational experience that affirms who they are and builds them up, rather than one that presumes to save them by attempting to strip away their dignity.

I thank you for this opportunity to tell just a little bit of my story.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Klein follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. RAMONA KLEIN

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the Indian boarding school bill. I am Dr. Ramona Klein, an enrolled member of the Turtle Band of Chippewa based in Belcourt, North Dakota. I am a living survivor of the United States Indian boarding school policies and practices. I am a real human being who was placed in a boarding school away from my parents when I was seven years old. I am now almost seventy-five, and that experience has impacted my entire life.

What impact has it had? I ask you to remember your own child or grandchild going to school for the first time. The special moments when a child goes to school, but with the confidence that his mother or other relatives will come back to pick up the child at school. Remember that feeling. Now imagine that experience if you would not see that little child for the rest of the year, or perhaps even for years. For no other reason except that child is an Indian child.

I remember seeing my mother cry as she stood and watched six of her eight children board the big, green bus that took us to Fort Totten Indian Boarding School. That image is forever imprinted in my mind and heart.

I remember arriving at Fort Totten and my long hair being cut very short—much like a boy's haircut—and being fine combed with kerosine under the assumption that I had head lice. I remember being given the nickname "Butch" by the other children because of that haircut. I remember being scrubbed regularly with dirty, brown soap and my skin becoming dry and chapped. I remember that they used a stiff brush and that the soap was made with lye.

I remember arriving at the dormitory, which was so big and cold, feeling so scared and alone, among only strangers. I remember scratchy woolen Army blankets. I remember being afraid to sleep, fearful of the matron's son who walked the halls at night using a flashlight to spot me in bed. He touched my body like no child's body should be touched.

I remember being hit by the matron with a big green paddle that everyone called "The Board of Education," while I knelt on either a broomstick or a mop stick with my arms outstretched from my body. I remember thinking, "You will not get the best of me." I was determined not to cry. I would not cry. And I didn't cry for many years after I left Fort Totten. Today, I would say, "You will not take my dignity."

I remember being hungry. Very hungry. Hungry enough for my tummy to hurt.

I remember looking out the cold, frosted window and saying to myself, "Maybe tomorrow I will see Mama and Daddy." Only to wait months for a short visit before I was made to board the big, green bus again.

This is only a snippet of my memories, as there is not time to share more, like witnessing a murder outside of the dormitory or being told by my teachers that I was dumb and could not learn. Being in that boarding school was the loneliest time of my life. It has made it difficult for me to trust other people, including the people on this committee, with my emotions, thoughts, dreams, and physical being. And how could that not be the result?

In spite of my boarding school experience, I became an educator myself. I have taught kindergarteners through graduate students, in public school, public and private universities, and Tribal college, including for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I have served as both the Graduate School Director and Chairperson of the Division of Education at the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. In all these roles, I have tried to create for my students an educational experience that affirms who they are and builds them up, rather than one that presumes to "save" them by attempting to strip away their dignity.

I work hard to apply the seven teachings of the Anishinaabe—honesty, humility, truth, wisdom, love, respect, and bravery. This is why, despite my boarding school experience, I believe that I have been able to show empathy to hurting students, to support and encourage others, and serve as a mentor whenever I am able.

What I want from the United States are resources that can be used to help heal the deep wounds of the generations of Indigenous people who have been impacted by the United States' boarding school policies and the treatment of Indigenous children. I want resources to teach all Americans how boarding schools impacted and destroyed lives. I want resources to teach all Americans how we see evidence of that destruction today in people who suffer from and commit domestic violence, who suffer and commit sexual abuse, who suffer from addiction because they're

trying to stop the pain and nightmares, who experience extreme poverty, and even in underperforming schools.

I was asked one time why I didn't talk about the touching. I didn't talk about it then because no one that could do anything about it would have believed me. Still today there are people who do not believe these things happened. This must change. We must listen to the stories of the survivors and learn from them.

Thank you for the invitation to tell my story.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO DR. RAMONA CHARETTE KLEIN,
BOARDING SCHOOL SURVIVOR, TURTLE MOUNTAIN BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS

Questions Submitted by Representative Grijalva

Question 1. Your testimony notes that, despite your experiences with education at the boarding school, you became an educator later in life.

(a) Can you elaborate on how your life story has impacted your work as an educator?

Answer. Rep Grijalva, thank you for your question.

As an educator, I consistently tried to be empathic to all of my students but especially those students who needed to be cared about and those students who had difficulty learning academically or socially. Early on in my career, I knew that I wasn't prepared to teach students with disabilities, yet I had students with disabilities in my classrooms therefore, I decided that I needed to gain skills so that I could teach all students. I went on to graduate school and earned a master of education in special education. Later, I went on to earn a doctorate in education leadership so I can gain skills to help make decisions to provide the best possible education for all students.

It was always my philosophy that all students can learn and educators had to find a way to teach so the students were able to learn. It is also my philosophy that it is extremely important to take time to establish a positive relationship with students from day one of the school session. I have found when a student has a positive relationship with educators, they are more likely to feel emotionally safe and learning is more likely to take place.

I have had the privilege of teaching and advising students in kindergarten through graduate school. I am pleased to share that I still have contact with some students from all of those levels. I continue to encourage and mentor people who seek me out. Just this week I have written recommendations for three people applying for graduate studies. I have been serving in education for over fifty years and I will continue to serve as long as I am able.

I believe that my life story has given me insight, sensitivity, compassion and humor and to be a lifelong learner with heart to work at being present when working with people.

Questions Submitted by Representative Leger Fernández

Question 1. Your testimony mentions that your experiences at the boarding school made you hesitant to trust others with your story. I want to thank you for sharing your story with us today and your willingness to be here.

(a) How can Congress help to address the trauma that boarding schools inflicted on individuals such as yourself?

(b) What resources would you like to see?

Answer. Rep Leger Fernández, thank you for your questions.

Congress can help to address the trauma that boarding schools inflicted on individuals by providing families and researchers access to records of the children who attended boarding schools. I believe this is very important so that families have the opportunity to get closure in the cases of children who never returned home.

I also believe that it is important to have a 24-hour national help line for survivors and family members to call for help as memories and flashbacks may arise from hearing others' stories of attending boarding school.

It will be very helpful to create educational materials to educate all people about the boarding schools and its impact on not only those of us who attended the schools but the generational trauma that resulted from that experience. It never ceases to amaze me how many people do not know that children were forcibly taken from

their families and separated for years or life. It will be important to have funding to develop curriculum to be included in all levels of education.

Question 2. While you were at the boarding school, were you able to connect with other students to speak about your shared experiences?

(a) What about later in life?

Answer. I did not connect with other students about the shared experience; when I reflect back on that time in my life, the treatment at the boarding school became normalized. However, three of the four of my brothers who attended Ft. Totten Boarding School, ran away from the school in the dead of winter. I believe my brothers ran away from what was not normal treatment. All of my brothers are now deceased and we didn't talk about the school experience before they died. I am just beginning to talk about the experience at boarding school. Most of the children I went to school with at Ft. Totten Boarding School are deceased. I think the last of the girls, who shared the same dorm room, passed away this past year.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you, Dr. Klein, for sharing your memories and the manner in which I hope you can regain our trust. The Chair will now recognize the Honorable Ben Barnes who is the Chief of the Shawnee Tribe.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE BEN BARNES, CHIEF,
SHAWNEE TRIBE, MIAMI, OKLAHOMA**

Mr. BARNES. Howesi kiiseki. Good day, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee regarding House Resolution 5444, the "Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act."

My name is Ben Barnes, and it is my honor and privilege to serve as the Chief of the Shawnee Tribe headquartered in Miami, Oklahoma. It is an honor to be here today. I honor, respect, and admire the bravery and perseverance of my fellow panelists who survived boarding schools.

At its core, Washington, DC is a city of remembrance. From the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, DC embraces our past and honors those that helped shape its future. Tragedies and acts of genocide are also memorialized lest they be repeated.

Monuments often point to events, but society draws meaning and deep understanding from the stories of individual people. That is why the Holocaust Museum is filled with testimonies from survivors and remembrances of the victims. That is also why more than 58,000 names have been carefully engraved on the wall of the Vietnam Memorial. These people and their stories matter.

For over a century, it was the policy of the U.S. Government to tear Native American children away from their families, communities, and culture to civilize them by erasing any vestige of Native identity. Yet, relatively little is known about the tens of thousands of children who suffered at these institutions. What were their names? What did they experience? How many of them died? Where were they buried? These children's stories have been cast aside, forgotten, or lost as if this tragedy never happened. These children matter. Their stories matter.

As Chief of the Shawnee Tribe, the issue of Indian boarding schools is extremely personal for me. Over 150 years ago, Shawnee children were sent to the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School in what is now Fairway, Kansas.

In many ways, that school, which still stands today, is a memorial to the struggles and perseverance of the Shawnee people. But like other sites, its history remains incomplete. We know that the residents there were malnourished and mistreated. We can still see carvings left in the windowless attic where children were forced to sleep in hot summers and cold winters.

We know that our school was closed in 1862 due to abuse and mismanagement. But we don't know the full extent of what went on there because, in large part, we don't know the stories of the children that went there, including the names of those that died or the locations of their burial sites.

Finding answers and honoring these children's stories is important to the Shawnee Tribe. We have engaged historians and researchers to assemble all available information regarding the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School. We have found that some records are seemingly lost forever. We have also discovered that crucial parts of the story are inaccessible within government archives or exist within the private collections of the religious institutions that operated some of these schools.

As time continues to pass, we will lose the testimonies of survivors and more documents will become misplaced. That is the importance of H.R. 5444. Creating a mandated Commission empowered to locate every available record and ensure this history is preserved and made available for examination.

Finding answers to long-asked questions will not be without consequences. Understanding the stories of our children will cause mourning among our people. The discovery of unmarked graves will provoke difficult conversations about how best to honor those children. But amidst the pain, a burden will be lifted. Acceptance, healing, and growth will follow.

So, this Commission's purpose is not to point fingers, lay blame, or evoke guilt in people who are generations removed from these atrocities. It will simply help American Indian communities find information that would otherwise be unattainable and bring an opportunity for some semblance of closure. We cannot go back and change the past, but we can and must hold ourselves accountable for doing the right thing today. The stories of human suffering at these institutions can no longer be hidden from view or ignored. It is time that they take their place in public conscience.

For this reason, I, as the elected leader of the sovereign Shawnee Tribe, as well as a grandchild of a boarding school survivor, respectfully urge passage of House Resolution 5444. Nekocaaye, hiini leeki. That is all. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Barnes follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BEN BARNES, CHIEF OF THE SHAWNEE TRIBE

howesi kiiseki (good day), Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to address this committee regarding H.R. 5444, "The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. Act." My name is Ben Barnes, and I am proud to serve as the Chief of the Shawnee Tribe headquartered in Miami, Oklahoma. It is an honor to be here today. I honor, respect, and admire the bravery and perseverance of my fellow panelists who survived boarding schools.

At its core, Washington, D.C. is a city of remembrance. From the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C. embraces our past and honors those that helped shape its future. Tragedies and acts of genocide are also memorialized lest they be repeated.

Monuments often point to events, but society draws meaning and deep understanding from the stories of individual people. That is why the Holocaust Museum is filled with testimonies from survivors and remembrances of victims. That is also why more than 58,000 names have been carefully engraved upon the Vietnam Memorial. These people and their stories matter.

For over a century, it was the policy of the U.S. Government to tear Native American children away from their families, communities, and culture to “civilize” them by erasing any vestige of Native identity. And yet, relatively little is known about the tens of thousands of kids who suffered at these institutions. What were their names? What did they experience? How many of them died? Where were they buried? These children’s stories have been cast aside, forgotten, or lost—as if this tragedy never happened. These children matter. Their stories matter.

As Chief of the Shawnee Tribe, the issue of Indian boarding schools is extremely personal for me. Over 150 years ago, Shawnee children were sent to the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor Boarding School in what is now Fairway, Kansas.

In many ways, that school, which still stands today, is a memorial to the struggles and perseverance of the Shawnee people. But like other sites, its history remains incomplete. We know that the residents there were malnourished and mistreated. We can still see the carvings left in the windowless attic where children were forced to sleep in hot summers and cold winters. We know the school was closed in 1862 due to abuse and mismanagement. But we don’t know the full extent of what went on because, in large part, we don’t know the stories of the kids that went there, including the names of those that died or the locations of their burial sites.

Finding answers and honoring these children’s stories is important to the Shawnee Tribe. We have engaged historians and researchers to assemble all available information regarding the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor Boarding School. We have found that some records are seemingly lost forever. We have also discovered that crucial parts of the story are inaccessible within government archives or exist within the private collections of the religious institutions that operated some of these schools.

As time continues to pass, we will lose the testimonies of survivors and more documents will become misplaced. That is the importance of H.R. 5444. Creating a mandated commission empowered to locate every available record and ensure this history is preserved and made available for examination.

Finding answers to long-asked questions will not be without consequences. Understanding the stories of our children will cause mourning among our people. The discovery of unmarked graves will provoke difficult conversations about how best to honor those children. But amidst the pain, a burden will be lifted. Acceptance, healing, and growth will follow.

So, this commission’s purpose is not to point fingers, lay blame, or evoke guilt in people who are generations removed from these atrocities. It will simply help American Indian communities find information that would otherwise be unattainable and bring an opportunity for some semblance of closure.

We cannot go back and change the past. But we can and must hold ourselves accountable for doing the right thing *today*.

The stories of human suffering at these institutions can no longer be hidden from view or ignored. It is time that they take their place in the public conscience. For this reason, I, as the elected leader of the sovereign Shawnee Tribe as well as a grandchild of a boarding school survivor, respectfully urge passage of H.R. 5444.

nekocaaye, hiini leeki (that is all).

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO BENJAMIN J. BARNES, CHIEF,
SHAWNEE TRIBE

Questions Submitted by Representative Grijalva

Question 1. As a tribal leader, can you explain how the Federal trust responsibility obligates the Federal Government to address its role in the Boarding School Era?

Answer. Speaking specifically to the issues of the Shawnee Tribe, we authored a letter to Congress in 1850 asking for answers about our children. We still await correspondence back. Many non-Native parties have since received correspondence from Congress, such as the Indian Agent, various missionaries, and school superintendents, while tribal nations all wait for answers.¹

¹ Kevin J. Abing, “A Fall from Grace: Thomas Johnson and the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School, 1839–1862” Ph.D. dissertation, Marquette University, 1995, pg 303.

The Shawnee Tribe has seen within the historic record, correspondence between federal agents (eg. Indian Agents, school superintendents, territorial governors) regarding the operation of our missions, and it is these documents that demonstrably evidence the U.S. States Federal Government as the original author of residential boarding school policy in this country.²

Question 2. Can you speak to the obstacles you've faced when attempting to locate and reveal records pertaining to boarding schools?

(a) Do you think that legislation like H.R. 5444 is needed to gain access to these records and testimonies?

Answer. The Shawnee Tribe is already awaiting the answers it was promised, not just from our inquiries in 1850–52. Almost two years ago, a nonprofit in Kansas City, KS conducted a study of the cemetery of the family of the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School (SIMLS) superintendent. We wondered if there were unmarked graves in that cemetery that could potentially belong to our children. The laboratory results are complete, and the local 501c3 that contracted the survey has yet to share those results with the Shawnee Tribe.

I am certain there will be other organizations, perhaps some that are culpable for terrible things against other tribal nations, and it will require a mechanism to ensure that a complete sharing of information occurs. If the Shawnee are already experiencing this over a 150-plus year old boarding school, I can only imagine there will be even more dissonance, confrontations, and adversarial postures from institutions that are still in operations where children were traumatized.

Questions Submitted by Representative Leger Fernández

Question 1. In your testimony, you note that the Shawnee Tribe sought out historians and researchers to account for the history of the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor Boarding School.

(a) Can you explain this process a little more? Are there any Federal resources available to help with fact-finding projects like these?

Answer. The Shawnee Tribe has always been a tribe that knows its history. We are fortunate to have many passionate and professional individuals in our community. However, even with this advantage, there are specific disciplines for which we have had to contract third-party, non-Native professionals because of a lack of Federal financial support to tribal nations does not prioritize all of the necessary services to conduct such research.

At no small expense to our government, we have hired two professional historians, Dr. Stephen Warren at the University of Iowa and Dr. Kevin Abing of Marquette University. We have also approached the Ball State Applied Archaeology Laboratory, the Illinois Archaeological Survey, and Indiana University's Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology, regarding potential ground sensing procedures (LIDAR, radio magnetometry, ground-penetrating radar, and electrical sensitivity) to help us understand how to search for unknown buried persons that may be interred at the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School.

I also feel the need to point out, the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School is just one of our boarding schools. In Kansas City, we also had the Shawnee Baptist mission and the Shawnee Quaker mission. We also have citizens that attended Chillocco, Haskell, Carlisle, and a host of others around the country.

Suffice it to say, our government is ill-financed to float the burden to conduct all of these research projects and ground studies, let alone the expenses to travel about half of the United States searching for our graves and the records that might contain the story of our children. While we feel obligated as a people to do this work, it will most certainly detract from the time and efforts of supporting our communities, elders and children.

Supposing that the Shawnee Tribe was did indeed have all the sufficient organizational capacity and funding to do all of this research, we still face one of the more significant and less talked about issues is how to address what happens when we find them. For example, if the Shawnee were to begin the ground sensing at the SIMLS and discover a grave, what would follow next would be additional tragedy heaped upon early ones. Since the land at SIMLS is owned by the State of Kansas, they would likely exhume the body to ensure it not to be a recent crime victim.

²Civilization Act of 1819, pg 303; Brenda J. Child, "A Bitter Lesson: Native Americans and the Government Boarding School Experience, 1890–1940." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1993.

Following that process by the local coroner and state officers, the body would then be subject to federal NAGPRA law and consultations would have to be had with all of the tribes from that geographic area that could possibly have a NAGPRA-claim. This would bog down the process of returning our child home.³

It has become abundantly clear to the Shawnee Tribe that if we are to conduct searches of the premises of the SIMLS for our children, we really need to do so on our terms: we need to own the land. We strongly feel that the seized lands upon which residential boarding schools were built must be returned to the tribal nation to whom the land initially belonged.

Question 2. Can you explain why timely passage of H.R. 5444 is critically important for the preservation of survivor testimony?

Answer. It is self-evident from the testimony of the four witnesses, who so bravely recounted the brutality they lived under during their attendance at boarding schools, that many of the victims are elderly. Not only can we not wait for more favorable winds or perfect circumstances to seek truth and healing, but we are in a time of global pandemic. How many voices of victims have already been lost to this disease or just to time?

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you so very much. We are getting close to having votes called, but I wanted to try to get to one more witness before the votes are called. So, the Chair will now recognize Ms. Deborah Parker who is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

Ms. Parker.

STATEMENT OF DEBORAH PARKER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL HEALING COALITION, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Ms. PARKER. Tsicyaltsa. [Speaking Native language.] Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Tsicyaltsa, Deborah Parker, a citizen of the Tulalip Tribes, and I have the honor of serving as the Chief Executive Officer of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, also known as NABS.

NABS was formed in 2011, following public outcry about the lasting impacts of the Boarding School Era. Shortly after Canada launched their Truth and Reconciliation Commission, leaders from the United States and Canada came together to discuss the need for such a process in the United States.

NABS supports a community of thousands of boarding school survivors and descendants. On behalf of these relatives, as well as 54 endorsements and 26 resolutions from tribes and national organizations, I am here to strongly support H.R. 5444.

Our collaborative work with the U.S. Department of the Interior has identified 408 federally funded and supported U.S. Indian boarding schools as well as 89 additional institutions that received no Federal funding at all. For centuries, these 497 boarding schools operated as a broad system with a singular goal aimed at our children.

The stated purpose of the United States Indian Boarding School Policy was to destroy Indian culture by using education as a

³For a very brief primer on NAGPRA interactions with boarding school endeavors, please see: Sarah E. Cowie, Diane L. Teeman, and Christopher C. LeBlanc, in *Collaborative Archaeology at Stewart Indian School* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2019), pp. 9, 209.

weapon. This purpose was clarified by General Pratt. In fierce commitment to an agenda of assimilation, Pratt's motto to "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man," became a standard for the operation of these institutions.

Upon arrival, our children had their hair chopped, their clothes stripped, and their names were replaced with English ones or often just a number. Children frequently received corporal punishment for speaking their language, practicing traditional songs and ceremonies, and resisting contradictory instructions from their languages and cultures.

Methods of punishment included: solitary confinement, flogging, whipping, slapping, cuffing, and forcing children to administer punishments to each other, such as the gauntlet or the strapline. Children were subjected to forced labor, neglect, malnourishment, and physical and sexual abuse. Children were beaten to death.

This happened routinely enough to compel operators to have cemeteries on the school grounds often in unmarked graves. This violence affected hundreds of thousands of children, their families, and their communities so deeply that these effects of trauma can be seen intergenerationally. Indian boarding school methods are rooted in the Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny.

It has taken generations for us to get to this point of public truth and accountability: For the voices of those that have never had the chance to return home; For those that were forever changed by this extreme cruelty; For those that were chained to basement radiators, prison cells, and dark closets; For those that were sexually abused, told to wash up, and to return to the marching lines; For those that were told that they would be forgotten—We are here to remind you to remember these children, to tell the truth, to subpoena others who are carrying that knowledge and ensure that we get the truth that our families deserve. They need to know where their children are. We need our relatives to come home. Thank you for this time. T'igwicid tsicyaltsa.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Parker follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DEBORAH PARKER, CEO, NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL HEALING COALITION (NABS)

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is tsicyaltsa, Deborah Parker, citizen of the Tulalip Tribes and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS). NABS formed in 2011, following public outcry about the lasting impacts of the boarding school era. Shortly after Canada launched the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, leaders from the United States and Canada came together to discuss the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the need for such a process in the United States. NABS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and we support a community of thousands of boarding school survivors and descendants. On behalf of these relatives, as well as 54 endorsements and 26 resolutions from Tribes and national organizations, I am here to strongly support H.R. 5444.

The vision of NABS is to lead in the pursuit of understanding and addressing the ongoing trauma created by the U.S. Indian Boarding School policy. In practice, NABS is a coalition of people who support the healing of boarding school survivors and descendants by using our network to advocate, engage in research, and offer healing resources. NABS uses its voice to educate about the truth, the full scope of the federal Indian boarding school policies and the lasting legacy felt in Indian Country and throughout the nation. The experiences of our relatives are still with us and the U.S. government has never meaningfully addressed these impacts. This is why we stand before you today.

Our recent collaborative work with the U.S. Department of the Interior has identified 408 federally funded and supported U.S. Indian boarding schools, as well as 89 additional boarding schools that received no federal funding at all. Over nearly two centuries, these 497 boarding schools operated as a broad system with a singular goal aimed at our children.

Between the 1800s and the 1970s, the federal government removed thousands of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children from our homes and families, and placed them in assimilative institutions designed to strip us of our languages, identities, and cultures—these lifeways that have connected us to the land since time immemorial. The stated purpose of the U.S. Indian Boarding School policy was to destroy Indian culture by using education as a weapon. This purpose was expounded upon by the likes of General Richard Henry Pratt, who stated:

“A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”

In fierce commitment to an agenda of assimilation, Pratt’s motto to “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”, became a standard for the operation of these institutions. Nearly 500 U.S. Indian boarding schools carried out this ideology. They sought to destroy Indian language, culture, and ultimately to dismantle Indian nations, enabling the federal government to acquire more Indian land. To achieve this end, Indian children were forcibly abducted and sent to schools often hundreds of miles away, under the pretense that replacing the child’s home and cultural influences through boarding school would be the most effective means to “civilize” Native people and to dispossess them of their lands.

Upon arrival, our children had their hair chopped, their clothes stripped, and their names were replaced with English ones or often, just a number. Children frequently received corporal punishment for speaking their language, practicing traditional songs and ceremonies, and resisting contradictory instructions that their languages and cultures were wrong. Methods of punishment included: solitary confinement, flogging, whipping, slapping, cuffing, and devising methods to engage children to administer punishments to each other, such as the gauntlet or the strap line. Other methods of dehumanization routinely observed were: forced labor, neglect, malnourishment, and physical and sexual abuse. Children were beaten to death. This happened routinely enough to compel school operators to have cemeteries on the school grounds, often in unmarked graves.

Indian Boarding School methods are rooted in the Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny—all of which meant genocide for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian peoples. The Doctrine of Discovery, specifically, provided sanction and justification for the invasion and colonization of land inhabited by non-Christians. One of the lasting legacies of this doctrine is the legal and cultural belief that Indigenous people do not have the right to our own cultures, lands, practices, and even how we raise our own children. The Boarding School Era, seen as an effective alternative to extermination, was ushered in by the U.S. “Education for Assimilation” Policy. Beginning with the Indian Civilization Act Fund of 1819, the U.S. authorized and financed religious missions to weaponize education as a “civilizing process”. This policy was further enacted through the creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in 1824, created under the War Department, primarily to administer these monies to churches. This would also be seen in President Grant’s Peace Policy, lasting from 1868 to 1881, which endeavored to replace corrupt “Federal Agents” with Christian missionaries.

The effects of Colonialism and the Federal boarding school policies are clear. They are measured in stolen land, stolen lives, and widespread denial of sovereignty; through the systemic delegitimization of Indigenous ways of living, knowing, and being; through the destruction of language, culture, and knowledge. In sum, the effects are seen as Indigenous erasure, rooted in the boarding school policy era.

The trauma of family and community separation, as well as the violently assimilative strategies of boarding schools and adoption, affected hundreds of thousands of children, their families, and their communities so deeply that these effects of trauma can be seen intergenerationally. In light of this, NABS, First Nations Repatriation Institute, and the University of Minnesota are conducting a research study to learn more about experiences and impacts of child removal related to the United States’ federal Indian boarding school policy. The survey has seen 900 respondents to date, including 211 boarding school survivors and 791 descendants of boarding school survivors. Of the respondents, nearly half reported being

diagnosed with a mental health condition; 77 percent reported struggling with depression; approximately one third of respondents reported symptoms of PTSD; 75 percent of respondents reported having attempted suicide. Additionally, 87 percent of respondents believed their experience affected their parenting, 81 percent believe they still need to heal from their experiences, and 73 percent have sought therapy or counseling.

The intergenerational trauma of Indian Boarding Schools continues to be particularly harsh among Native youth. The 2014 White House Report on Native youth found major disparities in health and education, with more than one in three American Indian and Alaska Native children living in poverty and a graduation rate of 67 percent—the lowest of any racial/ethnic demographic group across all schools. Those students who survived their boarding school experience, suffered traumatic alienation when they returned home, finding themselves unable to connect with their families and communities. The report also established a state of emergency regarding Native youth suicide—the second leading cause of death for Native youth in the 15- to 24-year-old age group—and PTSD, with rates three times the general public—the same rate as Iraqi war veterans.

Given nearly 500 boarding schools throughout a timespan of nearly two centuries, it is essential to recognize that boarding school experiences cannot be seen as monolithic. There are nuanced histories that need to be understood and examined further. U.S. boarding schools provoked deep traumas and unresolved grief, while also accompanying a complex history of resistance and resilience. Many individuals found solace in friendships and relationships that would sustain them throughout their lifetimes. Some resolved to learn settler ways in order to better prepare their Tribes to negotiate with an expanding American society. What cannot go ignored is that the spectrum of boarding school history and experiences are unequivocally and inescapably tied to the legacy of forced removal; dispossession of land; physical, psychological and sexual abuse; mass deaths and unmarked graves; and the extermination of Native ways of living, knowing, and genocide.

NABS is not alone in recognizing the cultural genocide carried out through Indian Boarding Schools. In 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which holds that “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.” The U.S. Government responded that UNDRIP advanced “a new and distinct international concept of self-determination specific to Indigenous peoples,” which is not the same as the existing concept in international law. The statement also interprets free, prior, and informed consent, “which the United States understands to call for a process of meaningful consultation with tribal leaders.”

Today, NABS is focused on hope, healing, and resiliency. Our goal is to provide this through the five-year Truth Commission, which aims to examine the location of children, document ongoing impacts from boarding schools, locate church and government records, hold culturally appropriate public hearings to collect testimony from survivors and descendants, gather institutional knowledge from subject matter experts, share findings publicly, and provide a final report with a list of recommendations for justice and healing.

It has taken generations for us to get to this point of public truth and accountability; For the voices of those that never had the chance to return home; for those that were forever changed by this extreme cruelty; for those that were chained to basement radiators, prison cells, and dark closets; For those that were sexually abused, told to wash up, and to return to their marching lines; For those that were told that they and their families would be forgotten;

We have not forgotten.

We ask you to hear their voices.

The time for action is now. We must pass, H.R. 5444, the Truth and Healing Commission Bill on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. t'igwicid tsiyaltsa.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO DEBORAH PARKER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL HEALING COALITION

Questions Submitted by Representative Grijalva

Question 1. As someone who worked previously on truth and healing efforts in Canada, do you have any recommendations for how the Federal Government should address its role in the creation and implementation of Indian boarding schools?

Answer. Yes. The Congress must pass H.R. 5444 and establish the Truth and Healing Commission that addresses boarding schools in the United States. Based in part on Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, H.R. 5444 reflects lessons learned, both positive and negative, from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada. The primary difference is that the Commission in Canada did not have the power to subpoena documents and compel testimony. The U.S. must have this authority to properly carry out its mission.

In 2007, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in Canadian began implementation. One of the elements of the agreement was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to facilitate reconciliation among former students, their families, their communities, and others across the Canadian government including Health Canada and other key governmental support networks.

The Government of Canada provided financial support the TRC's work. The TRC spent over 6 years traveling to all parts of Canada and heard from more than 6,500 witnesses, including generational survivors. The TRC also hosted seven national events across Canada to engage the Canadian public, educate people about the history and legacy of the residential school system, and respectfully share the experiences of former students and their families. The TRC then created a record of the impacts and harm caused by the residential school system. As part of this process, the Government of Canada provided over 5 million records to the TRC. Records are still requested and needed by many First Nations and their families.

At the end of their 6 year agreement, the TRC presented the executive summary of the findings contained in its multi-volume final report, including 94 "calls to action" to further help heal a country divided. The TRC also released its 6-volume final report.

To date, the government of Canada and First Nations members continue to work on their relationship. We believe there are many lessons the United States can learn from the TRC process initiated by the Canadians government and First Nations.

Questions Submitted by Representative Gallego

Question 1. Can you describe how involved the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition and survivors of boarding schools were in the compilation of the Department of Interior report that was released 5/11/22? Do you expect a similar level of engagement with NABS if the commission in H.R. 5444 is enacted?

Answer. NABS was actively involved in exchanging information about boarding schools with the Department of the Interior. NABS was founded over 10 years ago with the mission of researching information that was and is relevant to the Department of the Interior's Report and ongoing work. On December 7, 2021, NABS and the Department of Interior entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) so both parties that the Department could share information and keep it confidential, and Interior officials could freely ask questions of NABS throughout preparation of the report.

NABS had no role in drafting the Report. Boarding schools survivors did not communicate with Interior through NABS. Because of NABS' expertise in this area, NABS expects to be centrally involved in the Truth and Healing Commission if H.R. 5444 is enacted into law.

Question 2. It is my understanding that Federal boarding school policies, along with other oppressive Federal policies, contributed to the growth of urban AI/AN populations in U.S. cities. Can you discuss more about the impact of these Federal policies on the growth of the urban AI/AN population and the need to partner with urban Native communities to help heal from the effects of the intergenerational trauma caused by boarding school policies?

Answer. Federal boarding school policies began as a way for the Federal Government to obtain control over Tribal land. To achieve this end, federal law and policy makers established policies focused on destroying Native American and Alaskan Native ("NA/AN") culture. Policy makers hoped that when Native children

were assimilated into the dominant culture, they would no longer feel a connection to their reservations, which in turn would push them toward urban areas. Many children became disconnected from their home tribal communities. This successful ideology was centered on making the need for reservations obsolete. The effects can be seen today through the nearly 70 percent of NA/AN individuals who live in urban areas. It is paramount to work with urban Native communities on how to heal from intergenerational trauma as they can best articulate their needs.

Questions Submitted by Representative Leger Fernández

Question 1. After decades of inaction, we are proud of the U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland's efforts to jumpstart the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

(a) What other efforts would the Coalition like to see alongside this initiative?

Answer. Many Native people from across the United States suffer from a variety of physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental health problems, and other hardships associated with loss of language and culture. Many of those problems are a direct result of federal policies that existed for 150 years that were intended to wipe out Native identity and culture. Many people carrying out these genocidal policies treated Native children as less than human and inflicted severely abused them. Congress has much work to do to assist tribal communities with preserving Native languages and cultures. It was much work to do in providing resources to address mental health problems in tribal communities. It has much work to do to give tribal governments more resources to protect women and children in tribal communities that are suffering from the residual impacts of these hardships.

(b) How would the passage of H.R. 5444 aid these efforts?

Answer. The Trust and Healing Commission established by H.R. 5444 would give boarding school survivors an opportunity to share their stories. From our work, we know that so many of them suffered serious trauma while students at boarding schools, and they need healing from these experiences. We also need experts to provide focused work on ways to overcome the problems created by federal boarding school policies that can help our communities heal and move forward.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you as well so very much for your testimony. The bells you are hearing behind us is that the votes have been called. I apologize to our last witness that we weren't able to get to you before the votes were called. We will take a recess. I look forward to us all getting back here as soon as votes conclude.

Staff will keep you apprised of where we are in that process. I don't want to start pronouncing about them because we can't really tell how long they'll take.

But I do want to share that what we have heard so far is incredibly moving. It is important to hear the stories. It is important to hear all of your testimony as difficult as it may be testifying here and in the months and years ahead that these stories need to be heard. So, thank you for the sharing of them today.

We will come back as soon as we can. We are now in recess.

[Recess.]

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. The Chair will now recognize as our last witness, Dr. Janine Pease, who is the Founding President and Faculty Member at Little Big Horn College.

Dr. Pease, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF DR. JANINE PEASE, FOUNDING PRESIDENT
AND FACULTY MEMBER, LITTLE BIG HORN COLLEGE, CROW
AGENCY, MONTANA**

Dr. PEASE. Thank you, Madam Chair Leger Fernández. I am honored to present testimony today to this Committee in favor of House Resolution 5444, the "Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act."

Balusshe Ukchiiwaagideeiitshitchesh. Apsaalooke Biia. Shoodaagii. Itchik Daloom. My name is one who loves to pray. I am a Crow Indian woman. I bring you greetings from Crow country. This is a beautiful day that our Creator has given us.

I am past President of and current adjunct faculty in humanities at Little Bighorn College. As an associate faculty to the Crow Oral History Project, I have pursued over the last 5 years the stories of women and children from my Nation. I also coordinate language revitalization projects for the Crow Language Consortium.

But I want to tell you that like many other American Indian people, I am a descendant of boarding school students. My, Hidatsa, great grandmother, Sarah Walker Pease, attended and graduated from Hampton Institute. She went there with 14 students. And while she was there, 7 of those 14 perished and are buried there.

Sarah's fourth son, little Benny, was forced to go to Crow Agency School at the tender age of only 4 years. And he was beaten so badly that he died at the school, and we decorate his grave every Memorial Day.

My grandparents, Tillie White Man Runs Him and Ben Pease attended the Crow Agency Boarding School. And my grandpa, at an older age, went to Sherman Indian School in California where he chose to run away because he objected so much to his treatment there.

There is a story in our tribe of a grandmother who wanted to protect her grandson from being taken by the Crow Police to Crow Boarding School. I know this old lady. I knew her as a child. She was very elderly. She wanted to protect her grandson, so she went to the mountains. She and her grandson eluded the Crow Police for almost 3 weeks, camping, moving, camping. And finally, Crow Policeman White Arm captured the little boy.

She followed the policeman and her grandson to Crow Agency, a distance of 24 miles, set up her camp, and put up her tent right next to the fence that was around the boarding school. From August to December, she watched her little grandson march from the dorm, to the cafeteria, to the classroom building. Right up to the very frigid cold temperatures in Montana, subzero weather. Finally, she became convinced that her little grandson might survive the boarding school. Typically, we called the Crow Agency Boarding School the mean place.

Well, my reservation was served by many schools. We had two BIA boarding schools. We had a Catholic boarding school, Saint Francis Xavier Boarding School. We had a Unitarian boarding school. And we had eight day schools later starting in about 1904.

The Crow students, though, that went to Carlisle have definitely picked up my fascination, and I have studied them, learned about their data. In a general sense, it is difficult to get to the stories of

women and children because typical histories don't always get to the faces and voices of men and women often follow politics and economics. But my historical research has shown that there are many moving parts.

Fortunately, in the case of Carlisle, there is a digital resource center. And that center provides basic data on all of the students who were enrolled. I was able to find out who the students were. I found out that three of our students passed away and are buried there. I found that 17 were discharged for serious illness, many of whom, almost all of whom, died within just a year or two of their return to the Crow Reservation.

I have the advantage of having been able to interview children of Carlisle students, and conducting interviews to understand what the conditions at Carlisle were. Careful investigation is what I think the Commission will be about to hear the voices, to see the faces, to understand the conditions that our children were subjected to.

I would like to mention that in my career, I served on the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force. That was in 1989 to 1991. Our task force chose to hold listening sessions to hear the voices of people who had very important things to say about Indian education.

In a period of 2 years, we held hearings in eight locations. Each one of the members of our task force held hearings in schools, community centers, and we listened very intently. And then we issued summary reports of all the voices that came forward. We also commissioned papers on special issues. I think a commission such as being proposed could do this to bring the voices of people to this story.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Dr. Pease, thank you. We are over time, but I will give you a few more to round out your testimony.

Dr. PEASE. Thank you. The legacy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools is bittersweet. Certainly, the bitterness comes from the extreme distance Indian students had to endure from their homeland, from their loved ones, from their culture, and their language.

The bitter experience includes a loss of classmates and fellow tribal members who were students. Those who succumbed to diseases so debilitating that they took their life. It was bitter for the students whose stay at Carlisle was cut short due to severe illnesses. And they found themselves on trains as passengers to go home. And once they got home, they lost their lives.

Of course, there is a sweet aspect of those who achieved. And we have talked already about the immense resilience many of our people have shown to take away from those experiences. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of this legislation.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Pease follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JANINE PEASE, D. ED., CROW INDIAN EDUCATOR, ADJUNCT FACULTY IN CROW STUDIES AND HUMANITIES, FOUNDING PRESIDENT OF LITTLE BIG HORN COLLEGE OF THE CROW NATION

Shoodaagii. Itchik Daloom. Balusshe Ukchiiwaagideeiitshitcheesh. Apsaalooke Biia. Good Afternoon. Honored Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources' Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States (SCIP) and distinguished committee members,

I am honored with this invitation to present before this august body; my testimony is in support of this proposed legislation to establish the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies for the reasons that:

- Many children and youth voices of Indian people have been silent, despite their significant and impactful experiences in the boarding schools of the Bureau of Indian, from the most negative across the spectrum to the positive; and to be inclusive of Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools and those schools conducted by various churches for the education of Indian children; and,
- Some students sent to boarding schools did not survive, due to loneliness, disease, even disorientation; their legacy needs full disclosure and recognition of their lives lost and the intergenerational loss to their families and communities; and
- For there to be reconciliation and healing, stories of all those who experienced the boarding schools, both public and sectarian, must be told, listened to and understood; and,
- The American Indian boarding school stories in the telling give power to the survivors, the survivor's children and their precious succeeding generations.

Introduction

I am Janine Pease, an Absaalooke educator from Montana, my Crow Indian name is "One Who Loves to Pray." As an American Indian educator, my professional career has been in tribal colleges and universities administration and instruction, and most recently as a professor of Crow Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences. My doctoral research on the tribal colleges act history involved oral histories of Indian Educators, which I found to be compelling and vivid. The lives of early reservation Apsaalooke women and children have led into research of the stories of Crow Women Chiefs and Leaders, a study of health conditions for infants and children by decade, and the story of the Crow students who attended Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Through the Little Big Horn College Crow Oral History Project I met movers and shakers in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s through oral history interviews, written memoirs and official documents review.

In the 1940s, a Crow Women's Federated Club in Crow Agency and Wyola had members who were Carlisle alumni. A photo in the *Crow Calendar* of the club members sparked my curiosity in the Crow Indian Carlisle students. Thus began my intensive research of the Crow Indian Carlisle Indian Industrial School students. Through the use of the Carlisle Indian School Resource Center online I began a detailed records review, conducted oral history interviews of their children, and reviewed memoirs by alumni.

The Crow Indian Students Experience at Carlisle Indian Industrial School

Crow Indian Health and Education in 1890 to 1920. A glimpse of the period 1890 to 1920, the boarding school era for the Apsaalooke people, finds dire health conditions for children and youth. According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs census', during the decades 1890 to 1920 the Crow tribal population went from 2,500 to 1,800 due to the diseases of smallpox, tuberculosis, whooping cough, respiratory and gastric conditions. The population ages 0–18 dropped in number by half.

The treaty conditions made education mandatory on the Crow Indian Reservation. The Crow children were coerced, even forced, to attend the Bureau of Indian Affairs Boarding Schools and the contracted sectarian schools:

- **Crow Agency BIA Boarding School** was opened in 1886 and closed in 1920. The students were in grades 1 to 6. The school served up to 160 students at a time. The school was co-educational and followed the half day academics and half day trades curriculum.

- **Pryor BIA Boarding School** was built and opened in 1903 and provided grades 1 to 6. This was a coeducational school. The school closed in 1919. The school had a smallpox outbreak shortly after its opening when 9 girls came down with the life-threatening disease. The school had 50 to 75 students during its operation.
- The BIA contracted with the **Catholic Church for the St. Frances Xavier Catholic Boarding School**. This boarding school was operated by the Jesuits from 1887 to 1918. The school had teachers from the Ursuline Sisters, for grades 1 to 6. Their student population varied from 70 to 110 students. Chief Pretty Eagle negotiated with the school to have Sunday evening family time, and organized for the boys to be out of the school during the summer. The girls were sequestered throughout the calendar year, in the school. Students participated in daily mass, and conversion to Christianity was mandatory. Karen Watembach, local historian conducted extensive interviews with students and parents during the 1970s and 1980s. These records are at the LBHC Archives.
- The **Unitarian Universalist Church** contracted with BIA for **The Montana Indian Industrial School** in the northern portions of the Crow Reservation near Custer, Montana. The school followed the half academics and half school trades curriculum related to the self-supporting school operation. Citizenship and patriotism were stressed. The Crow people called this school Bond's Mission. The enrolled between 1887 and 1897 averaged 50 students. (This school is fully documented in *The Montana Indian Industrial School: A Worthy Work in a Needy Time*, by Margery L. Pease.)
- **American Baptist Day Schools** began when the Lodge Grass Crow Indian district leaders partnered with the Sheridan (Wyoming) American Baptist Church to meet, negotiate, agree, build and open a Day School in 1904 in Lodge Grass. The school was opened from 1904 to 1920. The Baptists opened additional day schools at Wyola, Reno Creek and Pryor over the next ten years; each served up to 10 students.
- **Catholic Day Schools** were opened by the St. Frances Xavier Catholic Mission and School at Lodge Grass Creek and Fort Smith. The teachers were Catholic Mission graduates, Crow Indian language speaking teachers. These schools had up to 20 students each.

Crow Indian Students Enrolled at Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Research of Janine Pease, D. Ed., March 2021. Among the 10,000 students who enrolled at Carlisle School, ninety-three were Crow Indian. Although Carlisle opened in 1887, the Crow Indian Agent sent a group of students in 1883. The Crow students took the train, and they would get to Iowa, then Chicago and on to Pennsylvania. At Carlisle, they were made to walk to the school, a distance of two miles.

Graduates. The Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center online indicates there are twelve Crow Indian students who completed the Carlisle graduation requirements. These are eight male students and four female students, starting in the Class of 1890 with George Means and the Class of 1907 with Christine Childs. In the Class of 1897 there were two Crow students: Frank Shively and Alexander Upshaw. Vocational certificates are not available, and several Crow Indian Students records note vocational certificates.

Crow Student Demographic Data. In an analysis of the 96 students files for Crow Indians, several data sets reveal who the students were, their enrollment at age, groups sent, and their choice of trades:

- Gender: 58 males, 38 females
- The student enrollment age begins at age 12 (15 students), age 13 (8 students), age 14 (13 students), age 15 (16 students), age 16 (all students), age 17 (9 students), age 18 (11 students). Just four students entered Carlisle at an age younger than 12; and nine students were older than age 18.
- Students' previous schooling ranged between 24 to 72 months, in reservation boarding schools.
- The trades students were taking included: housework (all girls), carpentry, blacksmithing, harness making, tin working, nursing, engineer (boiler operation), farming, wagon-making, and sewing.
- Seventeen students were discharged due to illness (type of illness not available). Ten of these students were girls, and seven were boys. All of these were reported dead by the Agent in 10 years time.

- There was a group of students from Greycliff, Montana (near Bozeman), the location of the first Crow Indian Agency, and from Custer, Montana, where the Unitarian Montana Indian Industrial School was located.
- Sibling groups were represented with the last name of Cooper, Stewart and Geisdorf.

Crow Students Who Died and are Buried at Carlisle. From the Carlisle Indian School Cemetery records, there are three Crow Indian students who died while attending the school: Charles Fisher of Crow Agency who died in September 1886, Katie Helen Adams of St. Xavier was enrolled for three years and died in August 1903, and Ernest Iron “Little War Shield” of Crow Agency, who was enrolled for 1.5 years and died in March 1910.

Crow Carlisle Students Married to Other Carlisle Students. Crow student William White married Josephine Williams, and Carlisle expelled them for this marriage. William White was enrolled for 5 years in the Engineer vocational program, and upon return, he worked at the Crow Agency as an operator of the Agency boiler for 5 years. Wife Josephine was Simshian and came to Carlisle from the Salem Indian School (Chemawa Indian School). She was enrolled for four years and took the trade of sewing and laundry. Rosa LaForge graduated in 1904 with the trade of seamstress. She was enrolled for six years and had become a Carlisle employee as an Assistant Matron. She married Charles Dillon, a Crow Creek Sioux, who was enrolled for 4.5 years, in the trade of blacksmith. The Dillon family lived in the Wyola district of the Crow reservation. Julia Hawks married Thomas Medicine Horse, and both were expelled from Carlisle for the marriage. Julia had a record of completing five outings in the summers, while Thomas Medicine Horse was enrolled for four years in the carpentry trade. Together the Medicine Horse couple lived in Crow Agency.

Nurses Training and Graduates. Susie Farwell of Custer, MT, went on an outing placement to Elliot Hospital in New Jersey, in 1896. Ida Towns of Crow Agency was sent to German Hospital in Brooklyn New York where she completed Nurses Training . Following her nursing training, in 1913, Ida became employed at Fort Lapwai Sanatorium in Lapwai, Idaho, on the Nez Perce Indian Reservation. Ms. Towns was featured in the Carlisle publications for her graduation from German Hospital. Margaret Picket was a nurse trainee placed in the Carlisle Hospital (treating primarily tuberculosis victims).

Enlistment in the U.S. Armed Services in World War I. The emphasis on citizenship as Carlisle curriculum content promoted the enlistment of many Carlisle students. Five Crow Indian students enlisted in the armed services: Russell Whitebear, George Pease, George White Fox, Horace Long Bear and Hugh Leider. All survived the WWI and returned to the Crow Reservation.

Four Mystery Students. In the review of Crow Indian student files, the district of origin on the Crow Reservation for four students was Fort Snelling. Fort Snelling is the prison where the Crow men involved in an incident named “The Wraps Up His Tail Rebellion” were incarcerated; Fort Snelling, Minnesota. These men served a brief time there and then were sent to Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Moses Knows His Cows and Julian Carries His Food were at Carlisle only briefly in 1888. However, Egbert Big Hail and Theron Looks With His Ears or Lears stayed for two years. Theron Lears became a political activist once he returned to the Crow Reservation. (Material on the rebellion can be found in *Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America 1805–1935*, by Frederick Hoxie.)

Outstanding Carlisle Graduates and Alumni. Based on digital resources, descendant interviews and autobiographies, nine profiles of Carlisle alumni were developed, five are provided here, to indicate their position and influence in the Crow Indian community upon their return from Carlisle School.

Alexander Upshaw. Alexander Upshaw’s father was Plenty Bear. He studied at Carlisle for ten years and went on five outings, all in Pennsylvania. He graduated with the Class of 1897. He was an excellent writer, and was published several times in the *Carlisle Indian Helper*. He attended Bloomsberg Normal School in 1897–1898, and completed a teaching certificate. His first assignment was an Genoa Industrial School where he was the Industrial Teacher for 2 years. He met and married his wife Emma Young and they had three daughters. Upon his return home to the Crow Reservation, he became a political activist. He became the Assistant/Interpreter to Edward S. Curtis, the renowned photographer of American Indians. Upshaw collaborated with Curtis on the Crow and Hidatsa research, setting up scenes and strategizing designs. Curtis and Upshaw met with President Roosevelt, where Upshaw discussed the conditions of the Crow people.

George Washington Hogan. At the tender age of 10, George Washington Hogan request of his parents Bear Before and Emma Chein Frazier to attend Carlisle. He was enrolled at Carlisle from 1898 to 1904. His daughter Mardell Hogan Plainfeather wrote about her father. “He was a part of a group of young men who attempted to spread their wings of “intellectual protection” over matters of political importance to the Crow.”^d About the relationship with the elder statement and Crow Indian chiefs, Ms. Plainfeather said, “They joined the Chiefs “with a weapon that the old chiefs did not have—a Whiteman’ education. The chiefs eventually learned to rely on them to convey their words to the whites especially to the Great White Father. Plainfeather recounts that “as interpreters, they worked for missionaries, anthropologists, local traders and Crows themselves, in matters that required reading, writing and orator skills.”¹

Lois Pretty Scalp. A student at Carlisle Indian School from November 1883, a student in the first group sent by the Crow Indian Agent to Carlisle. Lois stayed at Carlisle for seven years, even though she arrived at the age of seventeen. From the Black Lodge District, her Indian name was Two Medicine Rocks. The reason for her discharge was that her time expired. Carlisle enrolled students for five years, with extensions. Lois married Louis Bompard. In a graduate survey Lois responded about their family: “We own our home and it is white with 2 rooms and a porch. We have 50 chickens, 5 turkeys, 3 geese, 10 pigs, 7 doves and 13 horses. I worked at the school as a laundress for 1 month. My husband, a full blood, is a Boss Farmer. We take a leading role, the Agent relies on my husband.

Minnie Reed Williams. Minnie was a child of a Gros Ventre/Crow woman and a trader. She and her siblings suffered a tragedy when their father was killed in an altercation at the Agency, and the Agent sent them to St. Frances Xavier Boarding School at St. Xavier in the Big Horn District of the Crow Reservation. At an early age, according to her autobiography, Minnie aspired to read many great books. She eventually went to Fort Shaw Indian School in western Montana, where she gained an even greater appreciation of learning and reading. She completed her education at Fort Shaw and returned to teach at the Crow Agency Boarding School. She taught Crow Indian children just long enough to earn the cost of a one way train ticket to Carlisle Indian School. So on her own dime, Minnie went to Carlisle in 1897 at the age of 18, and stayed until 1901. She had five outings in Pennsylvania, with Quaker families, all of them teachers. Upon her return to Crow Agency, Minnie uncovered her mother’s and grandmother’s allotments, and along with her own, put together a landbase for a ranch near Custer. She purchased additional plots for the cattle and horse ranching business with her husband Owen Blue Williams. Due to the BIA Horse Kill of 1923, Minnie and Owen had their livestock slaughtered, leading to bankruptcy and the loss of the ranch. Minnie moved to the Agency where she took up political activism. She was tribal secretary three times in the 1920s and 1930s. She organized the Crow Federation Women’s Club, and advocated for women’s and infant’s health, sanitary conditions in the Crow Jail and for clean water to tribal members. The club has several Carlisle Indian School Alum as members.

Frank Shively, Graduating Class of 1897. Braided Scalp Lock or Frank Shively enrolled in Carlisle Indian School in 1890 and graduated in 1897. He was the son of a Union Civil War Veteran Samuel Shivley and a Crow woman Girl Sees the Weed. The mother died in childbirth and the father was killed in an ambush by the Sioux in 1875. While at Carlisle, Frank played football and ran track. After graduation, Frank became an Agency stenographer at Lapwai, at the Nez Perce Indian Agency. In a *Big Horn County News* article by Andrew Turck, the family recounted how Frank Shively became the first football coach at Washington State Agricultural College and Schools of Science, now Washington State University at Pullman, Washington.² Frank split his week into two parts, working three days at the Nez Perce Agency and two days a week at the College coaching football. In 1910, Frank Shively was an interpreter for Chief Plenty Coups, in the writing of the famous biography by Linderman. The Crow Council authorized Joe Cooper and George Washington Hogan, both Carlisle alumni, and Frank to meet with Crow tribal attorneys and Senator Dixon to make and execute an agreement on opening the Crow Reservation. He was inducted into the Montana Indian Athletic Hall of Fame in 2018.

¹Hogan-Plainfeather. Unpublished manuscript. “Biography of George Washington Hogan.” 1987. Little Big Horn College Archives, Crow Agency MT.

²Turck, Andrew. “19th century Football Coach, Track Star Gains Hall of Fame Placement.” *Big Horn County News*. November 1, 2018.

Unintended Consequences. A master's thesis by Peter Holman entitled "Unintended Consequences: How the Crow Indians Used Their Education in Ways the Federal Government Never Intended, 1885–1920." Holman stated: "Crows who returned from the boarding schools used their education, not only to meet the standard set forth by the government, but also in ways that reformers, government officials, and even themselves did not expect. The U.S. Government's expectation was to use education to prepare the Indian for particular limited lifestyles. Farming was the occupation intended to further the new cultural direction of the Indian after allotment of Indian lands. The curricula of boarding schools focused on industrial education, preparing the Indian child to a limited future without choice. Instead of following the path chosen by others, certain Crow opted to use their education in alternative ways: ways that startled agents and commissioners."

Conclusion

The legacy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools is bitter-sweet. The bitterness comes from the extreme distance Indian students had to endure from their homeland, their esteemed loved ones, their culture and language. The bitter experience includes the loss of classmates and fellow tribal members who were students at Carlisle and other boarding schools, who succumbed to diseases so debilitating that they were life-taking. It was bitter for the students whose stay at Carlisle was cut short due to severe illness, who found themselves passengers on the train heading home, and once at home, often unable to recover their health, and to lose their chance at life. The sweet aspect of the boarding school legacy and experience is the acquisition of skills, trades, athletics, rhetoric, writing and knowledge that assisted their conduct of life and living on the Reservation. Perhaps the brilliant youth whose qualities became recognized and known would have been bright and shining no matter what or where the circumstances. Perhaps, in some way, the boarding schools staff, teachers, fellow students and the individuals themselves coalesced to give these achievers a strong resilience in life. Doubtless, the story of Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools, whether directly administered by the Indian Service or contracted by churches, Catholic, Protestant or non-denominational (Unitarian) must be told, be reckoned with, be recognized, to reconcile the bitter with the sweet, and to heal the damages and injuries suffered by the American Indian children and youth.

Madam Chair, I testify today in support of the Bill under consideration: H.R. 5444 (Rep. Sharice Davids), To establish the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States, and for other purposes. "Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act."

Addendum on Bureau of Indian Affairs Off-Reservation Boarding Schools

The Off-Reservation Boarding Schools. The Bureau of Indian Affairs started off-Reservation boarding schools for the older students who had attended and finished the local on-Reservation boarding schools. Captain Pratt's innovation of Carlisle Indian Industrial School developed following his 3 year assignment to Fort Marion in Florida in 1875–78 guarding imprisoned leaders and warriors from the Cheyennes, Kiowas, Comanches, Apaches and 1 Caddo. He made the conclusion that education was a solution to the "Indian problem". He took this group to Hampton Institute, a school for the children of Freedmen. He requested to start his own school for Indians, which he said would be much less expensive than to wage war on their nations.³ His oft quoted philosophy was "Kill the Indian, save the man" and "all the Indian there is in the race should be dead." As the first off-Reservation boarding school, it was the blueprint for the federal Indian school systems to be organized across the UniMadam Chair, Ahoo, thank you for the opportunity to share this research and these thoughts with you today. ted States. In all, twenty-four military style off-reservation boarding schools were established.⁴

The journey to Carlisle Indian Industrial School was a long journey on the train, over land or by river boat for the Indian students who attended the school. Most children were taken directly from their families, although for the Crow Indian children, most had many months of local on-Reservation boarding school experience.

Fear-Segal and Rose tally that 758 of the 10,600 Indian students who attended Carlisle graduated, to finish a high school equivalent education. Some students

³ Fear-Segal, Jacqueline and Rose, Susan D. "Carlisle Industrial School: Indigenous Histories, Memories and Reclamations." University of Nebraska Press. 2016.

⁴ Ibid.

begged to go home or ran away. Others completed schooling but lived with stress and disturbance for the rest of their lives. But since Carlisle students were for the most part older, they made friendships among the students of many tribal and splayed sports, participated in vocational training, oratory, Native arts, and speech and debate. National leaders visited Carlisle as the distance between the school and the capital was small. Pratt documented the students using photography; a visual proof of the school's success. He had publications that featured student writing, prose and poetry.

David Wallace Adams, in *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875–1928* listed the enrollment by tribe. For example there were 370 Cherokee, 249 Cheyenne and 998 Chippewa. The Creek had 104 attend Carlisle, and Adams lists 97 for the Crow Tribe.

Luther Standing Bear said he learned of Carlisle from a tribesman Long Chin, who said the shites had come to collect children for a school in the East. Luther, a Dakota student, decided he wanted to go: “When I went to the East (to Carlisle) I went there thinking I would die . . . I could think of white people wanting little Lakota children for no other reason than to kill them, but I thought here is my chance to prove that I can die bravely. So I went East to show my father and my people that I was brave and willing to die for them. Standing Bear narrated about the cutting of his hair: “The fact is that we were to be transformed, and short hair being the mark of gentility with the white man, he put upon use the mark.” “It hurt my feelings to such an extent that the tears come into my eyes. None of us slept well that night; we felt so queer. Cutting off hair was associated with mourning.”

Zitkala-Sa, a Yankton Lakota, attended a Quaker boarding school at age 12. She said “On the first day, a large bell rang for breakfast, its loud metallic voice crashing through the belfry overhead and into our sensitive ears. The annoying clatter of shoes on bare floors gave us no peace. The constant clash of harsh noises, with an undercurrent of many voices murmuring an unknown tongue, made a bedlam within which I was securely tied. I struggled for my lost freedom, but all was useless.” She recalled “Once I lost a dear classmate. I remember well how she used to mope along at my side, until one morning she could not raise her head from her pillow. At her deathbed, I stood weeping.” She had lost a friend and classmate, so tragic.⁵

David Wallace Adams describes the regulation dress of the off-Reservation boarding schools. He said there was a changing from tribal clothing, that was taken and destroyed, to uniforms that met the school's regulations. Boys had 2 plain suits with an extra pair of trousers and girls had three dresses. Off-Reservation Schools had better clothes. At Carlisle the boys had red shoulder stripes on their coats, and Carlisle girls had cloaks with red braid, and some ruffles and lace were allowed. The students' individuality was stripped away, and they became carbon copies of “the White Man”. The before and after photos were a common part of the arrival to Carlisle ritual.

The meals were a part of the civilizing experience. The school food included fruits, vegetables, dairy products, beef, port and poultry. Rules were made and enforced about services; no seconds. Carlisle has “army rations” amounts of food, which was unusual for boarding schools. But students' relatives sent the papa and wasna—the traditional dried foods. Adams states there was excessive regimentation at the table with rituals and rites.

The student recruitment process was a responsibility of the Reservation Agent. It was not until 1893 that parental consent was required to attend off-reservations schools. Prior to that year, the selection to attend was compulsory with or without parents agreement. The schools and the local Agency funded the train fare. Adams notes that some Agents kept the best students for the local boarding school, others sent “the poorest material away to boarding schools to get rid of them.” Some Agents did not send any students to Off-Reservation schools.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you, Dr. Pease, for your important testimony regarding the importance of listening to the voices.

I thank the panel of witnesses today for their testimony. I remind the Members that Committee Rule 3(d) imposes a 5-minute limit on questions. The Chair will now recognize Members for any

⁵ Zitkala-Sa/Bonnin, Gertrude Simmons. *American Indian Stories, Legend and Other Writings*. Penguin Classics: New York. P. 89–91.

questions they may wish to ask the witnesses. I will start by recognizing myself for 5 minutes.

Today, we have listened with tears in our eyes and purpose in our heart to the tragic stories of the treatment of young Native American children who were torn from their parents, torn from their families, torn from their culture, torn from their homeland, and forced into conditions that if you told us these stories today, we would say it was torture.

We have heard such stories, and we know that it is important to continue to hear those stories. Even as I recognize that all of you who have shared who are survivors, that even telling the story is painful. So, I recognize that pain, and I thank you for being willing to go over that pain again and again so that we know what happened and so that we can move forward. For that, I offer my gratitude.

And we must acknowledge that Congress played a role in this when in 1819, we passed the Indian Civilization Fund Act to appropriate funds to church-run schools to “civilize” American Indian and Alaska Native children. By 1925, 60,889 American Indian and Alaska Native children were forcibly taken to Indian boarding schools. Our own country allowed children to die in federally funded schools as we have heard today.

At least 53 burial sites for Indigenous children in marked and unmarked graves exist across this country. And yesterday, we heard about the Department of the Interior and its report that confirmed that the United States directly used Federal Indian boarding schools as a system to dispossess tribes: 76 schools were in present-day Oklahoma, 47 in Arizona, and 43 in my own state of New Mexico.

The report further calls for an investigation on the legacy impacts of Federal Indian boarding schools. It is undeniable that these events have led to intergenerational trauma. American Indian and Alaskan Native children experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) rates at the same rates as veterans returning from war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Of course, they do. They have suffered harm as young children torn from their families. They suffer PTSD at triple the rate of the general population. H.R. 5444 will establish a much-needed Commission to formally investigate and document the stories of survivors and the human rights violations that occurred against these American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiians.

This bill will also include a nationwide hotline service for survivors, family members, and other community members. H.R. 5444 will focus on the historical intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities.

Again, I want to thank the witnesses, especially the survivors here today. I have almost used up all my time because I wanted to make sure we all understood the difficulty of what you are doing in testifying here today.

But, Ms. Parker, I want to just ask you quickly, what are the current barriers to obtaining records for Indian boarding school and better understanding what took place? Because I think it is important to understand those barriers so we can truly understand the purpose of the bill and some of its provisions.

Ms. PARKER. Absolutely. Thank you for your question, Chair Leger Fernández. I had the opportunity when I was younger to work in British Columbia, Canada. And we worked with the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And we were funded to do so to work with First Nations, residential school survivors and also boarding school survivors from the United States.

And we know from that experience, that obtaining records was extremely difficult. Records didn't come forward cooperatively. So, now, after many years, I am a citizen of the United States here. And it is time that the records come to us, to the citizens of this country, to the citizens of our tribes.

As CEO of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, we have asked for records from churches and organizations. We have done a FOIA request to the Federal Government, and we have received little support, little information.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. With the time left, with regards to the subpoena power that the Commission would have, do you believe that would assist in recovering those records?

Ms. PARKER. It is absolutely necessary. It is why we worked with this bill to make sure that this information comes to the boarding school survivors and their families and Tribal Nations and organizations who worked for the healing and the truth of the Indian boarding school experience.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you. My time is expired. The Chair will now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Obernolte.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you very much to all of our witnesses. I found your testimony this afternoon extremely moving. And I am sincerely hopeful that this represents the starting point of a process that can bring some healing and some catharsis to the victims of this terrible tragedy, like yourself, but in tribes across the country.

Ms. Parker, I will start with you with a question. At the beginning of the hearing, we were talking about the Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. And as I am sure you are aware, Secretary Haaland yesterday released the first volume of findings from that. I haven't made my way all the way through it. It is a little over 100 pages, but I perused it and hopefully, this weekend I will get some time to read through it. But it is very moving and powerful in what they have managed to uncover.

And I was also very happy to hear her announce yesterday that she is going to be doing a nationwide tour over the next year to gather testimony and stories from people in Indian Country about the atrocities that were committed at these boarding schools and to try to bring some light and some healing to this process.

As the author of the bill testified, we certainly don't want to be duplicating the efforts of the DOI here. We want to have this Commission be a parallel process that adds meaningfully to what the DOI is doing.

Can you tell us a little bit about how this Committee would distinguish its efforts from that of the DOI?

Ms. PARKER. Absolutely. Thank you for the question. This Commission would examine beyond what the scope of the Department of the Interior can do. As we know, there are other

Departments and Representatives in Congress, as well as churches and other organizations, private organizations, who have records.

So, this Commission would take a dive deeper into the records and public testimony. This will make it a formal record for the U.S. Congress and for all of us to understand the needs of our boarding school survivors, intergenerational survivors, and Tribal Nations.

And what this bill would do is hold public testimony in a way that opens the door to also the experiences of those who attended church-run schools.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Thank you. Yes, I think we all have a common purpose here. I was actually very disappointed that we didn't have the Department of the Interior here to testify on their initiative. And I am hopeful that in the future, we will be including them in this process because I think that would be a very helpful addition. I think we are all on the same team here, and we are all working for the same cause. And I think that their inclusion is warranted.

Secondly, I would like to continue a line of questioning that Chair Leger Fernández began on the subpoena power that you are requesting for the Commission. As you are aware, that is actually a relatively rare thing for a commission like this to have.

In fact, as I think I mentioned at the onset, there are some standing policy committees here in the House of Representatives that don't have that power. So, I am fearful that if we assume this process is going to be adversarial when we go out to collect this information, that although we might be getting at the truth, we might be also delaying the healing. Can you talk a little bit more about that particular concern? Why assume that this is going to be an adversarial process?

Ms. PARKER. I guess I am not so sure I would call it adversarial. I would just call it the need for records and for churches and other organizations to bring the records forward. We have heard many stories that they don't have a librarian in their church that can compile all the information. We have heard a lot of reasons why we cannot receive the records.

So, with the subpoena power that will allow us to make sure the records do come forward in a timely fashion. I think a lot of this is just compelling these organizations to bring these records forward, especially because we have elders right now who are ill, and we have lost a lot through the pandemic. So, we need these records now. It is critically important before we lose these stories and our elders. They deserve to know where their relatives are, what happened to their family members.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Right, we all share that goal. But I can tell you from experience that when you issue a subpoena to somebody, that when someone serves that subpoena, that the person is going to assume that the process is adversarial. They are going to show up with lawyers. They are going to be very defensive. I don't think that is the kind of atmosphere we are trying to lay here. So, that is my concern.

We, the Natural Resources Committee, we have subpoena authority. So, I will pledge to you, and I think the Chair will join me in this, that if you are having difficulty accessing records, sic us on it, because we will go after those records.

And you know these are agencies that have to come to us for approval on their budgets and for approval on the initiatives that they are starting. And we will help you get those. But I still remain concerned about that subpoena authority just for that reason.

I see I am out of time, but thank you again to everyone. It has been very moving this afternoon, and we all appreciate you being here.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you. The Chair will now recognize the gentlewoman from Minnesota, Representative McCollum.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for having this hearing. Thank you, Representative Davids, for bringing this forward. And thank you to our Interior Secretary who is in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota this weekend who was at the headquarters of the folks who are here trying to seek the reconciliation for children who attended boarding schools.

Really quickly, before I get to the subpoena issue, I would like to address the term, "such sums as may be needed." As an authorizer when I first came to Congress, that was all that was in the education bills unless we were reauthorizing something that had a current base number. So, it is custom in usage when you're launching something, you need to put in "such sums as needed." And that is because when it goes to Ms. Pingree's Committee, she will have a targeted amount of money that she can spend on the Interior bill. And that gives her the flexibility of balancing all the needs of Indian Country within the Interior bill. Also, making sure that she works with organizations to make sure that they have the necessary funds to do the minimum, more if we could do more, and the maximum they can spend, if they can spend it at of time, and if Ms. Pingree has that amount of money there.

To have authorizers determine what the appropriating committee is going to have is a little awkward because we don't have our targets yet. So, such sums as may be needed, doesn't mean it is an open checkbook. It just means that the Appropriations Committee, which the authorizing committee can work with, can do its job at setting the budget.

I am going to hold up something. I know we are doing this virtual. This is called the Catholic Spirit. And I am Catholic, for the record, because I will be criticizing my own church. The Catholic Spirit had a big report, and it is called the Special Report on Indian Boarding School Legacy. And they are going through a truth and reconciliation within the Catholic Church on this.

Yet, I know firsthand that my church has failed often when children have suffered at the hands of religious clergy with sexual abuse, that the church has been involved in cover-ups and slow walking. So, the fact that this Commission has the ability to quickly let the churches, particularly that were involved in these boarding schools, know that they have to comply with getting these records moving forward is extraordinarily important.

And this just isn't records to do reconciliation and healing. These are all records so we can honor those young students who died who are often in unmarked graves. And that is something else I worked on in the state of Minnesota. We have a legacy at our state of mentally ill and other children being institutionalized and being

buried in unmarked graves. So, it was a very difficult process to move through to get the information in that.

So, subpoenas should be rarely used, but when used properly, they can keep someone from stonewalling a commission or a group to get to the truth.

So, Ms. Parker, once again, please, would you say that where there has been public money used to a Catholic church, one of these other church schools, that the taxpayers have the right, that you have the right to get that information for taxpayers and how their dollars were used, in many instances to abuse and torture children, and to divide families by destroying their cultural traditions? Should it be a right to get that information for the taxpayers?

Ms. PARKER. Yes, I strongly believe it should be a right to obtain those records. And we have already proven that it has been incredibly difficult to receive the records. So, I would agree with Representative McCollum.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Madam Chair, as Chair of the Department of Defense Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, I look forward to working with you, Ms. Davids, and the Department of the Interior to make sure that the Department of the Defense turns over every single record because they too were involved in a lot of these schools and the way in which children were not treated with the dignity that they deserve. The families had their whole future ripped away from them, and we owe it to our tribal brothers and sisters to do everything that we can to face a wrong, to right or wrong, to make sure it never happens again. With that, I yield back. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you, Representative. The Chair will now recognize the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. García.

Mr. GARCÍA. Thank you, Madam Chair, Ranking Member, and especially the witnesses for sharing their most intimate, tragic, and important stories that we need to move forward by passing this legislation that has been presented by Representative Davids.

Today's hearing comes just one day after the Department of the Interior released a report that reveals more about the dark history of Native American boarding schools. We know that there were more than 400 such schools and that they were supported by the U.S. Government in more than 58 associated sites, a figure that could grow exponentially as research continues.

Children were forced to leave their families, were renamed, told not to use Indigenous languages, and many killed, among many horrors. This hearing may seem timely, especially after this report, but let's not forget that to this day, the United States has not acknowledged or apologized for its actions during the Boarding School Era.

While we may never be able to bring justice to the Native children killed, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act is a first step toward achieving necessary measures of accountability.

Questions for our witnesses—Mr. Matthew War Bonnet, thank you for being here today and for sharing your story as a boarding school survivor. In your testimony, you said that the government and the churches need to be held accountable for what happened

at these schools. What does accountability look like for you and how would the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act achieve that?

Mr. WAR BONNET. Thank you very much for your question. For me and my family, and if you would permit, I would like to show you a picture. These are my sisters, my family, and my siblings that went to the mission school. We all attended that Saint Francis School.

But to me, acknowledgement by the churches, not just an apology, but an acknowledgement of what they did to the children, and their refusal not to acknowledge the struggle that they had when they became adults. That they engaged in activities that became abusive to themselves, and as a result, they began to abuse their families. They became abusers of their communities until they left.

The churches and the government must sit down and say, by acknowledging that they had a hand in this, acknowledging that these children that came to the school, they were clean spirit. And what happened to those children had a lot to do with how they were let out of that school.

But to say to the children now, the grandchildren and parents of the grandparents, to say what can we do by acknowledging this? How can we help you today to begin to resolve these issues so that this doesn't continue to roll over into the future in future generations? How can we help you? Do we need to set up some kind of a mechanism or system whereby children can get the therapy that they need, and their parents can get the therapy that they need? Try to begin to understand what it is inside of them that makes life intolerable for them.

They need to look at how they can work with us so that our grandchildren can look good in the future; that they can say this is who we are, not who they want us to be. To me, a lot of our children that I went to school with, a lot of the children are going through this misery, and they don't understand why. Instead, people look at them and say it is your fault that you are in this situation.

No. We need the government to recognize that they helped in this situation. We need particularly in this situation, because it was a Catholic school, that the Catholic Church take responsibility to those communities.

I once asked the Archdiocese in Milwaukee that covers all the Catholic schools in the Dakota Territory to meet with me 9 years ago to talk about this issue. I told him that if we could sit down and come up with a plan that could help our children and our grandchildren, that I would come back and work with them to do this.

And that was Father Burns who represents the Archdiocese in Milwaukee. To this date, I have not heard from them. I don't know what it will take for people to meet their responsibility. I have no idea. I would hope that the truth and justice reconciliation they would want to meet that responsibility without a lot of legalities getting in the way.

Mr. GARCÍA. Thank you, Mr. War Bonnet, and know that I too stand with you in the efforts to get at the truth from whatever

institution it needs to be obtained from. Thank you, sir. Madam Chair.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you. The Chair will now recognize the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Soto.

Mr. SOTO. Thank you, Madam Chair. This Committee is often one that is tasked with righting historic injustices. There was a *Voice of America* headline titled, "Florida Prison Fort Served as Testing Ground for Federal Indian Boarding School System." The El Castillo de San Marcos, subsequently known as Fort Marion Florida, was an abandoned Spanish Fort, where U.S. Cavalry Officer Richard H. Pratt, according to VOA, had the idea of "how to solve the so-called Indian question, whether and how to assimilate Natives to American culture."

We see with our SAP analysis between 1819 to 1970, during the Boarding School Era, that more than 357 of these schools extended from Pennsylvania to Alaska came into effect. And, currently, less than 38 percent of the Indian boarding school records have been located.

We know the terrible tragedies that happened and thank you all for being here and for your stories. These stories matter, as tragic and as hard as they are to hear, and this hearing enshrines them into our shared history. And the Truth and Healing Commission by Representative Davids will help us on this long road toward justice.

Mr. LaBelle, you had told us a lot here today. And it would be, if you can, important for you to go into a little bit of the abuses that you witnessed in a little more detail for the record as we work on this bill. And the floor is yours.

Mr. LABELLE, SR. Thank you. Almost from the get-go in Wrangell Institute, beatings began almost upon arrival. It began with children being shorn of their clothing in a violent fashion. Many of our clothes were torn away from ourselves until we were sitting naked in the room and forced to look in a certain direction and march to get haircuts. I remember being toward the end of the room, and as I was approaching the barber, the mound of hair that was growing around his feet as we were getting closer to my haircut.

We were told to march up to an open area, a shower room. We were still naked, and we were still strangers to each other, to us boys, one from the other. And we were ordered into this open shower room where the water was already running. And many children could not bathe themselves. They were as young as 5 years old. And I recall. I can see matrons running into the shower and getting wet themselves getting a floor brush and taking lye soap and scrubbing children until some of them bled, the skin bled.

We were marched to get into a line where we were assigned our numbers. And we all were issued two-digit numbers that was placed in indelible ink on our clothing and on our bedding and on our mail. And many children had difficult names. So, oftentimes, it was easier for matrons to refer to these children only by their number, and number by their name. Years later, I still remember seeing and talking with other people my age, who said that for a time, I thought my name was my number.

We were basically forced to eat foods that were foreign to us. We came from traditions of eating wild game, caribou, moose, seal

meat, whale meat, salmon, grains, berries. And now we were forced to eat industrial-sized meals that were in cans, three-pound cans. They were like canned meats, canned vegetables. We drank powdered milk, powdered juice, ate powdered eggs.

These are all things that became violent in our bodies because our bodies rejected the diet. And many of us were getting extreme stomach aches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea. And sometimes this lasted for weeks until our bodies became adjusted to those kinds of foods. We soiled our beds. We vomited, and we had diarrhea in our clothing and in our beddings. Many of the matrons forced us to clean up our own messes. They did it in a lot of anger.

All along the way, punishments were meted out for speaking our language. I was bilingual, as I mentioned once before, but I do know that I suppressed my speaking Inupiaq language for English because I knew if I didn't, I would get punished as I saw many of the children did.

They were given the strap. They were given the cat-o'-nine-tails, the paddle. We were forced to run up and down and gauntlets where other children ripped our naked bodies. Sometimes we had to run numerous times up and down until the matrons were satisfied that we had received enough punishment.

In the classrooms, we were often put in darkened rooms and darkened closets for speaking our language. We were often put on high stools in the front of the class wearing a dunce cap, where other children would laugh and point fingers at them because they did that, really thankful that it wasn't them.

At nighttime, it was the worst, I think, for many of us, as War Bonnet said. It happened at Wrangell Institute also. We started to cry when the lights went out. We cried for our parents and our mothers, and it caught on. Pretty soon, the whole dorm, the whole wing of the dorm was wailing into the night until the next day, our eyes were closed shut. We could barely open our eyes. And that crying occurred days in and days out, and weeks in and weeks out, and months.

Until toward the middle of the school year, no child ever cried anymore. And I think you know as parents that when a child cries, they are wanting love. They are wanting a sense of safety and security and assurances that everything is OK. But us children never got those assurances, and we became pretty hardened. Our feelings became hardened because we knew that to cry and to pine for our relatives was just useless.

At nighttime, also, it was the worst time for many little boys who were sexually molested in their beds by matrons and by other staff on the campus. They were often also molested in the bathrooms. Wrangell, for some reason, attracted many pedophiles looking back on my experiences, my 6 years there from 1955 to 1961. And we were often warned not to tell anyone, not to tell our parents or something bad would happen to them.

Our mail was censored. I remember trying to write home telling about the abuses, and when my mom got the letter, she told me years later that a lot of my letters were redacted. I never knew what that meant at the time. But today, we know that they were blacked out because they didn't want my mom to know what kind of abuses we were experiencing.

In the girls' dorm, the same things happened. Many girls were sexually molested, many 11-, 12-, and 13-year-old girls were going home in the middle of the school year pregnant. A friend of mine was a favorite of an administrator who took her out of her classroom almost on a daily basis so that he could sexually molest her in his office.

She showed me her arms. And I don't know if much of you who know anything about cuttings. But she had scars on both sides of her arms and scars upon scars and scars. And we know that she was trying to take the pain away from the memory of all of those sexual molestations she had. It was so bad that she developed multiple personalities. She died 5 or 6 years ago. And her story, to me, is just so graphic. I knew things were bad for the boys, but I also realized that the girls suffered extremely harshly as well.

Mr. SOTO. Thank you for your testimony. I yield back.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you. The Chair will now recognize the Chair of the Committee of Natural Resources, the gentleman from Arizona, Chair Grijalva.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to convey my gratitude to you and the Ranking Member for having this crucial and precedent-setting hearing that we needed to have, and I appreciate that very much.

And in the testimony, both written and what I have heard today, as painful as it is, it is a reality. And a reality that we can't deny. We can't erase. We can't rewrite. We just have to expose to begin the process of healing, reconciliation, and understanding.

And that is what this Commission is about. And because we are talking about public policy that directed this nation and its entities to move in this direction, to move in the direction of 47 boarding schools in Arizona, the second-highest in the country, and 40-plus in New Mexico, and the list goes on. And it should not be a dark secret. It is not a secret to Indian Country.

And the intergenerational effect, we haven't even talked about that, but it is there. And the loss of identity on the part of who we are as a person, and who these children were, it is not something that is trifle or little. It is fundamental to a community, and it is fundamental to a people.

And I think the subpoena power is necessary. We are reacting to a public policy. And in order to—we must have, this truth-seeking is not about assessing punishment. It is about recognizing that this chapter in our history is something we cannot hide from.

And the survivors that are here today, thank you so much. Tribal leadership, thank you. Ms. Parker, thank you very much for your consistency on this issue for as long as you have been working on it and all of us have been working with you.

But I think you know the report, thanks to the leadership of Deb Haaland, the Secretary, and it does make a difference. Her report begins the process. It doesn't end the process. And I think the Congress has a role that is legitimate, the legislative policy setters for this nation, it is time to set a policy of this dark and atrocious chapter, not to forget it. Acknowledge it and begin the process of hearing.

The subpoena power is necessary because we are truth-seekers. This legislation that Ms. Davids, and I want to congratulate her as

well, is promoting and we all need to support, is about truth. And I'll yield back. Yes. But my questions are superfluous given their testimony. And the urgency doesn't go away with me asking or not asking a question. The urgency has been before us for a long time to do so, and it is going to continue to be there.

When I started school, I didn't speak English because that is what I learned at home with my parents. But I went to school and back home, and I had a particular grade that if you didn't know the primary language of English, that you were put into this class until you learned it. It was not first grade. It was something else. Although we were all supposed to be in first grade.

And you had a teacher that was stumbling through whatever Spanish she knew to try to teach us some words. And I remember that we kind of struggled and scratched our way out of that class and then went to real first grade after about a year, for me, about a year-and-a-half. But I remember the O'odham kids in my class whose primary language was O'odham. I remember the Apache kids, whether it was from San Carlos or White Mountain, that happened to be in the city, and their families, and their primary language, essentially, was their Native language. And I remember most of us Spanish speakers, most of us, moved on to first grade a year later or a year-and-a-half later.

And the tragedy that I remember, and we started learning more about the boarding schools and understanding that it isn't a secret, that it has been a secret too long, is that they didn't get out of that. They stayed there for a long time. They were then diverted to a boarding school before they disappeared, would just stop going to school. And I remember that in a very vivid way because those were my friends. Those were my neighbors. Those were my buddies.

And yet, we had a dual system, a system that not only intended to isolate and remove from children their identity and their sense of self, but a system that was intended never to educate them. And I think this bill is long overdue, Madam Chair, and I applaud you, the staff, the Ranking Member.

It is a difficult one, but all of us as Americans and as Members of this Congress, we have a responsibility. And the responsibility in this instance is not the question of forgetting about history, rewriting it, erasing it, forgetting that it didn't exist, but acknowledging it, and with the highest level of respect and candor begin the process of healing and reconciliation.

And that is where we are at. This is what this bill is about. And you can't sugarcoat the reality. You can be bold. And I think this Congress should be bold, step forward, pass this bill, and move it on. Thank you, and I yield back.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you, Chair Grijalva. I want to thank each of the witnesses for their testimony today and for their patience. I want to thank you for being willing to share the pain and the stories and the proposals and the answers to the many questions you received today.

And I think that it is important to recognize that this bill is about bringing out those stories, finding the information, getting the information you need, but it is also intended to say what do we do next? Like how do we address what happened in a way with

recommendations of policy proposals as Chair Grijalva said? Do we need to increase funding? Do we need to provide a better system? Because we are still educating Native American, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian children in our schools.

And are we doing the right thing by those children, considering what we did to their grandparents and their parents, so that this bill is more than just a truth about what happened. We always need to remember it is the reconciliation piece as well. Because it is in that reconciliation piece that we must dedicate ourselves to look at how do we address the wrong and move forward in a way that truly honors the pain that everybody went through.

Because the reason to do this is to create a better future for all of those grandchildren and those that would come after so they both know the truth, and know that this country is dedicated to moving beyond that to yet a better truth that we will make in that future.

So, I thank you for your testimony, I thank the Chair, and I do thank the Committee staff for all the work that they did in putting this hearing together. And I will remind everybody that the members of the Committee may have some additional questions for the witnesses, and we will ask you to please respond to these in writing.

Under Committee Rule 3(o), members of the Committee must submit witness questions within 3 business days following the hearing, and the hearing record will be held open for 10 business days for these responses. If there is no further business, without objection, the Subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:07 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

[LIST OF DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD RETAINED IN THE COMMITTEE'S OFFICIAL FILES]

Resolutions Submitted for the Record

- 32nd District Democratic Organization and Cathy Baylor, 1st Vice-Chair—Resolution in support of H.R. 5444
- Washington State National Organization for Women—Resolution in Support of H.R. 5444 dated May 21, 2022

Statements for the Record

- Amanda Schaeffe
- American Bar Association dated May 11, 2022
- Angie DeMay
- Anne Burgeson
- Anonymous [2 Statements]
- Arlene Dangeli Roberts
- Association on American Indian Affairs dated May 6, 2022
- Augustina Warledo-Rodriguez
- Barbara Anne Namias dated May 26, 2022

- Barbara Graham Bettelyoun, Ph.D.—Buffalo Star People Nonprofit
- Behnaz Bigmoradi
- Ben Sherman dated May 16, 2022
- Benjamin A. Jacuk
- Bernard Balbot
- Beth Hartwell
- Beverly Wood
- Burton Steck
- Carmelita Adkins dated May 19, 2022
- Carole McGuire
- Cassidy F. Reynolds
- Cheryl Lawrence
- Corinne Ludy
- Crystal A Cavalier
- Cynthia Watte Connel
- David Jaber
- David R. M. Beck
- David T. McCoy
- Debra Delk
- Dena Ammon Magdaleno—Billy Beckwith
- Dena Ammon Magdaleno—Deaths at Chemawa
- Dena Ammon Magdaleno—The Dark Side of the Indian Boarding School System
- Denise Gauthier dated May 25, 2022
- Dennis Decoteau
- Desiree Porter Acosta
- Diane Rosenberg
- Dianne Thiel
- Donna F. Council
- Douglas Reevis
- Dr. Denise K. Lajimodiere dated May 15, 2022
- Dr. Lena Hammons
- Dr. Priscilla Stuckey
- Eirene Nakai Hamilton
- Eleanor “Aankeenaa” (Jones) Hadden
- Elisha Big Back
- Elizabeth Bourne
- Emily Theresa Crampton Goodwin dated May 20, 2022
- Encel Harwood
- Ernestine Hayes dated May 18, 2022
- Seattle Indian Health Board

- Fairbanks Native Association dated May 11, 2022
- Farina King dated May 17, 2022
- Gerald Fisher
- Grant Koehler
- Irene Vasquez
- Jacqueline Siebert dated May 21, 2022
- Jadeen and Eva Elving
- James Keith Byrd, Sr. dated May 25, 2022
- Jami R. Moran LBSW dated May 24, 2022
- Janette M. Rautanen
- Jay Treat III
- Jean Pfaelzer
- Jeffrey Burch
- Jennifer Frazee
- Jewel Bruton Brumley
- Jill Perry Neumeister
- Jimmy Sanchez
- Joanne Faulkner
- John DiMino, Ph.D.
- John F Stensgar
- John H. Yazzie
- John S Captain III [2 Statements]
- Johnni Miller [2 Statements]
- Jolene Thomas (Hawk) dated May 18, 2022
- Judy Roy
- Julianna Hoskie Kien
- Karen Wasageshik
- Kate Mook, MA
- Kathleen Snyder
- Kathryn Guimaraes dated May 22, 2022
- Kelli Leiter Lord
- Kelly King
- Kelly Leah Stewart
- Ken Hall dated May 13, 2022
- Kerry Hawk Lessard
- Kimberly Ann Fyke
- Kimberly LaFromboise dated May 26, 2022
- Lahoma Schultz
- Lakota Harden
- Lauren Peters
- Linda Cobe dated May 18, 2022
- Linda Eben-Jones

- Lisa Tabor
- Loritta M. Rood dated May 14, 2022
- Louellyn White dated May 20, 2022
- Ma-Chis Lower Creek Indian Tribe of Alabama
- Marcida B. Eagle Bear (Morrison)
- Maria Daehler dated May 9, 2022
- Marie Suzanne Malone Olah
- Marilyn Wakefield
- Marion Miles
- Marjeanna Burge dated May 20, 2022
- Mark Kremen [2 Statements]
- Mary Baechler
- Mary Erickson
- Mary Hunt
- Matilda Klade
- Megan Simpson
- Melissa Margaret Rose Moses
- Melveena Malatare
- Members of the Ohlone Justice Project of the Peace and Justice Task Force of First Congregational Church of Palo Alto
- Michele Keyes dated May 18, 2022
- Michelle Lewis
- Mitch Walking Elk dated May 20, 2022
- Monica Gifford Watson dated May 10, 2022
- Monica Tsinagini dated May 13, 2022
- Moureena Williamson
- Nancy Marie Mithlo dated May 9, 2022
- Nancy Nickerson
- National Council of Urban Indian Health
- Nelson N Angapak, Sr.
- Oglala Sioux Tribe
- Oran Baumeister
- Patricia Patrick Gardner dated May 18, 2022
- Patricia Pearson
- Patti Jo dated May 14, 2022
- Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe, Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe (PMT) dated May 26, 2022
- Ramona Allard-Hendren
- Randall Sanderson
- Regina Mad Plume
- Robert Matthew Hazen
- Roberta Capasso dated May 23, 2022

- Roberta L. Paul, Ph.D. dated May 25, 2022
- Roberto Schiraldi
- Rodney A. Robideau
- Ronald L. Singer
- Roni Schwartz
- Ruby Larvie Leneagh and LaRaine Leneagh Waln dated May 25, 2022
- Ruth Robertson
- Sally (híin ’ónni) Peterson
- Sarah Pincus
- Shenoa Prettyshield
- Sonia James dated May 20, 2022
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
- Stephen Silva Brave
- Steve Filkins
- Steve Watson
- Steven Brody
- SuAnn Reddick and Eva Guggemos
- Susan Helf
- Suzanne L. Cross PhD, ACSW, LMSW, LLC
- Terry S.
- Tetana Adkins Mace, LMHC
- The Rapid City Indian Boarding School Lands Project dated May 26, 2022
- Theresa Burcham Hancock
- Theresa Sheldon dated May 24, 2022
- Timothy Christian Allen Buck
- Valerie Morgan
- Valerie Nagle
- Wanbli Mayasleca-Francis J. Yellow
- Wassillie Gust Sr.
- White Hawk, Torres, Axtel, Liebler, Greenleaf, Mann

