

VOLUME 1 OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR'S FEDERAL INDIAN BOARDING
SCHOOL INITIATIVE INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
AND S. 2907

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:35 p.m. in room 628, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Brian Schatz, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRIAN SCHATZ,
U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII**

The CHAIRMAN. Good afternoon. Welcome to the Committee's oversight hearing on Volume 1 of the Department of Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report and a Legislative hearing on S. 2907, a bill to establish a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States.

The Indian Boarding School era was a dark period in our Nation's history, and a painful example of how past Federal policy failed American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. As the department report lays out, the Federal Government supported boarding schools with a primary goal in mind: the forcible assimilation of Native children into western ways of life. These schools were key tools for suppressing Native cultures and languages, separating Native children from their families and their homelands, and indoctrinating them to, as the founder of the Carlisle School ominously said, "Kill the Indian and save the man."

That was not an empty promise. The brutality with which the Federal Government attempted to assimilate children, some as young as four years old, at these boarding schools, is gut-wrenching. Forced labor, whippings, solitary confinement, withholding food, making older children punish younger children with corporal punishment, unsanitary, and overcrowded living conditions, the shameful list goes on.

We can't undo history. But we must acknowledge it. We have to look at the full scope of these failures unflinchingly and with clear minds and fresh eyes. Most importantly, we must work directly with Native communities on forging a path toward healing.

Recognizing the significance of this work to Native communities, Lance Fisher of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe is here to provide us with an opening to help us set the tone for this important discussion. Please rise if you are able.

[Prayer Song for Native Children.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Fisher.

As indigenous peoples of the United States, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians were subject to the same cruel intent of Federal assimilation policies and practices, and they continue to share in the impact and lasting inequities of the Federal Government's centuries-long drive to try to erase Native cultures. We must do all we can to right this wrong. The Department of Interior's report, S. 2907, and Congress' long-term investment in the Native American language revitalization efforts are important steps to moving the reconciliation process forward.

But we must work hand in hand with the impacted communities and the families. That is why today's hearing will focus on Native perspectives as a guide for the Federal Government's path toward achieving truth and reconciliation, not in the abstract, but in a meaningful and real way.

Our approach must also be respectful of survivors, their families, and their communities. The Committee welcomes survivor testimony, should they choose to share their stories. Written comments for the record may be submitted to testimony@indian.senate.gov. That is testimony@indian.senate.gov.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here today. I would like to recognize Vice Chair Murkowski for an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. LISA MURKOWSKI,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA**

Senator MURKOWSKI. Gunalchéesh, Chairman Schatz. Thank you for convening this hearing.

As you have mentioned, it is long, long past time for the United States to come to terms with the dark and very terrible legacy of Indian boarding schools. From 1819 to about 1969, thousands of Native children across the Country, including in my home State of Alaska and your home State of Hawaii, were taken from their families and communities, often without consent, and relocated to boarding schools thousands of miles from their homes.

These boarding schools attempted to "break" Native children in order to quickly assimilate them into the dominant white culture. As part of this breaking process, Native children were stripped of their identity, their language, their culture, and often forcibly. Many of these students never returned home.

Federal Government policy during this time was to use education as "a weapon against Native people" to accomplish the goals of replacing Native cultures and dispossessing Native peoples of their lands.

Mr. Chairman, you mentioned the words that came from Richard Henry Pratt. He was the one who was credited with founding the boarding school movement. He claimed the need to "kill the Indian, save the man." Unfortunately, American history is full of such individuals who somehow believed that they were helping at the time,

when they were actually committing extreme acts that devastated Native people.

We so appreciate that we have in front of us now the first volume on the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report. It covers the 408 Federal Government supported Indian boarding schools that operated across 37 States and territories. Twenty-one of those schools were located in Alaska. The sexual abuse, violence, malnutrition, solitary confinement, forced manual labor, untreated diseases, unreported deaths, and disappearances documented in this report make it very difficult to read. And we know it just scratches the surface, unfortunately, of what actually happened.

Secretary Haaland, I want to acknowledge your work and that of the Committee, and you as well, Assistant Secretary Newland, for your work on this painful issue, and for your commitment to ensuring the Department provides Indigenous people with access to what you have called trauma-informed support. There is deep appreciation for that.

I had an opportunity, just last year, on the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools, to speak of some of the children who had been impacted by these policies. I spoke of Sophia Teatoff, a young Unungax girl who was taken from Alaska as an orphan, and brought to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. I spoke also of Anastasia Ashouwak, from Kodiak, who was taken to an orphanage after her mother passed away, of her story, and the effort for her family in Alaska to finally return the remains of young Anastasia to Kodiak for reburial.

These are hard stories, and of course, they not isolated to Alaska. They are so similar, unfortunately, to many Native children's stories that are just beginning to be recounted.

I think we recognize that repatriation of Native remains to their homelands is part of the healing process associated with these atrocities. I am interested to hear more about how the Department will comply with and enforce NAGPRA, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

We know that our neighbor to the east, Canada, is dealing with its own history and legacy of Indian boarding schools and has established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There is a lot to be learned from that. Senator Warren and I have been working on this. We are working on the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Board School Policy, S. 2907. These are, again, efforts for the United States to step up, to address and acknowledge the dark history that we face, but also to go further than that, to help bring healing to Native people.

We have a great panel here this afternoon. I am looking forward to, at the appropriate time, in the second panel, Mr. Chairman, I would like to be the one to introduce and welcome Ms. Liz La Quen Nuay Medicine Crow. Liz is the President and CEO of First Alaskans Institute, and has been instrumental in so many of these issues. I will speak to that at the appropriate time.

Know that I appreciate the interest of the full Committee in this very, very, very important issue.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Vice Chair Murkowski.

And now, Senator Cortez Masto for an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEVADA**

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you, Chairman Schatz and Vice Chair Murkowski, for holding this important hearing. I welcome Secretary Haaland and Assistant Secretary Newland for joining us here. This hearing could not be more relevant for our tribal communities in Nevada.

I want to take a moment to highlight the recent work done in our State, the opening of the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum. Not far from the Nevada State capital of Carson City sits the Stewart Indian School. It was open by the Federal Government from 1890 to 1980, one of three such schools in Nevada. The Stewart Indian School opened with the stated purpose of addressing indigenous education. In reality, the school was meant to erase Native culture and identity.

Today, we learned that thousands of students who were enrolled at the Stewart School were forced to forget their languages and were often prevented from seeing family members. Alumni that I have talked to have recalled being kidnapped by government officials and taken to the school, where their hair was cut off by school staff.

Letters from the school's archives make it clear that families were not informed when their children were sick or had even passed away. In fact, nearly 100 unmarked graves have been identified in the school cemetery. These stories show only a sliver of the cruelty and abuse Native children had at the Stewart Indian School and what they endured. But they highlight how important it is for us to continue to learn more about this painful chapter in our history and to give space for acknowledgement and for healing.

I commend the alumni and their descendants, as well as the Native Indian Cultural Commission for their hard work in opening this cultural center, and dedication to working in partnership with Interior on the Secretary's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

I look forward to hearing the testimony today on this important issue. I thank each and every one of you for being here. Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cortez Masto.
Senator Luján.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO**

Senator LUJÁN. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, Vice Chair Murkowski, thank you both for holding this important hearing today to examine the legacy of Federal Indian boarding school policies and to support legislation that moves us in the right direction.

I also want to say thank you and welcome to our friend, Secretary Deb Haaland. It is an honor to call you a friend and a mentor and to see the tremendous work that you are doing. I will be forever moved by you, Deb.

I also want to welcome some students from New Mexico that I had the honor of meeting with earlier, and I believe the Secretary did as well, from the Santa Fe Indian School and Princeton University's Summer Policy Academy. They are led by a dear friend of

mine, the former governor of Cochiti Pueblo, Regis Pecos, Preston Sanchez, who is the co-counsel and also the Justice Director and has also been involved with many issues and titles, by Taryn Aguilar, Amber Garcia, Leah Mountain.

I want to thank each and every one of you for being with us today. I understand that Mikayla Suina might also be a part of the leadership group that is here.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to enter a letter of the students into the record that recommends Congress introduce legislation to formally apologize for the generational harms resulting from the Federal Indian boarding schools and policies. I urge my colleagues to support this call for a formal apology and thank these young leaders for their advocacy, for their voices, for the past, for the future, and for current generations.

And with your permission I would just like to read a paragraph from here before consideration for adoption. A general principal we are taught early on is to apologize for our wrongdoings and to take responsibility for our actions. Since the recent release of the boarding school report, one might think that the U.S. would seek to undo the long-term trauma and harm inflicted upon Native children by boarding schools.

As of today, however, that is not the case. For that reason, my colleagues and I seek a formal apology in the form of legislation to restore balance among our communities and enable positive opportunities for indigenous people to heal.

By doing so, Congressional leaders would signify that our education, language, culture and traditions are important. It would also signify that indigenous people will never again be subjected to a school system that seeks to erase our cultural identity.

I would ask for unanimous consent that that be entered into the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

Senator LUJÁN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. We are pleased to have the author of the legislation in question as a guest of our Committee. It gives us pleasure to introduce Senator Elizabeth Warren from Massachusetts.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ELIZABETH WARREN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS**

Senator WARREN. Thank you very much, Chairman Schatz. It is a privilege to be here with the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. I want to say a very special thank you to you and to Vice Chair Murkowski for your leadership and your support on this issue.

I am here today to discuss my bill that is a focus of today's hearing, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. I thank the many cosponsors of this bill, including Vice Chair Murkowski, thank you for your work on this, and Chairman Schatz, thank you for your work on this, and a majority of this Committee.

This bill would establish a Truth and Healing Commission to formally investigate what are known as the Indian Boarding School Policies. These were horrifying practices, carried out by the Federal Government to strip Native children of their indigenous identities, beliefs, and languages. Between 1819 and 1969, these policies for-

mally removed children from their tribal lands and their families, and placed them in over 400 boarding schools.

It has been estimated that by 1926, nearly 83 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native children were in one of the currently known Indian boarding schools. Native children were subjected to harrowing human rights violations including spiritual, physical, industrial, psychological, and sexual abuse. They were neglected and they were traumatized. Many never returned to their families.

The Department of Interior has already identified more than 50 burial sites at these schools. Many of them are unmarked. That number is expected to rise.

These policies also affected Native Hawaiian children. For over a century, the United States supported several boarding schools across the Hawaiian Islands and repressed Hawaiian culture.

The full effects of these policies have never before been appropriately addressed by the Federal Government. In 2020, I worked with the Committee's first witness, my friend, Secretary Deb Haaland. While she was serving in Congress, we introduced this legislation to formally investigate these policies and to respond to ongoing historical and intergenerational trauma afflicting tribal communities today.

I reintroduced this bill last year with Representatives Sharice Davids and Tom Cole, the co-chairs of the Congressional Native American Caucus. I also wish to acknowledge the invaluable partnership of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition and many other extraordinary stakeholders who are here with us today.

When Secretary Haaland assumed her current role, she continued her outstanding work by launching the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative and working with Assistant Secretary Newland to make this happen. I am glad that this hearing will address the first volume of the Department of the Interior's report, because it contains many important findings and recommendations.

In particular, I would like to highlight the report's conclusion that "The Federal Government has not provided a forum or opportunity for survivors of descendants of survivors of Federal Indian boarding schools or their families to voluntarily detail their experiences in the Federal Indian boarding school system." My legislation would address this gap by establishing a commission that would have five years to formally investigate boarding schools and to document their enduring impacts.

The commission would hold culturally respectful and meaningful hearings for victims, for survivors, and for other community members to share their stories. Throughout the process, the commission would develop recommendations to the Federal Government to acknowledge and to heal trauma caused by these policies, including the establishment of a support hotline for survivors and for affected communities.

This work will be painful. But it is long overdue.

To the witnesses and the survivors who are sharing their experiences and the impact of these policies, thank you. Thank you for being here. Thank you for raising your voices. Your voices are vital to this undertaking.

I look forward to working with the Committee to advance this legislation and to address the disgraceful legacy of the Indian boarding school policies. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to be with you today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

We will now move to our first panel. We are pleased to have the Honorable Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Department of Interior, accompanied by the Assistant Secretary, the Honorable Bryan Newland. As you know, Madam Secretary, your full testimony will be made part of the official hearing record. Please keep your statement to no more than five minutes, so that members may have time for questions.

For the information of the audience, there are a couple of ongoing votes on the Floor, so you will see members shuffling in and out of this room, not for a lack of interest, but just because we have to cast a couple of votes.

Secretary Haaland, please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DEB HAALAND, SECRETARY OF THE
INTERIOR, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR;
ACCOMPANIED BY: HON. BRYAN NEWLAND, ASSISTANT
SECRETARY**

Ms. HAALAND. Hello, and good afternoon, Chairman Schatz, Vice Chair Murkowski and members of the Committee. [Greeting in Native tongue.]

It is deeply meaningful to me to speak to you from the ancestral homelands of the Anacostan and Piscataway people. Thank you for the opportunity to present the department's testimony at this important oversight hearing on the Federal Indian Boarding School initiative and S. 2907, a bill to establish the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States.

The Biden-Harris Administration is determined to make a lasting positive difference in response to the trauma that Federal Indian Boarding School policies have caused. I would also like to thank my dear friends, Senator Warren and the co-chairs of the Congressional Native American Caucus, Representatives Sharice Davids and Tom Cole, for prioritizing legislation to address these policies.

For over a century and a half, the Federal Government, including the Department of the Interior, forcibly removed indigenous children from their families and communities, and many never returned home. This intentional targeting and removal of Native children to achieve the goal of forced assimilation was both traumatic and violent. The consequences of Federal Indian Boarding School policies were inflicted on generations of children, some as young as four.

As the head of the Department of the Interior and as the first Native American cabinet secretary, I am in a unique position to address the lasting impacts of these policies. I now have direct oversight over the very department that operated and oversaw the implementation of the Federal Indian Boarding School system. I am a product of these horrific assimilation-era policies. My grandparents were removed from their families to Federal Indian Board-

ing Schools when they were only eight years old, and forced to live away from their parents, culture, and pueblos until the age of 13.

My family's story is similar to many indigenous families' stories in this Country, which is why on June 22nd, 2021, I announced the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, a comprehensive effort to address the troubled legacy of Federal Indian Boarding School policies. I am incredibly proud of the work by Assistant Secretary Newland and his entire team on Volume 1 of the Investigative Report that is a critical part of this initiative. It lays the groundwork for the continued efforts of the department to address the intergenerational trauma created by this Federal policy.

I want to note that the vast majority of the work was done by indigenous staff, who worked through their own trauma and pain to meet this moment. This marks the first time in our over 200 years since the Indian boarding school policies were implemented that the United States has formally reviewed or acknowledged the extensive scope and breadth of this piece of our history.

The Department's investigation focuses on the historical Indian boarding school system and cultural assimilation and removal policies. The initial investigation shows that between 1819 and 1969, the Federal Indian boarding school system consisted of 408 Federal Indian boarding schools across 37 States, or then territories, including 21 schools in Alaska and 7 schools in Hawaii.

Volume 1 also identifies approximately 53 different schools that contained marked or unmarked burial sites. As the investigation continues, we expect the number of identified burial sites to increase along with more definite numbers of identified Indian boarding school sites, children, and operating dates of the facilities.

Our obligations to Native communities mean that Federal policies should fully support and revitalize Native health care, education, languages, and cultural practices that prior Federal Indian policies sought to destroy. The department, working with relevant sister Federal agencies, will also work to expand tribal communities' access to mental health resources.

I recently announced that we will embark on The Road to Healing, a tour throughout the Nation, to hear directly from survivors and descendants about their experiences. A necessary part of this journey will be to connect survivors and their families with mental health support and to create a permanent collection of oral histories.

We know this won't be easy. But it is a history that we must learn from if we are to heal from this tragic era in our Country. I am proud of the work the department is accomplishing to confront its role in these assimilation policies through education. I am also deeply grateful to Congress for their support.

Funding for our initiative will enable the department to help expand existing school profiles following Volume 1 of the report, including detailing the number of children who attended Federal Indian boarding schools, identifying marked and unmarked burial sites, identifying interred children and detailing the amount of Federal support for the system.

I am grateful for the Committee's leadership in also considering S. 2907 as part of this hearing, which I led with my colleagues when I served in Congress. The Administration strongly supports

this legislation, especially the development of the National Survivor Resources, to address the intergenerational trauma, and the inclusion of the commission's formal investigation and documentation practices.

Federal Indian boarding school policy is a part of America's story that we must tell. While we cannot change that history, I believe that our Nation will benefit from a full understanding of the truth of what took place, and a focus on healing the wounds of the past.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am confident that together we can strengthen Indian Country and the Native Hawaiian community now and for future generations. Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland and I are pleased to answer any questions that you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Haaland follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DEB HAALAND, SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Hello and good afternoon, Chairman Schatz, Vice Chairman Murkowski, and members of the Committee. My name is Deb Haaland, and I serve as the Secretary of the Interior. It is an honor and privilege for me to be here with you today to represent the Department of the Interior (Department) and our tens of thousands of dedicated professionals. It is deeply meaningful for me to speak to you from the ancestral homelands of the Anacostan and Piscataway people. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's testimony at this important oversight hearing on the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative and S. 2907, a bill to establish the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States.

The Biden-Harris administration is determined to make a lasting positive difference in response to the trauma that these policies have caused, not just in the past but for current generations. I would also like to thank Senator Warren and the Co-chairs of the Congressional Native American Caucus, Representatives Sharice Davids and Tom Cole, for prioritizing legislation to address the federal Indian boarding school policies for the first time in United States history and find solutions to further shed light on its ongoing impacts on Native American and Native Hawaiian people.

Starting in 1819, and lasting for over a century and a half, the federal government, including the Department of the Interior, forcibly removed and assimilated tens of thousands of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children from tribal communities across the United States. Many children who entered the boarding schools were involuntarily removed from their communities and never returned home. This intentional targeting and removal of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children to achieve the goal of forced assimilation of Native people was both traumatic and violent.

The consequences of federal Indian boarding school policies—including the intergenerational trauma caused by forced family separation and cultural eradication—were inflicted on generations of children as young as 4 years old and are heart-breaking and undeniable. As the head of the Department of the Interior and as the first Native American cabinet secretary, I am in a unique position to address the lasting impacts of these policies. I now have direct oversight over the very Department that operated and oversaw the implementation of the federal Indian boarding school system.

Like all Native people, I am a product of these horrific assimilation era policies, as my grandparents were removed from their families to federal Indian boarding schools when they were only 8 years old and forced to live away from their parents, culture, and Pueblos until they were 13 years old. My family's story is similar to many Indigenous families' stories in this country, which is why, on June 22, 2021, I announced the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, a comprehensive effort to address the troubled legacy of federal Indian boarding school policies. On that same date, through a memorandum, I directed the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs to lead the first-ever departmental investigation into the federal Indian boarding school system.

I am incredibly proud of the work that Assistant Secretary Newland and his entire team did on the first volume of this report. I particularly want to acknowledge

the staff at the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration, which is managing the document collection, review, and records management of this Initiative. The vast majority of the work being released today was done by Indigenous staff in this department who worked through their own trauma and pain.

The Department released Volume 1 of the investigative report on May 11, 2022. This report lays the groundwork for the continued efforts of the Department to address the intergenerational trauma created by historical federal policy. It marks the first time in over two hundred years, since the Indian boarding school policies were implemented, that the United States has formally reviewed or acknowledged the extensive scope and breadth of these policies. The Department welcomes Congress' and this Committee's engagement in this important and continuing effort.

The Department's investigation focuses on the historical Indian boarding school system, which was implemented to further cultural assimilation and removal policies. The Department fully recognizes that unlike the federal Indian boarding school system we are investigating, contemporary Native residential schools are vital to advancing modern, culturally sensitive education.

Some key highlights of Volume 1 of the Department's investigation of our federal records include evidence that the United States targeted American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children through forced removal to Indian boarding schools in furtherance of territorial dispossession of Indigenous lands in the United States. The initial investigation shows that, between 1819 and 1969, the federal Indian boarding school system consisted of 408 federal Indian boarding schools across 37 states or then-territories, including 21 schools in Alaska and 7 schools in Hawai'i.¹

Additionally, the Department's initial investigation results show that approximately 50 percent of federal Indian boarding schools may have received support or involvement from a religious institution or organization, including funding,² infrastructure, and personnel. Further, the federal government at times paid religious institutions and organizations for Native children to enter federal Indian boarding schools that these institutions and organizations operated.

Another important finding published in Volume 1 identifies approximately 53 different schools that contain marked or unmarked burial sites. While this report lays the groundwork for the efforts of the Department to address the full scope of the federal Indian boarding school policies and the intergenerational trauma endured by Indigenous peoples in this country, the Department is moving forward to develop Volume 2 to further expand on these preliminary report findings. As the investigation continues, we expect the number of identified burial sites to increase, along with the potential expansion or more definite numbers of identified Indian boarding school sites, children, and operating dates of facilities.

As we add to the list of burial sites, the Department, working with relevant sister federal agencies, will expand our collaborative work, including increasing Tribal communities' access to mental health resources. These healing actions will help strengthen Native communities in a manner that I hope will be pursuant to each of the various traditional and religious protocols and beliefs. This effort may include disinterment, repatriation, documentation, and memorial efforts, where appropriate, in consultation with Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and the Native Hawaiian Community.

The Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative constitutes the first time the federal government has reviewed the scope of these policies. This is an important step for intergenerational healing from the ongoing effects these policies caused, and we will take an all-of-government approach. I believe that our obligations to Native communities mean that federal policies should fully support and revitalize Native health care, education, Native languages, and cultural practices that prior federal Indian policies, like those supporting Indian boarding schools, sought to destroy. We can heal from the harm and violence caused by Indian assimilation by effecting government-wide policies of revitalization for the Indigenous people of our country.

I recently announced that we will embark on the "Road to Healing," a tour throughout the nation to hear directly from survivors of federal Indian boarding schools and their descendants about their experiences. A necessary part of this journey will be to connect survivors and their families with mental health support, and to create a permanent collection of oral histories. We know this won't be easy, but

¹Some individual federal Indian boarding schools accounted for multiple sites. The 408 federal Indian boarding schools includes 431 separate sites.

²As the U.S. Senate has recognized, funds from the 1819 Civilization Fund "were apportioned among those societies and individuals—usually missionary organizations—that had been prominent in the effort to 'civilize' the Indians."

it is a history that we must learn from if we are to heal from this tragic era in our country.

As part of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, I look forward to continuing our work alongside sister federal agencies that administer the sites of former Indian boarding schools or possess or control records pertaining to the federal Indian boarding school system and those that currently provide medical and mental health services for Native communities. I am confident that, together, we can support the individuals and communities that have been shaped by detrimental federal Indian boarding school policies.

I am proud of the work the Department is accomplishing to confront its role in these assimilation policies through education and am deeply grateful to Congress for its support as well. In particular, the Department appreciates the \$7 million in funding provided for this work in Fiscal Year 2022, and we look forward to working with Congress on our Fiscal Year 2023 request of an additional \$7 million. These funds are crucial in order for this work to be thorough and effective, in particular the labor-intensive work of gathering and examining records and identifying and characterizing various sites.

This funding will enable the Department to help expand existing school profiles following Volume 1 of the report, including detailing the number of children that attended federal Indian boarding schools; identifying marked and unmarked burial sites; identifying interred children, where possible; and detailing the amount of federal support for the system including support to non-federal entities.

S. 2907—A Bill to Establish the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States

I am grateful for the Committee's leadership in also considering S. 2907 as part of this hearing. This legislation, which I led with my colleagues when I served in the U.S. House of Representatives, would establish a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States. The Commission would be required to investigate the impacts and ongoing effects of the Indian Boarding School Policies where Native children were forcibly removed from their homes. The Commission would be directed to develop recommendations on: (1) how to protect unmarked graves and accompanying land protections; (2) support repatriation and identify the Tribal Nations from which children were taken; and (3) to prevent the continued removal of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children from their families and Native communities under modern-day assimilation practices carried out by State social service departments, foster care agencies, and adoption services.

The Administration strongly supports this legislation, especially the development of national survivor resources to address intergenerational trauma, and the inclusion of the Commission's formal investigation and documentation practices. In addition to our support, we would welcome an opportunity to work with the Committee, especially on access to records pertaining to the federal Indian boarding school system under the control of non-federal entities as set forth in the legislation to supplement the Department's Initiative.

Conclusion

Some of the most influential decisions by the Department on the lives of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children involve those related to federal Indian boarding schools. That is part of America's story that we must tell. While we cannot change that history, I believe that our nation will benefit from a full understanding of the truth of what took place and a focus on healing the wounds of the past.

I am grateful for your work to help address the atrocities that Indian boarding school survivors and families have endured for decades.

Thank you again for your focus on the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative and consideration of S. 2907. I am confident that, together, we can start to help Tribal communities to heal and strengthen Indian Country and the Native Hawaiian Community now and for future generations.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Secretary.

I will start with a couple of questions about these listening sessions. Can you talk about how you are going to conduct them, and how you are going to integrate the mental health services piece?

Ms. HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question, Chairman. Yes, the primary goal of the Road to Healing is for me and Assistant Secretary Newland to hear directly from survivors, as I stated

in my remarks. We are working, first of all, with tribes to make sure that we are reaching out. That will help us to decide where we should have these sessions.

We want to make sure that we are documenting those. There will be a part where if folks want to share publicly, they can. We will close it off to the public and to any press so that if people don't want to share their story with the public, they have that opportunity as well.

We are working in coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services to direct the mental health resources for medical providers at the actual locations. We will start with the first session in Oklahoma.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Can you consider this a formal request, that you get back to us on what resources you may need in the coming appropriations cycle? A lot of SCIA members are also on Appropriations and would be pleased to help. Decisions are getting made over the next, I would say, three to four weeks. So as soon as you can get us a wish list, the more likely we will be able to be of assistance.

Ms. HAALAND. Thank you, Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. On the bill itself, we are going to mark this up, and we are going to try to move it through the Congress. Do you have any recommendations for any friendly amendments to make sure that it hits the mark in the ways that we want it to?

Ms. HAALAND. I appreciate your asking that. Of course, I just want to say how strongly we feel that this bill is actually complementary to the work that we are doing, one of the reasons why we are wholeheartedly supporting it. We are happy to, of course, happy to share with you our feelings about that legislation. If I could turn it over to Assistant Secretary Newland to detail that out, I would appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. Sure. Secretary Newland?

Mr. NEWLAND. Thank you, Madam Secretary. Thanks, Mr. Chairman, for the question.

Some of the changes, to the extent that the Committee and Congress are considering any, would relate to the composition of the advisory committee. For example, the legislation points to the Bureau of Indian Education. The Bureau of Trust Funds Administration has been central to putting together the report that we published earlier this year, because of their recordkeeping function.

So we would want to make sure that the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration is included in the commission and the advisory committee structure as well as the National Archives, which we have partnered with for getting information. They have millions of pages of Federal records in their possession that are going to be important in this work. Those are two examples.

The CHAIRMAN. And just consider this a request for TA, to make sure that, as I said, we are going to pass this thing, certainly out of Committee, and hopefully out of the full Senate. We want to make sure it is aligned with what you are already doing and we are not tripping over a new statute that is not exactly what you already have underway. Then we need to resource it.

My final question, and I talked to you about this, Madam Secretary, is the role of Native language in restoration. I am wondering if you can speak to that.

Ms. HAALAND. Yes, of course. It comes up a lot, because during the terrible Federal Indian boarding school era, children were cut off from their language. It happened in public school as well as the boarding schools. My mother had her hands hit with a piece of rubber hose every time she spoke Keres. It is one of the reasons why she didn't want to teach us Keres, our Native language, because she was worried and scared.

So you can see how easy it would be to have generations of non-Native speakers because their parents are worried about the future of their children.

We are wholeheartedly in support and this Administration is in support of language revitalization. First Lady Dr. Jill Biden and I got to travel to Oklahoma to visit the Cherokee Immersion School, a very fine example of how tribes are taking charge of teaching their languages. We feel that is one way to gain culture back for so many of the children in 2022 who have lost it because of the history of what happened.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Murkowski?

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Haaland, as we have looked at this report, as you have noted in your opening remarks, there are some 53 marked or unmarked burial sites that we know of right now, of students who died at these schools. There was an article about a month ago in the Anchorage Daily News detailing about the family of Mary Kininnook, she was a Tlingit girl who attended Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. She died at the school, apparently shortly after her 14th birthday. Her family thinks her remains could be at one of those unmarked graves in the school cemetery.

So to the Kininnook family, and to others who are trying to bring their children home, what resources or services, if any, does the department have to provide to the families that are seeking repatriation of family remains from any of these former Indian boarding school sites? Is there assistance to the families?

Ms. HAALAND. Thank you, Vice Chairman.

Carlisle in particular, it is now an Army war college, so I actually went to Carlisle to help some tribes repatriate children from that cemetery back to their Native homeland in South Dakota. The Army was incredibly helpful. They took the responsibility on to help the families go through the entire process. Of course, we are there to make sure that the tribe's wishes and the family's wishes are met.

So we would welcome the opportunity to help that particular family with finding the answers that they need. Certainly, we would be happy to work with your office to reach out to them.

Senator MURKOWSKI. So I understand from the answer, though, it is not necessarily an opportunity where you can go directly for resources to help your family from Alaska traveling to Pennsylvania to research records, it is working with Army, it is working with a department on a case-by-case basis.

Do you think there will be anything more formally structured where families might be able to turn for some level of assistance?

Ms. HAALAND. As you know, tribal consultation is incredibly important to us. It is the most important thing in this work that we are doing. When we consult with tribes, if that is an issue they would like for us to move forward on, we absolutely will move it forward. Of course, it is hard to know a budget for something like that.

But certainly, those are things that we, we need to consider everything and we need to consider every tool in the toolbox when we are working with people. The point is that we want to make this a healing process. If that is what the tribes and the families want, we will find a way to do what we can.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I will add to that, we had a hearing earlier this year in this Committee to discuss, again, the NAGPRA Act and how it is applied to protect tribal funerary objects, patrimony and remains. At that hearing, we had another Alaskan testify, Dr. Rosita Worl, who shared the unique institutional arrangements that govern the administration of services and certain Federal laws that impact Alaska Native communities.

As we are moving forward, and you in the department are identifying additional burial sites as the investigation continues, I would ask that you take into consideration the unique tribal government structures that we have in Alaska, invite the relevant tribes, the Alaska Native Corporations, to do exactly what you are talking about, which is to consult and be able to provide input to the department regarding NAGPRA and other relevant Federal laws that are out there as we are working through this boarding school initiative.

Ms. HAALAND. Absolutely, yes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. And very briefly, because the Chairman had raised this with regard to the legislation itself, in S. 2907, I understand you have identified, this is legislation you want to work with us to pass, one of the authorities that is granted to the commission in the bill is subpoena authority. Some of my colleagues have raised this, they want to understand better why we need to provide the authority to the commission.

Is it fair to assume that the department sees the subpoena power as necessary for the commission? Is that something you want to see included, or are there perhaps other options that could be used to gain needed information absent subpoena authority?

Ms. HAALAND. We support the bill as it is written, Vice Chairman.

Senator MURKOWSKI. [Presiding.] Okay, good.

Since Senator Schatz is at the vote, we will turn to Senator Smith.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TINA SMITH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MINNESOTA**

Senator SMITH. Thank you very much. I appreciate that, Vice Chair Murkowski.

Secretary Haaland, it is so wonderful to welcome you to the Committee. I also just want to send greetings to representatives and leaders, the NNABS leaders that are here today. I see Sandy there, and all of you. It feels very meaningful to have you all in this Committee room, since the last time I saw you was when Secretary

Haaland was coming to visit in Minnesota and we went to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. It was a powerful meeting.

So I am very grateful to be able to have you all here today to address the tragic history of this Federal policy.

The Federal Indian boarding school policy created deep intergenerational harm to Native communities across the United States. So many of the issues that we talk about in this Committee, health challenges, educational disparities, loss of Native languages, mental and behavioral and physical health challenges, all are tied directly to the Indian boarding school policy.

Secretary Haaland, I know that you are committed to addressing this issue in a holistic way. After all, people are people. They are not divided up into different policy areas.

Could you expound on your opening statement, and talk a little bit about how you see bringing a holistic approach to this issue, across the work of the department, as we move forward? I am a strong supporter of Senator Warren's bill, the Truth and Healing Commission bill. I think that will be an important tool to support the work that you are doing at the agency.

Could you expound a little bit on how you see that kind of holistic approach fulfilling itself in the department?

Ms. HAALAND. Absolutely. Thank you for the question, and yes, thank you for hosting us when we were in Minnesota.

First of all, what I will say is that with respect to the work we are doing, and the priority of this Administration, it is using an all-of-government approach to ensure that we are addressing the needs of Indian Country. We have trust obligations to Indian tribes. What I mentioned, the fact of Health and Human Services figuring out to make sure we are providing trauma-related support, language revitalization comes under our department.

With respect to our department, we also have the American Indian Records Repository, for example. It is based near Kansas City, Kansas, with hundreds of thousands of documents that we will be researching to make sure that we are not leaving anything out of the future reporting that we have to do.

With respect to Indian affairs, as I said, we have a trust responsibility to tribes. That is for health care, education, economic development, housing, all those things. That will also include the entire Administration. We will absolutely work to make sure that everyone is a part of this in fulfilling our mission. The bottom line is that that trust responsibility is real. Those are obligations that the Federal Government has to Indian tribes. Past administrations going back hundreds of years didn't always understand that obligation as it was meant to be.

So we feel confident that we can make that a reality.

Senator SMITH. Thank you. Thank you very much for that.

I hear in your comments that this is an understanding of the obligation, and also, I would say, the opportunity to make real progress that is shared by, as you said, it is a whole-of-government approach, it is shared by the entire Administration. It is not the Department of Interior fighting against the machine.

Ms. HAALAND. Exactly.

Senator SMITH. Yes, that is great.

I know that I am just about out of time. I want to say to the Committee that the work that is being done by the NNABS organization in Minnesota is national work. The incredible effort that is being made to bring the story of the impacts of the boarding school era, bring all those stories together, is really powerful. It gives individuals a way to connect into their part of the story at the same time they are understanding the broader implications of that policy across whole populations. It is really impressive.

It reminds me that if you really want to understand a story, you have to know it first. Then the next step is to take action to repair the damage that is done. It gives me great hope to know that work is happening. I want to thank you for that.

Ms. HAALAND. Thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Senator Cortez Masto.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you, Vice Chair Murkowski. I am so pleased we are having this hearing as well.

Secretary Haaland, thank you. I want to go back to your testimony. You noted in your testimony that you would welcome the Committee's assistance in access to records that are not under Federal control. Could you address that?

Also, does S. 2907, which I support, would that help address accessing or obtaining those records?

Ms. HAALAND. Absolutely. With the subpoena power, it would mean everything. I think there have been a lot of folks for decades who have tried to get records. It is difficult doing that as an individual. I also understand that some entities may need a subpoena before they are allowed to release certain records. So I think that portion of the bill is incredibly important.

I would really appreciate it if Assistant Secretary Newland could expound on that a little bit.

Mr. NEWLAND. Thank you, Madam Secretary. And thank you, Senator. It is great to see you and be back in front of the Committee.

Secretary Haaland said that the bill is broader in scope than our work has been to date. Establishing the commission and providing the mission and objectives for the commission, along with the subpoena authority, would give the commission the ability to seek out that information from non-Federal entities, and to do a deeper dive over a longer period of time.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Would that be State entities, local government entities, private entities, or a combination of all three?

Mr. NEWLAND. Yes.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Okay. That is helpful. That is why I do think some of them require that subpoena. They want to turn it over, but they also require some sort of Federal subpoena to be able to do so. So thank you. That is why I think it is important we have that ability to obtain those records.

I am so pleased we have the Nevada Indian Cultural Commission. They have done an incredible job in our State. I know they are working in partnership with you, Madam Secretary, and your Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

In Volume 1 of the report, the section on identifying and cataloging unmarked and marked burial sites at boarding schools notes that the department faced several limitations to complete this as-

pect of the investigation, including budget and appropriations restrictions. If you could elaborate now on that, I would like to hear that. If not, we can put it in writing.

But I am curious. What do we need to do to make sure we give you the tools you need and resources you need to address this?

Ms. HAALAND. Thank you. That is actually a great question for Assistant Secretary Newland as well.

Mr. NEWLAND. Thank you, Madam Secretary. Senator, thanks for that question.

In addition to the pandemic limiting our physical access to some of these records, we were working within our existing appropriations authority and our existing appropriations amounts with the team that we had in place. So it really limited the scope of the work that we could do with our existing staff.

So the appropriation that Congress provided for Fiscal Year 2022 has been very important for allowing us to continue this work and build out the profiles for each of the schools listed in the report. Also related to that, it will allow us to do a closer look at each school that we have on our list and do a better job of understanding where these cemeteries and burial sites are located, and also begin the work of trying to put together a plan to work with Indian Country to protect those sites.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you. So what I am hearing is, you need additional appropriations, additional dollars than the current appropriations, or you have enough?

Mr. NEWLAND. The President has requested an additional \$7 million in the Fiscal Year 2023 budget.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. And that is what you are referring to, that would help you further with your investigation?

Mr. NEWLAND. Yes.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Okay, thank you. Thank you, Madam Secretary. Mr. Secretary, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. [Presiding.] Senator Tester.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JON TESTER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA**

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member, for holding this hearing. It is great to have Secretary Haaland here today, and her left-hand man, only because he is sitting to your left, Secretary Haaland, Bryan Newland. It is always good to have you with the Committee, too, Bryan.

I want to start by thanking the Secretary for coming to Montana. We met with the tribal leaders in Montana and we heard from every one of them about the boarding school situation and its impacts on each one of their tribes. There is no doubt that the impacts of what happened are real, and that we need to do something about it.

The conversation around Native languages is an interesting one, because it is something that we have been talking about on this Committee for a decade or longer. The benefits, and you know this, Madam Secretary, the benefits of reconnection with the culture, the benefits of improving self-esteem for students, the benefits of better grades, staying in school, lower dropout rates, better attendance, better graduation rates, all that makes a big difference.

Could you, Madam Secretary, tell me what existing programs in BIA could help in the goal of cultural and language revitalization in Native communities? How do you envision them fitting into the recommendations that are outlined in this report?

Ms. HAALAND. Thank you, Senator, for that important question. I will just say right off the bat that that depends on what the tribes want for their communities. I mentioned earlier that the Cherokee Nation started an immersion school, the Cherokee Immersion School, for their students starting from elementary school up to high school. That is ideal for them.

That is the reason we are doing tribal consultation on these issues. We want to make sure that whatever we are doing is supporting what the tribe wants for their own communities, and of course, we have the tremendous support of President Biden in this effort. We look forward to moving it forward.

Senator TESTER. Very good. How is the Department of the Interior working with tribes and organizations that have already become some aspects of the work, such as the State of Maine's Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

Ms. HAALAND. Senator, I apologize, could you ask the question again? I had a little bit of trouble hearing you.

Senator TESTER. How is the Department of Interior working with tribes and organizations that have already begun some of the aspects of this work, such as the State of Maine's Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

Ms. HAALAND. I think it is really our job to make sure we are supporting tribes in whatever way is the best way possible for them. Of course, that is always helped by a budget that is kind and supportive of those efforts that tribes want to make.

But we are working with tribes every single day. As you know, they are all different. They see truth, they see healing, they see justice in different ways. So it is up to us to make sure we are consulting and supporting, whether it is technical support or monetary support, programmatic support, however we can do that, that is what we will do.

Senator TESTER. Thank you.

In the minute I have left, I want to move away from the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, and talk a little bit about consultation. The BIA and Indian Health Service does consultation, and they do a pretty good job of it, in most cases. Other departments, other agencies either aren't aware of the necessity for consultation or just don't think they have the time to do it.

Since you are a Native American Secretary of the Department of Interior, you have a unique insight into the value of consultation. Have you been able to do anything within the Administration to educate other agencies, other cabinet level officials, about the importance of consultation? If you have, has it shown any results that are positive?

Ms. HAALAND. Absolutely. Thank you, Senator. As you know, we convened, President Biden and we convened a White House Council on Native American Affairs. It has been incredibly important. All my colleagues, we meet regularly to make sure that we are moving the issues for Indian Country forward.

I think not only has this new era of Indian Country yielded tribal consultations that are incredibly meaningful, but it has also translated into the various departments hiring Native people at high levels, advisors and senior level department employees that can help move their departments forward in the ways that are best suited to move that trust obligations forward.

So I think everyone, all of my colleagues have been extremely optimistic and amenable to moving all of these issues forward.

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Madam Secretary, and thank you, Mr. Newland, for being in front of the Committee.

Thank you, Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Tester.

I have a quick couple of questions for the Secretary. This work is necessarily going to involve more departments, a fair amount of interdepartmental cooperation.

My first question is, have you run into any bureaucratic, administrative roadblocks? The second question is, can I have your assurance that if you do, you will come right to us? You can go right to the White House; I know you have that option as well. But we are pleased to be of assistance here.

I want to make sure that, you know, the Department of Defense had a role here, the Department of War. They are capable of being pretty slow in responding to something that they don't consider to be core to their mission. I want to make sure that we are on top of all the other agencies. I have no doubt you will move with great alacrity.

But I want to make sure that we have that interdepartmental cooperation that we need.

Ms. HAALAND. Thank you, Chairman. I will give Assistant Secretary Newland an opportunity to address this also.

But from the time I wrote my op-ed about this issue, which was over a year ago, we have had really incredible support from my colleagues across the Administration. I think everyone sees this as part of America's story. It is not just Indian history; it is American history. It affects all of us in the way we go about our lives.

So I feel confident that we will be able to find the support across the departments that we need. Certainly, we would absolutely come to you if we had some issues you could help us with.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me try to get one more question in before I move on to Senator Daines. How do you see the department working with your counterparts in Canada? I think they are at least chronologically a little bit ahead. I am wondering what there is to learn there, and maybe what differentiates us from our friends, I call them our friends to the north, Lisa called them our friends to the east.

[Laughter.]

Ms. HAALAND. You had to get a mental map in your head.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Ms. HAALAND. Well, of course we haven't been in contact with our counterparts in Canada regarding this particular issue, although I have read quite a bit about what they are going through as well. Before colonization, there was no Canadian American border. There were tribes living on this continent, and we are all rel-

atives. We all share a history together, and we all care and love one another.

So I will just say that however I can be helpful to any indigenous people, I will absolutely be honored to be of assistance in that way. I think the reason we have experienced some of the same history is because we are essentially the same people.

So I will be ready to help whenever I can. Certainly I think we always have something to learn from each other.

The CHAIRMAN. I think that was my point, is let's find out what they are doing, let's find out if they stubbed their toe in some way that looks obvious in retrospect, so we can avoid making any mistakes that they made in the first instance, and just sort of coordinate our efforts.

Obviously, they are not going to be the same, but they are our friends to the north. This is at least conceptually the same effort, and to your point, for the same people. So we want to know what they are learning as they go along, and make sure that we are learning from each other.

Senator Daines?

**STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE DAINES,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA**

Senator DAINES. Chairman Schatz, thank you. Secretary Haaland, thank you for being here.

Before we get to the topics at hand, I want to thank you and your team for your leadership and your help on what is happening with the Yellowstone floods. It has been an all-hands-on deck moment. I am hearing really good things on the ground from Cam Sholly about your leadership, Director Sams' leadership, on the response and support that they are receiving. They are working 24-hour days right now to get back on their feet.

So just a heartfelt thank you from the people of Montana, from Idaho, from Wyoming, who all share boundaries around that amazing treasure of Yellowstone National Park. We will rebuild it stronger than it was before.

Ms. HAALAND. Yes.

Senator DAINES. Thank you.

I also want to thank you for being here for this important conversation, and thank you for the department's work so far to bring light to the atrocities that occurred under the Federal Indian Boarding School program. This issue strikes deep into the hearts of Montanans. It is not something we should take lightly or halfheartedly, but it is something we need to put our effort behind so that the truth and the stories can be uncovered.

Montana was home to 18 known boarding schools located across the State, affecting many of our tribal communities. Each community will have different experiences and needs. It is important that as the department continues its investigation and work that you and we, we all work closely with each and every tribe and tribal community that was subject to the boarding school program.

My question, Secretary Haaland, will you commit to working with all Montana tribes to ensure their voices and stories are heard as the department moves forward with the investigation?

Ms. HAALAND. Absolutely. Absolutely, Senator. We are committed to working with each and every tribe. They suffered right along with so many other tribes, so yes.

Senator DAINES. Thank you. My follow-up on that would be, how will the department ensure that there are detailed investigations into the specific ramifications that each individual tribe has had to deal with?

Ms. HAALAND. Thank you for that question. Of course, you know that we have Volume 1 of this report, we are going on a healing journey across the Country, and we will be able to speak to individuals from individual tribes. Then of course our research will continue to move forward.

A second volume of course would have more details about children, about each school, about each tribe. So we hope to get with incredible specificity, so the tribes have opportunities to decide what they would like to do with that information.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Secretary Haaland. I know there will be a lot of focus on what has happened in the past. That is part of the healing process, as you just described. But as we continue to bring light to what happened in the past, I think it is important we must ensure that we use these findings to guide our actions in the present as well as looking into the future.

How can the Department ensure that we are promoting tribal sovereignty, the tribal culture, the language, and history at existing BIE schools across Montana?

Ms. HAALAND. Well, thankfully, that is happening now. We are, every BIA school that we operate, and Secretary Newland can speak to this in more specificity, but in a lot of those schools, they have Native teachers, Native principals, Native superintendents. There is a culturally relevant education for every Native student at every single one of those schools. And that will absolutely continue.

Senator DAINES. Secretary Haaland, thank you. Thanks for being here. Again, thanks for your support on this issue as well as helping us out west in Yellowstone.

Ms. HAALAND. Senator, if I could just say, thank you for the Yellowstone comments. I am happy that you recognize it is the career staff who live, eat, and breathe their jobs and we are incredibly grateful for the hard work they are doing to make sure that this crown jewel of our Country returns to its original glory. Thank you for recognizing that. I will pass on those comments.

Senator DAINES. Please do. And I will tell you, your leadership and the leadership from Director Sams is being noticed and felt, as I chatted again with our superintendent on the ground there, and career staff. They know they have the support from the team back here. It is very important.

Ms. HAALAND. Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Daines.

Secretary Haaland, Assistant Secretary Newland, we will now move on to our second panel. We thank you. You are excused.

As you are moving out, in the interest of time, I will begin to introduce our second panelists who can take their seats as they are able.

The first is the Honorable Kirk Francis, the Chief of the Penobscot Indian Nation, in Indian Island, Maine. Next, Sandra White Hawk, President, National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition in Minneapolis, Minnesota. And my friend, Norma Wong, Native Hawaiian Policy Lead, Office of the former Hawai'i Governor John Waihe'e in Honolulu, Hawaii.

I will turn to Senator Murkowski to introduce her witness.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I mentioned Liz before but I would like to officially welcome Liz La Quen Náay Medicine Crow. She is the President and CEO of First Alaskans Institute. I know she traveled from Anchorage to be here. Thank you, Liz, for that.

Ms. Medicine Crow is Haida and Tlingit from Kake in southeastern Alaska. She is an enrolled tribal citizen of the Organized Village of Kake. She has a strong background with a Juris Doctorate, J.D., from Arizona State and Certificate in Indian Law. She not only has extensive knowledge and experience in Federal Indian policy, but also with reconciling trauma, including the trauma associated with boarding and residential schools.

Liz, thank you for not only your advocacy on behalf of so many, but in assisting us with the discussion and consideration of the legislation. I think perhaps this is the first time you have testified before the Committee. We are delighted to have you back here. Thank you for making the journey.

The CHAIRMAN. Your full written testimony will be made part of the official hearing record. We would appreciate your confining your remarks to five minutes.

Mr. Francis, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. KIRK FRANCIS, CHIEF, PENOBSCOT INDIAN NATION

Mr. FRANCIS. Thank you, Chairman Schatz, Vice Chair Murkowski and members of the Committee. My name is Kirk Francis. I am from the Penobscot Indian Nation in the State of Maine.

I want to begin my testimony by thanking Secretary Deb Haaland for beginning the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative and elevating the need to compile some facts and humanity around this issue.

One of the main benefits to compiling this information is that Native Americans who were impacted by these schools get more educated about the facts and learn they are not alone in this experience. At one point in time over 100 of our children were in boarding schools, in particular the Carlisle Indian School. The impacts of that on our community are still being felt today.

As Chief of the Penobscot Nation, I was involved in two significant commission efforts. One was the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The other was the Maine Indian Tribal State Commission. I share my experiences with those commissions with you to help inform your views of the commission being established by S. 2907.

The Maine Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a temporary commission intended to investigate and compile information about the child welfare system in Maine. The effort was grassroots,

driven by tribal and State child welfare workers who agreed that the existing system was flawed.

Their efforts began in 2008. The five-person commission was seated in early 2013 and released its report in June 2015. Overall, the commission, in my opinion, was a success. The commission process allowed for both sides to get educated about the issues, to share their experiences and perspectives, and better understand each other. Since the commission's report, changes have been made to the State child welfare system to ensure that each Wabanaki government is able to fully participate in decisions that impact Wabanaki children.

What I think made the commission successful was, one, the tribal and State child welfare workers wanted to make the change; there was buy-in from the State Governor and all Wabanaki governments; the commission's focus was narrowly tailored to one topic; and the commission focused its work on compiling factual information but allowed the voices of those impacted by the system to be heard. The commission did a good job of describing its work as a conversation versus an investigation that placed blame on any person or entity.

The other commission I have experience with is the Maine Indian Tribal State Commission which is an intergovernmental entity created by the Maine Implementing Act of 1980 which is the State law that implements the Federal Maine Indian land claims. This Commission is comprised of 13 members, 6 of which are appointed by the tribes, 6 by the State, and those 12 choose a chair. The primary purpose of this commission is to continually review the effectiveness of the Settlement Act and the social, economic, and legal relationship between the State of Maine and three of the Wabanaki Nations. This commission is permanent and does not expire.

Unfortunately, this commission has not been as effective in improving the relationship between the Wabanaki Nations and the State. This is not the fault of the individual members of the commission, but more about the structure of the commission.

At times, the State has failed to fill its six spots which impairs the ability of the commission to get its work done. Additionally, very few recommendations of the commission actually get implemented by the State or Congress. Because of this, individual members of the commission and the tribes become frustrated and question the purpose of the commission.

Based on these experiences, I have several suggested edits for the Committee to consider in making S. 2907, but seeing my time is short, I just want to mention a couple.

The language of S. 2907 should be reviewed to make sure that it encompasses all the schools identified in Volume 1 of Interior's report. The bill seems to only include schools that were directly operated by the Federal Government or churches, versus schools that meet the four criteria used by Interior.

The members of the commission are all appointed by the Federal Government which will likely minimize trust in the commission's work. I recommend revising the bill to require that the Federal Government select their appointees from people nominated by national and regional tribal organizations.

Lastly, there are no next steps for what happens to the report that the commission develops. I recommend the bill include language that requires the Secretaries of Education, Interior, and Health and Human Services to conduct consultations about the findings and recommendations in the report and that the Committee on Indian Affairs conduct a hearing on the report in the future.

I think that is about my time. I thank you for allowing me to be here and I am happy to answer any questions, Mr. Chair.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Francis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. KIRK FRANCIS, CHIEF, PENOBSCOT INDIAN NATION

Good afternoon Chairman Schatz, Vice Chair Murkowski and Members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify today on the issue of Indian Boarding Schools.

My name is Kirk E. Francis and I am the elected Chief of the Penobscot Nation. We are one of four federally recognized Wabanaki Nations located within the borders of the State of Maine.

I want to begin my testimony by thanking Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and the sponsors of Senate bill 2907 for elevating the issue of Indian Boarding Schools and the need to fully examine the history and impacts these institutions had and continue to have on Tribal communities. As you already know, many Tribal communities struggle to deal with the longstanding effects of intergenerational trauma. I have been in elected office for my Tribal government for 26 years, with 16 of those years serving as Chief. I first ran for office wanting to work on policy and programmatic issues, such as health care, education, law enforcement, and natural resource protection. I did not realize how much of my time would be spent listening to elders, youth and most other Tribal citizens about the issues they struggle with because of intergenerational trauma, much of which is the result of failed federal policies towards Indian Country over the past two hundred years. The Penobscot Nation has made significant progress in investments in our physical infrastructure and economic development, but we continue to struggle with addressing the impacts of intergenerational trauma.

Much of this trauma has its roots in the piece-meal federal policies that occurred between the mid-1800s until the 1970s. The United States started its relationship with Tribal nations on a government-to-government basis. In fact, many Tribal nations in the Northeast fought on the side of the Americans during the Revolutionary War. The initial Federal policy towards Tribal nations focused on treaty making, but then turned to assimilation, and then to termination. Realizing that the assimilation and termination policies were failing, President Richard Nixon in a Special Message to Congress on Indian Affairs in 1970 denounced the termination policy and announced a new Federal policy under which "the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions." As President Nixon further explained, "we have turned from the question of whether the Federal government has a responsibility to Indians to the question of how that responsibility can best be furthered." This new Federal policy of Tribal self-determination remains the Federal policy today. It is largely seen as the most successful of the Federal policies towards Indian Country.

Although self-determination is working as a policy, the Federal government failed to mitigate the harms caused to Tribal nations by the previous series of piece-meal policies that tore down Tribal communities during the previous 150 years. The Federal government merely changed its policy moving forward without making adequate investments into rebuilding the Tribal nations that were broken apart. The intergenerational trauma that many Native American people and communities continue to struggle with today has its roots in the failed Federal policies of assimilation and termination that existed prior to the era of self-determination.

One of these failed Federal policies were the Indian Boarding Schools. As described in Volume 1 of Interior's investigative report, these schools were focused on removing Native American youth from their families and assimilating them into non-Native culture. Essentially, the goal was to eradicate the Native culture by extinguishing it in the children. As Interior's report indicates, hundreds of schools were either directly operated or funded or supported by the Federal government with the goal of assimilating Native American children. Hindsight has shown that this effort was flawed and it resulted in separating Native children from families,

communities and culture. Some Native American individuals were able to successfully reconnect with their Tribal communities, but many individuals never fully assimilated and were not able to reconnect with their communities. So they lived their lives in limbo, having lost their Tribal identity but never gained any mainstream identity either. Those individuals who were able to reconnect with their communities still suffered trauma and struggled to relearn their Native identity. These boarding schools played a significant part in the rise of alcoholism, substance abuse, and mental health problems amongst Native American individuals and within our communities.

There has never been a comprehensive compilation of the history of Federal Indian Boarding Schools, their policies and practices, their locations, and their impacts on Native American individuals and communities. It is good that the Interior Department and Congress is looking to compile this information but also allow Native individuals an opportunity to share their individual and family experiences. As I will describe later, one of the main benefits to compiling this information and getting out into Tribal communities is that Native American individuals who either were directly or indirectly impacted by these schools get more educated about the facts surrounding the schools and learn that they and their families are not alone in their experience. In my experience, there is a healing aspect to understanding that you as a Native American individual were a part of a larger policy and system, and that your experience is shared with other Native American individuals.

Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission

As Chief of the Penobscot Nation, I have been involved in two significant commission efforts that are similar to what is contemplated in Senate bill 2907. One was the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The other is the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission. I describe my experience with each below.

The Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission was a temporary commission intended to investigate and compile information about the child-welfare system in Maine as it affected Native people, create opportunities for learning and healing, and develop recommendations for improving the child-welfare practices within the State. The effort was grass roots driven by Tribal and State child-welfare workers who agreed that the existing system was flawed. Their efforts began in 2008, the 5-person Commission was seated in early 2013, and it concluded its investigation and released its report in June 2015. The Commission traveled the State, going into communities, and recorded interviews of more than 150 people, 95 from Native Americans and 64 from non-Native people. From those interviews and independent research, the Commission developed its report.

The Governor and Chiefs of the Wabanaki Nations each nominated individuals to serve on the Commission, and consensus was reached on who would serve on the Commission. The governments authorized the Commission to investigate whether or not the removal of Wabanaki children from their communities has continued to be disproportionate to non-Native children and to make recommendations that promote individual, relational, systemic and cultural reconciliation. The State legislature was not involved in the creation of the Commission, but the Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap served on the Commission. It was decided that no Wabanaki people would serve on the Commission. This decision had mixed reviews by participants, but the goal was to have Commissioners who were unbiased so that participants could trust the process was objective.

Overall, the Commission was a success. Soon after the report was released, productive dialogue took place between the Wabanaki people and State officials to make fundamental changes to the child-welfare system in the State. The most fundamental change was to ensure that there is full participation by every Wabanaki government in the decisionmaking process impacting any Wabanaki child who found themselves in the State child-welfare system. More importantly, the relationship between the Wabanaki governments and people with the State improved. The Commission process allowed for an opportunity for both sides to get educated about the issues, share their experiences and perspectives, and better understand each other. Although painful at times, the process resulted in an improved dialogue and respect on child-welfare issues between the State and Wabanaki nations, and shared accountability moving forward to make the best decisions for Wabanaki children. As the Commission's report noted, some State workers learned "to see not only the individual Wabanaki child but to recognize that the child was connected to a larger, collective culture."

What I think made the Commission successful was: (1) the Tribal and State workers who work on child-welfare issues wanted to make change; (2) there was buy-in from the Governor and Wabanaki governments; (3) the Commission's focus was

narrowly tailored to one topic; and (4) the Commission focused its work on compiling factual information about the child-welfare system but allowed the voices of those impacted by the system to be heard and recorded. The Commission did a good job of describing its work as a conversation versus an investigation that placed blame on any person or entity.

One of the indirect effects of the Commission was that its work re-opened wounds for many people. And, while many found it healing to finally be able to share their experience and trauma, the Commission process itself was traumatic for some. The Penobscot Nation found it important to have resources, including counselors, on the ground during the Commission process, but also afterwards.

The Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission

The other Commission I have experienced is the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission, which is an inter-governmental entity created by the Maine Implementing Act of 1980, which is the State law that implements the Federal Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act. This Commission is comprised of 13 members: six appointed by the State, two by the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, two by the Passamaquoddy Tribe, two by the Penobscot Nation, and the Chair of the Commission is selected by the other 12 members.

The primary purpose of this Commission is to continually review the effectiveness of the settlement act and the social, economic, and legal relationship between the State of Maine and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Passamaquoddy Tribe, and the Penobscot Nation. Additionally, the Commission is charged with making recommendations about the acquisition of land to be included in Indian Territory, communicate rules for fishing in certain ponds, rivers and streams adjacent to or within Indian Territory, and conduct studies about fish and wildlife management policies on non-Indian lands. This Commission is permanent and does not expire.

Unfortunately, the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission has not been as effective in improving the relationship between the Wabanaki Nations and State. This is not the fault of the individual members of the Commission, but more about the structure of the Commission. At times, the State has failed to fill its six spots on the Commission, which impairs the ability of the Commission to get its work done. Additionally, the Commission has conducted some thorough studies and made concrete recommendations for changes in State-Tribal policies, but very few actually get implemented. Individual members of the Commission get frustrated with the structure of the Commission and lack of authority to implement its findings. And, the Wabanaki Nations also get frustrated with the inability to modernize the settlement act that governs our relationship with the State. Although well-intended, the Commission has not been able to meet its purpose.

Comments on S. 2907, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act

Based on my experiences with other commissions, I offer the following comments on Senate bill 2907 for the Committee to consider as you move this bill forward:

- I absolutely believe that a Commission focused on Indian Boarding Schools is needed. There is significant value that can be achieved by having a commission that focuses on compiling factual information and experiences of those impacted by these schools and policies. Additionally, there has not been any real effort to mitigate the harms caused by these schools, and that needs to be done so that our Tribal communities can continue to progress.
- The language of S. 2907 should be reviewed to make sure that it encompasses all of the schools identified in volume 1 of Interior's report. The Interior Department used four criteria in identifying whether a school was a Federal Indian boarding school, which included whether the institution: (1) provided on-site housing or overnight lodging; (2) was described in records as providing formal academic or vocational training and instruction; (3) was described in records as receiving Federal government funds or other support; and (4) was operational before 1969. The language of S. 2907 seems narrower and only includes schools that were directly operated by the Federal government or churches. Interior's report includes schools that were operated by states and which received Federal funds or support. I recommend that a definition for "Indian Boarding School" be added to S. 2907 that mirrors the definition used by the Interior Department.
- The members of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies are all appointed by the Federal government, either by the President or Congress. This does not allow for maximum buy in from Indian Country for the work of the Commission. It is important that there be trust in the Commis-

sion's membership in order for there to be trust in the Commission's work. One change that could improve the bill is to have the President and/or Congress make their selections from individuals nominated by national and regional Tribal organizations, such as the United South and Eastern Tribes.

- Section 5(b)(5)(B) of the bill describes how vacancies on the Commission will be filled, but does not provide for a timeframe in which to fill such vacancies. I recommend that language be added that any vacancy be filled within 120 days.
- Section 5(c) of the bill says that the initial meeting of the Commission shall occur "as soon as practicable." I recommend that language be added to indicate that the initial meeting shall occur "as soon as practicable once a majority of Commission members have been appointed." Although Section 5(b)(4) indicates that Congress and the President shall appoint their members no later than 120 days after the date of enactment of the Act, there is nothing that enforces this provision. I have seen other federal commissions and committees not be able to begin their work because 1 or 2 members were still waiting to be appointed. Given the short timeframe for the Commission to get its work done, it would be best for it to be able to begin operations once a quorum of its members, which is a majority, have been appointed.
- The timeframe for the Commission's work seems short. This Federal Commission has approximately 2.5 years to conduct their research, hold hearings, and draft their initial report. Based on my experience in Maine, this seems too short a time to conduct these activities at a national level I recommend that the Commission's timeframe be extended by at least one year.
- The bill contains no requirement that the Commission travel to each region of Indian Country to hear from people. During the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission process in Maine, individuals found it valuable that the Commission came to their communities to hear directly from them. I recommend that S. 2907 be amended to require that the Commission travel to each Bureau of Indian Affairs region to take testimonies from individuals.
- Concerns were expressed by some Members of the House of Representatives about the power of the Commission to issue subpoenas. I understand the concerns, but I do believe there needs to be some requirement that any entity, including state governments and churches, who operated boarding schools and received Federal funding or support must make any relevant documentation available to the Commission. Maybe an alternative option is for the Commission to request the Committee on Indian Affairs to issue any subpoenas.
- Lastly, there are no next steps for what happens to the report that the Commission develops. S. 2907 identifies which Federal entities must receive the report, but provides no steps after that. I recommend that the bill include language that requires the Secretaries of Education, Interior and Health and Human Services conduct consultation with tribal nations about the findings and recommendations in the report, and that the Committee on Indian Affairs conduct a hearing on the report. There needs to be provisions in the bill that ensure that the conversation continues after the report is completed.

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on this important matter.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Chief Francis.

Now, we will hear from Sandra White Hawk, President, National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

**STATEMENT OF SANDRA WHITE HAWK, PRESIDENT,
NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL
HEALING COALITION**

Ms. WHITE HAWK. [Greeting in Native tongue.] My name is Sandy White Hawk. [Phrase in Native tongue.] I am from the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

I would first like to say thank you to our relative who opened our time with the prayer song and his companion who sang with him. I was really moved by that because it is only my second time in these halls. To hear our songs and our language spoken, I can only

think of our relatives who survived those horrible experiences and here we are still today.

We are told that if all you can say is who you are and where you come from, you will know where you are going to go in life and what you are going to do. This is what our children were not given in those institutions. It is truly an honor to be here. Thank you, Chairman Schatz, Vice Chairman Murkowski, and the Committee members for this time.

I am flooded with all kinds of emotions fighting that are against my words. My throat is almost beginning to close for our Secretary Haaland and Assistant Secretary Newland, and me as well because we can't speak on their behalf without seeing our own relatives' faces, how we can hear our brothers and our sisters, our aunts, uncles and grandmothers share their stories within our circles and our homes.

The Truth and Healing Commission will give us the opportunity to have a public opportunity, to have it validated by the public. It is one thing to share your story within your home or in your community, but it is another place to share it where it is going to be validated by the outside entities that brought this on. It brings a healing in itself and addresses what we call disenfranchised grief in our communities, a grief that has not been acknowledged or brought to any healing.

I have witnessed this as a commissioner for the Maine Wabanaki Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation. I was one of the five commissioners. I have also witnessed a commission in Canada, as I was invited to be an honorary witness for the truth and reconciliation for residential schools. I have much confidence in our CEO of NNABS because she too worked within those entities and has much experience in helping our communities develop that.

It is exceptionally important and it is time. It is so encouraging to hear you speak so fervently in support of us. That in itself, is healing, to sit and hear in the halls that there are representatives who understand this history and understand the importance of hearing from us. I want to thank you for that support.

I can't wait to go back and tell my community what I heard. They will go "really" and I will go "yeah, they did, I swear. It happened." Right now I am kind of stunned at that acknowledgment and to hear you say not just, our hair was cut, which is vital, and our clothes were taken, but you understand the corporal punishment and the psychological torture. You have spoken to that. I want to thank you for that acknowledgment.

One last thing I want to say about our language is the importance of it, is to remember those of our communities who were forced to not say anything about who they were or where they came from. Yet, our languages were used, not just the Navajo language, but Dakota languages, the Cheyenne language, many languages were used in World War II. The very people who were to be eradicated through wars and schools stood and they and were boarding school survivors as well.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. White Hawk follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SANDRA WHITE HAWK, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL NATIVE
AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL HEALING COALITION

Good afternoon, Chairman Schatz, Vice Chairman Murkowski, and members of the Committee. My name is Sandra White Hawk, citizen of the Sicangu Lakota Nation from the Rosebud Reservation. I serve as President of the Board of Directors of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS). It is an honor for provide testimony today. I am here to express my unequivocal support for S. 2907, the "Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act."

As the members of this Committee well know, the history of the United States and its relations with Native Peoples is a troubled one. The 150 years that the federal government either directly forced or coerced Native families into boarding schools, or outsourced Indian boarding schools to religious institutions, caused enormous loss to Native communities. The United States targeted tribal languages and tribal cultures for extermination to carry out a federal policy of assimilation and tribal land dispossession. As a consequence of these policies and actions, Native children suffered physical and sexual abuse, cultural reprogramming, and even death. Today, our Tribal Nations and communities continue to fight our way back from this era of genocide.

Sadly, neither the Federal Government nor Indian country really know what happened at the boarding schools during this era. We have bits and pieces of information collected from some elders who survived their boarding schools. We now have the important Volume I of the Department of the Interior Report. We commend Secretary Haaland, Assistant Secretary Newland, and the team at the Department of the Interior for this important work. But there is so much more to learn. So much information that has not been gathered. So many stories of living people that have not been told.

S. 2907, the Trust and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, is the right way to gather information, learn, and begin to heal from a century-and-a-half of harmful policies and conduct. The bill would create a Commission with authority to gather information from state, private, and religious institutions that possess information about the boarding schools but have not opened their doors to allow access to that information. The Commissioners and the Advisory Committee would represent a broad array of tribal people, experts, and institutional authorities. This Commission would have a singular mission of gathering and interpreting information with a five-year lifespan to carry out this important work.

This bill is the culmination of years of work, relying on lessons learned from the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission that studied the residential schools that similarly forced First Nations children into its doors. We know that this Commission had elements that worked and did not work. This bill considers those lessons with the expectation of creating an efficient, effective Commission. As a result of this Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work, the Pope has apologized for the role of the Catholic Church in implementing Canada's genocidal policies on First Nation's children. In July, the Pope will be traveling to First Nations territory for further dialogue and hopefully action on his apology.

We are often asked why we want to bill enacted to create a Truth and Healing Commission when the Department of the Interior has started this work. The answer to us is simple. First, the Interior work has a limited scope. Interior officials have many obligations to carry out its trust obligations to Tribal Nations. If properly constituted, a Commission that is closest to the people and is of the people has the best chance to earn the credibility of the people. While we certainly applaud the work of Secretary Haaland and the Department of the Interior, another federal inquiry with limited powers is far less likely to gain the trust of the boarding school survivors and their descendants that hold the stories of this horrific era in American history. A Commission of Native people, with the imprimatur of the United States Congress, has a far more likely chance of achieving knowledge and healing.

NABS, an organization that I am honored to Chair, has worked in this area for over ten years. We were formed as a non-profit 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.

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 US 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. US 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 UN 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 United States 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, S. 2907, the Truth and Healing Commission Bill on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.
Ms. Norma Wong.

**STATEMENT OF NORMA RYŪKŌ KAWELOKŪ WONG ROSHI,
NATIVE HAWAIIAN POLICY LEAD, OFFICE OF FORMER
HAWAII GOVERNOR JOHN WAIHE'E**

Ms. WONG. Aloha. [Phrase in Native tongue.]

Aloha. My name is Norma Ryūkō Kawelokū Wong. I was born in Kalihi near the mountains, where I now live.

Mr. Chairman, I apologize for not being with you in person. Instead, I am here in Kalihi from time to time. You have proof of that because you will hear roosters in the background.

My grandmother was banned from the language in her youth and she did not speak it again until two weeks before she passed. She did not tell us her story and I did not grow up in the language. So these few words that I have spoken here, that I wrote in my formal testimony, I sent to younger Hawaiians to correct, younger Hawaiians who benefitted from my generation's political fight for language revitalization here in Hawaii.

I know that my story is common among the many Native peoples. We all experienced forced learning, the stripping of language and ways, separation from land, family, and peoples. The boarding schools were focused delivery agents for this national policy and for the peoples who lived and governed in this Country at those moments in time for their descendants, there is very specific pain. To account for and acknowledge is a consequential precipice, and how to guide and participate in this particular moment.

In my introduction, the reconnection to language just three generations later is one small example of mending the arc, a seven generations arc, the seven generations that are before us and the seven generations after.

This is the world view, the ethos and the plumbline for all indigenous peoples. At the center of the arc is the current generation. All the peoples, whether you are Native peoples or not, who live in this particular moment and what is our kuleana, our responsibility to mend the arc and pivot the trajectory for future generations. So while justice is moral, it is a hollow victory if it is not accompanied by thriving.

Moving forward from the investigative report, it is critical to reach back and to cast forward. How do past actions impact us today? What is the imagined and hoped-for future? What would need to happen to make that possible?

To mend the arc is to contemporaneously restore that which was cut off, not as a reparation but in reconnecting to a fruitful path. Three areas of repair come to mind: language revitalization; connection of people to place; and worthiness.

Language contains values and ways. It must be taught orally and reconnects the relationship between generations. Language contains the wisdom of stewardship between peoples and the land and reconnecting to the responsibilities of land and place, even in urban areas. This is critical to the reconnection of the arc.

Indigenous peoples are intended to be stewards of peoples and place, not only their own but of the entirety. It is part of our worthiness across the span of time. In mending the arc, we must interrupt the habit of transactional repair, in its stead to be creative and generous in our investment and partnership.

Resources will be needed for grieving and therapeutic healing and guidance. The energy of what happened in these spaces and places needs tending to if repair is to be had. Ritual ceremony and repurposing, that is the indigenous way and making it possible for peoples to have the time, the space and the support to figure this out and implement hopes and dreams.

This is a generational journey. It is not a one and done. [Phrase in Native tongue.], observing the horizon clouds of the land. What took hundreds of years to tear to the point of breaking cannot be repaired let alone propel us toward a more thriving future over the course of a few studies, reports, and hearings. There is work to be done and it can be fruitful.

I leave with this wise saying of our peoples. [Phrase in Native tongue.]. One's child, a garland, that is never cast aside.

Mahalo nui. Thank you so much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wong follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NORMA RYŪKŌ KAWELOKŪ WONG ROSHI, NATIVE HAWAIIAN POLICY LEAD, OFFICE OF FORMER HAWAII GOVERNOR JOHN WAIHE'E

Aloha. 'O Norma Ryūkō Kawelokū Wong ko'u inoa. Ua hānau 'ia au ma Kalihi mauka ma O'ahu nei. Noho wau ma'ane'i i kēia manawa.

Aloha. My name is Norma Ryūkō Kawelokū Wong. I was born in Kalihi near the mountains, where I now live.¹ This I cautiously wrote in the language of my ancestors, and then sent to people younger than me to review and correct—descendants who are near fluent, who benefitted from the language revitalization efforts that I politically supported 30–35 years ago, having grown up in a time when the 'olelo—the language—was slipping away. I am the granddaughter of a woman who was considered fortunate to have attended what was known as normal school where the native language was forbidden, thus able to be an elementary school teacher for 40 years which allowed her to support her son as a single parent. She never spoke Hawaiian until the last two weeks of her life, at which time only 'olelo Hawai'i left her lips—to the astonishment of her son and grandchildren—until she passed and became my ancestor in truth and fact.

My story is a common one. If you are a descendant of an indigenous ancestor of the continental U.S., Alaska, and the Hawaiian Islands then, by definition, you are living in the wake of hundreds of years of government policies that sought to norm, even if it meant erasure. You need not have had an ancestor who was sent to a boarding school to have been subjected to the beliefs and therefore the institutions and programs of a country that had a profound misunderstanding of their superiority and indigenous inferiority. If you are a boarding school survivor, the descendant of a survivor, the descendant of peoples who did not survive, the descendant of peoples who buried the pain and did not speak of such things as if you no longer existed, then there is very specific trauma.

¹Norma Wong was born in 1956 in Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii and is of Native Hawaiian and Hakka Chinese ancestry. She is a 1974 graduate of the Kamehameha Schools, a school for Native Hawaiian children founded by Bernice Pauahi Bishop, one of the last native ruling class. As a young adult, she assisted in the first comprehensive field family survey of Native Hawaiian needs conducted by Alu Like, Inc. and in community organizing efforts for political action leading up to the 1978 Hawai'i Constitutional Convention in which landmark amendments were approved that imbed native rights and values. She was a State legislator, and a policy director for former Governor John Waihe'e, the State's only Native Hawaiian governor. Her portfolio included the most high profile native issues of that time—ceded lands revenues, addressing breaches of the Hawaiian Home Lands trust, restoring lands into the HHL trust, returning the island of Kaho'olawe and negotiating its munitions cleanup. She is a teacher and strategist that brings forward indigenous, spirit-based, and transformative practices and worldviews for contemporary conditions and issues. She is currently part of a hui (group formed for a purpose) shepherding a fundamental policy pivot for Maunakea, also known as Mauna a Wakea, out of the clash between culture and science into a more thriving future based on mutual stewardship. Ryūkō is the name given to her when she became a Rinzei Zen priest in 2000. Kawelokū is the name given to her by two descendants on the occasion of her 60th birthday, having no Hawaiian name given at birth. Roshi is the title given to a Zen master.

What this moment is about—The missed opportunity and potential harm of the usual reactive ways

*Aia no i ke kō a ke au. Which ever way the current goes, time will tell.*²

In many spirit practice ways, it is believed that the truth that has been buried will arise above the ground when the people are ready to see it, and not a moment before.

Many generations of individuals and clans may need to hold the dark secrets before the night turns to day, and their burden imprints every generation in between. Here we are now, in the purposeful uncovering, revealing, what people call truth-telling. Although we are more than ready to see it and it is more than past the time to do so, there will still be ways that the truth will be hard to bear and misunderstandings will reactively flow. The social justice practice is to center truth and healing in action. There is truth, there is healing, there is “and”. The “and” is frequently given short shrift, or abbreviated in ways that people have come to believe that truth is all that is needed for there to be healing. The truth—once unpacked beyond the data and the analysis and into the stories, one by one by thousands—is and will be painful, hard, beyond belief and understanding. It will reveal the underbelly of who and what the country was and in some ways still is. The truth is a prerequisite that will be revealed not once but over time. Truth is not the same as healing.

Here we are now. The investigative report merely places us on the precipice—a consequential precipice. How will we guide and participate in this moment? If there is a revealing and a political acknowledgement, but not much more, then there is the very real risk that we will have wasted a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity by moving on too quickly. The reversal of systematic erasure—not just an acknowledgement of it—would be a consequential pivot for the entire nation, a true mending of the arc or at the least a significant leap toward that horizon.

Elements of mending the arc

There is an arc and it has been interrupted. “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice”—Martin Luther King. From the indigenous perspective, the arc exists within the context of seven generations—the seven generations that came before, and the seven generations that follow, a span of 120 to 150 years in each direction. While justice is moral, it is a hollow victory if not accompanied by thriving. A seven generations arc exists because of the intentionality of each generation to tend to current conditions while working toward more fruitful futures, passing that responsibility and the wisdom of experience from one generation to another. The bend toward a just thriving is dreamt and cultivated, fought for and worked for.

The policies and willful intent of a country and its peoples can and have interrupted and nearly severed the seven generations arc by forced norming; displacement from land, people, and family; erasure of language and practices and therefore values and ways. Many of these tools of severing are embedded within the institution of policy known as the federal Indian boarding school. In spite of the determined actions to erase, followed by appeasement and neglect, there are still vestiges of the seven generations arc, which is how we may know that indigeneity still exists and isn’t just a historical or political frame. But we may have forgotten how to act, how to be, how to make choices as consequential participants in the arc. When a seven generations arc isn’t operational and healthy in all respects including being our worldview, then we are severed from agency and our present and future are at effect of others. A severing of the arc is a severing of self-sufficiency and sovereignty.

It is important to understand that a seven generations arc isn’t the thin line of blood lineage. The three parts—ancestors, the current generations, and descendants—are all of the peoples,³ not just the ones that are named in a given report, not just the ones who were harmed whether we know their names or not, and not just the ones who caused harm. It is true as it has always been that not all of the peoples of a generation will accept the fact let alone step into the responsibility within a seven generations context. The more that do so the more that can be accomplished. The more that can be prevented and interrupted, the more that can be put into motion toward the generations of descendants. A non-indigenous person or institution or government can look at itself as having nothing to do with what happened in the past. Alternatively, it can begin to understand the world as mutually interdependent including the past as it may be connected to the future. At one level,

²This is the first of four italicized quotes of ‘ōlelo no‘eau—wise sayings of the Native Hawaiian people, as recorded by scholar and cultural elder Mary Kawena Pukui (1895–1986)

³In addition to the peoples who lived in a given time and place, there are the non-human beings including animals, plants, mountains, water, the entirety of the living universe.

our mending of the arc is in the self-interest of all of our sakes—indigenous and not.

The current generation—by definition—are stewards, sitting at the midpoint of the arc that is seven generations in the past, seven generations in the future. We can think of ourselves as sole stewards—i.e., the government, or the agency, or the advocates for and on behalf of the peoples, past, present and future—or we can think of the current generation as the midpoint of the arc acting as mutual stewards, taking up the responsibility together in a multitude of roles. Doing so in mutuality in of itself mends the arc, interrupting the habits of hierarchy and assumptions of power.

What are we mutual stewards for? The kuleana—the responsibility—of the current generation is to bring forward the unseen and unhealed with sacred care while persistently and creatively shaping the future story. Understanding that the current generation includes as many of the “all of us” as may be possible, it is the kuleana of this generation to make visible and to see many deeds and peoples who have been otherwise hidden and forgotten both in their pain and in their joy. *He ‘onipa’a ka ‘oiā’i’o. Truth is not changeable.* This is an unearthing that must be done with determination, sensitivity and care, taking the time that may be needed, sometimes slowly and sometimes swiftly, but not stopping once having begun. But to mend the arc, the trajectory of the past needs to be interrupted, which means that it isn’t enough to just lay bare the painful truths of the past. Continue the arc. This is most fruitfully done by coming into the mutual stewardship of the future story, and working backwards to the actions that need to happen today to seed the future.

This kuleana is a consequential midpoint, a pivot point that is taken or not, for better or for worse. Every midpoint in a seven generation arc is a pivot point, but this one seems more potent than most.

What would the pivot be towards? In a long arc, seven generations in the past and seven generations in the future, the potential of the pivot into the long arc is to bring the peoples into more mutuality, harmony, and core strength for whatever it is that may need to be faced.

Potential ways forward consistent with mending the arc

- Iteratively reaching back and casting forward is critical. In the past, there is an accounting of what happened, but also a telling and understanding of why. In the present, there is the connectivity with the past on meta and micro scales with present-day impacts, including the accumulation of impacts over time. Toward the future, there is the imagining of what it would mean, what it looks like, and what it will take to hold the thriving of children at the center, collectively, to mend the arc. It is about the education of children, the safety of children, the transition from childhood to adulthood, the societal role of children. In the present, there is the organizing for future results including pivots and course adjustments. In the present, there is individual and collective revealing, grieving, and coming to terms.
- For this journey of making right and mending, there is strength and possibility in mutuality which will look like, especially at the beginning, as parallel efforts.
 - There is the work within native communities, including native peoples who live in the diaspora outside of native communities. This is the work of revealing and digesting what has happened. This may be in the form of stories, including the use of storytelling to chronicle and to therapeutically process. In many places and among many peoples there will be specific rituals, some in community, and some that may be guided in community for individuals. These rituals include the clearing of peoples, spaces, and places. There is the work of bringing ancestral children home, wherever home may be determined to be. There is the work of reconnection of ancestors and the living with places and peoples that they have been separated from. There is the creative wondering about the world that native peoples hope for, a robust description of what it would mean to not only acknowledge and to reverse the damage but to also leap forward. This may be community by community, peoples by peoples. There may also be the possibility of exploring the beginnings of a pivot of indigenous peoples as a whole across the continent, Alaska and Hawai‘i in relationship to a national policy.
 - There is emergent work that may be possible between native peoples and communities with non-native allies, co-workers, neighbors and friends. This includes the respectful sharing and the respectful listening of what has happened. There is the processing and perhaps a developmental path between people and between institutions, making and strengthening true re-

lationships, and making plans together toward more mutually beneficial futures.

—There is the work of bringing awareness into the understanding of the American public with the aspiration of pivoting the relationship that Americans have with the indigenous peoples of this land. Against the backdrop of polarization and othering, this is the most challenging of the parallel work.

- To repair in the ways of mending the arc is to contemporaneously restore that which was intentionally cut off, not as a reparation⁴ but in reconnecting the severed path. Three areas of repair come to mind: the revitalization of language; the reconnection of peoples to place; and renewed worthiness.

Language contains the values and ways of a people, teachings that lose their meaning in translation. The learning of once-only-oral languages must be done person to person, thus restoring teacher-student relationships, the value and ways of mastery. Indigenous languages contain wisdom of the stewardship between people and land.

Reconnecting peoples to place is critical to repairing the arc. Most indigenous peoples in this country have been displaced and dispossessed. Beyond the multitude of issues of land rights, there is the fundamental reconnection of people to be in relationship to land, including water and all aspects of nature. This is even so and perhaps more especially so if you are no longer living on the lands of your ancestors. Nonetheless, do you have a relationship with the lands you are now on, do you know it, care for it, care about it. This relational reconnection is critical to mending the arc of indigeneity, and awakens a critical societal role of indigenous peoples in this country, front and center in a time of tectonic climate change. To have to assume such roles for all peoples, not only your own, is worthy. And worthiness assumed repairs a broken arc.

- Among the transactional habits of political solutions is the monetizing of repair. In its stead, be creative and generous in the investment and partnership in thriving. Resources will be needed for grieving, therapeutic healing, the gatherings for saying what needs to be said and to share what needs to be shared. Resources will be needed if language is to be revitalized, peoples reconnected in relationship to land, and worthiness re-established. Making it possible for peoples—at scale—to have the time, space, and support to just talk and figure out what it may take to repair the arc will take resources, as will the implementation of those dreams and hopes.
- Our children ancestors went to or were taken to places known as boarding schools where things happened that are now being uncovered. Even more than the deeds themselves, these are places where there was loneliness, despair, hurt, numbness, disappearing, anger, fear, hope and the loss of hope, love and the withholding of love, joy and joy muted. The energy of what happened in these spaces and places need tending to if repair is to be had. That is the indigenous way. Places and spaces will need to be tended to, energy shifted, memorialized or repurposed, spirits called home. There will be no single plan and each place and space offers its own challenges and opportunities, especially for mending between native and non-native peoples.

This is a generational journey; not a one and done. *E nānā i ka 'ōpua o ka 'Āina. Observing the horizon clouds of the land.* What took hundreds of years to tear to the point of breaking cannot be repaired let alone propel us toward a more thriving future over the course of a few studies, reports, and hearings. There is work to be done, and it can be fruitful.

Ka lei hā'ule 'ole, he keiki. A lei (garland) that is never cast aside, one's child. This is our chance.

Many thanks for the opportunity to testify. I am at your service.

The CHAIRMAN. Mahalo.

We will now recognize Ms. Medicine Crow.

⁴Definition: the making of amends for a wrong one has done, by paying money to or otherwise helping those who have been wronged.

**STATEMENT OF LA QUEN NĀAY LIZ MEDICINE CROW,
PRESIDENT/CEO, FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE**

Ms. MEDICINE CROW. Gunalchéesh, háw'aa, Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairwoman Senator Murkowski from Alaska. Thank you so much for your words of introduction. And to the Committee, gunalchéesh, háw'aa, for your time today.

Like those who have spoken before me, this is not an easy subject to address. In my introduction, Senator Murkowski spoke about my heritage, that I am Haida and Tlingit and I come from [phrase in Native tongue.], the people of the community of Kake. Our name really means "mouth of the dawn people."

I sit here before you as the granddaughter of a survivor. Her name was Mona Jackson. I wear her regalia here today because I wanted to bring her with me and I wanted to become a vessel for her voice and for the voice of so many of our other children, our most vulnerable, who were taken from our communities.

They were not just taken from their communities. While we will focus on the importance of the children who were taken, it is also incredibly important to focus on the communities that they were taken from.

I often wonder what it would be like to come from a place with no children. This is what was imposed on our people. Could you imagine having your own children taken, communities without children? As stated earlier, over 83 percent of our children were taken across this Country. That is a staggering amount and likely has left some uncounted.

I work for an organization called First Alaskans Institute. Our vision is progress for the next 10,000 years. This is a large number which we know that we can look to because we come from over 10,000 years of history here in this place.

This period of the boarding schools was a short window of time that exacted so much precise damage. This was intentional and purposeful harm. This commission will finally help us tell the truth about the United States' history and its relationship with its Native people.

When I think about the process that we have been engaged in in Alaska called Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation, we used the process over the past almost 14 years to arrive at a Native value-centered process using our Native peoples' wisdom as the subject matter experts of this work.

We used a process that centered our people, that honors them and uplifts their voices. In this process, we created these tribunals where we invited our communities to step forward and share their truths, and in the sharing of those truths, lifting up the healing process, which I heard some questions asked earlier about, how do you marry both the space for telling the truth with the healing that needs to happen. Those things actually go hand-in-hand. Using a process that was designed by our people, for our people, and for Alaska's strength and future, we designed a process that also included accountability partners.

Those accountability partners were people who represent governments, churches, social groups, private individuals, for profit enterprise, who were ready to sit and stand beside Native people and say, we want to understand the legacy of our impact, we want to

work side by side to co-create the future that we know our children deserve.

This is wisdom and knowledge that comes from our Native people in Alaska, who like so many others of our Hawaiian brothers and sisters and our lower 48 Native brothers and sisters, have learned, under duress, how to actually hold people up, talking about incredibly hard things. That wisdom should be tapped by this commission.

I cannot thank you enough, once again. I want to leave with a story from my grandmother. My mother asked her a question about her experience with boarding schools. My grandmother responded, "I can tell you what happened physically, but I am still not able to talk about what happened inside."

This commission will open up a pathway where these stories from people who are now elders will be heard. Time is of the essence. We cannot waste any more of their precious life with not giving them a forum to share their lived experiences.

Gunalchéesh, háw'aa, for this opportunity to share on this incredibly important bill.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Crow follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LA QUEN NĀAY LIZ MEDICINE CROW, PRESIDENT/CEO,
FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE

Dear Mr. Chairman and Mrs. Vice Chairwoman:

Gunalchéesh, Háw'aa, Tsíná'ee—Thank You in the Lingít, Xaadaas and Tanacross languages—for considering [S. 2907] [H.B.5444], the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools Policies Act. Your leadership on this critical national issue supports the moral imperative and responsibility this country has to the Native peoples of this place. We greatly appreciate the wisdom of those involved in this process for the past many decades to get us to this point, and for the bravery of the Boarding School Survivors to be willing to participate in processes that create a space for their truths to be heard and direct action to be taken to address the issues raised through the sharing of their personal stories and those of their Indigenous communities. It takes a great deal of courage and strength to be willing to do this for future generations.

As a statewide Alaska Native non-profit whose vision is progress for the next 10,000 years., we too have been listening deeply and working alongside our communities to better understand how to support the critical social transformation that must occur to right these wrongs perpetuated against Native peoples through our most vulnerable, our precious children. For the past 14 years we have been engaged in deep community work around issues of healing and truth-telling in our communities and, under our people's direction and vision, to address these issues that are also manifest in this bill. We look forward to working with the US Congress to bring this Commission into reality. We also stand ready to support this effort by sharing our own work in this area called Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Alaska (TRHT Alaska) in hopes that lessons we have learned in creating a healing space for the truth to be told can be helpful in the Truth & Healing Commission set-up, recommendations, and outcomes that will flow from it. We also offer edits to the bill itself (see Attachment A) to help strengthen its ability to achieve these goals.

**WHY THE TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION ON INDIAN BOARDING
SCHOOLS POLICIES ACT NEEDS TO BE IMPLEMENTED**

Establishing this Commission to address the legacy and ongoing impacts of boarding schools for Native peoples creates a pathway for truth, transformation, justice, and deep healing that is critically needed to address the devastating, inter-generational, and ongoing impacts of the Boarding School era. As a country we owe it to ourselves to know what happened, how our country was formed by these policies, how Native peoples, cultures, communities, and families were almost completely destroyed and our homelands taken from us, and most importantly, how we can rectify, repair, and move forward together as a country whose destiny is intertwined with the well-being of the Native peoples of this place.

A true accounting of the Boarding School era and its ongoing ramifications today is the first step towards healing as a Nation and as Indigenous peoples—past and present. At least 367 boarding schools were operated by the U.S. for over a century, yet we only know the location on record for 38 percent of these schools, and only a fraction have been analyzed. This Commission is needed to help locate and analyze additional records and ensure that accounts of Indian boarding schools—told by survivors, families, Tribes, community members, and Native organizations, as well as presently unknown and undisclosed records—are preserved. Time is of the essence as we have a limited amount of time to hear directly from survivors and record their stories—at a bare minimum we owe this to them. This Commission is needed to ensure that our children who were forced to attend these schools are not forgotten, that their descendants and the legacy of impact intergenerationally is acknowledged and addressed, that our communities who had their children taken from them and the future of their cultures, languages, community well-being, and homelands severely jeopardized are finally heard, and so that this never happens again. This knowledge and understanding will also help ensure that we can shape better policy with more meaningful and significant supports, and that this destructive era of U.S. Indian policy is acknowledged so that future generations of Americans may understand this dark history and strive to do better for us all.

The traumas experienced by these stolen children and their communities continues to reverberate within our families, cultures, and communities, and disrupt our ability to live our ways of life as diverse Indigenous peoples. For too long, there has been a blanket of silence around boarding schools, without an opportunity for our communities to speak about what we endured. The longer the silence endures, the heavier the weight of these truths and the greater the trauma they inflict in our communities foreclosing opportunity, destroying lives, and creating a cycle of trauma that erodes this country's ability to live up to its promise.

Developing a complete picture of the ongoing impact Indian boarding schools have had on generations of Alaska Native, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian people, is critical to providing a path toward healing for individuals, families and tribal communities that have endured the terrible consequences of Indian boarding school policies and it will also help heal this entire nation. What is good for Native people is good for all U.S. citizens. This important work must be supported by all who reside in the United States today, and we encourage you to continue bringing other Senators and Congressmen together to advance this critical endeavor. This work will promote healing within our Indigenous communities and within the US as we begin to unpack the legacy, confront the truth, and transform these historic atrocities into a future our children can not only be safe in but they can finally thrive in once again.

To those ends, we highly support the creation of a Truth & Healing Commission that will help account for (1) the number of children forced to attend these schools; (2) the number of children who were abused, died, or went missing while at these schools and their locations and burial sites; (3) the number of children who were displaced, disconnected, and removed from their Tribal communities permanently; (4) the long-term intergenerational impacts on the children and the families of children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; (5) the impacts on Native communities, cultures, languages, and homelands (i.e. the link between colonization, land dispossession, assimilation, and boarding schools to effectuate those policies); and (6) the location of church, other privately held information, and government records needed to complete this analysis. Our country will continue to fall short of its values and ideals without this important work.

HOW TRHT ALASKA USES A NATIVE-BASED, HEALING PROCESS TO CREATE A SPACE WHERE THE TRUTH CAN BE TOLD, HEALING IS CENTERED, AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS AND REPAIR HARM ARE AMPLIFIED

First Alaskans Institute, working alongside our community, guided by Native Leaders, Advisors, and Healers, has been hosting the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Alaska process, grown out of our communities priorities, designed specifically for Alaska, and supported in partnership with the WK Kellogg Foundation, to bring forward our peoples truths at a statewide level. We invite our Native peoples to come forward and share their truths and lived experiences as well as Alaskan leaders within our state and national governments, faith-based communities, and other entities to commit to working together with the Native community to transform systems of past and current harm. We invite and encourage your participation in our TRHT Alaska endeavor as well.

About TRHT

For years, Indigenous communities in Alaska, and across the country, have called for a process that provides for intergenerational healing and permanent systemic and societal transformation. TRHT Alaska is a movement in response to this call and is grounded in Alaska Native knowledge to create space for healing for all of Alaska's people. Through this movement we are creating a record of our truths as Indigenous peoples, peoples of color, and identity intersections to right the wrongs we experience, and transform our systems so future generations are free to be who they are without harm. It is a pathway forward to healing the relationship with Alaska Native peoples and all others who now call Alaska home towards a more vibrant, dynamic, and strong Alaska.

The TRHT Alaska tribunal was created to make a space for the truth to be told, for wrongs to be righted, and for societal transformation to occur for the long term—by our people, for our people, and for Alaska. It was designed around a simple principle, that when we center Native values in the process and in the way we host these forums, we can ensure our people feel safe, welcome, heard, and that they have the best chance possible for the sharing of their truths to be a healing experience and support their continued healing journeys for themselves and for our collective well-being. These tribunals are designed around critical communities and issues such as Boarding and Residential Schools, Murdered and Missing Indigenous Relatives (also known as MMIW) and public safety, Protecting Our Native Ways Of Life (POWOL), lands, economy, and laws.

These TRHT Tribunals create space for truth, healing, justice, and societal transformation by engaging all participants in solution-making and ownership of actions that they can effectuate. We do not refer to this process as “reconciliation” because we are not trying to restore a relationship that was once good and needs to be “reconciled”. We cannot reconcile what we never had, so instead of starting with a false narrative, we are instead focused on the outcome we are seeking, the healing and transformation of our society. Through this effort, we aim for healing and justice for our peoples, transformation of systems, and to create a place where once again our children are reflected and loved for who they are.

Truth

The true history of Alaska Native peoples is a perspective rarely mentioned or represented in school systems today. This space is designed to accept and uplift the true lived experience of Alaska Native peoples. It is an opportunity to speak about the honest historical and ongoing legacies of institutions, governments and entities involved in harming our peoples. Sharing the legacy of these institutions and systems and how they rose into the positions they have at the expense of Indigenous and peoples of color is a story to share with every Alaskan. Telling the truth of how policies, laws, governments, faithbased entities, educational institutions, media, conservation organizations, resource industries, and other groups have impacted our peoples and our ability to thrive as Indigenous peoples in our own homelands and in our diaspora is vital for justice, for righting wrongs, and for ensuring all Alaskans understand their critical role in reshaping this legacy—to be a part of it and to find ways to evolve forward together. Truth is necessary for justice and justice is necessary for healing and transformation.

Racial Healing

We are deliberately centering healing in all aspects of these tribunals. Healing emerges from telling our stories in safe, uplifting, loving spaces designed for us and by us. Throughout this process, we are focusing on the wellbeing and healing of our peoples from the ongoing intergenerational trauma caused by these systems and policies. We have been working with a group of over 40 Native healers who carry expertise in various forms of healing to include clinical, spiritual, traditional, cultural, religious, and other forms of healing that are not bound by and/or defined by western ideologies of healing. It also incorporates healing pathways that focus on group, individual, and homelands-based processes (such as getting out on the land to harvest or just to be), as well as offering other types of healing that individuals themselves ask for, such as western psychology, therapy, or faith-based processes. These healing modalities are meant to meet our people where they are at. This means that this work continues to center on the guidance of our communities and peoples. The tribunals are designed to try not to retraumatize or cause further harm related to the historic trauma, but to create a pathway for healing and care for every individual participating in these tribunals. For many, being able to talk about these experiences collectively is a healing act in and of itself, while others feel more supported in smaller group or one on one connections. Whatever way works best for our peoples is the way we try to create these spaces and amplify their well-being.

Transformation

We operate with the understanding that Alaska Natives know best what is best for Alaska Natives, and what is good for Alaska Natives is good for all Alaskans. We know that when our communities are in charge of determining their future, everyone benefits. The transformation we seek will center the narratives, lived experiences, and needs of our people in all systems. The transformation of these systems will target the inequity where these injustices began, and are then addressed and remedied by every Alaskan in perpetuity—so it never happens again. Accountability Partners work alongside us to achieve this transformation within their institutions and governments. Our ever-expanding cohort is examining the legacies of their institutions and systems, educating themselves, and sharing these hard truths. What this means is that doing this work is not about having one moment in time and then ‘moving on’, as that is not possible, but rather that doing this work is about transforming ourselves for the better, never to return to what was before. Like a caterpillar to a butterfly, the United States can finally transform into the country we all know it must become to secure its healthy, vibrant future.

Tribunal Roles

There are several critical roles for each tribunal, which require various pre- and post-meetings and trainings to be fully prepared and debriefed, with actions to move forward with:

- **Truth Providers:** Alaska Native peoples who feel called to speak truth to the harms and challenges we have experienced with external systems that impact our ability to live and thrive as distinct Native peoples and continue our ways of life.
- **Pullers:** Doers and allies who work for, with, and in alignment with Native peoples to advance our Native peoples, protect our Native ways of life, work for racial equity, and fight for social justice. Pullers will be engaged, listening, committed, and will help co-create solutions to make transformation in the institutions, society, and systems that perpetuate inequity and harm to our Native peoples and ways of life.
- **Indigenous Artists:** They will listen and later—if inspired—will create art that meaningfully responds to truths told in the moment or memorialize what our peoples have gone through in order to honor the stories shared through the TRHT Alaska process, so they are not forgotten, ensure history is not repeated, and to create a more equitable and transformed future for our children.
- **Healers:** Healers will aid as we hold space for both our Truth Providers as well as all our participants no matter their role. The Healers serve as a touchstone, as a presence, and as a relationship that folks can tap into, connect with, and build deeper insights with during or following the gathering.
- **Story Guardians:** The Story Guardians are charged with being deeply engaged listeners, the receivers of any truths (testimony) that are shared and offering reflection into the space as a way of reciprocating to our Truth Providers during the process. The presence of the Story Guardians will help Truth Providers feel safe, listened to, validated, and believed. And provide a guidepost for all other participants as well.
- **Accountability Partner:** An Accountability Partner is a representative of an entity whose work, presence, or historical legacy has impacted, continues to impact, or has the capacity to impact the Alaska Native community, and the intention, willingness and commitment to respond to the truths told to work alongside our Native peoples to ensure true healing and transformation towards a better, more equitable, and stronger Alaska. Entities could include an organization, government (in any capacity—elected, appointed, judicial, administrative, legislative, employed, etc.), churches, educational systems, businesses, media, health care, environmental/conservation entities, resource development entities, social groups, or person or groups of people.

As a part of the healing work and path we are on, we ask those interested in being Accountability Partners to make the following commitments:

- Participate in our Accountability Partner preparatory session to ensure you are informed and ready to hear our peoples’ truths.
- Examine the political and racial legacy of your institution and commit yourself to examining and sharing this story.
- Lift up truths, share hidden or untold stories, and dismantle false narratives that are critical to transforming inequitable systems within Alaska that negatively impact all Alaskans.

—Participate fully during truth-telling spaces by bearing witness to the stories shared.

—Commit your time and resources to work proactively with our communities to advance desired policy and narrative outcomes.

This work is ongoing and its purpose is to continue to provide pathways for healing for our peoples, and for systems of harm to be healed and transformed as well. To date, we have 151 recordings from our Tribunals and Summits, mostly from our Truth Providers, Story Guardians and Healers. We use an informed consent process that is also built on healing and equity methodologies—that once participants share their truths, they have time to reflect and view their recording in order to decide if they are comfortable sharing the full recording, some of the recording, or none of the recording, and once they decide they can then provide their consent as they desire to give it. This acknowledges and amplifies their power over their truths and supports their decisionmaking. Each recording, as authorized by the informed consent process, will be held in an online repository as a living history of our truths. Our communities can access the knowledge and wisdom of these truths in a variety of formats, ranging from research, writings, curricula development, media, and other communication/artistic expressions. They will guide the narrative change needed to inform policy makers, leaders, decision makers, healers and health practitioners, educators, and more from now and into the future. A short documentary film is also being made to help tell the story of this work, so future generations can access and learn from it for the challenges they will face.

We will continue to work with our healers and advisors on our collective healing journey and grow our people's access to healing pathways grounded in our ways of knowing and being. We continue to expand our cohort of Accountability Partners who are examining the legacies of their institutions and systems, educating themselves and their colleagues, and sharing these truths towards the goal of cocreating a future legacy we can all be part of and our children proud of. The Accountability Partners are key participants who do not have an authoritarian or hierarchical role in the process, but rather stand beside and hold up those sharing their truths, bear witness, and do their own hard work to better understand these legacies and transform them.

This TRHT Alaska model, co-created by a visionary group of Alaskans and centering Alaska Native values in the process, has been sought by many folks around the country and world. Aboriginal people in Australia, First Nations in Canada, Sami (Norway), and other BIPOC communities from the contiguous U.S. have reached out to learn more about this Indigenous process as they work on their own. We will continue to share the model and are committed to evolving it as needed to meet the vision of our Native peoples—to create a space where the truth can be told, wrongs can be righted, and societal transformation is achieved. We welcome members of this committee to join us in this critical work and/or reach out to learn more for potential application for this Truth & Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools.

STRENGTHENING THE TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION ON INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS POLICIES ACT

Please find attached a redline version of the bill* with our suggested amendments to help ensure the law that is passed is the strongest and most impactful it can be, while still holding true to the original intent of the bill. We understand this is a continuing process and look forward to further opportunity to comment and make further suggestions. We also want to ensure that Alaska, having a unique history, and complex governance due to the various ways colonization has occurred in our homelands, can be fully engaged and represented in this process.

Gunalchéesh, Háw'aa, Tsíná'ee—We thank you again for considering this bill to establish a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools Policies. We stand ready to lend our support for this critical work.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much to all of our testifiers.

My first question is for Ms. Wong. Our last testifier made reference to trauma. It seems to me that we have to act with absolute determination, understanding that moments come and go and although we all seem to be in agreement that we need to move forward, that could vanish quickly. You just never know. And the Fed-

*The information referred to has been retained in the Committee files.

eral Government moves slowly so we want to make sure they feel the impetus, feel the motivation and have the resources to go.

But it also occurs to me that we have to do this properly, that in our determination, that can't turn into haste. Certainly, I have learned, as a non-Native Hawaiian residing in Hawaii for 47 of my 49 years, I know entering a space or starting a project, going into someone's home, starting a meeting in the wrong way can set a tone that is almost impossible to reverse.

The question I have for you, Ms. Wong, is, in your experience are their best practices when it comes to attempting to reconcile personal trauma and broader community harms? In other words, how do we do that part of it right and not just start to conduct listening sessions and maybe re-traumatize people, without a path forward?

Ms. WONG. Mr. Chairman, there is the trauma-informed aspect of this, there is the healing-informed aspect of it, and then there is the thriving-informed. Which is to say that, especially in government kinds of projects, even initiatives that have as much requirement as this particular initiative has, which is to say that the boarding schools, opening up the conversations that may be possible with boarding schools may be a once in a generation opportunity to pivot the entirety of the relationship that the United States Government has with the Native peoples of this Country.

Because of the possibility of that pivot, you need to actually move forward not only with care but with I would say some differentiation. By differentiation, I would say that you recognize there are different levels. There is a level of the individuals which would include the survivors as well as the descendants, as well as the Native peoples who are not actually accounted for in the boarding schools but essentially were cast into the diaspora.

So they are no longer a part of any peoples that are certainly recognized by the Federal Government and may actually be dislocated by hundreds, thousands of miles from their homeland. They will show up, they will show up in a community center or in a mental health clinic or some place and they will say, I remember that I am of these people, whoever those people may happen to be.

So, there are levels of the individual but there is the institutional, both private and public, for which an accounting is required and also a new narration that is brought forward. Then there are the cross-community conversations that would include non-Natives and would be best done on an individual basis. This would be on a relational basis, the people that you know and the people who know the people that you know.

So, designing this differently and to actually implement it almost at the same moment but not to use the blunt sword, I consider a public hearing to be a blunt sword. So we can't settle for the usual, the public hearing that would have certain testimonies and would have people who would have a time limit and things of that sort. That cannot be where all the focus happens to be.

Every person and descendant needs a way to be seen or heard, be it in community or on an individual basis. Some massive national effort will actually resolve many things if that is done in concert with this particular effort. I would also say that support teams who are going to be used for this are going to experience their own

trauma and they will need ways to deal with that and to deal with that in ways that are appropriate to their culture.

There is a narrative that is embedded within this Country that has reverberated to this day. Unless that narrative is rewritten, a new story is written, then these efforts will remain just within the government sphere of things.

I would say that it is useful for the United States Government to change its ways. But if your neighbor, who is non-Native, is not included in the new narrative and doesn't have a way forward, then I don't think much will change on the ground for the peoples of this place.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

I am going to ask one last question. I think it is yes or no.

Ms. WHITE HAWK. do you think this commission should have subpoena authority?

Ms. WHITE HAWK. Yes, I do, absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. Perfect. Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. MEDICINE CROW. I want to ask a question about how we are defining, or the criteria used to define Federal Indian boarding schools. Chief Francis, you kind of alluded to this at the end of your statement.

Certainly, in Alaska, we know that many of the boarding schools were affiliated with religious institutions. Apparently in Interior's report here, they say approximately 50 percent of Federal Indian boarding schools may have received support or involvement from a religious institution and that further, that the government, at times, paid religious institutions and organizations for Native children to enter Federal Indian boarding schools.

We have identified 21 schools in Alaska that we are calling Federal Indian boarding schools. But really, as we look at how big the State is and the role of religious institutions in these boarding schools, I kind of feel like that number might be low.

Would you care to comment on whether you think the Interior Department's criteria is adequately capturing the federally supported schools that we see in Alaska and elsewhere? Is there perhaps a better way to define Federal Indian boarding schools? When you have responded, maybe I will ask you, Chief Francis, to comment on the same thing. Go ahead, Liz.

Ms. MEDICINE CROW. Gunalchéesh for the question.

Yes, I think that what I even read within the Department of Interior's report acknowledges that their criteria was really limited, and as a result, we don't quite know how many actual boarding schools were in Alaska.

Right now, we know from the report there were 21, as you stated. But they also acknowledge there were over 1,000 different institutions across the Country that did not fit that criteria. So they did not include it in the report.

We know in Alaska that the orphanages, the boarding homes, were also subsidized by the Federal Government. Churches, in their own right, took it upon themselves to define areas in Alaska. During a convening, they came up with what we know today as the comity plan where the different churches sectioned up Alaska and each took a certain region of the State. Through that comity plan

those churches enacted their own efforts to assimilate our Native children.

Understanding the relationship between the churches and the Federal Government in that role is critical and I believe will come out through this commission process. From where I stand today, I do not think we have an accurate number yet of the institutions that were in Alaska.

The other thing I think is important to note is that a lot of Alaska Native children were sent out of State to boarding schools down south. We do not yet know the number of those children sent to these boarding schools or orphanages.

In one instance, there is another institution in Oregon called the Morningside Institute where mentally ill Alaskans were sent. A substantial number of them were Alaskan Natives and a number of them were Alaska Native children. Figuring out this entire kind of ecosystem of assimilative process is really critical. I think a very strict and narrow definition will limit our ability to really know the full story.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I appreciate the detail to that.

Chief Francis, do you agree that perhaps this definition is just too limiting, too narrow?

Mr. FRANCIS. Yes, I think so. As I stated in my testimony, the four criteria used in Interior's definition is much broader than the bill. I think this is why a solid, robust consultation process throughout this is going to be extremely important to understand what each tribal community's or each region's experiences were.

There are many ways that our children were affected by boarding schools, not just in the Federal system. What we found in our truth and reconciliation process in Maine was, we started the conversation about child welfare and then that child welfare conversation went into people's experiences as children in the Catholic church, we were raised, or whatever it may be.

It will inevitably broaden to a whole host of historical trauma, things related to the educational system for children. If we look at the State of New York, for example, we know there are three boarding schools there that are not considered Federal boarding schools, even throughout periods of time, throughout their history, they received significant Federal funding.

I think it is going to be extremely important to get that definition right. I think through a robust consultation process, the commission can begin to understand the diversity of institutions that contributed to these atrocities for Native kids.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Luján.

Senator LUJÁN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States poured enormous resources into Federal Indian boarding schools. By comparison, the Federal Government has invested less than \$400 million in recouping the very Native American languages they tried so hard to eradicate through these policies.

Mr. Chairman, it is my understanding that we still don't have an estimate of how much was spent by the United States into Federal Indian boarding schools. I am hopeful we can get that number so

when there is comparison and some may try to suggest it is too expensive to support these initiatives, people are able to take a look at how much was spent in trying to take away people's lives away, take language away, and to hurt people. I am hopeful we can work toward getting that number and finding ways to support initiatives like the Esther Martinez Immersion Program.

To each of the witnesses, yes or no, but if you care to expand, I would appreciate that as well. My question is, yes or no, in keeping with the initiative's recommendations, should Congress make bold, substantial investments in Native American language immersion, preservation, and maintenance programs? Chief?

Mr. FRANCIS. Absolutely, Senator. Thank you for that.

I do not know if we will ever be able to quantify the cultural damages from that era. But certainly every year, it should be the follow-up when we talk in the testimony about the follow-up being important to a commission report. It is critically important that we are having a budgetary conversation every year about addressing the cultural damages to tribes, language preservation, historic preservation.

Ultimately, it is going to be the Native communities that are going to be left to deal with the commission's report. It will inevitably open old wounds, it will be a difficult time and the communities are going to have to be able to support that historical trauma treatment. Unfortunately, resources are going to be a huge part of that success.

Senator LUJÁN. President White Hawk.

Ms. WHITE HAWK. Yes. I was thinking that there probably wasn't a discussion of the cost to try to eradicate the language. It would probably make sense, and for sure would make sense that Congress would invest in what it took to restore what was taken.

We often hear in our communities, people will say, we lost our language. I say, no, we did not lose it; it was taken. This was not something we did to ourselves; it was taken. It would make sense and I would support that.

As Chief Francis said, it will open up wounds. But in order for us to heal, we need to air out those wounds and replace them with the medicines we have within our ceremonies and songs, along with our mental health professionals who can help us as well. Most importantly, what was taken from us, our songs, our life ways, that will bring the healing when our wounds are open from that.

There was an elder that was one of my teachers, one of my most influential teachers in my life who said, we are a people well acquainted with grief. I have watched and seen that as we have gone into communities and listened to experiences and watched healing take place.

I heard Chairman Schatz mention possibly triggering our relatives, but I don't even like to use that word "trigger" because a trigger is on a gun. Why are we using possible language that leads to violence?

It does remind us that there is something that happens when the truth is spoken. It changes minds and changes hearts and gives strength to the individual who is being heard possibly for the first time in a way that will validate their experience. It is an incredible process to watch. I have been privileged to, over the last 20 years,

witness healing circles, truth circles, and it is definitely the way we need to be.

As a commissioner in Maine, Chief Francis was right, everything led back to boarding school, everything, because that is where the first disruption took place of our families, of our communities, of everything.

Restoring that begins that healing process. Most of all, it validates. I can't say it enough. I think of my own brother sharing what he is finally willing a little bit to talk about, of what he endured and my other relatives endured. Hearing it and shaking your head, singing a song. When that wound originally happened, nothing was there. They laid there in bed at night with nothing.

So hearing it, recounting it and the relatives being around, that is the healing process. From that, those who are listening can use their gifts and skills to say, wow, we need to do this to address this in our community, this would be helpful as we move forward. Our young people will take that next step for us as they listen and hear.

Thank you.

Senator LUJÁN. President Medicine Crow, yes or no?

Ms. MEDICINE CROW. Yes, absolutely.

Senator LUJÁN. Ms. Wong, yes or no?

Ms. WONG. Yes.

Senator LUJÁN. I appreciate that.

Mr. Chairman, my time has expired, but I have other questions I will submit into the record. Thank you for the time today. Thank you again to each of the witnesses for your courage and being here today. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Luján.

I will now recognize the Vice Chair for any closing remarks she may wish to provide.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank those who have come before the Committee for your testimony today, for your input, and for your advocacy for so many, knowing that it is personal for so many of you.

I would commend, Mr. Chairman, as this Committee is looking further into this investigation, the reports and what will follow, that what First Alaskans Institute has put in place with the tribunal and the summit on boarding and residential schools in Alaska, this process that allows for the stories to be heard, to provide for this source of healing, is something that hopefully others can look to as a process.

I hesitate to call it best practices, but I think oftentimes we look, where do we start, where do we begin, how can we allow for a safe space for the sharing, knowing that it won't just be words in a room but by sharing, that healing can begin.

I do recognize the heart that has gone into the effort by First Alaskans and how, in our State, we are beginning those slow steps, those initial steps. There is much to be done but I think we saw from those who have shared today we are in those beginning steps. There is much work to do and I appreciate the Committee's attention to this.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Vice Chair Murkowski.

I want to thank all of the testifiers for their incredible testimony, of course, but also their important work going forward. This will be the beginning of an ongoing process. There is no doubt about that.

It is important to remember that our government did this and that we like to think that only other governments in other places far away implemented such atrocities. It is literally hard to fathom that the United States Department of War and the United States Department of Interior removed children from their homes, punished them physically and abused them mentally and sexually. And many died.

This was an important first step. We are going to stay on this. All the Committee members are committed to this. I know the Secretary is. We will work with you, nothing about you, without you, to make sure we get this right.

Senator Hoeven.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN HOEVEN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH DAKOTA**

Senator HOEVEN. Mr. Chairman, if I could, I would like to ask Ms. White Hawk one question then I can submit other questions for the record as well.

As President of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, what are the next steps you feel should be taken following the release of this first volume of the study that was done?

Ms. WHITE HAWK. Until we hear our communities speak their experiences, that will define our next steps that we will take.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay. Very good. Thank you.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the witnesses being here. I will submit some questions for the record as well. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Hoeven.

If there are no more questions for our witnesses, members may also submit follow-up written questions for the record. The hearing record will remain open for one month.

I want to thank all the witnesses for their time and testimony. Mr. Fisher will now close this hearing.

[Closing ceremony.]

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:36 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE UNITED SOUTH AND EASTERN TRIBES SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

The United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is pleased to provide the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA) with the following testimony for the record of the March 16, 2022 oversight hearing, “Buy Native American: Federal Support for Native Business Capacity Building and Success.” During the 2022 State of the Union Address, President Biden renewed his Administration’s commitment to the ‘Buy American’ initiative, which was established by the January 2021 Executive Order 14005, “Ensuring the Future is Made in All of America by All of America’s Workers” (EO 14005). EO 14005 was issued to ensure that the federal government would invest taxpayer funds to support American businesses, workers, and manufacturers. However, the ‘Buy American’ initiative has not necessarily recognized and supported the contributions and production of goods and services by Tribal Nations and our businesses. The federal government must support our self-determined and sovereign rights to pursue initiatives for economic development that rebuild Tribal Nation economies.

For the ‘Buy American’ initiative to be successful, federal departments and agencies must remove regulatory barriers that hinder our ability to create economic opportunity for our businesses and entrepreneurs. This can be accomplished by broadening 638 self-determination compacting and contracting opportunities for Tribal Nations and utilizing ‘Buy American’ to purchase goods and services from Tribal Nations and businesses. This will support Tribal Nations and businesses to rebuild our economies and empower our initiatives to rebuild economic development and opportunity for our citizens. Additionally, the federal government must support Tribal economic parity by protecting our businesses from dual taxation, the restoration of Tribal homelands, and provide accessible opportunities for energy production and distribution.

USET Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is a non-profit, inter-tribal organization advocating on behalf of thirty-three (33) federally recognized Tribal Nations from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Mexico.¹ USET SPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and advancing the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations and in assisting its membership in dealing effectively with public policy issues.

Economic Development in Indian Country and the USET SPF Region

Prior to European contact, Tribal Nations, including our members, had a long history of dynamic economies and governance structures. Robust trade networks connected Tribal Nations and the goods we produced. As with other aspects of Tribal governance and infrastructure, the removal, termination, and assimilation policies of the United States government negatively impacted our traditional economic trade. Over the course of centuries, Tribal Nations ceded millions of acres of land and extensive resources to the U.S.—oftentimes by force—in exchange for which it

¹ USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chickahominy Indian Tribe (VA), Chickahominy Indian Tribe-Eastern Division (VA), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), , Mi’kmaq Nation (ME), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Monacan Indian Nation (VA), Nansemond Indian Nation (VA), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Rappahannock Tribe (VA), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe (VA) and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

is legally and morally obligated to provide benefits and services in perpetuity. Because of this historic and ongoing diplomatic relationship, the federal government has trust and treaty obligations to support Tribal self-governance and self-determination, along with rebuilding Tribal Nations and economies. Unfortunately, at no point has the federal government fully delivered upon and upheld these obligations.

In addition to being relegated to fractions of our original homelands, which can be in remote areas, Tribal Nations lack governmental parity in economic development opportunities and treatment under the U.S. tax code. The Federal Reserve Board of Governor's 2012 report, *Growing Economies in Indian Country*, outlined eight issues as fundamental challenges to realizing economic growth in Indian Country. USET SPF's member Tribal Nations, with few exceptions, face these same challenges, such as:

1. Insufficient access to capital;
2. Capacity and capital constraints of small business;
3. Insufficient workforce development, financial management training, and business education;
4. Tribal governance constraints;
5. Regulatory constraints on land held in trust and land designated as restricted use;
6. Underdeveloped physical infrastructure;
7. Insufficient research and data; and
8. Lack of regional collaboration

All Tribal Nations, especially USET SPF member Tribal Nations, vary in levels of economic activity, capacity, and development. Some Tribal Nations have decades of experience and familiarity with economic development initiatives, while some are just starting to pursue these initiatives. This diversity demands that federal policy not adopt a one-size-fits all approach in supporting Tribal Nations and businesses to pursue economic development initiatives to support our communities and engage in nation rebuilding.

Expand 'Buy American' to Include 'Buy Indian' Across the Federal Government

We appreciate SCIA's effort to examine the barriers Tribal Nations and businesses experience in accessing financial capital and marketplaces to produce and distribute Native goods, resources, and services. The 'Buy American' initiative must recognize Tribal Nations and businesses as economic development partners and direct federal agencies to actively purchase products manufactured, harvested, and produced by Native businesses and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the 'Buy American' initiative should be expanded to include federal government purchasing priorities outlined by the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of the Interior's 'Buy Indian Act' ('Buy Indian') regulations. More effective and expanded implementation of 'Buy Indian' regulations should be included in the 'Buy American' initiative and implemented across the federal government to ensure that all departments and agencies are prioritizing the purchase of goods and services from Tribal Nations and our businesses. This will support President Biden's 'Buy American' initiative and empower Tribal Nations and businesses to pursue economic development opportunities.

In June 2021, the Department of the Interior (DOI) hosted Tribal consultations on proposed revisions to its 'Buy Indian Act' regulations to increase contract preferences for Indian Small Business Economic Enterprises (ISBEEs) and Indian Economic Enterprises (IEEs). Proposed revisions also included updates on subcontracting to ensure consistency with Federal Acquisition Regulations and an update to the process for deviating from the 'Buy Indian Act' to ensure greater preference for IEEs. USET SPF submitted comments in support of DOI's proposed revisions to fulfill the intent of the law and recommended the expansion of the Act's provisions across the whole of the federal government. We reiterated these recommendations to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in response to its November 2020 rulemaking to update the department's 'Buy Indian' regulations. In addition to expanding 'Buy Indian' across the federal government, USET SPF also recommended that DOI and HHS increase internal accountability, communication, and compliance protocols to document and report on anticipated, pending, and completed ISBEE and IEE solicitations. Furthermore, we recommended that DOI and HHS develop ongoing evaluation mechanisms for 'Buy Indian' implementation by hosting annual Tribal Listening Sessions to receive feedback on successes and challenges with the Act's implementation. Federal agencies adopting 'Buy Indian' regulations

should also include these recommendations to ensure the purpose and intent of the law is meaningfully implemented to support Tribal Nations and our businesses.

Ensure Tribal Nation Economic Parity

With nearly every aspect of economic development regulated by the federal government, economic progress in Indian Country is often stymied with legal and regulatory burdens on Tribal Nations and businesses. These burdens have contributed to a perpetual cycle of social and economic hardships in our communities. Congress and the Administration must work to free Tribal Nations from over-burdensome laws and regulations that impede our social and economic success. This is especially important in an environment of the federal government's failures to uphold trust and treaty obligations to fully fund programs and services for Indian Country. Similar to other governments, Tribal Nations provide vital services to our people, which are funded by revenues generated by our businesses. The federal government, as well as state governments, should recognize and uphold Tribal Nation sovereignty and self-determination to pursue these economic development initiatives. These include efforts to support Native producers.

As it is for any other sovereign, economic sovereignty is essential to our ability to be self-determining and self-sufficient. The rebuilding of our Tribal Nation economies involves the rebuilding of our Tribal economies as a core foundation of healthy and productive communities. Building strong, vibrant, and mature economies is more than just business development. It requires comprehensive planning to ensure that our economies have the necessary infrastructure, services, and opportunities for our citizens to thrive. This results in stronger Tribal Nations and a stronger America.

The U.S. government has a responsibility to ensure that federal tax law treats Tribal Nations in a manner consistent with our sovereign governmental status, as reflected under the U.S. Constitution and numerous federal laws, treaties, and federal court decisions. With this in mind, we remain focused on the advancement of tax reform that would address inequities in the tax code and eliminate state dual taxation. Revenue generated within Indian Country continues to be taken outside our borders or otherwise falls victim to a lack of parity. Similarly, Tribal governments continue to lack many of the same benefits and flexibility offered to other units of government under the tax code. USET SPF continues to press Congress for changes to the U.S. tax code that would provide governmental parity and economic development to Tribal Nations.

This includes support for H.R. 4054, the Tribal Tax and Investment Reform Act, introduced by Representative Ron Kind on June 22, 2021. H.R. 4054 would specify the treatment of Tribal Nations as states with respect to bond issuance, modify the treatment of pension and employee benefit plans maintained by a Tribal Government, modify the treatment of Tribal foundations and charities, improve the effectiveness of Tribal child support enforcement agencies, and recognize Tribal governments for purposes of determining whether a child has special needs eligible for the adoption tax credit.

Protect Tribal Nations from Dual Taxation

Dual taxation hinders Tribal Nations from achieving our own revenue generating potential. Although Tribal Nations have authority to tax noncitizens doing business in Indian Country, when other jurisdictions can tax those same noncitizens for the same transactions, Tribal Nations must lower their taxes to keep overall pricing at rates the market can bear or forgo levying a tax at all. The application of an outside government's tax often makes the Tribal tax economically unfeasible.

Dual taxation undercuts the ability of Tribal Nations to offer tax incentives to encourage non-Indian business entities onto our lands to create jobs and stimulate Tribal economies. As long as outside governments tax non-Indian businesses on our lands—even if a Tribal government offers complete Tribal tax immunity to attract a new non-Indian business—that business is subject to the same state tax rate that is applicable outside our jurisdictional boundaries. As a matter of economic fairness, we ask that you work with us to support and advance initiatives that would bring certainty in tax jurisdiction to Tribal Lands by confirming the exclusive, sovereign authority of Tribal governments to assess taxes on all economic activities occurring within our jurisdictional boundaries.

Support Tribal Nation and Business Development in the Energy Sector

USET SPF member Tribal Nations, and our respective Tribal Lands and energy resources, are located within a large region that presents diverse geographical environments and opportunities for both conventional and renewable energy development. Our member Tribal Nations could benefit from the unlocked potential of those energy resources and realize energy development goals through appropriate Con-

gressional and administrative action and investment in Indian Country, particularly to promote balanced geographical representation and inclusion of USET SPF member Tribal Nations in energy programs. USET SPF has established its energy priorities, as follows:

- Promote Tribal self-determination and control of natural resources and energy assets to make conservation and development decisions that preserve Tribal sovereignty, protect Tribal assets, and achieve economic independence, job creation, and improvement of Tribal members' standard of living;
- Promote Tribal capacity building efforts involving multiple federal agencies, universities, and the private sector;
- Reform core federal programs, expertise, and funding to support Tribal energy resource development and market access; and
- Remove barriers to the deployment of Tribal energy resources, such as bureaucratic processes, insufficient access to financial incentives, and interconnection to and transmission on the power grid.

Enacting legislation and developing regulations to support these initiatives will advance the energy capabilities of Tribal Nations and translate into beneficial economic and health and wellness outcomes for our communities.

Restoration of Tribal Homelands

Possession of a land base is a core aspect of sovereignty, cultural identity, and represents the foundation of a government's economy. That is no different for Tribal Nations. USET SPF Tribal Nations continue to work to reacquire our homelands, which are fundamental to our existence as sovereign governments and our ability to thrive as vibrant, healthy, self-sufficient communities. And as our partner in the trust relationship, it is incumbent upon the federal government to prioritize the restoration of our land bases. The federal government's objective in the trust responsibility and obligations to our Nations must be to support healthy and sustainable self-determining Tribal governments, which fundamentally includes the restoration of lands to all federally-recognized Tribal Nations, as well as the legal defense of these land acquisitions. With this in mind, USET SPF continues to call for the immediate Senate consideration and passage of a fix to the Supreme Court decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar*.

Support Self-Governance Contracting and Compacting for Tribal Nations

Tribal Nations are political, sovereign entities whose status stems from the inherent sovereignty we have as self-governing peoples that pre-dates the founding of the United States. The U.S. Constitution, treaties, statutes, Executive Orders, and judicial decisions all recognize that the federal government has a fundamental trust relationship to Tribal Nations, including the obligation uphold the right to self-government. Our federal partners must fully recognize the inherent right of Tribal Nations to fully engage in self-governance, so we may exercise full decisionmaking in the management of our own affairs and governmental services.

Despite the success of Tribal Nations in exercising authority under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), as well as the recently enacted Practical Reforms and Other Goals to Reinforce the Effectiveness of Self-Governance and Self-Determination (PROGRESS) for Indian Tribes Act, the goals of self-governance have not been fully realized. Many opportunities still remain to improve and expand upon its principles. An expansion of Tribal self-governance to all federal programs under ISDEAA would be the next evolutionary step in the federal government's recognition of Tribal sovereignty and reflective of its full commitment to Tribal Nation sovereignty and self-determination.

As was discussed during the hearing, this includes an expansion of ISDEAA into federal nutrition programs. The 2018 Farm Bill authorized a demonstration project for Tribal Nations to pursue 638 contract and compact opportunities under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638) for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). This 638 authority should be expanded to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other vital federally administered nutrition programs. Tribal Nations, like other units of government, are responsible for providing essential services to our citizens, which includes those related to nutrition and health and wellness. Tribal Nations have demonstrated that we have the capacity to fully administer SNAP programs to Tribal citizens, as we have been administering far more complex federal programs for decades. However, and in spite of a 2014 USDA feasibility study, Tribal Nations continue to be excluded from administering SNAP and other nutrition programs under P.L. 93-638 contracting and compacting. USET SPF joins Tribal Nations and organizations across the country

in calling upon SCIA and Congress to ensure that Tribal sovereignty and self-determination for federal nutrition programs is made a reality, including as part of the next Farm Bill reauthorization.

In addition, we urge that P.L. 93-638 authority also be extended to forestry programs at USDA. When Tribal Nations manage our own forests, we are able to prioritize traditionally harvested plants and animals that provide vital elements of a healthy Indigenous diet.

Conclusion

Economic insecurity in Indian Country is a symptom of the larger issues we face as Tribal Nations, due, in large part, to the failure of the U.S. government to live up to the terms of our diplomatic, Nation-to-Nation relationship. Development and implementation of policies and programs that recognize and uphold our inherent sovereignty and fulfill trust and treaty obligations are necessary to alleviate economic hardship, rebuild Tribal Nations, and improve the quality of life for our citizens and communities. Congress must continue to support and fully fund federal programs that encourage economic development and the rebuilding of Tribal economies. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Committee on economic policy that better honors federal trust and treaty obligations while upholding our inherent sovereignty.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS

Casey Family Programs was founded in 1966 and is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on providing and improving—and ultimately preventing the need for—foster care. Casey Family Programs' perspectives are informed by our own experiences working with child welfare agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and with 16 American Indian tribal nations on child welfare policies and practices to improve outcomes for children and families. Casey Family Programs partners with child welfare systems, policymakers, youth and families, community organizations, national partners, philanthropy, American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, and courts to support practices and policies that increase the safety and success of children and strengthen the resilience of families.

We believe that families are the foundation of every community, and every family should have the ability to thrive with the support of a caring community. All families have strengths, and all families need support. Casey Family Programs has spent the last 55 years working to bring hope and opportunity to families across this nation regardless of the ZIP code or community where they live. We will continue to work with others in our commitment to anti-racism, anti-discrimination and equity. We will continue to be motivated by our belief in the intrinsic dignity and value of every person. We will continue to strive for fairness and justice in the way people are treated across America and the opportunities they are given to succeed. As a nation, we must create a world where our children's lives are no longer cut short by America's history of systemic racism and inequitable treatment. We should do everything we can to keep families strong, including our children and families in American Indian and Alaska Native tribes.

Our Indian child welfare work began in the mid-1980s and grew to include teams that worked in Bismarck and Fort Berthold, North Dakota, and Martin, Pine Ridge, Rapid City and Rosebud, South Dakota. Over time, Casey Family Programs worked to transform from a foundation-led and -funded operation to a tribally chartered Indian child welfare program.

In 1999, Casey Family Programs opened our Denver office, where the Indian Child Welfare Program is based today, employing 12 staff to work directly with tribes. Other teams within our organization, including our research, knowledge management, and public policy divisions, work with the Indian Child Welfare Program to support their efforts.

Our Indian Child Welfare Program currently works on national and tribal initiatives that aim to strengthen tribal nations' capacity to keep children healthy, safe and connected with their families, communities and cultures. We partner with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes across the country to support their development and administration of effective and culturally responsive child welfare systems. The Indian Child Welfare Program staff work directly with tribes, providing consultation and technical assistance on implementing child welfare programs. Casey Family Programs has agreements with 16 tribes that honor tribal sovereignty, support nation-building efforts, and help build partnerships with the broader child welfare profession.

Beginning in 2012 and continuing today, we have also supported 9 professional staff to work on tribal issues in several presidential administrations under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) in the White House Community Solutions Team, several divisions of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minnesota. The Casey Family Programs' IPAs bring unique perspectives and expertise on American Indian and Alaska Native child welfare to their assigned divisions and serve between one and three years funded by Casey.

In Washington State, Casey Family Programs is collaborating in a small tribal-state work group that is focusing on a comprehensive rewrite of Washington State's child welfare policies and procedures that pertain to Native children and families in the state child welfare system with a particular emphasis on enhancing effective tribal involvement in cases involving their children. Six tribal representatives and eight representatives from the state of Washington are part of the work group. The work group has completed its analysis and recommended revisions are now being reviewed by leadership of the Washington State Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), after which a formal tribal consultation process will take place before they are finalized.

We are currently working in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Tulsa Oklahoma, and Billings, Montana and 13 other jurisdictions to help create Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) courts to meet the specific issues of active efforts and support keeping American Indian children with family and tribes. Research on the Arizona ICWA court highlight that such courts promote greater tribal involvement and collaboration to enhance support and improve outcomes for ICWA families.¹

In 2019, Casey Family Programs worked with the North Dakota Department of Human Services and four Native American tribal nations to sign updated comprehensive agreements to enhance child welfare services for American Indian children and families. Under the agreements, the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation; the Spirit Lake Nation; the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe; and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa will receive state grants funded by federal Title IV-E reimbursements to support an enhanced array of child welfare services, expanded subsidized adoption services and the subsidized guardianship program. In addition, the updated agreements offer access to prevention services under the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, which realigns federal funding to strengthen families and protect children.²

In 2017, the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact was signed as a one-of-a-kind landmark government-to-government agreement between the State of Alaska and Alaska Tribes and Tribal organizations that recognizes the Tribes' inherent authority to oversee placement of their children and provide child welfare services—including conducting child welfare investigations, assigning placement of children in out-of-home care, and licensing foster homes, among other things. This umbrella agreement broadly defines the services and support that are to be conducted by each Tribe (Co-Signer) within their service area and memorializes how information and resources are shared between the State and each Co-Signer. This unique Compact has been created in the hopes of reducing the disproportionate number of Alaska Native children in State custody and improving the lives of Alaska Native families state-wide. At its inception, 18 Alaska Native tribes or tribal organizations were part of the new compact, and negotiations to add others are done on an annual basis. We are proud to have worked with the tribes and State on this historic program. Casey Family Programs has continued to support this work by providing research, convenings and other supports to the compact. In July 2022, Casey Family Programs was officially added to the compact and will offer ongoing support for tracking negotiations, outreach, and strategic planning.

In 2015, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS), in partnership with Casey Family Programs conducted a pilot project to identify practice trends related to compliance with the federal and Oklahoma Indian Child Welfare acts. The Indian Child Welfare Act Snapshot report describes a review of cases involving American Indian children in foster care performed by a subcommittee of the Oklahoma Tribal State Collaboration Workgroup. A "real-time snapshot" of Indian Child Welfare Act cases in Oklahoma DHS Region 4 was conducted to evaluate Indian Child Welfare Act practices by DHS staff and state courts, involvement by tribal

¹Korthase, A., Gatowski, S.I., & Erickson, M. (2021). Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Courts: A Tool for Improving Outcomes for American Indian Children and Families. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

²North Dakota Human Services Press Release, *North Dakota and tribal nations sign updated comprehensive agreements enhancing child welfare services for Native American children and families*, September 6, 2019.

child welfare program staff in Indian Child Welfare Act cases, and collaboration between state and tribal child welfare workers. Due to the high number of American Indian children in the state foster care system in Oklahoma, compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act and state/tribal collaborative efforts are crucial factors in improving outcomes for those children and their families. The project findings indicate varying levels of strengths and weaknesses in Indian Child Welfare Act practices by CWS, state courts and tribes in one DHS region.³ Using the data from the Snapshot, the Oklahoma Partnership won one of three Indian Child Welfare Act Implementation Grants in 2016 that ends in September 2022. The grants are expected to improve the safety, permanency and well-being of American Indian children and families through early identification, increased communication, and collaboration.⁴

Tribal data

American Indian and Alaska Native children are overrepresented nationally in all stages of the child welfare system, and disparate outcomes for these children have been well documented for decades. Overrepresentation of American Indian and Alaska Native children starts early in the child welfare process. It begins with who is reported to child protective services and remains a profound issue at every subsequent decision point, including the initial screening of reports, decisions about whether to substantiate allegations of abuse or neglect, removal of children from their homes, and permanency outcomes for children in foster care and beyond. American Indian and Alaska Native children are disproportionately more likely to be victims of maltreatment and to be in foster care than the general population of children with approximately 15 children per 1,000 placed in care, the highest of all minorities in 2020 data. This data also shows that 52 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native children in foster care are placed with non-Native Families despite Indian Child Welfare Act guidelines of active efforts to keep American Indian children with their families and tribes.⁵

Understanding the need to improve outcomes for American Indian children, Casey Family Programs collaborated with 21 teams of tribal and state representatives to work together over a one-year period to develop strategies to recruit and retain more tribal homes for American Indian children to fulfill the intention of the Indian Child Welfare Act to preserve cultural connections between 2014 and 2017. The project led to the publication of a detailed brief outlining the four essential strategy areas for effective recruitment and retention of the Indian Child Welfare Act-preferred caregivers. The first strategy identified is to build tribal and state agency infrastructure and resources for a foundation for successful collaborative recruitment and retention efforts. State agencies practices also should generate ideas and strategies and put a team's recruitment and retention efforts into action. State and federal policy have a strong influence on agency and judicial practice in making Indian Child Welfare Act-preferred placements for American Indian and Native Alaskan children. Raising awareness about the importance of Indian Child Welfare Act-preferred placement and strategies can lead to better compliance with the law.⁶

In 2019, Casey Family Programs published some encouraging data on American Indian and Native Alaskan children based on changing trends from 2010 to 2016. The percent of American Indian and Native Alaskan children in care who are placed with kin has increased from 27 percent in 2010 to 35 percent in 2016. The percentage of American Indian and Native Alaskan children placed with kin is higher when compared to Black/African American children (31 percent in 2016) or White children (32 percent in 2016). We know that placement with kin not only minimizes the trauma of removal, but increases the likelihood of remaining connected to siblings, families of origin and community, which improves overall well-being. In addition, children in kinship care have been found to experience fewer behavioral and mental health challenges, lower rates of re-abuse and less placement disruption.

Alternatively, the percent of American Indian and Native Alaskan children placed in congregate care settings has declined from 13 percent in 2010 to 8 percent in 2016. This reduction is greater for American Indian and Native Alaskan children when compared to Black/African American children or White children (12 percent). The percent of American Indian and Native Alaskan children exiting care who age out each year declined from 8 percent in 2010 to 6 percent in 2016. This decline is greater compared to the trend for African American children (11 percent in 2016)

³ Casey Family Programs, Indian Child Welfare Act Snapshot: A Pilot Review of ICWA Practice in Oklahoma, November 2015

⁴ Casey ICWA Partnership Summary, Casey Family Programs, 2022.

⁵ National AFCARS files obtained from National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDANCA) at Cornell University

⁶ Casey Family Programs, Preserving Connections: Best Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Tribal Foster Families for American Indian and Alaska Native Children, February 28, 2018.

and White children (7 percent in 2016).⁷ Such data highlights the potential for genuine progress with a sustained focus on the need for tribal children to remain connected to their families and their tribes.

Casey Family Programs research

In 2013, Casey Family Programs collaborated with the University of Oklahoma to examine the effectiveness of the SafeCare model with American Indian families. Researchers found that SafeCare was equally effective at reducing repeated child welfare involvement among American Indian parents as it was among other groups. In addition, American Indian parents receiving SafeCare reported reductions in depression and higher ratings of cultural competence, working alliance, and service quality and benefit than American Indian parents receiving services as usual. The study findings counteract concerns that structured evidence-based models that require certain elements such as formal manuals may not be compatible with American Indian culture and, and thus, not as effective as other approaches.⁸ This research study helped provide important clarifications and can be helpful to tribes and state agencies hoping to fund prevention services under the Family First Prevention and Services Act to support work with the tribes.

Conclusion

At the Senate Committee hearing on June 22, 2021, the Honorable Kirk Francis, Chief Penobscot Indian Nation, Indian Island, Maine testified about the successful process between the Maine tribes and the State agency that has led to better and sustained outcomes for Native Indian children. He said that success depends upon the commitment of both sides to work together, and Casey Family Programs stands ready to support other states on such collaborations.

Given Casey Family Programs' approach of working directly with tribes and having specific consulting relationships with every State child welfare agency, Casey is uniquely poised to support the goal of preventing "the continued removal of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children from their families and Native communities under modern-day assimilation practices carried out by State social service departments, foster care agencies, and adoption services."⁹

*Attachments have been retained in the Committee files.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE STANDING ROCK SIOUX TRIBE

Introduction

Chairman Schatz, Vice Chairman Murkowski, and Members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe appreciates the opportunity to testify on Senator Elizabeth Warren's bill S. 2907, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. The Tribe strongly supports S. 2907. Consideration of S. 2907 by the Committee comes at a critical time in the history of the United States and Indian tribes.

Last month, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland released Volume One of an investigative report called for as a part of the Federal Boarding School Initiative. The Initiative is an important effort to investigate, study and address the impacts and legacy of federal boarding school laws, policies, and practices. Through this investigation the Federal government must document its devastating laws and policies promoting assimilation and taking of tribal lands through forced removal of Indian children.

Only by addressing this past can we begin to address the intergenerational trauma that impacts our tribal members and much of Indian Country. Pursuant to federal laws and policies practices at these schools included renaming our children and youth with English names, cutting the hair of youth, discouraging the use of our languages, religions, and cultural practices, and organizing youth to perform military drills. The Federal Indian boarding school system also included manual labor as a significant part of school curricula.

This had a deadly impact on our youth. Our relatives who were forcibly removed from their loving homes and families and placed in boarding schools suffered physical, emotional, and psychological abuse. They succumbed to illness, disease, and death due to the conditions of the schools. These children and our Tribe have suf-

⁷ Casey Family Programs, Native American and Alaska Native Children Data Trends, January 2, 2019.

⁸ Casey Family Programs, SafeCare: Evidence-based Neglect Prevention Model Shows Effectiveness with American Indians, December 3, 2013.

⁹ Senator Elizabeth Warren, bill text S. 2907 Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy Act, September 30, 2021.

ferred a loss of our culture and language due to the boarding schools' assimilation efforts. This systemic dispossession needs to be fully investigated in order to establish efforts to address the harmful impact to our people.

Support for S. 2907, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act

S. 2907 would build upon the efforts of Secretary Haaland, Assistant Secretary Newland and Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. This process will be long and difficult, but we deserve a thorough and complete investigation that documents how many Indian Boarding Schools were established, how many Indian children attended these schools, what tribal nations they came from, and how many died or went missing as a result of these tragic policies. We must work together to uncover this information and begin the healing process by returning our ancestors taken from our families and communities. Only through truth and healing can our Tribe recover from this tragic history and begin to end the effects of the Indian Boarding School System for our people.

S. 2907 would establish and empower a federal Commission to investigate all federal agencies, church-operated schools, and private enterprises involved in implementing and providing for Indian Boarding Schools. S. 2907 would also establish and hold culturally relevant public hearings for survivors, victims, and tribal communities to testify and discuss the impact of the physical, psychological and spiritual violence at the Indian Boarding Schools. We strongly support all of these efforts and ask that Congress pass S. 2907.

Accountability for Treatment of Native Children and Historical Trauma

Starting in 1819 with the Indian Civilization Fund Act, the federal government collaborated with and empowered churches and private entities to establish hundreds of Indian Boarding Schools. Then in 1879, the federal government launched an official policy to forcibly remove Indian children from their families and tribal communities and place them in residential boarding schools. The Department of Interior found 408 Federal Indian Boarding Schools were created between 1918 and 1969.¹ In addition over 1,000 other Federal and non-Federal institutions were established to educate and assimilate Indian children.²

These military-style schools separated Indian children from their families, forced the adoption of Christian religions, values, and customs, and forbade our youth from using native languages and customs with the goal of eradicating their Indian identities. Congress often funded religious institutions or missionary organizations on a per capita basis for Indian children enrolled in their institutions.³ The intent of these measures and supporting federal policies was expressed by U.S. Captain Richard H. Pratt who established the primary model for all off-reservation boarding schools. In his writings, Pratt developed and advocated for policies based on his idea of "kill the Indian to save the man."

In fact, many Indian youth died as a result of federal Indian boarding school policies and practices. Based on initial investigations, Interior estimates that approximately 19 Federal Indian boarding schools accounted for the death of over 500 American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian youth.⁴ The Department expects the number of recorded deaths to increase as its investigation continues.⁵ As a part of this investigation and to help our communities heal, we need to identify where our youth are buried and we need to bring them home.

Indian Boarding Schools Impacting the Standing Rock Tribe

Standing Rock Tribal Members were sent to boarding schools across the country. Many of our members attended one of the boarding schools located in North or South Dakota. The Department of the Interior identified twelve federal Indian boarding schools in North Dakota that operated at fourteen different locations and thirty federal Indian boarding schools in South Dakota.⁶ These schools all received federal support to provide on-site boarding of Indian children for academic, vocational, and religious instruction. Some of these schools were located on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, including St. Bernard's Mission School, St. Elizabeth's School, Grand River Boarding School, and St. Benedict Mission School. Many of

¹Department of Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, Volume 1, p. 6.

²*Id.* p. 7.

³*Id.*

⁴*Id.* p. 9.

⁵*Id.*

⁶*Id.*, Appendix A, List of Federal Indian Boarding Schools as of April 1, 2022.

these boarding schools in North and South Dakota are still in existence, but now operated by the Bureau of Indian Education or by tribes.

This past year we supported our Oceti Sakowin relatives from the Rosebud Sioux Tribe as they brought home their ancestors who perished at the Carlisle Indian Boarding School. Standing Rock Tribal Members also attended the Carlisle Indian School and may be among the hundreds of children, some of whom are buried in unmarked graves, that lost their lives there due to illness and harsh living conditions. S. 2907 would seek to obtain information about our children that attended schools such as Carlisle and assist us in bringing them back home.

While Carlisle Indian School is located on federal lands and subject to the provisions of NAGPRA, many children who died at boarding schools located on non-Federal land will not be provided the same protections and process to allow family members and Tribes to bring them home for a proper burial. The Standing Rock Tribe hopes that S. 2907 will identify a means to address the loopholes currently existing in NAGPRA that prevent us from retrieving our youth so they can be put to rest with honor, remembrance, and ceremony. We need to ensure that the remains of our children who so tragically lost their lives far away from their homes will be protected and returned.

Ability to Obtain Records and Information from Federal and Non-Federal Entities

The Commission on Truth and Healing established by S. 2907 would only be effective in achieving its mission if the Commission is provided with the authority to compel non-Federal organizations, such as religious organizations and churches, to provide information needed by the Commission. To date, many efforts have been made to investigate and collect information on Indian boarding schools, however little progress has been made due to the inability to compel organizations to release information that may be in their possession. If there is to be any healing, these findings cannot be covered up or ignored on any level. Standing Rock supports providing the Commission with subpoena power or some other means to work with other Committees to timely obtain information necessary to uncover the truth of the boarding school history.

Advancement of Native Language Revitalization

In an effort to heal from the trauma created by the boarding school era, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and its programs and agencies have made a commitment to Lakota and Dakota language revitalization. We have a Culture and Language Department located in the Tribal Education Department that supports this effort and a Lakota Dakota Immersion School housed at Sitting Bull College. We hope that S. 2907 and Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative to investigate the legacy of Indian Boarding Schools will help to garner support for the development and expansion of culture and language programs to assist us with healing and restoring our culture and language.

Conclusion

If we are going to have any chance at moving past this dark history, it must start with an awareness and understanding of the harm caused by the federal government, churches, and private groups who advocated for and implemented these disastrous policies. We hope that the parallel efforts S. 2907 and Interior's Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools will promote efforts for the streamlined and efficient return of our ancestors to their home to be buried in a respectful and culturally-appropriate manner. We have all endured more than a century of trauma from this federal family separation policy.

The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, S. 2907, would provide important additional authority to support Interior's Indian Boarding School Initiative. The Tribe strongly supports expanding Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative beyond federal boarding schools to include church-operated schools or private enterprises that benefited from Indian children attending these institutions.

All of these efforts are needed to begin the healing process that our Tribe and all of Indian Country desperately needs. Truth and reconciliation are needed for all of these schools to this day. We cannot wait any longer to start the healing process.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JASON DROPIK, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (NIEA)

Dear Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record regarding S. 2907 the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.” We are the nation’s most inclusive organization advocating for improved educational opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. Our mission is to ensure that Native students have access to a high-quality, culturally based education. We represent Native students, educators, families, communities, and tribes across the country.

The Federal Trust Relationship

Since its inception, NIEA’s work has centered on improving Native students’ educational experience, a feat that is possible only if Congress upholds its federal trust responsibility to tribes. Established through treaties, federal law, and U.S. Supreme Court decisions, this relationship includes a fiduciary obligation to provide parity in access and equal resources to all American Indian and Alaska Native students, regardless of where they attend school.

However, as demonstrated by Volume 1 of the Department of Interior’s “Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report,” the federal government has repeatedly failed to uphold this trust responsibility by funding and operating at least 408 Indian boarding schools that weaponized education to force assimilation resulting in cultural genocide. For more than 150 years, the federal Indian boarding school system systematically robbed Native communities of our languages, cultural practices, and traditional knowledge through physically, sexually, emotionally, and spiritually abusive practices. The legacies of these schools continue to harm the well-being of Native communities today.

Indian Boarding School Legacy and Native Education Today

Research has shown that Native students thrive when their languages and cultures are a core component of their educational experience. The forced assimilation enacted by the federal Indian boarding school system has made it more difficult for Native communities today to integrate those linguistic and cultural components, negatively impacting Native students’ academic development. Additionally, the patterns of abuse and neglect that started in Federal Indian boarding schools have influenced the modern Bureau of Indian Education-operated schools. These schools often report abysmal structural conditions and chronically low achievement outcomes that threaten the physical, mental, and academic well-being of their students, much like their predecessors.

Furthermore, the intergenerational trauma caused by the federal Indian boarding school system has disrupted healing processes for many Native communities. Disproportionately high rates of poverty, PTSD, and youth suicide, as well as weakened familial and tribal structures have deep roots in the boarding school system. In order to heal current and future generations, it is imperative that we understand the complete history and legacy of the Federal Indian boarding school system. For this reason, NIEA calls on the Committee on Indian Affairs to report out S. 2907 and advance it to a vote on the floor. The Natural Resources Committee of the House companion bill, H.R. 5444 was reported out on June 15, 2022.

It is essential that the Truth and Healing Commission established under S. 2907 has the financial and legal power to fully and completely investigate the horrors of the boarding school era. Therefore, NIEA urges the Committee to protect S. 2907 from any amendments that would limit the Commission’s subpoena power. Without subpoena power, the Commission will not be able to accurately assess the true extent of the damage enacted by the boarding school system or the extent to which this historical trauma continues to affect Native communities today.

NIEA further urges the Committee to protect S. 2907 from amendments that would limit the Commission’s funding in any way, such as those that would restrict the financial compensation provided to Commission members. Historically, Congress financially backed policies that attempted to terminate Native cultures, languages, and ways of knowing. Today, Congress must financially back policies that promote reconciliation and healing as S. 2907 does.

Conclusion

Establishing a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies through legislative action will ensure that this critical work continues regardless of changes in Presidential Administration. Therefore, with these recommendations, NIEA looks forward to working with you and your staff to ultimately pass S. 2907, a bill that responds to the needs of the only students that the federal government has a direct responsibility to support—Native students. Thank you for considering this written testimony for the record.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NATIONAL INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ASSOCIATION

The National Indian Child Welfare Association would like to thank Senator Warren and Senator Murkowski and the many other Senate co-sponsors of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act in the United States (S. 2907). As we witness the international shock and outrage at the identification of mass burial sites and unmarked graves of First Nations children in Canada who were residents of residential schools, we see the parallels to the boarding school policies and experiences in the United States and the accounts from survivors of the horrific abuse and conditions they were subjected to. The legacy of those policies and practices is evident in Native communities all across the United States today. This legislation is critical to revealing the truth about the individual and collective trauma that was imposed upon Native communities and furthering the process of healing for all Native people.

NICWA's testimony will focus on:

- The impact of the boarding school experience upon American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children, families, and communities and its influence on the overrepresentation of AI/AN children in state foster care systems.
- The consequences of the boarding school experience and associated trauma that leaves AI/AN children and families more susceptible to public and private child welfare system involvement.
- The role of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and kinship care in addressing systemic bias and historical trauma through recognizing tribal sovereignty and self-determination over child welfare.
- Tribal-defined and trauma-informed solutions that effectively address safety, healing, and connection to family, community, and culture.

NICWA is a national American Indian/Alaska Native nonprofit organization located in Portland, Oregon. NICWA has over 40 years of experience providing technical assistance and training to tribes, states, and federal agencies on issues that impact Indian child welfare and children's mental health. NICWA provides leadership in the development of public policy that supports tribal self-determination in child welfare and children's mental health systems as well as compliance with ICWA (25 USC 1901 et seq.). We are frequently engaged in work to assist tribal leaders in establishing and operating effective governance structures that support tribal sovereignty and effective oversight and decisionmaking in child welfare, emphasizing the important role that tribal governments play in fostering community-driven and culturally based solutions to child abuse and neglect. NICWA also engages in research that supports and informs improved services for AI/AN children and families. NICWA is the nation's most comprehensive source of information on AI/AN child maltreatment and child welfare.

Boarding School Experience—An Avenue to Overrepresentation in the Child Welfare System

To fully comprehend the issue of child maltreatment among AI/AN children, it is essential to first understand that many of the risk factors for child maltreatment in AI/AN communities are linked to historic governmental policies and practices. From the 1860's through the 1970s, the federal government and private agencies established and operated Indian boarding schools in which Indian children were involuntarily taken from their families and often taken far away from their communities, often for years at a time (Crofoot, 2005; Cross et al., 2000), severing traditional child-rearing practices and belief systems and extended family networks that were relied upon to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. Harsh assimilationist policies not only took children away from their families and placed them in Indian boarding schools but aimed to further separate families from their culture. In the 1950s and 1960s, the federal government continued attempts to assimilate tribal communities by passing termination and relocation policies that ended the federal-tribal relationship for many tribes, provided states with expanded jurisdiction on tribal lands, and highly encouraged Indian people to leave their tribal communities and relocate to urban areas, continuing the erosion of protections and supports and disrupting tribal governments, cultural practices, and family structures. And while self-determination policies of the federal government began to relax more severe assimilationist federal policies in the 1960's, federal and state governments largely pushed against opportunities for enhanced self-governance, which can be seen in the passage of Public Law 280 in the 1950's that encroached upon tribal exclusive jurisdiction and required concurrent criminal and civil jurisdiction with the state. This is important to acknowledge because continued institutional barriers to tribal sov-

ereignty and self-determination only impeded the healing process for tribal communities.

Due to prolonged institutionalization and the harsh discipline tactics instilled by boarding schools, parents and grandparents were unable to experience positive, culturally based models of family life and family discipline (Crofoot, 2005), increasing the risk of Indian families reverting to punitive discipline and child maltreatment, similar to what was experienced and reinforced in Indian boarding schools. The time that AI/AN children spent in boarding schools led to the deterioration of traditional understandings of child-rearing practices and protection that were once the responsibility of entire communities, not just the child's birth parents. Without natural helping systems in place, children were left vulnerable to state and federal control. By the time the involuntary boarding school experience had faded in the 1970's, it had created conditions within AI/AN families that made these families vulnerable to involvement in public and private child welfare systems that often utilized bias and mainstream assimilationist practices to remove large numbers of AI/AN children from their families and place them in homes outside of their communities and culture.

Boarding School Trauma and Influence on Risk Factors for Involvement in Child Welfare Systems

Beginning in the 1960s, public and private agencies involuntarily removed hundreds of AI/AN children from their homes and placed them in non-Indian homes far away from their families and tribes (Cross et al., 2000). While this separation of children from their families occurred within a different system than that of boarding schools, it certainly took on similar patterns of forced separation and surfaced around the same time that involuntary boarding school placements began to decrease. In a 1970s study, the Association on American Indian Affairs found that between 25 percent and 35 percent of all Indian children had been separated from their families, and approximately 85 percent of the children removed were placed in non-Indian homes (Indian Child Welfare Program, 1974). Today, AI/AN children remain overrepresented in state foster care at a rate 2.66 times greater than their proportion of the general population; in particular, AI/AN children represent 1 percent of all children in the U.S. but account for 2.7 percent of all children placed outside of their homes in foster care (Puzzanchera et al., 2022). This disproportionality only increases as an AI/AN child moves deeper into the system, leading to further traumatic experiences among AI/AN children, families, and communities, and undermining efforts to improve child welfare outcomes among tribal families. A national study found that AI/AN children are two times more likely to be investigated, two times more likely to have allegations of abuse or neglect substantiated, and four times more likely to be placed in foster care than Caucasian/White children (Hill, 2007). This reveals persistent concerns around systemic bias, lack of training in cross-cultural care, policy-related barriers, and other structural inequities that place AI/AN children at higher risk of experiencing abuse or neglect.

While there is limited information available on the specific risk factors for child maltreatment among AI/AN families, national statistics show that AI/AN families are particularly vulnerable to child maltreatment, which may be understood by several interconnected factors, including but not limited to household poverty, joblessness, inadequate housing, social isolation, and high rates of victimization. These factors can be directly correlated to assimilationist policies that aimed to socially and economically isolate reservations and urban Indian communities. Similar to past efforts of involuntary removal and placement of children in boarding schools, AI/AN children continue to experience disparate treatment in public and private child welfare systems, a perpetual cycle of loss and isolation from family, community, and culture. Further, when the human brain is exposed to repeat traumatic events such as these, areas of the brain that play an important role in stress response become dysregulated and can alter a person's capacity to cope with the profound effects of trauma on memory, regulatory functioning, and stimuli response (van der Kolk, 2000). Therefore, a person's capacity to provide for their own safety becomes compromised as hypervigilance kicks in when the stress response system is unable to regulate itself back to a safe place that is absent of threat. When unable to self-regulate, a person can become emotionally withdrawn and participate in avoidance behaviors like substance abuse to prevent re-exposure to the existing unresolved trauma. For children, without the presence of a supportive and responsive adult to act as a buffer, repeat exposure to prolonged adversity among children, known as toxic stress, can disrupt brain development and other organ systems, lead to cognitive impairment, and increase risk for disease into adulthood ("Toxic Stress," n.d.). The presence of a supportive and responsive adult can act as a buffer to childhood adversity, however, the far-reaching effects of trauma both historically and present-

day among AI/AN communities requires comprehensive, community-based solutions to addressing trauma.

Traumatic events like forced displacement and the boarding school experience, which subjected children to harsh discipline, child abuse, infectious disease, isolation, and extreme mental and emotional trauma, can be passed down through generations (Cross, 2005; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998) and resurface in many ways, including but not limited to increased mental health disorders, stress, social isolation, and substance abuse; all of which are risk factors for child maltreatment and could result in interactions with the child welfare system. Without commitment to ensuring AI/AN children and families have access to culturally appropriate support services, children and families will have to find other coping mechanisms to manage the emotional, physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, and developmental impacts of compounding traumatic experiences. To break the cycle of trauma and create a path for healing among AI/AN children, families, and communities, the continued legacy of harm by public and private child welfare systems must be acknowledged and addressed.

Understanding How ICWA and Kinship Care Promote Healing

After two centuries of federal and state government efforts to disrupt tribal traditions, family structures, and systems of care for children, the federal government passed ICWA in 1978 to acknowledge the inherent sovereign right of tribal governments to protect their children and maintain their families. ICWA created opportunities to confront inequities by requiring that state public and private agencies provide active efforts to rehabilitate families and follow placement preferences as a means to keep AI/AN children connected to their families, communities, and culture. Active efforts requirements are intended to counteract potential systemic bias that may lead to unnecessary child removal and support family reunification whenever possible through the provision of services that aid families in keeping their children safely at home. This includes tribal-run community-based services that have largely been underutilized and underfunded, yet provide services that incorporate cultural components often left out of state models of how to provide child welfare services.

Despite ICWA codifying placement preferences for kinship care, evidence shows that AI/AN children are still less likely than non-AI/AN children to be placed in kinship care settings (Carter, 2009; Maher et al., 2015), impacting a child's sense of attachment, cultural identity, and developmental outcomes in adolescence and young adulthood. Studies have shown that the experiences between AI/AN children and their kin caregivers exhibit strong attachment and bonding development (Henderson et al., 2015; Cross & Day, 2008; Cross et al., 2010; Mooradian et al., 2007; Kopera-Frye, 2009) that can generate long-lasting benefits to mental health as well as, economic, and educational well-being. The holistic benefits of restoring connections between AI/AN children and their extended family networks shows just how important it is that families know the truth about what happened to their children and communities, have a space and opportunity to heal that is appropriate to their tribal culture, and have support and resources to nurture their tribal and cultural identity.

The Value of Tribal-defined and Trauma-informed Solutions

When tribes are empowered and have adequate resources available, they can design and operate trauma-informed solutions that best meet the needs of their children and families that have faced historic and intergenerational trauma. For instance, several years ago the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Oregon faced the challenge of how to improve their child welfare system to better meet the needs of children and families. Over a period of a few years, tribal leadership, the tribal child welfare program, and community members realized something needed to change if they were going to improve outcomes for children and families in the community. Despite the best efforts of those involved and the various state and federal funding sources they secured, the number of children placed in foster care had either risen or stayed very high. The tribe's largest child welfare funding source only provided reimbursement for services after a child was removed from the home, and the program was largely based on a state and federal model of how to provide child welfare services. With tribal child welfare staff overwhelmed and community members frustrated with the program's increased need to continually recruit more foster homes, the need for change was evident.

To turn their child welfare system around, tribal leadership, community members, and child welfare staff all came to the table to redesign and decolonize their child welfare system to be more proactive, family-centered, and culturally appropriate. This meant redesigning the structure of the child welfare system, incorporating more cultural practices, and restructuring the way the system was funded, ensuring

that the values of Indigenous children, families, communities, and cultures were at the forefront of redesign efforts. A primary change was developing more robust services for families that needed extra support or were at risk of having their children removed. The enhanced services placed greater emphasis on having regular contact with families; active coordination with other service providers, both in and outside the community; more training for staff on family engagement and support; and restructuring staff positions to provide more expertise and focus on prevention services. Following the restructuring, the number of children in foster care and other out-of-home care decreased by over 70 percent and has remained stable ever since. Reducing the number of children in out-of-home care made available funds that had been previously employed for foster care to be used for family support services, and tribal leadership reprioritized their revenue contribution to provide greater support for family support services. An additional, unanticipated benefit of the restructuring was the improvement in the community's relationship with the tribal child welfare program. Further, staff reported that parents were more likely to voluntarily seek help before a crisis occurred, and there was great relief in the community when recruitment for foster homes became less constant.

Although this kind of child welfare system redesign needs a lot of community investment to get off the ground, in the long run it has proven to be much less expensive because of the improved outcomes for children and families, higher staff satisfaction and lower turnover, and reduced need for more expensive and more intensive interventions like foster care and other out-of-home services. This illustrates that when tribes are at the forefront of the development process, positive outcomes are much more likely to occur, including enhanced support resources that promote safety and stability, allow for opportunities to restore and maintain relationships, and reduce the likelihood a child will experience trauma from unnecessary removal or separation that could be prevented with active coordination of culturally appropriate services.

For too long AI/AN children have been at the center of harmful state and federal policies and practices, including lack of understanding and bias among public and private child welfare systems that continuously fell short of recognizing that the solution was within AI/AN communities themselves—that tribes know best the needs of their children and families and are best positioned to address those needs when given the capacity to self-determine. Therefore, prioritizing tribally driven and trauma-informed solutions is critical to embarking on the journey to healing and preventing continued suffering among future generations of AI/AN children, families, and communities.

Legislative Comments

We appreciate the inclusion of the critical historical information and current-day impacts described in Section 2 Findings. While some people may be generally aware of the Indian boarding school policies and actions, Section 2 provides additional information that illustrates the intersection between the historical and intergenerational trauma that has occurred because of the Indian boarding school experience and more recent policies and actions regarding the continuing trauma that has occurred because of the bias and harmful practices in public and private child welfare systems.

Section 3 provides information on the purposes of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools in the United States (Commission). We greatly appreciate the coordination with the Department of Interior's investigation into Indian boarding schools; development of recommendations to address healing for affected Native communities, families and individuals; and the focus on the modern-day assimilationist practices of public and private social services systems that have led to continued trauma for Native families.

Section 5 provides information on the establishment and membership of the Commission, Truth and Healing Advisory Commission, and Survivors Subcommittee. We appreciate the scope of work that has been laid out for the Commission in the legislation and the requirements to include a diverse group of people with lived experience related to the Indian boarding school experience. We note again the importance of the provisions that address modern day assimilationist practices in public and private child welfare systems.

We also greatly appreciate extending the time for the work of the Commission to five years. In previous drafts, the timeline was much shorter and would have been a significant barrier to completing a comprehensive investigation, analysis, and development of recommendations. As we have witnessed in Canada, the timeline for a similar investigative process took six years and there were less than half as many residential schools identified there. While we appreciate extending the timeline of the Commission's work, we would caution members of Congress to not be surprised

if the work takes longer given the much larger scope in the United States compared with similar work in Canada on a much smaller scale.

Another point of appreciation are the provisions that require consultation with tribal nations by the Commission and provisions that address the issuance of subpoenas to secure testimony and evidence related to the Commission's work. Because of the incredible sensitivity and complexity of these issues and the sovereign governmental status of tribal nations, it will be critical that the Commission approach their work with a humility and respect for the tribal nations and individuals affected. The subpoena authority is critical because Indian boarding school policies and actions were implemented over a hundred years of time and involved numerous institutions and individuals that carried out the policies. Not all may cooperate with simple requests from the Commission to appear or provide evidence, so the issuance of subpoenas may become an important tool in piecing together important information that the Commission will need to complete their charge.

Final Statement

This legislation is vital to documenting the truth about the atrocities of the boarding school experience and the individual and collective trauma that has remained largely unrecognized and unresolved in Native communities. The passage of this legislation will not only further the process of healing for Native communities, but it also opens doors to acknowledging and addressing other ways in which government policies and practices have evolved over time and continue to perpetuate harm, including the current state of disproportionate treatment of AI/AN children in the child welfare system. Additionally, it is a path toward ensuring tribal nations receive the support and resources needed to continue healing, nurturing, and protecting their children, families, and cultural identity.

In closing, we greatly appreciate all the work that you have done to move this legislation forward and support tribal nations in this critical effort towards the truth and healing of children and families. If there is anything we can do to further support the passage of this legislation, please let us know. We look forward to continued partnership opportunities to pursue healing for AI/AN children and families impacted by historic and intergenerational trauma through community-based and culturally appropriate services in tribal communities.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION ON AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Association on American Indian Affairs (the “Association”), we urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. We stand in solidarity with Native Nations, Tribes, and the Native American survivors, descendants, and families impacted by genocide and assimilation policies carried out in the guise of education. We would like to offer a few recommendations regarding the language of the bill.

The Association is the oldest non-profit serving Indian Country protecting sovereignty, preserving culture, educating youth, and building capacity. Since its earliest beginnings assisting Pueblo Peoples defend their aboriginal lands, cultures and water rights in 1922, the Association was formed to change the destructive path of federal policy from assimilation, termination, and allotment, to sovereignty, self-determination, and self-sufficiency. Throughout our 100-year history, the Association has provided national advocacy on watershed issues that support sovereignty and culture, while working at a grassroots level with Native Nations to support the implementation of programs that affect real lives on the ground.

The Association has long advocated against genocide and assimilation policies since its inception in 1922. The Association consulted on the development of the 1928 Meriam Report, advocating then to eliminate boarding schools and replace with day schools that would allow children to stay in their homes, with family and community; we have authored legislation to restore cultural rights and religious freedoms to Native Americans; and we’ve fought to return children—one-by-one—in state courts, which led to our organization drafting the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act. Even after ICWA was passed, the Association continued to educate Congress to direct the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1984, advocating for a detailed day school implementation plan to assure a day school opportunity for every Indian child, instead of continuing with distant boarding schools. The Association has a wealth of history educating the public and the U.S. government about the continuing harm of boarding schools, adoption policies and problems with how Native children are educated—and how the public is poorly educated in public schools about Native Americans.

Despite the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act and the end of government mandated and funded boarding schools, the legacy of stereotyping Native American children as “less than,” “at-risk,” or simply ignoring them, has continued. We see this with recent attacks on the Indian Child Welfare Act and through harmful state adoption practices that continue to deplete familial structures and promote the continued removal of children from their homes and Nations. Private adoption practices that circumvent the Indian Child Welfare Act are a modern continuation of genocide and assimilation practices of boarding school policies.

Even as some repatriations of children from boarding school burial grounds are occurring, the horrible burden that some federal agencies have placed on those children’s families and Tribes is objectionable. The outright denial from private entities and churches refusing any opportunity to support truth, healing and reconciliation is horribly problematic. These actions are re-traumatizing many survivors, descendants, families, and Native Nations, creating an ongoing and continuing harm.

Congress has an opportunity to right some of the atrocities and indignities that have and continue to happen to Native American children and families. We know much of the pain—but the federal government, churches and other entities hold the information required to begin our healing. We see this bill as a foundation to begin the accountability process and nation-to-nation discussion that honors Native Nation sovereignty, families and culture. It will be a process that will require healing of wounds that go so deep—they travel through generations in the hearts and minds of descendants and families. It will also require the same amount of soul searching and healing from those today within the U.S. government and churches who have inherited the legacy of the harm that their predecessors have caused.

Specific Comments

While the Association absolutely supports the need for the development of the Commission as a starting point in truth, healing and reconciliation, we do believe minor adjustments could be made in the language of the bill that would better support this foundational work.

1. *Definition of “Indian Boarding School Policies.” This definition should not be limited to an era starting in 1819 with the Indian Civilization Fund Act*

There is a history that the United States inherited and benefitted from that began earlier than 1819. This history and treatment of Native children and families set up the justification for the 1819 Civilization Fund Act and must be included in this research. The first known boarding school was created in the 1600s in Maryland. In 1634, Andrew White of the Society of Jesus established a mission in what is now the state of Maryland, and the purpose of the mission, was to extend civilization and instruction to the “ignorant” Native Americans and show them the way to heaven. In 1677, the Society of Jesus opened a school for humanities to bring Native students to a “higher state of virtue and civilization.”

In the 1700s, similar schools were established by missionaries and other religious groups, prior to 1819, which established the “template” and justification for continuation of genocide, assimilation and cultural termination through education. We do not understand at this time how the colonies and the early United States were involved in these activities. Creating an arbitrary date, or defining an era based only on information that we understand today, removes the opportunity to understand why the U.S. chose these policies as a continuation of colonization that the U.S. benefitted from. The U.S. gross national product is based on the genocide, assimilation and taking of lands from Native Nations. Truth and reconciliation demand full transparency that is not limited to one legislative occurrence and must include the history leading up to it.

2. *Collection of Testimony. There must be a clear statement that survivors can remain anonymous, that their personal information is protected, and that the commission will honor cultural and spiritual protocols while collecting testimony.*

The collection of testimony from survivors of boarding schools, and descendants of boarding schools is absolutely important so that the U.S. and all of its citizens can come to terms with the genocide and assimilation policies that the U.S. has benefitted from. However, the investigation and personal transparency that the Commission is seeking will be emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually difficult for many survivors and descendants of survivors. Those individuals must be able to choose whether or not they wish to share their personal information in public, whether the information will be available under the Freedom of Information Act, and whether they are able to share anonymously protecting certain information.

The Commission must make it a priority to protect the health and welfare of those survivors and descendants involved and use culturally appropriate collection practices. The commission must honor individual, familial, and Native Nation cultural and spiritual protocols and provide a safe setting for sharing stories and collecting testimony. Elders, language speakers, traditional practitioners, and knowledge keepers should all be consulted and included to create safe and welcoming spaces for survivors, descendants, and their families, as well as consulted for aftercare and follow-up far beyond the initial date testimony is given.

3. *Advisory Committee Membership. The Association on American Indian Affairs and the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) should not be excluded from Advisory Committee Membership*

In Section 5(g)(2)(E)(x), the Association and IITC are singled out as part of the Advisory Council to include a member from either one or the other organization. The Association has been involved for 100 years on these issues, continues to provide expertise on boarding schools, and is the leading organization in repatriation issues and expertise. The bill is awkward in setting up Advisory Committee mem-

bership that includes Native organizations, naming some and excluding others. Native organization capacity can ebb and flow over time. The development and work of the Commission should rely on all expertise that Indian Country has on this subject and should not exclude or limit Native organization participation in the Advisory Committee.

The Association is honored to have conducted research and provided other information that aided in the draft of this bill. We are deeply committed to working hand-in-hand with Native Nations and see no greater honor and responsibility than working to bring about healing and reconciliation for those impacted by genocide, assimilation and territorial termination through education policies.

In conclusion, the Association supports this bill and Commission that will fulfill the following:

- A full inquiry and investigation that acknowledges the genocide and assimilation policies through the use of boarding schools and education;
- A full investigation that is not limited by the 1819 Civilization Act as a starting point; the U.S. inherited and has benefitted from these practices that began prior to 1819;
- Protection of survivors and descendants of survivors when collecting testimony that allows for anonymity or other solutions that will not cause further harm and trauma to survivors, their families and descendants;
- Provides strong provisions that allow for the Commission to subpoena and investigate private entity records;
- Development and dissemination of Commission findings and recommendations that is fully transparent;
- Recognition that this Act is only the beginning to correct the continuing harm of the boarding school legacy;
- Any repatriation solutions must apply to our children's graves regardless of the status of land where they are located; and
- Broader inclusiveness of Native-led organizations with expertise in the issues at hand.

Thank you for your time, energy and attention.

ONEIDA NATION
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing on behalf of the Oneida Nation to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long-lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools far away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and tribal communities died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The very first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, conducted by U.S. Department of the Interior, has helped shed light on the schools.

Over the past three years, the Oneida Nation has returned home the remains of our precious children that attended the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. The historical intergenerational trauma was re-lived by the families and our community, as we mourned for our children. We know that we have more of our children to bring home and with the creation of the Congressional Commission in S. 2907, will help further a full and complete review of the total number of Native children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; the total number of Native children who were abused, died, or went missing at Indian boarding schools; and the long-term impacts

that Indian boarding schools have had on the children who attended and their families.

S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. The Oneida Nation urges the Committee to support the passage of S.2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

With a Good Mind, a Good Heart and a Strong Fire,
TEHASSI TASI HILL, *Chairman*.

WABANAKI ALLIANCE
July 22, 2022

Chairman Schatz, Vice Chairwoman Murkowski, and members of the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,

The Wabanaki Alliance was founded in June 2020 by the five federally recognized tribes in what we today call the State of Maine, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mi'kmaq Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkmikuk, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik, and Penobscot Nation. We created the Wabanaki Alliance to educate the people of Maine about the need for securing the sovereignty of the tribes in Maine.

Each one of our communities has been profoundly impacted by Indian Boarding Schools. Wabanaki survivors of these “schools” have shared the horrors of what they experienced. When as children they should have been educated, nurtured, and protected they instead were abused and dehumanized in an evil effort to strip them of their indigeneity.

Wabanaki Tribal Governments in conjunction with the State of Maine conducted the first truth and reconciliation commission in the history of the world in which Indigenous and settler sovereigns deliberately decided to create a process to examine a painful history, the experience of Wabanaki children in the child welfare system. During that two- and half-year initiative, the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission accepted testimony from hundreds of people. The Commission prioritized people providing testimony in a manner that would be best for them striving to minimize people's trauma. As Congress considers S.2907/H.R. 5444, we urge that same prioritization to supporting victims of the Indian Boarding Schools who may testify.

The Wabanaki Alliance believes in the need for reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples and settlers. However, settlers too often want to advance to the reconciliation stage before truth telling is complete. We urge the Committee on Indian Affairs and all members of Congress to ensure the authorizing language for S. 2907/H.R. 5444 supports the best truth gathering process in a reasonable amount of time recognizing the opportunity to hear directly from the victims of Indian Boarding Schools diminishes each day. The integrity of the research and truth gathering will be essential to the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. succeeding. As stated in the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report,

People don't remember what happened as to how we lost our culture. The boarding schools that the government sanctioned, the mentality of taking children out of the home to enforce assimilation. People don't remember that today. (Beyond the Mandate: Continuing the Conversation p. 12)

People must remember and the horrific chapter in US Indian policy should be completely documented. Genuine and much-needed healing depends on the completeness of the truth telling.

SHARON BERGMANN
Brookings, Oregon, July 20, 2022

Senator Brian Schatz, Chairman,

I married a boarding school survivor who graduated from Ft Sill boarding school in Oklahoma. We both started work at Chemawa in August 1972.

Non-Indians were firmly entrenched in administration, supervisory positions and as teachers. Even though I had a degree from the University of Washington, I was hired as a dormitory matron which was a job I loved. In loca parentis [in place of parents] was a responsibility that I understood.

Indian preference in hiring was upheld with the Mancari decision in 1974. This did not set well with non-Indian staff who thought they were being discriminated against.

I was detailed as Acting Director of Counseling and Social Services. Even though there was no criticism of my job performance, the Superintendent [dissolved] the counseling center. I had spoken out on policies that were harmful to students. There were 2 Indian social workers whose contracts were not renewed and that left a white male to be the sole counselor for the dormitories and I was the academic counselor. The academic department was poorly run and the quality of education did not meet the needs of students. I was targeted by Special Education staff who saw students primarily as extra revenue and a very hostile work environment resulted.

On February 10, 1989 I walked out because I was the only academic staff that was required to work on a snow day. All teachers and administrators had the day off and I was the only person in the building. I had endured 3 years of an extremely toxic work environment and I was never able to return to work. I was diagnosed with PTSD and major depression and my date of injury was determined to be in 1986 when the counseling program was dissolved.

When I read the 2017 Oregon Public Broadcast report on Chemawa, it was very apparent that nothing has changed in 30 years since I was forced out. The problems with retaliation, insensitivity toward students and parents, nepotism and lack of a quality education all are part of systemic racism.

I support Senate Bill 2907.

I am a 76 year old Tolowa tribal elder. The severity of PTSD meant that my goal of working with Indian youth ended when I was 40 years old. I never worked again.

WALKER RIVER PAIUTE TRIBE

July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing on behalf of the Walker River Paiute Tribe to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long-lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and Tribal Nations died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report has helped shed light on the schools.

S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. I urge the Committee to pass S. 2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

Sincerely,

AMBER TORRES, *Chairman.*

BEN SHERMAN

May 16, 2022

My name is Ben Sherman. I am submitting my testimony in support of the above Act.

I am 82 years old and a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Pine Ridge, South Dakota. I attended four years of boarding school at the Oglala Community School in Pine Ridge, a school administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

My three sisters Mayda, Marilyn and Amy attended the same boarding school in Pine Ridge.

My immediate family has attended government and church boarding schools for four generations. My great grandmother Lizzie Glode (Sherman) was in the first group of Indian children to attend Carlisle in 1879. Another relative to attend Carlisle in that first group was my other great grandmother Lucy Standing Bear's older

brother Luther Standing Bear. Lucy had one sister and two other brothers attend Carlisle at the same time.

My grandfather William Sherman (son of Lizzie) and two of his sisters attended the government boarding school in Genoa, Nebraska.

My grandmother Victoria Hunter (Sherman) attended the Catholic boarding school at Holy Rosary Mission, Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

My mother Alice Kemery (Sherman) attended the Episcopal boarding school at St. Mary's Boarding School for Indian Girls in Springfield, South Dakota.

My boarding school experience was not terribly unpleasant. I adapted fairly quickly and did well in my academic studies. The big disadvantage was the curriculum. All students went through one-half of their studies in academic courses. The other one-half was vocational. That set me back one full year in college, and I had to repeat one year of high school.

I suffered from loneliness for my parents and home. I believe we returned home only twice during the entire school year. I ran away once and made it all the way home, but was immediately returned to school. I imagine that loneliness created most of the emotional stress on boarding school children.

I always felt sorry for the youngest boys in the dormitories. They were managed by matrons who could not provide the loving for care they needed. I wonder today how they were affected by the absence of family closeness. Some of those little ones spent the entire year at school because their parents were unable to visit them.

I mentioned earlier my great grandmother Lizzie at Carlisle. She stayed there for a few years. She learned primarily homemaking skills, which was the standard teaching for girls. After Carlisle she went to Genoa, not for school but to work. She met Frank Sherman and they were married.

They moved back to Lizzie's home on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation where they raised a family of five children. Three of the older children were sent to school at Genoa where they eventually finished and returned to Pine Ridge.

Lizzie and Frank's fourth child was Mark Sherman. He was sent to school at the Rapid City Indian Boarding School. The school environment was harsh, with regimented routines intended to instill highly controlled behavior. Mark and three other boys ran away from school in 1910. They decided to follow the railroad tracks from Rapid City and go south toward the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. At some point they decided to rest, with Mark and James Means sleeping on the railroad track.

A train rolled through, striking Mark and James, killing Mark immediately and fatally wounding James.

Mark was 17 years old. He was buried by Lizzie and Frank in a cemetery near their home in Kyle, SD on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation.

This is my personal story given in support the Act mentioned above. The committee will have volumes of testimony regarding the often cruel treatment of Indian children in boarding schools, some of which was fatal.

This cruelty was a government policy of a continued war against the children of an Indian population that was hated and reviled by many powerful Americans.

GARY B. NEUMANN, REDCLOUD

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing on behalf of my grandmother Elizabeth Minesinger and her brother Peter Minesinger, members of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes who attended the Chemawa Indian Boarding School in Oregon to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and Tribal Nations died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their

deaths. The first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report has helped shed light on the schools.

The Congressional Commission created by S. 2907 will help further ensure a full and complete review of: the total number of Native children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; the total number of Native children who were abused, died, or went missing at Indian boarding schools; and the long-term impacts that Indian boarding schools have had on the children who attended and their families.

S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. We urge the Committee to pass S. 2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

Sincerely,

GARY B. NEUMANN

PATRICIA C. CORCORAN
Tonawanda Onondowaga (Seneca)

I did not attend boarding school. All my mother's cousins went from the Tonawanda Reservation. She (Ruth Weigel Corcoran) escaped because the family moved to Rochester, NY.

Her mother, Grace Jones, went to Lincoln Institute in Philadelphia when she was ten years old. My mother never told me this, I don't know if her mother told her. . . boarding schools are not a popular topic of conversation. They were so traumatic people wanted to forget them and rarely shared anything about them. I discovered this fact on-line from information Dickinson College students posted about Carlisle.

According to my research she was at Lincoln for four years. During the summer to avoid 'summer epidemics' the girls were shipped off to private homes to do childcare, cooking, and house cleaning. They worked all day, everyday and my grandmother was paid \$5 per week. (I'm sure Lincoln made more.)

Grace returned to Tonawanda only to discover her next stop was to be Carlisle. She knew a lot of people who were also going there, but Carlisle made it a point to keep siblings, relatives and folks from the same nations as separate as they could. (As if the whole thing weren't already cruel enough!)

What my mother told me, that her mother said: Grace said, "she didn't learn anything, but cruelty and marching", it was never quiet at night because of children crying, they were always hungry, many children never went home (died), summer was super hot and winters were very cold inside the buildings unless you had laundry duty (then it was always hot). Punishment was frequent and heartless. I've found paperwork stating that Grace was "impertinent" and for this and for speaking her language she scrubbed sidewalks on her hands and knees for hours, knelt on cement for hours and also was forced to kneel on pencils!! I am proud and pleased to tell you Grace never had her language stolen from her, she retained it! However her white husband forbade her to teach it to her children.

Malen White from Tonawanda was nice, handsome, intelligent and I'm told a good lacrosse player, but he drank himself to death at a young age after coming home from boarding school.

Arlie Hill, my mother's cousin, told her when she visited him in the nursing home, "Ruthie, every minute of every day was dictated by bells, whistles and bugles. (at boarding school) When I finally got out I didn't know what to do. I had no idea what to do, I was lost, I didn't belong anywhere. So I joined the army because I knew how to take orders, but when I got out of the army, I was lost again. I never thought for myself in boarding school. They wouldn't let you."

Which brings us to another point. Richard Pratt served with George Armstrong Custer and he had run an Indian prison. He ran Carlisle like a military camp and in so doing was training Indians to become troops for the USA. It worked! Per capita, no race serves in the military more than Native Americans, even before we were citizens!

Heinous barbaric treatment of children, and they called us savages. I'm currently looking at colleges for my daughter, not one has a cemetery on campus.

Sincerely,

PATRICIA C. CORCORAN

ANNELLA TUCKER
July 21, 2022

To: Relevant Actors in the Native Language Initiatives—Subject: Barriers Faced by Native Students

Native Americans are survivors. We have proven our resilience and adaptability, which is why we are still here despite the gross efforts of the United States to “kill the Indian and save the man”. Pre-European contact survivance necessitated hunting, gathering, and other traditional skills and practices. With the rise of capitalism, a strictly traditional lifestyle is unfortunately unsustainable in the 21st century and I find myself struggling to balance working and pursuing academics while also engaging with my culture. Survivance for Native students, like myself, now includes working hard in school and getting a job to support themselves and their families.

I attend Stanford University, which offers some Native languages. These languages, however, are classified as “special languages” and therefore are under the umbrella of an underfunded department in the University. In order to initiate a Native language course, students must find a qualified instructor to teach it. Eligibility to teach requires a bachelor’s degree, among other qualifications. The teacher must have these qualifications and be willing to teach the course for a relatively low wage. This has presented a barrier for my peers who are seeking to initiate courses in their Native languages. Native language educators often do not qualify for such positions because their expertise is developed outside of western education models.

Stanford is a private University, but the barriers to language access are also present in public education. Native languages are treated as “special” in most educational institutions in the country.

Common barriers to learning Native languages for students include:

1. Lack of “qualified” Native language educators due to irrelevant certification requirements. Qualifications to teach Native languages should reflect the skillset that is necessary to teach the language.
- I. To hire the best Native language instructors, the Native Language Initiatives should determine how best to evaluate fitness in consultation with tribes.
2. Lack of incentive—I have been unable to take as many culturally relevant courses as I would like due to the lack of credit incentives for “special” languages or Native-focused courses in general. In order to meet graduation requirements, students must prioritize courses that fulfill those requirements.
- I. It is imperative that Native Language Initiatives push to include credit incentives that will allow native students to truly incorporate their Native languages into their academic agenda.

IRENE NORMAN

Dear Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,

I write to you not as an immediate survivor of the residential school system, but as the great-granddaughter of survivors. My maternal great grandparents, the Beauvais, were Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) originally from Kahnawá:ke. As survivors of the Canadian residential school system their experience is not under your direct purview, but I believe it is valuable nonetheless, and helps to illuminate how the trauma of Indian Boarding School Policies is felt for multiple generations. This information is as accurate as I can make it, given that many of the people involved have been dead for some time.

Both of my maternal great-grandparents were forced away from their families at a young age by residential school policies at the turn of the twentieth century. I do not know exactly what my great-grandmother Beatrice experienced at residential school, but according to my grandmother she was unable to return to her home afterwards. Beatrice worked as a seamstress in Montreal to support her young siblings before marrying my great-grandfather. Given that Kahnawá:ke is just outside of Montreal, I suspect that she experienced forced enfranchisement through the residential school system, thus losing her legal status as an Indian and her right to live on her reserve.

My great-grandfather Edward also experienced forced enfranchisement, and I know some of the details of the abuse he survived. The combined forces of

Canada’s Gradual Civilization Act, Gradual Enfranchisement Act, and the Indian Act forced Edward into the residential school system, used the supposed education he received through that system as an excuse to forcibly enfranchise him, and used that enfranchisement to strip him of his Indian status and force him to adopt an English name. As part of the forced labor programs and so-called “vocational training” associated with residential schools, he was sent to a logging camp at the age of five. As you might imagine, a logging camp is an extremely dangerous place for a child, made even more so by the older men at the camp entertaining themselves by plying this young child with alcohol and cigarettes. Edward would struggle with

alcohol abuse his entire life, and would eventually die from lung cancer stemming from life-long tobacco addiction.

As the Canadian government had forcefully stripped them of their Indian status and alienated them from their community, my great-grandparents moved to Michigan after their marriage. Great-grandmother Beatrice raised their eight surviving children on a farm in Emmet, Michigan while my great-grandfather spent his weeks working in a factory in Detroit. Though Edward was always very loving and gentle towards his wife, his children were given reason to fear his temper. To protect themselves, the Beauvais family did their best to pass as white.

My grandma Bea was the youngest child of her family, and while she was probably the most sheltered from my great-grandfather's temper, she was not sheltered from the attention of older men in the area. When she was sixteen, Bea became pregnant with my mother. As she was unwed and either would not or could not identify the father, she greatly feared her father's response. As a result, she ran away to Florida to have the baby, whom she surrendered to Catholic Charities for adoption shortly after her birth in March 1958. During this time, Michigan had an eugenics program that targeted Native Americans and "moral degenerates", which may have resulted in my grandmother's forced sterilization had she not fled the state to give birth. I was unable to confirm with Grandma Bea before her death if this was a factor in her choices.

My grandmother would go on to have a very successful harness racing career, where she still holds the record for most wins by a North American female driver, but had a turbulent personal life. Several of her siblings and their children struggled with alcohol abuse and domestic violence. Bea had four failed marriages, and no other children after my mother. Grandma Bea had many friends, and was very close with the sister closest to her in age. After my mother reconnected with her in the late 1970s, the two maintained a relationship for the rest of Grandma Bea's life. Grandma Bea never felt comfortable talking about the time surrounding my mother's birth or her Mohawk heritage, and only spoke of it with me once.

My mother Deborah's adoptive father was first-generation Irish-American and her adoptive mother was of French-Canadian descent. They adopted her with no idea as to my mother's indigenous heritage, and faced challenges raising an obviously non-white child in the Jim Crow South. My mother struggled with not knowing her racial identity as a child, and recalls having to use separate public restrooms from her adoptive mother on several occasions as well as the specific pain of a frequent anti-Asian schoolyard taunt where other children would pull the edges of their eyelids in different directions and say "My mother is Chinese, my father is Japanese, so what am I?"

These experiences, among others, prompted my mother to seek out her birth family once she was in college. My great-grandfather Edward had already passed away by then, and Grandma Bea was often uncomfortable discussing family history, so most of the information we have come from discussions between my mother and great-grandmother Beatrice Beauvais before her death in 1988. It was from Beatrice Beauvais that we learned who our people are, where they came from, and what was taken from us. It was because we know these things that we feel slightly less lost in the world.

You can directly trace the impact of residential school policies on my family through four generations. When my great-grandparents were forced into residential schools, they were stripped of their families, their freedom, their culture, their language, their legal recognition as indigenous people, and their very names. The early introduction to addictive substances led my great-grandfather Edward to a lifetime of alcohol and tobacco abuse, resulting in his death. The trauma of his youth also caused him to be abusive towards his children. The alienation from their tribal communities meant that there was little support for my great-grandmother Beatrice as she gave birth to eleven children and raised the eight survivors to adulthood.

This environment allowed for my grandmother to become pregnant at sixteen, and prompted her to flee her family and surrender her daughter for adoption. This experience would impact her interpersonal relationships for the rest of her life. My mother's transracial adoption meant she encountered systemic and societal racism without the support of a family who could understand and guide her through it.

My siblings and I have spent our entire lives trying to learn about our history and reclaim our Kanien'keh :ka identities in the face of people and governments who tell us that we are either lying in the hope of receiving some sort of monetary benefit or that we will never be "Indian enough". Our alienation from our history and native community, and our need to prove ourselves, has contributed to our struggles with education, mental illness, and substance abuse.

It is my sincere hope that this Committee will approve S. 2907 and endorse it for a vote before the full Senate. The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian

Boarding School Policies Act may not have a direct impact on my family, but it will help other families with similar histories to heal. It is incalculably valuable for indigenous communities to understand the full width and breadth of the harms done to them, because it is necessary to know the extent of an injury before it can be properly healed. It is necessary that the perpetrators of these wrongs be named, and the harms they cause be officially acknowledged. According to the Haudenosaunee, to whom the Kanien'keh :ka belong and from whom the United States' founding fathers drew inspiration for their Constitution, law and peace are one and the same. The Haudenosaunee believe that peace is righteousness in action, which requires the practice and pursuit of justice between individuals and nations. The passage of S. 2907 would be a clear example of such righteousness, and would help provide peace to the hearts of indigenous people across the nation.

Nia:wen and thank you for your time,

IRENE NORMAN

FRANK LEWIS SANCHEZ, YANKTON SIOUX
July 22, 2022

I was born 1955 on the Yankton Sioux reservation in South Dakota.

My father worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from 1955 until he passed away in 1963. At that time my mother also got sick with tuberculosis and went to the hospital in Rapid City, SD for two whole years. I was first sent to a U.S. government boarding school in Pierre, SD at that time for about 9 months. Then I was sent to a Roman Catholic boarding school called St Joe's in Chamberlain, SD. There they took all our personal belongings away, everything, and they gave us things that had been donated to the school to wear. No ties to home or memories of home were permitted.

My mother recovered and gathered up all her children and moved back to the Yankton Sioux reservation. We lived in a 3 room house, with no water, no electricity, it was my grandparents home, a few miles from Marty, SD. We walked to a one room school house with one teacher for all the grades. That school was destroyed by a twister (tornado) in May of 1965.

In the fall of 1965 I went to St Paul's Indian boarding school, in Marty, SD. I remember being dropped off with my suitcase and not knowing anyone there. I was taken to a little boys dorm, for grades 1 to 4. That day was the most traumatizing 24 hours of my life. They took me to a 3 story building called St Cats, with an 8' tall barbed wire fence around all sides of an outside area for the little boys. The nuns in charge of this dorm were Sister John and Sister Paul. They took me to the top floor and told me to pick out a bed and put my things under it. I did this and then they took me to the fenced area outside, where I found another boy to play with for an hour or so. Then the nuns came back and told everyone to get up next to the wall, to take down our pants and put our hands against the wall. The nuns moved down the line with a strap, that was 2.5" wide and about 18" long with holes that left red circle marks on our butts and the back of our legs. Everybody was screaming and crying. Later one of the other boys told me that one of the kids had crossed over the line by the entrance of the little prison yard.

Early the next morning we were woken up at around 5am, then we were taken over to a rack of suits and we had to find one that fit, with a white shirt, then we were marched over to the church, which seemed very big. I was sat in the front row, and was looking at the life sized crucifix with Jesus nailed to it, a crown of thorns on his head, the hole in his side. This was the first time I had ever seen anything like this, so as a kid I thought to myself 'what line did he cross over?'

As time went on things got worse, the nuns would come in the shower room and show you how to wash yourself with a wash rag, they would rub us down with soap, fondling us to see how big we could get down there. One of our class mates, his penis was a lot bigger than the rest of us and the two nuns would take him to their room at night. We would see him come out in the morning and he told us what he had to do for them (sexual intercourse), later, on a cold day in the winter he committed suicide and died of exposure.

After the 4th grade we were moved to a new dorm called St Bens (from grade 5 to 12). We were made to work, clean and other things. They would also load us on a bus and take us to local farms to work, by picking corn, stacking cane or hauling bales of hay and straw with no pay, of course. There was Wednesday bowling for the brothers, nuns and priests. They would come back from this outing all drunk and smelling like booze. They would get out the strap and whoever was on the list would be brought out in front of everybody, and be brutally punished. They also shaved our hair off for public punishment.

Under the mission were underground pathways that could access all the above ground buildings, so you could get anywhere, like from the priests house to the girls dorms via underground tunnels. There were also underground rooms where the girls were kept who got pregnant from the fathers and others. There was also a cemetery for fetuses and even full term babies aborted by the high school girls and nuns. I heard many stories from my elders and other class mates as well, many of them are not here to tell their personal stories anymore.

One personal story that still negatively affects me today was in the 2nd grade classroom, I was digging a pencil into my right ear, and Sister Bonita (who we called 'Beetleboots'), said "get back to work" and hit me hard on the left side of my head forcing the pencil deeper into my right ear, piercing the ear drum. This punctured a hole and became severely infected. It was my mother who happened to visit that weekend who took me for some urgent medical assistance at the IHS hospital in Wagner, SD. This is documented, they had to cut a hole in my skull to fix the pencil damage. Infections and deafness plagued my life from then on. I wasn't able to get into the army or navy because of this hearing loss. Just this month, July 2022, I had to seek medical treatment due to bleeding from the ear.

There are so many tragic stories from St Paul's Indian Mission, Marty SD and children being abused at other catholic institutions in South Dakota. I had some friends, now deceased, Loren & Sherwyn Zephier who unsuccessfully tried to bring law suits against the Catholic Diocese in South Dakota. The statute of limitations thwart their efforts at truth telling and justice.

I have shared a few memories today. Besides the physical and sexual abuse, the verbal abuse was constant, as the nuns told us "you won't amount to anything". They tried hard to 'kill the Indian' in us, not allowing us to speak our language, nor pray in our way etc. but I'm not even sure they actually tried to 'save the man' as many of us did not make it. Those of us that did 'survive,' continue to live with the trauma and repercussions of the abuse, with the shame and the lack of self worth.

To this day, I am not able to cry. At St Paul's, I learned there was no one to cry to. Not the adults, and not the other kids, as the atmosphere was too tense and hostile, there was no love, no compassion, and no feeling of safety. I was always on guard for what was going to happen next.

The genocidal federal policy that encouraged education to be a weapon against Indian people, and employed the Roman Catholic Church to abuse us and literally strip us of our dignity and culture, needs to be further examined and dismantled. It is not only in the past, there are still federal policies that are actively used against us Indian people. I know this as I am currently a federal prisoner, upholding my innocence. I have recently seen up close the ugliness and unfairness of the 'justice' system and criminal policy in 'Indian country.'

If 'Truth & Healing' is genuinely sought at this time in the United States with the indigenous peoples, much more needs to be unpacked than the horrors of the boarding schools. A sincere effort would be to actually honor the treaties. Such as the 1851 treaty of Fort Laramie, which my great grandfathers signed. We are still waiting for these agreements between sovereign nations to be upheld.

I hope that the good people in the US Senate and beyond who are willing to look at the truth and take the time to listen to us Indian people and our stories, will also have the courage to look at the whole truth, the past and present and then perhaps we can create a future together which is not based on lies, stolen land, and genocide.

Respectfully,

FRANK LEWIS SANCHEZ

MATTHEW HANKS LEIVAS, SR., CHEMEHUEVI CHIEF

Dear Chairman Schat and Vice Chairman Murowski:

I am writing on behalf of the [Alaska Native students who went to Holy Cross and Copper Valley Boarding School] to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and Tribal Nations died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report has helped shed light on the schools.

My name is Matthew Hanks Leivas, Sr., hereditary Chief of the Chemehuevi. Our reservation is located in eastern San Bernardino County, California, where I've resided since 1977. I am a 1971 graduate of Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, California. The first school I attended was; Parker Valley Indian School on the Colorado River Indian Reservation. A former Tribal Council for several terms and Chairman from 1992 to 1994, officially from 93–94. Former Chemehuevi Chief Game Warden, and Federal Law Enforcement Officer. Also a traditional farmer and current Board member of the Native American Land Conservancy from Coachella, California. Lastly I am co-founder of the Salt Song Trail Project, a grassroots organization consisting of 15 different bands of the Nuwuvi. I speak on behalf of the Chemehuevi and all our sister Nuwuvi Tribes from, AZ, CA, NV, and UT. A total of fifteen different bands of Nuwuvi or Southern Paiutes, and we support S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

An analogy for consideration or Food for thought: Nearly 50 years ago a four year old Orca Whale was captured off the Pacific Northwest coast, and the Lummi Nation in Washington State know this particular whale which is named "Tokatai" in their language. Since it's been held in captivity it had to learn to do tricks for food and ultimately for entertainment for the public. Tokatai has been singing it's Mothers song all these years, crying for family. I compare this to the taking of our the indigenous people from their families to learn to be subservient to their captors or stewards. Non-Indian Capitalism and Greed in America saw the indigenous people as less than human and attempted to use our people for financial gain and power, without compassion. I pray these words are read and felt by the readers. Truth is forthcoming, along with True reconciliation in America—2022. Mawk, Thank you in the Chemehuevi language.

The Congressional Commission created by S. 2907 will help further the ensure a full and complete review of: the total number of Native children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; the total number of Native children who were abused, died, or went missing at Indian boarding schools; and the long-term impacts that Indian boarding schools have had on the children who attended and their families.

S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. [I/WE] urge the Committee to pass S. 2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

JADEEN ELVING
July 20, 2022

I am Jadeen Elving. Oldest daughter of Eva Elving. My mom is a boarding school survivor. She went to Wrangle Institute when she was 6 years old. 1955. Later she also attended Mt. Edgecomb. Her whole childhood was stolen from her at those schools. I am Yupik thru my mom. We belong to the Asacarsmiut Tribe. Our people are from the Bering Sea coast where the Yukon meets. Many villages are relation.

I thank everyone involved with H.R. 5444. I support H.R. 5444 The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

I have included my Moms, Eva Elving, written testimony with mine. She has Dementia and has a hard time writing emails. It took her a while to write her statement. Please accept it. She has more to say but has a hard time writing it all down.

I have known about my moms childhood. It was always so sad to hear about the abuse and loneliness she suffered as a small child. She went thru medical problems also and was at the hospital she says was part of the Wrangle Institute. Not sure myself but she says she had surgeries there on her ear. She's legally deaf. One ear no hearing other less than half hearing. She also was legally blind for years then had lens replacement surgery and can see better. Now my mom suffers from dementia. She has had a stroke. I am thankful her voice can be heard and recorded.

She told me she was 6 when she was sent to Wrangle Institute. She was confused and scared and wanted to stay with her family. She is the oldest of 12 children. Back then the other younger siblings were too young to be taken.

When she arrived her hair was cut. She was changed out of her traditional clothing to their clothes. She was forced to change. And she didn't understand why this was happening or what she was going thru. She was scared. She was hit for not speaking English and punished and hit for speaking Yupik. She was put into closets for long periods of time. Which caused her to have claustrophobia as an adult. She can't ride elevators alone or walk up stair wells. Small rooms even the dark scare her. To this day she has a hard time sleeping. She sleeps with the lights on.

My mom received her one and only gift package from her parents. Dried fish she was so happy. She was even happy to share it with her childhood friends. The matrons made them all eat the dried fish under the table on the floor. Like animals.

The experiences she shared with me has hurt my heart for her and the thousands of other children who suffered like her and worse. Some never made it back home. Her culture was stripped from her. Her language shamed and beaten out of her. Her pride of who she was where she came from was forced out of her. Her whole childhood was stolen. Her teen years too. She entered the real world broken and lost. She managed to survive this world's discrimination this state's hidden history this governments hidden ugly past. It's been a hard life for my mom. She found herself with age and time and support from other family who are deep into our traditions. But it was never the same. I lost my culture too. My mom never made it a priority to teach us our culture. Because of what she went thru. My mom has always been a loving mom she saved us kids with her life. Literally. She never lost love for us. Or for her family. Her family at times shunned her for her cultural differences her experiences they didn't understand. Some still don't see the importance of what she went thru. And sadly some never will unless it happens to them. And I hope this never happens again. We also need to keep our native children out of children's services and foster care. That's another subject.

I couldn't imagine what horrors my mom survived. I am a mother myself and these days if someone treated my child that way I would be pressing charges. I wasn't taught our cultural ways so I couldn't pass them to my children. It trickled down thru 3 generations. Wrangle Institute has made the news for how horrible they were. Its unbelievable our government would allow this to happen to our kids. To families. The newest generations have cultural classes now here in Alaska. But that's not enough. I believe every survivor and descendant who felt the impact of cultural genocide should be repaid for their lost lives. The survivors especially deserve all the help they can get for emotional support to therapy to housing them. before they are all deceased. And bring every child home who didn't survive. They all deserve all the help to bring closure and to know they are cared about. . .that the horrors they survived are cared about.

Thank you to the Natural Resources subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States.

Thank you everyone who is a part of this.

Thank you for letting us tell our stories.

CHERYL WYNN RUSSELL QUICK

July 20, 2022

Hello. My name is Cheryl Wynn Russell Quick. Russell is my maiden name. I'm married, my husband's name is Virgil R. Quick. I was born on August 25, 1954 in Medicine Lodge, KS. My parents are the late Harvey Cicero Mouse Trail Russell and Francis Rosalie Nibbs Russell. I am a full blood Cheyenne and member of the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma. I have four children: Ellen, Allen Jr., Aaron, and Chauncina. My Father and Mother had nine children including myself and we lived in Lama Deer, Montana during this time. I was 9 years old in 1963 when I was sent to St. Labre Catholic Boarding School located in Ashland, MT. The first thing they did was cut my hair and told us that we were not to speak our language. It was the Devil's Tongue, they said. They told us that if we spoke our language, we would be punished. I was terrified and cried, I wanted to go home. My grandmother lived with us, I told her of the nuns and she didn't want me to go there in the first place. My first bad experience happened in my class, I can't remember my teacher's name but she was mean. As she asked our class to get our papers and pencils out, this boy whispered in our language that he didn't understand what the nun told us to do so I spoke in my language back to him. She heard me and began hollering at me and jerked me out of my chair by my earlobe. It hurt so bad that I began to cry. Then she screamed at me to hold out my palms and began to swat my palms very hard with a thick wooden paddle board. I never felt this much pain before in my life. All the while, she told me to open my mouth and shoved a huge bar of soap in my mouth, making me stand in the corner for the rest of the hour in class. To this day, I still have the scars on my palms. Sometimes I think this

nun got pleasure out of hitting me. Frequently I peed on my bed in the dorms at night from being afraid and was made to lie in the wet bed all night. They also fed us dry cold oatmeal and a hard dry biscuit for breakfast while the priests and nuns ate eggs, bacon, sausage, and gravy and drank orange juice. The nuns would walk up and down each aisle in the cafeteria with a paddle board making sure everyone was quiet and ate everything on their plates. If not, we had to stay in our seats until we ate everything. The food was terrible. We had to kneel for hours on our knees in mass reciting and praying in Latin. I never learned to recite Latin or pray in Latin because I didn't want to. A boy who was kneeling next to me in mass, pooped and peed on himself because the nun wouldn't let him go to the restroom. They jerked him out of the church by the back of his neck. I felt so bad for him. I was miserable in that place. I still have nightmares about St. Labre. My husband says he has to wake me up because I talk and cry in my sleep. I also attended Concho Indian Boarding school from 1967 to 1968 and Chilocco Indian Boarding school from 1970 to 1971. I was a sophomore when I went to Chilocco. I only had one complaint about it, my parents would write me letters and send me money. The matrons would open my mail, read my letters and take the cash. I never received any money from my parents. I feel as though I have been abused in the boarding school system. Now that I've told my story, it is time to begin my healing journey. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my experiences as a boarding school survivor.

SANDRA KATZ, SACO MAINE
July 25, 2022

I am writing in support of The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools in the US Act.

The time is overdue to deal with this horrific chapter in US history. It is time to listen to the survivors and descendants. We need to find all the children and find out which churches were involved and find government records.

Please pass this bill.

Thank you!

PATRICIA CORCORAN, TONAWANDA ONONDOWAGA (SENECA)
July 25, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. As you are aware, this legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

My grandmother went to two boarding schools, Lincoln Institute and Carlisle (and possibly a third, Thomas Indian School). My mother narrowly missed going, by moving off the reservation, but almost all her cousins went. I totally support S. 2907 with my heart as I believe this S 2907 will be the beginning of the healing of all American Indians and Alaska Natives boarding school victims and reconnect the 70% American Indian and Alaskan Natives that live in urban areas to their tribes and villages.

I appreciate all of you working with the Native Americans who attended boarding schools to heal from this period of sterilization, assimilation, colonization and genocide in United States history. May there be justice and healing and may this never happen again! May the People receive the justice we so deserve for all generations.

KELLY LEAH STEWART, GABRIELINO-TONGVA/LUISEÑO
July 25, 2022

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,

Míiyuyam. My name is Kelly Leah Stewart. I am Gabrielino-Tongva and Payómkawish (Luiseno). My ancestors—while not recognized by the United States (US) federal government—are the original inhabitants of the Los Angeles Basin, along with parts of San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside, and North San Diego coun-

ties, and are the original caretakers to some of the most fertile and ecologically diverse land in the US. I am also a descendant—by blood and through marriage—of thirty-three former St. Boniface Indian Industrial School (SBIIS) students, three of which are interred at the school cemetery located in Banning, California. Two generations of my family attended SBIIS between 1890 to 1935, with many of my ancestors being a part of the first cohort of students at the institution.

Additionally, I am currently a Doctoral Candidate in the Joint Degree Program in Education Leadership at the University of California San Diego and California State University, San Marcos, where I am writing my doctoral dissertation on SBIIS. Employing archival and oral history research methods, my dissertation examines the actions taken by the US government, Catholic Church, and settlers to eradicate California Indian knowledge transmission practices in efforts to assimilate Mission Indians into Spanish, Mexican, and American colonial societies. Furthermore, my research examines SBIIS's impact on survivors and descendants, explicitly centering on California Indian acts of survivance. I am the first California Indian woman and descendant of former students to explore the legacy of SBIIS in academic research. In addition to my forthcoming dissertation, I previously conducted research on the institution in my master's thesis, *(Re)writing and (Re)righting California Indian Histories: Legacies of Saint Boniface Indian Industrial School, 1890 to 1935*, which examined my family's experience at the institution.

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 2907—the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, and have previously provided written support and testimony for S.2907's sister bill in the US House of Representatives, H.R. 5444—the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. Since its establishment, the US federal government, along with state governments and multiple churches across the nation, enacted various policies—and invented legislation—designed to disrupt Native American peoples' connections to Indigenous knowledge systems to gain access and title over our lands illegally—violating a millennium of Indigenous governance systems, which pre-date the foundation and governing systems of the US. On multiple occasions, the US government ignored Indigenous sovereignty and ways of governing by violating and hiding various treaties established between the US government and Tribal Nations, specifically the Thirteen unratified (hidden) treaties of California, which would have given many unrecognized tribes in California—specifically the many Coastal Tribal Nations associated with the Spanish missions—federal recognition status.

In terms of colonial schooling and Indian boarding schools in California, the US government—for over two generations—provided substantial financial support and resources to both religious organizations (i.e., the Catholic and Protestant churches) and government schools under the guise of providing an education to Native youth. US government financial support and resources were used to steal or forcibly take Native youth from their tribal communities to sequester them to federal and religious day and boarding schools, where Native youth experienced genocide through colonial education. In these institutions, Native youth were stripped of their indigeneity, used as sources of unfree labor, and provided an inadequate education. Often, financial support was not utilized to educate Native youth; instead used to line the coffers of individuals, institutions, and religious organizations charged with providing a western education to our youth. As such, the US government has a moral, financial, and legislative obligation to atone for their wrongs and complicity in this history by offering resources and legislation to support Native communities as we begin to investigate the atrocities committed against Indigenous youth—at federal and religious Indian boarding schools—and in our efforts to move towards healing from the traumas enacted against us at the hands of the US government and to (re)claim our sovereignty as the original peoples of the land on which we allow you to reside.

As the descendant of over thirty former Indian boarding school students, the legacy of these institutions—institutions created strategically by your forefathers—has significantly impacted me, my family, and my Tribal Nations. My grand-uncles, Paul and Emmanuel Gonzales, were two of the 100+ California Mission Indian youth to be coerced or forcibly taken to SBIIS. A few short years later, my great-grandfather, Louis Florian Gonzales, would also be taken to the school to obtain the education promised to our people. During his time at SBIIS, Grandpa Louis was stripped of nearly every ounce of our Tongva and Pay mkawish culture. As the last family member to be connected to our traditional knowledge systems, taught to him by his mother, Maria Francisca Lisalde—a known midwife and healer for Native families in San Timoteo Canyon (located in present-day Redlands, CA), our family lost our culture for three generations.

My grandmother, Carmelita Gonzales, and her siblings (Leonard, Gilbert, Raymond, Dora, and Emma) were also forced to attend SBIIS, further decimating con-

nections to our ancestral knowledge and education systems. My grandmother, who was taken to the school before she even turned five, shared with many of her children and grandchildren how she would run away from the school because she feared the priests and nuns at the school and wanted to return home to her family at the Gonzales Ranch. My grand-aunt, Emma, shared with me how the only thing she received in terms of the promised education was a Paul Merchant penmanship course alongside endless religious indoctrination. Aunt Emma also spoke about how she was given different charges, of which butter churning was one. Before her death, she reflected on how she never got to taste the butter she churned as it was reserved for the priests and nuns overseeing the school—many of whom were already pocketing the financial support provided by the US government rather than using it to give the robust education promised to our people.

Upon completing their time at SBIIS, my thirteen and fourteen-year-old grand-uncles, Leonard and Gilbert, were sent to help build the Riverside Mission Inn. Uncle Leonard and Uncle Gilbert didn't get to return home to reconnect with their family. Instead, they were forced—in connection to SBIIS's outing programs—to help create what has become one of the most frequented tourist attractions and wedding destinations in Riverside, CA. My grand-uncle Raymond may have had it the worst out of all the children. He was a sickly child and required healing through traditional plants and medicines that only his grandmother knew how to cultivate and utilize. Uncle Raymond would have inherited her knowledge and experience and carried on her work as a healer, passing down generations of California Indian knowledge and wisdom held by Grandma Francisca. But the US government and Catholic Church stole that Indigenous education from him—from all of us.

The negative impacts of Indian boarding schools didn't end with their closing or Native youth being permitted to attend public schools with white children in urban areas after 1935 and beyond. My mother's generation, my generation, my nieces and nephews' generation, and my great nieces' generation—four subsequent generations—carry the legacy of these institutions—for our family, we carry the legacy of SBIIS and our ancestors' time at the institution.

My mother, Dolores Aguila, spent most of her life knowing she was California Indian, being forced to work with state and government agencies—most frequently the US Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)—so that she could (re)claim ties to our Tribal Nations via federal census and California Indian Judgement Rolls. While Dolores carried the oral histories of our family—narratives passed down for generations and that recounted stories of our ancestors always calling Southern California home—to meetings with BIA staff, they required her to find physical documents—records they had in their possession—to provide proof of her Native heritage; something that often came at a tremendous financial burden to her and our working-class family. The denial of access to documents that would confirm what she knew to be true and the rejection of the oral histories she took to BIA offices by staff only gave my mother fuel to stand her ground and to prove that the oral histories were correct and matched their records. My mother has led the charge in ensuring my siblings and I, along with our many cousins, have never forgotten that we descend from the first and true Americans of Southern California.

I, too, carry the legacy of my ancestors' experiences at SBIIS. My ancestors are why I have chosen to undertake the traumatic and heartbreaking work of being a scholar conducting Indian boarding school research. Every day—through every archival document I review, article I read, and story I preserve—I relive the experiences of my great-grandfather and his brothers, my grandmother and her siblings, and every survivor, victim, and descendant of SBIIS. As a youth, I was ashamed to tell friends that I was Tongva and Payčmkawish. Over multiple generations, the Spanish, Mexican, and US governments had done such an excellent job in their attempts at erasing California Indians from the physical and symbolic landscape of our ancestral homelands—and in replacing pride in our indigeneity with shame—that I knew my friends and teachers would not believe me if I told them I was California Indian and that they were residing on the lands my ancestors have called home since creation. I was also ashamed that I had no knowledge of our traditions and couldn't speak our languages. Practices that were stolen from us in the missions and further removed from us at SBIIS. I carried a shame forced upon my family due to these colonial structures and systems.

Conducting academic research on Indian boarding schools began as a way to atone for the rejection of my indigeneity, to find answers as to why my family had lost connections to our traditional ways and knowledge, and to rid myself of a shame—passed down intergenerationally—that was forced upon my family by on-going colonial structures and systems. But as the years have passed, it has become a way of (re)connecting with and (re)claiming the ancestral wisdom that I carry within me and exposing generations of falsehoods through truth-telling and (re)storying the In-

dian boarding school narrative of Southern California. It has become acts of refusal and healing. Refusal to be silent and refusal to let my ancestors' sacrifices be in vain. It is also healing generations of loss and shame and breathing life back into the ancestral knowledge and teachings we carry within. While we may never fully get back what was stolen from us, I am doing everything in my power to make sure the cycle of shame that was reinforced at the boarding schools ends with me. My nieces and nephews will carry stories of our ancestors' resilience and refusal at SBIIS and our enduring survivance as a people and as a family.

I want to note that as California Indians, we carry not only the legacy of US federal and Catholic mission Indian boarding schools but also the legacy of Spanish and Mexican colonization via the missions and ranchos, respectively. We carry the lasting effects of the genocide financially sponsored by the California government, which the US government reimbursed. As previously stated, my Tongva and Payčmkawish ancestors are the original inhabitants and caretakers of some of the most ecologically diverse and rich land in Southern California. Our people today continue our stewardship over our homelands. While the US government continues to deny us our very existence by denying us recognition—and despite three waves of colonization and three attempts to physically remove us from our homelands—we are still here, and we are not going anywhere.

When you approve this legislation in the Senate—which every US Senator should be morally obligated to vote yes on—and the sister legislation is approved in the House of Representatives, followed by President Biden signing this Act into law; I hope that committee members and investigators also include the Spanish missions and Mexican ranchos in investigations of California's Indian boarding schools. Why? Because colonial schooling—the stripping of our culture and knowledge transmission practices—began with Spanish contact and continues today. To fully atone for the wrongs done to California Indians, you have to start from the beginning. In bringing California into your nation, you inherited the atrocities committed by Spanish and Mexican government officials, religious leaders, and settlers. Thus, it is now your responsibility to right those wrongs. Additionally, I hope you call in California Indian tribal leaders and emerging scholars—such as myself—to be a part of these conversations and investigations because truth and healing cannot occur unless we are given a seat at the table.

I want to close by reinforcing my support of Senate Bill 2907—the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. The US government has benefited from Indigenous peoples and our land for far too long. It is time that the government honors the treaties—ratified and unratified—and helps Native peoples obtain truthful answers that we have sought for generations as we move forward in our healing.

Thank you to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for holding this space for us and collecting written support and testimonies.

BRIAN KAMANUOKALANI MARTIN, MD
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski,

My name is Brian Kamanuokalani Martin, MD.

I am a kauka Kanaka Maoli, a Native Hawaiian physician. I began my career as a computer scientist, went to medical school, did post-doctoral training in epidemiology, and currently work as a Health and Life Sciences Principal for a Federally Funded Research and Development Center.

I had the privilege of working with US Senator Daniel Inouye's staff on the drafting of The Native Hawaiian Health Care Act of 1988, Public Law 100-579.

I am writing to you to urge you to support S. 2907, and to consider including Native Hawaiians—na Kanaka Maoli—in S. 2907.

Here's why:

I am a 1973 graduate of the Kamehameha Schools, which at that time was a military institute for high school students and a K-12 boarding school for Native Hawaiian children. Up until 1973, the Kamehameha Schools did not provide a college preparatory education for Native Hawaiian children; instead, it required four years of Army ROTC for its male high school students, with the objective of graduating students who would enter the US Army at an E-2 private second class rank rather than attend college.

In the fall of 1972, as a senior at the Kamehameha Schools, I was accepted for admission to Reed College, an undergraduate-only college that the National Science Foundation ranks on a par with Caltech and MIT based on the proportion of under-

graduate students who go on to earn a STEM PhD. Reed is a college of approximately 1400 students with its own on-site nuclear research reactor.

In the spring of 1973, the Kamehameha Schools high school newspaper published a list of students who had been admitted to college, along with the names of the colleges that the students were planning to attend. I clearly recall my high school social studies teacher asking me to speak privately with him after publication of the school newspaper.

When we met, my teacher told me that he needed to apologize to me; he said that the Kamehameha Schools purposely did not prepare its students for college, and that he was worried that I was ill-prepared for the academic rigors of Reed College. He said that I would have been better-prepared for college if I had attended one of the public schools on the Island of O'ahu.

His conversation with me led me to write a blistering editorial about the education provided by the Kamehameha Schools; my editorial was published in the Sunday edition of the Honolulu Advertiser in the Spring of 1973. That editorial took the Kamehameha Schools to task for asserting that it accepted only the best and brightest of Native Hawaiian children, while failing to prepare these same children for success at the top educational institutions in the US. (The Kamehameha Schools dropped its mandatory ROTC requirement the following school year, in the Fall of 1973, and started a college preparatory program.)

I framed the editorial within the context of my family's oral history, as told to me by my maternal great-grandmother and step-great-grandfather. My family's ancestral home is the Island of Moloka'i; my family was known for its expertise in the practice of La'au Kahea, a traditional healing practice that was outlawed in the mid 1800s by the Protestant missionaries who controlled Hawai'i's government. However, my family continued its traditional practices in secret, hidden from the Protestant-led government.

In 1914, the church leaders of two O'ahu-based churches—Kawaiaha'o and Kaumakapili—received word that certain individuals on the Island of Moloka'i were still engaged in the Hawaiian cultural practices that the Protestants had outlawed. They sent an armed group to Moloka'i; that group tracked down my great-grandfather and murdered him. My grandmother saw her father murdered, and confirmed her experience to me.

In 1978, five years after I graduated from the Kamehameha Schools, the Hawai'i State Constitutional Convention dramatically amended Hawai'i's Constitution in part to reverse the impact of the cultural genocide that had been inflicted on the Kanaka Maoli by the Protestant-led government: the Hawaiian language was made an official language of the State of Hawai'i; Hawaiian beaches could no longer be owned as private property; and Native Hawaiian gathering rights, a practice that my family had carried out in secret for more than one hundred years, were enshrined by Hawai'i's Constitution.

COYOTE VALLEY BAND OF POMO INDIANS
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski,

I am writing on behalf of the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and Tribal Nations died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report has helped shed light on the schools.

The Congressional Commission created by S. 2907 will help further the ensure a full and complete review of: the total number of Native children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; the total number of Native children who were abused, died, or went missing at Indian boarding schools; and the long-term impacts that Indian boarding schools have had on the children who attended and their families. S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. I urge the Committee to pass S.2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL HUNTER, *Chairman.*

VALERIE WATSON, OLD TOWN, MAINE
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski,

I am writing to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. While I am not a victim myself of the boarding school era, I defer to my relatives who did, and I trust them when they say that this legislation is an essential step toward healing. Native people in this country continue to endure the direct and intergenerational trauma inflicted by boarding schools supported by the federal government, and it is our duty today as a nation to address that harm in a culturally appropriate way.

As you are aware, this legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

Many who experienced the boarding schools and foster homes directly support this legislation, and I do too. I appreciate you working to heal this period of our history.

GOVERNORS' INTERSTATE INDIAN COUNCIL, INC.
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski,

I am writing on behalf of the GOVERNOR'S INTERSTATE INDIAN COUNCIL (GIIC), to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and Tribal Nations died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report has helped shed light on the schools.

The Congressional Commission created by S. 2907 will help further ensure a full and complete review of: the total number of Native children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; the total number of Native children who were abused, died, or went missing at Indian boarding schools; and the long-term impacts that Indian boarding schools have had on the children who attended and their families.

S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. [I/WE] urge the Committee to pass S.2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

Sincerely,

NEALIE MCCORMICK, PRESIDENT

MYRA CAMPBELL
July 13, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski,

Greetings, my name is Myra Campbell, tribal member of the Colville Confederated Tribe and the Nez Perce Tribe. My deceased father had attended Chemawa Boarding School in Chemawa, Oregon. He was born in 1932 and attended during his adolescence (approx. 7–9 years old). I am a Licensed Professional Counselor for the State of Idaho and have conducted research with boarding school members both young and elderly.

My support for H.R. 5444 the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, is a personal one and a subject that I still continue to research in my current doctoral studies. I support the idea of reparation to indigenous peoples of the United States due to the historical trauma that is still a major component in the biopsychosocial issues of many Native American communities. This investigation is paramount to disclosing many generations of devastating policies set forth by the government in order to eradicate Native populations and strip from them their identity and culture.

My personal story of intergenerational trauma stemmed from my grandparents and the ensuing abuse and trauma that was passed down from generation to generation. My grandmother was placed in a boarding school as a youth which in turn imprinted behavior that caused her to develop an abusive pattern toward her children. My father, who had been named after his father, was then emotionally and psychologically abused by his mother. This caused my father to become abusive to me and my siblings. My father was an alcoholic who would physically abuse us as children. He could never maintain a healthy relationship with his wives who he also abused physically and emotionally. My siblings and I witnessed many physical fights and often had to 'break up' altercations during our adolescence. The trauma of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse occurred in our family throughout my childhood. I became addicted to alcohol and drugs and was also institutionalized in substance abuse treatment centers, county jails, and eventually prison. It took many years to come to the conclusion that my parents were affected by various ideologies that meant to break down the familial structure of Native American family lifeways. I did have the opportunity to discuss this with both of my parents before they passed away. Once I became sober and began my healing journey, I was able to recognize that my parents were the product of a system meant to negatively affect our cultural identity. I see psychologically how this affected them and their life. One common theme from their stories they have told me was 'shame' and 'regret'. They struggled with finding their true identity but was imprinted in them that 'being Indian' was shameful and superstitious. I also felt this way growing up as I was on the tail end of my parents' legacy of discrimination, racism, and loss of culture. I struggled with finding my way in this world despite what occurred in the past. I am now in the process of a doctoral studies program that will allow me to incorporate my research on historical trauma and boarding school history.

Again, I want to support H.R. 5444 to establish indigenous knowledge to others that suffer adverse events and how we, as a nation, can move forward with accurate history and acknowledging the wrongs of the past and to continue to help tribes become more culturally aware and emotionally well.

Thank you to the Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States for laying ground for a very important and historical healing event.

THE COALITION OF NATIVES AND ALLIES
July 14, 2022

Dear Senator Schatz and the Committee on Indian Affairs,

The Coalition of Natives and Allies (CNA), a Pennsylvania-based coalition led by Native voices, educates communities, schools and universities on the true history of our country. We understand that the "Boarding School" era in this country added to the profound harm that has been caused since first contact with Europeans. In our educational program, the Native American Boarding Schools and adoption programs are a central theme, given that two of our members have personal family experience with both of those harmful practices.

We understand the powerful intergenerational impact of the Boarding School era on all members of Native communities in the United States and Canada. We also

understand how most Americans haven't been truthfully educated, therefore have no idea about this chapter in our shared history. Our Coalition co-founders visited the Pennsylvania State Capitol to meet representatives and discovered that nearly all were unaware of this history, despite the flagship school—Carlisle Indian Industrial School—being less than 30 miles from the Commonwealth's Capitol.

We seek justice for Indigenous peoples by working on legislation to end the use of Native peoples for sports mascots. Decolonizing our schools by bringing awareness of the blatant racism and harm in misappropriation of the Native minority as stereotypical archaic mascots, is part of our mission.

We wholeheartedly support S. 2907 to begin the healing process in this country. We will never be the country that we are capable of being without this history and truth told, the harm expressed, the wrongs witnessed, and the healing beginning. The land we occupy, the air we breathe, the lakes we swim in, and resources we enjoy, come at a huge price to the original peoples of this land. It is time for this to be acknowledged and healing to begin. We urge supportive actions of repair be made in any way possible.

LOWER SIOUX INDIAN COMMUNITY, STATE OF MINNESOTA
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Lower Sioux Indian Community in the State of Minnesota, to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. As you are aware, this legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

The Lower Sioux Indian Community fully supports and endorses passage of S. 2907 and we appreciate your work towards healing.

Sincerely,

ROBERT L. LARSEN, PRESIDENT

CONSTANCE GARCIA-BARRIO
July 13, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

Hello:

I urge the Senate to pass S. 2907, which acknowledges the harm done to Native Americans by boarding schools designed to strip them of their cultural heritage. S. 2907 also provides resources needed to heal that damage.

Please support passage of S. 2907 and H.R. 5444 now.

NATIVE ORGANIZERS ALLIANCE
July 20, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

The mission of Native Organizers Alliance (NOA) is to amplify the power of Tribes, organizations, and communities to drive policy change in Indian Country. NOA believes our lands, waters, cultural resources, and communities are best protected when the rights of Tribal Nations are upheld, and the voices of Native peoples are heard. NOA urges the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. This legislation would authorize a comprehensive investigation of educational institutions in which Indigenous children endured trauma that has since been passed through generations. It will support the creation of national survivor resources that will increase our capacity to rise in resilience, heal from wounds of the past, and move forward with power into the future. A political moment is upon us.

We urge you to take action to make recommendations to identify the Tribes from which children were taken, protect unmarked burial sites of our children, ensure repatriation for our relatives when their families have requested that they be returned home, and to discontinue the removal of Indigenous children from their commu-

nities. While we cannot erase the past, we can create a permanent record of the stories of those who survived attempts of genocide, and leverage policy change to heal.

Alongside the work of the Department of Interior and Secretary Deb Haaland's initiative with the Red Road to Healing, this legislation will prove that the Biden-Harris administration is committed to making a lasting and positive impact on Indigenous peoples in response to the trauma caused by federal policies throughout the course of history in the United States. Enactment of S. 2907 will promote truth, justice, and healing. I urge the Committee to pass S.2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

With Respect and Thanks,

JUDITH LEBLANC, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

SISTER MARY ANN MCGIVERN, SL

July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

An extreme belief in "Manifest Destiny" led the U.S. effort to destroy Native peoples and their cultures. Fortunately, we did not succeed completely. But like Germany after the Holocaust, we need to teach our children the wrongs done in the name of our country when blinded by ideology. A Truth and Healing process will allow us to begin to heal the relationships that past behaviors harmed so much, and live more closely in respectful interdependence. In this way, we can move past current problems in our wider culture as well.

I am a Sister of Loretto and our community taught the Osage in St. Louis, St. Paul and Pahuska, KS and we operated an Indian school in Bernalillo, NM. While we always thought we had been good teachers to the Indians, we are now reviewing records and talking to descendants, asking for accounts from those we taught.

How can we go forward unless we understand the past?

LIBBY COMEAUX, DENVER

July 14, 2022

We need to face our history in order to heal it. Like Germany after the holocaust, we need to teach our children the wrongs done in the name of the U.S. when blinded by Manifest Destiny to disparage other cultures. This will allow us, like it allows humans in one-on-one human transgressions, to begin to heal the relationship and live more closely in the truth of our respectful interdependence. Let America heal and become the great nation we want to be.

NIKKI KATT, ORANGE, CT

July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and Tribal Nations died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report has helped shed light on the schools.

The Congressional Commission created by S. 2907 will help ensure a full and complete review of: the total number of Native children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; the total number of Native children who were abused, died, or

went missing at Indian boarding schools; and the long-term impacts that Indian boarding schools have had on the children who attended and their families.

S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. I urge the Committee to pass S. 2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

WASHINGTON WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

July 25, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Women's Foundation to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long-lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

Sincerely,

MARIA KOLBY-WOLFE (SHE/HER), PRESIDENT/CEO

DIANE OLTARZEWSKI

July 14, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

The "Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act" is long-overdue and extremely important. It will allow us to sweep away the clouds of confusion, ignorance, and denial—in favor of the clear truth about our history. For we've all been learning how these schools wrongly tore families apart and were part of a strategy to promote assimilation rather than protect the cultural integrity of Indigenous communities.

The pawns in the game were the young children (some so very young!) who were psychologically brutalized by denying them their language, their connection to siblings as well as their parents and extended family. Dressed up as little white children for photos, their reality was too often forced labor rather than education. Physical cruelty and exploitation were too often their lot. Many never made it out alive, and even more never made it back to successfully reintegrate with their families.

The truth must be told and reparation made.

Thank you in advance for your commitment to this truth.

JENNIFER FRICK, PORTLAND, MAINE

July 15, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I write to strongly encourage you to pass S. 2907 to create a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools.

As a survivor of childhood trauma, I fully understand the importance of unearthing and revealing the truth of the reality of adverse experiences, especially for the young.

Healing can only be possible when all parties face and feel the Truth, and acknowledge it publicly. Please reach into your hearts and make this Commission possible.

Thank you.

ARIFA BOEHLER

July 13, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

Hello,

I am a non-native person living on Wabanaki coalition land in Maine. I am so grateful for the work that Maine has done with truth and reconciliation. Because I was able to hear and feel the consequences of boarding school and other travesties on native people when my ancestors arrived on this land I have been able to unearth some very deep seated unresolved guilt.

Before learning the stories I was able to live in denial of those feelings and just assume nothing could be done. Mostly I had a shield up inside me about my own ancestors that I did not want to learn about. I just thought myself as starting now, they are not part of me.

Because of the work of an organization in Maine, Wabanaki Reach, that was initiated after the T&R council work here, many of us have excavated our own ancestral stories, felt the sorrow and guilt, and awakening ourselves the broad sweep of the development of the human heart through the course of history. And here we stand now. This is what we can do. We can hear the stories, do what is possible to reconcile the damages, all of us, native and non-native, working to create societies that these sort of atrocities can not happen.

But first, the native people need to be heard, loud and clear. Their history needs to be in our schools. Children need to know the true complexity of the foundations of this country, great as the vision of government is, the foundation has problems. Riddled with secrets and wounds that unless recognized and labeled will only fester and continue to create a society that is not based on truth. I think we all know what is manifesting now.

We are acting like a violent nation now because of our roots of violence. We all know too that in our hearts we are not a violent nation.

Action like a truth and reconciliation commission could possibly be a pretty major step toward the depth of healing that is required by all of us, especially the native peoples and those of us who are descendants of early settlers.

Thank you for your work!

AUTUMN GUSTO
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing this as a message of support for S. 2907, The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. Act.

Immediate action needs to be taken to rectify the crimes of our history in Maine and across the United States with regard to "Indian boarding schools" I can only hope this can serve as a beginning step to healing and memorial to the lives and culture lost.

LANA JACK
July 23, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

My name is Lana Jack. I am Celilo Wyam of the Columbia River Indians. We are a Sovereign Nation since time immemorial there are only a few of us left as holding aboriginal title. After being picked apart from the inside I come from a long line of Matriarchs whom stood their ground to their end. The final blow after jail, juvey, prison, state hospitals. The Boarding school folks swept the village for the children, to be sent to Chemawa Indian School. We been so completely disenfranchised from our authentic status of aboriginal title holders in pursuit of self determination. They were sure to leave the elders alone with no one left of their young folks. And when the children, young adults tried to return there was no one left of the old ones. I have cried a river. This is our sad reality both my parents were taken from their families and sent to school. My mom state side, my dad Canadian side.

I went thru years of the Truth and reconciliation process with my dad's people 2010-2012. Recompense behind and I am sorry will not do. It was devastating to our communities, to expose the darkest moment behind the secret allowed to live in our communities: incest, child rape, made for a very sorrowful time as we were struck with suicide of epic proportions. My uncle Chief Harvey Alphonse called me tiwun means niece. His words to follow were real as it gets. He himself had battled for his own life behind suicide. It came at a time the tribe had to call a state of emergency. Suicides along with a rash of violence, attempted murder, murder! Missing and murdered Indigenous peoples in numbers unprecedented. My uncle said Tiwun its a spirit isn't it? Yes, was my response. He himself had cried out the name of Jesus! And the spirit of suicide had to leave. He lay the shot gun down and thanked God for his life. I said tell them that uncle! Tell our people your story. Our people need to receive your story as a source of hope. I stood next to my uncle as he told his story to a room full of First Nation of Cowichan valley. Mr Shawn Atleo listened and responded to our call. By this time it is 2011 Jan to Dec. We had experienced 277 attempts of suicide and 88 completions from the age of 8 to 80. Sexual abuse was being spoken of and it was a powerful spirit. That the street people of Vancouver

were falling out under legions of spirits Behind the abuse of the schools and at home.

There is no easy way to move thru this with out coming up against harsh rebukes behind the abuse To hear the truth means to hear all of the truth , sodomy , incest having to preform sex acts on the nuns and priests or suffer the physical abuse and to be starved, or harsh corporal punishment and death.

I feel so desperate for time in the matter of Truth and Reconciliation The Hour of Acknowledgement is been upon us for some time now. The extent of our shared suffering and pain is so immense in our Indian communities from north to south, east to west. The Healing must began immediately Can cannot pull back the band-aid and hope to air it out and that will be the answer. It is a very delicate matter to all whom have a story of survival over the through the generations It is the inter-generational trauma silenced with in our elders often to the grave, never to be spoken of Its what keeps us from our authentic selves as the aboriginal Also That which keeps us Marginalized as drunk, lazy, dirty Indian Except meth, now fentanyl are the new poisons killing our next generation. Alcohol was the set up for this wave of death by drugs for our young people Covid 19 took our elders on the Columbia River, our honored oral tradition keepers of a way The last of our language teachers are gone Our language keeps us connected to our symbiotic way of being by the Natural Law as keepers of the earth This is what they wanted to make us forget the most There is nothing more dehumanizing then to steal our hearts, our children Back in a time when it took a village to raise a child, we observe the design of the system to pick a village a part over night Yes it was boarding schools for some, but it was that or Juvenile detention who did not cooperate, mainlined to adult jail, and then fed to the doctors at the state hospital , and or prison. Or off to the Vietnam war, All of which have kept our families apart to date As this on going genocide continues to take its toll on us.

Sandy white-Hawk says Our elders sharing their story will bring healing In time yes, but , on an immediate it will disrupt and damage more than I will do good.

The Government of United States of America should be held culpable for the crimes against us as the first peoples of Turtle Island Mass extinction of Millions of Indians We told them from the get what you do to the earth you do to yourself The system of kkk and white supremacy played its part in all departmenst was used to our demise to the fullest How to get rid of Indians by starving them out at the Rez and at school Not much has changed in the tactics to assimilate and acculturate us The salmon are near gone now as we foretold. We are almost all gone now Save an Indian campaign from extinction Time to honor the treaties Prisoners of war denied their existence is the worst kind of fate , we like the falls are prisoners of war in isolation We are the land , the river the air The salmon the orca Return our children now Money for mental health issues that manifest in self abusive ways for us Restore us the Celilo Wyam as a Sovereign nation, so we may protect what little we have left.

JOSEPH APPELL, FREEPORT, IL
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing in support of the Native American Caucus of the Washington State Democrats to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee.

This legislation will require the review of the records of over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country, and will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

We MUST heal this history.

VENUS EVANS, MI'KMAQ NATION
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing on behalf of the [INSERT TRIBE/ORGANIZATION NAME] to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee.

This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and Tribal Nations died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report has helped shed light on the schools.

The Congressional Commission created by S. 2907 will help further ensure a full and complete review of: the total number of Native children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; the total number of Native children who were abused, died, or went missing at Indian boarding schools; and the long-term impacts that Indian boarding schools have had on the children who attended and their families.

S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. [I/WE] urge the Committee to pass S. 2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

I am a descendant of a day school and residential boarding school survivor. My grandmother, Ida, attended the Woodstock Indian Day School, of the Woodstock Indian Reserve, of Woodstock, New Brunswick, Canada. Her sister, my great-aunt Esther, attended the Shubenacadie Residential Boarding School, in Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, Canada. Both eventually came to and became U.S. citizens. The trauma these women endured has had a lasting effect on their descendants to this day. We struggle with depression, addictions, and suicide. Addressing this issue with S. 2907 will be instrumental in beginning the healing process for the abuse and trauma suffered by Native children and families everywhere. The time has come, and you can hold a significant place in history. Please make it happen.

Wela'lin! (thank you)

CHRISTINE DIINDIISI MCCLEAVE
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

Greetings my relatives. My name is Christine Diindiisi McCleave. I am a dual citizen of the United States and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Tribal Nation and I am Eagle clan. I am also a generational survivor of church-run and government-run Indian Boarding Schools in the U.S. I am writing to submit testimony in support of passing Senate Bill 2907 for a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies.

I am the former CEO for the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) and I worked with Senator Elizabeth Warren to write this bill. Currently, I am a doctoral student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in the Indigenous Studies department doing my research on healing Indigenous historical trauma with traditional plant medicines.

The bill and testimony to date sets forth the many reasons this truth and healing commission is needed so I will focus on my personal testimony here.

At present, Indian boarding school experience affects five generations of my family, including my children. My great grandfather, John Walette, attended Carlisle Indian Industrial School and my grandfather, Lawrence Walette, attended Marty Catholic Indian School (formerly, Saint Paul's Mission School) and Haskell Indian School. My great grandfather attended Carlisle from 1910 to 1915 and played football for the Carlisle Indians. My family says he was recruited there by coach, Pop Warner and that he played football with the legendary Jim Thorpe. Though this may seem a proud piece of family history, my family never spoke of it until I started asking questions about my grandfather's boarding school experience. In fact, I had been working for the boarding school healing coalition for months before I learned that my great grandfather attended Carlisle at all. This is how little our family

spoke of boarding schools in an attempt to erase the past, but that didn't work. The effects lingered and surfaced, nonetheless.

I attempted to find out what dates my grandfather went to Marty or Haskell, but I have yet to locate his boarding school records. My grandfather passed away from a heart attack when I was 18 so I never got to ask him about it and when asking my mother, aunts, and uncles about his boarding school experience the response was always "he always said he didn't want to talk about it." I could only assume this meant he had negative experiences that he did not want to relive or burden his children with. I do know that he learned masonry at Haskell, as it was a vocational school at the time he attended, and that he was a bricklayer all his life. But I can only speculate what happened to him at Marty Catholic School. Some insight from his Catholic boarding school education can be gleaned from the fact that he almost missed my uncle's wedding because he said he "never wanted to step foot in the Catholic church again." Despite my grandfather's lasting resentment against the Catholic church, he disowned his eldest son, Lawrence Junior, when he came out as homosexual causing a lifetime of pain and estrangement between the two. Prior to colonization, my uncle would have held a position of honor in our tribe for his gender and sexuality.

Over the years, as NABS's executive, I heard countless testimonies and stories from survivors and descendants. Many described inhumane conditions, cruel treatment, brutal punishments, and horrendous abuses. I heard from one such survivor of boarding school abuses that Marty Indian School was known for using a punishment called the "beltline." The beltline was when children lined up in two rows facing each other and the child being punished would have to run down the middle while the others whipped and hit them with their belts. If blows were not doled out, the staff would send that child down the beltline next. I heard testimony that one child died from such wounds and that the children at the school had to build his casket to bury him in. I sobbed uncontrollably the first time I heard this and imagined my grandfather as a little boy being forced to run down the beltline and at times being forced to hit others running down the beltline. This type of punishment was physically cruel, psychologically torturous, and disgustingly common in Indian boarding schools.

As a result of learning brutality in the boarding schools, my grandparents exposed my mother to much violence and alcoholism growing up on the Turtle Mountain reservation. Eventually, my mother was sent to live with her aunt from age 8 to 15. Yet, when she became pregnant with me, she was sent to a Catholic unwed mother's home and told to give me up for adoption. I grew up witnessing much the same brutality as my mother did during childhood. As a result, when I had my first child, I gave custody to his father because I felt like I didn't know how to be a good parent. Thus, five generations were affected by Indian child removal, perpetuating the narrative that our children were better off being raised by someone else—an intentional message propagated by the U.S. Indian Boarding School Policies and the Indian Adoption Project.

Now, I have an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) score of 10 out of 10 resulting from inter-generational childhood trauma. The ACEs study shows that if a child experiences more than four of the ten trauma indicators, they are proven to suffer significant health disparities as an adult such as anxiety, depression, chemical dependency, obesity, heart disease, cancer, etc. and ultimately early death. I am 47 years old and living with several of these health issues. I have lost family members to alcohol-related and violent deaths. The ACEs study is indisputable proof that the U.S. policy to separate Native children from their families and send them to assimilative boarding schools in the U.S. caused generations of trauma, disease, and death.

Regarding the question about the bill's language granting subpoena power, it is imperative for the commission to be able to carry out a mandate for truth and healing. Subpoena power will assist with finding the truth. While CEO of NABS, I encountered numerous challenges in accessing boarding school records. In the U.S., NABS researched and documented that the location of nearly half of boarding school records is unknown. (As of 2021, collections for 62 percent of the schools on NABS's boarding school list were located, but collections for 38 percent of the known 400+ schools had not been located.) Churches who wanted to work towards reconciliation often could not answer the questions about where their records were. Funding, organization, and staffing were listed as obstacles to several Protestant denominations knowing what documents they held or even where they might be. Other institutions refused us access to the records outright, such as Marquette University. For three years I engaged in conversations with them about gaining access to records for over 60 Catholic schools—the bulk of the records owned by the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. Furthermore, I was advised by Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Com-

missioners to make sure our commission had subpoena power because the Canadian Commission ran into issues getting the church records even after they had been court ordered. There is no question that subpoena power is a requirement of the truth-telling process.

Lastly, regarding the questions about subpoena power starting the process off “adversarially,” that is erroneous—we are talking about a commission to address crimes against humanity. Genocide, to be exact, according to the definition set forth by the United Nations. Granting subpoena power is not starting adversarially. Stealing peoples’ children for indoctrination was the beginning of any adversarial action and it was not on the part of the peoples seeking justice through the formation of this commission.

Therefore, I urge this committee to be bold and brave in your pursuit of truth, healing, and justice. I have dedicated my life and career to those pursuits out of necessity. Prior to working at the boarding school healing coalition, I completed my master’s thesis on Native American spirituality and Christianity which covered the impacts of spiritual prohibition and religious programming at Indian boarding schools in the U.S. Inspired by my grandfather’s boarding school experience, I sought to find healing for my own questions of how one could possibly be Native and Christian after such evil had occurred in the name of God. The findings of my study showed that many Native Americans still practice Christianity, yet there are also many who have renounced it in favor of traditional Indigenous spirituality. Of those who had renounced Christianity, forced conversion in boarding schools and the irreparable harm that was caused by Christianity was cited as one reason. The strength and power of ancient Indigenous culture, language, and spirituality was another reason. Sadly, I have witnessed many families and communities arguing with each other over this issue of religion. Overall, it remains an unhealed wound for our peoples and an unresolved history which runs deep into our blood memory. A truth and healing commission would help to start these conversations for survivors and descendants to heal and move forward.

Lastly, regarding truth and reconciliation as a legal framework, I want to share that during my six-year tenure at NABS, I studied transitional justice with international experts from Canada, South Africa, and Columbia—all of which had TRCs. I learned about truth and reconciliation models and processes as I worked with Commissioners, Chief Willie Little Child and Monica Wilson from the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as well as Commissioner, Sandy Whitehawk of the Maine Wabanaki TRC. The boarding school healing coalition was formed expressly to implement such a commission in this country. Additionally, I was part of the City of Minneapolis’s TRC workgroup which made recommendations to the city council after the murder of George Floyd and the civil uprising that occurred in the summer of 2020. Truth and Reconciliation is currently the best model we have for addressing government-sanctioned violence. Though the murder of George Floyd sparked a global movement for racial justice, our cities, tribal communities, and nations are nowhere near healed from the centuries of racism, violence, injustice, and systemic oppression which has not only been designed by but upheld by the leaders of this country for generations.

While working at NABS, I often quoted Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart who coined the term “historical trauma” and her recommended steps to healing it. She wrote that the first step is to confront the trauma and the second step is to understand it before we can release it. In all honesty, this work will not be easy. My time at the boarding school healing coalition brought up much of my own family traumas for healing. Though I am grateful to all whom I worked with, and for, along the way, boarding school trauma will always be part of me. And it will always be a part of this country. Ignoring it won’t make it go away as many survivors and descendants can attest to; however, we must find a way to heal.

The U.S. Senate has the opportunity, through the passing of this bill, to begin the process of healing our collective historical trauma by setting us on that path to confronting and understanding this history and its enduring negative impacts on millions of people. We are just starting to step foot on this path to truth and healing in this country. It will be a long journey and will require a new level of humanity in our work and relationships.

I urge this committee to move this bill forward to be signed into law.

Wela’lin! (thank you)

JESS CADORETTE, DOWNINGTOWN, PA
July 19, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

Hi there,

I'm writing as a non-Native ally in support of revealing the truth about this painful chapter in our country's history so that healing may begin.

Unfortunately, we know thousands of Indigenous children were taken away and forced to attend boarding schools. To date, there has never been an accounting of how many children were forced to attend, how many were abused or even killed, and what the long term impacts of this horrific time were.

This Federal Commission is needed in order to locate and analyze the records from the 367+ known Indian boarding schools that operated in the U.S.

We need this Commission in order to examine the location of children who are buried, to help document the ongoing impacts from the boarding schools, and to help locate and analyze the church and government records. Additionally, this Commission could help to provide culturally-appropriate public hearings as a forum for survivors, victims, and their families.

This Commission ultimately would help to uncover findings and share those findings publicly so that this country may fully recognize and reckon with its past.

I support S. 2907, and I look forward to its passage and the creation of this Commission.

Thank you.

MARY LAVALLEY, PA
July 19, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing to express my support for S. 2907. It is time to acknowledge the deep generational harm that has been done, and continues to be inflicted on our First People including friends, members of my congregation and their families.

Please vote in favor of S. 2907 in order that healing begin.

Thank you.

JUDI GIBBS, SEATTLE, WA
July 12, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I strongly support a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian boarding schools.

Canada took on the issue of their residential schools some years ago with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the ensuing report. It is long overdue in the U.S.

I urge you to push ahead as quickly as possible with the Act that will set up the Truth and Healing Commission. I will ask my own senators, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, and my representative, Pramila Jayapal, to support your effort to push through this important legislation.

SANTA FE INDIAN SCHOOL'S SUMMER POLICY ACADEMY (SPA)
June 22, 2022

Dear Honorable Senator Ben Ray Luján Jr.,

On behalf of the Santa Fe Indian School's Summer Policy Academy (SPA), we are students who represent the Pueblos of San Idelfonso, San Felipe, Jemez, and the Navajo Nation. We spent a week at Princeton University's School for Policy and International Affairs (SPIA), studying the history of Indian boarding schools and the assimilation policies that devastated our tribal communities. This letter presents our research and recommendations for addressing the widespread atrocities resulting from the boarding school era.

The legacy of forced assimilation begins, in 1492, with our ancestors' first contact with European colonizer Christopher Columbus, and is followed by the arrival of Spanish Conquistadors in the late 1500's. Colonization resulted in the rape, pillage, and enslavement of our ancestors. By 1860, the U.S. established the first Indian boarding school on the Yakima Indian Reservation. Guided by its mantra to "Kill the Indian, save the man," the school's sole purpose was to forcibly assimilate Indian people into mainstream American culture. In fact, in New Mexico, the Albuquerque Indian School—built on the soil of our homelands—intentionally stripped our grandpas and grandmas of their traditional language and culture.

The conditions in Indian boarding schools and the long-term, detrimental impact on tribal communities were well-documented in both the 1928 Meriam and 1969 Kennedy reports. Yet, a more recent report—released on April 1, 2022—examined

more closely the harsh, boarding school methods that were used to poison children's hearts and minds. The report shows that schools replaced children's original Indian names with English names, cut their hair, and forbid them from using their native language and cultural practices. Children between 6 and 16 years old were even forced into hard, manual labor, including working on railroads. They were taught useless vocational skills, which left them with meager employment options, post-graduation. Even worse, the skills they learned were irrelevant for sustaining our cultural ways. Further, boarding schools used corporal punishment, such as solitary confinement, to enforce rules. If students broke the rules, the report states, they were denied food, whipped, slapped, and cuffed. Children in these schools experienced the most inhumane and humiliating punishment.

Almost 150 years since the creation of boarding schools, public schooling for Native American students still reflects remnants of the boarding school era—very little has changed. Public schools today neglect to include Indigenous culture, language, governance, and history into the curriculum. Schools, for example, often lack native language and culture courses, while history class typically neglects to teach the 1680 Pueblo Revolt—the only successful rebellion to drive out colonizers from present-day New Mexico. It is important to understand that we value our culture, history, languages, and traditions. Much like boarding schools, public schools today often conflict with our values and thus continue to threaten our very way of life. We value an education that blends academic learning with our cultural knowledge. The lack of a culturally relevant education leaves us, as students, feeling disconnected from school.

It is no surprise that academic achievement gaps disparately affect Native students. When students disconnect from school they fall behind academically. In fact, data shows that American Indian students have a dropout rate twice the national average. For this reason, several New Mexico families, in 2014, sued their state legislature and executive office for not providing Native American students an adequate education, i.e. one that strengthens cultural identity in the classroom. In 2018, the Court ruled in *Yazzie/Martinez v. State* that Native students have a constitutional right to a culturally relevant education; and that the State had violated those rights.

A general principle we are taught early on is to apologize for our wrongdoings and take responsibility for our actions. Since the recent release of the Boarding School report, one might think the U.S. would seek to undo the long-term trauma and harm inflicted upon Native children by boarding schools. As of today, however, this is not the case. For that reason, my colleagues and I seek a formal apology—in the form of legislation—to restore balance among our communities and enable positive opportunities for indigenous people to heal. By doing so, Congressional leaders would signify that our education, language, culture, and traditions are important. It would also signify that Indigenous people will never again be subjected to a school system that seeks to erase our cultural identity.

For example, in 2000, Kevin Gover, then Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, apologized publicly to Indigenous people for America's historical atrocities committed against them. Additionally, in 1993, Congress passed a Joint Resolution, which President Bill Clinton signed into law, apologizing for the U.S.' role in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy in 1893. In his apology, President Clinton stated, "I want to do what is right with respect to Native Hawaiians and all other Americans." These two events prove that, with sufficient political will, the U.S. can demonstrate respect for Indigenous people through a formal apology.

However, the U.S. must also take action to undo the generational harms resulting from federal Indian boarding schools. Many generations of Native families are deeply affected, for example, by poverty, substance abuse, and culture and language loss, thereby impeding the transfer of our tribal laws and cultural customs from one generation to the next. According to the recent Boarding School report, sustainable and long-term investments to increase opportunities for Indigenous education, and language and cultural preservation, are prime examples of actions that can be taken to undo such harm.

Let our request for a formal apology and commitment to undo the destruction to our cultural fabric be an encouragement for lawmakers to take the first step in helping us reach our most desirable communities. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or feedback.

STOCKBRIDGE MUNSEE BAND OF MOHICAN INDIANS
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing on behalf of the Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long-lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and Tribal Nations died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report has helped shed light on the schools.

My name is Shaimon Holsey President of the Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians located in northcentral Wisconsin, I am the granddaughter of grandparents who all attended Boarding School in Wisconsin and understand acutely the intergenerational trauma associated having close family members survive this challenging period in my families' lives.

The Congressional Commission created by S. 2907 will help further ensure a full and complete review of: the total number of Native children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; the total number of Native children who were abused, died, or went missing at Indian boarding schools; and the long-term impacts that Indian boarding schools have had on the children who attended and their families.

S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. We urge the Committee to pass S. 2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

Sincerely,

SHANNON HOLSEY, PRESIDENT

PETER CLAY
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing as a neighbor, a friend and an ally of The Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin and the Meskwaki Nation/Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. I am neither a Native person nor a survivor of the Indian boarding schools but I care deeply about this and wish to lift up my voice in support of S. 2907. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and Tribal Nations died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report has helped shed light on the schools.

As a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) I am aware that Quakers oversaw at least thirty of these Indian boarding schools. Within my own faith community I am respectfully advocating that we acknowledge the historical harms

that Quakers have done and that we do more research to learn more about what happened and how we tragically played a part in this. I am asking Quakers to apologize and, in respectful consultation with Native Nations and tribes, consider how we could make amends for our actions. I also am asking Quakers here in Iowa and across the United States to assist with the re-vitalization of Native languages destroyed by this misguided federal policy, which we supported. In fairness, earlier Quakers thought that what they were doing was for the best futures for Native children. We were profoundly misguided and we were wrong.

Thank you for including my strong support for S. 2907 as you deliberate. Please pass this crucially important bill out of committee and urge the full Senate to quickly pass this legislation. For all Americans, of all backgrounds and every heritage, the only way forward is together. This bill will be instrumental in making that possible.

ELIZABETH A. OPPENHEIMER, MINNEAPOLIS, MN
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee.

As I understand it, this legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country.

I am an active member in good standing of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers or Friends) and have been learning about the terribly harmful role that Quakers had in advocating for and implementing the boarding school system during the Grant administration, all of which resulted in abuse of all kinds, the destruction of families, and the forced assimilation of children into a culture that had decimated indigenous peoples and still causes tremendous harm. (See this post on the website Decolonizing Quakers: <https://www.decolonizingquakers.org/quakers-and-boarding-schools/>)

More specifically, in the last few years, I have learned that the relatives and ancestors of a few Quaker friends of mine and fellow worshipers in Iowa taught in one or more of these schools for Native children. There is remorse, confusion, and grief among my small Quaker community (called a “meeting, similar to a congregation”): We are fairly certain that there were good intentions connected to these Quaker relatives and predecessors, yet our contemporary learning teaches us that good intentions must never outweigh or be disconnected from taking responsibility for their harmful impact.

I myself am filled with remorse and have spoken openly among Friends about the need for healing—first and foremost for the indigenous communities, and second, as Way opens, for the Quaker and other Christian perpetrators of such widespread moral injury. Nevertheless, addressing the harm done to Native Americans is the priority and so their emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual needs must be centered by this Commission. Friends historically value truth-telling, this Commission will come a long way in doing so around these issues at the federal level.

I understand through the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) that this Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

The fact that NABS and other indigenous led groups and individuals are promoting this Congressional Commission leads me and other Quakers to humble ourselves and follow their guidance. My own predominantly white faith community has our own and separate healing to do, so I am in full support of this Commission.

Another Quaker friend of mine has written in his own testimony something I strongly unite with, so I am quoting him: “I am asking Quakers to apologize and, in respectful consultation with Native Nations and tribes, consider how we could make amends for our actions,” including taking meaningful actions related to the landback movement; the restoration and renewal of indigenous languages, culture, and practices; the cessation of pipeline construction that intrude upon indigenous land and infringe on the resources on which Native Americans depend; and the affirmation of the rights of nature and of Mother Earth.

LOIS A. LAW, VENETIE INDIAN TRIBAL GOVERNMENT/MEMBER OF ARCTIC
VILLAGE TRIBE
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

Good morning. I am writing to show support for S. 2907/H.R. 5444, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. Here in Alaska, truth of the myriads of child abuse which emerged from the religious boarding schools to address the traumatic outcomes caused by enforced attendance by scores of Alaska Native children in faraway boarding schools over several decades.

Please support this bill. Thank you.

I am writing to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. As you are aware, this legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

As a boarding school student who resided in children and foster homes I totally support S. 2907 with my heart as I believe this S 2907 will be the beginning of the healing of all American Indians and Alaska Natives boarding school victims.

I appreciate all of you working with the American Indians who attended boarding schools to heal from this period of assimilation, colonization and genocide in our United States history.

FARINA KING, PH.D. (ENROLLED NAVAJO NATION CITIZEN)
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I write in support of S. 2907, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. I am a Diné (Navajo) boarding school survivor descendant, daughter of Phillip Lee Smith who went to the Fort Wingate Indian Boarding School in New Mexico. I am a historian and author of publications about American Indian boarding school experiences. I recently accepted the position of Horizon Chair in Native American Ecology and Culture at the University of Oklahoma's Department of Native American Studies. I have worked as an associate professor of history and affiliate of Cherokee and Indigenous Studies at Northeastern State University for the past six years.

My aunt, Diane Smith, asked me to share her story of how the boarding school attendants and officials refused to take her to the hospital after she fell on the monkey bars at the Fort Wingate Boarding School in New Mexico. She broke her nose, but "they would not take [her] to the hospital." Her mother finally took her out of the boarding school to the hospital where she stayed for several days. My aunt continues to have sinus problems that affect her health. As she recounted this memory, in 2022, she said: "my nose still hurts." Her mother never returned her to school, and my aunt did not finish her schooling. She only attended school to the third-grade level. Her mother feared for her life. My aunt and family can only imagine the kinds of opportunities that my aunt could have had if she could have attended a school where her life wasn't threatened or disregarded.

I have interviewed and written about Native American boarding school experiences, especially those of my Diné kin like my aunt Diane and my father, Phillip Smith. One of the most haunting stories of boarding schools that I learned about has been recorded in a BIA file that I came across in the national archives about the "Leupp Incident" of 1957. In October of 1957, the Leupp Boarding School was hit by an influenza epidemic, and most of the children became very sick. A five-year-old girl, Dorothy Daily, was bullied and beaten by some older girls, while they were all suffering from the flu. Dorothy became unconscious and died soon after. Where were the school attendants and officials? The children were left vulnerable and at risk. A boarding school education under the hands of the U.S. federal government was lethal. I shared the story of Dorothy not to sensationalize her but to always remember her. Her community and family of Bird Springs also responded to this tragedy and sought for community-based Diné education, which our people still fight for today. I was able to talk with her home community and record some oral histories. You can read about it in my book, *The Earth Memory Compass* (2018), published by the University Press of Kansas.

This weekend, July 22–24, 2022, the largest group of Diné boarding school alumni and survivors are gathering in Wheatfields of the Navajo Nation. The Inter-mountain Indian Boarding School reunion and gathering brings hundreds of Diné boarding school survivors together, and they share their stories for healing. They find strength in each other as kin, as fellow survivors. They sacrifice their resources and time to travel from major distances to meet once a year. They put great effort in fundraising thousands of dollars to be able to gather with provided food, facilities, and shelter. Where is the support for this healing? Where are the centers and museums to remember their experiences and sacrifices for their people's survival? How are boarding school survivors, their families, and communities being involved in such initiatives? There are so many who want to share their stories and to be remembered. There are so many other boarding school survivors who want to gather and heal together, but they lack the resources to make it to such meetings.

I hope that this legislation, S. 2907, will be passed and address these imperatives. I support and look forward to collaborating with these initiatives as a public intellectual and Native American oral historian.

DON MOTANIC
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. As you are aware, this legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. As a son of two parents that were removed from the Umatilla and Coeur d' Alene Reservations and attended Chemawa Indian School in the 1930's, I've enclosed my testimony and totally support S. 2907 with my heart as I believe this S 2907 will be the beginning of the healing of all American Indians and Alaska Natives boarding school victims and cultural wellness programs to reconnect the 70 percent American Indian and Alaskan Natives that live in urban areas to their tribes and villages. I appreciate all of you working with the American Indians who attended boarding schools to heal from this period of assimilation, colonization and genocide in our United States history.

Enclosure

Thank you for this opportunity to support S. 2907/HR. 5444. My name is Don Motanic an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) who had parents that attended the Chemawa Indian School from 1927 until 1936. My mother, Myrtle Agnes Dupree, enrolled with the Coeur d' Alene Tribe met my father and married, Daniel Motanic, enrolled with CTUIR who attended the Chemawa School from 1932 to 1936.

I support all the recommendations in S. 2907/HR. 5444 and recommend that the implementation plan includes a process to assist boarding school decedents, especially the urban tribal population to reconnect with their tribe's reservation community with cultural wellness programs and provide a social-economic healthier population that was disenfranchised by genocide during the boarding school era.

In November 1958, I was only four years old, but found myself sitting in jail with my father in Renton, Washington. At a very young age, I started to understand how I needed to find a process to help our family to go from "Tragic to Magic."

I was fortunate enough to survive and thrive with parents who were affected by World War II and the Indian Boarding School system and become one of the very rare urban tribal science professionals with a degree in forestry to return to one of my mother's reservations at Spokane and my father's Umatilla Reservation to live and work. Our daughter Dr. Kelsey Motanic has also returned to the tribal community as the first CTUIR medical doctor and practices medicine with the Puyallup Tribe and a faculty member with the University of Washington School of Medicine. My parents and I found a way to struggle through some tough times and near death experiences with the assistance of many resilient community tools to find the Tragic to Magic trail.

I would recommend that the implementation plan with S. 2907/HR. 5444 gather Tragic to Magic stories of families, especially the urban tribal population that has returned to work on the reservation, so it could develop a resilient toolbox with var-

ious ways that families can survive and thrive to find the Tragic to Magic trail back from the boarding schools to our reservation lands.

Once again, I would like to thank the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for Indigenous Peoples of the United States for this opportunity to support S. 2907/HR. 5444.

PRAIRIE ISLAND INDIAN COMMUNITY
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

On behalf of the Prairie Island Indian Community, a federally recognized Indian tribe in Minnesota, I am writing to express the Tribe's support for the enactment of S. 2907/H.R. 5444—*Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act*. We commend your leadership on this issue and respectfully request that the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs pass S. 2907 out of Committee and, ultimately, the Senate.

The Indian Boarding School Policies funded by the Federal Government and U.S. missionaries were assimilation policies and practices inflicted on American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children as young as three years old. These schools intended to terminate the culture, spiritual practices, and languages of Indigenous people.

As Mdewakanton Dakota Sioux, our history and culture is kept alive through oral tradition—the purposeful repeating of stories—so the Indian Boarding School system immeasurably impacted who we are as Dakota people, even today. Killing our language was an attempt to kill our culture, traditions, connection, and existence. But our ancestors were strong, resilient people and, despite the scars within them, they raised us to have the same eternal principles, so we endure.

That is why S. 2907—*Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act* is critically important, not only to our Tribal people, but also to infinite other tribal nations who carry the same generational trauma inflicted on them by the U.S. Government and missionaries. Therefore, we respectfully urge you to take remedial action to support and enact S. 2907/H.R. 5444 to establish a commission to formally investigate, document, and acknowledge past injustices, assimilation practices, and human rights violations of tribal children, federally endorsed by the U.S. Government. Because, by better understanding the past, we can start to heal future generations of our Dakota people.

We thank you for your attention to this critical legislation for Tribal Nations.

Respectfully,

JOHNNY JOHNSON, TRIBAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT

ONEIDA NATION
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing on behalf of the Oneida Nation to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—*Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act* out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long-lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools far away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and tribal communities died at the boarding schools. These children were never returned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The very first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, conducted by U.S. Department of the Interior, has helped shed light on the schools.

Over the past three years, the Oneida Nation has returned home the remains of our precious children that attended the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. The his-

torical intergenerational trauma was re-lived by the families and our community, as we mourned for our children. We know that we have more of our children to bring home and with the creation of the Congressional Commission in S. 2907, will help further a full and complete review of the total number of Native children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; the total number of Native children who were abused, died, or went missing at Indian boarding schools; and the long-term impacts that Indian boarding schools have had on the children who attended and their families.

S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. The Oneida Nation urges the Committee to support the passage of S. 2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

With a Good Mind, a Good Heart and a Strong Fire,
TEHASSI TASI HILL, CHAIRMAN

KIMBERLY ANN FYKE
July 12, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

My name is Kimberly Ann Fyke of The Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians. I attended Holy Childhood of Jesus School in Harbor Springs, Michigan.

I'm here for those that can't, or won't talk about Holy Childhood of Jesus.

I am number 10 of my Indian Mother's 10 children, 2 of her children died young, but the other 8 of us all attended Holy Childhood of Jesus School. Being the youngest of the 10, I do have a different Father than my siblings, I'm unsure of the dates my siblings attended, but I was there from 1970-1974, we were taught white peoples ways, also the Beliefs of the Catholic Church

Growing up, the only Indian left in us, was our Blood an skin color.

My Mother passed away in 1970, my Father remarried a woman who had 12 children and her 5 youngest also attended Holy Childhood, a daughter an 4 boys, us girls were brought together by the nun an told we were sisters now because my Father had married her Mother. My Father passed away in 1974, left the school for his funeral and never returned. After living with my Stepmother for awhile, I needed out and ran away. My sister number 2 of the 10, took me in and then in 1976, we moved to Fairbanks, Alaska where she adopted me. I spent 20 years in Fairbanks, 20 years in Anchorage. After 40 years, my own daughter, an 2 grand daughters I came back home at age 55. Now learning what our ancestors really went threw at this Holy Childhood of Jesus School, an all over the world. I am so Angry! Of course my experience was nothing compared to my ancestors. The mental, physical, sexual abuse was still happening, by the people we were taught to be Holy people, Righteous people, Celibate people at Holy Childhood of Jesus School. We experienced the Pure Evil, in the Catholic Priests, Brothers, and Sisters if Notre Dame.

I may have been at the end of this school being Federally Funded, because we had to write letters to rich people asking for money. We children had cores, running Industrial Equipment, we stripped and varnished all hardwood floors, Industrial Kitchen Equipment, all food prep, Industrial Laundry Equipment. We were given needles and thread when first getting there and have to sew a number on all pieces of clothing we had, numbers changed each year. We were completely terrorized on Halloween, by the Holy people. I recall Sister Diane who took care of the youngest boys, bringing in a Black Bear's head on a silver platter, bleeding from its nose, at dinner time and rubbing the bloody nose all over a girl telling her that The Devil was going to get her. After dinner getting ready to leave the dinner hall we were told not to touch the Devil powder, that was everywhere from door of dinner hall, 3 fleets of stairs to our dormitory, entering the dormitory it was totally torn apart like a Tornado had hit it. Sister Diane came to our dormitory with the front paw of the Black Bear and was pulling the hairs from it, putting them on our beds telling us The Devil was going to get us. One year I found a human leg bone in my bed with my name written on it. Was told also The Devil would get me. One year, Sister Diane took all the girls in the back of a truck up to the Harbor Springs cemetery and dropped us of in the dark, to find our way back to the school. Holy Witches came out from behind trees and Tombstones to get us. I was running with a girl, who tripped and fell on a Tombstone an cut her knee wide open. By the time we made it to the school, the blood down her leg was drying, they wouldn't take her to doctors.

We had to find our belongings before bed, clean up their mess. After lights out the Holy Witches would come out of every where to get us. I Also remember another girl and I were told to go to the walk-in cooler to get cupcakes, we entered the cooler and the door was slammed shut, an light turned off. We were in there seemed like

forever, but also would hear someone unlock the cooler, as soon as we moved toward the door it would be locked again. This happened multiple times. We both thought we would freeze to death. I also remember hearing boys crying from the infirmary all the time, but no one was ever sick enough to be put in the Infirmary. I also remember Sister Naomi/Maxine tell all of us girls, that someone sold money from her living quarters and we had to knee in the main isle of our dormitory on the hardwood floor to pray that who ever took it would admit it. No one ever said they did it but we knelt and prayed until we would no longer, we couldn't feel our legs anymore and all started falling over in pain.

Again, I'm here to talk for those who can't, or won't talk about Boarding School. For my healing, I want to see Churches give up all Records from these schools, and Churches being held Accountable.

Thank you to all who are finally listening to us.

CATHIE CHAVEZ-MORRIS
July 25, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I, Cathie Chavez-Morris, am writing to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. My great grandmother, Paulina Juarez and her brother, were both enrolled in the Sherman Institute in Riverside, CA in 1905. They were preteens at the time of their enrollment. We have requested records from the Institute several times with no success. We do not know how long my great grandmother was enrolled, but we do know that her time there was during a critical moment in her life when she needed her family. My great-grandmother never spoke of the separation to her children. As a mother, I can imagine that must have been incredibly painful to even have to recollect and so she chose to keep that experience close to her heart. As a direct descendant of a survivor who cannot speak for herself, I speak for her and other ancestors who have no ability to share their thoughts and experiences. My journey and my children's journey is an extension of her journey. So this advocacy is carried on my shoulders for past and future generations.

This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

I'm so thankful you are working hard to heal this history.

REBECCA LINDER BLACHLY, THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing on behalf of The Episcopal Church to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long-lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

For well over 150 years, hundreds of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native children were taken, forced, or coerced to attend federal government supported Indian boarding schools away from their families, communities, and Tribal Nations. These schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation and genocide, the disposition of tribal lands, and produced long-lasting impacts including the loss of Native languages and cultures. Many children that were taken from their families and Tribal Nations died at the boarding schools. These children were never re-

turned home to their loved ones and often their families were never notified of their deaths. The first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report has helped shed light on the schools.

The Congressional Commission created by S. 2907 will help further ensure a full and complete review of the total number of Native children forced to attend Indian boarding schools; the total number of Native children who were abused, died, or went missing at Indian boarding schools; and the long-term impacts that Indian boarding schools have had on the children who attended and their families.

As part of our Church's work on racial reconciliation, justice, and our commitment to truth-telling, we are dedicated to addressing the legacy of violence and abuse perpetrated by boarding schools, including our church's role in the kidnapping of Indigenous children from their families by participating in the boarding school system. During our most recent General Convention, we passed a resolution to address our own history with Indian boarding schools. We resolved to create a fact-finding commission to conduct research on historical documents relevant to the role of the Episcopal Church in the Indigenous residential boarding schools and to support federal legislation to create a truth and healing commission on Indian boarding school policy.

S. 2907 will ensure that there will be a full accounting of the Indian boarding schools and will promote truth, justice, and healing. We urge the Committee to pass S. 2907 when it comes before the U.S. Senate.

Final Statement of Support—Submitted

We welcome the introduction of this legislation and thank Senator Warren and Congresswoman Davids for their leadership. As part of our work on racial reconciliation, justice, and our commitment to truth-telling, we are dedicated to addressing the legacy of violence and abuse perpetrated by boarding schools, including our church's role in the kidnapping of Indigenous children from their families by participating in the boarding school system. The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act will begin the work of healing intergenerational trauma and advancing efforts of racial reconciliation. We urge this legislation's swift passage.

Helpful References

Bishop Curry: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/publicaffairs/statement-on-indigenous-boarding-schools-by-presiding-bishop-michael-curry-and-president-of-the-house-of-deputies-gay-clark-jennings/>

Act of Convention (2018–A044): https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_generate_pdf.pl?resolution=2018-A044

LINDA R. COBE
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

My name is Linda Cobe, I am Ojibwa/Oneida and a member of Lac Vieux Desert Tribe of Lake Superior Indians. I speak English because my Native tongue was taken from me. Ojibwa was spoken in our home. My parents lived a traditional lifestyle, we lived off the land, my father hunted, trapped, and fished. We were poor and did not have running water or electricity. My grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, and Cousins all lived in close vicinity of us. I am a survivor of boarding school. Myself, siblings, and cousins were all forced to attend Holy Childhood boarding school in Harbor Springs, MI. The school was run by the Sisters of Notre Dame, Catholic nuns, where we were forbidden to speak Indian, wear our clothes from home, or possess any items from home. I was 5 years old, it was 1964 when the priest came for us. I don't remember who was with him but they patiently waited for us to come out of hiding, shook a bagful of candy, and grabbed us and put us in the car. We took the long ride downstate, 5 hours, and arrived to a 3 story building, where the nuns came out to greet us. They were dressed in long black dresses with veils, with only their white faces showing. We saw other children that looked like us, boys and girls. They all had the same stunned look on their faces as if to wonder why we had to be there. We had separate dorms, girls on one side, the boys on the other, school rooms and cafeteria were on the lower floors. They started with the rules right away. They were strict and mean. We had to line up single file and march next door every day for church before school started. Our morning routine started with making our bed. It had to be made without any wrinkles and have hospital corners. If it had one wrinkle, they ripped it apart and you did it again. Of course you also got a slap for not doing it right. A slap or cuff to the back of the head could also come if you weren't ready to line up when we were told to line up, or

if you missed a button, didn't pull your sock up, whatever, you could be yanked out of line, told to fix it, then shoved back in line. Punishments were also severe, many were made to kneel for hours for infractions. One girl had wet her bed and the nun made her scrub the entire bathroom on her hands and knees using her toothbrush. Mealtime was also stressful, having to eat slop, the same mush in the morning, we were expected to eat everything on our plate, and no seconds. I hated beets, was crying in my food because I knew I would be punished for not eating them. My cousin would eat what we couldn't so we wouldn't get in trouble. I had smile at him one time across the table and the nun came and slapped me across the face, told me I should be eating not playing. Nighttime was the most sorrowful, listening to the little girls sobbing into their pillows so the nun wouldn't hear them and come out and smack us around. We were homesick, we cried for our parents, we didn't want to be there. It seemed like we were constantly being told what stupid, dirty, stinking, good-for-nothing Indians we were and how lucky we were to be there. They made us write letters home and tell our parents we liked it there and the nuns were so nice to us. We had chores, there was always cleaning, they wanted the stairs and banisters to shine. The windows had to be washed inside and outside. One of my cousins told me she witnessed one child sitting on the windowsill, on the 3rd floor to wash the outside, while another child held his legs. I've repressed most of my memories of my one year there but I clearly remember the worst beating I got for not being ready when the girls were lining up. I couldn't find the blue dress I was told to where, so I started crying. Sr. Naomi came over to me, livid, hit me so hard I fell to the floor, she hiked up her long dress and started kicking me over and over. I was crying hard as she yelled at me to shut up, you stupid good-for-nothing Indian. I was smart enough to know you don't treat someone like a dog, something less than human. We just wanted the time to be over so we could go home to loving parents. I've had male cousins tell me they were sexually abused by the nuns. Today they drink heavily to numb out the pain. I finally returned home in the summer, but in August, a Social Worker came to the house and said we were being neglected. Our parents had split up, there was domestic violence and alcoholism in the family. We were placed with a White, Catholic family in Baraga, MI. where our culture again was kept from us, they treated us like we were White children but at school, the other children treated us like Indians, we faced a prejudiced community. Our adopted dad was also alcoholic and began sexually abusing us, which lasted for years. The US government, in the 1960s had started the Indian Adoption Project to also help assimilate Native children. This was called the 60s Scoop, before the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978 became law. It was all done for the Land Grab and resources, they used the Churches to force the assimilation through the boarding schools, destroying our culture, breaking up the family unit, and abused thousands of innocent Indigenous children. This was cultural genocide. How did it impact my life? It has taken most of my life, years of counseling, searching for answers, developing addictions, depression, divorces, to find myself again. It has been, a painful process to look at what happened. I've had to build my confidence, regain my dignity, and grow courage to tell my story. Not only was my language, culture, and identity stolen from me but so was my childhood. My real parents, whom I got to know somewhat, have been gone for years. My siblings are all gone, I have a half-sister that I do not know very well and we have an estranged relationship, I'm still meeting relatives I didn't know I had. But my older brother, Luther Brunk, a former US Marine, also attended Holy Childhood for 3 years, committed suicide at the age of 25, alcohol related. My other brother, Melvin Brunk, attended Holy Childhood, served in the US Army, was killed in a fatal car wreck, alcohol related. My younger sister Celia Mundell, attended Holy Childhood, developed diabetes, had addictions, passed away from Leukemia in 2018, she was only 57 years old. Our youngest sister Leona Brunk did not attend boarding school but our father and her siblings all did. She had addictions, developed diabetes also, had a leg partially amputated due to the diabetes, walked on in 2016, at the age of 53. They are all gone, I'm the last one and I often wondered, Why Me? Today I know why, I am their voice, they could not talk about boarding school or the trauma handed down from our ancestors. I am here to say that's what killed them, the US government and the Church broke their hearts and killed their spirits. Captain Richard Henry Pratt said, "Kill the Indian, Save the Man," they killed the Indian but they didn't save the man in my family. My story is the same as others. We need to heal from this pain. We need the truth to be told, the US and the Churches need to own up to what they've done. There needs to be Confession before Forgiveness. We need answers, how many Indigenous children died, where are they buried, how did they die? It is a shameful history and Indigenous people do not own that shame but we continue to feel the impact from that dark period. Intergenerational trauma may be passed down through our DNA but so is our ancestor's resiliency. We are taking back what was

stolen, our language, our culture, our spirit, but much work still needs to be done. If there is a hell, we've lived it, if there is a heaven we want to go there, if there is to be justice, then start by instituting the Truth, Healing, & Reconciliation Commission to fully investigate and address the U.S. Boarding School policy and its impact on the Indigenous Peoples.

Miigwetch & Thank You,

GKISED TANAMOOGK

July 14, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I greet You. I am gkisedtanamoogk, from the Wampanoag Community of Mashpee, located on cape cod, massachusetts.

From 2012–2015 I had the great honor of being one of five Commissioners seated on the *Maine Wabanaki State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, mandated by the Wabanaki Chiefs and the Governor of the state of Maine to investigate, report, and recommend actions regarding findings relative to the condition of Indigenous Children in the Maine Child welfare systems of the state. During our tenure we heard testimonies from Wabanaki Community members, and state welfare officials, state lawyers and judges. The Maine Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the first of its kind in the United States, recorded the tremendous impact public state and federal policy held over Indigenous Peoples (see: Maine Wabanaki State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission—Maine-Wabanaki REACH mainewabanakireach.org)

Additionally, I am married to Mi'kmaq Woman, Miigam'agan, living in her Mi'kmaq Community of Burnt Church, who was forced to attend Indian Day School, as her parents and family members, community were forced to attend canada's residential schools. I speak of this as testimony to the horrors and legacy of what federal policies have done to Indigenous Nations and Peoples, and in particular, Children for several decades and afterwards. these legacies still impact Communities and families.

I deeply support every effort to acknowledge the full truth of these legacies, to reconcile the long-overdue resolution and reconciliation required between Indigenous Nations and the settler colonial nation-states of north america. Our mutual need for this reconciliation and the future that awaits us both, must be manifested if life in these lands and indeed the world is to survive. My heart aches for all that has happened over this long, often brutal history and relationship between our two peoples and generally how Peoples of Color are treated, particularly in canada and the united states. This is not the life that I want for my Grandbabies and children from all ethnicities. Truly our rational, intellectual minds and Hearts can do far better at forming a loving, embracing society, one in which equity and freedom exists for all People and all living Beings.

JOHNNY SANCHEZ

July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

Hello Chairman Schatz, Chairwoman Murkowski, and members of the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. I live on Wabanaki land in what is now called Orono, Maine. Before Maine, I was raised in Ohkay Owingeh, NM—one of the 19 pueblo tribes along the Rio Grande. I am writing today to strongly urge all of you to support S. 2907.

The indigenous peoples of this country, from the tribes of Maine to my own in New Mexico, have deeply been affected by Indian Boarding Schools and the associated federal policies. Today, our society tries to distance itself from the horrors of this country's past. However, that is not a path forward. To date, there has never been an accounting of the number of children forced to attend these schools, the number of children who were abused, died, or went missing while at these schools, or of the schools' long-term effects on the children that survived.

People cannot truly heal from these types of atrocities without real reconciliation from all involved parties. A formal investigation, with input from tribes as well as survivors and their families is a necessary step to move on from many of the harms of forced assimilation.

I truly hope that you will support this important step to ensure that this terrible chapter in U.S. history will be honestly documented and indigenous survivors will be heard and allowed to process and heal from what they were forced to experience.

SUSIE SILVERSMITH
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing as a U.S. Indian Boarding School survivor. We need to find all our relatives from the Indian boarding schools that are still missing. I fully urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907 in hopes that boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families can come together to account for the long lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy.

I am so thankful that you are working towards finding our missing Native American children and to work towards healing the suffering caused during this period of U.S. history.

THE WABANAKI ALLIANCE
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

The *Wabanaki Alliance* was founded in June 2020 by the five federally recognized tribes in what we today call the State of Maine, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mi'kmaq Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkmikuk, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik, and Penobscot Nation. We created the Wabanaki Alliance to educate the people of Maine about the need for securing the sovereignty of the tribes in Maine.

Each one of our communities has been profoundly impacted by Indian Boarding Schools. Wabanaki survivors of these “schools” have shared the horrors of what they experienced. When as children they should have been educated, nurtured, and protected they instead were abused and dehumanized in an evil effort to strip them of their indigeneity.

Wabanaki Tribal Governments in conjunction with the State of Maine conducted the first truth and reconciliation commission in the history of the world in which Indigenous and settler sovereigns deliberately decided to create a process to examine a painful history, the experience of Wabanaki children in the child welfare system. During that two- and half-year initiative, the *Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission* accepted testimony from hundreds of people. The Commission prioritized people providing testimony in a manner that would be best for them striving to minimize people's trauma. As Congress considers S.2907/H.R. 5444, we urge that same prioritization to supporting victims of the Indian Boarding Schools who may testify.

The Wabanaki Alliance believes in the need for reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples and settlers. However, settlers too often want to advance to the reconciliation stage before truth telling is complete. We urge the Committee on Indian Affairs and all members of Congress to ensure the authorizing language for S. 2907/H.R. 5444 supports the best truth gathering process in a reasonable amount of time recognizing the opportunity to hear directly from the victims of Indian Boarding Schools diminishes each day. The integrity of the research and truth gathering will be essential to the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. succeeding. As stated in the *Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission* final report, People don't remember what happened as to how we lost our culture. The boarding schools that the government sanctioned, the mentality of taking children out of the home to enforce assimilation. People don't remember that today. (*Beyond the Mandate: Continuing the Conversation* p. 12)

People must remember and the horrific chapter in U.S. Indian policy should be completely documented. Genuine and much-needed healing depends on the completeness of the truth telling.

NATE SMITH, NATIONAL OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP SCHOOL
July 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I write in support of S. 2907, which would establish a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. I write to you from the perspective of an educator in two separate fields, and a resident of the state of Maine who has a connection to Chairwoman Murkowski's state of Alaska.

During the summer months, I am a field instructor for the National Outdoor Leadership School. I have recently returned from a month-long expedition in the

Healy mountains, the ancestral homeland of the Ahtna people. Aside from some social trails, a few airstrips, and hunting cabins, much of the landscape is empty of human presence; it becomes a fruitful environment to teach students about outdoor leadership and risk management in remote areas. But the landscape there, like all of North America, also tells a story of forced removal; I know that today's "wilderness" bears a history of traumatic experiences for countless individuals.

During the school year, I teach secondary economics, government, and history at a high school in Maine. I can reflect back upon my own high school experience, which did not include much about the history of cultural genocide committed by colonists in Maine against the Wabanaki people; learning more about this history as an adult was a wake-up call, and I feel the burden of teaching accurate history to my students. I know of this history because Maine conducted a truth and reconciliation commission, among the first of its kind.

On July 4th, I crossed over a high mountain pass near the Yanert river. That evening, as I sat with students above treeline, reflecting on the celebration of US independence, we spoke of our connections to country and land. I am painfully aware that my connection to place is overwritten upon someone else's, and that the United States committed genocide in the colonization of its current territory; I am ashamed of the actions committed by the United States. I also know that the conversation that is beginning today, namely, what is the right relationship now between colonizers and indigenous people, is new to human history, and I am proud to live in a place where that conversation is growing, and proud that the United States is taking steps towards right relationship.

I am proud that Maine led the way in establishing a truth and reconciliation commission. I hope to be proud that the United States followed suit; we are not alone in the world in needing to have this conversation, and having committed some of the worst atrocities of this kind, we are in a position to lead the way in opening the door to this process. I hope that Congress feels the same responsibility to truth and accuracy as I do in teaching history, and that they create a process that centers the voices of the victims in the truth process, dwelling there as long as needed before asking them about reconciliation.

Thank you for your time.

JULIE SA'LEIT'SA KWINA JOHNSON, (ENROLLED LUMMI)

July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am writing on behalf of the Native American Caucus of the Washington State Democrats to urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to support and pass S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act out of Committee. This legislation will create a Congressional Commission to locate and analyze the records from the over four hundred known Indian boarding schools that operated across the country. This Congressional Commission will bring together boarding school survivors, tribal representatives, along with experts in education, health, and children and families to account for the long-lasting impacts of the federal Indian boarding school policy. S. 2907 will also be an important additional measure to support the U.S. Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

My mother Sarah Elsie Lewis and my Uncle Arnold McKay attended the federal government Tulalip Indian Boarding School and both worked long hours each day to maintain the school. My mother worked in the Health Center and my Uncle, cleaned and cut wood to keep the school warm.

One day, my mother's cousin got caught speaking the Lummi language and the rule was "All the students in the classroom had to line up and 'hit' the person who spoke their native language." So, all 27 girls lined up and slapped our cousin with a belt. . . my mother was number 28, she took the belt and "slapped the teacher as hard as she could." Mom was kicked out of the school in the 8th grade. This was one of our bedtime stories my mother shared. . . So growing up. . . we were very careful "never" to speak our language in front of or near a non-Indian. We were taught not to speak about our culture, our traditions or our language in front of any non-Indian.

I don't think we all realized that this history has left many scars on our minds and hearts of our Native People today. This is the first time; I'm speaking publicly about the beating my mother endured. I've only shared this history with a few people, who are related to our family.

I'm so thankful you are working hard to heal the scars of our people. Thank you for helping to pass Senate Bill 2907.

Hy'shque Si-am. "Thank you. Leaders."

LAURA RAUWERDA
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I am the daughter, granddaughter and great granddaughter of European Immigrants that came to this great country. I have immense respect for the Native Americans who suffered, died and were driven from their homeland to make way for others to exploit the resources here. Our history is one that has expressed unjust practices for the greater good throughout its existence and it is time for all Americans to recognize that the Indian Boarding Schools were inhumane, cruel and culture robbing. It is long overdue that the original Natives of this great land are given truth and justice for crimes we committed against them.

As an American citizen, I support this Act.

DEBRA DELK
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

I went to Holy Childhood of Jesus School in Harbor Springs Michigan. Was there for 5 years along with my younger sister. And our mother before us. We were locked in closets, locked in infirmary without supper. Made to kneel on rice outside the nuns bedroom door all night long. Physically abused in front of all the girls, mentally abused by being told we would never amount to anything and going to hell. After hearing this every year you start believing it! We were Chased around the dormitory in the middle of the night with the nuns being dressed as bears. Because up North Indian medicine was called: Bear Walk That alone traumatized me! So bad that I wouldn't take my children to any of our Pow-Wow's. Until they were adults.

I am a survivor of Cut Bank Boarding School, Browning, Montana; Concho Indian Boarding School, Oklahoma; and the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe. I survived Indian boarding schools from age 6 until 20 years old. I have a story to tell if anybody is listening.

aboriginally yours,

ALFRED YOUNG MAN, CHIPPEWA-CREE TRIBE, MONTANA

FAITH ACTION NETWORK
July 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

We are writing to express our full support for S. 2907—Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. As a multi-faith organization working across Washington State, we represent more than 164 faith communities and thousands of individual advocates of faith and conscience. Together we call upon the Senate to take action on S. 2907.

Faith Action Network facilitates an Interfaith Network with Indigenous Communities (INIC) that seeks to address the harm caused by faith communities involved in our nation's tragic history of Native American Boarding Schools. We recognize the history of the United States is marked with Christian-based denominations' complicity in the cultural genocide of indigenous people. While these atrocities are making headlines now, tribal communities have been testifying for decades of the forced removal, assimilation, abuse, and death perpetrated through these boarding schools.

As people of faith, we know that our complicity and lament must lead to action. INIC issued the statement signed by over 160 faith leaders and organizations including Pacific Northwest bishops, calling for a truth-telling and healing process and endorsing Secretary Deb Haaland's investigation. Moving S. 2907 forward is a critical step in the process of addressing this injustice.

We support bringing together a commission to investigate the lasting and ongoing effects of these boarding schools, and make recommendations to:

- **Discontinue the removal of indigenous children** from their families and tribal communities by state social service departments, foster care, and adoption agencies.

- **Protect unmarked graves** and accompanying land protections.
- **Support repatriation** and identify the tribal communities from which children were taken.
- **Include subpoena power in the bill** to ensure accountability and sharing of church records.

Passing S. 2907 is a critical step towards doing what is right. Faith Action Network, faith leaders, multi-faith communities, and advocates of faith and conscience across Washington urge you to take action.

Please contact us if we can be of any assistance in speaking with our WA Congressional delegation.

Sincerely,

ELISE DEGOOYER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA RESOLUTION NO. 2022-20

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA SUPPORTING THE PASSAGE OF US SENATE RESOLUTION 2907, THE TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION ON INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL POLICIES IN THE UNITED STATES ACT, AND ENCOURAGING THE COMMISSION TO COME TO TLINGIT AANÍ AS PART OF THE COMMISSION'S SEARCH FOR TRUTH AND THE PROCESS OF HEALING

WHEREAS, a 2021 report from the Department of Interior investigating Indian Boarding Schools, it was found that between 1819 through the 1970s, the United States implemented policies establishing and supporting Indian boarding schools across the nation. The purpose of federal Indian boarding schools was to culturally assimilate American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children by forcibly removing them from their families and Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and Native Hawaiian Community; and,

WHEREAS, the report found Indian child removal coincided with Indian territorial dispossession. The conditions experienced by attendees included manual labor and discouraging or preventing American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages, religions, and cultural beliefs; and,

WHEREAS, children attended federal Indian boarding schools, many endured physical and emotional abuse and, in some cases, died; and,

WHEREAS, many lives were lost, yet other lives were saved by boarding schools in the past, the assembly recognizes federal boarding school policies of past eras focused on assimilation and other harmful practices, and these policies caused harm for many; and

WHEREAS, from 1819 to 1969, the federal Indian boarding school system consisted of 408 federal schools across 37 states or then territories, including 21 schools in Alaska and 7 schools in Hawaii. The investigation identified marked or unmarked burial sites at approximately 53 different schools across the system; and,

WHEREAS, this report lays the groundwork for the continued work of the Interior Department to address the intergenerational trauma created by policies supporting the historical federal Indian boarding school system; and,

WHEREAS, the report reflects an extensive and first-ever inventory of federally operated Indian boarding schools, including summary profiles of each school and maps of general locations of schools in current states; and,

WHEREAS, the first boarding school established by Americans in Alaska occurred at Sitka in 1878 by Presbyterian missionaries, but in the decades that followed boarding schools opened across Alaska; and,

WHEREAS, the courts upheld the rights of Tlingit families initially (District Court case file for *United States vs. Sheldon Jackson* in 1885 that documents a Tlingit family and individual's attempt to free their children from the Presbyterian Boarding School at Sitka. This case concerns how the boarding school had claimed legal custody of the children attending the school and would not let families visit their children. In this case a Tlingit family and individual each issued a writ of habeas corpus, arguing the children were being held against their will by the school. Judge Ward McAllister ruled in favor of the Tlingit family and individual, allowed the children to return home, and informed the school they could not claim full custody of children attending the school.), only to later rescind those rights in 1886 (District Court case file that documents a Tlingit mother's attempt to free her child from the Presbyterian Boarding School at Sitka. This case emerged because the school had claimed custody of the children attending the school and would not let

families visit their children, even though the school was ordered by the court to stop such actions in 1885. In this case Can-ah-couqua issued a writ of habeas corpus, arguing her son was being held against his will by the school. The case file contains a letter from her son asking to be released and returned to his family. Judge Ward McAllister initially heard part of the case, but missionary Sheldon Jackson lobbied for a new judge. Lafayette Dawson was installed as the new judge in Sitka and he eventually ruled against Can-ah-couqua and in favor of the school, arguing that the boarding school needed authority to carry out its educational mission.); and,

WHEREAS, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act, legislation that seeks healing for stolen Native children and their communities has been reintroduced in Congress; and,

WHEREAS, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held a hearing on June 22, 2022 with testimony from Senator Warren, the Honorable Deb Haaland, and several members from tribal nations greatly impacted by the forced removal and education of their children, and a vote on Senate Bill 2907 is expected.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka that the community stands in full support of the passage of Senate Bill 2907 Truth and Healing Commission by committee, the full Senate, the House of Representatives and signed by the President of the United States.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the community of Sitka offers to host Commissioners on Tlingit Aanf immediately upon passage of the bill.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska on this 26th day of July, 2022.

A few hand written testimonies, articles, and photos, have been retained in the Committee files.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO
HON. KIRK FRANCIS

Question 1. The Committee has heard concerns that the definition of “Indian boarding school” in Interior’s report may not be broad enough to capture the range of institutions that participated in the boarding school system. Do you agree? If so, how can the definition be improved?

Answer. I initially liked the definition of “Indian Boarding School” in Interior’s report and first thought it was broad enough to capture the range of institutions that boarded Native American children and sought to assimilate them. But, since the Committee’s hearing, I have learned of schools that may not be covered by Interior’s definition. I think for purposes of S. 2907, the legislation should include Interior’s definition as a baseline for which schools are covered, but provide flexibility to the Commission to examine any schools that were intended in policy or practice to assimilate Native American children, regardless of who funded such schools or operated them. The federal policy was to assimilate Native American children, and that policy and practice by the federal government encouraged state governments, churches and private citizens to do the same. Thus, the primary goal of S. 2907 should be to cover all schools that had a policy or practice of trying to assimilate Native American children. I do not think we fully know the extent of these schools until the Commission is able to conduct its work.

Question 2. How do you see the work of the Department of the Interior being integrated into the work of the Commission proposed in S. 2907?

Answer. I see the Interior Department’s work as being useful to the Commission established by S. 2907, but really only serving as a starting point. Interior’s focus is on reviewing federal documents and schools that were primarily operated by the federal government. There were so many more schools that sought to implement the federal policy of assimilating Native American children. The Interior Department’s current work is really merely laying the foundation for which the Commission can begin its work. The Commission’s work for S. 2907 is much broader than what the Interior Department is currently doing. It will be useful to the Commission, but the Interior Department is limited in the amount of time and energy it can focus on this effort. Having a commissioner and staff dedicated to this effort is what is needed in order for a comprehensive review to be conducted and concrete recommendations for how to start mitigating the harmful impacts of the Boarding Schools.

Question 3. In addition to incorporating federal native language programs into a truth and healing process, are there other related areas, like education, that should be incorporated into a healing process and receive additional support to meet that goal?

Answer. One of the main things I have seen serving as a tribal leader for more than 20 years are the number of Penobscot people coming home to learn their identity as a Penobscot person and to connect or reconnect to family and culture. Some of these people are enrolled members, who moved away from the community when they were children or whose parents enrolled them although they did not live in our community. Some of them have never been enrolled and are just now trying to learn what means to be Penobscot. Most of them do not know the language, do not know the culture or the lands, and they come back or come for the first time hungry to learn their history, culture and language, and to learn what it means to be Penobscot. Many also want to know the history and experiences of their parents and grandparents; why their parents never mentioned being Native American, why their parents were guarded and distant, or why their parents suffered from substance abuse. Unfortunately, these individuals are not always welcomed with open arms by those who grew up in the Penobscot community, and sometimes are greeted by hesitant Penobscot people who are cautious about why they came home. But these individuals have a birth right to be in our community, on our lands, and to learn our language and culture. And, I believe the federal government has an obligation to try to restore to them their identity, language and culture, and family that was taken away by the federal government. I do not want to get out in front of the Commission's work in developing recommendations for mitigating the assimilationist policies of Boarding Schools, but I do think that more than language programs need to be a part of the mitigation policies of Boarding Schools. For example:

- The Commission's work will be a traumatic experience for many who participate and engage in it. There needs to be mental health support any and all participants, and it should be support that goes beyond just a meeting or two. Support for those who participate and engage in the Commission's process should be available for the entire term of the Commission, and maybe longer.
- The policies and practices of the Boarding Schools contributed to the intergenerational trauma that plagues many tribal communities, survivors and descendants of survivors today. There needs to be more federal support focused on mitigating intergenerational trauma for all tribal communities, survivors and descendants of survivors of Indian Boarding Schools. One of the things I have learned is that many descendants are not enrolled in a tribal government. In many instances, the assimilation policies of the Indian Boarding Schools worked, and those individuals never returned to their tribal communities. In some instances, Native individuals who assimilated became ashamed of their tribal cultures and languages and never spoke of them to their descendants. This has created another form of trauma for descendants who now feel lost in society and have no knowledge of their ancestors, culture or history.
- More assistance needs to be provided to tribal governments to strengthen Native culture, which includes language but also traditional cultural practices.
- More federal assistance needs to be provided to help individuals return to their tribal communities. Indian Boarding Schools were a form of relocation and assimilation. In order to reverse the impacts of those policies, the federal government needs to help Native American individuals return to their tribal communities. Specific programs should be established to help survivors and descendants of survivors of Boarding Schools return home. This would include assistance with relocation costs and housing.

Question 4. You testified that while the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission was generally a success, it also created challenges that required the Penobscot Tribe to provide additional resources for survivors and Commissioners that extended beyond the time-frame of the Commission. What additional resources should Congress be mindful of as it considers S. 2907?

Answer. Both Commissioners and participants experience trauma from the experience of going through a truth and reconciliation process. It is important that people planning to participate in the process understand that they may experience trauma and learn to be trauma-informed. There needs to be transparency up front with those who participate and engage in the commission process that old wounds may be opened and new ones may be formed. Fact finding and truth revealing can be painful for many people. People need to understand up front that there may be some trauma, but that there will also be resources available not just on the day they are testifying but also after. The more individuals and tribal government leaders understand the commission process ahead of time, the better they can plan for it. And, additional federal resources need to be made available. Mental and behavioral health resources need to be available during the Commission process, but also after. The Commission process is really focused on uncovering the truth and acknowl-

edging it, and documenting it. But there then needs to be a process to mitigate the harms, and that is a longer term process. Reading the initial draft report and final report will be traumatizing for some people. The reports will be the first time there is a culmination of research and testimonies into one document that will allow those who have heard the stories all of their life actually see it for the first time in writing and as a part of a systemic policy or system. This will be traumatizing for some people. Previously unknown facts and circumstances will likely be uncovered during the commission process. And there should be some acknowledgement of that up front, during the process and after the final report is released. Those who live in or near tribal communities need to know that additional mental and behavioral health resources will be available and how to access them. Those people who live outside of their tribal communities need to know how to obtain mental and behavioral health resources if they experience trauma from participating in the commission process. Additionally, having counselors and traditional healers available to help individuals navigate their experiences is helpful.

Participants in the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission provided testimony to the Commission that reopened wounds from past experiences that many people had tried to forget and didn't want to remember. The priority was to adequately prepare and support people throughout the process by promoting healing and restoration by engaging professionals and building the capacity of community members to listen with compassion and offer comfort to each other. Most participants chose to have their testimony available to the public without anonymity, even if they hadn't shared their story with family. When asked why, the consistent reply was "I want people to learn from my story so it doesn't happen to any other children." Wabanaki values of generosity, reciprocity, and care of the children made this truth seeking work possible. I think the Commission established by S. 2907 needs to have these type of resources available to it and the tribal communities and urban Indian communities in which the Commission does its work needs to be adequately prepared.

Question 5. Can you describe how the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission developed and formalized a process that was meaningful to all participants?

Answer. The Governor of Maine and Chiefs of the Wabanaki Nations each nominated individuals to serve on the Commission Selection Panel and this Selection Panel chose the five members of the Commission by consensus. The State and Tribal governments authorized the Commission to investigate Wabanaki experiences with the State child welfare agency and to make recommendations that promote individual, relational, systemic and cultural reconciliation. The State legislature was not involved in the creation of the Commission, but Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap served as a Commissioner. Two of the Commissioners were Indigenous but were not Wabanaki. While this decision to not have any Wabanaki on the Commission was initially met with mixed reviews, this composition of the Commission provided a safe space for Wabanaki participants to share their stories.

I think having Commissioners from both the Native communities and the State government was helpful, but it only worked because the Commissioners from the State side were really compassionate and invested in the process. It was important for the Native American participants to see people serving on the Commission from the State government and to see that the State government was invested in the process and the results. It showed that the process was more than just Native Americans talking to Native Americans. People really felt like the Commission process was going to result in changes, and it did. The most significant change has been ensuring maximum participation by every Wabanaki government in all aspects of State child welfare cases involving Wabanaki children by implementing a standard of co-case management. Carrying out the goals of truth, healing, and change, the Commission process provided an opportunity for both sides to learn the history of forced assimilation of Wabanaki people and to share their experiences and perspectives to better understand each other and the system in which they operate, which allows for shared accountability moving forward as it relates to child welfare issues.

Question 6. How did the structure of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission contribute to its overall success?

Answer. What I think made the Commission successful was: (1) the resolve of the tribal and State child welfare workers to keep showing up to make changes no matter how difficult the process became; (2) the commitment from the State Governor and Wabanaki governments in the Commission process; (3) the focus of the Commission's investigation was specific to one topic; and (4) the Commission focused its work on the voices of survivors and their descendants while compiling factual information about the child-welfare system. The Commission did a good job of trans-

forming their investigation into a conversation and presenting their findings as a matter of fact, without judgment.

Question 7. What additional steps can Congress take to ensure a U.S.-based truth and healing process is meaningful and long-lasting? Do you have specific suggestions on how to incorporate these ideas into S. 2907?

Answer. I think it is important for Native Americans to feel like the federal government is invested in the S. 2907 Commission process. As the Commission performs its work, it would be good for senior level federal government officials to express continuous support for the process, without regard for what the final report may or not conclude. Additionally, Native Americans need to feel like there is a good faith commitment to try to implement the findings and recommendations of the Commission, no matter what they may be. Building trust in the Commission process is important, but it is also important to build trust in whatever comes after the Commission's final report and that there will be action after the final report is issued.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO
SANDRA WHITE HAWK

Question 1. How important is the Commission's subpoena power to the effectiveness of S. 2907? What challenges would the Commission face if it were to operate without this authority?

Answer. We would hope that private institutions that operated boarding institutions, as well as institutions that hold boarding school records and actively benefit from them would be eager to share their collections with the commission. The reality is that we are unlikely to see a situation where every collection of boarding school records will be immediately made available. There are a variety of factors why boarding school records would not be immediately produced: they haven't been cataloged, they are disorganized, or curators/owners are unwilling.

It is for these reasons that subpoena power is of central importance to the work of the commission. The Department of the Interior's first volume of the Federal Boarding School Truth Initiative report recently identified 408 federally supported and/or federally funded boarding school institutions, of which many were operated by non-federal entities. The resources that the government of the United States utilized toward the operation, maintenance, and sustainability of these 408 institutions place a level of responsibility with the federal government that demands the ability to compel documents to be brought forward in this commission. Simply put, United States taxpayers funded much of the Indian boarding school system, and these documents should be able to be retrieved, as they were created utilizing government funds.

Question 2. You work closely with boarding school survivors and have seen firsthand how reliving these stories can be traumatizing for both survivors and staff. Are there best practices for facilitating these types of engagements and how those discussions should be framed? Should these practices be included in S. 2907? If so, how?

Answer. There are absolutely best practices that can and should be brought into the process to care for boarding school survivors, their families and staff. It is also essential to remember that with over 400 boarding school institutions and nearly 578 federally recognized tribes in the United States that there exist different practices, protocols, and methods that Native people can recognize as healing and restorative. Given this diversity, it is really important that the advisory council of the commission, as well as the commissioners themselves, be able to reflect the diversity of Indian Country throughout the process of the commission. Generally speaking, I am referring to a diversity of traditional healers and licensed counselors, who are capable of supporting Native people while minimizing the harm that sharing one's story in this setting can often provoke. Lastly, an adequate amount of resources to get this done is likely the most important. There are skilled Native practitioners who can support in powerful ways. It should be the role of the advisory council and the commissioners—a diverse body of Native people-to be able to select healers and counselors to support this process in a good way.

Question 3. You testified that that S. 2907 builds on lessons from Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Can you provide examples of how those lessons are incorporated into S. 2907?

Answer. Subpoena power was not included in the Canadian TRC. Documents are still being found and brought forth by private/Christian institutions to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to be included in their digital archive. These

documents are essential in identifying where our children are. When the final report was published in 2015, an estimated 6000 children deaths were identified. Since the finding of the 215 children buried in a mass grave in Kamloops, Canada, it has been estimated that the total number of children deaths lie between 10,000 and 25,000. Subpoenaed documents could have identified these children far before the release of the TRC report. First Nation leaders have expressed that having subpoena power would have guaranteed they could have received access to records from those unwilling to voluntarily share their documents.

Question 4. In your testimony, you acknowledged the importance of creating multi-generational spaces for sharing and healing. Does S. 2907 do this? If so, how?

Answer. S. 2907 is critical, as it invites Tribal leaders in Indian Country to come together to make sure that multi-generational spaces are honored in this commission process. These kinds of spaces are central to all that we do, to make sure that the next generations can continue to grow our Nations and our communities in strong ways. S. 2907 allows these processes to unfold in a way that is consistent with our lifeways. Historical trauma does not stop with the boarding school survivors, it is passed on to their child, who passed it on to their children. In 2022, we are still seeing the negative impacts on native children who did not know their grandparents went to Indian Boarding Schools. These schools broke our elders and the generations who followed them.

Question 5. Based on your experience, what steps should Congress take to ensure survivors, their families, and their communities are supported following the release of the Commission's Report? Do you have specific suggestions on how to incorporate these ideas into S. 2907?

Answer. Most immediately, boarding school survivors and families should have appropriate access to healers and counselors throughout the process and even for a time after they have shared. The wounds of boarding school run deep and the impacts of this trauma cannot be tokenized nor trivialized. Congress will need to listen to boarding school survivors and respond with swift and decisive action. There isn't one Native community in the US that hasn't been affected by boarding schools. The moment that Congress receives a final report including recommendations from the commission will be a moment that demands their response in action. This Commission cannot be a symbolic talking space that merely hears from survivors, documents the stories and moves on to the next issue. There should be therapists who understand intergenerational trauma, proactive training made available before the report comes out for tribal citizens to learn about how intergenerational traumas impacts them, and access to cultural ceremonies. Funding for traditional wellness centers/programs should be provided to each Tribe and urban Native centers.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO
NORMA RYŪKŌ KAWELOKŪ WONG

Question 1. You testified that, in addition to large public hearings, community and individual-centered approaches should be considered as part of any reconciliation process. Can you provide concrete examples of how S. 2907 can be amended to incorporate this approach?

Answer. As a predicate, it should be noted that forced assimilation has resulted, among other conditions, in gender-based violence, homelessness, health and mental health issues, and generalized disconnection. For example, there may very well be a one-to-one correlation between a survivor of sexual assault and a specific boarding school-related trauma to that survivor or to an ancestor of that survivor. Many Native peoples are already in relationship to community groups, organizations, programs, and healers or have "local knowledge" of these service providers even if they aren't specific clients. Publicity about the boarding schools and the investigation will magnify existing trauma.

S. 2907 can provide for testimony, stories, documentary and oral history evidence to be facilitated and curated by indigenous groups, organizations, and programs and teams of indigenous in partnership with non-indigenous organizations and programs on behalf of and in addition to efforts by the Commission and the Department of Interior. This will need \$.

The legislation should be clear that health, mental health, healing and restorative work will occur on a parallel basis with the truth-telling and evidentiary collection, including in advance of and in the wake of official proceedings. In this regard, there are a vast variety of groups, organizations and programs that are already in relationship with people who will be the most impacted. Funding will be needed to increase the reach and level of programming. Consider authorization and funding for multi-year restorative demonstration projects. Innovations will be needed to reach

people who are in urban areas and in rural settings that are not a part of or in proximity to Native communities, reservations, or programs. Consider authorization and funding for these specific innovations. It should be noted that testimony, stories, and documentation may very well be collected as part of care and healing work.

Publicity will awaken memories and needs. Is the hotline intended to be the primary means by which the unassociated Native person connects? Is the hotline a referral service? A one-stop truth-telling and story-gathering center? The purpose of the hotline should be clarified. Hot-lines are an on-ramp, not an endpoint. For a hotline to work moderately well, it needed to be in coordination with multiple services and resources on the ground, complicated here by geography, culture, generation differences, and governance jurisdictions.

Question 2. Do you have suggestions on how to ensure S. 2907 is not duplicative of the Department of the Interior's ongoing efforts through its Initiative?

Answer. Consider a separate section in S. 2907 that establishes/recognizes the Department of Interior's initiative, including the primary scope of the Department's work. A practical sorting out should occur using the legislation as the canvas. Some of the Commission's scope may be designated as led by the Department and submitted to the Commission. Within this section, there should also be a naming of agencies that would take significant roles within the all-of-government approach that Secretary Haaland spoke to. Among those agencies may be DHHS (including CDCP), DOE, HUD, DOJ, and OVW. If authorization is needed, establish an inter-agency task force or working group. If authorization is needed, allow for cross-agency programming and funding. It is possible that a White House Advisor may be needed—I defer to Secretary Haaland. Name in the legislation the importance of coordinating public hearings and the gathering of testimony and information, and place that function in the Department of Interior.

Question 3. You testified about the importance of including non-Native Americans in the healing process. Could actions taken by the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission be instructive to the process the Department of the Interior has begun and Congress is currently considering? If so, how?

Answer. In conversations with non-Native allies of Native peoples in Canada, there are a few observations that may be instructive to the U.S. process. First, that the Canadian process—like the one contemplated by the Department of Interior and S. 2907—was heavily front-loaded by the public collection of the experiences of survivors. These proceedings were extensively covered by local and national media. However, that was the extent of the involvement of non-Native people—readers (or non-readers) of media coverage. Some non-Native allies say that, in hindsight, that what was thought of as respectful distance and witnessing also missed opportunities for deeper understanding. Media accounts may or may not—and apparently mostly did not—report the news in ways that would create greater understanding. There wasn't structured encouragement of non-Native conversations—not as testimony or public comment, but as educational efforts to promote understanding and interrupt mis-held views. The observation is that although policymakers accepted the results of the Commission and its processes, that conditions on the ground and between Native and non-Native peoples have not demonstrably shifted. Also, only the symbolic recommendations of the Commission have been implemented so far, with little political movement on those recommendations that named substantive repair and structural changes. Non-Native allies believe that part of the reason for the slowness is the lack of organized non-Native support, which wasn't built in the mostly compartmentalized process. This has left recommendations to the whims of negotiations between First Nations and the Canadian government.

In the U.S. process, consider providing resources and support for conversations, education, and reconciliatory repair with non-Natives. This can be done on a demonstration basis and should include teams that include Native and non-Native providers. Begin these experiments on a parallel basis, with a plan to expand from the learnings as there is more demand. In other words, start with non-Native individuals and communities that are desirous of learning more, being better friends, neighbors, and allies.

There should be an educational effort that isn't just about publicizing the process. This effort should tell the story not only of what happened, but also make the case as to why it is important and beneficial to Native and non-Native peoples that this accounting and repair occur, and what needs to be transformed in our views and relationships in the process.

Question 4. In addition to boarding schools, Native communities are also grappling with multiple, ongoing harmful federal policies, such as Red Hill. How do we focus reconciliation efforts to make progress where we can?

Answer. In presenting the question in this way, you are recognizing that the water contamination descending from Red Hill is a harm to Native communities. But this is neither a widely held nor well understood view. While federal agencies may politically respond to Native Hawaiians as a matter of improving public relations, that alone does little to reconcile. (It is also nearly impossible to be in consultation as the federal government understands that process, as Native Hawaiians have been thwarted from the aspiration of governance formation.) Reconciling requires re-mending the reciprocal relationship of peoples and the land, and the stewardship responsibilities that arise as a result. The act of water contamination—especially at the level and scale of harm descending from Red Hill—is not only a continuing threat to the environment and public health. Continuing contamination severs the reciprocal relationship between peoples and the land. The severing happens when land and water are property and resources to be used and misused by competing interests. As property and resources, bargains are made as to which use supersedes another. A fuel tank farm is seen as a higher use in the interest of national security. A certain level of contamination is deemed within the margin of public health risk. A spill that is mishandled is viewed as a threat to the continuation of the facility and the reputation of the Navy. The Navy and other agencies respond in a stance of risk mitigation. These are the kinds of choices that are made when land is property and water is a resource. Many Native Hawaiians and many local residents have reacted viscerally to the water contamination and to the unfolding facts of what has happened over a long period of time without alarm or attention. They believe and understand that the water has not been cared for as a living being that we are in relationship to, even if they don't articulate it in this way. To reconcile, the entire process of what happens from here on in would need to come into mutual stewardship ways and means. Entire cohorts of people would need to be educated, and those who may come into understanding would be those who would take charge of next steps. The recognition of being a guest, that being on the land is a privilege, not a right. That stepping into stewardship is about restoring and maintaining thriving. Stewardship would be a matter of pride, an application of knowledge in concert with many. The life of the water—and therefore the life of the people—would need to be center to strategies and decisions. It would be insufficient and unacceptable for the tanks to be drained and removed, only to have fuel continue to seep through the soil and rock until it has permanently despoiled the water, or for mitigation efforts to fall short of restoring clean, dependable water now and into the future.

Question 5. Do you have recommendations for how the various federal agencies in Hawai'i should coordinate on a reconciliation process like this?

Answer. The cleanup and restoration may be the largest in U.S. history, certainly the largest undertaken on an island. This should be an all hands-on-deck endeavor that can draw expertise and assets from different agencies, including engineers, hydrologists, scientists. Consider a federal team approach with leads for certain aspects. There is a serious question as to whether the U.S. Navy should be the lead agency in the effort. When a mission is ancillary to the core mission of an agency, they may have responsibility but may not have the combination of sustained focus, organizational and leadership structure, and policy approach needed to successfully execute the mission. For example, it was difficult to keep the Navy's command attention on the cleanup of Kaho'olawe through the course of the effort, even though there was specific congressional authorization, appropriation, and staff oversight.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN TO
NORMA RYŪKŌ KAWELOKŪ WONG

Question . Based on your experience, how could additional funding for Native education be integrated into a broader reconciliation framework?

Answer. The connection between the contemporary conditions of native peoples and the systemic historical termination of language and cultural ways is intrinsically understood and accepted in native and tribal communities, but not among non-native institutions, civic, and political leaders. This is a consequential disconnect as most native children in the United States are in educational institutions outside of tribal control or influence. If public schools—disaggregated across over 13,800 school districts—aren't desirous or motivated, or have the curricula or teachers, then most native children will continue to be systemically separated from language and culture.

In a broader reconciliation framework, the connection and the case would be made by educational leaders and scholars, including researchers and prestigious institutions as part of the Commission's core findings. To restore the connection and inter-

rupt the harm of cultural and linguistic termination practices would require investment in complex infrastructure, such as: the documentation and restoration of those languages that are on the verge of disappearing; supporting teacher recruitment and training; experimentation with traveling teacher corps, and the pairing of elders who hold the wisdom and young adult teachers-in-training; funds to support successful, mature programs such as those in New Mexico and Hawaii to be support centers for the revitalization of language and cultural ways for other native peoples. These are a few examples. Such investment needs to be sustained and will require energy and support over a long period of time. Consider the establishment of a non-lapsing fund, with an initial investment that would support substantial progress in a decade. In Hawaii's case, it took public policy, institutional and community support to reverse the course of decline, from less than 8000 native speakers to about 40,000 native speakers over the course of 25 years.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO
HON. DEB HAALAND

Question 1. You testified that you will be leading a year-long listening tour to hear directly from boarding school survivors, and that while the first listening session will take place in Oklahoma, you are working with Tribes to decide upon locations for future listening sessions. a) If available, please provide timing and location details on the first session in Oklahoma. How are you conducting Tribal engagement for listening session location—through formal consultations, or some other process? If through formal consultation, have Dear Tribal Leader Letters been sent? What is the timeframe for these consultations?

Answer. The first visit of The Road to Healing tour was held at the Riverside Indian School, the nation's oldest federally operated Indian boarding school, in Anadarko, Oklahoma on Saturday, July 9, 2022. The Department has conducted three consultation sessions regarding the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative with Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, Alaska Native Corporations, and the Native Hawaiian Community. The Department has sent, or will send, Dear Tribal Leader letters to Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and the Native Hawaiian Community, near each stop on The Road to Healing tour.

Question 2. You testified that the Department will receive testimony from survivors both publicly or privately, depending on an individual's preference, at the listening sessions. a) Will the contents of the private sessions fall within one of the nine Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) exemptions? If so, which exemption or exemptions would apply? If these discussions are subject to FOIA, how will the Department ensure the privacy of this testimony? If some, or all, survivors wish to speak in private, how will their testimonies be used, or not used, to build a public record? What protocols will be in place to protect this information?

Answer. At each visit on The Road to Healing tour, members of the media will be present for the first hour of the event. During the first break, media will be escorted out of the visit and the remainder of the day will be closed to press. A court reporter will transcribe the entire visit, and a full transcript of the event may be released, to the extent permitted by federal law, if requested. We will not know the substance of the private sessions in advance, so we cannot say which, if any, FOIA exemptions could apply. However, the Department will ensure the privacy of all testimony consistent with the law.

The testimony may contain information about Federal Indian boarding school system burial sites, both marked and unmarked. The Department supports Congressional action to protect sensitive information identifying burial sites of Indian children associated with the Federal Indian boarding school system by developing new or amending existing FOIA exemptions. Doing so would assist in preventing grave-robbing, vandalism, and other disturbances to Indian burial sites, which are already well documented and could be likely to occur.

Question 3. Does the Department intend to receive testimony from descendants of survivors, representatives of organizations that participated in, or have historical connections to, boarding schools? Others?

Answer. The Road to Healing tour provides survivors of the Federal Indian boarding school system and their descendants and families an opportunity to share their stories and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. The Department believes that this approach will help better inform the Federal Government about subsequent work of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

Outside of the Road to Healing Tour, the Department welcomes non-federal entities to provide feedback or information on their role in the Federal Indian boarding school system.

Question 4. Please describe, in as much detail as possible, how the listening sessions will be structured and how the Department intends to facilitate them.

Answer. For each of The Road to Healing tour stops, the Department plans to coordinate a local Tribal or Native Hawaiian blessing, as appropriate, remarks from Secretary Haaland, Assistant Secretary Newland, or both, before then focusing on open discussion with survivors of the Federal Indian boarding school system and their descendants and families about their experiences. Members of the media will be allowed for the first hour of the event. During the first break, any media will be escorted out of the visit and the remainder of the visit will be closed to the press. A court reporter will transcribe the entire visit and a full transcript of the event may be released, under applicable authorities, if requested.

Question 5. Please describe the mental health resources the Department plans to provide to survivors and staff during and after your listening sessions. Are there organizations the Department is working with to assist in facilitating discussions?

Answer. To help fulfill the U.S. trust responsibility to Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and the Native Hawaiian Community, the Department is collaborating with other Federal agencies to support the Department's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including through the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is providing trauma-informed and on-site support throughout the tour. HHS will also connect survivors and their families with follow-up support, as requested.

Question 6. Beyond creating a public record, how will the Department use the information gathered during the listening sessions?

Answer. The Road to Healing tour is the first time the Federal Government has provided survivors of Federal Indian boarding schools and their descendants and families an opportunity to directly share their stories and experiences. As the Department continues its investigation of the Federal Indian boarding school system, the individual experiences of survivors at specific schools can help paint a picture of the overall system that the archives alone cannot fully provide. In addition to advancing our priorities for Volume II of the Report, which includes identifying marked and unmarked burial sites and documenting methodologies and practices that discouraged or prevented the use of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages or cultural or religious practices, the first-hand accounts of survivors and their families may assist the Department in identifying additional aspects of the Federal Indian boarding school system that warrant examination.

Question 7. You testified that the Department's current work through the Boarding School Initiative is complementary to the work contemplated in S. 2907. How so? Please explain.

Answer. The Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative is the Federal Government's first effort to comprehensively examine the establishment, operation, and impacts of the Federal Indian boarding school system. The Department is currently focused on two things: identifying, digitizing, examining, and evaluating records under its control, including at the Department of the Interior Library and American Indian Records Repository (AIIR) relating to the Federal Indian boarding school system, and hearing directly from survivors and their families about their experiences. The Department is also coordinating with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to identify, digitize, examine, and evaluate records under NARA's control relating to the Federal Indian boarding school system.

S. 2907 would complement the Department's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative by creating an independent voice that could make recommendations, establish resources for survivors, and seek records in ways that the Department cannot.

The Administration further supports S. 2907 because it would increase access to records pertaining to the Federal Indian boarding school system that are not under the Department's control but are instead under the control of other Federal agencies or non-federal entities. This would include through the use of subpoenas, which may in some cases be helpful or necessary to acquire important information that remains inaccessible to the Department. S. 2907 would also develop national survivor resources to address intergenerational trauma.

Question 8. Are there any Boarding School Initiative-related activities that would benefit from additional resources or statutory authorizations?

Answer. The Department supports possible Congressional action:

- (1) To clarify the applicability of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) as it relates to Federal agencies;
- (2) To increase appropriations and professional staffing for programs in Federal agencies that are responsible for agency compliance with NAGPRA;

(3) To strengthen the repatriation process of funerary objects and human remains for Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and the Native Hawaiian Community, including Indian children in marked and unmarked burial sites associated with Indian boarding schools; (4) To direct Federal agencies that control cemeteries to allow the reburial of remains of Indian children and funerary objects repatriated pursuant to NAGPRA, and consistent with specific Tribal practices. An amendment of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act may be needed to facilitate the use of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands for this purpose.

(5) To authorize the protection, preservation, reclamation, and Tribal co-management or costewardship of sites across the Federal Indian boarding school system where the Federal Government has jurisdiction over a location;

(6) To fund the expansion and development of programs implementing or supporting Native language revitalization for Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)-operated and funded schools, as well as non-BIE Tribally operated schools;

(7) To fund the expansion and development of programs outside BIE schools that implement or support Native language revitalization, including language immersion schools and community organizations;

(8) To authorize federally funded scientific and medical research on the Federal Indian boarding school system, including health impacts on Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and the Native Hawaiian Community and individual American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; and

(9) To increase the provision of trauma-informed support and mental health care to Indian boarding school survivors and their families, and students at BIE-operated or funded schools, by other agencies responsible for the health care of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

Question 9. A 2019 High Country News article estimated that, for every dollar the U.S. spent on federal Indian boarding schools, it has spent less than seven cents (\$0.07) on Native American language revitalization.¹ Will the Department's future work look into data points like this? For example, will it try to document the full scope of federal investments in boarding schools? Or, examine the cultural and linguistic impacts of the boarding school policies on Native communities in more depth?

Answer. The Department believes that it is important to gather this information to understand the scope of the Federal Indian boarding school system, and is working to determine the scope of federal investments in these schools—including financial, property, livestock and animals, equipment, and personnel for the Federal Indian boarding school system, recognizing that some records are no longer available.

The Department is currently identifying, examining, and evaluating records that document methodologies and practices used in the Federal Indian boarding school system that discouraged or prevented the use of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages or cultural or religious practices.

Question 10. The U.S. Army has, and continues to engage in, a lengthy and complicated process of returning the remains of children buried at the Carlisle Industrial School to their home communities. While this process was a voluntary one on the part of the Army, the Army has also stated that the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act does not apply to these circumstances and instead chooses to follow Army Regulation 290-5. These regulations require that a request for disinterment be made by a lineal descendant. It is the Committee's understanding that in terms of the disposition of remains at Carlisle, Interior deferred to the Army's decision to follow its own regulations and not NAGPRA. How, if at all, is the Department engaging the Army to clarify if, how, and when NAGPRA would apply in the boarding school cemeteries located on lands currently controlled by the Department of Defense?

Answer. The Department recognizes the work of the Department of Defense (DOD), in coordination with Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages, and individuals from those Tribes and Villages, to disinter human remains from military installations or other lands under DOD's control. This work is critical to addressing the Federal Indian boarding school system. As stated in points (1)–(5) in the response to Question 8 above, the Department would welcome Congressional legislation to ensure clarity on NAGPRA's application and provide support for its implementation.

¹ The article estimates that the U.S. spent almost \$3 billion—adjusted for inflation—on federal Indian boarding schools between 1877 and 1918 and \$180 million on Native language revitalization between 2005 and 2019. <https://www.hcn.org/issues/51.21-22/indigenous-affairs-the-u-s-has-spent-more-money-erasing-native-languages-than-saving-them>.

Question 11. How does the Department envision the survey and discovery of marked and unmarked burials taking place? Will the Department engage Tribal Historic Preservation Officers to conduct this work? If so, will the Department be requesting additional funding for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) to cover the additional administrative and workforce burdens these offices will face?

Answer. The Department has identified marked and unmarked burial sites at approximately 53 different Federal Indian boarding school system sites thus far and we expect this number to increase as our investigation continues. The Department is identifying, examining, and evaluating potentially responsive records to locate additional marked and unmarked burial sites.

The Department supports increased Congressional appropriations for programs in Federal agencies responsible for compliance with NAGPRA and for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) under the National Park Service (NPS) for THPOs to increase professional staffing and program activities as highlighted in the response to Question 8.

Question 12. The Department makes several NAGPRA related recommendations. Can you provide more details on the specific legislative changes to adopt these recommendations? And, has the Department worked with Tribes, THPOs, and Native community members in developing these NAGPRA-related proposals?

Answer. In addition to points (1)-(5) in the response to Question 8, the Department would also support Congressional activity to exempt from the Freedom of Information Act information on burial locations across the Federal Indian boarding school system that contain remains of Indian children to protect these sensitive areas and prevent grave-robbing, vandalism, and other kinds of disturbances to Indian burial sites that have been all too common.

As stated in our response to Question 11, the Department also supports Congressional activity to increase appropriations and professional staffing for programs in Federal agencies responsible for compliance with NAGPRA and for the HPF under the NPS for THPOs.

In July 2021, the Department invited Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and the Native Hawaiian Community to consult on revisions to the NAGPRA regulations. By September 2021, the Department had received over 700 comments from Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and Native Hawaiian organizations, all of which were reviewed and considered in drafting a proposed regulation. The Department hopes to publish a proposed rule in the Federal Register soon for a 90-day public comment period and will conduct additional consultation with Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and Native Hawaiian organizations.

Question 13. Is there anything else the Department would like to add to the record? Are there any parts of the record the Department would like to correct for this hearing?

Answer. The Department supports Congressional action to create a memorial to recognize the generations of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children who experienced the Federal Indian boarding school system.

The Department also recommends that Congress consider the Department's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report and the Running Bear studies,² watershed quantitative research based on now-adult Federal Indian boarding school attendees' medical status, which indicate that the Indian boarding school system continues to impact the present-day health of Indians who participated in the studies.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN TO
HON. DEB HAALAND

Question 1. As part of its Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, the Department prepared Volume 1 of its report as part of an initial investigation of the federal Indian boarding school system. Volume 1 notes that you anticipate future site work and investigations and mentions the development of a second report. Secretary Haaland, the president requested an additional \$7 million in his Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request to continue the Federal Boarding School Initiative. Is this funding sufficient to complete the Initiative's work, or will future funding also be instru-

²Ursula Running Bear et al., The Impact of Individual and Parental American Indian Boarding School Attendance on Chronic Physical Health of Northern Plains Tribes, 42 Fam. Community Health 1, 3-4 (2019); Ursula Running Bear et al., Boarding School Attendance and Physical Health Status of Northern Plains Tribes, 13 Applied Res. Qual. of Life 633 (2018); Ursula Running Bear et al., The relationship of five boarding school experiences and physical health status among Northern Plains Tribes, 27 Applied Res. in Qual. of Life 153 (2018).

mental in achieving the Initiative's goals? Can you explain what Congress's initial \$7 million appropriation in Fiscal Year 2022 has meant for the Initiative?

Answer. Congress's initial \$7 million appropriation for Fiscal Year 2022 is advancing the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative by: (1) supporting the identification, digitization, examination, and evaluation of millions of records in the American Indian Records Repository (AIRR) related to the Federal Indian boarding school system; and (2) supporting The Road to Healing, a year-long tour across the country to provide survivors of the Federal Indian boarding school system and their descendants an opportunity to share their experiences. As part of the trust responsibility to Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and the Native Hawaiian Community, the Department would welcome long-term investment in the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative by Congress.

Question 2. Secretary Haaland, you note in Volume 1 of the Initiative's report that the agency has a substantial number of records to review to complete its work. Does Interior have an estimate of how many records it needs to analyze, organize, preserve and potentially make available for families of survivors? What agencies and departments outside of Interior require future appropriations to move this effort forward?

Answer. For Volume I, the Department, through the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration, identified 39,385 boxes in the AIRR that have potentially responsive documents (approximately 98.4 million sheets of paper). The Department is currently digitizing, examining, and evaluating these records.

Additionally, the Department, in collaboration with NARA, will identify, examine, and evaluate potentially responsive records under NARA's control.

The Department supports Congressional activity that would allow the Department and other Federal agencies that control potentially responsive records, including those that control sites on current or former military installations; those that provide health care to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; and NARA, to further identify, digitize, examine, and evaluate the millions of potentially responsive records relating to the Federal Indian boarding school system.

Question 3. Will subsequent volumes of federal Indian boarding school reports try to estimate total federal spending on federal Indian boarding schools? Why is it important that we have an estimate of this spending?

Answer. For the first time, the Department is identifying, digitizing, examining, and evaluating responsive records to approximate the amount of Federal support, including financial, property, livestock and animals, equipment, and personnel, allocated to the Federal Indian boarding school system, recognizing that some records are no longer available.

These responsive records document methodologies and practices used in the Federal Indian boarding school system that discouraged or prevented the use of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages or cultural or religious practices.

The Department believes that it is important to gather this information to understand the scope of the Federal Indian boarding school system and its impact, which will ultimately inform Congress on future activity it may undertake to address the intergenerational trauma created by historical federal policy.

Question 4. In keeping with recommendations outlined in Volume 1, should Congress make bold, substantial investments in Native American language immersion, preservation and maintenance programs?

Answer. Yes, the Department encourages Congress to support the expansion and development of Native language revitalization programs within Native communities and their schools, including accepting the Department's fiscal year 2023 budget request to provide at least \$4 million in new funding for Native Language Development at the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) operated and funded schools. The Department's fiscal year 2023 budget request also proposes at least \$21 million for grants and technical assistance to support Native language revitalization provided through non-BIE language immersion schools and community organizations. Congress should consider supporting all avenues to revive Native languages.

Question 5. Will future volumes from the Initiative's investigation make recommendations to improve federal Native American language program funding? Why is it important that we make federal funding for Native American languages more robust and accessible for Tribes and Native communities?

Answer. The Department is identifying, examining, and evaluating responsive records that document methodologies and practices used in the Federal Indian boarding school system that discouraged or prevented the use of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages or cultural or religious practices.

The Federal Indian boarding school system played a large role in breaking up families and preventing or discouraging the use of Native languages.

This has led to a dramatic reduction in the number of fluent language speakers in Tribal communities. As stated in the hearing, I believe that our obligation to Native communities means that federal policies should fully support and revitalize Native health care, education, languages, and cultural practices that prior federal Indian policies, like those supporting Indian boarding schools, sought to destroy. We need to make investments in Tribes and Tribal organizations to revitalize their languages and preserve their cultural practices.

Question 6. How would a federal Truth and Healing Commission supplement Interior's current Initiative? How does the scope of the Initiative compare to the proposed work of the federal Truth and Healing Commission under S. 2907?

Answer. The Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative is the Federal Government's first effort to comprehensively examine the Federal Indian boarding school system. The Department is focused on identifying, digitizing, examining, and evaluating our records relating to the Federal Indian boarding school system and coordinating with NARA to do the same with NARA's potentially responsive records. The Department is also conducting The Road to Healing, a yearlong tour across the country to provide survivors of the Federal Indian boarding school system and their descendants an opportunity to share experiences.

S. 2907 would create a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States, an independent voice with subpoena power that would, among other things, develop recommendations for the Federal Government to acknowledge and heal the historical and intergenerational trauma caused by the Indian Boarding School Policies and other cultural and linguistic termination practices carried out by the Federal Government and State and local governments, including recommendations for resources for survivors. The Commission's subpoena power is notable in that the Commission would be able to obtain records, testimony, and evidence in ways that the Department cannot. The Commission's work with survivors would also be a benefit to, and benefit from, The Road to Healing currently undertaken by the Department.

The Administration strongly supports S. 2907, especially the steps taken toward the development of national survivor resources to address intergenerational trauma, and the inclusion of the Commission's formal investigation and documentation practices.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN TO
SANDRA WHITE HAWK

Question 1. In New Mexico, Tribes and Pueblos crafted a Tribal Remedy Framework to respond to a legacy of underinvestment in Native education. The framework recommends investing in Native teacher pipelines, investing in curriculum development centers controlled by Tribal Colleges and Universities and Tribes, and ensuring Native American language programs receive additional funding—all recommendations echoed in Canada's Truth and Healing Commission's recommendations to address the legacy of residential schools. What roles have reconciliation commissions like those in Maine and Canada had in influencing investments in Native youth and education programs?

Answer. I have seen how truth commissions have played a significant role in building awareness and drawing attention to the healing in our communities. A powerful lasting impact of these commissions is how the next generation has responded. Our youth on the Rosebud reservation, the Sicangu Youth Council, really did single handedly open the area of boarding school issues for us here. They did this because they were led by spirit, and also because they were witnessing their relatives who were in hard places emotionally, spiritually, and physically. The more they understood the boarding school issue, the more they understood their relatives. Education helps people understand. It doesn't excuse behavior, or even change it directly, but it does help provide insight as to how it happened. Now, the youth council is engaged with the community. There are youth councils across Indian Country that are asking similar questions. They are ready to be engaged and help their nations heal. There could be even more youth councils that form across the country given the opportunity to be a part of a US national truth and healing initiative. Being descendants of boarding school survivors, the youth are given information that we as elders didn't have about why our people are who they are. They are asserting that we can heal, we can be stronger, and we can leave a better generation behind them.

Science continues to provide insight into how childhood trauma and abuse will form our brains and even create our personalities as adults. When an entire Tribe has been victimized, the survival behaviors become normalized because everyone is carrying these trauma traits which present themselves as PTSD and other mental health issues, diabetes, heart/lung problems, obesity, and etc. As the younger generations question “why” do my parents and grandparents act this way, it’s providing a non judgmental lens for Tribes to evaluate the mental health and safety needs of their community. Our communities are evolving around trauma instead of rising out of it. This responsibility should not fall on the youths shoulders alone but they should be given a healthy chance to be raised in a Tribe without trauma. Access to healthy communities, healthy youth programs (physical/mental), healthy education systems, traditional foods, empowered language programs, accurate curriculum, and etc are needed to begin to repair the damage that has been done for over 200 years.

Question 2. How would establishing a federal Truth and Healing Commission change the scope of the work Interior has begun with its Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative?

Answer. The Department of Interior (DOI) is doing amazing work with regards to their Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. This work must continue on. The DOI report, Volume 1 is historic in providing an adequate timeline of federal leadership, oversight, policy direction, funding, and acceptance of how Indian Boarding Schools were run and operated from 1800 to 1960’s. The intent of these Indian Boarding Schools were to take land away from Native peoples, remove Native peoples from hunting and fishing areas, death- if a child died while being taken away, removed, transported to Indian boarding schools and/or died while attending, running away, and/or disappeared from such schools. it was okay. Every school had a cemetery, the ability to burn their bodies, and/or mass unmarked graves to dispose of nameless children without a record of their lives.

S. 2907 will address what the DOI cannot. For example, there are over 1,000+ day schools, orphanages, asylums, sanitariums, and stand-alone dormitories as the definition for Indian Boarding Schools is limited in scope. The DOI report does not cover an exhaustive list of burial sites across the Federal Indian Boarding School systems. Nor does it identify the children who were placed in or attended Federal Indian boarding schools. Further review is needed to understand the impacts of violence and trauma inflicted on Indian children, DOI did recognize that targeting Indian children for federal assimilation contributed to: (1) Loss of Life; (2) damage to physical & mental health; (3) loss of territories & wealth; (4) demolish of tribal & family relations; and (5) eradication of use of Tribal languages.

S. 2907 will Inquiry into the Assimilative Policies of the U.S. Indian Boarding Schools which go beyond the DOI. This will include all the federal cabinet’s departments for example the War Department, Education, Treasury, and etc who assisted in support of this genocide thorough Indian Boarding Schools as well as state, local and county governments who participated in this time period.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN TO
HON. KIRK FRANCIS

Question 1. S. 2907 directs a federal Commission to investigate schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but some schools such as Carlisle were operated by other federal agencies such as the U.S. Army, or were funded by the federal government and operated by states or religious institutions. Should a definition of federal Indian boarding schools be added to S. 2907 to capture these circumstances, the criteria used by the Department of Interior’s Initiative, and further criteria as defined by a robust Tribal consultation process?

Answer. I agree that the language of S. 2907 is not broad enough to encompass all the schools that were implementing the federal policy of assimilation of Native American children. S. 2907 focuses on Bureau of Indian Affairs schools and church-operated schools, but volume 1 of Interior’s report identifies multiple schools that were operated by other federal agencies and by state governments. I am also cognizant that some schools were operated by individual members of a church or religion, and not necessarily by “the church” itself. These schools needs to be covered by S. 2907.

A definition of Indian Boarding School should be added to S. 2907, but I also agree that the Commission should be provided the flexibility to review any schools where evidence can be shown that the school was trying to implement the federal policy of assimilation. The Interior Department developed a definition for what constitutes a Federal Indian Boarding School and says it’s any school that meets four

criteria: (1) provided on-site housing or overnight lodging; (2) was described in records as providing formal academic or vocational training and instruction; (3) was described in records as receiving Federal government funds or other support; and (4) was operational before 1969. Initially, I liked the Interior Department definition, but upon reflection and hearing from other tribal leaders since the Committee's hearing on S. 2907, I think even the Interior Department definition is too narrow for purposes of the legislation. Given that the federal policy towards Native children during the relevant timeframe was one of assimilation, I think it should be assumed that any school targeting Native children was trying to assimilate them into the non-Native society, unless the evidence shows otherwise.

The purpose of S. 2907 is to conduct a comprehensive review and compilation of Indian Boarding Schools, for the first time ever. Given this, we do not yet know the full scope of schools that targeted Native children for assimilation purposes. Upon reflection, I think S. 2907 should cover any schools that meet criterion #1, 2 and 4, and it should be presumed that some sort of federal support existed for these schools given the federal policy of assimilation. I also think that the Commission should have the flexibility to examine any schools where any evidence shows that one of the purposes or practices of the school was to assimilate Native children, and to consult with Indian Country about what other schools may be out there. Essentially, I recommend that S. 2907 provide some minimum standards for what constitutes an Indian Boarding School, but also flexibility to the Commission to go beyond that. S. 2907 should cover any schools operated by any federal agency, or church or state or private individuals or organizations. The focus should be on schools that were intended to assimilate Native children, regardless of who operated them.

Question 2. Based on your experience, why is it important that S. 2907 identify next steps for the final report that the federal Commission develops?

Answer. S. 2907 presents the first time a comprehensive review is conducted on schools that tried to assimilate Native children. It would be shameful to spend so much time and effort in conducting such a review and not have mechanisms in place to implement whatever recommendations get included in the final report. Too often, I have seen reports developed with no consequence or action items to ensure change. As the findings of S. 2907 indicate, the limited research available shows that historic Indian Boarding Schools contribute to the intergenerational trauma that plagues much of Indian Country. There needs to be some accountability for these failed federal policies that focused on assimilating Native American children, and there should be some processes added to the legislation to ensure that continued consultation occurs after the final report is issued and that actions are finally taken that focus on mitigating the harms of these schools.

My recommendation is for S. 2907 to be expanded to include the following action items once a final report is issued by the Commission:

- The term of the Commission should be extended for two years after its final report is issued so that the Commission can hold hearings throughout Indian Country about the findings and recommendations contained within the final report. These consultations should be focused on (1) educating and informing about the contents of the final report, and (2) developing action items to implement the recommendations in the final report.
- Any federal agency that is identified as operating or funding an Indian Boarding School should be required to conduct separate consultations with Indian Country about the findings in the final report and any how the agency can help implement any recommendations contained in the final report. This should include the federal agency including within its annual budget proposals to the White House and Office of Management and Budget funding to help mitigate the impacts of the agency's historical assimilation activities and support, and a mandate for the agencies to address the final report in any testimony before the Congressional Appropriations Committees for the five fiscal years after the date of issuance of the final report.
- The final report should go to the Office of Management and Budget, and the Office should be required to conduct consultations with Indian Country on how to implement the recommendations contained in the final report.
- The final report should go to the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives, and to the Appropriations Committees of both chambers and such Committees should be required to conduct hearings on the final report for at least several fiscal years after the report is issued.
- Any federal agency who owns lands on which the remains of Native children who attended Boarding Schools are believed to be located shall develop policies

to repatriate such remains in a culturally appropriate manner to the tribal governments or descendants of those children, at the cost of the federal government.

- Any federal agency that owns lands on which historic Boarding Schools were located shall, in consultation with Indian Country, develop mechanisms for informing the general public about the history of such schools that were located on such lands.

Question 3. How long should the timeframe for the federal Truth and Healing Commission proposed by S. 2907 be extended?

Answer. If the recommendations in my testimony are followed to ensure that the Commission can begin its work in a timely fashion and begin its work once a majority of Commissioners are appointed, then I think the term of the Commission should be extended for two years for a total of 7 years. This will account for any small delays in getting a majority of Commissioners appointed, and will also allow the Commission to hold hearings and conduct consultations on the final report. Currently, S. 2907 requires that the Commission terminate 90 days after the date of issuance of its final report. That makes no sense because the Commissioners should be available to testify about its final report before Congress and any agencies, but it should also conduct meetings and consultations with Indian Country to educate stakeholders about what is in the final report.

