



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #AK-21-004

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**NCAI HEADQUARTERS**  
1516 P Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20005  
202.466.7767  
202.466.7797 fax  
www.ncai.org

### TITLE: Support for Truth and Healing on Indian Boarding Schools

**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, Schools for American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian student hostages employed practices including assimilation, corporal punishments, and child labor, which were often carried out without law or policy, were adopted by the United States Government to strip American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children of their Indigenous identities, beliefs, and languages to assimilate them into non-Indian culture through federally funded, Christian-denomination schools, which had the effect of cultural genocide; and

**WHEREAS**, Indian boarding schools were created through the Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819 which was created to administer the education, healthcare, and rations promised to Tribal Nations under treaty law, and Grant's Peace Policy 1868 which opened the Civilization Funds to be used by churches; and

**WHEREAS**, by 1926, nearly 83 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native school-age children were enrolled in Indian boarding schools in the United States, but because nearly 62 percent of the school records have been lost or destroyed, the full extent of the Indian Boarding School Policy has not been identified; and

**WHEREAS**, the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 2016 asking how many boarding schools the government funded, how many children attended, and how many went missing or died at the schools and the BIA responded that they could not answer because research would be needed; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) has found 367 assimilative Indian Boarding Schools in the U.S. through independent research and has only been able to locate 38% of the boarding school records and 62% of the records are being held in private collections that we do not have access to; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) filed a submission to the United Nations in 2019 about children who went missing at Indian boarding schools in the U.S. whose whereabouts are still unknown and the U.S. has yet to respond to our allegations and answer to where those children are; and

**WHEREAS**, according to UN 1948 Geneva Convention on the definition of genocide, the U.S. had never acknowledged its genocidal policies; and

**WHEREAS**, the Policy's deliberate intention was the separation of Native American children from their families, cultures, and Tribal communities through removal, cutting their hair, taking their clothing and issuing uniforms, forbidding them to speak their language or engage in any cultural practices, and carrying out severe and often corporal punishments constituting, in many cases, physical, emotional and mental torture for non-compliance, including the sterilization of our children, as to this day, families are still mourning for the loss of their children and future generations; and

**WHEREAS**, in partnership with NCAI and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) along with other coalition members, organizations, Tribal Nations, survivors, and descendants, organizations and national leaders including Boarding School survivors, are in support of the "Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy and other Native American Assimilation Policies Act"; and

**WHEREAS**, at NCAI 2021 Mid Year Conference, the first Native American Secretary of the Interior, Debra Haaland announced a Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative (Initiative), a comprehensive review of the troubled legacy of federal boarding school policies; and

**WHEREAS**, the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative will serve as an investigation about the loss of human life and the lasting consequences of residential Indian boarding schools, the primary goal of which will be to identify boarding school facilities and sites, the location of known and possible student burial sites located at or near school facilities, and the identities and tribal affiliations of students interred at such locations; and

**WHEREAS**, the work will proceed in several phases and include the identification and collection of records and information related to the Department of Interior's own oversight and implementation of the Indian boarding school program with formal consultations with Tribal Nations.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) does hereby support the Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, encourage meaningful consultation with Tribal Nations, and call upon Congress to fully fund it; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI calls upon the Secretary of the Interior to coordinate with the Secretary of Defense in all matters regarding repatriation; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, NCAI calls upon the Initiative to conduct non-destructive, non-invasive ground imaging of boarding schools to determine the number of students who died, the number of graves and to survey all federal repositories to find all ancestors and records; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) requests that the United States Congress to approve the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act” which would build on the Department of the Interior’s Initiative and last at least 3 years; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI supports the efforts by Tribal Nations, Families and organizations seeking this information through a national “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act”; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI calls upon the United States Congress to conduct oversight hearings, including field hearings, as well as legislative hearings, and that the Commission shall have the power to subpoena all necessary records; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI calls upon the Commission to report to Congress on the findings and recommendations; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, NCAI calls upon the US Federal Government to comply with all requests and efforts to obtain this information by families, decedents, Tribal Nations, Alaska Native Villages and Native Hawaiians as well as Indigenous organizations and coalitions working on their behalf to confirm current initiatives through the Federal Freedom of Information Act, the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances and other international mechanism; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2021 Mid Year Conference of the National Congress of American Indians, held June 20, 2021 - June 24, 2021, with a quorum present.



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Fawn Sharp, President

**ATTEST:**



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Juana Majel Dixon, Recording Secretary