

SENATE RESOLUTION

8661

By Senators Stanford, Billig, Conway, Das, Dhingra, Fortunato, Hasegawa, Keiser, Kuderer, Lias, Lovelett, Nobles, Pedersen, Robinson, Saldaña, Trudeau, Van De Wege, and Wellman

1 WHEREAS, The United States, at the urging of and in support of
2 many Christian churches of that time, adopted the Indian Civilization
3 Fund Act on March 3, 1819, to provide financial support for church
4 run schools to "civilize" Native American children through an
5 education program intended to eradicate Native American culture; and

6 WHEREAS, In 1869, the United States, in concert with and the
7 urging of several denominations of the Christian Church, adopted the
8 Indian Boarding School Policy or "Peace Policy" for the removal and
9 reprogramming of Native American children to ensure the systematic
10 destruction of indigenous cultures and communities; and

11 WHEREAS, The Indian Boarding School Policy was a deliberate
12 policy of cultural genocide, founded on the assimilationist directive
13 to "Kill the Indian and save the man"; and

14 WHEREAS, Between 1869 and the 1960s, Native American children
15 were removed from their homes and families, often involuntarily, and
16 placed in Boarding Schools far from their homes which were funded by
17 the federal government and operated by the federal government and
18 churches, where children were punished for speaking their native
19 language, banned from acting in any way that might be seen as
20 representing traditional or cultural practices, shorn of their hair,
21 stripped of traditional clothing and all things and behaviors
22 reflective of their native culture, and shamed for being Native
23 American; and

1 WHEREAS, The prevailing attitudes of the time allowed for the
2 neglect and abuse of children who were overseen but not parented, who
3 were bullied and assaulted not only by the adults but also by older
4 children under the modeling and instruction of the caretakers and
5 staff, and who were neglected as a whole through the denial of
6 adequate food and medical care; and

7 WHEREAS, These children observed and suffered physical,
8 emotional, cultural, spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse, and
9 punishment by physical restraints, beatings, and isolation in
10 inhospitable surroundings, and many children died as a direct result
11 of this malfeasance and mistreatment; and

12 WHEREAS, There were more than 350 Indian Boarding schools across
13 the United States, located within 30 States, which included 14 Indian
14 Boarding schools in Washington state; and

15 WHEREAS, These children, their children, and now their
16 grandchildren and great-grandchildren, bear the burden of the legacy
17 of the boarding schools and the federal policy that established and
18 sustained those schools, where the children suffered trauma that has
19 gone unrecognized and unresolved, and has been passed onto each
20 subsequent generation; and

21 WHEREAS, This historical and inter-generational trauma continues
22 to devastate, undermine, and negatively impact Native American
23 individuals, families, and communities; and

24 WHEREAS, The United States has not offered a meaningful
25 acknowledgment of responsibility or offered to provide any redress
26 for the generations of harm caused by the deliberate imposition of
27 the policy of cultural genocide on the Native American children,
28 families, communities, tribes, Pueblos, or Alaskan Villages;

29 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Senate pause to
30 acknowledge the two hundred third anniversary of the signing of the
31 Indian Civilization Fund Act; to recognize and remember the surviving
32 children of Indian Boarding Schools, their children, grandchildren,
33 and great-grandchildren, and to honor their resiliency and
34 determination to endure such atrocities.

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