

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. CON. RES. 28

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Whereas, more than 200 years ago, the Act entitled “An Act making provision for the civilization of the Indian tribes adjoining the frontier settlements”, approved March 3, 1819 (3 Stat. 516, chapter 85) (commonly known as the “Civilization Fund Act”), was enacted and ushered in devastating policies and practices designed to assimilate American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children by removing the children from their families and Native communities throughout the United States;

Whereas that Act intended to resolve what was commonly referred to in the United States as the “Indian problem” and was based on the unjust belief of many that Native people needed to be “civilized” and that education would be the appropriate vehicle to enact assimilationist policies on Native American people;

Whereas, pursuant to that Act, numerous church- and government-operated boarding schools were established on and off Indian territories and homelands to house and educate numerous Native American children through policies and practices that sought to eliminate the cultural identity of Native children and assimilate them into mainstream United States society;

Whereas, according to the Native American Rights Fund, Native American families were torn apart by the removal

of Native American children, either voluntarily or forcibly, from their homelands and communities to attend Indian boarding schools located across the country;

Whereas many parents of children sent to Indian boarding schools were forbidden to contact or visit their children, compounding the problem of isolation that negatively impacted and continues to impact the lives of many Native children, their families, and their communities;

Whereas the Native American Rights Fund also reported that an unidentified number of Native children died at Indian boarding schools due to abuse, neglect, malnourishment, or disease, and many of those children were buried far from their homes in unmarked graves or under tombstones that misidentified the children or ascribed Anglicized names to the children;

Whereas many of the parents of children who died at Indian boarding schools were never informed of the fate of their children;

Whereas, according to a report issued by the Native American Rights Fund, many survivors of Indian boarding schools have testified that Indian boarding schools stripped Native American children of their traditional cultures, languages, and religions by forbidding the children to wear traditional clothing, speak their Indigenous languages, or practice their cultural, religious, or spiritual beliefs, and many of the boarding schools are known to have severely punished children who violated these policies through verbal, psychological, and physical abuse;

Whereas many survivors of Indian boarding schools and families of children who attended those schools have recounted details of the physical, sexual, and psychological

abuse that countless Native American children endured while attending the schools;

Whereas, according to the report entitled “The Problem of Indian Administration” and dated February 21, 1928 (commonly known as the “Meriam Report”), many Indian boarding schools sent students to nearby communities for forced manual work as servants or farm laborers, and the operation of many Indian boarding schools was supported by the labor of the students;

Whereas the Federal policy of Indian assimilation and education has proven to be a disastrous failure and a national tragedy;

Whereas, as stated in the report entitled “Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge” and dated November 3, 1969 (Senate Report 91–501) (commonly known as the “Kennedy Report”), “the dominant policy of the Federal Government toward the American Indian has been one of coercive assimilation” that had “disastrous effects” on the education of many Native American children;

Whereas, in 2018, the United States Commission on Civil Rights reported that many American Indian and Alaska Native people suffer from intergenerational trauma as a result of policies and practices of Indian boarding schools that alienated many children from their families, traditional cultures, languages, and religions, and deprived those children of their true identities and heritage;

Whereas, while early assimilationist policies were eventually eliminated and Indian boarding school attendance has greatly diminished since its apex, the impact of this

shameful period in United States history still affects the lives of many Native American people today;

Whereas many Native American people are still suffering from and trying to comprehend and cope with direct trauma, including impacts on health and well-being, and the intergenerational trauma, that resulted from losing connection to family, culture, language, religion, and heritage;

Whereas significant research shows that adverse childhood experiences, such as the experiences of many Native American children who attended Indian boarding schools and the descendants of those children, can cause numerous negative health outcomes, increased suicide rates, and other harmful outcomes throughout life; and

Whereas recognition that healing and promotion of care for the mind, body, and spirit is essential to overcoming the dark shadows on United States history cast by Federal Indian assimilationist policies and practices carried out by the Federal Government through Indian boarding schools and acknowledging the lived experiences of the Native American children and families who endured and continue to endure the trauma and grief associated with Indian boarding schools: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives*
2 *concurring), That—*

3 (1) it is the sense of Congress that there should
4 be a national day of remembrance for the Native
5 American children who died while attending a
6 United States Indian boarding school;

1 (2) Congress recognizes, honors, and supports
2 the survivors and the families and communities of
3 children who attended such schools; and

4 (3) Congress encourages the people of the
5 United States—

6 (A) to support and recognize the grief,
7 pain, and hardship many Native American peo-
8 ple suffered and still endure as a result of the
9 assimilationist policies and practices carried out
10 by the United States through Indian boarding
11 school policies;

12 (B) to honor the legacy of and remember
13 those who were lost or harmed by those policies
14 and practices; and

15 (C) to appreciate the resilience of the sur-
16 vivors and their families with appropriate cere-
17 monies, programs, events, and other activities
18 to support and commemorate a national day of
19 remembrance.

Passed the Senate January 20, 2022.

Attest:

Secretary.

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Expressing the sense of Congress that September 30 should be observed as a national day of remembrance for the Native American children who died while attending a United States Indian boarding school and recognizing, honoring, and supporting the survivors of Indian boarding schools, their families, and their communities.