

# National Indian Health Board



## National Indian Health Board Resolution 13 – 01

### **Support for the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition’s Proposal for the Establishment of a National Commission to Investigate and Report to the United States Congress on the Effects of the Forcible Removal of Children and Subsequent Abuse and Neglect Resulting from the Boarding School Policy Adopted and Implemented During the 19<sup>TH</sup> and 20<sup>TH</sup> Centuries**

**WHEREAS**, the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), established in 1972, serves all federally recognized American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Tribal governments by advocating for the improvement of health care delivery to AI/ANs, as well as upholding the Federal government’s trust responsibility to AI/AN Tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, the NIHB serves all federally-recognized Tribes, constituting an immensely diverse service population with wide-ranging perspectives, opinions, and values; and

**WHEREAS**, the governing body of the NIHB is its Board of Directors, comprised of a representative elected from the Tribes in each Indian Health Service Area; and

**WHEREAS**, the NIHB is intimately aware of the harms suffered to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual harms suffered among members of AI/AN communities, in the past and ongoing, as a direct result of the past federal boarding school policy, and the role those harms continue to play in the health of AI/AN people; and

**WHEREAS**, the NIHB has performed and documented significant work, in the past and continuing in the present, related to addressing the harms suffered as a result of the boarding school policy, especially as such harms are directly related to the health of AI/AN people; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States, at the urging of and in support of the Christian churches of that time adopted the Indian Civilization Act Fund of 1819 to provide financial support for church run schools to “civilize” AI/AN children through education; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1869 the United States, in concert with and at the urging of several denominations of the Christian church, adopted the Indian the Boarding School



Policy (also known as the Peace Policy) which was a deliberate policy of the removal and reprogramming of AI/AN children, the purpose of which was the systematic destruction of indigenous cultures and communities; and

**WHEREAS**, between 1869 and the 1960s more than 100,000 AI/AN children were removed from their homes and families, often involuntarily, and placed in Boarding Schools operated by the federal government and the churches; and

**WHEREAS**, Native children that were voluntarily or forcibly removed from their homes, families and communities were taken to schools far away where they were punished for speaking their native language, banned from acting in any way that might be seen to represent traditional or cultural practices, stripped of traditional clothing, hair and all things and behaviors reflective of their native culture, and commonly abused and neglected by inadequate staff who were hostile to native culture; and

**WHEREAS**, the prevailing attitudes of the time allowed neglect and abuse of children who were overseen but not parented, who were bullied and assaulted not only by the adults but also by older children under the modeling and instruction of the caretakers and staff, and who were neglected *en masse*. These children observed and suffered physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse, punishment by physical restraints, beatings and isolation in inhospitable surroundings, such as unlighted cellars, and unlighted and unventilated outbuildings designed as “jails”; and

**WHEREAS**, these children, their children and now their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, have become the legacy of the boarding schools and the federal policy that established and sustained those schools, where the trauma the children suffered has gone unrecognized and unresolved, and the trauma is passed onto each subsequent generation where this historical and intergenerational trauma continues to work in, undermine and devastate Native American individuals, families, and communities; and

**WHEREAS**, neither the United States nor any national denomination of the Christian churches in the United States has offered a meaningful apology or offered to provide any redress for the generations of harm caused by the deliberate imposition of the policy of cultural genocide on the AI/AN children, families, communities, Tribes, Pueblos or Villages; and

**WHEREAS**, the facts and history about the pervasive harm caused and continuing to be caused by the trauma and continuing intergenerational trauma attributable to the Boarding School Policy are poorly understood by the American public, the Congress or the Executive Branch of the federal government; and

**WHEREAS**, in order to begin a healing process to address the harms suffered and enduring as a result of the boarding school policy, a comprehensive national study is needed of the history of the policy, including complete documentation of the fate of each of the students and the events that took place at each of the schools, gathering of testimony from those that suffered from abuse, neglect or other trauma, and recommendations to Congress based on the information gathered from individual victims, communities and

experts concerning the nature of the harms and potential paradigms for healing and reconciliation; and

**WHEREAS**, similar events in the past have been successfully addressed through Congressional authorization of a Commission to study and report on the issue.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Directors of the National Indian Health Board does hereby encourage the United States government to accept responsibility for the boarding school policy and its continuing inter-generational trauma and impacts, and to take meaningful steps to provide redress for these harms; and

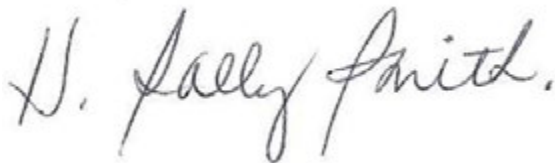
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the National Indian Health Board does hereby encourage the churches involved in the establishment of the boarding school policy and its implementation to accept responsibility for their roles, to formally apologize for those roles, and to provide support, including funding, for the work of the Coalition and for direct healing work carried out in communities; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the National Indian Health Board does hereby support the enactment by the United States Congress of a bill to create a Commission on American Indian Boarding School Policy to conduct hearings on boarding school abuses and their continuing impacts. The Commission should plan, design and carry out its work in collaboration with impacted AI/AN communities; take testimony from boarding school survivors and others with adequate care available for those who need it when they revisit the trauma they have survived; gather information from experts about, among other issues, intergenerational/historical trauma; take recommendations from affected communities and experts about what is needed to effectuate true community and Nation healing; raise public awareness and provide public education about US boarding school policies and their ongoing effects; and recommend and commit support for culturally-appropriate community-led remedies with the full and effective participation of survivors, families, communities, Tribes, Pueblos or Villages.

#### **CERTIFICATION**

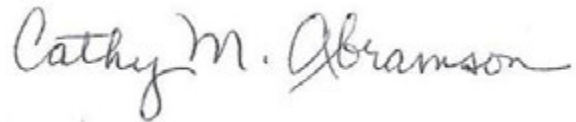
The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Board, with a quorum present, on the 16 day of June, 2013.

**ATTEST:**



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Secretary, H. Sally Smith



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Chairperson, Cathy Abramson