



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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December 2, 2021

Senator Elizabeth Warren
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Sharice Davids
1541 Longworth House Office
Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Tom Cole
2207 Rayburn House Office
Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Warren and Representatives Davids and Cole,

On behalf of the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF), we write to convey our strong support for S. 2907/H.R. 5444, the *Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act*. USET SPF has supported this legislation since it was first introduced in 2020 by former Congresswoman Deb Haaland. It would establish the first formal commission to investigate, document, and acknowledge the past injustices of the federal government's Indian Boarding School policies. Acknowledging these transgressions is the first step in a path to healing and reconciliation for abuses committed against Native children and Tribal Nations at the hands of the U.S. government. USET SPF asserts that the U.S. must atone for centuries of transgressions against our children and the effects Indian Boarding Schools have had on our communities.

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.

In 2014, USET SPF adopted Resolution No. 2014:044, which asserted that neither the U.S, nor any Christian denomination in the U.S, has offered a meaningful apology or any restitution for the generations of harm caused by the cultural genocide of Indian Boarding School policies. To begin the healing process, to address the harms endured by our children, a comprehensive report is needed on the deplorable history of the Indian Boarding Schools and how they continue to contribute to intergenerational trauma within Tribal communities. USET SPF reaffirms and offers our full support to passage of this critically important legislation.

¹ USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians (ME), 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), 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).

Because there is Strength in Unity

During the Assimilation Era of federal Indian law and policy, the federal government's objective was infamously stated by U.S. General Richard Pratt as, "kill the Indian and save the man". Our children, as young as 3 years old, were forcibly removed from their families, homes, and culture and placed into Indian Boarding Schools. While at these Boarding Schools, they were forbidden to speak their language, practice their cultural and religious beliefs, and subjected to horrendous abuse and treatment. By 1926, it was estimated that 83 percent of Native children were enrolled in these schools. The era of Indian Boarding Schools has ended, but the effects remain and persist in our communities, and the survivors who returned home brought with them memories of unspeakable acts and teachings.

The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act is long overdue and a product of years of advocacy by Tribal Leaders, Tribal Organizations, and members of the federal government. The commission would be charged with conducting culturally respectful and meaningful public hearings for victims, survivors, and other community members to testify and discuss the impacts of Indian Boarding Schools. Most importantly, the commission will be required to develop recommendations for Congress and the federal government to acknowledge and heal the historical and intergenerational trauma related to the impact these schools have had on Native people and communities and to prevent these historical atrocities from occurring again.

USET SPF strongly supports this important legislation that will bring to light the truths of Indian Boarding School policies in the United States and provide a foundation for the healing of Tribal Nations and our citizens. The time is long overdue for the federal government and the American people to engage in honest reconciliation with the atrocities of the past and the intergenerational trauma we continue to experience today. Truthful acknowledgement and reconciliation will allow us all to move forward as citizens of a more just and honorable United States. We call upon Congress for the immediate passage of *The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act*. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact Ms. Liz Malerba, USET SPF Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, at L.Malerba@usetinc.org or 615-838-5906.

Sincerely,



Kirk Francis
President



Kitcki A. Carroll
Executive Director