



# USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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## USET SPF Resolution No. 2025 SPF:011

### **PROTECTING THE BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION AND TRIBALLY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS**

- WHEREAS,** United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is an intertribal organization comprised of thirty-three (33) federally recognized Tribal Nations; and
- WHEREAS,** the actions taken by the USET SPF Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member Tribal Nation, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member Tribal Nations' leadership; and
- WHEREAS,** the USET SPF Board of Directors recognizes the importance of sovereignty and self-determination in education and reaffirms its commitment to ensuring Native students receive the best possible education; and
- WHEREAS,** the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and Tribally Controlled Schools are responsible for ensuring the education, cultural preservation, and future success of Native students in federally funded schools across Indian Country; and
- WHEREAS,** the United States has clear trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations for the education of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children, as established through the U.S. Constitution and treaties, and reaffirmed in statutes, executive actions, and judicial decisions; and
- WHEREAS,** Congress has long understood its unique legal duty to AI/AN students, reaffirming their political status through centuries of legislation, beginning with the Civilization Fund Act of 1819, codified as a federal directive in the Snyder Act of 1921, and later revised under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (ISDEAA), P.L. 93-638, and the Tribally Controlled Schools Act of 1988, P.L. 100-297; and
- WHEREAS,** Executive Orders (EOs) and policy decisions under the Trump Administration such as EO 14191, "Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families," and EO 14210, "Implementing The President's 'Department of Government Efficiency' Workforce Optimization Initiative," have the potential to undermine Tribal sovereignty, reduce funding for Indian education, further reduce critical staffing levels; and disrupt the educational services at BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools; and
- WHEREAS,** nearly 48,000 AI/AN students are currently enrolled in BIE-operated or Tribally Controlled Schools, which serve as the fulfillment of the federal government's trust treaty obligations to support Indian education, yet these schools have been chronically underfunded; and

- WHEREAS,** Congress established a school choice system for Tribal communities through the Tribally Controlled Schools Act of 1988 (P.L. 102-97), reinforcing Tribal self-determination and sovereignty in education; and
- WHEREAS,** USET SPF member Tribal Nations both support and rely on BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools to provide quality, culturally appropriate education in a safe and healthy environment for our youth; and
- WHEREAS,** any development of new school choice programs for AI/AN children must secure separate funding and programs, ensuring that existing funds dedicated to Tribally Controlled Schools and the BIE are not depleted or redirected to state education agencies, which would undermine Tribal sovereignty; and
- WHEREAS,** the current Indian School Equalization Program (ISEP), which funds the core operations of BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools, must remain intact and appropriately funded to support AI/AN students; and
- WHEREAS,** 168 of the 183 Bureau-funded schools are located in rural or remote areas with few, if any, viable alternative education options, making the stability of BIE funding critical to AI/AN students and our communities; and
- WHEREAS,** off-reservation boarding schools, which are essential to many AI/AN students, are directly operated by the BIE and serve students from multiple Tribal Nations without the protection of individual Tribal governance, making their continued operation and adequate funding particularly vulnerable; and
- WHEREAS,** these off-reservation boarding schools are critical for students who have limited access to local education options and are often neglected and underfunded by federal policies, risking the further erosion of educational opportunities for AI/AN students in these schools; and
- WHEREAS,** the federal government has legal and moral obligations to consult with Tribal Nations before any decision-making process regarding the implementation of EO 14191 and EO 14210 to ensure that the federal trust and treaty obligations to Indian education is fully upheld; and
- WHEREAS,** protecting BIE and Tribally Controlled School funding, resources, staffing levels, and Tribal control over education is essential to fulfilling the federal government's trust responsibility and ensuring AI/AN students receive quality, culturally appropriate education; and
- WHEREAS,** federal funding for BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools is not discretionary and is not a matter of diversity, equity, and inclusion; rather, it is a right owed as payment on debt to sovereign, federally recognized Tribal Nations by virtue of our political status and our trust and treaty relations with the United States; and
- WHEREAS,** the BIE Central Office and BIE leadership play a critical role in ensuring the effective administration and protection of BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools, and any efforts to weaken or dismantle BIE leadership jeopardize the future of Indian education; and

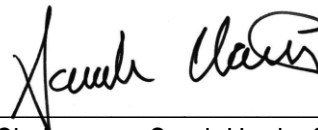
- WHEREAS,** administrative staff, technical assistants, non-teacher staff, and adequate staffing levels are essential to keeping BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools open, funded, and running efficiently, ensuring that the schools can effectively serve AI/AN students; and therefore, be it
- WHEREAS,** workforce reductions under EO 14210 pose a grave risk to the stability and effectiveness of BIE, Tribally Controlled Schools, and other federal programs serving Indian Country, threatening the delivery of critical services to AI/AN students and communities; and
- WHEREAS,** in December 2010, the United States recognized the rights of its First Peoples through its support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), whose provisions and principles support and promote the purposes of this resolution; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED** the USET SPF Board of Directors formally opposes any executive orders, budget cuts, workforce reductions, or policy changes, including those under EO 14191 and EO 14210, that would undermine the BIE, Tribally Controlled Schools, BIE Central Office, BIE leadership, adequate staffing levels, and AI/AN student success; and be it further
- RESOLVED** the USET SPF Board of Directors calls upon Congress and federal agencies, including the Executive Office of the President, to uphold federal trust and treaty obligations by increasing BIE and Tribally Controlled School funding, staffing levels, and supporting Tribal sovereignty in education preserving staffing levels, and engaging in consultation with Tribal Nations before any policy changes affect Indian education; and be it further
- RESOLVED** the USET SPF Board of Directors urges Congress and federal agencies to ensure that BIE-operated schools and off-reservation boarding schools receive appropriate funding, staffing, and resources to remain viable and effective, especially for those students who have limited access to local education options; and be it further
- RESOLVED** the USET SPF Board of Directors strongly affirms its commitment to protecting the integrity of Tribally Controlled Schools, recognizing their vital role in supporting AI/AN students through culturally relevant and community-centered education, and calls upon the federal government to fully fund and support these schools in perpetuity, ensuring they retain the autonomy and resources necessary to continue fulfilling their mission; and be it further
- RESOLVED** the USET SPF Board of Directors urges the Office of Personnel Management, the Office of Management and Budget, alongside every agency head and Department of Government Efficiency Team Lead, to ensure that employees whose functions are in service of fulfilling trust and treaty obligations to Indian Country are exempted from this and future comprehensive actions towards workforce or federal funding reduction; and be it finally
- RESOLVED** the USET SPF Board of Directors affirms its continued commitment to defending and strengthening the Bureau of Indian Education, Tribally Controlled Schools, and the educational rights of AI/AN students, ensuring that all federal actions and policies fully uphold the rights, needs, and cultural values of Native communities.

**CERTIFICATION**

This resolution was duly passed at the USET SPF Impact Week Meeting held in Arlington, VA at which a quorum was present on March 13, 2025.



Chief Kirk E. Francis, Sr., President  
United South and Eastern Tribes  
Sovereignty Protection Fund



Vice Chairwoman Sarah Harris, Secretary  
United South and Eastern Tribes  
Sovereignty Protection Fund