

Co-sponsor the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. Act

The bipartisan Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act (S. 2907/H.R. 5444) would establish the first formal commission in U.S. history to investigate and document the policies and practices of 367 federally sponsored, faith-run institutions from the 1860s through the 1960s. This includes assimilation practices, attempted termination of cultures and languages of Indigenous peoples, and human rights violations.

This bill is significant for tribal nations, which continue to experience the intergenerational consequences of the boarding school era. This legislation is also significant for faith communities. Many denominations have stepped forward to acknowledge their complicity in the historic trauma of the boarding school era. They are committed to locating, cataloguing, and sharing boarding school records as part of the truth-telling process. The establishment of a commission is an important first step in starting the truth, healing, and reconciliation process for all of us.

On Sept. 30, 2021, H.R. 5444 was introduced in the House by Rep. Tom Cole (OK-04) and Rep. Sharice Davids (KS-03), co-chairs of the Native American Caucus. A companion bill, S. 2907, was also introduced in the Senate by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (MA) and has since been co-sponsored by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (AK), vice chair of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

A Truth and Healing Commission will:

- » Formally investigate and document the assimilation practices and human rights violations that occurred against Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.
- » Hold culturally respectful and meaningful public hearings for victims, survivors, and their families to testify on the impacts of these policies.
- » Be guided by a Truth and Healing Advisory Committee with representatives from tribal organizations, tribal nations, experts, and survivors.
- » Develop a final report with recommendations for the federal government due no later than five years after enactment.

Co-sponsor the Truth and Healing Commission bill.

Contact:

Portia Skenandore-Wheelock

Congressional Advocate
for Native American Policy

portiasw@fncnl.org

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