



2022 Mid-Year Conference Ferndale, Washington

RESOLUTION #22 – 21

Declare a United States Proclamation that Genocide was Committed on Native Children, Families, and Nations

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants rights secured under Indian Treaties and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians (ATNI) are representatives of and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and tribes in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of the ATNI; and

WHEREAS, the United States deliberately attempted to eradicate Native Peoples' distinct cultures, identities, languages, beliefs, values, and attachments to original lands and traditional ways, and enabled and allowed others to do so by its financing, authorizing, and looking the other way; and unknown numbers of Native children died as a direct result of this

racial, religious, and cultural carnage, as others died as an indirect result of it and of neglect and despair, and as still others survived, but their spirits were killed; and

WHEREAS, the United States deliberately attempted to “civilize” and force assimilation of Native children through such direct actions as: (1) federal franchises and grants of appropriated monies, administered by the War and Interior Departments throughout the 1800s and known as “Civilization Funds,” which financed missionizing and proselytizing entities’ English-only/Christianity-only “education” of Indian children; and (2) the Boarding School Policy of 1869, known as “President Grant’s Peace Policy,” that located early Indian industrial or agricultural boarding schools on and near US military forts and bases, with oversight or control by Christian missionaries and churches, the most prominent being the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (1879-1918)--at Carlisle Barracks (established in 1757; later also located there, the US Army War College, 1901-present), in Western Pennsylvania—whose first Superintendent, Second Lt. Richard Henry Pratt, served in the Indian Wars under Gen. Phillip Sheridan, who spawned the phrase, “The only good Indian is a dead one,” and was part of the Washita River campaign led by Lt. Col. George A. Custer against the Black Kettle Band of Cheyenne (1868), and who operated Carlisle under the guiding credo, “Kill the Indian, Save the Man;” and

WHEREAS, the United States deliberately attempted to “civilize” and force assimilation of Native children through additional direct actions, such as, (1) Interior Secretaries’ 1883, 1884, 1894, and 1904 *Civilization Regulations* (in force and effect until withdrawn in 1936) and the Courts of Indian Offenses (1883-) that criminalized tribal and individual Indian dancing, ceremonies, giveaways, “roaming away from the reservation,” or using “any means” or “any of the arts of a conjurer to prevent the Indians from abandoning their heathenish rites and customs,” “to keep the Indians under his influence,” to interfere with the “progressive education” of the children, or “to prevent the attendance of children at the agency schools;” and (2) Indian Affairs Commissioner *Circulars* to implement *Civilization* (1880s-1930s), by instructing all agents and superintendents, for example, to “undertake a careful propaganda against the Dance,” to prohibit young Indians from dancing and “painting,” and to strictly prohibit long hair (1902 Order: “The wearing of short hair by the males...will certainly hasten their progress towards civilization. The returned male student far too frequently goes back to the reservation and falls into the old custom of letting their hair grow long... He also paints profusely and adopts all the old habits and customs which his education in our industrial schools has tried to eradicate.... The returned students who do not comply voluntarily should be dealt with summarily. Employment, supplies, etc., should be withdrawn until they do comply and if they become obstreperous about the matter a short confinement in the guard house at hard labor, with shorn locks, should furnish cure.”); and

WHEREAS, the Boarding School Policy’s deliberate intention was to separate and remove Indian children from their families, cultures, and peoples by disintegrating their identities, cutting their hair, confiscating their medicine pouches and protective items, replacing their clothing with uniforms and hard shoes, forbidding them to speak or sing or pray in their languages, denying participation in any traditional practices, and carrying out severe, brutal corporal punishment that often constituted physical, emotional, and mental torture for disobedience, non-compliance, or as an example; and

WHEREAS, most of the early Indian children were hostages who were concentrated into “civilization” camps and used to keep their strong families in line, at the same time as they were schooled to disdain their relatives and homelands, and as they sometimes were paraded and staged for review with their prisoner-of-war parents and other symbols of a pacified Indian population, including such celebrity leaders as Geronimo (Chiricahua Apache) and Nez Perce Chief Joseph; and

WHEREAS, Indian hostage-students were the unpaid labor force who built dorms, classroom buildings, and athletic facilities, while learning trades, posing for photos, displaying their recitation skills and oratory talents, and making unabashed fundraising appeals for visiting dignitaries and potential donors to the schools, and were the off-campus work force in summer and other seasonal “outings” at white homes and businesses, where they worked for a pittance or for free; and

WHEREAS, Indian hostage-students were exploited for their natural athletic prowess and beauty in sports, where they also were the mascots; in musical programs where they were the noble savages, braves, and princesses, waiting to be “discovered” and “settled;” and in tableaux and plays, where they were detribalized, but pan-Indianized in the mode of Carlisle Superintendent Pratt’s favorite Plains style of hide regalia and feathered headdresses, irrespective of the origin or Native tradition of the wearer, and this Carlisle tradition became the model for the other schools and continues as the main stereotypical Indian identifier used today; and

WHEREAS, just as the lives of Native Peoples were controlled by the callous politics of food—healthy traditional foods were denied and replaced with rancid rations, while corruption among the traders and in the food delivery chains assured infested grains and limited goods—so were the daily routines and health regimen of Indian children disrupted by the withholding of meals or being forced to eat spoilage; and

WHEREAS, the failure of the United States to provide for adequate physical, emotional, and medical care for these children—many of whom were kidnapped and taken into US custody as tribal citizens who would not also be US citizens under US law until 1924—resulted in inadequate nutrition, illness, neglect, and emotional, physical, mental, sexual, and spiritual trauma, all contributing to mortality rates significantly in excess of lifespans of contemporaneous non-Indian children; and

WHEREAS, Indian children who became ill often were sent home alone so they would not die at the boarding schools, while those who did die at the away schools often were buried, exhumed, and reburied, some more than once, to make way for buildings, bridges, roads, stadiums, and other features of the grounds, and not all were buried in marked graves or cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, the ATNI membership, which includes myriad survivors and descendants who have lived with intergenerational trauma, believes that these known and documented atrocities and immoral acts, separately and taken together, constitute genocidal acts borne of genocidal intentions and policies; and

WHEREAS, the most widely accepted definition of genocide is in the United Nations' 1948 *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (effective in 1951, ratified by the United States in 1988), wherein *Article 2* defines genocide as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group;" and

WHEREAS, the *Genocide Convention's Article 3* lists the following punishable acts: (a) Genocide; (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide; (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide; (d) Attempt to commit genocide; (e) Complicity in genocide; and *Article 4* states, "Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3 shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals;" and

WHEREAS, in an April 1, 2022 letter to the Interior Secretary transmitting the "first Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report," the Interior Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs wrote: "This report confirms that the United States directly targeted American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children in the pursuit of a policy of cultural assimilation that coincided with Indian territorial dispossession. It identifies the Federal Indian boarding schools that were used as a means for these ends, along with at least 53 burial sites for children across this system—with more site discoveries and data expected as we continue our research....The report highlights some of the conditions these children endured at these schools and raises important questions about the short-term and long-term consequences of the Federal Indian boarding school system on Indian Tribes, Alaska Natives, and the Native Hawaiian Community. I am recommending further investigation to examine those consequences;" and

WHEREAS, in the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act (HR5444/S2907), Congress will direct the Commission to examine the location of children who were killed and died while under the government's care, documenting ongoing impacts from boarding schools, locating church and government records, holding culturally-appropriate public hearings to collect testimony from survivors and descendants, gathering institutional knowledge from subject matter experts, sharing findings publicly, and providing a final report with a list of recommendations for justice and healing; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, Volume 1, by Department of Interior (May 2022) acknowledges over 408 Federal Indian boarding schools from 1801 to 1969 in over 37 states with the intent to colonize by 1) death of families; 2) Taking land; 3) Removing Natives from hunting/fishing territories; 4) Eradicate tradition, religion, culture and teachings. This report does not address the 1,000 other Federal and non-Federal institutions, including Indian day schools, sanitariums, asylums, orphanages, and stand-alone dormitories; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians has, in Resolution ATL-14-016 and PHX-16-063, previously called for a beginning to the process of healing from the historical and intergenerational traumas brought on by the Boarding School policies and practices, and the harms they caused and are causing our people, families, communities, Nations, the United States, and the various Churches, how meaningful healing paradigms can work to turn back the ongoing effects of historical and intergenerational trauma that continue to plague our peoples, and that the US must acknowledge its role; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI entreats U.S. President Joseph R. Biden to issue a United States Proclamation declaring that the federal government committed genocide against Native Children of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Peoples, and used “civilization” and “education” goals, boarding school policies and practices to justify and attempt to achieve deculturalization, detribalization, and dispossession of land; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI entreats U.S. President Joseph R. Biden to direct all federal agencies to work with Tribal Nations, families, organizations, survivors, and descendants to develop a plan for full federal accountability, atonement, and redress, including memorializing the graves and cemeteries, marked or unmarked, as hallowed ground in the national interest of respect and remembrance; and

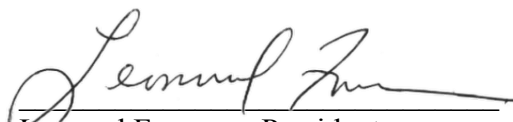
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI urges the continued investigation of the federal and church boarding school systems within the Department of Interior, as well as within the Department of Defense and all federal agencies with historic and/or present jurisdiction regarding Native children of Native peoples in the United States; and

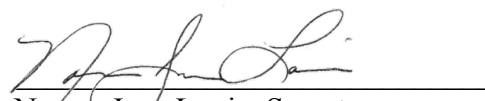
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI urges the enactment of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, with the addition of subpoena power, in order to obtain documents and records that may exist only in non-federal files; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that ATNI stands by and supports the Tribal Nations, families, organizations, survivors, and descendants in their urgent and continuing calls for the federal agencies to appreciate, recognize, and work with their historical knowledge, oral history, documents, research, and experience.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2022 Mid Year Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at the Silver Reef Casino Resort, Ferndale, Washington, on May 16-19, 2022, with a quorum present.


Leonard Forsman, President


Norma Jean Louie, Secretary