



Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

12th Session, Geneva | July 15-19, 2019

Agenda Item 8: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including Study on Recognition, reparation and reconciliation.

STATEMENT by the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, Presented by the Executive Director, Christine Diindiisi McCleave, Turtle Mountain Ojibwe

Thank you Madame Chair and congratulations on your new appointment. Diinoway Maginiidook.

Respectful greetings to all delegations and relations here today. Diindiisi indizhinikaaz, Anishinaabe iikwe.

The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition congratulates you on the excellent draft report on the “Efforts to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Recognition, Reparation, and Reconciliation.” We believe this report will be an invaluable tool for indigenous peoples, states, and NGOs to implement the Declaration.

We would like to inform the EMRIP of our efforts towards reparation and reconciliation in the United States regarding the ongoing intergenerational impacts and effects of the U.S. Indian Boarding School Policies, which include **intergenerational trauma, loss of language and culture, cycles of imprisonment, disproportionate levels of Indigenous children in state custody through the child welfare system, ongoing violence in the form of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and children who went missing while in government boarding schools.** The Boarding School Healing Coalition was formed in 2012 to address these ongoing impacts in hopes of forming a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the United States.

In May 2019, a coalition led by our organization filed a submission with the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances on the unanswered questions about the many Indigenous children who never returned home after forced removal by the U.S. to Boarding Schools, including those in the many unmarked graves at former Boarding School sites.

This is an ongoing human rights violation and crime against humanity under international law and a violation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The United States has never acknowledged, made reparations, or reconciled with indigenous peoples for its Indian Boarding School Policy. To date, survivors and descendants of boarding schools have not had access to justice for harms inflicted or access to the truth and information about relatives who died or went missing at these assimilative boarding schools.

While the EMRIP's report lists the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, more detail is needed on formation of the commission as the result of a class-action lawsuit for Residential School abuses, including the importance of court-ordered records being brought forth under the commission, and the highly effective 94 Calls to Action towards reconciliation in Canada.

In the U.S, in 2016, we filed a Freedom of Information Act request for boarding school information and records, but the U.S. closed the request without notifying us. We continue to work independently to locate and analyze boarding school events and impacts. We have identified 357 federal-run Indian boarding schools, but have only found 61 schools' records in federal archives. Those records can only be accessed up to 1944 due to domestic privacy laws. There have also been major obstacles to accessing church archive records of federally-funded, church-run boarding schools, hindering our access to justice and right to the truth.

The U.S. needs to make these records available as part of a truth and reconciliation process that is long overdue. Therefore, we **respectfully request the EMRIP address the long-term impacts and lack of redress regarding assimilative boarding schools in the U.S. and engage supportively with the UN Working Group on Involuntary Disappearances on our filing.**

Chi miigwich. Thank you.