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Permanent Forum III
May 11, 2004

Mandated Area: Education
Boarding School Healing Project (U.S.)



Contact:

Boarding School Healing Project, Andrea Smith, 3700 Haven Hall, University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI 48109, 734-231-1845, tsalagi@umich.edu

Recommendation:

The Boarding School Healing Project proposes that the Permanent Forum restate its commitment to Recommendation 81 from the 2nd Permanent Forum which calls for a study of genocidal and ethnocidal practices perpetrated on indigenous peoples, but that it redirect its recommendation to the UN Human Rights Commission. We further recommend that the genocidal policies of mandatory boarding/residential attendance be specifically named within the scope of this study. Finally, we recommend that a report on the implementation of this recommendation be issued by the Permanent Forum next year.

Rationale:

Recommendation 81 calls on the Working Group on Indigenous Populations to undertake a study of genocidal and ethnocidal practices perpetrated on indigenous peoples, including sterilization abuse, medical experimentation programs, nuclear testing, etc. However, the Working Group did not take up this recommendation and has not undertaken a study in several years. Therefore, we recommend that the Human Rights Commission be given the charge of appointing an appropriate Rapporteur to undertake this study.

As preliminary studies indicate, violence against Native women in States (such as the U.S. and Canada) that have histories of residential/boarding school policies, can largely be attributed to these same policies. The history of U.S. boarding school policies illustrates this larger trend. During the 19th century and into the 20th century, American Indian children were forcibly abducted from their homes to attend Christian boarding schools as a matter of state policy. The stated rationale of the policy was to "save the child; kill the Indian." Attendance at these boarding schools was mandatory, and children were forcibly taken from their homes for the majority of the year. Sexual/physical/emotional violence was rampant; and the U.S. government took virtually no measures to address sexual abuse in government-run schools until the late 1980s. Because Native children received no nurturing parenting in these schools, it became difficult for them to provide nurturing parenting to their children. As a result, Native peoples can generally trace the beginnings of gender violence and child abuse to the generation that first attended boarding school.

The legacies of child abuse and violence against women in the U.S. and similar States can be largely attributed to these boarding school policies. Thus, we find it disturbing that in last year's recommendations from the Permanent Forum which focused on indigenous children, there is no mention at all made of boarding school policies. We hope that there will not be a similar omission this year. Otherwise, the Permanent Forum cannot in good conscience say that it has a commitment to ending violence against indigenous women if it neglects to mention one of the great contributing causes of this violence. Consequently, we hold that the proposed study on genocidal/ethnocidal practices should include boarding/residential school policies.