SENATE RESOLUTION

8661

By Senators Stanford, Billig, Conway, Das, Dhingra, Fortunato, Hasegawa, Keiser, Kuderer, Liias, Lovelett, Nobles, Pedersen, Robinson, Saldaña, Trudeau, Van De Wege, and Wellman

WHEREAS, The United States, at the urging of and in support of many Christian churches of that time, adopted the Indian Civilization Fund Act on March 3, 1819, to provide financial support for church run schools to "civilize" Native American children through an education program intended to eradicate Native American culture; and

WHEREAS, In 1869, the United States, in concert with and the urging of several denominations of the Christian Church, adopted the Indian Boarding School Policy or "Peace Policy" for the removal and reprogramming of Native American children to ensure the systematic destruction of indigenous cultures and communities; and

WHEREAS, The Indian Boarding School Policy was a deliberate policy of cultural genocide, founded on the assimilationist directive to "Kill the Indian and save the man"; and

WHEREAS, Between 1869 and the 1960s, Native American children were removed from their homes and families, often involuntarily, and placed in Boarding Schools far from their homes which were funded by the federal government and operated by the federal government and churches, where children were punished for speaking their native language, banned from acting in any way that might be seen as representing traditional or cultural practices, shorn of their hair, stripped of traditional clothing and all things and behaviors reflective of their native culture, and shamed for being Native American; and

WHEREAS, The prevailing attitudes of the time allowed for the neglect and abuse of children who were overseen but not parented, who were bullied and assaulted not only by the adults but also by older children under the modeling and instruction of the caretakers and staff, and who were neglected as a whole through the denial of adequate food and medical care; and

WHEREAS, These children observed and suffered physical, emotional, cultural, spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse, and punishment by physical restraints, beatings, and isolation in inhospitable surroundings, and many children died as a direct result of this malfeasance and mistreatment; and

WHEREAS, There were more than 350 Indian Boarding schools across the United States, located within 30 States, which included 14 Indian Boarding schools in Washington state; and

WHEREAS, These children, their children, and now their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, bear the burden of the legacy of the boarding schools and the federal policy that established and sustained those schools, where the children suffered trauma that has gone unrecognized and unresolved, and has been passed onto each subsequent generation; and

WHEREAS, This historical and inter-generational trauma continues to devastate, undermine, and negatively impact Native American individuals, families, and communities; and

WHEREAS, The United States has not offered a meaningful acknowledgment of responsibility or offered to provide any redress for the generations of harm caused by the deliberate imposition of the policy of cultural genocide on the Native American children, families, communities, tribes, Pueblos, or Alaskan Villages;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Senate pause to acknowledge the two hundred third anniversary of the signing of the Indian Civilization Fund Act; to recognize and remember the surviving children of Indian Boarding Schools, their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and to honor their resiliency and determination to endure such atrocities.