

Legislation Text

File #: Res 31621, **Version:** 1

CITY OF SEATTLE RESOLUTION _____

A RESOLUTION relating to the acknowledgment of the various harms and ongoing historical and inter-generational traumas impacting American Indian, First Nations, and Alaskan Natives for the forcible removal of Indian children and subsequent abuse and neglect resulting from the United States' American Indian Boarding School Policy during the 19th & 20th Centuries; supporting American Indian and Alaskan Native communities' efforts in calling on the United States Congress to commission a study and report on the United States' responsibility and role in adopting and implementing an American Indian Boarding School Policy; and committing to work with the local American Indian and Alaskan Natives in efforts of reconciliation in addressing the impacts of historical trauma, language and cultural loss, and alleged genocide.

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle recognizes that Seattle is built upon the homelands and villages of the Indigenous Peoples of the region; and

WHEREAS, In Resolution 31420 the City of Seattle was declared to be a Human Rights City on December 10, 2012 committing itself to protect, respect, and fulfill the full range of inherent human rights for all as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous other international human rights treaties; and

WHEREAS, on October 6, 2014 the City of Seattle passed Resolution 31538, the Indigenous Peoples' Day resolution, to celebrate the thriving cultures and values of Indigenous Peoples, and promote the well-being of Seattle's Native American, Alaskan Native, and other American Indigenous Peoples; and

WHEREAS, in 2013 the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, representing 59 tribes from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Northern California, Western Montana, and Alaska, passed Resolution 13-32 to "support the enactment of a bill by the United States Congress to create a Commission on American Indian Boarding School Policy"; and

WHEREAS, the United States, at the urging of and in support of Christian missionaries of that time, adopted the Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819 to provide financial support for church run schools to “civilize” Native American children through an education program that promoted the eradication of Native American culture, and later adopted a Boarding School Policy that also promoted the eradication of Native American culture and language; and

WHEREAS, between 1869 and the 1960s at least 100,000 Native American children were removed from their homes and families, often involuntarily, and placed in faraway boarding schools that were funded and operated by the federal government and missionaries, where according to the Meriam Report: The Problem of Indian Administration, those children were: shamed for being Native American; punished for speaking their tribal language; banned from engaging in any traditional, spiritual, or cultural tribal practices; shorn of long hair and stripped of traditional clothing; and severely neglected, subjected to harsh discipline and corporal punishment, and physically, sexually, and mentally abused; and

WHEREAS, according to the Meriam Report: The Problem of Indian Administration, these prevailing practices involved Native American children who: were overseen but not parented; were bullied and assaulted not only by adults but also by older children under the modeling and instruction of the school caretakers and staff; witnessed other children suffer physical, sexual, and mental abuse, including punishment by physical restraints, beatings, and isolation in inhospitable surroundings such as unlighted and unventilated cellars and outbuildings designed as “jails”; and

WHEREAS, Article II(e) of the United Nations definition of genocide, as defined in international law in the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, states “*Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group*” with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group is an act of genocide; and

WHEREAS, there are many who consider the actions taken under the Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819 and the American Indian Boarding School Policy to be acts of genocide; and

WHEREAS, according to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger report, only 20 of the over 300 distinct Native American, Alaskan Native, and other American Indigenous Peoples' languages are estimated to survive by 2050, with the majority being extinguished and lost particularly as a result of the United States' American Indian Boarding School Policy, which included a prohibition against Native children speaking their tribal languages; and

WHEREAS, according to Assimilation through Education: Indian Boarding Schools in the Pacific Northwest, Native American children who were indigenous to the Pacific Northwest and lands known today as Seattle were forcibly removed from their homes and families and transported to regional boarding schools, including Tulalip Boarding School, Cushman Boarding School (later Cushman Hospital), and Chemawa Boarding School, where they were forced to speak English and otherwise treated inhumanely as set forth above, all of which affects Indigenous Peoples in the greater Seattle area and Pacific Northwest in profound ways to this day; and

WHEREAS, according to Boarding School: Historical Trauma among Alaska's Native People, these Native American children, their children, and now their grandchildren and great-grandchildren have become the legacy of the United States Indian boarding schools and the federal policy that established and sustained those schools, and the trauma these Native American children suffered has gone unrecognized and unresolved and has instead passed onto each subsequent generation, and the resulting historical and intergenerational trauma pervades, undermines and devastates Native American individuals, families, and communities to this day; and

WHEREAS, the United States never has offered a meaningful apology, or offered to provide any redress to, Native American, Alaskan Native and other American Indigenous Peoples for the generations of harm caused by United States Indian boarding schools and the federal policy that established and sustained those schools; and

WHEREAS, in November 1987, and reiterated in November 1997, the Bishops and Denominational Executives from churches in the Pacific Northwest issued *A Public Declaration to the Tribal Councils and Traditional Spiritual Leaders of the Indian and Eskimo Peoples of the Pacific Northwest* wherein it issued "...a formal apology on behalf of our churches for their long-standing participation in the destruction of traditional Native American spiritual practices," while offering their "commitment to support you in the righting of previous wrongs;" and

WHEREAS, the facts and history about the pervasive and continuing harm and trauma caused by the United States' American Indian Boarding School Policy are poorly understood by the American public, the United States Congress, the United States Executive Branch; and

WHEREAS, in order to begin a healing process to address the harm and trauma suffered by Native American, Alaskan Native, and other American Indigenous Peoples as a result of the United States' American Indian Boarding School Policy, a comprehensive national study of the Policy and its impacts is needed, which should include documentation of the events that took place at each of the boarding schools; the fate of the Native students; the gathering of testimony from those who attended the schools; and recommendations to Congress for truth, healing, reconciliation, redress, and justice;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THE MAYOR

CONCURRING, THAT:

Section 1. The City of Seattle, in an effort to promote truth, healing, reconciliation, redress, and justice, acknowledges the various harms, claimed acts of genocide, and ongoing historical and inter-generational trauma to Native American, Alaskan Native and other American Indigenous Peoples resulting from the United States' American Indian Boarding School Policy.

Section 2. The City of Seattle strongly encourages the Seattle Public Schools to include both the history of the Boarding School era and the teaching of Native American, Alaskan Native, and other American

Indigenous Peoples' languages in school curriculum.

Section 3. The City of Seattle encourages the United States Congress and United States Executive Branch to accept responsibility for the United States' American Indian Boarding School Policy and its various harms and ongoing historical and inter-generational trauma to Native American, Alaskan Native, and other American Indigenous Peoples, and to take meaningful steps to promote truth and healing, and to provide and fund reconciliation, redress, and justice for those harms.

Section 4. The City of Seattle supports the enactment by the United States Congress of legislation to conduct a comprehensive study and report on the United States American Indian Boarding School Policy and to conduct hearings on boarding school abuses and their continuing impacts on Native American, Alaskan Native, and other American Indigenous Peoples, all of which is intended to promote truth and healing and to provide and fund reconciliation, redress, and justice. The study and report should include a plan and design to gather information and take recommendations from experts; to consult with and take recommendations from affected Native American, Alaskan Native, and other Indigenous Peoples, especially to understand and address the impacts historical and inter-generational trauma; to support Native American, Alaskan Native, and other American Indigenous Peoples' language revitalization efforts; to raise public awareness and provide public education about federal boarding school practices and their various harms and ongoing effects; and to recommend and support modes of truth, healing, reconciliation, redress, and justice in ways that are consistent with the traditions, practices, and cultures of Native American, Alaskan Native, and other American Indigenous Peoples.

Adopted by the City Council the ____ day of _____, 2015, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of _____, 2015.

President _____ of the City Council

The Mayor concurred the ____ day of _____, 2015.

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Filed by me this ____ day of _____, 2015.

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)