

Amendment - 1st Reading-white - Requested by: Susan Webber - (S) Education and Cultural Resources

68th Legislature - 2023

Drafter: Pad McCracken, 406-444-3595

SJ0006.001.001

1 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 6
2 INTRODUCED BY S. WEBBER, M. WEATHERWAX, J. WINDY BOY, T. RUNNING WOLF, F. SMITH, M. FOX
3
4 A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF
5 MONTANA RECOGNIZING THE TRAUMA INFLICTED BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR
6 MORE THAN A CENTURY IN FORCIBLY REMOVING AMERICAN INDIAN CHILDREN FROM THEIR
7 FAMILIES AND TRIBES AND SENDING THEM TO BOARDING SCHOOLS AND EXPRESSING A DESIRE
8 THAT A NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE BE DESIGNATED FOR THE AMERICAN INDIAN CHILDREN
9 WHO DIED WHILE ATTENDING A UNITED STATES INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL AND RECOGNIZING,
10 HONORING, AND SUPPORTING THE SURVIVORS OF INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS, THEIR FAMILIES,
11 AND COMMUNITIES.

12
13 WHEREAS, over 200 years ago, the act entitled “An Act making provision for the civilization of the
14 Indian tribes adjoining the frontier settlements”, approved March 3, 1819 (3 Stat. 516, chapter 85), commonly
15 known as the “Civilization Fund Act”, was enacted and ushered in devastating policies and practices designed
16 to assimilate American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children by removing children from their
17 families and Native communities throughout the United States; and

18 WHEREAS, that Act intended to resolve what was commonly referred to in the United States as the
19 “Indian problem” and provided for the unjust belief of many that Native people needed to be “civilized” and that
20 education would be the appropriate vehicle to enact assimilationist policies on Native American people; and

21 WHEREAS, numerous church- and government-operated boarding schools were established on and
22 off Indian territories and homelands to house and educate numerous Native American children through policies
23 and practices that sought to eliminate the cultural identity of Native children and assimilate them into
24 mainstream American society; and

25 WHEREAS, many parents of boarding school children were forbidden to contact or visit their children,
26 compounding the problem of isolation that negatively impacted and continues to impact the lives of many
27 Native children, families, and communities; and

28 WHEREAS, an unidentified number of Native children died at Indian boarding schools due to abuse,

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1 neglect, malnourishment, or disease, and many of those children were buried far from their homes in unmarked
2 graves or under tombstones that misidentified or ascribed to them Anglicized names; and

3 WHEREAS, many of the parents of children who died at Indian boarding schools were never informed
4 of the fate of their children; and

5 WHEREAS, many survivors of Indian boarding schools and families of children who attended those
6 schools have recounted details of the physical, sexual, and psychological abuse that countless Native
7 American children endured while attending the schools; and

8 WHEREAS, the federal policy of Indian assimilation and education has proven to be a disastrous failure
9 and a national tragedy; and

10 WHEREAS, many American Indian and Alaska Native people suffer from intergenerational trauma as a
11 result of policies and practices of Indian boarding schools that alienated many children from their families,
12 traditional cultures, languages, and religions, and deprived those children of their true identities and heritage;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, the impact-legacy of this shameful period in United States-our country's history still affects
15 the lives of many Native American people today with many Native American people still suffering from and
16 trying to comprehend and cope with direct trauma, including impacts on health and well-being, and the
17 intergenerational trauma that resulted from losing connection to family, culture, language, religion, and heritage;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, significant research shows that adverse childhood experiences, such as the experiences
20 of many Native American children who attended Indian boarding schools and the descendants of those
21 children, can cause numerous negative health outcomes, increase suicide rates, and other harmful outcomes
22 throughout life; and

23 WHEREAS, recognition that healing and care for the mind, body, and spirit is essential to overcoming
24 the dark shadows of United States history of federal Indian assimilationist policies and practices that were
25 carried out by the federal government through Indian boarding schools, and acknowledging the lived
26 experiences of the Native American children and families who endured and continue to endure the trauma and
27 grief associated with Indian boarding schools.

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1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
2 THE STATE OF MONTANA:

3 That the 68th Legislature of the State of Montana:

4 (1) recognizes, honors, and supports the survivors, families, and communities of children who
5 attended Indian boarding schools and encourages the people of Montana to:

6 (a) support and recognize the grief, pain, and hardship many Native American people suffered and
7 still endure as a result of the assimilationist policies and practices carried out by the United States through
8 Indian boarding school policies;

9 (b) honor the legacy of and remember those who were lost or harmed by federal assimilation
10 policies and practices; and

11 (c) appreciate the resilience of the survivors and their families; and

12 (2) urges the United States Congress to designate a national day of remembrance for the Native
13 American children who died while attending a United States Indian boarding school.

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send a copy of this resolution to the Speaker
15 of the United States House of Representatives, to the Majority and Minority Leaders of the United States House
16 of Representatives and the United States Senate, to each member of the Montana Congressional Delegation,
17 and to the tribal governments of each of the federally recognized Indian tribes in Montana.

18 - END -