

PRESS RELEASE: President Biden Formally Apologizes for Federal Government Involvement in Indian Boarding Schools

Category: Policy Blog, Press Release
written by NCUIH | October 29, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gila River Indian Reservation, Arizona (October 28, 2024) – President Joe Biden delivered a historic formal apology on behalf of the federal government for its 150-year policy of forcibly placing Native children in Indian Boarding Schools.

“The Federal Indian Boarding School policy and the pain it has caused will always be a significant mark of shame, a blot on American history,” said President Biden in historic remarks. “It’s a sin on our [Nation’s] soul.”



Picture source: <https://x.com/WhiteHouse/status/1849949471888519514/photo/1>

“For 150 years, the government attempted to wipe out our Native cultures by removing and relocating thousands of Native children to boarding schools. The President’s historic apology is a painful reminder of this country’s history and our community’s immense resilience,” said Francys Crevier, J.D. (Algonquin), CEO of NCUIH. “Congress needs to act now and pass the *Truth and*

Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools Act, and invest in Indian Country, so we can learn from our past and make sure these wrongs are never repeated.”

President Biden’s apology follows the Department of Interior’s (DOI) [investigative report](#), which confirms that at least 973 American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian [children died](#) while attending federally operated or supported schools and identifies at least 74 marked and unmarked burial sites at 65 different school grounds. It estimates that the U.S. government appropriated more than \$23.3 billion between 1971 and 1969 for the federal Indian boarding school system and other similar institutions and associated [assimilation policies](#) (dollars adjusted for inflation based on Fiscal Year 2023).

This act of recognition can foster healing and reconciliation, which are crucial for improving mental and physical health. By validating the experiences of Indigenous peoples and addressing the traumas associated with these institutions, the apology may encourage increased access to health care resources, culturally competent care, and a greater focus on mental health support. Ultimately, such measures can help bridge the gap in health disparities and promote overall well-being within these communities.

NCUIH is particularly grateful to the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) for its unrelenting leadership in securing the DOI’s report and introducing critical legislation in Congress.

Next Steps

Congress must swiftly pass the *Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act* ([S. 2907/H.R. 5444](#)).

About NCUIH

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) is a national representative advocating for the 41 Urban Indian Organizations contracting with the Indian Health Service under the *Indian Health Care Improvement Act*. NCUIH is devoted to the support and development of quality, accessible, and culturally competent health and public health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives living in urban areas.

NCUIH respects and supports Tribal sovereignty and the unique government-to-government relationship between our Tribal Nations and the United States. NCUIH works to support those federal laws, policies, and procedures that respect and uplift Tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government relationship. NCUIH does not support any federal law, policy, or procedure that infringes upon or in any way diminishes Tribal sovereignty or the government-to-government relationship.

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