

Congressional Statement, May 2022

My name is Linda Eben-Jones, I am a 74-year-old Paiute elder and I am an alumna of the Stewart Indian Boarding School in Carson City, Nevada. I attended Stewart from 1963 to 1966 and graduated with a high school diploma.

I am a third-generation alumni of Stewart; my father graduated in 1938 and my mother in 1941. My grandmother was forced to attend SIS where her name was found on a student register in 1918.

My father was kidnapped and taken to SIS during the roundup of students in 1930 with a couple of boys playing on the road in Fort Bidwell, California. He never talked about his experiences at Stewart to our family.

My mother shared some of her experiences of working in the bakery and sewing. She never shared how she arrived at the school or of her other experiences. My aunt attended Stewart and graduated in 1951. I know nothing of her experiences either.

Children who attended Stewart in 1890 through the 1940's were treated the worst, the conditions of being kidnapped and forced into the Indian boarding school were already traumatic. They also endured a rigid militaristic style schedule and drills, beatings for speaking their language, forced to attend church, identity subjugation, starvation, isolation, poor medical care, poor living

conditions, assaults, and sexual abuse. Many children experienced intergenerational trauma due to these experiences. They suffered from these abuses, and this caused low self-esteem, shame, guilt and many addictive behaviors in their lives and their families lives.

When I left Stewart I heard many stories about the poor education, conditions and experiences of the boarding school that I started to talk to former students, staff and families of what we went through. I did not realize what my family and I had been through, or about the assimilation and cultural genocide of our people, until I grew older and started reading books on the boarding school and American Indian history. At first, it was about the history of Indigenous people, from the Indian Civilization Act, the Indian Removal Act and then the Allotment Act of 1930 that I realized I was a product of this hidden part of American history. I wanted to know more.

I started documenting and recording alumni stories of elders who shared their sad stories. I noticed that many of the stories from the first boarding school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania to Stewart were so similar and shocking. It is heart breaking to know so many of our Indigenous people had to go through these horrific experiences throughout the 400+ schools in the United States and Canada.

A Paiute lady shared her story of being at Stewart in 1950 and she was taken to Stewart, where she was scrubbed with kerosene, had her hair cut, and issued a number and a flour sack dress to wear. She was severely mistreated as a mixed-race child.

A Washoe boy was taken to Stewart and stated they beat the Indian out of him, countless beatings for years for speaking his language. They were given a number like in prison. They were treated like animals.

Elders are still hesitant to share their stories for fear of retribution still to this day. Telling their stories filled with trauma and passing it on to their families is unbearable to think of. Having this story finally come into the light is the only way for Native people to start the healing. Having this story in the education systems as a part of our American history will be a start. I hope the congressional inquiries will bring investigations and tell the truth about the horrors of the Indian boarding schools in the United States.

Linda Eben Jones

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]