

Dear US Government,

I am an Unangax woman from the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands of Alaska. I am enrolled in the Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove, a federally recognized tribe. I am writing to encourage you to support HR 5444 and S.2907.

My mother attended BIA sponsored Mt. Edgecumbe boarding school, one thousand miles away from her home, in Sitka, Alaska. When she arrived at age 14, she spoke English, Aleut, Russian, and Norwegian. When she graduated, she only spoke English, although she understood the other languages. I only speak English, and I struggle to learn Unangam Tunuu (Aleut language). There wasn't anything like culture camp when I grew up, so I missed out on learning my culture as it slept through two generations before waking in my sons' childhood. My mom then taught at Wrangell Institute when Mr. LaBelle was a child. She never spoke of the atrocities there. Mr. LaBelle has taught me much about my mother's anxieties.

Last summer, I went to Carlisle Indian Industrial School's cemetery to bring home my great aunt who died there at age 17. She was stolen by Methodist Missionaries, John and Mary Tuck, along with her sister from St. Paul Island. They were 8 and 10 years old. Irene died at the US Government sponsored Jesse Lee Home on Unalaska in 1900. Sophia was sent to Carlisle, 4000 miles away, in 1901. Most of her time was spent in the 'outings' program working as a domestic servant, suffering abuse and neglect. She became sick on one of these outings and died upon her return to Carlisle.

I entered a PhD program in Native American Studies at UC Davis with a Designated Emphasis in Human Rights. That emphasis is the framework I use to find and, if possible, return our children who died in US Government sponsored boarding Schools. Sophia was the first Alaskan to come home. I realize how fortunate we were to have her in a marked grave. There are 13 more Alaska Native of the 180 children in Carlisle's cemetery. There are over 200 more children in BIA's Chemawa, OR cemetery. This is only two of the 408 known schools, all with children's cemeteries, yet they account for over 400 children. The math will shock the Non-Native world. This is the tip of the iceberg and something all Native people have known about for generations.

Please help bring justice and closure to our people by supporting HR 5444 and S.2907. Help us bring our children home. Thank you to the Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States for their important work.

Qagaalakux [many thanks].

Sincerely,

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