

May 13, 2022.

Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples |
of the United States of America
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Honorable Subcommittee:

Please receive the present letter regarding the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act” (HR 5444/S.2907) in support of your effort to investigate ongoing effects of the Indian Boarding School policies and their impact on surviving descendants of students. The aim of this letter is to contribute to the collective effort in countering the chronological, schematized erasure seemingly concretized within the effective use of strong institutions in the creation and construction of the United States of America.

My late mother, Annie Sam Tsinagini, was a boarding school student at Brigham City Intermountain Indian School in Utah from 1951 through 1955, and in 1957. She was born at home in the Nazlini Canyon area and her recorded date of birth is April 24, 1939. She and at least three of her siblings were removed from their home by BIA reservation personnel and sent to various institutions as directed by administrators within the Bureau of Indian Affairs in and surrounding the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation.

Throughout my upbringing, my mother recanted several times that she had given birth as a teenager and that the baby was “half-white”. It was not a conversation that she had with us often, but in her preparations to embark upon a bout of extreme drinking, she purposefully unraveled emotionally to my sister and I on occasion. In these times, she would describe moments from her past that she considered to be struggles in her life that we needed to know.

From her Brigham City Intermountain Indian School student record, we have been able to deduce that this child was most likely born between 1956 and 1957 given that photos for those years are omitted from the student record. The cover letter of the record specifies 1957 as an enrollment year although there are no other mentions of the year 1957 in the record. We have had the copy of my mother’s student file since 2001 and according to the records within, it does not appear that my mother formally graduated from Brigham City Intermountain Indian School.

One record that we review often is the Home Economics Record in the file, which reads as follows:

Tommaney (Registrar) Information Pertaining to Student
Home Economics Girls’ Guidance File.
Prevocational Placement Office.
Student Work and Character Report.
Class of 1957

Date of Visit: December 4, 1956.
Employer: Mrs. S. L. Moskowitz – 901 North Main.
Type of Employment: General Housework.

School Representative

Making Contact: Cherril Nelson.

1. **Attitude and Behavior:** Sullen -non-cooperative;
2. **Adjustment Socially:** Poor;
3. **Language Development:** Didn't have much to say;
4. **Quality and Quality of Work:** Slow, below average in quality of work;
5. **Is this student still in your employ?** No.
If not, please state reason: I quickly exchanged Annie for Nellie Brady;
6. **General Comments: (Use of leisure time, finances, habits, housekeeping ability, ability to take corrective criticism, punctuality, initiative, skills needed or developed, problems, etc.):** I did not have the opportunity to observe Annie for a sufficient period of time to make an intelligent comment on the items specified.
Etta Moskowitz

Signed: Cherril H Nelson

With this information from my mother's boarding school record, we deduced that she was most likely pregnant with her first child as of the date of this report, December 4, 1956. Since there aren't any enrollments photos or records available in the file for academic year 1956 through 1957, it would explain why there isn't any data in the file for these/this academic year(s). Who is this child?

Just this simple forensic exercise in document analysis was able to yield this information for scrutiny. Imagine the depth of facts we would be able to extract with access to ALL of the boarding school records in the history of the nation.

Most recently, on January 8, 2022, my dear maternal uncle and mother's younger brother, Alfred Sam, died from cancer in Providence Horizon House residential nursing facility in Anchorage, Alaska. Since April 2021, he gradually transitioned from living independently in his own home to an assisted living arrangement at Providence Horizon House. In that time, I spoke with various service providers in Anchorage and learned that he had been admitted into Providence Horizon House under the name "Yulin Bahnoff".

When we approached Alaska Vital Records the following week to request a copy of his death certificate, a series of barriers presented themselves. First, Alaska Vital Records will issue a copy of a death certificate only to a spouse, child or sibling. Second, Navajo Nation Vital Records would not request the record on our behalf because we cannot produce a proof that Alfred Sam and Yulin Banhoff are the same person. Finally, as a result of our inability to prove that Alfred Sam is deceased, we are unable to put forth any request to aggregate his boarding school records with those of my mother.

Perhaps the "Truth and Reconciliation" procedures will help Indians gain proper access to records so that we can properly document our family ties. Personally, I accept the duty and responsibility to be certain that accurate records are in place with our office in Chinle. This way, I can do my part while I am alive to be sure that bureaucratic overcomplications do not result in erasure of our family lineage as we move into the mid-21st century. Please use the "Truth and Reconciliation" procedures to help Indians obtain access to records including, but not limited to Boarding School Records.

Kindly receive this expression of thanks to the Natural Resources Subcommittee for the Indigenous People of the United States of America.

Respectfully Yours,

Monica Tsinagini
Navajo Nation