

To: Whom it may concern
From: John H. Yazzie
Subject: Federal Boarding School Initiative

My name is John H. Yazzie, I am 60 years old and a member of the Navajo Nation. I attended Keams Canyon Boarding School (KCBS) Keams Canyon Az. On the Hopi Reservation from 1967-1976. I also attend Snowflake Union High (SUHS) School 1976-1978, while attending (SUHS) I stayed at the Snowflake Government Dormitory.

My 7 siblings also attended KCBS combine years 1964 – 1986. / My mother attended Sherman Indian School during the 40's 50's Riverside Ca. / My great Uncle attended Valentine Indian School in 20's-30's Valentine Az.

I support H.R.5444 The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

My personal experience at the KCBS, was very regimental and disciplinary. When I first arrived at the Boarding School, I was given a number and it was written on my hand, my first # was 80. our # was what we answered to roll call. Just like how the Nazis keep track of the Jews in this manner.

Our dormitory was 2 stories and we had 1 staff member for each floor looking over anywhere from 50-100 students. We were confine to the Dormitory 24/7 we were not allowed no open spaces.

Our day started at 5 am with physical training and cleaning our assign part of the dorm. Formation and marching and drills were constant.

Physical, emotional, and mental punishment by Dorm staffs, and Teachers was a constant.

Example: At 8 years old I was put in isolation for 27 days in a 12x14 room because the staff thought I had the flu and that was their way to prevent a flu outbreak among the students. Another incident during my 8th grade year, we were walking back from church and near the dorm I heard a loud cry, it was one of the dorm staff lifting my younger brother off the ground by his ears my brothers and I had to push the staff to let go. The staff member had to work intoxicated. No disciplinary action taken against him.

I have heard of and witnessed many physical abuses daily. Sometimes Teachers were allowed to take students home, even when some had questionable reputations with students.

Religion was assigned to us and we were never allowed tribal ceremonies. There is so much to elaborate on about my experience.

There was a burial site there near the school, I am not-to-sure who are buried there. I never visited the location.

KCBS sat in a narrow Canyon ¼ mile wide that was our Prison walls, it is what we woke up too every morning "200-foot stone wall". At night I would get up and look up into the sky, between the canyon walls and the ceiling of the building there a small opening I could see the stars. I would ask myself "why I'm I here?"

I had buried these dark times deep within my soul not to ever revisit it again It brings on a lot of anger and hate in me. After over 50 years I still hear the little ones crying for their parents and to go home.

On behalf of all who have suffered and survived the Boarding School era I hope this is healing beginning to grow, not just talk and promises. It took a lot for me to travel back down this road.

I thank the Natural Resource Subcommittee and wish you the best in your efforts and dedication to right the wrong in this historical genocide of our cultural.

This letter is dedicated to my mother who survived the Boarding School, and never allowed the chance to heal or speak of her experience. Love you mom!

Thanks, John

John H. Yazzie

