

May 9, 2022

The House Natural Resource Committee

HNRCDocs@mail.house.gov

Dear Committee Members,

I am of American European descent growing up and residing in the US in a number of states. I attended Central High School in Phoenix Arizona from 1978-1982. My 40th reunion is this fall. Central Highschool is on the main road of Phoenix Arizona and is part of a four high school complex all located next to each other. To the north of this large public high school were two private pay catholic high schools, one for boys and one for girls. To the south of Central High was the Indian School which is now torn down and a public park. I am personally so very happy to see that a Truth and Healing Commission is being considered for our country and am in full support of HR 5444. Please pass this bill!

My personal story is one of bewilderment and confusion because of a lack of information to questions some of us had as teenagers and the vague responses we received. I did not understand why some indigenous kids were required to leave their homes and live away from family during their teenage years. A few indigenous students attended our quite diverse inner city high school but lived in the Phoenix area and it was great to get to learn from them and work with them as well as with students from many other cultures in our high school. When we asked about the Indian School, we were told "Indians" on the rural reservations had to go to boarding schools because there weren't enough teens on the reservation to have a high school near their homes or that their families weren't able to care for them. This made no sense to me given that many small towns not on reservations in Arizona bused teens to high schools near their homes and kids with problem families could have a foster parent in my high school. It seemed unfair that only indigenous students had to live away from home while other students could take a bus or have a new family. We tried to meet with the students at Indian School and were told that this was not possible. This was a mystery much of my life until I lived in Australia in 1992 and learned about the atrocities that occurred in aboriginal boarding schools in that country. I began to wonder if the teens next door to my high school had also suffered abuse as well as isolation and deculturation away from their families. It was difficult to learn about this enduring unspoken inequality between people in my formative growing up years. It was difficult to imagine being a bystander, someone who witnesses problems directed at others, but does nothing. Stories, even difficult ones, from kids who grew up in these conditions in the US would be welcome to me and help bring more understanding to the deep holes in this part of my growing up. Stories that filled these holes would help me understand the inequalities of the past and help guide our communities better with how we want to live going forward. Perhaps we would be able to see each other as unique individuals and unique peoples and not groupings of people with supposedly different needs and issues. Perhaps we could all heal from more knowledge and understanding. It is embarrassing to write my story because it seems insignificant and untraumatic compared to those who had to leave the

familiarity of their homes and communities. The lack of knowing perpetuates the possibility of recurring trauma and its reenactment for us all. We are all in this together! I look at places like Germany, Rawanda and South Africa and I see the benefits of Truth and Healing.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these concerns and their impact on our communities. Thank you for working on a Commission towards understanding consciously and healing.

Sincerely,

Maria Daehler

Cc: The National Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) info@nabshc.org