

May 25, 2022

HNRCDDocs@mail.house.gov

I am Roberta L. Paul, PhD, my Nez Perce name is Tow-le-kit-we-son-my, and I am an enrolled member of the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho. I am the retired founding Director of Native American Health Sciences for Washington State University, Spokane, Washington. Currently an education consultant. [REDACTED]

I am a direct descendant of Ka-khun-nee (Black Raven) Jesse Paul who attended Carlisle in the years of 1880 to 1888. He is my grandfather, who married my grandmother Lydia Conditt Tow-let-kit-we-son-my (Woman of the Forest) Paul. She attended Chemawa Indian Boarding School in the years of 1883-1888.

They had 11 children, of which 7 attended boarding schools. My father Titus Koo-ya-mah (Mountain Lion) Paul was one of them, he attended Chilocco Agricultural Indian Boarding School, in Oklahoma during the years 1922-1927.

I attended a summer program at Haskell College during the summer of 1967. Although this was not a boarding school the manner of how the program was ran was very similar to the boarding school experiences of my grandparents and father, school in the mornings, and work in the afternoons.

I fully support the H.R. 5444 Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. The Act is timely to begin to address the harms of the Intergenerational Trauma of the Boarding Schools that were created to Assimilate and destroy our cultural ways, language and families. This to me was cultural genocide.

Grandfather Black Raven (Jesse Paul)

The journey of discovering the story of my grandfather Black Raven began over 33 years ago. On my 39th birthday my ex-husband announced he no longer loved me and walked out the door. We had an 11-year-old boy and an 18-year daughter just starting college. Six months later I tried to take my life. It was on this night that my grandfather came to me in a dream, saying "ENOUGH DEATH, GO HOME". Go home meant back to the reservation, home to our ranch that my grandfather had chosen as allotment and started the Paul Ranch, where they raised 9 children and where my father and mother raised our family of five. I obeyed the command and thus started the journey of healing for our Paul family. We had been separated from our cultural roots for many years and now was the time to reclaim and heal the wounds of the generational trauma. It has now been 3 decades since I began this healing journey and developing a healing model for our family, which I have shared with many others. Not all of my family has been a part of the healing, but most have. I have found healing is a choice, and we are our own best physician. Because our family story had almost been lost, I believe it was divine intervention that my grandfather spoke not only to me but to my oldest brother Jesse Paul who was named after our grandfather. Grandfather has come to visit me several times in dreams over the years, guiding me on our family healing journey. My great grandmother and grandmother have also spoken to me in dreams.

I did not know my grandfather physically, he died long before I was born, but I know him spiritually. He along with my grandmothers, great grandparents are saying; "IT IS TIME TO HEAL". The how for our family has been "Learn to Listen and Listen to Learn". Now is the time for the United States to help with this healing process. The work of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition and the work of Interior Secretary Haaland to begin the research of the Native American Boarding Schools in the United States. Healing can begin with the telling of the truth and acknowledge the pain and harms that were caused as the result of the Indian boarding school policies. The passing of H.R. 5444 Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools is a beginning of making amends for past atrocities.

What I share in the following stories of my grandparents and father is only a small portion of the research I have compiled about my Nez Perce Family. I am about to submit a book about my healing path that will have all the research compiled about our five-generation story of trauma and healing. My family is still healing, but on the healing path.

Carlisle Indian Boarding School 1879-1918

My grandfather Black Raven (Jesse Paul) arrived at Carlisle February 20, 1880 along with five other Nez Perce youth from the Nez Perce exile camp of Tonkawa, Oklahoma. This was the third exile camp that the Nez Perce had been placed at after they had surrendered at Bears Paw, Montana. Grandfather had experienced the trauma of war, and witnessed the killing of his father, five brothers and sisters and the trauma of exile. He would enter Carlisle as a traumatized child. His mother Um-al-wat (Phoebe) and he were the only survivors of their immediate family. Together the two survived the exile camps where they had been placed next to swamps that caused malaria and killed many of the exiled Nez Perce. It is a miracle that they both survived the camps. It is not known for sure why he was selected to go to Carlisle at the age of ten. Or how a mother could send her only surviving child off to a boarding school so far away. In my research of finding my family story I have often asked that question. I read a book titled "Man's Search for Meaning" by Victor Frankl and survivor of the Holocaust. From this book I gleaned "If you have a Why you will survive the How." What was their "Why". My great grandmother had to send her only surviving child with love. I also believe that she sent him with a medicine bag and encouraging words to go and learn so he would come back to help our people.

The reason I believe he was given a medicine bag is from a personal story of my own experience of secondary PTSD. Early in my research of finding our family story and history I attended a conference titled, "Suicide Prevention for Native Americans." This was held in Spokane, Washington. I did know that my grandfather had attended Carlisle, but I did not know what happened to them when they arrived and how they were treated. At the conference they showed a documentary titled "In the White Man's Image." The film showed what happened to the youth when they arrived. They were given lye baths, a haircut, put into scratchy wool uniforms and then given an English name. Instant transformation. As I was watching this film, I became upset and nauseous. I suddenly ran out of the room and went outside. The conference center was next to the Spokane River. I ran to the river and threw up. It took awhile for me to gather myself to go back inside for the remaining time of the conference. That evening at home I was still upset about the film and I lay on my couch in a fetal position with my thumb almost in my mouth when I noticed the picture of the five Nez Perce children taken of them when they arrived at Carlisle on my wall. (I had this photo on the wall). But for the first time I noticed that my grandfather had his hand inside the uniform that he was wearing. I asked the question, "Grandfather why do you have

your hand inside the uniform?" I pondered the question the rest of the evening. That night my grandfather came to me in a dream, he said to me "You may get the outward Indian appearance of me but you will not get all of my Indianness." I believe he was holding onto the medicine bag that his mother had given him. Grandfather Black Raven (Jesse) was there for 8 years. When he leaves, he still speaks Nez Perce. Even though he is at a school where they are punished for speaking their language. (His "Why" to keep his language and spirit).

I was also able to find the Nez Perce names of our great-grandfather and grandfather through documents that my brother Jesse discovered in the archives in Washington D.C. His father Wa-tat-ooynapt-lah-hayne (Seven Days Whipping) had served with the U.S. military in the Washington and Oregon wars of 1855-56. But they had never been paid for their service. It was while Black Raven (Jesse) was at school that the U.S. Congress was finally paying the back payments to the Nez Perce who had served during that time. There was a group of Nez Perce men who reviewed the list of names and knew that Wa-tat-ooynapt-lah-hayne (Seven Days Whipping) had died during the Nez Perce War, but also knew he had a surviving son who was at Carlisle. I have the letters that were the correspondence between the Nez Perce Indian Agent and Richard Pratt. These letters helped with finding out the Nez Perce names of Great grandfather and grandfather. We are fortunate to have these documents and to find their Nez Perce names.

While Black Raven attended Carlisle, he participated in Richard Pratt's idea of the 'Outing Experience'. Pratt believed if the Native men could work on area farms and learn about how to farm this would help them to assimilate into "White society". Black Raven (Jesse) went on two outing experiences, he was age 14 and he was there two years and five months, from April 16, 1884 to September 6, 1886. He came back and had more education, which was to go to school in the morning and learn a skill in the afternoon. He was assigned Wagon making. At the age of 17 his second outing was from March 22, 1887 to September 13, 1887. They were supposed to get paid; I am not sure how much but I have found records where he donated \$75.00 back to Carlisle school in 1887. He had to have earned money to be able to donate so much money.

Black Raven also attended church, which was a requirement of Richard Pratt. It is most likely that he attended one of the Presbyterian Churches in Carlisle. The Presbyterian missionaries were the first missionaries to come to the Nez Perce and also were ministered to while the Nez Perce were in exile in Oklahoma. Christianity did have a part in the cultural genocide of doing away with cultural practices. They said the practicing of anything other than what the church defined as appropriate was heathen and evil. When one accepted Christianity and was baptized you were told you did not need to know your culture, language or dress in the old ways, you were born "A NEW".

Black Raven (Jesse Paul) was finally able to return back to the Nez Perce Reservation. He left Carlisle on July 6, 1888. He arrives in Lapwai mid-July, 1888.

How he survived boarding school after being traumatized from war and then to experience boarding school is a miracle and a testament to his strong spiritual strength to endure. I cannot speak for other Native American students who also arrived traumatized and then to experience the trauma of forced assimilation. Many did not, their spirits broken. Many died as there are several hundred buried at Carlisle. There are three Nez Perce youth buried there. I have visited Carlisle three times and each time I visit the graves of our Nez Perce children. They are Luke Phillips, Rebecca Little Wolf and Samuel Johns. It is my hope that they may be returned to the Nez Perce Reservation.

Over the years of Carlisle some documents state that there were 126 Nez Perce Children who attended beginning in 1880 to 1918. The three mentioned above are the only ones known to have died and buried at Carlisle.

When Grandfather Black Raven returns to the reservation he does odd jobs and does interpreting for railroad companies. He also was hired as a chain man by Alice Fletcher who was assigned to the Nez Perce Reservation to begin the assigning allotments as a result of the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887. From this process Grandfather Black Raven chose his allotted land on the Camas Prairie and began the Paul Ranch. Our family still owns this land and was farmed by our family until 2015, and it is now being leased.

Grandfather Black Raven and Grandmother (Lydia) Woman of the Forest ran a very successful farm and ranch. Along with the farm Grandfather Black Raven was hired by the Nez Perce Tribe as assistant Forest Ranger. He made \$75.00 per month. He also helped form the first Nez Perce Tribal government.

Carlisle did try to keep track of the students who attended Carlisle. I have two correspondence that have been shared with me by Dickenson College. They now house most of the Carlisle student records and have a website to access most of the documents and photos. This is one example of a college helping to preserve the history and helping descendants to find the story of their ancestors. Sadly, there are too many boarding schools that will not have these types of records.

Grandmother Tow-le-kit-we-son-my (Woman of the Forest) Lydia Conditt

Chemawa Indian Boarding School 1883 to present

Grandmother Lydia Conditt Tow-le-kit-we-son-my (Women of the Forest). She is Nez Perce and a granddaughter of Chief Ut-sin-malikan, who was present when Lewis and Clak happened upon the Nez Perce September 20, 1805. He was a chief and signed the treaties of 1855 and 1863, and then was sent to Washington D.C. to renegotiate the 1863 Treaty which had become known as the "Steal Treaty". He dies of typhoid fever that he had contracted while crossing the Isthmus of Panama on May 25, 1868, while there and is buried in the Congressional Cemetery. Lydia's parents were Jane (Wah-le-hoo) Parsons and Jason (Tin-tin-nae-khom-kan) Conditt. They have four children, Homer, Lydia, Watkins, and William. The latter two dies in their youth. They were being raised Christian as Jane had been baptized by Rev. Spalding the first missionary to come to the Nez Perce. Homer and Lydia are recruited to go to Chemawa Indian Boarding school, near Salem, Oregon. There are about 50 Nez Perce youth sent during this time period of 1883-1888. The records of the early years of Chemawa Indian school are sparse, mostly just a place card in a file. There are also physician records that tell of the treatment for the students.

There is not a complete list of how many Nez Perce Children attended Carlisle, but several hundred attended from the Nez Perce Reservation. Chemawa has some documentation and has helped with trying to find more records of the name of students who attended Chemawa in the early years. There are two lists of those buried at Chemawa, and some are buried at Forest Grove, Oregon, which was where Chemawa started in 1883 and then moved to present day Chemawa in 1885. There are several unmarked graves, and the lists are not complete. I have counted 15 Nez Perce children buried at Chemawa and 1 at Forest Grove.

What I have learned about my grandmother's experience there is from family items that were saved in a trunk. The trunk belonged to Grandfather Black Raven which he had while attending Carlisle. In the trunk were two autograph books that were dated 1883-1889. Also, there were several Calling cards, they were Victorian in style. They had a floral design on top and then lift the floral design and there would be the name of the student. I believe the autograph books were an English assignment. The students had been assigned student ID numbers. The pages of the book the students would address the student as such:

Dear Lydia, No. 119, then say their sayings, usually something like forget me not and I will not forget you and sign their name and their student number. The hand writing was cursive and very elaborate. From the autograph books I was able to find a list of students who would be the class of 1887. I have had these autograph books and calling cards scanned as well as the Paul Family Boarding school documents at the Washington State University Plateau Portal under the Paul Family Boarding School Experience and Nez Perce History. It is my hope that descendants can look up their ancestors autograph and calling card. There are also lots of photos of students who attended when my aunts were there, 1919-1921. Most are not identified; I am hoping that some will be identified and named.

Plateauportal.libraries.wsu.edu/digital-heritage/community/33889

There is very little else known of the types of activities they experience while there. I am aware that she could sew and made a lot of her children dresses and clothes. A skill that I assume she was taught while at Chemawa.

Second Generation of Paul Family attending Boarding Schools.

Grandmother Lydia (Woman of the Forest) returns to the Nez Perce Reservation in the summer of 1888. It would be a few years before she meets and marries my grandfather Black Raven (Jesse Paul). They marry August 6, 1894. Together they have 11 children over 22 years, two die in infancy. There are seven Paul children who attend boarding schools, but they did not attend until they were teenagers and not as small children. The Paul children attended a one room school house grades 1-8 and then were encouraged to go to boarding school. They were not forced to go, but grandparents knew and wanted their children to acquire a skill beyond their 8th grade education.

There is a family story about hiding their young girls so they would not be sent off to boarding school at a young age. Black Raven and Women of the Forest had heard that the Indian Agent was coming to take their young girls and send them off to boarding school. They did not want their girls to be taken away as young girls. I think because of their own experience of being so young attending boarding schools themselves. The ranch house sat on a hill and about a ¼ mile from the main road, so they could see when the agent was coming. My grandparents had bought an upright piano and was delivered in a wood box crate. They saved the wood box crate and used it for a wood box in the wood shed. They hid the girls in the wood box and piled wood on top of them. When the agent came, he asked where the girls were and they replied that they were at a neighbor for a few days. So, the agent left without the girls.

The oldest boys attended Cushman 1915-1916, to learn carpentry skills. The older two girls attended Chemawa, 1919-1921. One learned nursing skills and worked at the Sanitarium at Lapwai, Idaho on the Nez Perce Reservation. The Lapwai Sanitarium also has an unmarked cemetery of where they buried the children who died of tuberculosis. It is not known how many are buried there. The Sanitarium also had school for the students while they were there.

Chilocco Indian Boarding School 1883-1980

My father Titus Koo-ya-mah (Mountain Lion) Paul was age 14 when he chose to go to Chilocco Indian Boarding School in Oklahoma. The years he attended was 1922-1927. He had to repeat the 8th grade because his schooling at the one room school house did not prepare him enough for this school. His experience was a good one, except he did lose his language. That is the one regret he had from attending boarding school. I asked him how was his treatment, he shared that they were told to do things just so, and not to cause any problems. I did ask him did he do anything that he got in trouble for. The boys would do stomp dances down by Chilocco Creek. There would be a boy with a drum in the middle and the others would stomp dance around the drum. His punishment was to march with a rifle on his shoulder around the parade grounds for a couple of hours or sweep clean the hall ways of the school. I did ask him did you quit doing the stomp dances, his reply was NO, and sometimes they would not be punished. He also shared that they played stick game, which was prohibited, but they did anyway. The students at Chilocco had an underground of doing their traditions.

My father Koo-ya-mah (Mountain Lion) school activities was much the same as Carlisle, they had school in the mornings and then work in the afternoon. My father was assigned to the mechanical and motors shop. He was also the bus driver for the school athletic teams. He said the teams played Junior colleges because the high school teams weren't good enough to play them. They often beat the college teams. He also drove the "Big Shots" around when they came to visit. He mostly drove the lady school teachers to Arkansas City to do their shopping on the weekends. I asked what did you do while they were shopping. He answered, I would play pool or go to a movie. He earned money in the Candy shop at the school making .25 to a dollar a day.

My Father's class was the first to have a four-year high school curriculum and he graduated in 1927. I do not know how many Native children are buried at Chilocco but there is a cemetery there. Not as many Nez Perce attended Chilocco, mostly because of the distance from the Reservation.

There was a younger brother of my father's named Alexander. There had been a tragedy for the Paul family in November 28-29, 1923, three adult children had died of Typhoid fever. Then six months later my grandmother died of a broken heart and then another adult child giving birth died the same month. A year previous to the three deaths an adult daughter died of what was described as Consumption, so yet again Grandfather Black Raven had experienced trauma in his life time. In his grief he sent Alexander to Chemawa Indian Boarding School in the fall of 1924. My father Titus Koo-ya-mah Paul had already been at Chilocco when all these deaths occurred and was not able to come home for the funerals because of the expense and time to get there. About a year after the anniversary of the deaths of the three adult children grandfather Black Raven had fallen ill and was in the hospital and not expected to live. Grandfather asked his oldest son, Richard, to go get Alexander from Chemawa not realizing how ill he was. Alexander had written home saying he was being mistreated and whipped. When grandfather asked the Indian Agent to inquire about this to the Superintendent of Chemawa, the response was he was just homesick and was fine. But when Alexander arrived, he had a temperature of 102 degrees and had tuberculosis and was put into the hospital where grandfather was also. Alexander dies on February 20, 1925. How grandfather recovered and went on living, is miraculous. Family stories say he did not live life fully as before, there was a sadness about him. There was still one young son, Reuben at home and he soon was sent to Sherman Institute at Riverside California, he was about age 7. His boarding school

experience was much different than my father's. He reported abuse, he was there until age 17 and then returned to the reservation and graduated from Craigmont High School, in Craigmont, Idaho.

The abuse and the living conditions for Alexander experienced at Chemawa contributed to his death. An uncle that I never got to know. The deaths of all these children did contribute to the historical trauma that was passed down in the Paul family.

Third Generation

After Titus Koo-ya-mah (Mountain Lion) graduated from Chilocco in 1927, he went to St. Louis and took classes in more mechanics. Then moved to Arkansas City, Kansas. He had been hired by Shell Oil Refinery. He boarded at a house that was my grandmother's, Elizabeth Caster. This is how my mother describes meeting her future husband:

I met my husband-to-be when he came to board at the boarding house my mother opened up when I was sixteen. She had asked a friend to send her some boarders; three young Indian boys were among the first that he directed to her accommodations. My girlfriend was staying with us at the time and we two teenagers were very much impressed by the good-looking young men. I set my cap for the handsome one with the two first names (Titus Paul). It took me two weeks to get him to ask me for a date. It was two years later that we married.

My parents married July 2, 1931. My mother was non-native and she was marrying a full blood Nez Perce. In many states that was an illegal marriage and not common for a white woman to marry an Indian man. Together they had five children, I am the fourth child. We were raised as a Bi-racial family. They lived in Arkansas City, Kansas until the Shell Oil closed because of the depression. My parents then moved back to the Nez Perce Reservation.

My parents raised our family during the depression, World War II and the post war years. I was not born until after the war in 1949, My three older siblings were born in 1933, 1935, and 1937. A twelve-year gap, then I also had a younger brother born 1951.

When World War II broke out, my father went to Bremerton, Washington to work in the ship yards. At first, he was a worker, but became a first-class welder. After the war they returned to the Paul family ranch. He used his welding skills to build and repair farm machinery. He also was one of the first farmers to increase wheat production by planting peas and plowing under the pea vines to put natural fertilizer into the ground. His wheat production was one of the first to harvest 100 bushel per acre. He was the first farmer to grow lentils. My mother helped form the Pea and Lentil Association in Lewis County. Mother cooked lots of lentil recipes and most were good. Over time Father Koo-ya-mah leased Nez Perce Tribal land to increase his farming to about 2000 acres. He was active in Grange and served on the Board of Directors for the Lewiston Grain Growers. Father's success using natural fertilizer and increase grain production, and early adoption of lentils contributed to his being inducted in 1999 into the Chilocco Agricultural Indian School Hall of Fame.

We were not raised speaking our Nez Perce language, unlike when my father was raised in his family. They all spoke Nez Perce. As I stated earlier father lost the use of his Nez Perce language when attending

Chilocco. And society enforced not speaking Native Language, even among my own people. The family did not practice Native cultural activities. Father did share a few words with us and we have used these words to this day and have been able to add more Nez Perce words to our vocabulary.

I was still being raised in assimilation thinking of society, and had teachers, peers, Sunday school teachers tell me my race was dying out and I did not need to know my culture. I am the only one who attends a similar Boarding School experience. The effects of the loss of language and practicing cultural ways affected our family until about 1985 when my oldest brother began to research our family history and together, we started to reclaim cultural practices.

Haskell Indian Boarding School, now Haskell Indian Nations University 1884-present

I graduated from high school in 1967, and my parents had found out that there was a special program for Native students who just graduated to help with transitioning from high school to college. My parents signed me up and also, I had a girlfriend who also went with me. We were being sent to Haskell Junior College in Lawrence, Kansas. Our transportation being by Greyhound Bus. This would be my first experience of going away so far from home and for an extended period of time. When we arrived, we had to figure out how to get a taxi to the school and pay the taxi.

At Haskell, I enjoyed meeting the other Indian students from the different tribes. We shared many social activities—we played games like charades, have scavenger hunts, and dance to the radio. Sometimes in the evening at the girl's dorm there would be scary stories shared, some true, some not, but never the less, caused an anxious night of sleep. We saw *My Fair Lady* at an outdoor theater, as well as a Kansas City Athletics baseball game. I didn't care for the regimentation. Haskell was still being run in a military style, much like the boarding schools of Father and Grandfather Black Raven attended. Up by 6, in the morning, clean room, shower, and dress before breakfast. Then classes for the morning, followed by lunch. In the afternoon, I worked as a janitor cleaning the student union building. We were not allowed to leave the campus after 5 P.M. unless chaperoned. After dinner, we had study table and then it was lights out at 10. At 17, I thought this was restrictive and demeaning. I had never adhered to routine like this in my life.

Although the classes were good for me, and did help prepare me for college, all the restrictions gave me a feeling I was not capable of taking care of myself; it felt like I couldn't be trusted. There was that tape again that I had played my whole life when a second-grade teacher told me I was a "Dumb Indian". I tried to not hear those messages, but still they crept in.

There were no cultural activities held while at Haskell, no pow wow dancing, stick game or any other type of cultural activities.

Conclusions:

The importance of finding the stories and histories of what happened to boarding school descendants and survivor's is absolutely necessary for healing. Not knowing what happened to my ancestors caused an empty hole and question "Who are We"? The loss of language and cultural practices attributed to the intergenerational wounds that got passed on because they were not talked about. There is a quote I often use in my presentations:

“What cannot be talked about can also not be put to rest; and if it is not, the wounds continue to fester from generation to generation.” Danieli (1988)

The Intergenerational wounds that were passed on from my Grandfather Black Raven did not just begin with the boarding school experience, war was the first trauma. Black Raven enters Carlisle as a traumatized boy of 10. Then experiences 8 years of a military run boarding school. But was still able to maintain his Nez Perce Language. Returns home and marries a woman who has also attended a boarding school at Chemawa, Oregon. Grandmother Lydia (Woman of the Forest) was being converted to Christianity and being raised in this manner. But still was able to speak her Nez Perce language. When Grandfather Black Raven and Grandmother Woman of the Forest were raising their children, my father said that Nez Perce Legends were told by uncles and his grandfather. Cultural ways of knowing with these legends.

What was not shared were the stories of the Nez Perce War and their experiences of being students at boarding schools. When I asked my father Titus Koo-ya-mah Paul, if grandfather ever spoke about the war, he said no, or even of the deaths of his siblings and mother. This was not talked about in our family, but on the anniversary dates of events of the war, and family deaths I felt an uneasiness and depressed around these dates. It was not until after I began to do family research of what happened to our family that I began to align the dates of war with my times of depression. As well as dates of when grandfather and grandmother went to boarding schools.

Historical Trauma has been defined by Maria Brave Heart as:

...cumulative, in that there is a collective corresponding and psychic wounding over time, both over a life span and across generations. Brave Heart (1995)

The historical trauma Brave Heart defines is much like it happened in the Paul family as well as the Intergenerational Transmission which Brave Heart (1995) states:

The transfer of features or symptoms across generations, from the survivors to their descendants, is delineated as intergenerational transmission.

This transmission is unresolved grief.

The Conspiracy of silence was also a major part of the Paul family unresolved grief. It is defined as:

Transmission of unresolved grief happens with the first generation who experiences the trauma

*They either do not share the story of trauma

* Only bits and pieces are shared, so not a complete picture is known, but the children are aware of the omnipresent feeling that is left

* Thus, leaving the children of the survivors having absorbed the omnipresent feelings and unspoken grief

Danieli (1998)

These are the psychological terms used to help with understanding the effects of the traumas of forced assimilation by Missionaries, Treaties, Boarding Schools, The Dawes Allotment Act, and Termination policies that affected all Native Peoples of the United States.

The boarding school is not just one trauma it is one of several that added to the genocide of a Native population. How do we heal from these traumas is a process? An example of how another country works toward healing is South Africa. I had the privilege to attend a conference in South Africa and met The Archbishop of South Africa, Desmond Tutu. The conference was titled:

“Memory, Narrative, and Forgiveness, reflecting on the Ten-year anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and celebrating Desmond Tutu’s 75th birthday”. I was selected to present my families healing story. Having had the opportunity to share our story in South Africa with celebrants of that troubled nation’s truth and reconciliation process helped me realize there is hope for humanity. As we share our stories across the world, we learn we all have suffered, but we do have a choice to confront the atrocities and heal those wounds. We validate each other by listening, and by listening we gain empathy for one another, and strengthened with that empathy we can find the capacity to forgive and to halt the cycle of inhumanity.

I pray and hope the United State is ready to confront the atrocity of the Boarding school polices that afflicted Native children for over a hundred years. Much like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa they provided a means to ‘LISTEN’ to the stories, to acknowledge the harms, and begin a process of addressing the harms caused.

I want to thank the Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States for allowing me to share our family generational story of the Boarding School Experience.

Roberta Lynn Paul, PhD

Nez Perce

Tow-le-kit-we-son-my (Woman of the Forest)

Founding Director Native American Health Sciences Washington State University

Education Consultant

