

My name is Valerie Morgan and am enrolled at Oglala Lakota tribe on the Pine Ridge reservation. My father was born and raised here and attended Holy Rosary Catholic boarding school in the 1930s and 1940s. He graduated from Gordon High School in 1949. He never ever talked about his experience there and not until I was in my twenties and he had passed on did his sister tell me how jealous she was that he got away from boarding school. Understand that there is insurmountable SHAME and in our family questions were not allowed so I actually know very little history and I couldn't even ask her to tell me. My dad and all his brothers joined the military because after all it was the militarized boarding school to military pipeline. He was a supremely intelligent man and went on to college after 20 years in the USMC but his life was cut brutally short by alcoholism. His addiction and sexual deviancy I could never understand and I subsequently have spent most of my life trying to heal from the loss of identity and the shame based values I was given. I believe this more than anything has shaped my life and the choices I have made. He told me once he hated the reservation and never came back here so I grew up away from here and fortunately that access to mental health care is invaluable to me which seems to be difficult to access here. I think about his life and it causes me supreme sadness as he was truly a gifted person cut down by these circumstances. I mentioned the sexual deviancy of which he had no control over the same as his alcoholism and he drank every day of his short life. I fully support establishing HR 5444 and I thank you the committee Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the USA