

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Benjamin A. Jacuk (Dolchok). I am an Indigenous Researcher at the Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC). My area of study is on the church-run Boarding Schools in North America with a specific focus on Alaska. Through my efforts, I aim to analyze the structures of violence that were developed through the creation of the Boarding Schools. I am a tribally enrolled member of the Kenaitze Indian Nation whose grandfather (Mack Dolchok) was forced to attend the Boarding Schools in Alaska. Thank you all for bringing justice and truth to the minds and hearts of the Nation through the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. Act (H.R.5444 and S.2907). It is imperative that depicting the truth of our own histories lead to justice and healing for all Indigenous peoples of North America. Our communities have been continuously impacted by Federal and church entities who took part in this act of cultural genocide, my family included.

In listening to the hearing that occurred on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022, regarding H.R.5444, a persistent question was related to acquiring ecclesial documents concerning the structure, funding, and continual operation of the church-run Boarding Schools. Having researched the church's involvement within the Boarding School project in North America for the better part of ten years, I have found that the denominations who had the biggest impact upon the policies that led to the creation of institutions such as Carlisle Indian Industrial School, do not know the information they possess. ANHC has been working with several protestant denominations that were involved within the Boarding Schools in Alaska to retrieve relevant documents. We have found that they are either unaware of the significance of some their primary source material or sensitive documentation had been miscataloged. Another challenge that will be encountered is that many of the people within these religious denominations do not know the extent of the role their institutions played in creating these structures of violence. The interpretations that the religious institutions may proffer might not be entirely useful due to their lack of concrete information regarding their involvement in the Boarding Schools. There is another obstacle in non-religious organizations attempting to decipher ecclesiastical documents because there is minimal context that would allow outside individuals to recognize the complicity of individuals in the creation of these institutions, as well as the ideological structures which functioned as justifications for acts of violence.

ANHC's Indigenous Research program has been able to navigate the location of these critical primary sources which detail the evolution of these horrendous realities. We have also uncovered the ecumenical structures that prove a unified and meticulously planned out operation, with the assistance of the United States Federal government, for the eradication of Indigenous peoples through the Boarding Schools. ANHC serves as the cultural representative for the 231 tribes within the state of Alaska and has several Indigenous researchers who have advanced academic degrees. This puts the organization in an ideal position to help this future "Truth and Healing" Commission in interpreting the role of the ecclesial bodies within the operation of Boarding Schools.

ANHC proposes partnering with the Commission and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition in bringing truth, healing, and justice to Indigenous peoples. When we work together to bring truth, justice and healing today, we heal our Ancestors and give a better future for those who come after us.

Chiqinik,

Benjamin A. Jacuk (Dena'ina Athabaskan, Sugpiaq/Alutiiq)  
Indigenous Researcher, Alaska Native Heritage Center