Letter from the CEO

This last year has seen a dramatic change in the political and emotional-spiritual landscape of boarding school accountability and healing. Beginning with the finding of locations of unmarked graves at residential boarding schools in several communities in Canada in May and June and continuing into the fall amounting to the location of nearly 2,000 children in unmarked graves. This news rippled across Turtle Island and transcended borders as survivors and descendants in the U.S. also mourned for these children and the experiences and stories from boarding school students started to surface after being buried for many years.

The impact of the unmarked graves was followed by an announcement from the U.S. Secretary of the Interior for a boarding school investigation. NABS’s research that it has been doing for nearly a decade is now at the center of national attention. Our comprehensive, authoritative list of boarding schools in the U.S. is being referenced and used for research across the country. And the demand for our resources and support of communities wanting to initiate research and healing activities has grown exponentially.

Despite the ongoing pandemic, NABS was able to nearly double our organizational capacity this past year by increasing our staff to a team of seven. Now, we have capacity to conduct more engagement with Tribal Nations, communities, organizations, and survivors and descendants. Though we are still not having large gatherings in person, we have continued with our virtual healing summits and online webinars. This service to community is at the heart of our work and we are eager to continue supporting truth, justice, and healing for all our relatives. We are working with national partners and legislators to urge mental and emotional health supports and resources for tribal communities that are so long overdue.

We continue to give thanks every day for our coalition members, partners, funders, and supporters. We wish you all health, healing, and peace during these intense times we are living in and encourage you to keep the momentum going for the long-awaited truth and healing movement that has finally arrived.

On behalf of the staff and board,
Christine Diindiisi McCleave, Chief Executive Officer

Vision: Indigenous cultural sovereignty.

Mission: To lead in the pursuit of understanding and addressing the ongoing trauma created by the U.S. Indian Boarding School policy.
Education

Educational resources about Indian boarding schools were more sought after this year than ever before. It was critical that we increased remote programming and virtual accessibility to NABS’s resources to meet the increased demand for boarding school truth. For the first time, a digital version of our Healing Voices Vol. 1 publication, “A Primer on American Indian and Alaska Native Boarding Schools in the U.S.” was made available on our website. Our other digital resources—the list of U.S. Indian boarding schools, recordings of NABS’s webinars and presentations, and our Truth and Healing education curriculum—were downloaded or viewed thousands of times due to the increased interest in this research.

Our annual webinar series consisted of a four-part program with the theme of “Boarding School Healing: Mind, Body, Heart, and Spirit.” Our guests explored emergent issues, such as:

- The grassroots Truth and Healing Movement and call for a Truth and Healing Commission,

- The repatriations that occurred at Carlisle Indian School Cemetery in summer 2021,

- The research involving unmarked graves and cemeteries at Indian boarding school sites in the U.S., and

- Indigenous mindfulness, traditions, and neurodecolonization methods for resilience and healing historical trauma.

The research team at NABS, consisting of staff members Samuel Torres and Stephen Curley, aided by summer interns as well as a team of seven contract researchers, have been diligently advancing the ongoing research efforts into U.S. Indian boarding schools. The development of these research projects will culminate in the release of the forthcoming Digital Map of Indian Boarding Schools in the U.S. and Canada with our partners at the National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation, as well as the first of its kind National Indian Boarding School Digital Archive (NIBSDA). NABS has also been working with the Department of the Interior on their boarding school investigation, sharing the research we’ve done over the last 10 years.
Advocacy

NABS’s advocacy work reached a new level this year, with the addition of Director of Policy and Advocacy, Deborah Parker, coming on staff. NABS was in Washington D.C. when the Secretary of the Interior announced the Indian Boarding School Investigation in June 2021. NABS applauded Secretary Haaland for launching this long-overdue initiative.

NABS also worked with the National Indian Health Board to advocate for greater mental health supports for Indian Country. This resulted in a letter signed by 21 members of Congress in August to the Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of the Interior calling for protections to be put in place for those who will experience trauma as further revelations emerge during the Department of the Interior’s Federal Indian Boarding School Truth Initiative.

Over the summer, NABS consulted with tribal leaders, coalition members, survivors, and former TRC commissioners to inform the drafting of a bill for congress. We worked with U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D), Representative Sharice Davids (D), and Representative Tom Cole (R) to re-introduce the bill for The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies on September 30, 2021. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R) also introduced a resolution on that day for an official National Day of Remembrance in the U.S.

This bipartisan legislation would establish a formal five-year commission to investigate and document U.S. Indian boarding school policies and their impacts. This includes the federal government’s attempted termination of cultures, religions, and languages of Indigenous peoples, assimilation practices, and human rights violations that occurred through the Indian boarding school policies. Most importantly, the commission would also collect testimony from boarding school survivors and descendants, and provide recommendations for healing from the historical trauma of the boarding school era.
Healing

The events of this year showed us that there is still much unresolved grief around the historical loss and trauma of the Indian boarding school experiences. The need for healing and mental health support for boarding school survivors and their descendants has never been clearer nor more urgent. NABS has urged the federal government and Tribal Nations to act quickly to provide additional resources to our communities to foster healing from historical trauma, particularly as we grieve the announcements from our First Nations relatives in Canada and process our own experiences in the U.S.

We continue to uphold community-led and culturally-relevant healing and remain committed to providing and sharing healing resources as well as holding space to uplift the voices of those who suffered during their time in Indian boarding schools. We urge everyone to center the voices of survivors and descendants while being respectful of their wishes to share—or not—and to consider the mental health toll that comes with recounting these experiences.

As healing often comes with education and awareness, NABS was proud to launch the Boarding School Descendant Scholarship program in partnership with the American Indian College Fund. We raised over $52,000 to fund 20 scholarships for boarding school descendants and received over 600 applications in the inaugural year.

This summer, NABS had the privilege and honor to provide support for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and Unangan Alaskan Natives in the repatriation of their children buried at Carlisle Indian School Cemetery. We know that there is great healing in finally welcoming these children home.

Finally, NABS hosted our 2nd Annual Virtual Summit, Healing in a Time of Truth and Justice, in November. We expanded to two days this year and brought communities together virtually to hear from boarding school survivors, Indigenous researchers, advocates, and Native youth who are leading the movement for boarding school healing into the future. We will continue to work for boarding school truth, justice, and healing on behalf of survivors and descendants across the U.S.
Financials as of September 30*

2020

Source of Funds

$1,230,198  Foundation Grants
514,643  Nonprofit Giving
84,700  Tribal Giving
37,981  Special Events
34,996  Religious/Civic
14,313  Individual Contributions
10,808  Earned Revenue
2,638  Interest Income
1,798  Merchandise Sales
275  Corporations

$1,932,320  Total Funds

Use of Funds

87%  Programs
12%  Administrative
1%  Fundraising

$1,403,396  Total Spent

2021

Source of Funds

$1,525,780  Foundation Grants
177,159  Individual Contributions
33,002  Corporations
19,739  Religious/Civic Giving
12,258  Merchandise Sales
7,420  Earned Revenue
3,692  Interest/Other Income

$1,779,050  Total Funds

Use of Funds

79%  Programs
18%  Administrative
3%  Fundraising

$1,379,306  Total Spent

2021 Funders and Contributors

American Endowment Foundation  NoVo Foundation
Better Way Foundation  Prairie Unitarian Universalist Church
Boulder Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends  Red Cedar Friends Meeting
Chapa-de Indian Health Program  Rochester Friends Meeting
Christ Church Cathedral  Sinsinawa Dominicans
Council on Library and Information Resources  The Kendeda Fund
Episcopal Diocese of NW Pennsylvania  The Oregon Community Foundation
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration  United Parish in Brookline
Fursona Pins  Unity Church - Unitarian
LaxStraps  University of MN Human Rights Program
Haayk Foundation  W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Minnesota Humanities Center  Ways of Peace Fund
Native Voices Rising (Common Counsel Foundation)  

Over 2,750 Individual Donors gave $177,159!
THANK YOU!

The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization incorporated in June 2012 under the laws of the Navajo Nation.