

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 6, 2024

2:54 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Löki Tobin, Chair  
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair  
Senator Jesse Bjorkman  
Senator Jesse Kiehl  
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 266

"An Act relating to standards-based assessments; relating to correspondence study programs; relating to student fund accounts for correspondence study programs; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 17

Urging the United States Congress to pass the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

- MOVED HJR 17 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 266

SHORT TITLE: CORRESPONDENCE STUDY PROG; STUDENT ACCTS

SPONSOR(S): EDUCATION

04/26/24	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/26/24	(S)	EDC
04/29/24	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/29/24	(S)	Heard & Held
04/29/24	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
05/01/24	(S)	FIN REFERRAL ADDED AFTER EDC
05/01/24	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
05/01/24	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
05/03/24	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

05/03/24 (S) Heard & Held  
05/03/24 (S) MINUTE(EDC)  
05/06/24 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: HJR 17

SHORT TITLE: SUPPORT FED TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION

SPONSOR(s): MCCORMICK

01/18/24 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/18/24 (H) TRB  
03/04/24 (H) TRB AT 3:30 PM DAVIS 106  
03/04/24 (H) Heard & Held  
03/04/24 (H) MINUTE(TRB)  
03/06/24 (H) TRB AT 3:30 PM DAVIS 106  
03/06/24 (H) Moved HJR 17 Out of Committee  
03/06/24 (H) MINUTE(TRB)  
03/11/24 (H) TRB RPT 4DP  
03/11/24 (H) DP: CARRICK, DIBERT, VANCE, MCCORMICK  
04/26/24 (H) MOTION TO CALL FOR THE QUESTION  
04/26/24 (H) POINT RULED OUT OF ORDER  
04/26/24 (H) SUSTAINED RULING OF CHAIR Y35 N1 E2 A2  
04/26/24 (H) CALL FOR THE QUESTION PASSED Y36 N1 E2  
A1  
04/26/24 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
04/26/24 (H) VERSION: HJR 17  
04/29/24 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
04/29/24 (S) EDC  
05/06/24 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

**WITNESS REGISTER**

GINA ZUIDERDUIN, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified with concerns on SB 266.

KATRIELLE MACHIDA, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to SB 266.

STEVE MAILLY, representing self  
Nelchina, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to SB 266.

DEZIRAE QUAM, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to SB 266.

CALLAN CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF, Staff  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke on behalf of the sponsor of HJR 17.

BENJAMIN JACUK, Indigenous Researcher  
Alaska Native Heritage Center  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on HJR 17.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:32:28 PM](#)

**CHAIR LÖKI TOBIN** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 2:54 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Kiehl, and Chair Tobin. Senator Gray-Jackson and Senator Bjorkman arrived thereafter.

#### **SB 266-CORRESPONDENCE STUDY PROG; STUDENT ACCTS**

[3:34:12 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 266 "An Act relating to standards-based assessments; relating to correspondence study programs; relating to student fund accounts for correspondence study programs; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR TOBIN resumed public testimony on SB 266 that was held open on May 6, 2024.

[3:34:38 PM](#)

GINA ZUIDERDUIN, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, testified with concerns on SB 266. She said she homeschooled her children and grandchildren using the Raven Program. Home school allows for smaller class size and personalized instruction. Reimbursement for classes has existed since 2002 and should continue so home school can operate properly.

[3:37:31 PM](#)

KATRIELLE MACHIDA, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 266. She stated she opposes the mandatory testing clause. Homeschool is not the same as public school therefore testing should not be the same. Testing is the responsibility of the parents and should not be mandatory. Homeschool students are successful without mandatory testing. She urged the committee to not pass any bill that requires mandatory testing.

[3:39:24 PM](#)

STEVE MAILLY, representing self, Nelchina, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 266. He said Alaska has a long history of independent correspondence education. He did not take money from the state when he educated his children who are now successful adults. NEA lobbyists push an educational agenda. He is against mandatory testing.

[3:41:57 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON joined the meeting.

[3:42:15 PM](#)

DEZIRAE QUAM, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 266. She said students learn differently and SB 266 creates red tape instead of opportunities for students. SB 266 does not allow for diversified learning. Furthermore, it does not address the issue brought up by the court. SB 266 should not prohibit opting out of mandatory testing for homeschool students. Mandatory test results are not received in a timely manner. She stated seeing her child's progress everyday is what she needs to know they are learning.

[3:43:25 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN stated Senator Bjorkman joined the meeting.

[3:43:33 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN closed public testimony on SB 266.

[3:43:45 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN held SB 266 in committee.

**HJR 17-SUPPORT FED TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION**

[3:44:09 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 17 Urging the United States Congress to pass the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.

[3:44:32 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN stated HJR 17 has a zero fiscal note. She suggested members and the public read pages 25-26 of the May 2022 Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report regarding initial federal policies towards Indian education. The report is available on the Alaska State Legislature website.

[3:45:52 PM](#)

CALLAN CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF, Staff, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, spoke on behalf of the sponsor of HJR 17. She turned to slide 2 and began delivery of the presentation House Joint Resolution 17 "Urging the United States Congress to Pass the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools Policies Act":

[Original punctuation provided.]

**HJR17**

- Support US Senate Bill 1723
- Federal Truth & Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act
- 2022 Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report findings
- Alaska Native Heritage Center Lach'qu Sukdu Research Program database/research
- Alaska Federation of Natives Resolution 23-14 in support of S.1723

[3:46:40 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF stated that the portions of the sponsor's presentation that speak to the Alaska Native Heritage Center's body of work would be addressed by Mr. Jacuk.

[3:47:55 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF turned to slide 6 and said U.S. Senate Bill 1723 has 29 Bi-Partisan Co-sponsors. She said Alaskan Native leaders and Senator Lisa Murkowski are involved in the drafting of U.S. Senate Bill 1723.

[3:48:27 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF moved to slide 7 and said for Representative McCormick, herself, and others the systemic abuse relatives faced is intergenerational.

[3:49:25 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF turned to slide 8 and thanked the committee for hearing HJR 17. It is a very personal piece of legislation for Representative McCormick, herself, and others.

[3:49:38 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said the presentation only mentioned four boarding schools, but he is aware that boarding schools existed statewide. He asked if the study and resolution include all boarding schools in Alaska or just some.

[3:50:39 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF replied that Mr. Jacuk's presentation includes over 100 Native boarding schools in Alaska. She said downtown Juneau has buildings with architecture that resemble the four boarding schools she mentioned. Those buildings elicit images of violence and cultural elimination for Native people.

[3:51:31 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said he is glad the study and legislation is inclusive because Alaskan's have heard horrible stories of abuse from institutions statewide.

[3:51:48 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked about the intersection between HJR 17 and the work taking place by the Alice Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children.

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF expressed that although she isn't acquainted with the commission itself, the Alaskan Federation of Natives has supported HJR 17, suggesting Native leaders are unified in their support of HJR 17. She stated her belief that the commission also supports HJR 17.

[3:53:02 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced invited testimony on HJR 17.

[3:53:38 PM](#)

BENJAMIN JACUK, Indigenous Researcher, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage, Alaska, introduced himself and mentioned that his current area of research focuses on Native boarding schools in Alaska. He moved to slide 2 of the Sheldon Jackson and Frameworks of Violence presentation and stated that his reason for conducting research on Native boarding schools is to tell the stories of Native Elders who were never able to share their experiences. He quoted his grandfather as saying, "The only way to know what to heal or how to heal is to know what we need healing from." Truth is essential to understanding what healing entails. The history of boarding schools impacts every Alaskan Native. Research indicates that Alaska is ground zero for the boarding school policies listed in the Boarding School Initiative, Volume I.

MR. JACUK stated the learning objectives of the presentation are:

[Original punctuation provided.]

- Alaska Boarding School History
- Historical/Source Criticism in conjunction with Alaska State History
- Structural Violence Model
- Recognizing the Structures of Violence that Impact Alaska Natives Today

[3:57:09 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 3:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Boarding School Facts**

- Assimilation project meant to “domesticate” Native children of North America
- ~500 US Alaska Native/American Indian Boarding schools, day schools, boarding home schools, and asylums
- Government-funded while being church-run
- Alaska Native/American Indian children were
  - forcibly abducted by Indian Agents
  - sent hundreds of miles away
  - beaten, starved, or abused
- Holy Cross, Alaska
- 10,000s did not return

MR. JACUK stated that it is important to recognize that the intent of the assimilation project was to gain access to resources and land by taking away students' Native identity and replacing it with an American identity. He said he expects to find unmarked graveyards throughout the state as his research continues. In Holy Cross, Alaska, there was a 20 percent mortality rate that was not connected to epidemics. He opined

that there is not one Native Alaskan alive today that has not been affected by the history of boarding schools.

[3:59:46 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 5 and said the U.S. Department of Interior in its May 2022 Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report provided definitions that give direction to the conversation on boarding school research:

[Original punctuation provided.]

#### **Definitions**

- Missions
- Day School
- Boarding Schools

**-1. Housing** - The institution has been described as providing on-site housing or overnight lodging. This includes dormitory, orphanage, asylum, residential, boarding, home, jail, and quarters.

**-2. Education** - The institution has been described as providing formal academic or vocational training and instruction. This includes mission school, religious training,

**-3. Federal Support** - The institution has been described as receiving Federal Government funds or other Federal support. This includes agency, independent, contract, mission, contract with white schools, government, semi-government, under superintendency, and land or buildings or funds or supplies or services provided.

**-4. Timeframe** - The institution was operational before 1969 (prior to modern departmental Indian education programming including BIE).

[4:00:36 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 8 and emphasized that understanding the history of Native boarding schools in Alaska requires looking back to the 1493 Doctrine of Discovery. Access to land was often conditioned upon forced education or conversion. This doctrine facilitated the transfer of lands to Western European empires through forced education or conversion and was brought to North America by Protestant settlers, where it was reinterpreted by Charles Hodge and Archbold Alexander. The reinterpretation evolved the Doctrine of Election into a tool to promote ideological agendas.

[4:03:29 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 9 and stated that the policy for Protestant and Catholic boarding schools required indigenous people to either assimilate fully into American culture or face death. Protestants initially experimented with this policy in Oklahoma. In 1940, Robert Loughridge began institutionalizing boarding schools because he believed that for change to occur, students needed to be removed from their homes. Around 1950, Sheldon Jackson, under Mr. Loughridge's tutelage, became the superintendent of all boarding schools west of the Mississippi and established many schools.

[4:05:38 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 10 and stated that a Wyoming news article referenced Jackson's recognition of conflicts over resource extraction and proposed assimilated schools as a means of gaining access. The article indirectly mentioned the use of force by acknowledging nearby barracks of 1,200 men. He noted that forced assimilation was a recurring theme within Jackson's work.

[4:07:05 PM](#)

MR. JACUK stated that Jackson came to Alaska in 1877. Until recently, few primary sources on the Native boarding schools were known. The map in slide 11 is an example of inaccuracies created due to a lack of primary sources. ANHC has since located a map from a primary source that a peer-reviewed journal will publish in June.

[4:08:45 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 12 and said the Comity Plan began in 1880 and entailed splitting Alaska into sections for resource extraction and assigning a religious denomination to each section. He named various Christian denominations and the resources and areas in which they had assigned interest. He stated that it was the first time in history that Catholics and Protestant denominations agreed on something, which was the forced assimilation of Native children for monetary gain. He further stated that as an ordained religious leader, he has seen little evidence that conversion was a motive for assimilation.

[4:12:08 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 13 and said Native boarding schools were created in other areas of the world and a congressional body was created to sway their development. He quoted John Reed as saying, " It is cheaper to convert the Indians than it is to shoot them."

[4:13:34 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 14 and discussed the monetary gains of the schools. He stated that at the Eklutna Industrial Indian School in South Central Alaska, teachers and principals owned plots of land where children worked and trained. Records were found showing children ages birth to 14 years old were signed into indentured servanthood by non-English speaking parents, making the conversation not only about assimilation but also about slavery. Records also show that the American Baptist Church, which controlled Kodiak and South-Central Alaska, reported making over \$7 million in 1895. Statewide estimated profits reach billions of dollars.

[4:15:57 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 15 and discussed Sheldon Jackson's influence and militarization of boarding schools. He said it is a period where Native Boarding Schools are considered Native prison camps, not just in Alaska but elsewhere in the United States, such as Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. Although never explained, Jackson is referred to as the preserver of culture even though evidence is to the contrary, for example viewing Alaskan Native languages as retarding development.

[4:17:51 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 16 - 17 and discussed the recruitment of teachers through Protestant women's societies. He noted the portrayal of a Native boy in traditional clothing as an "Eskimo boy in a savage state," but once his hair is cut and he wears a suit, his picture is captioned with his name "David Skuvinka" to show he is deserving of a name. The next image shows a photo of a white teacher and her daughter living in Bethel, dressed in clothing similar to the boy when he was dressed in his "savage state." He opined that this represents Native culture being evil only when in the hands of Natives.

[4:20:01 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 20 and said in the lower-48 the government attempted to turn Native Americans into poor farmers. Since farming was not conducive to Alaska, Jackson established reindeer herding to domesticate, assimilate Natives, and feed extraction workers.

[4:20:56 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 21 and said it is important to take a historical and source-critical approach when doing research.

[4:21:26 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 22 and stated that physical and sexual abuse did not occur on an individual basis; rather, it was systematic because the actions were deliberate. The only known location proven to have children wear dog tags is Alaska.

[4:22:21 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 23 and said the photo of handoffs and a child sleeping chained to a bed, titled "A prisoner," is an internal document from a Methodist Episcopal church.

[4:23:45 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 24 and said most people do not know about or acknowledge Native Boarding School history and said a Presbyterian professor opined that forgetting the history was intentional:

[Original punctuation provided.]

#### **Historical Amnesia**

- No state-wide Curriculum that teaches about the atrocities and cultural genocide that took place at Sheldon Jackson Boarding School, Wrangell Institute, or any other Boarding School in Alaska.
- Most people do not know about or acknowledge the Boarding Schools in Alaska (especially the Churches)
- No real education about Sheldon Jackson
- Unable to connect structural violence w/ what has happened
  - Taking Children and cultural genocide is enough

[4:24:28 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 25 - 26 and spoke to the Structural Violence Model used by ANHC:

[Original punctuation provided.]

#### **Structural Violence Model**

- Structural Violence- the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is.
- Structural Violence & Historical Trauma
- Community vs. Individual
- Affects all Indigenous Peoples

- Recognizes the structures put into place that institutionalizes violence for Indigenous peoples
- Lets us know we are never alone

### **Structural Violence Model Applied**

- To be defined as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is.
- Violence that is "Psychological" and/or "Physical," which turns into a cycle
- Violence that was "positively" or "negatively" influenced.
- "At least we gave you..."
- Violence if "there is a hurt object that exists."
- Unseen Pain • Visible "subject that acts"
- Abuse of one vs. Many instances
- Whether this event was unintended or "intended" by the "subject."

[4:26:11 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 27 - 28 and discussed the importance of internal and external identity, specifically how Alaskan Natives see themselves and how society perceives them.

[Original punctuation provided.]

### **Data Tells a Story**

- More than 4 in 5 American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women (84.3 percent) have experienced violence in their lifetime.
- One out of every two AI/AN women have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime
- 40 percent Native Incarceration Rate - Alaska Native men and women are more likely to be arrested than any other race in Alaska. From a national perspective, AI/AN are more likely to be arrested than any other race.
- 60 percent Native children in Foster care
- Suicide rate 4 times the national average
- Homicides twice the national average, rape of Native women at a third higher than the national average, and underreported and accidental deaths by Natives disproportionate to their numbers.

[4:27:38 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 29 and said the Boarding School Initiative, volume I, and the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report are two pieces of work that are important to understanding the realities of assimilation. The ANHC is the only entity that has found primary sources through church records and local locations. He described the recent primary sources ANHC has located.

[4:29:10 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 30 and said within the last 20 years only two individuals have written exclusively on boarding schools in Alaska. It is important to tell individual stories and the story of Alaska.

[4:30:10 PM](#)

MR. JACUK moved to slide 31 and said the point of research is to look at the wound and identify truth so healing can occur. He said taking off the band aid and identifying the truth will bring healing to the living and the dead. Healing is needed to move from surviving to thriving.

[4:32:10 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked for an explanation of intergenerational and historical trauma and how it affects people.

[4:32:55 PM](#)

MR. JACUK said ANHC uses the structural violence model to understand the ongoing impact of historical trauma on Native communities. This approach links the broader structural issues to the individual experiences of intergenerational trauma. A key aspect is the transmission of identity; if Native individuals lack a positive self-identity, it can lead to various long-term issues. The speaker emphasizes that it's not just about isolated incidents but about how these realities shape the upbringing of Alaskan Natives, leading to cycles of abuse and substance misuse. Studies, including those on epigenetics, show that parental experiences of abuse can make their children more vulnerable to similar abuses, as evidenced by extensive research in Canada.

SENATOR STEVENS replied how trauma affects the mind and is perpetuated generationally is not fully understood but appears to be true.

[4:36:54 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF stated she wanted to share her experiences as a Native person growing up in modern Alaska. She stated she is an Olympic snowboarder who has encountered racism her entire life, with slurs like "homeless drunks" aimed at her and her family. She highlighted that she is not alone in these experiences and that her family has been victims of institutional violence. She noted that while boarding schools ended in 1969, the impact is still felt by many Alaskans. She referenced Drs. Charles and Worl, who spoke at a House Tribal Affairs hearing, sharing previously unheard first-person testimonies. She encouraged people to watch the hearing to learn about intergenerational trauma, stating that these testimonies and the research of ANHC validated her own feelings.

[4:40:12 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN noted that the state mandates all teachers to complete Alaska cultural coursework and students to earn a half credit in Alaska Native Studies. He highlighted the need for curriculum development and inquired if ANHC has taken any steps to provide such curriculum or coursework.

[4:41:08 PM](#)

MR. JACUK mentioned that ANHC currently offers a 3-hour class for teachers and is in the process of developing a more comprehensive curriculum. He emphasized that the real question isn't about who will write the curriculum but rather who will actually teach it.

CHAIR TOBIN said recent changes to the Alaska Reads Act now require school districts to quantify the professional development days dedicated to culturally relevant curricula. She suggested it is a good time for ANHC and school districts to find synergy.

[4:42:01 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN responded that history teachers teach Alaska Native studies every year. Sheldon Jackson and the Nelson Act are specifically called out in the Alaska history content standards. He stated he has taught this history to high school students. Many people make commentary about what is and is not taught in K-12 classrooms. He requested that people not make blanket statements about what is taught in classrooms. He suggested partnering with the creators of the Alaskool website and the Alaska Humanities Forum, that have attempted to maintain a foundational curriculum for stories on boarding schools. He opined that teachers around the state would appreciate the partnership in providing curriculum on this subject.

[4:43:35 PM](#)

MR. JACUK replied that he was speaking of the need for statewide teaching of boarding school history. He stated that he has participated in over 100 classes, and approximately three teachers were aware of the history. He mentioned that the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District informed him that it does not have a policy to teach this history. He stated that while some educators even deny Alaska's boarding school history, he is grateful for the individual teachers that do teach it.

[4:46:00 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on HJR 17; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[4:46:18 PM](#)

At ease

[4:46:32 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN reconvened the meeting.

[4:46:37 PM](#)

MS. CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF thanked members for their time and stated Representative McCormick wished he could have attended the hearing.

[4:47:25 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN solicited a motion.

[4:47:29 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS moved to report HJR 17, work order 33-LS1019\U, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[4:47:44 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN found no objection and HJR 17 was reported from the Senate Education Standing Committee.

[4:48:44 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Tobin adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 4:48 p.m.