

DOI SELF-GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

c/o Self-Governance Communication and Education

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December 21, 2018

The Honorable Tara MacLean Sweeney
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior
Main Interior Building, Room 4660
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Re: School Violence and Safety Measures for Native Children

Dear Assistant Secretary Sweeney:

On behalf of the Department of the Interior Self-Governance Advisory Committee (DOI-SGAC), I am writing to once again share our concerns and repeated requests to be included in the discussions and at the table as the Administration prepares a plan to address school violence and to develop safety measures. We question the level of safety for Indian children who attend Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), Tribal and Public schools. For the past two years, the SGAC has invited representatives from the Departments of Justice and Interior to address this question, as well as, to share details of their collective outreach efforts dealing with school violence and safety measures in Indian Country. We have appreciated the discussions but remain skeptical that our Native students are being provided every consideration possible compared to students throughout the rest of the Country. This is, in part, because BIE's *Strategic Direction for 2018 – 2023* document issued in August 2018 does not include its plans to protect Native students against school violence nor does the plan identify BIE's plans to coordinate with the Department of Justice. Therefore, the SGAC is requesting that you *establish a Tribal/Federal Committee, to target the BIE, Tribal and Public schools with Native students, to develop a plan to address school violence and safety measures.*

The SGAC finds it unfortunate that the Administration did not include the Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Education in the interdepartmental Federal Commission on School Safety (FCSS). The membership of the FCSS lacks the representation of Federal agencies with the greatest knowledge and experience working with American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AI-AN), Tribal governments, communities and our students. While the members of the FCSS may all provide key qualifications to make policy recommendations on school safety, violence and mass shootings, not including Interior/BIE or Tribes raises the question how thoroughly and effectively their recommendations will address the school safety and violence issues in our local rural Tribal communities?

Recent reports have estimated that school shootings have fueled a \$2.7 billion school safety and violence prevention industry; this does not include the billions more spent on actual man-power protection. It remains to be determined which safety measures do and do not protect students from gun violence. While there has been a great deal of Federal funding supporting research on such topics as the short and long-term effectiveness of school safety technology, what level of funding has been dedicated for Tribes to bolster school security and student safety? Some 90% of Native children attend public schools, which require state, local, and Tribal coordinated efforts on the implementation of school safety measures. Yet, it is unknown whether the BIE has initiated efforts to collect data that would demonstrate that such collaboration exists.

While there has been extensive research performed on the public health and safety of BIE schools from the structural, operations and maintenance perspectives, far less has been conducted on school safety and violence for AI/ANs. Indian Country has also been impacted by the tragedies of shootings – both at Red Lake and Tulalip – they are haunted by the loss of their youth, their lives have been changed forever and they are not receiving the long-term attention to help them better understand how to prevent future violent occurrences nor the resources to help them heal. Our Tribal citizens have grieved and mourned the loss of children just like Columbine, Sandy Hook and Parkland; but we have not received the support and outreach by the Federal government to get through our losses – this is such a sad statement to have to make.

We ask that you consider establishing a *Tribal/Federal Committee* to help AI/ANs identify the resources and support they need to prepare for the future and assistance to help in healing from the traumas of the past. If you would like additional information or to discuss this request in further detail, please contact Jay Spaan, Executive Director, Self-Governance Communication and Education (SGCE) at (918) 370-4258 or jays@tribalselfgov.org.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



W. Ron Allen
Tribal Chairman/CEO, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe and
Chairman, DOI-SGAC

Cc: Darren Cruzan Director, Office of Justice Services, BIA
Charles Addington, Deputy Bureau Director, Office of Justice Services, BIA
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