



Dear Rehoboth Alumni,

As part of our 120th anniversary reflections, we would like to share the following statement about our history as a boarding school. We recognize there will be various experiences and perspectives on this topic. It is our prayer that we may provide a way toward unity, and not division, within our community, by sharing these words.

Rehoboth Mission/Christian School (RCS) was established in 1903 after the 1896 purchase of 320 acres of land, then six miles east of the town of Gallup. The area was known as *Tsé Yaaniichii*- “where the red rocks go into the ground”. It was a mission school under the governance of the Christian Reformed Church of North America, and a boarding school among hundreds of Indian Boarding Schools established during that historical period. As more attention is being given to the history of Indian Boarding Schools in the United States, Rehoboth Christian School intends to re-address our own past and publicly profess our position on national efforts.

“In June 2021, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, a comprehensive effort to recognize the troubled legacy of federal Indian boarding school policies with the goal of addressing their intergenerational impact and to shed light on the traumas of the past.” ([bia.gov](https://www.bia.gov))

This Initiative is now linked to proposed legislation that would create a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian boarding schools, funded and administered from the Federal level, the first of its kind in our nation’s history.

The 2022-2023 Board of Directors of Rehoboth Christian School desires to publicly express our support of the Department of the Interior’s task force to “investigate and right the history of the boarding school experience in the United States” and in support of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act ([HR 5444](https://www.congress.gov/bills/117/5444)).

Our hope is that through careful examination of the past we can move forward in a way that brings reconciliation between God’s children of all ethnic backgrounds in accordance with our motto: Vigorously Academic, Beautifully Diverse, Thoroughly Christian.

In the United States, the Board School Era was a devastating time for Native American families and communities. Through policies and executive decisions that were directly counter to the health of Indigenous tribes, European settlers in America developed a pattern of systemic oppression to benefit their own interests through the acquisition of land and resources. These policies included the forced assimilation and conversion of Native peoples that often came through violence or threat of violence. Over a period of about 100 years, hundreds of thousands of Native American children were removed from their homes and families and placed in residential schools operated by either the federal government or, as in the case of Rehoboth,

churches. Read more about this history from the [National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#).

The cumulative events that occurred at these boarding schools across the nation can be called cultural genocide because of the intentional efforts to disrupt family systems, spiritual beliefs and practices, and ancestral lifeways that had developed over thousands of years. In addition to forced assimilation, it is now known that there was also widespread abuse of children in these schools.

Current understanding of the neurobiology of trauma and its impacts across generations demonstrates how fear and learned inferiority are not limited to those who directly experienced it, but are carried forward to future generations through biology, behavioral learning, and loss of identity, culture, and language. Many of the disparities evidenced in health and wellbeing among Native populations today can be traced back to this trauma and loss.

We lament that Rehoboth Mission School, now Rehoboth Christian School, was established and administered in this social and historical context. We understand that the lasting impacts of intergenerational trauma and systemic oppression of Native Peoples are still evident today, and affect our current students and community members in various ways. We lament that some Rehoboth students and families were subjected to these traumas in our school history. Understanding that words must be followed by actions, and words alone do not heal, we say without excuse or justification that we are truly sorry for the harm caused to those students and families.

Within our mission to “challenge students to know the Triune God”, we also respect and acknowledge that Diné (Navajo), A:shiwí (Zuni), and other Indigenous people have the right to choose personal faith and spiritual beliefs and embrace their cultural identity, which was not always the position of church-led boarding schools. We celebrate that many of our students and alumni have chosen a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and have a deep love for our school. We trust that seeds planted during a Rehoboth education will grow through the work of the Holy Spirit. Our [Faith Statement](#) and [Educational Philosophy](#) can be read on our website by following the links.

As a Christian school, we value and uphold the cultural identity of all our students and families as created in the image of God. Because of the way that Navajo language and culture was intentionally taken from students during the Boarding School Era, we commit to support the revitalization of language and culture by teaching Navajo language at all grade levels during a Rehoboth education, and we intentionally celebrate the cultural identity of our Native American students as a counter-message to the history of colonization and genocide.

We resolve to remain open to and cooperate with investigations into our institutional history and welcome the truthful storytelling of our community members, whatever their experience, in the interest of healing historical wounds, apologizing for harm done, and healing relationships with our community.
