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For the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs

The United States was built on land stolen from Indigenous peoples. The stealing and acquisition of land required violence and dispossession. By the late 19th Century, the United States had failed in its attempts at genocide of Indigenous peoples in North America, but had successfully confined most tribes to small portions of their homelands, or forcibly removed

enacted other policies to force Natives to assimilate to Anglo-dominated culture. One of these experiments was focused on boarding schools, which aimed to isolate children from their tribes and families, strip them of their language and other tangible modes of culture, and teach trades such as carpentry, agriculture, or laundering. The flagship institution of this time was the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania. Considered to be a great success, Carlisle was used as a model for subsequent

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from 1891 to 1911. Additionally, two on-reservation schools also existed in Ignacio and Towaoc, operating from the 1890s to around 1920. The Catholic run Good Shepherd Industrial School operated for an unknown length of time in Denver in the 1880s.

The [Federal Indian Boarding School Research Program Act](#) (HB22-1327) was signed while attending th

[HB22-1327](#) was advocated for by the leadership of Fort Lewis College, in consultation with the two Colorado Ute Tribes. Fort Lewis College traces its roots to the school at Hesperus, located twenty miles from the present-day campus, and recognizes the importance of reckoning with this history.



The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) convened a Task Force in January 2021 in response to concerns raised by the Southern Ute Indian Tribe about the possibility of student burials at the Teller Institute, a portion of which is now the Grand Junction Regional Center. The Task Force membership consisted of a dynamic group of subject matter experts, Tribal representatives, staff from several State Agencies, and concerned community members. The primary objective of the Task Force was to provide recommendations to the CDHS Executive Director about the process of locating potential student burial sites.

The Task Force concluded in November 2021 after finalizing three recommendations:

1. In an effort to move forward with formal Tribal consultations, the Task Force recommends that as its primary purpose has been achieved, to disband.
2. Multi-Nation consultations should be initiated between the State of Colorado and the Tribes who had students with documented attendance at the Teller Institute. Additionally, if lineal descendants of individual students who perished at the Teller Institute can be identified, the State of Colorado will consult with those descendants.
3. Perform archival research and remote sensing ground work to help determine whether there are burials on the grounds of the Grand Junction Regional Center (formerly the Teller Institute). This should be performed with sensitivity not only for the tribes and descendants of the deceased, but for the residents who currently live on the grounds.

Today, CDHS is well on its way to meeting the spirit and the letter of the recommendations. The Task Force has been disbanded. On April 26th, 2021 CDHS held a multi-Nation Tribal consultation in partnership with History Colorado leadership and staff, facilitated by the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, and with a representative from NARF and a trusted Elder Advisor from the Pawnee Nation. Representatives from the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe; Southern Ute Indian Tribe; Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska; Eastern Shoshone Tribe; and San Carlos Apache Tribe attended in person. Additionally, representatives from the Tohono O'odham attended virtually. Finally, historians from Alpine Archaeological Consultants and remote sensing professionals from the Colorado School of Mines were present to discuss how research could be conducted. The consultation resulted in a plan for appropriate ways to attempt to locate student burials using remote sensing methods or technologies that do not disturb the ground surface.

Remote sensing work commenced at portions of the former Teller Institute in July 2022, focusing on the most likely areas of the property to contain a cemetery or burials. The Colorado School of Mines conducted surveys using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), LiDar, Magnetometer, photogrammetry and GEM2 which uses frequency domain electromagnetics. The results are still in post-processing.

Much of the archival work has been focused on local or state archives and includes research conducted at the State Archives, History Colorado and other repositories in Denver, Grand Junction, and on-line. CDHS also had historic documents on site that were retrieved by History

Colorado staff for the State Archives and are currently being reviewed for any relevant information to the boarding school.

At the April 26th consultation, History Colorado and Alpine Archaeological Consultants provided thumb drives of all the historic documents that had been collected so far related to the Teller Institute. We plan on providing not only synthesized information, but all primary documents to the tribes who had students in attendance at the schools. CDHS is currently developing a secure website to share information more efficiently with the appropriate Tribal governments.

CDHS has made all documentation regarding the Task Force publicly available on their website at <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/teller-institute-task-force>. This work and the Tribal consultations are currently being funded through a State Historical Fund grant.

This past legislative session, State Representatives from across Colorado recognized the trauma of the boarding school legacy and the need to both acknowledge and understand Colorado's history with Federal Indian Boarding schools.

Preservation Offices of both the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe.

Currently, History Colorado anticipates that the bulk of remote sensing work will occur in late fall with draft reports available for review by spring. Archival research is on-going, with trips to national archives and other repositories planned for the late fall and early winter with draft reports available for review by the spring.

Multi-nation consultations are currently being planned for both the Teller Institute and the Fort Lewis Indian Boarding School effort by CCIA staff and are tentatively scheduled for late October.

SB-16-178

Summary of Legislation: Grand Junction Regional Center Campus

SESSION: 2016 Regular Session

SUBJECT: Capital Construction

BILL SUMMARY:

This bill, recommended by the Joint Budget Committee (JBC), directs the Department of Human Services (DHS) to vacate the Grand Junction Regional Center (GJRC) campus, within the parameters of certain guiding principles related to relocating individuals receiving services on the campus to home-like settings of their choosing, and to list the campus for sale no later than July 1, 2018.

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