



NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

June 23, 2022

## **NIEA CELEBRATES THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDIAN EDUCATION ACT**

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and its members commemorate the **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Indian Education Act**, signed into law on June 23, 1972. This landmark piece of legislation ushered in a new era of educational sovereignty for Native students.

The Indian Education Act (IEA) marked the first significant piece of legislation passed by the U.S. Government to address education rights for American Indian and Alaska Native children. It also established the Office of Indian Education at the Department of the Education and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education, along with providing federal funds for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) education at all grade levels.

In addition, the IEA authorized formula programs and several competitive grant programs for Native children and adults. It also empowers American Indian and Alaska Native parents to form advisory boards for federally operated boarding schools and public schools that have programs meeting the unique needs of Native students.

This landmark legislation also marks the closure of the traumatic era of Indian Boarding Schools from 1819-1969. Indian Boarding Schools instigated and funded through federal policy sought to assimilate Native people by weaponizing education systems to eradicate Native culture, language, and identity.

The passage of the IEA in 1972 launched a new era in which education has been reclaimed as a tool for preserving cultural heritage and empowering Native people to thrive through culturally relevant teaching and direct access to resources. This flagship piece of legislation is a celebration of survival, resiliency, and reclamation that has thrived over the last 50 years of work setting the stage for the future of education sovereignty for Native people.

“The Indian Education Act was a turning point in teaching our children,” said Jason Dropik, NIEA President. “After half a century, there is still much work to be done to ensure Native leaders are strategically involved in managing their educational system. The goals of education equity and sovereignty can only be achieved through active engagement with parents and the community. NIEA is working to elevate the voices of Parent Advisory Committees – a provision of the law to have their message heard by policy makers around the country.”



NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The **National Indian Education Association**, founded in 1969 by Native educators who demanded solutions to improve the education system for Native children, was a strong advocate for this legislation and has been at the forefront of the movement to ensure comprehensive, culture-based educational opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

“The Indian Education Act is critical for improving the quality of education for American Indians and Alaska Natives and came at a time when cultural decline was commonplace within tribal communities,” said Teresa Sarabia, Alaska Representative, NIEA Board Member. “The work that NIEA is doing to educate all children about the true history of Native Nations and our work to ensure civil rights in our communities is directly tied to the passage of this law.”

NIEA will continue this legacy work through advocacy and programming that brings together collaborative partners, tribal leaders, educators, teachers, parents, and community members to impact the future of Native education. This October, NIEA will hold its 53rd Annual Convention and Trade Show in Oklahoma City. Our theme this year is **Education Sovereignty - Our Choice**. We are in an era of Native education empowered through tribal sovereignty, self-governance, language revitalization, and the actualization of the impact of our Indigenous knowledge.

For more information visit [www.niea.org](http://www.niea.org) or contact Diana Cournoyer at [dcournoyer@niea.org](mailto:dcournoyer@niea.org).