

Statement of Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Committee on Indian Affairs
Hearing on the Reauthorization of the ESEA
October 27, 1999

Today we will receive testimony on the Indian titles and provisions in the draft reauthorization for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("ESEA").

Because of its broad jurisdiction and the many problems facing Indian country, this Committee hears from the tribes on many issues: housing, health care, gaming, road construction, and a host of others.

None in my mind is more critical to the health and welfare of Native communities than education.

Since the issue of Indian education was subject to a special subcommittee in the 1960's, there has been progress made but as we all know there is a long way to go.

Indian kids have high dropout rates, sub-standard academic achievement, alcohol and substance abuse problems, teen pregnancy, and a host of other problems that are holding Native people back from getting the kind of education today's market and world demands.

As a former teacher and as Chairman of this Committee I believe that in the long-run, education --- and particularly higher education --- holds the key to brighter futures for Native people.

I will place the rest of my statement in the record, but let me just say that over the next couple of months we will have an opportunity to scrutinize the bills that have been offered to reauthorize the ESEA.

My understanding is that Senator Jeffords' "Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee" (HELP) does not expect to markup the bill until at least January of next year.