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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
"THE ROAD TO HEALING" TOUR  
MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE  
MILLE LACS BAND COMMUNITY CENTER  
18458 MINOBIMAADIZI LOOP  
ONAMIA, MINNESOTA 56359  
JUNE 3, 2023

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Appearances:

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs

Bryan Newland

1 (Whereupon, the conference  
2 commenced at 10:45 a.m.)

3 (Tribal music playing)

4  
5 (Presentation of flags)

6  
7 MR. HARRINGTON: (Speaking  
8 in native tongue). Brief translation  
9 of that and tobacco offering to our  
10 colleagues (inaudible).

11 And so I -- I did that to  
12 the best of my ability, and then also  
13 ask that for everybody who's gonna be  
14 speaking today that they're able to  
15 speak clearly and read clearly.

16 And that whatever their --  
17 whatever they do speak, it is going to  
18 support them in moving forward in their  
19 life and also that our ministers, our  
20 leaders, are able to contain their  
21 testimony and listen with them so which  
22 in (inaudible).

23 MR. HARRINGTON: (Speaking  
24 in native tongue). I was asked to talk  
25 a little bit about the (inaudible) that

1 brought you here today.

2 And first of all I wanted to  
3 acknowledge the two leaders that has  
4 come here today from the various  
5 tribes. The leaders who are going to  
6 get to acknowledge that and make sure  
7 that their -- that their loved ones are  
8 recognized, and they get to share their  
9 story today.

10 But the story that I was  
11 told about today was very similar. I,  
12 you know, I always told myself, you  
13 know, about how else you can tell their  
14 story?

15 Some people make a big deal  
16 about it, it was miserable. But they  
17 did that it was the way, it was a long  
18 time ago (inaudible). There was an old  
19 man that was there.

20 There was a dress in there,  
21 he called a (inaudible) make dresses.  
22 And then that's (inaudible) so she  
23 convinced them to make them so they  
24 made these dresses.

25 One was red, one was yellow,

1 one was blue and one was green. They  
2 also had a brother that would sit with  
3 them, and they brought those dresses in  
4 and -- to the -- to the bands.

5 And they had jingle dresses  
6 like it and their young relative was so  
7 sick so they (inaudible). But over the  
8 -- over the time I had with her she was  
9 getting better.

10 Pretty soon she was sitting  
11 up, pretty soon she was standing up and  
12 then by the end the night she was out  
13 there dancing.

14 Although dancing was  
15 (inaudible) dresses on and (inaudible).  
16 Then they ship it here in Mille Lacs  
17 and that's how those dresses became  
18 known as healing -- healing dresses.

19 And others communities that  
20 share their story, too. For all, and  
21 how often here in Mille Lacs.

22 So everybody gives their  
23 attention here today, and I would like  
24 to welcome to the stage our chief for  
25 the Mille Lacs Band the Ojibwe, my

1 daughter, (inaudible).

2 MS. BENJAMIN: (Speaking in  
3 native tongue). I want to start off by  
4 saying thank you for speaking on our  
5 behalf, the tribal group, the  
6 medicines, the people and how are our  
7 drum leaders have been today. We  
8 appreciate that.

9 Certainly we have one of our  
10 big drums here from Owatonna, another  
11 of our community, so to get the entire  
12 group to visit with us a little bit  
13 today was very helpful and we  
14 appreciate that.

15 And I want to offer a  
16 welcome to the speaker from last week,  
17 Secretary Haaland. This is for Mille  
18 Lacs and also leading on The Road to  
19 Healing initiative.

20 In politics it's common for  
21 leaders to hear nice things about  
22 themselves from others. Often it is  
23 more about the position they hold  
24 rather than what do with it.

25 Madam Secretary, I want to

1 take a moment to let you know you have  
2 done more here with your cabinet  
3 position than any other cabinet member  
4 who came before you. That is just not  
5 flattery, that actually is the truth.

6 Now, you have been the  
7 secretary of this and you're in cabinet  
8 team, you're a hard worker for this.

9 We are also want to welcome  
10 the other brothers and sisters from the  
11 midwest regional who are here today to  
12 share their stories about how they were  
13 affected.

14 The boarding schools was  
15 part of a national campaign to gain  
16 control over Indian land and regional  
17 people.

18 In Minnesota the doctrine  
19 which was called the Nelson Act in this  
20 state was hand in hand raised voice.

21 Federal also want to  
22 document change and help Indian  
23 children while providing a home at the  
24 same time, thinking these kids would  
25 grow up and become adults who no longer

1           cared about the homeland and  
2           traditions. Of course, they were  
3           wrong.

4                     Thinking about boarding  
5           schools and the smallest victims here.  
6           It's so hard -- heart breaking. When  
7           we talk about oppression I also want to  
8           deliver a message.

9                     In my community, and this  
10          was told by one of the elders there,  
11          she told that to me a couple of years  
12          ago, she said when the Indian agents  
13          came around the first family would be  
14          out there, would blow a whistle.

15                    And then that whistle would  
16          be blown to alert the following  
17          families that the agent was here and so  
18          time to hide the kids, making sure that  
19          they don't take them.

20                    Many children escaped  
21          boarding schools because this community  
22          organized acts of resistance.

23                    Not too long ago a letter  
24          was found by a woman of the church, and  
25          it was written in 1890 by a boarding



1 school's superintendent.

2 He was frustrated, he wrote  
3 about his failures and convinced  
4 families to give women and children  
5 away. The parents at that time said,  
6 "No, we don't want our children to  
7 leave home." What are we gonna do  
8 about our children when they're not  
9 here.

10 Who's gonna love and who's  
11 gonna care for them? Who's gonna help  
12 them when they need help with their  
13 raising or other times of need.

14 And so he wrote, "I have  
15 never anywhere met such a stubborn  
16 resistance, I have a case with these  
17 Mille Lacs Indians."

18 There are so many Mille Lacs  
19 Lake boarding schools left, but I not  
20 want these acts of resistance to get  
21 lost in history.

22 To all survivors that are  
23 here today, I want to know your  
24 survival was a major act of resistance.  
25 Today we offer you a safe place to

1 share your story.

2 In another part of the world  
3 something was happening that the world  
4 was unaware of. In February the U.S.  
5 State Department released to the court,  
6 it entailed how Russians forcibly  
7 removed over 6,000 Ukrainian children  
8 from their families without their  
9 parents consent.

10 That number is not accurate,  
11 at least 20,000 children. Russian  
12 children to what they called child  
13 (inaudible) centers spread throughout  
14 Russia, as far away as (inaudible).

15 Thousands of lives were  
16 lost. Children whose age ranged from  
17 toddlers to teenagers were being held  
18 in centers. Russia called these  
19 centers, re-education centers.  
20 Designed to help poor children receive  
21 a better education and better housing  
22 than they would at their homes in  
23 Ukraine.

24 They call it the human --  
25 humanitarian projects. The U.S. State

1 Department has called Russia war on  
2 these children and their parents.

3 Think about that today.  
4 Even today, a dictator has taken off  
5 the original disturbing playbook that's  
6 started in the United States, in order  
7 to gain control of the land and  
8 resources of a another nation. And the  
9 history with the long generations.

10 The United States has much  
11 to become accountable for that many  
12 would forever forget.

13 Secretary Haaland for nearly  
14 a 150 years of this, called the White  
15 Project, war crimes against people.  
16 And this determination to make American  
17 boarding schools in a history-making  
18 act of resistance.

19 You have been a  
20 transformational leader in this  
21 movement and we are so grateful to be a  
22 part of it. (Applause).

23 MS. HAALAND: Good morning.  
24 Sorry, I'll have to use my inside  
25 voice. Hello everyone. I would like

1 to say welcome.

2 My name is Deborah Haaland  
3 and I'm so glad to be here with all of  
4 you today. Thank you very much to  
5 everyone. Thank you for hosting us.  
6 Thank you for your leadership.

7 Thank you for everything  
8 that you do for your people in the  
9 movement across the country. And also  
10 thank you for your leadership and those  
11 who take the time out of your schedule  
12 to be with us today.

13 I also want to acknowledge  
14 the presence of our (inaudible). She  
15 is my dear friend; I just want to thank  
16 you for being here today. (Applause).

17 I also want to acknowledge  
18 the veterans in the room. It's the  
19 veteran who -- who makes -- and any  
20 veteran that served, we're very  
21 grateful for your service to our  
22 country. Thank you very much.  
23 (Applause).

24 I also wish to acknowledge  
25 the director of the National and

1 (inaudible). She is a member and  
2 valued partner in the organizational  
3 initiative.

4 She -- she got to be there  
5 immediately after the beginning of the  
6 initiative. She came to my office  
7 asking if she could help and she has  
8 been here ever since, very grateful to  
9 you for traveling all this way. Thank  
10 you so much.

11 Thank you for the  
12 opportunity. Thank you to everyone  
13 here, it is a true honor for me to be  
14 here. It's my first year in Mille Lacs  
15 so thank you for the warm welcome.  
16 And, of course, the homeland of the  
17 Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

18 I'm not going to speak very  
19 long, even though I might seem to get a  
20 bit long. Because I'm here to listen  
21 to all of you.

22 Your voices are important to  
23 me and I thank you for your willingness  
24 to share your stories.

25 Federal (inaudible) touch

1 every and each person I know. Some are  
2 survivors, some of decedents, but we  
3 all carry this painful legacy in our  
4 hearts.

5 Deeply ingrained in so many  
6 of us is the trauma that these policies  
7 and these places have inflicted. My  
8 ancestors and many of yours endured the  
9 hardships of Indian boarding schools.  
10 And the policy carried out by the  
11 Department of (inaudible).

12 This is the first time in  
13 the history in the United States  
14 Cabinet Secretary coming to the table  
15 with the shared trauma.

16 That's not lost on me and I  
17 return to you my position for the good  
18 of the people. I went with the  
19 boarding school initiative in 2021 to  
20 understand all the efforts to recognize  
21 the boarding schools policies, with the  
22 goals of making intergenerational  
23 impact and survival trauma of the past.

24 In Minnesota alone, there  
25 were 21 boarding schools, leaving

1           intergenerational impacts that the  
2           present community represents here  
3           today.

4                       It is my goal to address the  
5           shared trauma that many of us carry.  
6           To do that we need to tell our stories.  
7           Today is part of that journey.

8                       Through The Road to Healing,  
9           our goal is to create opportunity for  
10          the people to share their story. But  
11          also will help for trauma support and  
12          facilitate healing.

13                      Minnesota is part of the The  
14          Road to Healing, which is a year-long  
15          tour across the country to provide an  
16          opportunity to talk about the boarding  
17          schools; an opportunity to make known  
18          the shared experience.

19                      I want people to know that  
20          I'm here. I will listen; I will grieve  
21          with you. I will also feel your pain.

22                      As we mourn for the loss,  
23          please know we still have so much to  
24          gain. The healing that will help our  
25          communities will not be quickly done.

1                   This is one step among many  
2                   that we will take to strengthen and  
3                   rebuild bonds with the native community  
4                   everywhere.

5                   Those steps have the  
6                   potential to alternate and shape our  
7                   future. I'm thankful for each of you  
8                   in stepping forward to share your  
9                   stories today. I know it's not easy.

10                  I also want to acknowledge  
11                  the folks who may not say a word today  
12                  but will be there to support other  
13                  members in their effort to get the  
14                  truth out.

15                  Now I will turn it over to  
16                  assistant secretary Bryan Newland, my  
17                  friend and colleague, a person who's  
18                  team diligently worked incredibly hard  
19                  to make the boarding school initiative  
20                  possible. (Applause).

21                  MR. NEWLAND: Thank you,  
22                  Madam secretary. And to the Nation.  
23                  And I am I'm saying at this particular  
24                  time to say this morning the  
25                  (inaudible).



1                   My name is Bryan Newland. I  
2                   have the privilege as serving assistant  
3                   secretary for Indian Affairs Chief.  
4                   I'm a tribal member of Red Wing Band  
5                   from where we're at right now.

6                   You know, we were coming in  
7                   this morning and driving along the lake  
8                   here and the sun was shining off of it,  
9                   it was beautiful. Just an absolutely  
10                  beautiful day. And it's your homeland  
11                  and is here to enjoy and view.

12                  And in talking about  
13                  resistance, it's clear that you have  
14                  this powerful place across this state  
15                  as a people. And we're very grateful  
16                  that you've welcomed us here.

17                  As the Secretary mentioned,  
18                  there were 21 boarding schools in  
19                  Minnesota and we're gonna keep  
20                  investigating this boarding school  
21                  system to learn about your experience  
22                  at these specific schools.

23                  And to tell the story of the  
24                  overall system of the -- these boarding  
25                  schools and what they would do and what

1           they have done to people across the  
2           country.

3                         In addition to hearing from  
4           people today, our next steps are going  
5           to include the identifying of grave  
6           sites, both marked and unmarked as  
7           well, at these schools across the  
8           country.

9                         And trying to determine how  
10          much money and support the United  
11          States Federal Government provided to  
12          these boarding schools over a century  
13          and a half.

14                        We also want to make sure  
15          that we hear from tribal leaders and  
16          elders across the state to provide what  
17          should be taken into account throughout  
18          this investigation.

19                        I also want to make a few  
20          other acknowledgments as well before we  
21          turn the mic over and -- and close our  
22          mouths, I want to make sure we got to  
23          acknowledge our Department of Health  
24          and Human Services colleagues and  
25          partners with us.

1                   As well as friends and  
2                   partners in the Department of Indian  
3                   Affairs who support this conversation.  
4                   We also acknowledge them.

5                   I want to make sure that I  
6                   recognize our team and director of  
7                   Federal Education. Thank you.  
8                   (Applause).

9                   Now, this is a very  
10                  important role in this initiative and,  
11                  of course, to make it better we would  
12                  like to get your leadership and  
13                  inspiration across the country and your  
14                  leadership here as well, in welcoming  
15                  us.

16                  Also, I want to recognize an  
17                  author (inaudible), who is here with us  
18                  from the National Institute of Health  
19                  (inaudible) that's reinforcing our  
20                  investigative work.

21                  And, of course, we want to  
22                  recognize tribal leaders that are here  
23                  this morning, and thank you for coming  
24                  on behalf of the people of your  
25                  communities.

1                   So, just a few housekeeping  
2                   items. We want to make sure that this  
3                   is a space for boarding school  
4                   survivors and their relatives and  
5                   families who wish to share their  
6                   experiences and tell their story about  
7                   the boarding school system.

8                   We know that there are a lot  
9                   of people across the nation that really  
10                  have been -- each person has  
11                  essentially been effected by this  
12                  boarding school in some way.

13                  And had -- we all have  
14                  thoughts and views on it, and we don't  
15                  ever want to prevent or take away from  
16                  sharing with us.

17                  We want to make sure that  
18                  today's session is focussed on people  
19                  to share their boarding school  
20                  experiences.

21                  And those of you who want to  
22                  share other thoughts with us, we  
23                  welcome you to send by e-mail or  
24                  further submissions included in our  
25                  work.

1                   To raise discussion today,  
2                   we just ask you to raise your hand;  
3                   we've got mic runners here and mic  
4                   runners there (indicating).

5                   All right. And what we're  
6                   gonna do is just try to go to people in  
7                   order as they raise their hands.

8                   We are building this session  
9                   into our investigation so we would ask  
10                  you to speak your name before you  
11                  speak, your tribal affiliation and any  
12                  particular school you want to reference  
13                  and speak about in your comments.

14                  Also, I know that we have a  
15                  few members of press who are here  
16                  today. They're here for the first  
17                  hour. The session will be on the  
18                  record with the press and we'll take a  
19                  break and excuse them.

20                  So, if you wish to make a  
21                  comment and don't want to have it  
22                  reported on the news or in the  
23                  newspaper you can wait until after the  
24                  first hour.

25                  We also have a court

1 reporter who's taking a transcript of  
2 the session. Again, so we can use what  
3 we hear today in our investigation.

4 Under Federal law, sometimes  
5 we have to turn over information to the  
6 press, so I just want to make sure you  
7 all know that ahead of time.

8 Our plan is to stay well  
9 into the afternoon, the late afternoon,  
10 to hear from as many people as possible  
11 and we're gonna do what we can to make  
12 sure we hear from people.

13 We know that this is often  
14 difficult, so we're just sharing. And  
15 a lot of people don't feel comfortable  
16 and that's also fine.

17 There are time limits on  
18 speaking as well, so if you're going to  
19 speak today, be mindful that there are  
20 people who traveled here today who also  
21 wish to speak. And just to show them  
22 respect by trying to keep your comments  
23 as concise as possible.

24 We also have the house  
25 speakers, so that's going to be a

1 conversation. We have folks available  
2 here to provide trauma counseling on  
3 site, if this gets too much for you or  
4 you need that assistance, we have that  
5 outside in the hallway there.

6 And they can take you to a  
7 private room and hear from you and  
8 counsel to make sure that you have the  
9 followup care as best as they can.

10 Also, we always want to make  
11 sure that you take care of yourself  
12 during these conversations. Take  
13 breaks, drink water and be kind to  
14 yourself and those that are around you  
15 because this is very difficult and  
16 painful for so many of us.

17 And to those of you who have  
18 come today to experience these boarding  
19 schools experiences, I want to say --  
20 we want to say thank you for coming  
21 here today and sharing your experience  
22 with us, (inaudible) American people.

23 We want you to know that  
24 you're not alone, we're here with you  
25 through this and we are trying to

1           ensure that we tell the whole story and  
2           the truth about this federal boarding  
3           school system.

4                         So with that, I'm gonna put  
5           the mic down and turn it over to you.  
6           In one hour we'll take a short break  
7           and excuse members of the press from  
8           the room.

9                         We'll make sure you take  
10          some photos of the secretary for those  
11          of you that want to do that. We'll  
12          make time for that later on today. So  
13          with that I'll turn it over.

14                        MS. BENJAMIN: (Speaking in  
15          native tongue). I wanted to mention a  
16          few things, because this affects so  
17          many of us in so many different ways.

18                        My 15 seconds of fame came a  
19          couple years ago when I decided to  
20          acknowledge congressman Haaland and all  
21          she has give us in sending us to battle  
22          -- I'm sorry, (inaudible) because it's  
23          for the work that they've done.

24                        Aside from this, they made  
25          the role models that come and fill



1 roles and it was, you know, to that for  
2 that.

3 And also for them to come  
4 here and to listen to other people as  
5 they share some of their stories that  
6 we, as kind of the younger generation  
7 or the next generation coming up, can  
8 help with the healing, that's so, so  
9 much needed.

10 And Secretary Haaland for  
11 listening to us and getting classes for  
12 us.

13 SPEAKER: (Speaking in  
14 native tongue). Because they would  
15 talk about waking up or coming to or  
16 coming back to consciousness two or  
17 three years later. They knew how to  
18 speak English and they apparently  
19 functioned all that time and had the  
20 memory of it.

21 And I thank you. I think  
22 that was painful that that happened to  
23 a lot of people. So thank you for  
24 letting me talk to you.

25 MR. NEWLAND: Do we have any

1 other speakers? Any other -- anyone  
2 else who wishes to speak? Okay.

3 MS. BARBER: Bonjour. My  
4 name -- can you hear me? My name is  
5 Glenda Barber I'm a counsel person from  
6 Lac Courte Oreilles.

7 We have the Hayward Indian  
8 boarding school near our reservation,  
9 and I believe there was some Mille Lacs  
10 members that also attended -- attended.

11 We wanted -- I've heard  
12 stories about it, but it's our private  
13 land now, it's all been developed. I  
14 don't know how we're gonna prove  
15 anything.

16 We can't go excavating on  
17 private homeowner's lands, so I -- I  
18 really would like to find a way to look  
19 into it.

20 I -- it was maybe a year  
21 ago, all over the news, Paris Hilton  
22 was making the rounds, talking about  
23 her experience in boarding schools.

24 She was on the news on CNN,  
25 full coverage, pretty blond girl, how

1 she suffered in the boarding schools.

2 What got me was the anger  
3 listen to her story; she was crying.  
4 And then she mentioned, you know what  
5 this reminds me of what -- what I  
6 recall... I expected her to say the  
7 Indian boarding schools, the  
8 experiences that the children faced.

9 But she said it reminds me  
10 of Brittany Spears (chuckling). It was  
11 bad.

12 So the pretty blond girl  
13 will get all the coverage, everybody  
14 will listen, nationally, to her story  
15 about Indian boarding schools. About  
16 her experience in the boarding schools.  
17 But where -- there's nothing said about  
18 us; we don't get the coverage.

19 And that's all I want to  
20 say. And I thank you, Ms. Haaland for  
21 bringing this out in the open, but I  
22 hope the press brings it out more.  
23 Thank you.

24 MS. BARBER: Good morning.  
25 I'm Rose Barber, from Lac Courte

1           Oreilles, and I have very little of the  
2           language. But I help people on other  
3           stuff.

4                       And I listened to my  
5           cousins, (inaudible) Barber, talk about  
6           Sherman Indian school in California.  
7           She also worked at the one in Wahpeton,  
8           North Dakota.

9                       And when she worked in  
10          Wahpeton, North Dakota, she would tell  
11          us about how she worked in the little  
12          boy's dorm.

13                      And she would us about how  
14          those kids just cried so much. And  
15          they -- they wanted to go home, you  
16          know, because you're talking about  
17          little bitty kids, you know.

18                      And so she always said she  
19          hoped -- she worked there for like, I  
20          think it was, I don't know, 25 or 30  
21          years.

22                      And she said that Sherman  
23          Riverton in California and also in  
24          North Dakota, she tried to provide a  
25          little warmth.

1                   Because that's what some of  
2                   our children always needed. And we can  
3                   see clearly some of the effects, the  
4                   trauma that so many suffered.

5                   But we also can see some of  
6                   the, kind of, good points is our mother  
7                   went to Mount Pleasant, Michigan to a  
8                   boarding school, and I don't know all  
9                   her stories about that.

10                  But I do know her stories  
11                  about there was a boarding school in, I  
12                  think it Rhinelander, Wisconsin, and  
13                  she was the Lac du Flambeau tribal  
14                  member.

15                  So they would come and get  
16                  those kids, six, seven years old, they  
17                  would get them at I think it was 6:00  
18                  in the morning, and they didn't get  
19                  back home from -- it was more like a  
20                  base school, so they wouldn't get back  
21                  home until 6:00 at night.

22                  And for little kids, you  
23                  know, to not be able to speak their  
24                  language. And so to learn a whole new  
25                  language and to be affected by -- I

1 mean, I might as well say it, they were  
2 affected by white culture.

3 You know, many of us have  
4 very little culture. I -- I was  
5 educated and lost a lot of the  
6 opportunity to learn my language, but  
7 that was always preferred, my choice.

8 But now in looking back and  
9 remembering some of my mother's words,  
10 you know, she would talk about how it  
11 was so awful, you know, for a bunch of  
12 women with little kids, they were taken  
13 from their home.

14 But one of the -- the  
15 positive things is they were returned  
16 every night. So they could use their  
17 language, you know.

18 But when you think about all  
19 of the affects, you know, that boarding  
20 schools have had...

21 Some of the things that she  
22 talked about was learning to be a  
23 seamstress, a cook, you know, all these  
24 kind of things that were sort of  
25 pointed to and not -- I mean, how many

1 women who lived those many years ago  
2 were ever offered an opportunity or  
3 given opportunities to be leaders, you  
4 know, like our -- our (inaudible) who  
5 is a leader, you know, Rachel here,  
6 Menomonee.

7 You know, you think of that.  
8 Okay, so they come from areas where  
9 maybe they were not as affected as some  
10 of the other ones, or the little  
11 children Val talks about, you know.

12 I was lucky enough not to go  
13 to boarding schools, but I've heard so  
14 much from our parents. My father,  
15 Edward Barber, was a judge at Lac  
16 Courte Oreilles, and he was also an  
17 educator in BIE schools where we went,  
18 you know, many years ago.

19 But one of the things I can  
20 remember him talking about is that in  
21 the boarding school that Glenda talked  
22 about, he talked about how that was --  
23 people did die there, you know.

24 But they were just sort of  
25 kids who just, you know, if they died

1           it was quieted down, they were just  
2           taken out or -- or -- and he did say  
3           that he wasn't aware of where they  
4           buried them, but they just buried them.

5                     They didn't -- I mean  
6           especially in our culture we're used  
7           to, you know, helping our people on  
8           their journey, helping them journey to  
9           the spirit world.

10                    And it's very important for  
11           them to have someone speak the language  
12           to them when they're going. And in  
13           many cases -- he never talked about how  
14           many kids, how many he knew that died.

15                    But he would talk about how  
16           -- how sad it was that they did not  
17           have that because they weren't returned  
18           to their families, even though they  
19           were right from Lac Courte Oreilles, or  
20           they were right from Lac du Flambeau.

21                    You know, and I don't know  
22           about the ones from Mille Lacs, maybe  
23           they were -- they were brought -- they  
24           were returned.

25                    So, one of the things that I



1           wanted to say -- I'm one of those  
2           long-winded people, but one of things I  
3           wanted to say is thank you so much for  
4           all that you're doing and how this is  
5           bringing us out.

6                         You know, I want to hear  
7           this lady here from Alaska's story. So  
8           I'll give her the mic. Yes, if you're  
9           ready. Is that okay? (Chuckling).  
10          Because I could go on and on.  
11          (Laughing). Thank you.

12                        SPEAKER: Well, I'm scared.  
13          And I have to thank my daughter,  
14          Alisha, and Tad for challenging --  
15          taking time to remember.

16                        My daughter went to college  
17          in Duluth, and I didn't want her to go  
18          by herself. She paid for her school, I  
19          went with her, I learned some, and we  
20          -- and talking about boarding school,  
21          our house would get up and leave for  
22          class.

23                        I'm unspoken, I would go  
24          outside and start arguing with God, and  
25          say, "I don't want to remember, but I'm

1 here for my daughter, Alisha."

2 So as he was teaching about  
3 boarding school -- because everything  
4 is quite vague -- and worst of all I  
5 forgot to introduce myself. I'm sorry.  
6 I'm Grace (inaudible) Smith, born at  
7 Isthmus Point, Alaska, a survivor of  
8 boarding school at Holy Cross Mission.  
9 And to this day I call it the Hell  
10 Place.

11 I had my brother, Herbert,  
12 and my brother, Matthew, were sent to  
13 the boarding school. I know about it,  
14 but my cousin (inaudible) sent us to  
15 the boarding school.

16 We were put in one of the  
17 big boats from Peakus Point to Holy  
18 Cross. And we were sent down to the  
19 engine room each night to sleep.

20 And I couldn't understand  
21 why, because they had beds in rooms  
22 upstairs. But I was happy to be with  
23 my brother and cousin, and I wasn't by  
24 myself.

25 I don't know how long it

1           took us from going to Peakus Point to  
2           Holy Cross. And most of it was blank,  
3           because I didn't know where I was  
4           going.

5                           And so we came to Holy Cross  
6           and I knew it was on the hill, it kind  
7           of scared me. It was a huge cross and  
8           didn't understand.

9                           My brother and cousin  
10          renounced our language, they were  
11          there, sent out of our home town.

12                          I remember this guy said the  
13          building is up there, go through the  
14          door. And we didn't understand why he  
15          said it was there, because we didn't  
16          know which door to go through.

17                          And when I first seen these  
18          women, I didn't under -- couldn't  
19          figure out who she was, how come she  
20          was dressed funny?

21                          And I went to my brother and  
22          I just kind of looked and... Scared.  
23          And -- but first thing I found out she  
24          was a nun.

25                          First thing they said to us,

1           you're full of bugs, we got to give you  
2           a bath, we got to wash your hair, throw  
3           away your clothes and give you new  
4           clothes.

5                        Like I told you Tad,  
6           memories are coming back; I don't want  
7           that.

8                        It's -- and I didn't see my  
9           brother or cousin after that. Here we  
10          had a different building for the boys  
11          and different building for the girls.

12                      And every time I talked to  
13          somebody they didn't understand what I  
14          was saying because I was speaking in my  
15          language in which they didn't know.

16                      And going to school, I  
17          remember her name, Sister Mary Kathryn,  
18          she was the nicest nun and I didn't  
19          mind being in her class.

20                      And I still didn't know how  
21          to speak English. And she would take  
22          her time and teach me. By the time I  
23          got to second grade Sister Mary was no  
24          longer my teacher, and that's when  
25          things got worse.

1                   And I would get hit and  
2                   slapped. And they would say you're  
3                   speaking barbarian, speak English. I  
4                   thought I was speaking English. And I  
5                   didn't think that my language was  
6                   barbarian.

7                   And my brother I didn't know  
8                   where he was. I said, "Where's Matt?"  
9                   "None of your business." I said,  
10                  "Where's my brother, Matt?" "None of  
11                  your business."

12                  And I kept asking, and I got  
13                  hit. "We told you, it's none of your  
14                  business." These memories of being a  
15                  child are coming back and because I'm  
16                  remembering. (Chuckling).

17                  It's all right for Tad and  
18                  Alisha because I'm here with them  
19                  talking about boarding schools. Every  
20                  time we talk, I would get out of class.  
21                  I kind of have to get away from when I  
22                  first went to Holy Cross because those  
23                  memories haven't come for years.

24                  As of Wednesday some of  
25                  those memories started coming. And Tad

1 he's the one and my daughter, Alisha,  
2 are the ones that start bringing  
3 memories back. How many years was  
4 that?

5 AUDIENCE: Six years, seven?

6 SPEAKER: Yeah, six, seven  
7 years ago. And what I'm telling you is  
8 that these memories I'm telling you  
9 just are coming back two days ago.

10 And I would say, "God, why?  
11 Why? Why did I have to go through  
12 this? What kind of a God are you? I  
13 don't know how they didn't understand  
14 me. I don't know why -- I'm a kid, and  
15 where is my brother?" We were  
16 separated.

17 And it is something here  
18 that's calming me down. Because we all  
19 got something to share which we have  
20 kept. And you, too. And Alisha.

21 Which I forgot to say, I'm  
22 just -- I just have to say this, I want  
23 to announce I have seven kids, whom I  
24 love, 11 grandchildren whom I love.

25 I prayed for when I was in

1 boarding school. I told God, I wanted  
2 five kids. He blessed me with seven.  
3 And blessed me with 11 wonderful  
4 grandchildren.

5 I was in boarding school and  
6 I was told I wouldn't make a good  
7 mother. And I would tell God when I  
8 have kids I will love them and care for  
9 them.

10 And treat them like a  
11 person, because in boarding school  
12 you're not a person. You're not even a  
13 human being.

14 And I've been trying to  
15 build up enough courage because of Tad,  
16 again you're a good help for letting  
17 these feelings out. But I went through  
18 a boarding school.

19 And like Alisha said, Mom --  
20 and plus spinning tobacco, so I can,  
21 you know, be stronger with tobacco.  
22 How I survived through the beating, the  
23 hitting and harassment being there for  
24 years, I was not a person.

25 My personality was taken

1 away, my way of loving was taken away.  
2 I would ask God what has happened here?  
3 And I never knew and I won't understand  
4 why I'm living this life.

5 And because of Tad and  
6 Alisha, my supporters, I'm able to  
7 share some. How long this is gonna go,  
8 I have no idea. It's day by day.

9 But most of all what I thank  
10 God that my brother, Matt, didn't go  
11 through what me and my cousin both went  
12 through. He ended up with TB and they  
13 didn't tell me that.

14 But to this day I can still  
15 see that nun standing and she said,  
16 "Here," she gave me a bag and I said,  
17 "Oh, what is it?" "Oh, it's from your  
18 brother." "Oh, is he here?" "No, he's  
19 dead."

20 I could still see her  
21 standing there and I was still a little  
22 girl. And I thanked her.

23 Another one was of you guys  
24 or God, that's what I think. And so I  
25 ran out and yelled and screamed. I



1           said, "My protector is gone."

2                           And so I'm the oldest  
3           survivor in the family. I got my seven  
4           kids and 11 grandchildren and how in  
5           the heck did I stay alive this long?  
6           Because my children and grandchildren  
7           are the most precious gift that God has  
8           given me. And I cherish them.

9                           I got to stop because I will  
10          start crying. I haven't cried -- only  
11          I cried maybe once or twice because I  
12          got beat up too much. And so I hold  
13          out to hold back my tears because it's  
14          painful. Thank you. (Applause).

15                          MS. JONES: Madam Secretary  
16          (speaking in native tongue). My name  
17          is Bobbi Jones. I am a language  
18          revitalization, I would say a nerd, so  
19          to speak.

20                          And in all -- all of my  
21          language revitalization work in our  
22          community has stemmed from the pain of  
23          not knowing myself.

24                          So my grandmother on my  
25          dad's side had 12 siblings, the oldest

1           ones I -- I didn't not figure out until  
2           I was a young adult.

3                     The oldest ones couldn't --  
4           didn't have children, and it's been  
5           assumed that they were affected by  
6           sterilization policies or so much  
7           trauma that they were not able to carry  
8           children.

9                     Because the other -- their  
10          other siblings had -- had a lot of  
11          children. And so I wanted to just  
12          mention that that was something that,  
13          you know, discussions in my family as  
14          we've uncovered things like that.

15                    And because they're not  
16          around anymore, we don't really have  
17          the resources to figure out whether  
18          that's true or not.

19                    I would say that I was born  
20          to a teen mom and my dad suffered from  
21          alcoholism.

22                    And I would say that that  
23          also was a symptom of not having  
24          cultural coping mechanisms, teaching  
25          connection with our natural world, and

1 the things that we've used to sustain  
2 ourselves for generations.

3 Those things were all  
4 disrupted when these schools were put  
5 in place and when children were being  
6 removed.

7 My -- my dad told me stories  
8 of how when social workers would show  
9 up, it may not have been the Indian  
10 agents, but around 1960 it was social  
11 workers that they were taking them.

12 That they would go hide in  
13 the woods and they'd pretty much hide  
14 out there for hours until somebody came  
15 and got them. And they were about six  
16 or seven years old at the time.

17 So -- so I would say that as  
18 a descendent of people that have --  
19 that were in boarding schools, I carry  
20 a lot of pain for them, and -- and  
21 because of what they -- their  
22 behaviors, how they -- how we were  
23 raised, those things were all like  
24 invisible fears.

25 They didn't have a lot of

1 relationships with the local public  
2 schools. They had a lot of shame, they  
3 had a lot of discomfort and that was  
4 like a natural combination of racism  
5 and the American education system not  
6 being accepting and supporting them.

7 After history and indigenous  
8 knowledge, skin color, you name it, it  
9 was all a combination of those things.

10 But -- but back in the day  
11 when they were still using corporale  
12 punishment in schools, my dad's teacher  
13 abused him with paddles and by the time  
14 I made it to high school that same  
15 teacher was a principal.

16 And I can't imagine how  
17 powerless my dad felt sending me to a  
18 school where he was humiliated and  
19 beaten.

20 This is a public school no  
21 bigger than Onamia school, so I have a  
22 lot of feelings about this generations  
23 of not knowing yourself as a person.

24 Happily sending your child  
25 to an English-speaking school where

1           they don't have accurate telling,  
2           accurate history, genuine history, they  
3           don't have any information about the  
4           Mille Lacs Band of -- the Mille Lacs  
5           Band of Ojibwe.

6                         All of surrounding villages,  
7           the history of it -- of -- of  
8           settlement and the relationship with  
9           United States or the State of  
10          Minnesota, none of that is accessible.

11                        And so we have these  
12          generation of children that have such  
13          low self esteem and we're scratching  
14          our heads as tribal leaders wondering  
15          why they won't stop using drugs,  
16          wondering why they accept external  
17          things to try and feel good for right  
18          now.

19                        And I think I just have to  
20          say that the challenge and language  
21          revitalization isn't just studying it,  
22          it's just knowing how to use the  
23          language, the challenge is convincing  
24          my fellow people that theirs too -- my  
25          -- peers and my colleagues that it's

1           theirs too that was lost.

2                       And that I just got to say  
3           out loud in front of this group of  
4           people, the attacks that I've  
5           experienced in my career they felt very  
6           blind siding like it came out of  
7           nowhere.

8                       But I have to look at the  
9           boarding schools era and I have to look  
10          at public school and the day schools  
11          and how it evolved.

12                      And that's the only option  
13          that we have is to send our children to  
14          our tribally-controlled school that not  
15          always has the infrastructure and the  
16          support to -- and training  
17          certifications in order to make sure  
18          that children are learning more than  
19          one language, or they are learning a  
20          content in another language.

21                      We don't technically have  
22          the expertise to do that yet and it  
23          feels very desperate.

24                      We've -- we have -- when I  
25          started this group we had 145 fluent

1 speakers, I was sitting with a group of  
2 elders who sat for hours and hours, all  
3 of them from all of our different  
4 communities.

5 When we started Rosetta  
6 Stone project we were at 25 or 26, and  
7 I want to say that we're close to 17  
8 right now, maybe 15.

9 Over the pandemic with how  
10 much loss we experienced, and the  
11 burden now is that we have fluent  
12 speakers who are -- who are charging,  
13 obligated to be in two places at once,  
14 or three places at once, in a day to  
15 help support ceremonial needs.

16 And then also as  
17 second-language learners, we contact  
18 each other the day before ceremony to  
19 make sure somebody's gonna be there,  
20 that were showing up for our people.

21 So behind closed doors,  
22 behind the scene, there's coordination  
23 happening to make sure that somebody  
24 who can get us through that ceremony  
25 shows up in that particular community.

1                   It's so challenging to  
2                   convince people that we've sustained  
3                   ourselves for generations on cultural  
4                   practices that were embedded in our  
5                   language, were embedded in our  
6                   religious ceremonies, our ceremonial  
7                   doings.

8                   And because it's so foreign  
9                   and it's so intimidating, we have folks  
10                  that were rejected because it goes  
11                  against their experiences in their life  
12                  but it hasn't been a part of their life  
13                  thus far so it must not be important.

14                  And then we have generations  
15                  of children that -- that have no idea  
16                  who they are. And the work that we do  
17                  in funeral work and supporting families  
18                  when they're grieving a lot of that  
19                  stems from not being able to understand  
20                  the duty and the -- the support.

21                  And without knowing the  
22                  language it's really challenging to sit  
23                  during a ceremony and manifest your  
24                  well being and manifest a support in  
25                  well being of the other, whoever the



1 subject is.

2 And so I just wanted to say  
3 that publically, that it's not an evil  
4 thing to want to learn your language.  
5 And I feel like what I can do as an  
6 individual is to try to be more come  
7 accommodating and supportive to my --  
8 to my peers so that they can be -- so  
9 that it can be something that's a  
10 little less intimidating.

11 But I -- I appreciate you  
12 all listening to me. Thank you.  
13 (Applause).

14 MS. ST. GERMAINE: Bonjour  
15 Secretary Haaland and Assistant  
16 Secretary of the Interior. (Speaking  
17 in native tongue). I'm from the  
18 Whitefish community of Lac Courte  
19 Oreilles.

20 And when I first started  
21 becoming an older child, I grew up on  
22 the reservation, I used to ask my  
23 aunts, there are 11 of them in their  
24 family, about who we were, why we were,  
25 why was I up here.

1                   If you're familiar with the  
2                   northern area, the reservations in  
3                   Wisconsin are heavily wooded. On my  
4                   mother's land we had one of the three  
5                   ceremonial drums (inaudible) on my --  
6                   in my mother's backyard. So that's why  
7                   I have an affinity for the Mille Lacs  
8                   Band of Ojibwe because our drums came  
9                   from Mille Lacs.

10                   So I appreciate the history  
11                   and the tradition and the culture  
12                   practices that behold Mille Lacs Band.  
13                   Our relationships among the northern  
14                   tribes are all related, our families  
15                   are related.

16                   I am a product of two  
17                   parents that spent 20 years, their  
18                   entire childhood in boarding schools.  
19                   My father literally was captured when  
20                   he was seven years old from Joan  
21                   Academy.

22                   He ended up at a seminary  
23                   school and then he went to Joan Academy  
24                   and then to another boarding school.  
25                   This affected my growing up forever

1 more.

2 I didn't have the same kind  
3 of childhood other people had. I  
4 struggled to learn the language, my  
5 parents were first speakers, they did  
6 not speak English. They did not have  
7 running water or electricity.

8 I remember my mother always  
9 telling me to sweep the floor good. We  
10 used to gather grasses, we used to  
11 gather things, insulation to put into  
12 the sides of that old homestead, but  
13 that was home.

14 I didn't realize the stories  
15 that affected my mother and my father.  
16 We were taught not to cry because they  
17 were taught not to cry.

18 My father was taken along  
19 with his brothers and sisters in  
20 Oklahoma in 1927, and he never saw his  
21 family again. Some people say  
22 (inaudible), why do you speak so  
23 forcefully?

24 It's because I listened all  
25 those days growing up not understanding

1           why I didn't know stories and  
2           fairytale that the white schools were  
3           telling me.

4                   My parents made it a -- a --  
5           a pledge to us and themselves they  
6           would never have their children grow up  
7           the way they did.

8                   My father was sent away to  
9           school, his hair was cut, they used to  
10          laugh and talk about axle grease times.  
11          They would slick their hair back.

12                   And nowadays when I look at  
13          the young Indian men with their hair  
14          slicked back, I wonder is that from  
15          boarding school time when they used to  
16          take grease from those old trucks and  
17          put it on their head and slick it back  
18          because the nuns were coming. They  
19          were gonna cut their hair off.

20                   My dad was put into a small  
21          room when he first got there and  
22          everything that was native about him  
23          was taken away.

24                   He never saw his mother.  
25          His father used to come to try to find

1 him and this is actually recorded in  
2 the doctrine down in Oklahoma.

3 My father used to say there  
4 was money that was sent, and actually  
5 we only found out when I turned 18, we  
6 had to go back down to Oklahoma because  
7 he didn't have a birth certificate.

8 We didn't have credentials  
9 for when I started college. And so  
10 those memories, the stories all came  
11 back through very vividly again.

12 His land was taken away at  
13 the same time and while (inaudible),  
14 when I was 6 years old, we got that  
15 call that said your father's land is  
16 being stripped. He has no right or  
17 claim to it on Choctaw Nation. That  
18 was not true. They took land.

19 Let me give you another  
20 example, you talk about what has  
21 happening to Indian people, we have  
22 this -- I've seen the physical scars on  
23 made dad's body.

24 I've seen the  
25 psychologically status of having PTSD,

1           it didn't start at war, World War II,  
2           it started from him being taken away  
3           from a mother he never got to see  
4           again.

5                        He actually named me, my  
6           name's is (native tongue) was my first  
7           name given to me because my grandmother  
8           didn't want me to have to experience  
9           not knowing who I am.

10                      The language we grew up as  
11           first speakers. And I struggle today  
12           to learn English because I don't have  
13           that 2000 years of white education and  
14           inbreeding.

15                      My father's siblings  
16           appeared on the school roads and then  
17           one by one they didn't appear no more.  
18           Somewhere along the line they died in  
19           boarding school.

20                      He used to talk about he was  
21           put into a little room when he would  
22           cry, not much bigger than an outhouse.  
23           And there in the very middle of the  
24           room he was told to look at this big  
25           book, it was a Bible.

1                   And I -- I appreciate the  
2                   creator's gift of giving us faith, but  
3                   sometimes the deep internal hatred of  
4                   that Bible when I remember his stories.

5                   You talk about traumatic  
6                   issues. He was told to look at that  
7                   Bible, and he actually grew up thinking  
8                   he was supposed to be an alter boy  
9                   because that's what the nuns told him.

10                  My mother was sent away to  
11                  boarding schools because they said that  
12                  would save her, and she was very  
13                  confused. Save her from what?

14                  What that did to them is  
15                  that they learned to cling to anything  
16                  that would remind them of love and  
17                  security.

18                  My parents spent all those  
19                  years until after World War II from  
20                  1927 to 1947 in boarding schools. What  
21                  that did for me is gave me the impetus  
22                  to survive.

23                  I did not have that kind of  
24                  nice childhood that we hear about or we  
25                  are forced to align with -- with

1 educational policy and other  
2 provisions.

3 Sometimes I cringe at the  
4 fact when I hear educated people start  
5 telling me about policies that are best  
6 for native Indian people. Goddamn it  
7 they don't know what they're a talking  
8 about.

9 They don't know the things  
10 that were stripped from our people,  
11 from our parents.

12 Secretary Haaland I applaud  
13 you for taking on this critical  
14 mission. There are people today in  
15 this room that talk and they have  
16 grants.

17 We're looking at things that  
18 effect human minds forevermore. I  
19 actually think that trauma bond to what  
20 my parents grew up with, and when will  
21 that end.

22 I made it a pledge to my  
23 husband when we got married, Dr. St.  
24 Germaine who was in boarding schools,  
25 and he couldn't come today because he



1           said he'd cry.

2                         Rick's a strong man, but  
3           when I talked to him last night he  
4           said, "Becky, don't bring it up."

5                         But I'm gonna implore you,  
6           Secretary Haaland, our foundation of  
7           who we are is based on what we've been  
8           through.

9                         And if there's funding  
10          available through the NIHO CDC, we would  
11          like to have that funded directly to  
12          the tribes as we look forward to  
13          principals of social guidance of help,  
14          I would like to have that expressed  
15          more as native determinates of health  
16          with the foundation of looking at our  
17          history and reevaluating the  
18          instruments that currently now exist,  
19          those have to change.

20                         We need instruments of  
21          evaluation that are based on our  
22          authentic history and that's these  
23          stories.

24                         So I will be giving you a  
25          card. I work currently with the Great

1           Lakes Epidemiology Center and that, of  
2           course, we've been tasked by CDC to  
3           look at what fails Indian health today.

4                   And I believe we have to  
5           look at that and describe a new method  
6           of telling our story. It's important  
7           that we look at our history, it's  
8           important that we recognize the people  
9           that stand in front of you from day to  
10          day.

11                   We wear Indian regalia, we  
12          wear things that are remnants of who we  
13          are, but those were bought by cost. I  
14          know how to reap and sow today.

15                   And I know our religious  
16          background was because my parents  
17          weren't allowed to practice that,  
18          literally from my mother's own  
19          backyard.

20                   I know how to make wigwams,  
21          I know how to sew moccasins, but it  
22          wasn't out of a cultural affiliation.  
23          It was because my mother lived and  
24          died.

25                   And said Becky's there was a

1           few things in this world that are gonna  
2           keep you safe. She said don't look  
3           toward the past; she said look to the  
4           future and we've got to heal that  
5           future.

6                         I think it's imperative with  
7           these transcripts being delivered that  
8           we get that information and data back  
9           to the tribal leaders, give it back to  
10          our counsel, give it back.

11                        Give it back to the people  
12          who actually lived this world. We have  
13          a vast, rich culture, we traveled this  
14          whole area, the Ojibwe people were from  
15          -- from the east coast to the northern  
16          plains regions down to the south.

17                        Wisconsin, Minnesota,  
18          Michigan, a lot of our state congress  
19          people don't know who we are. I think  
20          we need more integration and let the  
21          state congress people -- they say they  
22          represent us, but they don't know who  
23          we are.

24                        I want to have a meeting  
25          with them so they can listen to us,

1           authentically and intentionally. We  
2           need to teach this. As Melissa said,  
3           education has been effected, medicine  
4           has been affected, our funding sources  
5           have been affected and not sufficient  
6           enough to really take in this whole  
7           vast history.

8                        You know, today this would  
9           never have happened and we have -- and  
10          bear with me for a few more minutes, I  
11          wrote it down...

12                      In 1945 World War II ended,  
13          1955 BIA relinquished their hold on  
14          Indian Health Service. And 1955 was  
15          also the time we had researchers up  
16          here investigating our Indian people,  
17          what we are or who we were.

18                      I don't know if you know  
19          about the ink blots, Rorschach tests,  
20          where you put a bunch of ink on the  
21          paper and you talk to see what it looks  
22          like.

23                      That was done to our  
24          Anishinaabe people up here to see if we  
25          were human. I was offended by that,

1 but I knew it was true.

2 If you go back and look at  
3 the early works of Carl Jung, a  
4 psychologist, Anishinaabe people would  
5 not change, and they were perplexed.

6 So when the chief executive  
7 says Mille Lacs Band was non removable,  
8 that is a fact. And that is written  
9 into the documents. (Applause).

10 Our people have a story and  
11 I hope this effort doesn't get put  
12 aside somewhere because we don't say  
13 the right words or the right things.

14 If we start writing about  
15 our history it's going to come out. No  
16 other country has had to -- no other  
17 country in the globe has had to put up  
18 with what we've been done through our  
19 -- through efforts of sterilization,  
20 extermination.

21 My mother told me they  
22 wouldn't go to a doctor because she was  
23 afraid I would become sterilized. I  
24 ended up going into the health  
25 industry. Yeah. (Applauding).

1 MR. NEWLAND: Thank you.  
2 Miigwech. We have time for one more  
3 speaker before we take our first break.

4 MS. BERGER: Thank you all  
5 that spoke before me because some of  
6 that is really relatable. My dad is  
7 from LCO, my mom was brought up in  
8 Isle.

9 She too attended the Bob  
10 Jones Academy, and I remember some of  
11 those stories she would share until she  
12 was drinking.

13 Masking that pain and kind  
14 of avoiding any real conversations with  
15 us kids until it was punishment and  
16 there's a reason. And I think that  
17 came from the punishment she -- she  
18 received there.

19 Right away getting her hair  
20 cut, the forbidden language, forced  
21 religion and no contact with the  
22 family.

23 I did a lot of research kind  
24 of about some of the things that some  
25 people have -- some children and people

1 while they were there mentioning.

2 She didn't speaking about  
3 some of the really bad atrocities, but  
4 some things that kind of stuck out were  
5 how kids would go missing. And when  
6 they would ask about them, they were  
7 done, she said they were careful not to  
8 lie because that would go against what  
9 their church believes.

10 She asked why they were  
11 there and she remembers -- she  
12 remembered when she first got there how  
13 polished the floors were compared to  
14 where she was living.

15 How nicely the beds were  
16 made and everything was all in a row,  
17 the windows were clean and there was no  
18 repairs, evidence of repairs, and so  
19 she -- she thought at first impression,  
20 'okay, this is gonna be a nice -- a  
21 step up from home.'

22 She said she was the middle  
23 child of nine, so she learned quickly  
24 while she was there to blend in, to not  
25 cause attention and not rebel.

1                   She saw what was happening  
2                   to the other children in the form of  
3                   punishment and this other that wasn't  
4                   what she was gonna do.

5                   When she left there she  
6                   wasn't allowed to return home she went  
7                   to (inaudible) to Paschal Indian  
8                   College or what was it?

9                   Junior college back then, to  
10                  keep with the short and the seamstress,  
11                  the laundering, those trades that they  
12                  instilled at that academy.

13                  And she went from going  
14                  there with a purpose to -- to okay all  
15                  starting to hit. She said it was using  
16                  different things to medicate.

17                  And I think some of it was  
18                  like unhealthy relationships where she  
19                  was looking for love, substance abuse  
20                  to mask some of that pain.

21                  She -- there was some cycles  
22                  that looking back kind of makes sense  
23                  now. I actually looked up that Bob  
24                  Jones Academy and I read through the  
25                  history, how they've grown, how they've



1           changed.

2                       Not one word about the  
3           children, not one word about the  
4           children that were, the Indian children  
5           that were there, and the reasons for  
6           that.

7                       I didn't get the -- the  
8           nurturing parent. I got the -- the  
9           teachings that I received were from the  
10          aunts that came and were trying their  
11          best to bring culture to my mom, who  
12          was to turn her kids to her roots.

13                      And she kind of thought that  
14          and I didn't know why at the time. We  
15          didn't grow up going to college, we  
16          didn't go to any cultural events. We  
17          weren't part of the (inaudible)  
18          community, we didn't even -- it was  
19          pretty detached.

20                      My mom made sure that she  
21          was detached from that. And, you know,  
22          now looking back I see why, but I --  
23          growing up it was -- it was really  
24          frustrating.

25                      I just -- I now, knowing

1           what I know about her life and  
2           everything. And I kind of made it my  
3           -- my mission to raise awareness. I  
4           live in Brainerd and I don't live here  
5           on the Mille Lacs reservation, but I  
6           work here and I come here for  
7           fellowship with my -- with my people  
8           and my family and my cousins and  
9           friends.

10                         But those people that are in  
11           the same situation as me, they did not  
12           grow up knowing their roots, so they  
13           feel alienated to, you know, come to  
14           any of these -- these situations or  
15           even some of the celebrations.

16                         They feel like they don't  
17           belong, they don't -- they're not  
18           included. So I made that my mission  
19           to, in Brainerd, raise awareness.

20                         I've got some strong allies  
21           up there and there's some good programs  
22           -- programming not with just indigenous  
23           people, but with all, you know, people  
24           of color, most marginalized or  
25           oppressed people.

1                   So there are other agencies  
2                   that are taking this fight and bringing  
3                   it right to the forefront. And I  
4                   applaud you for bringing your ears,  
5                   your -- your platform and your  
6                   leadership to our community and our  
7                   people. Thank you. (Applause).

8                   MR. NEWLAND: So we're gonna  
9                   take our first break now. The tribe is  
10                  -- is going to provide a lunch break  
11                  for those of you who want to stay.

12                  Our -- our team here at the  
13                  department will take a brief break.  
14                  We'll come back in, allow folks to eat  
15                  and then we will excuse the press and I  
16                  think we'll take some photos for those  
17                  of you who want photos and then we'll  
18                  go into our next session.

19                  I want to say miigwech  
20                  again, thank you, to everybody who's  
21                  spoken already today. I know that it  
22                  takes a lot of courage to do that.

23                  And we're gonna be here for  
24                  a few more hours to make sure that we  
25                  hear from every -- as many people who

1 want to speak as possible.

2 So we'll see you back here  
3 after a short break. Thank you.

4 (Applause).

5 REPORTER'S NOTE: Whereupon,  
6 a short recess is taken.

7 MR. NEWLAND: Good  
8 afternoon. We're gonna restart. I  
9 want to see if I can find our mic  
10 runners. There we go.

11 So we're just gonna pick it  
12 back up where we left off. And just  
13 hear from speakers. We'll ask our --  
14 our mic runners, we're gonna do our  
15 best to hear from as many people who  
16 want to speak as possible.

17 And then we will adjourn  
18 later this afternoon. We may take  
19 another break if needed, but we'll --  
20 we'll see where we at.

21 So, I'll look to our first  
22 speaker. We've got -- we -- I think we  
23 had somebody lined up first and then --  
24 and then you.

25 MR. NEELY: Thank you.

1 Scott Neely from (inaudible). My  
2 mother was 90 years old; she died July  
3 4th, 2019.

4 She told us when we were  
5 young that she was taken and put into a  
6 boarding school, but she never spoke  
7 about it, ever.

8 This is the first I heard  
9 about where she was coming to this  
10 meeting as a guest of the Mille Lacs,  
11 Madam Chair.

12 I never knew, I couldn't  
13 imagine what she went through until  
14 today. But during lunch, I looked at  
15 my grandchildren and I would never be  
16 able to fathom the thought of somebody  
17 going into my daughter's house and  
18 taking my baby and leaving.

19 And not saying -- not saying  
20 anything, all of sudden you took them  
21 and robbed them of their -- of their  
22 mother's bosom and their -- their love  
23 and their beds and their blankets.

24 Even if they didn't have any  
25 back then, just still the brothers and

1 sisters of them were taken from the  
2 mother.

3 So my mother's mother lived  
4 to be 99 and her mother lived to be  
5 103. My mother lived as an alcoholic.  
6 I'm 62, for as long as I remember,  
7 every time I seen her, every single  
8 time I seen her, she was drunk.

9 And she wasn't a mean drunk,  
10 she was just drunk. And I never  
11 realized, I knew she had problems,  
12 emotional problems, but I never  
13 realized that part her being taken from  
14 that home, her mother's home and her  
15 grandmother's home, was a part of her  
16 trauma.

17 And I am so grateful to the  
18 other people that shared here today  
19 that I was able to better understand  
20 that what happened to her, affected all  
21 of us as we grew up.

22 Because she -- she didn't  
23 start saying she loved anybody or  
24 everybody until later on in her life.  
25 Because I suppose nobody ever taught

1 her how to say that she was loved or  
2 that she was cared about.

3 So as I looked at today's  
4 objectives and as you move through  
5 Indian country with these learning  
6 curves, the only thing we could hope  
7 and pray for is that it doesn't happen  
8 again to our grandchildren or their  
9 children.

10 People would think that it  
11 can't, but we hear about it everyday.  
12 You know, if you're a Latino, if you're  
13 crossing the boarder illegally you got  
14 to worry about your children getting  
15 separated from you.

16 My word. You know, I heard  
17 some people saying, talking about God  
18 and -- and -- and I questioned the  
19 faith of myself and wonder how it could  
20 happen.

21 Why would people put those  
22 Indian babies and those young women and  
23 those young men through that type of  
24 lifestyle.

25 To make them stronger? For

1           what? Because they're already strong,  
2           they're a already Native, they're  
3           already Anishinaabe, of the this land.  
4           So it's devastating to listen to what  
5           happened.

6                         But it also helped me a  
7           little bit to understand what happened  
8           to my dear sweet mother. And it don't  
9           make it right because she never spoke,  
10          not one word, she never told us what  
11          happened to her.

12                        She never complained about  
13          what happened to her. She just said  
14          she was gone and one day she got to  
15          come back, that was all.

16                        So it's, what happened to  
17          her? Where was she? Don't know. So,  
18          that's what I got, what I learned here  
19          today, about what happened to her.

20                        I can just only imagine the  
21          footsteps, the crying, the slaps, you  
22          hear those stories. So I'll end it  
23          up -- I'm trying -- I'm trying to end  
24          it on a good note.

25                        So I had -- we had a friend



1           in a tribal leader from the Menomonee  
2           tribe, his name was Manny Voigt. And  
3           Manny said he was in a boarding school  
4           and that nuns would whack him when they  
5           spoke Native, Menomonee, he said they  
6           would whack them.

7                        And so he said that he was  
8           talking to some other kids, one of them  
9           asked him to do something, and he said  
10          hell witcha. The nuns thought he was  
11          talking Menomonee, but he said hell  
12          witcha. So she smacked him.

13                       And so he told that story a  
14          bunch of times. And it was just -- it  
15          was -- it was a funny story when he got  
16          slapped because she thought he was  
17          talking Menomonee, but he said hell  
18          witcha. You know, like hell with ya?  
19          That's how he said it, hell witcha.

20                       So, thank you, Madam  
21          Secretary and Assistant Secretary.

22                       SPEAKER: I might have to  
23          sit down when I'm talking because  
24          sometimes I get long winded. No, I  
25          don't. But I'd like to thank Assistant

1 Secretary. And what is your name?

2 MR. NEWLAND: Bryan.

3 SPEAKER: Bryan. I'm sorry.  
4 But we're going around the country and  
5 listening to all these -- these stories  
6 about the cruelty that happened to our  
7 people in the boarding schools.

8 You're a very strong person.  
9 Even as I sit here today, you know, a  
10 tear runs down my face just listening  
11 to a couple of them.

12 And you listen to those, you  
13 know, the whole Indian country, and  
14 thank you for that.

15 And I don't really have an  
16 experience with boarding school, I do  
17 have stories that were told to me from  
18 my grandparents and our community which  
19 is east from of Hinckley is called  
20 Aazhoomog.

21 And we were kind of  
22 close-knit families that lived there  
23 and we took care of each other. And so  
24 that was the mornings when the Indian  
25 Agency would come down the dirt road

1 and they would hear it.

2 And it would meet, my great  
3 grandpa who would whistle, and all his  
4 kids -- he -- he had nine children that  
5 were -- that worked in the field. And  
6 so when he would whistle they would run  
7 and had a round (inaudible) that he  
8 would hide the kids in.

9 So whenever they went by  
10 they never seen kids. The next family  
11 over would whistle and hide their kids  
12 all through the whole village.

13 So I don't think that a lot  
14 of our people in Aazhoomog community  
15 actually experienced boarding schools  
16 because they knew enough to hide their  
17 children.

18 But I know after a time of  
19 being here there was a -- there was a  
20 -- I don't know if it was related to  
21 the tribes that said that kids if they  
22 wanted to, they had to choice to go a  
23 boarding school or public school.

24 We had some of our -- our --  
25 well, they were girls at the time 13 --

1           12, 13 years old there was probably six  
2           or seven of them that decided they were  
3           going to Flandreau Boarding School.  
4           And they were -- they were given a  
5           train ticket to go.

6                     They got there and -- and  
7           during the night the other girls that  
8           were there, they had a bob cut, and  
9           they were telling them that in the  
10          morning they were going to be washed  
11          with kerosene and they were going to  
12          get the hair cut like they did.

13                    And, you know, back in the  
14          day everybody that had long hair you  
15          know had to have long hair.

16                    I mean, hair was very  
17          honorable and so when they heard they  
18          had to get their hair cut, you know,  
19          some of them had their hair, you know,  
20          past their waist or whatever.

21                    But when they heard they  
22          were gonna get their hair cut these  
23          girls got together at night and they  
24          decided they were gonna run.

25                    They ran and they left one

1 -- one girl that was 6 years old still  
2 there. And I asked her sister just  
3 recently, maybe about a year ago, how  
4 come you guys left -- left her there?

5 And it was, you know, she --  
6 she laughed about it, she said, "Well,  
7 do you ever hear her talking, how --  
8 she would have gave us up."

9 So that's just a couple of  
10 things that I know about boarding  
11 school. And I'll have to admit that I  
12 didn't learn about boarding school  
13 until I was like 14 or 15 when I heard  
14 it.

15 But I grew up in South  
16 Minneapolis and that's where I heard  
17 about boarding school from Tom. And I  
18 just wanted to know more about it, so I  
19 asked my grandma and that was -- that  
20 was two stories that I got from her and  
21 that was it.

22 But, you know, and I was  
23 thinking about, you know, the trauma  
24 that our people go through because of  
25 the removal from their families.

1                   You know, if -- if those  
2                   traumas and that stuff happened back  
3                   then and it still effects us today.  
4                   You know, maybe we wouldn't need victim  
5                   advocates, we didn't have victim  
6                   advocates, and those other people  
7                   there's victim advocates, there's child  
8                   advocates, there's advocates for men,  
9                   women.

10                   You know, maybe if we didn't  
11                   have the trauma and we knew how to deal  
12                   with it and learn from it, we wouldn't  
13                   have to have those advocating for us to  
14                   the government.

15                   That's all I got to say.  
16                   Thank you for listening. (Applause).

17                   MS. FERNANDEZ: ( Speaking  
18                   in native tongue). Hello everyone. My  
19                   name is (inaudible), Sturgeon Woman. I  
20                   am Bear Clan.

21                   My English name is Rachel  
22                   Fernandez. I come from the Menomonee  
23                   Nation in Wisconsin. I am a descendent  
24                   and family member of boarding school  
25                   warriors who resisted and fought back

1           against the assimilation, oppression,  
2           genocide and violence.

3                       I'm also a member of the  
4           Menomonee Tribal legislation and  
5           represent my tribe. I'm honored to be  
6           here to share -- to share and to  
7           listen.

8                       We had two day schools and  
9           one boarding school. I'm going to  
10          share about my three aunties. I have  
11          permission to do so.

12                      One of them lived deep in  
13          our forest, our families would hide  
14          their children there. She was the one  
15          who our people relied on. She was our  
16          backbone and one of our knowledge  
17          keepers.

18                      Another auntie shared about  
19          the St. Joseph's Indian School in  
20          Meshina and what happened to her baby  
21          sister.

22                      My aunt was punished one  
23          time and was told to clean the floors.  
24          Her baby sister was five and noticed  
25          her sister wasn't in the room so she

1           went looking for her, and found her  
2           sister cleaning the floors.

3                       And when my aunt saw her  
4           baby sister, she told her to -- to  
5           leave and go back to the room. She  
6           didn't want to, she wanted to stay with  
7           her sister.

8                       A nun came in and started  
9           yelling at the baby sister. And my  
10          aunt was trying to get her to still go  
11          back to her room and she wouldn't.

12                      The nun struck her baby  
13          sister and struck her so hard in the  
14          face that she killed her instantly. So  
15          my aunt had to relive that and carry  
16          that with her for many, many years.

17                      But what she did was she  
18          told the story and she made sure that  
19          everyone knew about her sister and  
20          honored her sister's memory with  
21          sharing that story.

22                      Because her baby sister was  
23          buried in that -- they had an unmarked  
24          grave cemetery behind the -- the  
25          church, school. So she told those



1 stories and her sister's story to honor  
2 her memory.

3 Another aunt tried to escape  
4 several times and finally did so and  
5 someone on the train gave her a ticket.  
6 (Mic squealing). I'm sorry.

7 Gave her a ticket and it was  
8 -- it was a train that was segregated,  
9 so the ticket that she was given put  
10 her in some seats where the government  
11 officials weren't checking them.

12 So she finally was able to  
13 escape and come back home and go into  
14 the woods -- into the forest with my  
15 other aunt and be hidden.

16 But all those times that she  
17 -- she wasn't able to escape and they  
18 brought her back, she was fluent in  
19 Menomonee and so they would torture her  
20 because she wouldn't give up her  
21 language.

22 And she went through many  
23 torture -- many torturous treatments  
24 for her speaking her language. So  
25 after she came home, escaped and came

1 home, as she got older she started her  
2 own family.

3 And one of her sons he grew  
4 up, he wanted to know his language, he  
5 wanted her to teach him and she told  
6 him no, she couldn't.

7 So he went off and he learn  
8 Menomonee on his own. And he thought  
9 he would come back home and surprise  
10 her with the language that he learned,  
11 and thinking that, you know, she would  
12 be proud of him. He was proud of  
13 himself for learning it and bringing it  
14 back.

15 But when he spoke it to her,  
16 she immediately went into a breakdown.  
17 And she was hospitalized for many  
18 months because of it.

19 And that's when her husband  
20 told the stories of what happened to  
21 her and why we couldn't speak the  
22 language to her because it was so  
23 hurtful to her.

24 She was never able to talk  
25 about that because that would bring her

1 back.

2 I share these stories  
3 because we need to remember my aunties,  
4 we need to remember everyone that  
5 endured all the horrific treatment, the  
6 abuse, the violence, everything that  
7 they all went through.

8 Because we need to be the  
9 truth tellers. We need to be the  
10 change makers. All those who are brave  
11 enough and courageous enough for  
12 sharing the truth.

13 My aunt's baby sister was  
14 buried within that cemetery. St.  
15 Joseph's Indian School in Sheena, there  
16 are unmarked graves still behind that  
17 church. St. Michael's it's called now.

18 We have been trying to get  
19 information on these graves, some say  
20 that when they tore down the boarding  
21 school and paved the parking lot for  
22 the current church that is there, that  
23 the unmarked graves are under the  
24 parking lot, plus the others that are  
25 behind the church.

1                   So today I am here asking  
2                   you to please look into this and  
3                   support us as we navigate this healing  
4                   in reconciliation journey that we're on  
5                   for our people.

6                   For myself I have  
7                   experienced the historical trauma and  
8                   intergenerational trauma of what  
9                   happened to my ancestors, my family.

10                  It took me being a victim of  
11                  child sexual assault, domestic and  
12                  sexual violence, attempted suicide, an  
13                  eating disorder, and being missing in  
14                  my 20s to my healing and acknowledgment  
15                  of the boarding school era, and how  
16                  that was passed on to me without even  
17                  knowing it.

18                  I've done my healing and  
19                  survived and will continue that until I  
20                  go on to meet my ancestors. Because of  
21                  the trauma I experienced it brought me  
22                  to my heart life, my advocacy life.  
23                  And I have been doing it for many  
24                  years.

25                  My father died because he

1           drank himself to death. He was also a  
2           legislator and he was a tribal court  
3           judge. But he died young.

4                        I wasn't able to talk to him  
5           about his trauma because at the time I  
6           was going through my own trauma in my  
7           20s.

8                        I have reported and it fell  
9           on deaf ears, but I always wanted to  
10          ask him why. Or what happened to him,  
11          and I regret that I never was able to  
12          do that.

13                      What happened that he felt  
14          he had to drown himself in alcohol.  
15          And I won't know that until I meet him  
16          again in spirit.

17                      I am a wife. I have eight  
18          children, I have 21 grandchildren and  
19          everything I do is trying to  
20          (inaudible) against their people, and  
21          break cycles and promote and uplift the  
22          healing we need.

23                      I pray everyday that my  
24          children, my grandchildren, all of our  
25          children, our future, don't have to go

1 through what I went through or our  
2 ancestors went through.

3 I pray for that everyday  
4 that -- that we don't have to keep  
5 doing this, we don't have to keep  
6 meeting in this way so that we get  
7 justice with reconciliation and  
8 healing.

9 I would like to (native  
10 tongue thank you) for this opportunity  
11 for everyone to share. It was an honor  
12 of listening to the stories and the  
13 truths, and for providing this for our  
14 relatives that still have to go through  
15 this pain daily. (Speaking in native  
16 tongue). (Applause).

17 SPEAKER: Hello, I want to  
18 start by thanking Secretary Haaland,  
19 Assistant Secretary Newland and the  
20 Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe for hosting  
21 us here today for these really  
22 important stories to be told.

23 My name is Anita (inaudible)  
24 and my mother is Eleanor Robertson. My  
25 mother was born and raised on the White

1 Earth Indian Reservation in the Pine  
2 Point community in northern Minnesota.

3 She's 94 years old today,  
4 and she is not able to travel. So she  
5 is not here today. I -- I did talk to  
6 her this morning and I told her that  
7 this event was happening and she said  
8 that she wishes she could be here.

9 It's only been in the last  
10 few years that my mother has told any  
11 of us that she had attended a boarding  
12 school.

13 She, like some the other  
14 people have said before me, she -- she  
15 didn't want to talk about it. And she  
16 still doesn't really want to talk about  
17 it much today.

18 It wasn't until we asked her  
19 the specific questions, "Did you ever  
20 attend a boarding school," that she  
21 said, "Yes." Up until -- and that was  
22 about four years ago.

23 Up until that time she never  
24 mentioned it. She didn't want to talk  
25 about it. So for 90 years my mother

1 did not want to talk about her  
2 experiences.

3 And I think if these  
4 hearings had not been happening, and if  
5 the topic wasn't coming up because of  
6 these hearings, people wouldn't -- they  
7 would have never said anything about  
8 this.

9 And though she still doesn't  
10 say much, and she still tries to put a  
11 good spin on it, the story of what  
12 happened to her is really shocking.

13 This is what -- the little  
14 bit that she has told me. She was  
15 living in northern Minnesota on the  
16 White Earth Indian Reservation and at  
17 the age of six she was sent to the  
18 Wahpeton Boarding School in North  
19 Dakota.

20 She was six years old she  
21 probably doesn't know or didn't know  
22 exactly how this happened. She hasn't  
23 -- she didn't say anything other than  
24 that at six years of age I went to the  
25 Wahpeton Boarding School.



1                   She was taken to North  
2                   Dakota and she did not go home to see  
3                   her family except for summer vacations.  
4                   She said the only thing that made it  
5                   bearable was the fact that her brother  
6                   was with her. So she did have one, one  
7                   family member there with her.

8                   She said it was a long way  
9                   to travel and no one from her family  
10                  was able to visit. Today she's very  
11                  matter of fact about the experience.

12                  She will say one good thing  
13                  about the boarding school that she had  
14                  enough to eat. That's the best thing  
15                  that she can say.

16                  She went to the Wahpeton  
17                  Boarding School for three to four  
18                  years, returning home only for the  
19                  summers.

20                  I'm seeing the lifelong  
21                  impact of boarding schools. My mother  
22                  spoke no Ojibwe even though her mother  
23                  and her grandmother were fluent  
24                  speakers, she grew up in a home of  
25                  fluent Ojibwe speakers.

1                   And, as I have asked her  
2                   about specific incidents in her life,  
3                   at one point she told me that when she  
4                   grew up she wanted to get as far away  
5                   from the reservation as she possible  
6                   could.

7                   Consequently, I grew up in  
8                   Louisville, Kentucky; that's where she  
9                   ended up. She was a registered nurse  
10                  and she worked as a nurse in  
11                  Louisville, Kentucky.

12                 My mother never told anyone  
13                 when I was growing up, she never told  
14                 anyone that she was Native American.  
15                 She was ashamed of that.

16                 She would never -- she had  
17                 never spoken an Ojibwe word that I was  
18                 aware of when I was growing up. My  
19                 mother did not have any parenting or  
20                 nurturing skills.

21                 She would leave for extended  
22                 periods of time when I was a young  
23                 child. She left me with the next door  
24                 neighbor.

25                 So I was a young child, I

1 don't know how this happened or for --  
2 for how long she was gone, but I do  
3 know that she would come to visit me at  
4 the next door neighbor's house. And I  
5 didn't know who she was.

6 And so the woman who was  
7 raising me would say, "That's your  
8 mother. You need to go hug your  
9 mother." So she'd been gone for a long  
10 time.

11 She seemed to think that  
12 this was completely normal. There were  
13 never any apologizes or any kind of,  
14 you know, "Maybe I shouldn't have done  
15 that," or, "Sorry I've been gone so  
16 long."

17 She didn't think anything of  
18 the fact that she disappeared for  
19 extended periods of time. My mother  
20 never used the Ojibwe language as far  
21 as I knew.

22 And finally when I was 13  
23 years old, I went to live with my  
24 mother for the very first time. I had  
25 never lived with her until I was 13.

1                   My grandmother, Irene Roper  
2                   Ellis, came to live with us at the same  
3                   time. And my grandmother had grown up  
4                   on the reservation and she had lived  
5                   most of her life in the Pine Point  
6                   community on the White Earth Indian  
7                   Reservation.

8                   So, when I was about 13 I  
9                   overheard a conversation between my  
10                  mother and my grandmother in the  
11                  kitchen.

12                 And they used the word --  
13                 words that were of a language that I  
14                 didn't -- I didn't know. So I asked my  
15                 grandmother, what is this? What are  
16                 you talking about? What's Navish?

17                 And my grandmother said,  
18                 "No, my girl, you do not want to learn  
19                 these words, they will only get you in  
20                 trouble."

21                 And she held out her hands  
22                 and showed me -- I'm -- I'm guessing  
23                 she was in her '60s at this point, she  
24                 showed me the scars on her knuckles and  
25                 she said this is what happened to me

1           when I spoke my language.

2                       And she said, these are the  
3           scars from the nuns, the nuns hit me  
4           when I spoke Ojibwe. Until that day --  
5           I was 13 years old, I had never heard  
6           an Ojibwe word, I don't even think I  
7           knew that there was an Ojibwe language.

8                       In my family it was -- I  
9           don't know, I don't want to say it was  
10          forbidden, but everybody was -- it was  
11          like a really bad thing, you don't  
12          speak Ojibwe.

13                      And my mother and my  
14          grandmother never talked about being  
15          members of a tribe. They never talked  
16          about living on the reservation as far  
17          as I knew.

18                      I wish I had asked more  
19          questions at that time. I understood  
20          so little about the fact that we were  
21          even tribal members. No one even  
22          talked about that.

23                      No one wanted anybody to  
24          know that we were members of a tribe,  
25          and that we still had family on the

1 reservation. Nobody mentioned that.

2 I didn't find that out until  
3 I was a teenager, and my mom finally  
4 took me to the reservation, to the  
5 Leech Lake Indian Reservation, where we  
6 still had family.

7 The boarding school  
8 experience almost worked. The goal was  
9 to erase Indian culture, our language  
10 and our family ties.

11 In my family there has been  
12 a -- a long impact on our family  
13 history and times. So I have both a  
14 grandmother and a mother who attended  
15 boarding schools.

16 They said very little about  
17 it, but from some of the actions that  
18 they've taken during the course of  
19 their lives, you can see the impact  
20 that it's had.

21 I don't know if they would  
22 say that some of things that they've  
23 done were because of boarding schools.

24 No one has every mentioned  
25 trauma, my -- my mother or grandmother,

1 even when talking about the scars on  
2 her hands from speaking her language,  
3 my grandmother didn't blame anyone.

4 Her reaction was she wanted  
5 to protect me. And the way she thought  
6 to protect me was to say don't speak  
7 Ojibwe. Don't use these words.

8 So there has been a  
9 long-standing impact on my family in  
10 probably many ways that we don't even  
11 realize.

12 And I think there are so  
13 many people on -- on the reservations  
14 who continue to live with this  
15 unresolved trauma. And people don't  
16 realize or don't know that the root  
17 cause of a lot of this goes back to the  
18 boarding schools.

19 So I just want to thank you  
20 again for having this hearing, I think  
21 it's really important. Miigwech.

22 (Applause).

23 MS. ELLENBAKER: (Speaking  
24 in native tongue). Lac Courte  
25 Oreilles. My name is Mary Ellenbaker,

1           and I'm a daughter of a survivor of the  
2           boarding school, the Hayward Boarding  
3           School. And my dad was in the  
4           Flandreau Boarding School.

5                     My mother -- my mother ran  
6           away from there. I don't know, I think  
7           she was in there for about six months,  
8           and she ran away.

9                     And they come and got her,  
10          my grandfather had her go back, and she  
11          went back. And she was there for  
12          another six months maybe and then she  
13          ran away again.

14                    Our -- her home on the  
15          reservation was down 24 miles from the  
16          Hayward Boarding School. And at the  
17          age of, I think she was in there for --  
18          when she was about eight or nine, she  
19          found her way back.

20                    And on the reservation at  
21          that time, we didn't have to go far for  
22          what you needed. And -- and she -- she  
23          was telling me -- she didn't tell me  
24          very much, and I didn't know my Indian  
25          name for a long time.



1                   And they didn't want us, my  
2                   dad and my mother, didn't want us to  
3                   talk the language, but they wanted us  
4                   -- my grandfather, her mother and dad,  
5                   wanted us to talk to understand it.

6                   So I grew up without any  
7                   teachings, without any type of values,  
8                   without -- without any solid roots,  
9                   tribal roots, the songs, the stories,  
10                  and I grew up without the language  
11                  mainly.

12                  So at the age of -- at the  
13                  age of nine, I lost my father and --  
14                  and he couldn't be buried in the  
15                  (inaudible) Lake which he lives.

16                  And -- and I grew up like I  
17                  -- like I said, I didn't have any --  
18                  any kind of values or roots, and the  
19                  ones that I had to live by I couldn't  
20                  understand very much.

21                  So I went into alcoholism.  
22                  I -- I drank for a lot of years,  
23                  suffered for a lot of years. And  
24                  around 1979 I sobered up, it was my  
25                  last drop of alcohol or any drugs.

1                   And after that time I  
2                   started looking at the traditional  
3                   ways, they come -- the traditional ways  
4                   come to me, and the elders were -- were  
5                   trying to help us to stay straight and  
6                   live a good life.

7                   And we started learning  
8                   about our -- our Indian names and so  
9                   on, and I had four children by then.

10                  And I -- and I wanted them  
11                  to have their Indian names, and I  
12                  invited my mother and I got (inaudible)  
13                  and everything. And she wouldn't come.

14                  She was so afraid, she was  
15                  so afraid to be -- that I would be put  
16                  in jail or suffered what she did, and  
17                  so she didn't encourage me or support  
18                  me.

19                  But I went on anyway and --  
20                  and -- and soon after that -- I had got  
21                  my children named and soon after that  
22                  she realized that we weren't gonna be  
23                  put in jail.

24                  And I wasn't gonna have  
25                  somebody come into my house at

1           midnight, two o'clock in the morning  
2           and have -- lose my children, have  
3           someone taking my children away from  
4           me.

5                        So she started relaxing a  
6           little bit and she started to -- to  
7           help me. She started telling me that  
8           we all had our own songs when she was  
9           small.

10                      That she -- she -- she  
11           couldn't walk when she was born and she  
12           remembered tribal elders coming over  
13           and after they left, she got up and  
14           walked.

15                      So it must have been our  
16           doctors, our Indian doctors, that come  
17           over and took care of her.

18                      She was telling me all these  
19           things and she said that she had a  
20           coronary and she said that her -- her  
21           song, her song brought her back.

22                      And her song kept getting  
23           louder and louder and she hadn't heard  
24           that song for a long time. And so my  
25           -- the -- being sober and listening and

1 learning all the things that I learned  
2 from our elders about our traditional  
3 way of life has helped me so much.

4 And the more, and the more I  
5 learned, the more the language I  
6 learned, the more I realized that it  
7 can also help my daughters, my  
8 grandchildren, my great grandchildren  
9 and those to come.

10 So I advocate -- I advocate  
11 for our -- for our traditional way, I  
12 have a cultural healing center, and  
13 I've had that since 19 -- been doing  
14 that since 1981.

15 But I gathered all my -- my  
16 grandmother's land, I gathered all the  
17 heirs, and I got that all in my name,  
18 and I put -- I had a dream about  
19 helping our people, and I put that all  
20 together.

21 So I -- we lost, we lost so  
22 much, we've lost so much, but we're  
23 getting it all back. We -- and it's  
24 not getting it all back, it's coming  
25 back to us, you know.

1                   So I -- the more I learned,  
2                   the more the language I learned, the  
3                   more of the understanding I had, the  
4                   more teachings that I did, the more I  
5                   realized that our people needed so  
6                   much.

7                   With my cultural healing  
8                   center I -- I tried for government  
9                   grants, and I can't get it because it  
10                  was strictly traditional.

11                  I -- it's hard to, it's hard  
12                  to get that kind of money for  
13                  traditional way of living, for  
14                  traditional treatment, for traditional  
15                  things.

16                  And that's not the way,  
17                  that's not the reason I'm here. The  
18                  reason I'm here is because I -- I  
19                  dreamt, I had a dream four years, that  
20                  I had a dream of all these -- and I can  
21                  see them in my dreams, of all these  
22                  elders women that lost their children  
23                  in the boarding school that died.

24                  They couldn't give their  
25                  children the right burial, they

1           couldn't give their children the right  
2           -- the right ceremony, the right story  
3           to take them home, to take them back to  
4           the spirit world where they -- where  
5           they come from. To take care of their  
6           spirits.

7                         So I had that dream and then  
8           a while later, maybe a year, then I saw  
9           this, the boarding school issue coming  
10          up.

11                        So I know that the healing  
12          boarding school from that dream, I know  
13          that we have children that are buried  
14          there someplace. And I -- I truly hope  
15          that -- that they can be found, that  
16          they can be recovered.

17                        That they can -- their  
18          spirits can be sent home in the good  
19          way, in the right way.

20                        So because you're here,  
21          because you're taking on this  
22          responsibility, because you had this in  
23          your heart, because you have so much to  
24          do and so many places to go, and -- and  
25          I know that you're given up your family

1 too to do this for us and yourself, I'd  
2 like to sing a song for you to honor  
3 you and to honor those that are -- that  
4 are here, our brothers and sisters that  
5 are here, that -- that too have -- have  
6 opened their hearts and hope for their  
7 families, and hope for their babies and  
8 hope for their -- their lives of their  
9 family as well as our -- our children  
10 that we need to find. That are waiting  
11 for us to find them.

12 So if you can stand up. The  
13 song talks about -- the song talks  
14 about the -- how much we love the great  
15 spirit for -- for taking care of  
16 everything here, for taking care of the  
17 land, for taking care of things in a  
18 good way and a lot is gonna come of  
19 this, a lot is going to be recognized  
20 because of this.

21 We have to bring it back, we  
22 have to believe that everything is  
23 gonna be made right, especially for our  
24 children. Sure we've -- we've went  
25 through a lot and we suffered a lot, I

1           have too.

2                       But I don't look at -- I  
3           don't look at it in a bad way, I  
4           suffered because -- because my mother  
5           and my daughter, my mother and my --  
6           dad rather, my mother and my dad, were  
7           trying to do the best they could. So  
8           I'm gonna sing a song and if anybody  
9           knows the song, they can help me.

10                      (Singing song).

11                      MR. OLSON: Good afternoon,  
12           Madam Secretary. Thank you so much for  
13           coming to our region and to our state.

14                      My name a Melissa Olson, I'm  
15           a tribal citizen of the Leech Lake Band  
16           of Ojibwa. I live in Minneapolis,  
17           Minnesota. Drove a couple hours north  
18           with my cousin to be here.

19                      I have to admit I -- it's  
20           not an easy proposition get up and  
21           share as people have so generously  
22           shared. I'm 47 years old; I was raised  
23           by my own parents.

24                      I'm the first person in two  
25           generations who can say that. I



1           suppose I'll speak just a little bit on  
2           behalf of my grandparents.

3                       My grandmother (inaudible)  
4           Smith, the late (inaudible) Smith, was  
5           a survivor the Pipestone Boarding  
6           School in southwestern Minnesota.

7                       I believe records indicate  
8           that she attended Pipestone after 1924.  
9           She passed away in 1954 in Minneapolis.  
10          I think she was -- I don't even know,  
11          she was born sometime before that, I --  
12          I know that she was about 34 when she  
13          passed.

14                      Though my grandmother  
15          survived her boarding school  
16          experience, I'm not sure how to  
17          describe or characterize her life from  
18          the time she graduated until the time  
19          she passed away.

20                      My grandparents came to  
21          Minneapolis like so many people did  
22          seeking work. And she used her  
23          education, or what counted as an  
24          education, to find work as domestic.  
25          She was cleaning homes; that was what a

1           boarding school education afforded her.

2                   And over the years talking  
3           to my peers, people my own age, a  
4           little bit older, a little bit younger,  
5           learned that many of their mothers, or  
6           grandmothers, or great grandmothers  
7           that was the only work that they could  
8           find.

9                   I was talking with one of my  
10          mom's friends and this was a very  
11          accomplished woman, educated person,  
12          who had said that one of her recent  
13          experiences was of another nonprofit  
14          professional addressing her as though  
15          she was 'help'.

16                   And I know this woman well  
17          and I couldn't imagine anybody thinking  
18          that she was other than you know  
19          accomplished, wise, brave, you know, a  
20          leader.

21                   And to this day, she's still  
22          being categorized as someone who should  
23          be cleaning houses. So I guess one of  
24          the things that touched me deeply, was  
25          that women didn't often have the

1 opportunity to be in leadership.

2 And I see that today. And I  
3 -- I think that must have it's reason  
4 kind of mis-education that my  
5 grandmother and all of our grandparents  
6 experienced.

7 My grandmother passed away  
8 from cirrhosis of the liver when she  
9 was just 34 years old. She was  
10 homeless when she -- when she died.

11 She died of -- in a coma  
12 from -- and that's what we can glean  
13 from medical records. And that's  
14 really what we have aside from a  
15 photograph that was given to my mom of  
16 her mother.

17 That part, the next part of  
18 the story I'm going to save for another  
19 day, but safe to say my grandmother was  
20 buried at a Catholic cemetery in  
21 northeast Minneapolis.

22 And while it was not an  
23 unmarked grave in the way that we're  
24 talking about the -- the graves of  
25 children whose lives were lost at the

1 -- at the school they attended, my  
2 grandmother was buried in a potter's  
3 field, unmarked and unnamed.

4 In about 2008 my mom and my  
5 great uncle and my family received a  
6 notice from that cemetery saying we  
7 think we've -- we've located her.

8 They'd done some work and  
9 that was the first time that we've been  
10 able to place a marker at the place  
11 where she was buried.

12 It was the first time in,  
13 you know, 15 years ago maybe now, that  
14 was the first time they'd ever been  
15 able to grieve their parent.

16 So while I respect, you  
17 know, all of -- what people would share  
18 in terms of the time that's passed, it  
19 doesn't seem like a whole lot of time  
20 has passed.

21 By contrast, where my  
22 grandmother's life ended too young, and  
23 I think as a result of her  
24 mis-education and abuse that she likely  
25 suffered, and the lack of economic

1 opportunity and educational opportunity  
2 she suffered as a result of her  
3 experience, my grandfather attended  
4 Wahpeton Boarding School in North  
5 Dakota.

6 He was a White Earth tribal  
7 member and did his damndest to make  
8 sure that something -- his family would  
9 survive with him.

10 I think I'm here for that  
11 reason today. As a matter of fact, I  
12 know I am.

13 One of the reasons I can say  
14 that is because as his brothers were  
15 missing in the second world war and  
16 some of them were, you know, responding  
17 to the draft, my grandpa said he would  
18 not attend, he would not -- he -- he  
19 told me that he faked spina bifida.

20 He faked his way out of  
21 military service in 1942, and he was  
22 not -- that was something he was not  
23 ashamed to say.

24 He ran away from Wahpeton at  
25 age eight with three other of his

1           siblings, and according to his story,  
2           they -- they did not return. My great  
3           grandfather was the marshall, who's a  
4           mixed blood person, he was the marshall  
5           and whatever influence he might have  
6           had he -- he was able to keep his  
7           children at home thereafter.

8                        And so my grandfather, you  
9           know, retained his language in the  
10          three-and-half some years that he was  
11          at school.

12                      And as I got to know him  
13          when I was a teenager, he shared it,  
14          and he was happy to share it. He was  
15          proud to share it because he was  
16          absolutely willing to, in the face of  
17          70-some years of hardship.

18                      I think one of the -- the  
19          things I'm cognizant of today is the  
20          work that's available to people because  
21          they have a certain relationship to  
22          their education.

23                      He worked on the Alaskan  
24          pipeline. He, you know, he went  
25          through I think a lot, because, you

1 know, whatever education he had did not  
2 afford him other possibilities.

3 And that's the direct result  
4 of the kind of abuse that he  
5 experienced as a child. So that just  
6 had just long-lasting economic impact  
7 for him and his children, and my many  
8 cousins and there -- there are lots of  
9 us.

10 I can say without fault that  
11 -- or without... I can say that --  
12 that every single member of my family  
13 on my mom's side at some point was  
14 removed from a parent.

15 In -- in sort of my  
16 immediate close family, I have two  
17 younger and an older brother.

18 And so, you know, the -- if  
19 -- if -- if there is one thing that I  
20 would hope that comes out of the  
21 hearings today and across, you know,  
22 the country and all of this, is that  
23 for people who don't have these direct  
24 experiences with boarding school, but  
25 who's families do, that we'd be able to

1 name the general -- the generational  
2 nature of surviving, and to provide  
3 supports for, you know, people two,  
4 three, four generations removed from a  
5 grandparent's boarding school  
6 experience.

7 And I -- I think what's so  
8 different for everyone. And I was  
9 hesitant to get up and say anything  
10 today because I feel like I don't have  
11 too much to say for it to be  
12 meaningful, and I'm not sure if I've  
13 added anything to what others have  
14 already said.

15 But the -- it's my hope that  
16 everybody sort of gets up and says, you  
17 know, "Me too; I can be counted on to  
18 go tell a story and participate in  
19 whatever comes next." So I appreciate  
20 the time. And thank you so much.

21 (Applause).

22 MS. BEAULIEU: I didn't want  
23 to get up after that song so thanks  
24 Melissa for getting up before me. It  
25 was such a beautiful song, thank you



1 very much. Miigwech.

2 To the host of Mille Lacs,  
3 I'd say miigwech, and to the  
4 dignitaries for being here to listening  
5 to our testimony.

6 All my grandmother's  
7 children went to boarding schools. Her  
8 oldest one (inaudible) went to the  
9 boarding school and he would tell me  
10 about the stories about washing the  
11 military clothing that they had to wear  
12 and how heavy it was and how hard it  
13 was to do that.

14 And he told me about the  
15 tasks that they would play I think in  
16 the morning to get them up out of bed.  
17 They'd have to go down there and stand  
18 in military style and he said that was  
19 the loneliest, most lonesome feeling,  
20 hearing that song that went through  
21 him.

22 My older (inaudible) went to  
23 Pipestone. She grew up away from us,  
24 but didn't make it back for her own --  
25 my grandfather's funeral, that haunted

1 her her whole life.

2 My grandmother, the baby of  
3 the family, never mentioned once that  
4 she went to boarding school until we  
5 actually went to the school and we  
6 walked up to the 5th floor.

7 And since she was a baby she  
8 was at one end of the hall and her two  
9 older sisters were at the other end and  
10 the nun was in the middle.

11 And she would try -- she'd  
12 be crying and wanted to go to her older  
13 sisters and they wouldn't allow that.

14 Even though that -- I never  
15 experienced that, we all experienced  
16 that the institutions that we're  
17 product of. And lucky enough I came  
18 out as I went in and have -- I've  
19 remained Anishinaabe.

20 But when I graduated from  
21 high school, and because I didn't live  
22 on a reservation, I wasn't entitled to  
23 a scholarship. So even though these  
24 stories are in the past, the past  
25 hasn't passed, it still continues on

1           today.

2                           And the thing that I  
3           remember hearing about, testimonies,  
4           are like the social worker telling that  
5           Abenaki, Wabanaki kids on the east  
6           coast that oh -- they don't -- they  
7           need tennis shoes, they don't need to  
8           learn Indian dancing.

9                           So social work profession  
10          along with the education profession,  
11          all these professions, are part of the  
12          problem.

13                          And now we have upon us to  
14          try to infiltrate and change this  
15          scenario around so that our grandkids  
16          won't have to go through this, that our  
17          culture thrives today is a sign of  
18          resistance.

19                          And we need to continue  
20          that, and thank you too for saying  
21          that. We have to believe, we have to  
22          hope that it will change. I'll say  
23          that much. (Speaking in native  
24          tongue). (Applause).

25                          REPORTER'S NOTE: Submitted

1 to the court reporter in written form  
2 by Ms. Kathryn Beaulieu, a child was  
3 overheard praying, "Lord, help me not  
4 to hate my mother and father."

5 MR. NEWLAND: We'll see if  
6 we have any -- anymore folks who want  
7 to speak. Here we go.

8 SPEAKER: Good afternoon.  
9 (Speaking in native tongue). I am a  
10 Mille Lacs Band member. I just wanted  
11 to say a little bit about my dad, my  
12 father, who was sent to the Pipestone  
13 Boarding School here in Minnesota.

14 Pipestone is about -- it is  
15 in the southwest corner of our state.  
16 It's approximately a four to five-hour  
17 drive from here just to give some of  
18 you that may not know its distance from  
19 here to there.

20 My father was very young and  
21 he was sent there to have his language  
22 taken away. I am -- thanks to the  
23 boarding school, I am a  
24 first-generational English speaker.

25 My father did not know how

1 to speak English when he was sent to  
2 the school. He remembers how he lost  
3 his language and he does not remember  
4 how he knew or learned the English  
5 language.

6 What I mean by 'losing' his  
7 language was that he doesn't use it  
8 very often today, he never spoke it, he  
9 never taught it to us kids. That's why  
10 today I'm a first generational English  
11 speaker.

12 I don't want to drag this  
13 out, he never talked a lot about his  
14 experiences. Once in a great while  
15 he'd say something. He talked about,  
16 mostly about, how he used to run away.

17 He ran away multiple times,  
18 most of those times he made it back  
19 here to Mille Lacs Lake, sometimes he  
20 got caught halfway and got sent back.

21 I'm glad that there's a spot  
22 light on boarding schools today because  
23 they have a far generational reach to  
24 affect the children of the survivors,  
25 myself.

1                   My dad ran away, made it  
2                   back home many times. He was eight  
3                   years old. Thank you. (Applause).

4                   MR. HARRINGTON: Hi, I am  
5                   Bradley Harrington. I'm from the Mille  
6                   Lacs Band of Ojibwe and I was not taken  
7                   to a boarding school and it took me  
8                   quite a while to really understand the  
9                   impacts that it had on me as an  
10                  individual.

11                  I grew up hearing about it  
12                  from, for whatever reason, my  
13                  grandparents and their relatives they  
14                  -- they didn't talk about it, they just  
15                  mentioned that something happened  
16                  there, and I remember them saying  
17                  boarding school.

18                  And some of the stories that  
19                  I heard when I was about maybe six,  
20                  seven, eight years old of what happened  
21                  over there, one of them was with Henry  
22                  Sam, that's my grandmother's brother.

23                  And they said that when he  
24                  had spoken their language, spoken our  
25                  language, that they'd lock him in the

1           -- the basement.

2                       And, you know, growing up  
3           and hearing about boarding schools a  
4           little bit when I was younger and then  
5           really started coming out as I was  
6           getting older, I really couldn't  
7           connect how boarding schools impacted  
8           me, no matter how many times somebody  
9           told me that they did, until I started  
10          learning the Ojibwe language.

11                      I started learning the  
12          Ojibwe language about ten years ago. I  
13          went -- I started learning really  
14          quick, I -- I accelerated and was  
15          seemingly grasping it, but then I got  
16          to a certain point to where I stopped  
17          learning and I started forgetting.

18                      So another -- another part  
19          of the experiences I got when growing  
20          up on a reservation and the lifestyle  
21          here I was taken to treatment for  
22          chemical dependency plenty of times,  
23          jails and prison twice.

24                      And through treatment, you  
25          know, you learn how to assess your

1 dependency and assess your relationship  
2 with certain chemicals.

3 So I thought about the  
4 language in that way when I was having  
5 difficulties learning more. So I  
6 thought about what's my relationship  
7 with the Ojibwe language?

8 What are some of my core  
9 beliefs that I may have about it and I  
10 remember one of them.

11 So Henry Sam got locked in a  
12 basement and chained to a radiator for  
13 speaking the language. So I developed  
14 a core belief that if I were to speak  
15 the language something bad was gonna  
16 happen to me.

17 And I remember one -- it  
18 really struck me when I first seen the  
19 -- the movie called the Indian Horse.  
20 There was a scene in there where they  
21 showed a young Indian gal locked in the  
22 basement.

23 And seeing that really, you  
24 know, gave me the visual of it as  
25 because up until then I was just



1           imagining what it may have been like  
2           being, you know, locked in a basement  
3           for whatever reason, especially  
4           speaking your language.

5                       And in order to overcome  
6           that, I had to tell myself something  
7           different about the language that if I  
8           speak it, nobody's going to come and  
9           drag me to the radiator.

10                      And even if they were to try  
11           to, you know, I'd put up a pretty good  
12           fight. I'm not the smallest guy in  
13           camp.

14                      But at the same time I was  
15           believing that in myself and not  
16           addressing it at the time, I -- I may  
17           not have learned as much as I have, and  
18           then I think about that fellow  
19           Anishinaabe as I'm trying to teach and  
20           I'm trying to make sure everybody has  
21           an opportunity at least hear the  
22           language.

23                      What are some of the core  
24           beliefs that my fellow Anishinaabe may  
25           have developed whether it be to a story

1 a about boarding school. Maybe it was  
2 micro-aggressions that we get from non  
3 Indian society.

4 Maybe it's internal family,  
5 internal family nature, that some of  
6 the things I'm (inaudible) speak the  
7 loudest, but the -- the language is for  
8 primitive people, maybe that's some of  
9 the stuff out there.

10 So in -- in sharing that,  
11 I've learned a lot more just that one  
12 instance, that one story, that I had  
13 heard one time long ago had a great  
14 impact on my ability to just learn --  
15 learn our language, something that was  
16 given to my people in order to  
17 communicate.

18 So I can't imagine what  
19 other stories, what other thoughts that  
20 are still having to deal with. And  
21 then as a -- as a Anishinaabe society  
22 what large core beliefs do we have as a  
23 people regarding our language.

24 I was told thirty years ago  
25 that our language was dying and I was

1 told that every year every since then,  
2 every since I was able to hear and I  
3 understand that.

4 And one of my elders, Doug  
5 Sam has passed on now, I remember a few  
6 years ago he said that what if for  
7 every time that they told us that the  
8 language was dying that they actually  
9 did something about it, that it may  
10 have not die or been viewed as dying in  
11 the last 30 years.

12 So I greatly appreciate  
13 everybody coming here and appreciate  
14 the awareness that's going on out here.  
15 The first -- the first step in order  
16 for us to heal is this awareness.

17 Bring it Anishinaabe across  
18 the -- across the world together in  
19 order to become more aware of what  
20 happens in order to pass on some  
21 intergeneration fight,  
22 intergenerational perseverance on to  
23 our next generation that are coming up.  
24 Miigwech. (Applause).

25 MR. NEWLAND: Thank you. I

1 think we've had an opportunity to -- to  
2 hear from almost everybody here. We'll  
3 keep going if folks want to speak.  
4 This gentleman.

5 MR. CANE: My English name  
6 is Thomas Cane. I grew up in Remer,  
7 Minnesota. My mother comes from White  
8 Earth, Minnesota and the Leech Lake,  
9 Minnesota.

10 My grandmother comes from  
11 Lac Courte Oreilles and I want to say  
12 miigwech to Melanie Benjamin for having  
13 this gathering and miigwech to Deb and  
14 Bryan for coming to Minnesota.

15 I drove in from Blaine,  
16 Minnesota where I live. And one very  
17 important reason why I'm here today is  
18 to share with Deb and Bryan, I have  
19 couple of films here that -- I've been  
20 a filmmaker for 36 years, and over the  
21 years I have collected a lot of  
22 interviews with elders.

23 One of the profound  
24 interviews that I've ever done over  
25 those 36 years was with (inaudible) and

1 over in Golden, Colorado, 29 days  
2 before he left us.

3 And I shared this film in  
4 Washington DC with all the government  
5 entities, but the Bureau of Indian  
6 Affairs until, and I emphasize 'until,'  
7 Deb Haaland becomes the secretary of  
8 the Interior.

9 And another film that I had  
10 shared that I did film over at the  
11 University of Colorado with a Dr. Maria  
12 Delano Braveheart on historical trauma.

13 And I asked Maria I said,  
14 "Maria, what do you think if we send  
15 this film to countries around the  
16 world, so they can hear first hand from  
17 our stories about historical trauma?"

18 And she said, "You know,  
19 Tom, I got that covered." She said,  
20 "I'm speaking at the U.A. on historical  
21 trauma." So I said, "Okay. We'll just  
22 let you carry it from there."

23 So the places that I  
24 hand-delivered this film, two of our  
25 films, was the Smithsonian Institute of

1           Library of Congress in their museum and  
2           the White House.

3                       So this is the final place  
4           that I wanted to leave it is with the  
5           Bureau of Indian Affairs. And I think  
6           it -- it'll be in good hands.

7                       And my parents both went to  
8           boarding schools; one was at the  
9           Catholic school in Red Lake. My mother  
10          when to Pipestone.

11                      And one of the films I had  
12          here is the interview with my mother  
13          being at Pipestone, she shares stories  
14          about it. And I'll let you, you know,  
15          listen to it when you get back home.

16                      And I just want to say, you  
17          know, that wherever I go and whatever I  
18          do, I -- I try to share the films that  
19          I did the interviews with.

20                      I -- I shared a film with  
21          Melanie this morning. I -- I did some  
22          interviews here in 1992 with some  
23          artists over by the lake there. And I  
24          just now shared it with her and hope  
25          she -- one of the relatives are in --

1 in the film with (inaudible) Benjamin.

2 So I just, you know, want to  
3 say thank you and have a safe journey  
4 back home. (Applause).

5 MR. NEWLAND: Miigwech.  
6 Thank you. Looks -- we have a woman in  
7 the back of the room.

8 SPEAKER: (Speaking in  
9 native tongue). Miigwech, everyone.  
10 Thank you. And thank you everyone here  
11 who has made this -- this moment come  
12 together. My name (inaudible) Beck.

13 I'm enrolled at Little Shell  
14 Chippewa in Montana and I'm Blackfeet.  
15 I'm originally from Montana and I moved  
16 to Minnesota to work for the National  
17 Native American Boarding School Healing  
18 Coalition a couple of years ago.

19 I'll try to keep this brief  
20 since most of my experiences have to do  
21 with Montana. I was named after my  
22 great, great grandmother by grandmother  
23 (inaudible) was the first person to  
24 attend boarding school in my family.

25 She attended Fort Shaw

1 Industrial School in Montana where she  
2 was renamed Mini Caloos. And my great  
3 grandmother and grandfather on my  
4 Blackfeet side attended Holy Family  
5 Mission on the Blackfeet Reservation.

6 And my grandmother attended  
7 Saint Ignatius for Earth Client  
8 Submission on the (inaudible) Indian  
9 Reservation and also attended Chemawa.

10 All of them, they're full,  
11 you know, K through 12 education was in  
12 Indian boarding schools.

13 What I will say about what  
14 I've learned about Minnesota boarding  
15 schools since I've been here -- to this  
16 day, a lot of my family members, my  
17 aunties, my cousins attend (inaudible)  
18 Indian schools.

19 And recently we went to  
20 Kansas City and I was able to scan a  
21 bunch of documents and records from  
22 (inaudible) Indian school.

23 And something that I noticed  
24 was that there were work programs and  
25 they have the exact, you know, names,



1 location, individuals that worked with  
2 different families for very low wages  
3 in Minneapolis.

4 And a lot of them are on  
5 Franklin Street which is now where our  
6 organization is based. And so I just  
7 wanted to brag, I'm sure that you all  
8 are going through the records right now  
9 too, just that I suspect that a lot of  
10 economic development that happened in  
11 the Twin Cities area was in part due to  
12 the labor of children who were in  
13 federal Indian boarding schools.

14 And I don't doubt that this  
15 is true of many other cities. And so I  
16 hope that that's -- that can be part of  
17 the investigation is the impact that  
18 that child labor and taking those  
19 children to (inaudible) work programs  
20 in the Twin Cities, what that had on  
21 the economy here and, of course, on the  
22 children who were put in those  
23 programs.

24 (Speaking in native tongue).  
25 Thank you so much for allowing me some

1 time. And thank you all this hard  
2 work. (Applause).

3 MR. NEWLAND: Okay. Has  
4 anybody not spoken who wishes to speak  
5 today?

6 THE AUDIENCE: (No  
7 response).

8 MR. NEWLAND: Okay. With  
9 that I think then maybe we can turn it  
10 over to Secretary Haaland for some  
11 closing remarks and then Chief Benjamin  
12 and we can wrap -- conclude our session  
13 today.

14 MS. HAALAND: Thank you.  
15 Thank you, Bryan, and thank you  
16 everyone so much for taking your time  
17 to be with us today, for having the  
18 courage to speak up.

19 And for those of you, as I  
20 said earlier, who stayed and didn't say  
21 anything, just wanted to be supportive  
22 with your community members, that means  
23 a lot I know to the people here.

24 I especially want to thank  
25 Chief Benjamin, thank you so much for

1 all of your staff for all work they put  
2 into making this event a success, and  
3 for the delicious lunch.

4 I know these things don't  
5 just come together, you know, with the  
6 snap of your finger. But the lunch was  
7 -- was wholesome and delicious and  
8 we're very grateful for that as well.

9 You know, through the  
10 stories that I've heard today, I sit  
11 here and of course I think about my own  
12 grandparents who were taken from their  
13 families when they were eight years  
14 old.

15 And I had opportunities to  
16 sit down at the kitchen table with my  
17 grandmother and hear her talk about  
18 those events. The priest coming to the  
19 village to round kids up and put them  
20 on the train.

21 The fact that she only saw  
22 her dad twice in the five -- the five  
23 years she was gone and how it changed  
24 her.

25 She went to a Catholic

1 boarding school in Santa Fe which was  
2 only 100 or so miles away from the  
3 village of (inaudible) but it took  
4 three days to get there by horse and  
5 wagon. And so there were hardships on  
6 children, there were hardships on the  
7 families.

8 And so I -- I know that's  
9 true for every place that we have  
10 traveled to so far. I appreciate so  
11 much in trusting us to hear your  
12 stories, you trusting us to work as  
13 well as we can to move this country  
14 forward. I think it's a time of  
15 healing for our country.

16 Yes, for this issue, but for  
17 so many others as well. And so I just  
18 -- I just want you all to know how  
19 grateful we are to be here in our  
20 community.

21 I want to just acknowledge  
22 my staff who was here with me today  
23 because without them none of this would  
24 happen either.

25 So Chelsie -- where's

1 Chelsie? Chelsie. Thank you, Chelsie  
2 Wilson, she's working directly with  
3 Indian Affairs to -- on this particular  
4 issue of boarding school initiative.  
5 Thank you, Chelsie for being here.

6 (Speaking in native tongue).

7 (Applause). Joaquin David scheduling  
8 of events. Melissa Schwartz our  
9 prompts director.

10 John Grande who works with  
11 Melissa. Tyler (inaudible) who works  
12 with Melissa too. (Laughing). My  
13 (inaudible) was the -- the esteemed  
14 secretary of Indian Affairs for the  
15 State of New Mexico before she came to  
16 this department, and we're very  
17 grateful that she joined our team.  
18 (Applause).

19 Heidi (inaudible) who has  
20 been with me since I was a member of  
21 congress and who really worked on the  
22 boarding school issue lots before now.

23 And last but not least,  
24 Kathryn Main who is also the scheduling  
25 events coordinator. Thank you very

1 much, Kathryn.

2 And, of course, my security  
3 detail who you've -- who you've seen  
4 come in and out of the room as well.  
5 But, again, thank you all so much and  
6 I'm very appreciative. And I will turn  
7 it over to Chief Benjamin.

8 MS. BENJAMIN: Again, I want  
9 to say (speaking in native tongue) for  
10 all of you coming today and sharing  
11 your stories. And we were always  
12 taught too, that -- not to really show  
13 too much emotion out in the public.

14 If you needed to you, you  
15 keep that at home type of a thing. And  
16 -- but I was sitting over here in tears  
17 just about with every story, so just  
18 impacts the -- the heart.

19 And I think about my  
20 grandchildren and great grandchildren  
21 and how they love their family so much  
22 and just the thought of them kids being  
23 taken away, going someplace where they  
24 don't know where their parent and  
25 grandparents, aunties and uncles.

1                   And again just about the  
2                   strength of the Anishinaabe. When you  
3                   think about how strong we are and how  
4                   we have endured so many negative, awful  
5                   things to us, but we're still here  
6                   today.

7                   And -- and we're gonna give  
8                   that strength to our children, our  
9                   grandchildren and the next generations.

10                  And that's so uplifting and  
11                  the stories this morning were heart  
12                  wrenching and -- but the one thing I  
13                  thought the -- the mood really changed  
14                  when everybody had the opportunity to  
15                  go up and take a photo with secretary  
16                  Haaland because she's our champion.

17                  We are so thrilled that she  
18                  was here. Miigwech for -- for asking  
19                  to come to the Mille Lacs Band. And I  
20                  think all the stories that were here  
21                  and there's lots and lots of our  
22                  stories, but they're powerful and they  
23                  have so much strength.

24                  And the resistance and  
25                  resilience that we are Anishinaabe. We

1           have so much to be proud of and we can  
2           give that to our children.

3                       We can give all of your  
4           positive attributes of who we are, of  
5           the Anishinaabe.

6                       And that's why I challenged  
7           everyone just make sure our kids know  
8           where they have come from, what the  
9           strength that and warriors that they  
10          have in their -- their blood and that  
11          we will be here for the next several  
12          generations.

13                      And on safe travels to  
14          everyone. And thank you so much and I  
15          hope that you do a lot of healing  
16          ceremonies for yourself because you  
17          hear a lot of this historical, but at  
18          the end of the day, we will be the ones  
19          that are still standing here.

20          Miigwech. (Applause).

21                      (Whereupon, the conference  
22          terminated at 3:00 p.m.)

23

24

25



