

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

THE ROAD TO HEALING
NAVAJO NATION, MANY FARMS HIGH SCHOOL
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1 (Introduction guest speaker in Navajo.)

2 MALE SPEAKER: (In Navajo.) I just want to
3 say thank you so much for your leadership putting on
4 this event here, including our (indiscernible) in the
5 boarding school era and (indiscernible) in the future,
6 and that we continue being able to help one another
7 and make sure that this issue is taken seriously.
8 It's an honor to have the Secretary of Interior, Deb
9 Haaland, here with us. The governor as well. So I
10 just want to say thank you to all of you for coming a
11 long way for listening. Thank you so much. And with
12 that being said, I just want to turn it over to
13 Secretary Deb Haaland.

14 SECRETARY HAALAND: Hello again, everyone.
15 Greetings and good morning to all of you. It's such a
16 beautiful day outside and (indiscernible). Thank you
17 so much for your blessings (indiscernible).

18 It's an honor to be back here on Navajo
19 Nation. I will (indiscernible) to make sure that you
20 all have a time today. I'm here to listen to you and
21 I'm so honored (indiscernible). Your voices are
22 important to me, and I thank you for your willingness
23 to share your stories. (Indiscernible) from the
24 survivors, from the (indiscernible) Navajo Nation
25 policies carried out (indiscernible).

1 This is the first time in history that the
2 United States had a secretary come to the table
3 (indiscernible). That is not lost on me, and I'm
4 honored to use my leadership (indiscernible). A
5 boarding school policy (indiscernible). You've asked
6 me to come forward. Today is part of that journey.
7 (Indiscernible). Our goal is to create opportunities
8 for people to share their stories but also
9 (indiscernible) those in the boarding school system an
10 opportunity today to share all their experiences. I
11 have (indiscernible) here on Navajo Nation over the
12 years (indiscernible).

13 I was very honored when congress
14 (indiscernible). Please know we still have so much to
15 gain. In the event that (indiscernible). This is one
16 step among many that we will take (indiscernible). I
17 am very fortunate to be here (indiscernible) in the
18 step forward to share your stories (indiscernible).

19 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: (In Navajo.)
20 Good morning, everyone. My name is Brian Newland.
21 (Indiscernible) here today on Navajo Nation and here
22 at Many Farms. The Secretary (indiscernible) for two
23 years, (indiscernible) spent so much of their time
24 away from their families (indiscernible).

25 Yesterday, we had an opportunity to visit

1 Canyon de Chelly and learn the history of Navajo
2 people (indiscernible). Lastly, really understand and
3 make sense of (indiscernible). Those connections that
4 the federal government (indiscernible) did in these
5 boarding schools. So I want to thank you
6 (indiscernible) boarding school. At least 47 boarding
7 schools operated in the U.S., including 2 here on Many
8 Farms, as we continue our investigation,
9 (indiscernible) schools. (Indiscernible) various
10 sites and boarding school sites (indiscernible)
11 boarding school system, especially now. We ask and
12 encourage those of you here to share with us
13 (indiscernible) as part of this.

14 I want to also make sure I acknowledge that
15 there are folks here today. We have (indiscernible)
16 as well as Assistant Secretary (indiscernible) from
17 HHS. It has been an honor to serve as
18 (indiscernible). We also have (indiscernible), which
19 has a very important role (indiscernible) to make sure
20 that partnership with the tribes (indiscernible). I
21 also want to thank President Buu Nygren and Vice
22 President Richelle Montoya leadership (indiscernible).
23 I believe we also have a special guest (indiscernible)
24 right here. Let's give our chair a round of applause.
25 (Indiscernible) this is not just for (indiscernible).

1 This is the work of the United States Federal
2 Government, and this has been an issue
3 (indiscernible).

4 I'd also (indiscernible) I just want to make
5 sure (indiscernible), especially the state governor to
6 sit here with us and hear the boarding school
7 (indiscernible). Relationships with tribes and state
8 governments hasn't always been positive, and just the
9 governor's presence here (indiscernible) to hear means
10 a lot (indiscernible) and we appreciate it.

11 So just to get to a few housekeeping matters.
12 First, I know a lot of folks who traveled to see the
13 secretary (indiscernible) and we're going to have to
14 do that over the lunch break with photo lines, so
15 please (indiscernible). Don't rush up (indiscernible)
16 make time to get it.

17 I also want to note that we have a lot of
18 issues to work with the federal government and tribes
19 and the federal government of Navajo Nation. This
20 event today, we want to make sure that when we give
21 the space for those of you who have come to share your
22 experiences in the boarding schools and your family's
23 experiences. And we certainly hope (indiscernible).
24 So other issues that are not boarding schools, we're
25 not here to do those today (indiscernible). We want

1 to make sure that (indiscernible) boarding school
2 initiative.

3 So as we begin, it's our (indiscernible)
4 session (indiscernible). If you wish to speak, just
5 simply raise your hand and (indiscernible). We will
6 be here for a long time today, so we'll be sure that
7 we get to folks. Please note also you have members of
8 the rez here (indiscernible) and tell your story to
9 the American people about what these boarding schools
10 (indiscernible) and experiences (indiscernible).
11 So after the first round, we're going to excuse the
12 press and continue the conversation later
13 (indiscernible). We also have a court reporter here
14 making a record and a transcript of this
15 (indiscernible).

16 We also know that these conversations stir up
17 a lot of pain and these are difficult conversations
18 (indiscernible). We have health professionals and
19 trauma counselors here on site for those of you who
20 are willing to take advantage of that (indiscernible).
21 We just want to make sure that you're all
22 (indiscernible) run out of time limits on speakers.
23 We will ask that you kindly respect that there are a
24 lot people who wish to speak, so please be mindful of
25 that. If there is more you want to say in 15 minutes

1 (indiscernible),.

2 So with that, we'll start (indiscernible).

3 We will wrap up an hour and take a lunch break and
4 release the media, and then we'll continue.

5 (Indiscernible.) Thank you.

6 GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.) So he says
7 you go to boarding school. I went. I had two sisters
8 there with me, and two were older and (indiscernible).
9 And we wouldn't see each other very much because
10 (indiscernible) and boarding school. We had our hair
11 cut. (Indiscernible.) The other things was we
12 couldn't talk to each other. (Indiscernible) and when
13 we did, we got soap washed in our mouth.
14 (Indiscernible) and I remember I was told you have to
15 eat that, and I sat there for about two hours and I
16 wouldn't eat it. I cried. (Indiscernible) I had to
17 eat it.

18 Kids will pick on you, and he says I'm going
19 to teach you how to fight, fist fight. He taught me
20 how to fight. (Indiscernible.)

21 GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.) She came as
22 our guest from (indiscernible) and she told me there
23 that she was coming here today so (indiscernible) and
24 tell her stories. She has nine brothers and sisters,
25 and a lot of her siblings also came (indiscernible).

1 I think just you being here that she now has started
2 to (indiscernible). I had never heard (indiscernible)
3 because she was just a child. She was just a little
4 girl. (Indiscernible.)

5 My other sister, she was eight years old.
6 She went to (indiscernible). She still
7 (indiscernible). So here she was at nine years old,
8 and they told her you need to decide which boarding
9 school you're going to go to. She was scared.
10 (Indiscernible) will my parents know? Here they told
11 my mom, as a little small child, that I should decide
12 whether I should go to California or to go
13 (indiscernible).

14 So this is some things that occurred with
15 small children (indiscernible) boarding school. He
16 taught her to survive. And she said when she was a
17 teenager, (indiscernible). So thank you for the
18 opportunity to provide testimony (indiscernible).
19 Thank you for providing the opportunity to speak
20 (indiscernible).

21 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.
22 (Indiscernible).

23 GUEST SPEAKER: Good morning.
24 (Indiscernible) to Many Farms community
25 (indiscernible). (In Navajo.) Thirty-eight years ago

1 (indiscernible) 1985 to 2022, boarding school abuse
2 (indiscernible). Thank you. (Indiscernible) and here
3 I am. I went out into that (indiscernible) because I
4 snuck out in PE class 38 years ago. Our gym teacher
5 walked in the restroom (indiscernible), and he walked
6 in on us, and I got (indiscernible). I'm the only one
7 that spoke up, and I came back and (indiscernible). I
8 told the principal (indiscernible). And 38 years
9 later, the same people, the same people are still
10 here.

11 (Indiscernible) for my child I know the
12 system. Nobody's going to help but myself. I taught
13 him myself (indiscernible) a junior, senior year
14 (indiscernible) all he needs. I (indiscernible) and
15 make all the decisions. Two weeks before school was
16 out, I told the school, I said (indiscernible). Oh,
17 they're going to come up with something. I know
18 they're going to come up with something.

19 (Indiscernible) this IEP here is not (indiscernible).
20 It's not strong. (Indiscernible.) Why is it still
21 happening? (Indiscernible.) He has not had a fair
22 high school education. He did not have
23 (indiscernible). None of that. (Indiscernible) the
24 system is not working for him (indiscernible), but he
25 will survive. I did. (Indiscernible.) Thank you.

1 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.
2 Also, just a reminder once again to reach out.
3 Appreciate you speaking out. We've got a lot of folks
4 here in the department who can try to help out
5 (indiscernible) share your experiences with boarding
6 schools (indiscernible).

7 GUEST SPEAKER: (In Navajo.) Good morning.
8 I'm from (indiscernible). I want to start by telling
9 my mom's story. My mom is in her 80s now and mother
10 to her girls. She talks about her story and her
11 experience in Mesa, Arizona. And she grew up very
12 traditional, and at an early age (indiscernible), and
13 they go around and make their offerings before the sun
14 rises, and then they went back and started their day.
15 So she had a very traditional upbringing.
16 (Indiscernible) and so very rich in culture.

17 She said when she was about the age of -- she
18 doesn't really remember, but I believe it's around age
19 eight or nine years old. She said there was a black
20 car that came to her mom, and it had a big white star
21 on the passenger door -- driver or passenger door.
22 And then there was also a truck that came, and that
23 was (indiscernible). And they were there to basically
24 round up Navajo children and take them to boarding
25 schools. And you know (indiscernible) Navajo peace

1 officers there for sure. And he told my grandmother,
2 my grandparents, you have to put your fingerprints on
3 this paper to send your kids away to boarding school.
4 If you don't, you will be arrested and you will be taken
5 to jail.

6 And so my grandparents, not having very much
7 option, went ahead and put their fingerprints on it,
8 and my mom and her siblings were torn away from their
9 parents. (Indiscernible) not knowing the culture, a
10 foreign culture yet having to conform to it. Not
11 knowing a foreign place they came to. So they were
12 loaded up in the truck, and they were taken away
13 crying, screaming for their parents. And she said
14 they just held each other. There were some cousins in
15 that truck also, and they all hung on to each other,
16 and they were taken away to school (indiscernible).

17 And when they got there, they were told that
18 they had to (indiscernible) hair lice and their hair
19 was chopped. (Indiscernible) your hair is a part of
20 your body and they held that sacred, but their hair
21 was chopped (indiscernible) and thrown in the trash.
22 (Indiscernible) sister became angry (indiscernible).
23 She realized that this is part of our culture and
24 we're not supposed to do this, and they disregarded
25 her and did it anyway.

1 And so not only (indiscernible) she
2 contracted tuberculosis, and then she was sent away to
3 (indiscernible) sanatorium where she spent the whole
4 year there. And she had to have surgery on her lungs
5 because she had tuberculosis. And she said she was so
6 lonely there. The only people that would come visit
7 her were the Mormon missionaries (indiscernible). She
8 went ahead and did the surgery and it was okay. And
9 she said she stayed there all the school year into the
10 summer, and they finally let her go (indiscernible).
11 And they said they finally separated for this next
12 school year, so they all decided to go to
13 (indiscernible) school. (Indiscernible) and that's
14 where she completed her education.

15 Boarding school education was vocational
16 where you have (indiscernible). But my mom, she was
17 training to be a maid, basically. She chose home maid
18 as her career path. And my dad, he chose construction
19 work. So those were the ways they were trained. It
20 was not to prepare for college at all.

21 So upon their graduation, they began working
22 right away. They moved to Seattle. They had met in
23 school. My mom had wanted to start a family there and
24 (indiscernible). And then eventually, they moved back
25 to the reservation because my mom was so homesick for

1 her homelands so they moved back. We were born here.
2 The six of us grew up together (indiscernible).

3 And my experience in boarding school, we
4 didn't have the option. (Indiscernible) so at five
5 years old I went to boarding school. And while I was
6 there, my mother, she wanted to be close to us so she
7 applied for positions for a dorm maid, and she lived
8 in another dorm. So she was there on campus with us
9 and would help us.

10 And I guess one of the dorm maids in my dorm,
11 she didn't like my mom because she kept getting praise
12 because she was a good employee. And so the maid in
13 my dorm took that -- her aggressions against my mom
14 against me. And so I remember being yanked out of bed
15 in the middle of the night being told that I'm a bed
16 wetter. She'd take off my sheets and wake up
17 everybody and say, "This girl is a bed wetter" and
18 show everybody the sheets (indiscernible) and I
19 started to cry. I was like (indiscernible). I knew I
20 wasn't a bed wetter. And so that's the humiliation
21 that I had to endure there.

22 And that same person in the morning would
23 braid my hair, and she would yank on it, hit me on the
24 head, which I was in (indiscernible) and I wasn't
25 fooling around. But she just did that just to abuse

1 me. So finally, one of the other dorm maids reported
2 on her and told the supervisor that I was being abused
3 by this dorm maid. So they called my mom to a
4 meeting, and my mom was getting ready to punch her.
5 And so they asked my mom, "What do you want us to do?"
6 Or we can either put her on leave without pay or we
7 can fire her. And so my mom, you know, she was very
8 angry, but she (indiscernible) in her heart and she
9 spoke to this lady in Navajo. But the way she did it
10 was (indiscernible) and lady not (indiscernible). I
11 think she told them leave without pay and so that's
12 what they did. And so those were some of the
13 experiences we gone through as a people.

14 And when I completed my education
15 (indiscernible), I had my two step-daughters, and my
16 husband and I raised two daughters. (Indiscernible)
17 parents that are in the school system --
18 (indiscernible) kids that are homeless, kids that are
19 from alcohol, drug abuse by their parents, and so they
20 (indiscernible) you know. Just all kinds of a range
21 of backgrounds in these kids. And they're so much
22 stronger on what they deal with on a daily basis. But
23 they didn't ask (indiscernible). They're thinking
24 about what's going on at home. You know, is Mom going
25 to use or is Mom or Dad are in jail? Things like

1 that, you know. Or where am I going to sleep tonight
2 or where am I going to go? And those are the issues
3 that our kids of today are facing.

4 It's really sad, but we have to do something.
5 And I believe this is all compounding trauma. And I
6 went back to school, and I just finished my master's
7 program in (indiscernible). And my thesis -- I
8 decided to do -- my thesis is titled "The American
9 Indian Intergenerational Trauma on (indiscernible)."
10 and I did this because this is such a huge issue that
11 needs to be addressed, who as a (indiscernible), a way
12 for our students to adjust to the trauma, to have the
13 trauma education to do healing and our culture
14 (indiscernible).

15 Every season traditionally, my mom said they
16 used to have (indiscernible) with every season,
17 spring, winter, summer, and the fall. (Indiscernible)
18 we have to tailor our trauma and our approaches
19 according to our students, (indiscernible) to all
20 these programs. But it's hard (indiscernible).

21 I come in today as brown and indigenous. I
22 come to you (indiscernible) boarding school being
23 yanked (indiscernible) permitted to speak another
24 language, forced to learn about a culture that's
25 foreign to me. I come today (indiscernible).

1 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you for
2 sharing your mom's story and yours. (Indiscernible.)
3 We're going to hear from two more speakers, and then
4 we will break for lunch. Navajo Nation has provided
5 box lunches for us here (indiscernible).

6 GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

7 GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

8 (Lunch recess.)

9 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Good afternoon,
10 everyone. Thank you for being patient with us. Thank
11 you to the Nation for the lunches. Time check it is
12 1:40. We're going to try to go for another hour, hour
13 and a half, and then we'll take a break. When we're
14 preparing to wrap (indiscernible), and then just make
15 sure we have a chance to hear from people who still
16 want to speak.

17 Before I turn it back to all of you to share
18 your stories with us, I just want to make sure that I
19 emphasize two points. The point of today's session is
20 to hear from people about their boarding school
21 experiences and their families. If there's another
22 issue you wish to raise with us, the Department of the
23 Interior, we ask that you not take the microphone and
24 the floor time to do that. We have people here who
25 can hear from you about those issues.

1 And the second, I just also ask that those of
2 you who are going to speak to just be mindful that
3 many others may want to speak as well. So we're not
4 trying to rush you through your time, but just please
5 be mindful that others are coming after you as well to
6 share their stories. So with that, we'll open the
7 floor back up and hear out next speaker.

8 GUEST SPEAKER: (In Navajo.) Good afternoon
9 leaders here as I come before you humbly. I come to
10 you to share stories. I was asked to come for my
11 father and my mother. My father in 1967 enters the
12 gymnasium (indiscernible) senior class after
13 (indiscernible) high school for four years. He did
14 not know why he was asked to come to the high school
15 gymnasium at (indiscernible).

16 Living in a boarding school away from home,
17 there were no phones at the time. But in 1967, my
18 father entered a gymnasium only to find to be asked
19 what his Social Security number was. From that day
20 on, my dad was drafted to the Vietnam War. His
21 parents had no idea where their son was for more than
22 4 months. My paternal grandmother had no way of
23 contacting the school or had no way of knowing where
24 her son was.

25 My dad recalls the memory of wondering how he

1 ended up in San Diego for basic training and ended up
2 in Vietnam three months later. And his mother and
3 father never knew where he was going. They only knew
4 that their son was in boarding school at
5 (indiscernible) High School. And the food there was
6 (indiscernible), but he said it didn't get any better.

7 I never knew these stories until my senior
8 year in high school when the Iraq war started -- or my
9 junior year in high school when the Iraq war started.
10 And we were sitting in the living room when my dad
11 broke out in a sweat. We couldn't understand why he
12 would just hop in the shower. And it isn't until then
13 he started sharing stories of his experiences with the
14 federal government early on.

15 And he started to share that he was lonely
16 all the time. He had to hitchhike back and forth to
17 go back to school, but his parents were told that if
18 he didn't, that they would go to jail. That's the
19 experience that my father has had with boarding
20 school. Going to school and not knowing that he was
21 going to leave for the Vietnam War, he served his
22 country. That, I did not know because he never spoke
23 highly of the Vietnam War, but I was raised in the
24 military traditional lifestyle. And it's with a heavy
25 heart that my dad finally shared that story.

1 So when I shared that I was coming today, he
2 said, "Straight to the point, go in short. That's all
3 you need to say." And that's military language for
4 him. But that's what the federal government bestowed
5 upon him, and he dealt with years of trauma. It
6 wasn't until 10 years ago my dad entered a facility in
7 Denver to get help.

8 But I tell that story to you as I come to you
9 humbly today. (In Navajo.) I come from a long line
10 of family that has served our country, and I always
11 tell my dad, "I'm proud of you no matter what you did
12 there." But that was his experience of going to
13 boarding school and never having the ability to come
14 home and the government taking him from school and
15 straight to Vietnam. Thank you.

16 GUEST SPEAKER: Thank you, Shannon, for
17 coming today and sharing your dad's story, and thank
18 you to your dad.

19 Madam Secretary, Mr. President, Madam Vice
20 President, Speaker, and our Advisor and Mr. Beechum:
21 I would like to have my (indiscernible) in a sense
22 that the Bureau of Indian Affairs Boarding School was
23 heaven sent compared to some of the stories that you
24 may have heard with Christian boarding schools. I am
25 very much appreciative of the (indiscernible) and then

1 also the experiences that we have had. I am in the
2 winter of my season. I have no room to harbor the
3 heartaches and the difficult times that many of us
4 have had. I'm willing to leave it on this court.

5 In the 1960s (indiscernible) where the
6 original boarding school was established, Chairman
7 (indiscernible) at that time, he said -- but before he
8 said that, I want to share with you what the Bureau of
9 Indian Affairs Boarding School officials said in 1963.
10 They established that boarding school was to make a
11 service in the custodial service, culinary arts, and
12 others. And those are meaningful trades and
13 meaningful occupations. But at the time, Chairman
14 (indiscernible) said I see doctors. I see lawyers. I
15 see administrators. I see educators. I remember that
16 as much as a seven-year-old could remember. I'm very
17 much appreciative of that.

18 At the time our council men would visit us,
19 they told us to endure, to persevere, to go through
20 these hardships so that those who are coming after us
21 will have an easier time. I'm very much appreciative
22 of those that have come home to work for us. It is
23 our own people that work with us. It just seems like
24 all of the people who went to Vietnam became dormitory
25 maids here, so we were introduced to calisthenics very

1 early on.

2 And for those who went to boarding school,
3 and for those who talk of their military experience
4 serving and having gone to school at a boarding
5 school, boot training was no match. It was very easy.
6 Without the boarding school, I would not have had the
7 opportunity to experience friends here. What it
8 taught me was in Many Farms, when they gave you your
9 certificate, I remember it had MFBS. Mother, father,
10 brother, sister. That's what we took those letters to
11 mean. It gave us greater bonding with our siblings
12 who attended boarding school here with us. It gave us
13 the opportunity to have the experience of what ice
14 cream is all about, chocolate cake, having our own
15 bed, having showers, never such a shame that we ever
16 experienced back home. In exchange, we gave up
17 (indiscernible). We gave up some of our language and
18 some of the (indiscernible) that was uttered this
19 morning, but we still remain. They never took that
20 away from us. Even though our mouth was washed out
21 with soap, we still speak Navajo.

22 Now, for us (indiscernible), we have the
23 opportunity that boarding school gave us, especially
24 (indiscernible). It gave us bicultural nations. Many
25 of our children today on boarding school and they are

1 bicultural. That is a blessing. Now, how we treat
2 those that are bicultural, those that are mixed blood,
3 how do we treat our own now? We need to embrace them.
4 We need to take them to heart. They are Navajo. We
5 need to have them with us. Many Farms Boarding School
6 gave me my children (indiscernible). If I didn't go
7 through these times, I don't know if I would have
8 them. But I'm very, very fortunate.

9 Lastly, I would like to say that in our
10 boarding schools, if any (indiscernible) we need to
11 increase graduation rate of our college and university
12 students. We cannot continue to whimper through with
13 only 7 percent of our candidates who go to college and
14 graduate. I believe that there's opportunity for
15 people like myself in my particular generation that
16 they become a generation (indiscernible) the Indian
17 Child Welfare Act. We've gone through the Native
18 American Freedom of Religion. We are now experts.

19 Now, what is our government going to do with
20 this? What are they going to do with my experience?
21 I am in the winter of my years. I'm ready to retire,
22 but what do I do with all this knowledge? That is
23 what we can do. We have many educators who are PhD
24 candidates. And then also, those educators, they can
25 teach us as well and we can give back to our

1 community. I am very fortunate to have gone to the
2 Many Farms Boarding School. Many Farms Boarding
3 School was not always locals. They were Many Farm
4 neighbors. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

5 GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

6 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Dolores, I'm
7 sorry. Can you hold the microphone closer to your
8 face?

9 GUEST SPEAKER: I come from the
10 (indiscernible). I went to school at (indiscernible)
11 Boarding School and then moved on to Tuba City
12 Boarding School. But today I want to share with you
13 stories from my parents.

14 Last night I thought, oh, had the boarding
15 school life. I don't truly remember a lot of things,
16 but as I hear stories today, (indiscernible) and I
17 think that's sort of what I did. My dad's from
18 (indiscernible) area, and he met my mom in a boarding
19 school somewhere in Albuquerque, New Mexico. So my
20 mom is from Crown Point, New Mexico, and they've been
21 married -- they were married for 66 years, but my dad
22 passed away 4 years ago. But my dad (indiscernible)
23 and my mother is (indiscernible).

24 My dad used to tell us about when he was
25 taken to boarding school. (Indiscernible) and then

1 all of things that they told, you know, things that we
2 hear about. Not speaking your language, not doing
3 certain things, like being torn away from your
4 parents, not knowing what was there, and not knowing
5 what running water was, electricity. Those are some
6 of the things that we had. But then there was other
7 things that were taken away from us, right, like being
8 able to bond with family. But now I have
9 (indiscernible) your family is your grandparents, your
10 cousins, your aunts, your uncles. (Indiscernible)
11 four years ago.

12 And now I think about that, and I thought all
13 those things that happened from there, we're still
14 trying to live through those. We're still trying to
15 figure out, you know, (indiscernible). And then I
16 have five brothers and two sisters. Today I just have
17 one sister and one brother. The rest are all gone
18 from alcohol. And you just wonder how did we get
19 here? How did we (indiscernible) our ancestors did we
20 do that? Our ancestors had these values that were set
21 for us, and we lost that because we were dragged away
22 from our families.

23 And today, as we go along in my generation,
24 which is a little bit later in the stories in -- a lot
25 of the stories I heard here. But we're the next

1 generation, and our kids are starting to grow up, and
2 they're struggling, too. So it's just a generational
3 trauma that you hear (indiscernible), but we had that,
4 too, but nobody talks about it because nobody knows
5 that we exist or (indiscernible). They don't choose
6 to hear us or they don't choose to see that we make a
7 contribution. And we talk about military commitment.
8 We talk about (indiscernible) that have served in the
9 military. (Indiscernible.) And somewhere along the
10 way, we have to make sure we have to keep talking. We
11 have to raise our voices to tell our story
12 (indiscernible).

13 We are so fortunate to have Secretary
14 Haaland. They come from that, and we have to help
15 them to get us to the next level. Maybe
16 (indiscernible) for our children (indiscernible). And
17 you think about it and you say, yeah, okay. But we
18 have to be strong. I have to survive and, you know,
19 we just have to keep making steps. And that trauma is
20 what causes all these problems. Our parents went
21 through it, we went through it, and somewhere for our
22 kids, and for our grandkids and all of that.

23 I just wanted to express my sincere
24 thankfulness that these -- that now we can come to the
25 center and tell our stories. And we just have to keep

1 doing that until they (indiscernible). Be proud of
2 them, help us help them grow (indiscernible), help us
3 make it better. An that's what we need. Yeah, we can
4 tell our stories but also help us move forward.
5 (Indiscernible) and then we have to be able to be
6 contributors to that, not to sit on the sidelines, be
7 contributors. Do your votes, whatever we need to do,
8 that's what we need to do as a group, and then we can
9 make impact that way. (Indiscernible) I just want to
10 share with you how much this means to me and probably
11 (indiscernible) just to be able to come here and tell
12 short stories and, hopefully, contribute to a change
13 for our people. Thank you.

14 GUEST SPEAKER: Thank you for coming and
15 inviting us. My story is that I went to
16 (indiscernible) to boarding school. I don't see them
17 no more. I only see the cafeteria and one barn;
18 whereas, (indiscernible).

19 My dad and my mom talk about that. It is to
20 talk about my brother (indiscernible). He never came
21 home. (Indiscernible). I want to find my brother,
22 where he's at, where he's buried. (Indiscernible) my
23 mom and dad's home to go to school. Only one
24 returned, the first son. And then my two other
25 brothers (indiscernible) got wounded. He lives in

1 (indiscernible). He doesn't come visit. And my other
2 brother, he was a sergeant and a sniper in Vietnam.
3 He passed on two years ago. One of our
4 (Indiscernible.)

5 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you very
6 much for taking the time to speak.

7 GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

8 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Merlin, I want
9 to make sure we get to the speakers that haven't had a
10 chance to speak.

11 GUEST SPEAKER: All right. Thank you.
12 (Indiscernible.)

13 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you,
14 Merlin. We'll go to our next speaker. Thank you for
15 sharing. We've got back here and then over here to
16 the side. You can get up. We should be able to hear
17 you fine from where you are. Thank you.

18 GUEST SPEAKER: Good afternoon. (In Navajo.)
19 Mr. President, Ms. Vice President (indiscernible).
20 (In Navajo.) We were taught when we were in boarding
21 to school to have to stick to the main topic as much
22 as we can (indiscernible).

23 I went to boarding school all my life from
24 (indiscernible). I graduated from (indiscernible)
25 Boarding School, and then I graduated from

1 (indiscernible). The way I feel about this boarding
2 school didn't hurt anybody. The boarding school
3 taught me a lot and taught me some bad. But when I
4 went to boarding school, I was already prepared for
5 it.

6 My mom, my dad (indiscernible). That's the
7 way we grew up, and I was already prepared for
8 boarding school, so I really had a good time at
9 boarding school. They didn't treat me well. A lot of
10 bad things happened to me (indiscernible). That's the
11 way they treat us. (Indiscernible) that taught me to
12 keep us in line every day. We had to be in a line, a
13 straight line (indiscernible), but that helped teach
14 me that (indiscernible).

15 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: We'll come over
16 here. Just make sure we can hear you with the
17 microphone up here so you don't need to come to the
18 front of the room. We'll be happy to have you stand
19 where you are. Thank you.

20 GUEST SPEAKER: Good afternoon, everyone. So
21 my name is (indiscernible), and I'm a long life
22 resident of Many Farms. I grew up in a remote area 7
23 miles east of here (indiscernible). We go around this
24 way (indiscernible) so I don't know what to believe.
25 But in my heart, this is not there. Not with

1 (indiscernible), not with the Navajo Nation, and not
2 with the state of Arizona.

3 It's hard talking about today. It's painful,
4 it's embarrassing, it's shameful, and no one is
5 (indiscernible). Rimrock Boarding School from 60
6 years ago, that's where I started. It was a boarding
7 school in Chinle. We'd get up at 5:00 in the morning
8 with all of the amenities, electricity, water, nice
9 floors, bed. It was a place where we would want to
10 grow up, but you can't (indiscernible). They fix your
11 bed with nice corners. But for some reason, that
12 still was not good enough.

13 You'd go across the hall to your classroom
14 (indiscernible). The bus comes to my house at 5:00 in
15 the morning (indiscernible), I wouldn't get breakfast.
16 (Indiscernible.) You go to your classroom, you be
17 prepared and you are going to be good. We were
18 educated by these very smart, intelligent people in a
19 different language when you go to a classroom. One
20 misbehaved child gets everybody in trouble. You're
21 going to help that child, your school classmate, to
22 stand on your knees for one hour without moving. Your
23 teacher calls you up. That's what reminds me of
24 captivity. (Indiscernible) and put your hands under
25 your skirt and fondle you. Trust, respect, trauma.

1 This was trauma. (Indiscernible.)

2 You go to check out, come back home all
3 proud, and you no longer have long hair and somebody
4 (indiscernible). I don't want to be a poster child
5 for abuse. I no longer had an identity. A loved one
6 (indiscernible) in fancy clothes, but they made me.
7 I learned how to be bad. I learned how to be
8 disrespectful. I learned how to lie to my people.
9 (Indiscernible) and get my \$15 dollar check. Abuse
10 continues. (Indiscernible) you go back across the
11 hall to the dormers and you do your homework, have a
12 little fun time. And then the white people who take
13 care of you says that it's time to go to bed. We all
14 (indiscernible), and here comes a man, a teacher, a
15 principal, people that we were supposed to trust.
16 (Indiscernible) they pushed all the beds
17 (indiscernible) into one corner in the back with our
18 hair pulled by the metal hooks on our bed.
19 (Indiscernible) we sat on our knees with a tooth brush
20 to clean with nasty soap.

21 (Indiscernible) I didn't know how to read a
22 book because my first teacher came from my parents.
23 My first teaching came from (indiscernible). That's
24 where my first education went, and that's why we
25 (indiscernible) follow the law. They groomed my dad

1 to obey the law (indiscernible). He said, "Rita, look
2 at those pictures, and when you dream, you better
3 dream with your eyes wide open that some day you'll
4 have a car like that because some day you're going to
5 have a house like that." He pushed us but it was with
6 love. Coming from Rimrock to Many Farms, same but a
7 little different. Food was (indiscernible) on your
8 clothes (indiscernible). Food was spoiled.

9 (Indiscernible) but I became so simple. I became so
10 humble. Traumatized does not even come close.

11 (Indiscernible) when you get yourself
12 damaged, as a lot of the young ladies I went to school
13 with, you never recover. It's one day at a time. You
14 can go to church. (Indiscernible) I came here to the
15 high school. I was told come in (indiscernible). My
16 mother and sister had a restaurant there, and I went
17 to the high school there. Same thing in the state
18 school. I graduated from Chinle High School, and
19 again, I'm on the bus almost like 6 hours out of the
20 day (indiscernible), and that is why you don't see
21 high school graduates. Our family, my family, my dad
22 was educated (indiscernible).

23 But I say to you we are all a part of this.
24 The abuse continues, and it will continue until we
25 start action. Sixty years ago (indiscernible). I

1 heard horror stories four years ago. (Indiscernible)
2 I want to see some action because of the stories have
3 been told (indiscernible). I don't think so. You're
4 the boss. You're the leader. You have the power
5 (indiscernible). When you don't say something, you
6 cannot talk about change. You have to speak up and be
7 part of the change. These guys aren't going to do it
8 by themselves. These guys aren't going to do it by
9 themselves.

10 All we have, we have all the witnesses right
11 there and the students. (Indiscernible) I come from a
12 long line of military. I have children in this
13 country. I have a right to be heard. I have a right
14 to be seen. I have a right to have my concerns
15 addressed without being (indiscernible) the people
16 that serve the people. (Indiscernible.) My parents
17 never depended on the system for anything. Never.
18 They were (indiscernible), and they'll always
19 (indiscernible). Something that is such a terrible
20 secret (indiscernible) because nobody is going to fix
21 your problems until you fix your problem. The
22 president today is not going to fix my problem or I
23 cannot fix anyone's problem. That is how I survive.
24 That is how we stop it.

25 We throw around the word sovereign. We're a

1 sovereign nation. (Indiscernible) we're only
2 sovereign over ourselves, and you're the only one that
3 can fix your problems and fix your community and
4 (indiscernible), right, so we can grow. But that
5 trauma never goes away. That pain, that hurt never
6 goes away. (Indiscernible.) Will I get to see a
7 change? Will I get to help in the change? I feel
8 like it's too late for that.

9 (Indiscernible) if it comes to that excuse.
10 I am so thankful these guys are here, and I think we
11 need to self help, and I think those of us that have
12 been through this need to have a voice at Navajo
13 Nation, not pacify us. (Indiscernible) needs to start
14 looking at this prevention, furthermore, starting with
15 the teachers (indiscernible).

16 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.
17 Thank you very much. We're going to take a break.
18 We'll take a quick break for 10 minutes, and we'll
19 come back in and continue to hear from folks. Thank
20 you.

21 (A recess was taken.)

22 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Ladies and
23 gentlemen, again, please take your seats, please take
24 your seats. All right. In order to continue, please
25 take your seats. We've got our mic runners here.

1 What we're going to do is start over here first.
2 We're going to go for about another hour, and then
3 we'll see where we're at. I do want to say -- again
4 if you can take your seats, please. What I do want to
5 say is I appreciate that this is a difficult
6 conversation for folks. It would be very helpful for
7 us if you would stay in the area where you are seated
8 instead of coming to the front of the room. I would
9 very much appreciate that. We will make sure that we
10 hear you.

11 So what we will do is we'll start over here.
12 Thank you.

13 GUEST SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

14 (indiscernible) Secretary of Interior, the staff, and
15 all the officials (indiscernible). (In Navajo.) I
16 just introduced myself.

17 Anyway, I went to (indiscernible) boarding
18 school way back -- I'm talking maybe about 1962, '63,
19 '64, something like that. I was there at the time
20 (indiscernible). It was an experience from the start
21 in the classroom, you know. We had Navajo teachers
22 that would teach (indiscernible). One of the things
23 that I had to do for every class I went to, you were
24 placed in a group. You're at (indiscernible) one,
25 two, three, and I was the last group to go and read

1 (indiscernible).

2 The teachers that we had had a ruler. And
3 every day or every time I had to read, I would wear
4 long sleeves because (indiscernible). Anyway, that's
5 one of the things I went through. And you know, not
6 just your arm. Some days on the edge of the ruler
7 right on your wrist. That's what they did.

8 And then the sets, one of the classrooms at
9 that point and the dorm room. You'd be okay in your
10 classroom. You go back to the dorm rooms, it's
11 something else, you know. You have to -- once you get
12 back (indiscernible) you made noise, it's
13 (indiscernible), too. You bent over, everybody had
14 their head down bent over for a period of time. For
15 what reason, I don't know what they were teaching us.
16 So that's the boarding school.

17 And when many people were in trouble, for
18 some reason they'll ask you, "What do you want? Do
19 you want the stick or whip?" We'll come in
20 (indiscernible) of a bat, a baseball bat. That's what
21 I had to deal with (indiscernible). Got whipped,
22 spanked, not only me but others. Not any time but
23 throughout the day. That's how we were treated and
24 that's how we were punished.

25 And the other things that happened

1 (indiscernible) at that time, John F. Kennedy, who was
2 the president, introduced the physical fitness, called
3 for all the schools to be in our education. That's
4 what they told us to do. We didn't have no tennis
5 shoes, gym shorts, things like that. So we only had
6 one shoes. There was street shoes. You go to school
7 with that, you run with that, you do exercises. You
8 (indiscernible) time to. You might be too painful,
9 but you still have to do it. So he said okay with the
10 physical fitness, we were having that. Certainly not
11 a -- was a sidewalk around the playground. So that's
12 one of the things (indiscernible).

13 And then the playgrounds that were there, and
14 at times no body would watch over us and we were
15 small. We went out there with the buildings, and some
16 of them were built back in the 1930s. They were all
17 (indiscernible) and we're under there crawling around
18 there in the insulation, and there was asbestos. So
19 we used to crawl under there and play. Things like
20 that you can't (indiscernible). We didn't know.

21 In the middle of the night, they had a siren
22 for a fire drill. It was a mandate and we had a fire
23 drill and we were on the top floor. When that thing
24 starts ringing, everybody had to be out of the dorm,
25 and it's "Fire drill, fire drill," and we were,

1 "What's a fire drill?" We were just happy to slide
2 down the fire wall. We enjoyed it. (Indiscernible.)

3 We were put in a school. We lived in
4 (indiscernible). One day they put us on the bus, and
5 they had -- they said that's an LDS church bus and we
6 got to go to church. You have water over there, we've
7 got air, so it's (indiscernible) what do we do to be
8 baptized. See, I don't really know what that is, you
9 know. They said nothing. We thought we'd go
10 swimming. We thought, "Oh, that's good, you know."
11 It wasn't even bad.

12 But things like that are just the tip of the
13 iceberg, some of the things that went on. But I think
14 it's just really shock, myself. And I was in the
15 Marine Corps, which I tried (indiscernible). I've got
16 four kids, three adorable grand kids. My wife is an
17 educator, and we're both retired now and enjoying it.
18 (Indiscernible).

19 GUEST SPEAKER: I just wanted to add real
20 quickly about, first of all, (in Navajo). I'm a
21 retired professor, Navajo University, and I also
22 taught Navajo language, too. So I really, really
23 enjoyed, you know, my job, but I also (indiscernible)
24 before my grand kids, too. So I had -- you know, I
25 had to retire.

1 So I just wanted to share that during my --
2 when I was working on my masters, I did my thesis on
3 Navajo language. When I taught Navajo language and
4 (indiscernible) that Navajo language to students. And
5 they would say, "Why are we paying tuition to learn
6 our own language? Why? We should have learned this
7 at home." So as I went along, I would ask them why.
8 Why was your primary language? English? Well, my mom
9 went to boarding school. My dad went to boarding
10 school. So, you know, they just told me speak
11 English, so that's what the response was. And they
12 were very frustrated. They could be paying for
13 another tuition for another class rather than paying a
14 Navajo language class. So anyway, if you're
15 interested, I have my thesis. Thank you.

16 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.

17 GUEST SPEAKER: (In Navajo.) It is a
18 privilege to be here, Secretary Haaland and Assistant
19 Secretary. I can't remember your name.

20 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: It's okay.
21 Bryan Newland.

22 GUEST SPEAKER: Bryan, okay, Newland. Thank
23 you. I just can't believe. I'm from Round Rock, just
24 15 miles north of here. I have the privilege of
25 serving as a political appointee for the

1 administration. I was a special assistant to the
2 Secretary (indiscernible) at the time. And I'm just
3 overwhelmed with that, that the Secretary of Interior
4 is in Chinle Valley and is here. And I really want to
5 take note that we really appreciate that. Not anybody
6 has come here like that, and here, our secretary is
7 listening. So I just want to (indiscernible) that.

8 I'm here with memories and stories of my late
9 mother who has passed on. The stories that I grew up
10 with first was of the (indiscernible). He, we are
11 told, was a young man, a young boy, and Shipley who
12 was the agent in Fort Defiance was out rounding up
13 Navajo children. And he was hiding, and he was hiding
14 from the military who didn't ask permission but came
15 up here, and there is something that is in the
16 Department of Interior called "The Trouble with
17 Round-Up" that documents that horrific time. But our
18 community rounded up and captured him, the agent, and
19 my grandfather was let go. He was hiding in the wagon
20 where they were going to take him away.

21 So that's the way the education was
22 introduced to us about resistance, about the fact that
23 at the time of the turn of the century, this is how
24 Navajo children were treated. And if you look at the
25 historical documents at Fort Defiance where the

1 children were taken to, there's horrific evidence of
2 children coming back without their eyesight, without
3 their hearing, and the horrible physical nature of
4 that experience.

5 So my father grew up with a father who was
6 rooted in his tradition, and he was a (indiscernible),
7 and that's what I grew up with. And my mother
8 recounted her experiences in a book she wrote called
9 "Women in Navajo Society." And in that book, she
10 recounts going to school, boarding school. And in the
11 winter, I know this was so unbearable, but she ran
12 away. She said she almost lost her life
13 (indiscernible) in a snow storm. She later then was
14 told she should go to school, and she and her sister,
15 Irma, went to Fort Lincoln. And there's pictures we
16 see in our family when my mom is dressed up
17 traditionally with her sister together, and yet you
18 see her on this hair she has a little bob, and it's
19 alternative. And you know, she's adapting to that
20 westernized style but still regaining her traditional
21 dress.

22 It was hard for my mother at Fort Windgate.
23 She recounted to us that they were told they should go
24 into vocational education, and they would take these
25 tests and the tests would tell them or tell the

1 bureaucrats there what best would be your skill set.
2 My mother was told that she would maybe be a waitress.
3 She could not probably be a secretary, but a waitress
4 was going to be her future. Years later, the
5 gentleman who was the educator at Fort Windgate, she
6 encountered him, and she went up to him and said, "I
7 was a student. I was able to go get my degree,
8 undergraduate degree in education and went on and got
9 a masters." And he apologized to her and said, "That
10 was wrong what we did."

11 So I grew up with these stories of really how
12 important it is, in my mother's teachings, that she
13 always said be proud of who you are. And I think it's
14 very difficult in this setting to kind of remind
15 ourselves that, foundationally, when we think about
16 trauma, when we think about these experiences that
17 have happened to our relatives, our parents, our
18 neighbors, we can (indiscernible).

19 And I really urge Secretary Haaland to think
20 about not only healing part of this journey but to add
21 resilience to it. Because when we focus so much on
22 individual trauma, we forget that so much of that was
23 institutionalized. And we forget that it's not the
24 individual. It's not your fault. It's not your fault
25 that you got drafted under a manipulated system, and

1 yet people are made to feel guilty, are made to feel
2 something is wrong with them. And I really urge you
3 to think about all of us here as Navajo.

4 You know, what comes to mind is when there
5 was a lot of discussion. I remember my mother telling
6 me what she thought. There was a lot of discussion
7 about whether Navajos should go back to
8 (indiscernible), whether we should go back to
9 (indiscernible) and see what was there, have ceremony
10 there. And she said, "No, we don't go back. That was
11 in the past. Those were things happened." There were
12 ceremonies at that time that were done to try to deal
13 with all of that with our people and what happened.

14 And I think fast forward to what we're
15 dealing with now, and I really think it is important
16 we understand the past because if we don't understand
17 it, we're condemned to repeat it. Something my dad
18 (indiscernible) into me. But we have to know what
19 happened. We have to understand the history, which is
20 what I think this cabinet on this listening tour is
21 doing. But then what do you do with that information?
22 And that's the big ask that I'm asking you.

23 Your education is under your jurisdiction,
24 both of you, and those schools were formerly boarding
25 schools, and they have none, almost all of them. And

1 that what is it in that setting in that academia where
2 we should be teaching the children Navajo history,
3 language, and culture. Because ultimately, that is
4 the basis of resilience. Resilience is based on
5 positive identity, know who you are, not where you
6 came from (indiscernible).

7 I used to direct the Navajo Nation Washington
8 office under President (indiscernible), and I remember
9 people would always say -- and I would ask him in
10 interviews, "Well, tell me what do you know about who
11 you are as a Navajo person?" And many times the
12 answer was "Well, I learned this and (indiscernible)
13 but." I said, "Well you know the four sacred
14 mountains plus the two other mountains." And
15 afterwards, I thought, "Why is this important to me?"
16 And it's important because if we don't know our
17 history, then somebody else is going to tell it, and
18 somebody else is going to remediate what it is.

19 So very much, I am just so indebted that
20 you're here. I appreciate fully what this represents,
21 and I just urge you to think about the path forward
22 and what it is right now we can do in the department
23 across the board so that folks understand the issues
24 in the interim to do so in a way that gives great
25 previews to the fact so much is institutional, and

1 we've gotta change the way we look at education and
2 the way we look at ourselves. Because if we can't
3 look in the mirror and say we're proud to see who we
4 are, that's not a very good way to start your day and
5 brush your hair.

6 So again, thank you so much. And I say these
7 words, especially among my parents who were educators
8 and who worked with the communities (indiscernible)
9 program, school, and then later on in Navajo Community
10 College. So it comes from a great love for our people
11 and my people and for you being here. Thank you.

12 GUEST SPEAKER: (In Navajo.) We are honored
13 to be here as I was listening to all our elders today
14 who were taken so young. I went to a boarding school
15 in the '80s, and so many stories brought back some
16 trauma I put away (indiscernible). Some of these
17 abuses that even through I exist in boarding school.
18 I went to Tuba City Boarding School.

19 I was recounting a little the days there. I
20 remember the (indiscernible). I remember the days of
21 trouble. Some of the stories are similar to all these
22 elders went through. I was made to sit in my chair
23 wanting to go to the restroom, and I would piss on
24 myself. Then I was made to stand in front of this
25 class humiliated in many ways, and then they told us

1 to go back to class because what I did was wrong. I
2 was like (indiscernible). I haven't thought about
3 this in years. Maybe that has to do with some of the
4 things that happened that brought me back today and
5 set me full back in some of the confidence that I have
6 in myself. It's a little bit wounded.

7 Also, I was made to eat food that I didn't
8 know what they were in the cafeteria. I remember
9 eating something that tasted spoiled, and when I
10 brought it to the cafeteria, and they made me put it
11 back on my plate and eat it again. You know, stuff
12 like that, it's dehumanizing, it's discriminating,
13 it's humiliating. It's a lot of things that really
14 takes a toll on a human.

15 And not only that, the peers you know and
16 everything, dealing with the peers after that. I mean
17 it's, like I said, humiliation. I mean I was young as
18 them, young humans, you know. Kids can be hard on
19 each other. Man, kids can be brutal. It also happens
20 today as well (indiscernible). But as I was young, I
21 remember being so white-skinned, almost realized I
22 don't look like my (indiscernible). The teachers,
23 they were my aunties, many of them (indiscernible). I
24 remember my mom going to the school trying to put me a
25 (indiscernible) class, and they said we're not

1 teaching him. He's not Navajo. He's a little white
2 guy.

3 You know, thinking back that really hurts. I
4 never thought about these things for years, y'all.
5 And today I can't speak my language. I can choose
6 myself. I learned that I can speak like a puppet or a
7 parrot. No, because I remember (indiscernible). It's
8 in you somewhere. My grandparents' ways
9 (indiscernible). I know somewhere that trauma is
10 keeping me from building that (indiscernible). But
11 they told me I was a white boy. They told him, "We're
12 not teaching him. Go put him in another class." I
13 took honors classes. Even in college I took English.
14 Man, I tried (indiscernible) language. I hate
15 speaking in this language. I wish I could speak in my
16 own language.

17 And that's another trauma. I try to speak to
18 my elders, and they even laugh at me. I even get
19 teased by some of these elders out there. They say,
20 "Oh, you're not Navajo enough to learn these songs, to
21 learn these stories." So that's another level I have
22 to put up with. That's another issues (indiscernible)
23 teach our kids to learn not to be outcasting each
24 other. We're all (indiscernible). That's how my
25 grandparents raised me. They told me you are

1 (indiscernible) first. My father came from another
2 tribe (indiscernible). All of us are the same people.
3 We're connected.

4 So that's what I wanted to share today. That
5 trauma is still alive in Navajo Nation
6 (indiscernible). We do it to ourselves, man, and
7 that's the only difference. I mean, we do it to
8 ourselves. So let's take a step back for a minute,
9 you know what I mean. This is the 21st Century. Take
10 a step into the 15th Century again and remember who we
11 were before (indiscernible). We're still struggling
12 to survive, but we're still here. We're resilient,
13 like I say. But resilience, that's another trick
14 right there. We're strong. No one's stopping us from
15 moving forward, but we're stopping ourselves today
16 (indiscernible).

17 GUEST SPEAKER: I'd like to introduce myself.
18 My name is (indiscernible) and I am (indiscernible).
19 I live down the road here, and I learned about this
20 event to be in the Navajo Times. So when they
21 mentioned my former school, I wanted to be here. So I
22 came here this morning, and I went to Many Farms
23 Boarding School back in the late '60s. And back then,
24 we didn't learn about the word abuse until now because
25 when I went to school there, we kids were abused and I

1 was abused. And one of the dorm maids, he was a mean
2 old guy and came into other little boys. I was about
3 this small, and I was sitting on my bunkbed, a loner.
4 And the dorm maid, I felt something really hot be
5 pressed against my left cheek. He said was that it
6 was important to have licks. To this day, I still
7 have that lick on my left cheek. (Indiscernible.)

8 But I went there for four years, and if we
9 would get punished, we would be taken (indiscernible)
10 dorm maid, she was going to make us drink ammonia
11 (indiscernible). I'm happy it didn't happen. But
12 then if we were in trouble again, we're taken to the
13 office. And then they would tell us to stick our hand
14 out, and they would use a metal ruler to hit our
15 fingers and like (indiscernible) speech, we were back
16 on the farm early in the morning, still dark, winter.
17 We'd be running around the whole campus. As we got
18 abused by bigger (indiscernible), they would come up
19 to us in the dining hall and they would say, "Give me
20 your bacon and egg sandwich or else."

21 So we (indiscernible), but I gave the one
22 that really stuck out planted that (indiscernible) on
23 my cheek. I can still see the mark when I look into
24 the mirror. So (indiscernible) the school that's in
25 Carmel, Pennsylvania, how many kids were taken

1 actually to be killed or how they were -- what
2 happened to them (indiscernible) two times. And as I
3 watched it twice, I had tears rolling in my eyes of
4 people were made to be there, wanting to go home back
5 to their home country and raping the children.

6 So I look back and I think, "Why did this
7 happen to us at boarding school?" Even another
8 (indiscernible) walk around from room to room in our
9 dormitory, and he would always use his finger like
10 this to our head, "You knuckleheads." And so finally,
11 I got out of there. Me and my sister we went to
12 school there. And I don't know why they always kept
13 me, the last one he kept up.

14 And so that's what I went through at the
15 boarding school. I'm an artist and I've been working
16 in Death Valley, California, for 24 years as an
17 artist. And in the last 6 years, the (indiscernible)
18 had really went down. (Indiscernible) when I started
19 going there, they wanted me to participate in the
20 quick draw. But they put 4 artists on the stage, and
21 you are allowed 4 to 5 minutes to finish a page, and
22 you couldn't finish into the (indiscernible) they
23 won't wait for you.

24 So that's when I -- when I first done that,
25 we were all each given a cordless microphone. They

1 wanted for us to say some words to the people in the
2 auditorium. So I think, "What shall I say? What
3 should I say?" Finally, it came to me. I said the
4 first words that popped into my mouth. So I said,
5 "Any more questions?" (Indiscernible) people started
6 laughing and I kept my microphone. So right now, I'm
7 going to get chosen. 2015 I came home and here in
8 Chinle. I got home, I got my groceries, and I started
9 (indiscernible) they were really given worse.

10 And I vaguely remember calling the ambulance
11 myself. And my brother and sisters, they worked for
12 the hospital. So he had a radio, and as we were
13 driving home, he heard that it was me that called over
14 the ambulance. And when -- only thing I remember my
15 sister saying to me was "We will take you in." So I
16 heard her voice on my right side (indiscernible) and
17 she says, "Do you know where you're at?" And I says,
18 "No." And she says "You're here in Phoenix at Good
19 Samaritan Hospital. You just went through a 5-hour
20 brain surgery."

21 So as I touched my head, it was all bandaged
22 up. (Indiscernible.) So they gave me a walker and I
23 did good. The next day they started working me with
24 physical therapy, speech therapy, and there was
25 another, and they put me in a room (indiscernible)

1 they gave me art supplies. I heard a voice and I knew
2 it was a surgeon. (Indiscernible) and he said,
3 "You're a miracle you're sitting here." I put my
4 brush down and I shook his hand, and I'm standing here
5 today.

6 Talk about in this room, so after I got my
7 brain surgery, I came here for a basketball game, and
8 I was sitting right up there with my cousin. They
9 didn't (indiscernible) and my cousin sitting next to
10 me she said, "Stand up," (indiscernible) and I
11 remember falling forward over three little boys, and I
12 don't remember taking the bleachers down and my leg
13 (indiscernible). So I came back the next day and
14 talked to the principal, and she said, "No, no, no.
15 They're water bottles." (Indiscernible.) So I made a
16 tort claim --

17 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Gilbert, thank
18 you very much. We appreciate you taking the time to
19 share your stories. We want to make sure we get to
20 other speakers today if you want to finish your
21 thought.

22 GUEST SPEAKER: Okay. Anyway, they turned
23 down my claim so nothing has been done on my part. So
24 (indiscernible), I can't run no more, I can't jog, I
25 still have a lot of headaches because I couldn't --

1 Tylenol keeps me going. So that was (indiscernible).

2 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Gilbert, thank
3 you so much for taking the time with us today and
4 sharing.

5 We're at just before 4:00. We've been going
6 on for about 6 hours today. I think we've got time
7 for about two more speakers, and then we'll have
8 Secretary Haaland wrap up with just some closing
9 observations from today, and then we'll be departing
10 and ending the event.

11 GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.) I had heard
12 for three years tales from my grandfather. And
13 listening to stories that my uncle talked about
14 (indiscernible) boarding school (indiscernible). Her
15 stories continue to be our trustee who was entrusted
16 by congress to look over us to watch us. To build a
17 nice building and say, "You're going to get educated
18 here." And they had people walking the halls and
19 people there that really disturbed minds
20 (indiscernible). Not only here in Navajo, throughout
21 the 574 federally recognized clans.

22 My grandfather told me by 1939, he was picked
23 up by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He was taken out
24 to a place called Tuba City. There, he had to network
25 with his peers, the students, the older generation,

1 her father, my grandfather, cousins. And getting to
2 it is that through his eyes is that that boarding
3 school that was built in Tuba City in 1903, it was
4 only built to produce soldiers to bridge a war of
5 World War II. There was many Navajos being brought
6 in, Navajo young men. Every morning, they would stand
7 up in front of the boarding school. It started with
8 government preparing Navajo students to fight, whether
9 it's in the Pacific or Germany to fight in the world
10 war.

11 And yes, he knew how to handle a gun. He
12 knew what to do. And my grandfather educated at a
13 young age, about 9, 8 years old watching through his
14 eyes the system. By the time he mastered how to stand
15 in line correctly in front of the boarding school
16 early in the morning. If you didn't hold your gun the
17 wrong way, (indiscernible) for a couple hours
18 (indiscernible). The Navajo chief imposed and said,
19 "You're going to be our first police chief."

20 So those are a lot of what Navajo citizens
21 across Navajo Nation has endured, whether it was at
22 Fort Windgate, whether it's on Many Farms, or Tuba
23 City, or Ship Rock. Indian citizenship has been given
24 to American Indians since 1924. Yes, we were given
25 rights of citizenship but not the right to vote. And

1 boarding school stories are told that right to vote
2 allow you to speak did not come until almost 1950. So
3 these people (indiscernible) for years and years.
4 (Indiscernible.)

5 Today it's still going on. (Indiscernible)
6 pays you to be a doctor, a lawyer or such. In order
7 to know your (indiscernible), you have to live it, you
8 have to breathe it, you have to taste blood to hear
9 it. It's unfortunate it's come to that point. And
10 today a lot of (indiscernible) continuing to take the
11 Indian out of us. (Indiscernible) it's being
12 resilient and soulful. How do you show resilience
13 being not about Indian. (In Navajo.)

14 What I'm saying is that there's something
15 that (indiscernible) has inflicted to Indian country,
16 and what they inflicted is still going on today. You
17 go to any boarding school, any boarding school, you go
18 to a child and try to talk to that child in Navajo,
19 the school will not and continue not teach them their
20 culture, their heritage, who they are.

21 (Indiscernible) every day congress and the
22 administration continue to impact (indiscernible) to
23 take away who we are. (Indiscernible.) (In Navajo.)

24 Again, thank you, Madam Secretary Haaland,
25 for coming to Navajo in Chinle, also Bryan Newland in

1 assisting your team up here. (Indiscernible) our
2 trustee take care of us. They tell us to be good
3 Indians. We're good Indians. Every day in Washington
4 they continue to (indiscernible) from Indian country
5 whether it's Indian education, BIA support, health and
6 safety, social service (indiscernible).

7 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you,
8 Mr. Skinner. And we'll hear from our last speaker
9 today, and then Secretary Haaland will make some
10 closing remarks, and then we'll conclude.

11 GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.) My name is
12 Jerry and under (indiscernible) (in Navajo.) I come
13 from Page, Arizona, but I was born and raised in
14 Shonto Springs, Shonto area. And I just wanted to
15 share some brief stories about my boarding school
16 days. I when to Shonto Boarding School, and I got
17 promoted out of there back in 1975 because I went to
18 Flagstaff.

19 When I first got to Shonto Boarding School,
20 it was totally different atmosphere for me. Meaning,
21 that you have to get up every morning, you have to
22 shower every evening, and you go to bed at a certain
23 time. So coming off, you know, living on the
24 reservation is totally different, but I got used to
25 it. But along the way, you know, I'm going to bring

1 (indiscernible).

2 I was talking about the lower class grades,
3 kindergarten, 1, 2, 3 in Shonto, there's an incident
4 that always comes to my mind. We all had to get into
5 the shower by 8:30. Everybody showered in one room.
6 One room. You guys know what I'm talking about,
7 right? One room with a shower, shower heads coming
8 out of that room about 20-by-20. And once you get
9 done, there was a lady that had -- she put her chair
10 by the door, and we all walked (indiscernible) and we
11 had to pass her to go back to our room. You had to
12 take your towel off and you had to turn around like
13 this, and she had to inspect and make sure you took a
14 good shower. So that stuck in my mind, you know.

15 So at a very early age, you don't really
16 understand. You don't really know. And then from
17 there on, when I got into the upper level, we used to
18 have movie nights. So one day -- one evening we went
19 to the movies, and me and one of my friends, we kind
20 of snuck out the back to scare the girls because we
21 had a scary movie. So when they walked out, we were
22 sitting by the plants, and the first group of girls
23 came by so we jumped up and we scared them. They took
24 off and all (indiscernible) and we went back to our
25 dorm.

1 And somehow the word got back to the
2 administration, and the very next day, I got called in
3 the gymnasium like this. In each corner on the edge
4 of the gymnasium there's a walkway. I was sitting on
5 the second set of stairs, and the principal came in
6 and he said, "I heard what you guys did last night."
7 And he started talking, and he said, "I know what you
8 guys were trying to do. I know what you guys
9 planned." And I said, "Well, all we were trying to do
10 was scare the girls after a scary movie." And he
11 said, "No. That's not what you guys were coming to
12 do. And I want you guys to tell me what you had
13 planned on doing." And I said, "That's all we did.
14 They took off and we ran."

15 And then he says, "Well, let me tell you one
16 thing." He said, "If you get the urge as a young man,
17 a young adolescent guy, if you get the urge, you go
18 jump in the shower. You take a cold shower." He said
19 that will take care of it. And I started thinking in
20 my mind what this guy is talking about. And I looked
21 at him and I said, "Are you saying that we're going to
22 rape somebody?" He says, "Exactly. That's what we
23 thought you were coming to do." And then he brought
24 out a pocket knife. He's an ex-Navy guy. He was
25 going like this.

1 He said, "Tell me, guys, what you were going
2 to do." I said, "Well, if we were going to do
3 something, we would not have ran." And I said, "How
4 can we do something with 30, 40 girls?" I said, "Come
5 on." So those were some incidents.

6 Then another thing that happened that I
7 wanted to bring up it's our own relatives that were
8 (indiscernible) you know, we're Navajo. We're male,
9 we're female (indiscernible). And like I said
10 earlier, these are out only relatives. These are our
11 only people.

12 So that's what I wanted to share with you
13 guys. I have lots of stories that I can tell. The
14 lady that was sitting here, she brought up talking to
15 your kids in Navajo and English. I brought up my kids
16 talking English, exactly what she's talking about. To
17 this day, my kids are grown, they're all gone. And
18 they ask me, "Dad, why did you talk to us in English?
19 You should have talked to us in Navajo." So the one
20 thing that I know -- I think somebody else brought it
21 up. When you get hit on the hand because your hand
22 takes a lot of abuse and that's the reason I'm
23 thinking because we all stood out there like this and
24 we got whacked. So thank you for letting me tell a
25 little bit of my experience. But thank you for giving

1 me some time, thank you for listening. Like I said, I
2 just want to make it brief, but I had a story to tell.

3 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you very
4 much. So I want to thank all of you for coming out
5 today and to those of you who spoke on your own behalf
6 or on behalf of your relatives. It's meaningful for
7 us, it's meaningful to me, and we're trying to make a
8 (indiscernible) for the people who come after us as
9 well. So thank you again.

10 Madam Secretary.

11 SECRETARY HAALAND: Thank you, Bryan.

12 And I really just want to thank everyone who
13 had a part in this. There were people who set the
14 chairs up, our law enforcement in the back who made
15 sure everybody had what they needed, you know, the
16 tables, the table cloths, the sound system, all of
17 those things don't happen on their own. There are
18 people who work to make things nice for us, and I just
19 want everyone to know how much we appreciate you
20 working with our team. Yes. Give them a hand.

21 And again, I want to thank my team, Geo and
22 Brandon, Bryan and Catherine, Stephanie, Heidi.
23 Everyone stand up if you will. Juaqueen, Melissa,
24 David, everyone who came all the way out to make sure
25 that everyone was able to, you know, move this program

1 forward.

2 You know, I'm also generational trauma
3 because my grandparents, my maternal grandparents, my
4 mother went to boarding school. And my grandmother,
5 you couldn't get her to say one bad thing about the
6 nuns at St. Catherine's. In fact, she wanted me to
7 name my child after one of the nuns. But I know that
8 it affected her. I know that those experiences
9 affected my grandmother. You can't take a child away
10 from her family and her community at eight years old
11 and keep her gone for five years without it affecting
12 those children in some way.

13 My grandmother talked about the priest coming
14 to the village and collecting the children and putting
15 them on a train. And her father, because nobody had
16 (indiscernible), but I'm grateful that she was able to
17 go back home at 13 and resume -- her dad had sheep,
18 and so she resumed herding sheep for him and doing all
19 the things that (indiscernible) needs to do, making
20 sure you take good care of the family cooking,
21 preserving food and all of those things.

22 So I know that (indiscernible) and they
23 succeeded that because my parents and grandparents
24 worked very hard to preserve that culture for us. And
25 I just want to acknowledge the legacy that all of you

1 have been left by your ancestors about the future of
2 this community. So I recognize that and I'm really
3 happy that all of you were able to come today.

4 So thank you very much. And thank you also.
5 I know that your community is incredibly proud of the
6 work that you are doing. (Indiscernible) and we're
7 grateful to have the support and thank you for
8 traveling across the country to be here with us.

9 President Nygren, thank you. It's been
10 wonderful spending time with you these last couple
11 days. I saw him in New Mexico, I saw him down south,
12 and now I saw him here. It's really wonderful.
13 Congratulations again, and Vice President. We're
14 very proud and honored to have the opportunity
15 (indiscernible). If it wasn't for President Biden, I
16 might not be standing here right now, and I just want
17 to say that President Biden, he cares deeply about
18 Indian country, and he is doing everything he can to
19 make sure that we have what we need for our
20 communities. And just know that for us, my colleagues
21 across the federal government, (indiscernible).

22 Just know that everybody's working really
23 hard. I know there's a lot of ground to make up and
24 sometimes it takes time, but just know that our hearts
25 are in it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for having us as

1 well. And I wish you all a safe journey home as well.

2 Thank you.

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16
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18 June, 2023.

19
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Arizona Certified Reporter
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