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THE ROAD TO HEALING Tour

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

on

Saturday, August 13, 2022

at

PELLSTON SCHOOLS

Pellston, Michigan

PRESENT:

Secretary Deb Haaland

Asst. Secretary Bryan Newland

- - -

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1 Pellston, Michigan  
 2 Saturday, August 13, 2022  
 3 At 10:14 a.m.

4 - - -

5 (Opening ceremony.)

6 WASSON DILLARD: You can stay seated.

7 (Native greeting and prayer.)

8 I am Thunder (inaudible), I come from the  
 9 Land of the Crooked Tree, but I was born and raised in  
 10 Grand Rapids, Michigan. My taxpayer name is Renee  
 11 Dillard, but I am known as Light All Around.

12 (Native language) Creator, thank you for  
 13 giving us this language. (Native language) Help us to  
 14 speak our language in a good way throughout this day.

15 (Native language) Also, help us to love and be  
 16 respectful to language. (Native language) Also, that we  
 17 may be able to teach it to our children and our  
 18 grandchildren. (Native language) This is the help that  
 19 we are asking of you today. (Native language) Thank you  
 20 Great Spirit and all the other spirits that have come to  
 21 help us today.

22 Now we'll do what would be I think  
 23 equivalent to a land acknowledgment. (Native language)  
 24 Being Odawa is all about freedom; (Native language) the  
 25 freedom to be part of a people who with integrity and

1 pride still have and speak our own language; (Native  
2 language) the freedom to share in common with all other  
3 Odawa customs and culture and spirituality of our  
4 ancestors. (Native language) The freedom we have today  
5 we will bring to the future through unity, education,  
6 justice, communication, and planning. (Native language)  
7 We will reach out to the next seven generations by  
8 holding onto cultural values of wisdom, love, respect,  
9 bravery, honesty, humility, and truth. (Native language)  
10 We will utilize our tribal assets to provide the  
11 necessary tools to become successful, hardworking  
12 community members who proudly represent our culture.  
13 (Native language) With these values, we will move the  
14 tribe forward. (Native language) Every clan from every  
15 person of this land has already been healing. (Native  
16 language) Our grandfathers, our grandmothers, our  
17 parents and our children and their children and our great  
18 grandchildren will all be healing. (Native language)  
19 Everyone has all been sickened by the boarding school  
20 system, whether we went there or not, and we are all  
21 healing, (Native language) and we will be healing for  
22 many years.

23 (Native language) So English now. This  
24 orange black ash basket was created in honor of my great  
25 uncle who never got out of the boarding school, and for

1 those of us that have suffered hurts, the Waganakising  
2 people invite you, the People of the Crooked Tree invite  
3 you to write their name on a piece of birch bark and put  
4 it in there, and after the journey, the journey is done,  
5 the basket will come back and we're going to burn and  
6 have a ceremony to release that hurt. It's just another  
7 tool, and it will be here throughout the day.

8 REGINA GASCO-BENTLEY: (Native language)  
9 Hello everybody, and welcome to a very big day here. I  
10 would like to say first of all welcome the Department of  
11 Interior's Road to Healing listening session. The Little  
12 Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians is honored to have  
13 been selected as a host tribal nation for today's event.  
14 I would like to thank Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland  
15 and Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland for their continued  
16 efforts to bring much needed conversation and exposure to  
17 the federal level. Chi miigwetch.

18 The purpose of today is intended solely  
19 to provide boarding school survivors and their  
20 descendants with the opportunity to share their personal  
21 experiences while they were enrolled in these schools.  
22 For some this is the first time sharing what happened to  
23 them, and telling the truths will result in a wide range  
24 of deep emotion. By gathering here today, we give our  
25 survivors and descendants a platform to have their voices

1 heard and to allow all of those affected to tell their  
2 stories. Many members of our tribal communities have  
3 gathered here from Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, and  
4 Wisconsin to share their experiences and give testimony  
5 of the trauma inflicted while attending a church-ran  
6 boarding school. Look around the gymnasium today, you  
7 will see people of all ages that have come forward to  
8 share their testimonies. You will see survivors here who  
9 are the grandparents, parents, aunties, uncles, and  
10 siblings. It is a historical step forward for tribal  
11 communities everywhere as we look to end the suffering  
12 created by these institutions.

13 The Holy Childhood of Jesus Boarding  
14 School, which is located within the homelands of the  
15 Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, did not close  
16 until 1983. Now, for almost 40 years later, it's time to  
17 uncover the real truth of these schools, and I can not  
18 think of a better way to educate the public than to hear  
19 directly from those who were impacted. You, our native  
20 communities over the decades have experienced great loss,  
21 cultural, its practices, a great loss of language, and in  
22 many instances our people's lives at the hands of these  
23 schools. While it is an emotional day, these, our shared  
24 experiences, will bring awareness to the harsh reality of  
25 boarding school life and the trauma that still affects

1 the native community to this day. It will also allow  
2 much of the needed healing within our communities to  
3 begin and move us forward.

4 Please know that the entire space has  
5 been smudged, a pipe ceremony was done at sunrise and  
6 was -- we asked the spirits to come and guide the people  
7 as they tell their stories today, so know our ancestors  
8 are here and they will help heal us.

9 Trauma-informed support and privacy rooms  
10 are available on site if you need them. Attendees will  
11 find traditional medicines and spots of smudging,  
12 tissues, masks and sanitizers, and other resources out in  
13 the main auditorium for you. So please see the event  
14 maps or one of our volunteers for directions for these  
15 spaces. We will provide a box lunch and light snacks.  
16 Food stations also marked on the maps. Our main goal as  
17 a host is to provide a safe place for survivors and  
18 descendants to come forward. Please do not hesitate to  
19 reach out to any of the volunteers, and if there's  
20 anything that you need.

21 So with that, I want to say chi miigwetch  
22 to everybody for coming here, and it's my pleasure to  
23 turn the microphone over to Assistant Secretary Deb  
24 Haaland.

25 - - -



1 SECRETARY HAALAND: Good morning  
2 everyone. First I would like to say hello to all my  
3 fellow Hornets. When I went to high school in  
4 Albuquerque, I graduated from Highland High School and  
5 our mascot were Hornets, so get that out of the way.

6 So first of all I just would like to say  
7 how grateful I am for the singers that we had. I noticed  
8 the young man, the young boy, singing, learning our  
9 culture and traditions because the older man bringing him  
10 into the circle and want him to learn, and that's, and I  
11 recognize how important that is for native people. I  
12 would also just like to say thank you Chairwoman for all  
13 of the effort that you put forth to make sure that our  
14 ancestors are here with us today.

15 You know, I learned what it's like to be  
16 a Pueblo woman because my grandparents, in spite of the  
17 fact that they were taken away to boarding school and  
18 made a, just a very -- I mean they survived the  
19 assimilation era by persevering through all of, through  
20 everything they had to do for five years away from their  
21 communities, and my grandfather, my grandmother, and all  
22 of the people of that generation made sure that they held  
23 tight to our customs, traditions, to the songs and the  
24 dances and all of those things because they knew that we  
25 deserved to have that, so I'm very grateful for my

1 grandparents and all the people who have suffered through  
2 those eras in order to make sure that we can still have  
3 our songs today.

4 So I really -- I'm really honored to be  
5 here. Thank you very much, Chairwoman and (Native  
6 language). Greetings and good morning to everyone.  
7 Thank you for the beautiful prayer, very appreciative of  
8 that. It's a honor to join you all on the ancestral  
9 homelands of the Anishinaabe people.

10 I'll speak briefly, but the reason I'm  
11 here today is really to listen to all of you, and we will  
12 stay as long as it takes. So thank you for being here.  
13 Your voices are important to me, and I thank you for your  
14 willingness to speak essentially publicly about your  
15 experiences and those of the people that you love.

16 Federal Indian boarding school policies  
17 have touched every indigenous person I know, some are  
18 survivors, some are descendants, but we all carry the  
19 trauma in our hearts. My ancestors endured the horrors  
20 of the Indian boarding school assimilation policies  
21 carried out by the State Department that I now lead.  
22 This is the first time in history that a United States  
23 Cabinet Secretary comes to the table with this shared  
24 trauma. (Applause) That is not lost on me, and I'm  
25 determined to use my position for the good of the people.

1 I launched the Federal Indian Boarding  
2 School Initiative last year to undertake a comprehensive  
3 effort to recognize the legacy of boarding school  
4 policies with the goal of addressing their  
5 intergenerational impacts and to shed light on the  
6 traumas of the past. To do that, we need to tell our  
7 stories. Today is part of that journey. Through the  
8 Road to Healing, our goal is to create opportunities for  
9 people to share their stories, but also to help connect  
10 communities with trauma-informed support, and overall to  
11 facilitate the collection of a permanent oral history  
12 because every single American should know about Native  
13 American history. (Applause) Thank you.

14 Michigan is the second stop on the Road  
15 to Healing, which is a year-long tour across the country  
16 to provide Indigenous survivors and descendants of the  
17 Federal Indian boarding school system an opportunity to  
18 make known their experiences. I understand that your  
19 proximity to the United States northern border means that  
20 many of your family stories overlap with the work being  
21 done on this issue in Canada. As I meet with Canadian  
22 leaders, we regularly discuss ways we can learn from each  
23 other and work together.

24 I want you all to know that I'm with you  
25 on this journey. I will listen, I will grieve with you,

1 I will weep, and I will feel your pain. As we mourn what  
2 we have lost, please know that we still have so much to  
3 gain. The healing that can help our communities will not  
4 be done overnight, but I know that it can be done. This  
5 is one step among many that we will take to strengthen  
6 and rebuild the bonds within the Native communities that  
7 Federal Indian boarding schools policies set out to  
8 break. Those steps have the potential to alter the  
9 course of our future. I am grateful to each and every  
10 one of you for having the willingness to step forward to  
11 share your stories because I know it cannot be easy.

12 I'll turn the floor over now to my dear  
13 colleague and my friend and a tremendous leader in Indian  
14 country, Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland. (Applause)

15 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch,  
16 Madam Secretary. (Native language) My name is Bryan  
17 Newland, I have the privilege of serving as Assistant  
18 Secretary for Indian Affairs. And I'm glad to see so  
19 many friendly faces here as I know many of you from  
20 growing up here, just north of here in Kenosha Commons,  
21 Bay Mills Indian Community. I want to say miigwetch to  
22 my friend and Chairwoman, Regina Gasco-Bentley, and  
23 Waganakising Odawa for hosting us today. And since the  
24 Secretary brought up basketball, I have to say go Bays.  
25 (Laughter)

1                   It's really great to be back here, home,  
2                   and meeting with many of you and hearing from many of you  
3                   about this. Michigan was home to five Federal Indian  
4                   boarding schools across the state, including here at  
5                   Harbor Springs where my great grandfather attended. As  
6                   we continue to investigate the Federal Indian boarding  
7                   school system and learning about your experiences at  
8                   these specific schools, and we know that the overall  
9                   system paints a history that records can't fully account  
10                  for.

11                  In addition to hearing from you, our next  
12                  steps include identifying marked and unmarked graves and  
13                  determining the total amount of federal spending and  
14                  support for the Indian boarding school system. We also  
15                  encourage people here to raise other considerations that  
16                  you think we need to make based upon your experiences.

17                  I want to acknowledge some folks who are  
18                  here with us today. First, our Indian Affairs team from  
19                  the Department of the Interior, we have our Principal  
20                  Deputy Assistant, Wizipan Garriott; our Deputy Assistant  
21                  Secretary, Kathryn Isom-Clause; our Special Assistant,  
22                  Joaquin Gallegos; and the counselor in our office known  
23                  to many of you, Rose Petoskey from the Grand Traverse  
24                  Band. (Applause)

25                  I want to acknowledge our friends from

1 the Indian Health Service and the Department of Health  
2 and Human Services who are also here supporting this  
3 event, and also acknowledge the Department of Education  
4 Director, Tony Dearman. The Bureau of Indian Education,  
5 as many of you know, has been playing an important role  
6 in ensuring our communities have an education that  
7 integrates our cultures and has been leading efforts on  
8 language revitalization programs, so miigwetch and thank  
9 you for coming. (Applause) Thank you.

10 I also want to thank Superintendent  
11 Seeley and the Pellston Public Schools for hosting this  
12 long overdue conversation and making this space available  
13 for all of us.

14 And of course we appreciate all of our  
15 tribal leaders here today and the support that you've  
16 shown to the survivors in your communities and the work  
17 that you all did to organize so people can get here, we  
18 know that this was a team effort across the Great Lakes  
19 Indian country, and I want to say miigwetch to those of  
20 you elected tribal leaders and tribal administration  
21 staff for helping make today happen.

22 So some housekeeping items for today's  
23 conversation. This is an opportunity for us at the  
24 Department of the Interior to hear from survivors and  
25 their descendants. Secretary Haaland and I are here not

1       only on our own behalf but on behalf of the United States  
2       Federal Government to be held to account for what the  
3       United States Federal Government did through these  
4       boarding schools, and we want to make sure that in these  
5       roles, that we've got a space for survivors, those of you  
6       who grew up in homes raised by boarding school survivors  
7       and attendees, and those of you who can speak on that  
8       experience and how it affected you and your families.

9               Other people who are here who wish to  
10       provide us with a statement, including tribal leaders,  
11       can do so by sending an email to the address that we  
12       provided on the information sheet that we handed out.  
13       Again, I want to emphasize that we often engage tribal  
14       leadership on a government-to-government basis as part of  
15       our work at the Department of the Interior, but today is  
16       about the people who attended these boarding schools and  
17       their families and their survivors, and we want to make  
18       sure that we clear this space for you and for us to  
19       listen.

20              To make a comment, I'm just going to ask  
21       you to keep it simple and old school, to raise your hand  
22       and one of our mic runners will bring a mic to you. We  
23       are keeping a transcript of this event, so we will ask  
24       that you state your name, your tribal affiliation, and  
25       the name or the names of the boarding school that you

1 wish to speak about.

2 I also want to note that we have members  
3 of the press here to cover this event, they will be here  
4 for the first hour. After one hour, we will take a  
5 break, our friends from different media outlets will be  
6 asked to leave because we know that some people want to  
7 share without being put on the local news, and that's  
8 okay, so we want to create space for you, but also these  
9 are stories and this is a story we want to share with the  
10 nation and with the world, so we've also created a space  
11 for journalists and reporters to come and cover this as  
12 well. Also, as I mentioned, we have a court reporter  
13 who's transcribing this visit, and at some point in the  
14 future the Department may be asked to make these  
15 transcripts public based upon existing Federal records  
16 laws.

17 So we know, as the Chairwoman mentioned,  
18 this is a conversation that involves difficult memories  
19 and experiences. That's why we've worked with the Tribe  
20 and with Indian Health Service to make sure we have  
21 trauma-informed support available on site. Please see an  
22 attendant outside the classrooms next to the gym if you  
23 would like to talk with a licensed therapist today, and  
24 we will also connect survivors and their families with  
25 followup support as requested. Please take care of



1       yourselves.

2                       We have water here if you need it. And  
3 to the survivors and the families who took the time to  
4 travel here today to spend one of the last few remaining  
5 Saturdays in our beautiful northern Michigan summers with  
6 us, miigwetch to you for your courage to speak. Remember  
7 that you're not alone, we're here alongside you, and we  
8 hope that together we can all start to heal.

9                       So with that, we're going to open the  
10 floor up to the folks who wish to speak. Again, if you  
11 do wish to speak, please raise your hand, and be patient  
12 with us as our mic runners are going to be looking around  
13 the room. And also remember we're going to be here as  
14 long as it takes, so if we don't get to you before break,  
15 we will make that time. Miigwetch.

16                      WARREN PETOSKEY: This is a momentous  
17 day. My effort to address historical trauma in our  
18 family, having come to realize the impact of Carlisle  
19 Indian School and Mt. Pleasant Indian School played a  
20 great role in my upbringing, and I grew up thinking my  
21 dad was my enemy because of how he beat me when I was  
22 young, I'm the oldest in our family, and then growing up  
23 in a community where we disintegrated, that community  
24 being the first people of color that lived there and me  
25 walking down the middle of the street going home or going

1 to town in order to get me extra steps to run from the  
2 older gang of boys that caught me twice and beat me  
3 pretty good, but after that they never caught me again.  
4 And later in life, they asked me how I did that, and I  
5 told them, I said, old Indian trick.

6 But I want to give honor to Deb Haaland  
7 and Bryan for coming here and all the staff that they  
8 brought with them, that they would honor us with their  
9 presence and take this time with us so that we can share  
10 these things.

11 My name is Warren Petoskey, and I'm the  
12 great-great grandson of Chief Petoskey, and I began  
13 addressing historical trauma in our family probably 30  
14 years ago, and around 25 years we created Dawnland  
15 Ministries specifically for the purpose of addressing the  
16 historical trauma residuals and began advertising on the  
17 internet, and the journey gradually carried around the  
18 United States by invitation, and so there was a great  
19 interest in hearing what we had to say, and we realized  
20 that we were just very small voices among a great number  
21 of voices with the same experiences.

22 So my preparation for today was to write  
23 a thesis, I'm a writer and I'm a storyteller, I'm a  
24 Native artist, I'm a lot of things I guess, and I reached  
25 the stage where most of the time I think I'm just old. I

1 had to ask my wife to help me hold this because I shake.

2 Biidassige (Native language) Jesus Christ  
3 (Native language).

4 If you type my anglicized name into your  
5 computer search engine, some references should come up as  
6 to how I've spent the last 20 years of my life, and my  
7 papers are in The Bethel Library Museum at the University  
8 of Michigan. They thought it important enough to  
9 approach me and ask me if they could do that. My purpose  
10 is that I want to leave residuals for our young people,  
11 and they assured me that they average anywhere between 9  
12 and 100,000 contacts from around the world every year.

13 I survived the-altering effects deposited  
14 in our home due to Carlisle and Mt. Pleasant Indian  
15 School. And I can't begin to express my appreciation  
16 again for you and members of your staff for giving us  
17 this opportunity to come together, all who made this  
18 possible.

19 I make this statement for identification  
20 purposes. I'm not a Native American or American Indian.  
21 I am a direct descendant of the Great Odawa Chief  
22 Biidassige and a citizen of the Waganakising Odawa  
23 Nation, the Bear River Band of Odawa seeing this sense of  
24 origin as citing my tribal nation as older than America.

25 I am a seven-year military veteran during

1 the Vietnam era.

2 I'm here to represent my relatives whose  
3 lives remain altered due to the effects Holy Childhood  
4 deposited in them and cannot emotionally handle an event  
5 like this so they asked me to speak for them. I am here  
6 to speak for the hundreds of children who experienced the  
7 abuse leveled upon the boarding school students,  
8 recognizing the impact that it's had on generations and  
9 generations of our relatives.

10 And one time my testimony, testimonials  
11 and commitment to address boarding school and historical  
12 trauma effects were considered valid enough to be asked  
13 to be part of a documentary that, at last count, 16,000  
14 copies were distributed around the world. At one time  
15 among some of our tribal nations I was considered an  
16 expert in this field.

17 Tribal people are still dying because of  
18 the aftereffects of residuals deposited in their lives by  
19 their incarceration. The outside community continues to  
20 endorse the crimes committed by defending what Holy  
21 Childhood Boarding School perpetrated and the charges  
22 brought against many of the staff members who ignored the  
23 issues our people still struggle with and who were guilty  
24 of abusing the children.

25 I'm here to speak for an elder Odawa

1 woman who attended Holy Childhood, and I remember a  
2 conference in Mt. Pleasant on the reservation where she  
3 said, I attended Holy Childhood, she said, where I was  
4 raped and sodomized more times that I can count. And she  
5 said, when I realized that they were trying to break me,  
6 she said, I was determined they would never do that. And  
7 upon her graduation, the priest struck her in the mouth  
8 and broke her jaw in such a way that every ten years she  
9 has to go back and have the jaw reset because it grows  
10 back crooked. So she says every ten years I'm reminded  
11 of Holy Childhood.

12 I want to refer to a testimony of a man  
13 who attended Holy Childhood and said that the boys  
14 attending Holy Childhood learned to pee sitting down  
15 rather than standing at a commode. He was so angry in  
16 his early adult life and said, if the government were a  
17 man standing before me right now, I would have killed  
18 him. The article in the Grand Rapids Press circulated in  
19 1973 revealed the inner character of some of the  
20 operation at Holy Childhood, and the report was pretty  
21 extensive, but it never got very far.

22 There now is the evidence among us that  
23 includes a feeling of the need to protect the Catholic  
24 Church who exercised administrative control over the  
25 school's function denying criminal acts committed inside

1 the walls of the schools. These endorsements represent a  
2 conflict and threat to who we are as a tribal nation.  
3 Our ability to function is hampered as we promote the  
4 dysfunction represented and discredit those who suffered  
5 at the hands of the nuns and priests at Holy Childhood.

6 Dysfunctions including prejudice denying  
7 enrollment to those applicants applying whose siblings  
8 are already members but their sister or brother denied,  
9 blood relatives of those enrolled and first cousins  
10 denied, too, though they are the same bloodline and an  
11 adopted son denied membership despite providing  
12 irrefutable evidence as to his lineage, and I attribute  
13 this all to the impact of historical trauma and the  
14 boarding school residuals.

15 In the year 1800, the Catholic Church of  
16 held a council more then to determine whether we were  
17 animals or human beings, and they determined that we were  
18 not animals, but they also said we were not quite human  
19 beings, and so they gave us a title of wards, and somehow  
20 that title of wards crept into federal policy and  
21 provided no protection for us through the Constitution of  
22 the United States, and so they did to us what they wanted  
23 to. The idea was that the policy was we will make the  
24 necessary decisions for them because they are not capable  
25 of making them for themselves. This attitude expanded

1       into the boarding school model of kill the Indian, but  
2       save the man. And one of the first men from the Lakota  
3       people, and I'm Lakota, too, said that more of our  
4       children died in Carlisle than came home.

5               The Constitution nor the Declaration of  
6       Independence has no reference for protecting or offering  
7       the same equal status to the title of wards as we are  
8       identified as but the rest of the U.S. populace enjoyed.  
9       All men under the jurisdiction of the U.S. were not given  
10      equal right to life, liberty and the pursuit of  
11      happiness.

12             In the Declaration of Independence, the  
13      term merciless savages is mentioned, raising the bar in  
14      our estimation regarding the system's perspective of who  
15      we are still. In my estimation, that document should  
16      have been thrown out a long time ago.

17             We don't function well as a tribe because  
18      our traditional values defined by the Seven Grandfather  
19      Teachings are not practiced due to the effects of  
20      historical trauma and our tendency to transfer our  
21      loyalty and sense of patriotism to local, state and  
22      federal governments thinking to enlist their favor.

23             The Catholic Church made a statement,  
24      give us your children above five years of age and let us  
25      have them until they begin their teenage years and they

1 will always be Catholic, and we found this to be true,  
2 and I say this because I was once Catholic.

3 The reluctance in addressing the  
4 residuals deposited in us is because some endorse the  
5 policies and procedures of the Catholic Church or have  
6 become acclimated in western society and see no need in  
7 promoting tribal consciousness and culture anymore.  
8 That's an impact of historical trauma of the boarding  
9 schools.

10 We encourage our young people to get an  
11 education and bring their skills back to our people, but  
12 too often they return with the degree in hand and the  
13 western perspective that they are superior to the rest of  
14 us who don't have degrees. Evidence proves this true,  
15 and the evidence and the influence of the man for  
16 compliance with the federal government due to the grand  
17 funds, the fear of survival-inducing levels of greed,  
18 lust and avarice encouraging nepotism, political  
19 favoritism, and preferential treatment among those  
20 elected to office in the tribe and the further  
21 identification of this damnable baggage referred to as  
22 historical trauma never should have existed in the first  
23 place.

24 The questions arising how an  
25 administrator was salaried arises.



1                   Our administration was asked to look into  
2                   the unusual number of deaths of tribal members at a local  
3                   hospital due to the antibiotic-resistant staph infections  
4                   created through medical malpractice and us remembering  
5                   their a sterilization program conducted by the Indian  
6                   Health Service from 1976 to 1979 averaging 3,400 of our  
7                   men and woman every year, and this would not have been  
8                   discovered except a women, young woman went into a clinic  
9                   in California and asked for a womb transplant, and then  
10                  she related how they had removed had her womb in boarding  
11                  school.

12                  Let me bring in the picture the estimated  
13                  Indigenous population to be over 100 million in the year  
14                  1700 and rendered to 238,000 at the year 1900 census,  
15                  which represents the greatest holocaust in the history of  
16                  the world. Thanks to Gzemindo our numbers have increased  
17                  to 6 million.

18                  Finally, in addressing the crimes  
19                  perpetuated at Holy Childhood by priests and nuns and  
20                  this effort in bringing into a bigger picture, the  
21                  Catholic Church was a creation of the Roman Emperor  
22                  Constantine who along with his staff designed the  
23                  Catholic Church with all its perks.

24                  The Roman Emperor Constantine assumed the  
25                  office of pope and initiated an effort that nearly

1 eradicated the tribes in Europe. Constantine's converts  
2 occupied political offices and administrative positions  
3 at the local, state and federal level providing leverage  
4 to the Catholic Church which included protecting sexually  
5 and physically abusive priests and nuns from that time to  
6 this. Whole tribes were exterminated because they would  
7 not comply with the Catholic Church's demands.

8 Pope Alexander VI blessed Columbus and  
9 those of expeditionary forces saying, wherever you place  
10 your foot, claim for God, your king, and the Church, and  
11 whoever resists you, kill them.

12 Frank Baum, who wrote the Wizard of Oz,  
13 stated as an editor of newspaper for Wichita, Kansas, and  
14 hearing of the massacre at Wounded Knee in the 1890s  
15 where some of my relatives are buried, the cavalry should  
16 have proceeded and committed a greater sin and killed all  
17 them red devils.

18 Teddy Roosevelt stated, I have heard it  
19 said that the only good Indian is a dead one. And he  
20 said, for nine out of ten, I think this is true, and I'm  
21 not sure about the tenth.

22 I know, and I call you Madam  
23 Ogichidaaqwe, we have many of those here, and your staff,  
24 because I know this is a daunting task for you and it's a  
25 weary task as you travel in to be exposed to testimonies

1       like this all the time. I know about Spanish, I know  
2       about what happened there, I know about the medical  
3       experimentation hospital in Oshkosh or in a city in  
4       northern Wisconsin, the Bad River Battle of Ojibwe --

5                   ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Mr.  
6       Petoskey, I'm sorry to interrupt. If you have a written  
7       statement, I would invite you to submit that as well.  
8       And I'm only interrupting just because we're going to  
9       stay as long as it takes today, but I want to make sure  
10      that we are leaving time for everyone to have a chance to  
11      share their stories, and particularly people who have  
12      firsthand accounts of their own experiences, and I'm not  
13      trying minimize the information you're sharing with us,  
14      but if you have a written document, we would certainly  
15      welcome the submission of that.

16                  WARREN PETOSKEY: I'm glad to pass that  
17      on. I just hope that it goes farther than this room.  
18      Miigwetch for your time, this opportunity. Miigwetch for  
19      hearing me.

20                  ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch.  
21      Thank you. (Applause)

22                  UNIDENTIFIED: (Native language.) I  
23      really wanted to come here today in honor of both my  
24      parents for (Native language) Cross Village. She was a  
25      beautiful child, but when her parents passed away when

1 she was only nine years old, then she was sent to Holy  
2 Childhood of Jesus Indian Boarding School. My father,  
3 William Engstrom, everyone knew him as Turtle, he grew up  
4 in the Grand Rapids area and he was sent to Holy  
5 Childhood of Jesus Indian Boarding School when he was  
6 only nine years old, and I think that made them even  
7 tougher for the rest of their lives (inaudible). They're  
8 passed on.

9 I wanted to, as I was thinking about the  
10 things that they and my mother in particular told me,  
11 they never got married, but he'd come see us. And I just  
12 wanted to mention that that institutionalization carried  
13 on in their lives, and what that meant to them and their,  
14 I think, struggle to understand their place as people  
15 who, as I said, were proud of their heritage. My mother,  
16 she never even learned to drive. When she was around us  
17 she would always walk us down to pow wows at the  
18 Washtenaw River, and be sure to take us there. She  
19 struggled with mental illness all her life. And there  
20 would be times growing up where she would be gone for  
21 months, and we would be put in the foster care.

22 I was fortunate, I was the youngest of  
23 her seven girls, to have a family that was kind to me.  
24 My sisters weren't as lucky. Three of my sisters, at the  
25 urging of the Catholic Social Services, thought that my

1 mother had to give her children up for adoption. One,  
2 here today with me, she found us when I was 13 years old.

3 And there is something about the history  
4 of that institutionalization that I think is connected to  
5 the boarding school experience. The same with my father.  
6 He was in and out of jail for all of his life. My mom  
7 would share some and tell us times about when they were  
8 at Holy Childhood. She would say, oh, they say, oh, your  
9 boy has ran away again, you know. And he never stopped  
10 running. He was running the whole time he was there.  
11 And he preferred not to live in places. If we wanted to  
12 find Turtle, we looked for him down at the river, at the  
13 Washtenaw, you know. And he preferred to stay there  
14 because he didn't want to be told who he was and what he  
15 could and could not do. But he was abused. He ended his  
16 life by strokes. He was in the prison system to where he  
17 could not walk any longer. And he did that -- he was  
18 never the same as when he ran away from Holy Childhood.  
19 Turtle would not be told who he was and what he could and  
20 could not do. He would always talk back and it got him  
21 in a lot of trouble and it got him a lot of pain, and he  
22 was that way throughout his life.

23 My mother passed on in a very bad way.  
24 She was institutionalized at the time of her death at  
25 Honeyrest, a mental institution, and she was not cared

1       for. She was neglected. And it's really hard. My  
2       daughter, who is with me, she reminds me so much of my  
3       mother, and she never got to meet her. My two youngest  
4       children never got to meet their elders, grandmother.

5               But you know, her smile, when I was  
6       talking to (Native language) she remembers my mother,  
7       says, oh, she was a smiling girl. And she stayed that  
8       way, and that's a victory for all of us. All that  
9       laughter we still have with us after all of that pain.  
10      You know people will slow down because we'd laugh out  
11      loud, and say why don't you go places, and that's  
12      something, you know, I carry on from her.

13             And then you know it's been tough because  
14      my father, Turtle, you know as I said that he never  
15      married, he did marry another woman and they had some  
16      children. And I talk to her sometimes, and she never  
17      knew he was at the boarding school. He never told her  
18      about the things my mother told me. You know, she was so  
19      young when her parents passed, she was like, oh, you know  
20      the nuns, they were -- they were like mothers to me. But  
21      you hear underneath her story, she would talk about like,  
22      oh yeah, my knee would be red, my knees would just be red  
23      after scrubbing the floor. And she was like, oh, this is  
24      my iron, and tell you about that shirt, you have to get  
25      that right. But you know, she told stories when she

1 would be with my dad, and I'm sure he was old, she was  
2 like, oh, hey, you remember? And she sort of always had  
3 a crush on him. We have a lot of -- (inaudible) that.  
4 At home with my sister, considered half sisters. I'd ask  
5 my mom: Who was the most handsome of our dads? And she  
6 was always, oh, yours, great. She said, you know, they  
7 were there for years. And she said, oh, she says when I  
8 used to iron your shirts, your shirt was special. And  
9 she said, you remember that? (Inaudible) And he was  
10 like, no, I don't remember them. Well, I do. So that  
11 was cute.

12 But I just wanted to think about that  
13 name, Holy Childhood. You know, her childhood before  
14 that time, that was the sacred space. We know when she  
15 was a baby, we know she was born in Cross Village, in a  
16 log cabin, without electricity. Her parents spoke the  
17 language, they hunted. They didn't speak it to her; they  
18 had already been punished for speaking it. But she  
19 remembers it so much. And all my life she would say to  
20 me: You know I'm not afraid to die because I know I'll  
21 see my parents again. And when she went in that bad evil  
22 way, we saw her before she was cremated, and her face was  
23 so beautiful, so much at peace, and I believe it's  
24 because she did see them again, and she said she would.  
25 And I want to think, and I'm quite sure that we know of

1 our ancestors' spirit, and I hope that she is at peace  
2 where they were and they have good healing things and is  
3 growing those species of plants that bring back our mind  
4 altering, right, our little spirit beings, bring back  
5 those butterflies, bring back those bees, because that's  
6 another violation of life that were not considered  
7 worthy, and those are all in relation to presence in  
8 communities where even that sort of contention of those  
9 kind of plantings so we can go somewhere and we feel that  
10 peace and feel that continuation, and that restoration.  
11 Miigwetch. (Applause.)

12 MARY PETERS JARVIN: My name is Mary  
13 Peters Jarvin, Grand Traverse Band 2154. I'm here with  
14 my sister, Irma Peters, Grand Traverse Band 2153. Our  
15 father, (Native language -- Nadagahe Iowabe) went to  
16 Mount Pleasant Boarding School. There his name was  
17 changed to Albert Peters. When it was possible he ran  
18 away from there because -- because boarding school left  
19 him damaged. He led an explosive life in a home with  
20 alcoholic people, but mostly on Bridge Street in Grand  
21 Rapids, Michigan. Alcoholism caused him to be absent  
22 most of his life as a husband and father from his family  
23 of six children, but especially during our adolescent  
24 years. We were raised by a Christian mother on welfare.  
25 We lived in a muddy shack, heated by a pot belly stove.



1 Our home was also without electricity and indoor plumbing  
2 until 1993.

3 IRMA PETERS: And our house is still the  
4 same.

5 MARY PETERS JARVIN: But it's got  
6 plumbing now. Alcoholism caused evil. When he was sober  
7 he was a loving husband to our mother who remained  
8 married to him for over 50 and a half years. The day he  
9 walked on, he walked from Belgav, Michigan, to Saint  
10 Mary's Hospital with pneumonia where he died of a massive  
11 heart attack. He was the same Chippewa Indian descent  
12 who lived for years without a birth certificate or tribal  
13 affiliation. He tried to come -- last September. My  
14 sister here beside me, Irma, and my son Wayne Jarvin, and  
15 I have been trying for decades to change so that the  
16 grandchildren can become tribal members. The (Native  
17 language - Peters) is a residential school issue. The  
18 BIA has been -- long before our dad, based on an  
19 enrollment at the Mount Pleasant school where he was  
20 incorrectly listed as three-fourths instead of  
21 four-fourths. Miigwetch for allowing us to speak on  
22 behalf of our father and family. (Applause.)

23 UNIDENTIFIED: (Native language). I am a  
24 boarding school survivor from Holy Childhood School. I  
25 went there for six years, first through sixth grade.

1 This is my brother Ivan, he went there six years as well.  
2 And we have another sister that went there for four  
3 years.

4 I left the school thinking that I was a  
5 sinner. And then I met my partner a few years after  
6 that. And then I realized that I was a Native American,  
7 and that I could attend. He wouldn't be in church  
8 without feeling guilty.

9 That school, when I left that school and  
10 went to public school, I did not know how to act because  
11 I came from being told what to do every minute of every  
12 hour. You were told when to get up, when to go get in  
13 line for breakfast, when to get dressed and when to wash  
14 up and to go to bed, when to go to church and when to  
15 sing or when to pray. They told me everything to do. So  
16 when I got there I was like a free bird, but a baby bird,  
17 because I still had to learn how to live in the public  
18 society.

19 I deal with abandonment issues because I  
20 don't understand completely why my father sent us there.  
21 I can presume that, you know, if he had a hard time  
22 himself with alcoholism, and I remember him always living  
23 with other people and not living, having our own house.  
24 If we did have our own house, it went from a tiny one  
25 room to a big house, but I was left alone a lot. So

1       there is where my loneliness comes from and my  
2       abandonment issues come from.

3               And then I have a hard time with math and  
4       reading because, you know, at the chalkboard, when you're  
5       in class and everybody would be looking at you and the  
6       teacher is telling you that you're dumb and that you  
7       should have gotten it. That's my form of disability that  
8       I received from them.

9               Going to my first healing circle was  
10       where for me, I realized there was a woman there that was  
11       telling her story, and she was like about ten to 15 years  
12       older than me, but she said something about what they  
13       used to do to us in those schools. Like during Halloween  
14       time they would scare us to death. That was very  
15       traumatic, and she brought it up that they should have  
16       left.

17              We lived on the third floor and they  
18       would have people pounding on the fire escape, and those  
19       girls would open it up, and there would be some kind of  
20       goblin or witch that would come busting in through that  
21       floor and chasing us all around, wreaking havoc in the  
22       dark, running everywhere, this way and that way. Then we  
23       would be shoved into Sister's room, and a bunch of us  
24       would be crying. I would get underneath the bed, and my  
25       sister came running for me, and I reached out from

1 underneath the bed and I scared her because she was  
2 running for me, looking for me. And she brought me into  
3 the Sister's room, and that's where we stayed until  
4 everything was all done. So those are just a little bit  
5 of my experience.

6 And my brother is here with me today, and  
7 he would like to share his story, but I don't know if --?  
8 Thank you.

9 IVAN WASIGIAC: My name is Ivan Wasigiac  
10 (phonetic spelling). I'm 59 years old. I went to Holy  
11 Childhood of Jesus School for six years. What I have to  
12 say about that place was a lot of, you know, a lot of  
13 like my sister said, being told what to do. I was always  
14 corrected because I was pretty wild. I mean I did what I  
15 wanted to do. I was always getting paddled. And I was  
16 afraid of being an alter boy. The abuse that I suffered  
17 from one of the nuns. She used to come in and give me  
18 back rubs, which I didn't think was too bad at the time.  
19 But you know, little did I know it was sexual abuse. And  
20 I thought that was okay at the time. I was only 12 years  
21 old. And it was very -- I grew up thinking weird  
22 thoughts about that, and it kind of stuck and affected  
23 me. And I was always shame-faced all my life. I have  
24 shame issues up until now.

25 The only thing that I could really say

1 positive about the school was it taught me how to do math  
2 tables really fast, I was quick. Spelling bee, I was a  
3 good speller. I learned to be a really good handwriter.  
4 I could write really good. I could write letters, you  
5 know, and punctuation. So in order for me to -- I  
6 actually liked going to school, because when we got out  
7 all we had to do was clean, clean, clean, clean, you  
8 know. The room mother we had, she was a cleaning fanatic  
9 so we cleaned and cleaned and cleaned. And that's all I  
10 knew how to do, you know. So going to school for me was  
11 actually like an escape and I excelled. And when I did  
12 excel, you know, I felt good about myself. That was the  
13 only way I could feel good about myself.

14 But after I got into the public school  
15 system, I kind of withdrew because I knew I was different  
16 but I didn't know why. I knew I was different than  
17 everybody else. And you know, all that time that we got  
18 to go play at recess or after school, we had to run. We  
19 did a lot of running, running around in circles around  
20 the field, run, run, run. No play time, just run.

21 And the only time we got to play as kids  
22 growing up was at recess and then we played football. I  
23 excelled in football. I excelled in sports, basketball.  
24 So that was my escape. I felt sorry for all the other  
25 kids there, because then I started to straighten up a

1 little more and kind of figured out what I needed to do  
2 to keep from getting in trouble, so I excelled in sports  
3 and in schooling. I did that, so when I went to the  
4 public school I excelled in sports.

5 Then I was introduced to alcohol and that  
6 became my downfall. I suffered and still suffer from  
7 alcoholism. It's still a fight. But I have underlying  
8 secrets in me that, from the school, that really  
9 traumatized me about being shame-faced. And it's a work  
10 in progress, but.

11 I appreciate everybody for coming here.  
12 I can see some people that I haven't seen before, it's  
13 been a while. You probably don't recognize me; I  
14 probably don't recognize you. But anyways, thank you for  
15 letting me share, me and my sister, and for being here.  
16 And I really appreciate the Secretary being here and  
17 giving us an opportunity to discuss this. Thank you.  
18 Miigwetch.

19 (Applause.)

20 BART GASCO: Hello there. My name is  
21 Bart Gasco. I am a Catholic boarding school survivor,  
22 and this is my story. I'm going to take you back to what  
23 was supposed to be the happiest and most carefree times  
24 of our lives, our childhood. I will admit to growing up  
25 with a semi normal attitude, trying to make the most in

1 life. I have blocked so much of the memories, including  
2 both years I was there. My kindergarten and first grade  
3 years there were not those of a fairy tale. They were  
4 most like real-life horror movie and all being filmed in  
5 Harbor Springs for me.

6 I am number ten of eleven children, but  
7 for some reason only three of us were taken and forced  
8 into a boarding school situation. I came home from  
9 school in kindergarten to my one, to one of my sisters  
10 and one of my brothers and me, and we were loaded into a  
11 car, with only one bag for each of us. We had bare  
12 minimums to live with. We were driven to the Holy  
13 Childhood Boarding School in Harbor Springs where we  
14 would live for who knew how long. Taken away from all  
15 our other siblings. Once we arrived, split from the only  
16 familiar faces we knew when we were that young.

17 I was five years old and placed in a  
18 sleeping hall with other Native boys my age. And from  
19 what I can remember, there were approximately 30 to 40  
20 boys in one hall, with the beds arranged in rows. We  
21 were assigned to the hall with Sister Diane Marie and her  
22 room was up front in the hall but still attached so she  
23 could keep her eye on us.

24 We were taught that the first thing in  
25 the morning our bed was to be made military style, and if

1       those corners were not just right, Sister Diane Marie  
2       would walk by and destroy it, something that I, as a  
3       five-year-old, worked hard on. Ripped it apart and told  
4       to start over. After making the bed in the morning you  
5       were then instructed to get dressed. We didn't dare sit  
6       on the bed, sit on the freshly made bed, out of fear of a  
7       wrinkle or untucking. We were forced to sit on the cold  
8       floor, tiled cold floor, to do all of our dressing. For  
9       some reason that's still unclear to me, we were told that  
10      we were not allowed to wear underwear when we went to  
11      bed, just our pajamas. So you can imagine the cold floor  
12      even more so on your bare skin as a five-year-old  
13      struggles from one leg or foot after another.

14               Not getting dressed fast enough because,  
15      as I mentioned, we all know how long it takes a  
16      five-year-old sometimes. Sister Diane made sure we moved  
17      at a little faster pace or else abuse would begin, even  
18      before breakfast.

19               Once we were down with breakfast, lunch,  
20      or dinner, we stood at attention waiting for others to  
21      file in. We definitely were not able to utilize it as a  
22      social event. We were there for one reason, and that was  
23      to eat and we would get done as fast as we could. I was  
24      fast. The dining hall was one large room. You could see  
25      the other groups file in. You could only stare, but you



1 don't get caught looking up or making eye contact or even  
2 remotely attempting to talk to someone else. Sometimes  
3 meals were the only times during the day I was allowed to  
4 see the faces of my brother or my sister. Punishment  
5 though for talking and not eating could get your next  
6 meal skipped.

7 So every day, Monday through Friday, and  
8 of course Sunday school. Although we weren't -- If you  
9 were caught acting up or punished for something, we would  
10 then go to school on Saturday too.

11 On Saturdays our families were allowed to  
12 come visit and occasionally take you out for a picnic or  
13 other family visit in the community. As was mentioned,  
14 if you act up, not only did you get the punishment during  
15 the event, but your family day was then taken away from  
16 you.

17 I can recall one Saturday that I was not  
18 allowed my family time. Sitting by the window, I watched  
19 my older sister come pick up my two siblings that were  
20 there with me, to take them for the day. What was it  
21 that I did that warranted an extra school day, you  
22 wonder? I colored on my fingernails with a pencil,  
23 something that was so innocent that I think every little  
24 kid does at sometime, at some point in their lives. I  
25 was punished for that. Not only that weekend that I

1 missed my family time, but in the moment I was slapped  
2 with a ruler across my hands. And it wasn't a quick slap  
3 or even with the flat side of the ruler. It was the  
4 sharp edge of the ruler. And how many times? One for  
5 each finger that had coloring on it. And if I cried, it  
6 would start over. The counting would start over and it  
7 would be harder than the first time.

8 Suck it up and deal with it is what I  
9 was told. You made this choice and it's because you are  
10 a naughty boy that you are getting this. This is all  
11 your fault.

12 Another memory I had, I unfortunately get  
13 to think about, are my playground memories. We were  
14 boys. We of course had it in us to be rough and tumble  
15 from time to time. But if I was caught arguing or  
16 fighting with a fellow boarder, we were taken inside and  
17 split apart and punished. The punishment I most remember  
18 was where I was taken into my sleeping home and paddled  
19 bad, and not just a quick pat on the back or behind for  
20 an attention getter, more of a beating than a paddling.  
21 The other boy and I were to scrub three flights of  
22 stairs, starting between rungs on the banister, the steps  
23 and the approaches. We only stopped once when we hit the  
24 ground floor. The tools used to clean the floor, three  
25 flights of stairs, a toothbrush and a bucket.

1                   As I looked around the hall, the dining  
2                   room, seeing the other faces I can recall, we all looked  
3                   similar. We all had dark hair, skin, and eyes. And we  
4                   were all Native children. We were constantly preached at  
5                   during the week that we were learning how to transform,  
6                   transition away from being Native American. We were  
7                   being talk how to be white. We were to never speak in  
8                   our Native language again, never sing or dance to the  
9                   music that our grandparents had and so on. I was young  
10                  enough that I was not versed or taught many of those  
11                  traditions yet anyways, so unfortunately it was very easy  
12                  for them to work on their goal of killing the Indian in  
13                  me and saving the white man.

14                 Some time has passed, and the end of the  
15                 school year is approaching. Kids are packing and getting  
16                 ready to go home for the summer. My sister Regina and my  
17                 brother Joe and myself were finally able to go home, but  
18                 we would soon be returned for another school year. My  
19                 mother had received the help that she needed in that  
20                 first year we were gone, but for some reason still did  
21                 not want us three back in her life or to worry about us  
22                 during the school year. Taken home again and returned to  
23                 the hands and the mercy of the church. My total time  
24                 there was two few years.

25                 I share this little glimpse into my life

1 not to try and re-live it or even to seek the pity of  
2 those listening but as a way to share light on this  
3 chapter of my life. I'm going to close this chapter of  
4 my life and what I thought would never be spoken about,  
5 that there would never be many people that even cared.

6 There are two years in my childhood that  
7 were supposed to be carefree, and I was supposed to be  
8 allowed to be a kid. Those young impressional years are  
9 dark and something that I do not wish upon even my worst  
10 enemy. To show how these years have been blocked, these  
11 are not stories that I haven't even shared with my own  
12 three children until today. I stand here in support with  
13 my daughter, my wife and my sister, finally feeling like  
14 someone is listening.

15 Fifty plus years later, I know that I'll  
16 never get year five and six back of my life, but I am  
17 hopeful that I might get the love and support that I was  
18 missing in my childhood, and we, as a nation, will come  
19 out stronger in spite of the Catholic Church and the  
20 horrible things they were able to do with us.

21 I share with you today my sadness, and  
22 can stand tall with the help of my family, and say that  
23 the Catholic Church as a white people did not get all my  
24 spirit.

25 I am a Native American boarding school

1 survivor. Thank you.

2 (Applause.)

3 JEAN MALINOVICH: Good morning. My name  
4 is Jean Malinovich, I went to Holy Childhood School in  
5 1955 to '56 with my brother and three sisters. This is  
6 the first time I've been in this area in 70 years.

7 It's hard for me to say, but the one  
8 thing I remember is this one nun treating me so badly  
9 that I still think about it to this day. Her name was  
10 Sister Jenrose. There was this one girl that wrote a  
11 note to a boy and signed my name and she gave it to the  
12 nun, and the nun came and asked me if I wrote the note,  
13 and I told her no, but she didn't believe me, she told me  
14 that I was lying. So she made me a ridicule of the  
15 entire school. I would stand in line to go to lunch or  
16 go to a classroom and she would either pull me by the ear  
17 or pull me by the hair or get her hand around my neck and  
18 take me out of line and put me to the end of the line,  
19 and while she was doing this, she would tell the other  
20 kids that this is a dirty, filthy girl, she was not  
21 worthy to walk with any of you, so she would put me at  
22 the end of the line and everybody would go about going to  
23 the lunch or going to their class. And when we went to  
24 the dinner hall, there was a table at the front of the  
25 room where bad kids were sent, bad kids were put to sit,

1 and that's where I would have to sit and eat my meal, and  
2 everybody coming into the lunchroom would point their  
3 fingers at me and tell me what a filthy person I was. So  
4 they must have did their job because I never seemed to  
5 get over that story or that vision of that nun pulling my  
6 ears, pulling my hair, pulling my neck, and telling  
7 everybody what a filthy person I was, that I wasn't  
8 worthy to be walking amongst them, and these were my own  
9 kind of people that also were pointing their finger at  
10 me.

11 She finally found out who wrote the note,  
12 she had everybody write a note. And here she was a nun  
13 of intelligence, she was teaching all of us, and she  
14 found out that the girl that wrote the note wrote the J  
15 backwards, G, and then afterwards she made me stand in  
16 front of the class and the girl in front of the class and  
17 she made the girl apologize to me, and she told me I had  
18 to accept that apology. I didn't want to accept that  
19 apology, but she said that I had to do it, I had to do  
20 it. And when I accepted the apology, then she told us to  
21 hug each other. I just couldn't do it, but I had to  
22 because the nun said to. I still can't get over that  
23 day, what everybody did to me. I'm 78 years old and I'm  
24 still going through that trauma.

25 That was not a good school, the nuns were

1 not good, and the nuns that were good were transferred.  
2 And the priests told my mother to send us there, we would  
3 get a good education.

4 I hope this is a good healing for all of  
5 us. Thank you. (Applause)

6 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you,  
7 Jean. Miigwetch. We're going to hear from one more  
8 speaker and take a break for ten minutes, at which point  
9 we'll ask members of the press to leave and allow folks  
10 to compose themselves, get a drink, stretch your legs,  
11 and then we'll come back in. So one more speaker at this  
12 time. In the back. Right here. Sorry. Oh, we have one  
13 woman in the back who had a microphone, we'll come to you  
14 after the break.

15 JEAN FRANCES KING: Hello. Sorry. Hi.  
16 My name is Jean Frances King, I am the daughter of  
17 William Francis King and the daughter of Cindy  
18 Springwater and the granddaughter of Virginia  
19 (inaudible). Both my mother and my grandmother was in  
20 the boarding school. Which one, I don't know, but I was  
21 in Holy Childhood and I, too, do not have good memories.  
22 In fact, I have six daughters and one son, and I never  
23 told any of them what happened to me, and it took me ten  
24 years to even open up to a counselor. I have the gift of  
25 gab, but, you know, some things you just don't talk

1       about.

2                   And but at one of our tribal events, one  
3       of our elder leaders had spoken about me, the time I was  
4       in a boarding school, to my oldest daughter, and that was  
5       something I really didn't want to remember. But some  
6       stuff happened to me throughout the years; I've made bad  
7       decisions, I was traumatized by other people in the  
8       boarding school, and now that I'm older, I do realize now  
9       all this stuff that I went through in my life is because  
10      of the boarding school. I was really young, I was like,  
11      you know, five, six, seven, eight, and I only have one  
12      good memory. The one good memory, I want to say this  
13      first, was seeing my Aunt Carol and my Uncle Matt and my  
14      daddy. These double doors opened up and they came in and  
15      saved me. They saved me.

16                   They chopped my hair off. And nothing  
17      would happen till nighttime, nothing. We would hear  
18      things down in the basement. If I did something wrong,  
19      which I don't think I did anything wrong, the girls  
20      beside probably didn't do anything wrong, but it seemed  
21      like they always found trouble with us. They would take  
22      me in the room, and there was mats. They took me, they  
23      would choke me, they hit me with rulers. See my hands,  
24      see my face, there's scars on them. You want to see my  
25      back? Not too many people know that. And the only



1 person I told was my daddy. He had to reraise me,  
2 reraise me.

3 And a few years ago or just, you know,  
4 many years ago before coronavirus, I heard the boarding  
5 school was closing down. I was so happy. Even though I  
6 saw another Native sister saying praise to Holy  
7 Childhood, go ahead and praise all you want because at  
8 least she got something good out of it. And I feel bad  
9 for all the people before me, and hopefully that I was or  
10 we was the last generation of the boarding school.  
11 Because I have a sister-in-law from out west, you know,  
12 southwest, and their boarding school was nice, made our  
13 boarding school look bad.

14 There was more things I don't even want  
15 to talk about. I just feel for everyone who's been  
16 there, and I'm glad, because you know what, this is  
17 something you just can't talk about. You know, there's  
18 already been enough trauma, and then when someone wants  
19 to choke you and hates you that much to want to kill you,  
20 for someone to hate you that much because you're brown,  
21 because of the color of your skin or because you don't  
22 speak the same language, this is just, you know, this is  
23 crazy. You know, it's like we're supposed to be human  
24 nature, human beings helping another human being, we're  
25 supposed to be empowering each other, not tribes fighting

1       against tribes or white people fighting against brown  
2       people, anyone, and for these boarding schools to do this  
3       us to and for us, the need to be prejudice; and you know  
4       what my daddy says, we just got to pray, pray for those  
5       who are more sick than you. Chi miigwetch. (Applause)

6                   ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch.  
7       I want to say miigwetch, thank you to those of you who  
8       have had a chance to speak of your experience and your  
9       family's experience. Thank you. Thank you.

10                   We're going to take a ten-minute break.  
11       We'll ask -- I know many folks have come to also meet the  
12       Secretary, we're going to have time at our second break  
13       for some photos, but so I ask that you give her and the  
14       rest of our team some space to catch our breath, and then  
15       we'll come back in and continue going. Miigwetch.

16                   (Recess from 11:47 a.m. until 12:07 p.m.)

17                   -   -   -

18                   ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: All right.  
19       Thank you. Miigwetch. Thank you, everybody. We're  
20       going to continue. I know we had a speaker lined up  
21       ready to go again. Before we get started, just one, two  
22       quick housekeeping items. One, again, we want to make  
23       sure that we are hearing directly from those of you who  
24       have firsthand experiences and that this space is for  
25       you, and then those of you of course talking about your

1 relatives and your family members, I want to make sure  
2 that you have a space as well, so if you wish to speak,  
3 if you fall into those categories, please raise your  
4 hands and our mic runners will come to you. We're going  
5 to stay, so just please be patient with us. Second  
6 housekeeping item is we'll go for another 45 or 50  
7 minutes, and then I know the Tribe has lunch for people,  
8 we'll take a lunch break, and then after we get something  
9 to eat, we'll do a photo line for those of you who are  
10 interested in that.

11 So with that, we'll -- I know we've got  
12 our first speaker lined up, and we'll begin. Please also  
13 state your name and your tribe and school.

14 MARY COBE GIBSON: My name is Mary Cobe  
15 Gibson. I'm a survivor of Holy -- I'm sorry, but I'm a  
16 crier. And a lot of this has just came out, my healing  
17 with my sister, she's also a survivor. I think it's real  
18 important that the gentleman back there that was  
19 speaking, that he said the name of the nun, and I think  
20 it's important that we say those, the names of those  
21 abusers, Sister Naomi, Sister Diana, you know, all of  
22 those that were there at the school, you know, that were  
23 abusing us.

24 And but what I want to say, I want to  
25 tell you a couple of experiences that I had. And my

1 heart just broke for this woman up here because I was in  
2 that same position where I was ridiculed by, you know,  
3 other students, you know, the other Anishinaabes that  
4 were at the school, because I had -- and this is really  
5 hard for me to say, that I haven't said it publicly, I've  
6 said it to my therapist -- but where, you know, I had  
7 peed myself. I had asked continuously to go to the  
8 bathroom and I wasn't allowed to go, and so when I went  
9 up to the desk, I said I have to go, and she wouldn't let  
10 me go, and so I stood in front of her and I, you know, I  
11 peed my pants, and I was in first grade, and then I was  
12 beaten later by Sister Naomi because I lied. And she  
13 said, why did do you that in class, and I said I, she  
14 wouldn't let me go. I don't remember the nun's name that  
15 was the teacher in first grade. But then later everyone  
16 was allowed to go to the movies and she had singled me  
17 out and she said, no, no pee pants can go, so others were  
18 allowed to go.

19 There was a -- I want to jump back a  
20 little bit. But can I have people raise their hands that  
21 are survivors of Holy Childhood that I went to school  
22 with. I went to school in the mid '70s, and I call it  
23 Holy Hell because that is what we experienced. And some  
24 of the things -- and I'm healing. A lot of people will  
25 often say that didn't experience it that they say, why

1 didn't you tell your parents? Why didn't you tell? But  
2 we didn't tell because we were afraid, we are afraid of  
3 what would happen because we knew we were going back. We  
4 were sent there through the state and the government that  
5 took us from our homes. There was six of us girls and  
6 one boy.

7 I remember going there, and they  
8 immediately -- I had very long hair, and my hair is very  
9 important to me, as it is with all Anishinaabes, but they  
10 wanted to cut my hair because there was head lice there.  
11 And I remember telling Sister Naomi, I think there's  
12 something wrong, I have, you know, I'm itching, and there  
13 was many of the girls that were there, and when I went up  
14 to tell her that, she threw me on the floor and she said,  
15 you brought that to us. I was in second grade, so I  
16 didn't, you know -- I don't know that I brought it there  
17 or you have all these kids together, you know, but  
18 immediately they were wanting to cut our hair, and I  
19 remember crying, saying please, please don't cut my hair,  
20 and they did, they cut all of our hair. They made us  
21 wear them in these little curls and dresses and going to  
22 school.

23 But I want to share some of the things  
24 and something that just came out. I'm in therapy, and  
25 I've been in therapy for a while, but my sister and I, we

1        were talking, and sometimes when you repress your  
2        memories and then later they come out just like out of  
3        the blue, and I shared with her when she was sharing with  
4        me some of the things that had happened to her. There  
5        was molestation going on in that school, and I think a  
6        lot of people, they think about the other boarding  
7        schools, but I think this one might be overlooked because  
8        of the community that it was in. You know, it is a white  
9        community, you know, we were sent off, oh, you know,  
10       let's go sing -- and I apologize, I don't mean to  
11       offend -- but we were sent off to go sing for the white  
12       people, you know, as little kids, and or they would come  
13       and pick us up and take us to their homes and -- I'm  
14       sorry, I forgot where I was going.

15                    Oh, one of the stories that I can relate  
16       to, the story that you were talking about on Halloween  
17       when they petrified us and terrorized us on Halloween and  
18       devil's night. As a second grader, I had bones on my bed  
19       and I knew what was going to happen that night, they  
20       going to come to us. And my sister was protecting me,  
21       and she said, come and sleep with me, you know, and I'll  
22       protect you. But later on nothing happened and I went  
23       back to my bed and I was awoken by, they had, it was like  
24       bags, and they put a flashlight on their face and they  
25       grabbed my hair and the mattress and completely threw me

1 out of the bed. And I was a hard sleeper, so I'm like  
2 looking up, but I was just petrified at that age. So if  
3 you can imagine being in second grade and having that  
4 happen, bringing you to the cemetery, making you find  
5 your way back. I know the ones that went to Holy  
6 Childhood, you remember that when they would take us to  
7 the cemetery and say you have to find your way back.

8 And, you know, being young and remember  
9 kneeling and kneeling for a sin that somebody did that  
10 you don't even know what it was that they did, it was  
11 probably something very small, but they would throw that  
12 rice on the floor and you would kneel all night long  
13 until morning. And the beatings that came with Sister  
14 Naomi, being pulled up three flights of stairs. If you  
15 remember, the boys probably don't because the boys were  
16 in one part and the girls were in the other, but those  
17 flights of stairs, Sister Naomi pulled me by the back of  
18 my hair, and the reason she did that was because I was  
19 coughing during Elvis Presley movie, and so it's like  
20 okay, I'm the sinner, I'm going to hell. But what about  
21 her, what about her and John Hughey, and I know you guys  
22 remember that. She was having an affair with her best  
23 friend's husband, and she left the nunhood, but she  
24 starting telling me that I'm going to hell. I'm second,  
25 third grade, and so I just remember those.

1                   And one of the things that came up -- and  
2                   there's family members, and I'm not going to share their  
3                   stories because that's their story to tell -- but the  
4                   molestation of the boys from Sister Diana, and you know  
5                   she did it. So I have family members that, you know,  
6                   after they left their school, they got into drugs and  
7                   alcohol, and I understand that because that was their way  
8                   of coping. You know, when you have a nun and everybody's  
9                   like, oh, it's a nun, but when you're molested by a nun,  
10                  you're -- the pain that some of them have told me that  
11                  they went through, they had a hard time with that because  
12                  we were so many times told we were going to hell for this  
13                  or for that.

14                  But real quick, I want to share two  
15                  stories about my memory of there and the abuse that I  
16                  received. You know, I did get many, many beatings. I  
17                  was very quiet, I'm not a public speaker, I'm very shy,  
18                  very withdrawn, but I think that that's because we've all  
19                  experienced that because we were told that you are to be  
20                  seen and not heard and you're to do as you're told, and  
21                  so that's what I did. And when we went home, we didn't  
22                  tell our parents, you know, we didn't tell my mom. And  
23                  but the two stories I want to tell is when I was in third  
24                  grade, I don't remember what I did, but Sister Naomi had  
25                  put me out on the fire escape, and if you were going



1       there, you know how raggedy it was, it was crickety,  
2       raggedy, and she left me out there until probably about  
3       4:00 in the morning, and I was so afraid at that age  
4       because there were bats flying around, and I remember  
5       sitting out there crying and trying to realize, you know,  
6       what did I do to make this happen to me. And the only  
7       reason I was allowed to come back in is because my sister  
8       had said, are you going to let my sister, you know, come  
9       back in, she's outside, and Sister Naomi laughed, this is  
10      what my sister had shared with me later, she said, yeah,  
11      she laughed, and she said, oh, I forgot her. You forgot  
12      me out on that fire escape for eight hours until 4:00  
13      o'clock in the morning?

14                   And then there's another story, and this  
15      is extremely personal and I've never said it out loud.  
16      We all know that there was the molestation going on with  
17      the boys, but there was also with the girls, too. When I  
18      was in first grade, we weren't allowed to go in Sister  
19      Naomi's room, and so if you -- so when I was asked to go  
20      in there, it was odd to me, and but, you know, I was  
21      young and I'm like, okay, well, I'm going to go in her  
22      room, and I remember having my pajamas on, and this is a  
23      memory that just came to me like within the last year or  
24      so, and I remember, I clearly remember my pajamas and I  
25      remember folding the sheet up in front of me, and I said,

1        what am I waiting for, and she said, just wait, just  
2        wait. And I'm like, can I go back to my bed, and she  
3        said, no, no, you're going to be in here tonight and  
4        you're going to wait and I'll be back. And I have not  
5        got past that healing in me and that memory. I don't  
6        know what I was waiting for, but I have an idea of what I  
7        was waiting for; I was waiting for a man to come in. And  
8        I know that later in life I learned that -- I know that I  
9        wasn't penetrated because I was a virgin later in life,  
10       but I know how they were and I know what they did to some  
11       of my friends at the school, and they would put us for  
12       the priests, for the brothers who were so creepy, and if  
13       you remember them in their brown robes with their little  
14       three knots that they had on there, what they would do.  
15       And I've heard other stories that the similar thing had  
16       happened to them, so I know what happened to me, I know  
17       that I was, that I was touched, and but I haven't got to  
18       that healing part yet. I'm still there, I'm still  
19       healing.

20                    And one thing I want to say is that I --  
21       and I get what she was saying about the shame, I was so  
22       ashamed for so many years, but then I realized, that's  
23       not our shame, that's their shame. That's the nuns'  
24       shames, that's brothers' shames, and that shame goes all  
25       the way to the Vatican (applause), and I will not go

1       into -- I will not go into a Catholic Church. Yes, I was  
2       baptized in the, made my -- or made my first communion --  
3       and what's after communion, when you get your name?  
4       Yeah, confirmation. See, that's how long, I blocked that  
5       stuff out, I don't want no part of it.

6               But my heart just goes out when I hear  
7       these stories, and I think this is just a wonderful thing  
8       that we have here today, and I've seen the, the Wasigiacs  
9       [sp] because I haven't seen them since the school, so but  
10      that's just what I wanted to share. And my heart goes  
11      out to that woman in front there because I know the shame  
12      because I felt it, but, you know, again, that's not our  
13      shame. (Applause)

14             And want to thank you for coming out and  
15      being our voices, too, you know, and we all as survivors  
16      need to be voices, we need to be voices for those  
17      children that they're finding, and they might want to  
18      check Holy Childhood because my sister removed bones from  
19      there and were put in bags and nobody knows where those  
20      bones went. She didn't share that until recently that  
21      they had to dig up them graves at night when nobody was  
22      around. My thought is, whose bones were those, and why  
23      were they put in bags, and she was in eighth grade, and  
24      that was in the '60s, so there's bones there, and they  
25      need to be found. Miigwetch. (Applause)

1                   MELISSA MOSES: (Native greeting.) I am  
2 from Water Moccasin Nagawa. My spirit name is (Native  
3 language), White Framed Woman. I stand before you today  
4 to give my testimony about me and my family's  
5 generational trauma.

6                   This trauma started at an unknown time in  
7 history, but I have tried to document when and who have  
8 entered these boarding schools across Michigan. I want  
9 to be using my binder today to give you a glimpse of who  
10 was affected and how some of these descendants survived  
11 and these descendants happen to be in my family.

12                  And I briefly wanted to acknowledge Mary  
13 that -- you spoke last, Mary, you were my little girl in  
14 the Harbor Springs school. Mary, you were my little girl  
15 in Harbor Springs school, and I love you. My name is  
16 Melissa Moses.

17                  MARY COBE GIBSON: I love you.

18                  MELISSA MOSES: O.K. That's what we did,  
19 we protected each other. That was the good thing out of  
20 the school is we became strong together, all my brothers  
21 and sister here, and my biological brothers and sisters  
22 too. I love you. (Applause.)

23                  I also want to apologize for my color  
24 today. It's only a dress. It happens to be a black  
25 dress that happens to be in remembrance of the nuns that

1 beat us. I am sorry if I offended anybody. I know that  
2 when I walked in people were really quite taken back that  
3 somebody would come dressed as a nun. But it is them who  
4 abused us. It is them that we forgive, and it is them  
5 that we try to forgive. And so I'd like to continue on  
6 with my story.

7 I have a story board here. It is my  
8 brother Russell's. My brother's story was told in 1994  
9 about the sexual abuse at Holy Childhood School. My  
10 brother is -- I am 60; he's almost 75 years old today.  
11 But he also served in the military. And I want to honor  
12 that, and I will always honor anybody who was in the  
13 military, that served as a Native American for this  
14 country. I will honor you. (Applause.)

15 I have the color red for missing murdered  
16 women and children, and that's across the country. And  
17 then I have the orange for us as children and the  
18 children who never returned to us, the children that we  
19 are looking for. Please pray.

20 On this board, it is made of brick  
21 because that is where I grew up for eight years, the  
22 brick building. The nuns and the priests and the church,  
23 I had to kneel in that church for eight years, five days  
24 a week. I had to go to confession on Saturday and tell  
25 them lies about what a bad child I was. It's -- it was a

1 vicious cycle. I don't know who I am. I'm lost. And  
2 there's a story to be told as I continue it. But I was  
3 baptized, confirmed, and I had Holy Communion. One of  
4 the things that I want to go to church and ask for is the  
5 excommunication papers so that I no longer have to worry  
6 about what they can come at me for. (Applause.)

7 This is not my customary mode of dress so  
8 I would like to remove the look (removing head covering),  
9 and I want to show you the look of a true survivor of  
10 boarding school. Because it's Plain Jane. We went in  
11 there with long hair, I went in there with big ears. And  
12 that was a very handy thing to have when you were beaten  
13 up and you needed to be pulled out of line because you  
14 don't know your birthday. You had to be sitting in a  
15 bathtub because you were so brown that they named you  
16 Little Black Sambo. And that was my name for the longest  
17 time. And people in this room who went to Holy Childhood  
18 will know how many hours I spent in the bathroom, trying  
19 to clean my elbows and my knees and the back of my neck.

20 And school, I didn't -- I don't remember  
21 any sexual abuse happened to me. My sisters never spoke  
22 of sexual abuse happening to them, but I know the abuse  
23 was physical to us because we had to clean the hallways.  
24 We were given one piece of cleaning material to scrub the  
25 long floors because they were made of wood and they

1 needed to be shiny. And we had to wash windows and hang  
2 outside the windows in a third-story building because the  
3 school needed to be cleaned before we left the school  
4 year.

5 I am not too familiar with the church  
6 activities, like what the boys did or anything like that.  
7 But as girls, I know that I have done enough praying. I  
8 know that I have knelt at her front door, the Sister  
9 Naomi, a lot. My family has suffered, we're still  
10 suffering today. But as the end goal of all of this, I  
11 have a five-year-old great grandson. His name is Michael  
12 (inaudible) and I want it publicly recorded that this  
13 family is a survivor and we will continue to do the  
14 healing work that needs to be done. My book is  
15 available.

16 I do want to share one story as to why I  
17 dressed up today. This whole book is pictures and  
18 stories about Holy Childhood, the names of the nuns, the  
19 stories that were written in the public venue. I was  
20 also a member of the -- I'm not a member, I was a foster  
21 child. I was a foster child from the age of six until I  
22 turned 18.

23 That too has another story, because as a  
24 little girl I used to have to stand in front of the  
25 foster homes that I was in and sing a song that told them

1       that I was Indian and would you please let me in. And  
2       today I'm going to sing it to you because it's what the  
3       church did and what they made me believe that I needed to  
4       do this to enter into a foster home.

5                       (Singing) Look at me, oh! look at me.  
6       I'm an Indian, oh! I'm an Indian. Down at the feet is  
7       the moccasins for the shoes. Up on the back is a little  
8       fat papoose. Up on the head is the feathers from a  
9       goose. It's a goose, it's a goose, but I'm an Indian. I  
10      pal around with Hunting Bear, Laughing Foot, and Standing  
11      Hair. Such people I never saw before. They do war  
12      dances all around. I take a skip or two around the  
13      ground. Oi, oi, oi, oi, I'm a terrible squaw. Oi, oi,  
14      oi, oi, I'm a terrible squaw. (End singing)

15                      So I'm going to leave you with that. I  
16      love all of you, and God bless you for being with me and  
17      standing with me. And my story book is available, and  
18      you will receive a copy. So I hope this helps.  
19      Miigwetch to all of you. (Applause.)

20                      IRENE CORNSTALK MITCHELL: (Native  
21      language) My name is Irene Cornstalk Mitchell, my maiden  
22      name is Cornstalk, and I'm from Beaver Island. My dad  
23      was a fisherman, his name was Alec Cornstalk, he had his  
24      own book. And there was 12 of us altogether, all 12  
25      children. And anyway, my dad, we lived across the Bay



1 over there on Beaver Island, and he made enough money, he  
2 taught my oldest brother to fish, and naturally all the  
3 brothers became fishermen, and they made enough to pitch  
4 in to buy us a home from across the Bay into town. And  
5 in those days, a house doesn't cost very much because  
6 this was back in the '30s and '40s. So anyway, my dad  
7 bought a home in town so we'd be closer to the grocery  
8 stores and stuff.

9 And so some of us children went to Holy  
10 Childhood School, my two brothers, Alec and Franklin,  
11 Alvina and myself. And anyway, what I remember, when we  
12 were going to school there, my little sister got sick,  
13 she broke out in sores, and they didn't call no doctor,  
14 no doctor came to look at her just why, what was wrong  
15 with her. So the sisters had me take care of her, change  
16 her sheets and keep her clean and everything. So anyway,  
17 it took about a month -- about two weeks I think before  
18 Alvina would heal up. So anyway, I remember that. And I  
19 remember we hardly had -- they hardly let us take a bath  
20 or wash our hair, and some of us caught lice. And what  
21 they done was they put kerosene in our hair and they  
22 wrapped our hair up in towels, and we had to wear that  
23 overnight, which really smelled bad, so I remember that.  
24 And I remember I got sick, I wasn't actually, it was my  
25 legs, I couldn't walk, and my legs were swelled up, and

1 they didn't call the doctor for that, and I had to lay in  
2 bed for two weeks before my legs would go down where I  
3 could walk again, and I remember that.

4                   Anyway, my brother, oldest brother  
5 Junior -- no, my oldest brother Frank, he ran away and he  
6 made it, he made it home, and me and Alvina really missed  
7 him, you know. But then we couldn't hardly see our own  
8 brothers either. The only time we could see our brothers  
9 was at lunch and breakfast and dinner, that's the only  
10 time we could, you know, have some communication with our  
11 brothers.

12                   And I also remember my mother and dad  
13 came to see us, and my mother had brought forth a whole  
14 bunch of canned peaches that she had canned, and she  
15 brought the, brought it there for all the children, but  
16 the children, none of the children ever got any of those  
17 peaches, and we didn't get any either, and I remember  
18 that. So we toughed it out, I and Alvina and Junior, we  
19 stayed until the end of the school. So anyway, when we  
20 told my mother and dad about it, they didn't send us  
21 back, so that was it. And that's what I remember about  
22 the school. And I never, never forgot it. (Applause)

23                   UNIDENTIFIED: I'm Natiqua (Native  
24 language), they didn't take that away from me, I still  
25 have that name. Two words, the creator.

1 I just want to share with you, to  
2 continue on, that was my brother that give his first  
3 testimony and that's the first time he's ever been able  
4 to speak of the abuse. And he was right, we were kids  
5 trying to enjoy life. My father had walked on when I was  
6 five years old, my mother was struggling, there was ten  
7 of us at home, and she needed help, and so we reached out  
8 for the CMAS [ph] program, and that's when they sent  
9 people to your home to talk to you about it, and us kids  
10 would all have to go in the other room because the lady  
11 was here. We didn't know what was going to happen or  
12 what they were going to say. But I had went in to ask my  
13 mother a question while this was going on, and I hear  
14 this lady say to my mother, you have ten children, is  
15 there any of them that you don't want, that you don't  
16 have to, you know, that you don't need here, you know, we  
17 can take them. And as a little girl, I had to think  
18 about that and think about that, I'd go to school and  
19 think about it. Well, I come home one day, my bag is  
20 packed, I'm put in a car and I'm taken up to the boarding  
21 school in Harbor Springs. So my biggest nightmare come  
22 true, I was taken away, me and my two brothers. And as I  
23 walked through them doors, I couldn't even tell you who  
24 took me up there, it was just a big blur. As I walked  
25 through them doors -- and thank you for saying we need to

1 say -- Sister Naomi was there to greet me. And it's like  
2 all of a sudden you're taken up to a room and there's all  
3 the other kids and stuff, taken into that room. She  
4 checked you all over to make sure you didn't have any  
5 bugs and everything and you got your hair cut.

6 So I was there for a day and Sister Naomi  
7 come, I was in bed, and she come and she nudged me and  
8 she says, your sister is here, she wants to see you, she  
9 had been over to see father, and she put her face right  
10 down against my face and she says, I'm going to tell you  
11 right now, if you cry when your sister leaves or if you  
12 cry or show any emotions, you'll never see your family  
13 again. That was my first experience at Holy Childhood.  
14 So you didn't, you had to try and bury those feelings,  
15 you had to try and hide the searedness, the beatings that  
16 you seen coming.

17 And they're right, we weren't allowed, I  
18 was not allowed to see my two brothers. I could see them  
19 at mealtime. We weren't allowed to talk, we weren't  
20 allowed to laugh and to hang on to each other. And on  
21 the playground, time to go outside, when they let you  
22 finally go outside, the boys had to stay on one side of  
23 the school, the girls on the other. Well, I missed my  
24 brothers. So there was five of us girls, five or six, we  
25 snuck around the end of the building because the boys was

1 out because I wanted to say hi. Well, Sister Naomi Kust  
2 [ph] got us, and the famous fire escape, she took us up  
3 to that fire escape, she locked us out there, and we had  
4 to stand out there until she decided she was going to let  
5 us come in that door. And we stood there. And the  
6 hardest part for me was there was another girl at that  
7 boarding school, Sister Naomi beat on her daily -- her  
8 name was Deb, I will not use her last name -- daily, and  
9 you know what I did, I was so scared, afraid to go in  
10 there, I looked to see one of the five girls was her, and  
11 I thought, I'm not going to get beat as bad because she's  
12 going to go after Deb. I went into a survival, and I had  
13 to live with that guilt knowing I wanted somebody else to  
14 get it worse than me because I knew what was coming, and  
15 that was the life of the boarding school. You got sent  
16 down in the cellar, you had to peel them potatoes or else  
17 you didn't come up until they were done.

18 I don't know how many of you got locked  
19 in the dark room, but I sure spent time there. There you  
20 go. She locks you in that dark room, no lights, no  
21 nothing, and you stay in there until she decides you're  
22 ready to come out. Don't know if you're in there for  
23 days, you don't know if you're in there for weeks. And  
24 then the famous clicking of her taking -- walking down to  
25 her room to get her ping-pong paddle out, or whichever

1 one she felt like using on us, them heels clicking on  
2 that wood floor, you knew what was coming. She'd go in  
3 that room and you just lined up and waited to see who she  
4 was going to get first and if it was your turn or not.

5 So I was very fortunate, I only had to  
6 spend two years there, and you know what, it was the  
7 worst two years of my life. And I know there's a lot of  
8 things that happened that I chose to forget, because you  
9 want to know something, today I try and deal with it, and  
10 hearing all these stories, you can feel yourself back at  
11 that school. But everybody let's just remember, they  
12 didn't get us, we'll get them in the end.

13 And you are absolutely 100-percent right,  
14 Sister Naomi, the preacher, beat on that girl every day  
15 because she said your mom told me you were a bad girl  
16 over the summer. Sister Naomi, she ended up pregnant by  
17 the janitor of the school, she left the convent, she  
18 married him, divorced, and she has children. And so I  
19 was told, you know, her grandson is part of our community  
20 now so be careful what you say, so we're asked to stay  
21 quiet again. Well, I'm here with you, I will not be  
22 quiet no more. We are here. (Applause)

23 And to you, Bryan and Deb, as my friends  
24 here, I'm asking you, there is -- she is correct, there  
25 is bones still left down at Holy Childhood. A few years

1       ago we got a notification from, they were redoing the  
2       sidewalk down by the school and down by the church, and  
3       they told us they found bones. So our people from our  
4       tribe went down there to help to take care of them bones,  
5       and they told us you have 48 hours to get them bones out  
6       of here because we're going to finish our sidewalk. We  
7       know the children are down there. Sometimes the children  
8       would have to go dig on the playground and you found the  
9       bones. So we need to find our, the rest of our brothers  
10      and sisters that died at that school and let's take them  
11      all home and let's take good care of them. So chi  
12      miigwetch. (Applause)

13                   ASST. SECRETARY ASST SECRETARY NEWLAND: B  
14      efore our next speaker, I just want to note -- Miigwetch,  
15      Chairwoman -- we'll do one more speaker and then take  
16      another break to allow folks to get food. The Tribe has  
17      graciously provided us with food, and then we'll come  
18      from that and go back to sharing. There will be an  
19      opportunity to meet and greet and take some photos, and  
20      then continue our hearing.

21                   MARILYN WAKEFIELD: My name is Marilyn  
22      Wakefield. I attended Holy Childhood School, Harbor  
23      Springs. I am a survivor. I went to boarding school for  
24      six and a half years. I brought a picture of myself  
25      right here, my sisters, my cousins. One of the survivors

1 that spoke out earlier, found himself here, Ivan. I  
2 brought a brick from the school. I have seven of them  
3 for my seven brothers and sisters of my family including  
4 myself that went to the school.

5 This is a brick from Holy Childhood  
6 School. I received it a couple of years ago. I'm going  
7 to jump forward and then I'm going to get into my story.  
8 I received seven bricks.

9 I live in Bay City, the diocese of  
10 Gaylord of which Harbor Springs is part of. I taught  
11 catechism for the diocese of Gaylord for ten years. I  
12 taught first grade catechism for three years. My last  
13 seven minus a year, I taught reconciliation for the  
14 diocese. I was willing to give them a second chance for  
15 the trauma that myself and my brothers and sisters  
16 endured while staying there. After giving them a second  
17 chance, I realized I don't need to give them a second  
18 chance anymore.

19 While preparing for reconciliation we had  
20 to take classes at the new torn-down school. I received  
21 the bricks after one of the ladies who was teaching the  
22 class -- I was sitting in the front row next to somebody  
23 from Mackinac City. We had a class of probably 24, 25  
24 people from, all the way from the Straits of Mackinac  
25 City, all the way down to the West Branch, as far as I



1 believe our diocese covers.

2                   So upon her learning that I went to Holy  
3 Childhood, she aggressively came after me. And she  
4 came -- we were in desks similar to what you are sitting  
5 at, next to each other with, with a little bit of space,  
6 which is called our circle of grace separating us. So in  
7 front of the whole class, this lady who still worked for  
8 the diocese came up to me and just lunged at me. She  
9 lunged right at me. And she said: You went to the  
10 school. And she said: They left one classroom standing  
11 so that people that went there years before could stop in  
12 and see if they wanted to remember anything else about  
13 their childhood. And when she lunged at me it reminded  
14 me -- it took me back to why I fell from the church after  
15 returning back home to Mackinac Island. It was about the  
16 most embarrassing control she had over this class of  
17 ours, and everybody was aghast. Especially my--.

18                   I fall down but I get up easy. Why?  
19 Because even though I'm Native, I'm like thin Native. I  
20 was called, you know, half breed. I was called many  
21 names. And I don't resemble being Indigenous, but my  
22 mother was Indigenous.

23                   So I'm going to tell you now about -- I  
24 wanted to share with this, about the last year. A bunch  
25 of us survivors got together and we formed our own class

1 site page. And on the page, this is dated from 1924. It  
2 has on it the contents of the box sent to Rome. This is  
3 the following contents. There's a lot of things named on  
4 this thing that they took from this child or children  
5 back in 1924, that has a list. And I believe there is a  
6 copy of this in Melissa's -- we know each other. We all  
7 formed our survivors group a year ago. We hadn't seen  
8 each other in 40, 50 years, and now that we have, we're  
9 not letting go of each other. We have each other from  
10 such young ages we went through hell and trauma.

11 We're not letting go of each other. We  
12 have each other's backs no matter what we went through.  
13 We know it to be truthful. So I'm going to just share  
14 with you some of the things that I remember.

15 My name is Marilyn Wakefield. And now  
16 I'm going back. I attended the Holy Childhood School in  
17 Harbor Springs. I attended first grade until  
18 sixth grade. I am survivor of the school for many  
19 reasons. Number one, now that we know there is remains  
20 still on the property of the roadways over in Harbor  
21 Springs, that's one way I'm a survivor; I didn't perish  
22 with these children. But I'm going to -- my biggest  
23 thing when we came together, my biggest part is to  
24 recognize these children. They have, had parents who  
25 expected to pick them up at the end of the school year.

1       What happened to the parents, the children, and their  
2       relatives?

3               My trauma, my trauma that I received  
4       while I was there is still with me. It is a part of me  
5       that doesn't go away. And in August of 2021 I learned of  
6       remains of children buried in the streets of Harbor  
7       Springs, which brought me to another level of trauma from  
8       the school I would have to face, to bring death to the  
9       life of children that went there before me, that never  
10      made it home. And I'm devastated.

11              My abuse started when I was making my  
12      communion, and everyone in my class, the girls with their  
13      white dresses and boys in their black pants and white  
14      shirt. The girls in their white socks and white shoes.  
15      I was the only child in my class of probably, my  
16      recollection is maybe 20 people, boys and girls included,  
17      I was the only person in a pair of black shoes with a  
18      white dress. It traumatized me. Why would they do that,  
19      why single me out? I don't know. But it's not up to me  
20      anymore.

21              The next time I remember my emotional  
22      torture, my mom and dad brought my siblings to the  
23      school. I was standing in the vestibule when they got to  
24      the school. My mom would -- We would get our own clothes  
25      to begin with at the school. My grandmother would make

1 us nightgowns. We got to school, we had this blue  
2 suitcase that the three of us shared, had to flip it on  
3 the side to open it up, and my mom neatly packed our  
4 clothes. My grandmother, her mother, would make us  
5 nightgowns. Once we got to the school, we never saw any  
6 of it again. So that's an abuse of it, an emotional  
7 thing for me. Nobody needed to hit me. Nobody needed to  
8 hit me. I just -- I was, I'm still -- I can't. Let's  
9 see.

10 So my mom and dad brought my siblings to  
11 the school. I was standing in the vestibule with Sister  
12 Naomi. She went by Maxine and Naomi, had two names. She  
13 went by Sister Naomi for a long time, this switched over  
14 the years, she switched the name to Maxine. I didn't see  
15 my siblings as we were always separated. They always  
16 separated us when we got there. Naomi said that she had  
17 a treat for me one day when we were dropped off. My mom  
18 and dad stayed in the vestibule with Sister Naomi. She  
19 said: I've got a treat for you, go in the dining room  
20 and sit in there. Now this is after a couple of years of  
21 being there. She knew one of the most torturous things  
22 to me was to give a raisin cookie. Naomi was talking  
23 with them, so I go in the dining room and here on the  
24 dining room table is a little saucer and a raisin cookie.  
25 And at that time I'm in second, third grade, I can't

1 really remember. That just led me to believe that I'm  
2 getting ready to face another torturous year. Not a slap  
3 in my face because it's an emotional roller coaster that  
4 I can't get rid of it. So let me see. It was her  
5 ultimate torture for me as she knew I hated raisins, and  
6 which it was in a lot of foods that we ate.

7 One day while I wasn't feeling good after  
8 breakfast, I told her I wasn't feeling good. And she had  
9 me go upstairs and asked if I wanted anything. I said  
10 yes, a glass of orange juice. I went and got in bed, got  
11 on my pajamas and got in bed. And sesame, after she got  
12 done sending the girls off to school for the day, she set  
13 up an ironing board, it was right next to her room, she  
14 set her ironing board near my bed. She was going to iron  
15 her clothes while she watched me. Take care of me, I  
16 guess, because I wasn't feeling good. But instead of  
17 bringing me a glass of orange juice, she brought a great  
18 big metal pitcher that we used to milk the cow. There  
19 was a milking stand just outside the dining room doors.  
20 So she -- and I said, oh, I need something to drink. So  
21 as I laid in bed and she's ironing the skirt and her  
22 white blouse at the time, and she's smiling. And I took  
23 my first glass of orange juice. That's not what she had  
24 in mind for me. I had to drink the whole pitcher of  
25 orange juice. And within, I would say -- oh, I don't

1 have a concept of time, but within just a short time I  
2 had to go to the bathroom because now all the orange  
3 juice I drank, I'm full of the diarrhea coming down my  
4 leg. So I went running to the bathroom. I turn around  
5 and looked behind me, and she is still standing there  
6 ironing her clothes and smiling like nothing was going  
7 on. So after that I just kind of -- I don't remember  
8 much more of the day, only that specific time. I got  
9 back in bed, I got myself cleaned up. I don't know what  
10 happened with my things. I just got back in bed and went  
11 asleep.

12 So another time all the girls were  
13 watching a small black and white TV. This is when I was  
14 in the little girls dorm. So we were watching the small  
15 black and white TV in the little girls dorm, a Don  
16 Melvoin movie on a Saturday afternoon. The kitchen nuns  
17 fed us a late afternoon dinner, and we were having a bag  
18 dinner or lunch. We had a Waldorf salad, similar to a  
19 Waldorf salad, in which it contained raisins. I threw  
20 mine out in my milk carton and threw it in the garbage.  
21 I didn't realize she was watching me, but she made me dig  
22 in the garbage, get the milk carton out, dig those  
23 raisins out and put them in my mouth. I kind of pack  
24 ratted them off to the side because I hate raisins, and  
25 that were her torture for me. And I just wanted them out

1 of my mouth. So when the girls got to watching the movie  
2 in the big girls dorm and I was still in the little girls  
3 dorm, I ran down three flights of steps into the dining  
4 room, spit them out, ran back upstairs before she knew I  
5 was even gone. So that is the type of things that I went  
6 through.

7 As far as -- oh, let's see. One time, I  
8 don't know if my sister was here with me, we had seven  
9 siblings, so. One time we were taken -- my sister, her  
10 name is Mary, she'll be speaking later. We were taken  
11 down to the second floor in a dark room, and we were  
12 paddled. And the nun told us: You go back up to that --  
13 back up to the dorm and you act like something good  
14 happened to you. And things like that, that have  
15 emotionally worn me out.

16 I was going to bring all seven bricks  
17 today but the weight of these bricks are the weight on my  
18 shoulders, and I didn't want to do that to myself today.

19 One day I was outside walking along the  
20 front of the school, hanging on to the black rail that  
21 ran in front of church to the school. A couple of boys  
22 came up to me and were saying: Tell her, tell her. And  
23 I asked them what, because it stuck in my mind even to  
24 this day, and until I found out from my brother what had  
25 happened to him. So one day -- And I asked the boys:

1 Tell me what? And, oh, never mind, what you don't know,  
2 it won't hurt you.

3 So I asked my brother, now that we're  
4 adults and we have nobody out looking over our shoulders  
5 to rip us to shreds, I asked him: What were these boys  
6 talking about? And my brother, Frank, he is an  
7 alcoholic. He told me that he was down in the boys play  
8 room, which is in the basement. He'd peed his pants, and  
9 the nun stripped him down in front of all the boys, and  
10 took him by his hand and drug him up to the third floor,  
11 gave him a bath and drug him back down into the basement.  
12 Those types of things are so emotionally damaging that it  
13 has taken its toll on myself. And I told my brother:  
14 Why didn't you ever tell me? And he told me, he said: I  
15 didn't think people cared about me. And I said: We all  
16 care about you. All right.

17 One day after I aged out of the school,  
18 being from Mackinac Island we have to pick up our mail by  
19 bicycle or walk down to the post office after school. My  
20 dad worked for one of the hotel chains over island there  
21 and asked me if I'd pick up the mail after school. I  
22 told him yes, I will. So I got our mail and went home,  
23 after school.

24 And when my dad came up, he said: Did  
25 you get the mail? I said yes. It looked like he got a



1 bill from the hospital. Well, at that time it was called  
2 Burns Clinic. So he opened it up. And I said, well,  
3 maybe, one of my cousins is named after my dad, maybe  
4 it's such and such's mail. He says no, why would it be  
5 his? He's a lot younger, you know. So he did open it.  
6 And come to find out, my brother Frank was in the  
7 hospital for two weeks without anybody realizing this as  
8 we didn't know he was there, because my dad had a bill  
9 for six hundred dollars. Now six hundred dollars back in  
10 the 60s, 70s was a lot of money. So I said: Maybe you  
11 should call the school. So we did, and found my  
12 brother's kneecap had split open and he had been in the  
13 hospital and had pins in his kneecap for about two weeks  
14 and nobody in our family knew about it, so. And my dad  
15 proceeded to take care of that.

16 Another time the girls went on a day trip  
17 to Cross Village. I was looking for her, my sister Mary.  
18 We were at Cross Village for a long time that day. I  
19 didn't see Mary on this particular trip to Cross Village.  
20 When we got back I looked by the fire escape, and she had  
21 been kneeling for about eight or nine hours, I'm not  
22 really sure. Nobody even knew she was missing. After  
23 talking with Mary, she didn't have anything to drink,  
24 nothing to eat. She was afraid to move from that spot  
25 because if Naomi came back -- you don't move. If you're

1 put there, you do not move. She was always kneeling for  
2 something as a child.

3 One thing I talked to my mom about a few  
4 years ago before she passed away was, is this typical, we  
5 all had a physical. I asked her if she signed any  
6 consent form for us to have -- at the school all the  
7 girls had to get dressed in house robes and stand in line  
8 on the second floor and wait in line to get checked by  
9 somebody who we were told was giving us physicals. Now  
10 the room we were in was the girls playroom. They had  
11 divided it with sheets, the boys on this side and the  
12 girls on this side. My mom -- I remember opening my robe  
13 and that's about as much as I can get with that memory.  
14 My mom said: No. What are you talking about? I said,  
15 well, we had physicals there. I personally want to know  
16 if these were legal, if it was something that the school  
17 had to do for the government, or what was that physical  
18 all about?

19 I witnessed -- and I'm going to use just  
20 a first name, they're not here. I witnessed my cousin  
21 Judy being yelled at by Naomi. We were on hands and  
22 knees scrubbing the stairways, she was screaming at Judy  
23 because Judy, she said, was missing a spot and how would  
24 she like to start these stairways over. Many stairs.

25 Halloween, a complete nightmare. There

1 was powder on the stairs, ghosts and goblins. When the  
2 lights went out, all heck broke loose. The nuns would  
3 dress up and scare us, dumping you out of our beds,  
4 shaking us. The powder was supposed to be the devil's  
5 powder and if you got any on you he was going to get you.

6 When I aged out of the little girls dorm  
7 and moved to the big girls dorm, I thought it wouldn't be  
8 as bad. I was getting older. Maybe I was going to be  
9 safer in there. Well, it didn't happen. Halloween, when  
10 you got to the big girls dorm, it just went up a notch.  
11 They taken us to a cemetary. The girls had to -- you  
12 weren't out off the property so how do we even know where  
13 we got to go to get back to school property. They took  
14 us to the cemetary. I was so shaken, I just closed my  
15 eyes and hoped that I was going to be pulled out of that  
16 truck, and I wasn't. I just closed my eyes, and when I  
17 woke up at least I was back at the school, even though it  
18 was a horror school.

19 Naomi had taken a toll on me. I once was  
20 caught in winter time washing my face in the morning with  
21 warm water. She came up to me and turned on the cold  
22 faucet and made me rewash my face in cold. I couldn't  
23 free myself from her.

24 I have looked back on many times there.  
25 I didn't suffer in the classroom, my horror was in the --

1       where we slept, where we kept our clothes, upstairs. How  
2       could my sufferings continue by just a few flights of  
3       stairs away.

4               One night as I lay in bed I heard the  
5       screaming of Naomi across the big girls dorm. She was  
6       screaming at Debbie. I will not use her last name. I  
7       think we're speaking of the same Debbie, and out of  
8       respect out to her I don't use her last name. She's a  
9       little older than myself. I sat up in bed and looked  
10      across the dorm and then looked at her, looked at Debbie.  
11      Naomi was screaming at the top of her lungs at Debbie.  
12      She had, she had -- excuse me because it's very personal.  
13      She had started her period and didn't know what to do.  
14      So she hid all of her dirty clothes in her dresser, a  
15      small stand next to her bed, as we all had one. Debbie  
16      started screaming and crying and was holding her head. I  
17      was holding my breath, as I think we all were, I was so  
18      scared for her. I couldn't sleep. She was just  
19      screaming. The next day we were back in school for our  
20      education. I was so confused about the night before, but  
21      went to school in the morning, nonetheless. When  
22      different girls were asking about Debbie, we were told  
23      that she went back home. We didn't know that for sure,  
24      but in the last few weeks or months, excuse me, I found  
25      out that Debbie had some learning disabilities, she was

1 special needs. And for that night that happened, I  
2 wanted to find her. I didn't know she was special needs.  
3 She was a darker skinned Native than an average  
4 Indigenous person is. And with me being light-skinned, I  
5 felt so injust for her to have to endure that. Sister  
6 Naomi threw her clothes out of her dresser and just  
7 screamed at her, just wore her out. And the last memory  
8 I have seen of that is that Debbie was holding her head,  
9 just screaming, because she didn't know what to do with  
10 herself. So I found out just recently with my sister,  
11 who was with somebody that she had met through us  
12 reconnections, that Debbie had special needs. And as far  
13 as I can remember, she did go to the school up in the  
14 Sault. That's the last I know about her, so.

15 And anyways, my cousin Doris was on  
16 Maxine's, Naomi's radar. They never got along. Doris  
17 hid in the infirmary one day. Because my bed was back at  
18 the bathroom, the infirmary was on the opposite wall as  
19 the bathroom. So Naomi is looking for her. Naomi went  
20 through the big girls dorm screaming Doris's name. I had  
21 my covers -- Doris was my first cousin. I had my covers  
22 covering my head, trying to block it out, trying not to  
23 listen. And after what seemed an eternity she finally  
24 caught her and chased her to the front of the dorms, and  
25 I said out loud -- I said, I said out loud, oh, my God,

1 they're at the Virgin Mary picture that was hanging at  
2 the front of the doorway, to the right of the doorway as  
3 you enter the girls room, big girls room. They were at  
4 each other screaming. I just laid down and blocked it  
5 out and went back to sleep with my head covered for  
6 tomorrow we will be -- for tomorrow we will be safe, back  
7 in a classroom.

8 My cousin Will, Doris's youngest  
9 brother --

10 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: I'm sorry,  
11 terribly sorry to interrupt at this point. I know you  
12 have got many stories to share and I'm very --

13 MARILYN WAKEFIELD: That's it?

14 ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: I am very  
15 grateful. I want to make sure we have time for --

16 MARILYN WAKEFIELD: Everybody else.

17 ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: And I'm happy  
18 to receive, I see you have a copy, I am happy to take  
19 that and keep it as part of our records and the  
20 transcript.

21 MARILYN WAKEFIELD: O.K.

22 ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: I don't mean any  
23 disrespect.

24 MARILYN WAKEFIELD: I am not receiving  
25 that at all from you. I'm just thankful that you are

1           here.

2                           ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you so  
3 much, ma'am.

4                           MARILYN WAKEFIELD: You're welcome.  
5 (Applause.)

6                           ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: We're going to  
7 take a short lunch break. The Tribe has provided food.  
8 I think the food is back where you came in, in the  
9 cafeteria. And if you allow us 15-ish minutes on our  
10 part, just to catch our breath, we'll come back, do some  
11 meet and greet, and then continue the session of folks  
12 who want to stay. I want to thank again all of you who  
13 are sharing.

14                           If you have longer stories to share and  
15 have written it out, we are happy to take the written  
16 document as part of the study. We want to make sure,  
17 again no disrespect intended, that we are leaving time  
18 for other folks to speak, to have a chance to meet with  
19 us.

20                           (Luncheon recess at 1:13 p.m.)

21                                           -   -   -

22                           ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: All right,  
23 everybody. I hope everyone had a nice meal and a chance  
24 to catch their breath. We're going to continue and we're  
25 going to probably keep in this rhythm of 50 minutes or so

1 and catching a quick breather. I know a lot of folks had  
2 to leave. And before we get started again, just want to  
3 emphasize that while we want to make sure everyone has an  
4 opportunity to share their stories, that we have a lot of  
5 people who do want to do that, and it's not our intention  
6 to diminish your storytelling or to be rude and cut you  
7 off, I just want to make sure that everyone's mindful of  
8 others, and we'll exercise that sparingly. So also, if  
9 you have longer stories that you want to share that are  
10 written out, we're happy to receive those, that's going  
11 to be part of this initiative in our records, and so you  
12 don't have to read the whole thing, we're happy to hear  
13 summaries or overviews of that.

14 So we have mic runners, I want to say  
15 miigwetch, those guys are getting a workout today.

16 (Applause)

17 And so we'll again prioritize those who  
18 went to boarding schools and then those who grew up in  
19 households with boarding school survivors and so on. So  
20 with that, we'll get started.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: (Native language) --  
22 Waganakising Little Traverse Bay Band Odawa Anishinaabe  
23 endogue, Saginaw Swan Creek and Black River Ojibwe  
24 endogue. I am a survivor of Holy Childhood of Jesus  
25 Indian Boarding School located in Harbor Springs,



1 Michigan. I am 63 years of age and attended Holy  
2 Childhood between 1967 and 1970 with four of my siblings.  
3 My great grandfather, James Pontiac, attended Carlisle  
4 Indian Boarding School between 1890 and 1899. Both my  
5 patrilineal and matrilineal grandparents attended one of  
6 five Indian boarding schools in the state of Michigan in  
7 their lifetime. Both of my parents attended federal  
8 Indian boarding schools, so I am the fourth generation of  
9 my family to have attended one of these schools.

10 I'm the direct lineal descendant of  
11 Obwandiyag, or better known as Pontiac, who dedicated his  
12 life defending (Native language), which is our beautiful  
13 way of life. I come from a proud Anishinaabe family who  
14 shared endless stories and teachings with me as a child,  
15 yet never once spoke one word of Anishinaabe, despite the  
16 fact that they were all fluid speakers. Our people hold  
17 on to sacred prophecies that have given us the strength  
18 to get through difficult times, we rely on our ceremonies  
19 to maintain that sacred relationship with all of  
20 creation. Part of the prophecies are believed to be  
21 fulfilled.

22 We are making difficult choices today  
23 that will affect our children for generations to come.  
24 Our duty is to be good ancestors by leading them to  
25 healing. We must end the generational trauma by

1 acknowledging its harmful effects on our people,  
2 communities, and unlearn the oppressive behaviors  
3 associated with this trauma. My family was heavily  
4 impacted by this; one of my brothers who attended school  
5 with me is no longer with us.

6 As tribal nations, we share one common  
7 thread, the devastating effects of the federal  
8 assimilation policies and the war declared on our  
9 nation's innocent children through Indian boarding  
10 schools. We must teach the world our history and the  
11 truth about the tumultuous relationship we endured with  
12 the United States. Only by understanding what happened  
13 can our communities come together through understanding  
14 to begin this journey to healing.

15 Little Traverse Bay Bands, as many of our  
16 members are here -- and I wanted to do one more thing. I  
17 wanted to ask all of the Holy Childhood School survivors  
18 that are present to please stand, because I think that's  
19 important to acknowledge all of these survivors.

20 (Applause) Each of these people have an incredible story  
21 to tell about what happened at that school, the horrific  
22 events that have impacted our lives.

23 So the very first Catholic missionaries  
24 visited Cross Village in about 1829. I just want to give  
25 you some background. The damage to our cultural lifeway

1 is through denial of our spiritual beliefs, cultural  
2 lifeways, has left deep scars in our community, it may  
3 take generations for families to fully recover and heal.  
4 The damage to our cultural identity due to the loss of  
5 tribal estates being subjugated to the reservation  
6 systems and survival of Indian boarding schools has only  
7 been compounded by the use of racial inequity, abject  
8 poverty, and insecurity.

9           So my story is the story of all of those  
10 survivors of Holy Childhood Indian Boarding School, and I  
11 want to share some of my experiences while I was there.  
12 I arrived at Holy Childhood Indian Boarding School in  
13 September of 1967 not knowing what to expect. I was  
14 apprehensive and nervous about leaving my family of  
15 course and spending the next nine months living with  
16 people who I knew nothing about. Upon arriving at the  
17 school, I was greeted by Sister Marie Fidelis and was  
18 told that I should go up to the dormitory which was at  
19 the top of the stairwell on the third floor, grab a pair  
20 of swimming trunks and a towel, and go to the beach and  
21 swim with the other boys and other children. I thought  
22 to myself, how bad can this be, right. It sounds great,  
23 starting good. Later on that evening, after we returned  
24 to the dormitory about 7:00 p.m., a young man who I would  
25 say was probably about 11 years of age came into the

1 doorway and he was visibly frightened about coming into  
2 the dormitory. Sister Roberta, who was in charge of the  
3 senior boys' group, proceeded to yell at him in a very  
4 threatening manner. He couldn't move, he was frozen in  
5 that doorway. She then ordered two of the older boys to  
6 help her restrain him. She put him over a bed and beat  
7 him severely with a cleaning brush from a closet that she  
8 had pulled out. We didn't see this young man until a few  
9 days later, he was locked in an infirmary recovering from  
10 his injuries. That was just -- that was my introduction  
11 on my very first night to Holy Childhood Indian Boarding  
12 School. You can't imagine the psychological, the  
13 emotional response that I had to that beating, knowing  
14 that that probably is what I was -- what I had to look  
15 forward to during the rest of my stay. Like a lot of the  
16 children that were there, we lived in constant dread and  
17 fear of retaliation from the nuns.

18 On one occasion, and this is one that I  
19 remember well -- all of the students that have talked so  
20 far have talked about Halloween being a very difficult  
21 time for us because there was a lot of fear driven into  
22 the children by the actions of the nuns who made clear  
23 that it was devil's night, and if you were an unlucky  
24 child that ended up with a bone under your pillow or  
25 ashes on your bed, you could expect that something bad

1 was going happen to you following that incident. On this  
2 particular occasion, it was 1968 I believe, my second  
3 year at the school, some of the older boys and older  
4 girls were allowed to decorate on the first floor of the  
5 school so the kids could trick or treat that year.  
6 During the -- near the end of the decorating, one of the  
7 younger boys came and fetched myself and another boy and  
8 were told that Sister Roberta was upset and she wanted to  
9 see us back at the dorm. So we went up the stairway,  
10 both of us trying to figure out what did we do wrong, and  
11 we know we hadn't done anything wrong, we were doing  
12 exactly as we were told. So we got to the top of the  
13 stairway and there were a bunch of boys gathered around  
14 the entrance to the senior boys' bathroom. Roberta came  
15 out and grabbed both of us by the ear. If you were ever  
16 a student there, you know what that felt like because it  
17 happened a lot. We were dragged into the senior boys'  
18 restroom, and on the floor there was a pair of girl's  
19 panties, and she looked at us both and she said, how did  
20 those get there? Of course we had no idea because we had  
21 been busy all that afternoon decorating on the first  
22 floor, and we told her that. She basically told us that  
23 we were lying, that another nun had reported to her that  
24 during that afternoon of decorating, she had witnessed me  
25 and this other boy leaving with two young women. Now, if

1       you know anything about the school, that didn't happen.  
2       You weren't allowed to fraternize with the girls at any  
3       time. So we tried to explain that that didn't happen,  
4       that we were being accused of something that we didn't  
5       do. She hauled us out to the front of the dormitory,  
6       told us to kneel. Other students have talked about this.  
7       So we were left there to kneel. She said, listen, I've  
8       got nothing but time, you know, stay there until you  
9       confess to what you've done wrong. And so we were left  
10      in the front of the dormitory, the other children were  
11      allowed to go and trick or treat.

12                   About an hour or so later, I don't know  
13      how long it was, she came back, we were still kneeling  
14      there, she said, are you ready to confess? And we tried,  
15      again tried to explain that we had done nothing wrong and  
16      if we confessed, we were doing exactly what we were told  
17      we shouldn't do, we were going to lie. Right. And she  
18      didn't believe that of course, and she left us there.  
19      The other boys were instructed to go to bed. She flicked  
20      the lights off. We were left kneeling on the hardwood  
21      floor for hours and to the point where I couldn't even  
22      feel my knees anymore. At some point during the night,  
23      she came out at different times and asked us to confess.  
24      We debated whether or not we should just do it because it  
25      would end the suffering.

1                   About 2:00 o'clock in the morning, I mean  
2                   that's what my recollection is, about 2:00 o'clock in the  
3                   morning she came back out, she said, look, you can end  
4                   this just by admitting what you did wrong. I was so  
5                   tired, I don't remember my exact response, but it was  
6                   basically this: I said, look, you tell us, the priest  
7                   tells us, that God sees everything, that he knows what  
8                   happens. If we tell you that we did something that we  
9                   didn't do, we're committing this sin that you tell us  
10                  that we shouldn't do. I said, if God sees all things, he  
11                  knows who did something wrong in this case. Now, she hit  
12                  me so hard that I landed on the floor, and she said, you  
13                  little bastard, get back to your bed, we'll deal with  
14                  this in the morning. I don't remember much after that.  
15                  I woke up the next day thinking that something was going  
16                  to happen; it didn't. I was surprised. That was just  
17                  one incident that we went through as students there. We  
18                  were, on one hand, we're told to, that we should forgive  
19                  what happened to us, that to forgive was divine, and on  
20                  the other hand, we were told to lie, we were accused of  
21                  things that we didn't do. And there were thousands of  
22                  other things.

23                         There are a lot of young men who I went  
24                         to school with who aren't here, I know why they're not  
25                         here. We witnessed sexual abuse on a regular basis with

1 Sister Roberta. Young boys, when they reached 10 or 11,  
2 she began to groom us to spend time with her, she did it  
3 in different ways. And we witnessed boys going in  
4 sometimes at 10:00 o'clock at night and they wouldn't  
5 come out until just before sunup. And there was nothing  
6 we could do to protect each other from those events. And  
7 being a child in that school was, there are things that  
8 today I don't even remember. I remember bits and pieces  
9 of them.

10 About 12 or 14 years ago, like my friend  
11 Mary, I went into counseling and went into therapy, spent  
12 two and a half years, started doing ceremonies, and I've  
13 healed from some of that, but I know there are a lot of  
14 people out there who are still hurting. And I'm grateful  
15 that somebody's finally listening to these stories.  
16 There are a lot of people who are no longer with us who  
17 didn't get that chance to tell that story, and one of  
18 them was my brother.

19 So anyway, I just want to end by thanking  
20 you for giving us this forum, I want to just say chi  
21 miigwetch, Deb, and for taking this time. And I want to  
22 pass this mic and encourage all of my fellow Holy  
23 Childhood survivors to share your stories, they're  
24 important. And I truly believe that the healing that  
25 needs to happen in our communities will only happen when



1 we get to tell these stories, and that until we are able  
2 to do that, I think we'll continue to suffer from that  
3 trauma. Hopefully we stop it. Chi miigwetch.

4 YVONNE WALKER KESHICK: (Native language)  
5 What I said was I am Turtle Coming, Waganakising Odawa,  
6 Land of the Crooked Tree, (Native language) is Falling  
7 Leaf Woman. My English name is Yvonne Walker Keshick. I  
8 attended Holy Childhood of Jesus School when, in 1952 to  
9 1960. We were not sent there willingly.

10 My father had attended boarding school in  
11 Mt. Pleasant, so he knew what the schools were like. But  
12 my mother left us in 1950-1951, something like that, so  
13 my father was trying to raise myself and my other  
14 siblings, five of us, by himself. The babysitters he got  
15 were not the best quality, he paid them by giving them a  
16 bottle of wine. And they, when they got buzzed up, they  
17 took off, you know, and stole our food, and then when he  
18 came home, the food was gone and she was gone and sold us  
19 out. So he had a hard time finding babysitters, and good  
20 ones that would stay and take care of us.

21 Well, the incident in the wintertime  
22 happened when my little sister walked across the field to  
23 the neighbor's house and knocked on the door and said,  
24 I'm hungry, you got any food, and she was standing  
25 barefoot in her underpants, so the neighbor called the

1 police, then they called the church, the nearest church  
2 near our house, and they came, and my dad was gone at  
3 work and they came and they charged my father with  
4 neglect, and so we were court-ordered to the boarding  
5 school. It was that or be adopted out. So my father  
6 sent us to boarding school in Harbor Springs.

7           When we arrived there, we sat outside for  
8 the longest time, he didn't want to take us in. Finally,  
9 you know, the car started to get cold and finally he  
10 says, well, let's go in. So we went in. He introduced  
11 us to the nun that let us in, and then they told him that  
12 they would take good care of us, that we were in good  
13 hands, and that he did not have anything to fear. My  
14 father, he didn't wave goodbye, he just wiggled his  
15 fingers at us, and we knew that was his sign that we  
16 would see him later, and he left.

17           During those years, we were in the school  
18 except for recesses and when we went out for walks or  
19 walked back and forth to church. The rest of the time,  
20 we were inside the school. And then it was regimental,  
21 very extreme discipline. The major rule was keep your  
22 mouth shut and feet on the floor. We got up at a certain  
23 time, went to bed at a certain time. The rules were  
24 enforced with capital punishment. During my years at  
25 school, those eight years, I was slapped, punched, beaten

1 with a board from a desk. I was beaten repeatedly  
2 because I refused to hang my head. I would stare at that  
3 pin on the forehead of the nuns, and they took that as a  
4 sign of aggression, and they wanted me to hang my head  
5 and look down at the floor like everybody else did, but I  
6 refused, so they saw it as defiance, and I was beaten  
7 regularly so that they could break my spirit.

8 And I remember at one time my brother  
9 told me to stop crying, he says -- he was older -- stop  
10 crying, he says, you're Indian and you can't let them see  
11 you cry. He said, just take it. So since he was the  
12 oldest one in our family, I tried to not cry in front of  
13 the nuns, and by not crying, they beat you harder because  
14 that's what they wanted.

15 Every morning Sister Rossine would come,  
16 and because I did not hang my head and I looked at that  
17 pin on her forehead and she thought I was looking her in  
18 the eye, she would pound me in the breastbone here and  
19 she would say every morning for three years, how are you  
20 today, big chief, and with every word, she hit me. And  
21 years later when I had my heart attack and they used the  
22 paddles on me, it felt the same way as the paddles. So  
23 the very thing that was hurting me back when I was a kid  
24 was the same thing that was saving my life later on. So  
25 there was no, there was nothing to compare with what the

1 pain I was feeling, you know, back when I was a little  
2 kid. She was very strong woman, I thought she was a man.  
3 And I thought they were all men, because there was  
4 another nun, Sister Arnold, and I heard her yelling at  
5 the boys one day, and it was a little boy who must have  
6 wet the bed because she was yelling about wet beds, and  
7 then she must have grabbed a kid and threw him. He slid  
8 across the floor and he hit the double doors in our  
9 dormitory and then he started crying and yelling and she  
10 told him to get, so we could hear that on our side of the  
11 dormitory because there was just the two double doors  
12 separating us.

13 We had to eat the food that they cooked  
14 up because it was donated. We ate cornmeal mush that  
15 smelled like shit. We were served tomatoes that had,  
16 still had the tomato worms in them. So we had to eat  
17 what they fed us. If we didn't eat it, they made us sit  
18 there until it was eaten. We were not allowed to talk at  
19 meals. We could say please pass the salt or please pass  
20 the pepper, but they didn't want to hear us say it, so we  
21 learned sign language. We had an unwritten spoken  
22 language between all us boarders where if somebody was in  
23 trouble, we let them know just nonverbally that we knew  
24 what they were going through. Sometimes it was just a  
25 pat on the shoulder or, you know, just a slight bump on

1 the elbow. We had our own unwritten language between us.

2 And the nuns insisted on strict  
3 discipline at all times. So if there was an infraction,  
4 I have seen kids going through the same thing I was going  
5 through, only the boys were punched and they were kicked  
6 when they went down on the floor. And I saw boy named  
7 John with the daylights kicked out of him in a classroom  
8 because he was accused of breaking a table, and he didn't  
9 break the table, the chunk of wood that was under the  
10 trim fell off on the floor just from use, it was loose  
11 all the weeks and it was just dangling, nobody bothered  
12 to tighten it; and that one day it fell off and he found  
13 it first on the floor and he was pretending it was a  
14 little pistol and he was shooting it off into the air  
15 making noises, and then the nun came in and she just  
16 slapped him up there on the spot and she hit him. He  
17 would not admit that he broke it because he didn't. And  
18 then finally there was day students in the classroom at  
19 the same time, we visualized and when we saw him, and she  
20 told him get in the closet. So he went in the closet,  
21 and that's where she really beat him up, we could hear  
22 him yelling and screaming in there. And when she came  
23 out, one of the day students finally spoke up and said,  
24 he didn't break that table, it was on the floor under the  
25 table when we came in. And the nun says, well, this is

1 in case he does something else wrong, and then the class  
2 resumed. So we were all subject to things like that.

3 Before I spoke today, I came here late,  
4 but when I realized that I was going to be speaking soon,  
5 the stress made me suddenly sick. And most people see me  
6 as a calm kind of a person, but what the school took from  
7 me was that you don't show emotion, you appear to look  
8 strong, brave, you're not, you're trembling inside your  
9 mind and in your body, and so what that did was this  
10 internalized and caused problems, physical problems for  
11 myself. The school took away the ability to say no  
12 because they demanded obedience at all times. If you  
13 said no, it was a beating, so everybody complied. So  
14 when we got out of school and went to public schools, we  
15 were a fish out of water, we didn't know how to say no, I  
16 don't want to party; no, I don't want a beer; no, I don't  
17 want sex; no, I don't know what you're talking about; we  
18 didn't know how to do any of that. We couldn't  
19 communicate with each other or anybody else except when  
20 it was in anger or yelling, and even then, we took the  
21 beatings in silence because we learned if you yelled out,  
22 then the more you got beat.

23 So I left the school a total social  
24 misfit. I didn't speak up in class. I failed my -- I  
25 had low grades because I refused to participate, but I

1 didn't know how. I didn't talk to my classmates; I  
2 didn't know how. I turned in my homework, but I wasn't  
3 sure what they wanted because I never learned, we didn't  
4 have that there in boarding school. I didn't know how to  
5 dress or act, I didn't know what they were talking about  
6 when they were talking about just radio shows or whatever  
7 was on TV, I didn't know what they were talking about, I  
8 was in a totally different world. So it was the four  
9 loneliest years of my life.

10 When I became a young woman, I did not  
11 know how to say no to men. I took beatings from them in  
12 silence. And finally my father, you know, is -- I left  
13 high school -- I mean it was shortly after high school I  
14 left home, but I realized that there's got to be more.  
15 It never once occurred to me to commit suicide, even  
16 though by then I had known young people my age who were  
17 dying. I didn't know what suicide was at that time.

18 The boarding school, when you did  
19 something good, you didn't get the praise you deserved,  
20 they said that's what you're supposed to be doing anyway,  
21 but we didn't get any reward or anything for that.

22 One of the hardest things that the school  
23 taught me was learning how to speak, learning how to  
24 communicate with other people and to tell people how I  
25 felt. I suffered severe shyness in high school and

1 after, later on when I was older, and it wasn't until I  
2 learned an artform and learned that I was, that I had a  
3 gift that I could give to other people, and then I became  
4 a better human being. I drank, I didn't ever use drugs,  
5 but I drank just because I wanted to wipe out whatever  
6 was the matter with me, I thought there was something  
7 wrong with me, and it wasn't until I felt a sense of  
8 self-worth that I began to drink, and I didn't become a  
9 human being until 1978 when I stopped drinking alcohol  
10 completely. That was then when I began to blossom.

11 (Applause) That's when I realized that I had something  
12 to offer, that I did not need to be ashamed of who I was  
13 or what I was or what I had done in my younger years, and  
14 we all have to go through that, and I learned to adjust  
15 and become that.

16 I also learned to deal with my creator in  
17 my own way without being afraid of turning down the  
18 Catholic Church that had been forced upon us as young  
19 children; it was a hard step to make, you know, to adjust  
20 to that. So the creator and I are on good terms, also  
21 known as to other people as God or Ali or whatever they  
22 want to call it. I told my daughter, you can name your  
23 god mud if you want, that's between you and him. So I  
24 have come to good terms finally, but it took years to  
25 become this way. And I wanted to leave this world so



1       that my ancestors and my father and my community would be  
2       proud of me, because part of the healing process is  
3       learning how to talk about what we went through and to  
4       forgive, and I hated for the longest time.

5               When I went to church after leaving the  
6       boarding school, I went to confession while I was in high  
7       school, and the priest said, I can't forgive you, I can't  
8       forgive you your sins. And I said, why not? He says,  
9       because you don't put money in the coffers. I got up and  
10      walked out and I never went back to church again.

11      (Applause)

12             So I believe that, in forgiving people,  
13      and it took a long time. Sister Naomi, every time she  
14      saw me, she apologized. Oh, I'm sorry, and she'd put her  
15      finger on her chin like this and shake her hips and said,  
16      oh, I'm sorry, she said, for all the things that you went  
17      through, and we just told her, you're going to get yours  
18      in the next world, so you don't need to fear me  
19      physically even though I would like to beat you up,  
20      you're going to get yours later. And then I learned to  
21      forgive. I did forgive her. I also forgave Sister  
22      Rossine and all the others, you know, who gave me a rough  
23      time in that school, and there were a lot of them, you  
24      know, that seemed to enjoy what they were doing. And I  
25      prayed often to those, you know, who could not defend

1 themselves, for those who didn't survive, who became  
2 alcoholics and addicts, bag ladies, homeless people who  
3 were not able to separate or become, what do they call  
4 it, become comfortable with who they were and what they  
5 went through, so I pray for them all the time. And I  
6 want to thank all of you for allowing me to speak, and I  
7 will pray for all of you, too. Miigwetch. (Applause)

8 KIM FYKE: Hello, my name is Kim Fyke. I  
9 attended Holy Childhood the years of 1970 through 1974.  
10 I'm the youngest of ten children of my mother's, my dad's  
11 only. We had two siblings that died as young children.  
12 So eight of us attended Holy Childhood. My older sister  
13 just turned 84 on Sunday, and she has absolutely not a  
14 bad thing to say about Holy Childhood or the Catholic  
15 Church. They have totally brainwashed her to the point  
16 that there is no returning for her. I talk to her daily  
17 about what I went through when I was there and what her  
18 kids went through when they were there. And she looks at  
19 me like I'm bluffing, and she knows I'm not. And she's  
20 like: Well, why wouldn't my kids tell me? I said: We  
21 were taught to keep quiet. We were told to don't tell.  
22 Our letters never made it home. Our phone calls were  
23 monitored. So when you say to the children from back  
24 then why didn't you say something? We weren't allowed  
25 to.

1                   My first horror experience was the first  
2 Halloween. I was a young girl in the little girls room,  
3 not knowing what was going to happen. Had no clue.  
4 Halloween was a fun time when I was little, before Holy  
5 Childhood. But I remember hearing all the girls, and  
6 there must be 30 to 50 older girls in the bigger dorm,  
7 screaming and crying and hollering and running. And they  
8 came through their dormitory into the nuns sleeping  
9 quarters, which also led into the little girls dormitory.  
10 They came through her room with such force they tore the  
11 sink off the wall. That's how scared these little girls  
12 were. We were always powdered everywhere on Halloween.  
13 We were told it was devil's powder, do not touch it or  
14 the devil will get you.

15                   So if you can imagine 50 girls, if not  
16 more, trying to climb a three-story stairwell and not  
17 touch the powder, it was impossible. And it didn't  
18 matter if you touched it or not. Them bitches were going  
19 to get you. They came out of closets, they came out of  
20 the stairwells, they came out of the doorways. I  
21 remember one time trying to put my bathrobe away. And  
22 because we were all numbers, you had to hang your robe on  
23 the hanger with your number. I seen the witch at the  
24 bottom of the closet and I didn't say anything to  
25 anybody. Because we already all knew, once we were in

1       bed they were coming to get us.

2                       I don't recall anybody ever getting  
3       seriously hurt other than the Halloween that Sister Diane  
4       put all us little girls in the back of a pickup truck and  
5       drove us to Harbor Springs cemetary and dropped us off  
6       somewhere up on the hill. That's all I remember. I have  
7       no idea how far away it was. But we didn't go out at  
8       night. We didn't have a clue how we were getting back to  
9       the school or which direction to go.

10                      But in the meantime, the witches, the  
11       ghosts, the whatever you want to call them, were coming  
12       up from behind tombstones and chasing you through the  
13       cemetary. I went running with a girl named Tina Rafferty  
14       who tripped and fell on a tombstone -- thank you. She  
15       cut her knee wide open and it was just pouring blood. By  
16       the time we got back to the school the blood was drying  
17       on her leg, and they refused to take her to the hospital.  
18       The girl ended up with at least an inch and a half scar  
19       across her knee because it wasn't sewn back together.

20                      Another Halloween we were eating dinner,  
21       and my cousin Doris, she was one of the Sister Naomi's  
22       favorite to pick on, for whatever reason I'm not sure.  
23       Somebody had killed a black bear on the road or  
24       something, and it was donated to the school for food.  
25       Sister Diane took that black bear's head and put it on

1 the silver platter and brought it into our dining room.  
2 She took the nose of that black bear that was just  
3 bleeding, and she rubbed it all over my cousin Doris, and  
4 just, you know, telling her devil's going to get you,  
5 devil's going to get you. That was so terrifying to me,  
6 not only because bears are scary, but this bear was dead,  
7 this bear was going to get me when I went to bed.

8 That evening after cleaning up our mess,  
9 which wasn't ours; they always destroyed our sleeping  
10 quarters. We always had to find our belongings before we  
11 went to bed that night. But the minute we would crawl  
12 into bed and the lights would go out, the witches and  
13 whatever were coming out of everywhere to get us.

14 I recalled -- and I don't recall telling  
15 anybody this until probably a year ago -- Sister Naomi  
16 was on the third floor balcony or what do you call that,  
17 fire escape, the rickety old thing we were all afraid of,  
18 and the witch had her by the throat and was pushing her,  
19 like trying to push her over the railing. And all I  
20 could think of, this little girl, was: Push her, just  
21 push her. Because she tortured every kid that entered  
22 that school. It didn't matter who you were or what you  
23 did or what you didn't do, they were there to hurt us.

24 I am 61 years old. I have always known I  
25 was an Indian. Obviously you can't tell. But I never

1 knew my language. My mother never spoke it, my dad was a  
2 white man. And so experiencing Holy Childhood as a child  
3 it was one thing, but being here with you today, knowing  
4 what they did to us, it just makes me so angry. And I'm  
5 sorry to say I do not and I will not forgive the Catholic  
6 Church for what they have done to my family, my siblings,  
7 my ancestors. And I understand it was supported by the  
8 Federal government, but it was at the hands of the  
9 Catholics. Money doesn't hurt you, hands do. And as I  
10 believe, my abuser, the one we're all talking about,  
11 Sister Naomi, Maxine, Maxine Hughey, I believe, is still  
12 alive. Our abuser is still alive. And I think it's  
13 really not cool that she is not here. She should be here  
14 to see what she has done to us. (Applause.)

15 And I also want to add in that I  
16 understand that Canada is ahead of us on all of this.  
17 And I give them kudos for it.

18 I have waited more than fifty years to  
19 stand before all of you and tell you what they did to me.  
20 And seriously, I wasn't physically abused, I wasn't  
21 sexually abused, but what I saw happen to the other girls  
22 or the other boys is what's traumatized me. How can you  
23 teach me the Ten Commandments in one breath and break  
24 them a second later. I don't comprehend how they could  
25 teach us to be holy and good and righteous when the whole

1 time they were everything but. They were evil, pure  
2 evil, the Catholic Church. And I'm sorry, I know there  
3 is good Catholics, but I can't get past the bad. And I  
4 don't ever know how that's going to happen. You can't  
5 erase memories, you can't erase the dreams that us  
6 survivors have. There are so many people that I went to  
7 school with that are not here today because they can't,  
8 they can't come and talk to you. They could come talk to  
9 me personally and tell me their stories; it's not the  
10 same, because we all need to hear it.

11 I did have a niece that's my age, she got  
12 in trouble. I'm not sure what she did. But one of the  
13 things, I mean you hear of beatings and slappings and  
14 kickings, and things. They made my niece kneel on two  
15 open soup cans until she could not feel her legs. Now  
16 that's just pure torture. I would take a beating, a  
17 whipping, a whooping, anything over what she had to go  
18 through.

19 I am here to say that I am here for all  
20 those that are still buried on the grounds of these  
21 schools. I am here for my family that could not come  
22 here and talk to any of you, and will not. I'm here for  
23 my holiest of holy sisters who hears me but doesn't  
24 believe me. And for her kids who still won't tell her  
25 what happened to them because she is such a devoted

1 Catholic. And I'm the big mouth in the family, and I  
2 said: This is the truth.

3 Thank you for listing to me, Bryan and  
4 Deb. Thank you so much for everything you are doing. It  
5 has been a long time coming. (Applause.)

6 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: We'll do  
7 one more speaker and then take another brief break and  
8 then come back, I think, for a final session unless --  
9 we'll see where we're at, at that point.

10 SHARON WALKER: Aanii, Sharon (Walker)  
11 Skutt nda-zhinikaas, Midland, Michigan mda-jibaa, Saginaw  
12 Chippewa anishinaabe kwe, mkwa dodem.

13 My name is Sharon Walker Skutt. I live  
14 in Midland, Michigan, and I am a proud member of the  
15 Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan located in  
16 Mount Pleasant. I was born in Detroit, Michigan, in  
17 1956. I'm a third generation boarding school survivor as  
18 my father and both his parents attended boarding schools  
19 as well. I have five siblings, which includes three  
20 brothers -- three sisters and two brothers. This is one  
21 of my brothers. I will not be including the names of my  
22 siblings in this document in order to maintain and  
23 respect their privacy.

24 In 1967 it was decided that my older  
25 brother, younger sister, and I would attend Holy



1 Childhood in Harbor Springs, Michigan, because of the  
2 hardships our mother was experiencing. At the time we  
3 were ages 12, 11, and nine. My brother and I were in  
4 sixth grade and my sister was in the fourth grade. The  
5 school was for students in first through eighth grade.  
6 Holy Childhood boarding school was run by the School  
7 Sister of Notre Dame and the parish by the Franciscan  
8 Order of priests. I remember thinking that this had to  
9 be a really nice place because the names of the school  
10 and town it was located in sounded so pleasant. So let  
11 me start by telling you about the first day we arrived at  
12 Holy Childhood.

13 I remember pulling up in front of,  
14 directly in front of the three-story red brick building  
15 and was stunned to see that there were no children  
16 outside the school. I had an ominous feeling of dread as  
17 I looked at that building. Where were the kids, I asked  
18 myself. We went through the front door and rang the  
19 doorbell. A short, stout nun answered the door. It was  
20 Sister Perpetuella. And Sister Perpetuella, just so you  
21 know, was one of the best things about that school. She  
22 was always looking out for us. And if she saw Naomi  
23 coming, she was "shush shush" really quick, and tell us  
24 "be quiet, Sister is coming." And then she'd hustle us  
25 into the kitchen to finish doing our work cleaning up.

1                   My older brother -- there were four of us  
2                   that ended up there but -- when I first started going  
3                   there. And even though we were there kind of together,  
4                   my brother was in the boys dormitory, I was in the big  
5                   girls dormitory, my sister was across the room in the  
6                   dormitory, and my younger sister was in the little girls  
7                   dormitory. And as you already heard, the only time you  
8                   got to spend with each other, really, was in the dining  
9                   room. Other than that we were expected to stay with our  
10                  age group and our classrooms.

11                 My first night there -- the girls had to  
12                 wear rollers in their hair every single night except  
13                 Friday nights, and we didn't have any because we didn't  
14                 know. And Sister shoved me at one of the girls and told  
15                 her to get rollers in my hair before she chopped my hair  
16                 off with an axe. I was terrified.

17                 The next incident that I can talk about,  
18                 hopefully I can keep it together to tell you this story,  
19                 is what has to do with my six-year-old sister. She  
20                 wasn't supposed to stay that first year. She was only  
21                 six years old and my mother wanted to keep her home with  
22                 the other two younger kids. Sister talked to her and  
23                 told her that she was fine to stay, that she had  
24                 everything that she was going to need clothing-wise and  
25                 she has everything, all that kind of stuff. My mom

1       relented and let her stay. So this story is about her.

2               We were lining up for church one Sunday  
3 morning, and to get ready to go to church, and the  
4 dormitories had wooden floors. And when you walk on them  
5 with patent leather shoes, it made a lot of noise.  
6 Sister came out of her room, hurriedly, and wanted to  
7 know who was making all that noise. Some of the girls  
8 pointed to my sister and said her name, Janice Walker.  
9 Sister came over to my sister and grabbed her by the  
10 throat and threw her across the floor.

11              And this story is hard for me to tell  
12 because as I stood there in the line and I watched this  
13 happen, I just stood there. I was terrified. I didn't  
14 know what to do. I wanted to help my sister but I was  
15 too scared. Anyway, my sister and I talked about this,  
16 we talked about it a few times. And she said: There's  
17 nothing you could have done. But the guilt still haunts  
18 me.

19              There were times when Sister would tell  
20 us that we were just a bunch of crazy Indians or wild  
21 Indians. And she also told us that we needed to get down  
22 on our hands and knees and thank god for the white man.  
23 I don't understand that because I'm sure the white man  
24 was how we ended up there.

25              Also, we were allowed visitors, as

1 someone else already mentioned, on Saturdays usually. So  
2 whenever the doorbell would ring people would run to the  
3 windows to see who is getting company, you know. Of  
4 course the kids that were getting company would be all  
5 bubbly and happy and everything. But you really never  
6 could enjoy your visit from your family because you knew  
7 afterwards Sister was going to have an attitude about it  
8 and say things like: Oh, you should just get off your  
9 high horse just because you had company. Same thing when  
10 the phone rang, you know. You couldn't enjoy a phone  
11 call from home either.

12 I remember lying in bed at night crying  
13 with my head under the pillow, so as not to be heard,  
14 because I wanted to go home so bad. I thought if I  
15 prayed hard enough and thought hard enough, my dad would  
16 come and get me, but he never did. Things were not  
17 always good at home without enough food to eat or money  
18 to pay the rent, but at least we had our parents and  
19 siblings.

20 You have already heard about Sister  
21 Roberta and Sister Diane so I'll just skip by that. And  
22 you've already heard about how regimented our days were  
23 where basically everybody had chores, and you did the  
24 chores first thing in the morning, you got ready, did  
25 your chores. We went down to breakfast, cleaned up, went

1 to school. Some kids went to play after school and did  
2 homework and watched TV and we went to bed. That's  
3 pretty much how it was.

4 And like they mentioned, the food wasn't  
5 always that great. So one night we had something that I  
6 was never going to eat it. And I got sent bed. Sister  
7 thought she was sending me to bed for punishment. But  
8 listen, that dormitory was empty and I was the only one  
9 up there. I feel like I was more rewarded than punished.  
10 So I just put my pajamas on and chilled till everybody  
11 came up, knowing I wasn't going to get in trouble because  
12 there wasn't no one around.

13 Random memories come to mind. One of  
14 them most recently was because these cardboard boxes that  
15 were by the bathroom. They had little squares of Camay  
16 soap, I believe it was, but they were from the local  
17 hotels. And it just occurred to me, when I remembered  
18 that, that those were used bars of soap. And I was so  
19 grossed out by that.

20 First year there, we had one bathtub in  
21 the big girls dormitory and one bathtub in the little  
22 girls dormitory. We weren't allowed to change that water  
23 until it was real dirty and scummy. You heard Melissa  
24 say that was she -- who was her. Oh, I can't remember  
25 the name. Not Mary, Mary's sister. I can't think of her

1 name. Oh, it was Mary Cobe. Mary Cobe's sister, big  
2 sister. Well, my sister and I were our little sisters  
3 and big sisters, and when we came back I wanted to make  
4 sure she got into clean water.

5 The following year when we came back,  
6 four showers were installed and real sinks were put in.  
7 Before that we had like a trough sink with spigots across  
8 the top. So that was a good thing.

9 Another memory that needs to be known is  
10 regarding human remains, which people have already spoken  
11 about. But I remember one Saturday I came outside after  
12 my chores and wondered where everyone was. I walked to  
13 the front of the church and someone was walking toward me  
14 with a cardboard box. I looked inside the box and saw a  
15 pile of bones. They were digging up graves and putting  
16 the skeletal remains in cardboard boxes. I remember  
17 thinking that I was glad I didn't have to do that. And I  
18 don't why at the time I didn't think it was particularly  
19 odd, but as I got older I realized what was going on.

20 There were a few good memories. There  
21 were times when some of us were selected to perform at  
22 various clubs, the Perry Davis Hotel, the Moose and the  
23 Elks clubs to name a few. Even then I knew we were being  
24 put on display so that people would donate money and  
25 other items to the school. I was often picked to run

1 mail to the post office. And when I did, I walked as  
2 slowly as I could so I could stay as far away from there  
3 for as long as I could.

4 We did have a band, I played a drum in  
5 the band, and that was a good time. We even marched in  
6 the Memorial Day parade. I remember going ice skating  
7 and for hikes around the point. I didn't care much for  
8 hikes because was that was a time when kids who wanted to  
9 be on Sister's good side would start telling on other  
10 kids. So one time my sister and I got locked in Sister's  
11 workroom. I heard her lock the door but I wasn't going  
12 to say anything because I didn't want to go on a hike.  
13 Then she came back. But in my mind it was out of sight,  
14 out of mind. I tried to be as invisible as possible  
15 while I was at that school just to stay out of any kind  
16 of trouble.

17 I talked a little bit about Sister  
18 Perpetuella. She always had hugs for us. She was always  
19 very kind and very loving. I would have to say she was  
20 probably the most loving nun there. And that Sister  
21 Naomi and none of the other nuns that I can think of,  
22 were ever kind to us or compassionate. If you got hurt,  
23 if you got sick, go to bed, that was usually the  
24 response.

25 I can't speak for my siblings except to

1 say that we pretty much share the same memories from our  
2 years at the boarding school. We also share in the  
3 trauma as a result of the many abuses witnessed and  
4 experienced. Like Kim I wasn't physically abused or  
5 sexually abused, but emotionally abused for sure. I  
6 tried to put the boarding school and the memories from  
7 the boarding school behind me because they are so  
8 painful. I don't like to talk about them. This is,  
9 today is me finding my voice. For the first time in 55  
10 years I'm standing in front of a large group and talking  
11 about my memories. (Applause.)

12 My older brother doesn't speak about his  
13 days at the boarding school. I know things happened  
14 there that he's ashamed of, and I tried to tell him, you  
15 know, that we were kids, and you did what you were told  
16 to do or else you suffered the consequences.

17 The impact of attending the Holy  
18 Childhood on my life has caused me to deal with anxiety,  
19 depression, and panic attacks. I've gone to counseling,  
20 and one counselor in particular was extremely helpful in  
21 telling me that I had a right to my feelings and  
22 emotions. I'm 65 years old and know these things must be  
23 talked about if for no reason other than to help others  
24 see how and why I am who I am.

25 I tend to be a little OCD. So for



1 example, my bed has to be made every day. I stayed at a  
2 hotel last night, and you know I made my bed. When I  
3 left Holy Childhood, I told myself that I would never  
4 send my children away and especially not to any boarding  
5 school.

6 I have five sons. They're all educated  
7 and they all have awesome jobs. Two of them work for  
8 Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, and my oldest son is the CEO of  
9 the Tribal Government of the Notawaseppi Huron Band of  
10 Potawatomi.

11 This summer I decided to go to pow wow  
12 that I could and hopefully reconnect with old boarding  
13 school friends, some of which I have. I feel this is  
14 where I belong, with my people in the circle as I was  
15 meant to be.

16 A small committee was formed to  
17 facilitate a reunion of former Holy Childhood boarding  
18 school students and survivors. COVID put that on hold  
19 for the last couple of years. I feel like we are  
20 brothers and sisters, if not by blood then by the shared  
21 connection we have with each other as survivors. I know  
22 others feel the same.

23 In closing I'd like to say  
24 gda-miigwetchwiyin, and I thank you for launching The  
25 Road to Healing initiative and giving us the opportunity

1 to share our memories. It has taken me all these years  
2 to be able to do that, but I am very grateful for you to  
3 allow us the opportunity.

4 I want to be remembered as a survivor of  
5 the boarding school era. The boarding school didn't  
6 crush me, it made me the strong woman I am today.  
7 Miigwetch. (Applause.)

8 PAUL WALKER: Madam Chair, I'm younger  
9 brother Paul. I was incarcerated, as I like to refer to  
10 it, at Holy Childhood from 1971 to 1976, under the  
11 watchful eye of Sister Diane and Sister Roberta.

12 I would say that, you know, you have sat  
13 here and heard these -- they're not stories, they are our  
14 history, they are the real things that happened to us.  
15 The story of the bear, the head of the bear being brought  
16 in to the dinner table to being dropped off at the  
17 cemetery on Halloween night.

18 My first grade year, my first year at  
19 Holy Childhood, I was able to sit with my older sisters  
20 for one night, and then the next night Sister Diane took  
21 me to another table and I was not allowed to sit with  
22 them, I was not allowed to look at them, I was not  
23 allowed to acknowledge them. My one older sister came to  
24 the little boys dormitory, or the playroom in the  
25 basement, to drop off a Christmas gift, and Diane just

1 grabbed the gift, slammed the door in her face, and threw  
2 the Christmas gift at me. I wasn't even allowed to say  
3 hi to my sister on Christmas day, Jesus's birthday.

4           You know, the incident with the bear,  
5 Sister Diane had one of the claws of the bear, and she  
6 was going around, not only to where they hid the bones in  
7 the bed but they would also rip back the sheets and she  
8 would rub that bear claw on your bed and say you've been  
9 bad, the devil was going to get you tonight. Well, she  
10 went over to the girls dorm and was trying to do the same  
11 thing over there. And one of my other older sisters, who  
12 was very outspoken, said: I am not afraid of you. That  
13 is just an old bear bone and it's not going to do  
14 anything to us, for which Sister Diane threw the bone at  
15 her. It hit her in the hip, creating a huge bruise on  
16 her.

17           Sister Naomi kicked Diane out of the  
18 girls dormitory, said: You don't treat my girls this  
19 way, to which afterward I received one of the first if  
20 not the worst beating in my five years at the school.  
21 Beatings were normal, as was kneeling in the hallways in  
22 the middle of the night until you either passed out or  
23 Sister determined it was time for you to be able to get  
24 up and go to bed.

25           There was another time where my,

1 another -- my sister who is a year older than I was, was  
2 running through the basement, it was dark down there, and  
3 she ran past Sister Roberta, a/k/a Sister Mary, in the  
4 hallway who did not see her, to which Sister Mary came in  
5 the boys' playroom and grabbed me and was swinging me  
6 around by the hair and beating me, saying it was my fault  
7 that my sister would not say hello to her in the  
8 basement.

9           The happiest that I had ever been up  
10 until -- after that was when the end of my fifth grade  
11 year when my mother told Sister Mary that we would not be  
12 returning the next year, and I was just so overjoyed  
13 because I knew I wasn't going to be going back to that  
14 place, but that place haunted me for years, I had dreams  
15 of that place. I had dreams of walking into the big  
16 boys' dormitory, that it was being tore down, and there  
17 was a hole in the floor and I could see down in the  
18 gymnasium, and I didn't understand that dream until they  
19 opened the school up to allow us to go in there, and I  
20 walked in the big boys' dormitory and there was a hole in  
21 the floor, you couldn't see the gymnasium, but there was  
22 still a hole where in this dream, so I knew these things  
23 that were going to happen.

24           A few years after -- I had gotten into --  
25 once I got into high school and stuff, I started doing,

1 started drinking a lot, starting doing a lot of drugs,  
2 the effects, the aftereffects, trying to cover the pain,  
3 trying to cover the shame, trying to cover the trauma of  
4 what happened at this place. I had managed, I had gotten  
5 some, gotten hold of Sister Mary and I told, you know, I  
6 talked with her, and she wouldn't apologize, she was just  
7 like, I just, I did what I had to do. I'm like, to beat  
8 us, a defenseless child, and she says, yeah, that's what  
9 I had to do. I reached out to Sister Diane and I left  
10 her -- she's not a nun anymore so I guess it would be  
11 Diane. I reached out to her and I left a voice mail, or  
12 a voice message on her answering machine and let her know  
13 that this was going to happen. Back then, in 1987, I  
14 told her, you need to call me because it's going to come  
15 out what you did to us boys. Sister Diane was notorious  
16 for taking boys into her room at night and sexually  
17 molesting those kids, some of which are no longer with us  
18 because of the damage that she did to them.

19 For years I suffered from, and still  
20 today, I suffer from PTSD I've been told by our  
21 (inaudible) that I suffer from the same, almost the same  
22 type of situation that they dealt with. So I just want  
23 to say that now I am able to stand here and talk to you  
24 folks, but I'm also clean and sober (applause) because I  
25 don't want those nuns to win, I didn't want them to win,

1 I didn't want them to kill my spirit. I dance, I dance  
2 for the ones that are laying over there yet, the ones  
3 that are laying in MITS, the ones that are laying at all  
4 these other boarding schools around the United States and  
5 Canada, they weren't given a chance to do that. I thank  
6 you, thank you for your time. (Applause)

7 SHARON WALKER STUTT: I have a sister who  
8 emailed me her testimony, and my niece Melissa is going  
9 to read that for us.

10 MELISSA WALKER: So this is on behalf of  
11 Janice Walker.

12 My name is Janice A. Walker, I am a  
13 member of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan.  
14 I live in Fort Worth, Texas, and I am unable to attend  
15 this evening's meeting here today. I have two sons who  
16 are firemen, and one is a fireman and a paramedic who was  
17 recently promoted to lieutenant. They are both married  
18 and have beautiful babies. They are aware that I  
19 attended the boarding school of Holy Childhood School of  
20 Jesus in Harbor Springs, Michigan. They are unaware of  
21 the horrific trauma that my siblings and I have endured.  
22 I attended along with my two brothers and my three  
23 sisters. In order to preserve their privacy, I will not  
24 mention them by name.

25 I started school at Holy Childhood in the

1 fall of 1967 and left in June of 1972. My siblings  
2 attended during those years as well, and the younger two  
3 were there until 1974 to 1975. There are so many people  
4 that do not know about these schools and the atrocities  
5 that were inflicted on the children. These events  
6 happened and they are true. Our family is third  
7 generation survivors. Our grandparents and our father,  
8 along with his siblings, also attended North American  
9 boarding schools; those included, were the Carlisle  
10 Indian School and the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial  
11 School. The reactions when I get when I tell people my  
12 story is one of awe until they find out the truth.

13 My story begins with that originally. I  
14 wasn't supposed to attend the school because my parents  
15 thought I was too young, however, the nuns gave us a  
16 grand tour and showed me the dormitory, playroom, dining  
17 room, et cetera, and wouldn't I want to stay with them  
18 and play with the toys and eat in the dining room. I was  
19 only six years old. Eventually, they wore my mother down  
20 and promised to take good care of me. For a poor little  
21 Native girl that was often hungry and longed to sleep in  
22 her own bed and have food on a regular basis, it looked  
23 appealing. I remember that I had been there for a few  
24 weeks and wanted to go home. I said to Sister Naomi, I  
25 think I'm going to go home now. She leaned way over into

1 my face and said, you're not going anywhere, you're going  
2 to be here for a long, long time. So I choked back my  
3 tears and I hide inside myself.

4 One Sunday as we were getting ready for  
5 church, we were all lined up to walk down the stairs and  
6 I was walking to get into line when Sister Naomi yelled,  
7 who's making all that noise, and in unison everyone said,  
8 Janice Walker, Sister. She came running up to me and  
9 picked me up by my throat and threw me across the room  
10 and I skidded across the hardwood floor. I had brush  
11 burns on my knees and legs. It wasn't my fault that I  
12 was wearing black patent leather shoes that she had given  
13 me. Many years later I confronted this nun, and she  
14 denied all of it, of course. She was no longer a nun  
15 because she had an affair with the man who drove the bus  
16 for us on outings, who she later married.

17 My first job was to sweep the stairs from  
18 the third floor all the way to the first floor, I did  
19 this every day for the first couple of years I was there.  
20 To this day, you can eat off my floors. School was very  
21 regimented. We had the same routine every day. The only  
22 time we had a different routine was when someone had  
23 company.

24 How we longed to go home with our  
25 parents. I dreamed of running away so many times, but I



1 knew that I'd never make it. Those who did run away were  
2 always caught and severely punished. One group of girls  
3 that ran away spent the night in jail.

4           The nuns loved Halloween. They used to  
5 decorate the front door of the classrooms on the first  
6 floor and let us trick or treat each room and we would  
7 get a wrapped hotdog as a special treat. While that  
8 sounds fun, they would take us up in truckloads to the  
9 local cemetery and make us walk back to the school in the  
10 dark. They would have taken the boys up sooner so they  
11 could hide, scaring and chasing us. That would -- they  
12 would put flour on the floor and make footprints in it  
13 and say that the devil had come to harass the bad girls.  
14 Even some got chicken bones on their beds. But I'd have  
15 to say the worst part was when we had gotten into our  
16 beds and all hell would break loose. They had hidden in  
17 the closets and the sick rooms and came out turning over  
18 beds, pulling hair and scaring everyone. It was  
19 pandemonium.

20           Our family was treated a little  
21 differently because we had a rich uncle who donated money  
22 to the school. He had come to visit and wanted to know  
23 what I needed, and they said she needs new shoes. He  
24 took out his checkbook and said, okay, how much. He was  
25 told, oh, you can't just buy shoes for Janice, you have

1 to buy for everyone, and he did. We all got new clothes  
2 and a new set of play clothes. We were given our shoes  
3 and clothes first. I think they knew not to mistreat us  
4 so that the parents didn't pull us out of the school. Of  
5 course, as children we didn't know that he was our  
6 benefactor, we just loved him because he was our uncle.  
7 We did not know about this until recently when our aunt  
8 told us this story. We wondered why we were given our  
9 clothes and shoes first.

10 We were called many names; dirty Indians  
11 that were -- that we were crusty, told us your mom's on  
12 welfare and food stamps, your dad's a drunk. While some  
13 of these statements may have been true, they are  
14 certainly not to be said to children who idolize their  
15 parents. It's true we were poor; we didn't know it. We  
16 often went hungry. We were farmed out to various  
17 relatives who took great care of us and others who  
18 didn't. My brother worked three jobs. And when I was  
19 six, my dad left and she had six children to raise on her  
20 own. It wasn't easy for her.

21 I had a nervous breakdown when I was 28.  
22 I spent three months in a hospital where I could barely  
23 write my name or remember my phone number. I attempted  
24 suicide on Mother's Day of all days. I'm sorry you guys,  
25 I haven't read this story, this is the first time I've

1       seen it. I spent roughly about ten years or so in  
2       therapy for PTSD, abandonment issues, trust issues,  
3       feeling unloved and unwanted.

4               There are days I struggled to stay alive,  
5       but then I look at my sons, their wives, and my adorable,  
6       beautiful grandchildren and how they would feel if I left  
7       them. The important years of bonding with our family --  
8       darn it, I lost my spot. Sorry, I can't see through my  
9       tears. The important years of bonding with your parents  
10      and getting loved and hugged on daily is vital to  
11      children's health, growth, and emotional well being. I  
12      did not get that. We didn't get that. There were no  
13      hugs, no encouragement, no praise. I do have something  
14      to live for. I have my beautiful family who need me to  
15      be their biggest supporter no matter what they are  
16      striving for. While my parents' lives and my  
17      grandparents' lives were a struggle like mine, we  
18      survived. We are still here. We are strong, we are  
19      courageous. We are a tight-knit family that is always  
20      there for each other, we had to be because no one was  
21      there for us. Every one of my siblings is accomplished.

22             I'm not going to deny that there is still  
23      pain, and looking back is difficult. It cannot be  
24      sugarcoated. We were schooled and taught how to work  
25      where we are today. Those experiences molded and shaped

1       us, but the atrocities inflicted on us as children is  
2       unconscionable. We didn't deserve to be put down, abused  
3       physically, mentally, spiritually, and in some cases  
4       sexually. There are so many stories and painful truths,  
5       yet I marvel at the resilience of my family and friends  
6       who are like family to us because we share an experience.  
7       Many are productive, living their lives and thriving, but  
8       these scars are ones you can't, you can't see are still  
9       there. We must live with this while being strong for our  
10      loved ones. We are a testament onto our ancestors who  
11      would be so proud of us for staying strong.

12                 Thank you for this opportunity to share a  
13      small portion of my many years at Holy Childhood. My  
14      prayers go out to each survivor. May you find peace,  
15      love, and understanding, may your tears of sadness,  
16      frustration and anger be replaced with tears of joy and  
17      love healed by the loving hand of our creator and loved  
18      ones, and may the souls of those who never came home from  
19      those schools be at peace when they return to their  
20      families and our ancestors. They had stories, too,  
21      untold stories. They lived and were loved by their  
22      families and friends. My fellow survivors, you are loved  
23      today, tomorrow, and always. Miigwetch.

24                 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch  
25      for sharing. We're going to take one final short break,

1 and then we'll come back I think for one more short  
2 session. I know we've been here a long time, and I know  
3 there are some folks who still want to speak and talk  
4 about what happened to them and their experiences, we  
5 want to give as much time and space as we can with the  
6 time that we have. So we'll do a very short break to  
7 allow folks to stretch your legs and get some water, and  
8 we'll be back in five to ten minutes.

9 (Brief recess at 3:30 p.m.)

10 - - -

11 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: I know a  
12 lot of you have traveled a long way, both in physical  
13 distance and time to be here today to share your  
14 experiences with us on behalf of the Federal Government  
15 and I am very grateful for that. We are very grateful  
16 for that. We have been here today now for about six  
17 hours and we're going to have one more abbreviated  
18 session to try to hear from a few of the folks who have  
19 been waiting since this morning. So we're going to go to  
20 three speakers, and then the Secretary will conclude with  
21 some parting remarks. And then feel we'll finish up.

22 For those of you that we can't get to  
23 today, we're terribly sorry. We will of course gladly  
24 accept your written statements and comments to us as we  
25 continue the Secretary's Board School initiative as well.

1 So we'll hear from three more speakers. I think we have  
2 got them all lined up already, right? Yes. O.K. And  
3 then we will close out for today.

4 RON YOB: I'm going move over here  
5 because I don't want to turn my back to you people and I  
6 don't want to turn my back to you people, so.

7 (Native introduction.) My name is Ron  
8 Yob, and I come from Grand Rapids, Michigan. I am  
9 currently the Tribal Chairman of the Grand Rapids Band of  
10 the Ottawa Indians. I was not a -- I did not go to the  
11 Harbor Springs school myself, but my mother did. And I  
12 noticed that today a lot of people have talked about the  
13 current column of descendants, you know. And I think  
14 that's an important message too because these people went  
15 through that experience, but you've got to remember the  
16 next generation had a whole another experience, you know.

17 I can remember as a young child, 25, 30  
18 years later my mother was, and every mother loves, loves,  
19 and loves her children, you know. And she was so deadly  
20 affeared that I would, me and my brother and sister were  
21 going to be taken away. Her and her brother at four and  
22 five years old were taken away and brought up to Harbor  
23 Springs. My grandpa went to the Mount Pleasant Indian  
24 boarding school.

25 Well, I don't know if it was fortunate or

1 not or by design, but the house I lived in when I was  
2 known was little belonged to an old bootlegger. And  
3 being a bootlegger, there was all kinds of hidden spots,  
4 like the old closets with false walls and things like  
5 that. And as a child we were raised, we had drills. And  
6 when anybody that kind of looked important would come  
7 knocking on the door, we had to quick scatter. We would  
8 actually go through practice of this. And we would have  
9 to run in these little hiding places, and we had to be  
10 still and don't breathe heavy and don't move around, you  
11 know. And you know when your mother tells you that, it  
12 creates a certain paranoia in you that, that's someone  
13 going to come and take you away. We didn't understand  
14 because we were too little. But she was so deadly  
15 afraid.

16 My grandmother, you know, did not go to  
17 school. And the only thing I figured on that one was  
18 they probably had good hiding places in her house.

19 But one thing. I was looking at the sign  
20 there -- and I'll get to this in a second. But a week  
21 ago I ran my lawn mower over a bunch of ground hornets  
22 and I got stung from head to toe. I mean I got stung  
23 from head to toe, and I was in bad shape for a while.  
24 And then I hear death talk about the hornets, and I  
25 thought, oh, gosh, those guys. But I'll talk about it in

1 a second.

2 But beyond the paranoia, by going to the  
3 boarding schools, it developed the cultural traits of  
4 people, you know, of the children and the people. I  
5 liken this to if you went to get a computer, you'd have  
6 an operating system in that computer, and all that  
7 computer does is just operate, right. And everybody that  
8 has a computer, they train in a different way. Sports  
9 people would have sports events on it, and the fashion  
10 people would have fashion on it, the music people would  
11 have music on it. Well, these children's minds were like  
12 computers that were empty. They were taken away and they  
13 were put into an environment that was not, it was not  
14 their aunties and uncles and grandmas and grandpas, and  
15 it wasn't nurtured like an Indian family would do. They  
16 weren't taught cultural things, they weren't taught their  
17 language, they weren't taught to be (Native word). They  
18 were brought there and put away. And so all of a sudden  
19 all these kids are programmed, right, programmed to be  
20 what they wanted them to be. And it was another culture  
21 they wanted them to be. They were taken away from their  
22 homes. So they had no choice in that matter. And that's  
23 how computers are to this day.

24 The hiding and stuff like that taught us  
25 not to trust, trust the dominant culture, you know. We



1        didn't respect them, you know.

2                    As I grew older -- I mean I was pretty  
3        wild myself. And I had a group of elder women, elder  
4        Native women that came to me in the early 70's, and we  
5        had a 78 percent drop-out rate in our school system of  
6        Native children. And these children were the descendants  
7        of the people that went to boarding school. So these  
8        parents, elder parents' schools, they were afraid to  
9        teach their children things because they didn't want  
10       these children beaten, they didn't want their hair cut  
11       off, they didn't want these kids to have the experience  
12       that they did.

13                   So here we had this big group of kids  
14       that would not go to school. They had no respect for  
15       anything. They had no respect of the police, they had no  
16       respect for the teachers, they had no respect for  
17       counselors, social workers, their aunts and uncles,  
18       because they'd turned into alcoholics and they didn't  
19       respect their aunts and uncles. It got to a point where  
20       these kids did not even respect themselves. And if you  
21       don't respect yourself, you're in bad trouble.

22                   Well, here I come along and I'm a hard  
23       riding outlaw biker, right, alcoholic, everything else  
24       you could name, you know, I was there. And a bunch of  
25       older women come up to me. One thing I was, though, was

1 smart. I went through college and I got a teaching  
2 degree. And these women come up to me and pointed me out  
3 and says: We have a problem with our children. We don't  
4 know how to alleviate it. And they asked me, they asked  
5 me if I would work with these children. And I thought,  
6 me? Come on, you know.

7 I remember my first day. I rode up on a  
8 Harley, with a long ponytail, and the kids all smiled,  
9 know, they thought oh, good. I was probably the first  
10 thing they ever seen that kind of resembled them a little  
11 bit, you know. Well, I looked at these kids and I looked  
12 into their eyes, and I had been there, right. And I'll  
13 tell you something, I went to school on Monday and I  
14 gathered them up. Back there on Tuesday, we had twice as  
15 many kids there. Come Wednesday, we had twice as many  
16 kids again. And I looked into their eyes and I could  
17 see, I could see something.

18 I'll tell you something. Wednesday  
19 night, 1974, I quit drinking alcohol. That was the last  
20 drop I had in my life, you know. That was -- (Applause.)  
21 Miigwetch.

22 I seen where, I seen what I had to do.  
23 And I wasn't going to reinforce the things that was  
24 happening to these kids, you know. My mother still did  
25 not say who we were. I was fortunate enough, I told you

1 about my grandma didn't go to boarding school. Well,  
2 during the day when my mother would work she would raise  
3 me, and she didn't talk a whole lot of English, you know.  
4 So I was able to learn a lot, a lot of these Native  
5 things, you know. She taught, taught me them. Taught me  
6 how to be a Native, and then I couldn't be that when I  
7 was away from them, when I was away from her.

8 So I took these kids in. And today these  
9 kids are the kids here today. I've seen a lot of my  
10 former students walking around the crowd here. And I'll  
11 tell you something, these kids I have, former students,  
12 several several former students that are now on tribal  
13 councils or have been. I have former students that are  
14 tribal. I got former students that are tribal  
15 prosecutors. I got several former students that have  
16 MSWs that they went to college for. And these are kids  
17 that were totally headed in a total wrong direction. I  
18 mean they were. And it just, I don't know what was put  
19 on me, but I seen what I had to do.

20 And I'll tell you something, I didn't  
21 even do nothing, because I don't really know if I taught  
22 these kids anything because they all taught themselves,  
23 you know. I was the blessed one that was asked to do  
24 this, and I was the blessed one because these kids come  
25 from all over the State of Michigan, and they brought

1 with them little bits of culture that they had brought  
2 from their home, and I had being the center point was the  
3 recipient of all this. So what was going on at that  
4 point was, it was kind of a little turnabout. I got the  
5 drop-out rate in our school system down to one percent,  
6 and that really upset me because I didn't know who that  
7 one percent was. Otherwise I would have went and nailed  
8 them.

9 But what I am trying get at is, and I'll  
10 be short because I know you all have got to get back,  
11 you're getting tired and that. But I told you about the  
12 bees running and down my body. That was a week ago.  
13 Well, I'll tell you something. Right now today -- I was  
14 hurting for a week -- but I'm almost healed, you know.  
15 Those bee stings, they went away. And I know Indian  
16 medicine. I used to go, I was a lifeguard at the Grand  
17 Traverse camp for eleven years. And those little kids,  
18 they get stung by a bee and they'd run around looking and  
19 they'd find a plant and they'd rub it on their bee sting  
20 and they'd take off and go play again. So they were  
21 teaching me, you know. They were healing themselves and  
22 they were healing me.

23 And just what these people are doing  
24 today, you have to have patience, but it will come, and  
25 everything I think is working in the right direction and

1       that's why these people that are here right now, you have  
2       that heart, and it will happen. So Miigwetch.

3               (Applause.)

4               BAMBI BARNUM: Thank you. My name is  
5       Bambi Barnum (phonetic) and I am here as a direct  
6       descendant representing my grandmother, Sherrie Ann  
7       Martell, who passed away in 2018 of advanced dementia.

8               My grandmother's story is a little bit  
9       different than what I have heard today. She was put into  
10      the foster care system when she was nine years old, from  
11      Flint, Michigan. Her mother, as far as we understand,  
12      was also a residential school survivor, as well as my  
13      great great grandmother, Josephine Martell, who was born  
14      into the Ontario tribe.

15              I am non-tribal. I am the only sibling  
16      of eight that are non-tribal. Because as many of us  
17      know, the intent was to fracture families and break them  
18      apart, and that has been successful in my family. My  
19      grandmother was taken to Baraga when she was nine with  
20      her -- she was the oldest of six siblings, and she was  
21      the primary caretaker of her younger siblings. When she  
22      was taken to the boarding school and incarcerated, some  
23      have used that term earlier and that's how I view it.  
24      She was there for two years. She never spoke of it at  
25      all until about five years before she passed. And there

1 was one journal entry that's about 13 pages long and  
2 talks about her experiences, and very soon after that she  
3 was no longer lucid for a period of five years.

4 In her writing she talks about a donation  
5 being given to the church, the school. And she went to a  
6 farm in Byron, Michigan, as a child laborer. If anyone  
7 knows where Byron is, it's near Howell. And she went to  
8 school with the grand wizard of the KKK who ended up  
9 blowing up the buses in Pontiac in 1971. And that's  
10 where she lived, four miles from there. That was her  
11 town.

12 She had one friend in elementary school,  
13 her name was Ann. And one day Ann went to visit my  
14 grandmother when she was 12 at the farm that my  
15 grandmother was a child laborer at, and saw that my  
16 grandmother and the other two foster kids from Baraga  
17 were eating trash from General Motors, that the foster  
18 parents would bring home before they would feed to their  
19 pigs. So her friend talked to her mother, her own  
20 mother, and the State was called. And my grandmother was  
21 removed from that home, but not till after her head was  
22 shaven at that home, and she was taken to a -- I can't  
23 think of the religion but they speak in tongues. That's,  
24 my mind won't let me into that word right now.

25 She came to this new farm, which happened

1 to be my grandfather's uncle's farm, in a burlap sack and  
2 no shoes. And the one thing I really remember about her  
3 writing is when she talked about leaving Flint, she  
4 talked about going with no shoes and no coat and riding a  
5 ferry to the island, which it took me a long time, I  
6 don't know why, to figure out that that was, that was in  
7 1944. That was prior to Mackinac Bridge. She was riding  
8 across the lake. So there was no way for her to try and  
9 get back home.

10 My grandfather and her were forced by his  
11 parents to marry. We don't know why. They never talked  
12 about it. My grandmother never talked about any of this  
13 information except for in this one document. They were  
14 married in 1954. My father was born in 1955 and raised  
15 in a very, very white, very, very racist town. Many  
16 things happened in my grandmother's writing, including  
17 names she was called that we didn't know until recently.

18 And the reason why I'm here is because  
19 this past December 29th my dad talked to me for the very  
20 last time. And he said, my dad was fluent in Ojibwe. I  
21 just found that out, we had just reconnected. And he  
22 said: Bambi, you have to let people know. And I said:  
23 I am, Daddy. I'm trying. I'm trying to teach my kids.  
24 And he goes: No, you have to let people know our family  
25 is still broken from this trauma.

1                   My dad shot himself three weeks later,  
2                   this past January. And I am here because he asked me to  
3                   come here. So the message, I thought all day about what  
4                   message I needed to share. And the message I must share  
5                   today is, our families are still suffering. My family is  
6                   still fractured due to religious beliefs. I have an aunt  
7                   who refuses to believe my grandmother went through any of  
8                   this. I have siblings that are tribal members that  
9                   refuse to participate. My father and I were the outcasts  
10                  because we believe these stories need to be told.

11                 I have a written spoken word phone that I  
12                 have to read for my family. It will not be long, I  
13                 promise, but I ask you to please listen to it. It's  
14                 about my grandmother, my father, and myself.

15                 (Reading): On December 29th my dad said  
16                 to me: Tell our story, Bam, don't let them forget. My  
17                 response was: How can I when I don't know who I am yet?

18                 Boarding school, age nine. Child labor  
19                 at age 11. Donations were made to keep the truth hidden.  
20                 Relationships lost and damaged forever, never knowing the  
21                 love of each other. Keep your hair white and short to  
22                 fit in. She followed unwritten rules until the very end.  
23                 You can't marry our son, your past is too shifty. Racism  
24                 failed you, now I see so clearly. Four decades plus  
25                 three is how old you were when Indigenous rights were



1 finally conferred, 1962.

2           You protected your family the best way  
3 you saw until recent progress could write new law. Our  
4 relatives were found, our questions compiled, the  
5 experiences that shaped you as a child. You left your  
6 lives to build anew, leaving behind the ways that you  
7 knew. I couldn't understand your need to leave, all you  
8 longed for was some reprieve. Your relatives ridiculed  
9 your mission to keep alive their own rendition.  
10 Questioning christian beliefs at every turn, while  
11 so-called families that you would burn. A century plus  
12 of war runs through our veins, the realization started  
13 before we found those remains.

14           I ran from our history, to whiten my  
15 might. The church was not a safe place for me to leave.  
16 You are too proud to be my grandbaby. You can't be my  
17 daughter, you don't act like a lady. For separate from  
18 family called Indian princesses, a white woman's way of  
19 forcing our assistance. Leather braid (inaudible). You  
20 can't wear those, ungod like they may be. Straighten  
21 your hair to me a boss said, it's too ethnic to give you  
22 professional cred.

23           Memories and pieces start fitting  
24 together. Darker storms coming for us to weather. Your  
25 daughter -- that's me -- you found to reclaim our

1 heritage, this life long strife affected our marriage.  
2 Friends of the church tried to keep you in line, to  
3 reinforce the colonizer's line. Our house divided has  
4 been for years, no one talks but buries the tears. Leave  
5 the past alone some plead, God and country are all we  
6 need. Internal racism and lies abound, keeping the  
7 secrets not to be found.

8 Your life was taken by your own gun, for  
9 betrayal and spite it was time to be done. You moved on  
10 to join our ancestors, I have cleared the road to find  
11 the answers. I will share our stories as forward we go,  
12 because unlike before now I know.

13 And I need, I need my family story, our  
14 family story, this trauma is like a ripple effect, like a  
15 skipping stone across the lake. I am four generations in  
16 and I am just learning my heritage. (End reading)

17 So I beg you to please make this right so  
18 that my grandmother, her experience is not in vain, and  
19 that my dad's death was not in vain. Miigwetch.  
20 (Applause.)

21 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch.  
22 Thank you for sharing. We'll go to our final speaker for  
23 today.

24 LINDA COBE: My name is Linda Cobe. I'm  
25 a member of the Lac Vieux Desert Tribe in Watersmeet,

1 Michigan, and I'm a survivor of Holy Childhood. Unholy  
2 Childhood it should have been called. I was only there  
3 one year, but, and I don't have a whole lot of memories  
4 of being there, I don't know if it was that traumatic or  
5 why, that's the only thing I can think of.

6 But when I hear some of the stories about  
7 Halloween, I remember my younger sister who also attended  
8 telling me about Halloween, and I don't have any memories  
9 of the Halloween down there, but she said that she  
10 thought the nuns were trying to kill her. She said they  
11 were bobbing for apples and one of them held her head  
12 under the water for, she thought she was going to drown.  
13 And then she said that they had a great big powder puff,  
14 when they came around the corner, they'd hit them in the  
15 face with the powder puff, and she said she could hardly  
16 breathe from that dried powder.

17 But when I was in Watersmeet, my father  
18 is Ojibwe, my mother is Oneida, and they had five  
19 children, two older brothers, two years older than me and  
20 then one year younger than me, one year older than me,  
21 and then me and then two younger sisters. And my father  
22 was married to someone before my mother, they had two  
23 girls, so I have two half sisters that I didn't know,  
24 didn't grow up with, but they also attended Harbor  
25 Springs. And the story that I heard about them being

1       there, their time there, from one of my cousins, they  
2       said that both of the girls contracted some kind of  
3       disease where they were bleeding from their eyes and  
4       their nose and their mouth and their ears, and the nuns  
5       made my cousin take care of them, and I don't know if it  
6       wasn't contagious or what, but she said watching them  
7       bleed, she thought they were going to bleed to death, and  
8       she didn't, somehow didn't catch whatever they had, and  
9       my sister, half sister told me that she was only there  
10      for a short time, six months.

11               Well, I do remember vaguely them coming  
12      to get us kids. There was, in our house we had my aunt  
13      and some of her boys, the Hazens, and then my uncle, the  
14      Brunks lived just a few minutes away, and then my aunt,  
15      the Petes, lived a little bit farther away. And when  
16      they came to get us, they would round most of us up, and  
17      they said we used to try and hide out in the woods in the  
18      trees, and one of my cousins said that the priest would  
19      shake a bag of candy to get us to come out.

20               And so my time at Harbor Springs, I  
21      remember I think my brothers were there the same time I  
22      was, I was in first grade, I was five when they came and  
23      got me, turning six in the fall. And but I, we got to  
24      see our family at, when we ate the meals, but I don't  
25      remember seeing my brothers there. I don't have any

1 memories playing with them on the, in the schoolyard or  
2 what.

3 But I do remember a state of fear all the  
4 time, we're always in a state of fear because you didn't  
5 know where it was coming from; you're going to get  
6 slapped, cupped, shoved, pushed, yanked, whatever, and  
7 for the slightest infractions. And someone who's  
8 interviewing me earlier and he asked what kind of, what  
9 were the small infractions, I said I remember looking at  
10 one of my relatives across the table when we were eating,  
11 and the sisters would walk back and forth and make sure  
12 you were eating, even if you didn't like the food, you  
13 had to sit there until your plate was clean, but I just  
14 smiled at him and she came slapped my face, and when they  
15 slapped you, they left a handprint on your face.

16 But I think the worst part of it was at  
17 night, listening to all the other kids crying themselves  
18 to sleep, crying for their parents, and just wanting to  
19 go home. And I remember one girl was a bedwetter, and  
20 they made her scrub the entire bathroom on her hands and  
21 knees with her toothbrush. And when the gentleman was  
22 talking about making our beds, yeah, it was ran like a  
23 military boot camp. You really had -- I remember the  
24 hospital corners, and I remember her ripping my bed  
25 apart. Because we were living in poverty growing up in

1       Watersmeet, we didn't have sheets on our bed, I just  
2       remember an itchy green wool blanket that I think my dad  
3       brought home from the World War II.

4                 We were very poor, no running water,  
5       electricity. I remember my parents going to the local  
6       dump and bringing a couch home for my sister and my two  
7       brothers and me to sleep on. And I remember we didn't  
8       have any toys. We would play with little pieces of wood,  
9       push them around in the dirt. We didn't celebrate  
10      birthdays or Christmas, they were too poor to buy us  
11      anything, but we had a lot of freedom. Our parents were  
12      very permissive, they would let us explore, run around  
13      the woods. And it really does take a village to raise  
14      the children because I remember my aunts and uncles, even  
15      my older cousins, they all watched out and helped raise  
16      us and corrected us when we were into mischief.

17                And then I remember before they came and  
18      picked us up towards the end of summer, I remember they  
19      had us all -- I remember seeing a picture of us getting  
20      baptized, and so that tells me that that wasn't part of  
21      our religion, they didn't baptize us when we were a baby,  
22      but I think it might have been a step that we had to  
23      complete before going to the Catholic school. And I  
24      remember being marched over to the church every morning  
25      early. The food really did suck, and I hate beets to

1       this day.

2                   And but I do -- one thing that really  
3       does stand out in my mind is this beating I got one time  
4       from Sister Naomi, it was in May, because they were  
5       having Flores De Mayo, which is they were crowning Mary  
6       Queen of Heavens, and she picked me to carry this, a  
7       little satin pillow, I don't know if it was a crown or a  
8       wreath, something, to put on the statue, it was going to  
9       be a celebration outside out front, and a bunch of people  
10      were there. Well, I was supposed to wear this certain  
11      blue dress, and everyone is running around getting ready,  
12      and I could not find that blue dress, I don't know where  
13      they put it, but I couldn't find it, and the girls were  
14      already starting to line up, and I started getting more  
15      and more scared because I wasn't ready and I knew they  
16      were going to be waiting for me and I knew I was going to  
17      get a beating for it, and sure enough, I just started  
18      crying because I knew what I was in for. And she came  
19      over, why aren't you ready, I said, I can't find my  
20      dress, and she hit me so hard, she knocked me on the  
21      floor and then start kicking me. It wasn't just the boys  
22      that got kicked, she was kicking me and kicking me and  
23      kicking me, and I was about a 35-pound kid, and that's  
24      how they treated us. And the worst part of it was, too,  
25      was having to watch the other kids get beat like that

1 and, like I said, listening to everyone cry at night just  
2 wanting to home.

3 But so I was there a year, then when I  
4 got back, my parents were splitting up because there was  
5 so much alcoholism, they were fighting all the time. My  
6 dad really beat my mother half to death, so she finally  
7 left him. When she did, she took the baby because she  
8 was nursing her, and they left my sister, who's three  
9 years younger than me, and me and my two older brothers  
10 with my dad. And social services was involved, too,  
11 somehow. They told this one family from Baraga that  
12 Frank Brunk had these girls that he couldn't take care of  
13 because they were too poor, so she was taking in foster  
14 kids, a white family, so she came to get us, and they  
15 brought -- and I just watched the interview, my mother's  
16 interview, and she said that they brought my dad a case  
17 of beer for his daughters. And so they put us both in  
18 the car, I started crying, so they took me out, took my  
19 sister to Baraga. And then two weeks later another  
20 family that was related to that family came and said,  
21 there's one more girl there, and so when they told me I'd  
22 be in the same town as my sister, I wanted to go. So I  
23 went to Baraga and we got to see each other because we  
24 were in the same town.

25 But eventually they adopted her, also.



1 This was before 1978 ICWA, Indian Child Welfare Act. So  
2 it was the government, it was in the '60s with the Indian  
3 adoption program that the government used as another tool  
4 to assimilate Native children, and when I, we got adopted  
5 into that family, they of course knew nothing about our  
6 culture; and but back home my parents lived a traditional  
7 life, hunted, trapped, fished, my grandma tanned hides in  
8 the kitchen, Ojibwe was their first language, but they  
9 didn't teach us kids, that I can remember anyway. But  
10 yeah, that was the biggest part was losing my culture.

11 And then I was -- but in Harbor Springs  
12 we were constantly, when they -- we would get beat, we  
13 were nothing but a dirty, rotten, stinkin' Indian who  
14 would never amount to anything. And then when I got  
15 adopted into the white family, they said, your dad's  
16 nothing but a drunk, your mother's a whore, that's all  
17 they do is drink down there, you don't want to go back  
18 there. But my adopted dad was also an alcoholic, and he  
19 started sexually abusing me when I was about eight. And  
20 then when they adopted my sister, I was 12, it wasn't  
21 long before he started with her, and I tried to protect  
22 her from him, but I couldn't.

23 And, well, my two older brothers attended  
24 Harbor for three years, Celia had to go three years, and  
25 when she came back for the summer -- I brought these

1 papers to give you, it's from the State of Michigan  
2 Probate Court. It says, Celia Brunk, my sister,  
3 neglected child. Because we were poor, they considered  
4 us neglected. Okay. Blah, blah, blah. Having been  
5 brought before said court, an order having heretofore  
6 been entered on October 13, 1965, adjudicating said child  
7 to be a temporary ward of probate court and placing her  
8 for foster care in the temporary custody of Mr. and  
9 Mrs. Carl Mansfield, Baraga. And it having been  
10 represented to this court that it would be in said  
11 child's best interest that she be provided with special  
12 schooling at the Holy Childhood School at Harbor Springs,  
13 Michigan. This was up in Baraga County. So I'd like to  
14 submit these.

15 But so what happened after I turned 18,  
16 actually I was 17 when I graduated, I went back and  
17 looked up my parents and tried to establish a  
18 relationship with them again, and my brothers, we didn't  
19 get to see much of them growing up.

20 But I come from a family of warriors,  
21 also. My father served in World War II and the Korean  
22 War, my uncles all served, my brother, two brothers  
23 served, one was a Marine, the other one was in the Army,  
24 and two of my boys are in the Air Force, one just retired  
25 20 years and the youngest will be retiring with 20 years,

1 and I'm very proud of them all. And due to the divorce,  
2 though, and just complications, we don't have a strong  
3 bonding.

4 But my brother Luther was home from the  
5 Marines a couple years, and they both partied really  
6 hard, too, and he ended up shooting himself, he took his  
7 own life. Three years later my other brother was killed  
8 in a car wreck. They're both alcohol related. My two  
9 younger sisters both contracted diabetes, and Celia, I  
10 just lost them in the past -- my youngest one died in  
11 2016 and the other one died in 2018, and so I'm here  
12 today to speak for them. They had a shitty life like me,  
13 they missed their sisters, they didn't, they didn't get  
14 to have a family.

15 And I know there's one point in my life I  
16 just went wild after I got away from my sick, perverted  
17 father, but there was one -- they threw me out the house  
18 literally, and the only thing I had was a few clothes. I  
19 had a little money saved, thank God, was able to get an  
20 apartment with a couple of my friends, but I had broken  
21 up with my boyfriend and my parents threw me out and they  
22 wouldn't let me see my sister. And I, I'm not a swimmer,  
23 I can't swim, kind of scared of water, deep water, and so  
24 I walked down to the dock knowing it was over my head and  
25 sat there swinging my legs thinking I didn't have anyone,

1 and I wracked my brain and couldn't think of anyone on  
2 the planet that actually could give a shit whether I was  
3 alive or dead, and I was just going to fall into the  
4 water and then maybe the pain would stop. I don't know  
5 what made me walk away from there, but I did. And I've  
6 also, you know, struggled with alcoholism and I've had  
7 three failed marriages, married for the fourth time, my  
8 soulmate here supports me.

9 But I'm finding my way back, put it that  
10 way. I'm starting to heal because -- and what really  
11 helped was years of counseling, psychiatrists,  
12 psychologists, group therapy, but they really helped me  
13 with the issues of trust and love and abandonment and  
14 grief and that, but they didn't touch on  
15 intergenerational trauma. They knew nothing of the  
16 boarding school, they were all nonnative professionals,  
17 but yeah, they didn't touch on that and I think that's  
18 what we all really need that, to make sense of what  
19 happened. We were victims and we are survivors.

20 And today I'm getting my culture back. I  
21 don't speak the language, but I know words and I hear  
22 more of our people speaking it, and I think the more you  
23 hear it, too, you start catching it, getting it, and the  
24 more you participate in your Native community, the more  
25 you learn our way of life. And that dirty, rotten,

1 stinkin' no-good-for-nothing Indian got two college  
2 degrees, and I was a wildland fire fighter for 15 years.  
3 (Applause) So I'm really honored to be here, and I thank  
4 you so much for coming and hearing us.

5 I just wanted to read my niece's  
6 statement. I told, let them know that I'd read my  
7 statement for anyone in the family, and this is my niece  
8 that her dad was killed in the car wreck, and she was  
9 just a little kid when he passed away.

10 My name is Celia Brunk, I am an enrolled  
11 tribal member of the Lac Vieux Desert Band of the Lake  
12 Superior Chippewa Indians. I am 43 years old. I'm  
13 writing regarding your launch of the Federal Boarding  
14 School Initiative with my story of being a descendant of  
15 a survivor of the Indian residential school. My father,  
16 Melvin Brunk, now deceased, was a child of the '60s  
17 scoop. He was forced to attend Holy Childhood in Harbor  
18 Springs from the years '62 to '67. I don't know much of  
19 my dad as he passed away in 1984 due to a car crash,  
20 alcohol definitely a contribution.

21 What I would like to share is I grew up  
22 with my mother not knowing any of her culture, although  
23 her dad was brought up close to her culture. Basically  
24 my maternal grandfather was already affected by a scoop.  
25 He said one year he came home, all the kids were gone.

1 Him and another known elder were only -- were the only  
2 kids left. My sister said he couldn't avoid one year. I  
3 am thinking that is why he enlisted in the Army. He had  
4 eight kids, stayed in the city to avoid his kids taken  
5 away. In turn, didn't teach his children our cultures  
6 and traditions. It wasn't to be talked about. Although  
7 my dad survived his assimilation, it rendered him a short  
8 life. He joined the Army and married my mother and had  
9 four children. As a child, all I remember is the  
10 drinking. We weren't the only household with the  
11 alcohol-related issues. My mother is a survivor of my  
12 father's domestic abuse.

13               Myself, I had to grow up at first being  
14 taught the history lessons. I had thought we were  
15 speaking English right away in the 1800s, like it was all  
16 agreed, calm and peaceful progression, and that my  
17 original was just a thing of the past. As I was in the  
18 seventh grade, I started to question school. My  
19 grandparents -- we really didn't get answers through the  
20 '90s. My grandparents and relatives started opening up a  
21 little more and we started hearing truths, stories, and  
22 the horror stories.

23               So my conclusion is there is generations  
24 that a lot have not healed from such effects and traumas.  
25 My whole family is affected. In order to heal our

1 children, us, and our elders, we need to address, change  
2 history, curriculums, and get healing programs to the  
3 tribes of our nation. Respectfully, Celia Brunk.

4 And thank you. (Applause)

5 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch.

6 SECRETARY DEB HAALAND: Thank you all so  
7 much for being here. And for those of you who are still  
8 here, for staying this long and being here for all of the  
9 people who shared, to help share the burden of those  
10 memories and those stories that I know have haunted  
11 people for such a long time. My biggest hope is that for  
12 those of you who were able to share and those of you who  
13 now have the courage to come out and talk about this,  
14 even with your fellow tribal members or with people in  
15 the behavioral health community, or just to get it off of  
16 your chest, I hope that you can find some peace at last.

17 You know, I spoke with my grandmother a  
18 few times about her experience at boarding school. Other  
19 than for her to tell me how the priest came around to the  
20 village -- this was back in the early 1900s, how the  
21 priest came around to the village, and she talked about  
22 him collecting children and putting them on the train to  
23 go to Sante Fe, to the boarding school in Santa Fe, she  
24 never said anything bad. But it showed, when I think  
25 about it, it showed in how she lived her life, right.

1 She got up at 5:00 every morning and cleaned her entire  
2 house from top to bottom. It was never dirty. Even if  
3 she were to skip a day, it would be fine. How her work  
4 ethic just drove her. She worked incredibly hard. And I  
5 feel like she put a lot of things on herself because she  
6 felt she had to be perfect in so many of the things that  
7 she did, and she said her rosary every single night  
8 before she went to bed. That puzzled me. But these  
9 things, these experiences, they affect people in so many  
10 different ways.

11 I hope that you have found the services  
12 that we were able to provide, that the Indian helpers  
13 were able to provide today helpful. I hope that this is  
14 not the last time that you reach out to them, because it  
15 is important that you all take care of yourselves. So  
16 please take care of yourselves. I will keep you all in  
17 my prayers. And I am really, really grateful to be here  
18 with all of you. Thank you so much. (Applause.)

19 ASST SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you  
20 everybody. That will conclude our session today. Thank  
21 you so much for coming out, and we wish you safety and  
22 good health going forward.

23 (Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:40 p.m.)

24 - - -  
25



## C E R T I F I C A T E

We, Marie T. Schroeder and Lori Anne Penn, do hereby certify that we reported in stenotype the proceedings had in the within-entitled matter, that being Road to Healing Tour - Michigan, before Deb Haaland, Secretary, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, at the Pellston Public Schools, Pellston, Michigan, on Saturday, August 13, 2022; and do further certify that the foregoing transcript, consisting of 161 pages, is a true and correct transcript of our stenotype notes.

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Marie T. Schroeder, CSR-2183

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Lori Anne Penn, CSR-1315  
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Dated: August 24, 2022