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

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Appearances:

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs

Bryan Newland

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

3 (Tribal music playing)

4
5 (Presentation of flags)

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

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

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

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

1 brought you here today.

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

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

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

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

25 One was red, one was yellow,

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 daughter, (inaudible).

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

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

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

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

25 Madam Secretary, I want to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 school's superintendent.

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

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

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

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

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

1 share your story.

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

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

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

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

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

3 Think about that today.

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

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

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

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

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

1 to say welcome.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 Federal (inaudible) touch

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 they have done to people across the
2 country.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 We also have a court

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 MR. NEWLAND: Do we have any

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 she suffered in the boarding schools.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 So, one of the things that I

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

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

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

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

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

1 here for my daughter, Alisha."

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

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

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

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

25 I don't know how long it

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 First thing they said to us,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 AUDIENCE: Six years, seven?

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

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

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

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

25 I prayed for when I was in

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

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

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

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

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

25 My personality was taken

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 said, "My protector is gone."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 They didn't have a lot of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 theirs too that was lost.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 subject is.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 more.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 educational policy and other
2 provisions.

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

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

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

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

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

1 said he'd cry.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 And said Becky's there was a

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 but I knew it was true.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 while they were there mentioning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 changed.

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

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

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

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

25 I just -- I now, knowing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 want to speak as possible.

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

4 (Applause).

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

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

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

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

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

25 MR. NEELY: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 sisters of them were taken from the
2 mother.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 To make them stronger? For

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

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

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

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

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

25 So I had -- we had a friend

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

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

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

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

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

1 Secretary. And what is your name?

2 MR. NEWLAND: Bryan.

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

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

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

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

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

1 and they would hear it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 They ran and they left one

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 back.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 My father died because he

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 did not want to talk about her
2 experiences.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 So I was a young child, I

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 when I spoke my language.

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

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

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

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

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

1 reservation. Nobody mentioned that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 have too.

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

10 (Singing song).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 boarding school education afforded her.

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

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

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

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

1 opportunity to be in leadership.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 very much. Miigwech.

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

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

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

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

1 her her whole life.

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

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

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

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

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

1 today.

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

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

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

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

25 REPORTER'S NOTE: Submitted

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

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

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

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

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

25 My father did not know how

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 -- the basement.

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

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

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

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

1 dependency and assess your relationship
2 with certain chemicals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 MR. NEWLAND: Thank you. I

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 in the film with (inaudible) Benjamin.

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

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

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

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

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

25 She attended Fort Shaw

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 THE AUDIENCE: (No
7 response).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 She went to a Catholic

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

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

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

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

25 So Chelsie -- where's

1 Chelsie? Chelsie. Thank you, Chelsie
2 Wilson, she's working directly with
3 Indian Affairs to -- on this particular
4 issue of boarding school initiative.
5 Thank you, Chelsie for being here.
6 (Speaking in native tongue).
7 (Applause). Joaquin David scheduling
8 of events. Melissa Schwartz our
9 prompts director.

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

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

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

1 much, Kathryn.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

23

24

25

1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)

2) ss.

3 CROW WING COUNTY)

4
5
6 I, Nathan D. Engen do hereby
7 certify that the foregoing transcript in
8 the matter of The Road to Healing Tour
9 Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe is true,
10 correct and accurate:

11 That said transcript was prepared
12 under my direction and control from my
13 stenographic shorthand notes.

14 That I am not related to any of
15 the parties in this matter, nor am I
16 interested in the outcome of this
17 action.

18
19 Witness my hand and seal this 30th day
20 of June, 2023.

21
22
23
24 Nathan D. Engen
25