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BEFORE THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

In Re the Matter of: )  
 )  
THE FEDERAL INDIAN BOARDING )  
SCHOOL INITIATIVE: )  
 )  
THE ROAD TO HEALING GATHERING )  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

**CERTIFIED  
TRANSCRIPT**

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS  
(Public Comment)

Laveen Village, Arizona  
Friday, January 20, 2023  
10:29 a.m.

MELISSA GONSALVES, RMR, CRR  
Certified Reporter  
Certificate Number 50070

1 DIGNATARIES AND REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:  
2 Debra Haaland, Secretary of the Interior  
3 Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs  
4 Jack Ganzel, Senate Committee of Indian Affairs  
5 January Contreras, Assistant Secretary,  
6 Department of Health and Human Services  
7 Roselyn Tso, Director, Indian Health Service  
8 Tony Dearman, Director, Bureau of Indian Education  
9 Ruben Gallego, U.S. Representative (D-AZ, 3rd District)  
10 Carlos Ramos, for Kyrsten Sinema, Senator, (Independent)  
11 Daron Carreiro, White House Representative  
12 Katie Hobbs, Governor, State of Arizona  
13 Stephen Roe Lewis, Governor, Gila River Indian Community  
14 Monica Antone, Lt. Governor, Gila River Indian Community

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Laveen Village, Arizona;  
Friday, January 20, 2023; 10:29 a.m.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(The colors were presented.)

(A blessing was offered in native language.)

GOVERNOR LEWIS: I'm Governor Stephen Lewis of  
the Gila River Community.

On behalf of myself, Lt. Governor Monica  
Antone, our community, and the entire Gila River Indian  
Community, I would like to welcome you to the Community  
today for the Department of the Interior's Boarding School  
Initiative: The Road to Healing Gathering.

Now, today's gathering is a solemn one  
because we will be focusing on a very shameful history, a  
period of federal Indian policy, the boarding school era.

Many of our children were forcibly removed  
from our tribal communities, from our families, for one  
singular purpose: to transform our children by taking  
their culture, their language, their hair, their community  
and their sense of belonging. Tens of thousands of native  
children were removed to federal boarding schools. Those  
children were forever -- forever -- changed by their  
experiences, and many of those who were fortunate enough

1 to make it home still bear the scars of that period.  
2 Those children were our great-grandparents, our  
3 grandparents, our parents, and our Elders here today.

4 For many who were forcibly removed, the  
5 trauma they experienced remains a daily part of their  
6 life, trauma that has remained buried too long, because  
7 many could not speak of that time.

8 But today, we will speak of it. Each of you  
9 here today are survivors, families of survivors. And  
10 advocates are here to share your story, to listen, to show  
11 support because we don't need to be silent anymore. And  
12 through our collective voices, we will raise awareness,  
13 and we will make change. And we must -- we must -- speak  
14 of it, because we have to continue to do everything,  
15 everything we can, to heal prior generations and to  
16 protect our children and our communities from ongoing  
17 policies that even today threaten our beautiful, precious,  
18 native children, like efforts to overturn the Indian Child  
19 Welfare Act by those that are still trying to remove our  
20 children from our families and from our tribal  
21 communities.

22 I'm so proud to see this convening take  
23 place in our beautiful Gila Crossing Community School.

24 As you can see, it visibly demonstrates the  
25 distance we have come since the era of forced boarding



1 schools.

2                   As you arrived here today at our beautiful  
3 school, and as you look around this gym, you can't help  
4 but notice the Community's culture is everywhere. It's on  
5 the walls and in the walls themselves and appears  
6 throughout our curriculum. This is a school built by the  
7 Community specifically for our students, but it is a  
8 Bureau of Indian Education school built in partnership  
9 with the Department of the Interior: a modern,  
10 state-of-the-art, federal Indian school.

11                   This school is a far cry from a boarding  
12 school. It's a school where our children feel safe. They  
13 feel protected and embraced, not only by our Community but  
14 by our sacred Estrella Mountains. This is the federal  
15 school of today. This is the relationship between tribes  
16 and the Department of Interior today, working with a  
17 sovereign tribal nation, the Gila Indian River Community.

18                   And that brings me to how we came to be here  
19 today, all of us. This gathering is made possible for one  
20 reason, and one reason only: The Secretary of the  
21 Interior, Deb Haaland, our Secretary, prioritized shining  
22 a light on this failed federal policy, instead of burying  
23 it, burying this painful period and the residual effects  
24 as history.

25                   This is what it means to have a native

1 Secretary of the Interior. This is what it means to have  
2 the first native to ever serve in a presidential cabinet,  
3 who can make federal policy from a place of experience, a  
4 place of insight, and with a heart for the people.

5 Secretary Haaland knows that through  
6 sharing, by supporting each other, by acknowledging this  
7 part of our past and present, that the healing can begin.  
8 And by creating a path for those who didn't come home to  
9 finally find their way home, healing can begin as well.

10 Before I turn the program over to Secretary  
11 Haaland for the day, I want to acknowledge our new  
12 Governor, Katie Hobbs.

13 (Applause.)

14 GOVERNOR LEWIS: A friend of the Community  
15 also, Congressman Gallego.

16 And also Daron Carreiro representing the  
17 White House, Mr. Carlos Ramos representing Senator Kyrsten  
18 Sinema, Jack Ganzel from the Committee on Indian Affairs,  
19 Juan Canojos, who is part of the White House as well --  
20 oh, excuse me -- from Mayor Kit Gallegos' office.

21 And the Community, all of us here, we  
22 appreciate you, truly. We appreciate you, truly. We  
23 appreciate you taking the time to learn about this part of  
24 our history, to lend support and to work in true  
25 partnership with us to strengthen tribal sovereignty and

1 our self-determination.

2 Now, it's my honor to welcome and introduce,  
3 our Secretary, Deb Haaland, Secretary of Interior.

4 (Applause.)

5 SECRETARY HAALAND: Good morning, everyone.

6 Thank you so much for being here.

7 And, again, thank you so much, my dear  
8 friend and former colleague, Ruben Gallego. So happy to  
9 see you.

10 And Governor Hobbs, thank you. I think  
11 you're the first governor to attend one of our hearings,  
12 so we appreciate your dedication.

13 (Applause.)

14 SECRETARY HAALAND: Greetings and good morning,  
15 everyone.

16 Thank you for that beautiful blessing.

17 And thank you, Governor, for your wise  
18 words.

19 It's such an honor to be here, to join you  
20 all on the ancestral homelands of the O'odham and Piipaash  
21 people. And thank you to the Gila Indian River Community  
22 for graciously hosting us today.

23 And I smell something in the air, this  
24 really delicious food cooking, so I hope that will help us  
25 focus on this until lunch.

1 I will speak briefly, because I'm here to  
2 listen to you. You're not here to listen to me. I'm here  
3 to listen to you. Your voices are important to me. And I  
4 thank you for your willingness to speak through the pain  
5 and share your stories with us.

6 Federal Indian boarding school policies  
7 touched every single indigenous person I know. Some are  
8 survivors, some are descendants, but we all carry the  
9 trauma in our hearts.

10 I visited Phoenix Indian School yesterday.  
11 Those walls, they also have stories; right? The women who  
12 gave us the tour, they talked about their time there.  
13 It's deeply ingrained in so many of us: the trauma that  
14 the Governor spoke of, the policies in these places that  
15 were inflicted on so many people.

16 My ancestors and many of yours endured the  
17 horrors of the Indian Boarding School assimilation  
18 policies carried out by the same department that I now  
19 lead. This is the first time in history that a United  
20 States cabinet secretary comes to the table with a shared  
21 trauma. That is not lost on me. And I'm determined to  
22 use my position for the good of our people.

23 I launched the Federal Indian Boarding  
24 School Initiative in 2021 to undertake a comprehensive  
25 effort to recognize the legacy of boarding school policies

1 with the goal of addressing their intergenerational acts  
2 and to shed light on the trauma of the past. To do that,  
3 we need to tell our stories. Today is part of that  
4 journey.

5                   Through The Road to Healing, our goal is to  
6 create opportunities for people to share their stories,  
7 but also to help connect communities with trauma and form  
8 support and to facilitate the collection of a permanent  
9 oral history.

10                   Phoenix is our fourth stop on The Road to  
11 Healing, which is a year-long tour across the country to  
12 provide indigenous survivors of the Federal Indian  
13 Boarding School system and their descendants an  
14 opportunity to make known their experiences.

15                   I want you all to know that I'm here with  
16 you on this journey. I will listen. I will grieve with  
17 you. I will weep alongside you. And I will feel the pain  
18 that you feel.

19                   As we mourn what we have lost, please know  
20 that we still have so much to gain, and this school right  
21 here is an example of that. The healing that can help our  
22 communities will not be done overnight, but I know that it  
23 can be done.

24                   This is one step among many that we will  
25 take to strengthen and rebuild bonds within native

1 communities that the Federal Indian Boarding School policy  
2 set out to break. Those steps have the potential to alter  
3 the course of our future.

4 I'm grateful to each of you for stepping  
5 forward to share your stories. I know it's not easy.

6 Now, I'm very honored to turn the floor over  
7 to my dear colleague and friend, Assistant Secretary  
8 Newland. And I just want you all to know that he has a  
9 tremendous team, and the people on his team who worked  
10 very hard to get out the first boarding school report,  
11 they, too, are descendants of Indian boarding schools, and  
12 it was difficult for them to do that work. And I just  
13 want you all to know that it comes from all of our hearts,  
14 and I'm so proud to serve alongside Assistant Secretary  
15 Newland and his team.

16 So over to you.

17 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you, Madam  
18 Secretary.

19 (Comments in native language.)

20 My name is Bryan Newland. I am Ojibwe  
21 Nishnaabe from the Bay Mills Indian Community.

22 I have the honor and privilege of serving  
23 under Secretary Haaland's leadership as the Assistant  
24 Secretary for Indian affairs.

25 And I'm really grateful to be with everybody

1 here this morning here at the Gila River Indian Community  
2 in this beautiful setting.

3 I think this is the first one where we've  
4 had sunlight or sunshine blessing us during this Road to  
5 Healing, which we know is important. It brings that  
6 healing power of the sun into this conversation.

7 The Secretary mentioned that she and I have  
8 both had the opportunity to visit the Phoenix Indian  
9 School recently. I was here last week with members of our  
10 team touring the school and learning about it's  
11 century-long history as part of the Federal Indian  
12 Boarding School system where thousands of kids were taken  
13 away from their families and sent there, often to do hard  
14 physical labor that had little educational value, and as  
15 part of the larger legacy of the federal government's and  
16 the Department of the Interior's operation and funding of  
17 these boarding schools.

18 As of now, the Department of the Interior  
19 has determined that 47 of the federal government's Indian  
20 Boarding Schools were located here in Arizona. And that  
21 includes the Pima Boarding School, which is just over the  
22 way.

23 And as we keep continuing our work with this  
24 Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative and our  
25 investigation and learning about your experiences at

1 specific schools, we know that our federal records and  
2 documents can only tell us so much of the story, and that  
3 your words and your experiences are crucial to telling the  
4 whole story, not just to us in the federal government, but  
5 to the American people. And so we want to make sure that  
6 in addition to doing that investigative work, that we're  
7 painting that full picture.

8                   We're going to continue our investigation,  
9 and our next steps include identifying marked and unmarked  
10 burial sites and determining how much money and how much  
11 investment the federal government made in operating the  
12 system for a century and a half.

13                   We also want to encourage you to raise other  
14 considerations that you think we should include in our  
15 investigation as we move forward.

16                   I want to acknowledge, again, a number of  
17 folks who are here in the room on behalf of the federal  
18 government, as well as the state.

19                   First, I want to acknowledge IHS, Indian  
20 Health Service Director Roselyn Tso, and the IHS team,  
21 which has been with us the entire way, helping to make  
22 sure that we're providing that mental health support to  
23 people as we have these conversations.

24                   I also want to acknowledge my friend,  
25 Assistant Secretary January Contreras, from the Department



1 of Health and Human Services, who has been a great partner  
2 on this initiative, and also in the administration's work  
3 to protect and defend the Indian Child Welfare Act.

4 We have Tony Dearman, who is the Director of  
5 the Bureau of Indian Education. As you heard the Governor  
6 reference, the Bureau of Indian Education is different now  
7 than it used to be in the way we operate these schools,  
8 and Tony and his team at the BIA have been great partners  
9 in this work.

10 Of course, I want to make sure I also  
11 acknowledge my friend, Governor Lewis, and the Gila River  
12 Indian Community for hosting this conversation. We know a  
13 lot of logistics and effort goes into these events.

14 And while she's been acknowledged several  
15 times already, I want to give my own shout out to Governor  
16 Hobbs for being here. We all know in Indian Country about  
17 the tough relationship in the past between the United  
18 States and Indian Country, but we also know that the  
19 relationship between state governments and tribes can be  
20 challenging. And I think it speaks volumes that Governor  
21 Hobbs has taken time to join us today to listen. And so I  
22 want to thank you, Governor, for being here.

23 And also I want to acknowledge Congressman  
24 Gallego for being here as well. Again, the trust and  
25 responsibility is shared by the entire United States

1 federal government, all three branches. So it's important  
2 to have you here, Congressman, and I want to thank you for  
3 being here.

4 I want to thank all of you tribal leaders  
5 and the survivors and those of you who are here to speak  
6 on behalf of your ancestors and your relatives for coming  
7 here today.

8 Now, just a few housekeeping notes before we  
9 set our mics down and open our ears.

10 First, I know people are very eager to take  
11 photos and selfies with Secretary Haaland. We're going to  
12 do a photo line, so we ask that you not rush up here as we  
13 break and get photos. We'll make space to do that, so  
14 just respectfully asking that.

15 Also, I want to make sure that we're being  
16 clear that these events are intended for boarding school  
17 survivors and their families. I know we've got tribal  
18 government representatives and academic researchers and  
19 others who have thoughts and perspectives on the Federal  
20 Indian Boarding School system, and we certainly welcome  
21 you sharing those with us. But we ask that you leave  
22 today for the boarding school survivors and their  
23 families. You can email us statements that we will  
24 include in our work in this initiative. We've got an  
25 email address on the sheet that I think many of you have

1 that was passed out here today.

2 To make a comment today, we have some mic  
3 runners here. Can you raise your hands? And so I've got  
4 pretty good eyesight, but this is a big room going all the  
5 way in the back, so I'm going to rely on the mic runners  
6 to help us identify speakers.

7 When you do get the opportunity to speak, we  
8 ask that you state your name, your tribal affiliation, and  
9 the name or the names of the boarding schools that you  
10 wish to speak about because this conversation is also  
11 informing our work and our investigation.

12 Also, I want to note that because part of  
13 this work involves sharing this history with the American  
14 people, we've invited members of the press who have very  
15 important role to play and important jobs in our  
16 constitutional democracy to join us for the first hour of  
17 the event. But I know many people are uncomfortable  
18 sharing your stories on the news and in the media, so what  
19 we will do is after our first hour, we'll take a break.  
20 Members will go off the record with the press, and they  
21 will be asked to leave, and then we'll continue the  
22 session.

23 We will have a court reporter taking the  
24 transcript of the entire session today. Again, that helps  
25 with our investigation, and at some point in the future,

1 someone may request that information and there are federal  
2 laws that apply to that, so please note that information  
3 may be made available in the future to the public.

4 Our plan is to stay with you well into the  
5 afternoon. Secretary Haaland and I are people too. These  
6 are very difficult conversations. We're here to listen  
7 and to share the burden with you. And we're going to stay  
8 as long as we can to hear from as many people as we can.

9 We want to make sure that you know that we  
10 do have trauma-informed mental health care support  
11 available here. We've got attendants. Can you please  
12 raise your hand? Here we are over here near the door. So  
13 if this is triggering or becomes too much, we welcome you  
14 to talk with our licensed therapists and counselors who  
15 are here. We're going to work also to make sure we're  
16 providing follow-up care from that.

17 These are hard conversations, and we know  
18 that by us coming here that we're resurfacing a lot of  
19 pain in your communities and your families, and we really  
20 want all of us here to take care of ourselves. We want  
21 you to take care of yourself. Please feel free to step  
22 out at any point if you need it; get some water.

23 And those of you who are coming today to  
24 speak, I just want to express my gratitude to you, not  
25 only on behalf of the federal government, but personally

1 as a descendent from great-grandparents and others who  
2 were forced into these boarding schools. There's not an  
3 Indian person in this country whose life hasn't been  
4 shaped somehow by these boarding schools. And so you  
5 coming here to share your story today is meaningful for me  
6 and for us and our team as the Secretary noted on a  
7 personal basis as well, so thank you.

8                   So we're here today to listen, to support.  
9 You've heard enough from me, and enough housekeeping, so  
10 what we're going to do is open the floor up, ask that when  
11 you speak -- we don't have a time limit, but please be  
12 mindful that we've got a lot of folks who want to speak  
13 today. We'll give you the time you need to share your  
14 story. At some point I may interject. We welcome you  
15 here to share your story, and we'll now turn it over to  
16 you.

17                   We've got someone right there.

18                   MS. CHERRY: Good morning.

19                   My name is Nora Cherry. I'm here to speak  
20 on behalf of my mother, Ena Dodd, who attended the Phoenix  
21 Indian Boarding School from 1930 to 1935.

22                   I was fortunate enough to get her school  
23 records as far as I could. She also attended the Sherman  
24 Indian School in Southern California.

25                   We're Luiseño, San Luis Rey Band Mission

1 Indians, but many of them were shipped -- sent from  
2 Sherman, from Southern California, to here in Phoenix.

3 She told me many stories, which I won't go  
4 into today, but -- and I -- I see that park and that  
5 ground as sacred ground. I return to it on a regular  
6 basis because she was one of the ones who survived and  
7 made a successful life as an educator, was mentored by a  
8 family, which is also, I think, part of the investigation,  
9 is that outing program. She was fortunate to be outed to  
10 a professor's family, and they tutored her. She was able  
11 to go to Tempe Teacher's College, which is now ASU.

12 But my concern for today is really as an  
13 adult going back over -- wondering why my family is so  
14 disjointed and so weird. We just didn't have the  
15 relationships that I saw in other families, you know, why  
16 we're so spread out and so disconnected.

17 And through my research, it's really come  
18 down to that separation as a child, of families just being  
19 torn apart and not learning from their Elders, from their  
20 maternal side about how to parent. My male relatives,  
21 about how to be the man in a household. The alcoholism,  
22 the drug abuse that permeated so many of my relatives.

23 And I see it, you know, in my own parenting,  
24 which, you know, I see in my daughter how things that I  
25 didn't do, that my mother didn't know to do because she

1 never had a mother. It was the boarding school. She was  
2 there from age 12. And at Sherman, she was there probably  
3 from age 7 or 8.

4 So it's really, really impressed upon me and  
5 many of my native colleagues how, again, to this day, our  
6 lives have been just continually affected.

7 And then the last thing I would like to take  
8 note of is, I'd like to know where the cemetery was at the  
9 Phoenix Boarding School. As one of the largest native  
10 schools in the country, there had to be a cemetery, and  
11 that's a huge concern to me is what happened to all of  
12 those children that didn't go home, that were never heard  
13 from again.

14 And then also in my research looking for her  
15 records, I have looked upon ledger after ledger after  
16 ledger of names of children and their ages and their  
17 tribes. It's just heartbreaking when you see the  
18 thousands of names that, you know, until now have been  
19 forgotten.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 MS. IGNACIO: I'm really nervous. I didn't think  
23 I was going to be.

24 Madam Secretary and Assistant Newland:

25 (Comments in native language.)

1                   So real quick, that was a loose introduction  
2 of my immediate family, the lands my family comes from.

3                   They call me April Ignacio, and I am  
4 providing testimony on behalf of my family. I am a  
5 citizen of the Tohono O'odham nation, and my family in  
6 particular has five generations of boarding school  
7 attendees and survivors. Thank you for providing this  
8 opportunity to go on record. As we all know, not everyone  
9 has the same experiences.

10                   My family begins in Cedagi Wheia and Mamsk.  
11 These two villages are in present-day Mexico. And as we  
12 know, this is all O'odham Jewed. But in order for you to  
13 understand how my family has been impacted by the boarding  
14 school system here in the United States, we have to go  
15 back to those villages where, as it was told, N-wi'kol,  
16 which is understand in English as my maternal  
17 great-grandfather, was orphaned at a young age and was  
18 raised as a ranch hand in the village of Mamsk.

19                   These family origin stories, that we have  
20 been told over generations, talk about the late 1800s the  
21 United States "boots" would come in wagons as far south as  
22 Mamsk and round up O'odham children. N-Wi'kol was sent to  
23 Carlisle Boarding School and his name was changed to José  
24 Ignacio.

25                   There are debates in our own family on how



1 he made it back to Mamsk, but what we do know is he would  
2 write letters. He would write letters to the man he  
3 worked for, and that rancher would take those letters to  
4 the village of Cedagi Wheia to a young woman who could  
5 read and write in English.

6                   When he finally returned to stay, he  
7 traveled to Cedagi Waheia, and met the young woman he  
8 corresponded with during his time at Carlisle, and as they  
9 say, they fell in love, got married and had many children.

10                   Our family is hazy about the dates, but we  
11 think it was around the 1920s when José and Placita agreed  
12 that things were changing around them, and they wanted  
13 their children to have some opportunities. So they agreed  
14 that having a western education would be beneficial  
15 because the mi'milgans (Americans) were not going to stop  
16 coming. So they migrated to the village of Komkcud  
17 'e-wa'sodisk, which name was changed to Sells after the  
18 BIA set up their agency. It's a familiar story for most  
19 migrants who want to ensure their children have a better  
20 or brighter future. But when they arrived and settled in  
21 Sells, they learned that the agency school was set up for  
22 white children of the BIA agency and Indian Health  
23 employees, so their only option was to send their children  
24 away.

25                   Although I understand that this tour is

1 specific to the federal boarding school system, I think it  
2 is important to state that the federal government was  
3 funding mission churches and giving Christian religious  
4 groups jurisdiction over tribes in the late 1800s to the  
5 1960s. So this part of our family story is about José and  
6 Placita's children who were sent to Tucson Indian School,  
7 which is known to us as Escuela.

8           N-hu'ul (my grandmother) Susie Ignacio Enos,  
9 and si:s (Elizabeth Ignacio Antone), which translates to  
10 my grandmother's younger sister -- which for the purpose  
11 of this testimony, I will refer to her as "younger  
12 grandmother" -- they processed the trauma of Escuela very  
13 differently. The abuse they suffered during their time at  
14 Escuela continues to impact our familia in ways I'm still  
15 peeling back and processing.

16           When my younger grandmother's dementia began  
17 to worsen, she told the same stories. One of those  
18 stories that I can recite was about how they split her  
19 tongue for speaking O'odham. You see, Escuela housed  
20 Akimel and Tohono children. They were sent to Escuela,  
21 and for some of them, it was the first time away from  
22 their families. The loneliness was sometimes  
23 overwhelming, and my younger grandma was a good  
24 storyteller. She was funny. She was beautiful, and she  
25 liked to make people laugh. In fact, I can still see her

1 smile when I close my eyes.

2                   So as she told it, she was caught speaking  
3 O'odham and trying to comfort these children, trying to  
4 make them laugh so they could forget about being sad. The  
5 missionaries heard her and took out clothes pins to teach  
6 her a lesson. And these are not the clothes pins that you  
7 are familiar with today that have the clasp. These are  
8 the ones that were split. She talked about how that made  
9 everything worse, and she sat in the desk for hours with  
10 blood and some saliva overflowing across her hands and her  
11 dress. The trauma of that experience for my younger  
12 grandmother ended with not wanting those same experiences  
13 for her own children. In turn, my aunts and my uncles do  
14 not speak O'odham. And maybe those stories that she  
15 retold were her consciousness of guilt, or maybe it was  
16 the painful memory of Escuela. N-Hu'ul Susie Ignacio  
17 Enos, my grandmother, also attended Escuela, but processed  
18 abuse differently and became one of the first language  
19 linguists for our tribe under Dean and Lucille Saxton. So  
20 two sisters who both attended the same boarding school  
21 during the same time processed and dealt with the trauma  
22 of not being allowed to speak the language in two  
23 completely different ways.

24                   When my mother was alive, she would talk  
25 about understanding the concept of being poor at a young

1 age. She was sent to Southwest Indian School, which is in  
2 Peoria, north Phoenix, here in Arizona. She talked about  
3 being forced to babysit the missionary's children, and  
4 sometimes they would pay her.

5 Her little sister, Marilyn, my aunt, who is  
6 here in the audience with me, was a really good  
7 seamstress, and my mom would always brag on her little  
8 sister. Marilyn was one of the first O'odham  
9 fashionistas. My mom once recalled, before they learned  
10 how to make their own clothes, that she saw her little  
11 sister in the mess hall, and her feet were sticking out of  
12 her shoes.

13 My mom had been saving money to buy herself  
14 some new saddle shoes. (This was back in the '50s.) My  
15 aunt Marilyn was around 7 or 8, but the guilt for my mom  
16 was overwhelming, so she asked one of the missionaries to  
17 buy her sister shoes. When my mom died, she had over 50  
18 pairs of shoes. I'm still trying to understand that  
19 trauma.

20 In my own experience attending Santa Fe  
21 Indian School and being kicked out for being naughty, I  
22 didn't have those trauma-induced experiences. I was  
23 treated well. I learned how to clean like a professional  
24 and take care of myself. They had a great arts program  
25 which I still kick myself for not taking part in that.

1                   My oldest son Micah is a junior and attends  
2 Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, California. He  
3 loves it there. But when I go there, it makes me sad.  
4 The campus is old. It's outdated, and the grounds are  
5 never maintained.

6                   This is my testimony.

7                   Thank you again for providing this  
8 opportunity.

9                   Our experience with the boarding school  
10 system is unique, and oftentimes as Indians, we offer up  
11 humor and laughter as a means to cope. I realize that  
12 within our own family, we scratched the surface level of  
13 this complicated relationship we have with organized  
14 religion, western education, and tend to focus on the  
15 positive aspects of those experiences.

16                   There are multiple layers, but these are  
17 just a few I hope paints a picture of resilience.

18                   N-Wi'kol José Ignacio ended up serving as  
19 the first Chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation known as  
20 the Papago Tribe of Arizona. He and his family migrated  
21 across to ensure his children will receive a western  
22 education. His daughter Susie became a linguist. Her  
23 daughter, my mother, was an educator for the BIA -- now  
24 known as the BIE -- for over 30 years. And for myself, I  
25 own the co-founder of a grass-roots organization called

1 Indivisible O'odham. We focus on federal and state  
2 legislation that impacts the Tohono O'odham Nation. We  
3 organized as much as we could to ensure there was some  
4 representation of Tohono O'odham here at this hearing.

5 We are grateful and appreciate this well  
6 meaningful body of work. We are recognizing this effort  
7 as historical, and we know how much it means to our  
8 hemajkam as we are all affected.

9 Ta hegad thom nei.

10 Safe travels.

11 (Applause.)

12 SECRETARY HAALAND: April, since you have that  
13 written down, if you would like us to take a copy of that,  
14 we would be more than happy to.

15 MS. IGNACIO: I do have a copy.

16 SECRETARY HAALAND: Thank you very much.

17 MS. IGNACIO: Thank you.

18 MS. AZUL: Good morning.

19 Good morning.

20 My name is Dolores Sophie Azul (phonetic).

21 I'm from (inaudible) village, and I'm Tohono  
22 O'odham.

23 My father is Tohono O'odham. My mother is  
24 San Carlos.

25 Both of my parents went to St. John's just

1 down the road. As a result, we went on a relocation  
2 program, another federally funded program.

3                   We were in California, and we were living in  
4 California, going to school in California. And when my  
5 sister reached high school age, they decided to send us  
6 back. I was 12 years old when I was sent to school.  
7 I -- aside from summers, I didn't return home till I was  
8 about 22, so I grew up in a boarding school -- they grew  
9 up in a boarding school -- though it was a Catholic  
10 school. At that time they weren't allowed to speak in  
11 their native language, but we could, and we would when we  
12 could.

13                   And so there were a lot of experiences  
14 there, and my husband sitting here next to me, he went to  
15 Sherman. He has different stories.

16                   But the one thing that kind of -- as far as  
17 the boarding school -- because we talk about being  
18 survivors, and being the wife to a survivor of a federally  
19 funded boarding school -- I felt those, and I still do to  
20 this day, feel the effects of being in the boarding  
21 school, and myself being also in a boarding school.

22                   But the thing that really sticks out is the  
23 roles, like someone -- the lady was mentioning about roles  
24 of people in the family: the parents, the mother, the  
25 father, their roles. And so being away in a boarding

1 school, you don't learn those roles. Or maybe you do pick  
2 up on it just a little bit, at least when you're going  
3 through your teenage years, and so a lot of those things  
4 were not taught. How do you learn those roles?

5 I think the biggest thing as an adult that  
6 struck my mother was when we were watching a show, and she  
7 says, Gosh, was I that bad as a mother? You know, when  
8 you were a teenager?

9 I didn't say anything. But it -- I guess  
10 the look on my face must have said it.

11 And then she said, Oh, I guess not because I  
12 wasn't there.

13 So it really struck me, and I think it  
14 really struck her in how much she missed out on that  
15 mothering role when I was growing up, and how much she  
16 missed out on hers, learning from her mother, because she  
17 was young when she was sent away to school.

18 So that really -- that really struck me, and  
19 that's the one thing that I know with my husband and  
20 with -- I noticed this because I worked at -- I worked at  
21 Santa Rosa, and at the time it was a boarding school,  
22 federally funded boarding school, so I dealt with a lot of  
23 parents who were products of the federally funded boarding  
24 school.

25 And when their kids would get into trouble



1 and the looks on their faces of, like, What did I do? How  
2 did this come about that my children are getting into  
3 trouble? So I noticed a lot of the roles as parents,  
4 people lost out on that. And I see that with, you know,  
5 with my husband. He went to Sherman, and so some of that  
6 was missing.

7                   We have four sons together. It was a  
8 struggle in the beginning when we first got married. I  
9 did everything I could. Luckily, my parents were together  
10 to -- during those summers that I got that sense of  
11 family.

12                   So I did what I could, and I sacrificed, and  
13 I worked really hard to keep our family together. I made  
14 sure that our sons stayed with us, that they didn't go  
15 anywhere. And we did everything we could to get them to  
16 school and make sure that they went to school. We talked  
17 about it, and we did -- I did everything to keep  
18 everything together to bring them in to say, This is  
19 family; this is how things are as family; this is what we  
20 do.

21                   And our sons, they are in their 30s, and it  
22 is still there: that thing of we're family, this is how  
23 we're supposed to be, togetherness, being together.

24                   I have my phone, and I will text. And I can  
25 be texting, and we have our group texts, the family texts.

1 So I'm constantly talking, and it's always having to pull  
2 him into -- okay, this is what's going on. This is  
3 like -- I wonder what they're doing today?

4 Well, he'll be asking me, Where are they at?  
5 What are they doing? You think this, or you think that?

6 And so I'm like, Well, I don't know, maybe.

7 He will be asking me about the family, so I  
8 know that -- I know that it was kind of hard for him just  
9 because he has his stories about how his family was.

10 So it was just this whole sacrifice, giving  
11 everything I could to keep that family together because  
12 it's important.

13 We managed our four sons. We have three  
14 graduated from college. One is working on his second  
15 master's, and one still needs to finish, so it was just  
16 that push, push, push, kind of tying it together.

17 That's the biggest thing is the family, the  
18 togetherness: how is this supposed to be? This is what  
19 it's supposed to like, or at least that's what I think.  
20 Or maybe sometimes that's what you see on TV.

21 But I think that's one thing that was really  
22 missing from people's lives is that togetherness of  
23 family. And I think a lot of us experienced that and are  
24 still experiencing that togetherness, giving what you can  
25 to each other no matter what.

1 (Applause.)

2 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: There is a woman in  
3 the back there.

4 MS. JACKSON: Good morning.

5 Thank you for being here.

6 My name is Desha (phonetic) Jackson.

7 My family, I learned, my maternal, is here  
8 somewhere in 6.

9 My grandfather was named Paul (inaudible).  
10 He took the name from the outfit that was -- that had  
11 built the bridge over the Gila and district (inaudible).

12 And my -- my maternal is from (inaudible)  
13 District 1, here in Gila River.

14 Before that, my family would spend time in  
15 the Komquak (phonetic). My great-grandmother from there  
16 married grandfather here.

17 And then there was family stories of --  
18 from earlier times, earlier times where there was two  
19 brothers who lived here on this side of Gila. And the  
20 land -- the land was chosen out in sovereign way, so they  
21 (inaudible) like how it is today.

22 The memory I have here and the understanding  
23 of what's become, what's happened, and how they came to us  
24 as a people, as a family, is much like the earlier stories  
25 of family unification. Our family was torn apart, ravaged

1 by all of these -- all of these -- not just the schools,  
2 the arrangements. And I'm a product, a person who is in  
3 my 60s.

4 Now, I know my grandmother taught us -- I  
5 learned all of the language. When they named us Pima,  
6 we're -- we were and still are the Akimel O'odham, people  
7 by the river, (inaudible) the Salt River people. And  
8 we're practically old people.

9 So my grandmother, she taught me about the  
10 language as a youngster.

11 You know, I had no idea, you know, after my  
12 education and all. And I thought -- I remember the times  
13 she asked me to something on the table.

14 And I just had so much honor for the  
15 creator. There was so many things around me that, you  
16 know, I'm glad -- you know, this is what they had. This  
17 is what we had.

18 And at the time, you know, I didn't -- I was  
19 talking the language.

20 (Inaudible comments.)

21 And the schools, my grandmother (inaudible).  
22 And we lost my grandmother. She -- I didn't even know she  
23 couldn't speak any English, but at a time when she needed  
24 to communicate, she would. It was mainly the O'odham  
25 language all the time.

1                   Where she got that schooling, her history, I  
2 am in the dark about. I was told to go to the agency, the  
3 Pima agency. I'm told to go there. There are apparently  
4 records there to get that genealogical record. I hope  
5 somebody will some day open that door to us. I would  
6 really like to know that history.

7                   My grandparents are from (inaudible) here in  
8 District 5, Gila River. Their school, Escuela, they  
9 were -- my dad ran away from there several times to go  
10 back home.

11                   You know, a family, the men, boys, the young  
12 men of that family are the ones who helped their parents  
13 and their aging parents. Some ways -- not now -- not  
14 being respected, not being taught, not being heard.

15                   And another point here is that -- what  
16 happened to the little -- my children, hugs, words, deeds,  
17 things you do for them to show love.

18                   When my children, they are now in their  
19 early 40s, late 30s. We would come down to visit. We  
20 were -- and I would tell them, Show your grandpa some  
21 love; go give grandpa some love. And they would run over  
22 and hug him. And he would just look at them. He would  
23 just -- it was -- and there's a -- there was much turmoil  
24 in this life, much, much upset, as well as being a  
25 serviceman.

1                   Actually, I -- he was corps -- with the  
2 Corps of Engineers in the Army. He raised us the best he  
3 can.

4                   Okay. So down to here. It's hard  
5 to (inaudible). I'm pretty sure that -- I know that we  
6 can -- we can -- we need to pull our children out of those  
7 hindrances: alcohol and drugs. We need to teach them and  
8 show them a new way.

9                   And I just encourage everyone, Native  
10 American people, all of us throughout the states and  
11 beyond. Keep your prayers up. Keep your prayers up.

12                   Thank you so much for listening.

13                   (Applause.)

14                   ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: It's 11:30. We're  
15 going to go another 15 or 20 minutes and then take a  
16 break. I think there's -- we have some refreshments  
17 available.

18                   So maybe one or two more speakers. And then  
19 we'll come back from the break.

20                   There's a gentleman here.

21                   Can you raise your hand again?

22                   MR. BLACKWATER: My name is Roland Blackwater Jr.

23                   I'm not too familiar with boarding schools,  
24 but I know my Uncle Kenneth -- I can just remember him  
25 talking about -- I think he went to Escuela.

1 My grandmother went to Escuela, Tucson.  
2 She (inaudible) keystone.

3 Kenneth was older. I remember him talking  
4 about boarding school.

5 My sister Janice Blackwater, she passed last  
6 year. She attended boarding school.

7 But I know there is still a lot of things I  
8 know they didn't want to talk about. We sat around the  
9 table in the evening. I just remember those -- I mean, my  
10 Uncle Ken and my grandma was talking about that.

11 And the only good part about it, the  
12 boarding school, is that, you know, my dad moved us from  
13 Phoenix back to Sacaton in '73 or '72. So my family was  
14 Blackwater, my brothers, they're still around.

15 I'm the oldest of them. I'm 64 years old.  
16 And I married in '78 and moved back to Phoenix. We're all  
17 familiar with Indian School, and I was right around 15th  
18 and Indian School, that's where we lived, and it was all  
19 native around there.

20 So we always tried to go to the Indian  
21 School to play on Saturday morning, basketball, and that's  
22 when they had their practices. We were invited to  
23 practice -- to scrimmage the varsity team, so that was  
24 good for us. A lot of the kids, they were Indian anyway,  
25 so we ran. We ran Rez ball, and that's what they liked.

1 So I was able to run with the varsity team. And we  
2 scrimmaged with them, two, three times in the morning. We  
3 were asked to stay at the junior varsity team. So that  
4 was our -- we were all Rez-balling: Navajo, Apache. But  
5 they liked to run. And that was my thing about the Indian  
6 School. I lived right there in that neighborhood most of  
7 my life, so I was familiar with the school.

8 I remember a lot of people saying when they  
9 had to go to church and stuff, they had to jump the fence  
10 because the church was right across the street. So I  
11 remember that's where they had to go. And I was out -- a  
12 lot of people I talked to said they would jump the fence  
13 and help them there at the church. That was like their  
14 little refuge place. That was always a refuge place for  
15 everybody. That's about the only report I can remember.

16 I remember the old hospital being on the  
17 grounds. I remember my first Powwow there, you know,  
18 things like that. I do remember all of the roads that  
19 were there. I remember when we first moved back to  
20 Phoenix. I remember playing softball on the field way in  
21 the back up near the high school now. There was old  
22 baseball field there, and that's what I remember of that.  
23 Those were good.

24 I just remember it was totally different  
25 because around there, there was a lot of hog farms, a lot



1 of chicken farms, a lot of -- what do you call it? --  
2 grapes? There was just a lot of farms in the area. I was  
3 pretty familiar with that, and a lot of people I talked  
4 to, they did get a lot of the jobs there and amenities.  
5 So it was productive at that time.

6 But there was times you just don't want to  
7 listen to it because it gets you mad, you know. You  
8 wonder why. But, unfortunately, you know, they are human  
9 just like we are. And, you know, this human race is  
10 unfortunate at times. You know, we get aggressive and  
11 mean, and that's not right.

12 But that's the only time we talked about the  
13 boarding schools. I remember my parents, my grandparents  
14 and stuff talking about it, and my sister; I remember  
15 that. She did leave a daughter. She's 40 now. And that  
16 was one of my little sisters, you know.

17 There's just -- I was just sitting here, and  
18 I couldn't remember a lot of those things. But I  
19 remember -- I just remember here and there, what my  
20 grandmother -- what they used to talk about.

21 Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 TRIBAL MEMBER: Thank you.

24 I can't stand very long, so I'm going to  
25 sit.

1 I'm not from this community, but I'm  
2 grateful to be able to be here. I live in Laveen, but I  
3 live on the other side, so.

4 And he just -- he just -- when he spoke, I  
5 could just see some of my friends here shaking their head  
6 because we all remember Reverend Miller across the street  
7 from the boarding school. We would go off to his church.

8 I want to speak mainly about my experience  
9 in the boarding school. I did attend Phoenix Indian  
10 Boarding School. And my dad also attended Phoenix Indian  
11 Boarding School.

12 I, first of all, want to acknowledge my  
13 people. I am Hopi. I'm from the village of Walpi.

14 But I want to acknowledge the Hopi man that  
15 aren't always mentioned about the endeavor they took to  
16 protect their children and were actually imprisoned on  
17 Alcatraz because they would not allow their children to be  
18 taken from their homes, and they hid them in the rocks.

19 And I want to honor all of the parents of  
20 the children that were taken away. If you can just  
21 imagine watching your child be yanked from your arms, not  
22 knowing if you'll ever see them again.

23 I want to acknowledge those parents having  
24 to deal with: I wonder what my child is doing? And a lot  
25 of them weren't very educated, so they couldn't write

1 letters or communicate with their children. I think about  
2 those parents.

3 But what I wanted to share about was my  
4 experience in the boarding school, which was -- I'm not  
5 really sure if it's traumatizing, but it just reminded me  
6 of what things happened in a boarding school that maybe  
7 people aren't aware of that happened there.

8 We, of course, were treated like a military  
9 school. We had detention. We had details. We had to  
10 line up to go eat and come back. For those of you that  
11 were at Phoenix Indian School, I got the privilege to work  
12 at Wohonda (phonetic). It was our little bookstore -- I  
13 mean, our little store.

14 But there was a thing that they did in the  
15 Indian School, and they would send the kids out to do  
16 outings, and what these outings were was the kids could go  
17 out and earn money, spending money. And so they would --  
18 you would volunteer to go out in an outing. And these  
19 people would just come and pick you up. People didn't  
20 really know who they were sending these kids out with.  
21 They'd just come and get them and use them as labor for  
22 the day to do -- to do whatever they could in their homes.

23 I had the opportunity to go out in an  
24 outing, and I was at the Indian School when I was in 7th  
25 grade. I wasn't in high school. I was there in as a 7th

1 grader. And so I went.

2 I wanted to go on an outing. And so a  
3 family came and picked me up and took me to their home.

4 And the task that they wanted me to do was  
5 pick up dog poo in their house. I guess they let this dog  
6 run through their house, and it would go to the bathroom  
7 behind the couch and all this stuff. And they said that  
8 that's the outing that they wanted me to do.

9 And I refused to do it. I was, like, I'm  
10 not going to pick up dog crap.

11 And so they told me that I needed to go back  
12 to the school. So they sent me back to the school.

13 And at the school, I got severely punished  
14 for not doing what that family had asked me to do. And I  
15 was never allowed to go out on another outing because I  
16 refused to do it because I just felt that there's no  
17 reason that I should be doing that.

18 And then I started to wonder, I wonder what  
19 happened to some of these kids that went out in these  
20 outings that nobody ever followed up on them. Could  
21 things have happened to them that they didn't speak about?  
22 Could they have been paid for things that they -- duties  
23 they had to perform? And because, you know, we're taught  
24 at the Indian School that you just follow direction. You  
25 do what you're told. And I just started thinking about

1 those experiences, you know.

2                   Nowadays we're very protective of our  
3 children: making sure that whoever takes our children, we  
4 know where they're going, when they're going to be back.  
5 Have you been fingerprinted? What's your intention?

6                   And I think -- I wondered if those kids --  
7 some of the kids that were in Indian schools were the  
8 first to be sexually molested or to be treated in a way  
9 that was inappropriate for children. You know, we're  
10 just -- we were just young kids trying to earn money so  
11 that we can buy something.

12                   Some of us didn't get the chance to always  
13 be with our parents. But my experience at the boarding  
14 school was, other than that, was basically -- it wasn't as  
15 severe as what I would say my father's experience was.

16                   I don't speak my language. I don't know my  
17 culture as well as I would like to, and that was the  
18 result of the boarding school era because my dad chose not  
19 to teach us because he was afraid that we would be beaten  
20 for it.

21                   And I remember one thing he used to say all  
22 the time is: I'm just a dumb Indian. And I always  
23 wondered why he said that. And he said that's how they  
24 referred to them at the school: that they were dumb  
25 Indians. And I think about that, you know, because when

1 you look at the educational level of the boarding schools,  
2 it wasn't -- it was enough to get you to a trade school,  
3 enough to get you to a point where you could maintain, but  
4 you couldn't really go much further than that.

5           So the education requirements were very,  
6 very low, the standards, and I don't like it when they  
7 lower the standards for native people, never. You should  
8 always increase the standard because we're better than  
9 that, and we can achieve, and I never liked that. They  
10 just brush you aside, Oh, let's make this easier for you.  
11 No, make it harder for us because we can achieve.

12           And so I just remember my first night when I  
13 was -- my first night at the boarding school. I always  
14 thought there was only two tribes in the world: the  
15 Navajos and the Hopis. (Laughter.) Because I was from  
16 the Hopi reservation, and we were surrounded by the  
17 Navajos.

18           But when I went to the boarding school, I  
19 got a Supai roommate, an Apache roommate, and an O'odham  
20 roommate. I had no idea how to communicate with these  
21 people. And it was -- it was a very interesting evening  
22 dealing with ladies, young girls, and how different we  
23 were, but how alike we were.

24           And I think the thing that bonded us was  
25 that we were all scared. We didn't know each other. We

1 didn't know anything about our tribes. A couple of us got  
2 to get along, but we were really afraid of the Apache  
3 roommate. (Laughter.) So it was just -- we didn't know.  
4 We didn't know.

5 And one thing I have to say about the  
6 boarding schools, it did -- it did broaden the horizons of  
7 intertribal marriages. I know a lot of us are products of  
8 mixed marriages because of boarding schools. So I guess  
9 that could be a good thing.

10 But, anyway, it wasn't -- you know, it  
11 was -- it was devastating, I know, for my parents. And I  
12 know that there is some things that I still think about  
13 when I think about my time in a boarding school. I didn't  
14 stay there very long, but in that short time, I -- I guess  
15 I can almost say I'm grateful for the experience because  
16 it made me realize the importance of being a mother, and  
17 the importance of knowing that when you take a child away  
18 from a mother or a father, it can be devastating.

19 Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: I think we can hear  
22 from one more person before we take a break, and after our  
23 break, we'll hear from those of you who want to speak and  
24 haven't had an opportunity.

25 We'll go to this gentleman.

1 MR. HAARSTAD: My wife is shy.

2 (Reading:) Hello. My name is Cheri  
3 Haarstad, and I am an Alaska native. My family and I have  
4 been successfully erased by a native boarding school in  
5 Alaska. My grandmother Olga Berestov was sent to the  
6 Baptist Orphanage at Woody Island, Alaska, back in 1911 at  
7 age 2. I believe she was released in 1928, but my  
8 grandmother Olga never spoke of her time at the boarding  
9 school or that she was from Seldovia, Alaska.

10 I started researching my ancestry about five  
11 years ago. It took several years and help from people who  
12 were willing to help me. I was excited to find out that I  
13 was a great-great-granddaughter of Chief Feodor Berestov  
14 of the Seldovia tribe. As far as I could find out, he was  
15 the only chief or Toion of the tribe. Chief Berestov was  
16 born in 1850 when Alaska belonged to Russia. He passed in  
17 1900.

18 I contacted the tribe, and they told me they  
19 had no idea there were any living descendants of Chief  
20 Berestov. I applied for enrollment but was shocked that I  
21 was denied membership because no direct descendent was  
22 originally enrolled during the 1971 ANCSA settlement. It  
23 was impossible for my family to be enrolled because of the  
24 native boarding school erasure of my family. My mother  
25 never knew of her connection to the Seldovia Tribe, and my



1 mother was never enrolled in any tribe. I am 60 years  
2 old, and I have never had a BIA card until 2008. And it  
3 has my blood quantum incorrect. I am one-quarter Aleut,  
4 but my card states I am one-eighth. I cannot correct it  
5 because in 2008, I did not know that I was one-quarter  
6 Aleut.

7 My family has more history and heritage than  
8 any enrolled member, but I am not enrolled in the Seldovia  
9 Tribe. The ANCSA settlement did not consider that Alaska  
10 Natives that were erased by the native boarding schools  
11 would interfere with enrollment within proper tribes.  
12 This needs to be discussed and changes made to this  
13 oversight.

14 So far the boarding school has been  
15 successful erasing me, kill the Indian and save the man is  
16 what happened to my family. I am a native Alaskan that is  
17 a part of the genocide.

18 I am the great-great-granddaughter of the  
19 one and only chief of the Seldovia Tribe. It is beyond my  
20 understanding that I could be told that I am not one of  
21 them.

22 Thank you.

23 (Applause.)

24 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: So what we will do  
25 now, we're at the one-hour mark. We'll take a break.

1 We've got food for folks. We're going to take a break,  
2 and we'll come back up after for photos.

3 (Recessed: 11:47 a.m. - 1:21 p.m.)

4 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: I'll ask everyone  
5 to take their sheets.

6 Thank you everybody for bearing with us for  
7 the break.

8 First, can we give a special shout out for  
9 our friends from Gila River here who helped prepare that  
10 wonderful lunch and the food for us.

11 (Applause.)

12 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.

13 So our reporter friends have left us. We  
14 still have a court reporter here to make a record. We're  
15 simply going to open the floor back up.

16 We're going to try to go for about 60 to 90  
17 minutes, depending on how this goes, and then take another  
18 break. The breaks will not be as long as the lunch when  
19 we do take them.

20 And when we're getting close to the end,  
21 Secretary Haaland or myself will give, you know, an hour  
22 notice to make sure that if there's somebody left who  
23 really wants to speak, that you are here to do that.

24 So with that, Madam Secretary, I don't know  
25 if you have anything.

1                   Okay. We'll just turn it back over to you  
2 and hear from folks.

3                   So, mic runners, will you please raise your  
4 hands, where you're at? Okay.

5                   If you wish to speak, please raise your  
6 hands and we will find you.

7                   MR. MCGILL: Good afternoon. I'm sorry, but I'm  
8 going to have to stay seated. I'm using a walker and get  
9 tired of standing up.

10                  Anyway, my name is George McGill. I'm  
11 Tohono O'odham from Sells.

12                  I just wanted to share a story with you  
13 about my grandfather. He told me that he was captured and  
14 hogtied probably about early 1890s, I'm guessing, because  
15 they shipped him off to Chilocco, a school in Oklahoma,  
16 and he said he arrived there about 13 years old. And so  
17 Chilocco was kind of a well-known school in our family.  
18 My brother went to school there, and so then I wanted to  
19 go to school there. I'm kind of an adventurous type of  
20 guy and wanted to see the world.

21                  So my mom tried to enroll me in a public  
22 school in Tucson, but I just didn't like it, and I  
23 probably would have dropped out. But I decided I'm going  
24 to go ahead to Oklahoma and stay with my grandfather  
25 because Sells at that time, there was no high schools.

1 Everybody went off to Indian school past 8th grade. You  
2 gotta go past 8th grade. So they were talking about  
3 sending me to Sherman, but I'd rather go to Oklahoma to  
4 Chilocco.

5 So my mom just sent me to Oklahoma, and I  
6 felt my grandfather was still working there, but he had  
7 retired, and he was living in a little town across the  
8 state line called Ark City. He had a little farm.

9 So I got there, and about two weeks after I  
10 got there -- well, in fact, when I got there, I was  
11 looking for him, and nobody knew who he was.

12 And so they asked me what I wanted to do,  
13 and I said I wanted to go to school at Chilocco. They  
14 enrolled me, and so about two weeks later, I finally found  
15 my grandfather. He was living in Ark City, Kansas, which  
16 was right across the state line.

17 And he would come out on weekends, and we'd  
18 go out for a drive, but he forgot the language because,  
19 you know, he never returned home when they shipped him off  
20 to Oklahoma. And my mom -- he kept in touch with my mom,  
21 and my mom would tell him: Why don't you come home? You  
22 still got people here.

23 And he says: No, I just don't feel like I  
24 belong now. It seemed like I grow up in Oklahoma.

25 And that's where he stayed. He went to the

1 Army, served overseas, came back. He ended up marrying  
2 his teacher from Chilocco. And so when he came back from  
3 the service, he married his teacher, and they both worked  
4 there at the Chilocco at the school.

5 And so they both retired, and his wife died  
6 first, and they are both buried Chilocco -- excuse me --  
7 Ark City.

8 I kept saying I wanted to write a book about  
9 him, but it was hard to find information because when they  
10 closed the school down, they shipped, I guess, all the  
11 records to, I believe, Fort Worth.

12 I spent one week in Fort Worth trying to get  
13 information, but there's so much information there, I  
14 couldn't stay any longer.

15 So at that time, I told my classmates, my  
16 colleagues, my alumni people that I knew, to keep their  
17 eye open because I wanted to get any material I can on my  
18 grandfather. I wanted to write a book.

19 I started to and worked with this author.  
20 She wrote a book on Chilocco, and my story is in there, in  
21 her book. And so she helped -- she wanted to help me, and  
22 so we said, well, we'll start it out like a children's  
23 book, and so we did the storyboard, and that's as far as  
24 I've gotten. I will hopefully get enough material to  
25 finish it up.

1                   But he just lost his culture and he  
2 just never wanted to come home.

3                   And yet, us, to me, the O'odham way -- I  
4 think most of the Indians are tied to their land, wherever  
5 you grow up -- whenever you're ready to retire -- or you  
6 want to get married, you usually want to go back home.  
7 But he did try to come, and I wasn't there, when he did  
8 come, so he just went back to Oklahoma, went back to  
9 Kansas, rather.

10                  And so I always think about us being tied to  
11 the land. When I went to school in Chilocco, I had mostly  
12 positive experiences.

13                  The only thing that I probably missed out on  
14 is some of the customs. Like, I'm a fluent speaker; I  
15 speak my language. I speak it fluently, but I can't sing.  
16 I can't sing a song. People have tried to teach me how to  
17 sing our traditional songs, and it bugs me. I just can't  
18 do it. I don't know why. I guess it wasn't meant for me  
19 or what.

20                  My grandfather told us that you're a really  
21 rounded person when you can sing the traditional songs, so  
22 I wanted to learn them, but I never did -- I couldn't pick  
23 up on that.

24                  And another thing, when I first went to  
25 Oklahoma, like around here, we've got mountains, and

1 you're used to the mountains. And you can tell your  
2 directions, which way is north, south, east, west.

3 And when I got to Oklahoma, it's all flat,  
4 and so I got disoriented. So I talked to the guys, and  
5 I'd tell them: east?

6 And they'd laugh at me. No, that's not  
7 east, that's a different direction.

8 So it took me about two weeks to finally get  
9 oriented to where I know where north and south and east  
10 and west are.

11 But all in all, it was a good experience for  
12 me. Like I said, I got to meet people, and I got to see a  
13 lot of the native culture back there.

14 I used to go stay with my friends at  
15 holidays. I hardly ever came home. I'd come home for a  
16 week or two and go back to Chilocco.

17 But I finished in 1960. We have our alumni  
18 association there that is still going strong, but all of  
19 us are getting old now. So for four years, I was the  
20 president of the alumni association.

21 And we do have a cemetery of some of the  
22 kids that died there. And most of them are known, but  
23 there's a few there that are not known, so we do have a  
24 cemetery there at the school, and it was our  
25 responsibility, the alumni association, to take care of

1 the cemetery, and the tribes, the surrounding neighborhood  
2 tribes, are helping us with money and equipment. And so  
3 every year, when we have our reunion, we take care of the  
4 cemetery to remember those that are forgotten and are  
5 buried there. So we remember, try to keep alive the  
6 history, or remember what happened back in the old days.  
7 So we respect all of the ones that have come and gone.

8           But my main story was to let you know when  
9 my grandfather lived -- when they picked him up, he was  
10 probably 13 years old, and he grew up out there and just  
11 never came home. And he's buried out there in Kansas  
12 right now.

13           And so I just wanted to share that story  
14 with you: that he lost the desire to come back home. He  
15 lost the culture.

16           And that's it.

17           Thank you.

18           (Applause.)

19           TRIBAL MEMBER: Good afternoon.

20           Hello, again. I spoke earlier, and I just  
21 wanted to share a little more, you know.

22           You know, there's a lot that is -- that will  
23 not come out. We can only speculate as to what went on,  
24 but I just wanted to relay that, you know, when my dad had  
25 to chastise this disruptive son of his, my younger



1 brother, you know, I wonder what he went through, what my  
2 dad went through, that caused him to run away from that  
3 school in Tucson.

4 But when he made the decision to spank his  
5 son, after doing so, he walked away, and my mother said he  
6 cried. There's -- it's just, you know, it was really deep  
7 for them.

8 And in that sense, you know, we need to  
9 unify, make the world a better place. I don't know where  
10 this is going, you know. Yeah, we need to heal. We  
11 really need to heal.

12 Creator, bless your way forward.

13 Ms. Haaland, thank you for everything you  
14 are doing and have done. Thank you, Lord.

15 Bless your way forward: people, schools,  
16 departments, seniors. We need to get up, and let's blaze  
17 a trail forward. You know, we did, we have, but we need  
18 to take a stronger stance for those that are not here yet.  
19 Let's pull together and move forward.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 TRIBAL MEMBER: Good afternoon.

23 My name is Pamela. I'm from the Morago  
24 family in District 3 of Gila River Indian Community in  
25 Sacaton.

1                   I don't have boarding school stories of my  
2 own because I didn't go to boarding school, but my parents  
3 did. And it took me years to figure out why we were  
4 raised the way that we were. And I never thought that it  
5 had anything to do with boarding school because they  
6 weren't actually at boarding school that long, but they  
7 were there long enough for it to make an impact on how  
8 they raised us.

9                   And I remember one day I was making some  
10 candy to make some popcorn balls, and I had bowl, a Pyrex  
11 bowl, that's from way back when. Pyrex bowls you put in  
12 the oven to bake casseroles. And I had a bowl, and I was  
13 trying to put it on the stove to make this candy, and my  
14 mom said, No, don't do that because it's gonna break.  
15 It's not for the stove; it's for the oven. And I insisted  
16 that it wouldn't break. So she went ahead and let me do  
17 it, and of course, it broke.

18                   And then she told me this story about her  
19 time at Escuela. It's a Presbyterian boarding school in  
20 Tucson, and she said that when they were on kitchen duty,  
21 if they ever broke a dish, washing it or just  
22 accidentally, any kind of dish, cup, saucer, bowl,  
23 anything, that they would take a piece of that broken dish  
24 and cut them with it. And so that's, you know, abusive.  
25 In that sense, I don't know how many kids got cut and how

1 many dishes were broken, but I'm sure they were very  
2 careful not to break anything knowing that would happen.

3           And she also took piano lessons there, and  
4 that was a good thing that she learned how to play the  
5 piano because she got to be a really good pianist. But in  
6 learning how to play the piano, if she made a mistake,  
7 they hit her with a ruler on her hand. And I know now  
8 when you teach children how to play an instrument, piano,  
9 anything, you don't hit them if they make a mistake. So  
10 that kind of stuck with her.

11           And it was also a Presbyterian school, so  
12 their education was also spiritual. So she did believe  
13 the Bible. But as she got older, she realized that those  
14 that were teaching her were not living that spiritual life  
15 that the Bible actually taught. They were not living the  
16 life that they should have been living by the way they  
17 were treating the students there. They were not -- they  
18 were misrepresenting God is what they were doing. And I  
19 saw that in all of the boarding schools that were Catholic  
20 or Presbyterian or some kind of Christian school, that  
21 they were all misrepresenting God.

22           And with my dad, he was also at Escuela at  
23 the same time that my mom was there. And it was him and  
24 his older brother and his younger brother. And my dad  
25 never really shared stories with us about what happened to

1 them there, but apparently they treated the boys worse  
2 than they did the girls.

3           And it got bad enough that the three  
4 brothers ran away from that school. And Tucson is about  
5 70 miles from Sacaton, so they ran away, and they carried  
6 the younger brother on their back. They took turns  
7 carrying him. And they made it back to Sacaton.

8           And at that time, I-10 was not there, and I  
9 don't know what was there, if was just a two-lane highway  
10 or what was there, but they came back to Sacaton. It just  
11 so happened that there was a man from Sacaton that was  
12 coming from Tucson back home. He picked them up, and he  
13 brought them all the way home. But at that time, they  
14 were probably -- they were in elementary school, so the  
15 younger brother was young enough to be carried by the  
16 older ones. So they got back to Sacaton.

17           And my grandmother, their mother, she's from  
18 the Crow Agency. She's enrolled at the Crow Agency. She  
19 met my grandfather at boarding school. And she came back  
20 to Sacaton, and that's where she raised her family.

21           There was a another school there. I heard  
22 another lady talk about a BIA school that they built for  
23 the children in Sells. Well, they did the same thing in  
24 Sacaton. And if you are from the Sacaton, everybody knows  
25 the pink school. That was that school. It was for the

1 BIA white children to go. Everybody else went somewhere  
2 else.

3 Well, when my dad and his brothers got back  
4 to Sacaton, my grandmother went down there and demanded  
5 that they be enrolled in that pink school. And they were  
6 the first native kids to be enrolled in that pink school.  
7 So after that, you know, other kids began to go to school  
8 there. Now it's the Ira Hayes library in Sacaton, but  
9 those were a couple of stories that I heard from them.

10 And what it did was -- and what I see, it  
11 has the same effect on a lot of families that -- all  
12 across Indian country. And Gila River, I think, is  
13 probably our fourth generation of young people struggling  
14 with the language. They don't know it. And I think it's  
15 a result of that because they were not allowed to speak  
16 the language there.

17 And then my dad would not allow us to ever  
18 even think about going to a boarding school, even though a  
19 lot of my cousins went to boarding schools.

20 And the town that I lived in was Ajo. We  
21 were born and raised in Ajo. Me and my brother were the  
22 last two. We were born and raised in Ajo, and the rest of  
23 the other five children went to school and all graduated  
24 from Ajo. And there was a lot of natives in Ajo, but all  
25 of them went to boarding schools. So we ended up being

1 like one of three families that had their children in the  
2 public school in Ajo because my dad would not allow us to  
3 go to boarding school. Because he knew the effects that  
4 it would have on us, and what he went through, and he  
5 didn't want us to go through that.

6                   But as a result of them punishing him for  
7 speaking his language, he didn't teach the language to us  
8 because he thought it was going to be a handicap to us  
9 being in a public school and being around non-Natives,  
10 that he thought that we needed to learn English. And  
11 because he didn't get the proper education that he should  
12 have gotten, education was very important to him. So he  
13 made sure that all of us went to school and went to  
14 college.

15                   I see that trade-off. You know, he did not  
16 know how to live in both worlds at the same time, whereas  
17 now, you know, I see that happening: People are practicing  
18 their culture; they are practicing their songs, their  
19 dances, their ceremonies. But at the same time, they are  
20 getting educated because they know that that's how they  
21 are going to advance. But he didn't know how to live in  
22 both worlds at the same time. So that was the trade-off:  
23 The result was us not knowing our culture, us not knowing  
24 our language to be able to teach it to the next  
25 generation.

1                   So they say that, you know, the seventh  
2 generation was going to bring that back, and that would  
3 have been my daughter's generation, which that's happening  
4 now. My daughter is into the culture way more than me,  
5 into the language, into the dances, and so are her  
6 children. So it's coming back.

7                   But that was a result of the boarding  
8 schools' impact that it had on my family and that I see  
9 everywhere else. But it never clicked until I started  
10 reading about boarding schools.

11                  And even though the things that happened to  
12 -- my parents were not as bad as some of the boarding  
13 schools. And even children dying, you know, that's  
14 horrible, you know. You know, no child -- that should not  
15 happen to any child, and then to hide it is even worse.

16                  But I see the impact that it's had on my  
17 friends, my family, you know, our community, and I'm  
18 thankful that it's coming out into the open because that's  
19 the only way that people are going to heal from it.

20                  Natives, generally, they have a trust issue  
21 because of all of the atrocities from the federal  
22 government, not just from boarding school, but from other  
23 relationships with the federal government. And Natives  
24 just basically have -- don't trust people because of that,  
25 and it's time for healing.

1                   And I'm thankful to you, Secretary, that you  
2 have opened this up and that you have come here and allow  
3 us to speak.

4                   Thank you.

5                   (Applause.)

6                   TRIBAL MEMBER: I have to stand up.

7                   You know, I want to say first thing: I'm not  
8 as bad as my wife made me out to be.

9                   (Laughter.)

10                  Really, you know, like the saying goes, you  
11 don't judge the book by the cover. You never know what's  
12 inside.

13                  Well, anyway, I'm also -- I don't know if  
14 I'm a survivor or a product of the boarding schools.

15                  But, yeah -- excuse me -- (indiscernible).

16                  I went to Sherman High School in Riverside,  
17 California, and that's -- you know, when I look at it,  
18 when I look back on it, you know, I -- that's one part of  
19 my life experiences, you know.

20                  I've heard and I've read, you know, all the  
21 horror stories about boarding schools way back, you know.  
22 Even my family, my uncles, were always talking about the  
23 boarding school or the school in Tucson, Escuela, where  
24 they went, but they just kind of talked about it here and  
25 there. But they never really talked about their



1 experiences there.

2 But, you know, I guess, you know people  
3 that have gone to boarding schools all have had different  
4 experiences, you know, some bad, some good, you know.

5 Mine I guess, you know, were both bad and  
6 good. Some of the bad were my own making, you know, in  
7 the school, so.

8 But I think that the negative part of my  
9 experiences was, you know, being away from my family. I  
10 think it's changed now, but back then you couldn't come  
11 home, you know. We just stayed there, you know, like my  
12 wife had said. I think nowadays, students come home for  
13 the holidays. Back then, you know, they didn't. We  
14 couldn't.

15 But I remember, you know, I remember when I  
16 first got there, I kind of -- I was -- I was lonely in  
17 Iowa, you know, and I didn't like it.

18 You know, somebody was saying the schools  
19 were like, you know, military, you know. You know, you do  
20 certain things at certain times, and, you know, you've got  
21 to obey them. And, you know, I went there, but, you know,  
22 I didn't want to stay there. But, you know, I was hanging  
23 around with some of the other guys from South (inaudible).

24 I pretty much grew up --

25 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Can you hold the

1 microphone closer to your mouth?

2 TRIBAL MEMBER: Oh, okay.

3 I pretty much grew up outside the  
4 reservation. I went to one of the grade schools,  
5 elementary schools, one of the public elementary schools.

6 But when my family, when my mom went back to  
7 the reservation, I stayed behind for about a year, and  
8 then I finally went back -- I mean, went there, and then I  
9 went to school -- a day school there on the reservation,  
10 but I -- within six months, I left for the boarding  
11 school.

12 The thing about it is that, you know, I've  
13 heard about, you know, I heard about other tribes. I  
14 never really met one or saw one, but when I got there, I  
15 was kind of surprised to see all of these other tribes  
16 there. And, you know, I was kind of amazed, you know, the  
17 way they were talking. Some tribes sounded like Chinese.  
18 But, you know, that's the deal, you know. I would say  
19 that was one part of it, you know, that was good for me  
20 was that, you know, meeting the other tribes. Some were,  
21 you know, I got real good friends with them, and I got to  
22 know, you know, a lot of them.

23 But, like I said, you know, the home  
24 sickness, you know, kind of gradually went away, but I  
25 think most of it was because, you know, we stuck together.

1 Like, I know that the O'odham on that side and the O'odham  
2 here, you know, they were pretty close. It was like that,  
3 I think, in most boarding schools. And that's how we, you  
4 know, I think that's a big part of our survival or, you  
5 know, our sense of our health and our mentality, you know,  
6 has been because of being together, you know.

7                   Then, again, you know, I met some real good,  
8 you know, some real good friends, close friends. I met  
9 some close friends from this side. And it's sad to say  
10 that, you know, now, it's sad to say that a lot of people  
11 that we know from these, you know, from these schools are  
12 now pretty much -- most of them are pretty much -- they're  
13 all gone except for a few, you know, diehards, I guess,  
14 like me.

15                   But, like I said, you know, there were  
16 good and bad experiences for me. I learned -- you know, I  
17 learned some stuff that I probably would have never  
18 considered, like joining the orchestra, the band. I never  
19 thought about it, even though I come from a long line of  
20 family musicians and all that. There was some good  
21 experiences, bad experiences.

22                   Again, like I said, those were one part of  
23 my life experiences. And I have learned, you know, some  
24 experiences from there and some, you know, that I still --  
25 but there was some good memories that I still, you know,

1 think about, you know, with all the different tribes that  
2 I'd make friends with and with all those pretty girls that  
3 I met.

4 I just want to tell you this: That was my  
5 experiences, you know, with the boarding schools and all  
6 that. But anyway, that's what I want to say with my  
7 experiences about boarding schools.

8 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.

9 This gentleman in the blue.

10 And I know we've had a few folks up here in  
11 the front, so let's get this gentleman in the blue who  
12 just stood up.

13 And then also just a housekeeping note.  
14 With the microphone, it's -- they are very sensitive, but  
15 it's important to hold it close to your mouth so we can  
16 hear. We're having a difficult time with some of the  
17 speakers.

18 Go ahead, sir.

19 MR. PORTER: Good afternoon, everyone.

20 Am I good?

21 Okay. My name is Beralt Porter. I'm from  
22 District 4.

23 I went to boarding school in 1963, '64. We  
24 all met in Sacaton, the Pima bus, and there was maybe 9 or  
25 10 of us that got in our little, yellow bus with our

1 suitcases, and we were driven to Phoenix Indian High  
2 School. I went to Phoenix Indian High School under the  
3 premise that if I didn't like it, I could walk home.

4           But we got there, and like the lady said  
5 this morning, you know, she was amazed at what she saw. I  
6 was -- I'm speaking for myself -- because when we got  
7 there, and we were looking around the school, we were all  
8 curious. And here comes this huge -- Greyhound buses full  
9 of students. Most of them were Navajos. They had the  
10 Cadillac of buses. They came in, three or four buses at a  
11 time, opened up the bottom, and they brought out all of  
12 their nice suitcases and everything. And we had no idea  
13 that other tribes were there. We didn't know.

14           So, as time went on, the school itself was  
15 not anything close to being what you would call a  
16 military-style school. I would -- later on in my years, I  
17 would look at it as an honor system. You were woken up at  
18 a certain time. You got ready. You went to breakfast.  
19 And the school bell would ring, and you come out of your  
20 dorm and you would go to class. That was all up to you.  
21 You weren't put in a line to go to lunch -- breakfast,  
22 lunch or dinner. We were not that -- it was -- I look at  
23 it nowadays as it was kind of an honor system for us to  
24 get ourselves going and be ready to go when it was time  
25 for you to do something.

1                   I have to say that I graduated from there in  
2 1968/'69, a long time ago. And at that time, our -- the  
3 school, the Phoenix Indian School at that time was what  
4 was considered a class A school. We had over five hundred  
5 students. Our class alone, I think, was like maybe two,  
6 three hundred people, our graduating class. We had one of  
7 the biggest graduating classes there.

8                   Our sports was -- everybody participated.  
9 We couldn't play football worth a darn -- I'll tell you  
10 that -- we got beat all the time by all the schools around  
11 here. But don't try to run against the Indians. We beat  
12 everybody when it came to cross country track and all  
13 that. Basketball, we were good at, but football, we were  
14 terrible.

15                  So I just want to add that -- I just want to  
16 say that those four years, to me, were the best years of  
17 my life. And I've got maybe four other people in the  
18 audience who could probably say the same thing.

19                  And we still -- up to now, there are maybe  
20 15, 20 of us that still get together on a quarterly basis  
21 and call ourselves the Phoenix Indian alumni. We go out  
22 to eat, you know, and talk about the old times. It's all  
23 good stuff. It's nothing bad.

24                  So, that's just -- I wanted to add that to  
25 everything that we have heard so far today. It was

1 positive note for me, and I would say for everybody else  
2 that was there.

3 So, thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 MS. TREMAINE: (Comments in native language.)

6 Good afternoon.

7 I'm Jennifer Tremaine (phonetic).

8 I live in Chandler, Arizona.

9 My family is White Earth Chippewa.

10 My grandfather attended St. Benedict's  
11 campus in Minnesota.

12 I was his caregiver for the last three years  
13 of his life. He never talked much about his experience,  
14 except for describing it as a military school.

15 In the last couple years of his life, he  
16 would have PTSD attacks and night terrors where he would  
17 speak Ojibwemowin in his night terrors and then  
18 immediately follow it with the Rosary.

19 After he passed away, I found maps online,  
20 and you guys were a brand-new organization with just an  
21 executive director and an admin assistant. And I found  
22 St. Benedict's on the list of campuses that you knew  
23 about. And I called, and the executive director spoke  
24 with me for two hours about that campus. And said, Yes,  
25 it is so common for Elders to have referred to this as a

1 military school.

2 About a month after he passed away, we  
3 received an apology letter from the Catholic Diocese of  
4 Minnesota. And that is much more than many families have  
5 ever received.

6 So thank you for being here. Thank you for  
7 listening.

8 I implore you to also look into the ties  
9 between the boarding schools in the 1950s and 1960s -- or  
10 1950s, 1940s and 1930s, and their tie-in with the Indian  
11 Relocation Act of '56, because that is how my family left  
12 our native lands.

13 The first chance he got, he took the money,  
14 went to California and hid his own children in plain sight  
15 so that his children did not have to follow and go to  
16 those schools.

17 And so many of us who grow up in the urban  
18 Indian communities have the same story: We were taught to  
19 hide in plain sight, and we were taught to blend in. And  
20 we were taught to not talk about our native ancestors and  
21 our native history.

22 And I would like to also thank the Minnesota  
23 Housing Coalition for running online Ojibwemowin classes  
24 because it's allowed myself and my daughter to learn our  
25 language, the language that was beaten out of my



1 grandfather.

2                   So thank you. Thank you for being here.

3 Thank you for sharing stories.

4                   (Applause.)

5                   MS. WHITEHAIR: Good afternoon.

6                   My name is Marlana Whitehair.

7                   I'd like to apologize to the Elders for  
8 speaking before you, but I felt so moved by your bravery  
9 and by your courage to speak up today.

10                   I know that I'm not alone, that we had --  
11 that I'm not alone, that I had grandmothers, grandfathers,  
12 great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers who had boarding  
13 school experiences and how it affected them.

14                   Growing up, I never knew nor was I taught in  
15 school about the boarding schools and what happened to  
16 them, and the abuse that they went through and the trauma  
17 that came with it.

18                   I have two grandmothers who are very strong  
19 matriarchs in our family, and I always looked up to them.  
20 It wasn't until later when I grew up that I learned they  
21 had to be strong because of what they went through.

22                   And that -- I know that it's my  
23 responsibility to learn what the history is of our people,  
24 and learn about what they went through and why.

25                   And I'm grateful that I had the family and

1 the community with me to, like, teach me about the history  
2 and about the culture.

3           And I'd like to thank leadership for coming  
4 here on our community and on our land and spending the  
5 time and giving the effort of listening to us and our  
6 Elders. It means so much to us.

7           I would like to hear about the tangible  
8 change that will come out of this. I know that you have  
9 given us the opportunity to speak, but I would like to  
10 know, like, what would happen. I'm grateful for the first  
11 step: the acknowledgment of what happened. It's not only  
12 the Tribe, but to also everyone else.

13           And I would also like to thank and to  
14 acknowledge that we do have other programs, such as ICWA,  
15 the Indian Child Welfare Act, that protects the children  
16 of indigenous families to prevent separation.

17           I know that for our Tribe, Gila River, we do  
18 have a strong community of people who are passionate about  
19 protecting the children.

20           And I would like to thank every one of the  
21 Elders, and our aunties and uncles, that came here today  
22 to spend the time with us, appealing, of learning, and  
23 listening.

24           I would like to thank the volunteers who are  
25 here with us, too.

1 (Comments in Piipaash language.)

2 So, thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 TRIBAL MEMBER: Good afternoon.

5 (Comments in native language.)

6 My name is Myrna, and I say my name to you  
7 in Navajo and in Pima. And instead of saying O'odham or  
8 Diné, I just say Navajo/Pima because when I was growing  
9 up, and I'm 70 right now, my mother didn't really say the  
10 traditional name and neither did my father. I think that  
11 came a little bit later.

12 So I don't really have a boarding school  
13 story for myself. But I know that my father went to  
14 boarding school in New Mexico. And my mother went to  
15 Phoenix Indian High School, and she graduated from there.

16 And in her older years, I asked her one  
17 time: When you went to boarding school, did anything ever  
18 happen to you for speaking your language?

19 She said no. She seemed to have had a good,  
20 positive high school experience, but she did say that when  
21 she went to the day school -- and I'm not sure if that  
22 would be here or in Sacaton -- that when they spoke the  
23 language, that the teacher would get a ruler and hit her  
24 hand. And I don't know if it was this way or this way  
25 (demonstrating). But she would -- the teacher would slap

1 their hand with the ruler for speaking the language.

2                   Now, my parents were two different tribes,  
3 and so they only spoke English to us. My father taught as  
4 much as he could to us. My mother, when I came down here  
5 to Gila River about 15 years ago, when she was aging, I  
6 only knew about 3 words. And then through the efforts of  
7 the Head Start program, revitalization of the language,  
8 and through the language programs that were offered in the  
9 community, I was able to learn much more.

10                   Now, with the Navajo part, that's my more --  
11 I'm more familiar with that. And I've taken classes, and  
12 I know Navajo people, and I've learned Navajo a little bit  
13 more than I did when I was younger, but much more than I  
14 knew the Pima language.

15                   And also here in the community, I'm very  
16 appreciative of the people who have been working with the  
17 language revitalization for the tribe here, through the  
18 museum, and Joyce Hughes, Ernestine Nelson, and Barbara  
19 Parson, and there's a few others that I can't think of.  
20 And also Anthony Gray and James Sanchez, through the Head  
21 Start program, are very vital links to learning the  
22 language.

23                   But I think the effects of the boarding  
24 school comes down to me because of my parents not teaching  
25 us the language. And I know that they would more or less

1 say you need to stick with English because you'll get  
2 further in life, and you need to go to school. So that  
3 was something that through our efforts, my sisters and I,  
4 we -- two of us were teachers, and one -- my sister was a  
5 nurse, and my children are continuing that endeavor. I  
6 have five daughters, and they all have either a bachelor's  
7 and/or an associate's degree.

8           So I think that when we look back, we have  
9 lost a lot. Because when you -- through the boarding  
10 school experience and having to go to school off  
11 reservation, you lose your tribal identities, and you get  
12 far away from it. And then when you marry another tribe,  
13 then it becomes a little bit less and less and less.

14           I have children that are Navajo, Hopi, Pima,  
15 and then my grandchildren are Navajo, Hopi, Pima, Tohono  
16 O'odham and Apache. And I have a great-granddaughter who  
17 is also Mexican, and she's 3-1/2. And bless her heart,  
18 she has a native culture behind her, but she's learning  
19 Spanish, and she's 3-1/2. And she -- you know, I think  
20 that's wonderful.

21           But I really would like to see, so that we  
22 can reconnect with our past, the schools teach much, much  
23 more than they are. Like here, Gila River, we need to be  
24 teaching the language from preschool, not when you get to  
25 kindergarten.

1                   Because when you have a child, the first  
2 thing that you're going to do is communicate with your  
3 child, and you don't communicate with your child when they  
4 are 5 years old and going to kindergarten. It starts at  
5 birth. And so, therefore, we need to have programs at  
6 that age.

7                   That's always been my interest, and I push  
8 it, even at my age now. I'm looking forward to the museum  
9 offering the Pima language classes again in March. And I  
10 continue to study the Navajo language.

11                   And my husband is Hopi, and he -- his  
12 parents went to boarding school. And I think they also  
13 were -- it was ingrained, you know: Speak English; speak  
14 English. So even though his parents were fluent in Hopi,  
15 he didn't learn as much as he would have liked to.

16                   And that also has an influence because of  
17 the influence of the Church, and the Church kind of  
18 separates family from their traditions and culture also.  
19 Not all of them, but in his case, it did. But my parents,  
20 the Church was not a factor in us being where we are  
21 today.

22                   So I thank you all for sharing your stories.  
23 I'm glad that I don't have any horror stories to tell you.  
24 But I hear about them and read about them. And when I go  
25 to the Heard Museum, I do go to the boarding school

1 exhibit, and it just -- my blood boils. I go out of  
2 there, and I am very angry about what happened to the  
3 children.

4                   Like someone said, children died in boarding  
5 schools, but where are they? You know, where were they  
6 put to rest? And I agree with somebody who mentioned  
7 that. They had to have been buried somewhere. But  
8 somehow, you know, they got pushed under the rug. And  
9 it's sad. It's sad. And when I watch certain  
10 documentaries, my blood boils again. I can't read books  
11 about it because it upsets me so much. And I can't even  
12 imagine what our grandparents went through.

13                   My grandmother, my mother's mother, that I  
14 know of, I never heard her speak English. She only spoke  
15 Pima.

16                   My grandfather on my father's side, he spoke  
17 some English, but not very much. And I think that's  
18 admirable.

19                   And what's sad to me is that today, we don't  
20 have that anymore. Most of the grandparents, they speak  
21 English. Or maybe they are bilingual, and our children  
22 are growing up without the traditions, the teachings, the  
23 language, the culture, the music, the dance. You know,  
24 some of it's coming back, but it will never be where it  
25 was in the past.

1                   So I thank you all for sharing. And, you  
2 know, like I said, I'm just bringing a small part of it to  
3 you from my experience.

4                   Thank you.

5                   (Applause.)

6                   MS. SCHURS: Good afternoon.

7                   My name is Carol Schurs (phonetic), Akimel  
8 O'odham from Harshanth Cook, District 2.

9                   Thank you for providing this opportunity for  
10 those of us that survived boarding school. I have many  
11 classmates in the room. We attended St. John's Indian  
12 School down the road.

13                   And I think for the most part it was a great  
14 experience for us. We had fun. We played sports. Some  
15 of my sports people are sitting right here, and we  
16 excelled. We did what we did. I was a majorette in high  
17 school, believe it or not. That's an accomplishment for  
18 me, because I was chubby.

19                   But growing up in the arena of the Church,  
20 very structured church everyday, prayer. But the fun part  
21 was participating in the many sports that we were able to.

22                   We had our jobs, obviously, to build  
23 structure and foundation for us as we grow. I think most  
24 of us started school there in the 9th grade. We all  
25 successfully graduated and moved on to college. And for



1 the most part, I think we're all successful.

2           The thing that sticks out for me is I was  
3 told I would never be successful in life. And I don't  
4 remember what I did to have that told to me. I was amazed  
5 because that came from a priest. I was raised in the  
6 Church.

7           My grandmother was traditional, but a very  
8 devout Catholic. My mother as well. Not my father; he  
9 was renegade. He didn't go to church.

10           But growing up in that environment and to be  
11 told that really struck me, and it stayed with me so that  
12 I have been successful in my life. I graduated college.  
13 I was a council representative for 9 years for my  
14 community. I worked in the Indian Health Care. I was  
15 professional. And thank you to Indian Health, they also  
16 provided my education and lived in different places based  
17 on my husband's career.

18           So, you know, listening to the stories, some  
19 of it for me was not good in the sense that I was told  
20 that statement. But maybe it helped me grow to be the  
21 person that I am today. I'm not sure.

22           But I'm thankful for the time that I went to  
23 school at St. John's because, for the most part, we had a  
24 lot of fun. And dancing, you know, you had to be careful.  
25 We couldn't dance a certain way in the era of the Twist.

1 We had to hide and dance. My favorite group, the Beatles,  
2 well, we had to put our radios under the pillows to listen  
3 to our music that we wanted to listen to, not the music  
4 that the sisters wanted us to listen to. But overall,  
5 there were good experiences.

6 And thank you, Secretary of the Interior,  
7 for providing this opportunity. We just thank you so  
8 much.

9 Thank you to Governor Lewis for inviting us  
10 today, and it was a good session.

11 Thank you.

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. CHARETTE-KLEIN: Good afternoon.

14 My name is Ramona Charette-Klein. I'm from  
15 the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, up in North Dakota,  
16 about 7 miles from the Canadian border.

17 I winter in Arizona, so thank you for your  
18 hospitality today. I spend October to May here.

19 I do a little bit of contact work with NABS,  
20 and I asked their office to let me know if and when they  
21 were going to be in Arizona, so I could be here to support  
22 the cause.

23 In May, I was very fortunate and honored to  
24 speak on behalf of all of us who are survivors of the  
25 boarding school era because I spoke to Congress in hopes

1 of passing some bills.

2 I don't know if I'm a survivor or if I  
3 conquered. But I attended the boarding school in Fort  
4 Totten, North Dakota, from 1954 to 1958. I've got gray  
5 hair, and I don't care.

6 But I want to share with you today just a  
7 little bit. As I listen to your stories, I try to reflect  
8 and think: How does that impact me and my experience?

9 So I will share with you my personal  
10 experience of abuse. There was physical abuse. And I  
11 really want to know if there were manuals on how matrons  
12 and teachers were taught how to treat us. Because as I  
13 listen to stories, and I listen to people talking about  
14 their experience, I swear there had to be training on how  
15 to treat children who were taken from their families, for  
16 no other reason than we are native.

17 And to beat us. When I shared about a board  
18 of education, people knew what I was talking about. And  
19 it wasn't a governing board. It was a paddle. I had  
20 bruises on my back, from here to my buttocks, to my upper  
21 thighs, from being beaten. I know what it's like to kneel  
22 on a broom handle or a mop handle and get beaten with that  
23 because I was a child. Because there were no -- there  
24 weren't any -- there weren't any toys or anything to  
25 engage us in, so we played during the night.

1                   The matron would come in and get me out of  
2 the bed. And she would say to me, Ramona Charette, you  
3 get over here. So I could get over there. And I would --  
4 7 years old. And as you can probably tell, I'm a little  
5 under tall, and I was little as a child. So I would kneel  
6 on that board -- on that broom handle with my arms  
7 outstretched as she would beat me.

8                   One night she said to me, Ramona Charette,  
9 you get out of -- face the wall, after I got back in bed.

10                  And, you know, when I was kneeling on that  
11 handle, I distinctly remember -- I distinctly remember  
12 saying to myself: You are not going to get the best of me.  
13 You're not going to take from me. That has helped me  
14 through the rest of my life.

15                  But at that moment, I thought, You're not  
16 going to get the best of me. And she beat me. Then I got  
17 in bed, and I sleep like this (demonstrating), still do,  
18 and I was looking at -- I was looking at the wall, giving  
19 her the staredown. You ever give anyone the staredown?  
20 You know what I'm talking about. So I would give her the  
21 staredown.

22                  And she said to me, Ramona Charette, you  
23 face the wall. And I said, Ms. Gaddess (phonetic), there  
24 are four walls in here. I am facing the wall. Guess  
25 what? I got to get out of bed again and get hit again.

1                   After those experiences, I did not cry for  
2 decades. 65 years ago, January 12th, my father died  
3 while I was in boarding school. I did not cry because  
4 they were not going to get the best of me.

5                   So what impact did that have on me? That  
6 impact, that experience, impacted my entire life. I'm  
7 75-1/2 years old. It's difficult to trust. It's  
8 difficult to trust emotionally. It's difficult to trust  
9 just even sometimes in a conversation.

10                   Or whether somebody's going to show up. I  
11 experience feelings of abandonment because I think of my  
12 mother standing on that sidewalk as we were loaded into  
13 the green bus to be taken to a boarding school.

14                   And I can see it -- still have the image of  
15 my mom burned in my brain and in my heart where she was  
16 crying. What does a mother think? She was helpless. You  
17 either starved and froze -- we were in North Dakota. It  
18 was cold. "Was there a choice?" someone asked me.

19 "Didn't your parents have a choice?" Those of us who  
20 lived it, we said, "No, there was no choice. That isn't a  
21 choice." So trusting and feelings of abandonment.

22                   Lack of confidence: How many times have I  
23 been told that I'm a dumb Indian or that you can't learn  
24 over the years of going to -- attending those kinds of  
25 schools.

1                   The feelings of loneliness when you hear  
2 other kids crying at night. I still sometimes, when I  
3 think about it, can hear the other girls crying.

4                   Someone said they went to the Heard Museum.  
5 The school I went to is there. The exhibit that I went to  
6 school at is there. When I visited the Heard Museum, I  
7 thought, is that the brown bunk bed that I slept in?  
8 Because it's there.

9                   But that feeling of loneliness, and it could  
10 happen at any time.

11                   The feeling of hunger: My husband is sitting  
12 right here, and sometimes he chuckles at me when I go  
13 grocery shopping because I like food. I like to have my  
14 pantry stocked because of hunger -- because of the hunger.  
15 And I don't let anybody go hungry.

16                   There's a distance between my siblings and  
17 myself. I have -- there were four brothers, four full  
18 brothers, who are now deceased. But we didn't see each  
19 other.

20                   Someone asked me: Do you like to visit your  
21 sister? I said, you know, I like the idea of a sister. I  
22 have no idea, really, what that relationship is like. I  
23 envy people who say they have this relationship with their  
24 siblings. That, I think, was stolen from me.

25                   I hear people talking about their positive

1 experience. And when I think about my experience, I also  
2 have some positive experiences. And from a 1st grade  
3 teacher -- I was in 1st grade when I went there -- but she  
4 was not my teacher. Her name was Ms. Thelma Daggs  
5 (phonetic). I believe at the time she was the only black  
6 person in North Dakota. That woman took me under her  
7 wing, and she taught me lessons that I use today.

8 She taught me the word errands. Go and do  
9 an errand for her. And when I would do that errand, she  
10 would pay me. So the lesson I learned was that if I work,  
11 I get paid.

12 The lesson she also taught me would be  
13 rewarded. She would have saltine crackers on the radiator  
14 with peanut butter. After I was finished doing chores, I  
15 would get a snack. So when I have saltine crackers and  
16 peanut butter, I think of Ms. Daggs.

17 She bought me the first toy that I ever  
18 remember having, because we didn't have toys at the  
19 school. She bought me 20 jacks, two sets of jacks, 20  
20 jacks and two balls, so I could participate in some of the  
21 tournaments.

22 But Ms. Daggs left a positive impact on me.  
23 She taught me that if I worked, I got money. She taught  
24 me the difference between -- that it was okay to make a  
25 mistake, because there is a difference between Oreo

1 cookies and -- the other one -- there is one milk  
2 chocolate and one dark chocolate -- Hydrox cookies. But I  
3 learned those things from her. And she has left that  
4 impact on me.

5 But that boarding school, somebody said: Did  
6 the boarding school experience change you?

7 I have no idea because that's the only  
8 experience I have. I really don't know what I would have  
9 been like had I not attended that school. I don't know.

10 I know what it feels like to be abandoned.  
11 I know what it feels like to be lonely. I know what it  
12 feels like to have a man's hands rub over a little girl's  
13 body in the middle of the night. I know what it's like  
14 when I hear that man walking down the hallway and you can  
15 see the lights from around the halo from around the  
16 flashlight looking for someone to touch. Those are  
17 the -- that was the kind of experience I had at that  
18 boarding school.

19 Has it impacted my life? Absolutely.  
20 Absolutely. It took me decades and decades to trust.

21 I am an educator. And I hope I took that  
22 experience to make a difference with the students I  
23 taught.

24 Do I have flashbacks? Absolutely.  
25 Absolutely. I have flashbacks. And it changes all of the



1 time.

2 Thank you for sharing your stories today.  
3 Thank you for connecting. Thank you for your hospitality.  
4 I appreciate you being here and to help this  
5 cause.

6 Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. STEVENS: Good afternoon.

9 My name is Yolanda Hart Stevens.

10 I'm very grateful to be here and very  
11 grateful that you have come to our community out here on  
12 the West End. Some of us here are Piipaash and have had  
13 the same experience but in a slightly different way.

14 My mother went to Phoenix Indian School. My  
15 father from Fort Yuma, he didn't go to Indian School. My  
16 grandparents were at Phoenix Indian School. Not a good  
17 experience. And most of my Elders shared a lot of the  
18 things that they went through.

19 And I went there in '70/'71, Phoenix Indian  
20 School. And you know, I was there. I was in town. I  
21 mean, it was crazy. I didn't know how to be. I didn't  
22 have anything.

23 And somehow, you know, I was in the Dezba  
24 Dorm. There was a north side and south side. But there  
25 was also a good girls' side and a bad girls' side. I was

1 on the bad girls' side.

2                   Because when, you know, we got -- we were  
3 told to do things, you know, I was rebellious, and I would  
4 swing back. So I ended up on the bad girls' side. Stayed  
5 there for a year. I was 12 years old.

6                   So in my mind, I was always a bad girl, you  
7 know. Always not much to expect to me. Not much to -- no  
8 high hopes for me. And so 12 years old. You know, I look  
9 at 12-year-olds today, and I think my god, you know, the  
10 things I was told and the way that I was treated, the  
11 things that happened with that mentality, the talk, the  
12 words, just the mentality in and of itself, I think, you  
13 know, no wonder.

14                   But, you know, being there I met a lady,  
15 Mary Louise Frenchman. She was Sioux; right? Sioux. And  
16 I just recently got reacquainted with her. And I didn't  
17 get along with her. She was one of the teachers, English  
18 reading teachers.

19                   Then one day she told me she was Native,  
20 too, and I never -- I was shocked. 12 years old, bad  
21 girl, not worth much. How does a Native person get  
22 educated and become a teacher? How could she be my  
23 teacher? You know, and from that time forward, '70/'71,  
24 you know, I always thought of her. She never left my  
25 mind. And like I said, she came to see me last year, and

1 we got reacquainted after all of these years.

2 She was a light. You know, she was it from  
3 that time. I met a lot of people. I look around here  
4 today, and I was looking for some of my classmates there.  
5 And I don't -- maybe I don't recognize anybody, but I  
6 don't see many. I don't see anybody.

7 But, you know, the other side, too, was that  
8 sitting here, I can relate to what people -- the stories  
9 that people were telling.

10 And my daughter was here with me earlier.  
11 She's a young lady. I mean, she's 40 years old, but she's  
12 my daughter.

13 And her father and the 10 brothers and  
14 sisters, they all went over here to St. John's. And they  
15 had their own experience.

16 But she's always heard us refer to boarding  
17 school one way or another. And somebody was telling a  
18 story earlier about shoes. And she kind of laughed, you  
19 know, looked at me. And she said, Is that kind of why you  
20 have a shoe hang-up? And I'm like, Yes. And she kind of  
21 laughed, and she started crying. And she sat here and she  
22 just cried listening to the stories. Is that what you  
23 guys really went through? I mean, she's not a kid, but  
24 she is -- it's not that she didn't believe, but all of the  
25 stories that you guys have shared today have really

1 brought it to light for her. And she left. I was just  
2 talking to her, you know. And she's still having a hard  
3 time. You know, knowing that this was the life that we  
4 lived, myself, my mom, my grandfather, you know. All of  
5 the stories he told, same thing, same thing, you know.

6           Again, you know, we are Piipaash, from here.  
7 My father is Kwatsáan from Fort Yuma where I came from. I  
8 was born there and then came this way.

9           But because of that, because of boarding  
10 school, my mom enrolled me when I was 12. And years later  
11 when I got in my late 20s, early 30s, because I was dually  
12 enrolled and didn't know it, 'cause I was born over there,  
13 I got disenrolled from both tribes.

14           And I got mad. And I'm like, I don't need  
15 guys, tribal people, you know. I don't need nothing from  
16 you. I had my three children; I have a son and two girls,  
17 and I went three years without tribal status. And I  
18 didn't care, you know.

19           I still showed, you know, Santa Fe and  
20 Heard, you know. I know who I am. I know where I come  
21 from. But I still had to have that tribal ID, and I was  
22 really mad at tribal government, period, anybody, that  
23 they can do that to us. They can look at me one day and  
24 say, Okay, scratch you off the list; you're not an Indian  
25 anymore. I won't repeat what I said to a few people. But

1 unfortunately, I had to get back to have a tribal status,  
2 not for myself, but for my kids. Because it came to the  
3 point where if anything happened or something, you know,  
4 they lose their tribal status. That came from the Indian  
5 School. That's kind of a weird situation.

6 But, you know, so anyway, she's hearing all  
7 of these stories, and she's sitting here. And like I  
8 said, she said, You guys made it really real, whoever  
9 spoke, and whoever spoke to her, you really brought it to  
10 life.

11 The whole idea that this is a healing  
12 session, this is healing; it's good that she has an  
13 understanding. It's good that she doesn't have to always  
14 believe Mommy. She's hearing it from everybody else, that  
15 that's the reality, the harsh reality.

16 And maybe I am a bad girl. Maybe I'll be a  
17 bad girl all of my life, you know, because that's what  
18 they told me. I don't care, you know. I know who I am.  
19 I know where I come from. And we are pipa kivay  
20 (phonetic) from here. You're on the West End. So when  
21 you guys go back that way, don't just say "Gila River."  
22 You say, "West End." That's where you're at.

23 (Laughter.)

24 One more thing very quickly, you know,  
25 again, back to the healing -- that's right, Governor, West

1 End -- you know, one thing about the healing is that, I  
2 would like to acknowledge, I would like for you to  
3 acknowledge, you know, there are, for instance, Idyllwild  
4 Indian School, in Idyllwild, California, in Mountain  
5 Kuwaya (phonetic) territory. Those guys are doing amazing  
6 things.

7 My friend Wendy took me up there in '95.  
8 I've been going up every year. My girls went to summer  
9 school there. They offer a lot. It's a different kind of  
10 boarding school, so to speak. But I think that needs to  
11 be acknowledged. I think what you're doing -- this  
12 healing is all about our expression of the things that  
13 happened that weren't good, but on the other hand,  
14 Shaliyah Ben is doing things in Idyllwild, California, for  
15 the Mountain Kuwaya in many of us.

16 So there is some light. It can be taken a  
17 different direction. There are positive things that are  
18 coming from this whole situation, and, yes, that's going  
19 to be a part of the healing because in the Indian way, you  
20 don't have all dark, you've got to have the light, too, to  
21 have the balance. And I think that's the light.

22 I continue to go back there. My  
23 granddaughter is 13. She's going to be starting high  
24 school over there at the boarding school, and yet we talk  
25 about this. That's Summer's daughter. And she went home,

1 and she was telling her about what it was like; what she  
2 heard.

3                   So these are just some things I would like  
4 to acknowledge, you know: that there are some positive  
5 situations that are coming from it because of this. It's  
6 not going to, you know, fix things, but, you know, a part  
7 of the healing is going in a different direction. And,  
8 you know, you've touched on everything that I've  
9 experienced.

10                   And I have to say about the language, I  
11 mean, no disrespect to anybody, but, you know, I was  
12 growing up and being a bad girl, you know, and being in  
13 town, you know, my mom would say to me, learn how to talk  
14 like the white people. Go do this and talk for us because  
15 you know how to talk like white people, and that was the  
16 mentality. No accent. Talk like a white woman. And I  
17 didn't know, but my mother told me that, and that's what I  
18 did.

19                   And today, I guess I'm presenting myself as  
20 Native, Indigenous, here in Indigenous Country but  
21 speaking like a white woman. And that's okay, because I  
22 get that, too, from people: Oh, you look all Native, but  
23 you sound like a white woman. I get that. But you've got  
24 to laugh, all of these little weirdo things that happen  
25 along the way.

1                   And I believe to be attached to that  
2 mentality, that upbringing, and especially, just the  
3 total, total, desecration of our people, my Elders, my  
4 family -- but we're going to survive it just like we  
5 always do. We have to find a good way, keep a good  
6 attitude.

7                   And, again, I really ask you to try to  
8 incorporate something with Shaliya Ben in Idyllwild School  
9 of Arts. It's really developing. If you're not familiar  
10 with it, I'll make sure you get the information.

11                   Thank you.

12                   (Applause.)

13                   ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Here first and then  
14 here.

15                   MS. JACKSON: Good afternoon.

16                   My name is Laverne Jackson. I live here in  
17 District 6. My family comes from District 3.

18                   My mother is the late Shirley Ann Evans  
19 Jackson. She grew up in Blackwater, District 1, and  
20 that's where she's laid to rest.

21                   My father is the late Verton Jackson, Sr.  
22 He's from Snake Town, and that is where he is laid to  
23 rest.

24                   And in the mid-'70s, my mother -- we moved  
25 here. It was a housing issue. It was a problem back



1 then, just as it is today.

2 She moved us here across the street to the  
3 HUD housing. We came from Sacaton, and where we lived, we  
4 had an outhouse, no running water, no electricity, and we  
5 lived in my Grandpa Henry Shurz's home. It was a little  
6 shack, and we called it the sugar shack. It didn't look  
7 like much from the outside, patched up with ply board and  
8 cardboard, and his home is where the last recognized chief  
9 Antonio Azul, where his home was. That's where we lived.

10 So when we moved here, to 205 Redbird  
11 Circle, we thought we were rich. We had running water.  
12 We had an inside toilet. We could flip the switch and the  
13 lights could come on. Little did we know we were living  
14 in HUD housing, but we thought we were rich.

15 So we grew up here. I believe I was 4th,  
16 5th grade. We lived here, and my mother became associated  
17 with all of the women here from the parish: the late Sally  
18 Pablo, Ruth Giff, Marcella Giff, Phyllis Giff. They just  
19 kind of took her under their wing, and she got involved  
20 with the Catholic church here.

21 And the thing that comes to mind, after  
22 sitting here listening to everybody: We went out to  
23 forage; we went out to Santa Cruz with all of these women  
24 to pick spinach. And they gave us knives to cut the  
25 spinach. And we stayed out there all afternoon. And all

1 they were doing was speaking O'odham, and they were  
2 laughing. And I didn't have a clue what they were saying,  
3 but all that morning, and into the afternoon, we finally  
4 came home. We went back to Sally's house and made -- they  
5 processed the spinach.

6 So we finally went back home to 205, and I  
7 told my -- I asked my mother, What were you guys talking  
8 about? I said, It sounded so beautiful to hear you guys  
9 speak the language.

10 And she goes, Oh, just this and that. And,  
11 you know, They were just talking crazy.

12 And so I asked her, and I had never asked  
13 her this question before, I said, Why didn't you teach us?  
14 Teach me? Teach us how to speak Pima?

15 And she got emotional -- sorry if I do.

16 I was sitting here telling my friend here.  
17 He is a teacher here in the agriculture department. I  
18 said, I want to speak, but look at my hands; they are just  
19 shaking. And he said, I'll ask for the mic for you.

20 So my mother's response was, she started  
21 sharing the story with me of what happened to her when she  
22 went to Escuela. She said, We used to get punished for  
23 speaking O'odham.

24 And she said, One time, I was caught and my  
25 teacher reprimanded me. She said that she was put in

1 trouble, kind of like what people call time-out now. But  
2 she wasn't allowed to leave the room that they were  
3 staying in, and she couldn't go eat.

4 She said her and her friend tried to -- they  
5 thought they could just walk back to Sacaton to Blackwater  
6 where she was from. So they tried to walk away, but they  
7 caught them, and they took them back. So she was in  
8 trouble.

9 So to avoid the punishment she said she hid  
10 in a trunk that she kept her clothes in. And I don't know  
11 if you remember those big trunks that you could pack your  
12 stuff in; she said she hid in there. And then her friend  
13 would bring her food to eat.

14 And she cried about it. She said, That's  
15 why I never taught you because we always -- before here,  
16 we always went to the public school. She says, I didn't  
17 teach you because I didn't want you to be beaten. I  
18 didn't want you to be deprived of anything for speaking  
19 your language. That's why I never taught you, just  
20 because of the things that I went through. And she went  
21 to Escuela.

22 My grandmother, her name is Edith Azul, a  
23 direct descendent of our last recognized chief, Chief  
24 Antonio Azul. She also went to Escuela. And my cousin  
25 Roland was here, and he spoke about it.

1 I never asked her questions about anything  
2 she went through. But, you know, just hearing that from  
3 my mother, it was sad to hear. She never spoke about it.  
4 She never spoke about it, other than that time, that  
5 story.

6 She told me that she and her brother, George  
7 Evans -- she said, I don't even know how old we were, but  
8 we were small. Somebody took us in the back of a Model T  
9 Ford, and we had to sit in the rumble seat all the way to  
10 Tucson. She said, It was hot, and we had to stop and put  
11 water in that little truck, whatever it was. And we got  
12 there --

13 And I said, Well, when did you come home?

14 She said, I don't ever remember coming home.

15 I said, Well did your mom go visit you?

16 She said, No, because she didn't have the  
17 money to come.

18 So I don't know how much years they went  
19 without being able to visit.

20 So those are just a couple of things that I  
21 wanted to share.

22 I have a photo album that belonged to my  
23 grandmother that I'd like to try to get archived. I  
24 wanted to bring it here today to see -- just to show, and  
25 it looks very militarized.

1 I forgot. I wanted to share: I asked my  
2 mother what her punishment was. One of the punishments  
3 that she got was she had to pick the lice out of other  
4 little girls' hair as punishment.

5 Another thing I wanted to share, and it's  
6 hard for me to share this part because I've shared it with  
7 very few people. As a child, I was abused sexually, and  
8 it was by -- not an immediate family member, but an  
9 extended family member. And this person told me that if I  
10 ever told anybody that he would kill my mother and cut her  
11 up and bury her in different places where she could never  
12 be found.

13 So after that, I never spoke. I was afraid  
14 to speak because I was afraid that that would slip out and  
15 I would share it with somebody. So all my life, I've been  
16 kind of a quiet person. I don't say much, but when I do,  
17 I try to speak my mind.

18 I wouldn't talk as a child. So we went to  
19 Monroe School in Phoenix. I believe I was maybe in  
20 kindergarten, 1st grade. And I wouldn't speak because I  
21 was afraid that I would tell someone what was going on.

22 So my teacher thought I was deaf. So they  
23 did all kinds of hearing tests, and they found out, No,  
24 she can hear.

25 So then she thought that I was Mexican, and

1 I didn't know how to speak English. So they put me in the  
2 bilingual class, and I just sat there. I didn't know what  
3 was going on. I just sat there day after day.

4 And one day I really had to use the  
5 restroom, so I raised my hand. And the teacher called on  
6 me, and I said, May I go to the restroom?

7 And she said, You speak! You speak! You  
8 speak English! And they were all amazed.

9 I got to go to the restroom, and they sent  
10 me back to my regular classroom.

11 So this abuse went on, but as I -- it was  
12 something I had to deal with, you know, growing up.

13 And as I became an adult, we went back to  
14 Sacaton for a funeral or something. And I came  
15 face-to-face with the person who abused me as a child.  
16 And all of those feelings came back over me: the terror,  
17 the pain, the embarrassment, the guilt. Because I always  
18 thought it was my fault.

19 And when everything was over, we were  
20 getting ready to leave to go back to Phoenix. And I must  
21 have been about 18; I'm not too sure. And I thought, I'm  
22 going to confront this person. And he was old by then. I  
23 was scared. I was terrified, but I made myself go.

24 And he had this look on his face because he  
25 knew; he knew what he did to me.

1                   And I just said, Hello, how are you doing?

2 I said, I'd just like to talk to you.

3                   And he seemed terrified. I said, I just  
4 want to ask you a question.

5                   He said, What's that?

6                   I said, Why did you do that to me? I was  
7 powerless as a child. Why did you do that to me?

8                   So we just started talking. And he started  
9 talking about his boarding school experience. He said, I  
10 guess that's where I learned it. He said, When I was a  
11 small boy, that's what they did to me. And I think that's  
12 where I learned it. Because after coming home, that was a  
13 sickness that I had.

14                   So I just wanted to share that.

15                   A lot of people came home -- and like the  
16 Elder over here said -- as products. So this man, in his  
17 old age, I was finally able to confront him.

18                   I'm sorry. I'm shaking again.

19                   He came back. He was a product of the  
20 boarding school.

21                   But I had to forgive him so that I can be  
22 okay, and I told him that. I said, I forgive you. I  
23 lived with it. I became an alcoholic dealing with that  
24 trauma. And that's a direct product of this boarding  
25 school system. He was a product. My mother was a

1 product. And I feel that the system robbed me. It robbed  
2 me of my language, and it robbed me of my childhood.

3 But I know that after getting sober and  
4 obtaining sobriety, that I had to forgive all of the  
5 people who hurt me. And I've learned that the addictions  
6 that people face come from a place of pain. And I see it  
7 when I go down to 51st and Baseline. I see all of those  
8 young kids out there hooked on Fentanyl.

9 And I just think, God, I wonder what they  
10 went through. I wonder what it is that's driving them to  
11 that. And I know that Fentanyl is a whole other monster.

12 But it's intergenerational trauma where they  
13 are lost. They don't know who they are because our  
14 culture was taken from us through that school system. Our  
15 language was taken from us through that school system.

16 But I want to thank all of the language  
17 teachers that are here, and Governor Rhodes for  
18 making education and culture one of his big initiatives.  
19 And he's pushed it ever since he's been in office. And  
20 I'm very thankful for that. Because I'm able to take the  
21 classes and learn, learn how to speak our beautiful  
22 language that I heard as a child. It's like hearing  
23 someone talk -- read poetry. That's how I see it and how  
24 I hear it.

25 I just wanted to share those couple of



1 stories. There's more. You know, everybody has the  
2 trauma stories, and we do have some good stories, too.

3 My mother met a lot of sisters at that  
4 school, people that were from her community that went, and  
5 they all became close, and they were close until her dying  
6 day.

7 But I feel that the boarding school robbed  
8 me. And I'm 60, and I'm barely able to publicly speak  
9 that. I feel robbed.

10 But I want to thank everybody for being here  
11 and sharing and giving me the courage to share.

12 And this is a monumental day -- I don't know  
13 if we all realize it -- to have these dignitaries here.  
14 This has never happened before in our Indian country.

15 But when you go to the other end -- I want  
16 to kind of piggyback off of what Mrs. Hart said -- it's  
17 the West End. But I always call it when I go to the other  
18 end, I call it the Best End.

19 Are you going home, now?

20 Yeah, I'm going back to the Best End. So  
21 that's how I refer to it.

22 But thank you.

23 (Applause.)

24 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: We'll come over  
25 here to this speaker, then we will take a short, you know,

1 10-minute break for water and refreshments. And then  
2 we'll, I think, reconvene after that.

3 MS. SUN: Good afternoon.

4 My name is Janice Sun. I'm an Elder. I  
5 come from Piipaash Chumish (phonetic), the People's  
6 Nation, Maricopa colony. I'm also an Elder. I reside in  
7 District 7.

8 And I want to speak about my grandparents.  
9 They spoke the language fluent. They were fluent.

10 My mother -- they were also whipped when  
11 they were in school. They were told to speak English.  
12 These stories were told to us when we were small.

13 I attended St. John's mission school. I was  
14 also told put your hands out, and I was whipped with a  
15 ruler.

16 I felt it firsthand. I'm not fluent, but I  
17 did have the opportunity to go to U of A and work with the  
18 language. Our family hosts our songs. And we were raised  
19 traditionally.

20 So I just want to come before you today and  
21 thank you for coming out to hear this. And to try to make  
22 change for the future generations to come.

23 I come to you today to state for the record  
24 that the intergenerational grief from historical trauma  
25 experienced by my family members, meaning my grandparents

1 and my mother, others in the Indian Nation First Country.

2 I just want to say that it is passed from  
3 generation to generation due to forced relocation, land  
4 dispositions, loss of spiritual practices, languages.

5 Language and culture and our livelihood and  
6 spiritual ways are not the same as -- our spiritual ways  
7 are not the same as the Akimel O'odham. We have no voice.  
8 We have no cultural representation.

9 The current tribal reservation officer does  
10 not know our traditional ways or beliefs, sacred sites and  
11 burial grounds. Culture and identity is combined with our  
12 history, health and our land since time immemorial.

13 We are a minority in a genocide in 2023 with  
14 the mentioned issues. And I call upon you today for  
15 change. Then, again, we are a second minority within the  
16 tribe of Gila River, amongst the Akimel O'odham, which is  
17 the dominant tribe that outnumbered our people by 20,000.  
18 Boundary between cultural-defined groups, that structure,  
19 ethnic interactions, relevant to the cultural differences.  
20 I'd like to ask about -- I'd like to call on change.

21 And, one, I'd like to ask about renaming the  
22 Indian School Road to Ira Hayes Boulevard. Two, I'd like  
23 to ask about granting all tribal nations first rights at  
24 purchasing back public and private land at three tribal  
25 passports, so we can travel for -- a pathway for a

1 separate and equal tribal government. We have two tribes  
2 here and one government.

3 I'd like to say November 3rd, 2020, a lot of  
4 lands were put on a ballot vote and given to District 6 to  
5 create policy without landowner consent.

6 Now, current today, they're having a meeting  
7 in our district. Those individuals that reside there were  
8 given 90 days to move over here to 6 and get their  
9 services. A lot of them are Piipaash. They don't want to  
10 come here. This is not their way. They want to stay  
11 within District 7. It's a hot topic in our district.

12 We have the highest poverty, suicide,  
13 addiction, unemployment rates. We have the lowest  
14 education and life expectancy. We face water crisis,  
15 language, MMIW.

16 And I see the failure to protect sacred  
17 sites in the environment, locations like Skunk Camp.  
18 Sacred and religious sites must be protected.

19 Our district wrote a letter in opposition to  
20 HR2509, HR4880 and S409. Our belief is that our -- is  
21 that traditionally Tempe Butte, Four Peaks, Yavapai  
22 County, San Francisco Peaks, and Beekwamay (phonetic)  
23 where we came off the mountain in Needles, California,  
24 hold our cures, and those places are being desecrated or  
25 they are running the bad water off of some of the

1 mountains. And I feel those sites need to be protected.

2 I'd like to ask to end the lease of CAP  
3 water to Rio Tinto in the 50- and 100-year leases in the  
4 surrounding municipalities, especially Chandler and Mesa.  
5 And for us to give them clean water and us to be -- the  
6 effluent water to be pushed back on us. I feel it's not  
7 right.

8 And I'd like to ask how an exemption could  
9 be granted to a foreign corporation. And with George  
10 Ogilvie, the CEO of Arizona Sonoran Copper Company,  
11 entering into a partnership with Rio Tinto, joins B & M  
12 Bloomberg to discuss the Cactus Project saying copper is a  
13 safe bet for the green energy transition, as tier 2 water  
14 restrictions went into effect for Arizona, January 1st,  
15 2023. Rio Tinto is getting ready to drain and poison  
16 another underground aquifer 45 miles south of Phoenix  
17 without any federal restrictions or permitting.

18 And I'd just like to say, you know, help  
19 with these issues for our people, for the generations to  
20 come. And make change, you know.

21 I'm thankful that you all came out to hear  
22 this.

23 Thank you.

24 (Applause.)

25 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you very

1 much.

2                   We're going to take a short break now. It's  
3 3:10. And we're going to aim to be back in here at 3:20,  
4 so 10 minutes to get some refreshments and get some fresh  
5 air, stretch your legs. And we'll get back in.

6                   Thank you.

7                   (Recess: 3:10 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.)

8                   ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: We'll go through  
9 another hour and see where we are at that time.

10                   So our mic runners, can I see where you're  
11 at? Okay.

12                   It might be helpful if we posted two closer  
13 to the front and two closer to the back.

14                   All right. At this time, if anybody wishes  
15 to share your experiences or your family's experiences at  
16 federal Indian boarding schools, I'd like to give you an  
17 opportunity to speak.

18                   I just -- before we get to that, I just want  
19 to note that I know that there are so many issues across  
20 Indian country that we have to work on. We want to make  
21 sure that this space is available, though, for those  
22 families and those people that went to those boarding  
23 schools to share their experience, and we've got a big  
24 team here from across the department in the federal  
25 government. We'll be happy to get information if there

1 are other issues that you want to raise with us.

2 We'll start with this gentleman in the blue.

3 MR. TORRES: Hello everyone.

4 My name is Rudy Torres.

5 I'm (indiscernible) and I'm here from West

6 End.

7 My mother and both my grandmothers were  
8 products of boarding schools. They went to St. John's  
9 right here down the road and also to Sherman in Riverside.

10 First and foremost, I want to thank all of  
11 the Elders for sharing your stories of your traumas today.  
12 I appreciate it.

13 First off, growing up, my grandmother had a  
14 burn on her hand, top of her hand, and she always told us  
15 it was from making fry bread. You know, we believed it.  
16 It wasn't until I got older that I later learned that  
17 while she was at boarding school, they weren't allowed to  
18 speak their language, and they tried to communicate  
19 between each other.

20 Sorry about that guys. I didn't know the  
21 mic was that low.

22 So they were trying to communicate with hand  
23 language, and they were caught. One day she was caught  
24 while going to the restroom or going to the showers, and  
25 they used to have to carry kerosene lamps, and while she

1 was doing so, as part of her punishment, the Sister took  
2 the kerosene lamp and poured the oil on her hands for  
3 trying to communicate without speaking English, so she had  
4 third-degree burns all over her hand, and they never told  
5 us why.

6                   My other grandmother, when she passed away,  
7 we found tons of food stored around her house in the most  
8 odd places. Thankfully we have our community that does  
9 the elderly meals, and they bring our elderly daily meals.  
10 So some days she didn't eat those meals fully, or she  
11 would store them. So when she passed away, we found in  
12 her deep freezer and all throughout her house different  
13 meals hidden around her house. And we found out later on,  
14 it was because she was starved at these boarding schools  
15 as part of her punishment.

16                   She would go days without being fed, and her  
17 friends were not allowed to feed her. If the kids were  
18 caught feeding her, they would receive some type of  
19 disciplinary action as well.

20                   So she was traumatized from this and started  
21 hoarding food around her house. And that was just one of  
22 the products from these boarding schools. I'm not trying  
23 to be long-winded or anything.

24                   I'm going to go past all that and just want  
25 to talk about -- a little bit more about statistics.



1 According to BIA's 2021 statistics, only 29 percent of  
2 Native American students graduate high school. Three  
3 percent graduate college. And those numbers aren't where  
4 they should be, and I think we could all agree.

5           So my question is: We see this history of  
6 boarding schools and what they've done to our communities;  
7 what they've done to our people. Why do we keep putting  
8 into them? Why do we keep trusting them? Why do we keep  
9 going along with them?

10           Why don't we give back to our community or  
11 bring these kids home, back to our community, and work on  
12 our reservation, and put education here on our  
13 reservation? Why don't we have a high school here? I  
14 don't understand that.

15           I know we had one before and it failed, and  
16 it was due to, I guess, disciplinary, educators giving up  
17 on it, and they couldn't fill those positions.

18           So why don't we turn to another outlet? Why  
19 didn't we try another education system?

20           We have Montessori schools that we could  
21 have tried. We could have tried some different type of  
22 education, but we didn't. We shut it down and we relied  
23 on these boarding schools again, sending our children back  
24 across the states off of our reservation and just  
25 colonizing even more. And I don't understand it.

1                   So, with that being said, I just -- I want  
2 to know why we're building a fourth casino and not a high  
3 school here on our reservation.

4                   So thank you.

5                   (Applause.)

6                   MS. RHODES: (Comments in native language.)

7                   Good day. My name is Eliana Rhodes. I'm  
8 the current Junior Miss Gila River.

9                   First of all, I want to salute our elderly  
10 for their bravery for telling their stories.

11                   I'm trying not to get emotional.

12                   We talk a lot about intergenerational  
13 trauma, and I think when us youth hear this, in a way, we  
14 feel it as well.

15                   My great-great-grandfather was Walter  
16 Rhodes. He attended Phoenix Indian School at 3 years old.  
17 He was forcibly taken. And his parents, obviously, like  
18 many others, had no choice as well. He was so young, they  
19 gave him the name Walter Rhodes. That's how we got our  
20 last name. He doesn't remember his name, nor did he  
21 remember when he was born. So we never knew his actual  
22 age when he passed. I know our family says he thinks he  
23 was born sometime in the fall, so they automatically just  
24 gave him a random birthday just sometime in the fall.

25                   I'd also like to talk about my grandmother

1 who, unfortunately, couldn't make it today. She also went  
2 to St. Johns, like many of our Elders here in District 6.

3           Hearing everybody's stories really makes you  
4 realize everybody really did have a different experience  
5 in these schools. Some were worse than others, and some  
6 had better experiences.

7           My grandmother, fortunately, she had a  
8 not-so-bad experience. But she witnessed a lot of things  
9 that she still remembers and still tells me to this day.

10           She always talks about how sometimes she  
11 used to get smacked with a ruler and how there were a  
12 couple times some girls would joke around in the O'odham  
13 language to one another. When they were caught, they  
14 would get soap in their mouth or slapped around, or their  
15 hair pulled, or even just smacked with the ruler once  
16 again.

17           It's kind of hard to talk about, and being  
18 an indigenous youth is hard. Sorry.

19           The lady in the back here, she repeatedly  
20 said multiple times how she felt robbed. She repeatedly  
21 said how she felt robbed, and not only do our elderly feel  
22 that way, but us as indigenous youth feel that way every  
23 single day.

24           Not only am I Akimel O'odham, I'm also  
25 Tohono O'odham, Cheyenne, Lakota, Pawnee and Choctaw. I'm

1 a very proud indigenous woman. But, unfortunately, I  
2 don't really know where I come from, especially being  
3 adopted and taken in by the woman I now call my  
4 grandmother and the person I now call my father. Every  
5 day it seems like an identity crisis just because I'm  
6 trying not to forget my way in life.

7           Growing up, I watched my family fall to  
8 alcoholism, and physical abuse ran in my family,  
9 especially to me. I tell my people all the time, I'm very  
10 vocal, because I am an ambassador for our tribe, and I'm  
11 not ashamed of what they went through. And physical abuse  
12 and alcoholism, I now realize, comes from the boarding  
13 school error. Before then, alcoholism wasn't involved in  
14 our communities and neither was physical abuse.

15           Our people loved one another, and they took  
16 care of one another. They didn't ever want to  
17 hurt -- they didn't ever want to hurt each other,  
18 especially not their own children or their own  
19 grandchildren.

20           So as an Indigenous youth, I'm pretty sure I  
21 can speak for many youth in here as well, we are trying to  
22 make change, and we are so glad that you guys are here  
23 today listening to not only the Elders, but listening to  
24 us as well.

25           We are trying to balance living in two

1 worlds: the white man's way, and our way of life that we  
2 were brought up in, that we are supposed to be living in.

3 This is definitely a healing journey. It's  
4 definitely not going to happen overnight. And this is  
5 just the start of it.

6 So, again, thank you both for listening.

7 Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 MS. MILTON: Good afternoon.

10 And thank you once again for coming to our  
11 "Best Side."

12 There's a lot to be said about all these  
13 children, all these parents, that felt these heartaches.

14 I went to high school, and I thought I was  
15 gonna be safe there because of a trauma at home. I  
16 thought I would be safe because it was a Catholic school.

17 But guess what? It wasn't.

18 I went to school here at St. John's. But I  
19 could only last two years because of the nuns.

20 I could not believe -- growing up, I was  
21 taught this and I was taught that about Christianity, the  
22 Bible, Catholic. But, as I grew up, a lot of those  
23 things, I find out are, like they say, are not -- nobody  
24 can be like Christ. Nobody can be like Jesus. Jesus has  
25 us. Jesus knows us, but he knows that nobody can by like

1 Christ.

2                   And I always used to think that the nuns and  
3 the priests would be because they made a promise, and they  
4 married the Lord.

5                   But it turns out where a lot of them hurt me  
6 in grade school and in high school, so I left. I only  
7 took two years of it.

8                   Some of the things that happened here at  
9 St. Johns, I don't want to mention. But I thought -- my  
10 mom and dad sent my younger brothers to Phoenix Indian.  
11 I'm a product of -- of -- stepchild.

12                   When I was over here at St. Johns, my mom  
13 and dad didn't hardly come. I watched parents come bring  
14 their kids goodies, goodie boxes, goodie bags, plus  
15 sandwiches. They'd sit out and eat under the trees  
16 together. But that wasn't so for me.

17                   But when my younger brothers went to Phoenix  
18 Indian, they were over there. So I thought since that's  
19 the way these nuns treated me here, that I wanted to  
20 switch. So I asked and begged my mom because my dad  
21 always said no, my stepdad.

22                   And so I asked my mom. And she talked him  
23 into sending me over there, so I went over there. It  
24 seems like it was worse there than over here. Here I got  
25 hit by rulers, books. But over there, sexual abuse,

1 physical abuse, just because they didn't like you. The  
2 dormitory leaders, they make you do this, make you do  
3 that.

4 I tried to tell people that I felt would  
5 listen. I tried to tell my parents. My stepdad just said  
6 'cause I was naughty. I tried to be my best just so they  
7 could love me like my younger brothers. 'Cause the kids  
8 that came after me, that are younger than me, all belong  
9 to this man, my stepfather.

10 Through my life, when these kids said, She  
11 did it, I got the broom, the belt, the hose, a rake, tree  
12 limb, whatever they could get their hands on, table spoon.  
13 And I thought, when I grow up, that's not going to go on  
14 under my roof.

15 Anyway, the lady that was here talked about  
16 Phoenix Indian's outings. Well, at the time I went there,  
17 they let us go out and work for other people and do  
18 housekeeping and stuff, you know. I thought to myself,  
19 I'll sign up for it so I can get my own money to get my  
20 own things. Little did I know that I would face those  
21 things out there too.

22 I thought the white people would be nicer.  
23 One day I did some ironing for this lady. And she said I  
24 didn't iron it right, and she told me how to do it. And  
25 the second time, I didn't crease it right, and she turned

1 around and got the iron and hit me upside the head.

2           Somebody said they called them what? Stupid  
3 Indians. Exactly. That's what they always say. And I  
4 hated those words. I told my kids: Don't ever call  
5 anybody stupid. Don't ever let me hear you call anybody  
6 stupid. And they never knew why, but that is why.

7           The other incident: I went to clean this  
8 couple's -- old couple's place. And I got done. By that  
9 time, the lady had gone to the grocery store. And the man  
10 was supposed to pay me. And he said, I wasn't gonna get  
11 paid till I do this. He told me to go lay on the bed. I  
12 said no. He tried to pull me by the hair.

13           And, see, all this stuff I forgot until the  
14 lady spoke about the outings. Like I said, if I left  
15 home, I thought I was gonna be safe.

16           Even our own Indian people didn't treat us  
17 so nice if they didn't like you. You got the wrong end of  
18 any kind of stick.

19           On the upside, I did experience some  
20 pleasant times at PI because of our principal. He took a  
21 liking to me and another girl, a Hualapai, and the other  
22 one was an Apache boy. And sometimes he would give us  
23 money to go to movies 'cause he says that the things we  
24 do, we help people. We're nice; we do our work. Even  
25 though I wasn't good at math. I was a D on math. But he



1 always said that I had good grades.

2 And he sent us to Paul's Remodeling School.

3 At first when they told us what to do and how to do it, I  
4 thought I could never do that because I don't want -- I  
5 didn't want to open up to no more people.

6 It's just like I wanted to grow up, get a  
7 job and get my own house, and I'd be safe in that house.

8 I went back home after high school. I did  
9 what I could in the house, but it wasn't good enough for  
10 my stepdad. He threw me out. He said I was drinking. I  
11 don't like drinking. I tried it, but I don't like  
12 drinking.

13 But anyway, I went to -- a lady picked me  
14 up, and I went to -- over there in Sacaton, the Career  
15 Center is what they called it. I went to school there.  
16 Then when I got finished with schooling there, I went to  
17 -- my instructor took me to Coolidge where I got a job  
18 over there as a nurse assistant at the mentally retarded  
19 village on the other side of Coolidge. That was good.

20 But I met a white man in Coolidge because I  
21 got an apartment out there. And it took me a year and a  
22 half, a year and a half to be able to say yes to this man  
23 that wanted to marry me. He says he fell in love with me  
24 at first sight, and I don't believe the first sight deal.  
25 He would sit outside my porch, and I would sit on my couch

1 inside. And we would talk.

2 But guess what? This man gave me all the  
3 love that a heart can give. I had two boys that weren't  
4 his, and he treated them like they were his.

5 We had a good 23 years, and that last year  
6 before he passed way, all those years he always told me,  
7 Just stay home, take care of the kids and the home. And  
8 that last year he -- I don't know what possessed me to ask  
9 him if I could work. I said I wanted to work at the  
10 casino. That's when we started with the little one, the  
11 Smokey House.

12 Anyway, he was the only -- I think about the  
13 only white man that I really trusted and became -- we  
14 became one. I never knew what love could be from the  
15 whole heart. There are men out there that will tell you:  
16 I love you; I love you, but just a little bit or half,  
17 which is not enough.

18 And when I lost him, I was scared. Because,  
19 you see, when I was growing up, 5 years old, my stepfather  
20 molested me until I left home. So I know when I grew up,  
21 I was scared.

22 And then when my husband left, it was like  
23 an armor lifted off of me. And there I was again. I went  
24 back to work, over here at the Vee Quiva. I was walking  
25 down that walkway. There was a man that was walking

1 behind me.

2 My stomach started to shake. My legs  
3 started to shake. I couldn't really walk, so I ducked  
4 into a bathroom. And I cried, and I cried, and I cried.

5 These boarding schools, like Torres said,  
6 why do we have to have them when we could have had our own  
7 on our own reservations? Go to school and come back home  
8 like we did in grade school?

9 But these are some of the things that we  
10 went through, and I guess the -- our elderly back then,  
11 and, yes, it angers me so much when I hear about these  
12 kids that were done like this.

13 And some of these priests, they got away  
14 with it. These nuns, they got away with things.

15 And at the same time, the same question  
16 begin to bug my mind. These kids were in these boarding  
17 schools back then, and they came up missing. Who knows  
18 where they are. Does anybody care?

19 I would ask my question -- that question  
20 constantly.

21 My mom taught me to trust in the Lord, and  
22 when my husband left, I got so angry with the Lord. I  
23 didn't want to pray; I didn't want to hear of Him. I  
24 didn't want to talk about Him because my husband would  
25 cook with me, clean with me. We would do everything

1 together. You ask anybody. They know he was always at my  
2 side. He was always with me and my boys.

3 But how can you imagine a mother going  
4 through having to yank the baby out of her arms, the kids?  
5 It hurts me just as much as getting an iron hit on the  
6 side of my face. Luckily, nothing happened to me, nothing  
7 broke. I got bruised and everything, but I guess I was  
8 lucky at that.

9 But I'd like to say too, to the two of you  
10 up there: Thank you so very much for giving us the  
11 opportunity to speak our minds.

12 I know -- well, I don't really know if my  
13 story is a product of what happened back then for our  
14 elderly, but I know a lot of the things I do are because  
15 of what I experienced in the boarding school and at home.

16 All I ask is that you see to it that these  
17 things are not happening in the boarding schools now  
18 because a lot of our kids are still going to boarding  
19 school. What choice do they have?

20 Right now a lot of the parents are not  
21 sending their kids to boarding schools because of these  
22 things. They're sending them out here into towns nearby,  
23 which I don't know if it's good or bad. But everything  
24 that I went through, I wish I never went through.

25 I was crying for my grandma because when my

1 stepdad would spank me and send me to bed with no food, I  
2 would take off. When they would fall asleep, I would take  
3 off. We lived way on that side of Rachel, that end of the  
4 village, and there is a ditch that's like a field away. I  
5 would run through the ditch, and run through the field  
6 through the ditch all the way down at midnight, just to  
7 get away from him and seek the comfort of my grandma.

8                   She always listened to me. She  
9 always believed me. Next morning, we'd be marching down  
10 Ira Hayes Boulevard, all the way to the other side. And  
11 she would have a fit with my parents.

12                   I always remember back in the day when the  
13 ladies used to put the Blue Bird sack on their head just  
14 to cover their ears from the cold. She would put one on  
15 me, and I didn't like it.

16                   But she would grab my hand, and we would go  
17 down to my mom's. But she always had -- she always had --  
18 it looked like a sleeping bag rolled up at the foot of her  
19 bed. And she would roll it out. It was just a bunch of  
20 blankets. But she would roll it out right there where she  
21 lay. She always said that she wanted to make sure I'm  
22 right there.

23                   Now, my mom -- my grandma on either side has  
24 never really talked about their experience with school,  
25 high school.

1                   But my grandfather on my mom's side, well,  
2 both sides, my grandfather was well known for the  
3 teachings of the Pima legends. And our language was  
4 always spoken fluently in our house. And I tried to speak  
5 it as much as I can to whoever knows what I'm saying.

6                   And my grandfather on my dad -- my real  
7 dad's side was known for his paintings, his art. He  
8 painted the murals in Ak-Chin Flats, Blackwater,  
9 St. Peter's. He painted Holy Family pictures, the  
10 shepherd with his sheep. And some of them got ruined here  
11 back by the storms and stuff. And they tried to ask -- I  
12 was one of them that they tried to ask to do the  
13 touch-ups. I do painting and artwork, but I could never  
14 touch up what my grandfather had put on those walls.

15                   But to say that all these things happened  
16 with the kids at boarding schools, I wish there was a few  
17 people that were appointed to check -- not -- not -- by  
18 not letting them know, but coming in by surprise and  
19 checking on these people that are Indian people that are  
20 sometimes working in the boarding schools, but some of  
21 them are not good with the kids.

22                   One time we had a Powwow at PI. My  
23 boyfriend walked me back from the football field to the  
24 dorm way back there. It was called Montezuma. My  
25 boyfriend kissed me. And this lady that was at my

1 dormitory, came running out, pushed me, and I fell on the  
2 steps. And my boyfriend stumbled this way.

3 I mean, it wasn't like a -- like a real long  
4 kiss or anything. I mean, he just gave me a kiss on  
5 the -- yeah, it was on my lips, but she found that so  
6 dirty and nasty. She said some pretty nasty things.

7 And then when we went -- when I went in, I  
8 went to my room. One of my roommates came out, came into  
9 the room and said Mrs. So-and-So wants to see you.

10 I went to the office. She closed the door.

11 And I said why are you closing the door?  
12 And we have -- they have this big, old window. Almost  
13 like this (indicating) behind her desk, and she had it  
14 closed.

15 I said why are you closing the door? How  
16 come the curtains are closed? 'Cause I -- when she told  
17 me that I should get in the dorm right away --

18 And I forgot, I made a smart alec remark as  
19 to me being a -- I'm not a vampire. I'm a human being,  
20 and I stay up during the day. I sleep at night; I go to  
21 my room.

22 I'm the kind of person that doesn't hardly  
23 go to the room, only to go to bed or to get something out  
24 of the room. I stayed out of my room. I don't know why  
25 that is, but I stayed out of my room.

1                   She said that I don't need to be talking  
2 like that to her. And she slapped me two times on the  
3 face.

4                   And I told her she's not supposed to do  
5 that. You're not supposed to touch us like that.

6                   And she said, Who gave me the authority to  
7 tell her that. That I was not somebody bigger than her.

8                   And I said, I'm a person.

9                   But those are the things -- some of the  
10 things that need to be -- I guess you would say surprise  
11 visit some of these places. Don't warn them because then  
12 they'll get ready, and be all nice. I know that because  
13 that's what happened at both high schools.

14                   When I heard the lady talking about Phoenix  
15 Indian this and that, my heart just pounded and pounded.  
16 And I'm always afraid to speak to a crowd too. Because I  
17 have a -- I don't know -- emotional side of me that will  
18 constantly fall apart.

19                   But I learned -- there was a time after my  
20 husband passed away, I learned I needed the Lord. And I  
21 learned to start talking to Him. I don't say prayers like  
22 a Hail Mary, Our Father and the stuff like that. I talk  
23 to Him from my mind and from my heart. And I asked Him to  
24 give me the strength to stand on my own two feet.

25                   ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Ma'am, you've done



1 a great job sharing your story today.

2 Can you share your name with us?

3 MS. MILTON: Glendora Milton.

4 Kiatan (phonetic) was my maiden name.

5 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you,  
6 Glendora.

7 MS. MILTON: Yes. And I'm thankful that all of  
8 these other people stood up and told their stories. I'm  
9 really thankful to them because more or less you guys are  
10 the ones that encouraged me to stand up and tell what I  
11 went through.

12 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you. Thank  
13 you.

14 (Applause.)

15 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: So we've got --  
16 it's 4:15. We're going to try to hear from a few more  
17 folks, at least this session.

18 So this young lady in the white here.

19 MS. DOSELA: (Comments in native language.)

20 So good afternoon.

21 Thank you all for coming and listening to  
22 what everyone else had to say.

23 My name is Lahualoni (phonetic) Dosela. I  
24 come from the Village of Kuap (phonetic) here on the Gila  
25 River Indian Community.

1 I attend Mesa Community College where I  
2 major in fire science.

3 My parents are Arvis Dosela and the late  
4 Lorraine Dosela. My paternal grandparents are the late  
5 Frank Dosela and the late Sally Dosela.

6 And my maternal grandparents are Roland  
7 Golding and Carol Golding.

8 I'd like to share about my  
9 great-grandmother. Her name is the late Myrtle Pete  
10 Noble. She attended both St. Johns Indian School and  
11 Phoenix Indian School. And there she met my  
12 great-grandfather, who was Navajo. And he was actually in  
13 World War II. He was one of the original 29 Navajo Code  
14 Talkers. His name was Frank Danny Pete.

15 I never got to meet my great-grandfather, as  
16 he passed before I was born. After my great-grandmother  
17 -- great-grandmother's partner, McDonald Hughes, who was  
18 Tohono O'odham, passed away, my great-grandmother became  
19 withdrawn.

20 And I remember my mother had bought a book  
21 for my grandma with prompts. And one night while I stayed  
22 the night, I had her start filling it out. And it had  
23 various questions in regard to her childhood and teenage  
24 years. This sparked a conversation and stirred memories  
25 for my great-grandmother about her boarding school days.

1                   She spoke about how she was only taught  
2 basic math and reading in her childhood, and once she  
3 reached middle school age, she began to learn domestic  
4 chores, such as ironing sheets, folding them, doing  
5 laundry, and basically how to be a domestic servant.

6                   She went on outings as well and served an  
7 upper-class white family who treated her well.

8                   When I tried asking more, she would go  
9 silent and simply shake her head no.

10                  She only spoke O'odham growing up as a young  
11 girl, but when she started school, she wasn't allowed to  
12 speak it.

13                  When I tried to ask her more, she again  
14 shook her head no.

15                  This has impacted many of our generations to  
16 follow, including myself.

17                  My grandmother Carol Pete did not grow up  
18 learning her O'odham Himdag, and neither did my mother,  
19 the late Lorraine Dosela.

20                  It wasn't until my older sister, Kristin  
21 Dosela, went to my great-grandmother that we started  
22 learning our culture. My Grandma Myrtle turned her away,  
23 not wanting to teach her, but my sister persisted.

24                  My sister went to her each day asking to  
25 teach her our culture for a week. And finally my

1 grandmother said yes and began teaching her our language  
2 and our songs.

3 My older brother went to my  
4 great-grandmother as well and asked her to teach him, and  
5 she also turned him away, but he persisted and asked every  
6 day until my grandmother said yes.

7 It was through my older siblings that opened  
8 this door to my grandmother teaching us our Himdag that  
9 allowed our younger siblings and I to learn our songs  
10 openly and freely from my great-grandma. It is because of  
11 my great-grandmother Myrtle Noble Pete, and her partner  
12 McDonald Hughes, that I stand before you continually  
13 learning. It is because of their strength to overcome the  
14 boarding school trauma that I'm able to introduce myself  
15 in O'odham. I'm so proud and grateful for my grandmother,  
16 that she gifted us with this precious knowledge.

17 So with that, once again, thank you all for  
18 sharing your guys' stories. The room is really heavy  
19 right now, but I know that we can overcome this.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 MS. THOMAS: (Comments in native language.)

23 What I just said in the People's Language  
24 is: Hello. It's so great to see you today.

25 My name is Cher Thomas, and I'm from down

1 the street, around the corner. That's where I'm from.  
2 I'm godeeya (phonetic). I'm from here.

3 I am an activist and an artist. I've been  
4 in indigenous activism now for 10 years. I remember the  
5 conversations about hearings just like this.

6 This conversation began in the Trump  
7 administration, and this was an idea that carried over.

8 I recall this conversation regarding the  
9 Every Child Matters movement. What I wish --

10 I've heard some questions about Phoenix  
11 Indian School, and that's where my area of expertise  
12 centers.

13 So in the late 1800s, early 1900s, there was  
14 tuberculosis, and there was a tuberculosis center down the  
15 street from the Phoenix Indian School, and so a lot of the  
16 bodies were processed through that tuberculosis center,  
17 and it became the city morgue or became one of the  
18 epicenters for the city morgue.

19 And so when we look at excavation at the  
20 Phoenix Indian School, that's going to have to be dealt  
21 with or understood or comprehended by the people  
22 themselves.

23 What we have found is that -- the theory is  
24 that building the Steele Indian School Park was actually  
25 the government's way of covering up one of the most

1 atrocious crimes in American history. Building that park,  
2 that man donated \$2.5 million to the City of Phoenix to  
3 have that park named after him. We need to remove that  
4 man's name off of our children's graveyard. It is  
5 disrespectful to have that philanthropist have his name on  
6 there. That's the site where our children died. That  
7 needs to be acknowledged, not just for the love for the  
8 children who have passed there, but also in recognition  
9 that the Steele Indian School Park is a global space, as  
10 Phoenix, Arizona, is now becoming a global space. We are  
11 about to host the Super Bowl. This is a global space.

12           We as indigenous people are also global  
13 citizens. Our history and experiences should not be  
14 ignored nor erased. Not just for the validity of our own  
15 lived experiences but also for the accommodation of our  
16 visitors, and those with whom we share this land. It is  
17 not good in some of the world's religions to have children  
18 play where other children have died. We need to be  
19 cognizant of the faith of all of Americans. We need to be  
20 cognizant of the belief and pathways of all of those who  
21 visit our land. This is the O'odham Jewed. Part of the  
22 Himdag is that we are hospitable. A part of being  
23 hospitable is being honest. A part of being honest is  
24 acknowledging the truth of that land.

25           The truth is, is that -- what you are

1 hearing today are war stories. Because the children who  
2 were escorted by the government, who were taken to a place  
3 of holding, that was a governmental act of war. It was  
4 the government who turned our children into warriors. Our  
5 children were not ready yet. And yet they were rounded up  
6 as if they were prisoners of war, taken away from their  
7 family as if they were prisoners of war, withheld from  
8 their people as if they were prisoners of war.

9           And, again, they died there, whether they  
10 died in their heart, in their spirit or actually in their  
11 blood and in their flesh, a piece of every child who went  
12 to those institutions died, and their death, whether it be  
13 fully in their hearts, or a piece of their spirit, needs  
14 to be acknowledged, not just for those who died, not for  
15 those of us who survived, but also for those of them who  
16 come to this land to give recognition to our experience  
17 and to hold truth that we are still here, and we refuse to  
18 be silent.

19           And the thing that needs to be understood is  
20 that these were acts of war. This was an act of war. The  
21 American government was at war with our people. And this  
22 was a way of having war with us: prevent the future  
23 warriors from becoming warriors.

24           How do we do that? We round them up. We  
25 rid them of their rights. We brainwash them into thinking

1 that they, though they live in America, they are without  
2 their American rights. That was the brainwashing that we  
3 endured, and we still have ramifications of that  
4 brainwashing to this very day.

5                   Much of our work is about dispelling,  
6 dispelling and demystifying, reminding of the truth that  
7 all of this is brainwashing. All of this is about  
8 erasure. All of this is about the victor commanding his  
9 story.

10                   So as we move into the next era, we need to  
11 acknowledge that. We, as indigenous people have survived  
12 many apocali (sic). We have been here before. We, as  
13 indigenous people, have stood with rubble at our feet and  
14 decided how to move forward again. This has happened to  
15 us before. We have been here before. And the way through  
16 it is through truth-telling.

17                   I appreciate this government for giving the  
18 space for my people to share the depth of the pain. Thank  
19 you for giving us the opportunity to articulate the pain.

20                   I need to admit on the part of the activist  
21 what we wanted was for the Republicans to sit here because  
22 that was the point behind us. This conversation began in  
23 the Trump administration, and yet here you are. And we  
24 need to acknowledge that. You are a Pueblo woman  
25 listening to us. You know. You already know.



1                   I want to thank you for your grace in this  
2 demonstration, in this experience. I want to give you  
3 respect. Thank you so much.

4                   And the other thing is that I would like for  
5 you to remind your boss of something, and that is that I  
6 see him -- me personally; I'm only speaking for myself --  
7 I see him as a gentleman. Unlike his predecessor, he is a  
8 gentleman. And a part of being a gentleman is waging war  
9 like a gentleman. And the gentlemen of his ilk, several  
10 millennia ago, made their own meetings, had their own  
11 decision-making processes, within which they created the  
12 rules of engagement.

13                   I wish to highlight one of the last rules of  
14 those set of rules, which is: When the war is over, both  
15 sides may collect their dead. Both. When the war is  
16 over, according to the gentleman, both sides may collect  
17 their dead. Our dead have yet to be collected.

18                   Want to know why? Because this war ain't  
19 over. And until we get the bodies of our children back,  
20 according to the rules of the gentlemanly men, this war  
21 isn't over.

22                   So as we move forward, let us progress with  
23 that in mind. That what we are merely doing is asking the  
24 gentlemen of this nation to behave as the gentlemen they  
25 claim themselves to be, the gentlemen I believe them to

1 be.

2                   And may we end this war. May we acknowledge  
3 the war stories of our children. May we acknowledge the  
4 atrocities our people have been through. May we  
5 acknowledge the site as a place of death. Not only for  
6 the memories of our children, but also so we can tell all  
7 of those who visit our land the truth of this space: that  
8 this was once a war-torn country. It was once called the  
9 Wild West.

10                   But the truth is, is that it was one  
11 oppressive regime after the other, and those who were here  
12 in the original still exist today.

13                   We wish for peace. We wish for  
14 reconciliation. Thank you so much for your effort, for  
15 your energy, and I pray we propel this forward.

16                   In the future, I would like to see  
17 excavations. However, it's not likely that the bodies  
18 will be there, at least at the Phoenix Indian Center.  
19 That's the truth. It's not likely.

20                   When they built that park, the city asked  
21 all of these hobbyist men who would do metal detector  
22 work, Go look at the park. Go look. Go have fun. And  
23 they all went, and they said, This is where all the metal  
24 is, and that's where they dug. If you look at it, it's  
25 along Indian School Road. If you look at it, there's this

1 big hole in there, and there's like a weird water  
2 fountain. It's almost like a swirl. That's where they  
3 dug. That's where they mostly did their digging.

4           When we looked at it -- as the activists, we  
5 looked at the meetings. Some of them made comments,  
6 talking about how their dogs do their business on top of  
7 us.

8           So my theory, my personal theory, is that  
9 they had those hobbyists look for the metal when they  
10 built the park, they excavated that area. They found the  
11 bodies, and they moved them to either -- they either  
12 burned them, got rid of them, or they buried them in the  
13 dog part. That's my best guess.

14           But I don't know anything. I just know the  
15 research that I've made.

16           And what I want to say is that excavation  
17 needs to be led by indigenous hands, by indigenous  
18 governments. Because if the feds sat down and told us,  
19 Hey, there's no bodies there, I wouldn't believe you all.  
20 It needs to be us. It needs to be our cultural resources  
21 department. It needs to be our government. It needs to  
22 be our people. That governor needs to open the gate for  
23 us and allow us to find our own children, if they are  
24 there. That is my request.

25           And I'd like to thank you so much for your

1 time and for your love and for your dedication to  
2 resolving this issue.

3 May suppa (phonetic).

4 Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Okay. Thank you.

7 So we're at 4:30. I think what we'll do is  
8 we'll hear from maybe two more people. And then I think  
9 the Secretary will make some observations and offer  
10 reflections, and then we'll wrap up today.

11 And I know that there may be more folks here  
12 who wanted to share. We're doing our best to get to as  
13 many communities as possibility and hear from people, but  
14 that will be the order.

15 So we'll do two more speakers.

16 MS. MARTINEZ: Thank you.

17 (Comments in native language.)

18 My name is Kelsey Anne Martinez.

19 Thank you all for coming here today. You  
20 know, this is a very, very sensitive topic that needs to  
21 be discussed, and I want to say thank you to all of you  
22 that shared something -- or, you know, shared and took the  
23 floor and said something. You are in my prayers tonight.

24 I want to make this very quick. When I  
25 asked my grandpa why is -- my Grandfather Lesley

1 (phonetic), why is it that he spoke the old O'odham, but  
2 he didn't teach us. It is because his parents told him,  
3 Don't teach your kids, don't teach your grandkids the  
4 language because it is going to hold them back. They are  
5 not going to be able to be successful in miligá:n world.  
6 And he believed that.

7                   And up until about maybe 10 years before he  
8 passed away, I was always -- I was very fortunate to  
9 always be with my grandfather. And I started asking him  
10 questions here and there, and I think that's what finally  
11 broke him. And he started telling me things about the  
12 language. And I carry that to this very day. That is one  
13 of the reasons why I decided to run for this title.

14                   But I just want to say, thank you all for  
15 sharing your stories. And it makes me -- of course, this  
16 room is very heavy, and my heart is very heavy for all of  
17 you. But it makes me wonder: What can I do to help? What  
18 can I do to raise awareness?

19                   I just want to say thank you to everybody  
20 here for creating this safe space. I'm sure that this may  
21 be one of the first times for a lot of you to share your  
22 stories. And I'm thankful to have this safe space created  
23 for everybody here.

24                   (Comments in native language.)

25                   Creator be with you and take care of

1 yourselves.

2 Thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Terribly sorry.

5 We'll go to our last speaker today, if  
6 anyone else has anything they wish to share.

7 TRIBAL MEMBER: Hello. I'm from right here.

8 And I hear everyone talk, and it's true. A  
9 lot of the Elders that talked are from here.

10 My mom is from way West End, District 7 or  
11 District 6. I lived here a lot of years.

12 And I went to boarding school. My mom went  
13 to Tucson. She didn't say how it happened, but she's the  
14 oldest.

15 I feel for all, whatever goes on. So I  
16 wanted to say this to new people working for tribe:

17 When I went to boarding school, it was good.  
18 It was Phoenix Indian. I did four years there. I didn't  
19 finish my last year. But I went back. It was kind of a  
20 sad time because one of my classmates passed away. But I  
21 finished that same year at Carl Hayden High School. And  
22 then another Indian girl, me and her, she's a Hualapai,  
23 and we went to high school, junior college.

24 Whoever is doing the hiring, give them a lie  
25 detector test. Because if they're not doing right to the

1 people, a lie detector test will tell. Because people  
2 that are hurt ain't gonna come out and say anything;  
3 they're already scared.

4 Boarding school was good for me. There was  
5 sports, rodeo club, all that. Those are the good days. I  
6 made it from my freshman to the 10th grade. I wanted to  
7 go to the honor dorms. I made it. And -- because they  
8 were gonna take those guys to Disneyland. So we got a  
9 bus. We made it to Sherman. It was nice over there too.  
10 Different tribes. I like all tribes. We're all together  
11 here in the United States. You never know whose a good or  
12 bad person. It doesn't matter what color. There's bad  
13 and good in everybody.

14 But the old people believed in the Good  
15 Spirit. They farmed lands around here. Do their pottery  
16 a long time ago. You had to haul water too. Kerosene  
17 lamps way back. They struggled, the older people.

18 I didn't ask my grandma if she finished  
19 school. She was already out there with the church people.  
20 Nothing wrong with that. Of course, she believed in the  
21 Good Spirit.

22 I mean, I didn't know what I wanted to be in  
23 junior college. I don't know why they change it from  
24 junior college to university. I could have still go back,  
25 but I'm getting old.

1                   So I took up cooking over there. I stayed  
2 there a whole half year, but I jumped in there with  
3 another girl from up northern Arizona.

4                   She went out to a hangout place, and I  
5 wasn't old enough. So there I was, out in the snow. Some  
6 nice person took me to his house, and I started to hit the  
7 road again. I made it to Navajo Country, and it was  
8 getting dark. But these guys got a place, and well, they  
9 were safe, and they pray for me, so you've got to believe  
10 in the Good Spirit.

11                  I think all Native Americans already know  
12 Jesus Christ, and go to church to pray. They're so  
13 thankful for the creations around us, that we're created,  
14 and the animals. And we're blessed, all of the  
15 reservations.

16                  We've got to protect that. Sometimes cars  
17 go too fast around here.

18                  New leaders, whatever happened all way back,  
19 I hope they're not still working. Get them lie detectors  
20 to get them out of there.

21                  Let them be happy in school. There's sports  
22 in schools, and get better teachers that really want to  
23 care for us. Otherwise, they're passing us and we're not  
24 learning that much, you know. Make an effort.

25                  I was happy in school.



1                   And I made it with the bad girls there too.  
2 I wanted to see what they do. So I stayed out one night,  
3 and that's when they boot me out.

4                   But I came back when they graduated, crying  
5 again over my friend that passed away. I like all  
6 reservations. There's good in everybody, in the different  
7 minorities. Thank God for Gila Crossing school. What  
8 they did for the community here. We all had Thanksgiving  
9 or Christmas dinner. The Boys and Girls Club didn't do  
10 it.

11                   I don't know. Gila Crossing did good, and  
12 it's only up to grade school, you know.

13                   I thank God for all of them. They try their  
14 best. Some kids are -- no angels, some kids. Don't want  
15 to listen, especially my granddaughter. I say, If you  
16 don't listen to me, I'll have the cops -- it's the law  
17 that you have to go to school. Some got attitude.

18                   I have to pray harder. I feel for everybody  
19 here, their tears. God hears our tears. This is a Good  
20 Spirit. That's why we look to the Higher Power. It's  
21 awful, awful, what I hear that happened to these Elders or  
22 young people a long time ago.

23                   I'm glad it didn't happen to me when I was  
24 young, but I went there when I was a high school kid, and  
25 it's a good thing. There was good people then.

1 I went to Sherman for a visit. We all had  
2 to line up, us, everybody, rush to go eat, and hang out by  
3 the door with the kids. And here these guys walked in  
4 line to go eat at Sherman.

5 Our Rodeo Club went to Indian Mountain for a  
6 rodeo there. It was good.

7 That's when you have big buildings, because  
8 it's cold up there, snow or whatever. A lot of them go to  
9 different boarding schools. Some can't get out.

10 I had uncles. There were seven of them.  
11 Six of them went to Indian School. And at that time, they  
12 a military school, more stricter.

13 And who's applying for our workers to  
14 instruct us? Pray for a better future, for another  
15 generation of workers, councilmen, all the ones that  
16 represent all native tribes. Hear our prayers. And pray  
17 for everybody to keep going. There is a lot of tears, but  
18 we take it to God in blessing.

19 We thank you and thank everyone. It's very  
20 hard and sad to see what happened, the old stories. It's  
21 very awful to humanity, you know.

22 I don't hold a grudge. You never know who  
23 is your brother or sister, like the Chinese. The white  
24 people are worried about the Mexicans, the United States,  
25 and the Mexicans work hard on the farms. Hard workers.

1                   But I encourage my kids to learn the English  
2 language, too. My mom learned English, too, but I guess  
3 that's why I understand everybody because of education.  
4 That's what I told my grandkids. Education is very  
5 important.

6                   I thank you. It's been quite a wild one,  
7 but it's real worth it and very sad. Hear our tears. I  
8 got no hate to the individual worker there, whoever is  
9 doing something bad at school and didn't get caught about  
10 it. It's not good. There was other good workers that do  
11 want to help our Natives. That's where we've got to love  
12 each other, but it's hard to tell if somebody just wants  
13 to be crooked. It's not good.

14                   I thank you.

15                   (Applause.)

16                   SECRETARY HAALAND: Thank you so much for  
17 sharing. And I'd like to just ask my team to stand up  
18 here. They are all kind of in this area -- Daron, Heidi,  
19 Catherine, Wesey (phonetic), Tony, please stand up.

20                   (Applause.)

21                   Thank you all so much.

22                   Yes. All right. They are the reason why  
23 we're doing so much on this issue, and I appreciate  
24 belonging to such an amazing team of dedicated public  
25 servants.

1 I also want to acknowledge Deborah Parker,  
2 who is here with the Native American Boarding School  
3 Healing Coalition. When I was a member of Congress, she  
4 brought a group of advocates into my congressional office,  
5 and we sat down. And she just said, Can we just sit here  
6 for a minute and appreciate the fact that we're in an  
7 office where we don't have to explain things to someone,  
8 somebody who understands what it means to say we're  
9 survivors. We're, you know, we're suffering from  
10 generational trauma.

11 And so Heidi was in my office, and she  
12 worked really hard to get a piece of legislation so that  
13 we could pass it to create a commission that would pay  
14 attention to these things.

15 One of the issues -- and somebody here in  
16 their story mentioned it, that they want records. We want  
17 proof. We want the real history that's been written down  
18 about what happened to our ancestors. And so that's what  
19 we worked on.

20 And so, I mean, I know that for such a long  
21 time so many people have been talking about this and, you  
22 know, making your homemade signs and calling people and  
23 writing letters and all those things. I did all of that  
24 too. I did all of that in New Mexico at the same time you  
25 all were doing that also.

1                   And I guess I feel -- I just felt like I got  
2 tired of never having a real voice in things, and that's  
3 why I decided to run for public office because I felt like  
4 I want to have a seat at the table. I want to -- I want  
5 to be able to talk about these things on a larger stage.  
6 Because we deserve that.

7                   And I really do acknowledge and honor and  
8 value everyone who spoke here today. I know it's not  
9 easy. I know it's really difficult.

10                  And, you know, back when I was a student  
11 studying undergraduate -- in my undergraduate career at  
12 UNM, I have a degree in English, and so I was doing a lot  
13 of writing for my degree. And I would go out to Macita  
14 Village every weekend and sit at the kitchen table while  
15 my grandma ironed or cooked or sat with me.

16                  And, you know, it's interesting how everyone  
17 handles trauma differently. And I could never get her to  
18 say anything bad about boarding school. She -- but she  
19 did say that she was 8 years old when they took her away  
20 to St. Catherine's in Santa Fe. I mean, it's an hour  
21 drive from Albuquerque, so it's probably less than a  
22 two-hour drive from Macita now, but back then, her dad  
23 only had a horse and a wagon, and it would take him three  
24 days. So he was only able to go see her twice in the five  
25 years that she was gone.

1                   And she just said that the priest came to  
2 the village and went around collecting children. That was  
3 the word she used. He went around and collected the  
4 children, and put us all on the train. And there she went  
5 for five years.

6                   And I can't imagine what happened to her.  
7 She did meet my grandfather there, so I'm very grateful  
8 for that. And their house was full of love. And she  
9 showed that with the things that she cooked for us; right?

10                  But I will never understand, even though she  
11 was at this Catholic boarding school away from her family  
12 for five years, she said her Rosary every single night  
13 before she went to bed. She would go to church -- it was  
14 right across the street -- go to church every Sunday. She  
15 was a devout Catholic.

16                  And I feel like at this point, maybe there's  
17 just some things that I'll never understand. But I  
18 understand what all of you have said today. I appreciate  
19 you feeling like coming here would not only help yourself,  
20 but would help someone else. Because at the end of the  
21 day, we're all one community. We're all one people. And  
22 we have an obligation to one another, even though this  
23 world in 2023 doesn't seem like that sometimes. It seems  
24 like there's a lot of people who are just out for  
25 themselves. But we're not like that. We are here for

1 each other. And so I just want you all to know how  
2 grateful I am.

3 And some of you who didn't speak, and you  
4 sat here all day long listening to everyone else because  
5 you felt the need to support your community members, so  
6 thank you for that.

7 Thank you all for having us here. It was a  
8 lovely, beautiful lunch, and we're so grateful for  
9 everyone who spent their time opening up the school,  
10 turning on the lights, getting the heat going, setting up  
11 the tables and chairs. Thank you all so much for that.  
12 We felt very welcome here. I am so grateful to have the  
13 opportunity.

14 Governor Lewis, are you still here?

15 Yes, there you are, sir.

16 Thank you so much, Governor.

17 (Applause.)

18 This will not be my last trip to Gila River  
19 or to Arizona.

20 Thank you, all.

21 (Applause.)

22 Please drive safely home.

23 Thank you.

24 Applause.

25 (The public comment concluded at 4:49 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, MELISSA GONSALVES, do hereby certify that  
the foregoing pages constitute a full, true, and accurate  
transcript of the public comment had in the foregoing  
matter, all done to the best of my skill and ability.

WITNESS my hand this 6th day of February  
2023.

*Melissa Gonsalves*

MELISSA GONSALVES, RMR, CRR

Arizona Certified Reporter No. 50070



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