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THE ROAD TO HEALING Tour

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

on

Saturday, August 13, 2022

at

PELLSTON SCHOOLS

Pellston, Michigan

PRESENT:

Secretary Deb Haaland

Asst. Secretary Bryan Newland

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

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(Opening ceremony.)

WASSON DILLARD: You can stay seated.

(Native greeting and prayer.)

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

(Native language) Creator, thank you for giving us this language. (Native language) Help us to speak our language in a good way throughout this day. (Native language) Also, help us to love and be respectful to language. (Native language) Also, that we may be able to teach it to our children and our grandchildren. (Native language) This is the help that we are asking of you today. (Native language) Thank you Great Spirit and all the other spirits that have come to help us today.

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

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

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

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

8 REGINA GASCO-BENTLEY: (Native language)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 - - -

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 I want to acknowledge our friends from

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 wish to speak about.

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

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

1 yourselves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 I am a seven-year military veteran during

1 the Vietnam era.

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

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

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

25 I'm here to speak for an elder Odawa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 (Applause.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 I am a Native American boarding school

1 survivor. Thank you.

2 (Applause.)

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

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

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

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

25 That was not a good school, the nuns were

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

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

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

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

1 about.

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch.

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

10 We're going to take a ten-minute break.

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

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

17 - - -

18 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: All right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 MARY COBE GIBSON: I love you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 believe our diocese covers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 Halloween, a complete nightmare. There

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 MARILYN WAKEFIELD: That's it?

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

16 MARILYN WAKEFIELD: Everybody else.

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

21 MARILYN WAKEFIELD: O.K.

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

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

1 here.

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

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

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

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

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

21 - - -

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

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

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

16 (Applause)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11 (Applause)

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

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

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

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

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

1 bed they were coming to get us.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 I can't speak for my siblings except to

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

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

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

25 I tend to be a little OCD. So for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 There was another time where my,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 I started school at Holy Childhood in the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 - - -

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 a second.

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

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

1 didn't respect them, you know.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 (Applause.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 She came to this new farm, which happened

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 finally conferred, 1962.

2 You protected your family the best way
3 you saw until recent progress could write new law. Our
4 relatives were found, our questions compiled, the
5 experiences that shaped you as a child. You left your
6 lives to build anew, leaving behind the ways that you
7 knew. I couldn't understand your need to leave, all you
8 longed for was some reprieve. Your relatives ridiculed
9 your mission to keep alive their own rendition.

10 Questioning christian beliefs at every turn, while
11 so-called families that you would burn. A century plus
12 of war runs through our veins, the realization started
13 before we found those remains.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 this day.

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

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

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

25 But eventually they adopted her, also.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 And thank you. (Applause)

5 ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

Marie T. Schroeder, CSR-2183

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