THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

THE ROAD TO HEALING
NAVAJO NATION, MANY FARMS HIGH SCHOOL
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MALE SPEAKER: (In Navajo.) I just want to say thank you so much for your leadership putting on this event here, including our (indiscernible) in the boarding school era and (indiscernible) in the future, and that we continue being able to help one another and make sure that this issue is taken seriously. It's an honor to have the Secretary of Interior, Deb Haaland, here with us. The governor as well. So I just want to say thank you to all of you for coming a long way for listening. Thank you so much. And with that being said, I just want to turn it over to Secretary Deb Haaland.

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

It's an honor to be back here on Navajo Nation. I will (indiscernible) to make sure that you all have a time today. I'm here to listen to you and I'm so honored (indiscernible). Your voices are important to me, and I thank you for your willingness to share your stories. (Indiscernible) from the survivors, from the (indiscernible) Navajo Nation policies carried out (indiscernible).
This is the first time in history that the United States had a secretary come to the table (indiscernible). That is not lost on me, and I'm honored to use my leadership (indiscernible). A boarding school policy (indiscernible). You've asked me to come forward. Today is part of that journey. (Indiscernible). Our goal is to create opportunities for people to share their stories but also (indiscernible) those in the boarding school system an opportunity today to share all their experiences. I have (indiscernible) here on Navajo Nation over the years (indiscernible).

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

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

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

I want to also make sure I acknowledge that there are folks here today. We have (indiscernible) as well as Assistant Secretary (indiscernible) from HHS. It has been an honor to serve as (indiscernible). We also have (indiscernible), which has a very important role (indiscernible) to make sure that partnership with the tribes (indiscernible). I also want to thank President Buu Nygren and Vice President Richelle Montoya leadership (indiscernible). I believe we also have a special guest (indiscernible) right here. Let's give our chair a round of applause. (Indiscernible) this is not just for (indiscernible).
This is the work of the United States Federal Government, and this has been an issue (indiscernible).

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

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

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

So as we begin, it's our (indiscernible) session (indiscernible). If you wish to speak, just simply raise your hand and (indiscernible). We will be here for a long time today, so we'll be sure that we get to folks. Please note also you have members of the rez here (indiscernible) and tell your story to the American people about what these boarding schools (indiscernible) and experiences (indiscernible).

So after the first round, we're going to excuse the press and continue the conversation later (indiscernible). We also have a court reporter here making a record and a transcript of this (indiscernible).

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

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

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

(indiscernible.) Thank you.

GUEST SPEAKER: (indiscernible.) So he says you go to boarding school. I went. I had two sisters there with me, and two were older and (indiscernible). And we wouldn't see each other very much because (indiscernible) and boarding school. We had our hair cut. (Indiscernible.) The other things was we couldn't talk to each other. (Indiscernible) and when we did, we got soap washed in our mouth.

(indiscernible) and I remember I was told you have to eat that, and I sat there for about two hours and I wouldn't eat it. I cried. (Indiscernible) I had to eat it.

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

GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.) She came as our guest from (indiscernible) and she told me there that she was coming here today so (indiscernible) and tell her stories. She has nine brothers and sisters, and a lot of her siblings also came (indiscernible).
I think just you being here that she now has started to (indiscernible). I had never heard (indiscernible) because she was just a child. She was just a little girl. (Indiscernible.)

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

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

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.

GUEST SPEAKER: Good morning. (Indiscernible) to Many Farms community (indiscernible). (In Navajo.) Thirty-eight years ago
(indiscernible) 1985 to 2022, boarding school abuse (indiscernible). Thank you. (Indiscernible) and here I am. I went out into that (indiscernible) because I snuck out in PE class 38 years ago. Our gym teacher walked in the restroom (indiscernible), and he walked in on us, and I got (indiscernible). I'm the only one that spoke up, and I came back and (indiscernible). I told the principal (indiscernible). And 38 years later, the same people, the same people are still here.

(Indiscernible) for my child I know the system. Nobody's going to help but myself. I taught him myself (indiscernible) a junior, senior year (indiscernible) all he needs. I (indiscernible) and make all the decisions. Two weeks before school was out, I told the school, I said (indiscernible). Oh, they're going to come up with something. I know they're going to come up with something. (Indiscernible) this IEP here is not (indiscernible). It's not strong. (Indiscernible.) Why is it still happening? (Indiscernible.) He has not had a fair high school education. He did not have (indiscernible). None of that. (Indiscernible) the system is not working for him (indiscernible), but he will survive. I did. (Indiscernible.) Thank you.
ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you. Also, just a reminder once again to reach out. Appreciate you speaking out. We've got a lot of folks here in the department who can try to help out (indiscernible) share your experiences with boarding schools (indiscernible).

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

She said when she was about the age of -- she doesn't really remember, but I believe it's around age eight or nine years old. She said there was a black car that came to her mom, and it had a big white star on the passenger door -- driver or passenger door. And then there was also a truck that came, and that was (indiscernible). And they were there to basically round up Navajo children and take them to boarding schools. And you know (indiscernible) Navajo peace
officers there for sure. And he told my grandmother, my grandparents, you have to put your fingerprints on this paper to send your kids away to boarding school. If you don't, you will arrested and you will be taken to jail.

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

And when they got there, they were told that they had to (indiscernible) hair lice and their hair was chopped. (Indiscernible) your hair is a part of your body and they held that sacred, but their hair was chopped (indiscernible) and thrown in the trash. (Indiscernible) sister became angry (indiscernible). She realized that this is part of our culture and we're not supposed to do this, and they disregarded her and did it anyway.
And so not only (indiscernible) she contracted tuberculosis, and then she was sent away to (indiscernible) sanatorium where she spent the whole year there. And she had to have surgery on her lungs because she had tuberculosis. And she said she was so lonely there. The only people that would come visit her were the Mormon missionaries (indiscernible). She went ahead and did the surgery and it was okay. And she said she stayed there all the school year into the summer, and they finally let her go (indiscernible). And they said they finally separated for this next school year, so they all decided to go to (indiscernible) school. (Indiscernible) and that's where she completed her education.

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

So upon their graduation, they began working right away. They moved to Seattle. They had met in school. My mom had wanted to start a family there and (indiscernible). And then eventually, they moved back to the reservation because my mom was so homesick for
her homelands so they moved back. We were born here. The six of us grew up together (indiscernible).

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

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

And that same person in the morning would braid my hair, and she would yank on it, hit me on the head, which I was in (indiscernible) and I wasn't fooling around. But she just did that just to abuse
me. So finally, one of the other dorm maids reported on her and told the supervisor that I was being abused by this dorm maid. So they called my mom to a meeting, and my mom was getting ready to punch her. And so they asked my mom, "What do you want us to do?" Or we can either put her on leave without pay or we can fire her. And so my mom, you know, she was very angry, but she (indiscernible) in her heart and she spoke to this lady in Navajo. But the way she did it was (indiscernible) and lady not (indiscernible). I think she told them leave without pay and so that's what they did. And so those were some of the experiences we gone through as a people.

And when I completed my education (indiscernible), I had my two step-daughters, and my husband and I raised two daughters. (Indiscernible) parents that are in the school system -- (indiscernible) kids that are homeless, kids that are from alcohol, drug abuse by their parents, and so they (indiscernible) you know. Just all kinds of a range of backgrounds in these kids. And they're so much stronger on what they deal with on a daily basis. But they didn't ask (indiscernible). They're thinking about what's going on at home. You know, is Mom going to use or is Mom or Dad are in jail? Things like
that, you know. Or where am I going to sleep tonight or where am I going to go? And those are the issues that our kids of today are facing.

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

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

I come in today as brown and indigenous. I come to you (indiscernible) boarding school being yanked (indiscernible) permitted to speak another language, forced to learn about a culture that's foreign to me. I come today (indiscernible).
ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you for sharing your mom's story and yours. (Indiscernible.) We're going to hear from two more speakers, and then we will break for lunch. Navajo Nation has provided box lunches for us here (indiscernible).

GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

(Lunch recess.)

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

Before I turn it back to all of you to share your stories with us, I just want to make sure that I emphasize two points. The point of today's session is to hear from people about their boarding school experiences and their families. If there's another issue you wish to raise with us, the Department of the Interior, we ask that you not take the microphone and the floor time to do that. We have people here who can hear from you about those issues.
And the second, I just also ask that those of you who are going to speak to just be mindful that many others may want to speak as well. So we're not trying to rush you through your time, but just please be mindful that others are coming after you as well to share their stories. So with that, we'll open the floor back up and hear out next speaker.

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

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

My dad recalls the memory of wondering how he
ended up in San Diego for basic training and ended up in Vietnam three months later. And his mother and father never knew where he was going. They only knew that their son was in boarding school at (indiscernible) High School. And the food there was (indiscernible), but he said it didn't get any better.

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

And he started to share that he was lonely all the time. He had to hitchhike back and forth to go back to school, but his parents were told that if he didn't, that they would go to jail. That's the experience that my father has had with boarding school. Going to school and not knowing that he was going to leave for the Vietnam War, he served his country. That, I did not know because he never spoke highly of the Vietnam War, but I was raised in the military traditional lifestyle. And it's with a heavy heart that my dad finally shared that story.
So when I shared that I was coming today, he said, "Straight to the point, go in short. That's all you need to say." And that's military language for him. But that's what the federal government bestowed upon him, and he dealt with years of trauma. It wasn't until 10 years ago my dad entered a facility in Denver to get help.

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

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

Madam Secretary, Mr. President, Madam Vice President, Speaker, and our Advisor and Mr. Beechum: I would like to have my (indiscernible) in a sense that the Bureau of Indian Affairs Boarding School was heaven sent compared to some of the stories that you may have heard with Christian boarding schools. I am very much appreciative of the (indiscernible) and then
also the experiences that we have had. I am in the
winter of my season. I have no room to harbor the
heartaches and the difficult times that many of us
have had. I'm willing to leave it on this court.

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

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

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

Now, for us (indiscernible), we have the opportunity that boarding school gave us, especially (indiscernible). It gave us bicultural nations. Many of our children today on boarding school and they are
bicultural. That is a blessing. Now, how we treat those that are bicultural, those that are mixed blood, how do we treat our own now? We need to embrace them. We need to take them to heart. They are Navajo. We need to have them with us. Many Farms Boarding School gave me my children (indiscernible). If I didn't go through these times, I don't know if I would have them. But I'm very, very fortunate.

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

Now, what is our government going to do with this? What are they going to do with my experience? I am in the winter of my years. I'm ready to retire, but what do I do with all this knowledge? That is what we can do. We have many educators who are PhD candidates. And then also, those educators, they can teach us as well and we can give back to our
community. I am very fortunate to have gone to the Many Farms Boarding School. Many Farms Boarding School was not always locals. They were Many Farms neighbors. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

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

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

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

My dad used to tell us about when he was taken to boarding school. (Indiscernible) and then
all of things that they told, you know, things that we hear about. Not speaking your language, not doing certain things, like being torn away from your parents, not knowing what was there, and not knowing what running water was, electricity. Those are some of the things that we had. But then there was other things that were taken away from us, right, like being able to bond with family. But now I have (indiscernible) your family is your grandparents, your cousins, your aunts, your uncles. (Indiscernible) four years ago.

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

And today, as we go along in my generation, which is a little bit later in the stories in -- a lot of the stories I heard here. But we're the next
generation, and our kids are starting to grow up, and they're struggling, too. So it's just a generational trauma that you hear (indiscernible), but we had that, too, but nobody talks about it because nobody knows that we exist or (indiscernible). They don't choose to hear us or they don't choose to see that we make a contribution. And we talk about military commitment. We talk about (indiscernible) that have served in the military. (Indiscernible.) And somewhere along the way, we have to make sure we have to keep talking. We have to raise our voices to tell our story (indiscernible).

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

I just wanted to express my sincere thankfulness that these -- that now we can come to the center and tell our stories. And we just have to keep
doing that until they (indiscernible). Be proud of them, help us help them grow (indiscernible), help us make it better. An that's what we need. Yeah, we can tell our stories but also help us move forward. (Indiscernible) and then we have to be able to be contributors to that, not to sit on the sidelines, be contributors. Do your votes, whatever we need to do, that's what we need to do as a group, and then we can make impact that way. (Indiscernible) I just want to share with you how much this means to me and probably (indiscernible) just to be able to come here and tell short stories and, hopefully, contribute to a change for our people. Thank you.

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

My dad and my mom talk about that. It is to talk about my brother (indiscernible). He never came home. (Indiscernible). I want to find my brother, where he's at, where he's buried. (Indiscernible) my mom and dad's home to go to school. Only one returned, the first son. And then my two other brothers (indiscernible) got wounded. He lives in
(indiscernible). He doesn't come visit. And my other brother, he was a sergeant and a sniper in Vietnam. He passed on two years ago. One of our (Indiscernible.)

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

GUEST SPEAKER: (Indiscernible.)

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

GUEST SPEAKER: All right. Thank you.

(Indiscernible.)

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

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

I went to boarding school all my life from (indiscernible). I graduated from (indiscernible) Boarding School, and then I graduated from
The way I feel about this boarding school didn't hurt anybody. The boarding school taught me a lot and taught me some bad. But when I went to boarding school, I was already prepared for it.

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

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

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

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

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

You go to check out, come back home all proud, and you no longer have long hair and somebody (indiscernible). I don't want to be a poster child for abuse. I no longer had an identity. A loved one (indiscernible) in fancy clothes, but they made me. I learned how to be bad. I learned how to be disrespectful. I learned how to lie to my people. (Indiscernible) and get my $15 dollar check. Abuse continues. (Indiscernible) you go back across the hall to the dormers and you do your homework, have a little fun time. And then the white people who take care of you says that it's time to go to bed. We all (indiscernible), and here comes a man, a teacher, a principal, people that we were supposed to trust. (Indiscernible) they pushed all the beds (indiscernible) into one corner in the back with our hair pulled by the metal hooks on our bed. (Indiscernible) we sat on our knees with a tooth brush to clean with nasty soap. (Indiscernible) I didn't know how to read a book because my first teacher came from my parents. My first teaching came from (indiscernible). That's where my first education went, and that's why we (indiscernible) follow the law. They groomed my dad
to obey the law (indiscernible). He said, "Rita, look at those pictures, and when you dream, you better dream with your eyes wide open that some day you'll have a car like that because some day you're going to have a house like that." He pushed us but it was with love. Coming from Rimrock to Many Farms, same but a little different. Food was (indiscernible) on your clothes (indiscernible). Food was spoiled. (Indiscernible) but I became so simple. I became so humble. Traumatized does not even come close.

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

But I say to you we are all a part of this. The abuse continues, and it will continue until we start action. Sixty years ago (indiscernible). I
heard horror stories four years ago. (Indiscernible) I want to see some action because of the stories have been told (indiscernible). I don't think so. You're the boss. You're the leader. You have the power (indiscernible). When you don't say something, you cannot talk about change. You have to speak up and be part of the change. These guys aren't going to do it by themselves. These guys aren't going to do it by themselves.

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

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

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

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

(A recess was taken.)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Ladies and gentlemen, again, please take your seats, please take your seats. All right. In order to continue, please take your seats. We've got our mic runners here.
What we're going to do is start over here first. We're going to go for about another hour, and then we'll see where we're at. I do want to say -- again if you can take your seats, please. What I do want to say is I appreciate that this is a difficult conversation for folks. It would be very helpful for us if you would stay in the area where you are seated instead of coming to the front of the room. I would very much appreciate that. We will make sure that we hear you.

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

GUEST SPEAKER: Good afternoon. (Indiscernible) Secretary of Interior, the staff, and all the officials (indiscernible). (In Navajo.) I just introduced myself.

Anyway, I went to (indiscernible) boarding school way back -- I'm talking maybe about 1962, '63, '64, something like that. I was there at the time (indiscernible). It was an experience from the start in the classroom, you know. We had Navajo teachers that would teach (indiscernible). One of the things that I had to do for every class I went to, you were placed in a group. You're at (indiscernible) one, two, three, and I was the last group to go and read
The teachers that we had had a ruler. And every day or every time I had to read, I would wear long sleeves because (indiscernible). Anyway, that's one of the things I went through. And you know, not just your arm. Some days on the edge of the ruler right on your wrist. That's what they did.

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

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

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

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

In the middle of the night, they had a siren for a fire drill. It was a mandate and we had a fire drill and we were on the top floor. When that thing starts ringing, everybody had to be out of the dorm, and it's "Fire drill, fire drill," and we were,
"What's a fire drill?" We were just happy to slide
down the fire wall. We enjoyed it. (Indiscernible.)

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

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

GUEST SPEAKER: I just wanted to add real
quickly about, first of all, (in Navajo). I'm a
retired professor, Navajo University, and I also
taught Navajo language, too. So I really, really
enjoyed, you know, my job, but I also (indiscernible)
before my grand kids, too. So I had -- you know, I
had to retire.
So I just wanted to share that during my -- when I was working on my masters, I did my thesis on Navajo language. When I taught Navajo language and (indiscernible) that Navajo language to students. And they would say, "Why are we paying tuition to learn our own language? Why? We should have learned this at home." So as I went along, I would ask them why. Why was your primary language? English? Well, my mom went to boarding school. My dad went to boarding school. So, you know, they just told me speak English, so that's what the response was. And they were very frustrated. They could be paying for another tuition for another class rather than paying a Navajo language class. So anyway, if you're interested, I have my thesis. Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.

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

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: It's okay.

Bryan Newland.

GUEST SPEAKER: Bryan, okay, Newland. Thank you. I just can't believe. I'm from Round Rock, just 15 miles north of here. I have the privilege of serving as a political appointee for the
administration. I was a special assistant to the Secretary (indiscernible) at the time. And I'm just overwhelmed with that, that the Secretary of Interior is in Chinle Valley and is here. And I really want to take note that we really appreciate that. Not anybody has come here like that, and here, our secretary is listening. So I just want to (indiscernible) that.

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

So that's the way the education was introduced to us about resistance, about the fact that at the time of the turn of the century, this is how Navajo children were treated. And if you look at the historical documents at Fort Defiance where the
children were taken to, there's horrific evidence of children coming back without their eyesight, without their hearing, and the horrible physical nature of that experience.

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

It was hard for my mother at Fort Windgate. She recounted to us that they were told they should go into vocational education, and they would take these tests and the tests would tell them or tell the
bureaucrats there what best would be your skill set.
My mother was told that she would maybe be a waitress. She could not probably be a secretary, but a waitress was going to be her future. Years later, the gentleman who was the educator at Fort Windgate, she encountered him, and she went up to him and said, "I was a student. I was able to go get my degree, undergraduate degree in education and went on and got a masters." And he apologized to her and said, "That was wrong what we did."

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

And I really urge Secretary Haaland to think about not only healing part of this journey but to add resilience to it. Because when we focus so much on individual trauma, we forget that so much of that was institutionalized. And we forget that it's not the individual. It's not your fault. It's not your fault that you got drafted under a manipulated system, and
yet people are made to feel guilty, are made to feel something is wrong with them. And I really urge you to think about all of us here as Navajo.

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

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

Your education is under your jurisdiction, both of you, and those schools were formerly boarding schools, and they have none, almost all of them. And
that what is it in that setting in that academia where
we should be teaching the children Navajo history,
language, and culture. Because ultimately, that is
the basis of resilience. Resilience is based on
positive identity, know who you are, not where you
came from (indiscernible).

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

So very much, I am just so indebted that
you're here. I appreciate fully what this represents,
and I just urge you to think about the path forward
and what it is right now we can do in the department
across the board so that folks understand the issues
in the interim to do so in a way that gives great
previews to the fact so much is institutional, and
we've gotta change the way we look at education and
the way we look at ourselves. Because if we can't
look in the mirror and say we're proud to see who we
are, that's not a very good way to start your day and
brush your hair.

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

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

I was recounting a little the days there. I
remember the (indiscernible). I remember the days of
trouble. Some of the stories are similar to all these
elders went through. I was made to sit in my chair
wanting to go to the restroom, and I would piss on
myself. Then I was made to stand in front of this
class humiliated in many ways, and then they told us
to go back to class because what I did was wrong. I was like (indiscernible). I haven't thought about this in years. Maybe that has to do with some of the things that happened that brought me back today and set me full back in some of the confidence that I have in myself. It's a little bit wounded.

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

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

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

And that's another trauma. I try to speak to my elders, and they even laugh at me. I even get teased by some of these elders out there. They say, "Oh, you're not Navajo enough to learn these songs, to learn these stories." So that's another level I have to put up with. That's another issues (indiscernible) teach our kids to learn not to be outcasting each other. We're all (indiscernible). That's how my grandparents raised me. They told me you are
(indiscernible) first. My father came from another tribe (indiscernible). All of us are the same people. We're connected.

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

GUEST SPEAKER: I'd like to introduce myself. My name is (indiscernible) and I am (indiscernible). I live down the road here, and I learned about this event to be in the Navajo Times. So when they mentioned my former school, I wanted to be here. So I came here this morning, and I went to Many Farms Boarding School back in the late '60s. And back then, we didn't learn about the word abuse until now because when I went to school there, we kids were abused and I
was abused. And one of the dorm maids, he was a mean old guy and came into other little boys. I was about this small, and I was sitting on my bunkbed, a loner. And the dorm maid, I felt something really hot be pressed against my left cheek. He said was that it was important to have licks. To this day, I still have that lick on my left cheek. (Indiscernible.)

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

So we (indiscernible), but I gave the one that really stuck out planted that (indiscernible) on my cheek. I can still see the mark when I look into the mirror. So (indiscernible) the school that's in Carmel, Pennsylvania, how many kids were taken
actually to be killed or how they were -- what happened to them (indiscernible) two times. And as I watched it twice, I had tears rolling in my eyes of people were made to be there, wanting to go home back to their home country and raping the children.

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

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

So that's when I -- when I first done that, we were all each given a cordless microphone. They
wanted for us to say some words to the people in the
auditorium. So I think, "What shall I say? What
should I say?" Finally, it came to me. I said the
first words that popped into my mouth. So I said,
"Any more questions?" (Indiscernible) people started
laughing and I kept my microphone. So right now, I'm
going to get chosen. 2015 I came home and here in
Chinle. I got home, I got my groceries, and I started
(indiscernible) they were really given worse.

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

So as I touched my head, it was all bandaged
up. (Indiscernible.) So they gave me a walker and I
did good. The next day they started working me with
physical therapy, speech therapy, and there was
another, and they put me in a room (indiscernible)
they gave me art supplies. I heard a voice and I knew
it was a surgeon. (Indiscernible) and he said,
"You're a miracle you're sitting here." I put my
brush down and I shook his hand, and I'm standing here
today.

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

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

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

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

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

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

My grandfather told me by 1939, he was picked up by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He was taken out to a place called Tuba City. There, he had to network with his peers, the students, the older generation,
her father, my grandfather, cousins. And getting to
it is that through his eyes is that that boarding
school that was built in Tuba City in 1903, it was
only built to produce soldiers to bridge a war of
World War II. There was many Navajos being brought
in, Navajo young men. Every morning, they would stand
up in front of the boarding school. It started with
government preparing Navajo students to fight, whether
it's in the Pacific or Germany to fight in the world
war.

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

    So those are a lot of what Navajo citizens
across Navajo Nation has endured, whether it was at
Fort Windgate, whether it's on Many Farms, or Tuba
City, or Ship Rock. Indian citizenship has been given
to American Indians since 1924. Yes, we were given
rights of citizenship but not the right to vote. And
boarding school stories are told that right to vote
allow you to speak did not come until almost 1950. So
these people (indiscernible) for years and years.
(Indiscernible.)

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

What I'm saying is that there's something
that (indiscernible) has inflicted to Indian country,
and what they inflicted is still going on today. You
go to any boarding school, any boarding school, you go
to a child and try to talk to that child in Navajo,
the school will not and continue not teach them their
culture, their heritage, who they are.
(Indiscernible) every day congress and the
administration continue to impact (indiscernible) to
take away who we are. (Indiscernible.) (In Navajo.)

Again, thank you, Madam Secretary Haaland,
for coming to Navajo in Chinle, also Bryan Newland in
assisting your team up here. (Indiscernible) our
trustee take care of us. They tell us to be good
Indians. We're good Indians. Every day in Washington
they continue to (indiscernible) from Indian country
whether it's Indian education, BIA support, health and
safety, social service (indiscernible).

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

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

When I first got to Shonto Boarding School,
it was totally different atmosphere for me. Meaning,
that you have to get up every morning, you have to
shower every evening, and you go to bed at a certain
time. So coming off, you know, living on the
reservation is totally different, but I got used to
it. But along the way, you know, I'm going to bring
I was talking about the lower class grades, kindergarten, 1, 2, 3 in Shonto, there's an incident that always comes to my mind. We all had to get into the shower by 8:30. Everybody showered in one room. One room. You guys know what I'm talking about, right? One room with a shower, shower heads coming out of that room about 20-by-20. And once you get done, there was a lady that had -- she put her chair by the door, and we all walked (indiscernible) and we had to pass her to go back to our room. You had to take your towel off and you had to turn around like this, and she had to inspect and make sure you took a good shower. So that stuck in my mind, you know.

So at a very early age, you don't really understand. You don't really know. And then from there on, when I got into the upper level, we used to have movie nights. So one day -- one evening we went to the movies, and me and one of my friends, we kind of snuck out the back to scare the girls because we had a scary movie. So when they walked out, we were sitting by the plants, and the first group of girls came by so we jumped up and we scared them. They took off and all (indiscernible) and we went back to our dorm.
And somehow the word got back to the administration, and the very next day, I got called in the gymnasium like this. In each corner on the edge of the gymnasium there's a walkway. I was sitting on the second set of stairs, and the principal came in and he said, "I heard what you guys did last night." And he started talking, and he said, "I know what you guys were trying to do. I know what you guys planned." And I said, "Well, all we were trying to do was scare the girls after a scary movie." And he said, "No. That's not what you guys were coming to do. And I want you guys to tell me what you had planned on doing." And I said, "That's all we did. They took off and we ran."

And then he says, "Well, let me tell you one thing." He said, "If you get the urge as a young man, a young adolescent guy, if you get the urge, you go jump in the shower. You take a cold shower." He said that will take care of it. And I started thinking in my mind what this guy is talking about. And I looked at him and I said, "Are you saying that we're going to rape somebody?" He says, "Exactly. That's what we thought you were coming to do." And then he brought out a pocket knife. He's an ex-Navy guy. He was going like this.
He said, "Tell me, guys, what you were going to do." I said, "Well, if we were going to do something, we would not have ran." And I said, "How can we do something with 30, 40 girls?" I said, "Come on." So those were some incidents.

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

So that's what I wanted to share with you guys. I have lots of stories that I can tell. The lady that was sitting here, she brought up talking to your kids in Navajo and English. I brought up my kids talking English, exactly what she's talking about. To this day, my kids are grown, they're all gone. And they ask me, "Dad, why did you talk to us in English? You should have talked to us in Navajo." So the one thing that I know -- I think somebody else brought it up. When you get hit on the hand because your hand takes a lot of abuse and that's the reason I'm thinking because we all stood out there like this and we got whacked. So thank you for letting me tell a little bit of my experience. But thank you for giving
me some time, thank you for listening. Like I said, I
just want to make it brief, but I had a story to tell.

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

Madam Secretary.

SECRETARY HAALAND: Thank you, Bryan.

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

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

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

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

So I know that (indiscernible) and they succeeded that because my parents and grandparents worked very hard to preserve that culture for us. And I just want to acknowledge the legacy that all of you
have been left by your ancestors about the future of
this community. So I recognize that and I'm really
happy that all of you were able to come today.

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

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

Just know that everybody's working really
hard. I know there's a lot of ground to make up and
sometimes it takes time, but just know that our hearts
are in it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for having us as
well. And I wish you all a safe journey home as well.

Thank you.
STATE OF ARIZONA )  ss: REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE
COUNTY OF COCONINO )

I, CORI BRICKEY, RPR, CR do hereby certify that I am an Arizona Certified Reporter;

I further certify that this event was taken down in shorthand, and was thereafter reduced to typewritten form, and that the foregoing constitutes a true and accurate transcript, all done to the best of my skill and ability.

I further certify that I am not related to, employed by, nor of counsel for any of the parties herein, nor otherwise interested in the result of the within action, and that I have complied with the ethical obligations set forth in (J)(1)(g)(1) and (2).

DATED at Flagstaff, Arizona, this 15 day of June, 2023.

CORI BRICKEY
Arizona Certified Reporter