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
## Opening Remarks:

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

(Native language) So English now. This orange black ash basket was created in honor of my great uncle who never got out of the boarding school, and for
those of us that have suffered hurts, the Waganakising people invite you, the People of the Crooked Tree invite you to write their name on a piece of birch bark and put it in there, and after the journey, the journey is done, the basket will come back and we're going to burn and have a ceremony to release that hurt. It's just another tool, and it will be here throughout the day.

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

The purpose of today is intended solely to provide boarding school survivors and their descendants with the opportunity to share their personal experiences while they were enrolled in these schools. For some this is the first time sharing what happened to them, and telling the truths will result in a wide range of deep emotion. By gathering here today, we give our survivors and descendants a platform to have their voices
heard and to allow all of those affected to tell their stories. Many members of our tribal communities have gathered here from Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin to share their experiences and give testimony of the trauma inflicted while attending a church-ran boarding school. Look around the gymnasium today, you will see people of all ages that have come forward to share their testimonies. You will see survivors here who are the grandparents, parents, aunties, uncles, and siblings. It is a historical step forward for tribal communities everywhere as we look to end the suffering created by these institutions.

The Holy Childhood of Jesus Boarding School, which is located within the homelands of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, did not close until 1983. Now, for almost 40 years later, it's time to uncover the real truth of these schools, and I can not think of a better way to educate the public than to hear directly from those who were impacted. You, our native communities over the decades have experienced great loss, cultural, its practices, a great loss of language, and in many instances our people's lives at the hands of these schools. While it is an emotional day, these, our shared experiences, will bring awareness to the harsh reality of boarding school life and the trauma that still affects
the native community to this day. It will also allow much of the needed healing within our communities to begin and move us forward.

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

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

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

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

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

You know, I learned what it's like to be a Pueblo woman because my grandparents, in spite of the fact that they were taken away to boarding school and made a, just a very -- I mean they survived the assimilation era by persevering through all of, through everything they had to do for five years away from their communities, and my grandfather, my grandmother, and all of the people of that generation made sure that they held tight to our customs, traditions, to the songs and the dances and all of those things because they knew that we deserved to have that, so I'm very grateful for my
grandparents and all the people who have suffered through those eras in order to make sure that we can still have our songs today.

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

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

Federal Indian boarding school policies have touched every indigenous person I know, some are survivors, some are descendants, but we all carry the trauma in our hearts. My ancestors endured the horrors of the Indian boarding school assimilation policies carried out by the State Department that I now lead. This is the first time in history that a United States Cabinet Secretary comes to the table with this shared trauma. (Applause) That is not lost on me, and I'm determined to use my position for the good of the people.
I launched the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative last year to undertake a comprehensive effort to recognize the legacy of boarding school policies with the goal of addressing their intergenerational impacts and to shed light on the traumas of the past. To do that, we need to tell our stories. Today is part of that journey. Through the Road to Healing, our goal is to create opportunities for people to share their stories, but also to help connect communities with trauma-informed support, and overall to facilitate the collection of a permanent oral history because every single American should know about Native American history. (Applause) Thank you.

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

I want you all to know that I'm with you on this journey. I will listen, I will grieve with you,
I will weep, and I will feel your pain. As we mourn what we have lost, please know that we still have so much to gain. The healing that can help our communities will not be done overnight, but I know that it can be done. This is one step among many that we will take to strengthen and rebuild the bonds within the Native communities that Federal Indian boarding schools policies set out to break. Those steps have the potential to alter the course of our future. I am grateful to each and every one of you for having the willingness to step forward to share your stories because I know it cannot be easy.

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

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch, Madam Secretary. (Native language) My name is Bryan Newland, I have the privilege of serving as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. And I'm glad to see so many friendly faces here as I know many of you from growing up here, just north of here in Kenosha Commons, Bay Mills Indian Community. I want to say miigwetch to my friend and Chairwoman, Regina Gasco-Bentley, and Waganakising Odawa for hosting us today. And since the Secretary brought up basketball, I have to say go Bays. (Laughter)
It's really great to be back here, home, and meeting with many of you and hearing from many of you about this. Michigan was home to five Federal Indian boarding schools across the state, including here at Harbor Springs where my great grandfather attended. As we continue to investigate the Federal Indian boarding school system and learning about your experiences at these specific schools, and we know that the overall system paints a history that records can't fully account for.

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

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

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

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

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

So some housekeeping items for today’s conversation. This is an opportunity for us at the Department of the Interior to hear from survivors and their descendants. Secretary Haaland and I are here not
only on our own behalf but on behalf of the United States Federal Government to be held to account for what the United States Federal Government did through these boarding schools, and we want to make sure that in these roles, that we've got a space for survivors, those of you who grew up in homes raised by boarding school survivors and attendees, and those of you who can speak on that experience and how it affected you and your families.

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

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

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

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

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

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

WARREN PETOSKEY: This is a momentous day. My effort to address historical trauma in our family, having come to realize the impact of Carlisle Indian School and Mt. Pleasant Indian School played a great role in my upbringing, and I grew up thinking my dad was my enemy because of how he beat me when I was young, I'm the oldest in our family, and then growing up in a community where we disintegrated, that community being the first people of color that lived there and me walking down the middle of the street going home or going
to town in order to get me extra steps to run from the older gang of boys that caught me twice and beat me pretty good, but after that they never caught me again. And later in life, they asked me how I did that, and I told them, I said, old Indian trick.

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

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

So my preparation for today was to write a thesis, I'm a writer and I'm a storyteller, I'm a Native artist, I'm a lot of things I guess, and I reached the stage where most of the time I think I'm just old. I
had to ask my wife to help me hold this because I shake.

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

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

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

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

I am a seven-year military veteran during
the Vietnam era.

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

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

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

I'm here to speak for an elder Odawa
woman who attended Holy Childhood, and I remember a
cconference in Mt. Pleasant on the reservation where she
said, I attended Holy Childhood, she said, where I was
raped and sodomized more times that I can count. And she
said, when I realized that they were trying to break me,
she said, I was determined they would never do that. And
upon her graduation, the priest struck her in the mouth
and broke her jaw in such a way that every ten years she
has to go back and have the jaw reset because it grows
back crooked. So she says every ten years I'm reminded
of Holy Childhood.

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

There now is the evidence among us that
includes a feeling of the need to protect the Catholic
Church who exercised administrative control over the
school's function denying criminal acts committed inside
the walls of the schools. These endorsements represent a conflict and threat to who we are as a tribal nation. Our ability to function is hampered as we promote the dysfunction represented and discredit those who suffered at the hands of the nuns and priests at Holy Childhood.

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

In the year 1800, the Catholic Church of held a council more then to determine whether we were animals or human beings, and they determined that we were not animals, but they also said we were not quite human beings, and so they gave us a title of wards, and somehow that title of wards crept into federal policy and provided no protection for us through the Constitution of the United States, and so they did to us what they wanted to. The idea was that the policy was we will make the necessary decisions for them because they are not capable of making them for themselves. This attitude expanded
into the boarding school model of kill the Indian, but save the man. And one of the first men from the Lakota people, and I'm Lakota, too, said that more of our children died in Carlisle than came home.

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

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

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

The Catholic Church made a statement, give us your children above five years of age and let us have them until they begin their teenage years and they
will always be Catholic, and we found this to be true, and I say this because I was once Catholic.

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

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

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

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

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

The Roman Emperor Constantine assumed the office of pope and initiated an effort that nearly
eradicated the tribes in Europe. Constantine's converts occupied political offices and administrative positions at the local, state and federal level providing leverage to the Catholic Church which included protecting sexually and physically abusive priests and nuns from that time to this. Whole tribes were exterminated because they would not comply with the Catholic Church's demands.

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

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

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

I know, and I call you Madam Ogichidaaqwe, we have many of those here, and your staff, because I know this is a daunting task for you and it's a weary task as you travel in to be exposed to testimonies
like this all the time. I know about Spanish, I know about what happened there, I know about the medical experimentation hospital in Oshkosh or in a city in northern Wisconsin, the Bad River Battle of Ojibwe --

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

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

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

UNIDENTIFIED: (Native language.) I really wanted to come here today in honor of both my parents for (Native language) Cross Village. She was a beautiful child, but when her parents passed away when
she was only nine years old, then she was sent to Holy Childhood of Jesus Indian Boarding School. My father, William Engstrom, everyone knew him as Turtle, he grew up in the Grand Rapids area and he was sent to Holy Childhood of Jesus Indian Boarding School when he was only nine years old, and I think that made them even tougher for the rest of their lives (inaudible). They're passed on.

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

I was fortunate, I was the youngest of her seven girls, to have a family that was kind to me. My sisters weren't as lucky. Three of my sisters, at the urging of the Catholic Social Services, thought that my
mother had to give her children up for adoption. One, here today with me, she found us when I was 13 years old. And there is something about the history of that institutionalization that I think is connected to the boarding school experience. The same with my father. He was in and out of jail for all of his life. My mom would share some and tell us times about when they were at Holy Childhood. She would say, oh, they say, oh, your boy has ran away again, you know. And he never stopped running. He was running the whole time he was there. And he preferred not to live in places. If we wanted to find Turtle, we looked for him down at the river, at the Washtenaw, you know. And he preferred to stay there because he didn't want to be told who he was and what he could and could not do. But he was abused. He ended his life by strokes. He was in the prison system to where he could not walk any longer. And he did that -- he was never the same as when he ran away from Holy Childhood. Turtle would not be told who he was and what he could and could not do. He would always talk back and it got him in a lot of trouble and it got him a lot of pain, and he was that way throughout his life.

My mother passed on in a very bad way. She was institutionalized at the time of her death at Honeyrest, a mental institution, and she was not cared
for. She was neglected. And it's really hard. My
daughter, who is with me, she reminds me so much of my
mother, and she never got to meet her. My two youngest
children never got to meet their elders, grandmother.

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

And then you know it's been tough because
my father, Turtle, you know as I said that he never
married, he did marry another woman and they had some
children. And I talk to her sometimes, and she never
knew he was at the boarding school. He never told her
about the things my mother told me. You know, she was so
young when her parents passed, she was like, oh, you know
the nuns, they were -- they were like mothers to me. But
you hear underneath her story, she would talk about like,
oh yeah, my knee would be red, my knees would just be red
after scrubbing the floor. And she was like, oh, this is
my iron, and tell you about that shirt, you have to get
that right. But you know, she told stories when she
would be with my dad, and I'm sure he was old, she was like, oh, hey, you remember? And she sort of always had a crush on him. We have a lot of -- (inaudible) that. At home with my sister, considered half sisters. I'd ask my mom: Who was the most handsome of our dads? And she was always, oh, yours, great. She said, you know, they were there for years. And she said, oh, she says when I used to iron your shirts, your shirt was special. And she said, you remember that? (Inaudible) And he was like, no, I don't remember them. Well, I do. So that was cute.

But I just wanted to think about that name, Holy Childhood. You know, her childhood before that time, that was the sacred space. We know when she was a baby, we know she was born in Cross Village, in a log cabin, without electricity. Her parents spoke the language, they hunted. They didn't speak it to her; they had already been punished for speaking it. But she remembers it so much. And all my life she would say to me: You know I'm not afraid to die because I know I'll see my parents again. And when she went in that bad evil way, we saw her before she was cremated, and her face was so beautiful, so much at peace, and I believe it's because she did see them again, and she said she would. And I want to think, and I'm quite sure that we know of
our ancestors' spirit, and I hope that she is at peace where they were and they have good healing things and is growing those species of plants that bring back our mind altering, right, our little spirit beings, bring back those butterflies, bring back those bees, because that's another violation of life that were not considered worthy, and those are all in relation to presence in communities where even that sort of contention of those kind of plantings so we can go somewhere and we feel that peace and feel that continuation, and that restoration. Miigwetch. (Applause.)

MARY PETERS JARVIN: My name is Mary Peters Jarvin, Grand Traverse Band 2154. I'm here with my sister, Irma Peters, Grand Traverse Band 2153. Our father, (Native language -- Nadagahe Iowabe) went to Mount Pleasant Boarding School. There his name was changed to Albert Peters. When it was possible he ran away from there because -- because boarding school left him damaged. He led an explosive life in a home with alcoholic people, but mostly on Bridge Street in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Alcoholism caused him to be absent most of his life as a husband and father from his family of six children, but especially during our adolescent years. We were raised by a Christian mother on welfare. We lived in a muddy shack, heated by a pot belly stove.
Our home was also without electricity and indoor plumbing until 1993.

IRMA PETERS: And our house is still the same.

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

UNIDENTIFIED: (Native language). I am a boarding school survivor from Holy Childhood School. I went there for six years, first through sixth grade.
This is my brother Ivan, he went there six years as well. And we have another sister that went there for four years.

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

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

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

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

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

We lived on the third floor and they would have people pounding on the fire escape, and those girls would open it up, and there would be some kind of goblin or witch that would come busting in through that floor and chasing us all around, wreaking havoc in the dark, running everywhere, this way and that way. Then we would be shoved into Sister's room, and a bunch of us would be crying. I would get underneath the bed, and my sister came running for me, and I reached out from
underneath the bed and I scared her because she was running for me, looking for me. And she brought me into the Sister's room, and that's where we stayed until everything was all done. So those are just a little bit of my experience.

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

Thank you.

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

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

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

And the only time we got to play as kids
growing up was at recess and then we played football. I
excelled in football. I excelled in sports, basketball.
So that was my escape. I felt sorry for all the other
kids there, because then I started to straighten up a
little more and kind of figured out what I needed to do to keep from getting in trouble, so I excelled in sports and in schooling. I did that, so when I went to the public school I excelled in sports.

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

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

(Applause.)

BART GASCO: Hello there. My name is Bart Gasco. I am a Catholic boarding school survivor, and this is my story. I'm going to take you back to what was supposed to be the happiest and most carefree times of our lives, our childhood. I will admit to growing up with a semi normal attitude, trying to make the most in
life. I have blocked so much of the memories, including both years I was there. My kindergarten and first grade years there were not those of a fairy tale. They were most like real-life horror movie and all being filmed in Harbor Springs for me.

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

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

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

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

Once we were down with breakfast, lunch, or dinner, we stood at attention waiting for others to file in. We definitely were not able to utilize it as a social event. We were there for one reason, and that was to eat and we would get done as fast as we could. I was fast. The dining hall was one large room. You could see the other groups file in. You could only stare, but you
don't get caught looking up or making eye contact or even remotely attempting to talk to someone else. Sometimes meals were the only times during the day I was allowed to see the faces of my brother or my sister. Punishment though for talking and not eating could get your next meal skipped.

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

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

I can recall one Saturday that I was not allowed my family time. Sitting by the window, I watched my older sister come pick up my two siblings that were there with me, to take them for the day. What was it that I did that warranted an extra school day, you wonder? I colored on my fingernails with a pencil, something that was so innocent that I think every little kid does at sometime, at some point in their lives. I was punished for that. Not only that weekend that I
missed my family time, but in the moment I was slapped
with a ruler across my hands. And it wasn't a quick slap
or even with the flat side of the ruler. It was the
sharp edge of the ruler. And how many times? One for
each finger that had coloring on it. And if I cried, it
would start over. The counting would start over and it
would be harder than the first time.

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

Another memory I had, I unfortunately get
to think about, are my playground memories. We were
boys. We of course had it in us to be rough and tumble
from time to time. But if I was caught arguing or
fighting with a fellow boarder, we were taken inside and
split apart and punished. The punishment I most remember
was where I was taken into my sleeping home and paddled
bad, and not just a quick pat on the back or behind for
an attention getter, more of a beating than a paddling.
The other boy and I were to scrub three flights of
stairs, starting between rungs on the banister, the steps
and the approaches. We only stopped once when we hit the
ground floor. The tools used to clean the floor, three
flights of stairs, a toothbrush and a bucket.
As I looked around the hall, the dining room, seeing the other faces I can recall, we all looked similar. We all had dark hair, skin, and eyes. And we were all Native children. We were constantly preached at during the week that we were learning how to transform, transition away from being Native American. We were being talk how to be white. We were to never speak in our Native language again, never sing or dance to the music that our grandparents had and so on. I was young enough that I was not versed or taught many of those traditions yet anyways, so unfortunately it was very easy for them to work on their goal of killing the Indian in me and saving the white man.

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

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

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

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

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

I am a Native American boarding school
survivor. Thank you.

(Applause.)

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

It's hard for me to say, but the one thing I remember is this one nun treating me so badly that I still think about it to this day. Her name was Sister Jenrose. There was this one girl that wrote a note to a boy and signed my name and she gave it to the nun, and the nun came and asked me if I wrote the note, and I told her no, but she didn't believe me, she told me that I was lying. So she made me a ridicule of the entire school. I would stand in line to go to lunch or go to a classroom and she would either pull me by the ear or pull me by the hair or get her hand around my neck and take me out of line and put me to the end of the line, and while she was doing this, she would tell the other kids that this is a dirty, filthy girl, she was not worthy to walk with any of you, so she would put me at the end of the line and everybody would go about going to the lunch or going to their class. And when we went to the dinner hall, there was a table at the front of the room where bad kids were sent, bad kids were put to sit,
and that's where I would have to sit and eat my meal, and everybody coming into the lunchroom would point their fingers at me and tell me what a filthy person I was. So they must have did their job because I never seemed to get over that story or that vision of that nun pulling my ears, pulling my hair, pulling my neck, and telling everybody what a filthy person I was, that I wasn't worthy to be walking amongst them, and these were my own kind of people that also were pointing their finger at me.

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

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

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

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

My name is Jean Frances King, I am the daughter of 
William Francis King and the daughter of Cindy 
Springwater and the granddaughter of Virginia 
(inaudible). Both my mother and my grandmother was in 
the boarding school. Which one, I don't know, but I was 
in Holy Childhood and I, too, do not have good memories. 
In fact, I have six daughters and one son, and I never 
told any of them what happened to me, and it took me ten 
years to even open up to a counselor. I have the gift of 
gab, but, you know, some things you just don't talk
And but at one of our tribal events, one of our elder leaders had spoken about me, the time I was in a boarding school, to my oldest daughter, and that was something I really didn't want to remember. But some stuff happened to me throughout the years; I've made bad decisions, I was traumatized by other people in the boarding school, and now that I'm older, I do realize now all this stuff that I went through in my life is because of the boarding school. I was really young, I was like, you know, five, six, seven, eight, and I only have one good memory. The one good memory, I want to say this first, was seeing my Aunt Carol and my Uncle Matt and my daddy. These double doors opened up and they came in and saved me. They saved me.

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

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

There was more things I don't even want to talk about. I just feel for everyone who's been there, and I'm glad, because you know what, this is something you just can't talk about. You know, there's already been enough trauma, and then when someone wants to choke you and hates you that much to want to kill you, for someone to hate you that much because you're brown, because of the color of your skin or because you don't speak the same language, this is just, you know, this is crazy. You know, it's like we're supposed to be human nature, human beings helping another human being, we're supposed to be empowering each other, not tribes fighting
against tribes or white people fighting against brown
people, anyone, and for these boarding schools to do this
us to and for us, the need to be prejudice; and you know
what my daddy says, we just got to pray, pray for those
who are more sick than you. Chi miigwetch. (Applause)

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

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

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

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: All right.
Thank you. Miigwetch. Thank you, everybody. We're
going to continue. I know we had a speaker lined up
ready to go again. Before we get started, just one, two
quick housekeeping items. One, again, we want to make
sure that we are hearing directly from those of you who
have firsthand experiences and that this space is for
you, and then those of you of course talking about your
relatives and your family members, I want to make sure that you have a space as well, so if you wish to speak, if you fall into those categories, please raise your hands and our mic runners will come to you. We're going to stay, so just please be patient with us. Second housekeeping item is we'll go for another 45 or 50 minutes, and then I know the Tribe has lunch for people, we'll take a lunch break, and then after we get something to eat, we'll do a photo line for those of you who are interested in that.

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

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

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

There was a -- I want to jump back a little bit. But can I have people raise their hands that are survivors of Holy Childhood that I went to school with. I went to school in the mid '70s, and I call it Holy Hell because that is what we experienced. And some of the things -- and I'm healing. A lot of people will often say that didn't experience it that they say, why
didn't you tell your parents? Why didn't you tell? But we didn't tell because we were afraid, we are afraid of what would happen because we knew we were going back. We were sent there through the state and the government that took us from our homes. There was six of us girls and one boy.

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

But I want to share some of the things and something that just came out. I'm in therapy, and I've been in therapy for a while, but my sister and I, we
were talking, and sometimes when you repress your memories and then later they come out just like out of the blue, and I shared with her when she was sharing with me some of the things that had happened to her. There was molestation going on in that school, and I think a lot of people, they think about the other boarding schools, but I think this one might be overlooked because of the community that it was in. You know, it is a white community, you know, we were sent off, oh, you know, let's go sing -- and I apologize, I don't mean to offend -- but we were sent off to go sing for the white people, you know, as little kids, and or they would come and pick us up and take us to their homes and -- I'm sorry, I forgot where I was going.

Oh, one of the stories that I can relate to, the story that you were talking about on Halloween when they petrified us and terrorized us on Halloween and devil's night. As a second grader, I had bones on my bed and I knew what was going to happen that night, they going to come to us. And my sister was protecting me, and she said, come and sleep with me, you know, and I'll protect you. But later on nothing happened and I went back to my bed and I was awoken by, they had, it was like bags, and they put a flashlight on their face and they grabbed my hair and the mattress and completely threw me
out of the bed. And I was a hard sleeper, so I'm like looking up, but I was just petrified at that age. So if you can imagine being in second grade and having that happen, bringing you to the cemetery, making you find your way back. I know the ones that went to Holy Childhood, you remember that when they would take us to the cemetery and say you have to find your way back.

And, you know, being young and remember kneeling and kneeling for a sin that somebody did that you don't even know what it was that they did, it was probably something very small, but they would throw that rice on the floor and you would kneel all night long until morning. And the beatings that came with Sister Naomi, being pulled up three flights of stairs. If you remember, the boys probably don't because the boys were in one part and the girls were in the other, but those flights of stairs, Sister Naomi pulled me by the back of my hair, and the reason she did that was because I was coughing during Elvis Presley movie, and so it's like okay, I'm the sinner, I'm going to hell. But what about her, what about her and John Hughey, and I know you guys remember that. She was having an affair with her best friend's husband, and she left the nunhood, but she starting telling me that I'm going to hell. I'm second, third grade, and so I just remember those.
And one of the things that came up -- and
there's family members, and I'm not going to share their
stories because that's their story to tell -- but the
molestation of the boys from Sister Diana, and you know
she did it. So I have family members that, you know,
after they left their school, they got into drugs and
alcohol, and I understand that because that was their way
of coping. You know, when you have a nun and everybody's
like, oh, it's a nun, but when you're molested by a nun,
you're -- the pain that some of them have told me that
they went through, they had a hard time with that because
we were so many times told we were going to hell for this
or for that.

But real quick, I want to share two
stories about my memory of there and the abuse that I
received. You know, I did get many, many beatings. I
was very quiet, I'm not a public speaker, I'm very shy,
very withdrawn, but I think that that's because we've all
experienced that because we were told that you are to be
seen and not heard and you're to do as you're told, and
so that's what I did. And when we went home, we didn't
tell our parents, you know, we didn't tell my mom. And
but the two stories I want to tell is when I was in third
grade, I don't remember what I did, but Sister Naomi had
put me out on the fire escape, and if you were going
there, you know how raggedy it was, it was crickety, raggedy, and she left me out there until probably about 4:00 in the morning, and I was so afraid at that age because there were bats flying around, and I remember sitting out there crying and trying to realize, you know, what did I do to make this happen to me. And the only reason I was allowed to come back in is because my sister had said, are you going to let my sister, you know, come back in, she's outside, and Sister Naomi laughed, this is what my sister had shared with me later, she said, yeah, she laughed, and she said, oh, I forgot her. You forgot me out on that fire escape for eight hours until 4:00 o'clock in the morning?

And then there's another story, and this is extremely personal and I've never said it out loud. We all know that there was the molestation going on with the boys, but there was also with the girls, too. When I was in first grade, we weren't allowed to go in Sister Naomi's room, and so if you -- so when I was asked to go in there, it was odd to me, and but, you know, I was young and I'm like, okay, well, I'm going to go in her room, and I remember having my pajamas on, and this is a memory that just came to me like within the last year or so, and I remember, I clearly remember my pajamas and I remember folding the sheet up in front of me, and I said,
what am I waiting for, and she said, just wait, just wait. And I'm like, can I go back to my bed, and she said, no, no, you're going to be in here tonight and you're going to wait and I'll be back. And I have not got past that healing in me and that memory. I don't know what I was waiting for, but I have an idea of what I was waiting for; I was waiting for a man to come in. And I know that later in life I learned that -- I know that I wasn't penetrated because I was a virgin later in life, but I know how they were and I know what they did to some of my friends at the school, and they would put us for the priests, for the brothers who were so creepy, and if you remember them in their brown robes with their little three knots that they had on there, what they would do. And I've heard other stories that the similar thing had happened to them, so I know what happened to me, I know that I was, that I was touched, and but I haven't got to that healing part yet. I'm still there, I'm still healing.

And one thing I want to say is that I -- and I get what she was saying about the shame, I was so ashamed for so many years, but then I realized, that's not our shame, that's their shame. That's the nuns' shames, that's brothers' shames, and that shame goes all the way to the Vatican (applause), and I will not go
into -- I will not go into a Catholic Church. Yes, I was baptized in the, made my -- or made my first communion -- and what's after communion, when you get your name? Yeah, confirmation. See, that's how long, I blocked that stuff out, I don't want no part of it.

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

And want to thank you for coming out and being our voices, too, you know, and we all as survivors need to be voices, we need to be voices for those children that they're finding, and they might want to check Holy Childhood because my sister removed bones from there and were put in bags and nobody knows where those bones went. She didn't share that until recently that they had to dig up them graves at night when nobody was around. My thought is, whose bones were those, and why were they put in bags, and she was in eighth grade, and that was in the '60s, so there's bones there, and they need to be found. Miigwetch. (Applause)
MELISSA MOSES: (Native greeting.) I am from Water Moccasin Nagawa. My spirit name is (Native language), White Framed Woman. I stand before you today to give my testimony about me and my family's generational trauma.

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

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

MARY COBE GIBSON: I love you.

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

I also want to apologize for my color today. It's only a dress. It happens to be a black dress that happens to be in remembrance of the nuns that
beat us. I am sorry if I offended anybody. I know that when I walked in people were really quite taken back that somebody would come dressed as a nun. But it is them who abused us. It is them that we forgive, and it is them that we try to forgive. And so I'd like to continue on with my story.

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

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

On this board, it is made of brick because that is where I grew up for eight years, the brick building. The nuns and the priests and the church, I had to kneel in that church for eight years, five days a week. I had to go to confession on Saturday and tell them lies about what a bad child I was. It's -- it was a
vicious cycle. I don't know who I am. I'm lost. And
there's a story to be told as I continue it. But I was
baptized, confirmed, and I had Holy Communion. One of
the things that I want to go to church and ask for is the
excommunication papers so that I no longer have to worry
about what they can come at me for. (Applause.)

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

And school, I didn't -- I don't remember
any sexual abuse happened to me. My sisters never spoke
of sexual abuse happening to them, but I know the abuse
was physical to us because we had to clean the hallways.
We were given one piece of cleaning material to scrub the
long floors because they were made of wood and they
needed to be shiny. And we had to wash windows and hang
outside the windows in a third-story building because the
school needed to be cleaned before we left the school
year.

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

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

That too has another story, because as a
little girl I used to have to stand in front of the
foster homes that I was in and sing a song that told them
that I was Indian and would you please let me in. And
today I'm going to sing it to you because it's what the
church did and what they made me believe that I needed to
do this to enter into a foster home.

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

So I'm going to leave you with that. I
love all of you, and God bless you for being with me and
standing with me. And my story book is available, and
you will receive a copy. So I hope this helps.

Miigwetch to all of you. (Applause.)

IRENE CORNSTALK MITCHELL: (Native
language) My name is Irene Cornstalk Mitchell, my maiden
name is Cornstalk, and I'm from Beaver Island. My dad
was a fisherman, his name was Alec Cornstalk, he had his
own book. And there was 12 of us altogether, all 12
children. And anyway, my dad, we lived across the Bay
over there on Beaver Island, and he made enough money, he
taught my oldest brother to fish, and naturally all the
brothers became fishermen, and they made enough to pitch
in to buy us a home from across the Bay into town. And
in those days, a house doesn't cost very much because
this was back in the '30s and '40s. So anyway, my dad
bought a home in town so we'd be closer to the grocery
stores and stuff.

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

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

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

UNIDENTIFIED: I'm Natiqua (Native language), they didn't take that away from me, I still have that name. Two words, the creator.
I just want to share with you, to continue on, that was my brother that give his first testimony and that's the first time he's ever been able to speak of the abuse. And he was right, we were kids trying to enjoy life. My father had walked on when I was five years old, my mother was struggling, there was ten of us at home, and she needed help, and so we reached out for the CMAS [ph] program, and that's when they sent people to your home to talk to you about it, and us kids would all have to go in the other room because the lady was here. We didn't know what was going to happen or what they were going to say. But I had went in to ask my mother a question while this was going on, and I hear this lady say to my mother, you have ten children, is there any of them that you don't want, that you don't have to, you know, that you don't need here, you know, we can take them. And as a little girl, I had to think about that and think about that, I'd go to school and think about it. Well, I come home one day, my bag is packed, I'm put in a car and I'm taken up to the boarding school in Harbor Springs. So my biggest nightmare come true, I was taken away, me and my two brothers. And as I walked through them doors, I couldn't even tell you who took me up there, it was just a big blur. As I walked through them doors -- and thank you for saying we need to
say -- Sister Naomi was there to greet me. And it's like all of a sudden you're taken up to a room and there's all the other kids and stuff, taken into that room. She checked you all over to make sure you didn't have any bugs and everything and you got your hair cut.

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

And they're right, we weren't allowed, I was not allowed to see my two brothers. I could see them at mealtime. We weren't allowed to talk, we weren't allowed to laugh and to hang on to each other. And on the playground, time to go outside, when they let you finally go outside, the boys had to stay on one side of the school, the girls on the other. Well, I missed my brothers. So there was five of us girls, five or six, we snuck around the end of the building because the boys was
out because I wanted to say hi. Well, Sister Naomi Kust [ph] got us, and the famous fire escape, she took us up to that fire escape, she locked us out there, and we had to stand out there until she decided she was going to let us come in that door. And we stood there. And the hardest part for me was there was another girl at that boarding school, Sister Naomi beat on her daily -- her name was Deb, I will not use her last name -- daily, and you know what I did, I was so scared, afraid to go in there, I looked to see one of the five girls was her, and I thought, I'm not going to get beat as bad because she's going to go after Deb. I went into a survival, and I had to live with that guilt knowing I wanted somebody else to get it worse than me because I knew what was coming, and that was the life of the boarding school. You got sent down in the cellar, you had to peel them potatoes or else you didn't come up until they were done.

I don't know how many of you got locked in the dark room, but I sure spent time there. There you go. She locks you in that dark room, no lights, no nothing, and you stay in there until she decides you're ready to come out. Don't know if you're in there for days, you don't know if you're in there for weeks. And then the famous clicking of her taking -- walking down to her room to get her ping-pong paddle out, or whichever
one she felt like using on us, them heels clicking on that wood floor, you knew what was coming. She'd go in that room and you just lined up and waited to see who she was going to get first and if it was your turn or not.

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

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

And to you, Bryan and Deb, as my friends here, I'm asking you, there is -- she is correct, there is bones still left down at Holy Childhood. A few years
ago we got a notification from, they were redoing the sidewalk down by the school and down by the church, and they told us they found bones. So our people from our tribe went down there to help to take care of them bones, and they told us you have 48 hours to get them bones out of here because we’re going to finish our sidewalk. We know the children are down there. Sometimes the children would have to go dig on the playground and you found the bones. So we need to find our, the rest of our brothers and sisters that died at that school and let's take them all home and let's take good care of them. So chi miigwetch. (Applause)

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

MARILYN WAKEFIELD: My name is Marilyn Wakefield. I attended Holy Childhood School, Harbor Springs. I am a survivor. I went to boarding school for six and a half years. I brought a picture of myself right here, my sisters, my cousins. One of the survivors
that spoke out earlier, found himself here, Ivan. I brought a brick from the school. I have seven of them for my seven brothers and sisters of my family including myself that went to the school.

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

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

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

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

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

So I'm going to tell you now about -- I wanted to share with this, about the last year. A bunch of us survivors got together and we formed our own class
site page. And on the page, this is dated from 1924. It has on it the contents of the box sent to Rome. This is the following contents. There's a lot of things named on this thing that they took from this child or children back in 1924, that has a list. And I believe there is a copy of this in Melissa's -- we know each other. We all formed our survivors group a year ago. We hadn't seen each other in 40, 50 years, and now that we have, we're not letting go of each other. We have each other from such young ages we went through hell and trauma.

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

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

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

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

The next time I remember my emotional torture, my mom and dad brought my siblings to the school. I was standing in the vestibule when they got to the school. My mom would -- We would get our own clothes to begin with at the school. My grandmother would make
us nightgowns. We got to school, we had this blue
suitcase that the three of us shared, had to flip it on
the side to open it up, and my mom neatly packed our
clothes. My grandmother, her mother, would make us
nightgowns. Once we got to the school, we never saw any
of it again. So that's an abuse of it, an emotional
thing for me. Nobody needed to hit me. Nobody needed to
hit me. I just -- I was, I'm still -- I can't. Let's
see.

So my mom and dad brought my siblings to
the school. I was standing in the vestibule with Sister
Naomi. She went by Maxine and Naomi, had two names. She
went by Sister Naomi for a long time, this switched over
the years, she switched the name to Maxine. I didn't see
my siblings as we were always separated. They always
separated us when we got there. Naomi said that she had
a treat for me one day when we were dropped off. My mom
and dad stayed in the vestibule with Sister Naomi. She
said: I've got a treat for you, go in the dining room
and sit in there. Now this is after a couple of years of
being there. She knew one of the most torturous things
to me was to give a raisin cookie. Naomi was talking
with them, so I go in the dining room and here on the
dining room table is a little saucer and a raisin cookie.
And at that time I'm in second, third grade, I can't
really remember. That just led me to believe that I'm getting ready to face another torturous year. Not a slap in my face because it's an emotional roller coaster that I can't get rid of it. So let me see. It was her ultimate torture for me as she knew I hated raisins, and which it was in a lot of foods that we ate.

One day while I wasn't feeling good after breakfast, I told her I wasn't feeling good. And she had me go upstairs and asked if I wanted anything. I said yes, a glass of orange juice. I went and got in bed, got on my pajamas and got in bed. And sesame, after she got done sending the girls off to school for the day, she set up an ironing board, it was right next to her room, she set her ironing board near my bed. She was going to iron her clothes while she watched me. Take care of me, I guess, because I wasn't feeling good. But instead of bringing me a glass of orange juice, she brought a great big metal pitcher that we used to milk the cow. There was a milking stand just outside the dining room doors. So she -- and I said, oh, I need something to drink. So as I laid in bed and she's ironing the skirt and her white blouse at the time, and she's smiling. And I took my first glass of orange juice. That's not what she had in mind for me. I had to drink the whole pitcher of orange juice. And within, I would say -- oh, I don't
have a concept of time, but within just a short time I had to go to the bathroom because now all the orange juice I drank, I'm full of the diarrhea coming down my leg. So I went running to the bathroom. I turned around and looked behind me, and she is still standing there ironing her clothes and smiling like nothing was going on. So after that I just kind of -- I don't remember much more of the day, only that specific time. I got back in bed, I got myself cleaned up. I don't know what happened with my things. I just got back in bed and went asleep.

So another time all the girls were watching a small black and white TV. This is when I was in the little girls dorm. So we were watching the small black and white TV in the little girls dorm, a Don Melvoin movie on a Saturday afternoon. The kitchen nuns fed us a late afternoon dinner, and we were having a bag dinner or lunch. We had a Waldorf salad, similar to a Waldorf salad, in which it contained raisins. I threw mine out in my milk carton and threw it in the garbage. I didn't realize she was watching me, but she made me dig in the garbage, get the milk carton out, dig those raisins out and put them in my mouth. I kind of pack rattled them off to the side because I hate raisins, and that were her torture for me. And I just wanted them out
of my mouth. So when the girls got to watching the movie in the big girls dorm and I was still in the little girls dorm, I ran down three flights of steps into the dining room, spit them out, ran back upstairs before she knew I was even gone. So that is the type of things that I went through.

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

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

One day I was outside walking along the front of the school, hanging on to the black rail that ran in front of church to the school. A couple of boys came up to me and were saying: Tell her, tell her. And I asked them what, because it stuck in my mind even to this day, and until I found out from my brother what had happened to him. So one day -- And I asked the boys:
Tell me what? And, oh, never mind, what you don't know, it won't hurt you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I have looked back on many times there.
I didn't suffer in the classroom, my horror was in the --
where we slept, where we kept our clothes, upstairs. How could my sufferings continue by just a few flights of stairs away.

One night as I lay in bed I heard the screaming of Naomi across the big girls dorm. She was screaming at Debbie. I will not use her last name. I think we're speaking of the same Debbie, and out of respect out to her I don't use her last name. She's a little older than myself. I sat up in bed and looked across the dorm and then looked at her, looked at Debbie. Naomi was screaming at the top of her lungs at Debbie. She had, she had -- excuse me because it's very personal. She had started her period and didn't know what to do. So she hid all of her dirty clothes in her dresser, a small stand next to her bed, as we all had one. Debbie started screaming and crying and was holding her head. I was holding my breath, as I think we all were, I was so scared for her. I couldn't sleep. She was just screaming. The next day we were back in school for our education. I was so confused about the night before, but went to school in the morning, nonetheless. When different girls were asking about Debbie, we were told that she went back home. We didn't know that for sure, but in the last few weeks or months, excuse me, I found out that Debbie had some learning disabilities, she was
special needs. And for that night that happened, I wanted to find her. I didn't know she was special needs. She was a darker skinned Native than an average Indigenous person is. And with me being light-skinned, I felt so injust for her to have to endure that. Sister Naomi threw her clothes out of her dresser and just screamed at her, just wore her out. And the last memory I have seen of that is that Debbie was holding her head, just screaming, because she didn't know what to do with herself. So I found out just recently with my sister, who was with somebody that she had met through us reconnections, that Debbie had special needs. And as far as I can remember, she did go to the school up in the Sault. That's the last I know about her, so.

And anyways, my cousin Doris was on Maxine's, Naomi's radar. They never got along. Doris hid in the infirmary one day. Because my bed was back at the bathroom, the infirmary was on the opposite wall as the bathroom. So Naomi is looking for her. Naomi went through the big girls dorm screaming Doris's name. I had my covers -- Doris was my first cousin. I had my covers covering my head, trying to block it out, trying not to listen. And after what seemed an eternity she finally caught her and chased her to the front of the dorms, and I said out loud -- I said, I said out loud, oh, my God,
they're at the Virgin Mary picture that was hanging at
the front of the doorway, to the right of the doorway as
you enter the girls room, big girls room. They were at
each other screaming. I just laid down and blocked it
out and went back to sleep with my head covered for
tomorrow we will be -- for tomorrow we will be safe, back
in a classroom.

My cousin Will, Doris's youngest
brother --

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

MARILYN WAKEFIELD: That's it?

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

MARILYN WAKEFIELD: Everybody else.

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

MARILYN WAKEFIELD: O.K.

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

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

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

MARILYN WAKEFIELD: You're welcome.

(Applause.)

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

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

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

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: All right, everybody. I hope everyone had a nice meal and a chance to catch their breath. We're going to continue and we're going to probably keep in this rhythm of 50 minutes or so
and catching a quick breather. I know a lot of folks had
to leave. And before we get started again, just want to
emphasize that while we want to make sure everyone has an
opportunity to share their stories, that we have a lot of
people who do want to do that, and it's not our intention
to diminish your storytelling or to be rude and cut you
off, I just want to make sure that everyone's mindful of
others, and we'll exercise that sparingly. So also, if
you have longer stories that you want to share that are
written out, we're happy to receive those, that's going
to be part of this initiative in our records, and so you
don't have to read the whole thing, we're happy to hear
summaries or overviews of that.

So we have mic runners, I want to say
miigwetch, those guys are getting a workout today.
(Applause)

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

UNIDENTIFIED: (Native language) --
Waganakising Little Traverse Bay Band Odawa Anishinaabe
endogue, Saginaw Swan Creek and Black River Ojibwe
endogue. I am a survivor of Holy Childhood of Jesus
Indian Boarding School located in Harbor Springs,
Michigan. I am 63 years of age and attended Holy Childhood between 1967 and 1970 with four of my siblings. My great grandfather, James Pontiac, attended Carlisle Indian Boarding School between 1890 and 1899. Both my patrilineal and matrilineal grandparents attended one of five Indian boarding schools in the state of Michigan in their lifetime. Both of my parents attended federal Indian boarding schools, so I am the fourth generation of my family to have attended one of these schools.

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

We are making difficult choices today that will affect our children for generations to come. Our duty is to be good ancestors by leading them to healing. We must end the generational trauma by
acknowledging its harmful effects on our people, communities, and unlearn the oppressive behaviors associated with this trauma. My family was heavily impacted by this; one of my brothers who attended school with me is no longer with us.

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

Little Traverse Bay Bands, as many of our members are here -- and I wanted to do one more thing. I wanted to ask all of the Holy Childhood School survivors that are present to please stand, because I think that's important to acknowledge all of these survivors. (Applause) Each of these people have an incredible story to tell about what happened at that school, the horrific events that have impacted our lives.

So the very first Catholic missionaries visited Cross Village in about 1829. I just want to give you some background. The damage to our cultural lifeway
is through denial of our spiritual beliefs, cultural
lifeways, has left deep scars in our community, it may
take generations for families to fully recover and heal.
The damage to our cultural identity due to the loss of
tribal estates being subjugated to the reservation
systems and survival of Indian boarding schools has only
been compounded by the use of racial inequity, abject
poverty, and insecurity.

So my story is the story of all of those
survivors of Holy Childhood Indian Boarding School, and I
want to share some of my experiences while I was there.
I arrived at Holy Childhood Indian Boarding School in
September of 1967 not knowing what to expect. I was
apprehensive and nervous about leaving my family of
course and spending the next nine months living with
people who I knew nothing about. Upon arriving at the
school, I was greeted by Sister Marie Fidelis and was
told that I should go up to the dormitory which was at
the top of the stairwell on the third floor, grab a pair
of swimming trunks and a towel, and go to the beach and
swim with the other boys and other children. I thought
to myself, how bad can this be, right. It sounds great,
starting good. Later on that evening, after we returned
to the dormitory about 7:00 p.m., a young man who I would
say was probably about 11 years of age came into the
doorway and he was visibly frightened about coming into
the dormitory. Sister Roberta, who was in charge of the
senior boys' group, proceeded to yell at him in a very
threatening manner. He couldn't move, he was frozen in
that doorway. She then ordered two of the older boys to
help her restrain him. She put him over a bed and beat
him severely with a cleaning brush from a closet that she
had pulled out. We didn't see this young man until a few
days later, he was locked in an infirmary recovering from
his injuries. That was just -- that was my introduction
on my very first night to Holy Childhood Indian Boarding
School. You can't imagine the psychological, the
emotional response that I had to that beating, knowing
that that probably is what I was -- what I had to look
forward to during the rest of my stay. Like a lot of the
children that were there, we lived in constant dread and
fear of retaliation from the nuns.

On one occasion, and this is one that I
remember well -- all of the students that have talked so
far have talked about Halloween being a very difficult
time for us because there was a lot of fear driven into
the children by the actions of the nuns who made clear
that it was devil's night, and if you were an unlucky
child that ended up with a bone under your pillow or
ashes on your bed, you could expect that something bad
was going happen to you following that incident. On this particular occasion, it was 1968 I believe, my second year at the school, some of the older boys and older girls were allowed to decorate on the first floor of the school so the kids could trick or treat that year. During the -- near the end of the decorating, one of the younger boys came and fetched myself and another boy and were told that Sister Roberta was upset and she wanted to see us back at the dorm. So we went up the stairway, both of us trying to figure out what did we do wrong, and we know we hadn't done anything wrong, we were doing exactly as we were told. So we got to the top of the stairway and there were a bunch of boys gathered around the entrance to the senior boys' bathroom. Roberta came out and grabbed both of us by the ear. If you were ever a student there, you know what that felt like because it happened a lot. We were dragged into the senior boys' restroom, and on the floor there was a pair of girl's panties, and she looked at us both and she said, how did those get there? Of course we had no idea because we had been busy all that afternoon decorating on the first floor, and we told her that. She basically told us that we were lying, that another nun had reported to her that during that afternoon of decorating, she had witnessed me and this other boy leaving with two young women. Now, if
you know anything about the school, that didn't happen. You weren't allowed to fraternize with the girls at any time. So we tried to explain that that didn't happen, that we were being accused of something that we didn't do. She hauled us out to the front of the dormitory, told us to kneel. Other students have talked about this. So we were left there to kneel. She said, listen, I've got nothing but time, you know, stay there until you confess to what you've done wrong. And so we were left in the front of the dormitory, the other children were allowed to go and trick or treat.

   About an hour or so later, I don't know how long it was, she came back, we were still kneeling there, she said, are you ready to confess? And we tried, again tried to explain that we had done nothing wrong and if we confessed, we were doing exactly what we were told we shouldn't do, we were going to lie. Right. And she didn't believe that of course, and she left us there. The other boys were instructed to go to bed. She flicked the lights off. We were left kneeling on the hardwood floor for hours and to the point where I couldn't even feel my knees anymore. At some point during the night, she came out at different times and asked us to confess. We debated whether or not we should just do it because it would end the suffering.
About 2:00 o'clock in the morning, I mean that's what my recollection is, about 2:00 o'clock in the morning she came back out, she said, look, you can end this just by admitting what you did wrong. I was so tired, I don't remember my exact response, but it was basically this: I said, look, you tell us, the priest tells us, that God sees everything, that he knows what happens. If we tell you that we did something that we didn't do, we're committing this sin that you tell us that we shouldn't do. I said, if God sees all things, he knows who did something wrong in this case. Now, she hit me so hard that I landed on the floor, and she said, you little bastard, get back to your bed, we'll deal with this in the morning. I don't remember much after that. I woke up the next day thinking that something was going to happen; it didn't. I was surprised. That was just one incident that we went through as students there. We were, on one hand, we're told to, that we should forgive what happened to us, that to forgive was divine, and on the other hand, we were told to lie, we were accused of things that we didn't do. And there were thousands of other things.

There are a lot of young men who I went to school with who aren't here, I know why they're not here. We witnessed sexual abuse on a regular basis with
Sister Roberta. Young boys, when they reached 10 or 11, she began to groom us to spend time with her, she did it in different ways. And we witnessed boys going in sometimes at 10:00 o'clock at night and they wouldn't come out until just before sunup. And there was nothing we could do to protect each other from those events. And being a child in that school was, there are things that today I don't even remember. I remember bits and pieces of them.

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

So anyway, I just want to end by thanking you for giving us this forum, I want to just say chi miigwetch, Deb, and for taking this time. And I want to pass this mic and encourage all of my fellow Holy Childhood survivors to share your stories, they're important. And I truly believe that the healing that needs to happen in our communities will only happen when
we get to tell these stories, and that until we are able to do that, I think we'll continue to suffer from that trauma. Hopefully we stop it. Chi miigwetch.

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

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

Well, the incident in the wintertime happened when my little sister walked across the field to the neighbor's house and knocked on the door and said, I'm hungry, you got any food, and she was standing barefoot in her underpants, so the neighbor called the
police, then they called the church, the nearest church near our house, and they came, and my dad was gone at work and they came and they charged my father with neglect, and so we were court-ordered to the boarding school. It was that or be adopted out. So my father sent us to boarding school in Harbor Springs.

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

During those years, we were in the school except for recesses and when we went out for walks or walked back and forth to church. The rest of the time, we were inside the school. And then it was regimental, very extreme discipline. The major rule was keep your mouth shut and feet on the floor. We got up at a certain time, went to bed at a certain time. The rules were enforced with capital punishment. During my years at school, those eight years, I was slapped, punched, beaten
with a board from a desk. I was beaten repeatedly because I refused to hang my head. I would stare at that pin on the forehead of the nuns, and they took that as a sign of aggression, and they wanted me to hang my head and look down at the floor like everybody else did, but I refused, so they saw it as defiance, and I was beaten regularly so that they could break my spirit.

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

Every morning Sister Rossine would come, and because I did not hang my head and I looked at that pin on her forehead and she thought I was looking her in the eye, she would pound me in the breastbone here and she would say every morning for three years, how are you today, big chief, and with every word, she hit me. And years later when I had my heart attack and they used the paddles on me, it felt the same way as the paddles. So the very thing that was hurting me back when I was a kid was the same thing that was saving my life later on. So there was no, there was nothing to compare with what the
pain I was feeling, you know, back when I was a little kid. She was very strong woman, I thought she was a man. And I thought they were all men, because there was another nun, Sister Arnold, and I heard her yelling at the boys one day, and it was a little boy who must have wet the bed because she was yelling about wet beds, and then she must have grabbed a kid and threw him. He slid across the floor and he hit the double doors in our dormitory and then he started crying and yelling and she told him to get, so we could hear that on our side of the dormitory because there was just the two double doors separating us.

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

And the nuns insisted on strict discipline at all times. So if there was an infraction, I have seen kids going through the same thing I was going through, only the boys were punched and they were kicked when they went down on the floor. And I saw boy named John with the daylights kicked out of him in a classroom because he was accused of breaking a table, and he didn't break the table, the chunk of wood that was under the trim fell off on the floor just from use, it was loose all the weeks and it was just dangling, nobody bothered to tighten it; and that one day it fell off and he found it first on the floor and he was pretending it was a little pistol and he was shooting it off into the air making noises, and then the nun came in and she just slapped him up there on the spot and she hit him. He would not admit that he broke it because he didn't. And then finally there was day students in the classroom at the same time, we visualized and when we saw him, and she told him get in the closet. So he went in the closet, and that's where she really beat him up, we could hear him yelling and screaming in there. And when she came out, one of the day students finally spoke up and said, he didn't break that table, it was on the floor under the table when we came in. And the nun says, well, this is
in case he does something else wrong, and then the class
resumed. So we were all subject to things like that.

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

So I left the school a total social
misfit. I didn't speak up in class. I failed my -- I
had low grades because I refused to participate, but I
didn't know how. I didn't talk to my classmates; I didn't know how. I turned in my homework, but I wasn't sure what they wanted because I never learned, we didn't have that there in boarding school. I didn't know how to dress or act, I didn't know what they were talking about when they were talking about just radio shows or whatever was on TV, I didn't know what they were talking about, I was in a totally different world. So it was the four loneliest years of my life.

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

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

One of the hardest things that the school taught me was learning how to speak, learning how to communicate with other people and to tell people how I felt. I suffered severe shyness in high school and
after, later on when I was older, and it wasn't until I learned an artform and learned that I was, that I had a gift that I could give to other people, and then I became a better human being. I drank, I didn't ever use drugs, but I drank just because I wanted to wipe out whatever was the matter with me, I thought there was something wrong with me, and it wasn't until I felt a sense of self-worth that I began to drink, and I didn't become a human being until 1978 when I stopped drinking alcohol completely. That was then when I began to blossom. (Applause) That's when I realized that I had something to offer, that I did not need to be ashamed of who I was or what I was or what I had done in my younger years, and we all have to go through that, and I learned to adjust and become that.

I also learned to deal with my creator in my own way without being afraid of turning down the Catholic Church that had been forced upon us as young children; it was a hard step to make, you know, to adjust to that. So the creator and I are on good terms, also known as to other people as God or Ali or whatever they want to call it. I told my daughter, you can name your god mud if you want, that's between you and him. So I have come to good terms finally, but it took years to become this way. And I wanted to leave this world so
that my ancestors and my father and my community would be proud of me, because part of the healing process is learning how to talk about what we went through and to forgive, and I hated for the longest time.

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

(Applause)

So I believe that, in forgiving people, and it took a long time. Sister Naomi, every time she saw me, she apologized. Oh, I'm sorry, and she'd put her finger on her chin like this and shake her hips and said, oh, I'm sorry, she said, for all the things that you went through, and we just told her, you're going to get yours in the next world, so you don't need to fear me physically even though I would like to beat you up, you're going to get yours later. And then I learned to forgive. I did forgive her. I also forgave Sister Rossine and all the others, you know, who gave me a rough time in that school, and there were a lot of them, you know, that seemed to enjoy what they were doing. And I prayed often to those, you know, who could not defend
themselves, for those who didn't survive, who became alcoholics and addicts, bag ladies, homeless people who were not able to separate or become, what do they call it, become comfortable with who they were and what they went through, so I pray for them all the time. And I want to thank all of you for allowing me to speak, and I will pray for all of you, too. Miigwetch. (Applause)

KIM FYKE: Hello, my name is Kim Fyke. I attended Holy Childhood the years of 1970 through 1974. I'm the youngest of ten children of my mother's, my dad's only. We had two siblings that died as young children. So eight of us attended Holy Childhood. My older sister just turned 84 on Sunday, and she has absolutely not a bad thing to say about Holy Childhood or the Catholic Church. They have totally brainwashed her to the point that there is no returning for her. I talk to her daily about what I went through when I was there and what her kids went through when they were there. And she looks at me like I'm bluffing, and she knows I'm not. And she's like: Well, why wouldn't my kids tell me? I said: We were taught to keep quiet. We were told to don't tell. Our letters never made it home. Our phone calls were monitored. So when you say to the children from back then why didn't you say something? We weren't allowed to.
My first horror experience was the first Halloween. I was a young girl in the little girls room, not knowing what was going to happen. Had no clue. Halloween was a fun time when I was little, before Holy Childhood. But I remember hearing all the girls, and there must be 30 to 50 older girls in the bigger dorm, screaming and crying and hollering and running. And they came through their dormitory into the nuns sleeping quarters, which also led into the little girls dormitory. They came through her room with such force they tore the sink off the wall. That's how scared these little girls were. We were always powdered everywhere on Halloween. We were told it was devil's powder, do not touch it or the devil will get you.

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

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

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

Another Halloween we were eating dinner, and my cousin Doris, she was one of the Sister Naomi's favorite to pick on, for whatever reason I'm not sure. Somebody had killed a black bear on the road or something, and it was donated to the school for food. Sister Diane took that black bear's head and put it on
the silver platter and brought it into our dining room. She took the nose of that black bear that was just bleeding, and she rubbed it all over my cousin Doris, and just, you know, telling her devil's going to get you, devil's going to get you. That was so terrifying to me, not only because bears are scary, but this bear was dead, this bear was going to get me when I went to bed.

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

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

I am 61 years old. I have always known I was an Indian. Obviously you can't tell. But I never
knew my language. My mother never spoke it, my dad was a white man. And so experiencing Holy Childhood as a child it was one thing, but being here with you today, knowing what they did to us, it just makes me so angry. And I'm sorry to say I do not and I will not forgive the Catholic Church for what they have done to my family, my siblings, my ancestors. And I understand it was supported by the Federal government, but it was at the hands of the Catholics. Money doesn't hurt you, hands do. And as I believe, my abuser, the one we're all talking about, Sister Naomi, Maxine, Maxine Hughey, I believe, is still alive. Our abuser is still alive. And I think it's really not cool that she is not here. She should be here to see what she has done to us. (Applause.)

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

I have waited more than fifty years to stand before all of you and tell you what they did to me. And seriously, I wasn't physically abused, I wasn't sexually abused, but what I saw happen to the other girls or the other boys is what's traumatized me. How can you teach me the Ten Commandments in one breath and break them a second later. I don't comprehend how they could teach us to be holy and good and righteous when the whole
time they were everything but. They were evil, pure
evil, the Catholic Church. And I'm sorry, I know there
is good Catholics, but I can't get past the bad. And I
don't ever know how that's going to happen. You can't
erase memories, you can't erase the dreams that us
survivors have. There are so many people that I went to
school with that are not here today because they can't,
they can't come and talk to you. They could come talk to
me personally and tell me their stories; it's not the
same, because we all need to hear it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In 1967 it was decided that my older brother, younger sister, and I would attend Holy
Childhood in Harbor Springs, Michigan, because of the hardships our mother was experiencing. At the time we were ages 12, 11, and nine. My brother and I were in sixth grade and my sister was in the fourth grade. The school was for students in first through eighth grade. Holy Childhood boarding school was run by the School Sister of Notre Dame and the parish by the Franciscan Order of priests. I remember thinking that this had to be a really nice place because the names of the school and town it was located in sounded so pleasant. So let me start by telling you about the first day we arrived at Holy Childhood.

I remember pulling up in front of, directly in front of the three-story red brick building and was stunned to see that there were no children outside the school. I had an ominous feeling of dread as I looked at that building. Where were the kids, I asked myself. We went through the front door and rang the doorbell. A short, stout nun answered the door. It was Sister Perpetuella. And Sister Perpetuella, just so you know, was one of the best things about that school. She was always looking out for us. And if she saw Naomi coming, she was "shush shush" really quick, and tell us "be quiet, Sister is coming." And then she'd hustle us into the kitchen to finish doing our work cleaning up.
My older brother -- there were four of us that ended up there but -- when I first started going there. And even though we were there kind of together, my brother was in the boys dormitory, I was in the big girls dormitory, my sister was across the room in the dormitory, and my younger sister was in the little girls dormitory. And as you already heard, the only time you got to spend with each other, really, was in the dining room. Other than that we were expected to stay with our age group and our classrooms.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

You have already heard about Sister Roberta and Sister Diane so I'll just skip by that. And you've already heard about how regimented our days were where basically everybody had chores, and you did the chores first thing in the morning, you got ready, did your chores. We went down to breakfast, cleaned up, went
to school. Some kids went to play after school and did homework and watched TV and we went to bed. That's pretty much how it was.

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

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

First year there, we had one bathtub in the big girls dormitory and one bathtub in the little girls dormitory. We weren't allowed to change that water until it was real dirty and scummy. You heard Melissa say that was she -- who was her. Oh, I can't remember the name. Not Mary, Mary's sister. I can't think of her
name. Oh, it was Mary Cobe. Mary Cobe's sister, big
sister. Well, my sister and I were our little sisters
and big sisters, and when we came back I wanted to make
sure she got into clean water.

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

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

There were a few good memories. There
were times when some of us were selected to perform at
various clubs, the Perry Davis Hotel, the Moose and the
Elks clubs to name a few. Even then I knew we were being
put on display so that people would donate money and
other items to the school. I was often picked to run
mail to the post office. And when I did, I walked as slowly as I could so I could stay as far away from there for as long as I could.

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

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

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

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

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

I tend to be a little OCD. So for
example, my bed has to be made every day. I stayed at a hotel last night, and you know I made my bed. When I left Holy Childhood, I told myself that I would never send my children away and especially not to any boarding school.

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

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

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

In closing I'd like to say gda-miigwetchwiyan, and I thank you for launching The Road to Healing initiative and giving us the opportunity
to share our memories. It has taken me all these years to be able to do that, but I am very grateful for you to allow us the opportunity.

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

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

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

My first grade year, my first year at Holy Childhood, I was able to sit with my older sisters for one night, and then the next night Sister Diane took me to another table and I was not allowed to sit with them, I was not allowed to look at them, I was not allowed to acknowledge them. My one older sister came to the little boys dormitory, or the playroom in the basement, to drop off a Christmas gift, and Diane just
grabbed the gift, slammed the door in her face, and threw the Christmas gift at me. I wasn't even allowed to say hi to my sister on Christmas day, Jesus's birthday.

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

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

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

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

A few years after -- I had gotten into -- once I got into high school and stuff, I started doing,
started drinking a lot, starting doing a lot of drugs, the effects, the aftereffects, trying to cover the pain, trying to cover the shame, trying to cover the trauma of what happened at this place. I had managed, I had gotten some, gotten hold of Sister Mary and I told, you know, I talked with her, and she wouldn't apologize, she was just like, I just, I did what I had to do. I'm like, to beat us, a defenseless child, and she says, yeah, that's what I had to do. I reached out to Sister Diane and I left her -- she's not a nun anymore so I guess it would be Diane. I reached out to her and I left a voice mail, or a voice message on her answering machine and let her know that this was going to happen. Back then, in 1987, I told her, you need to call me because it's going to come out what you did to us boys. Sister Diane was notorious for taking boys into her room at night and sexually molesting those kids, some of which are no longer with us because of the damage that she did to them.

For years I suffered from, and still today, I suffer from PTSD I've been told by our (inaudible) that I suffer from the same, almost the same type of situation that they dealt with. So I just want to say that now I am able to stand here and talk to you folks, but I'm also clean and sober (applause) because I don't want those nuns to win, I didn't want them to win,
I didn't want them to kill my spirit. I dance, I dance for the ones that are laying over there yet, the ones that are laying in MITS, the ones that are laying at all these other boarding schools around the United States and Canada, they weren't given a chance to do that. I thank you, thank you for your time. (Applause)

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

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

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

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

My story begins with that originally. I wasn't supposed to attend the school because my parents thought I was too young, however, the nuns gave us a grand tour and showed me the dormitory, playroom, dining room, et cetera, and wouldn't I want to stay with them and play with the toys and eat in the dining room. I was only six years old. Eventually, they wore my mother down and promised to take good care of me. For a poor little Native girl that was often hungry and longed to sleep in her own bed and have food on a regular basis, it looked appealing. I remember that I had been there for a few weeks and wanted to go home. I said to Sister Naomi, I think I'm going to go home now. She leaned way over into
my face and said, you're not going anywhere, you're going
to be here for a long, long time. So I choked back my
tears and I hide inside myself.

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

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

How we longed to go home with our
parents. I dreamed of running away so many times, but I
knew that I'd never make it. Those who did run away were always caught and severely punished. One group of girls that ran away spent the night in jail.

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

Our family was treated a little differently because we had a rich uncle who donated money to the school. He had come to visit and wanted to know what I needed, and they said she needs new shoes. He took out his checkbook and said, okay, how much. He was told, oh, you can't just buy shoes for Janice, you have
to buy for everyone, and he did. We all got new clothes 
and a new set of play clothes. We were given our shoes 
and clothes first. I think they knew not to mistreat us 
so that the parents didn't pull us out of the school. Of 
course, as children we didn't know that he was our 
benefactor, we just loved him because he was our uncle. 
We did not know about this until recently when our aunt 
told us this story. We wondered why we were given our 
clothes and shoes first.

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

I had a nervous breakdown when I was 28. 
I spent three months in a hospital where I could barely 
write my name or remember my phone number. I attempted 
suicide on Mother's Day of all days. I'm sorry you guys, 
I haven't read this story, this is the first time I've
seen it. I spent roughly about ten years or so in therapy for PTSD, abandonment issues, trust issues, feeling unloved and unwanted.

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

I'm not going to deny that there is still pain, and looking back is difficult. It cannot be sugarcoated. We were schooled and taught how to work where we are today. Those experiences molded and shaped
us, but the atrocities inflicted on us as children is unconscionable. We didn't deserve to be put down, abused physically, mentally, spiritually, and in some cases sexually. There are so many stories and painful truths, yet I marvel at the resilience of my family and friends who are like family to us because we share an experience. Many are productive, living their lives and thriving, but these scars are ones you can't, you can't see are still there. We must live with this while being strong for our loved ones. We are a testament onto our ancestors who would be so proud of us for staying strong.

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

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch for sharing. We're going to take one final short break,
and then we'll come back I think for one more short
session. I know we've been here a long time, and I know
there are some folks who still want to speak and talk
about what happened to them and their experiences, we
want to give as much time and space as we can with the
time that we have. So we'll do a very short break to
allow folks to stretch your legs and get some water, and
we'll be back in five to ten minutes.

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

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

   For those of you that we can't get to
today, we're terribly sorry. We will of course gladly
accept your written statements and comments to us as we
continue the Secretary's Board School initiative as well.
So we'll hear from three more speakers. I think we have got them all lined up already, right? Yes. O.K. And then we will close out for today.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The hiding and stuff like that taught us not to trust, trust the dominant culture, you know. We
didn't respect them, you know.

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

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

Well, here I come along and I'm a hard riding outlaw biker, right, alcoholic, everything else you could name, you know, I was there. And a bunch of older women come up to me. One thing I was, though, was
smart. I went through college and I got a teaching degree. And these women come up to me and pointed me out and says: We have a problem with our children. We don't know how to alleviate it. And they asked me, they asked me if I would work with these children. And I thought, me? Come on, you know.

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

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

I seen where, I seen what I had to do. And I wasn't going to reinforce the things that was happening to these kids, you know. My mother still did not say who we were. I was fortunate enough, I told you
about my grandma didn't go to boarding school. Well, during the day when my mother would work she would raise me, and she didn't talk a whole lot of English, you know. So I was able to learn a lot, a lot of these Native things, you know. She taught, taught me them. Taught me how to be a Native, and then I couldn't be that when I was away from them, when I was away from her.

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

And I'll tell you something, I didn't even do nothing, because I don't really know if I taught these kids anything because they all taught themselves, you know. I was the blessed one that was asked to do this, and I was the blessed one because these kids come from all over the State of Michigan, and they brought
with them little bits of culture that they had brought from their home, and I had being the center point was the recipient of all this. So what was going on at that point was, it was kind of a little turnabout. I got the drop-out rate in our school system down to one percent, and that really upset me because I didn't know who that one percent was. Otherwise I would have went and nailed them.

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

And just what these people are doing today, you have to have patience, but it will come, and everything I think is working in the right direction and
that's why these people that are here right now, you have that heart, and it will happen. So Miigwetch.

(Applause.)

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

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

I am non-tribal. I am the only sibling of eight that are non-tribal. Because as many of us know, the intent was to fracture families and break them apart, and that has been successful in my family. My grandmother was taken to Baraga when she was nine with her -- she was the oldest of six siblings, and she was the primary caretaker of her younger siblings. When she was taken to the boarding school and incarcerated, some have used that term earlier and that's how I view it. She was there for two years. She never spoke of it at all until about five years before she passed. And there
was one journal entry that's about 13 pages long and talks about her experiences, and very soon after that she was no longer lucid for a period of five years.

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

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

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

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

And the reason why I'm here is because this past December 29th my dad talked to me for the very last time. And he said, my dad was fluent in Ojibwe. I just found that out, we had just reconnected. And he said: Bambi, you have to let people know. And I said: I am, Daddy. I'm trying. I'm trying to teach my kids. And he goes: No, you have to let people know our family is still broken from this trauma.
My dad shot himself three weeks later, this past January. And I am here because he asked me to come here. So the message, I thought all day about what message I needed to share. And the message I must share today is, our families are still suffering. My family is still fractured due to religious beliefs. I have an aunt who refuses to believe my grandmother went through any of this. I have siblings that are tribal members that refuse to participate. My father and I were the outcasts because we believe these stories need to be told.

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

(Reading): On December 29th my dad said to me: Tell our story, Bam, don't let them forget. My response was: How can I when I don't know who I am yet? Boarding school, age nine. Child labor at age 11. Donations were made to keep the truth hidden. Relationships lost and damaged forever, never knowing the love of each other. Keep your hair white and short to fit in. She followed unwritten rules until the very end. You can't marry our son, your past is too shifty. Racism failed you, now I see so clearly. Four decades plus three is how old you were when Indigenous rights were
finally conferred, 1962.

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

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

Memories and pieces start fitting together. Darker storms coming for us to weather. Your daughter -- that's me -- you found to reclaim our
heritage, this life long strife affected our marriage.
Friends of the church tried to keep you in line, to reinforce the colonizer's line. Our house divided has been for years, no one talks but buries the tears. Leave the past alone some plead, God and country are all we need. Internal racism and lies abound, keeping the secrets not to be found.

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

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

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

(Applause.)

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

LINDA COBE: My name is Linda Cobe. I'm a member of the Lac Vieux Desert Tribe in Watersmeet,
Michigan, and I'm a survivor of Holy Childhood. Unholy Childhood it should have been called. I was only there one year, but, and I don't have a whole lot of memories of being there, I don't know if it was that traumatic or why, that's the only thing I can think of.

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

But when I was in Watersmeet, my father is Ojibwe, my mother is Oneida, and they had five children, two older brothers, two years older than me and then one year younger than me, one year older than me, and then me and then two younger sisters. And my father was married to someone before my mother, they had two girls, so I have two half sisters that I didn't know, didn't grow up with, but they also attended Harbor Springs. And the story that I heard about them being
there, their time there, from one of my cousins, they said that both of the girls contracted some kind of disease where they were bleeding from their eyes and their nose and their mouth and their ears, and the nuns made my cousin take care of them, and I don't know if it wasn't contagious or what, but she said watching them bleed, she thought they were going to bleed to death, and she didn't, somehow didn't catch whatever they had, and my sister, half sister told me that she was only there for a short time, six months.

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

And so my time at Harbor Springs, I remember I think my brothers were there the same time I was, I was in first grade, I was five when they came and got me, turning six in the fall. And but I, we got to see our family at, when we ate the meals, but I don't remember seeing my brothers there. I don't have any
memories playing with them on the, in the schoolyard or what.

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

But I think the worst part of it was at night, listening to all the other kids crying themselves to sleep, crying for their parents, and just wanting to go home. And I remember one girl was a bedwetter, and they made her scrub the entire bathroom on her hands and knees with her toothbrush. And when the gentleman was talking about making our beds, yeah, it was ran like a military boot camp. You really had -- I remember the hospital corners, and I remember her ripping my bed apart. Because we were living in poverty growing up in
Watersmeet, we didn't have sheets on our bed, I just remember an itchy green wool blanket that I think my dad brought home from the World War II.

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

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

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

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

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

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

And, well, my two older brothers attended Harbor for three years, Celia had to go three years, and when she came back for the summer -- I brought these
papers to give you, it's from the State of Michigan Probate Court. It says, Celia Brunk, my sister, neglected child. Because we were poor, they considered us neglected. Okay. Blah, blah, blah. Having been brought before said court, an order having heretofore been entered on October 13, 1965, adjudicating said child to be a temporary ward of probate court and placing her for foster care in the temporary custody of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Mansfield, Baraga. And it having been represented to this court that it would be in said child's best interest that she be provided with special schooling at the Holy Childhood School at Harbor Springs, Michigan. This was up in Baraga County. So I'd like to submit these.

But so what happened after I turned 18, actually I was 17 when I graduated, I went back and looked up my parents and tried to establish a relationship with them again, and my brothers, we didn't get to see much of them growing up. But I come from a family of warriors, also. My father served in World War II and the Korean War, my uncles all served, my brother, two brothers served, one was a Marine, the other one was in the Army, and two of my boys are in the Air Force, one just retired 20 years and the youngest will be retiring with 20 years,
and I'm very proud of them all. And due to the divorce, though, and just complications, we don't have a strong bonding.

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

And I know there's one point in my life I just went wild after I got away from my sick, perverted father, but there was one -- they threw me out the house literally, and the only thing I had was a few clothes. I had a little money saved, thank God, was able to get an apartment with a couple of my friends, but I had broken up with my boyfriend and my parents threw me out and they wouldn't let me see my sister. And I, I'm not a swimmer, I can't swim, kind of scared of water, deep water, and so I walked down to the dock knowing it was over my head and sat there swinging my legs thinking I didn't have anyone,
and I wracked my brain and couldn't think of anyone on
the planet that actually could give a shit whether I was
alive or dead, and I was just going to fall into the
water and then maybe the pain would stop. I don't know
what made me walk away from there, but I did. And I've
also, you know, struggled with alcoholism and I've had
three failed marriages, married for the fourth time, my
soulmate here supports me.

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

And today I'm getting my culture back. I
don't speak the language, but I know words and I hear
more of our people speaking it, and I think the more you
hear it, too, you start catching it, getting it, and the
more you participate in your Native community, the more
you learn our way of life. And that dirty, rotten,
stinkin' no-good-for-nothing Indian got two college degrees, and I was a wildland fire fighter for 15 years. (Applause) So I'm really honored to be here, and I thank you so much for coming and hearing us.

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

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

What I would like to share is I grew up with my mother not knowing any of her culture, although her dad was brought up close to her culture. Basically my maternal grandfather was already affected by a scoop. He said one year he came home, all the kids were gone.
Him and another known elder were only -- were the only kids left. My sister said he couldn't avoid one year. I am thinking that is why he enlisted in the Army. He had eight kids, stayed in the city to avoid his kids taken away. In turn, didn't teach his children our cultures and traditions. It wasn't to be talked about. Although my dad survived his assimilation, it rendered him a short life. He joined the Army and married my mother and had four children. As a child, all I remember is the drinking. We weren't the only household with the alcohol-related issues. My mother is a survivor of my father's domestic abuse.

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

So my conclusion is there is generations that a lot have not healed from such effects and traumas. My whole family is affected. In order to heal our
children, us, and our elders, we need to address, change history, curriculums, and get healing programs to the tribes of our nation. Respectfully, Celia Brunk.

And thank you. (Applause)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Miigwetch.

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

You know, I spoke with my grandmother a few times about her experience at boarding school. Other than for her to tell me how the priest came around to the village -- this was back in the early 1900s, how the priest came around to the village, and she talked about him collecting children and putting them on the train to go to Sante Fe, to the boarding school in Santa Fe, she never said anything bad. But it showed, when I think about it, it showed in how she lived her life, right.
She got up at 5:00 every morning and cleaned her entire house from top to bottom. It was never dirty. Even if she were to skip a day, it would be fine. How her work ethic just drove her. She worked incredibly hard. And I feel like she put a lot of things on herself because she felt she had to be perfect in so many of the things that she did, and she said her rosary every single night before she went to bed. That puzzled me. But these things, these experiences, they affect people in so many different ways.

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

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

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

Lori Anne Penn, CSR-1315
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