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

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs
Bryan Newland
(Whereupon, the conference commenced at 10:45 a.m.)

(Tribal music playing)

(Presentation of flags)

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

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

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

MR. HARRINGTON: (Speaking in native tongue). I was asked to talk a little bit about the (inaudible) that
brought you here today.

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

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

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

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

One was red, one was yellow,
one was blue and one was green. They also had a brother that would sit with them, and they brought those dresses in and -- to the -- to the bands.

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

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

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

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

So everybody gives their attention here today, and I would like to welcome to the stage our chief for the Mille Lacs Band the Ojibwe, my
daughter, (inaudible).

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

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

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

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

Madam Secretary, I want to
take a moment to let you know you have
done more here with your cabinet
position than any other cabinet member
who came before you. That is just not
flattery, that actually is the truth.

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

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

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

In Minnesota the doctorate
which was called the Nelson Act in this
state was hand in hand raised voice.

Federal also want to
document change and help Indian
children while providing a home at the
same time, thinking these kids would
grow up and become adults who no longer
cared about the homeland and
traditions. Of course, they were
wrong.

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

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

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

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

Not too long ago a letter
was found by a woman of the church, and
it was written in 1890 by a boarding
school's superintendent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They call it the human -- humanitarian projects. The U.S. State
Department has called Russia war on these children and their parents.

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

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

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

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

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

My name is Deborah Haaland and I'm so glad to be here with all of you today. Thank you very much to everyone. Thank you for hosting us. Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for everything that you do for your people in the movement across the country. And also thank you for your leadership and those who take the time out of your schedule to be with us today.

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

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

I also wish to acknowledge the director of the National and
(inaudible). She is a member and valued partner in the organizational initiative.

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

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

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

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

Federal (inaudible) touch
every and each person I know. Some are survivors, some of decendents, but we all carry this painful legacy in our hearts.

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

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

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

In Minnesota alone, there were 21 boarding schools, leaving
intergenerational impacts that the present community represents here today.

   It is my goal to address the shared trauma that many of us carry. 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 opportunity for the people to share their story. But also will help for trauma support and facilitate healing.

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

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

   As we mourn for the loss, please know we still have so much to gain. The healing that will help our communities will not be quickly done.
This is one step among many that we will take to strengthen and rebuild bonds with the native community everywhere.

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

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

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

MR. NEWLAND: Thank you, Madam secretary. And to the Nation. And I am I'm saying at this particular time to say this morning the (inaudible).
My name is Bryan Newland. I have the privilege as serving assistant secretary for Indian Affairs Chief. I'm a tribal member of Red Wing Band from where we're at right now.

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

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

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

And to tell the story of the overall system of the -- these boarding schools and what they would do and what
they have done to people across the country.

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

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

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

I also want to make a few other acknowledgments as well before we turn the mic over and -- and close our mouths, I want to make sure we got to acknowledge our Department of Health and Human Services colleagues and partners with us.
As well as friends and partners in the Department of Indian Affairs who support this conversation. We also acknowledge them.

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

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

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

And, of course, we want to recognize tribal leaders that are here this morning, and thank you for coming on behalf of the people of your communities.
So, just a few housekeeping items. We want to make sure that this is a space for boarding school survivors and their relatives and families who wish to share their experiences and tell their story about the boarding school system.

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

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

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

And those of you who want to share other thoughts with us, we welcome you to send by e-mail or further submissions included in our work.
To raise discussion today, we just ask you to raise your hand; we've got mic runners here and mic runners there (indicating).

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

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

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

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

We also have a court
reporter who's taking a transcript of
the session. Again, so we can use what
we hear today in our investigation.

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

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

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

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

We also have the house
speakers, so that's going to be a
conversation. We have folks available here to provide trauma counseling on site, if this gets too much for you or you need that assistance, we have that outside in the hallway there.

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

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

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

We want you to know that you're not alone, we're here with you through this and we are trying to
ensure that we tell the whole story and
the truth about this federal boarding
school system.

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

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

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

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

Aside from this, they made
the role models that come and fill
roles and it was, you know, to that for
that.

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

And Secretary Haaland for
listening to us and getting classes for
us.

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

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

MR. NEWLAND: Do we have any
other speakers? Any other -- anyone
else who wishes to speak? Okay.

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

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

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

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

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

She was on the news on CNN,
full coverage, pretty blond girl, how
she suffered in the boarding schools.

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

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

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

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

MS. BARBER: Good morning.
I'm Rose Barber, from Lac Courte
Oreilles, and I have very little of the language. But I help people on other stuff.

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

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

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

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

And she said that Sherman Riverton in California and also in North Dakota, she tried to provide a little warmth.
Because that's what some of our children always needed. And we can see clearly some of the effects, the trauma that so many suffered.

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

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

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

And for little kids, you know, to not be able to speak their language. And so to learn a whole new language and to be affected by -- I
mean, I might as well say it, they were affected by white culture.

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

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

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

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

Some of the things that she talked about was learning to be a seamstress, a cook, you know, all these kind of things that were sort of pointed to and not -- I mean, how many
women who lived those many years ago were ever offered an opportunity or given opportunities to be leaders, you know, like our -- our (inaudible) who is a leader, you know, Rachel here, Menomonee.

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

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

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

But they were just sort of kids who just, you know, if they died
it was quieted down, they were just
taken out or -- or -- and he did say
that he wasn't aware of where they
buried them, but they just buried them.

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

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

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

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

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

You know, I want to hear this lady here from Alaska's story. So I'll give her the mic. Yes, if you're ready. Is that okay? (Chuckling).

Because I could go on and on. (Laughing). Thank you.

SPEAKER: Well, I'm scared.

And I have to thank my daughter, Alisha, and Tad for challenging -- taking time to remember.

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

I'm unspoken, I would go outside and start arguing with God, and say, "I don't want to remember, but I'm
here for my daughter, Alisha."

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

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

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

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

I don't know how long it
took us from going to Peakus Point to Holy Cross. And most of it was blank, because I didn't know where I was going.

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

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

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

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

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

First thing they said to us,
you're full of bugs, we got to give you a bath, we got to wash your hair, throw away your clothes and give you new clothes.

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

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

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

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

And I still didn't know how to speak English. And she would take her time and teach me. By the time I got to second grade Sister Mary was no longer my teacher, and that's when things got worse.
And I would get hit and slapped. And they would say you're speaking barbarian, speak English. I thought I was speaking English. And I didn't think that my language was barbarian.

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

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

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

As of Wednesday some of those memories started coming. And Tad
he's the one and my daughter, Alisha, are the ones that start bringing memories back. How many years was that?

AUDIENCE: Six years, seven?

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

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

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

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

I prayed for when I was in
boarding school. I told God, I wanted five kids. He blessed me with seven. And blessed me with 11 wonderful grandchildren.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another one was of you guys
or God, that's what I think. And so I
ran out and yelled and screamed. I
said, "My protector is gone."

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

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

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

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

So my grandmother on my dad's side had 12 siblings, the oldest
ones I -- I didn't not figure out until I was a young adult.

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

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

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

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

And I would say that that also was a symptom of not having cultural coping mechanisms, teaching connection with our natural world, and
the things that we've used to sustain ourselves for generations.

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

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

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

So -- so I would say that as a descendental of people that have -- that were in boarding schools, I carry a lot of pain for them, and -- and because of what they -- their behaviors, how they -- how we were raised, those things were all like invisible fears.

They didn't have a lot of
relationships with the local public schools. They had a lot of shame, they had a lot of discomfort and that was like a natural combination of racism and the American education system not being accepting and supporting them.

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

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

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

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

Happily sending your child to an English-speaking school where
they don't have accurate telling,
accurate history, genuine history, they
don't have any information about the
Mille Lacs Band of -- the Mille Lacs
Band of Ojibwe.

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

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

And I think I just have to
say that the challenge and language
revitalization isn't just studying it,
it's just knowing how to use the
language, the challenge is convincing
my fellow people that theirs too -- my
-- peers and my colleagues that it's
theirs too that was lost.

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

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

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

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

We've -- we have -- when I started this group we had 145 fluent
speakers, I was sitting with a group of elders who sat for hours and hours, all of them from all of our different communities.

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

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

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

So behind closed doors, behind the scene, there's coordination happening to make sure that somebody who can get us through that ceremony shows up in that particular community.
It's so challenging to convince people that we've sustained ourselves for generations on cultural practices that were embedded in our language, were embedded in our religious ceremonies, our ceremonial doings.

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

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

And without knowing the language it's really challenging to sit during a ceremony and manifest your well being and manifest a support in well being of the other, whoever the
subject is.

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

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

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

And when I first started becoming an older child, I grew up on the reservation, I used to ask my aunts, there are 11 of them in their family, about who we were, why we were, why was I up here.
If you're familiar with the northern area, the reservations in Wisconsin are heavily wooded. On my mother's land we had one of the three ceremonial drums (inaudible) on my -- in my mother's backyard. So that's why I have an affinity for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe because our drums came from Mille Lacs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It's because I listened all those days growing up not understanding
why I didn't know stories and
dairytales that the white schools were
telling me.

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

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

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

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

   He never saw his mother.

   His father used to come to try to find
him and this is actually recorded in
the doctrine down in Oklahoma.

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

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

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

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

I've seen the
psychologically status of having PTSD,
it didn't start at war, World War II,
it started from him being taken away
from a mother he never got to see
again.

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

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

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

He used to talk about he was
put into a little room when he would
cry, not much bigger than an outhouse.
And there in the very middle of the
room he was told to look at this big
book, it was a Bible.
And I -- I appreciate the creator's gift of giving us faith, but sometimes the deep internal hatred of that Bible when I remember his stories.

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

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

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

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

I did not have that kind of nice childhood that we hear about or we are forced to align with -- with
educational policy and other provisions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

    And if there's funding
available through the NIHO CDC, we would
like to have that funded directly to
the tribes as we look forward to
principals of social guidance of help,
I would like to have that expressed
more as native determinates of health
with the foundation of looking at our
history and reevaluating the
instruments that currently now exist,
those have to change.

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

    So I will be giving you a
card. I work currently with the Great
Lakes Epidemiology Center and that, of course, we've been tasked by CDC to look at what fails Indian health today.

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

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

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

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

And said Becky's there was a
few things in this world that are gonna keep you safe. She said don't look toward the past; she said look to the future and we've got to heal that future.

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

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

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

I want to have a meeting with them so they can listen to us,
authentically and intentionally. We need to teach this. As Melissa said, education has been effected, medicine has been affected, our funding sources have been affected and not sufficient enough to really take in this whole vast history.

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

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

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

That was done to our Anishinaabe people up here to see if we were human. I was offended by that,
but I knew it was true.

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

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

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

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

My mother told me they wouldn't go to a doctor because she was afraid I would become sterilized. I ended up going into the health industry. Yeah. (Applauding).
MR. NEWLAND: Thank you.
Miigwech. We have time for one more speaker before we take our first break.

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

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

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

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

I did a lot of research kind of about some of the things that some people have -- some children and people
while they were there mentioning.

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

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

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

She said she was the middle child of nine, so she learned quickly while she was there to blend in, to not cause attention and not rebel.
She saw what was happening
to the other children in the form of
punishment and this other that wasn't
what she was gonna do.

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

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

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

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

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

Not one word about the children, not one word about the children that were, the Indian children that were there, and the reasons for that.

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

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

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

I just -- I now, knowing
what I know about her life and
everything. And I kind of made it my
-- my mission to raise awareness. I
live in Brainerd and I don't live here
on the Mille Lacs reservation, but I
work here and I come here for
fellowship with my -- with my people
and my family and my cousins and
friends.

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

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

I've got some strong allies
up there and there's some good programs
-- programming not with just indigenous
people, but with all, you know, people
of color, most marginalized or
oppressed people.
So there are other agencies that are taking this fight and bringing it right to the forefront. And I applaud you for bringing your ears, your -- your platform and your leadership to our community and our people. Thank you. (Applause).

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

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

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

And we're gonna be here for a few more hours to make sure that we hear from every -- as many people who
want to speak as possible.

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

(Applause).

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

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

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

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

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

MR. NEELY: Thank you.
Scott Neely from (inaudible). My mother was 90 years old; she died July 4th, 2019.

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

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

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

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

Even if they didn't have any back then, just still the brothers and
sisters of them were taken from the mother.

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

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

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

Because she -- she didn't start saying she loved anybody or everybody until later on in her life. Because I suppose nobody ever taught
her how to say that she was loved or that she was cared about.

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

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

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

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

To make them stronger? For
what? Because they're already strong, they're already Native, they're already Anishinaabe, of this land. So it's devastating to listen to what happened.

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

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

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

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

So I had -- we had a friend
in a tribal leader from the Menomonee tribe, his name was Manny Voigt. And Manny said he was in a boarding school and that nuns would whack him when they spoke Native, Menomonee, he said they would whack them.

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

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

So, thank you, Madam Secretary and Assistant Secretary.

SPEAKER: I might have to sit down when I'm talking because sometimes I get long winded. No, I don't. But I'd like to thank Assistant
Secretary. And what is your name?

MR. NEWLAND: Bryan.

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

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

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

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

And we were kind of close-knit families that lived there and we took care of each other. And so that was the mornings when the Indian Agency would come down the dirt road
and they would hear it.

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

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

So I don't think that a lot
of our people in Aazhoonog community
actually experienced boarding schools
because they knew enough to hide their
children.

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

We had some of our -- our --
well, they were girls at the time 13 --
12, 13 years old there was probably six or seven of them that decided they were going to Flandreau Boarding School. And they were -- they were given a train ticket to go.

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

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

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

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

They ran and they left one
-- one girl that was 6 years old still there. And I asked her sister just recently, maybe about a year ago, how come you guys left -- left her there?

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

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

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

    But, you know, and I was thinking about, you know, the trauma that our people go through because of the removal from their families.
You know, if -- if those traumas and that stuff happened back then and it still effects us today. You know, maybe we wouldn't need victim advocates, we didn't have victim advocates, and those other people there's victim advocates, there's child advocates, there's advocates for men, women.

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

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

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

My English name is Rachel Fernandez. I come from the Menomonee Nation in Wisconsin. I am a descendent and family member of boarding school warriors who resisted and fought back
against the assimilation, oppression, genocide and violence.

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

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

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

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

My aunt was punished one time and was told to clean the floors. Her baby sister was five and noticed her sister wasn't in the room so she
went looking for her, and found her sister cleaning the floors.

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

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

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

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

Because her baby sister was buried in that -- they had an unmarked grave cemetery behind the -- the church, school. So she told those
stories and her sister's story to honor her memory.

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

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

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

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

And she went through many torture -- many torturous treatments for her speaking her language. So after she came home, escaped and came
home, as she got older she started her own family.

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

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

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

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

She was never able to talk about that because that would bring her
back.

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

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

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

We have been trying to get information on these graves, some say that when they tore down the boarding school and paved the parking lot for the current church that is there, that the unmarked graves are under the parking lot, plus the others that are behind the church.
So today I am here asking you to please look into this and support us as we navigate this healing in reconciliation journey that we're on for our people.

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

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

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

My father died because he
drank himself to death. He was also a legislator and he was a tribal court judge. But he died young.

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

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

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

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

I pray everyday that my children, my grandchildren, all of our children, our future, don't have to go
through what I went through or our ancestors went through.

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

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

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

My name is Anita (inaudible) and my mother is Eleanor Robertson. My mother was born and raised on the White
Earth Indian Reservation in the Pine Point community in northern Minnesota.

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

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

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

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

Up until that time she never mentioned it. She didn't want to talk about it. So for 90 years my mother
did not want to talk about her experiences.

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

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

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

She was six years old she probably doesn't know or didn't know exactly how this happened. She hasn't -- she didn't say anything other than that at six years of age I went to the Wahpeton Boarding School.
She was taken to North Dakota and she did not go home to see her family except for summer vacations. She said the only thing that made it bearable was the fact that her brother was with her. So she did have one, one family member there with her.

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

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

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

I'm seeing the lifelong impact of boarding schools. My mother spoke no Ojibwe even though her mother and her grandmother were fluent speakers, she grew up in a home of fluent Ojibwe speakers.
And, as I have asked her about specific incidents in her life, at one point she told me that when she grew up she wanted to get as far away from the reservation as she possible could.

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

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

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

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

So I was a young child, I
don't know how this happened or for --
for how long she was gone, but I do
know that she would come to visit me at
the next door neighbor's house. And I
didn't know who she was.

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

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

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

And finally when I was 13
years old, I went to live with my
mother for the very first time. I had
never lived with her until I was 13.
My grandmother, Irene Roper Ellis, came to live with us at the same time. And my grandmother had grown up on the reservation and she had lived most of her life in the Pine Point community on the White Earth Indian Reservation.

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

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

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

And she held out her hands and showed me -- I'm -- I'm guessing she was in her '60s at this point, she showed me the scars on her knuckles and she said this is what happened to me
when I spoke my language.

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

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

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

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

No one wanted anybody to know that we were members of a tribe, and that we still had family on the
reservation. Nobody mentioned that.

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

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

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

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

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

No one has every mentioned trauma, my -- my mother or grandmother,
even when talking about the scars on
her hands from speaking her language,
my grandmother didn't blame anyone.

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

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

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

So I just want to thank you
again for having this hearing, I think
it's really important. Miigwech.

(Appause).

MS. ELLENBAKER: (Speaking
in native tongue). Lac Courte
Oreilles. My name is Mary Ellenbaker,
and I'm a daughter of a survivor of the
boarding school, the Hayward Boarding
School. And my dad was in the
Flandreau Boarding School.

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

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

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

And on the reservation at
that time, we didn't have to go far for
what you needed. And -- and she -- she
was telling me -- she didn't tell me
very much, and I didn't know my Indian
name for a long time.
And they didn't want us, my dad and my mother, didn't want us to talk the language, but they wanted us -- my grandfather, her mother and dad, wanted us to talk to understand it.

So I grew up without any teachings, without any type of values, without -- without any solid roots, tribal roots, the songs, the stories, and I grew up without the language mainly.

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

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

So I went into alcoholism. I -- I drank for a lot of years, suffered for a lot of years. And around 1979 I sobered up, it was my last drop of alcohol or any drugs.
And after that time I started looking at the traditional ways, they come -- the traditional ways come to me, and the elders were -- were trying to help us to stay straight and live a good life.

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

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

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

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

And I wasn't gonna have somebody come into my house at
midnight, two o'clock in the morning
and have -- lose my children, have
someone taking my children away from
me.

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

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

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

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

And her song kept getting
louder and louder and she hadn't heard
that song for a long time. And so my
-- the -- being sober and listening and
learning all the things that I learned from our elders about our traditional way of life has helped me so much.

And the more, and the more I learned, the more the language I learned, the more I realized that it can also help my daughters, my grandchildren, my great grandchildren and those to come.

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

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

So I -- we lost, we lost so much, we've lost so much, but we're getting it all back. We -- and it's not getting it all back, it's coming back to us, you know.
So I -- the more I learned, the more the language I learned, the more of the understanding I had, the more teachings that I did, the more I realized that our people needed so much.

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

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

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

They couldn't give their children the right burial, they
couldn't give their children the right -- the right ceremony, the right story to take them home, to take them back to the spirit world where they -- where they come from. To take care of their spirits.

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

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

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

So because you're here, because you're taking on this responsibility, because you had this in your heart, because you have so much to do and so many places to go, and -- and I know that you're given up your family
too to do this for us and yourself, I'd like to sing a song for you to honor you and to honor those that are -- that are here, our brothers and sisters that are here, that -- that too have -- have opened their hearts and hope for their families, and hope for their babies and hope for their -- their lives of their family as well as our -- our children that we need to find. That are waiting for us to find them.

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

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

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

(Singing song).

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

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

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

I'm the first person in two
generations who can say that. I
suppose I'll speak just a little bit on behalf of my grandparents.

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

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

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

My grandparents came to Minneapolis like so many people did seeking work. And she used her education, or what counted as an education, to find work as domestic. She was cleaning homes; that was what a
boarding school education afforded her. And over the years talking to my peers, people my own age, a little bit older, a little bit younger, learned that many of their mothers, or grandmothers, or great grandmothers that was the only work that they could find.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And while it was not an unmarked grave in the way that we're talking about the -- the graves of children whose lives were lost at the
-- at the school they attended, my
grandmother was buried in a potter's
field, unmarked and unnamed.

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

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

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

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

By contrast, where my
grandmother's life ended too young, and
I think as a result of her
mis-education and abuse that she likely
suffered, and the lack of economic
opportunity and educational opportunity
she suffered as a result of her
experience, my grandfather attended
Wahpeton Boarding School in North
Dakota.

He was a White Earth tribal
member and did his damnedest to make
sure that something -- his family would
survive with him.

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

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

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

He ran away from Wahpeton at
age eight with three other of his
siblings, and according to his story, they -- they did not return. My great grandfather was the marshall, who's a mixed blood person, he was the marshall and whatever influence he might have had he -- he was able to keep his children at home thereafter.

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

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

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

He worked on the Alaskan pipeline. He, you know, he went through I think a lot, because, you
know, whatever education he had did not afford him other possibilities.

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

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

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

And so, you know, the -- if -- if -- if there is one thing that I would hope that comes out of the hearings today and across, you know, the country and all of this, is that for people who don't have these direct experiences with boarding school, but who's families do, that we'd be able to
name the general -- the generational
nature of surviving, and to provide
supports for, you know, people two,
three, four generations removed from a
grandparent's boarding school
experience.

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

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

(Applause).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REPORTER'S NOTE: Submitted
to the court reporter in written form
by Ms. Kathryn Beaulieu, a child was
overheard praying, "Lord, help me not
to hate my mother and father."

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

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

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

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

My father did not know how
to speak English when he was sent to
the school. He remembers how he lost
his language and he does not remember
how he knew or learned the English
language.

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

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

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

I'm glad that there's a spot
light on boarding schools today because
they have a far generational reach to
affect the children of the survivors,
myself.
My dad ran away, made it back home many times. He was eight years old. Thank you. (Applause).

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

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

And some of the stories that I heard when I was about maybe six, seven, eight years old of what happened over there, one of them was with Henry Sam, that's my grandmother's brother. And they said that when he had spoken their language, spoken our language, that they'd lock him in the
-- the basement.

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

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

    So another -- another part
of the experiences I got when growing
up on a reservation and the lifestyle
here I was taken to treatment for
chemical dependency plenty of times,
jailed and prison twice.

    And through treatment, you
know, you learn how to assess your
dependency and assess your relationship with certain chemicals.

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

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

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

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

And seeing that really, you know, gave me the visual of it as because up until then I was just
imagining what it may have been like
being, you know, locked in a basement
for whatever reason, especially
speaking your language.

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

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

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

What are some of the core
beliefs that my fellow Anishinaabe may
have developed whether it be to a story
a about boarding school. Maybe it was micro-aggressions that we get from non Indian society.

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

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

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

      I was told thirty years ago that our language was dying and I was
told that every year every since then, 
every since I was able to hear and I 
understand that. 

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

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

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

MR. NEWLAND: Thank you. I
think we've had an opportunity to -- to hear from almost everybody here. We'll keep going if folks want to speak.

This gentleman.

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

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

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

One of the profound interviews that I've ever done over those 36 years was with (inaudible) and
over in Golden, Colorado, 29 days
before he left us.

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

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

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

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

So the places that I
hand-delivered this film, two of our
films, was the Smithsonian Institute of
Library of Congress in their museum and the White House.

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

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

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

And I just want to say, you know, that wherever I go and whatever I do, I -- I try to share the films that I did the interviews with. I -- I shared a film with Melanie this morning. I -- I did some interviews here in 1992 with some artists over by the lake there. And I just now shared it with her and hope she -- one of the relatives are in --
in the film with (inaudible) Benjamin.

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

MR. NEWLAND: Miigwech.

Thank you. Looks -- we have a woman in the back of the room.

SPEAKER: (Speaking in native tongue). Miigwech, everyone.

Thank you. And thank you everyone here who has made this -- this moment come together. My name (inaudible) Beck.

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

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

She attended Fort Shaw
Industrial School in Montana where she was renamed Mini Caloos. And my great grandmother and grandfather on my Blackfeet side attended Holy Family Mission on the Blackfeet Reservation. And my grandmother attended Saint Ignatius for Earth Client Submission on the (inaudible) Indian Reservation and also attended Chemawa. All of them, they're full, you know, K through 12 education was in Indian boarding schools.

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

And recently we went to Kansas City and I was able to scan a bunch of documents and records from (inaudible) Indian school. And something that I noticed was that there were work programs and they have the exact, you know, names,
location, individuals that worked with
different families for very low wages
in Minneapolis.

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

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

    (Speaking in native tongue).

Thank you so much for allowing me some
time. And thank you all this hard work. (Applause).

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

THE AUDIENCE: (No response).

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

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

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

I especially want to thank Chief Benjamin, thank you so much for
all of your staff for all work they put
into making this event a success, and
for the delicious lunch.

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

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

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

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

She went to a Catholic
boarding school in Santa Fe which was only 100 or so miles away from the village of (inaudible) but it took three days to get there by horse and wagon. And so there were hardships on children, there were hardships on the families.

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

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

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

So Chelsie -- where's
Chelsie? Chelsie. Thank you, Chelsie Wilson, she's working directly with Indian Affairs to -- on this particular issue of boarding school initiative. Thank you, Chelsie for being here. (Speaking in native tongue).


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

Heidi (inaudible) who has been with me since I was a member of congress and who really worked on the boarding school issue lots before now. And last but not least, Kathryn Main who is also the scheduling events coordinator. Thank you very
much, Kathryn.

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

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

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

And I think about my
grandchildren and great grandchildren
and how they love their family so much
and just the thought of them kids being
taken away, going someplace where they
don't know where their parent and
grandparents, aunties and uncles.
And again just about the
strength of the Anishinaabe. When you
think about how strong we are and how
we have endured so many negative, awful
things to us, but we're still here
today.

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

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

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

And the resistance and
resilience that we are Anishinaabe. We
have so much to be proud of and we can
give that to our children.

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

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

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

    (Whereupon, the conference
terminated at 3:00 p.m.)
STATE OF MINNESOTA )

) ss.

CROW WING COUNTY )

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

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

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

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

Nathan D. Engen