ROAD TO HEALING TOUR

SHERMAN INDIAN HIGH SCHOOL, RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA

AUGUST 4, 2023

AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

Transcribed by:
Diana Sasseen
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STEVEN ESTRADA: (Foreign language spoken.)

I said, good morning, thank you for everyone who has come here today. My name is Steven Estrada from Santa Rosa, and my clan is the (inaudible) People. So I'll be offering this morning's prayer.

(Foreign language spoken.)

STEVEN ESTRADA: I said, "Our Creator, the one who brought us here, hear our prayer. Watch over all who have gathered here today, our leaders and elders who have come to Sherman on this solemn day. We ask you to make us strong on this day as we share these stories and we ask you to guide any survivors who have come. And we acknowledge the Interior's effort for healing, but this will be a long journey.

"The stories our relatives told us are still with us and the stories of hurt, pain, and loss. And while we can't forget what was done, we can work together for a better future and protection of the generations to come."

(Foreign language spoken.)

LYNN VALBUENA: Well, good morning. We are so happy that everyone is here this morning for another session here with our Secretary Deb Haaland and Bryan Newland. Thank you both for being here. And I will make those introductions real soon.

But want to give another round of applause for the beautiful dancing today with our bird singers. And it just warms our hearts to see that we have so many of the young singers now learning and knowing the dance and the culture and the language. So that makes us very, very happy. So thank you all for being here today.

So I'm going to make some very short remarks, and then we are going to get on with the session.

But (foreign language spoken) in our language is hello, a warm greeting to all of you. Lynn Valbuena, chairwoman of San Manuel. And I would be remiss if I did not introduce my two council members that are here with me today. Audrey Martinez our travel secretary. Please stand. She's also my sister. And then also Eddie Duro [phonetic] sitting next to her. He's also on our tribal council. He works with us under our growth pillar and learning a lot now about finance and what we

need to do with our money to help others with assistance.

So thank you, Eddie.

And also I see our cousin here Alexis, Alexis Monzano, former council member for San Manuel.

Alexis, please stand and be recognized.

Alexis is so involved and one of our committee members on our healing committee for the state and she

goes to all these meetings here.

So, Alexis, thank you so much for being here today. So nice to see so many friends today.

So just want to say greeting, warm welcome to all of you for being here today. And also we are very, very honored to welcome you to the part of Southern California here in our ancestral territories. And we're especially honored and privileged to be here, to welcome Deb Haaland, our Secretary of the Interior, to California. And Secretary Haaland, she's on a mission to fully investigate the true history of boarding schools and their effects, as you all know, going on all these tours, on the native people across, you know, all

generations. So we thank her for being here with us today.

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians are descended from the ancient Maara'yam people who are the Spanish explorers here in our area, Serrano, which is the word that came into our ancestral territory from the Spaniards. So we are what you call the Yuhaaviatam Clan, we are the People of the Pines. Some of you may not know that Santos Manuel is our great great-grandfather, but the reservation name San Manuel was shortened after his name Santos, so that's our leader back in the 1800s.

And also our original ancestry territory was 7.4 million acres back in the day. We ended up having only 640 acres on our reservation, which is all mountains and hilltops as most of you know.

So there -- I want to share a story about our cousin Frances Morongo who is the great-grandmother here of Alexis who is sitting here with us today. But I wanted to share how she attended the boarding school here and was taken as a young girl from here, from the Sherman Institute to a hospital here because she was

homesick and ill, she wanted to go home. And we were told in her story that from the second floor window she could see her home, she could see the mountain where San Manuel is, which is our homeland where we're from.

She was a young girl. I'm not sure of her age, but I'm told a very young girl, possibly nine or ten years old. So she could see the arrowhead formation on the mountain here in San Bernardino, and she followed that and she escaped and she left. And she walked for about 20 miles back home to our reservation which is near here in Riverside.

So my cousin, our cousin's story is being placed in the schools and also the assimilation methods as recounted by many, many generations of all of us natives in our culture.

So the boarding schools is another way for the federal governments to take more Indian lands and resources for a new and growing country for all of us in Indian country. So in all more than 400 Indian boarding schools were operated by the federal government in different areas of the country. The very school where

we meet today originally opened in 1892 as the Perris Indian School in Perris, California. The school was relocated here in Riverside in 1903 under the name the "Sherman Institute." Today it is known as "Sherman Indian High School" operated under the authority of the federal government.

So San Manuel has been honored to work very, very closely with the Sherman Indian High School for a number of years. The Career Pathways Program is a program that we've partnered here with Sherman many years ago and is one of our favorite projects for more than -- well, more than ten years now, it's been more than a decade.

Just kind of wanted to share a little bit of history of that with all of you and how San Manuel is involved. And this program provides career education and training opportunities for the students here in areas of culinary, environmental vocations, emergency medical training, and also the -- the years here spent

by the students who participated in all of these ready job skills allows them to move on and to find employment and to assist and help others.

So in addition, these students take job skills learned from the program back home to their reservations. And the Career Pathways Program continues to be a wonderful, wonderful opportunity for San Manuel and Sherman.

So again, we want to thank you for the opportunity to offer these opening remarks.

And then also now it is my great pleasure to welcome Deb Haaland, our Department of Interior Secretary to listen to this listening tour and to hear from all of you and to confront the legacy of boarding schools.

And also Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary, thank you so much, Bryan, also for being here.

So please join me in welcoming the Honorable Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland.

(Foreign language spoken.) Deb.

SECRETARY HAALAND: Hello. Thank you, everyone. (Foreign language spoken.) My child (foreign language spoken), I'd like to acknowledge her even though she's not here.

Good morning, everyone. I'm so happy to be

here with all of you. And I want to say a special hello to my dear former colleague and friend Congressman Mark Takano. Welcome and thank you for joining us today. Thank you.

Thank you, Chairwoman. Thank you for acknowledging all the great things that Sherman does and proud of our students and the mark that they'll have on our country and our people. Thank you also for the beautiful blessing and the beautiful songs that opened us today. It's so important and it's an honor to join all of you on your ancestral homelands.

I'm not going to speak for a long time because I'm here to listen to you. Your voices are important to me. And I thank you for your willingness to share your stories.

Federal Indian boarding school policies have impacted every single indigenous person I know. Some are survivors, some are descendants, but we all carry this painful legacy in our hearts regardless of who we are and how we got here.

Deeply engrained in so many of us is the trauma that these policies and these places have inflicted on our people. My ancestors and many of yours endured the horrors of the Indian boarding school assimilation policies carried out by the same department that I now

lead. This is the first time in history that a United States cabinet secretary comes to the table with this shared trauma. That is not lost on me, and I'm determined to use my position for the good of the people.

I launched the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative in 2021 to undertake a comprehensive effort to recognize the legacy of boarding school policies with the goal of addressing their intergenerational impacts and to shed light on the traumas of the past.

In California alone there were 12 boarding schools leaving intergenerational impacts that persist in the communities represented here today. It is my department's duty to address this shared trauma that so 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 opportunities for people to share their stories but also to help connect communities with trauma-informed support and to facilitate the collection of a permanent oral history. This is the eighth stop on the Road to Healing, which is a year-long tour across the country to provide indigenous survivors of the

federal Indian boarding school system and their descendants an opportunity to make known their

experiences. I want you all to know that I'm with you on this journey, I will listen, I will grieve with you, and I will feel your pain.

As we mourn what we have lost, please know that we still have so much to gain. The healing that can help our communities will not be done overnight, but I know that it can be done. This is one step among many that we will take to strengthen and rebuild the bonds with the native communities that the federal Indian boarding schools set out to break. Those steps have the potential to alter the course of our future.

I am grateful to each of you for stepping up forward to share your stories. I'm very grateful for the tribal leadership in this room too. Thank you all so much for being here and caring so much about your communities. I know we rely on all of you for a lot.

Also, just want to give a quick acknowledgement of the secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee members who are in the room as well. You're helping me to be a

better secretary, and I'm very grateful for that.

I'm going to turn this over now to our -- my dear friend, colleague, he was -- he -- it took a lot for him to get here with all the plane issues. And I'm really happy that he's sitting next to me today. Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: (Foreign language spoken), Madam Secretary. I'm very glad to be here. Planes, trains, and automobiles to get here.

I want to say first (foreign language spoken). That is our -- my greeting to you in our language as a Anishinaabe Ojibwe people. Where I come from in Northern Michigan, my name is He Walks Many Paths of the Wolf Clan. And I come from the Place of the Pike. And we are an Anishinaabe people.

And I'm really honored to be here with you all here on your homelands and your communities. And also want to make sure I acknowledge, because of the centuries of forced assimilation policies, I also want to acknowledge the large urban native community we have here in Southern California who are not living maybe on their ancestral homelands but are an important part of

the native community here in Southern California as well. Thank you all for joining us here at Sherman Indian school.

And I want to also extend my gratitude for our singers this morning. When we're talking about important and painful topics like this, it's always a real nice way to start the healing process and to lift our spirits. And so I want to say (foreign language spoken), thank you all for sharing your songs and your

dances with us. And I also want to thank -- I can't see him -- for the blessing this morning and the prayer.

You know, Sherman is a significant place as the first federal Indian boarding school here in California. And when Congress appropriated funding for this institution, the purpose was to assimilate Indian people, but that policy of assimilation wasn't directed at adults, it was directed at kids. And the federal government knew that when it established places like Sherman Indian School and directed this policy of forced assimilation at children here in California and across Indian country, some of them as young as five years old.

Today, under the Department of the Interior, Sherman is a place now where Indian students are provided a place to live and study as Indian people and where they can excel and go on to contribute to their families, their tribes, their communities, and the nation.

As of now, as the Secretary mentioned, the Department of the Interior has determined there were 12 federal Indian boarding schools here in California. As we keep investigating the federal Indian boarding school system and learning about your experience at specific schools, the overall system paints a history that the records alone can't provide.

So in addition to hearing from you today and along this healing tour, our next steps include identifying marked and unmarked burial sites across the boarding school system and determine the total amount of federal funding and support invested in this system. And we also encourage you today and at future stops to raise other considerations you think we need to account for in this initiative.

I want to acknowledge our colleagues and our

friends from the Department of Health and Human Services who are supporting this conversation with trauma-informed mental health support. I also want to acknowledge our friends from the National Endowment for the Humanities who are helping us to share survivor experiences across the globe.

We have a number of folks from the Department of the Interior, our staff, too many to name, but all just doing amazing work over here, and -- yes, we're all over here on this side. And also, since we're at Sherman Indian School, I want to make sure I acknowledge our Director of Bureau of Indian Education Tony Dearman who plays a critical role in this initiative and in the education of Indian kids.

And also extend my gratitude to Chairwoman Valbuena for your leadership into the San Manuel Band of

Mission Indians for your support of the students here at Sherman Indian School.

We appreciate all the tribal leaders here for your support for the survivors in your communities and from across Indian country.

So there are a few housekeeping things I want to walk through before we turn the mic over to all of you.

I want to first emphasize that these listening sessions are intended to be a venue for survivors and their families to tell us as representatives of the United States about your experiences at the boarding school system.

Other people may wish to provide us with comments or statements or views on the boarding school system, including tribal leaders, and we want to encourage that, and you can submit your views to us in writing. We've provided an e-mail address to you. And that will be included in our research for the boarding school report. But first want to make sure that we emphasize that these spaces we want to make sure we're giving space to people who want to talk about their experience and their family's experience at these schools. And we appreciate everybody for giving that space to them.

So to make a comment today, you can simply raise your hand. I think we've got some mic runners

here, right? Maybe? Okay. And we will bring the mic to you. We'll ask that you state your name, your tribal identity or affiliation, and the name or the names of the boarding schools that you wish to discuss. That information is important for our research as part of this initiative.

Also want to make sure you are all aware we have members of the press who are here with us today. They will be with us for the first hour of this event. We want to make sure that we're telling this story to all the American people who may not understand or be aware of this. But we also know that people may wish to give their comments and views without being on the evening news or in the local newspaper. So at the one-hour mark we'll take a short break, we'll respectfully ask our friends from the media outlets here to excuse themselves, and then we will continue this conversation.

Also note that we have a court reporter who is recording what's said here today for a transcript. That transcript is useful for us in this initiative, but it may be released under federal law if it's requested.

We plan to stay with you today until 3:00 p.m.

And I will apologize in advance, due to our travel schedule we have to leave here promptly at 3:00. We will try to make some space during the day for photos and a lunch.

And then lastly I want to make sure that I also share that we know that these conversations are painful and difficult and they can be triggering for a lot of people. And so if you want to talk with somebody who can help you with that, we have attendants here outside the classrooms next to the gym. We have licensed therapists and we have people who can connect survivors with follow-up support if needed. We want to make sure you're all taking care of yourself. Take water breaks and fresh air breaks as needed.

And lastly, I want to thank all of you for taking your time with us today, especially the people who are coming to share stories about themselves and their relatives. This isn't easy and it's painful. And we are grateful for your courage, for standing up to speak the truth. And we're here to support you in that.

So with all that said, now we're going to put our mics down up here, we're going to turn the mic over to you. And all you have to do if you wish to speak or share with us is simply raise your hand, and our mic runners will find you. (Foreign language spoken.)

Thank you.

SALLY THURMAN: Hi. I'm Sally Thurman. I am from the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. And I'd be interested in having you take a look at Pierre Boarding School. Three of my grandmother's siblings attended there and many cousins in the early thirties. My uncle served three world wars, Korea, World War II, and Vietnam. And he went back many years later, I have an interview I did of him, where two different deaths occurred there.

One was his cousin who was shook to death from her hair by another student. She died from that injury. Her hair came out. I don't think any punishment or consequences ever happened. She even has a death certificate that has an unrecognizable death diagnosis to me called meiphitis, m-e-i-p-h-i-t-i-s. And the best I could decipher, being a medical transcriptionist myself, is that meiphitis means black and white. So I can only assume that means half breed, unless it's an old diagnosis for brain injury that I don't know about. I don't know where she's buried.

And then my great -- he's my grand uncle, my

grandma's brother was in a hospital room next door to his sister, only he didn't know she was in there because they separated the siblings, and she died. But they

didn't tell him about it till after she died, and he was in the room next door.

So he went back to the school at Pierre in South Dakota after he retired from the military, being a reconnaissance vet, kind of funny, boarding school and then three wars, right, to find his sister's grave their in Pierre, only they don't know where it is. They don't know where she is buried.

So I'd love to know where Delilah Menz [phonetic] is buried. He wanted to put a tombstone for her, and that is -- he died last year from COVID, and so did the other two sisters of his, they were 93 and 96 years old.

I guess that's it for now.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you very much for coming and sharing that today. Thank you.

KEITH: It's a pleasure to meet you Mr. (inaudible). My name is Keith (inaudible). I'm a

65-year-old Blackfoot Indian. (Foreign language spoken), first nations.

I have been advocating for the boarding schools, and I am a co-chair of United American Indian Involvement in Los Angeles In-house Service Program. Approximately about two years ago we had some information come about the boarding school through our

people up there.

So I'm part of the relocation act with my wife here too, come down here in '63, so I survived that, but it was almost like the second thing. First it was a boarding school, and then coming down here and being taken away from our reservation. Ponytails got cut, the Blackfeet, we wear three, it was almost the same thing as the boarding school. Lot of prejudice, but we stuck together. We bang the drum, which is now the pow wow that we have out here. Our first drum group was Many Trails. And that's where we all come from, Many Trails.

The BIA stuck us together in these apartment complexes. And I was just talking to this young man about him riding a skateboard. Well, I learned to ride a skateboard -- they stuck us in Redondo Beach. But we

did go home every year for Indian Days, North American Indian Days.

I also am a veteran. I have a diagnosis of PTSD. Still struggling with that through groups, but that is war that happens with men. But with children, to do the same thing, that's genocide.

After my grandma passed I started getting all kinds of information and documents that she was born in 1900. And in 1908 she was in Carlisle until she was 17. She talks about Jim Thorpe. She's seen him play

football.

And then from 17 to 21, she was transferred at 17 years old to Chemawa. And then eventually she come home back to the reservation.

But I used to stay with her every summer, and she was really disciplined in the way she ran her place, her house. Cleanliness, cooking, and we'd have to go bed at 7:30. And after we took a bath we would come to her room and say the rosaries. And I never knew where this come from until I started growing up and finding out that my grandma was disciplined that way. But it

just seemed like she didn't show too much emotion, it was just something that was in her head.

I am a traditional counselor with the Department of Mental Health L.A. County, and I do run across a lot of our people through intergenerational trauma. And it still exists in me. I speak about it. But that's one of the coping skills that I have. And I think if we speak about any kind of trauma, we can get through this together.

But how do I get the education to the kids that are here or to the other places what these institutions were? Is there a history there about what happened here? The U.S. government has never put what really happened to the Blackfeet; taking away our ghost dance,

our sun dance, all of our ceremonies. But we stayed with it. We continue on doing it. I continue on doing the ceremonies.

But it's this one thing, after I started seeing all the documents coming out, that's why auntie never did talk about things, uncle never. And you know they died with that trauma. And I don't want the next generation to not know the history, even though it's

hard; but when you have a wound, you got to let the -- you got to let the Creator sun heal it. It becomes a scar. But that's all right.

Thank you.

FERN CHARLIEBIAS: (Foreign language spoken). My name is Fern Charliebias [phonetic], and I'm originally from Shiprock, New Mexico. I attended public school and mostly off and on reservation boarding schools.

The first on-reservation boarding school I went to was in Shiprock, up on the hill they call it, Shiprock Boarding School. And then I went away to Sherman when I was barely 14 years old. And I'm glad I did come to Sherman. There were some things in the beginning when I was 14 that I experienced and I didn't really like.

But going back to the -- on reservation -- oh,

before I say that, thank you for being here to hear our voices because for a long time we had been silenced. We were. We couldn't say anything. As a child -- I'm starting to get emotional -- you couldn't talk about it.

If you talked about it you were punished. I mean that's awful. You think about your own kids. They hurt, they can't talk about it.

Anyway, going back to the Shiprock Boarding School, I was only nine years old. And there were some experiences that -- that is really cruel, that even the native people were told to -- that they worked there, and they were told that we could not wear our hair long.

If we visit with our relatives, I think the gentleman said that, we were separated. My sister's dorm was just next door, and we were told we were forbidden to visit with them. And we went to church, we were forced to go to church, but we had to go to different churches. We couldn't sit with our sisters in the same church.

If I -- I remember that experience when they found out that I sat with my sister in church; I was -- I was punished. I couldn't eat lunch, I stayed up until midnight to clean the hallways. These are some of the examples that really, like he said, is still a scar.

And I'm also writing a -- I'm on my final draft

of a book -- and this is not an advertisement for a

book, but it's about my experiences on and off reservation boarding schools. And it hurts to talk about it. It does.

We were forbidden to speak our language. My hair was really long. When I got there, they cut it, it was like straight across and then straight this way. And they didn't ask my parents about it.

Then I went to Sherman. The name of my book is going to be Cottonwood Dream -- "Cottonwood Tree Dream," because that's where my dream started. I sat on this really tall cottonwood tree, I would dream there. I made a little throne up there in the tree, and I sat there and I said, I want to do something for me, for my life. I don't want to be on the reservations, do, you know, manual work. So I thought how can I go and get an education somewhere else, not in Shiprock. It was a small town, it was probably about a thousand people there.

I sat there and I thought how can I be -- I could see Shiprock way off in the distance, and it looked like an abandoned ship when it rains. So I thought long and hard and I thought, I got to be -- I've got to go somewhere else.

Found out about Sherman through my cousins,

nieces and all that -- excuse me, aunts. They told me about an off-reservation boarding school. And I was only like probably nine years old when I started that dream. And then found out that they went there, they came home, they said, hey, there's a really neat school, you can go to Disneyland, you can see the ocean, you know, a lot of neat things. I'm the oldest of three children, I really never had a childhood. And you can do the things you want. You don't have to chop wood. You don't have to cook. So I said, yay, I can go there. So my parents let us go, the three of us, the three oldest.

When I came to Sherman I was scared. I saw these trees, palm trees. I said, those are strange looking trees. They just got these little clumps at the top. There's no shade. So all these things was a new world for me. And I said, you know, I know I'm going to get lonely, but I'm going to do it, because my dream is based on that. I want to make something of my life.

So I stayed. I wanted to go home. If I tell my parents I'm lonely, they will just bring me home. But there are a lot of strict rules at Sherman. We didn't have to wear uniforms, but we could not speak our language. I'm Dene, and we were -- we speak our

language at Sherman. This is way back. And we were --

they punished us. We were written up. This was one of my first major discipline, was speaking my language. And yet today I am teaching my language proudly in classes.

And my second major referral was going to church. We were forced to go to different churches. I didn't go to church one day and I hid in my -- I think it was the Ramona dorm, one of the dorms here. And dorm people found out, and I was punished as well too.

But there are a lot of experiences that I would like to share in my book, I just need to get some financial backing on that. Again, like I said, this is no advertisement. But I'm in my final draft, and I think my voice needs to be heard because this is real, this trauma is real, people. And we are the voice. I'm one of the evidence or one of the people that's really speaking out today. Beware. Listen to your children. And communicate with your kids, not just your kids but our -- our relatives. So it's very important.

Also, one last thing, my class when I graduated from Sherman, we're the ones that changed the name from

Sherman Institute to Sherman Indian High School. Yay. We didn't like the word "institute" because when we went off on outing, working off campus, people would say, is there something wrong with you? You're at this

institute. You know, that kind of stuff. We didn't like that. So we had it changed.

Thanks for your time.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you very much.

We have a gentleman over here.

WILLIAM PINK: My name is William Pink. Sherman had a lot of connection to our family. My mother came here, my uncles came here to school, my brother worked here as a groundskeeper until he retired, my uncle worked here as a groundskeeper until he retired. I had one aunt who was a dorm mother, two aunts who worked in attendance. So we have a strong connection to Sherman itself.

When I came back home from Vietnam, I was doing the same thing you're doing today, and I went around because I wanted to find out all the bad about Sherman

Indian School. And, you know, I talked to my mother about it. And I went around and I started to -- you know, interviewing various elders.

And I got back home to my mother. I says, they don't want to talk to me about it. And she said, that's because you're asking them to say bad things about the school. She says, you got to remember, this is the only thing that they had. You know, it meant a lot to them.

So I went back around again, and yes, she was right, don't be talking bad about our school. This is what they had. This is what they shared together and the friendship and what it represented; a lot of them met their spouses here.

I have an aunt that was from Hualapai, I have two uncles from Pomo, you know, because they met here. And so, you know, in this way the United States failed. They tried to break us up, and eventually they stopped the California Indians from coming here and they started bringing in the other groups of people.

My uncle Aloysius, known as Ally, he died fighting fire when he was 15 years old because they would draft the students from here to go fight fires

with the forest service, and he went out to fight fire on the Pomo Indian reservation and he was killed fighting fire. So and that affected them quite a bit. My mother's last words were calling out to her brother, "Pull me up, Ally, please pull me up," because that's what she saw, was her brother who was killed fighting fire in the next world, begging him to pull her up.

But at the same time, you know, recognize what this represented to a lot of the California Indians, that, you know, one being barred from it, and what happened after that is just as important as during the

school period itself.

I ran into a man -- I was appointed by Cecil B. Andrus to serve on the Desert Advisory Committee back in the day when he was secretary of interior. And so I met a lot of the Indian people. We were tasked with developing a 25 million acre land use plan for the California desert. And I ran into Ed Swick from Parkers Mojave Indian. And he would guide me. He's also alumni from Sherman. And he would tell me when I was wrong. He would take me and lambaste me sometimes in public.

But I listened to him; he was a good man.

And so I was walking away one time after he berated me one time, and he says, oh, by the way, say hello to your mother for me. And I looked at him and I said, you know my mother? And he says, yeah, say hello to your mother for me.

So I went and said hello -- I said, Ed Swick said to say hello. And she turned pale. And she said who? I said Ed Swick. She said, he died 25 years ago. So I said, no, mom, he's very much alive, and he's out at Parker, you know, Colorado River Indian Reservation.

And the friendship was so strong between them, the very next day -- they never even asked me where he lived -- they got in the car with her two sisters and they drove out to meet up with him because they had

alumni status.

Before my mother died, I took her on a tour of California to meet all of her student friends. And the bond between them was everlasting, they're together today. And then to come back every year to the Sherman reunion, these people would travel I think in their old age to come back and meet their old friends.

So I think we need to look at both sides of this in terms of what good it did. And I understand the bad it did. My uncle was beaten for speaking the language. And his own brothers and sisters didn't know that until one evening he started speaking and they looked at him and said, you speak the language? And he said, yeah, but they beat me at Sherman for speaking that, and so mama and papa said, don't speak it ever again. So that ended the language for our family.

So, you know, then that's what I ask, that you look at both sides of this. There are some good things that happened here; and yes, I understand the bad things that happened here as well, too. But please keep an open mind to that. And thank you.

TENSHA CHAVEZ: (Foreign language spoken.) Good morning. My name is Tensha [phonetic] Chavez. I'm Navajo Dene, born to the Meadow People for the Mexican people.

I was born and raised out here, so I'm going to tell you two stories that were passed on from my grandfather Andy Yazi [phonetic] and my

great-grandfather Andrew Yazi, Sr.

So two weeks before my grandfather died, he died in 2012, he was on his deathbed and he was telling me stories. And I remember growing up myself wondering why I didn't know my language, why we were brought out here. And he proceeded to tell me that he thought throughout his life that if he taught us our language that we were going to be beat in school just like him. His hair was cut, he was told not to speak our language, not to practice anything that he learned growing up. So that trauma stayed with him.

Throughout my own life I always wondered why things happened to me personally as a young woman. And I realize now more than ever that it's passed down from generation to generation. Sometimes these are things that we don't want to talk about that are trauma. I'm a recovering addict, and from my recovery I realized I've uncovered a lot of things that have been passed down from generation to generation.

My great-grandfather Andrew Yazi, Sr., was at Carlisle, Chemawa, and I believe he was here at Sherman. I'm not sure he was at Chemawa, and he was here. And I

remember a story that was passed down. And he said that they ran away from the school, him and three other boys. They were caught. One of them ran faster than the rest of them. And they saw I believe he said dogs chase after them and grab that one. They came back. He said he never saw that boy again.

So that always stayed with me. I always wondered what happened to that kid until we heard a few years ago about all the children being buried and they're uncovering their remains that I wondered if that little boy was one of them.

So I'm really grateful that you're having this today because for myself and for our future generations, it's time for us to heal. And it's time for us to talk about things that are very uncomfortable in order for our next seven generations to heal.

I have two of my kids with me as well, and we're breaking barriers and breaking those traumas today. You know, no more drug addiction; you know, it doesn't have to be passed down anymore. Now my kids get to heal.

You know, we talk about being -- like our family -- no one said I love you. And that was something I grew up with. No one said I love you. They might have shown it in their own way. Like when I go

back home to the res, my uncles, my aunties, my grandmas and grandpas, it was really hard for them to say those things. It was like they were still traumatized.

For myself, I knew I didn't want that, and so I -- everyone knows now when you leave me you have to say I love you, (foreign language spoken), because that to me is very powerful to say those words.

And so I just really feel like it's time for us to heal. So thank you for doing this. And thank you for those who are sharing their stories. They're very impactful. And hopefully we can all heal as a community. (Foreign language spoken.)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you very much.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Foreign language spoken.) Hello. It's an honor. And thank you, Secretary Haaland and Assistant Secretary Newland.

I met you, Secretary Haaland, actually we were in Rincon. And it's always a pleasure to have your own people in the way you engage with everybody. But I took a picture of you and Assemblyman Ramos. And he said, hey, can you take a picture? I was like, yeah, sure. And he actually asked that of me a couple of days ago --

or like months ago.

So again, it's just always a pleasure to have

our own people there and being able to hear our words. And as well as Bryan and knowing him and his previous life. So again, it's always a joy.

I was asked to actually send a message from the elder and chairwoman from the (inaudible) committee from the Torres Martinez tribe. She was unable to be here because she's enjoying some chair volleyball. That's a very intense sport here in California and Arizona. But she wanted to send her thank you for coming and listening to the people. But she also said she will be reaching out to the -- your department in regards to a national monument that they're addressing out there under the Chuckwalla national monument. It's a proposed national monument.

I wanted to quickly comment I think it's been repeatedly said here that the trauma we all suffer and generational trauma is horrible, but it's not just from the stories that are shared by our ancestors or our elders that have gone -- or our family, it's actually continuous. I'm from the Pauma Band of Luiseño Indians,

and Luiseño not being our true name, we're actually the (inaudible) people. And we're a proud people. You know, there's obviously a lot of tribes here in California. There are -- we still sit within our villages in our traditional areas.

But my uncle was Sam (inaudible). And the story that we heard when we were growing up was that they swooped through the reservations and picked up the kids. The statement was to give them a better life. But they took them from their families. And that didn't make sense.

And my uncle was actually supposed to be the -- he was to be the fire keeper for our people. That is what was told to me by my uncle. And him being gone had an adverse effect, a negative -- definitely a negative effect to our people. Not to say that we still don't carry many of those things within our -- for Pauma, but he was an essential part of our culture.

And then he went and fought in the war. He participated in the Normandy invasion, he marched through Europe. He was wounded and received a Purple

Heart. But again, at that time, they didn't give Purple Hearts to Native Americans. He got, I think it was -- it's a brown -- anyways, he never received it.

So as I talk about the continual influence or -- that it has -- that boarding schools and that type of thing that happened to our people, I'm also a great niece to Pete Calac, great-great niece to Pete Calac. And Pete Calac attended the Carlisle School. And it was interesting because I repeatedly get asked about Pete

Calac because he played with Jim Thorpe. And this is not a dig at Mr. Thorpe because he was an amazing athlete, but I was told that he was better than Jim Thorpe. Maybe that was my uncle just making me feel good, I don't know.

But what it was was it was interesting because the involvement of what the people there at Carlisle had. It was again trying to prove and assimilate the people into society.

The Ford Company did an experiment, and I have the transcripts from my great uncle's mother, and Carlisle and the Ford Company about they wanted to do an experiment on 60 native people from Carlisle. The

experiment was to see if natives could be more than just laborers. Yeah, it's so -- I read it continuously.

And I've reached out to the Ford Company in a letter and trying to express, you know, this is what has happened and to get their thoughts. But what happened, long story to short, is that there were only six people that were successful, six men. And my uncle Pete Calac was one of them. And the six men were shown that they were amazing workers, that they weren't just laborers, and they actually were awarded full gentleman's suits from -- it's called The Gentleman Suit Company out of New York. They were sent there.

But the story is actually tragic within it because Carlisle was ready to charge my uncle money because he escaped. Well, he escaped because he had to come back to see his mom because his mom was sick. But again, there was just continual issues in regards to his time there.

Of course, he -- I think he still worked for Ford once he left, but when I talk about continual effects that it has on us, this affects us even to this

day because people still consider, you know, can Indians be something else other than just laborers? I've heard that comment before. I mean, and yes, we can; doctors, lawyers, you know, anything else, you know, here we go, right in front of us, that's who we are.

So and I'll just leave with this and I'll reach out to Mr. -- I'm sorry -- Mr. Dearman, I'll reach out to him. I'm actually the founder of an organization called the 7g Foundation. And the 7g Foundation provides an opportunity for our youth to go to the next level, but it's at a holistic approach. But we still within that is the mental health that we're not approaching and we still continuously see the affects of boarding schools and the lack of advocacy and support within our community. So it's something that we're focusing on. We're a national organization.

But again, I just wanted to share that -- about my two uncles, and actually those are two uncles from two different families. So, you know, it continuously affects us. And again, I can't say that enough. But I really do appreciate you giving us the time and listening to us. Thank you so much.

ERICA BEN: Good morning, Secretary Haaland and Secretary Newland. (Foreign language spoken.) My name is Erica Ben [phonetic]. (Foreign language spoken.) I was actually born and raised on the reservation, but I'm actually an alum here of Sherman Indian High School. And I listened to everybody's comment here about, you know, their experiences both negative and positive, you know.

So I came actually here to Sherman Indian High School in 2004, and I was just newly fresh from the reservation coming here. And it was -- it was -- I was happy because I got to see different natives. You know, being raised on the reservation, I just knew just my fellow native students, right? So this kind of opened my eyes to know other native cultures. So to me that kind of brought some positivity for me.

But on the other hand, my parents were both -- they both were part of the boarding school system. So my father, he was -- he was -- he was taken to Fort

Sill, Oklahoma, so him and my uncle. And I remember him, he just -- he just passed two years ago. But he

used to always tell us how important education was and the sacrifice he had to make by not coming -- you know, by escaping boarding school.

So he escaped from boarding school, and him and my uncle made their travel back from Oklahoma to Arizona. I don't know how, you know, but they did. And I asked him why, you know, why that was -- why he did that, you know. And he said that, you know, because my grandfather, he had passed. So there was really no male figure on the reservation, it was just us women. And he told us that he came back to take care of his mother and his sisters.

And so he talked about his experience, you know, at Fort Sill about how he couldn't speak Navajo, he would get beaten or get whipped by the nuns at the -- when they were doing mass. And so, you know, and we all talked about that, you know, intergenerational trauma.

I see that, and I saw that because my parents -- my parents, we knew they loved us, but there was no affection, right? We all -- we all just got that like stern look, like you know already, you know, but they never really acknowledging and telling us, you know, like I love you. It was not until later when my

parents got older when they started actually saying, you know, (foreign language spoken.) They used to teach us that.

So and in doing so, he had to give up, you know, I guess education. He had very limited education. He didn't graduate from high school. But not getting that education he was able to speak and practice his language, you know, and he was able to pass that on to us, his -- you know, his children.

And both my parents have passed just within the last three years. They were -- have been always been -- you know, our parents are our number one people that are our rock, right, and that's who we look up to, especially when it comes to traditional teachings, you know, traditional language and stuff like that. And I can see how easily we can forget who we are, where we come from, right? But I've managed to -- I've managed to keep myself connected with my people, with my tribe, with my culture, with my kids.

I brought my kids here today, but they're out there, because I wanted them to learn, I want them to know that it is possible, right, and that no matter what, what life throws at us, we have to be resilient, we have to get back up, and we have to look forward, you know, look forward to not just for ourselves but for our

people.

And I tell my kids that every single day, I tell them that mommy's got to go to work, mommy's got to make -- mommy's got to take care of not just you guys, but I've got to take care of the whole nation, you know, take care of all different -- you know, the different native groups here in Southern California, right?

And just recently I changed position. I used to -- I was working for the State of California for Cal State -- Cal Poly Pomona, and along with my mentor, and she's like a mother to me, she's replaced -- she's my mother figure now, Dr. Dixon here, ever since I lost my mom, and she's been guiding me and helping me and, you know, really being there for me because you don't really know what you go through when you lose a parent, you know, and you think that they're going to be there forever, but I just barely got to learn that. So I'm just very thankful for her to, you know, help me and support me and still be here with me.

But also I had the great opportunity to change jobs as well, to do something more meaningful rather than just being another invisible native on a campus

such as Cal Poly Pomona. So I started working for California Indian Nations College in Palm Desert. So I've been working with them. And we've been working

with native students and really pushing for them to continue their education because that's -- that's the key, right? That's what we all -- that's what we're all here for. That's what we envision and that's what we tell our children, you know, that education is important.

And I finally realized, you know, my parents stressing that on us growing up, and I didn't know that until I actually got into college, you know. And so and my job here is to be a model, to be a role model.

And I just wanted to say, Secretary Haaland, you have been a role model, especially for us native women, you know? So I'm just -- I'm working on -- I'm working towards that, I'm working on my doctoral starting this semester, starting to working on my dissertation; so I'm very excited about that. And I just really -- also focusing on our native foster children. And that's kind of where my dissertation is going to be on Indian policy surrounding Native American

children. So and being a foster parent here in California too, that really brings a lot of joy to my heart; I love helping children, I love helping people.

So if you guys ever see me out there, please don't hesitate to come up to me and say hello or anything, or to help, I'm always here to help, whatever

which way I can.

And I just want to say thank you guys for listening and really putting this out here for us, you know, as to healing. You know, we're talking about it. And I've learned -- I've learned -- it took me a really long time to do that, really to learn because of generational trauma, my parents didn't -- we didn't talk about anything at all. We didn't talk about nothing. So it took me until my adult years to finally realize that.

So thank you very much.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me. I have one thing to say real quick. Just real quick. Sherman Indian Cemetery, total disgrace. $80 a year for maintenance. Fix it.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.

So we'll -- ma'am, we'll ask you to be the final speaker for our morning session. And then we're going to take a lunch break after that and we'll come back and hear after that.

CINDY DEVERS: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Haaland, thank you for coming. Newman -- anyway, my name is Cindy Devers. I'm from the Pauma Band of Mission Indians. I am Luiseño and I am the school board president for Sherman Indian High School.

And we do welcome you here. Thanks for coming.

My concern here is that the generational trauma that we were talking about, my dad went to school here. He was in the Sherman band, he played the tuba. And he always did all the marching things. And I never really heard any bad stuff from my dad about Sherman.

The bad stuff came from my mom who never attended a boarding school. But the same thing happened there that happened here. She was not allowed to speak her language when they took her to school. The first day they took her to school, public school, they beat her for speaking her language. It was the only

language -- she was bilingual at that time, she was eight, she could speak Luiseño and Spanish. So the first time she went to school, they beat her badly. And she -- she wouldn't even go back to school again. But my grandfather talked her into it.

So she went back again. When the teachers were asking her again in English, this time she answered them back in Spanish, and they beat her again. So at that point she's about eight or nine and she just flat out refused to speak the language at all, period. So growing up and asking her, mom, talk to us, teach us. No. But mom -- no. Well, what about Spanish? No. You only need to learn English. That was her thing.

So I guess my point is is that the generational trauma didn't just come from the boarding school setting. It came from the whole mentality of what was going on at that time. Because even in public schools they were beating the kids for speaking their language, it wasn't just in boarding schools. And that's something that at that time we have to, you know, really think about.

This is in the -- see, my mom was born in 1922, so we're talking like maybe in the late twenties, early thirties at that time. That's when they were being really, really hard.

I mean my dad, I heard wonderful stories from Sherman from my dad because he's the one that came here. It was my mom that I heard the horror stories from, and I almost didn't want to go to public school after that. It's like, really?

You know, so the generational trauma that we have today is the effect that happened not just in boarding school but it happened everywhere that our kids went to school -- or where our parents went to school, whether it was in a boarding school or a public school, they still got the same treatment. And that's my point.

So I mean, it's hard to understand that, what happened here, but it was still an ongoing thing, we

were never able to get away from that at all.

So my thing is I am a strong supporter of Sherman, I really believe in the school. This is the -- we need this school, especially here in California. We have kids that have no places to go, they can't cut it

in public school or they just need a place to stay or live and grow, that's why we need this school. Okay? We need to focus on taking care of them, those that can't make it in the outside in the public school, but we can do it here with our own kids. That's my goal, that's what I believe, and that's what I'm pushing for, is to make sure that our kids now get what they need to survive in the future.

Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you, Cindy.

So we're going to take a break now. We will excuse members of the press who are here.

The Sherman Culinary Institute here has generously provided lunch, and so I believe that's going to be served in the back.

The Secretary and I will be back in after a brief lunch break for some photos and a brief meet and greet, and then we'll continue the session. We're going to try and start up again at 1:00 to hear from more folks that want to speak.

Thank you.

(Lunch recess.)

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. First I want to give a special acknowledgement to everybody who helped prepare the lunch for us and served. If you guys can give them a round of applause.

Thank you.

So we are going to continue with the listening session.

Just as a reminder, we are going to have to leave promptly at 3:00, so sometime around 2:30 I'm going to give the warning for one more speaker, and then we'll have some closing comments. And I know many folks often at these events want to come up and share information with us. We're not going to be able to do that today.

We do have members of our team who are here. If you have information you want to share with us, I encourage you to hand that over to them because, again, we're on a tight time schedule today, and we do apologize for that.

The Secretary being from New Mexico and myself from Canada, we have different opinions on what the temperature should be sometimes. This is cozy.

SECRETARY HAALAND: I'm from the desert.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: So we have excused the press, and we'll just simply turn the floor back over to you.

Again, if you wish to speak, you may raise your hand. Our runners will find you. We'll start with this gentleman in the front and then the next -- lady in the middle.

STEVEN ESTRADA: Hello again. Steven Estrada. I'm from the Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians. And what I -- the story I will share with you was, you know, reiterated to me from my grandmother.

At that time the Sherman Institute, or Sherman Indian High School, had been closed to California Indians, so my grandparents, you know, never went through that process. My grandfather did work here at Sherman Indian School for over 30 years, you know, retired from here, making the 150-mile round trip almost every day to come do maintenance and other services here. But his mother had passed away when he was about five years old and he was raised by his grandmother.

He had an aunt that they would talk about. She was taken to the Sherman Institute when it was in Perris. And it's on the official record with the BIA that something had occurred, I think the superintendent

was writing that she went crazy, you know, kind of in a mental state, and that she had passed away.

My grandmother said that that wasn't the way that she had passed away, that she had been food poisoned and, you know, she had died. And she was around 12 years old.

They took her back up to Santa Rosa in a wagon, and at that time the village had moved to a different camp. And my grandmother said that they brought the body back, but the way she kind of explained it is a mountain lion had followed because the body was decaying. They brought her back to the Sherman Institute in Perris and buried her there. And my grandfather, he remembered his grandmother saying "This is where she's buried, remember this place." There was a row of palm trees.

In 2016 the development around the city of Perris was starting to come in and, you know, they did some consultation efforts trying to relocate not just her but many of the other gravesites that were supposed to be there, and they were never successful. So I'm

just correcting that record, and, you know, unfortunately that they were never recovered. And now I think it's a Whirlpool distribution center is sitting on top of that site, unfortunately.

So thank you again for allowing the opportunity for everyone to share.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you. So we had a woman in the center was going to go next. In the yellow.

KAREN GAIL VASSER: Thank you. Thank you guys for being here. I appreciate it.

I disagree with the assimilation attitude and idea. Totally disagree with that. Okay? I disagree with destroy the Indian, save the man, all of that rhetoric, I disagree with it.

The federal government was very systematic in how they handled Native Americans in my opinion, because don't forget the Civil War was just over. That life was finished. So they had to have other scapegoats, and to me it was Native Americans. They played the game very, very well.

So it wasn't just a matter in my opinion of

them taking the land, it wasn't that issue at all, they needed servants, they needed slaves, they needed people to do their bidding. And natives were perfect. Because don't forget the history after the Civil War, gold, California, 1849. They started coming this way. Where were all the natives? They were on this side. They had to do something. They played the game well.

I am Karen Gail Vasser. I'm from the Bishop Paiute Shoshone tribe in Inyo County. Okay? We have quite a history. From my understanding in Owens Valley, Inyo and Mono County, the natives were gathered together and they were put on Sunland Reservation. Okay? Then Mulholland, he comes along during World War I and he's like, whoa, I need this water. So he goes to Southern California, he gets his crew together, they boogie on to Washington, Congress is like, yo, bud, it's yours, take it.

So what they do is all the natives that are at Sunland, what they did is they put them on the Bishop Reservation, Big Pine, Independence, Lone Pine. So when in the sixties when the soldiers came through and

gathered up all the natives and put them at Sunland, what they did is they separated them. So if you were the furthest, you went to Lone Pine, if you were the northern in Mono County, that was Benton, and then all the other reservations were created in between.

So it's my understanding Bishop Reservation, not only but all those others in Inyo and Mono County, they were displaced again because Mulholland wanted the water and he got it, till this day. Everything in the Owens Valley is landlocked between the L.A. Department of Water and Power, the first Forest Service, the

reservation, and BLM. So you can't buy property there. Okay? Everything is landlocked.

Okay. Here we go. My grandma, her name was Ida McBride, and she was born in 1889 at Mono Lake. Mono Lake is still trying to get their federal recognition from the tribe, and this is from our Inyo Register. So that's documented, okay? She died in 1973 at 83 from complications from a broken hip.

Her dad, he is from Benton, he was a white guy, he was Irish, and my grandmother's mother worked for him. Okay? He impregnated her because that was typical

of how white people treated blacks, that was typical of how white people treated natives. She worked for him as a domestic, and he impregnated her. Well, my grandmother's mother died in childbirth, so she boogied back to Mono Lake where she was from, and that was the end of that.

Now, I think there's a reason why my gram never went to Benton to put any flowers on his grave, because she was hard-core Memorial Day, real hard-core, okay? And I think she knew that that man didn't care for her. She knew where he was. She never went. She knew.

So another thing too, because her mother was native from Mono Lake and her father was Irish, here was another typical thing white people did, they were

notorious with black people, notorious, and they tried it on Indians. My grandmother was the color of me, and here's what they did: They tattooed her face from here all across here, all across here to on the other side, and they slit her nose right there. And the reason why they did that is so she could not pass for white. Typical. Typical. Okay?

She never talked about it, ever. When I approached my two aunts about it and I told them my theory of the whole thing, when they tried to convince me it was a sign of beauty, I'm like no, no. Okay?

My grandma was a domestic. When she was 12 years old she went from Mono Lake and she went to work at Bodie. Now, we all know what Bodie was, it was a hard-core silver mining town, okay? So she was 12 years old and went to work there. Anyway, she married this guy named James Worley [phonetic], he was from the Owens Valley, he was born in 19- -- 1896, he was younger than grandma, and he died in 1933 at 36 or 37 years old, and happened to be a year after their youngest child -- my grandma had nine kids, okay? And the father, he died when the youngest one wasn't even one yet. Okay? He was an orphan. He was raised in Owens Valley, and this family raised he and his brother.

What is distinguished about him is this, and

this is very unusual, because if you picture the Owens Valley in your mind and you look at it nowadays, there's 15,000 people in the Owens Valley. That's -- and so when you look at the United States and you think of

Owens Valley, 15,000 people, so picture that in your mind, that's how many natives were in World War I, 15,000, okay? But here's what he got out of the deal. He became a United States citizen when every other native in America didn't become citizens until 1924. But the 15,000 natives that served in World War I, they immediately got citizenship. So that was -- that was whatever. But he died 15 years later after he served.

Then comes my mother. My mother, the fifth child of my grandmother. She was born in 1922, she died in 1970. She started out at Stewart in Carson City. Whatever happened, she ended up graduating from Sherman in 1970. Here's a picture of her graduation from this school. And if you'll notice she's wearing a cross. Okay? So the people who testified that that's what this school did, they were right, because she's wearing a cross. And this is her graduation picture. The sad part about this picture is when you look at it really good, she looks forlorn, she looks lost. There's no pep in her face; nothing. Okay? What a bummer.

She graduated in 1940 and she came home to

Bishop. And it was in the fall, and this is before the roads were paved, it was still dirt roads. She was riding bareback on the corner of 395 and Brockman, and the wind came up and spooked the horse, and it bucked her off, and she flopped down on her head. After that she had seizures. So the doctors gave her phenobarbital. Phenobarbital is one of the worst drugs any individual could have because it's highly toxic, highly toxic. Well, after that she became a binge drinker in order to satisfy these seizures, okay?

Like I said, the feds did a very, very good job when it came to these boarding schools on three levels.

Number one, they treated them just like they did black people. They took them when they were young. Then they're there. And what do the guys do? The guys are laborers. What are the women? And my mom was good. My mom worked at dry cleaning, caregiver, cleaning motel rooms. It's a step above from her mom who was a domestic.

So the government, they knew what they were doing. They knew exactly what they were doing, because they needed people to serve white people, and this is what my mom did. Whatever.

Now, what did I say? My mom died -- my mom died at 48 years old, okay? And she was with six guys

in that short period of time she was alive. She married and divorced my dad twice, that's two. She got with this Italian guy from Philadelphia. His name was Chuck Denova. Actually, he was a pretty nice guy; I liked him. He hung around at the Indian bars in L.A., whatever. That's how she met him.

Her third guy was Marty Abeita, and he's Pueblo from New Mexico. Gifted in jewelry work. He gave a lot of nice things to my mom. So when she died I got them, but I gave them to my daughter, so all that's hers now. But he was very, very gifted. He's the one that taught me to play chess. I taught my son, and he plays chess to this day and he plays with people from all over the world, people that don't even speak English. Whatever.

Then she married John (inaudible) Paradise. He's native from Nevada. And then her last guy she was with was John Williams, and it was at his house she died. It was on the reservation. And the brick house because -- when they relocated the natives from Sunland to Bishop, they built all these brick houses for people. And at his place he had a cabin in the back, and that's where she stayed.

Well, he went in to make some breakfast for them, and my mom had a seizure and she choked on her own

vomit and died. So he comes out to give her breakfast

and he finds her dead. Okay?

My mom and my dad had two kids, me and my sister. When -- the reason why my mom and dad got married is she was three months pregnant. Well, my dad, he hung out with the natives on the res, so he knew all -- I know it made his folks really mad because they were real racist.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Karen. Karen, can I ask you to kindly respectfully wrap up your comments. We'd be happy to take your card as a submission.

KAREN GAIL VASSER: Oh, no, I'm almost finished.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.

KAREN GAIL VASSER: Yeah. So anyway, we were Irish twins, and we're nine months and 28 days apart, so for that time we were the same age.

The third child, Donald Worley, he went to this school. He was born in 1918. July of 1926 he fell out of a tree. He was eight years old, and he's buried at the Sherman cemetery. So that's one of the things I'll

be talking to you guys about.

The tribal council's trying to change the name of our cemetery in Bishop right here. So we got a notice. Also, Josie Rodgers right here, she does stories from boarding school kids. She's from our

reservation. So that's pretty cool. And Laurie who's here at the museum, she gave me some good tips about DNA and a plaque. And our tribal preservation officer spoke to her, she's got a file on Donald. This is what I have on Donald that I gave her preservation officer and I'll be giving it to her.

The odds are very high Congress is not going to approve to have Sherman cemetery exhumed, let alone DNA, because those stones you see out there, there's no names. And there's 66 kids out there. So I don't even know which one's Donald. Okay? Plaques, I'm going to have two made, one for Bishop, one for here.

So to get down to business, here's the summary: Donald died in 1926, my grandmother's other son died in 1930, he got run over by a car at Sunland, and, of course, we all know in 1930 who owned cars in the Owens Valley, and that was all white people. And James her

husband died in 1933. So anyway, that's the name of that.

The interesting thing is my kids have another history, World War II, their grandfather, their dad's father was a code talker. So they had a chance to go to -- where's the lady with -- they had a chance to go to Washington to get the Medal of Honor.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you. Thank

you. Okay.

Can we come to the outside, this lady here.

And then also just to ask while we wait, we've got about 90 minutes left and a number of folks who want to speak, so there's not a time limit, but do ask that you try to be concise and respectful of other speakers and other folks who are coming after. Thank you.

ALEXIS DURO: (Foreign language spoken.) My name is Alexis Duro [phonetic]. I just want to mention really quick what the boarding schools did to our family but also what they did for our families.

So just a little background. So my great-great-grandparents and their siblings, they

attended boarding schools in California and they were also like a lot of other families told not to speak their languages. So when they finally came home they would speak in secret, like they were only allowed to talk in the house in their language, and then when they went outside they could only talk English or Spanish just because those are the languages spoken at the time. But that helped contribute to the degradation obviously of the language in our family because they didn't want to teach it. But some of my aunts and uncles were insistent to my grandparents to teach the language, and so that's why some of us still hold it today. But an

example of -- that's what the boarding schools did to my family.

But what they did for my family is I'm a graduate here of Sherman Indian High School. I graduated in 2009. And then I went to the University of California Riverside where I earned my bachelor's in psychology and my bachelor of science in anthropology. I went on to the University of Oklahoma and earned a master's in law, specifically in Indian law. And then I recently graduated from Claremont Graduate University

with a master's of education, where here I am giving back as a teacher here at Sherman now, and so kind of making it full circle for me.

So that's what the boarding schools did for me and my family, they helped to give me an opportunity and a platform that maybe I otherwise wouldn't have had. And that is going to enable me to pass that on to my kids who I brought with me today. And I'd like -- my kids are home schooled; I like to bring them to these things to show them exactly what it is the government did to natives but what it also can do for natives.

And like I mentioned to you, Ms. Haaland, when we met you, my daughter's a girl scout and she's very active, and they always display different role models in the Supreme Court, you know, and in the House of

Representatives; but most recently when you got on, I said, look, there's somebody that's native, you know, running. And I told my boys too, yeah, she works at the White House. They're like, oh, my God, that's so cool. But I just wanted to show them that there are actually Indian people who have -- who are up there working for

like Indian people. And that's why I brought them, even though they've been a little rowdy.

But I know if I -- I think I didn't introduce. I'm from the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, also from the Chumash Nation. I have my chief here with me. He came as a representative for our tribe.

But I just, you know, a lot of people have negative experiences here, and a lot of the time when they come -- you know, I work with Laurie Sisquoc in the museum, and I try to show them too that there's a positive side to this school, more so recently within the last 30 years it's been extremely positive and really a step forward, you know, for native people in general.

I think in my graduating class there was 60 of us, and I think about 25 were all headed to UCs, Cal States, and state universities. So I'm really thankful for that for all my peers that went on to higher education.

But again, too, you know, we had the good examples of the native teachers that were here like Ms. Sisquoc, Sandy Dixon, Ms. Townsend, Hathaway,

Mr. Johnson, and, you know, now we have Mr. Ortiz here, and we're really grateful to have a native principal here now because it's really important for us, you know. It's hard for students to connect with principals that are not native and don't understand the struggle.

And so we're really thankful that we have him, and we have our abundance -- not an abundance of native teachers, but more so now than we did before. And, you know, I'm just looking for more of my peers who have graduated or come after me to pursue higher education so they can come back and help run the Bureau's schools. And that's really important. I know it's something I talked to Mr. Dearman about when we went on our tour last year here.

But I just want to say thank you for coming and being here at the school. It's very important. Your representation is much needed. So (foreign language spoken). Thank you.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: So we're going to come to this gentleman over here and then back -- this gentleman in the bleachers and then next --

MEL CAMPBELL: Thank you. First of all, my

name is Mel Campbell. I'm of Hopi and Pomo decent.

My daughter wants to thank and I want to thank, all of us want to thank you, Secretary Haaland and Assistant Newland, for having this event, because you're our voices, you're our voice now in Washington and whatever thereafter.

And I want to say, Walter and Margaret Campbell, both retired from Sherman. My father went here. And he used to mention some let's say discipline, but he wouldn't really talk about it much. He wasn't the type to -- I don't know, but over the years now, I never went to Sherman, but we grew up around here as Laurie Sisquoc did, and we, you know, grew up with her mother and so forth and other children of former employees that worked here. We were called the "Sherman brats" when we used to hang around here.

But I'm going to say back in the sixties when I used to hang out here with my buddies at Sherman they told me some of the problems. And I'm sure they said it wasn't as bad as it used to be way back like when my father went here, but, you know, discipline, what is discipline? Sure, they had to have discipline, but not to -- only to a certain extent.

But, you know, what were boarding school -- what were they for in the first place? To control us,

colonize us. You know, I'm into that, really anti colony, and so is my daughter in all this. But I just want to say I'm sure things have changed some. You know, they put us on a reservation for a reason, but then over the years, you know, with all due respect, they still won't let us have our own basically freedom even today maybe in some places, but, you know, that's -- that's what it is right now, maybe always be.

But I just want to -- my heart goes out to all the students who went here, had some problems. But I think that's changed a lot. And I'm glad. And I'm proud to be a -- you know, a Sherman let's say in my own way alumni because, you know, I'm for everything that Sherman does, you know, right. And, of course, there's always going to be problems, but I know those will be corrected, and that you see and what you're hearing today from all of us, and I salute you for that. And carry on the good work. Thank you.

SUNSHINE SYKES: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Sunshine Sykes. I am a member of the Navajo Nation. My (foreign language spoken) sister, Coyote Pass Clan. Thank you for being here today, both of you.

I -- I am going to share a few stories from my

grandparents. I'm originally from Tuba City, Arizona, born on the Navajo reservation. My family still lives

there in Tuba City.

Both my grandparents came here to Sherman. They actually -- I know a gentleman earlier said some people found love here; they met each other here at Sherman, although my grandfather was from Red Lake and my grandmother is originally from Wheatfields, they didn't know each other until they came here to Sherman. My grandfather also attended boarding school in Tuba City and he has stories that he shares.

I'm fortunate that both my grandparents are still alive. My grandmother was recently able to come here back to Sherman, and Laurie was gracious and kind enough to open the door to the museum for her so she was able to find herself in the yearbook and find my grandfather.

They tell me the stories. My grandfather tells me of a story of -- Tuba City boarding school I'll start with. He was living in Red Lake and he remembered the agents coming out to the reservation. And they could

always hear them coming. And my great-grandmother would try to hide them. And sometimes she was successful and sometimes she wasn't. So a couple times my grandfather's brothers were taken and they were taken away to Tuba City Boarding School.

And he tells the story, because he was the

youngest, is that my grandmother had a very old sewing machine, one that had a foot pedal, and any time the agents would come, she would hide my grandfather under the lid of the sewing machine, and that's where he would escape.

And they knew the routine, they could hear the agents coming down the dirt road. And one day he accidentally hit the pedal, and the sewing machine went off, and he was found. And he can't remember how old he was, he knew he was just little, and he was taken away to Tuba City Boarding School.

He tells the story of how hard it was there because he was so far away from his family. It's hard for me to -- to tell this story because I have four daughters and I can't imagine someone coming to my home and just taking one of them away and how devastating

that would be to me to not know where they were, not to know if they were eating, not to know if they were being loved, not to know anything about them. And so I just can't -- I can't imagine that pain. And that pain, as we talk about it, it is passed down to us. But there's always strength there that I want to talk a little bit about.

So my grandfather tells the story that he would escape, he would always run away. And I think that's

why they wouldn't let -- I think we know that that's why they wouldn't let the California natives come here to Sherman, because they would know where to hide, they would know how to get back home too easily, so they brought in natives from Arizona or New Mexico, from places far away so they couldn't escape.

But my grandfather tells the story like many of your family and your relatives and yourselves about how hard it was there, how he wasn't allowed to speak his language, how his hair was cut, how he was beaten. And he was just a little boy, and how hard that was for him. And then he was taken to Sherman as he got older.

And a different side of the story is my grandmother, her mother wanted her to go to Sherman; so she wasn't forced to go here, my grandmother wanted my -- my great-grandmother wanted my grandmother to have an education and she thought the education was the key, was the way to get our family off the reservation, was the way to have our family learn and have our family be able to participate in the world that was changing around her that she saw, because my great-grandmother only spoke Navajo. And I was fortunate enough to know her, and my oldest daughter was fortunate enough to know her too. So at one point there was five generations of native women from my family that lived together.

So my grandmother wanted that -- my great-grandmother wanted that for my grandmother. So she sent her here to Sherman in hopes that she would get an education and she'd be able to come back to the reservation and do something good for the community.

And so education was always very important to my family. It was something that was instilled in my mother, it was instilled in me, and I've instilled it in my children, the importance of education to help

ourselves and help our communities.

But my grandfather, when he came here to Sherman, he said it was much better than the boarding school at Tuba City. He said although they had to work, he remembers the most -- the thing he remembers most about being at Sherman is that they had to march. Everywhere they went they were marching. And to this day he just hates marching because that's all he remembered, he had to march to class, march to church, march to work because it was based upon a military model of a boarding school.

And the same things happened. He had to cut his hair, he couldn't speak his language, and he ran away. And he was able to make it back to the reservation. He said he was going on trains or hitchhiking, he doesn't really remember. So he never

graduated from Sherman, he kept escaping.

But my grandmother was able to graduate and she was able to go on and get a degree and able to go back to Tuba City and work at the hospital.

So although there's great trauma I think that

we carry, because my mother had me when she was very young, she was only 17 -- so I heard a lot of people speaking about, you know, not really knowing how to parent some of the kids who went away to boarding schools, not knowing how to show love, not knowing how to say "I love you" and embrace their children because they didn't get that when they were here. They weren't loved. They weren't held. They didn't get tucked in at night and stories read to them.

And so that -- that hurt and that pain, it does go across generations, and it's something that when my mother had me at 17 I grew up in a home of -- filled with domestic violence, and it was very hard for me because she didn't know how to parent, she didn't know how to take care of herself let alone taking care of me.

But last thing I just want to say is that that trauma may be on one side, but there's also strength. And there's strength that's within each and every one of us and there's strength that allowed us to survive despite the worst odds imaginable, taking our children

away from us, taking us far away from home, just trying to assimilate us, trying to get rid of us, all these

things I could go on and on about all the governmental programs to try to devastate native communities, but there's strength.

And that's the strength that I try to remember every day of my life, is what my ancestors had to go through just for me to be able to exist and live in this world and to have opportunities and be able to tuck my daughters in at night, to kiss them, to tell them I love them. And that's all within us, each and every one of us. And you just have to find it. I'm fortunate enough to have had my grandparents come here and give me that strength, pass that on to me.

And this building, this place was built in 1903. And I just saw that today; I didn't know that. And I sat in a courthouse, I was fortunate to come back here to this county just by chance and to be able to become a judge here, and the building that I used to sit in in in the state court was built in 1903.

So one of the things my grandparents told me is that when they were here they were expected to be homemakers, take care of other people's children, be agricultural workers, fix machines, that's what they were expected. And I know in this room there's native

lawyers, there's native judges, there's doctors, there's teachers, there's professors, there's the Secretary of the Interior. I mean it's amazing what we can do. So I know there's trauma there, but there's also strength. So I just want us to remember that.

Thank you.

GAYLORD TOWNSEND: I apologize for not standing up. Wounded warrior.

My name is Gaylord Townsend, and I lived on this campus for 16 years of my life. I was born in 1978, December 29, 1978. I was born at the hospital across from Tyler mall, what used to be there, mom brought me home. For the next 16 years Sherman was my home.

And this building was not here. At that time they had the kids -- they talked to kids about livestock, sheep, cattle, and they had -- this property went all the way past the freeway, the freeway wasn't there, it went over to the next street up.

The thing was since my brother and sister could not attend the school, we had to go to a public school, which I walked down to Liberty Elementary which is about 3 miles that way right across from the Tyler mall. And then the -- I can go a lot of my stories what was going on in here, this whole place, but I'll -- I'll be more

than happy to talk to anybody who wants to ask me questions back then because (inaudible) brag.

Thank you very much.

SECRETARY HAALAND: Thank you.

VINCENT RUFO: My name is Vincent Rufo [phonetic], and I'm a descendent of the Kuupangaxwichem, The People Who Sleep in Water. And the Spaniards called our people the Cupeños, (inaudible) caliente.

I thank you for what you guys are doing. My family needs a lot of healing. We've had for generations, from my great-great-great-grandmother, her children were removed and put into the boarding schools from Perris to St. Boniface. They took my grandfather, my great-grandfather, his siblings.

And I really wanted to start -- I wanted to bring my mother here because she was a survivor from St. Boniface, but she was too frail and I couldn't bring her here. She told me some things that happened to her.

She would tell me that they would tie her hands to the tables and slap her hands, make her eat rotten food. And she ran away when she was 10, 11 years old. She jumped into a sewer in Banning and she crossed

5 miles to get away from the boarding schools because when they would run away they would send people to bring them back. So she went underground. And I can only

imagine what was down there.

So she escaped. And she's -- I don't know how, but she told me found her home, her home where her mom lived. So she I guess escaped from the boarding school.

But getting back to my grandfathers, my great aunts and great uncles, they were also at St. Boniface. My great uncle, my brother -- my grandfather's brother was 16, 15, went healthy into St. Boniface, and he died a couple weeks later. I don't understand how a young kid of that age could die in the boarding school. So because of the boarding schools my family has been decimated.

I live in Banning, in Beaumont, and I come to find out in the radius of 5 miles that I have family everywhere that are descendants of my grandfather's brothers and sisters. So I grew up in a foster home since I was nine months old and I didn't know who I was until I started looking for my family in my late

twenties.

Doing the research of my family, it was the hardest thing to do because the more I would do the research, the more pain I would find. To know that my family come to this kind of trauma, you know, I ran the streets when I was in my youth, went to foster homes, and then when I found my father and mother, I come to

find out that they were in foster homes too. My father had to go around saying he was an Indian because they -- they -- instead of being put into the boarding schools, they put them in foster homes back in the forties and fifties. And the trauma that we went through, my parents were alcoholics, drug addicts.

So, you know, I've made it my mission to get to know my family and bring them all back together again. I had a reunion in Banning with -- I went to the BIA and I ran down the descendants of my great uncles and aunts, and we had a big reunion at the park in Banning, and 52 people showed up. We barely met each other. And come to find out that they live right around the corner from me, you know.

And this is -- I thought it was -- you know,

hearing you guys, you know, your words, we really need healing, our families really need a lot of healing. I don't know if it's anger, and I don't have a way to redirect it to, you know. You know, it was juvenile hall all my life. I was in a foster home since I was nine months old, so you can imagine I was an angry teenager growing up, and then finding out that my ancestors went through all this.

And like you said, you know, we can do a lot. I don't want to be a victim of this -- of this boarding

school trauma, but we do need healing. And if I can be a part of it, I want to do something to help our people, especially those that were in boarding schools, because we tried going home, we tried going back to our people, we tried going back to the reservations, and we were not accepted.

I heard Secretary -- Assistant Secretary said something like urban natives. I guess that's what we are, you know. We're a different class of Indians, Native Americans who, you know, we try to go back to our people, and we're not accepted by. And the worst thing

of that is that now we're pitted against our own people. We have the assimilated natives and then we have the reservation Indians. And it hurts that I can't be a part of my people because of that reason. And I do my best to try to learn my culture and be strong and do whatever I can to bring our families back together.

So, you know, it took me a while to -- I -- the courage to get up and talk because, you know, these emotions, they come out when we think about the suffering that our people went through, my family went through.

You know, it's sad enough that I don't know my own father, but to not know my own relatives, my own cousins, my own uncle, my own aunts, it's just something

that I have to learn to live with, but if I can do anything to help our family heal is -- I want to do whatever I can.

So whenever you do -- you know, I would contact, whatever you come up with, I heard somebody say that the tribes have their own community outreaches to help people heal that have been to boarding schools, but there's nothing -- I don't know if there's anything for

us out here to reach out to us for healing.

You know, I do run a talking circle on the reservation in Morongo, and I do that for -- I've been doing that for 12 years because there's a lot of healing for the alcoholism and our people, and so I don't want to be the victim at all, I don't want to be, because I know that our people are resilient and my family -- my ancestors suffered a lot. They ran away from Sherman and they ran away from St. Boniface and jumped on a train. I heard you say a train, I go, yeah, that's what they did, they jumped on a train. And that's how they got away.

But, you know, it went down to my -- to my -- to my grandfather, my grandmother, my mother. And I think that's all I have to say.

Thank you.

JULIE HOLDER: My name is Julie Holder. I

am -- I was born a Diegueño, I'm called a Mission Indian, I have become a Kumeyaay, and I'm actually from the Epi [phonetic] community of Southern California in the mountains.

But I'm an urban Indian, and my history is like everybody here. And what I hear today is I hear blood memory, I hear sorrow, I hear the pain that my grandmother made me promise not to forget. She was taken to Sherman off the streets of old town when she was 10 years old. Her brothers and sisters, they were brought here. They were told their family no longer existed. They didn't own anything. She had an Indian grandmother and an Irish mother.

She then ran away, her brother ran away. He ended up in Haskell, she ended up in San Diego. She ended up being outed at 13 from Sherman because, as you said, they were trained to be servants, and my grandmother was nobody's servant. She came back to San Diego and she built a life.

When I was 20 years old in 1969 during Alcatraz, when the first voices of our people started making noise, we paid attention. And I sat with my grandmother as we watched the people at Alcatraz for the first time in our history and our life and my lifetime stand up and be proud and talk about their experience in

the land they were born to.

Now we have today that blood memory, the sorrow, the tears. The heart that you hear in this room is that blood memory. We are no different today than we were in the sixties. We have spent billions of dollars trying to figure out what to do with Indian people. We have our history in the national archives, we have our photographs in the museum, we have our people buried under the lands, and yet we are today these modern Indians that we have become still trying to figure out who we are and how to identify ourselves. We have displacement, and now we have money creating the conflict.

My promise to my grandmother was I would never forget her people and I would try to find them. I have been to Washington, D.C., I've been all over California, I've been to libraries and archives. Everybody here has talked about what they've looked for, because that's what they did when they brought my grandmother to Sherman, is they stole her history, they stole her story, they stole her family. And I have been looking for it ever since.

Now I'm here with my mother who is 97, and we are at the end of this story; it's a full circle here. I have two grandchildren who are more Indian than I will

ever be, so I have a legacy to carry out. I want my stories back, I want my history, I want my pictures, I want my archives. I want the things that the government holds that they won't give back to us to let us tell our own stories and to find out who we are.

Everybody here has looked somewhere to find their history because that's what genocide is and that's what has been done to us as a people, and that's what's being done to us today because you haven't -- nobody's figured out how to get our stories back, how to give them back to ourselves, how they belong to us, how they belong to our families.

I did what my grandmother promised and I went to the library and I found books and I found pictures. And when I went to publish those, I was told by the people who owned them in the museum that they didn't belong to me. Now, these are my history, this is San Diego, these are my people, but they didn't belong to me, they belong to the museum. So I took them home and I did it and I published books.

And I brought these people, these are my ancestors, and I brought them back, and that's what I believe we need to do so that we can have our people back from the past and we can carry them forward into

the future because we're not -- we are testament it

didn't take. Genocide failed because we're still here. And we're going to continue being here. And if we're not careful, if we don't take care of each other, if we don't tell our stories, if we don't bring our history back home, we may not have a future.

Thank you.

PEGGY FONTENOT: My name is Peggy Fontenot, and I'm Patawomeck and I'm Potawatomi. And -- my moral support here.

I heard his name mentioned many times today; Jim Thorpe is my cousin. And many people don't realize that Jim Thorpe was a twin and his brother ran away from the boarding school and he got sick and he died. So at any rate, as Jim got older and he had a family of his own, he sent his daughters to boarding school, which has always -- I've never quite understood.

But anyway, Gracie was the youngest at Sacred Heart in Oklahoma, and she said that the nuns used to let her sleep with them. And she said, I don't know why, if they felt sorry for me or what the reason was.

But when Jim Thorpe died, he had married a

non-native, and his third wife shopped his body around. And there's a town in Pennsylvania called Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania, and they purchased Jim Thorpe's body and they changed the name of the town to Jim Thorpe.

And I'm an artist of 40 years, and I was invited to do a show there because of who I am. And they prided themselves on the fact that they had an ironclad contract that we would never get Jim's body back. And we've tried and tried and been unsuccessful. But I believe that native people should not be shopped around and purchased and that we should be able to bring his body home.

And the other issue is that his oldest daughter Gail, she had moved to Chicago, and when she came home, she wanted to become enrolled, and I never understood why she wasn't enrolled. Jim's mother was Potawatomi, and his father was Sac & Fox, so they were mostly known as Sac & Fox. So Gail said that the Sac & Fox said that they would not enroll her because why now, why as an adult?

And so we went to the Potawatomi chairman and

we said -- we told them the story. And he -- and Gracie said, I will relinquish my membership in the Sac & Fox and go to the Potawatomi if they will enroll my sister. And he agreed.

So we went, we got all the documents together, and we went back, and he had changed his mind. And Gail died knowing that her father's famous and everybody makes money off of him and that her and her daughter and

her grandchildren and descendants will never be enrolled.

And the other issue that I'd like to bring up is the fact that any of those individuals that would like to be a native artist under the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, they will never be recognized as Indian. And there's a real issue with that as far as I'm concerned.

And the other issue is what you were talking about is the fact that we pit each other -- we pit each other against each other. And you've got state tribes and you've got federal tribes. And the very government that destroyed the documents that they now ask for those state tribes to become recognized is the very government

that destroyed them.

So I just want to put that out there.

FAITH MORENO: (Foreign language spoken.) Hello. My name is Faith Moreno. I'm from the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Tribe.

And first of all, I want to just share (foreign language spoken). My heartfelt thanks to you for being able to listen and carry these stories to wherever action or plan of action there is to address them.

Our federal government's really good about consultation and about listening, but I don't know about

the following up and action plan of getting our stories back like this woman has shared, like addressing how we are recognized and acknowledged by our government.

And I work currently for the California Indian Nations College, one of the first emerging tribal colleges here in California, one of only three with over 100 tribes here in California where, you know, one of only three and we're trying to get accreditation. But I see on a daily the impacts that our students don't even realize they're carrying because although we have all

these stories that are shared here, there are thousands of untold stories buried, stories of our ancestors that will never be told to us, that we'll never know.

We are forced into an education system, and through these institutionalized initiatives, we have really, you know, just dismissed the importance of education because our education was within our families, was within our elders. That's how we were taught. But then our government, if we don't send our kids to these boarding schools or public schools, you know, we are penalized for it. So how do we change that system and making it a more positive outlook for our students to thrive and to succeed? That's the question I deal with every day when I work with our students at the college.

Thankfully, you know, my mother, as one of my

sisters from Pauma shared, she attended public school. She had gone through the same treatment at public school as most of the boarding schools had. My dad had -- and I've lost both of them, may they rest in peace -- went to St. Boniface. And I feel that although we have California representation here of over -- you know, we have all these tribes here, we know that relocation had

ushered in many other tribes, but I don't want that to diminish our California tribal voices in relation to the impact of Indian boarding schools here.

Many of our California tribes were affected. And I thank this gentleman for sharing his story, because St. Boniface was one of the major boarding schools that many of our parents had gone to and ran away from. Sherman is another one too. I remember my mom telling about my auntie running away. Every single time they brought her here she'd find her way back home.

So, you know, my -- my story is that, you know, my mother was very resilient in that because she was shamed in public school about speaking her language, she never spoke her English until she was like in the fifth grade, she never learned English and never spoke it and to the day has never really spoken in the way -- she was fluent in her Cahuilla language, and that's what she held on to. And when that teacher shamed her in class

in front of the other classmates, that was the one thing that she promised herself, was that she was never -- they were never going to take that language away from

her. They were not going to take that. They could take and make her do everything else, but they were not going to take away her language, the (inaudible) that's in her heart. So she taught us English first.

So, you know, through these generations, again, the trauma of all of that has passed down to our younger generations where, you know, they have this confusion about what higher education can be. So it makes it difficult. And not surprising, we don't have that many, I mean we're changing that now, but, you know, why, you know, the education system is failing our Native Americans, you know, and so we're trying to change that.

And I just think that it's really important that it is documented, the California stories from the California tribal people with relation to boarding schools and the impacts also of public schools. And then what are we going to do about it.

And then, you know, prayers for you all because you're taking in all of these stories, you and your -- you know, the people that have to work and transcribe, I mean they're touching, they're deep, they're deep, but we can't forget those untold stories as well that we may

never know about, we'll never be able to hear or share with our families. So we want -- we want our stories back, we want that -- I agree with this lady here that we want everything that belongs to us back, you know.

Thank you. (Foreign language spoken.)

Can I share my time with another relative? Is that okay? She's right here.

ELIZABETH PAGE: (Foreign language spoken.) Thank you, Faith.

(Foreign language spoken.) My name is Elizabeth Page. I am from a world member of the Torres Martinez Band of Desert Cahuilla Indians. My grandmother who I lost in 2002, her name was Frances Lario [phonetic]. She was born in 1923. And when she was a girl she did go to St. Boniface.

Now, my grandmother during her later years in life, she would never ever talk about the experiences that she had there and nor would she teach me any -- me, her only granddaughter -- she wouldn't teach me the language, she wouldn't talk to me in -- she wouldn't talk in Indian except to go to doings and things like that. So I remember hearing her making the words, and I cherish those memories that I had of her and the way that she spoke (inaudible) which is our language.

But yeah, I just -- I felt compelled to get her

story on the record as well because it's not about what she told me or my mom or stories that she shared with us, it's about what she didn't say. And even though she did sometimes talk about the good memories that she had of meeting -- because it was a place where they sent a lot of brown kids basically, so she did make friends with some Indian American kids and Hispanic Americans, but, you know, it was few and far between. And then her silence really spoke volumes about her experience there.

She didn't graduate, she went on to be a domestic worker. Her father took her out of St. Boniface.

So as she -- like I said, she never talked about it. And I don't -- I don't know, but I just hearing the stories about St. Boniface is very troubling, and I just wanted to share that with you. And I thank you so much for doing this and giving us a voice.

I also have another relative from the Cahuilla Nation as well.

ROSANNA HAMILTON: (Foreign language spoken.) My name is Rosanna Hamilton, and I'm from all the young and old of the (inaudible) family, and it is the Wildcat

Clan, and I'm from Cahuilla reservation, and it's good to be here and it's good to see you.

I'd like to talk a little bit about my mom. And yesterday I was doing good, you know, I was really strong and thinking about this day today; and anyway, I'm a big cry baby, you know, because I lost my mom in 2015, and she was one of our last fluent Cahuilla speakers, mountain Cahuilla speakers. And I also lost my oldest brother before her in 2012, and then again I lost another brother in 2016.

But before that I lost my nephew. His name was Nick Hamilton. And he was gunned down on the streets of San Jacinto by sheriffs. After that it kind of destroyed my older brother, and he died in 2019. And I recently lost my older brother, my last brother, Joseph Hamilton, who was also a tribal chairman of the Ramona Band of Indians, Cahuilla Indians, and I lost him to COVID in 2020. So that left me the last of that generation.

But what I wanted to tell you is about my mother Anne Hamilton who was born in 1932. And when she was nine years old she was taken to boarding school.

One day the San Franciscan priest came and they picked up all the kids from Cahuilla and put them in a car and took them away. My mom was looking out of the back of the window watching the house and her mother drift away. And it wasn't a year, till a year till my grandma knew

where she was at. And my grandma's name was Rosinda Apappas [phonetic]. She was a very special woman.

My mother's people were very special. They were the medicine people of Cahuilla and they practiced their ceremonies and held a very special sacred bear bundles, they were the people that had the ability to turn to bears, and they were the medicine people and they healed the people up on Ramona reservation. That was their place where they would go from Cahuilla to perform all these beautiful rituals that would heal the people.

It's a very, very special place because they predicted the people before the non-Indian man came, they knew he was coming. So what they did is they took the sacred bundles from all the desert Cahuillas from the mountain Cahuilla and the past Cahuilla, they made

very big trips, they made four trips collecting those bundles, and they put them away up in the Ramona reservation.

I wanted to tell a lot of the young people here that today because it's a very special story and it's a very significant story of power for our people.

So my mom was taken into the boarding school system and she -- you know, we never heard English language until we went into town like to Anza or Hemet,

but it was spoken all the time at home. And so, you know, when my mom went to school, she was there for four years until she was 14 years old. And, you know, she said it was just like a prison, you know. And we've had to live with it, you know, watching her tears. She wouldn't talk about it.

She was a very quiet woman, humble woman, very good person, but a very strong person. And she made it through that horrible time because during that time they made them work, scrub the floors, you know, on their hands and knees, and then they were -- prayed from sun up to sundown. They were taught to speak in the Latin language. A lot of them didn't speak any of the English

language.

So I just always think about that. How did they, you know, learn how to do these things or forced to do these things, were whipped, were reprimanded when they tried to talk to each other. You know, she got reprimanded in different schools, but inside the school herself.

So she was a quiet woman and she would watch, by mimicking -- if she didn't know how to do something, she watched. And I think that's how she learned how to do things in the school, was watching what they did, because they couldn't communicate because she didn't

speak the language.

So I don't understand, you know, how we do these things to each other. We talk about healing, you know. It takes me a lot just to come here and talk about these things to you. And people say, well, why didn't they talk about them? Because they're very hard to talk about. They're very personal experiences that we've gone through and we have had to live with.

And, you know, I think about my family every

day. We talk about healing and the emotional traumas and the cross-generational trauma. It's very real. And then it gets passed over to our children and to our grandchildren. And, you know, the things that we've seen our grandparents, our parents, and our kids go through and have to face, they're not easy, you know. So we live with that. We don't like to see our parents cry, but we witness that, the things that hurt them the most and what's hurt them.

So, you know, this healing that we have to go through, I thought about that a lot, you know. One, I'm very -- I like what you're doing here. You know, this is a start, but, you know, the people are gone. Like I mentioned before, I lost my mom. It would have been nice if she could have come and people could have said, you know, we're sorry this happened to you. At least

that would be something. You know, but they're all gone now, and a lot of our grandparents and parents are all gone. We just have their memories and their spirits that are in us and around us.

But we need to get back to us, hearing each other out, respecting one another, and learning that

this is a very, very sacred journey that we're all on. It's not just something that we just, you know, throw here and there, this is the sacred life that we were given by someone, very special, very powerful.

And one thing I was taught was to pray, to pray for my people. My mom always said, pray, you should pray every day and be thankful for your life. And that's what's helped me get through the days without my family, the grief that I feel. I get out there and I pray every day to the Creator the way they taught me, and I'm very, very thankful for these teachings of my Creator because they helped me through, they helped my mother through.

Everything we need to know to be good people is there. But we need to treat each other in a good way, be good to each other, and learn that this is a sacred journey that we're on and be good people, otherwise we're going to go back and do the same things over and over and over again.

You need your spirituality. The people are spiritually starved, that's why we have addiction and we

have murder, we have traumas, because we don't have that; we were meant to have that, we have Creators.

So thank you for listening to me. We did make a documentary that's called "These are Not Stories," and hopefully -- it's on YouTube, hopefully you will listen to it, but thank you for letting me speak and remember my people. (Foreign language spoken.)

NORA POLSCAMP: Hello. My name is Nora Polscamp [phonetic]. I'm a member of the Navajo Nation.

My mother attended Sherman back when it was still Sherman Indian Institute. She graduated from the Navajo program in 1961 I believe and started the program when she was about 13 years old, and that was her first time leaving the Navajo reservation, first time learning how to speak English and whatnot.

But I'm the youngest of 11 children, I was born and raised in Los Angeles. I am there because my mother came here to Sherman.

But I did want to reach a little bit further back to another story in my family that I am just learning more about more recently, but I had always heard that one of my ancestors had been a casualty of the boarding school system and that he had been written

about somewhere. When I started to look into it, it wasn't that he was written about so much that there was a case that happened in Arizona.

His name was Corn Pollen, it translates to Corn Pollen, and he was murdered by three men who were sent by the Indian agent that was in Tuba City after his daughter ran away from a boarding school that I believe it was located somewhere in Utah, but I don't know the name of it. She ran away during the winter to return home, and he went to find her. And somewhere in the halfway point to bring her home after hearing that she had left school and was found almost frozen to death on her journey home, he brought her home and decided that he would not send his children to boarding school after that.

But the Indian agent had sent these three men to his house to retrieve his children. And it's a question about whether or not the order was given to kill him in the process or if that happened kind of in the moment. But he was murdered, shot in the back multiple times in front of -- in front of his children. My grandfather was one of the children there. He was probably about four years old.

And this is something that, you know, unfortunately the only reason why we know about this to

the detail that, you know, we know now is because it had been written about because the three men were put on trial and were then acquitted, they were found not guilty of murder because they had right -- I guess reason to do that, or that's what it was determined.

But yeah, his name was mistranslated in a lot of articles that I found he was called Tatty Tin [phonetic], I think it's because the Navajo name didn't -- wasn't translated correctly, but his name was Corn Pollen, or Tatty Tin.

And so my grandfather, my mother's father was a child that was there during that time. And that happened up in northern Arizona near Kaibito. Corn Pollen had also I guess had a reputation because he was probably in his seventies at the time and was not part of the Long Walk to Fort Sumner. He had stayed and remained in that area and had this reputation of being, you know, a disobedient Navajo person because he didn't participate in the Long Walk.

Several generations later my mother attended Sherman as I mentioned as part of the Navajo program. And I was hoping that she would attend today to share

her own stories, but she didn't want to. And I think that there's a lot of people who have the same feelings, a lot of elders especially don't feel comfortable

talking about it or who only share their stories if they're positive.

And she's shared a lot of very positive aspects about her time at Sherman, the friends that she made. But the things that were not so great were always shared in a way that was funny, there was a lot of humor involved and kind of these funny situations that would occur because of language barriers or, you know, being away from home.

But she did mention a couple instances of violence. A fellow classmate that had attacked her and tried to strangle her that was not I guess mitigated by staff at the time. Another moment where faculty would try to embarrass her and sent her to the dining hall in her undergarments while she was sick. And at that point she mentioned that she did consider leaving Sherman, running away and trying to get back home.

But as a child of someone who attended boarding school, I did see that her history, my family's history

did still affect us. We all run when someone knocks on the door. And I thought that that was just something that everybody did, and I found out later that a lot of my native friends had that same experience, but a lot of my non-native friends -- or none of my non-native friends had that reaction, you know, where the children

would run when someone knocks at the door. It's only now that you know looking back, we thought it was kind of funny, but we know where that comes from.

My mother as I mentioned attended Sherman right around the age of 13 when she was starting to go through puberty, and you can see that disconnect in her own upbringing in the way that she treated her children when they got to that age. She didn't know how to handle us. And I watched that pattern go through my ten older siblings. And, you know, we had to piece that together ourselves to figure out why these things are.

So thank you for holding this and giving us time to share.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Okay. Just a time check. We're at about 2:15. Once we get to 2:30, I'll

call for our final speaker.

Yes.

PAMELA JAMES: Hi. My name is Pamela James. I consider myself a relocation baby. My mother relocated to Los Angeles in the fifties. She's full blood Chickasaw. My father had graduated from Chilocco Indian Boarding School. And my father came to Los Angeles, again through the BIA. He graduated from Haskell. He was Sioux and Menomonee. So I'm Chickasaw, Sioux, and Menomonee.

And my mother's here today. She's a beautiful 89 years old. And I want her to share her experience about what it was like to go to Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma.

Thank you.

WINDY JAMES: As my daughter said, that I'm Windy James, originally from Ada, Oklahoma. And I lost my mom when I was two. My dad raised me until I was 16. He passed. And I had nowhere to go, so I told my brother, send me away to a boarding school. I didn't know what boarding school, but I thought a lot of my friends, my church members' kids would all go to

boarding school when it opened, and so I thought, well, I'll give it a try for one year because I was a senior.

So I got -- my brother got me ready to go to Chilocco, so I went to Chilocco for one year. But I had the experience of being in a sadness that (inaudible) it was on account of the Navajo students that were there. And I saw them where the teachers would not let them talk, wouldn't let them go before us, and they would have to go behind us and then have their breakfast or meals or whatever we were having. And I thought that is the saddest thing that I ever seen. I didn't think that our country could ever do that to us, not only the Navajo people but I'm sure some other tribe had some

sort of doings too.

But I just wanted to share that there is a place that the boarding school is good, and I found -- when we found Sherman, I was proud because I could donate my time with them or work with them. So through our United Methodist Church, we work with Sherman, with -- with school -- school supplies before school, we're still gathering now. The pastor said they just

brought some more to the church today. So I am just proud to have Sherman here to work with them. And it's just amazing how these Navajo kids from where they come from we don't know, I don't know, that how they survived to get here. But I'm just proud that we have Sherman here to help support our children that come from the reservation.

And I don't even know what reservation life is until I went to my daughter's parents -- grandparents, and they lived on the reservation, and that was a sad place. I cried for two weeks when I went there on vacation, because of seeing how they live, how they had to live because there were no other way. But now you go back, they have casino, they have their own schools, they have their own colleges, so you can't beat that, with different tribes that helps our Indian people.

So I just want to share that time that, you

know, when I did go to Chilocco, I just had a sad time knowing that the Navajo kids was mistreated, and then I -- when I graduated, come through the BIA and came to Los Angeles and there I felt not a lot of Navajo kids again, and then I made friends with them, and then still

to this day some of them we still get together or write or Facebook each other. I have a good friend in Fort Defiant, and she sends me the Indian (inaudible) so I can stay up with my health. That keeps me going.

So I just want to say thanks to Sherman and thanks for having talk -- let us know what Indian school's about.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.

So come back here. Then we have a woman in the -- lady in the front who has been asking to speak.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Foreign language spoken.) I'm from the Hopi Nation and, I'm from the village (inaudible), and I am (inaudible) clan.

I am here to speak for my ancestors and for my (inaudible) who also came here to Sherman and Stewart Boarding School as well and the experiences that they had, very similar to the experiences that have been mentioned here.

My mother never spoke much of it or would tell us a lot, but she would share oftentimes when we'd go

home and go to our dances, my uncles would be there

doing their part, and you could see when they wore their traditional, that their backs would be shown, and there was the -- the scars from the whips on the backs of them. And but we never spoke about it, and it was never shared, only until later.

I then had the opportunity of coming here and working at Sherman. And I was asked three times to come here and work. And the first time I said no, I don't want to come here, I know the history of the BIA and I don't want to come, and I'm happy where I'm at, where I'm teaching in L.A. Unified.

I got a call about a week later and was asked to come back. And they said, come with me, I want you to meet some other people. So come back, because we need a special ed person here. So I came back the second time and I said, no, thank you, I appreciate visiting the school, thank you very much, but I'm happy where I'm at.

The third time he called, and he said he was the principal, and he said, this is the last time I'm going to ask you. Would you come up one more time? And I want you to meet some others.

So when I came up, he introduced me to the students. And I ended up being here at Sherman for 14

years and loved every part of it.

The good things about Sherman is that the people that work here, we have become family. We know each other, we continue, and I haven't worked here for 17 years, 18 years now, but still involved and do a lot with Sherman and the families and the people. And somebody I ran into earlier, I think they already left, but we was talking about how this was a reunion for us because we hadn't seen each other for five, ten, twenty years. And I ran into people that I hadn't seen for a very long time, so it was a nice -- and I appreciate that opportunity, because we don't get this opportunity.

Those are the positive things and the people here of what we have.

But when we look at the things historically that happened with Sherman is a lot of those things that have happened because of the colonization, because of the assimilation, because of the oppression that has been put on us as native people, is that when we see that these things are fading away, that they still existed.

When I was here in the '80s, and I didn't -- it was interesting because many -- we talk about our ancestors and elders, that they did not want to share. I did not want to come and talk until the media left,

just did not feel comfortable with having the media. And it's funny because I feel, well, should I share this or not? But I am.

When I was here there was still issues of -- and somebody mentioned it before about the treatment of the students. And I would teach in the same building across -- over there in the academic building. And I had girls come into my classroom and they would wear hoodies and cover their faces and hiding. You could tell when they came in that way that something was up. And they would pull the sleeves and cover their arms all the way up.

And I would ask, what's going on, what's wrong? And they would begin to cry. And then they would slowly show me their hands. And we're not talking that long ago. But the teachers here would hit their hands with the ruler. And there was one ruler that we found later that had a nail that had been driven into the end of it because they were not typing fast enough.

About 500 feet from my classroom in that same academic building, there was a room that was always

locked. And I wondered why. Eventually I ended up getting a pass key to the whole building, the whole campus, so that was kind of interesting. One night I was coming -- leaving the classroom, and it was pretty

dark, and I went in there. And I said, what's in that room because it's always locked.

And in that room was a cell, a 4-by-6 cell that had walls about 10 feet high. And it was built in that academic building for students. It was very difficult to see something like that because we thought those times had passed. And I will say that the people that I was working with here, many of them are here now, that we did things and we talked about these things and worked to get rid of those things and find out why they were here.

And then we saw that things were not being done by the administration, it was like looked over. And many people were afraid even to say anything because of what happened of the history of just students being here and faculty and the way that people were sometimes not being treated fairly. Our jobs were lost. And so it was held in. And eventually that there were some that

we talked, and it was -- that room was finally removed. But that is not that long ago.

And so when we talk about these things and the trauma and the effects of that and when I related to what my uncles and my (foreign language spoken) and my (foreign language spoken) went through when they were at these places, that -- the continuation.

And so I hope that as we continue looking at the generational effects and what is going to be taken with this information, that we continue to look at the schools here of what is and what is still happening or what is not or the improvements that have been made, because there are some really good people, good native and non-native people that work here and continue to work here and try to make this a place, but they have to have the education of working and they have to have the funds.

One of those things that we still saw at times was a few years ago there was a picture being passed around, it went to many of us, I don't know if it was Instagram or not, that showed the meals that students

were receiving. It was terrible. And there needs to be enough funds to feed the children that go here. There needs to be enough. They should not have to be settled with a tiny apple and their little tiny plate of something for breakfast. They need to have enough.

And so when we talk about the education and with the funding that is needed to make these schools continue so that the people, that the students that go through here that they will be able to receive enough funds, there are people that work here, volunteer and to do things. Our museum person, and Laurie that has

worked here for so long to create -- they get volunteers to do that over and over and 20 years ago. Father Townsend volunteered much of his hours here to volunteer because nobody offered to pay them.

And I really hate to say this, but I wonder how much was spent on everybody that came here, all the hotels, the airlines, the flights, everything that it cost to get people here that could have paid as many of these other people that work here.

I will have to give much respect and gratitude to the tribes, the local tribes here that have given so

much to help Sherman survive. But if not for the tribes around here, there would be many things that they would not have. And to me, there's so much good that can continue to happen.

We always learned and always have said amongst ourselves there's so much potential here at Sherman. But the Sherman students and the Sherman people and the people that still believe in Sherman, we have to remember that we're doing it for them but also for our ancestors and for the voices and for the spirits that are on this campus. And those of you that now work, we have those spirits here.

And so I would just say with gratitude (foreign language spoken) to all of you for listening to me, but

also thank you so much for being here and just really appreciate your time. (Foreign language spoken.)

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.

So we have time for one more speaker. And I'll ask ahead of time if our final speaker can be succinct, and then we'll have a closing program.

DAWN: Hi. My name is Dawn. And I'm Mescalero

Apache. My father and my two uncles went to St. John's in Arizona in the '40s, early '50s. And I think one of the things that they told me that really, really struck me was that they were so young and they were homesick all the time and they were like six and eight there. And they would sneak in to my dad's, who was older, bed, my uncles did, because they were so sad and homesick and scared, and pull on his ears to fall sleep at night. And that's just something that's always just -- you know.

And then my grandmother, their mom, she went to boarding school also, and her story was harder because she said that her and her fellow students were always hungry. And that's just a hard thing to hear as a mom and having kids of my own, that she was hungry all the time; it's just such a horrible thing. And that was her biggest story, was that they just -- they got their three meals, but they were small, and that was all they

could have, they couldn't have snacks.

And sometimes at the tables they always had peanut butter and bread, and they would sneak peanut butter and stick it in -- cup it in their hands and take

it with them back to eat later in their rooms. And it just -- I mean they could have gotten in a lot of trouble for that. And so to think about a bunch of kids who would risk getting in trouble to have a little bit of food --

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you for sharing.

We had a question here, and then we're going to have a closing program.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Beyond microphone range.)

I was wondering if there was going to be another follow-up visit or if there was going to be another team sent to Sherman regarding boarding schools.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Well, as part of this tour, this will be our only stop at Sherman, but we have -- this is my second visit to Sherman --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, thank you so much.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: -- and we'll make sure that, you know, whether it's myself or others from our team, that we stay engaged with Director Dearman and

the team here at Sherman. It's one of our four existing boarding schools as part of the BIA.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And I do thank you for being here and I hope you sharpen your focus on boarding schools. I have been here 30 years, and I absolutely love working here, I always thought I'd be a Disney artist, but -- the legacy of students that come here, I'm literally grandmothered in here. And I'm grateful for Dr. Sandy Kewanhaptewa-Dixon, sorry, Kewanhaptewa-Dixon, for speaking out too because there is the concern for cronyism, nepotism, those things that go on at all working places. And then, of course, our students' safety.

I feel like I put in -- I feel that I'm lucky enough that I can come here and work 10, 12 hours. I feel like I have the freedom to do that with our students. And I feel like I give my best to make sure that they're safe. And I'd like for that continue.

So I hope that you do keep your focus on Sherman and all other boarding schools.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you. Thank you very much.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'd also like to acknowledge that I'm a graphic design teacher here with California Technical Education, our Career Pathways.

And I hope you did get a chance to see our facilities because San Manuel has really helped with our students' growth and also helping them go to college. We may have had I want to say guesstimate about 50 students who graduated, but 28 of our students that graduated had college acceptance through CTE. So I hope that you keep that in mind too. Thank you.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you. Thank you.

SECRETARY HAALAND: We were on a tour of the school yesterday. Just so you know, we were on a tour of the school yesterday, so we had a chance to talk to (inaudible). Thank you.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you.

I want to thank everybody who took time to spend with us today as well many of you didn't speak but came to show support for folks that did or just in memory or honor of one in your family or community. And so we're very grateful for that as well.

So as we wind down, I'm going to invite Chairman Macaro [phonetic] to give us a closing blessing, and then we'll have the bird singers come back with a song and a few closing thoughts from the secretary.

25 CHAIRMAN MACARO: Thank you, Assistant

Secretary.

Just want to recap real quick that listening to everybody's testimony today, thank you for the courage to step forward and provide the United States with what they need to hear. It's very important for all of us to move forward in this manner.

So many did so much to make us disappear as Indian people. Father Serra and the missions, the count there was nine out of ten of our people died from disease in a 40-year period at Mission San Luis Rey. That's the studies that we know of. I don't think it was any better at any of the other missions. There might be about a hundred people in this room, maybe 75, but nine out of ten people, 90 percent population lost.

Fast forward to the middle of the next century, we had a treaty-making process, and lands were given to the United States in exchange for different things. And as soon as the treaties got taken back to D.C., they were taken away -- well, they weren't taken away, they were not ratified, put in a drawer for 45 years.

But boarding schools continued this attempt at destroying our people. This environment of fear and brutality. It didn't have to happen to every student, but they did it to enough students to create that atmosphere of constant threat, of constant this could

happen to you. And this person here unfortunately was an example. And so many people took away the lesson of I'm not going to have my kids go through this and we're not going to teach our language to our people, and things continued to unravel.

So it's in that context that I want to -- I have said this prayer a few times in public, and it's an ancient prayer, it's a -- actually, I'll translate it first and then I'll say it.

We're asking for guidance from the one who is above, we're asking for protection from all bad things and guidance in everything that we do. We're also asking that we should always be able to be together as one people, that we should always be able to laugh with one another, to look at each other straight on and not sideways, and that we shouldn't be hating each other or disliking one another. And if we could do just these

few things, then everything would be okay.

And it continues by saying, we should also remember the histories and the teachings that we've been given, the powers -- in our case, the powers and the mysteries of the directions, the north, the south -- the north, the east, the south, the west, the center, and sky, the little people, the ancient ones, the islands, Clemente, Catalina, San Nicolas, Santa Barbara. And all

these things taken together are part of the holding beliefs, the holding beliefs of our people, the things that are still here that we know; and that it's up to each one of us to take these things as we hear them, as we know them, and carry them forward. This is -- this is what we've been given, this is what the ancient people have told us, and we still have with us today.

(Foreign language spoken.)

Thank you.

ASST. SECRETARY NEWLAND: Thank you, Chairman.

SECRETARY HAALAND: Thank you, Chairman, very much. So wonderful to see you.

CHAIRMAN MACARO: I just asked if I could say

one more thing. I wanted to acknowledge somebody.

And don't get mad at me, Sunshine.

You know, representation matters, and we're extremely very proud of Secretary Haaland being one of us, being the highest pinnacles of our government here in the United States. And we heard earlier Sunshine Sykes spoke to us. And I want to acknowledge that she's Judge Sunshine Sykes, if you heard that in the testimony.

And during this administration, the Biden administration, she was nominated to the federal bench and -- appointed to the federal bench I think is the

term, and it was confirmed. And you are on the federal bench, you are a federal judge, one of three now.

So thank you for being here and thank you for sharing with us. Appreciate that.

SECRETARY HAALAND: Thank you. Thank you, Chairman. That was very important.

Well, first of all, thank you again, Congressman Takano, for being here and sitting through this entire session. I think you're the first Congressman -- member of Congress to actually sit

through the entire event. So thank you. Thank you for that.

I am incredibly grateful to each of you who shared. I'm also incredibly grateful for everyone who just felt that their presence was important to support your community members.

I know this is a wonderful school because we went for a tour yesterday. You can hear the accolades about the native principal, somebody who the students can look up to and say I see myself in him. We went to the museum, and that was also a really wonderful opportunity to look at photographs and just feel the history that is here.

And so -- and I'm proud of the work that, of course, Tony and his team do to lift up the school and

make sure that we're doing everything we can to support the students. So we will continue to do that.

And incredibly indebted to the Native American professionals, education professionals who realize that their talent, they want their talent, their own education, their knowledge and experience to benefit

other native kids. And I think that, you know, when I think about what we're all doing here, why we go to law school and work hard to become a judge, why we get our educations. And if we don't go back to our own tribe, we work for another tribe because we want to lift up Indian people in the work that we do.

And it's because -- and I believe, Rosanna, you said it, we are -- we're born with an obligation. It's not -- we're not just people here on this earth taking up space, we have an obligation to honor the legacy of our ancestors so they didn't starve in vain, so they didn't die in vain, so they weren't ripped away from their mother's arms in vain.

It's our obligation, we're born with this obligation to help people, to honor our earth and protect our environment for future generations. We're not -- we know that things don't die when we die. We're not here to use up as much as we can and then who cares about our kids and grandkids. That's not who we are as

people.

And I know that -- I've been around the country, I've talked to enough Indian people and enough

tribal leaders and heard from enough boarding school survivors and descendants to know that we all think the same on this. So I feel confident today acknowledging that obligation with all of you and thanking you for continuing that.

I know that -- I appreciate, sir, when you talked about what is it that we feel. Is it anger? Maybe. Maybe it's anger, maybe it's loss.

You know my grandmother was taken away from her family when she was eight years old and for five years. She didn't come back home until she was 13. And her dad only had a horse and wagon. And he only was able to visit her twice in those five years. Eight's a very impressionable age when she could have been home learning all the things she needed to learn from her mother and grandmother.

But every single night she said her rosary. She was taken to Catholic boarding school in Santa Fe. She said her rosary, she sent us to church, it was right across the street from her house in Mesita Village.

She -- I can never get her to say one bad thing about the nuns at St. Catherine's because she wouldn't

dare. In fact, when my daughter was born, she wanted me to name her Genevieve after one of the nuns that she had at St. Catherine's, and I respectfully declined because I loved my grandmother. And I would -- I was silent every night she said the rosary, I never said a word to her, I just let her live her life because she deserved that.

So, you know, it's about how do we process the things that we feel, the things that we've heard, the things that we know but our parents and grandparents would not talk about. We know those things happened. And I just think regardless of how you do feel, we can still -- it's still up to us to try to heal our country.

And a lot of these stories, you know, I get people come up to me and say, I never heard of that, I didn't know Indians got sent off to boarding school. But this is an American history. And Native American history is American history. So it's up to us to make sure that all those folks who didn't know that boarding schools existed, who honest to God there must be people in California who don't know there's still Indians that live here or that Indians had a strong history and lived all over this state. And so it's up to us to share that history.

And by traveling around the country and holding

these hearings, we feel we can help spread that news a little bit. And that somehow, even the folks who don't know or understand what it's like for us, will care enough to want to help us heal this country as well, because we -- we can't change the past but we can certainly change the future.

So I just thank all of you so much for being here. And I want to acknowledge again my wonderful team at the Department of the Interior, please stand up, all of you. And just know that these are the folks who make all of this work happen. So thank you all. I love you all. Thank you, everyone.

(Singers performing.)

(End of recording.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, the undersigned, a Certified Shorthand Reporter of the State of California, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing electronically-recorded proceedings were transcribed by me to the best of my ability.

I further certify I am neither financially interested in the action nor a relative or employee of any attorney or party to this action.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have this date subscribed my name.

Dated: 08/30/2023.

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Diana Sasseen
CSR No. 13456

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