

Closing Invocation and Closing Remarks – 04/17/14

Joanne Shenandoah: Thank you, Anita. And for all the witnesses, and on behalf of the Advisory Committee, I would like to say thank you—to our audience as well—for being here and taking the time for this very important meeting and hearing that we’ve had today and yesterday. I would also like to say we, as an Advisory Board, are committed and passionate to improving the lives of our children.

There is one other announcement. Tribal Law and Policy Institute will be holding the 14th National Indian Nations Conference, Justice for Victims of Crime, and that will be December 11 through 13. And you can look that up at TLPI.org. Tribal Law and Policy institute would like to thank you for the intense and wonderful work to put this hearing together, as well as all of our friends from the Justice Department for being here; and for all of our witnesses, of course.

We will convene for one final hearing and I would encourage people to go to www.justice.gov/defendingchildren for more information and also to please recommend to your colleagues to submit testimony. And I just want to say that we’ll be convening for one more hearing and that will be Hearing #4, June 11 through 13 in Anchorage, Alaska, following the NCAI Mid-Year Conference. The theme for Hearing #4 is Alaska-Native Children Exposed to Violence, Special Issues in Alaska. So please do recommend your colleagues and those people out on the reservation to get the word out there, let people know the work that we are doing as an Advisory Committee.

I’d like to thank each and every one of the Advisory Committee for submitting your time and energy and your passion toward this most amazing issue that we have facing us. So may the Creator continue to bless you in your work, all those of you out there who are doing wonderful things, and we appreciate you.

[CLOSING INVOCATION AND CLOSING REMARKS]

Anita Fineday: At this time, we are going to have a Closing Invocation by Jim Clairmont. Jim is a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe

and he has provided spiritual guidance for the Indian Nations Victims of Crime Conference for many years and has also provided spiritual guidance for this Advisory Committee along with his wife, Bonnie. And I told Bonnie this morning that I feel like as long as they're here that we know that everyone is going to be safe. They've both been assisting with the safe room for these hearings. So thank you, Jim. And with that, I'll turn it over to you.

Jim Clairmont:

I would like to say thank you for the privilege and honor that I can do this the last two days. And I heard some testimonies that touched my heart, that brought tears to my eyes listening yesterday what they were taking about testifying. And a lot of things that I've witnesses, a lot of things that I've experienced in my life, a lot of teachings of my grandfather and my grandma. I have a lot of things to say, a lot of things to share. But a lot of times, us elder people are not given that chance to speak our minds through our hearts.

Back when I was growing up on my reservation, we were taught to have respect for elders. And today, it isn't that way. We could do all kinds of things, talk about all kinds of things, but we have to put action into it. A lot of things personally hit my heart, touched my heart, saddened, shed tears, but prayed. For one, I was really devastated about the incident of the infant, Veronica, what happened there. Seems like everything was thrown out the window. It didn't help. I felt sorry for the father. So today, those are the kinds of people I pray for every day, the infants, the things that I go through, personal counseling. I do that 24/7. And my partner can testify. They even come to our home. They talk to me, her and I. We have ceremonies that we get our (preventions @ 126:35_APR160945PM) from, our spirits, from the Creator, God. What we do, in our language we say, "(NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 126:49_APR160945PM)." We go up the mountain. We seek our vision and we get wisdom. That's the way that life is that I was taught through my grandma and my grandfather. I've learned a lot from them. I was taught a lot from them. And I utilize them today.

So I wanted to just say that I'm going to say that closing prayer in my language because I'm fortunate that I—we had

to go underground. I was the last survivor of boarding-school life. And I know how that is. I witnessed it. I grew up with it. I know what happened. But my grandma said, “When things get nitty and gritty, when you are way down in a barrel, way down and can't climb back up, when you don't know who to turn to, that's when you have to pray much harder to the Higher Power.” However you call Him, he has all kinds of names, different tribes. In fact, we even use His name in vain.

I noticed I heard that. They had an ICWA Conference before this happened. Yesterday was the last day. They went till noon. And I was thinking about the infant, Veronica, what happened and I was hoping that that would have been the main topic of the ICWA Conference; to tighten up, to see what we can do, our professional people, what they can do to strengthen, to make it more powerful so that that father wouldn't have to go—any more fathers wouldn't have to go through this. When that father gave his life to this country, to go overseas and defend our Indian people again, and this is what happened to him.

So it's always an honor to say a prayer, humble myself, pity myself before Him. I've been having them use that feather. When I get done with our prayer, I'm going to stand from here and use—these are my ceremonial feathers that I take around—and from here I'm going to fan all of you. Because you, too, probably heard the testimonies that touched your heart, maybe a little tears came to your eyes, the stories that we heard, the devastating that we, as Indian people, go through our children. So from here, I'm going to enlighten you with a prayer that I'm going to offer to the Almighty God, to have your safe travels. And I've been praying ever since this happened, from the time that we went to Bismarck, Phoenix, now this. Now we have one more. I've been praying for these people up here so that God can touch their minds and their hearts for these little children.

All the Christian people, I was forced to read the Bible. My grandfather called it the Black Book. My grandfather never went to high school, never went to even grade school. My grandma's the same way. But they had the knowledge. My

partner's uncle, (NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 132:09_APR160945PM), the elder, well-respected man, I knew him. And he said, "You can have 25, 30 diplomas, all kinds behind your desk on the wall." But he said, "I can come and teach some more." That's what my grandfather said. He said, "You have to teach the educators as well."

So I just wanted to say that much and thank you for listening. And it's just more or less food for thought, I always say. And the way we use these feathers comes from the spirit bird, the Eagle. All your troubles—your mind, your heart, your troubles—be light as the feather. You pick these up, it's very, very light. And that's how we want your mind to be. Once you do leave back home where you come from, what you heard, use them, apply them to your communities to maybe you feel way down here, but maybe it can strengthen you. You put your mind to it, it will help you. Because that's all true what my grandma and grandfather used to tell me. So bear along with me for just a little bit. Not going to make it too long, but I want to say thank you to the Advisory Board. A lot of them I know personally. I worked with them, did things for them ceremonial-wise. And a lot of the people that testified got to know them personally the same way. So I just wanted to say this much and thank you again.

[NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 134:51_APR160945PM]

Now, with the prayer that I said, I'm going to smudge from here to all of you hoping that it would enlighten you, this prayer. Take care of you, your travels, your destination. Where you left your homes, your families, your children, grandchildren. That it would be safe for them and maybe even better as you left them. That you can use your heart and your mind, learn from the people that testified. So, again, Advisory Board, same way. Thank you very much. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Anita Fineday:

Thank you very much. This concludes the 3rd Hearing of the Advisory Committee of the Attorney General's Taskforce on American-Indian and Alaska-Native Children Exposed to

Violence. Safe travels, everyone. Thank you very much.

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