

Welcome, Invocation, and Opening Remarks

Sen. Byron Dorgan:

I now call the Advisory Based Public Hearing Number 4 into session. I, along with Joanne Shenandoah co-chairing the public hearing on the Attorney General's Advisory Committee on American Indian Alaska, the children exposed to violence. This is the fourth and the final hearing we will hold. We've held previous hearings in Scottsdale, Arizona, Bismarck, North Dakota, in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. And the task force felt that we needed to have one hearing focused specifically on Alaska. And so all of us are very proud to be here and participate in this hearing.

This is, after all, home to one-half of the federally recognized Indian tribes, or Native Alaskan Indians in the United States. I'm privileged that the Attorney General has asked me—and I know that Joanne Shenandoah feels the same way—to co-chair this task force. This is serious work. We're going to present a final policy recommendation report to the Attorney General, Eric Holder in late 2014. We must, in my judgment take this very seriously because the children of the first Americans face very significant challenges. And that's the reason the Attorney General has done what he has done to create this task force.

Let me also say that this administration holds tribal leaders Indian gatherings in Washington, DC. President Obama will be visiting an Indian reservation on Friday this week. This administration and the Justice Department have been taking these issues seriously. And I and the entire task force want everyone to understand that, and we are all very appreciative of it.

Many members of this committee have had the opportunity to visit Bethel and surrounding villages earlier this week, and have had quite an interesting experience as well. So to begin this day I want to introduce you to President Lee Stephan of the Eklutna tribe who will provide your invocation. And I want to thank him for being here.

Mr. Lee Stephan, would you proceed?

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Lee Stephan:

(speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 02:30_1001) everyone. My name is Lee Stephan. I'm (inaudible 02:33_1001) Stephan. My mother's maiden name is (inaudible 02:37_1001). I'm from Eklutna Village. Mom came to me with a prayer before I do the prayer, include the villages in my testimony, in my words. One thing my mother taught me very well was to tell it like it is, don't mince no words, speak very plainly to all of you on this task force.

Speaking as a child who experienced violence, in your report and when you do your thing. It took me 58 years to learn (inaudible @ 03:20_1001) going on. The American people come along and they use military tactic on Indian people. When you go to become a GI they tear you down and make you into nothing. And they build you back up into a government issue. Indian people, they don't do that. They leave us down there. To take over our land, our water, our resources, our kids, our language, everything that they think we own. They take away our leadership. They make a man feel less a man.

When I was a boy my dad got a white man's job. He tried commercial fishing. That started to die. (Inaudible @ 04:23_1001). He went to a school. He got a certificate to work as a mechanic. Every day he'd go into that place, "What the hell are you doing here? What are you doing taking a white man's job? Who do you think you are?" His answer had to be, "Nobody, Sir."

You'll never guess who bared the brunt of that on Friday nights drinking, 5:00 in the morning, little tiny boy sleeping, drug out by his hair, "Who the hell do you think you are?" You know what that boy's answer had to be? "Nobody, Sir." Now, violence against kids, that's just a symptom. That is just a symptom. If you don't tell it like it is in them reports, you'll be fooling around messing with the symptom.

No one in this universe the Creator said one human being is less than the next human being. As climate changes go on today, Mother Earth is going to clear us all out because we don't live the proper way. Native Nations got together

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here over the week. Better start listening. We're all going to end up dead. When we stand before the Creator, it ain't going to be me explaining how come I had to say, "Nobody, Sir."

There's Eklutna's testimony that goes from every little child who is experiencing another kind, they call the predators. It's like a disease, you can't fix them. But the kind you guys can have effect on is the one that I just explained to you.

Let us pray. Our Father, we thank you for the opportunity to gather and learn more about how life is to be for Native Peoples. We thank you for our children will have the knowledge, and that we will all grow with. We pray for your guidance and patience. Let us not forget that we all are servants of God here to carry out his mission. Bless all the people here who have traveled near and far. Hear their prayers and guide us as we travel home. We thank you for the lands and all that it provides us, the waters that we drink, traditional foods we eat. We pray that we all will always have these things that are our traditions and lifestyle. Help us understand that sometimes we have to give in order to receive. We pray in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, amen. [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 08:14_1001]. Thank you.

Sen. Byron Dorgan:

Thank you very much. President Stephan preceded the invocation with a very substantial amount of passion, and in many ways described in that passion why all of us are sitting around this table talking about this issue. So, President Stephan, thank you very much.

What I would like to do now is to introduce Mr. Kevin Washburn. And following Kevin Washburn's remarks, I'll introduce Tony West. Kevin Washburn is the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, and an enrolled member of the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma. He serves as the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs for the US Department of Interior. And Secretary Washburn, thank you for being here. You may proceed.

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Kevin Washburn:

Senator Dorgan, it's my honor to be here with you and the rest of the advisory committee. We're so grateful for your service. I want to welcome everybody, the Advisory Committee, as well and thank everyone for being here to talk about this critical issue for Indian country. I especially want to thank tribal leaders who are here to talk about these issues. And I want to thank the Advisory Committee for traveling to Alaska where these issues are frankly quite acute.

We are all here today in the interest of American Indian and Alaska Native children. There is no greater treasure or a more vulnerable treasure to the American Indian and Alaska Native people. Our children will ultimately determine the future for Indian country and we need to be investing in them. We are learning more and more about the adverse effects of violence, abuse and trauma on children and youth, as well as about building resiliency, and promising interventions. Exposure to violence has unique impacts on tribes and tribal communities, especially here in Alaska that need to be addressed with innovative approaches.

So it is with great care that we listen to the testimony today, listen to the tribal leaders, to the advocates, listen to those who seek justice and very important that we listen to people who talk about how to help youth and families. We need to begin to understand the full scope of these issues as well as acknowledge that everyone has been impacted and everyone has a responsibility to try to improve the situation.

It is this understanding, together with knowledge of our own cultural identities and cultural strengths that will guide us toward solutions. Knowing who we are, and for some of us remembering who we are, for others learning who we are, is the means to find resiliency. And that will be the factor for families and communities as they move forward.

For members of the Advisory Committee I want to thank you for serving. You've already heard a lot of very difficult

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testimony. I'm confident that you might be happier people if you turned and looked the other way, and focused on happy thoughts and not on some of the most tragic things that are happening in Indian country. So I really want to congratulate you for not turning away, and looking at hard facts right in the face, because that's what you're doing and it's a very important task.

For those of you who will talk about these problems today, I want to thank you also for trying to be part of the solution. We thank you. It takes tremendous courage to try to address these issues because we know that they are very difficult to address. And some of you have spent much of your life trying to address those issues, so thank you.

We share your hope and desire for meaningful change. I, as a child, saw my own mother abused and it's not something that's easy to talk about. It's something that I've overcome and many of us have overcome those sorts of things. But I really want to personally thank everyone who's willing to be here to try to prevent those situations and to make the world a better place.

As you may have heard, as Senator Dorgan mentioned, President Obama, as promised, will be going to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation this Friday. We've been working really hard on this for the last six weeks or so getting ready for his visit, and we're very excited about it. The President established the White House Native American Council to address issues involving, well, the kinds of issues that this committee is facing. And he's shown a real commitment to do that. And I'm evidence of that, and Tony is evidence of that, and all the other staff from the federal government who are here. And there is a sizable staff from the federal government. I think I won't recognize them because it would take too long, but I'm very grateful for all the public servants who are here to work hard on these issues.

I'd like to share a couple of things that we are working on at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and at the Department of

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Interior. One of them is a BIA Child Protection Handbook. We've been trying to find ways to better support our own people, our social workers and our child welfare workers in Indian country, to make sure that they follow best practices and do a better job. And we want to use culturally appropriate best practices when we are dealing with children in Indian country. And this Child Protection Handbook update will help us with that.

Secondly, our Indian Child Welfare Act Guidelines for State Courts, we've been working on those really hard and we've seen a lot of...had a lot of input. In fact, at the same time as I believe the second meeting of this committee, we got a lot of really good input on our state guidelines. And those guidelines, the Indian Child Welfare Act was a very important piece of legislation passed in 1978. And we enacted guidelines shortly thereafter. And we haven't revised them since, so it's time. And we are very grateful for all the people who have given us really good ideas for how to address those. And the Casey Foundation has been very supportive of that work too.

We know the path has not been an easy one for Alaska Native tribes. We know there have been struggles. We know there are current struggles that remain maybe more acute here than anywhere in the United States. And I want the Alaska Natives to know they have not been forgotten. We've got some really innovative people here working hard to improve lives for Alaska Natives and have some great programs. But we also have a long way to go and we need Alaska voices to guide us. So thank you for that.

This investigative work of this advisory committee is about to come to a close. I believe this is the last meeting of the committee. You've worked very hard. You've been around the country. I want to especially thank you for coming to Alaska. I've had personal experience with Senator Dorgan's work in Indian country. He set out to try to improve law and order in Indian country and worked really hard. I was in part of those hearings too several years ago for the Tribal Law and Order Act. And Senator Dorgan was able to deliver in that time. And I'm confident that this committee, with his leadership, and with Joanne

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Shenandoah's leadership, that this committee will also be able to deliver excellent recommendations. And then it will be up to Tony and I, and others in the federal government, to try to make sure we can implement those recommendations. And we very much look forward to that. And again, let me thank all of you for all your hard work on this committee. Thank you.

Sen. Byron Dorgan:

Secretary Washburn, thank you very much for your comments and your good work.

And next I'd like to introduce the Associate Attorney General of the US Department of Justice, Tony West. He's the Associate Attorney General who was confirmed in July of 2013, the third ranking official at the Department of Justice, and someone who is very committed on these issues. We, Tony, really do appreciate the work that you've done to bring this task force to fruition, so let me call on Associate Attorney General Tony West.

Tony West:

Thank you so much Senator. And let me thank you for your leadership. If anyone has earned the opportunity to rest after many years in congress working on these issues which are not easy issues, it's you. And I think it's a testament to your passion, your commitment, your dedication, that we've called you out of retirement to lead this task force with Miss Shenandoah. And, to both of you, we thank you for your commitment and your efforts on this.

Thank you to President Stephan for his invocation. It is really a pleasure and a privilege to be with you at this last meeting of the task force on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence. And it's particularly an honor to be here in Alaska with leaders and representatives of many of Alaska's native villages.

Let me, if I could, just give special thanks to one Advisory Committee member, Val Davidson, who is the Senior Director of Legal and Intergovernmental Affairs, for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. She was so instrumental in facilitating the Committee's visits to Native villages yesterday and the day before, and in helping to

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make today's hearing a reality. And so I just want to take a moment just to thank you, Val, for that, and for your commitment to be a part of this task force.

And let me also thank the US Attorney who is hosting this here in her district, Karen Loeffler, who is there. We're also joined by two other US Attorneys, Michael Ormsby from the eastern district of Washington and Mike Cotter from the district of Montana. And we are pleased for their leadership on these issues as well.

And it is always, always, always a pleasure to be able to share any dais with Kevin Washburn. Kevin is humble. But I have to tell you. His leadership has been absolutely instrumental at BIA. And I think when we look at the work that we've been able to do on these issues, and certainly in this...particularly in this second term, all roads at some point are going to lead to and through Kevin Washburn because of his great leadership. And so he's a great colleague, he's a great friend. We're fortunate to have him in the Department of the Interior.

Also with us today are several members of the Task Force's Federal Working Group, which includes several high ranking federal officials from the Departments of Justice, Interior and Health and Human Services, Kevin mentioned a few minutes ago. I really want to thank them for...not only for being here, but for the work that they are doing every day to improve the lives of Native children in very concrete ways. They are singularly committed to this issue and we thank them for their work.

And of course a special thank you to the witnesses and speakers who will be hearing from today. Thank you for your participation. We're looking forward to hearing from you.

I think it was the French philosopher Camus who wrote that this being a world in which children suffer, but maybe through our efforts we can lessen the number of suffering children, and if we do not do this then who will do this. I

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think we've come to Anchorage to lessen the number of suffering children. We come to continue the important work that we began some six months ago when the advisory committee first met in Bismarck. I think our charge at that time—and it remains—to examine the intolerable levels of violence that American Indian and Alaska Native children suffer, the violence they encounter all too often in their homes, in their communities, the collateral victimization that they suffer when someone abuses a parent, and the vulnerability that really subjects them to sexual violation.

And that charge took this committee and took all of us around the country from North Dakota to Arizona to Florida. We listed as tribal leaders accounted how violence tears at the fabric of their communities. Researchers and professionals told us about how victimization can steal a child's future. Survivors courageously shared their experience in the hope that by telling their stories they too might be able to answer the poet's question and lessen the number of suffering children.

And now we've come to Alaska to focus on the problems that are facing the young people here, young people living in Alaska Native villages. We've come to Alaska where the realities of geography and jurisdiction make this place like no other place, where the challenges of reducing the exposure of children to violence is particularly unique, particularly complex, and particularly hard. The important work which we pursued in Indian country throughout the lower 48 to reduce violence against Native women and children, to reduce sex trafficking, to improve the health and safety of Native communities. The need for all of that work is particular acute right here in this beautiful and magnificent state that spans an area larger than Texas, Montana and California combined.

It's a need that President Obama and the Attorney General Eric Holder have over the last five years I think worked very hard to address. Since 2010 the Justice Department has made almost 1,000 grants that total nearly 440 million dollars to improve public safety in Native communities,

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primarily through the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation or CTAS. Approximately seven percent of all of that funding that the Justice Department has made to Native communities has come here, to Alaska. To Alaska Native villages and 229 federally recognized tribes throughout the state. On a per capita basis that is on par with the funding that we provide to tribes on the lower 48.

Last year, for example, we awarded almost 17 million dollars to help hire law enforcement officers serve sexual assault and domestic violence victims, improve the prosecution of child sexual abuse, expand Alaska Native Tribal Court capacity and support Native youth in this state. We've helped to fund a youth culture camp which addresses the needs of drug endangered children by bringing Native youth together with their families and with village elders to share in traditional activities, like beading and sewing, headdress construction and grass basket weaving. And we've supported the Kodiak Area Native Association to provide same day forensic medical exams and forensic interviews to child victims of neglect and physical and sexual abuse, who otherwise would be forced to travel hundreds of miles and spend days away from home to receive these critical services.

And yet, as significant as these efforts are—and, make no mistake, they are life changing in their significance—we're also mindful that it is not enough. It's not enough when Alaska Native women comprise less than 20 percent of this state's population yet make up half of reported rape victims. It's not enough when Alaska Natives are two and a half times more likely to die by homicide than Alaskans whose skin is white. It's not enough when as recently as 2011 Native children comprised more than half of all maltreatment reports, substantiated by Alaska's Child Protective Services, and over 60 percent of all children removed from their homes. It's not enough when, as Marsha Hurd told me she heard yesterday in an Alaska Native village, a child's most fervent wish is not for toys, not for candy, not to be able to go to school, but for water that is simply clean.

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And notwithstanding the heroic efforts of many dedicated state law enforcement officers, a lack of resources compounds an already untenable situation. State Department of Public Safety Officers, who have primary law enforcement responsibility in the rural areas are, on average, able to devote only one to one and a half field officers to patrol every million acres of land. Few native communities have their own enforcement personnel. And the Village Public Safety Officers who serve as first responders, sometimes only responders, under Alaska State Trooper oversight, are spread thin, inconsistently trained and unarmed. At least 75 communities lack any law enforcement presence at all. This means that many Native crime victims, especially children, have little, if any, access to even the most basic services.

Now, in the face of such poverty, such deficiency, some may be tempted to throw up their hands and say the problems are too intractable, the challenges are too hard, the social and economic geography too difficult to overcome, the political terrain too treacherous. But we reject that defeatist attitude. We reject it because the situation faced by so many of our Native children is unacceptable. We reject it because of the responsibility that we in the federal government share with tribes and state and local officials to protect our most vulnerable citizens from harm. And we reject it because the shared destiny of our Native and non-Native children alike, a future that they will have to create together, that demands no less.

We can turn the tide and break the cycle of violence experienced by our Native children. I believe that. And while no one approach will be a panacea, there are things we can do, policies that we can pursue, that will help to better protect American Indian and Alaska Native children from adversity. And one step the Attorney General and I believe we can take is to enhance the ability of Alaska Natives to issue and enforce domestic violence prosecution...protection, orders, in the same way that

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tribes in the lower 48 can do now. And that's why the department supports congress' repeal of Section 910 of last year's reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. Because, as everyone in this room knows, a child's exposure to violence often starts tragically in the place she should feel the most safe, in her home. In most tribes throughout the country the Violence Against Women Act, or VAWA, provides them with full civil jurisdiction to issue and enforce protection orders. But Alaska Native villages and tribes have been carved out of that 48.

Now, I understand there will always be competing arguments about the scope of authority Alaska Native villages and tribes may exercise. And I know that in those arguments this justice department will be a voice in support of tribal sovereignty. But whatever one's view, we can't let these arguments impede our primary duty to protect Native children from harm and secure for them a future free of violence. And while the repeal of Section 910 won't, by itself, change the landscape for domestic violence victims overnight, it is more than just symbolic. Repeal of Section 910 is an important step that help protect Alaska Native victims from that violence and significantly it can send a message that tribal authority and tribal sovereignty matters; that the civil protection orders that tribal courts issue, those ought to be respected and enforced.

Now, as I mentioned a moment ago, it's certainly not a cure all. But these steps and steps like repealing Section 910 are necessary—although they're not sufficient, they are necessary—to helping us create a future where all of our children can learn, grow and thrive. Of course achieving that goal will take all of us in this room, all of us working together, sharing ideas together, learning from one another's mistakes and building on one another's successes. What we've heard over the last several months around the country, and what we will hear today, that will form the foundation of an effort that will produce an action blueprint, as Kevin referenced, for policymakers, legislators, researchers, educators, public health professionals, tribal leaders and law enforcement.

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And I predict that the blueprint this advisory committee produces later this year will offer us, not easy choices for generic platitudes, I predict it will not be a volume that is destined for the high shelves of some government or university bookcase. I predict it will, as President Stefan said, tell it like it is. I predict that it will challenge us to do what is necessary to invest what is necessary, by telling us not only what's possible and practical, but what's absolutely required if we are going to reclaim and defend childhood for these kids. And all of it will be based on what we learn in hearings such as this from folks such as you.

So, again, my thanks to all of you for your commitment and dedication to this effort. I look forward to our continued work together as we build a better and a brighter future for all of our children, Native and non-Native alike. Thank you.

Sen. Byron Dorgan:

Thank you very much. And thanks for your leadership. I might say that I served in congress for 30 years under a number of presidents and many administrations in the Department of Justice, but none over those three decades provided the kind of focus that this administration and this justice department is now providing on these issues. So, I commend you for that.

Let me introduce the Advisory Committee at this point. To my left is Joanne Shenandoah, the Committee Co-Chair, an Iroquois composer and musical artist. Thank you very much...

Joanne Shenandoah:

Thank you.

Sen. Byron Dorgan:

...for your leadership.

Anita Fineday, the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, Director of Indian Child Welfare of the Casey Family Programs.

Jefferson Keel, Chickasaw Nation, Lieutenant Governor of Chickasaw Nation.

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Dolores Subia Bigfoot, Caddo Nation of Oklahoma, Director of Indian Child Trauma Center, the University of Oklahoma.

Rear Admiral Eric Broderick, Former Deputy Administrator of SAMHSA, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Eddie Brown, Pascua Yaqui Tribe Tohono O'odham. I think, Eddie, I have not done well on that.

[LAUGHTER]

Sen. Byron Dorgan:

Thank you very much; Executive Director of the American Indian Policy Institute and Professor of American Indian Studies at Arizona State University.

Valerie Davidson, Yupik, Senior Director, Legal and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.

Matthew Fletcher, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Director of the Indigenous Law and Policy Center in Michigan State University. And he is not present.

Alicia Lieberman is not present, Director of Child Trauma Research Program, University of California at San Francisco.

And Chaske Spencer, a Lakota actor is not present.

Ron Whitener is not present, Squaxin Island Tribe.

And Marilyn Zimmerman—Marilyn? All right. She'll be back— Fort Peck Reservation, Director of National Native Children's Trauma Center at the University of Montana.

I along with my Co-Chair, Joanne Shenandoah, have been presiding over this hearing. On Thursday I must leave for

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another event in the lower 48, so Valerie Davidson will assist Joanne and others in presiding as well.

I want to just mention the format today for the hearing. We'll observe time requirements. Let me repeat that. We will observe time requirements, largely because we have a lot of people who want to tell us their opinions on these issues and they are very important opinions. A lot of witnesses are here. It's critically important to keep to the agenda time so that we hear from all of the witnesses. And we have a designated timer. And so who is the timer? Right over here. So that timer... Are you doing strobe lights, or what are you doing?

[LAUGHTER]

Timer: (Inaudible @ 36:01_1001).

Sen. Byron Dorgan: All right. This is going to be a very important man for this hearing. Your testimony is critically important to us, but keep an eye on the timer, if you don't mind, so that we can stay on time. We'll be taking some breaks during the day. That is in your agenda that you will see. We will, at the conclusion of each day, move to schedule public testimony, which is a very important part of the hearing as well. And so that's the reason that we want to stay on time.

But let me say how much we appreciate all of you being here. And I'm going to call on my Co-Chair for some opening comments, Joanne Shenandoah.

Joanne Shenandoah: Thank you Senator Dorgan. I also want to thank you all for spending time with us. I especially want to thank Tribal Law and Policy Institute for setting this up, and for our speakers, our opening remarks. What we've heard has been very difficult. And it's even more so than I had ever imagined. And when we travel, or even in my own community now the people know what we are working on, have shared stories, like Assistant Secretary Washburn said, that were not easy to tell. And so we intend to do something about that. We are incredibly dedicated. And you have a team in front of you that is incredibly

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remarkable. They are so amazing, each and every one. And I am so honored to be part of this committee.

I'd just like to briefly say a few words about where I'm from. My native name is [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 37:29_1001]. I'm from the Wolf Clan of the Onondaga, the (Hudna Shawnee @ 37:33_1001), the Iroquois people from Central New York. And I have traveled the world and I've heard stories all over the world about our children on this planet. And we believe it's our right and responsibility to take care of those children. In the Iroquois way it's wrong, it's illegal, to strike a child, or to raise your voice at a child. We believe, our children, we must raise them and nurture them, nurture their talents and their gifts.

You may have heard of the Hiawatha, the Prophet Hiawatha. And I just want to briefly share this. This is the Wampum shell which we made our treaty belts from. And we have many, many treaty belts made with the United States. The purple represents the bruising or the pain that we have felt. We've heard the word "historical trauma" I think so many times that it starts to become engrained in your dreams. When we have made our treaty belts we use this Wampum. And we hold this Wampum because the white represents truth and purity: And truth and purity; what a beautiful thing to be able to speak your truth.

When we hold the Wampum it is sad that all of our words that are being spoken are being heard directly by the Creator. So the Creator hears our every word. And I believe that each and every one of us have this responsibility that we're sharing with you. Hiawatha lost all of his children to murder because we wanted peace in his community, all his daughters. He went singing a song to evil chief, named Thadodaho. And Thadodaho ... Thadodaho was so angered by this idea of peace. That's when he murdered all of Hiawatha's children. And so Hiawatha laid by this lake for days. And as he laid there full of grief, which many of us still carry our grief in many different ways, he remembered that they peacemaker told him, "We could live in peace. We will plant a big, beautiful white pine tree. And on top of this pine tree will stand and eagle who will be our protector. And there will be four

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white roots to go into the four directions of the earth. And they say we'll bury our weapons under this tree so we will not use them against one another anymore." So this is how we became formed as the Confederacy. This is our flag, the Hiawatha Belt, which has the Tree of Peace in the center.

And I just wanted to share those words with you because the work that we are doing is just about that. It's about forgiveness. It's about learning how to live in peace and harmony with each other and the natural world. This is what our mission is on earth. And I just wanted to share those with you. At this juncture though, however, I'd like to, on behalf of this advisory committee, to take a moment to recognize the tireless contributions of a particular advisory committee member, and that's Valerie

Davidson. She has worked so hard to advise and support this committee as we put together this final public hearing in Alaska, to include the listening session and the village visits that Senator Dorgan mentioned.

Val, we are so grateful to you for your energy, sharing of your knowledge, your guidance, your passion; for opening up your home, providing a wonderful meal as the members of this committee ventured out to gather information from Bethel and several villages. Your efforts will lead this advisory committee to a deeper understanding of the issues related to Alaska Native children exposed to violence.

Valerie, we are very grateful for your efforts and your work, and for helping us to put this together. I have...we have a special gift. One is a necklace with the Tree of Peace on the front, and that's from me. And this is "you know from who." This is from TLPI [LAUGHS] and this is for tomorrow's hearing. And this is also for you.

Valerie Davidson: Thank you.

Joanne Shenandoah: And would you please offer a few opening remarks?

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Valerie Davidson: Sure.

Joanne Shenandoah: Thank you.

Valerie Davidson: [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 41:45_1001]. Thank you. [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 41:47_1001]. My Yupik Eskimo names are [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 41:57_1001]. My English name is Valerie Davidson. I'm from Bethel, which we call [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 42:03_1001]. My mom's family is from (Quinhagak @ 42:06_1001) on the coast. We didn't quite get to (Quinhagak @ 42:09_1001) this trip, but next time. And my father's family is from Port Orchard, Washington. And they're Caucasian or white. And in the fine Yupik tradition young man and young woman meet and fall in love and marry and have children, not necessarily in that order. He completely uproots himself and moves to his wife's home village and it is a tradition that still continues to this day.

And I wanted to first say [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 42:39_100] to the Eklutna tribe for allowing us to meet on your land. And we know that as we carry on our work in the next couple of days that we carry the work forward of your ancestors and of your people. And we will do so with dignity and respect, to be able to honor your tribe and the work that you continue forward.

I also want to extend appreciation to the Co-Chairs, Senator Dorgan and Joanne Shenandoah, as well to Tony West, and also to Kevin Washburn who I've known for many years, and also to the fellow committee members. We have said repeatedly that Alaska Native families really want what every other American family wants. We want our children to be healthy. We want them to be happy. And we want them to live in safe communities. But because of where we live we may have to do things differently in order to accomplish that. And we have to do that for our families. We have to do that for our children.

And we say often that Alaska is different, Alaska is big. Alaska used to have five time zones, five. That's how big it

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is. But it became too hard to do business in the state with five time zones, so we now have one, appropriately called Alaska Standard Time. Very few roads connecting any communities, travel is always a challenge. And to show everybody how different Alaska is through the leadership of the Department of Justice, through the Interior, and through this advisory committee, we thought, let's take them to the real Alaska because we often say Anchorage isn't quite there. We're almost there if we get to Anchorage. We're almost to Alaska. We're just a couple of short plane rides away.

And so we took everyone to Bethel, and which is huge. I mean, Bethel is like 6,000 people. It is like the New York City of the region, an area about the size of the state of Oregon, 20...75,000 square miles, no roads connecting any communities. And after we went to Bethel we also traveled to (Napaskiak) by boat. And that was an experience for many. We were trying to take the normal shortcut way but the tide was low and so we went around before we got stuck, almost got stuck. And we were only able to get so far to the shore and jumped out and landed in the mud. Luckily nobody fell over. And then we traveled by plane to, about an hour and 15 minutes, by caravan, which is a big plane because it has nine seats. That's a big plane in the region that I'm from.

And as we traveled and folks had a really busy day, they got to see how large Alaska can be and the challenges that families experience every day with limited access to running water. We visited the only tribally owned women's shelter in the country in Emmonak, an amazing place. And as we were traveling I kept thinking how fortunate that we are, that we are all able-bodied, none of us were nine months pregnant or had an injury, or were having to make that trip in the middle of the night to be able to escape a situation just to be able to keep our family safe, and how fortunate that we were that we had the resources to be able to get there. Because, for somebody who wants to travel from Emmonak just to Bethel is \$550 per person. And if they're coming all the way to Anchorage it's almost \$1,000. And that is repeated throughout Alaska. And, for families who are trying to do what's right for their family

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members to be able to escape situations, they don't have the resources that we have.

But I want to be clear that those situations aren't just villages, they happen everywhere. They happen here in Anchorage, where, unfortunately, sometimes systems give Native families the impression that it's okay for our children to be preyed upon, for our women to be preyed upon. And when that happens those cases aren't necessarily followed up on because it's just another Native woman in town or another Native child in town. And we have to stop that. And I think that's what we're here to do. But one of the things I've learned is that people will do the most amazing things under the most impossible conditions for the right reasons. And children are always the right reasons.

So I'm going to offer one little suggestion that I've offered along the way at pretty much every hearing that we have had, it's sometimes the small, simple thing that you can accomplish with just a pen or a computer, if you'd like. But as you're implementing programs, either through new legislation or regulation, or any kind of executive authority, or any other authority, anywhere you write the word "states" just add a comma and four little words. Add the words "tribes" and "tribal organizations." And then continue on with whatever authority you were recognizing that the state has. Because sometimes those four little words make all the difference to tribes and tribal organizations, and tribal members, people who live in our communities. It's means a difference of whether or not they are able to access services. Because, again, Alaska Native families want what every other family wants. And we have to make sure that we do whatever is necessary to be able to do that.

And so, with that, I just wanted to say welcome to Alaska and we're so glad the panelists were able to be here, and people who are going to testify today. And I want to invite you to tell the truth and to be bold, because we're never going to get there unless we do that. Because polite is good, polite has a place, but polite isn't solving the problem.

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So be bold. And I know that you're going to do that. And we really appreciate your taking the time. [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 49:23_1001]. Welcome to Alaska.

Sen. Byron Dorgan:

Valerie, thank you very much. I was going to give some remarks. I'm going to truncate them, just say one thing. This issue we're talking about, the issue of children, and the issue of children suffering, this is not some mysterious illness for which we don't know the cure. It just is not. Fixing this is a matter of will. Do we choose to do it? Or do we continue to ignore it?

Now, Tony West quoted Camus. Let me quote Shakespeare for another purpose. He said, "A straight back will stoop, a good leg will fail, a full eye will wax hollow, a fair face will wither but a good heart, that's the sun and the moon." The question is: Do we have the kind of good heart that is needed to decide we're going to fix this? We can fix it. The question is: Will we? Do we have the will to fix it?

I believe the people around this table and the people in this room and the administration and others who have come to this issue to say now is the time, I believe they all have a good, good heart. And I think if we decide to make this happen it will happen. I would refer you to the testimony tomorrow of Elizabeth Medicine Crow. I don't know if she's here, or she's going to testify today. If you wonder—and I expect there's no one in this room who wonders—what the issue is, I've seen this issue in a thousand ways and a thousand days. And Elizabeth writes about this issue with poignancy and descriptive prose about the unbelievable impact on a young child who suffers from having what that young child has seen.

So thank all of you for being a part of this. And I think I'm convinced that our work will produce change, produce opportunities for children who desperately need those opportunities. And I'm going to call now on Joanne Shenandoah to introduce the first panel. Joanne?

Joanne Shenandoah:

Thank you, Senator. Okay, so I just wanted to mention that we are going to be having what we call a safe room for those who may be affected by today's testimony. We are going to be listening to what is going on here in Indian

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country. And it's just very important that, even if you needed someone to just sit with you, or to talk to, or have someone listen to something a little bit more, we have Bonnie and Jim Claremont and the safe room will be beyond the elevators, to the right. Bonnie and Jim are very grateful and honored that you're here, as traditional healers and an advocate for our survivors. And I just wanted to point that out.

[END WELCOME, INVOCATION, AND OPENING REMARKS]