



Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE)

Office of Indian Education

Tribal Consultation

PUBLIC MEETING

The Tribal Consultation was held at Sitting Bull College in the Science & Technology Center, Room 101/120, Fort Yates, North Dakota, on April 13, 2015 at 9:00 a.m., Joyce Silverman, Director, Office of Indian Education, presiding.

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MS. SILVERTHORNE: Good morning. I apologize for the late start this morning; we experienced a couple of glitches and had to do some technology checks. We'll begin with the flag song.

(Posting of Colors -- American Legion Post 239 -- Looking Back, Growler, & Jamerson -- Little Eagle, South Dakota.)

(Children sing the Flag Song in Lakota -- Tatanka Chante Hokshila Hill.)

MR. J. TAKEN ALIVE: (Speaks in Lakota.) My friends and relatives, you have given me the honor to send my voice to the Creator, and to the Four Directions, and to Grandmother Earth.

And I'll ask that you help with your prayers. We all come with a prayer today, so I'll ask that you do that as we stand as relatives.

(Gives the Invocation in Lakota.)

EVERYONE: Amen.

CHAIRMAN ARCHAMBAULT II: I don't know if everyone can hear me. Okay. I just want to welcome everybody. I want to first thank the ones that sang the Flag Song, and our veterans for posting the colors.

I also want to thank Councilman Jay Taken Alive for that prayer. It's always good to hear our language, and every time we get a chance to try to learn, it's good.

I want to welcome the Department of the Interior -- sorry, the Department of Education, Joyce Silverthorne and Ron Lessard.

I know we've been working with you guys for a while, and I'm encouraged by the fact that you're actually coming out to Indian Country and not just visiting metropolitan areas, so I welcome you here.

Education is something that's really important to our tribe and to us. It's something that I see as an investment to our communities and to our economies. Over time, as our education improves, I know our economic situations will improve.

One of our great leaders said, "Let's put our minds together and see what we can build for our children."

That was Sitting Bull. And ever since the beginning of education, Indian education, tribes or even tribal governments have never been afforded the opportunity to participate or to have input on how our children were going to receive their education. It was something that was always mandated down.

And over decades and over time, we've seen the education system slip for, not just Indian Country, but for the whole entire United States.

At one time, the U.S. was considered -- ranked very high in educating their own, and now we're slipping.

As each time goes by, and every time something new is implemented, it is also mandated or implemented on tribes.

When that happens, it seems like we forget what we're doing, and we start teaching towards a test rather than trying to nourish a human being, or nourish the spirit of the human being.

So I -- and I welcome all the other tribal leaders that are here. It's good that you can come and be a part of this.

And I encourage everyone to comment during this consultation, because it's something that I know: For the first time, the government has their ears open, and everything that we say and everything that we're going to present is going to be taken back.

And so, I want to make sure that everyone has the opportunity and everyone is afforded an opportunity to have some input.

So with that, I thank you for giving us time, and I encourage everybody to enjoy Standing Rock while you're here. Welcome. Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Good morning, everyone. It's good to be here. I can't tell you how nice it was yesterday to drive at 65 miles an hour with the speed control on and actually be able to put bright lights on occasionally.

As I moved to D.C., I discovered that that's not an option. There are always so many cars; there are always so many people.

I never have my bright lights on anymore. And so, this was a treat. This was wonderful to be able to be in the country and be able to see the countryside again, so thank you.

I'm Joyce Silverthorne. I'm from the Office of Indian Education, and I've been there for about three and a half years.

The Office of Indian Education oversees a number of programs, the Title VII Formula Programs. We have about 1300 grants.

And if you look in your packets, on the right -- or, left-hand side, I think, it is, behind the agenda, you'll see maps of the Formula Program: Where those programs are located, the numbers of students that they serve, as well as the dollars that are contributed by state.

The other maps are the Demonstration and the Professional Development Programs that we also oversee.

And for the past three years, we've had the State Tribal Education Partnership Program, and that program is agreements between tribes and the state education agencies with an opportunity of oversight for federal programs that are coming to your school districts, and that is a pilot that we've been operating.

We will be offering a new competition this year. And the good news is, before we left on Friday, we were told that it will publish this week. So watch the Federal Register: The competition will be announced this week.

I'd like to pass the mike over to Ron Lessard from the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you, Joyce. Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Archambault. And thank you, everyone, for welcoming us here to Standing Rock. I was here in June, and I enjoy being here.

My family is Mohawk. We come from the Kahnawake Mohawk Reserve, originally. I lived on Pine Ridge for many years and still Sun Dance on Rosebud, so this area is kind of a second home for me.

My mom, who was in the boarding school system, lived in Pine Ridge for many years. So it's a real honor to come back.

And I want to also honor the veterans and the Flag Song. I'm a Vietnam veteran, and it's always wonderful to see honoring our veterans and honoring our youth.

So I'm just going to give a brief overview. On behalf of Bill Mendoza -- who, most of you know, is the Director of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education -- I work as Bill's Chief of Staff.

And Bill wanted to send his message that he wishes he could be with you today. However, he had to be in Milwaukee at the Wisconsin Indian Education Association and then has to be in Tucson.

I'm going to just give a brief overview of some of the things that we've been doing with the Initiative and through the White House.

And as you know, after the President visited Standing Rock and met with the young people, we were able to meet those youth that met with him again in Washington, D.C., when they came to visit the President and the First Lady, and Secretary Duncan also met with them.

What came out of that is, like Chairman said, it really opened up the opportunity to listen and open up an opportunity to make some changes.

So some of the things that we're doing: One -- and we can go into these deeper as the day goes on, if you have questions -- but one is: The president launched the Generation Indigenous, or "Gen-I," as we're calling it.

That has a number of components to it. and it's really something that has taken off since he announced that. A lot of Native youth have said that this is something that they can own.

And there's several opportunities. There's some -- I believe, in the packet, you have some information about, kind of, a tribal leader challenge, Native youth challenge, around Generation Indigenous, through The Center for Native American Youth.

Secondly, I think one of the most important things we've done this year is the -- we did the School Environment Listening Tour, and we're very thankful for Jo Ann Kauffman and Kauffman & Associates for working with us on that.

We did nine cities, listening to Native youth around the issues of bullying, disproportionate bullying, offensive imagery, mascots; those kinds of things.

And we're in the process of creating a final report with those testimonies, and it was a very moving experience for everyone.

We want to make sure that people understand -- people within the government, outside of the government -- that the offensive imagery, the use of these kinds of things, are not just offensive but they are harmful to our children, and they have a long-lasting effect.

So we did that. And as a result of that -- and that was mostly around the public school system.

And as a result of that -- and we also had the Office of Civil Rights go with us so that they could provide the opportunity to families and communities on where to go, how to file a civil rights discrimination complaint.

And so, since then, the Department of Interior, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Ed have begun looking at how to address this in tribally controlled schools, and that's going to be next, coming up soon. I believe the three agencies will come together to do a listening session around that.

(Coughs.) Excuse me. (Drinks some water.) One thing Joyce is right about: When we live in the city, there's lots of noise, and it's very easy to be on the metro and trains and get sick, you know. So pardon me for having this cold; my throat is a little bit raw.

The last thing I'll mention is another important initiative that we've been involved with -- not only the Department of Ed, but with an MOA, a Memorandum of Agreement, with the Department of Health and Human Services, specifically, the Administration for Native Americans; and also BIE -- is the Native language -- the work around the retention and revitalization of Native languages.

And as you know, especially with -- here, with your immersion school, which I had a great opportunity to be at during the President's visit, was how important that is, not only to the revitalization of the language, but of our cultures, and -- you know, and our tradition to keep that alive.

So last year, we did -- and there's a copy of the MOA in the packet -- and we would definitely welcome your suggestions -- and this particular MOA is with three federal agencies.

But we definitely want to expand that outside of that now so that we can hear information from you on what we can do within the federal partners, federal agencies, to promote and support the work that you are doing around Native languages.

So we did do a Native language summit, which was held last year in June, and we'll be doing another language summit in September of this year.

That will be -- you know, we know that in our communities: We know the importance of our languages.

And I wanted to thank the gentleman for that opening prayer because my wife speaks Lakota, studied with Albert. So whenever I try to, you know, she always gets on my case about that.

So it's important to us and our ceremonies; it's important to us for our young people.

So I think that, you know, how -- as you look at that memorandum, and if you have suggestions: How we get people outside of our communities to understand the importance of the revitalization and preservation of our languages and support them, whether it be through funding and initiatives and other things?

I think that's it for now. I'm sorry?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Second summit.

MR. LESSARD: Second summit, yeah. The 2015 summit will be in September, and it will be in Washington, D.C.

I think this might be the last year in Washington. I don't know. But originally, it was the Administration for Native Americans and the BIE was, kind of, some of the grantees that came together.

We want to expand that this year, which will include the -- it's called the Association of Tribal Museums; also, the National Endowment of the Humanities.

And we're looking for -- there will be several workshops, and we'll have information on the website of the date.

The date, I believe right now, is the 10th of September, and we'll -- it'll be on our website, and also the Administration for Native Americans, and, I imagine, the BIE.

And just to refer to the BIE, they just recently put out a framework of what their Native language work is going to look like.

So I think that's important, if you look at their site and look at their Native language framework.

I know Monty put that up there, and it's good that they're taking, you know, a step to make sure that that's included in the curriculum and it's added to the programs that they're doing.

And then, the consultation policy. Should I mention that now, Joyce? Yes?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: That'll be fine.

MR. LESSARD: Yeah. So we, at the Department of Education, had a tribal consultation policy, which has been under revision for some time.

We have the final draft copy, I can call it, which has initially been cleared through our internal Department of Education, you know, clearance process.

But it's at a draft state now, and before we move onto the final version, this is where we want everyone to look at that and provide comments on that.

Comments are certainly welcome today, but just receiving it, I would say that you might want to look at it.

We'll give you the -- where to find that, you know. It's actually at "tribalconsultation@ed.gov."

And so, this will be posted on there, and there will be a comment period, which will be 90 days.

So it'll go until August 13th, and that will provide ample opportunity for you to comment on the consultation policy.

It's been some time coming to update the one that we've had, but there's certainly been a lot of work into it.

And now, we're at this point where, before it goes to any kind of final, we want to maximize that opportunity now for tribal leaders and other tribal members to make comment on the policy.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: And also, the date on that is July 13th for the 90 days, and I'm sorry we don't have copies for everyone.

This truly is hot-off-the-press. I haven't even gotten to read yet the final edits that were completed over the weekend.

But we wanted to get it out, beginning with this Ed Consultation workshop, because we need the full 90 days for people to look at it and consider what it contains and get information back to us about your preferences.

Within the last five years, there have been many, many changes to the way the federal government consults with tribes.

And sometimes I feel like we're tripping over our feet: Everybody wanting the same people to come to us or to meet with us, and sometimes it gets very challenging.

As we were watching the various consultations that were held over this winter, there were multiple times that the tribal leaders were asked to come together and talk.

And every time, there is something more that has been presented. It's, kind of, that time where, "Beware of what you wish for; you may get it."

We've always wanted the federal government to hear what was coming out of Indian Country.

Now that it's beginning to do that better, it's asking for a lot of comments and considerations.

That's good for us, but it's challenging for all of us to keep up with. And so, what wanted to be sure with this one is that you have 90 days to consider this.

This is a revision to an existing consultation policy that allows us to be out here. We have been coming out to Indian Country since 2010, trying to gather information for education.

One of the interesting aspects of working for the federal government is the incredible amount of time that gets taken in clearance process.

Clearance process is our safeguarding to make sure that the information that we are acting upon has been cleared and is a quality product.

But it is also a very laborious process, and I can tell you that this document has been struggling to get out into the public view for a while.

And so, I hope that what we are able to have today will at least begin the conversation with the tribal leadership to look at what we might be able to update and change again.

This will be going on until July 13th. All of the comments that we will be receiving are being recorded.

We have a recorder in the house today, so anyone who speaks, please give your name first and where you're from so that the recording will indicate where the comments are coming from.

And be sure to speak into the mike. We have mikes set up, and we'll need to be able to get the full record because these do, then, turn around into the comment section and will revise the documents that we have before you.

MR. LESSARD: Are there any questions at this point?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: We left off one item. The Native Youth Community Project is another grant competition that we have been doing rule-making for throughout this past 12 months. Closer to 18 months, now.

And the rule-making for that is a priority change under the Demonstration Title VII program.

So the Title VII has always had discretionary programs attached to it, with the Demonstration and a professional development to train teachers, administrators.

And in the past, the Demonstration has been early childhood programs, ages three and four years old, and transition to college.

So just those two groups that we were able to work with in Demonstration. That's probably been for at least six years; maybe more like eight.

And so, this is a different priority, and this priority is trying to take lessons that we've learned from other programs across education and look at the self-determination from tribes and try to identify how, under our existing statute, we might be able to make our best effort at getting a better program out there.

So what this program will be based on is an analysis from a community on what your greatest need is.

It may be something you need to improve; maybe you may have some success you want to replicate. It is up to the community to determine what that topic will be.

What we are asking is that its end goal be to improve the college or career readiness of students as they come out of high school.

That program has been in rule-making. We are nearing the end of the final regulation, and that should be out within the next couple of weeks.

And that also will be published in the Federal Register, and it will be followed very closely by the notice inviting applications for that program, as well.

For this year, there is a \$3.1 million availability that we are halting all discretionary programs under Title VII to be able to offer this new program.

And then, next year, there is a budgetary request in that is a tremendous increase.

I doubt that we will get a full \$50 million to be doing this across the country just because of the economics and the political world that we live in, but we anticipate that there will be an increase.

And so, we're looking forward to that, so please keep watching. That's another exciting opportunity that's coming up.

MR. LESSARD: Any questions now? Do you want to take questions? Yes.

MR. MORRIS: Good morning. My name is Rodney Morris. I come from the Omaha tribe in Nebraska; I sit on the Tribal Council down there.

And my question today is: Is the office of Head Start involved in all of this education?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: It is not formally a partner, but we anticipate that it could be a member of the partnership in a community. The Head Start home office has endorsed our Native languages as a component.

They are meeting with us and having conversations, and we are looking forward to a stronger working relationship between the two departments. However, it is not a direct -- we have no authority over the Head Start.

In a community, when councils look at the various programs that serve their youth from early childhood through college, the partnerships that are formed, and particularly under the Native Youth Community Partnership Program, a partnership will be required, and it will entail those entities that are interested in the issue that the community chooses to address.

And so, Head Start can certainly be a part of that, but it is not a direct funding to it.

MR. MORRIS: Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you.

MR. J. TAKEN ALIVE: Good morning. Jesse Taken Alive with the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. Just a couple of comments.

I know we're going to have time this afternoon, but I guess it's interesting to know the "saca" (phonetic), if you will, of Indian education.

And we had a similar consultation over at our sister tribes, at one of their schools -- and I'm talking about the Oglala Lakota.

It was at Pine Ridge, and we really haven't seen any substance from that. But I do appreciate you coming.

As they say, stating things for the record is important. But it's frustrating when nothing surfaces from it. And this was, I'm going to say, maybe, six or seven years ago, over in Pine Ridge.

And I hope that whatever the outcomes or objectives of the gatherings are, that we'll be able to see some substance, simply because President Obama is nearing the end of his term, and we appreciate everything that he's done.

And I don't know how fast we'll get a turnaround on this process. But certainly, we are willing to facilitate and do our part when it comes to education.

But the approach that is being used throughout the country -- and I know there's been some efforts and attempts to change it -- I'm talking about No Child Left Behind.

The scientific approach to working with human beings is very challenging for us in Indian Country.

And there's no -- there is, really, no research to justify the No Child Left Behind law, much less teach it to Native children. So you can imagine the dilemma we're in right now.

And not to show any disrespect to any of our staff in Indian Country -- we really do respect them and are grateful that they've achieved, in many cases, the graduate degrees, et cetera, et cetera.

However, the statistic still remains, as far as I know, and that is the graduation rate. Now, that's different from the attendance rate. Those are two different numbers.

And the graduation rate that I'm familiar with and has been echoing for many years is that 70 percent of our Native children do not have the opportunity to graduate from high school simply because, over the years and decades and generations, if you will, education wasn't fair or appropriate for Native children.

And having said this little bit, I know that you're going to hear solutions. And the task, as partners with the United States -- and I say that in a respectful way, because we are members of the Hunkpapa Lakota, Sitting Bull's band, and Sitting Bull never signed a treaty but nevertheless always wanted to treat everybody with respect.

And that spirit continues to grow and grow. But having said that again, I'm just looking forward to that step of how we can incorporate our solutions that's in the minds and hearts of many of our Native Indian educators into a working piece for our children.

In old school, they call it a "Demonstration project." If it has to be that, so be it. I'm going back to the 1970s, if you will. But the graduation rate is troubling for us as tribal leaders.

Again, I'm saying "us" because we share the same data and the same challenges, and in no way am I trying to speak for my relatives who I respect so much who serve other sister tribal governments.

But next month, we're going to see graduation. In fact, our eldest grandchild is going to graduate from high school. And we saw our five children graduate from high school, which we're grateful for.

But we know, in their graduation class, it was the same: Only 30 percent of them were able to walk across and receive that diploma that they earned.

So what happens to the 70 percent? Where do they go? What happens? It's nearly a human right violation, if it is at all, but we just are looking forward to a partnership, ideally.

Now, I've been given an honor to -- my neck hurts; I don't like to not look at people when I talk, contrary to the Native "look down."

At any rate, I look forward to this opportunity, you know, for this partnership to grow.

How can we make that grow? Ideally, it would be a relationship between tribal governments straight with the federal government.

If we truly believe that treaties are the law of the land, and the interpretation of those treaties says, by the Supreme Court, that they shall be interpreted by said Indians.

And we have the answers. So if it needs to be called a "Demonstration project," or whatever, I would look forward to some type of -- forging some type of partnership. Nothing derogatory at all against any state. Nothing derogatory.

In the past, our leaders said, "The answers are out in our communities; the answers are at home," and if we could build upon it.

And as I said in Pine Ridge six or seven years ago, it's always been a lack of resources, never a lack of know-how. And I still maintain that.

But again, this afternoon, I know you're going to get a chance to hear from some really brilliant minds that are here in attendance.

And contrary to what goes on with No Child Left Behind -- which is strictly rote memory, memorization, versus meaningful learning -- you're going to hear some meaningful solutions from a lot of our Native scholars and intellectuals.

Likewise, we don't want to see the "deficit approach" used to teach Native children any longer. It's really unfair. Absolutely unfair.

So my friends, again: Welcome to Standing Rock. By no means have I meant to offend anyone with my comments.

But we got to always keep in mind where those 70 percent of our -- in my case, I get to say "grandchildren"; I'm humbled to say that -- where are they going to go? That, kind of, drives me with this.

Having gotten an honor to serve for 24 years, here, on our Tribal Government, I am concluding my service this fall because my fuel light keeps blinking on "empty." I really look forward to some changes.

And I thank our Chairman. He's a young and energetic and -- not to sound biased, but he's also my nephew -- and I'm thankful for the work that he does.

And I look forward to some feedback from this. Like I say, on your side, you've got President Obama about ready to finish his term, so a year isn't very long.

But I think we can get something done with everything that's going on. So thank you so much for listening.

(Speaks in Lakota.)

On behalf of our children, I just want to express these thoughts and these feelings: We all come here with common minds because we're common people first.

That's one of our teachings in our culture. So thank you. Thank you so much for listening.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you.

MR. LESSARD: I wanted to say one thing -- and thank you. Throughout the year, Director Mendoza and Secretary Duncan: We've had the opportunity to -- and with Joyce, also -- we always talk about Native youth and the things we want to do for Native youth.

But often, they don't bring Native youth to the table to tell us what they need, you know. What's happening. What's on their mind, you know.

And we've heard so much this year, and I don't know that I have the solutions within the federal government. But certainly, more Native teachers, you know. More input from tribes into curriculum.

Or the kinds of things that, you know, maybe, across nationally, it doesn't appear that those things increase grad rates; but we know, certainly, in Indian Country, that it's just like healthcare providers: If you're comfortable with your teachers and they know your language, they know your culture, they know the history, they know about historical trauma, those kinds of things, I think that, you know, we've really been able to listen to young people this year.

And you're right. I think the Administration has done more of that this year. You know, how do we make that -- how do we turn that into things that are sustainable, even after this Administration is gone?

We know that we can't -- you know, we've heard from them; they've told us, you know. But we can't let them down and not find solutions for them. So I just wanted to say that.

MR. FRAZIER: Harold Frazier, Chairman of the Cheyenne River tribe.

MR. LESSARD: Good morning.

MR. FRAZIER: What's the purpose of this consultation?

MR. LESSARD: Of this particular consultation?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Unlike the tribal consultation that takes place through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, we did not bring a topic, an agenda, to you. We are here to hear more of what your comments are.

We've provided a brief overview this morning of some of the current events that are taking place out of both of our offices.

Somewhere in between having a restricted agenda that you need to answer only what's available on the pages to our, unfortunately, very open-ended agenda, there should be some better balance; we're still working to find that.

It is to give you, at least, an update of where information is for our various programs today, and to give you some idea of some of the things that are in process. It isn't that we have an agenda for this consultation.

MR. FRAZIER: So it's more of a listening session?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: It's more of a listening session. And the one document that is requesting comment is the information that we handed out to the tribal leaders.

And I'm sorry to the rest of you in the room. We got enough copies made to at least get the head table today.

But there is a website that you will be able to pull down a copy of that consultation, and it's on the "www.edtribalconsultations.org," is where the document lives, and comments need to be sent to "tribalconsultation@ed.gov."

And that is a different website address, and that website will be where the comments are to be sent.

I think we've caught up with our agenda this morning. And so, according to our time, we should have covered at least the topics that have been presented for the day.

So we have the things that have been covered: The Title VII Native Youth Community Project, the State-Tribal Education Partnership.

The Ed Consultation document is, at least -- we don't expect you to have comments today; that's too quick. We haven't even had a chance to look at the final reading yet, either.

But also, the information on Generation Indigenous, the MOU on Native Language, and the handout that is from the White House Initiative that has the address of the White House up at the top.

That one has several different areas, several different topics: Gen-I Native Youth Challenge, the Tribal Leader Challenge.

And so, those are all available for comment in addition to topics that you may be bringing from home.

So we are here today to spend some time to be able to get to know you better, to be able to hear from tribal leaders some of the interests and areas that you'd like to have addressed.

MR. FRAZIER: Are you in charge of the BIA?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: No.

MR. FRAZIER: Because, you know, the reason why: In Cheyenne River right now, there's 14 unfilled positions at our school down there. We haven't had a math teacher for two years. So I'm at the wrong place.

MR. LESSARD: Is that BIA schools?

MR. FRAZIER: Yup.

MR. LESSARD: Yup.

MR. FRAZIER: And, you know, I was looking at this MOA for legal authority, you know. I mean, to me, that doesn't filter down.

And if you look at B, under Consultation: "Lack of support by school leadership."

I mean, that's going on today. Are we just going to sit and talk about it again? Because this happened in 2012, that this MOA was signed.

MR. LESSARD: Mm-hmm. Is that the language MOA?

MR. FRAZIER: I mean, it's good to say this. But I can say, on Cheyenne River, Lakota language has been taught in our schools for over 20 years without any success. I mean, that's reality. Not one fluent speaker produced by our schools.

So what's going on there? Is there not enough time in the classrooms? Not enough teachers?

MR. LESSARD: Yup.

MR. FRAZIER: The BIA is treating our teachers as support staff. So these are the things -- the issues that need to be resolved and taken care of.

And if we're just going to sit and listen. I mean, I'm, kind of, a little disappointed.

The leader of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe comes here, and your bosses ain't even here. You know, reorganizing this education: You know, that's not going to benefit our kids.

You know, right now, the way I understand it, if we have any issue, we have to go to Belcourt, North Dakota. That's where they're going to put our line office. That ain't going to help us. The 1868 Treaty, Article 5, said there be will be an agent on our reservation.

I was chairman of the Great Plains Tribal Chairman Association in 2004, when we sued the BIA, and we stopped it, and I think we're going to have to take that route again, because no one's listening.

When you look at this MOA -- it's more comments I have -- this Native Language Work Group: Did it ever get formed?

MR. LESSARD: Yes.

MR. FRAZIER: Who are they?

MR. LESSARD: The MOA -- the Native Language Work Group is members of the three agencies: So Bill Mendoza; Monty, the director of BIE; Lillian Sparks, who's the Administration for Native Americans Commissioner. Bill Mendoza, my boss, who's the director of the White House Initiative.

So it was formed by them. And then, there are other members within each federal agency, of those three federal agencies that are working on these.

MR. FRAZIER: Have they met?

MR. LESSARD: Yes, they met. They meet regularly.

MR. FRAZIER: Have any results come from their meetings? I mean, like I said --

MR. LESSARD: Yes.

MR. FRAZIER: -- there's a lack of leadership from -- tribal leaders in 2012 said there's a lack of support from school leadership for restoring our language.

MR. LESSARD: Mm-hmm.

MR. FRAZIER: So has there even been steps taken to address that?

MR. LESSARD: Yeah, there have.

MR. FRAZIER: Well, it hasn't on Cheyenne River, I'll tell you that.

MR. LESSARD: No, I think -- and, like I mentioned, it was -- it's been addressed at the summit, where we had members come from various tribes to address it at the summit. There will be another summit coming up.

But I also believe that, you know, even though this Native Language Work Group is within those three agencies, that all we can do is -- we just gather best practices; hear what other communities are doing to revitalize and retain their languages; and we see other ways that the federal government can do things to enhance that.

And I just wanted to speak to your -- I totally agree with you, and so the way -- my office and Joyce's office do not come under the BIA or the Bureau of Indian Education; we come under the Department of Education. So we do advise Secretary Duncan on Native affairs.

We -- the White House Initiative -- when President Obama created the Executive Order, 13592, which created the White House Initiative that, not only are we interested in the -- on a good day, 7 percent that the BIE might say our Native youth are in school -- in BIA schools.

But we also work with the public school system; our Native-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities that have, you know -- public school systems around the country that have a high population of Native students. So we don't -- and the BIA is not involved in that part of that with us, so --

MR. FRAZIER: I might be at the wrong meeting. But if you work for the White House, you could take a lot of this message back.

MR. LESSARD: Absolutely. You know --

MR. FRAZIER: Because, right now, on Cheyenne River, at one of our schools, in the past 11 years, their average ACT score is 15.9. Our kids are not college-ready. That's reality.

So what are we going to do? Are we just going to talk about it? That's what's been going on for the past 11 years.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: In the Native Youth Community Project grant, you can decide how it is you would like to address exactly that kind of an issue.

MR. FRAZIER: Yeah, but grants are really not a -- don't fix it. You know, it's good for two or three years, and then it's gone.

A lot of hope being built up with our kids, and then it's gone. And the bottom line is: We need our funding levels increased, our re-occurring base funding levels.

I just got re-elected back in December, and, you know, it's same old story. You know, if there's any increases, it goes out to these tribes. It's just not set up to really help the Indian people. The true Indian people.

In our region, we have reservations; we have roads; we have our language; we have our culture; we have a way of life.

But what I see -- and it's even mentioned by Ernie Stevens, the NIGA director -- whenever they need help from Indian Country, they come to the Sioux Nation. Again, we're always left holding the bag.

That money -- you talk about roads -- goes out to Alaska. They don't have reservations. They don't have roads.

It goes out to the Midwest; same thing. All that funding. We don't get nothing here. And now we got to go for a grant.

So I think the message you need to take back is: We need recurring dollars every year. Mr. Taken Alive said, "Honor our treaties."

I got a question: What does that mean, "tribally-controlled schools"? What does that mean to you?

Because here's what happens: We got a school on Cheyenne River, a grant school. I asked -- they told me, in the past four years, there was never ACT tests given to the students.

They ran into a \$1.2 million debt in one year. We have to pay for it, the tribe. Where's the monitoring from you guys?

So I think you got to be cautious. Because, bottom line, based on treaties, you guys still have that trust responsibility to educate our kids. So that's what I question: "Tribally-controlled school."

You know, the Government sure takes care of the public schools. I wish we had that kind of resources. Maybe our kids would have success.

So if we're really going to help our children, let's do it. Put that money there. Thank you.

MR. LESSARD: Appreciate that, thank you.

MR. J. TAKEN ALIVE: If I could echo some of the words of my friend, Chairman Frazier. It's been 100 years since anti-Native language policies were incorporated by the United States of America, through the Department of the Army. And it was unfortunate that that happened.

But now research is showing how important Native languages are to the world, and what that brings in terms of intellect, et cetera, et cetera.

For us, we always like to coin it as our way of looking and learning about the world, beginning with our children.

So the importance of our language has all been documented. And it's the simple fact of it being used for centuries is enough to cause us to be concerned about bringing it back.

Now, why is that important? It's important for a number of reasons: We can all remember it when the United States government was looking at adopting a law saying, "One language shall be spoken, and this is the official language of the United States." And it was English.

And you hear comments from people who speak English, formally, from England, and they call it "America's form of English." Excuse me for mentioning this: They call it a "bastard English," for one.

And yet, they want to formalize that. So these concerns are out there for a number of reasons.

Now, again, echoing what Chairman Frazier's comments were. The challenge of producing fluent speakers is there for all of us. And we know that one way does not fit all. Meaning that, if we had the resources.

Now, this morning, you got a chance to listen to our awesome, precious little "takojas," grandchildren. And it puts a lump in my throat when I ask them a question and they answer me.

I mean, a lot of the work, of course, is by the adults: The males and females that work with them daily.

But it sends an awesome spiritual chill down our backs. And we heard the little girls "okalata" (phonetic), and we heard the little boys, "okisha" (phonetic). And those are our grandparents coming back at us.

And it's really inspiring, very inspiring. And the process that's used is called a "wahohpi." It's called a language nest immersion.

We also got another way promoting our language out there with our Tribal Education Department.

And our Tribal Education Department didn't come from D.C. It was born here, and the successes are here.

Every June, we have a language conference here that lasts for a month. Lakota Summer Institute: We call it "LSI."

And a lot of our relatives -- throughout Canada, as well, and throughout the States -- come, and they learn how to teach the language. That is important: To know how to teach it.

And we're seeing success with it. We're hearing a lot of formerly non-speakers speak the language.

In fact, within the Indian Health Service, when we go get our medication in our community of Bear Soldier/McLaughlin, we can talk Lakota to the pharmacist, and he'll talk back in Lakota.

He's from Standing Rock, where he grew up not knowing the language at all, and it's amazing, I guess.

It's fulfilling. It's good to hear a pharmacist talking our language and understanding our language.

So the point being: There are multiple ways of learning our language, and feeling the world around us with our language.

And the children, of course, and younger people, are the benefactors. So the importance of language is out there.

Again, not to be redundant: How can we get more resources to build upon these? How can we do that?

Because I know there's no booklet or there's nothing in the halls of Mr. Arne Duncan's department that can say, "Here's your proven method of teaching Lakota."

But if you come here, and you go to the Tribal Office, you'll find that. You'll find that at Sitting Bull College.

The only thing that's lacking are the resources. How can we continue this flow of awards?

They're not freebies; they're awards from the United States renting our land. We never sold our land. They're awards.

So how can we continue that flow of resources, flow of money, to continue to build upon this, so that we can look at first-class methods, methodologies of teaching our children not only the language, but the academia.

So we can take a look at different school calendars, et cetera, et cetera. How can we get that the flow? And that's what I'm somewhat talking about in detail now: As I mentioned earlier, what can we do together?

Because I agree with Chairman Frazier. I've gone to similar conferences like this. Out of due respect, we get frustrated because there's no turnaround on things that we put out there as solutions.

And that's what I would hope for. If you could entertain something to say, "Give us your solution to education," collectively, we could put something together, and it won't be putting us all in the box.

Because our relatives from Oglala and our good friend just walked in, one of the Tribal Council members, and of course his colleague is here.

They'll do their things the way they need to do them. And our relatives from Cheyenne River, and on and on.

And we've been doing that for centuries. We've been doing that for centuries: Doing things the way that are fair and appropriate for us.

Our relatives from Omaha -- you'll be amazed, if you don't already know -- our languages are pretty close, really close. And it's awesome to have learned that awhile back. But where are the resources?

If there's anything that you can take back to the President's office, just let him know that, "Hey, there's a lot of folks out there that have the solutions. All we need to do is get them the resources. And have a stream of resources coming out there."

As long as the United States is renting our land, the interpretation of some of the treaties we're all familiar with is, "As long as the grass shall grow and the water shall flow."

That's an interpretation by some of our tribes. Some people look at that and say, "Hey, it don't say that here."

But the United States Supreme Court says these are to be interpreted by said tribes. We'll be putting it on shortly, if we're not doing it, to not only have the grass growing, but quality water flowing.

So I'm going to ask my brother, here, to make some comments. We've been working at this. Chairman called us "the old guys." I don't know why.

But we've forged some things with the State of South Dakota, and the governor has signed an Executive Order, setting up a committee to work with Indian education.

We haven't had our first meeting, yet; it's coming up on the 28th. But please, show us -- keep in contact with us: How and what you all can do to get resources out here flowing, just like the water.

And quality water, quality resources, so we can get the very best for our children. I'm going to ask my brother to make some comments.

MR. ARCHAMBAULT: Good morning, everybody. It's a great opportunity, I think, it's an opportune time. It couldn't be better.

The Senate has dropped their version, and the House has still got some haggling to do, and then they got to agree.

But there's still some time for change in here. And I just don't know what -- in this regard to education. And you hear this.

Just hear -- around here, you hear this culture and language being important; so, so important to our young people.

They'll talk to tribal leaders, and they'll say that. They'll say, "We really want language, and we really want culture in our schools."

We need that. It's so important for us to survive as Indian Nations. But the reality is this: That our schools operate based on funding.

I guess a question that I would have -- and I hope you go back and wave this big time when you get back to D.C -- is 25 CFR 30.

That's the Indian -- "25 CFR" is talking about Indian laws, and "30" is the one that says that Indian schools will operate by AYP of the federal government.

Okay, so that's the Indian law. The federal law is No Child Left Behind. That's section 11.11.

So what that's saying is that Indian schools -- and then, for public schools, I only see Jim here. Mr. Gross, he operates the school over here in Selfridge.

But really, this meeting is about public schools. We have all kinds of Indian schools here, but that's BIE, right.

So really -- but it's good to know, because actually, we're all in the same soup, because we have to follow federal education law.

Okay. I think it was mentioned, Public Law 100-297: Tribally Controlled School Act -- great Act -- it says, "Indians, Boards, you can do anything you want. That's your money; take it and run with it."

But that stops dead in the water because these schools have to take title money. You know, you have special education; you have Title I for school improvement.

You start going down the line: Title II, Title III, Title IV. Pretty soon, that Indian Controlled School Act -- "Here, Indians, do anything you want."

But then, they put another -- they say, "Here's some title money, and to get this title money" -- which none of these Indian schools can do without -- "you have to follow all the laws of No Child Left Behind."

So they got you. And when you talk to any of these educators at all of our public schools, or public schools on our Indian reservation, and you talk to them about public schools, private schools, and they are so worried about testing.

Right now, these guys are sweating it. "Oh, my God, our schools are not going to be performing well."

I really sympathize with them, and I know they're trying their hardest. Their staffs are just -- the teachers we have, and quite a few of them aren't Indian; a lot of them are. You know, it doesn't matter.

But they're trying their best to be AYP, right? They're just working all the time to do that. It hasn't worked.

We don't have -- there's something, you know -- when we keep saying, "We have miles of education that are different," I would just like to point out that there are models of education that are different.

On the other side of that, there is the Cuts Wood School in Montana. Joyce, you should know that one. Darrell Kipp. Doing well; talked with him a lot. It's a K-8 school that talks nothing but Blackfeet. Nothing but Blackfeet, K-8.

When they graduate, they go to Browning School, and they're the leaders; right, Joyce? You grew up around there; you should know all about that, yeah.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: (Nods head.)

MR. ARCHAMBAULT: These guys talk Blackfeet in school all day long. When they get out of that school, they go over to a regular public school, which is Browning. They attend school, and they're not hurt or diminished in any way, shape, or form.

But it's really hard, like I said, to get language and culture in if our school administrators are so worried about meeting the academic challenges.

So we run through math and, you know, reading. We just go, go, go. That takes up most of the day. I kid you not.

Most of these administrators -- we several of them here -- they'll tell you that. They're just driven. And the teachers, it means their job. It makes them look bad if they don't meet AYP, and so forth. So that's what's driving them.

You guys should go back and say -- 25 CFR 30: If you want to change, you guys should go back and say, "Give them some flexibility."

It takes rule-making next. So there's -- you know, I heard you say it before. There's a whole process.

And I would say, as the department of Title VII, you guys should go back and say, "First of all, we got to strike 25 CFR 30. That's making us do AYP. That is not self-determination."

Then go over here, and as far as our Indian schools, I hope there's stuff that -- our tribe has made several suggestions. I don't know where it's at. You say "tribal consultation."

There's an Indian saying -- but the comments early on are Indian people, let me first start -- working with the tribe, the federal government.

They'll say -- they come back and they say, "They have no ears. It's seem like we tell them and tell them and tell them, but I don't think they listen. They don't hear."

The United States President comes here and says -- and broadcasts to you guys, the employees, "Tribal control."

Okay, 25 CFR 30 is not tribal control. If you have to follow No Child Left Behind, section 11.11, that's AYP. There's no control. We got to have waivers to that kind of stuff.

There's a lot of good things. There's really a good feeling. I'd like to say: Melody Schopp is here. She's the director of the Department of Instruction for the State of South Dakota.

And Jay and I, we've had battles with her; we've been at it. But it's been -- I think that's the sole -- that state, South Dakota, saying -- and Melody can come up, and she might say -- and this is public schools in the State of South Dakota -- and she'd say, "What we're doing with those kids there, AYP, isn't working."

And so, the governor also got an executive order to form a commission: "Let's sit down and talk and see what you got. What do you want to do?"

And I just hope there's some really meaningful flexibility. I use that word cautiously because the law should give us that, and let us do that.

But if the State -- and we've worked with Melody, here -- and the State of North Dakota says, "We can give you flexibility."

The problem is that they can just jerk it out from under us anytime they want. We should have that right. We have that right, as nations.

But that's the issue, is control. If you guys go back and say, "Hey, we have to change 25 CFR 30, because that makes us do this rhyme-and-chime."

And I just want to say one thing: Ice seems to be breaking all over the place. We have an elementary principal here, and we're talking about -- do you see those little children over there? That's immersion.

We're talking about putting in a strand -- there's, I think -- how many kindergartens we got?

MS. LONGFELLOW: Five.

MR. ARCHAMBAULT: We got five. Possibility of one of them going immersion and going up. That's just a crack, but hopefully, that leads to more and more.

Because I think, like the Blackfeet have proven, if we talk -- because if you don't learn English in America on that reservation. You'll go home and see it on TV and all. So don't worry about learning English.

But if you learn your language, it fortifies your insides. It gives you purpose: Who and why you are living.

We don't get that right now. It's not right. We're not getting it in the schools. We deserve the chance to do that.

So that's what I say: Go back and say, "Change that law." Get that rule-making committee going and give us the right to have tribal control.

Obama said, "Tribal control." How do you do that? Amend those laws. Write recommendations to do that.

They're going on right now. Have you guys made any recommendations like that? To change No Child Left Behind?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: The ESEA reauthorization, the various drafts that get done, come through for comment. You're talking about both the administrative world and the political world.

The political world makes the laws or changes and upgrades them. The administrative side of that puts them into place however they get changed or altered.

And so, there's a balance between those two. Yes, we get involved in the drafts. Whether they take our advice or our comments is entirely out of our hands.

MR. ARCHAMBAULT: Well, I've talked to Donahue --

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Yes.

MR. ARCHAMBAULT: -- what's her name, Attorney Washburn. All these people say, "Change that 25 CFR 30."

Because say Congress right now changes section 11.11, the AYP. And what happens if they don't change that Indian law? Then you're back to square one.

So you got to change that first, and then you can change that other law. Who's doing that?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: And what you're saying is absolutely a strong foundation for the direction to take.

The reality is, your political side, the tribal leadership in this room, has a stronger voice than Ron or I do.

Not because we don't agree with it; but because we are not even allowed to speak to a Congressional person unless they call us, and then we have an office that has to be present to do so.

So as much as I would like to say that the change is something we have a hand in, I feel probably more constrained as an employee of the government than I did as a private person.

MR. J. TAKEN ALIVE: What about -- if I could, again -- for the record, Jesse Taken Alive -- what about seeking an endorsement from this process to what we would put on the table? Can you do that?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Yes.

MR. J. TAKEN ALIVE: Okay. That's encouraging.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Yes.

MR. J. TAKEN ALIVE: Because I understand the nuts and bolts, if you will, of not being able to lobby, et cetera, et cetera.

But I'm sure, for both of you, it's good to come out here, where you can meet with issues that involve human beings, not human doings.

And it's frustrating. I can only imagine what it's like, having gotten the chance to serve as Tribal Chairman in the mid-90s. It's absolutely frustrating.

And I lend all my support and prayers to the chairmen who go out there, because it's almost like going into a foreign country, especially when you meet with OMB.

The older people tell us in our language, they say that -- (speaks Lakota). The interpretation of what they say is, "Our children have been suffering, because it's important to always remember that the education that we respect comes from Europe, and that it doesn't come from us."

So when we talk about Indian education, right now, it's essentially the same as other education endeavors throughout the country because of what was outlined here in real general terms. So it's important to keep that and be cognizant of that.

Because, on the political side, as you said, it's all about interpretations. It's all about interpretations.

And we feel that we can do those interpretations as partners. Not as adversaries, but as partners with a common goal and common interests.

Because, if we're going to talk treaties -- and a lot of the federal folks do that, which I appreciate -- our role is to latch onto that.

Because if we allow them to continue the bilateral interpretation of those, we'll have let our children down.

So when I hear a federal legislator talk treaties, I get excited, because there's that opportunity to be a partner with that person and use our interpretation, as well.

So I'm encouraged, you know. I always want to look at the glass half-full -- with quality water; I want to keep saying that today -- and, I guess: How can we get the resources out here?

And I'm encouraged to see Dr. Schopp out here. We've had some good meetings, and we're looking forward to proceeding forward.

It's important for us to say, on behalf of this partnership that we have with South Dakota, that what we're looking at are opportunities such as charter schools to be implemented on Indian reservations in South Dakota.

Implement it to this degree that they'll be put on the table, and it's up to the school if they want to take that up.

You know, it's providing the opportunity for schools, public schools, to look at charter schools. Indian public schools, or schools on a reservation.

That's really, really important because we're very much familiar with what could happen if it gets misconstrued with some our friends off the rez, and how they may not like that in South Dakota.

And we respect that. We're aware of that, and we respect that. So that's really important. If you're to help us spread this message, it is for Native reservations in South Dakota at this point in time only.

And it's encouraging that that's a step that we made. But in our view, there's more steps that will be taken. But nevertheless, it's really encouraging to see Dr. Schopp here with us.

So again, please help us endorse: Let the president know that those brown people out in the Dakotas, they got some pretty good ideas. They're just waiting for some resources. Thanks.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you. We have staff in the back of the room motioning that we are past the breaktime that we were supposed to have in our agenda.

I think that we've started some conversations that are incredibly valuable. I don't want to stop this, but I do want to take a fast five minutes, so everybody can think about what we're talking about, and then we'll come right back.

(Off the record from 10:47 a.m. until 11:09 a.m.)

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Welcome back, folks. What the people at the back of the room were trying desperately to tell us before we broke is that there have been folks on the telephone who thought they were able to connect with us, and they were not able to hear us.

And so, they have been e-mailing and texting to the people at the back table, trying to get a word in on what was going on to let them know -- to let us know that they couldn't be heard -- or, that they couldn't hear us.

And so, we need to do a quick recap of where things have been this morning, and then we'll go back into the statements.

We've done a bit of a change in our agenda. Lucy has graciously agreed to stay with us for the day, and we'll have her speak with us at a little bit later time.

The conversation that began before we took our break is too important for us to just stop. And so, we'll do a quick update, and we'll come back to our tribal leaders who want to have a word before we go into lunch.

And then, the option is that we may do a working lunch. And so, go out and bring your lunch back in, and we'll continue to have the conversation that has begun.

As an update, the agenda this morning had the opening ceremonies from the local community, including the immersion school.

There were remarks from Chairman Dave Archambault II, and an intro welcome of people who came for the meeting.

We opened with summaries of what is taking place in the White House Initiative and in the Office of Indian Education.

Within the packets the people have in front of them here in the room today, there are three maps of an update of the 2014-2015 student counts and funding sources for formula demonstration and professional development.

We also talked about the Native Youth Community Project Program, which will replace our discretionary programs of Title VII for this year only.

The other programs will be available next year, but not this year. So we won't do a professional development or the other discretionary option for 2015; we will do them back in 2016.

The other program that was mentioned under the Office of Indian Education was the State-Tribal Education Partnership.

When I left on Friday, that is scheduled for publication in the Federal Register this week. It could be as early as Wednesday.

I think that would have been the earliest it could have been published. But the STEP grant application is coming up. And then, Ron?

MR. LESSARD: Hello, everyone. What I did this morning, just to give everyone on the phone some information: We did just an overview of some of the projects and initiatives that the White House Initiatives on American Indian and Alaska Native Education is involved with now with the Administration and the Department of Education.

One is the President's Generation Indigenous Initiative. The other one was the School Environment Listening Tour that the White House Initiative conducted recently.

I gave an update on following the School Environment Listening Tour, which predominantly was around public schools, with the Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Education.

Now, the Office of Civil Rights is looking to work with the BIE and the Department of Justice around those similar things, which included bullying, offensive imagery, mascot issues; things like that.

And then also, an update on the Native Language Memorandum of Agreement, which was the first time three federal agencies came together to discuss this really critical issue around the retention and revitalization of Native languages.

And then also, the revised tribal consultation policy, which has come out today.

MR. FRAZIER: Do I got to repeat myself, too?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: No. All of the information that was presented this morning will be in transcript form, available on the website as soon as we are able to get our edited copy back from the transcriptionist at the back of the room, and those will be available for everybody then.

What I can tell the people on the telephone is that we have had a very spirited conversation, both about BIE education and public education, and where they come together and when they don't come together, and concerns about how to be more responsive to tribal governments in education.

There was a question during the break about whether this is a listening session or a consultation session, and I think it depends on your interpretation.

Every consultation should be a listening session. If they are out, consulting with the tribal leaders, then they should be hearing what those tribal leaders say. So in that regard, yes, it is a listening session.

Is it a consultation session? Under the Department of Education's old rule for consultation, this is the consultation process.

And we have brought to the tribal leaders in the past a number of different things that have come before. We've heard comments, and we've taken them back for change.

One was on the definition of a "reservation," and that it was for the Office of -- I'm sorry, their acronym has changed since I'm familiar with them, and what they were doing is vocational education.

And I don't have the acronym to quote correctly today, just because I'm trying to think on my feet, and that doesn't always work.

They changed their definition, and the comments that were made during the session were part of how they went back and edited what they had brought to the meeting.

We also brought the STEP program; we also brought the Native Youth Community Project to consultation sessions like this. And in that, we heard lots of comments.

In the STEP program, we opened it up from being only on-reservation public schools to being on- or near- public schools, because many of our reservations don't have public schools in the middle of the reservation. And so, we were confining without being intentional.

The other was to include BIE tribally controlled schools as part of that partnership, and that's because our kids move from these systems to our -- back and forth.

(Garbled speech comes over the Polycom.)

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Is that a -- does that mean that we have a question from somebody on the phone? Okay. So we'll proceed again with the testimony that we were hearing before. Thank you.

MR. R. TAKEN ALIVE: Thank you. Welcome to Standing Rock. My name is Robert Taken Alive, and I represent the Running Antelope District of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe.

In the audience, I do have two school board members from the Sitting Bull School Board, and I've always stated to the school board and to my community that the direction of the school board is the direction that I take for them on the Tribal Council.

Now, that's a BIE school board, but we do have four public schools on Standing Rock, and it's important to recognize those demographics for Standing Rock, simply because you have one of the public schools in North Dakota and three of them in South Dakota.

Now, with that being said, we developed a discussion into the treaties and education. Education is the root for any society. The development of that education is the development of a society and/or a people.

And I say that because, on our reservations, specifically Standing Rock, our reading level in our community is about a sixth- to eighth-grade reading level.

Now, with that being said, the responsibility of that lies within our political system. Also, it lies within our government system, in terms of the federal government.

There's a few factors that play into that, and I'll just share a couple of those -- or, a few of those factors.

One of them is being: The majority of our teaching staff for our public schools and for our BIE schools live off the reservation.

They drive onto our reservation; and then school's out, and then you'll see a line of cars leaving, and most of those are educators.

And in most towns in South Dakota, most of the teaching staff live within the town, within the township or the infrastructure of where they're teaching. So they know what needs to be done personally and professionally, bringing that into the classroom.

It's important for me to say this because in our teachings -- you know, teaching of the language, teaching of the culture -- we have a word for that: It's called "wahwala."

Wahwala means it's being taught every day throughout everything we do; role modeling it; giving advice; being available so that, when you come into that classroom, that student knows you personally and respects you professionally.

In our community, we have people that practice our culture and traditions, and they're respected because they role model it every day.

Now, we get into education. Our teachers, administrators leave the reservation. Where is the role modeling?

So one of the things that's important is to look at that in terms of: How do we adjust that for our students?

Another piece that I wanted to share: When you're getting classroom management training, you are to provide a free and safe learning environment for your students. Okay.

On the reservation, and on Standing Rock, I live here; I grew up in my community; I was raised here; my K-12 was in McLaughlin Public School.

The safe and the learning environment isn't here, simply because we're having, at the Tribal Council level, some issues with our tribal or BIA law enforcement.

And that learning environment doesn't just stop when they leave that classroom or leave that school. It keeps going, you know; it develops.

And it's my true belief, as a person that came through that system that, where I'm at today -- as a tribal leader -- was given to me from, of course, my parents; my grandparents; and, ultimately, my community.

I do have my undergraduate from the University of Mary, and I do have my graduate studies from Oglala Lakota College and USD.

And in development of an education for any of our students starts off with a safe learning environment.

And it's very imperative that that's provided to our communities and our families on the reservation.

Also, another piece that's very important -- and I try to narrow it down to the ones I'm sharing with -- and that's curriculum development.

Now, we have the push for the larger curriculum being brought to our public schools. However, when you do demographics -- when I say "demographics," I mean employment -- where do our students get employed? Are we looking at 100 percent of our students going to college?

Now, if you look at the poverty level on the reservation -- specifically, Standing Rock, specifically, Running Antelope District -- our parents don't have the earning power to pay for a state school.

And then, if you're athletically inclined and you have that ability, you'll get a scholarship.

Now, with everything's that being said in that term, it's imperative that we need to start developing curriculum for our infrastructures on our reservation, our two-year programs, our certification for nine-month programs.

Some reality for our students in that curriculum development -- and I like my Omaha relatives talking about the Head Start.

Now, our Head Start program in our community: We have a Head Start, and we have a kindergarten in our BIE school. Okay. So we got two preschools going on in Running Antelope.

Now, with that being said, the numbers are going to be low for one of them, one of the programs.

That development, that bridge, that curriculum starts from that, when that child walks into that building -- or, is carried kicking and screaming, like I was. I had a hard time going to first grade.

But, you know, it's imperative that we support our families, our parents, in that development of a curriculum.

And we do have professionals that can develop those curriculums from preschool. And now you have the Sitting Bull College to high school.

And interning: When I interned, I interned off one of the local schools off the reservation.

And in that high school, their curriculum went into a two-year program, a vocational program, and two four-year programs.

So their high school seniors also, for the job availability in that town, those students were being prepared for the next step in their life.

So they had next-to-no behavioral issues, simply because that plan was being developed from when they started kindergarten all the way through 12th grade and beyond.

My daughter had a short experience with going to school there, and all of her class that graduated would be going on their fourth year.

And 82 percent of that graduating class is still going for their four-year undergraduate programs. So these are some of the things that are there that need to be put together -- and again, for our families.

And the reason why I sit here as a tribal leader is because I believe in our Lakota language. I believe in our culture.

And it was given to me to do this, to give back to my community. And for me to give back four years is not what my community gave me in terms of the language and the culture, and that development of being a person, like my brother stated; not a number.

So I say that out of respect for our community because every day, our community changes: We have a birth; we have a death.

So in between those life spans of the birth and the death, if we can make a positive change in our educational system from the State, from the Department of Education.

When the President came, he asked me, "What are two things you'd like to see, Councilman, in your community?"

One of them was clean drinking water, which started in November. We got our water line into our community. And we're still working on outlying communities. And the second one was a good education.

Now, a good education: Now, that's yet to be defined, you know. And I always say, when we finished our program at OLC, Vine Deloria said to us via video, he says to us, "I have to apologize for you giving up that part of Lakota for getting a higher education degree."

And that always takes me back to my father saying to me, "Always remember where you come from."

So that's the reason why I wanted to share that, because my community, the Running Antelope community, has had a lot of success in terms of education, but it's undocumented.

And the reason why I say that is because our grandpa, Sitting Bull, comes from there, and his mind was beyond, you know, what -- you couldn't give him a diploma.

He'd seen beyond. Way, way farther than, at the time, even the federal government. So I just wanted to share that with you.

And hopefully, we do have some turnaround on this. We'll be looking for it in the development of our community and of our reservation here on Standing Rock.

And I'd like to also recognize Lucy. She and I graduated -- Fredericks -- she and I graduated high school together. So I'd just like to recognize that.

But thank you for giving me the time, and thank you for coming to Standing Rock.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you.

MR. CLIFFORD: My name is C.J. Clifford, and I'm from the Oglala Sioux tribe. I also serve as the education chairman.

But Ms. Joyce, I didn't understand that double-Dutch talk that you was talking, about the consultation and the listening session. I've been at it for a number of years, and particularly on consultations.

Number one, there was several things that should have been done for this to be considered a consultation.

So I would like to have you clarify that this is a listening session, for the simple fact that you didn't follow the old rules of consultation, let alone follow the new rules with the executive order that President Barack Obama put out.

And a true consultation is tribal leaders dealing with decision-makers out of Washington, not a messenger; no offense.

And earlier, you said, "We are not allowed to talk to so-and-so," but, you know, in all reality, this goes back to the way the government has short-cutted Native Americans throughout Indian Nations in the fact that you sent out five items that you would like to talk about.

Did you notify any of our tribes here in the Dakotas on these subject matters? And did you talk about, "Is this something you would like to consult on?" And if not, why not?

Because true consultation is inviting everybody to talk about subject matters that is relevant to what's happening today.

A month or so ago, we also had an opportunity to visit with Mr. Roessel. And he come down, and his listening session: He tried to deem it a consultation with the Oglalas.

And we're not buying that for the simple fact he, too, in a very similar manner, acted in the same way that you guys are doing today: By giving us these subjects and saying, "We're going to consult with you on this."

Now, these plans are already put into effect; these plans are going to be moving forward, whether we agree or not. And do you think that's a true consultation?

And so, again, my job today is to remember who I am and where I come from. And I come from a very strong tribe.

And I also have a very strong bloodline that I, too, live with. And my language and my spirituality go together.

But just for another reminder: Ms. Joyce, I would like for you to clarify that double-Dutch talk on the true meaning of consultation versus the true meaning of a listening session. And do you -- from your voice, I would like to hear your definition of a consultation.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: I'm sorry you feel like that was double-Dutch. I didn't intend it to be. I was trying to explain a couple of things of the history of the education process that has been called "consultation."

And I would agree with you: It hasn't allowed for as much input as it should have. There is a change in process to that way we do consultation, but it isn't in place.

You have the draft that we have available today. By the way, for everybody else in the room, it's being sent out to the list-serve this afternoon, and it has been posted on the page -- now?

Not yet. It will be posted. If you check within a day, you should have it available on that website we gave you, so try to look for that.

Before it gets approved, it has to be out here for conversations, and for the next 90 days, that's exactly what it is. So you are the first people to see it.

The process of doing consultation between all of these different agencies has grown up since the President's executive order a couple of years ago, in 2012, I think? '11, '12?

And so, the executive order directed all of the agencies of the federal government to consult with the tribes. But it didn't tell them how to do it.

And so, all of the different agencies have created different kinds of processes that have been used.

And what was done in the Department of Ed was that we had national activities we committed a fund of that, and we were doing listening sessions to at least four sites each year since 2010. We have been following that.

We could have not had this session, and waited until a later time in the year, when something might have been more formally ready. But it needs your voice to become more formally ready.

So we're in a catch-22 of how do we get your comments into the documents as it's forming and still present to you what we want you to comment on?

And so, I agree with you: It is hard to do a true consulting with the tribes. And we are not the highest members in the office.

I have a hard time getting Arne Duncan to small meetings, even when they're in D.C. It's a challenge. His time is in high demand.

You had the secretary; you had the President in this region of the country. That was an incredible opportunity. And they did hear you.

They have come back with instructions to agencies to make changes in how we do business. And we are attempting to do that as quickly as we can. It isn't a fast process. So yes, on that realm, today is a listening session.

MR. CLIFFORD: Thank you very much. I just needed to clarify that so when I go home, President Steele, when he shakes me down, I'm going to be able to tell him that I got my message across.

But on several hands that I can't count because I only have two, but we have a school problem here in Indian Country, in its operation and maintenance.

And it affects all of our schools, not just my schools where I come from, but all BIA-funded schools.

One of the things that the Department of Ed sent word to was that they are waiving the spending regulations on the title dollars so that we could fix our schools up with our title dollars.

I, to this day, have not received any documents where the Department of Ed is authorizing that. And I sure would like to see it because they said that is how we're going to fix our schools up: We're going to rob Peter to pay Paul.

We're taking our title dollars -- and not only our title dollars, but prior to that, we're taking our ISEP dollars to fix our schools and pay our bills, our light bills, and things of that nature.

Now, you are in the office of where that particular note comes from, and that's what Dr. Roessel sent out.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Unfortunately, I am not in that office. There are different offices. The Department of Interior administers the Bureau of Indian Education. I think it's unfortunate our two names look so familiar -- so similar; they are different offices.

Under the Bureau of Indian Education, you have 186 grants- and contracts-operated schools, and all of those schools operate throughout Indian Country through ISEP counts and O and M and transportation, and those are all handled under the Bureau of Indian Education.

Under the Department of Education, my office is the Office of Indian Education, and it's a grant-making office.

We handle the formula program; we handle the demonstration grants, and we handle the professional development under Title VII of the ESEA, otherwise known as No Child Left Behind.

It is up for reauthorization. We anticipate that there will be many changes. In the drafts that I have seen, as we are trying to have voice into what is changing, there are significant shifts.

And I have no idea how it will finally look, but the talk is positive. The talk is actually incorporating many of the things that people have said in Indian Country.

So I think that's there's an attempt to do exactly what you're asking. I'm sorry, but I do not have any control over your O and M.

MR. CLIFFORD: Okay. So then, we have a problem up there with Bob and Ed not visiting each other; or they're divorced, and they still don't want to visit each other.

But we're talking about the Generation Indigenous Initiative where the President is asking for 50K.

My question on that, since it's on a listening subject: What is realistic to accomplish this with this amount?

And is it going to be handled with equity and fairness, not just given to the national organization?

I believe the tribes would want access and a way to sustain funds and resources, where is it going to be utilized for the benefit of Indian people. Do you guys have anything on that?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: You're looking at the 2016 budget? Is that what you're looking at?

MR. CLIFFORD: I understood it to be this year, partially with this year, and the remaining next year.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: I believe what you are referring to is the money that I have on account this year, the \$3.1 million, which will fund, for the first time ever, Native Youth Community projects, where the projects are developed based on needs assessment of the community, whatever that community chooses to address within that.

The overall goal of college-ready or employment-ready -- college- or career-ready. Now, a moment ago, there was a conversation about not everybody wants to go to college. We understand that.

So it could be like in Alaska, where they're talking subsistence careers. So there are all of those in between.

The community has to determine for itself how you look at that term of "college- and career-ready," because it isn't a definition that we have confined to being college students.

The grants this year will be awarded. The invitation for applications will be out by the end of April, and they will go through peer review. They will be awarded by September 30th. It will be a handful, but it will be a start.

The request in the budget: The President has asked for \$50 million as an increase for next year, 2016.

You know what the papers are full of today. I want there to be \$50 million available; I don't know what we'll get.

Whatever we get will also go out under the same format, looking for the community to identify its priority and to create a partnership to address it.

MR. CLIFFORD: Okay. So on the same line, is -- actually, how many jobs were created to make sure that this operation goes through with your department? Was there any jobs created? And if so --

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Zero. Zero. We are doing it within our office without additional help at this time. So yes, my cry to people is: If we get the \$50 million, I'm not sure how we're going to get them out in time.

MR. CLIFFORD: And is this going to go out to all the 565 tribes, or how is that working out?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: It is not an entitlement; it is a grant. They will have to apply. They will have to determine what it is they want to focus on and how they want to create their partnership to do so.

MR. CLIFFORD: Okay. Let's go back to Mr. Taken Alive's comment of treaties. Okay. So this should actually be an entitlement.

Any education dollars coming through should be entitlement dollars, and I think that you would like to -- I would like to see you carry that back to Washington, and let them know that these dollars need to be entitlement dollars.

This shouldn't be something in education that I have to compete with my nephew, Dave, over there, to have our children and teachers over here competing for dollars so that they can have a better education.

These dollars should automatically be there. Anything in that fashion, whether it be natural resources -- whatever it might be: Education, roads. I'll give up a few minutes to my colleague, Jackie.

MS. SIERS: My name is Jackie Siers. I'm with the Oglala Sioux tribe, and I also sit on the education committee. I'm C.J.'s vice chair.

And anyway, just listening to the Mr. Archambault that spoke earlier regarding AYP. A few weeks ago or more, on the radio -- I mean, on the TV, the news, there were people indicted for cheating to make AYP: Staff, teachers, administrators, you know.

I hope it doesn't have to come to that with our local schools here on our reservations, because right now, the pressure is on for these teachers and administrators to maintain funding, to get more funding, and that's been an issue.

Our children are not learning what they're supposed to be learning. And in Indian Country, we deal with a lot of social issues.

So I think we're really, in a way, unique down this way because of our urban-rural areas of getting our children the best, necessary education as we can.

And one of the things is, you know, he brought up the resources. We need the resources to address these issues.

You know, recently, we've had a lot of suicide on our reservation, and that really hits home; hits our families hard, our people, and our reservation.

As leaders, you know, what do we do? You know, that's our concern. And we can't really focus and provide all this -- the necessary health issues that we're facing with our children: Our behavioral, social, with our family.

So those are the type of things that I hope that South Dakota, you know, and the Department of Education can help in our areas of that concern.

And also, he talked about language: Requirements, you know, things like that. We have a lot of people that are willing to come in and help with our language.

But then there's the area of getting credentials to teach these things, and we can't expect that from our Elders: To start school over.

You know, we have a way of teaching; those should be -- a part of our education is to bring people in. Maybe a course to just help them with the structure of a classroom setting, or something.

But nothing too stringent. That makes it an obstacle for us to get our language out there and our culture to our children, because that is something that we need to continue to strive on with our reservation and, you know, things like that.

And also, your 90-day comment on the consultation and coordination of structure, here, that you presented in our draft.

You know, after the 90 days, is there another meeting to follow up to see if anybody had any comments or changes, and if that was implemented?

You know, those are the types of things that I'd like to know in the future: If we're going to be absolutely heard on this.

Because sometimes, this is just presented to us today. And if, you know, we want to see anybody that had changes to this -- because I'm going to, kind of, compare it, when the 90 days is up, to see if there was any reviews, or people had comments for change.

And another comment I had is on the agenda. You know, you had "Regional Perspective on Indian Education," but I don't see South Dakota on there. So that was, kind of, a concern of mine, too.

You had Standing Rock and North Dakota, you know, but nothing for South Dakota, and we're kind of, like, in the same region. Thank you.

MR. LESSARD: Jackie, I wanted to say one thing -- can you hear me okay? Oklahoma, through some of our comprehensive centers, they're called, they worked with many of the Oklahoma tribes and the State to get the State to change the certification for Native language teachers.

And that was really important because that allowed the tribes -- and I don't have all the details -- but it allowed the tribes to provide input to certifications so that -- the best language teachers are not necessarily the ones the State has, based on the State criteria.

So I know that there's a lot of effort around the country to do that: To change the certification.

And not just within -- promoted by the department, but this is just through state-tribal relations.

So the other thing, just real quick, I just wanted to mention -- and to Mr. Clifford too -- that this is probably the main part of that moving forward with, aside from informing you on things -- Generation Indigenous and some of the things going on with that -- we do want to hear, especially with your expertise around consultation: Is 90 days appropriate?

What kind of process do you want to see? Those kinds of things. This is an opportunity, going forward, to provide us with some of those comments, so that, you know, we can --

MR. CLIFFORD: You know -- can you hear me? Harold, can you hear me?

MR. FRAZIER: I think so. Can you hear me?

MR. CLIFFORD: Dealing with consultation, now: It's under revision at this point in time.

One of the things I also got to remind myself and remind you, also, is that we are big on land-based treaty tribes.

MR. LESSARD: Mm-hmm.

MR. CLIFFORD: And I believe that, here, in Indian Country, in the Sioux Nation, is the fact that we are different than down south. We are different than the eastern tribes, or the western tribes.

We are not a Public Law 280 tribe. We are actually treaty tribes. So that, when we are dealing with this revised consultation, because of the way that NCEI is set up, even though we're large land-based tribes and we're a big tribe, we just don't got that voting power to make things happen at NCEI.

So the Dakotas are separated now through what they call "coat" (phonetic). I believe that it would only be out of respect for the tribes here in the Dakotas is that, you bring a meeting on consultation, particularly for the Dakota tribes, and we look at separation, there, under large land-based treaty tribes.

Mr. Frazier was giving me the signal, so I -- a friendly reminder to you all that we are large land-based treaty tribes, and we're a lot different than all the other tribes in the Indian Nation, besides the Navajo.

MR. FRAZIER: Harold Frazier, Cheyenne River, with a comment on what you said about how you have to get state certification for Native language teachers.

I have to disagree with that. I don't think -- one of the things -- I took this course, and this word "itokala" (phonetic) was written up on the board.

And this young lady got up and put the dashes and all and whatever. And she got it right, but she couldn't say it and didn't know what it meant.

And what was even more astounding to me was when she said that she had 14 years of Lakota language. So I think it's more of an oral. That's where we are.

And I think the State, you know, as far as how do we develop that: I don't even think we should work with the State.

You know, we have a treaty with the federal government, with you guys. And you guys are saying, you know, you're going to give it back. Well, then, give it back.

So I disagree with getting our language teachers certified through the State, filing paperwork.

What I see back home is that's what consumes a lot of their time: Documenting. But in reality, do you have a fluent speaker? That's success.

So that's something I think. It shouldn't be new because, like I said, I think it's been around for 20 years that the BIA, you know, started this. The federal government did.

So you should have the kinks worked out by now. It's not like we don't. So I really disagree with working -- getting State accreditation or certification for our language teachers. I don't think it needs to be.

MR. LESSARD: Well, personally, I do agree with you. But I was just letting you know what's been happening in Oklahoma.

Because there's been a lot of problems over the years of certification. Who the tribe says is a qualified language teacher may not, by the State or in the public school system, be considered a -- you know, based on the State's regs.

But they've been able to let the tribe make that criteria. It's up to the community to decide who is the best language teacher.

MR. FRAZIER: But then the money goes. That's what happens.

MR. LESSARD: Right.

MR. FRAZIER: If we don't follow their steps, then they don't give us the funding.

MR. LESSARD: This gentleman.

MR. USES THE KNIFE: Raymond Uses the Knife. (Speaks in Lakota.) Good morning, everyone. I think it's still morning. My name is Raymond Uses the Knife.

I'm a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Council, and I'd like to say a few things as far as some of the issues we've dealt with over the years. I'll start with the Lakota language.

Back in 1990, when I first got elected on the Tribal Council, the first thing that came across my desk was the Native American Languages Protection Act that was signed by the first Bush that came through.

And then, I sat with it, probably, for about a year or two, just looking at it. And I thought, "Hey, this is an opportunity for tribes to implement Native language programs within our schools."

Then I got to reading it and realized that it did say that only federally funded schools can partner with the tribes and implement curriculum within the schools.

So then, over the years -- it's been 25 years, now, since we've implemented our ordinance: The Lakota Language Protection Act of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe.

And, like many of you have said, it's still in its infancy stages, even after 25 years, because the law reads that only federally funded schools have to comply with the law.

And there's no funding that came with it. It was an unfunded mandate, so to say. So the schools are scrambling to try to find money.

And fortunately, after a decade of working with the schools, I believe in the '90s, we finally got our ordinance passed.

But it was a -- there was internal conflicts, too, at the time, I'll have to say; I have to be truthful. Even our own tribal members were opposed to the ordinance. But we overcome that. We overcame it.

And so now, we have one hour of curriculum every day for every student. But only in the BIA-funded schools.

So we've got, like, four state public schools that aren't required, under the law, to implement language curriculum.

And so now, what we have is -- we have no funding, really, to begin with. So that's one thing I wanted to make sure that you understood.

It's an unfunded mandate, and we're scrambling with what resources we have within the BIE to implement language programs.

And also, the language teachers -- I'm the chairman of the Wo Lakota Committee. And the language teachers are -- a few that are unequal in the status as teachers.

So we've implemented an "Eminent Scholar Status" for our Lakota language teachers. But again, without funding.

So if the law could be amended, changed somehow so that there could be funding attached to it.

I don't even know if it has to be reauthorized or not. Perhaps, maybe, it's after 50 years; I don't know. Or if it's in perpetuity; I don't know. But if you could check on the Languages Protection Act, I would sure appreciate that.

And then, we also have, like I mentioned, partnerships with the public schools. We have our BIA school right there in Eagle Butte, and then we have four state public schools, and we do have one grant and one contract school.

And it's a struggle for us. And I've got funding down, because of lack of funding, you know -- in the schools, if you listen to the teachers, they'll tell you that they're underpaid, of course.

South Dakota is supposed to be the lowest salaried teachers in the country. And the retention process is also a problem.

Our teachers -- there's just not enough teachers in these schools. And so, the teachers are overburdened, overworked.

And, sad to say, our Native Lakota kids are just pushed through the system. They're pushed out the door, because they just don't want to deal with them, you know. There's just not enough teachers.

So that, I wanted to say: The funding is lacking. And Ms. Jackie over there mentioned a little bit about social problems.

As anywhere in the country, we have them, too. And one of the problems that we have is bullying.

And that's part of your process, the consultation process, that you want us to consult with you about.

And I believe we need the ratio of 1 counselor for every 100 students. Right now, it's, like, about 1 counselor for 1,000. And you can't help students with that ratio.

Counselors are very important. And preferably, they will be Lakota, such as Eminent Scholar Status individuals working with our youth.

And there has to be more training in the area of social counseling.

Parental involvement is very important. The lack of resources on the reservation is so -- the lack is so much that the parents don't know what to do.

And we need resources; we need to be able to network. We need to be able to involve the parents in all activities of the school, everything: From sports to academics.

And of course, we have gang activity, like everywhere else; drug abuse; and suicides. We just had a suicide a couple of days ago.

And so, it's really a burden on the families, and on the leadership, like you said. We don't know what to do. That's why I request a 1-to-100 ratio for counselors.

And I know it's mentioned that -- you mentioned that Secretary Arne Duncan was the cabinet member, right? Cabinet status?

MR. LESSARD: Mm-hmm.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: (Nods head.)

MR. USES THE KNIFE: And hopefully, some of these consultations and our words will reach them, because he meets with the President every month or so, I'm sure.

And again, like my "kola," here, said, these are competitive grants. We should be able to try to work out a system where we can be entitled to the funding. As much as we need, right?

And I also wanted to say that consultation is a hit-and-miss: Sometimes you get it right, and sometimes you don't.

I've been here for quite a while, so I know. I always remember what my grandmother used to tell me. (Speaks in Lakota.)

And that means, "Go out and look for what is good." And education is a need. Thank you.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: I understand that the lunch is ready. If it is agreeable with the folks at the table, we can go out and bring our lunches back in, and we'll continue the conversation. Nods or yea-nay?

MR. J. TAKEN ALIVE: Could I ask my friend to offer the meal prayer?

(Raymond Uses the Knife gives the meal prayer in the Lakota language.)

(Off the record from 12:06 p.m. until 12:41 p.m.)

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Since our agenda has been pretty dramatically changed today, you'll see up here on the board the folks who have signed up to be in public comment this afternoon.

And we have several presentations from this morning that were supposed to happen, but we pre-empted to have the conversation, so we'd like to turn things around a little bit.

We have a gentleman who's going to need to leave us right away. And so, Mr. McDonald is going to talk to us. He's from UT Tech.

Could I also add -- I'm sorry; I have two or three notes in front of me -- a thank-you to the Standing Rock Department of Education, and for sponsoring the lunch. That was incredibly gracious. We appreciate it very much.

Also to Standing Rock for sponsoring today, and for Sitting Bull College for hosting us.

It's kind of an interesting room. I'm not quite sure I've ever set up in a round room before. It's been a little challenging to make sure that we can get eye contact with everybody.

But it's a nice place to be, so thank you very, very much for your assistance both before the day and during the day.

DR. McDONALD: Can you hear me? Oh, talk into the mike. Start acting like a pow-wow announcer.

I want to just echo what you just shared: I want to thank the Standing Rock Sioux tribe for allowing us to come into their land and share a few thoughts in regard to education.

I also want to thank you, Dr. Vermillion, for hosting us at your beautiful college. And I want to thank those who provided prayer and posted our colors for us today.

My name is Russ McDonald. I'm president of United Tribes Technical College. I just wanted to echo a few thoughts over the course of this morning's comments that, I think, are going to give us some ideas for how we might remedy some of these comments, here. And a lot of this pertains back to funding.

First of all, when we look at the research -- and being a former researcher and assistant professor at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine -- what we know, and when we looked at the literature, is that -- and there is an abundance of it out there -- is that culture is important for enhancing academic success.

And so, we know that. The research tells us that, and we know that already ourselves. So if somebody is more grounded in their culture and has more of a sense of self and identity, then they're more likely to succeed in the classroom.

So we had some good conversations over the break, here, at lunch, and I think that we will continue to emphasize that. Not only that, but the spirituality that that's embedded within our culture.

I was looking at a couple grants that we have at United Tribes, and it's called the "Sage and Cedar Grants," and these are focused on educating students who are interested in elementary education, and we want to first thank you -- to take that back for us -- that we are appreciative of the funds.

I think this is so important for us, in regard to Indian education: The importance of Native teachers within the classroom.

When we have non-Native teachers -- not to take anything away from them, because they are the ones educating -- a lot of them are educating our students right now -- is that we end up having to do culture competency training with those folks.

Whereas, if they're Native teachers, they already have that knowledge. The majority of them have grown up in Native communities.

They already have that knowledge of the concepts of our spirituality, of our culture, and our language.

So that naturally comes out in the teaching; it's in the methods used for whatever they're teaching in the classroom.

I want to just mention Turtle Mountain Community College. They've been having an elementary ed program now for a little over 30 years, and Dr. Davis is here.

And from what I understand at one of the meetings I attended up there at Turtle Mountain -- you gotta say "Turtle Mountains"; that's how they say it -- is that 95 percent of their teachers are now enrolled members of their tribe. So I think that's a model that we might want to consider in regard to these types of grants.

But also, the importance of increasing funding for those types of grants for tribal colleges and universities; but also colleges, in general.

And then, the other part is immersion efforts: Increase funding for that. And then, we got to recognize a couple things about that.

Our time is short. We have our Elders here, and I appreciate the language being shared today.

They grew up with this language their first language. And unfortunately, as they get older, they're passing away.

And so, we have those of us who are trying to get caught up now and try to learn the language and become fluent, but it's not our first language anymore.

And so, we need to rely on those that have come before us to help us to keep as much as we can alive while they're still here with us.

And also, to understand how to tie together not just language and culture, but also that spirituality piece, as previously mentioned.

Second point I want to visit about is rural issues. You know, we talk about the online program development and language development in regard to online for Indian communities.

You know, we're doing some of that over at United Tribes. We're accredited to do the baccalaureate programs online, fully online.

But when you look at Native communities, is that cyber connectivity: There's no high-speed Internet out there.

We just moved up from Fort Tom to Bismarck, and I know, were I lived out in the country, we had the dial-up, but we didn't have the high-speed Internet.

So we couldn't watch Netflix. But if I wanted to take a class and view the videos from the class, I would not have been able to do that, either. So we have to take those into consideration with regard to the population that we serve.

The other part is that we were talking a little bit about GED availability, and those being mainly funded through the State.

And perhaps a consideration is for tribal colleges and Native communities to have their own GED programs in their communities, and to provide the direct funding to them for that -- to that end.

The third point I want to make is about safe environments. We heard a little bit about that today.

This is tied into safe environment with regard to education. We're lacking in law enforcement, we're lacking in funds for courts and child protection issues.

And what happens is, our kids come to school, and they're tired. Maybe they didn't eat that weekend. I know that's happened.

At United Tribes, we give them seconds on Fridays and Mondays to try to help that. And I know the other schools here are also doing the same thing.

And we also have a backpack program, where we send some food home with them on a limited basis.

But those are things that -- the environment has to be a consideration in regard to the education that we're doing. So we just ask that that be remembered.

The other part in regard to tribal courts is that, you know, some of our kids have maybe made some wrong decisions, and so they end up with a record sometimes.

And luckily, our tribal court burned down, so my record's not there no more. But now at Spirit Lake, we have the Peacemaker Circle Sentencing.

So it doesn't go on their record, but they sit with their Elders, and some of their relatives, and some counselors from their community.

And they come up with ideas of how that child can be disciplined in a sense where you go, "You're not supposed to be stealing from Grandma. So now you're going to go and cut her yard, and all the other Grandmas' yards, too."

So things like that, I think, will help out along those lines, in regard to sentencing. The other part in regard to a safe environment is poverty situations.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: I'm sorry. There's a silver car by the garage south, and the horn is honking. If somebody has a South Dakota plate 20P --

MR. CLIFFORD: Harold Frazier's vehicle.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Somebody set off the alarm, and it's out there.

MR. LESSARD: We should consult on it.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: I'm sorry?

MR. FRAZIER: Is one of the headlights broke?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Not before.

DR. McDONALD: So the fourth point is poverty, and just understanding the differences -- understanding the poverty issues that arise and to recognize that these are not our culture, but these are cultures of poverty.

And even to help our own people to realize that: That we weren't always like that. It's because we're poor that -- so it, kind of, sounds bad, because the thing is that we grew up poor, our family.

We had nine kids. But we didn't know we were poor. And I think that's so important to our Indian communities that that be recognized.

So last one is just, again -- I believe it was Mr. Clifford from Oglala who brought up the trust and treaty responsibilities.

Recognize that all tribes within the Great Plains area are treaty tribes, and that's different than these other State-recognized or non-treaty tribes. Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you. The other thing that we omitted from the morning schedule was that we have a combined speaker now.

Lucy Fredericks has agreed to combine her time with Melody Schopp about education in the Dakotas.

And so, we will step back to that, and then we'll resume with what the agenda says we were supposed to be doing this afternoon.

MS. FREDERICKS: Good afternoon. For those of you that don't know me, my name is Lucy Fredericks. I am the director of Indian Education for the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.

I would like to thank Emma Jean Blue Earth and the Standing Rock Tribal Education Department for inviting me to come and speak today on behalf of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.

State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler sends her welcome and wishes that she could have been here today.

But since she was not able to come, she has asked me to come on her behalf and also on behalf of the Department.

We've been asked to speak today about our regional perspective on Indian Education through the Department there, and some of the initiatives that we are working on at the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.

I've been in this position for over two years at the Department. And prior to that, I worked at Standing Rock Elementary School here in Fort Yates for about seven years.

So having that experience, I am familiar with a lot of the challenges that we have in our education system such as teacher shortages, attendance, graduation rates, dropout rates; a lot of different things that we need to look at and find solutions to.

My primary responsibility at the Department is to provide focus planning strategies, looking at programs and implementation of Indian education policy, and looking at program initiatives.

Our goals at the Department are to provide and incorporate teaching strategies that would best be for Native American students throughout the State of North Dakota, provide technical assistance as needed for schools that request it, and do develop and promote appropriate standards for Native students in the school systems.

The Department does fund a lot of the public schools in the State, but we also have schools that do receive both BIE and public-funding grant schools.

And so -- but my job is to work with all schools in North Dakota that serve Native American students.

One of the initiatives at the Department and things that have been accomplished since I've been in the position is that they were able to dedicate this position through the State, as a Director of Indian Education, to meet the needs of American Indian students in the schools.

The position was here at one time, and then it kind of went away for a while, and then, they were able to bring it back. And so, that was one thing that they were glad that they were able to get it back into the State Department.

The other thing that we've done through the State DPI, in collaboration and co-sponsorship with the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission, is we had our First Annual North Dakota Indian Education Summit, which we had last year, July 22nd, at the capitol in Bismarck.

This year, we are having a two-day summit, which will be held on July 7th and 8th at the capitol.

We do have some exciting keynote speakers: We have Dr. Bill Mendoza coming as a keynote speaker; and possibly Monty Roessel from BIE, or a representative from his office.

We have a student panel discussion; we have a tribal college panel discussions that we are going to be doing with 24 breakout sessions in the afternoon; all focused on Indian Education, so we're really proud of that.

We have a couple planning committee members here with us, Donna -- and so, they're on our planning committee, so we're pretty excited about that.

And we would like to welcome everyone and invite them our attend our Second Annual North Dakota Indian Education Summit.

The other thing up at the Department which we have been seeing success in is: We have the SIG funding, the School Improvement Grant funding, through the State. And I know they also have it through BIE.

But we have two schools, Solen and Warwick, that have been funded from the SIG program, and they have shown some really good success with their programs there, so we do offer that at the State.

And then, we also have our website -- the DPI website -- which, under "Native American Education," are a lot of resources that schools can go to and look for different resources that have to do with Indian education.

So those are just some of the things that we're looking at. We do have some short- and long-term goals through the State.

And again, you know, the other one that we're doing is the development of the North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings.

And we are working with the people that also were involved in the Wo Lakota project. So they have done the South Dakota Essential Understandings, and now we're working on the North Dakota Essential Understandings.

So we will be meeting with Elders, having some Elder gatherings, and they will help us in developing those Native American Essential Understandings.

And that will be available for all schools in North Dakota to use as a resource and to start developing their own curriculum within the schools. So that's another initiative that we're working on, also.

So as a Department Director of Indian Education, my main responsibility, again, is to be the direct liaison between the State and the tribes, and to do whatever we can to support and work with our Native American students in our State.

Mr. Chairman Archambault asked me to bring up a point that North Dakota did apply for a waiver from No Child Left Behind and the AYP status.

But one of the things that they wanted us to do in the State is to have a 50 percent reduction in our -- in proficiency for our most lowest-performing students.

The State didn't feel that that was appropriate. And so they, in turn, requested a 25 percent reduction in proficiency.

And they did not agree with that, so we were -- they withdrew the waiver application -- the DPI did -- from No Child Left Behind.

So we just wanted to mention that, because we felt that that was an important point to know what the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction had done through Superintendent Baesler.

And so, again, you know, we are working on different initiatives, and we're always here to listen and to support and do whatever we can through the State Department for our Native students in North Dakota. Thank you. Any questions? All right. Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: We appreciate that. Thank you.

DR. SCHOPP: Well, thank you for this opportunity. I am Melody Schopp, and I am the Secretary of Education for South Dakota.

I had not intended to speak today but to come and listen, but I'm very excited to share some of the things that we've been able to do over this past year, as this is truly my passion.

We are in these positions for a limited period of time. I'm in my second -- the governor was just re-elected, so I've been Secretary of Education for the past four years.

I know that I'm not going to be here forever, and so I have some really specific things that I want to accomplish.

And probably, the biggest thing on my mind has been Indian education for the students in South Dakota.

So some of the things I want to share with you today are a direct result of conversations I've been able to have over this past year with Jesse Taken Alive, Dave Archambault, and other leaders in the state who have really pushed and encouraged and, I think, taken me to task about where we need to go with this work.

We also have an Office of Indian Education. We've had that in place for about the last 10 to 12 years. It was one of those, again, had come and gone.

It has accomplished a number of different things with creating the Oceti Sakowin standards.

We have a strong project with the Wo Lakota work. In fact, we have a learning lab from the U.S. Department of Education coming in within two weeks that we're extremely excited about.

Their work has been recognized by Arne Duncan, and it's been recognized nationally, and we wanted to be able to share that message, and we're very excited about that opportunity that will be coming up.

We are a state that does have a waiver from No Child Left Behind. We have been able to create our own accountability system.

But again, to be able to say that that's taken us far enough, particularly in the area of Native American students and the work that we're doing, is something that I own that we are -- it's not a matter that these children are not able to -- that we have an achievement gap.

I think we have a gap in how we are addressing the needs of Native American students and teaching them appropriately, and I think that's what's important for me, in my position, to own.

And so, the background on that was, again, over the past years, we've had these difficult conversations but exciting conversations in my office over the past year.

We boiled it down to that, to really make a difference, we had to do something different.

And so, for a long time, in Indian education in South Dakota, we put Band-Aids here and there.

We tried new initiatives; we tried a different way of teaching; we get more money, in a SID (phonetic) program, which has helped in some ways.

But bottom line: We continue to not meet the needs of these children. And so our conversation was, has been, and will continue to be, "What do we need to do differently?"

And I'm willing to take on that challenge in whatever way we can to make that happen.

After some conversations about potentially doing, you know -- we were going to move forward, kind of, bullheadedly forward during this last legislative session and move, you know, some charter language forward.

But we knew that we had not done our due diligence in really looking at what's working successfully out there.

So I, along with my friends, we went to the Great Plains Tribal Chairman Council Meeting, and really asked for their support that I would ask for the governor's support of South Dakota to take a stance and say, "We need to do something."

And as a result, he created this executive order that was put out on February 2nd of this year.

And I would like to read to you what is in that executive order, because this is really from what he truly believes is important if we're going to move things forward. So bear with me for a minute, please.

"Executive Order from the Governor of South Dakota: Whereas, schools in South Dakota play a vital role in educating and preparing future generations for post-secondary education and careers;

"And whereas, Native American students have been identified in South Dakota to be at risk for low achievement levels and failure to graduate;

"And whereas, it is fitting and proper for the groups involved in the education of at-risk Native American students should undertake a study of methods to improve the achievement levels and graduation rates of these students.

"It is, therefore, by executive order, directed that the Native American Student Achievement Advisory Council is hereby established, with the following provisions:

"Section 1: The council shall consist of representatives from the Indian Education Advisory Council, the Department of Education, the Department of Tribal Relations, education groups, tribal leaders, individual educators, community members, and parents.

"Section 2: The Native American Student Achievement Advisory Council shall examine the following issues:

"1. Factors affecting achievement of students; 2. Effect of non-traditional schools on student achievement; 3. Methods of financing, establishing, and authorizing non-traditional schools; 4. and other related issues, as determined by the council."

And I think that number four is the most important one. Because what I've learned over the past year is the most important thing we can do is to listen to the people who are experiencing this on a day-to-day basis.

Obviously, we don't have the answers. Obviously, the federal government doesn't have the answers, or we'd be in a different place today, and we wouldn't be sitting right here today.

And I need to own that in my position, and I need to make sure that we are really open to those conversations.

So with that, our first meeting is coming up in about two and a half weeks. We have established a council.

These have been individuals who have been nominated by many of the different tribal leaders and individuals across the state.

We have about 22 members who have been identified and appointed to that council by the governor.

Our first meeting will be a two-day meeting. We have scheduled, tentatively, five two-day meetings over the next few months.

Our director is, then, to prepare a report to the governor and to the legislature by December 1 with recommendations going forward for what we could do, potentially, as far as legislation or pilots, et cetera.

We also have opportunities to go out and look at and explore, you know, other types of places.

I have secured funding from the Bush Foundation to help us with travel support. They are very interested in our work and were passionate about what we have been able to do and, hopefully, where we're going to go with this work, as well.

I'm hopeful. But I also realize that, if we don't do something, shame on us if this is just a matter of us talking and not coming out with a project going forward.

To move that passion forward, I had the opportunity -- along with Kirsten Baesler and other chiefs from around the country -- about three weeks ago, we were in D.C., and we spoke to Arne Duncan for some considerable time.

And over and over again, the four of us who have significant amounts of Native American children in our states reiterated the fact that we've got to do something.

And when they came here, it was good. And I'm glad they came to Standing Rock. To take that further, the President met with us that day, and that was a pretty humbling experience for us, because he stayed and he listened.

And of the one thing he said that's been the most impactful thing he's done was his visit here. He said it haunts him to this day, the stories that he heard from those students.

And each one of us in that conversation reiterated that we need to do something besides talk about this.

And as they were leaving the room, I, again, asked Arne Duncan, I said, "I'm asking you and I'm begging of you to take this work forward, at least with these four chiefs, right now, who are passionate -- north Dakota, Montana, South Dakota, and Arizona -- that we can actually do something and move this work forward."

And I do believe, as a result -- and I know I think you've heard some results of that -- that there was going to be an opportunity to reconvene us to have those conversations.

And so, I'm hopeful that it goes more than just coming up with something; that there would be funds that would be allocated to this, along with at least something.

So we can't change everything overnight. But my message, every time we talk about this, is: We can save a child at a time.

And that's my goal, is that we save every child that we can; we give them what they need to be successful, not what we think the public school system -- which has not done well for them in the past.

So I'm excited and I'm hopeful, but I also know that the work is really, really difficult.

But thank you to Jesse; thank you to Dave; thank you to those who really pushed me and helped me in really trying to get something accomplished.

And so, I'm hoping that I can come back in a year to you and say, "This is where we're at, that we actually have something in place that we're looking at."

I think we all have a lot of ideas, and when we talk to each other, it's always: I'm going to have to give some; you're going to have to give some.

But we've got to come to -- because it's all about the kids. And so, we need to make that happen.

So sorry to take up so much of your time, but I'm really excited to be here today. I think that this is one step, but we all need to listen, and that's what I really came to do today.

So thank you for allowing me to speak. But my goal is, really, to take from this and just help to build what I need to know more about where we need to go with Indian education. So thank you for the opportunity.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you very much. We've had a lot of conversations today; a lot of different perspectives already. And the goal, always, with these is to hear from tribal leaders.

So before we move to the list up on board, we'd like to ask for more comments from tribal leaders who have something they'd like to add.

CHAIRMAN ARCHAMBAULT II: Good afternoon. Dave Archambault from Standing Rock. Not the old, bow-legged guy, but the other one: The straight-legged one.

I just wanted to follow up on what Lucy had said about the letter -- or, the letter that -- the request that the State of North Dakota had made in 2012, and then they pulled it back.

I also gave a letter on December 3rd, 2014 to your department, expressing our disappointment in your department's not approving North Dakota's request for the assessment waiver regarding No Child Left Behind on the AYP.

And I never heard anything back, and I never got a response back. We submitted the letter, and that was something that was -- hopefully, this listening session is something where we can get some feedback on our comments, and that something is actually being done or being heard.

This was a North Dakota request for a waiver, and it was regarding AYP. That's okay, but at the same time, at the tribal level, with AYP -- what AYP does is: It forces us to learn non-Indian ideas or concerns, and it's not tribal control.

Our tribes should have the right to develop our own standards and create our own assessment, and both the federal and the state governments need to recognize our right to create and implement our own AYP, and not judge us against anyone else's curriculum or anyone else's assessment tools, but let us develop that.

The reason I say that is because, if I look at our past, we had the most intelligent human beings, the smartest leaders in the world with the highest level of education that can be obtained.

And they did that without any money -- but I'm not saying don't give us any money; we need the resources, and we need money -- but if we look at our history, we had an educational system that was beyond anybody else's.

And it was encompassed around our kids. It was nurturing our children and their spirit, and their human being.

And when they became adults, they had the utmost respect for Mother Earth, the world, the universe.

And that level of education, that level of maturity, is unknown today, it seems like; we don't see it.

I know that every tribe is going to be at different levels. They're going to have different views. We're not all the same. Not one size can fit all.

It's the same with our schools: All of our schools are different. We're going to be moving in a direction at our own paces, and all I wanted to do -- all I want our tribe to do is to create an opportunity for our kids and our future.

Even though some of us may not be ready today, even though some of us are okay with what BIE is doing, or some of us are okay with what AYP is about, that's all right.

But we still need to create the opportunity for when our tribes are ready, when our tribes or our schools or our communities are ready to move in a direction where we have say in what our kids are going to know and what our kids are going to learn and who our kids are going to be.

But it's encouraging to see and to hear a lot of the movements that are taking place. A lot of times, when tribal leaders get in front of people, we express our concerns; we express our deficiencies; and they're not heard. We're not heard.

But for the first time, when our kids -- the ones who are most impacted by all unjust doings by the federal government -- got to speak, now our voices are being heard, and that's encouraging.

And so, at our level, we as a tribe, our tribal nations, at that level, we have to start listening to our kids.

We have to start trying to change what we're doing. We can't continue to do the same thing and expect different results.

That's the definition of insanity. Insanity says, "Keep doing the same thing over and over and over again, and expect a different result."

So if we're continuing to depend on BIE, if we're continuing to depend on BIA, and we want something different, and every year that goes by, the BIE, the BIA, the Department of Education, whoever it is, provides less and less resources for us, but we keep doing the same thing, we need to start trying to do something different.

And I'm encouraged by this movement that I'm seeing. So thanks for being here and listening. That's all I have to say.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you.

MR. J. TAKEN ALIVE: Excuse me. If I could make some concluding remarks, as well. JOM data: If you could look at that.

I don't know if that's within your purview, JOM. But, for the record, it's important to know this: That our JOM departments, throughout Indian Country, annually do reports, you know.

And it's disappointing, if not disrespectful, to have learned a couple of years ago that the Central Office continues to use 1990s data in dealing with the JOM program throughout Indian Country. That's absolutely wrong.

I made mention of that a couple of years ago at a meeting in Rapid City. Now, whether that's changed or not, I don't know.

But these are just one of the many examples of why, when we come to tables like this, take opportunities like this to voice these kinds of concerns, and to understand fully, when we say "large land-based treaty tribes," there's a whole lot of things involved in that.

And I'm not making these comments to compete with smaller-based tribes or smaller-based treaty tribes; it's just a matter of fact. Especially out in this neck of the woods.

The climate, the distance between communities and homes to schools, et cetera, et cetera.

It's disappointing to see how the children have to bear the brunt of all the shortfalls in all of this.

And we've got some excellent educators throughout Indian Country that I know that are aware of this, and they do what they can.

Yes, we wish they could be living on our reservation, but the reality to a lot of that is that we just don't have the homes.

Indian Country is struggling with a tremendous shortage of homes throughout our reservations.

And I can say that for the public school in McLaughlin, South Dakota. We wish we could see a lot of the teachers staying in McLaughlin. But there's no houses, so they have no other choice but to go 30 miles east to Mobridge.

So when we say "large land-based treaty tribes," there's a whole bunch of stuff entailed in it.

And I hope that you're familiar with it, and you're taking a lot of these concerns to heart and, I guess, using common sense when we say "large land-based treaty tribes."

So I wanted to make certain that I expound a little bit on that and not try to make it sound like we're in competition.

That's the last thing we want to be, is in competition with each other for any funds. That's not in our nature, as Natives. Absolutely not. We want to share and share alike.

But the other concern or point I want to make is that, when we look at the "Eminent Scholar" concept -- South Dakota has it, North Dakota has it -- it's important to remember that there's two steps, if you will, in learning and teaching our language.

We are fortunate to have fluent speakers yet, as I say, in our neck of the woods. And I made this point to all my colleagues at one of our tribal government meetings.

I feel very gifted to have talked with a great-grandfather who didn't know a word of English. And he saw the world totally, 100 percent, from our language.

And that's one of the goals I want to see us make, is: Our children to be born into the language. That's only fair; that's only right for our children and those yet unborn.

So when we get a chance to do that, when we get a chance to see that, when we get a chance to feel that, we can say we have reached the Wo Lakota.

See, the books characterize us as many things, and one of them, in most recent times, is we can only say, "Ugh." We're not supposed to talk.

However, you're seeing that turnaround occur and to have -- to hear a lot of our language yet still being alive.

And for those of us who are fortunate to be able to speak the language, to share that openly, and try to do our best to interpret it.

That's why I went to those lengths today to try to interpret. But it's so important, when we look at "Wo Lakota," which means "peace." We want to be peaceful people.

And somehow, some way, I don't know -- only history can tell -- that all got turned backwards. Very unfair to our ancestry to see that turned backwards. And now we're digging out from that, if you will.

But these types of things, when it comes to education, and to know that, when we interpret our language into English, about 90 percent of it, we've got to interpret it backwards.

So what we say in our language, when we're interpreting it into English, we're saying it backwards.

And that, in itself, common sense tells you, that the need to see our language come back: So the spirits of our children can see the world in the way that the Creator made us to be; to see the world with our language; and to express ourselves that way.

I'll always be proud of our young people who have achieved in education today: The undergrad, graduate degrees, and all kinds of other post-graduate degrees and achievements.

And in any way that I can help, when they turn around, they want to come back and learn about themselves, and we see that play out so many times.

However, I still encourage our young people to go out and achieve, you know. And, as the old people say, in the "white man's education."

And they don't say it in any judgmental fashion at all, at all. But they use that in a respectful way to delineate that out.

We have our education. And now, as we've grown up for generations, we encourage each other. We encourage our children to continue on and achieve and earn those diplomas.

So, when we take a look at all of these opportunities, and we say, "It's important for us to believe so we can see," continue that spirit, if you will, as we have through generations.

And if we were to say that in English, we would say, "Seeing is believing." But for us, it's backwards: "Believing is seeing."

To you, are our English-speaking friends -- all these little, small-as-they-may-seem points, are very, very important to that youngster when he or she begins the process of going to big school.

"Big school" means after we get done with Head Start and we start into the kindergarten.

I don't know of any other children or child in Indian Country that doesn't know regular school as "big school."

All these little things like this that are really key and important to us. And as our Elders said for generations, "Never forget where you come from."

So what we want to do in our doing is creating a place where they will want to remember where they come from; they'll want to remember that. And that's incumbent on all of us.

So as we proceed down this path of "ska wichsha wionspaye" (phonetic), or "white man's education," what we're asking, in a respectful way, is to proceed with it as treaty partners; no longer bilateral interpretations, but as partners.

So I can't emphasize enough how important these meetings, but yet how frustrating they can be.

My friend, who I got a chance to serve with, when I chairman, he was pretty new -- I'm talking about my friend, Chairman Frazier -- it does get frustrating. It really gets frustrating.

So if you can promise us that you will send something back that's productive from this gathering today, we can say to our relatives (speaks in Lakota), "We didn't meet in vain."

We sat down and put the best that we could on a table. We demonstrated how we want to partner with the "milahanska," the "long knives." That's what we refer to the United States as: Milahanska.

We want to partner with them. We're demonstrating to you how we partner with our friends and our relatives in South Dakota and in North Dakota because we love our children.

We love them so much that, as my friend, Dr. Schopp, said -- yeah, we had our heated meetings. We may have some more. But as friends.

We're ready for that; we're ready to take that on. And as she coined it, "We'll give and we'll take, we'll give and we'll take, because we love our children."

We truly love our children. And once we begin to -- continue, rather -- once we continue to learn about our histories, those are -- that language and that knowledge is for all the children, each and every child.

Because we say the creator is like a Magnificent Gardener. The Creator created this beautiful place and, like a magnificent garden, put the different colors of mankind on Earth with our languages, our culture, our history, et cetera.

And the only thing we lack -- and I think there's a purpose for it -- when we call ourselves "Oyate" -- and one of the translations is "Nations" -- the only thing we don't have is currency. But we have everything else.

So as we pursue this, we're not so much concerned about red and white -- and I'm referring to Democrat, Republican -- that's never been a real concern for a lot of us.

In fact, for the record, I think I said this at the state capitol building: I'm a red guy. I'm a Republican, registered in Corson County. I hope a lot of my friends and relatives don't disown me for that.

But I think it's important to demonstrate to ourselves that it doesn't matter what color; it's the heart that we look at and work with.

So as you bring this spirit of Milahanska here -- and that has a lot of teachings and meanings -- we ask that you understand where we come from, as Lakota -- and yourselves, from your own respective indigenous peoples -- we respect them and call each other "Lakota," our ancestor.

We look at so many of brown skin and black hair, or they know that they're from these peoples. They'll say, "Hey, Lakota," they'll say. "That's one of us."

So I am enjoying this day, but I'll just say again: Please promise us to send some of this back, so the fruits of your labors and the fruits of our labors will be documented somehow, so that we can promise our children and their grandparents that we're moving forward.

And I can say that humbly. When we talk about our work with Dr. Schopp's office, that we're moving forward. It's a step, and that's way, way better than spinning in the mud, as they say.

But my relatives, thank you so much for coming. I need to go down the road, here, to the Black Hills. I've got some work to do there tomorrow.

But I wish you well on your travels, and I hope that our work today is something that you can build upon.

So we do that using our ancestors' belief, and their heart and their compassion, for the love of all of our children. (Speaks in Lakota.)

We take this time to show our love and our courage for our children because, in the future, they're the ones that we're going to depend on, even after we're long and gone.

Because one of the teachings is we ask our children to take care of our grandchildren. So that's what we're doing at this meeting.

Safe travels, my relatives. And I look forward to hearing something that you can send to Chairman Archambault's desk and say, "We accomplished this." And we can frame it, maybe. "Pilamayaye." Thank you.

MR. LESSARD: Pilamayaye. I wanted to say one thing, but thank you. First of all, for Chairman: I think it was at the Tribal Nations Conference that I was waiting for you to get that letter.

So I'm going to go back and follow up and find out where that is, and talk to Bill and see where that response is.

But secondly, I wanted to mention that many of us -- and Joyce can speak to this -- Bill Mendoza, Jodie -- many of us that have found ourselves in these positions within the government come from traditional backgrounds.

We've lived in Indian Country, and we've found ourselves sitting at these big conference tables, telling decision-makers what's it's like, you know: To be Indian; what our youths are like; what our culture is like.

And we finally, I think, have gotten to a point -- and you mentioned this, David -- that we're finally getting them out, you know, to see this.

This is not just happening around the table all the time. We're getting the President out here, and Secretary Duncan gave a commencement.

They need to see what it's like and what we've grown up with and what our children are growing up with. And I think you're right about the languages: For them, seeing is believing.

And so, you know, so many times, we spend a lot of our efforts internally within the federal government telling them what our people look like, what the suicide rates are like, how we treat our Elders; all of those kinds of things that we grow up with.

And I think maybe we've made a little progress in getting them out to see. It doesn't always change policy and legislation and things like that, but sometimes it changes the heart, and they start to see that.

Secretary Duncan, for sure, has been around a lot of Native youth this last year, and so have several others. SO I just wanted to say that before we leave. Thank you.

MR. J. TAKEN ALIVE: I know you're not afraid to lobby to life, so thank you for your work.

And I want to thank my cousin, Dr. Vermillion, who's always, always willing to help in any way she can. She is our -- we're very proud of our college president, here.

We went to school together. I think I'm still younger than her. But thank you for everything you do. Pilamayaye. Thank you so much.

MR. ARCHAMBAULT: I'd just like to let everybody know. Joyce Silverthorne, here: You don't know this, but she's one of the beginning -- this is I don't know how many years ago -- but the founding people supporting tribal education departments.

Way back in the day, and I think -- and then the government got ahold of her and put her back on board -- but I just want you to know that. She understands the vital role that a tribal education department can play.

And it hasn't gone the way we want, right? And that's, I guess, what my son said and that's what we're talking about, here is that -- and I assure you, that is in their heart, as well.

Tribes have the right -- we should have the right -- to develop the standards, the curriculum -- I think I heard, Rob mention that -- the standards, curriculum, and the assessments.

And I'll say, that's why I don't like AYP. People don't like me because they think I'm against the school, but I don't like that regulation because that's not our regulation.

It causes our schools -- it causes our kids to feel bad about themselves. And that's wrong. We're good people, and we're trying as hard as we can. That law has to change.

And I think that what we've got in this room, here -- you know, we've got Emma Jean Blue Earth, we've got my daughter; we've got a bunch of people.

We've got the ability in our tribe right here to develop quality education standards and curriculum of our own, and we can assess them. I don't want nobody else to judge us. That's our business. Those are our kids.

Right now, we don't do well in these mainstream-type of schools. We get judged, and we feel bad about ourselves.

The college has a great role in this. You know, as a matter of fact, all of us in this room from Standing Rock: We got to sit down.

We have a grant exploring sovereignty, and that's what it's all about: It's about coming together and wrangling that out, what that is, because that's so important.

Because, in actuality, when you go to our classrooms, 90 percent of the day is spent -- very little on language and culture.

So we're just not getting it. As Jay has just been talking about, it's the heart and soul of who we are.

And we will go into the world, we will go into America, we will go into each one of our states, and we will do much better than what we're doing right now. But it takes this, (gestures at his heart), and we're not getting it.

So I just wanted to make sure that everybody understands that, and also where Joyce is at. She's been fighting for tribal education departments for a long time. Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Are there other tribal leaders that would like to speak yet?

MR. FRAZIER: Yup. Harold Frazier, chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe. I want to say some more things. And I'll probably repeat myself, but I think they're important, because they're big issues.

Back home, on our reservation, and in a lot of parts of Indian Country, one of the things you must not forget: Most Indian children are in BIA schools and grant schools. That's where the majority of the Indian kids go to school at. Not public schools.

You know, currently, like I mentioned, right now, BIA is starting to -- trying to reorganize. And how it's going to have a negative impact on our reservation, our schools -- we have three schools within our boundaries: One's a BIA school and the other two are grant schools.

One grant school will be going down to Flandreau to be with that line office. Our BIA school will be going to Belcourt, North Dakota.

Our other school, on the west side of our reservation, will be going to Rapid City. So I don't see how that could help the Indian kids on our reservation.

And as I mentioned before, Article 5 of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaties said there will be an agent on our reservation. And I think, on that basis, is why these line offices should be left on our reservations.

And I went to the meeting with Mr. Roessel. And what I see is the Bureau of Indian Education, and they're doing the same thing as the Office of the Special Trustee: They're taking functions from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

In 2002, when we had that trust reform, the Office of the Special Trustee said, "Hey, give us appraisals. Let us do the appraisals. We could do a better job than the Bureau of Indian Affairs," and that happened.

But today, there's still backlogs on appraisals. So I don't see how taking functions from the BIA and creating another bureau -- another entity is going to help our kids. I just see the same old problems; just different name.

When we talk about tribal control, you know, Mr. Archambault mentioned which, you know, in grant schools and school boards are the ultimate authority.

But we got to be cautious because sometimes we get run-away school boards. And like I mentioned before, back home, one of our grant schools overspent \$1.2 million in one school year.

The people, we had to pay that back. So where is the federal government? What is their role? Why didn't they monitor that?

When you're talking about this re-organization, one of the things I agree with what Mr. Taken Alive said earlier: The answers are here at home.

A lot of these decisions are made at the top. They don't have no clue what life is on the reservation. And I think you mentioned that earlier.

So that's something that needs to happen. If we're going to re-organize, it needs to happen from the grassroots and go up.

You know, I mentioned to Tribal Council last month that I'm thinking about doing a massive lawsuit against the federal government for failing to fulfill their trust responsibilities.

We have a lot of issues, a lot of problems. We do have public schools back home on our reservations. A lot of our people, they look at them as "washichu" (phonetic) schools.

Like what Mr. Uses the Knife said earlier, we have high poverty. Ziebach County, which is half of our reservation, was designated as the poorest county in the United States.

So parents, every day they wake up, their main thing is to feed their kids; provide shelter for them. They ain't worried about education.

So when that happens, these public schools, they leave their Native kids behind. I see it. If there's no parent involvement, they don't look at that kid.

The only time they look at that kid is when it's time to sign them aid impact forms. Oh, yeah, I've been there.

They'll wine you, dine you, call you, smile. As soon as you sign that document, they're gone back home.

Timber Lake School just had a nice new addition. People say, "Our Indian kids built that school."

You know, which is true. Over half them kids that go to school there are enrolled members of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe.

There's no public hearings. That's something that I think the Department of Education can have a say. Timber Lake, Dupree, Eagle Butte.

Let's have some public hearings. Let's let the people -- let them decide how that 874 monies can be spent and where it's going. Because right now, there's no public hearing that I'm aware of.

When you talk about No Child Left Behind, you know, let's make sure not to leave the Indian kids behind that are in a BIA or a grant school.

It's not their choice. Some people have no opportunity to move to a public school. There's no transportation.

So down the road, my message is, you know, let's look at all the Indian kids, you know. Don't just look at the ones that you see. There's a lot more out there. So thank you.

MR. LESSARD: Yes.

MS. MILLER WHITE BULL: Good afternoon. My name is Merrie Miller White Bull. My husband is enrolled here at Standing Rock. I'm enrolled at Cheyenne River, and I'm a council rep; this is my third term.

I'm going on my ninth year as a council representative, and I've served as the education committee chairman for the past four years; this will be going on my fifth.

Education has been a priority of mine since I got on the council, but we need to talk about some of the issues.

And I apologize for being late, and I want to ask your forgiveness. I had a family emergency, and I had to take care of it.

One of the first things that I'd like to talk about is the teacher pay in South Dakota. The teacher pay is low. And as a result, we have a teacher shortage.

A lot of the teachers who started teaching are now retiring, which is leaving gaps in our schools.

And nobody wants to go into teaching anymore. When you talk to people, talk to the high school students, "What do you want to be?" People want to go where the money is. That's an issue.

You have to go to the colleges, and you have to recruit the students: Taking people with bachelor degrees in biology; taking people who don't have teaching degrees.

And you're putting them in the classrooms and then giving them time to train -- a certain amount; I don't know if it's a year -- to get their certificates. That's a good thing. I'm glad they're doing that.

But the problem is, it's affecting the academics of the students. When you're going without math teachers, and you're going without science teachers, and then you're expecting your children to take these tests three times a year.

And they're without a teacher in the classroom, and they're watching a livestream or streaming into the classrooms, how much are your students learning?

And then, you're judging them on their scoring, maybe because their SATs are low, because they didn't have a physical science teacher or a science teacher for maybe six to eight weeks.

They could have been reviewing important issues, but they had a sub because they couldn't find a science teacher or a math teacher because people just aren't going into those areas anymore.

The other thing that I'm concerned about is training, you know; that's what I'm concerned about, too.

We want to train our teachers, but we always try things for two years, three years, and then we throw it out.

We spend all this money on curriculum materials. We spend all this money on training our staff. And then we throw it out, and we try something new, and we don't give it time to work.

The other concern I have is the Lakota language. We're losing our language, and it hurts.

Our schools are so focused on teaching math and science and making AYP that they're not spending time on our language.

We're having suicides on Cheyenne River. We have suicides from the ages of 19 to 37. We have kids graduating that can't make it into colleges when they leave. And they come back home, and they get discouraged.

When they find their way, they find their way by going back to their culture and their values.

And when we start on that process, look at who's going back to school. Is it your freshmen? Is it your kids right out of high school? Is it your Native American students?

No, it's later in life: After they've started getting back into their culture and their religion and their beliefs, and they've started to identify with their culture and their language. And they're going back, and they're improving their lives.

Little things: You go into a building, and they're freezing in one room -- it's 49 degrees in one room; 75, 85 degrees in another.

And you want them to focus on math, and you want them to focus on science. There's so many issues facing our children.

I feel like I didn't want to come to this meeting today, because I thought, "Oh, it's just more mouth." Every time, every meeting I go to on education, people talk, but nothing gets done.

You can say that this government and this entity's at fault, or that government or that entity is at fault.

Everybody's so concerned about their little jurisdiction and their little areas they're overlooking. And State clashes with Tribe; BIE and BIA clash with State and Tribe. But everybody's overlooking the big picture, which is our children.

And I'm grateful that everybody's here. This place should be packed. People should be concerned about the education of their children.

I just think that, as a leader, I'm sad. Sure, we've made gains, and I know it's okay to make small gains. But since I've been a council rep, that's all we do is make small gains.

I have to agree with my colleague, Mr. Archambault: Maybe we need to look back to our own traditional ways, our culture, our language, and find that place.

Yes, I agree that math and science is important. But so are the other elements of education.

What happened to having a good, well-rounded education when you leave high school? What happened to the home ecs? What happened to teaching vocational skills to students?

You know, I talked to some junior high and high school teachers. And they said the children, when they talk to them about learning, they say, "Why? My parents didn't go to school."

"I don't have any money to go to college."

"That's not in my plan."

"Why should I study? Why should I sit here and listen to you when I have so many other issues going on at home? What are you going to teach me?"

I have a hard life at home, a hard way of life, and you expect me to sit here and listen to you go on about math and science?"

So I guess what I'm saying is, you know, there's so many issues. But we need teachers. There's so many issues, but the problem is that we need teachers.

We need to recruit teachers. We need to up that salary in the State of South Dakota so teachers will want to come; so people will want to go back into teaching.

You know, I recently started a consortium of schools at Cheyenne River because we wanted to find out just what the issues were on education.

And this is our -- we've been in effect for one year, and we've come across a lot of things.

We've invited and offered an olive branch to the Dupree Public School, to the Timber Lake Public School, to the 20-1 Public School.

And we've been able to come -- we've been able to work together and to start looking at ways that we can improve Indian education for our children.

And these are some of the some things that we've come up with: Head Start. They pay them so bad, yet they pay them to go to school.

But once they get the degree, the teachers leave, and they go where the pay is better, and then we're stuck again without having qualified, certified Head Start teachers.

So when we met with one of the representatives from the Head Start in Washington, D.C., I brought that up, and she said, "Well, you have to have Congress change that legislation because, you know, that's just the way it is."

Or, you know, I said, "Or, in other words, the tribe has to come in and try to supplement the salaries of these Head Start teachers so they'll stay at our Head Starts?"

I just think that -- I'm thankful that you're here, and I wish I had had the opportunity to be here to hear from the leaders earlier, and to hear.

These tribal consultations are awful. And why they're awful is because Standing Rock is different from Cheyenne River; Oglala is different from Cheyenne River; Pine Ridge, Three Affiliated are different from Cheyenne River.

And how they're different is our make-up of our schools and where we're located, the geographical locations. We are different.

And yet, you have these consultations, and they're, you know, only certain parts of the area, and they're only one.

And to me, we should be meeting individually. We should be meeting individually and then coming together, because we do have different issues. We might have common issues in some areas, but they're different.

And I just -- it's tough. It's really tough. We have to decide, as tribal leaders, which consultation to go to.

We are a poor tribe. We don't have any big revenue coming in every year. We are not a casino tribe. We depend on the leases of our land to care for our people. We have a small budget, yet we're trying the best that we can.

And, you know, sometimes it's hard to come to these consultations because of financial reasons.

Our money would be best served helping our people, trying to bring in economic development -- which we're working on -- trying to provide jobs, so our young men and women won't feel like they have to take their lives. Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you.

MS. YOUNG: Thank you, Merrie. (Speaks in Lakota.) I'm Phyllis Young, Tribal Council at large for Standing Rock, and I want to thank you for holding this consultation on Standing Rock and here at the Sitting Bull College.

We have strong feelings about government to government, and treaty relationship, and that relationship cannot be delegated to any national organization or to any regional groups.

We feel that this is an exercise that every tribe in this region has -- that we hold consultations -- so I feel like that's a very critical exercise that's happening here today.

I wanted to talk about being late, also. This month is also the Month of the Young Child, and so we had all of our youngest children performing at the tribal office.

So I listened to the immersion school do their ABCs and their songs and prayers in Lakota, and the total Head Start population doing their ABCs and performing in their curriculum.

So I had a good time smiling and enjoying, and I know that many of our people who witness the immersion either have a big smile that's going to crack or they have tears of joy because our children are speaking our language. And so, it's a very melancholy feeling.

But my grandchildren are part of that, and I wanted to witness that. So I feel that education has always been a priority for my family, for the work that we do at Standing Rock.

Mrs. Albina (phonetic) Grey Bear was a former councilwoman who was on the White House Initiative for Indian Education, and she had a great legacy here.

And she promoted -- she said, "If there was one student who needed help, then you have to be there." So she believed in the individuals.

She believed in the collective, as well. She had dreams and visions of this college campus. And so when I look at it, I think of her.

She wanted dormitories, she wanted student housing so our people didn't have to hitchhike from the communities to come to Standing Rock Community College, in her day.

She wanted it to be Sitting Bull College, and we had to go through the politics of that to get here.

But I believe that this campus is evidence of our legacy at Standing Rock, our commitment to education, higher learning.

And for me, it has always been the high road. It's the white way, the great white way, because it is the highest road for us to take part. Pick up the best of the non-Indian world, and it is education.

So I want to see the norms and standards and achievements be emphasized through our culture. I want to see it integrated, the language integrated.

I like the Memorandum of Agreement or Understanding, but I think it needs to go more than mutual agreement.

It needs to be an emphasis on mutual respect; mutual participation; and, eventually, mutual benefit, so that we are always partners in the ensuing development of whatever we do.

And I know that we met last week with the Department of Public Instruction, and I'm very proud of our member who serves as a Director of Education, Ms. Fredericks.

And so I feel comfortable that I don't have to be as vigilant in other areas in seeking a partnership that would have or guarantee open development for accreditation of the language process at Standing Rock.

I'm sure my constituents have all stated it previous to me that we do have the language, the Eminent Scholar in our tribal code.

And, as a committee member of the Health, Education, and Welfare Committee of the Tribal Council, I don't feel that I'm qualified to be a part of that board that accredits the -- that does the accreditation

process for the Eminent Scholars because I'm not a fluent speaker, although I understand the language and I speak it broken.

And so, I envision a full-fledged accreditation Lakota-Dakota-Nakota speaking commission that will do that process for us at some point so that it becomes more sophisticated and more geared towards the fluency and the customs and practices.

But I also feel that we're at a new threshold in developing the customary law that has been an empty box for going on 80 years.

When you talk about customary law -- we were prohibited from 1910 from 1978 by government policy from speaking our language and practicing our customs. So that's about six generations.

And when you're going to undo something, I believe -- and we, as Native people, stated that it would take six generations to undo what damage has been done to us.

And we believe that we are in the third and fourth generation right now, and it's a great -- very stressful.

We are a little past the adolescent stage for the freedom to express ourselves spiritually, emotionally, mentally.

And we have the collective memory to be able to carry forward with all the objectives, be it our education or life itself.

And so, we talk about suicide. I paused in my life work in 1998 because of the high suicide rates here in Standing Rock.

And for ten years, I did intervention work. And I tell you, it's the hardest work: Very private, very personal, very individual.

But you learn the deepest lessons in life, and you look for redemption at any point, and you reaffirm your spiritual values and your base by any means necessary. And so, when you come to that level, everything else should be easy.

So when we talk about the norms and standards for education geared towards the customary law and language, it's an exciting time because we still have that collective memory and we can provide the best that we have through our grandmothers and the Eminent Scholars.

And we owe them a great thank-you, a great honor for being the "underground," so to speak, that they maintained and carried that language and those customs forward.

And we -- granted, we all are part, or threads of it. It may not be the total, but we're in time of great conflict, and when we get to the sixth and seventh generation of healing -- which, I would say, maybe 15 to 20 more years -- I think it will be a great time.

And so, I have hope for the potential of education, having a fully accredited language program, customs.

And unbiased research, too, because all of the research has been totally biased by the non-Indian.

We were in FAE and FAS -- fetal alcohol syndrome -- research for a long time, and the "drunken Indian syndrome."

When I was young, that's all we heard about: The research that they were doing on us. So that figures into your classroom, and what you have to be aware of, and those kinds of things.

Granted, those are all the social pathologies that come with the major development we've had on Standing Rock and Cheyenne River, and up and down the river, in the building of the dams.

And so, I feel that Standing Rock has a good grasp on where we want to go. We have some former line officers from the BIE that can evaluate for us the good things and the bad things.

And if, at some point, we want to create objectives for ourselves, we will be aggressive in that.

In South Dakota, we are requesting not to be closed out in charter schools; that we have the potential to develop a charter school if we so wish and carry those objectives out.

Standing Rock has also gone on record to seek a waiver for the No Child Left Behind so that we're not subject to that criteria.

And as we move forward, we want to determine whether our immersion school would be a treaty immersion school, would be an immersion charter school.

So we're looking at those possibilities and how we could implement the different norms and standards that we would create for ourselves. But we are self-determined to develop those, and we would rely on our own people.

We, of course, need to redo the teacher training programs that we've done that have been successful in the past.

In numbers, we have to set aside monies in our systems to do that. And one of the successes that we had was for our loan grant program that came from our own revenue derived from the Oahe Act and the JTAC legislation. So we invest tribal funds into that.

And so, I have eight children, and we utilized that education fund for all of them, and it was a very beneficial program, and it was based on our own land ownership.

And so, we had Cobell (phonetic) priorities in the Public Law 859-15 in 1958. So the tribe utilized some.

It began with an appropriation of \$1 million in 1960, which was a lot of money at that time.

So thanks our grandparents, to the grandfathers and the grandmothers who had the vision to invest in education, meager as it was.

And so, we are going to move forward in the best way that we can. But we need these partnerships. We rely on them.

And we think we have a lot to offer in terms of our culture, our way of thinking, and our survival tactics that we can now put forward in a more sophisticated manner and challenge the technologies.

Modern science has gone over the edge, and we think that we can find the balance, and that we have some tenets and principles in our societies that demand and dictate for consensus and balance within our societies.

And we need to get there, but we need to have partners, and we need government policy that will support us, financially and otherwise. Thank you once again for coming to Standing Rock.

MR. R. TAKEN ALIVE: This is Robert Taken Alive again from the Standing Rock Tribal Council. I wanted to touch on a couple areas that I failed to mention.

One is: You have the data on the demographics, and you can do data-driven changes for education on reservations now.

And then, calendars for our schools: You know, some of us still pick our vegetation. Botany is important, and those are lifelong teachings for our students.

And then, our culture. Our culture gives us a worldview. You'll see it increase the scoring levels.

And whatever tests they are, if they're lifelong learning tests -- from how to break a horse to, "Let's take a math test" -- you'll see the scoring levels go up if that student has a strong background in their culture.

And then, language ties into that, vice versa: Language, culture. You'll also see positive behaviors in the schools with that background in culture.

You'll also see good attendance with that background in culture at that school, driven by that "culture piece" of that peoples.

It could be the Three Affiliated Tribes; it could be Turtle Mountain; Spirit Lake; Standing Rock. That's the key to the behaviors.

We've tried the Boys Town method here at Standing Rock Schools. We've used that method. I can't remember the ones previous to that. But, in bringing in the culture, the OLC has their administration leadership based on the "tiospaye" system, and that tiospaye system works for our student body and our staff.

Also, always remember that education just doesn't end, you know, when the student leaves that classroom. It continues on into the lifespan of that student, and they still continue to learn.

And the last thing I'll share is training for school boards and administrators and staff. Very important for the area that they're going to be working in.

They should be given something in terms of demographics. And it's not just the poverty stuff: It's where they can go, what they can do.

And I know Standing Rock has published the pow-wow schedule for Standing Rock. Different things like this that the Department of Education could follow through and say, you know, "These are the things that are going to help our administrators or help our staff that are coming into our reservations."

I know, for McLaughlin Public School, we have a good majority of Teach for America staff, and a lot of those Teach for America are coming from the East Coast. Boy, we're having a lot of issues of behavior there, because they don't know the area.

And I've tried a couple times to get in there to do training for Teach for America, but they wouldn't let me come.

You know, I wasn't asking for pay. I just said, "I can come in and do a part of your training for your staff," but I never got a response back.

The last thing is the treaty issue, and to remember that we are a treaty tribe. And, for one reason or the next, we need to come together for our kids, our students, and to develop that relationship that will continue on, you know, after the meeting, after the tenure of our -- for myself, of this council position, and on into the future, something that we can develop on; a building block.

And I think our students and the high school students are very intelligent in that they can see through you.

If you're telling them, and you're being sincere with them, they're going to listen. Now, if you're not being sincere with them, they're going to give you the, "Why am I here? What am I doing with you?"

Being in a classroom for on or about 14 years with high school students, that's what I concluded, is to be sincere and honest with them.

And getting back to the treaty part of it is: Because that's the way I treat my community.

All the things that are shared here, I'll take that back to my community, and I'll share those with my community in terms of what we can do as a community with what we have to develop.

And I mentioned those: I mentioned the language, I mentioned the culture, I mentioned the botany, I mentioned our calendar year for our schools, what's going to work for us.

And again, you know, the change has to come from the home, to the community, and to the tribe.
Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Could we take a five-minute break? And then, we'll come back and come straight into the public conversation.

(Off the record from 2:17 p.m. until 2:29 p.m.)

MR. LESSARD: Okay, we're back.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Could everybody please come up and join us at the tables? There will be microphones available that way, and it'll feel just a little bit closer.

There have been some folks that have been on the phone. We aren't sure if anyone is available right away.

We'll do a check-in with the phone comments real quick. If you're on the phone and you'd like to make a comment, you need to unmute your line so that we can hear you. I don't hear anybody changing their line, so --

MS. HUGHES: Hello?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Yes.

MS. HUGHES: Hi. My name is Cinda Hughes, and I'm the legislative affairs coordinator for an organization called CANAR: The Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation.

And my comments are about the Rehabilitation Services and Administration grant competition for the American Indian Rehabilitation Program for People with Disabilities.

And one of the problems that we have is peer grant reviewers. The peer grant reviewers do not have to have any familiarity with tribal programs.

So tribal programs especially operate very much on a patch quilt, and they bring in money from varying sources, and they have different accounting mechanisms and different ways of reporting that money and different ways of doing their grants.

In particular, it's true of tribes who utilize Public Law 102-477 that allows them to combine training grants.

So our main tribes who go through those grant applications are being reviewed by peer grant reviewers who have no idea about the law; no idea about tribal government.

And you have grant applications that have personnel that don't seem to be full-time employees, and so that applicant gets penalized because the peer grant reviewer doesn't know about Public Law 102-477; doesn't know about how tribes operate their governments; doesn't know how tribes operate their programs; doesn't know how tribes report those monies.

So that is a very penalizing thing for tribes, especially when you've got peer grant reviewers who are not required to read anything other than the narrative. They're not required to read any of the appendix.

So the information about the tribal governments isn't there. And if we're not taking precious time to teach the grant reviewers what they should already know, then those programs become penalized. That is inherently unfair, and it's not conducive to the grant reviewer.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: I apologize. Could you give me your name again, and spell that?

MS. HUGHES: My name is Cinda Hughes. I'm a member of the Kiowa tribe in Oklahoma, and I'm the legislative affairs coordinator for the organization called CANAR: C-A-N-A-R.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Okay, thank you.

MR. LESSARD: I just wanted to make one comment, and that's relative to the Department of Education.

The grant reviewers that we have -- and Joyce may be can speak to this -- but just in general, they do have to go through, you know -- when they're reviewing tribal applications for any grants, they do have technical assistance, and they have to look at that. They have to have some knowledge of tribal communities.

So I know we do that, and I know there are several other agencies: The Administration for Native Americans, and SAMHSA, and several of the others.

Really, in the last few years, we have been paying much more attention to that: That reviewers have some knowledge of, you know, tribal government and sovereignty, and things like that.

MS. HUGHES: I personally participated as a peer grant reviewer in two different sessions. And each time, I was paired up to work with other grant reviewers that had no knowledge of tribal governments and were not required to have that knowledge.

They only were required to have knowledge of vocational rehabilitation programs. Now, perhaps that peer grant review works different with the other grant programs, but it is not the RSA.

MR. LESSARD: I appreciate that.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: I appreciate your comment, and we'll take the message back, and your comment is part of the record for the day. It's not a program we work directly with.

Are there other commenters on the phone? Okay. We'll check again at the end as we complete the public comment period. Thank you. Mr. Archambault, would you like to make a comment before --

CHAIRMAN ARCHAMBAULT II: Yeah. I just want to encourage anybody who's in the public to come up, and I think there's a list they've got going, there. You're more than welcome to come up and make a comment.

I know a lot of the tribal leaders had to leave. And even if you don't want to make a comment, it just makes it feel closer if you come up here and join us.

But I want to thank you all for coming, and I welcome you to make a comment for the Department of Education for our kids.

And that's the end goal behind everything: Whether we agree or disagree, or we get along or we don't get along, our end goal is for future generations.

And whatever we do today, that's what we should be thinking about 20 years from now, so we can come back and say, 20 years from now, that we actually did something, and we are not doing the same things.

So I have to leave; I got another meeting with Cheyenne River at our tribal chambers. And so, I'm going to be stepping out.

And so, I still want everybody to come up. I know there's a whole bunch back there that don't want to come up.

But come up, make comments, and I think I'm going to take Raymond with me. We're going to go up and be at the tribal headquarters.

I look forward to hearing responses and hearing what the Department of Education is going to share with us after the comment period.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: We appreciate your support for the day, and thank you very much. Please come up. It gets to the point where we'll get the microphone and walk around the room.

MR. LESSARD: Remember when we were children, and you get to be, like, teacher for the day? Well, these name cards are still here, so you can be tribal leader for a few minutes.

MR. USES THE KNIFE: Is it on? Yeah? Okay. Something that Ms. Makhola (phonetic), C.J. Clifford, and I were talking about earlier was what we may not have covered is, of course, the safety of our children in the schools.

Recently, of course, the Department of Homeland Security was created within the last ten years, I think. Ever since 9/11.

And they have various grants available, but these grants are through the State of South Dakota. Maybe it's the same with North Dakota.

But we, as tribes, have to struggle to even access those funds because the States are handling the funds.

And we get peanuts compared to what the other entities receive, like cities -- city government, and federal government.

So if there's any way that we could streamline some of that -- the funds -- directly to the tribal government so we can take care of our children, and feel safer for our children in the area of terrorism, gang-related activities, bullying.

That fear is there, and it's unfortunate that our children have to learn in that environment, knowing that there is a potential for terror.

I don't know if you guys know it or not: In South Dakota, the Legislature passed the measure to allow guns in schools. You knew that?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: (Nods head.)

MR. LESSARD: (Nods head.)

MR. USES THE KNIFE: That's their idea for handling terrorism, is that the teachers can carry loaded guns into the schools. It's a shame that it's come that far.

And I disagree with any type of gun in a school setting, but that's what they chose to do at the State level.

So I don't think we're vehemently packing guns in BIA schools right now, but that, kind of, shows you that the fear is there, what our children have to live through in that environment.

Parents are concerned. And if we could, again, see if we can take one child -- and I can think of one child now: My granddaughter, for instance -- what is she going to need to get through that school system safely? So that's the Department of Homeland Security.

She needs to learn about agronomics, our environment; there's the Department of Energy and Environment.

She needs to learn about -- she needs to have a counselor, maybe, for her needs. And of course, she needs education.

So there's several, several departments. Probably half a dozen to ten departments that are needed for the education of my grandchild.

So it's not just the Department of Interior's BIE schools, you know. All these other departments play a part, too.

And specifically, the Department of Education. So I wanted to throw that viewpoint out: How all of these cabinet-level functions may assist my grandchild for a better education.

So how do you guys do that? You're just the Department of Education: How are you going to propose that all of these other areas are going to be active in our education system?

Maybe that's something you can take back with you. You don't have to answer me now, but -- thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you.

MR. GROSS: Doesn't work. Now? Okay. My name's Jim Gross. I'm the superintendent for the Selfridge Public School District, and our Native American population of our school district is about 94 percent.

We're a small but necessary school in North Dakota. Our district is about over 400 square miles. It banks right up to Standing Rock and goes all the way to Lemmon, South Dakota.

And with that, we have a lot of needs, but the biggest thing -- and first of all, we've been able to meet a lot of our needs, as we've established what is known as the Standing Rock Education Consortium.

There are not very many of those in the nation. In fact, Sunshine and I -- or, Sunshine Archambault and I have presented at two school board association meetings.

Many of the districts come together, and people say, "We can't even get two members to talk together."

And the biggest thing is, like, we have two states involved, I think you know, on Standing Rock.

And we have monthly meetings. We also have consortium meetings. Our consortium meetings are over our local radio station.

But the biggest emphasis that I'm thinking is that we've all finally realized -- and, again, I've grown up on Standing Rock; I graduated from Standing Rock.

This is my 40th year in education, so that tells you I'm 39 now. But anyway, I'm very proud to be a graduate of Standing Rock, and I wanted to come back to be able to give to the education that I had.

But the thing of it is, we still have those promises, when I left and when I came back, and I guess I don't understand that.

All our kids have the same needs: Doesn't matter if I have a big school or a small school, or whatever: Our kids all have the same needs.

And again, a lot of the things I was going to talk about have already been mentioned. I'm not going to reiterate a lot of these things, and I know poverty is one of them.

But the biggest thing there is that we need some assistance. To give you an example: Like I said, we're about 94 percent Native American students in our school, and we need to have funding.

Like I said, we have about 400 square miles of our school district. That's a big school district.

It goes all the way up to Lemmon, South Dakota. I think I talked to you, Joyce, before we started about - like, when we started special ed, we had a student that lived over on the other side of Thunder Hawk, South Dakota.

So I got in my vehicle, and I put my odometer on. By the time I got up to the school, I was 6/10ths of a mile short of 70 miles.

So people don't understand what "rural" is. They have no idea what that is out there. There's no way we could, you know, take our buses out to Thunder Hawk, South Dakota, and bring them back to our school up on the hill. We call it "The Ridge."

But the important thing we need to know is that, with that 400-square foot area, our funding evaluation has finally got a little over \$2 million. And that's unbelievable.

We depend on our impact aid. And I know this wasn't on the agenda. I was hoping that Dr. Lott was out here -- Alfred -- I met him already. But when we go to our meetings, we always get told that it's going to get better.

But now, even what we get: This year -- for three years in a row, we were told, "Budget for 50 percent of what your allot is."

And our allot -- for people who don't know what that is, that means we're a fully impacted school.

That means we all qualify. Not only that, but we're also what's called a Provision 2 school: All of our kids get free and reduced school lunches.

So we have no other way of making up these dollars. So when they tell us to budget for 50 percent of what we're supposed to get -- you know, there's no way.

If I were to run a business that way or my home, you know, I would be kicked out of my home.

And this goes back to the treaties, again. And the federal government -- I think it was 1937, or something like that -- they were the ones that started taking the land, whether it be federal grasslands or federal land, and also our treaty and our trust lands.

And they said that, because of that, "We will pay for the children." In other words, in lieu of that.

Well, it's not taking place. Even with the funding we get now: Let's say we get our full allot of what we're supposed to get, that's still about a little over 60 percent of what we're supposed to be getting, because it gets less and less every year.

I mean, there has to be something there. And I don't -- like I said, we've been dealing with this for so many years.

But the biggest thing there is that -- I hope you take that message back, and I know you will -- but the thing that's going to have to be done with all these promises and all these goals that they have: Anytime there's goals or promises, there's going to have to be a timeline set.

They have to set a timeline. Because if it's not -- any type a goal or a promise that's set, if there's no timeline, it's just a dream. That's all it is, people. And our kids are more valuable than that.

And I spoke in Washington, too, on that, and this is when there were all these innovative projects.

We can't compete -- and I think I told you that, too -- with the Bill Gateses of the world who hire grant writers.

I'm the grant writer. I'm this, and I'm that. And they don't realize that. And like I said, our kids are just as poor as their kids or anybody else's kids.

We can't start putting one district against another one to go up for one of these grants. You can't do that.

They want our kids to progress, but how are they going to progress if all of a sudden we had some type of funding but now we lose that, but the district next to me gets that? Like I said, our kids all have the same needs.

I've been a lifelong resident. I came back -- but like I said, if there's not a timeline set, it's just a dream.

There has to be some type of a timeline set for all these programs that they tell us they're going to do.

I had a conversation with Secretary Duncan, also, when there was about like we are here. There was six of us, and he promised us -- in getting back to AYP -- at that time, I said, "There has to be something re-done with this."

We can't base AYP on a school whether they're a failure or not. It has to be based on growth of students. And he said, "Yeah, I'll do that."

And I said, "I'm going to hold you to that and make sure you remember that," but I've never heard nothing since.

And that's the thing. Our kids that we have right now are very special kids, but they deserve more. They really do. So thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you. The list that we started up here: Tipizi. The first name I have on the list is Tipizi Tolman.

MS. TOLMAN: Is this one working? Okay. My name is Thipiziwin Tolman, and I'm Lakota language activities director and Lakota language nest instructor.

Those were the students that I am fortunate to work with that sang the Flag Song this morning.

I would like to say (speaks in Lakota), and (speaks in Salish?) to Joyce. I am born and raised here on Standing Rock. I went to school here until I was in eighth grade.

At that time, I started making negative choices for my life, and my parents sent me off to school in the suburbs of Kansas City, Missouri. So I had two very distinct and different school experiences.

I think I had a strong enough identity and parent support that I was able to excel on the reservation. And also, that helped me excel off the reservation.

I learned a lot. Speaking from my personal experience, I was able to take French, when I went.

And I took four years of it in high school, and I learned to be very proficient in it. And that also made me realize that, if I can learn French, I can learn Lakota.

And so I came home, really, searching for my language. I went to school at Sinte Gleska University in Rosebud, and I also went to USD and Sitting Bull College.

But I was never able to find that place in the academic arena that gave me my language -- to the extent that I found it when I found it in my French classes -- because it doesn't exist. And it still doesn't exist.

Lakota is not taught in Lakota in Lakota Country. I did my student teaching in Cannon Ball. And I heard two words of Dakota in the time that I was in the Dakota language class.

And I thought, "Anywhere else in the world, when you send your child to French class, you would think they're going to talk French."

So I could really relate and understand why our language is where it is. You think your children are going to a Lakota language class. But they're talking English there, and they're learning in English there.

So, in addition to that, I was fortunate to work with Sunshine Carlow in the survey on Standing Rock. We went door-to-door in every single community.

And initially, the tribe had an ANA planning grant where we were to see where -- which community would be most open to having an immersion school.

And at that time, we traveled to different immersion places. We traveled to Salish Country, we traveled to Mohawk Country, we did numerous school visits, and also, we gauged ourselves.

And the results of that really were scary for me. I mean, there's a number of words that come to mind, but the fact that I've seen with my own eyes where my language was in my own community and in my own home.

And at fact that there's about 14,000 enrolled members, and there's less than 300 fluent speakers that we found.

And the majority of them were 45 years of age and older, and there was absolutely no children who spoke Lakota.

And what I found out in that time was that every single house we went to said, "My child talks more Lakota than me. They learned it at school."

But also being really aware of where the language stands in the schools made me even more aware of how little of our language we have left. It's at a terrible, frightening level of deterioration.

And I'm also married to a man who's a Lakota language teacher at one of our tribal schools in Rock Creek, and so his experience as a Lakota language teacher and my experience as a Lakota language teacher in immersion are immensely different.

He also works at a priority school that received a SIG grant. So his experience is that he no longer gets to be the language teacher.

He's pulled in as one of those teachers that drills students in reading and math to up the scores to show that they did something with their money, and so he gets the children a half hour of a day, back-to-back, K-8.

And so, it's just really -- and that's one example. I know here at Standing Rock schools, they have a half-hour -- which is optional for them -- a week.

So a half-hour optional week of language isn't nourishing our children in language or culture. And it will not.

The language doesn't live in our homes, and they are not getting nourished in the tribal schools, the public schools, or the BIA schools. There's nowhere that the children are going to find that nourishment.

But also, after I've visited the homes of every community on Standing Rock, the parents in those homes are saying, "My child speaks more than me and knows more than me, and they learned it at school."

And so, we are at a really critical place that I don't think much of our people have articulated to what extent the deterioration is at.

And so, the Language Nest happened in 2012, and that was -- I really truly believe that immersion is our answer.

If we are going to put language and culture on the school system to say, "It doesn't live in our home anymore, save our language and our culture for our people, and it is your fault if my child doesn't talk Lakota, and it's your fault if my child doesn't conduct themselves as Lakota," then those spaces need to be created as immersion.

It won't work any other way. Speaking from my experience. I also think that this place that we're at is actually an opportunity for a really strong partnership for the United States government to have real quality compensation and redemption for past wrongs.

It's an opportunity to really support master-apprentice initiatives; to support immersion initiatives where quality results can be seen, can be tangible, and where all our children can benefit.

And I really want to say that, here at Standing Rock, the Language Nest, the parents that I'm fortunate to work with, they're involved at a whole other level, and that I'm proud of them.

I'm proud of my peers; I'm proud of my students; I'm proud of the families that I'm fortunate to work with, because they have to learn -- we have a parent component where they have to learn Lakota if their child is to be in the Nest.

And with that strong parent contract, I have seen amazing results with the parents and with the children.

I see them change their homes to a healthier status. They take the prayers that we do at the Nest home with them, and now they pray at home every day.

And so, they're raising the level of health for themselves, for their homes. And their individual families speak to the collective.

And so, even though it's a drop in the bucket, they're doing something to raise the health of our community as a whole, and it's amazing to be a witness to the revitalization of my language.

To be a witness to changing the dialogue and the assumptions that we even have about ourselves. Not just about outsiders think about us, but what we think of ourselves.

And those children are my little Elders. They're my little leaders. And I think, if we continue to give them the opportunity to be free to be Lakota, to be free to talk Lakota, and to embrace who they are at the level that they're given the opportunity, they'll lead us -- continue to lead us down a path that will be beneficial for all of our people.

I just really believe that immersion is the answer. And you know, from my experience, that's what I see.

And I really don't feel like we're asking much in saying that, if we're asking you to be a strong partner, that's saying, "I'm willing to work hard 100 percent of the time." I'm not saying, "We need help, more funding, and do all the work for us."

We're saying, "We've worked this hard, and support would be appreciated."

Also, I had a disconnect with my tribal leaders that talked this morning in terms of language because it's that difference that you're talking about something that you're not actively engaged in.

And I just really had a disconnect with them and what they were saying in regards to language because the reality is: Not one Lakota language teacher ever produced a Lakota speaker in all the years of Lakota language teaching on any reservation. Anywhere. Ever.

The second-language learners that exist today did so out of their own hard work, and no language teacher ever gave that to any of us.

So I just really believe that, you know, asking for that strong partnership is to say that, "I'm willing to do the work, first and foremost."

And in closing, I would like to say that I'm really proud to be Lakota and Dakota. It's a huge responsibility and gift from Creator that we get to be who we are.

And I get to share teachings that my own grandfather shared with me in terms of taking me outside to tell me to look at the stars and say, "There's that many people in the world, but there's only a little tiny bit Lakota. And you get to be one of them."

And it's super-special to share that with the children that I work with. It's a responsibility and an opportunity that I don't take lightly.

Also, I come from great-grandparents on my father's side who read and wrote and spoke Dakota and English, and they were born in the 1880s.

And they lived at a time when they seen with their own eyes the transition that happened to our people.

They're the ones that actually starved. They're the ones that were actually forced onto the reservation. They physically lived that reality.

But they were still intelligent enough to learn how to read and write in English and Dakota.

So I don't feel like any of our children or any of our people have an excuse. If they can do that, so can we.

I carry this around with me (indicates a little brown book), and it's 115 years old, and it's written all in Dakota, and it belongs to my great-grandparents.

And I truly believe that the experience that I've been fortunate to be a part of and the Lakota Language Nest journey is one of the -- maybe not the only answer, but an answer that I've seen to a quality of life that our children deserve.

And it's through the language, and it's through hard work, and it's through being realistic with ourselves, and willingness to work together and have kind hearts towards each other.

But the main thing is willing to work hard. Willing to work hard for my language. And if you will be a partner to us, we would appreciate that.

We wouldn't squander it, and we could show you results. So thank you very much for listening to me and for coming to my beautiful home.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you. I wanted to mention that, when we were here for -- when the President was here, and we came to the immersion school the next day, remember?

One of the things that really struck Bill Mendoza and myself was that: It's like the sacrifice of our Elders -- and in my tribe also -- the sacrifice to retain the language. How it was spoken "underneath," and, you know, you couldn't speak it publicly.

And now, what was really profound was that a lot of the young people that were there that have children are sacrificing again because they have to make the choice of the immersion school versus kindergarten; is that correct?

And that's costly, and it seems like it shouldn't have to be a burden again to want to involve your children in learning the language.

But that's what we took out of it and took from that, and how important that is. And I wanted to thank you.

MS. GAYTON: Good afternoon. (Speaks in Lakota.) My name is Lone Gayton. I'm an enrolled member, and I'm also a grandmother.

For me, what's really important is for the schools to incorporate our language and our culture into the curriculum.

In the Standing Rock Constitution Preamble, it talks about preserving our customs, our traditions and practices.

My grandchildren, as all other children here on Standing Rock, have a Constitutional right to learn their language, to learn their culture, to understand it.

Our prayers are so important, our future is dependent upon our children and what they learn.

And I do believe that's really important in our school system, to have that within the curriculum.

I know that other people have comments and address various issues of the educational process, I won't repeat and not take up any time unnecessarily, but I do want that to be part of the record. Speaking as a grandmother, that's very important to me. Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you. Linda Black Elk? Gone. Virginia Long Feather?

MS. LONG FEATHER: Hello. Does it work? Hi. My name is Virginia Long Feather, and I'm the principal at Standing Rock Elementary School.

We currently have 420 students in our school system. I have one Lakota language teacher.

I don't have the resources to teach the language and culture. I have no experts coming into my school that are there on a daily basis.

Our funding depends on us following the rules and the regs, and that we have to make sure that we're and doing the minutes that we need to for reading and math, for library, for PE, for music, for social studies, for science, for computers.

And then we're supposed to fit in our Lakota language. I don't have teachers that are fluent in speaking Lakota language.

The majority of my teachers do car pool from Bismarck, and I'm thankful that they're there, because who else would be in our classrooms if we didn't have those people that travel an hour every day and an hour back?

I graduated from Sitting Bull College and Sinte Gleska. I graduated from here, and I graduated with about ten people that were also in my cohort, and I think there's three of us working in the schools.

And there have been other graduates from here, and they don't come to work at our schools because it is a lot of work.

It is a lot of work, and you don't get paid a lot of money. You get paid better working for the tribe, working for Head Start, than working at my school.

There's no incentive for our own people to come to work there, other than if you want to take a vow of poverty.

Many of my teachers will qualify for food stamps; they'll qualify for commodities, fuel assistance.

And the same thing with my parents. And it makes it very difficult to recruit and retain our own people.

So we do look to the outside for them to come, because it is our job to provide them FAPE. That's what we get our money for.

Our money is to provide FAPE: A free, appropriate public education. And for things to change, then it has to change at the higher-up; it has to come down from them.

And that funding has to be there. There has to be an incentive for our own people to want to come to work in our schools because, like I said, it's very hard.

I was going to say that Ms. Froelich was here, and we're planning to do a Culture Week. But just getting people to come is very difficult. Getting them to follow through -- this is our own people.

I love our language; I love our culture. But it's very difficult for our own people to step up and, you know, come into our schools because it's difficult. It is.

It's a long, hard journey. It's not easy to sit in the classrooms, and, you know, be able to develop that report with your students. It takes a lot; it really does.

And you have to be very committed to what you do. You have to love what you do, you know. And I have said this many times.

I get very frustrated and very tired of the fingers being pointed at us, that we're failing, because I don't look at our students as failures by any means.

Yes, we need to teach our language and our culture. But we have to do it with our -- if you walk into our schools, our students are 21st century learners. They're not into textbooks; they're not into anything that has to do with books. They are technology, you know.

So if we want our kids to learn our language, there's a perfect opportunity for us to do it through technology.

Because, like we've said over and over, there are less and less fluent speakers, you know. Because many of our Elders are passing away.

My husband is a fluent speaker, but my children are not, and they live with him. Because there's nobody for him to have a conversation with. You know, not here.

If we lived in the smaller communities -- and most of the people there, like in Rock Creek, and so forth, they still speak their language -- and he would be able to have a conversation with them. But my own children can't.

They understand, they hear him, but, you know, for them to have -- so I know, when my son wants to learn something, he goes to You Tube.

He's learned how to skin a coyote. He's learned how to Paracord. He's learned how to set traps. He's learned how to reload his own ammunition.

When he wants to learn something, he's motivated. And let me tell you, he goes to high school, and he doesn't like school. He doesn't.

But he likes auto mechanics, and that's what keeps him there: Because he loves that. But when he really, truly wants to learn something, he goes on You Tube. He goes on the computer.

They search it out, and that's how they learn today. If you walk in our schools, you're going to see my teachers have promethean boards, smart boards. That's what they use to engage our students.

It's no longer the books and the texts and the writing because they can speak into computers, and it will write it out for you.

They are 21st century learners, and you have to remember that. How we learned: That's old school.

They have information in a blink of an eye. They can go and see places that we have never been to in a moment's flash, and they're used to that.

And we have to remember that that's how they communicate. You see them on their phones, texting, faster than I'll ever be able to.

The kindergarteners coming into my school: They already know how to run iPads and computers. They're already proficient.

And those are the things that we have to look at: How can we get our language so that it is easily accessible to them anytime they want it?

Not when we say that, "This is when you're going to do it," you know, which is what school is about.

And I don't think we're ever going to get away from FAPE. We're never going to get away from that, but I think that we can do some things innovatively through the computers and through technology.

When you talk about AYP and using that data -- graduation rates and so forth -- our schools are judged all around by everybody: By the state, by our own tribe, you know. Looking from the BIE side of it, you know.

We are constantly being judged by those things, and I liked what Mr. Jim Gross talked about: Using the growth model.

Because if you look at how much they grow from when they come in in the fall until the spring, there's not one child that goes backwards. They learn. They learn a lot.

And it might not be at the rate that we want them to, but they are still learning, and our teachers are working hard. They really are. They love their students.

There's so many things that happen day-to-day. We have one school counselor for 420 students. We have no social worker. We have a home school coordinator.

And a lot of schools have title teachers in supplement to their grade-level teachers. We don't have that.

And last year, I had 28 kids in a classroom in 5th grade, and our classrooms were just packed. But our kids still learn, and those are the things that we're up against, you know.

And so, I just wanted to say that there are so many things that need to be done, but we need to ask our students; we need to ask our teachers.

We need to be in those classrooms, walking down those halls, because people sitting around this table have no idea where they come from and what they go through.

But we do because we hear about it. We're there for them. We're providing for them, what we can: Whether it be shoes, whether it be food, whether it be a hug.

There's so many things that our children are up against, but they are resilient, and they are tough.

And I have to say, our schools are doing awesome in attendance. They want to be there; they're coming.

I think we've done a good partnership with the tribe as far as trying to get our attendance issues taken care of. And, you know, I just want to thank Tribal Ed for that.

I guess I just really don't have anything else to say, so -- I'm always the target, so (turns around) there's my back. Thank you for coming.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you very much.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Kathryn?

EVERYONE: She had to leave.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Anjanette?

MS. PARISIEN: Hello. Okay. (Speaks in Lakota.) My name is Anjanette Parisien, and I'm actually from Turtle Mountain. I'm an enrolled member there; my family's from there.

I am honored enough to be able to work here at Sitting Bull College with our students. I teach life sciences; I'm a biologist by trade.

I came today to talk about an initiative from Sitting Bull College to develop a framework -- an indigenous evaluation framework -- and to ask questions and pose questions about how agencies within the federal

government that you represent today recognize how native people incorporate their individual tribal values within their frameworks.

There's so much that organizations that work and come from tribal nations where our values and our way of viewing the world that Tipizi so eloquently described as an example for here at Standing Rock.

And what is important to us, for our children and for the education of our children: How is that relationship reciprocated in a partnership such as she described?

We are given mandates about what is required to report. However, we are also given mandates on how those items and evidence are supposed to be constructed and delivered.

If you have alternative means for gathering that information, how are government agencies recognizing tribal nations and their sovereign right to create those themselves?

I come from a place, personally -- (cough) excuse me -- where education is very valuable.

When your grandmother sits you down and talks to you about going to school and why it's important to be able to read and write in English when she herself can read and write in Cree and Ojibwe and English, and your grandfather can do German and Cree and Ojibwe and English and French, but they're telling you how important it is to go to school and learn English and get a good education.

Because, no matter what, there's nothing anybody can do to take away what you know: They can take away where you live, they can take away what you have, but they can never take away who you are and what you know.

And so, to come to a session like this, where you're able to tell individuals that those are the traditions that you come from, where your grandparents and great-grandparents instructed you on how you were going to make it, how you're going to survive, what you're going to have to do to be here for your children and grandchildren.

And it's an interesting thing to be a part of a generation where we're able to come and speak about these things and not have the fear, and not have the repercussions of no longer being able to provide food for your kids or any of the things that are necessary to live.

So my intent today was to talk about how -- when the solicitation announcement is created -- how are the interpretations of our values and our interpretations of who we are and how we determine our program success, how those are incorporated into the evaluation process.

And how that can start to be evident so that, when agencies and communities come forward to provide that evidence for their hard work for the development of educational protocol and symbolism within our communities, how are those given equal footing to those that are mandated through agencies that are representative from, you know, wherever.

I think that's an important thing that is a lot of times missing because we know who we are and we know how we do things. We know if something is good or bad.

And our ways of expressing that and determining that are often not the same as what's required to prove that we are.

And so, my question is to pose: When you're developing the solicitations, and when you're thinking about the types of need that are -- that's why you're here: To gather the types of needs that are in our communities.

So when you're thinking about drawing up those solicitations, you can have a general idea of categories, and things like that.

And then, for that second half of that part, once its allocations are made and divisions are made and disbursements are made, and it comes time for that reporting time, what is being done to recognize individual tribal nations and their unique perspectives on what they applied for and needed this assistance for?

MS. SILVERTHORNE: I think you're trying to get at something very specific, but it sounds like you're talking around it, and I'm not sure what it is that's actually prompting this question.

MS. PARISIEN: I guess my question is: What's prompting it from the work that is being done -- at least in the group that I'm working with -- is: We create this tool, and we create this framework that we decide that is important; we decide how that is structured, how will that be reflected and accepted from government agencies?

Specifically, any type of funding that may be allocated to a potential grantee through this funding process and the purpose of coming and consulting with us.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: And the group you're working with is --

MS. PARISIEN: Well, we actually represent a group up here -- we don't actually have a name.

We just really want to be able to create an evaluation framework that we say, from an indigenous perspective: These are the things that we think are important.

And it includes membership from here, at the college, and throughout our Tribal Education Office.

And we're working together in cooperation to create this so that it's a tool that we are able to use here for any type of program here at the college, but also any type of program that comes through our Tribal Education Office here at Standing Rock, and to be able to have some consistency and reflective of who the people are here at Standing Rock.

MR. LESSARD: If I could answer. One thing I must say: Director Mendoza and the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education -- and I'm sure Joyce's office, too -- is that, I think one of the key things that I feel I am -- aside from being Mohawk and Sun Dancer and Elder-in-training -- is that we're advocates.

You know, our advocacy starts because, I think, of who we are as Indian people. And it's also who we are in our roles within federal government.

So I find that, quite often, from listening and hearing what's important to you and to various communities, tribal communities, what's important -- whether it be evaluation; what you need in way of grant opportunities, or funding opportunities -- that, you know, sometimes the best we can do is take that back and keep pounding the door and saying, "This is what's needed."

I also must say, sometimes in -- often, in the federal government, we might get something, but we don't always get everything.

And Joyce can speak to that, because we spend a lot of times in meetings and saying, "No, I think this is what we know the tribes want; this is what they need; this is what they're asking for; we've heard that through listening to communities."

And so, sometimes we're happy for those very small successes that -- maybe we got something into No Child Left Behind that we never thought would be there. But at least we were able to advocate for that, and it's in there.

So I will just say: Keep giving us those ideas; keep telling us what you need; what, you know, in terms of evaluation and other things. And we can take those with us, so --

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Almost every program that comes out of the Office of the Department of Education will have some form of an evaluation component with it.

And they are constantly looking for evaluation that actually fits the community that it's from.

We had a long debate, as we were trying to create the evaluation component for the Native Youth Community Project -- which is brand-new, coming out in a few weeks -- will be a grant that was borne out of the conversations that the President and the Secretary had right here.

That part of what it is going to do, is going to ask the community how to decide how they're going to focus that -- those resources.

What kind of a partnership are they going to create; how are they going to create measurable objectives that they will know they've made it to one point, the next point, over the next four years.

At reach of those four years, there will be an evaluation component. At the end, a more important evaluation component. And the entire focus of that is built on where these are: Native Youth Community Projects.

So I'm having trouble with the question, and being able to answer you, other than that description.

I can tell you that, as we work in the office, there is never a day where we don't wind up talking to somebody about something they didn't understand: A piece of information, a question about, "Well, how would this work?" There is always something taking place.

Ten years ago, you didn't have brown faces in our offices. I don't know how it was done then.

So as long as we keep debating about what these days are about, I promise you, they're about the little ones. Just like Ron said.

It's not like we were there to make a dramatic change; we're there to get the little incremental pieces together. So yes, we are interested.

MR. DAVIS: I think I have an answer to your question. If you're talking about an indigenous model for evaluating Native programs. That is the --

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Name?

MR. DAVIS: Jim Davis. Well, I guess I wasn't officially on the board, here, but maybe I'll just introduce myself first and then respond to the question that was asked earlier on in the comment.

But my name is Jim Davis. I'm the president of Turtle Mountain Community College. My background is actually K-12 and higher education. I spent most of my life in those areas.

But to answer the question or the comment or the concern about an indigenous model of evaluation -- and this could be adapted for any Native program -- but that is the indigenous model for evaluating programs, and that was designed and developed and is being used by tribal colleges throughout the country.

And if you want a contact person, it's Carrie Billy, the CEO of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. So some of you probably know her.

But anyway, for my presentation, I guess, I'd like to focus on tribal higher education because most of our money actually comes from the Department of Education.

And I want to thank E.J. and Blue Earth and the Department of Tribal Education here; Laurel Vermillion, for opening up this beautiful campus to this meeting today; and the Tribe; and of course, you people from the Department of Education, for being here today.

But in terms of higher education, tribal higher education, as you know, there are 37 tribal colleges around the country, and 5 in North Dakota.

And we're funded, I'll say, a little bit by the BIE. And I say "a little bit" because about a fourth of our budget at Turtle Mountain is BIE.

The rest comes from other sources like the Department of Education, Interior, the Energy Department, HUD, et cetera. And from the State, as well.

But our programs at Turtle Mountain talk about, you know, "our way." In other words, we are sitting here today, talking about how we can do things, and do it "our way," instead of having someone from the federal government or the state government coming down and saying, "This is how you have to do this."

And I've been there, done that; worked for the BIA for some time; worked for the State for some time.

But I'll give you a really good example of how we've done it our way at Turtle Mountain: It has to do with teacher training and teacher education.

We can be most proud, at Turtle Mountain, for our elementary degree program. We probably graduated, now, going on 100 students.

And I'll say the high majority of those graduates stay and teach in our school systems. And some of them are teaching in non-Indian schools, actually, because of the quality of students that we produce.

We're producing students, at our college, that are better prepared than mainstream universities and colleges in North Dakota -- and probably throughout the country -- because we do things differently.

We do it our way. And three of those ways are actually the language; the culture, understanding where these young kids come from; the socio-economic background.

You don't get that kind of stuff -- information from mainstream colleges and universities.

So when our principals are telling us that, "You do a better job at Turtle Mountain of preparing educators, teachers, than up the road, down the road, UND, Minot State, et cetera," it's just something about tribal colleges and doing it our way.

Because we're here today talking about solutions and asking questions and, you know, basically doing it our way.

And I think tribal colleges, by and large, have found ways to do it our way without intrusion by the federal government, by and large, and also the state government.

And in our case, you know, we do a lot of programs. But if we didn't hustle for grants and contracts from the federal government and the state, as well, we wouldn't be where we're at today.

But it gives us the freedom, you know, to be creative and innovative. And I think that's where a lot of tribal colleges come from, you know: They're creative, innovative.

You know, I'm sitting here right now, today, wondering how I'm going to balance my budget for next year.

And I'm talking about \$1 million right now. So we've always been able to find ways to balance our budget and stay within our budget.

But it's something that, if we were able to get the funding that Congress authorized for tribal colleges, we would be in good shape.

In other words, I would have balanced my budget for FY16 a couple months ago, because that money that we should be getting is about \$1 million; a little over.

We're supposed to be getting \$8,000 per FTE, per full-time equivalent student. And we're getting \$6,355 per FTE.

You know, the State gets a minimum of \$8,000 per FTE, up to \$18,000 per FTE. Howard University -- you know where that's located; that's in D.C.; it's a black college -- they get \$20,000 per FTE.

Now, you know, maybe it's not good to be talking about us doing what we do with limited funding.

But there's probably no other college or university throughout the country that can find ways to do things and get things done more so than tribal colleges.

And so, you know, we deal with poverty. We deal with poverty: With kids that come to school, walk to school. I mean, students who have families that have very little resources.

Sharing rides with each other, you know; students giving other students money; faculty staff giving the students money to make ends meet.

And so, we do a lot of things to do what we do, you know. To do it our way. And I think tribal colleges, as Senator Conrad said before he left office, he said, "The thing about tribal colleges is that they're the best-kept secret in North Dakota, and probably throughout the country, because nobody really knows about them as much as people should."

And I think that's true. Sometimes that's even true within our own communities, because people don't know what we actually do.

Throughout North Dakota, I think we've done a good job of working with the State over the past few years -- since 2007, 2006 -- where we pursued them in trying to get money from the State Legislature to help fund our non-Native students.

At Turtle Mountain, we have about 5 percent, 10 percent non-Native students on our campus.

So long story short there, we've been able to get the State to give us money, you know. And again, finding ways to get the job done.

And also, to also -- back in 2013, the legislative session at that time, through a lot of education -- gave us \$5 million to divide that amount -- that money, you know -- within the five tribal colleges of North Dakota.

So we got \$1 million per biennium -- \$500,000 per year -- for each of the tribal colleges.

So the thing that I think is that, you know, looking for solutions: Sometimes it's not the easiest thing to do in Indian Country, whether you're with the BIE, a school district.

I worked for the BIA for -- as a teacher -- for a couple years, in the days when they were still very abusive to young kids. And that's the reason I left.

But I came back two years later and worked with them as a line officer and a superintendent.

You know, working for them for that amount of time, after a few years, I said, "I'm done." Because, truthfully, it was the worst job I've ever had.

I mean, it isn't the people so much as it is the system. It is the system. Because when it's in the program, everybody has to fall in line with that program, whether it's reading, writing; whatever it is.

But the thing about tribal colleges, again, is that we need to continue to do a better job.

And I think one thing that we need to do a better job at is to work with our tribal governments.

I know that there's been an issue or a concern with, you know, the tribal governments: The politics that goes on.

You know, I think we have to really -- if it's a risk, so what? Because when our tribal college started in 1972, our unemployment rate was 44 percent. The unemployment rate was 44 percent.

Today, it's probably -- well, it's nearly 70 percent unemployment rates. The poverty rate is very high.

So, you know, we need to find ways to work with our tribal governments and to bring industry and jobs to our reservation. And I think we're finding ways to do that.

So it's something that, you know, we haven't done. I can say, in our community, we haven't done that. And we need to do that.

So I think we're finding solutions, again, with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and to do some of those things.

So, you know, there's one thing that bothers me, and probably a lot of you people who live on the reservation.

The one thing that bothers me the most -- the most -- is that our young kids are not protected.

When they go home on the weekends, and they don't have nothing to eat or very little to eat, and somebody notices that: Our food pantry.

And they find ways to get the food to those kids in little backpacks. And, you know, this is in our school system.

Working in the school system back a few years ago, we had kids who were homeless in high school wondering, "Where am I going to go this weekend?"

And we'd find that, especially before holidays, students would really misbehave because they were wondering, "Where am I going to be in the next two or three weeks?" And so we have those kinds of challenges.

With the BIE, our system in Belcourt, we probably have the most complex system of any school in the country. And I say that not out of disrespect for anybody or any organization.

But we have our big system -- we have probably one of the biggest Indian schools in Indian Country, and we have four school boards, K-12: We have a district school board; a grant school board; we have a, you know -- just whatever it is out there, in Indian Country, we have that school board; BIA school board.

So how do you make things work when you have that kind of a system? It's so complex that it's difficult to make decisions, not knowing -- you know, "Who's on first base? Who's on second base," in terms of decisions, and things of that nature.

So I really think that, you know, there are solutions out there. But we have to ask ourselves some really good questions because my belief is: If you ask a good question, you'll get a good answer.

But you've got to have the courage and the fortitude to move forward and make that decision and get it done.

A lot of times, we don't do that. And I think tribal colleges, you want to, but we haven't been able to do that.

I mean, I'm saying it because, yeah, I worked there, because I've had nine years of experience there, as compared to working in other types of jobs.

So I want to thank you again for being here and giving us the opportunity to say a few words. And I guess, if you have any questions, field me for those questions.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you. I did have a question for you -- or, just, kind of, a comment that we heard when we've done listening sessions with tribal colleges, and the feedback that -- I really admire your work, because it's very challenging, very difficult work.

And I guess the comment is: I agree that the tribes should spend more time in partnership with the tribal colleges because we do hear that one of the problems that tribal colleges have is the remedial work that's needed --

MR. DAVIS: Exactly.

MR. LESSARD: -- you know, when young people come in. So, you know, we always talk about that retention: How long are they staying in school?

And if they don't make it in the tribal college, then they're back doing what we were, possibly.

MR. DAVIS: Well, it's not a surprise to me, but just the other day, one of our employees asked these students to read something from whatever text, and a lot of those students could not read that. They had to be read to. These are supposed to be college-ready students.

And I know that a lot of our students go through life -- like I said, whether they're young kids, junior high kids, high school kids: They have a rough time. I do not blame those kids for where they're at. It's, again, the system.

And so, you know, we spend a lot of money remediating those kids so that they can be ready for higher education.

And some of those students end up to be our teachers because they've grown so much at tribal colleges. Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Sheridan McNeil?

MS. McNEIL: Good afternoon. My name is Sheridan McNeil. I work at the TREND program here at Sitting Bull College.

I guess, I'm going to try to keep it really short. I know we're running short on time, here, but I just wanted to say: Being an educator is a tough job.

My degree is in education. And I know everyone is always working with limited resources and limited time, and we put such high expectations on the educators and on the students, as well.

And the indigenous evaluation group that Anjanette was talking about: I sit on that committee with her, as well.

And we were asked to develop our own tribally based evaluation framework, as well as the Tribal Education Department was.

So ours: We would use it here for the college and be able to adapt it to whichever program that we needed to.

And then, for the tribe, as well. So we are working together, trying to develop that framework.

But I guess my big concern is: Before I came to the college, I have 11 years in working with our diabetes program, and I was also the health educator for the tribe.

And I really feel -- I heard a lot today, you know, about the expectations set and the future we'd like to see for our kids with the culture and language, and everything. And I whole-heartedly believe in that, as well.

But I also think that, in order for us to put those expectations on our children, we need to keep them healthy.

And so, one of my main concerns throughout the years, in seeing the different standards change in education, was the -- like, with No Child Left Behind, for instance: The 90-minute blocks of reading.

When I was doing my student teaching, to sit down, you know, and expect the kids to sit there for that amount of time, and to see how physical education was taken out of the school system, was really disheartening for me.

And so, that's my concern. If anything were to be taken back to the people who do make the policy changes: Let us have physical activity in the schools again.

And I know it's such a hard thing to balance because, you know, everyone has priorities and what things they need to be done, you know: All these standards and assessments, and things like that.

But if our kids aren't healthy and we're making them sit for long periods of time like that, how can we expect them to concentrate and to want to learn, and for learning to be fun?

Sunshine and I were talking outside a little bit, you know, about listening to everyone talking and voicing their concerns and their questions, and everything. And in my mind, I just go back to health all the time, because it is my passion.

I just -- you know, I said, "I want to say something, but I don't know if I should," and she said, "I think you should, because we were a healthy people."

She said, "We didn't have the obesity and things like that, and part of our culture is the movement."

And so, I guess that's my overall concern, is just: Trying to find a way -- and, again, you know, everything in balance.

But I really believe that our kids need to have that overall health and well-being. Our teachers need to be educated on our culture, because there are so many of them -- I tell our students here.

I say, you know, "When you get into education, you don't do it to become rich, by any means."

And I don't know what percentage of our educators here on Standing Rock travel from Bismarck or Mobridge or, you know, 80 miles on a one-way trip.

And some of them have been doing that since the early '80s, if not longer. And so, those people who have been here longer: They've been immersed in our culture; they understand our culture.

But we also get a lot of new teachers that come down straight out of college because there's a loan forgiveness, and different things like that.

And so, they have no idea about how to deal with our kids, and, "Why are they behaving this way," not understanding that they've had a rough night; they've had nothing to eat.

If they had a home to go back to, or if they had a home to go back to that didn't have four families living in it, you know. To sleep on a floor, things like that.

I'm from here, myself. I grew up in Cannon Ball. And I was very fortunate in my life, you know, to grow up in an alcohol-free home. But, you know, a lot of my friends, a lot of them are dead now.

But just for people -- that understanding of, you know, "This is why our kids are behaving the way they do."

But yeah, the health. And, you know, what everyone was taking here about: Just the lack of resources. We always have a greater need than we do resources.

And I know that's not an easy fix because we're not the only ones that experience that and have these hardships.

But I think, you know, we need to start taking care of our kids' health. And even our food programs are something that we really need to take a look at because the nourishment, you know -- we believe that incorporating that into our culture is something sacred, you know.

And to the kids: Every day, we put all these expectations on them with the culture and the language, and everything.

And they don't understand it right now, but yet they're put on them that we need to teach these to them: They need to understand, they need to talk.

But them, every day, they're just going to school for somewhere safe; somewhere that has food, and everything.

But yet, again, we expect them to sit down and read this, study this, and everything, without letting them be active.

But I think that's all that I have. And I just also just wanted to thank you, but also your staff.

I know you guys have a long road ahead of you, and this is your first stop, I heard earlier.

And I just wanted to thank you for your commitment. And you have a very important job in taking back everything here that we're saying. So thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you so much. Joe -- and you'll tell me how to pronounce that last name.

MR. YRACHETA: Hi. My name is Joe Yracheta. I'm from Missouri Breaks Research Industries on the Cheyenne River Reservation.

And I have a masters in pharmaceuticals; specifically, pharmacogenomics and healthcare. And so, we do a lot of health-related research there at Missouri Breaks.

And I just wanted talk about back when I was a high school math teacher, both on Rosebud and on Cheyenne River for a short time, as well as a college advisor through the TRIO program on Pine Ridge.

So I just want to talk a little bit about trying to remake Indian education by using funds for new technologies that, right now, are kind of, in my opinion, miscategorized.

So right now, the big push, where all the billions of dollars -- "billions," with a "b" -- and maybe "trillions," with a "t" -- are in bioinformatics and genome science.

Both those things are such huge technologies that they're going to touch law; they're going to touch policy; they're going to touch environment; they're going to touch business; they're going to touch education.

But I know that not all tribes are treaty tribes. But those that are need to really push Washington to re-categorize some of that money.

The analogy that I put is that: You can't give a five-year-old kid a set of keys for a Lamborghini and expect it to be of any use to them.

And so, there's a lot of data collected by different research programs that first, you know, come from the reservation; go back to D.C.; and then they return it to the reservation.

But there isn't very many people who can understand or analyze that information to make it useful for the tribes.

And so, we have to build capacity on the reservation and tribal groups so that they can use that information.

And even if you do have experts, there isn't any money to pay those people to do that work.

And so, that brings me to my second point, is that: I think, in other ethnic groups, a lot of times, they get this purpose-driven education from their families, either because their family has a small business, or a farm or a ranch, et cetera. And a lot of Native kids don't have that.

They don't really see a reason for going to school and how it actually, you know, functions as you grow up, you know: Calculating interest on a bank account, or figuring out how many miles per gallon, or what kind of laws are being proposed that might hurt your bottom line; that kind of thing.

And so, we need to have programs K-12 that are more like apprenticeships, where the children are going to know how this stuff is going to play out, and give them examples that are culturally relatable to themselves to see how that would work.

I'm a member of SACNAS, which is the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science.

I'm also a member of AISES: American Indian Society for Engineering and Science. And, you know, one of the big things in both of those groups is that every student that comes to those groups: They don't come to it because they want to be famous, or they want to make a bunch of money. They come to it because there's a need at home that they want to fill.

Either somebody's sick with cancer; or there's a water source somewhere that's poisoned; or, you know, there's a dwindling of some species like buffalo or deer.

And they go to those programs because they're trying to fulfill a need. And if you can get that through to kids at the K-12 level, that there's a bunch of needs that aren't being met, and that's why education -- specifically, science education -- is important, that would be a very good motivator, I think.

And so, one of the things that I've noticed is that the BIE is, kind of, trying to get out of the Indian business by giving the grant and charter schools some money.

But the bad thing about that is this whole pendulum thing, you know: You swing from one way, where the government has a lot of control and a lot of investment into tribal groups. The next swings the other way, where they give the tribes more control, but they don't give them the money.

And so, we have to have the best both worlds: Where the tribe has control, and they have enough money to institute some of these programs.

And so, a lot of academics -- not myself, because I'm not in education -- are trying to pair tribal knowledge and tribal sciences with Western science so that the kids will not only have something that's culturally relevant to them; but then, as they grow up and become tribal leaders, they can make it something that is culturally appropriate for that group.

And so, I think, with this big money for genome sciences and bioinformatics, you can make an argument that, since they are collecting data, and they're using it for whatever they're using it for, to make it equally useable for tribal groups, you need to put some of that money into education; you need to put some of that money into IHS; you need to put some of that money into the tribal DPA.

And I think you can also make that argument because, when they started this endeavor back in 1998, they said that they would earmark 5 percent of all genome research money just for ethical, legal, and social issues attached to that research.

And because, like I said, bioinformatics tries to merge all these large data sets -- criminal forensics, medical records, satellite imagery, security camera imagery, your educational data -- you know, they're just merging all these huge databases of business and marketing -- because it's touching everything, you can make the argument that we need that money put here so that our tribal groups and our school systems can train people who know how to use this stuff. Thank you.

MR. LESSARD: I wanted to mention that one of the things we found in speaking with young people about getting excited about STEM is the interpretation of: What is STEM? "Do I have to be an engineer?"

When we talked to a young group about the fact that 10 percent of our energy is coming from tribal lands and that, if young people don't get excited about that or find a way to be a part of that in the tribes -- that it's important to be a part of that -- that that's another industry, like healthcare and other things, that will not be controlled by the tribe because they won't have the knowledgeable young people coming up and understanding what that's about. And so, it'll be outsourced again.

And, you know, healthcare is the same way: We don't have enough data providers, healthcare providers, nurses, doctors.

And we're not getting young people excited about that field, or giving them the encouragement to get into that field.

MR. YRACHETA: Yeah. And that was one thing I left out, was the whole issue of data sovereignty.

MR. LESSARD: Mm-hmm.

MR. YRACHETA: And the reason why I bring it up is because kids really like flashy technology: Cell phones, computers; all that kind of stuff.

And if you train them how to do computer programming and how to maintain servers and how to connect with the fiberoptics and satellite signals and maintain the electric grid and all that stuff for the tribe, so that they can actually store all that data and the system doesn't go down, you'd have the ancillary benefit of them being excited because you can use it for these fun things like gaming and telephones.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Is there anyone else who would like to speak?

MS. GILLISSEN: So we have someone who submitted an e-mail who wants to have it read for the record. Harvey DuMarce is the President and an instructor at the Sisseton Wahpeton College.

"As a tribal college president, I am mindful of the tremendous obstacles facing us as higher education institutions on Indian reservations that are deemed as some of the poorest communities in America.

"We have people coming to our colleges who are simply not prepared for college. Their academic skills are low.

"They often bring a gamut of emotional and cultural issues with them. They often struggle with alcoholism or drug abuse.

"Some of the people come from dysfunctional family structures that are often generational in nature.

"They have been mired in dysfunctional lifestyles for at least several generations, and it becomes difficult to extricate themselves from that sort of lifestyle.

"In many instances, family and personal dysfunction have become normalized to such an extent that our students find it difficult to imagine another life that is free of dysfunctional living.

"Dysfunction has become the new normal on some Indian reservations. While those tribal members who have gone off to achieve higher education and choose to return to their communities to be of service, they are sometimes viewed with suspicion by other tribal members who have little or no education at all.

"Many of us who have earned higher education degrees or advanced degrees in specific fields are faced with new challenges in which our college degrees have no ready solution.

"The idea of success becomes a contested area for us. Many of us are taught in high school to believe in the American Dream: That we, as individuals, can achieve success if we work hard in life.

"But this notion of success is problematic for many of our Indian students. The American Dream is not applicable for them because what does individual success mean to them while their families and communities remain mired in poverty issues that defy solutions?"

"American Indian students bring their cultures with them when they enroll in our tribal colleges.

"Their cultures still emphasize the importance of community and family, but this reality is often not reflected within our institutions.

"As an educator, I believe we need the equivalent of a domestic Marshall Plan for tribal higher education.

"As an instructor of history courses, I know the Marshall Plan revitalized devastated European countries in the aftermath of World War II.

"We need something similar to address and remedy the economic and social situations on Indian reservations.

"Tribal colleges are attempting to remedy these conditions with limited resources at our disposal.

"To rely and expect the Bureau of Indian Affairs to bring meaningful changes to our communities is an exercise in bureaucratic futility.

"It has had at least two centuries of time to improve our lives and communities, and it has failed to do so.

"The Bureau of Indian Affairs is a reluctant friend of tribal colleges. They are unenthusiastic partners with us because federal laws mandate they work for us and with us. It is common knowledge that the BIA opposed the Tribal Community College Act of 1978.

"Rome was not built in a day; neither do I expect my proposal to be met with approval by many quarters of tribal higher education, but at least we can begin a conversation that seeks to find solutions to intractable issues facing our tribal members and communities.

"As tribal colleges, we have to do this for the sake of the generations yet to come."

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you.

MR. BYINGTON: Test. Oh, there it is.

MR. LESSARD: It's alive.

MR. BYINGTON: It's alive. Hi, my name is Clay Byington.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Clay --

MR. BYINGTON: Clay Byington, B-Y-I-N-G-T-O-N. Well, first off, I consider myself a 21st century student. I graduated last year --

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Congratulations.

MR. BYINGTON: -- thank you -- from that same school that's 400 square miles. This is my superintendent (gestures to Mr. Gross.)

Let me -- I don't want to get too off-topic, I guess, but I noticed the Generation Indigenous packet that was handed out, the material.

I'm part of the Standing Rock Youth Council. We have accepted the challenge. Our youth council is a big promotor of our language.

We've just now started. We're in the "building blocks" stage still, I guess. We have established it; we have done some community projects. So that's good.

One of the problems, as I was growing up -- I grew up with the food stamps, with the poverty.

I was thankful, also, to grow up in an alcohol-free family. It was pretty nice living with my grandparents.

But I noticed the struggle of my classmates around me: The suicides. Just tragedies happening.

Like, one of my classmate's house blew up, and she passed away from burn injuries, and it was terrible. It's just -- I don't know -- it's just bad.

Like, I don't know. I don't know. Sorry. I got off-topic. I lost my train of thought. But anyway.

Some problems my school was facing, I guess: I didn't get the opportunity -- my school didn't fully implement -- due to funding -- fully implement the Lakota language until I was in 10th grade.

And by that time, my class schedule was so full, I couldn't fit it in. But now, I'm implementing it in my college. I go to Sitting Bull College. In fact, I have class here at 5:00 p.m.

But our biggest problems I saw, being a student leader in my school, was: Spacing. I recall, at one time, we'd have a Lakota language class, civics, and another class in our cafeteria all at once because of our spacing issue we had.

That was until last year. We've alleviated some of that spacing issue, but the space issue at our school is still there.

Our elementary school could have double the capacity if we could have a bigger and larger school. I mean -- and that's pretty much all I have right now. I can't really think of anything right now. I wasn't very prepared.

MR. GROSS: I just want to tell you: This is a student, I think, who's unbelievable. He's also one of the students who talked to the President. And he's going into medicine. Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: And this is how you warm up for a 5:00 p.m. class, right?

MR. BYINGTON: Oh, yeah. One more thing: I also did have the opportunity to have breakfast with Arne Duncan in November, and we also told him about the issues faced at our schools. And also the President, in the Oval Office, too.

We actually had three of our youth actually out in D.C. last week to talk with Arne Duncan also, I believe. So that went really good, too.

They did want to come today, but their schedules are full. They're in college and high school and stuff, too.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: We're glad you're able to join us. Thank you.

MR. BYINGTON: You're welcome.

MS. CARLOW: (Speaks in Lakota.) My name is Sunshine Archambault Carlow. I'm Oglala Lakota, and I'm from Standing Rock. And "Wazi Ahanhan": From Pine Ridge, as well.

But I work for the Tribal Department of Education here on Standing Rock, and I facilitate two programs.

Jim talked a little bit about our Education Consortium earlier, and I also do the Language Revitalization Program here on Standing Rock.

And I just -- I guess -- one of the -- you know, I haven't been able to listen in much because I was helping with registration. And my friend, she's much more articulate than me: Tipizi.

But I'm from Standing Rock. I went to school here most of my life. Also at Pine Ridge, I went to school.

And I can speak the Lakota language fairly well, and I can understand it better than I can speak it. And I never thought that I would be able to do that. And I can. And it's possible.

And that's one of the things that our program tries to do, is: Help our students, our young people, our young adults; anybody -- anybody -- that's a not a fluent speaker can learn our language.

And it is possible, and we can do it. Just trying to encourage our youth and our teachers, our community members, anybody that works with our schools.

But one thing that -- you know, I got to hear one of our principals speak, and it's our largest elementary school.

And she talked about all of the things they have to do, they have to cover. And one of the things you're asking for -- you're consulting with is the Native American language policy.

One of the things that is not required is for our schools to show how they're doing with cultural integration and language.

Those are -- it's almost like they're counter, because you have to make room for them, in addition to the things that you get money for.

MR. LESSARD: Exactly.

MS. CARLOW: You don't get money if you do well in the language and the culture; you get money to do well in reading and math. And that's what we focus on.

And so, if we're talking a Native American language policy: Something that gives our schools that due credit when they do well in those areas. Because it's a value in our community, and that's one thing that -- it makes it hard.

I work with our administrators. I work with Mr. Gross; we come together monthly. And our schools do work hard and, you know, sometimes get the blame for everything.

But, you know, when they are doing well in those areas that our community values, they don't get credit. And they certainly don't get money. And money is the ultimate driver.

I mean, if AYP was your Native language -- and math and attendance -- then I guarantee you a lot more of our teachers would be working on proficiency in language, and a lot more time would be devoted to Native language instruction and curriculum.

And some of our schools do it really well. And like I said, it's not necessarily credited.

But, with that being said, I think we're going to close, right? (Someone gestures that they will also want to speak.) Oh, yeah. Sneaky sister-in-law.

But yeah, I just wanted to say that I didn't get to hear a lot, but real quick: Involving our youth in these conversations.

One of the things that -- you know, I'm really glad that Clay could be here, but you don't see a lot of students.

I know that Cheyenne River was trying to stream in one of their schools, but exposing our students at a young age -- and usually our schools do try and get a class or two to an event like this, and it's kind of short notice.

But exposing them to -- you know, we have a unique -- we're unique in that we have treaties with the United States government.

And understanding why meetings like this happen at an early age; understanding how we have a different relationship than the other schools in the United States, be it public, tribal, grant or private.

There is a difference with our communities. And understanding that at an early age and being exposed to those kinds of conversations helps to build --

That's where I learned to fight for my language and my culture and my people, and learned about the history, and knowing that there are things that are our rights, that we signed a treaty with the United States government.

And so, fighting for those things -- I don't want them to be as old as I was. I didn't really start learning -- really in-depth about it -- until I was in college.

And so: Sooner, sooner. Exposing them to the real application of those. They're still very applicable.

Today. Like, today is an example. And exposing our students to it, and giving our schools credit when that happens. Okay. Sorry.

MS. ARCHAMBAULT: Hello. Okay. My name is Chrissy Kipp Archambault, and I am a student here at Sitting Bull College in the elementary ed department. I am a junior, and I am married to Chuck Archambault, who is a member of this tribe.

I just want to talk about what I've noticed through my observations with the school system.

The public school system, it seems -- like Mr. Archambault said, they teach towards the test. And to me, as a teacher, it's really discouraging.

And I went to my Uncle Darrell Kipp's school, Cuts Wood School, which is an immersion school.

And what his number one thing was for the kids was to make the school seem like it was at Grandma's house so that the children feel comfortable, and they want to be there. The teachers are there to be a comfort for them and to be there for them.

And, I think, if we could bring that mentality to the public system, where we have flexibility of what we can do with the curriculum, it would benefit the students with, I think, interdisciplinary subject matter, and it would work well with them.

And also, another thing with the older students: Us, as Indian people, we've always worked together.

Since back in time, the men, the women: We all come together for our children. And I think having role models, because we don't -- most of our students don't have the support system at home, it would be nice to bring the support system at school, along with the teachers.

Like, for instance, Sheridan: She's a fighter at Sitting Bull College. She makes sure the kids are on-point, and she's always there for us. Tipizi: She's a fighter for the language. Sunshine's a fighter at the Tribal Ed.

We have all these younger people here that are fighting. And my husband, Chuck Archambault: He works at the middle school. He's an ISS coordinator.

And one meeting he had, the principal, the social worker, and another person. And they had this gentleman: He wouldn't talk to any of them.

He wouldn't talk to the principal, the social worker; nobody. So Chuck went in there, and he's like, "Will you talk to me?" And he's like, "I will only talk to Chuck."

So things like that: Having mentors in the school; of young men, young women that will be there that are culturally involved, as well. To show that support system, I think, would be very beneficial. Thank you.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Thank you.

MS. CARLOW: We've asked Mr. Gross to do a closing prayer, if there are no more comments.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: Could we -- just a moment.

MS. CARLOW: Oh, okay.

MS. SILVERTHORNE: There have been a lot of really quality comments today: Some of them hard to hear; some of them difficult to answer.

But I welcome the fact that we had so many people who were here, who were interested, and who were -- to you few folks -- willing to stay to the bitter end. Thank you very, very much.

These events that we put on are challenging in many ways. Our staff, back at the back, who work with the community to help to coordinate and create the space and the time for us: There's a lot of work behind-the-scenes on it. And it's hard, sometimes, to find people who are willing to help co-host us, and we appreciate this very much.

It's only because there is that effort and that cooperation that we are able to be out here, and do the level that we are at, even to this point.

We hope to get better. There's always something better around the corner. Please watch your Federal Register this week. We have things coming out within the next couple weeks that are unique.

Please keep in touch with us. And comments can be sent in for up to 30 days after today. The transcript and the other documents will be done at the end of this day.

The comments: We usually offer to have those come in, and they will be attached to the transcript.

The other option will be, yet, the Tribal Consultation Policy. Today is its first day out in public; and 90 days of comment time; and then there will be a process to incorporate that information. So that's a longer project.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for your commitment to education. Thank you for your interest in kids.

MR. GROSS: First, before I do the closing prayer, I'd like to thank Ron and Joyce for coming out here.

I have to tell you, I had a phone call last Thursday from Bernard Garcia. I had got to know him over the years.

But he said, "Don't worry. I've seen Joyce before. And she doesn't know me, but," he says, "I'll guarantee you they'll understand what you're talking about." And I really feel that. So thank you again.

And with that: Heavenly Father, thank you for bringing all the people together today. We should always try, in everything that we do, Heavenly Father, to do what's best for the kids. And if we forget that, we're no longer educators.

And I think that's why we always try and do, now, our best: What we can do, and also by doing it together.

With the things that we have, our children are our future. Without them, we will not survive. And it doesn't matter what it is: Without language or culture, we will not survive.

So I hope, with the things that we did today, that they will be passed on, and things will take root.

And again, I guess, in closing, please help us. Because without any goal, without any type of a timeframe, it is just a dream.

Thank you, Heavenly Father. And everybody have a good trip home.

(Whereupon, the tribal consultation concluded at 4:23 p.m.)

NOTARY REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

COUNTY OF CASS

I, Elizabeth H. Lundquist, a Notary Public and stenographic court reporter within and for the County of Cass and State of North Dakota, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing two hundred sixty (260) pages contain an accurate transcription of my shorthand notes then and there taken.

I further certify that I am neither related to any of the parties or council, nor interested in this matter directly or indirectly.

WITNESS my hand and seal this day of April 29, 2015.

Elizabeth H. Lundquist

Notary Public

Fargo, North Dakota

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