

Welcoming Remarks (Day 2)

Joanne Shenandoah: Gentlemen, if you would take your seats, I think we're about ready to start day two of our hearing on children exposed to violence. So we'd like you to come together and we'll get started. Good morning. [Speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 00:15_1005]. My name is Joanne Shenandoah and I am co-chair for the task force. And we want to thank you so much for coming and taking this time out to spend with the task force. I think we're still waiting on a few people to attend. However, I just want to start by saying greetings and welcome. I'm Iroquois, Oneida [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 00:37_1005] from central New York. And I have been in, very honored to work on this task force for many reasons. Because I think all over Native America we see the troubles with our children.

And I come from a very strong cultural heritage. You may have heard of the prophet Hiawatha. He was a man who accepted the message of peace from our Peacemaker. And he angered an evil chief. And I'll just give you a brief version of this. He angered this chief so much that the chief had the entire family of Hiawatha murdered. And Hiawatha decided, as he grieved for days, he remembered the words of our Peacemaker. And he brought this shell, called the wampum shell, which you may have heard of. And it's purple and white. It's called technically the quahog shell. But this shell represents purity and truth from the white, and the purple represents the bruising or our pain that we've felt. And so when we have learned forgiveness or learned how to create a better world for our children, we can hold onto this wampum. And it's said that all of our words will, that we speak will be heard directly by the Creator. So we're very blessed to have this story. And I just wanted to share that kind of quickly with you.

We understand that Hiawatha also helped to spread the message of peace through the Tree of Peace. Four white roots going to four white, or four directions of the earth. And underneath this tree are buried our weapons of war. So if we could put away our weapons, if we could put away our anger and learn how to find a way to bring peace in our communities for our children, we know that we'll have a better world. So I just wanted to share that with you quickly.

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I want to mention also that yesterday we had some very intense and also very important testimony. And I'd like to offer, if you need to, anyone in the room to go to the safe room, which is down the hall past the elevators to the right. We have Jim and Bonnie Claremont who are our traditional elders. If you would raise your hand there. And they're right over here. And they're more than willing to sit with you and/or spend time with you to either debrief or unwind or if you need to share something with them. They are traditional healers and very honored that you're here with us today.

Also I want to mention that we have been working on this production since December in Bismarck. Then we went to Arizona as well as Fort Lauderdale and also to Minneapolis for listening sessions, and now here in Anchorage, Alaska. We'd like you to encourage people from your communities and whoever you know that has direct ideas regarding recommendations to the taskforce to please submit those within the next month. Right?

Man: Yes.

Joanne Shenandoah: Within the next month to test—the email is testimony@tlpi.org. So we have in the audience today some wonderful and dedicated people. And they come from the Department of Justice. They come from the Tribal Law and Policy Institute. Everyone on the task force. There's more information also at justice.gov/defendingchildren or defendingchildhood, excuse me. So if you would share those websites and emails with those people who you know who would submit testimony, that would be very terrific.

All right. So let's see. There are also two villages that were visited while here in Bethel, or near Bethel. And that's the—I think you should pronounce that. Napaskiak and Emmonak? Okay. And the taskforce went there and put on their boots and their sweaters. And they heard some powerful testimony there as well. So I just want to say that our panel—or our panel—our taskforce is deeply committed to this report that we will be submitting to the attorney general

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in October. So with that I'd like to also offer a good morning wish from my co-chair, Valerie Davidson.

Valerie Davidson:

Good morning. [Speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 05:17] My Yup'ik name—I'll make it short—my Yup'ik name, [speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 05:28]. My English name is Valerie Davidson. My mom's family is from Quinhagak. I'm from Bethel. My dad's family is Port Orchard, from Port Orchard, Washington. We really appreciate you, everybody coming to be able to participate in today's meetings. We especially appreciate the people who really took time out of their busy schedules to come to give us what, give us some advice and tell us what we really need to hear. What's happening at the communities, what are people's experiences, and what are the things that we can do to end violence?

We were very fortunate, as co-chair Shenandoah said, to be able to travel to Bethel. We had a listening session in Bethel and we also traveled to Napaskiak by boat. And then we flew a little over an hour to Emmonak and then back to Bethel before we came here to Anchorage. So as you can imagine, we always say you can't describe people's experiences in rural Alaska. You just cannot comprehend. And it was incredible to see the eyes sort of opening wide. And it's funny because your perspective is always personal. It's what you have experienced. It certainly is a Yup'ik belief that your view of the world is entirely defined by the experiences that you have. And so as we're designing solutions that work in communities, it's really important that we design those solutions based upon their own experience and how they view the world in order for it to be the most meaningful.

And we certainly have eye opening experiences when we visit different villages than the one that we're from. And it's not just from people who come from Washington, D.C. to our villages. Where we are, our communities that raised us, are different than other communities in Alaska. And in Alaska we are fortunate to have 229 federally recognized tribes. Each one is different. Each one is unique.

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So now that we have that, let me get to the official things. We have a timekeeper today. So today we're going to have a few panels that are going to be presenting invited testimony. We really appreciate your taking the time to do that. We do have a timekeeper and that is Jerry or Maureen. Think that's going to be Jerry is the timekeeper. And so you're going to have 15 minutes to be able to provide testimony. And then we'll open it up for the committee members to be able to ask any questions. We will take breaks during the day.

And at the end of the last panel today we're going to open it up for public testimony. So that anybody who's interested in providing public testimony, I think there's a sign-in sheet out by the front desk. If you didn't sign in this morning and maybe you've heard something that didn't get said, something that you would want to reinforce that would be important, it would be good to also, just feel free to sign up throughout the day at any time. We really want to hear what you have to say. The public testimony, in the interest of time, will be about five minutes.

Again, as Joanne said, if you want to submit written testimony, I know some people are more comfortable submitting things in writing rather than speaking in public. If you submit, send an email to testimony@tlpi.org. That's tango, lima, papa, indi-. I was going to say Indian. [LAUGHS] Dot org. And then they'll be taking testimony over the next month. But we really do want to hear the experiences of real people.

But I do apologize in advance if we have to cut anybody off. We always say in our communities it's really important for everybody to have the opportunity to be heard. And so if we do have to cut you off, we apologize. But we want to, we just know that in doing so we're doing it from the right place, knowing that by limiting your time we're also allowing time for someone else to be able to be heard. So with that, I'll turn it back over to Joanne. [Speaking NATIVE LANGUAGE @ 09:51_1005].

[END WELCOMING REMARKS]