which was great progress. And I appreciate them for that.

But most folks, they're too busy to follow the ins and outs of filibusters and what's happening in the Senate. So all they know, is nothing works up there, a plague on both their houses. And so then they stop voting. And they give up on the system. And when we don't vote, oftentimes we lose. Because the majority agrees with us on things like minimum wage. The majority agrees with us on investing in education and job training and so forth. But if they don't think it's going to get done and they just stay home, or they figure, you know what, neither side is going to be looking out for my interests, so I might as well buy into whatever social issue or issue of the day comes up as opposed to really paying attention to economic arguments that will give me some relief—that's happened too often.

I say all this not to discourage you. I say all this because we should not be complacent. We've got a great record of accomplishment over the last 7 years. We have the right agenda for America to move America forward over the next 7, 10, 20 years. But we have to go out there and sell it.

We've got to have what Dr. King used to call the fierce urgency of now. Because the stakes are enormous in this upcoming election. And what that means is, is that the kind of engagement and involvement and participation that so many of you displayed 7, 8 years ago when I was running, you've got to have that same sense of engagement and enthusiasm and passion this time out.

We can't afford complacency. I always have to remind people that when I ran in 2008, I didn't say, "Yes, I can." I said, "Yes, we can." We. A President is important. I won't lie. I've got a big plane. [*Laughter*] Helicopters. Although, it's leases, and my lease is about to run out. [*Laughter*] I'm trying to see if we can establish a frequent flier program—[*laughter*]—because I've put in over a million miles on that plane and I'm figuring that should allow me, even with some blackout dates, use a few times a year. But apparently, that's not been the practice. [*Laughter*]

So Presidents are important. They can make a difference. They can help set the agenda. But Presidents without a Congress that's supportive of that agenda and cooperative and thinking about the common good is not going to get done what needs to get done. And a Congress without the support of citizens who are fighting and scratching and clawing for the things that matter to them and their communities and to ordinary families, that means Congress isn't going to be able to do what it needs to do.

Justice Brandeis said, "The most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen." I believe that. And in a little over a year's time, I will get on that plane for the last time, but I am going to be right alongside you as a fellow citizen. And my work will not be done, just like your work is not done. And that means that together we will continue to make sure that my successor is a Democratic President and that we win back the Senate, we win back the House, and we move America the way it needs to move, in the right direction for every person, for every child.

I believe that. That's the politics we all bought into: a politics of hope, not a politics of fear. Let's go out and make it happen.

Thank you so much, everybody. Love you. Appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:47 p.m. at the residence of David and June Trone. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session During a Panel Discussion at the White House Tribal Nations Conference
November 5, 2015

The President. Am I supposed to make remarks first, or are you going to say something?

Moderator Jude Schimmel. I think we can do whatever you want. [*Laughter*]

The President. You know, I think I'm supposed to make remarks first. I was just feeling so comfortable, I sat down. [*Laughter*] Let me go to the podium first. All right, all right, I'm going to go to the podium. [*Laughter*]

I just feel so comfortable, with friends here, that I was just getting kind of relaxed. [*Laughter*] But I'm going to start off by making some remarks. Everybody, please have a seat. It is wonderful to be with all of you.

I want to thank Jude and the whole panel here of outstanding young people who are going to participate in this panel. I want to thank our outstanding Interior Secretary, Sally Jewell. I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here who are supporting the outstanding work that not just the Department of Interior is doing, but we're trying to get every agency to really focus on strengthening the nation-to-nation relationship that we have with the tribes. So thank you, Members of Congress.

I want to thank everybody who is here, young and old, but especially the young people who are participating in this terrific forum.

When I ran for office, I pledged to build a true nation-to-nation relationship with all of you. And back then, I was just a young adopted son of the Crow Nation. [*Laughter*] Didn't have any gray hair. [*Laughter*] Now I am President Barack Black Eagle. [*Laughter*] And what started out as a campaign promise has now become a tradition. So welcome to the seventh White House Tribal Nations Conference.

Now, traditionally, what we've done is, I've come out and I've given a big speech. And I was telling Jude and others, I just get tired of hearing myself talk; I'm just talking all the time. So, instead of a long speech, I thought I'd have a conversation with young people from Indian Country. And I just want to start off with a couple of brief thoughts.

I've often acknowledged the painful history, the broken promises that are part of our past. And I've said that while we couldn't change the past, working together, nation to nation, we could build a better future. I believe this not only because America has a moral obligation to do right by the tribes and treaty obligations, but because the success of our tribal communities is tied up with the success of America as a whole. And over the past 7 years, with tribal leaders and Federal officials working together, we've made a lot of progress.

Together, we've strengthened your sovereignty. We've expanded opportunity. We've delivered justice. But I think we all understand we've still got more work to do. We need to do more to safeguard tribal consultation rights across the Federal Government. We can continue to help to consolidate and restore tribal homelands. We need to create more opportunities for tribal communities. And that's why the budget I sent to Congress this year would have increased our investments in Indian Country by $1.5 billion. And we need Congress to show that same support for Indian Country.

And one of the reasons I'm so invested in your success is because I've gotten to know so many of you and we've become friends and I've visited more Indian Country than any sitting President. Last year, Michelle and I visited Standing Rock Sioux Nation. Then, we invited many of their young people to the White House.

This year, I met with young people in the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. In Alaska, I met with Native communities and witnessed how climate change threatens their livelihoods as we speak, and I reiterated my commitment to working with tribal nations to protect your national resources and honor your heritage, as we did with Denali. So, moving forward, we'll also review tribal proposals to permanently protect sacred lands for future generations.

While I was in Alaska, by the way, I also had a salmon spawn all over my shoes—[*laughter*]—which I was told, the salmon was happy to see me. [*Laughter*]

What struck me on each of these trips is, when we talk about the future of Indian Country, we're really talking about the future of young people. I don't need to tell you the enormous challenges that they face. Native children are far more likely to grow up in poverty, suffer from significant health problems, face obstacles in educational opportunity. A lot of the young people I've met have gone through

more than anybody should have to go through in an entire lifetime at a very early age. Losing family members to violence or suicide or addiction and struggling with the kind of poverty that is unacceptable in the richest nation on Earth.

In these circumstances, sometimes, it's hard to dream your way to a better life. And these challenges didn't just happen randomly to Indian Country. They were the result, the accumulation of systematic discrimination. But for all our young people have endured, the young people that I've met have also given me incredible hope. I see so much promise in them, so much determination.

In the words of Native American writer Janet Campbell Hale: "Courage has been bred into you. It is in your blood." Courage is in your blood. And you're not alone. I want our young people to know that we believe in you. That's why we started something called Generation Indigenous, which focuses on cultivating the potential of our Native youth. And at least 20 tribal nations have already become "My Brother's Keeper" communities to give more young people a shot at success.

Even as we prepare out tribal youth to succeed in the 21st century, we also have to preserve and protect Native culture and heritage. As I've said before, if you start losing your language and your culture, your sense of connection to your ancestors and touchstones that date back generations, you can start feeling adrift. And if you're living in a society that devalues your culture or perpetuates stereotypes, you may be devaluing yourself.

So we have to preserve those bonds, break stereotypes. I believe that includes our sports teams, because we all need to do more to make sure—[*applause*]—we need to make sure that our young people feel supported and respected.

And that's really what this Tribal Nations Conference is about: extraordinary young people representing the promise not just of their tribes or of Indian Country, but of the United States. Because ultimately, we're one family, and these kids are our kids. They deserve to be cared and loved and nurtured and given a shot at opportunity. And if we do the—our part, there's no limit to what they can achieve, because they have extraordinary talent and extraordinary resilience. I could not be prouder of them.

And so, with that, I'm going to sit back down, and let's start a conversation. Okay. All right.

Ms. Schimmel. Good afternoon, and welcome to the final session of the 2015 Tribal Nations Conference. Before we get started, I would like to briefly introduce myself. My name is Jude Schimmel. I'm 21 years old, and I'm a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Growing up, I had no idea that I would be in the position the position I am today, but through hard work and the help of my family, I was able to receive a scholarship to the University of Louisville, where I played 4 years of college basketball and earned my bachelor's degree in sociology. And I'm also a Nike N7 ambassador and an author. But most importantly, over the past few years, I've had the opportunity to travel and speak to over 60 different Native American communities within the United States to simply inspire young Natives to go out and follow their dreams and do what they love. I truly believe that if we continue to work together that we can get to the point where we preserve our culture and our tradition and also allow and create the opportunities that young Native Americans deserve. Lastly, I would just like to express how honored and how blessed I am to be in front of all of you today and on stage with all these special people.

Next, I would like to hand it over to our panelists so that they can introduce themselves as well.

[*At this point, panelist Tatiana Ticknor spoke in Dena'ina and then translated her remarks into English as follows.*]

Ms. Ticknor. This is me, this is who I am. I am Tatiana Ticknor. I am Dena'ina, Tlingit, and Yup'ik. And I was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, and I am 16 years old.

[*Panelist Brayden White spoke in Kanien'keha and then translated his remarks into English as follows.*]

Mr. White. My name is Brayden White. My traditional name means, "He carries the bow and arrow on his back." I'm from the Mohawk Nation, I'm 21, and I'm of the Bear Clan. And I would just like to say that they tried to bury us, but, you know, what they were burying was the seeds for change, and look it, we're all blossoming now.

[*Panelist Blossom Johnson spoke in Diné and then translated her remarks into English as follows.*]

Ms. Johnson. My name is Blossom Johnson. I am Navajo and from Black Mesa, Arizona.

Panelist Philip Douglas. My name is Philip Douglas. I am 15 years old. I am the member of Seminole—I am a member of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, and I am in 10th grade. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Schimmel. So, before we get started, I would just like to clarify and let you guys know that in addition to the panelists' questions, we also have a couple that we got from the online community through the hashtag #GenIAsksObama. But up first, we have Tatiana.

Teachers/Native American and Alaska Native Students/Racism in Schools/Native American and Alaska Native Mascots in Sports

Ms. Ticknor. Hello.

The President. Hello. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Ticknor. So my question is, is there any way you can get teachers to understand Alaska Native and American Indian students more better? And is there a way that we can get rid of or eliminate stereotyping and racism within schools?

The President. Well, the—it's a great question, Tatiana. And first of all, I just really appreciate you guys being here, and we're so proud of you. And I think it's fair to say that when I was their age, I was not making presentations with the President. [*Laughter*] I just want to point that out.

I think it's also important to point out that Jude can really ball. [*Laughter*] So the—she was being kind of modest in talking about her basketball skills. And since I'm a basketball fan, I'm very impressed. [*Laughter*] And her and her sister, I think, have really made all of Indian Country so proud. So we really appreciate it.

I think that in education, the single most important ingredient is the person in the front of the classroom, the teacher. And we've got incredible, dedicated teachers all across the country. And my sister was a teacher. My mother taught. I taught in law school. And so I have a deep appreciation for the art of teaching, and I think it's one of the most important professions in our society.

But part of being a good teacher is being able to connect, right? Part of being a good teacher is being able to see each individual student and say, how do I motivate them, and how do I relate to them, and how do I make sure that the subject matter that is being taught—whether it's math or science or history or English—that I find a link between what's being studied and what people feel and what they've gone through in their lives? And that's true in any community. But it's especially true, I think, if you've got schools with Native American students or Alaska Natives.

When I was in Alaska, when I was in your home State, it really reminded me a little bit of Hawaii in the sense that you have this incredible indigenous culture that kind of seeps into everything, but sometimes, it's not reflected in the curriculum, and it's not reflected in how the schools are teaching and interacting and what the reading materials are. And so I think we have a special obligation to focus on that.

And one of the things that we've asked—that I've asked Sally Jewell to do is, for those schools that are in the Bureau, under Bureau of Indian Affairs jurisdiction, that we revamp the curriculum to get a lot more input from the students and from the Native community and provide more local control so that we are helping to shape and assist what's going to work for those students.

For schools that are basically State-run or local school districts, but have a large Native

population, what we're doing is, we're giving grants to help those school districts think about these issues in a much more serious way.

And, I guess, to your last question, in terms of eliminating racism or stereotypes, that's an obligation of the entire society. But it's especially important in the school. And so my hope and expectation would be that anybody in authority in a school is being very clear the day—first day kids walk in as to what's acceptable and what's not in terms of how they're interacting with each other, how they're respecting each other, how they're respecting different cultures. If a school is not doing that, it's failing.

And one specific element of this that we've, I know, talked about, but I want to give some credit right now is on this issue of schools and mascots, because if you walk into a school the first day and you're already feeling that stereotypes are embedded in the culture and the cheers and all that, that kid is feeling set apart and different. And so I want to give credit to Adidas, and I know a number of their officials are here today. They've really come up with a smart, creative approach, which is to say, all right, if we can't get States to pass laws to prohibit these mascots, then how can we incentivize schools to think differently? And so what Adidas has done is, it said to the 2,000-plus schools that still have Native American or Alaska Native mascots—it said, you know what, we will work with you to redesign your entire sports brand.

And I don't know if Adidas made the same offer to a certain NFL team here in Washington—[*laughter*]—but they might want to think about that as well. But I tell you, for Adidas to make that commitment, it's a very smart thing to do because those schools now really don't have an excuse. What they're saying is one of the top sports companies in the world—one of the top brands in the world—is prepared to come in and use all their expertise to come up with something that's really going to work and that the entire community can feel proud of and can bring people together and give a fresh start. And I really want to give them a lot of credit for taking that step.

Student Loan Programs/Tribal Colleges and Universities

Ms. Schimmel. Thank you, Tatiana, for your question and thank you, Mr. President, for your remarks on that subject. Up next we have Brayden.

Mr. White. Hi, Mr. President.

The President. Hey, Brayden.

Mr. White. Pleasure to meet you.

The President. How are you doing, man?

Mr. White. Good.

The President. All right.

Mr. White. How was your—how will your administration help tribal education departments empower low-income Native American youth trying to get to college that don't have the money to go to college? Like, how can we—how can they be empowered to have those equal opportunities?

The President. Yes. Well, I'll say to all the young people who are here and all the parents of young people who are here, the fact is that an education is really the key to a middle class life in the modern world. And there was a time where, as long as you were willing to work hard, you could support a family without a college education, some sort of advanced schooling beyond high school. It is very hard to do now.

Every job requires a specialization and understanding everything from computers to how to communicate effectively. And so it doesn't necessarily have to be a 4-year education—4-year college, but you need some advanced training.

So the first thing I'd say in terms of Native American and Alaskan youth is, we need to do a better job telling you what's already in place, what's already there. Because the fact of the matter is, we expanded Pell grants to reach millions of more students. We have tried to simplify something called FAFSA that makes sure that—it's basically the form that you have to fill out to qualify for all the various student loans and programs that are out there. It used to be so complicated that a lot of people just wouldn't fill it out. Especially, if your parents didn't go to college, right?

So now you may not have enough counselors in the school, you don't know where to go, and you just figure you can't afford it. But the truth of the matter is, is that between Pell grants and Federal loans and grants and scholarships that are available, there's really very few young people who should not be able to go to college if they've got enough motivation.

So what we'd like to do is to work with the Department of Education, Department of Interior, local school districts, to just spread the word of what's already out there. And we're going to really spend a lot of time on reaching deep into the various communities and make sure that you are getting that information out to students.

Now, the other thing that we're trying to do is to strengthen tribal colleges, because we think there's an opportunity for more young people to get a really good education in a way that is culturally linked and allows young people sometimes to stay at home. I remember one of the first times that I saw you and your sister or heard about you was there was a story that was done about incredible Native American basketball players who oftentimes had trouble transitioning to college because they weren't used to being away from their tribe and their community and, sort of, the challenges of being in an environment where you're just cut off from your people and what you know.

And I think that tribal colleges can serve as an important bridge. In some cases, it may be, you start in that college and then you transfer to a larger university once you've, kind of, gotten more familiar and comfortable with what's required. So we're going to also work a lot on that issue. Okay?

Native American and Alaska Native Education/Balancing Cultural Heritage and Integration in Minority Communities

Ms. Schimmel. All right. The next question we got from online, but it may be a little similar to what you just answered.

The President. Okay.

Ms. Schimmel. The question is: "How can we best encourage our Native youth to pursue an education and integrate while still maintaining our culture, traditions, and languages?"

The President. This—since I've been talking about education twice, this may be one of those where I turn it to you guys and see what you guys think. Anybody want to volunteer some thoughts in terms of something I should know that you think would be especially helpful?

Go ahead, Tatiana.

Ms. Ticknor. So, at my school, we are—since it's Native Heritage Month, we're actually doing a word of the day on the morning announcements every day. So I think all the other schools should do that as well because it raises awareness for your culture and language and it will teach non-Native students language as well.

The President. Okay, that's a great suggestion.

Blossom, have you got any thoughts on that?

Ms. Johnson. Well, for the education part where students can't pay for it or are having trouble paying for it, is I've noticed that some after-school programs can probably provide more information about scholarships, fellowships, and maybe even grants to go to college.

The President. Yes, I think you're absolutely right. If we don't have enough counselors in the schools, then having tribal organizations, non-for-profit organizations, kind of, fill some of those gaps, I think that's really important.

What do you think?

Mr. Douglas. She pretty much touched on it. [*Laughter*].

The President. Okay. My man is kind of low key over here. [*Laughter*] You know what, can I—let me say one thing, though, and I'd be interested in anybody who has an opinion on this. And I know when I went to Standing Rock, I was talking to some of the young people about that. Part of the challenge here for young people—I think this is true for all young people, but it's especially true sometimes for African American or Latino or Asian American and Native Americans as well—is this age-old question in America, like, how do you stay true to your roots and your culture, but also how are you part of the larger community, how do you balance that out?

And I think the one thing that I would say—and there are some communities that have done this better than others—is to recognize that in order for young people to be successful today, you're not cut off from every—the rest of the world, you have to compete. You have to have knowledge which will empower you about how the world works. And it's not a betrayal of your traditions to understand those tools and use them on behalf of your community and on behalf of yourself.

Now, I think what you also then have to do is to be in touch with, though, where you're coming from and not forget that, but that's not always going to be in the environment that you find yourself in. And you can't shy away from breaking out of what you know and going ahead and reaching out and striving in environments that are unfamiliar to you—you're, kind of, breaking out of your comfort zone—as long as you know that you still have home base there with you.

And I think that sometimes people get into a situation where they think, oh, if I'm going to college and I'm learning this or that or the other, then—and a bunch of my friends are still back home and they're not doing the same thing, then somehow, I'm not authentic, I'm not really true to my culture and so forth. And that I don't think is productive thinking. That, I think, we have to get rid of. Because if you—you were just talking about languages—if you learn Spanish, that doesn't mean you're not an English speaker, it just means that you've got one more thing that you know that you can use, and you can translate. If you learn engineering, that doesn't mean you have to forget traditional ways of your people. It just means you've got both. Right? You can hunt, and you can fish, and you can—you've got your native beliefs, but you can also build a bridge and write code. And that's fine.

So I say all that just because, on the one hand, it's important, I think, for Native youth to be supported, connected, and have a place where they're learning who they are and where they come from. But that can't be like a crutch or an excuse to be avoiding what's outside the tribe. Because cultures have to adapt, and they have to grow alongside the world.

And there are communities that do this really well. You think about the Jewish community in America, who—very successful in all fields, but also deeply rooted oftentimes in their faith. I think that there are a number of Asian American communities there—where there's school and then there's a whole set of institutions that teach them their native languages and—or the languages of their homeland. And they don't see a contradiction in it. And I think we have to think about this the same way.

And as I've said, this is not unique to Native Americans. You see this sometimes in the African American community. Michelle came out of a working class neighborhood; a lot of her friends didn't go to college. And sometimes, when she came back from college, people would be, like, "Aw you—y'all all that, aren't you?" [*Laughter*] And she's all: "No, I'm just—I'm going to college. That doesn't make me less Black. That—I'm a Black woman who went to college." And that's, I think, how I want our young people to think. You can do both.

Ms. Schimmel. Thank you again, Mr. President. Up next is Blossom with her question.

Economic Development in Native American and Alaska Native Communities

Ms. Johnson. Okay. Well, first of all, I just want to thank you for creating the Obama scholars program at ASU, because I am a Obama scholar.

The President. There you go. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Johnson. And—[*laughter*]. Thank you. Okay so—I really want to speak about poverty, because I currently live on a Navaho Reservation—well, right now I'm at school, but I live on the reservation too, when I go home. I don't really have a suitable home, and I don't have running water or electricity. So I understand that you went to visit the Standing Rock Sioux Nation, and I know—I've seen pictures of the reservation—so okay—I want to know what kind of programs you have to offer Native American communities who have the worst housing and living conditions.

The President. Well, a lot of this is run through—traditionally has been run through the Bureau. And let's face it, for decades, it was underfunded. It was oftentimes not well managed. It was kind of an afterthought. And part of the reason why, when I came in, we started this conference was to make sure that we had a direct nation-to-nation relationship with all the different tribes.

And our first thing was to just listen to people and find out what is it that you need, what are you trying to do, what are the opportunities that you have, and then, we'll try to design ways to help based on what it is that you think would make the biggest difference. Because obviously, not every tribe is the same. I mean, there are now tribes that are doing really well because of gaming or because of the natural resources that they've been able to harness, have development ideas that they're moving forward on. And then, there are other communities that are having a tougher time.

So the first thing is for us to listen to each tribe and find out, okay, what can we do? On almost every measure—whether it's housing, education, economic development, health care—we've been trying to boost resources that are available. And that's really important, so we're really focused on, how do we build up the infrastructure in reservations that are having a tough time?

It's not acceptable that anybody doesn't have running water in this country. Right? So that's just a straightforward matter of help—getting the help from Congress to help build out the infrastructure that people need.

But one of the things that I've learned in conversations with a lot of the presidents and governors and others who are in the audience is, we have to think about sustainable development. So the idea is not just that the tribe is getting money from the Federal Government. The question is, how do we give tribes the tools whereby they can start generating jobs and economic development and progress on their own terms within their communities? And I think that is where we have to really focus.

I was just talking to one gentleman—because we took photos before we came out—who said they had just signed a contract for a multimillion-dollar clean energy facility. Right? And that suddenly brings resources to the community. It creates jobs. And now that's an economic engine that you can start selling power to surrounding communities using, in a sustainable way, the resources of that tribe and then take that money and plow it back into create more businesses and more jobs. And that, I think, is something that we really want to spend time on and focus on.

But the first thing is just getting some running water. And that requires just an investment. And that's something that we've budgeted; we're aware of it. It's—Congress doesn't always cooperate with me. [*Laughter*] I don't know if you've noticed. [*Laughter*] Yes. Okay. Thank you for your question though, Blossom.

Childhood Obesity/Combating Obesity Among Native American and Alaska Native Youth

Ms. Schimmel. Up next, we have Philip.

Mr. Douglas. Oh! [*Laughter*] Mr. President, my question is, do you have any ideas or programs that could prevent childhood obesity and diabetes for Native youth?

The President. Absolutely. The—because I live with Michelle Obama—[*laughter*]—and she's all about this. When we had the Generation Indigenous and youth summit—how long ago was that, Sally? Couple of months ago? It was in July? I know she talked about this.

Look, that—this is a problem for the entire country. It's now actually a global problem. And part of what's happened is that as our culture has changed, our kids are eating foods that create obesity. They're not getting the same kind of exercise that they did a generation ago. And you combine those two things, and we are seeing this explosion of childhood obesity.

Now, since Michelle started "Let's Move!" and MyPlate and all these other programs, we've actually seen some progress in some areas. But it's still something where we've got to make a lot more progress, because when kids start off unhealthy and obese early on, the likelihood of them having severe health problems later in life are much, much higher. And that means much higher health care expenses for

the society as a whole, which means we then have less money for things like setting up clean water systems and investing in education and college scholarships.

So this is something we can turn around. It starts with young people just having ways in which they can, on a regular basis, get exercise and get healthy meals. And so what we're going to try to do is to work with all the tribes and the schools and make a determination, okay, based on traditions and cultures and your budgets, how do we get more creative about creating meal plans and—that are better for our kids? And how do we program in exercise and—that is going to keep them healthy?

But, I don't know, let's ask the hotshot Division I athlete. [*Laughter*] What—Jude, what ideas do you have in terms of making sure that—because what is true is, is that the incidents of obesity among Native American youth is higher than it is for the general population. Some of that is just poor children are more likely to be obese because they're eating different stuff, and so sometimes, it's more challenging. And in some Native communities, it's hard to find healthy food; there are a lot of what's called food deserts where it's easy to buy a bag of chips, but it's harder to get some fresh fruit or something.

So, I don't know, what do you think?

Improving School Lunches in Native American and Alaska Native Communities

Ms. Schimmel. I would agree that it definitely starts with the youth. I know—and you said, it kind of, like, it was the last generation—I guess that's kind of mine, but I remember being outside, playing outside, doing sports 24/7. And that's obviously changed, especially with the technology these days. But I also know that living in a rural place, like you said, it's very hard to find nutritious food and things like that. So I guess this is another question for you, but I'm wondering, how can we make it to where the food that is available isn't necessarily fast food and it's more—it's healthier for——

The President. Right. One of the interesting things that we're trying to do is to link up local economies with school systems and so that farmers—and this whole movement of farm to fork or whatever you want to call it—the basic idea is, right now most school districts and a lot of rural communities, even though there's food all around, people aren't growing it there anymore. If they do grow it, they ship it to somewhere else. It gets processed, manufactured, stuffed with a whole bunch of stuff that's not necessarily bad for you, gets frozen, gets shipped back. And the question is—and this is going to be different for each community—are there ways in—to link up with local farmers? Are there ways to link up with traditional food sources?

When I was in Alaska, we went to Dillingham on Bristol Bay. That's where the salmon did the—did his thing on my shoe. [*Laughter*] But in Alaska, Alaska Natives get 50 percent of their calories from traditional sources: hunting, fishing, gathering. And that's an example of where—how do we adapt that so that that becomes part of the food chain for kids when they're in school, right? Because if you're—if there's all this salmon out in the ocean, then—which is really good for you, but then you go to school and all you've got is Tater Tots—now, nothing wrong with Tater Tots. I don't want anybody to—[*laughter*]. But you get my point. Or you've got some frozen pizza that got shipped in, when you could be eating this incredible salmon that was fresh caught and is going to be good for you—and by the way, that then gives the fishermen a market so there now making more money. Right? Those are the kinds of opportunities, I think, that we've got to look to.

And local school districts—in fairness to local school districts, sometimes, it's easier for them to take the processed food. And one of the problems that's happened in the way schools are organized these days is, recess is so short and lunch breaks are so short that the easiest thing to do is to, kind of, just defrost something or stick something in the microwave, plop it on a tray, because you've only got half an hour before we send you to your next class.

And this goes back to the education point you guys were making earlier. One of the

things that we should be trying to do is to think of the whole child. Education is not just books. Education is physical fitness. Education is the arts. Education is music and dance and movement and learning how to eat right. And if we have schools that are not designed to do all those things and take care of the whole child, then we're probably making a mistake. Okay?

Economic Development in Native American and Alaska Native Communities/Education

Ms. Schimmel. I have, kind of, something up—to follow up with that. But as you know, all aspects of life connect. But I'm just wondering, since financial situations are typically an issue among Native American families, I'm just wondering how we can get the—decrease the unemployment rates and increase—to get more, better financial situations. Because not only is McDonald's fast, but it's also cheap. So, if we have better financial situations, we would have better opportunity to eat healthier. And——

The President. Yes. Well, as I said before, I think we're working with tribes to come up with economic development strategies. I think it's very important for us to have a—in our nation-to-nation relationships, to have a strategic plan. It's not just a matter of each year let's get a little more in the budget to give to Indian Health Services or this or that or the other—because that's important, but the goal here is how do we create sustainable development for the nations.

And whether it's through clean energy projects, whether it's through tourism and—that's controlled that the tribes benefit from it, whether it's utilization of Native lands, whether it's starting incubators for small businesses on the reservation, all those things have to be stitched together. So, if we're building a road in Navaho Country, let's make sure that that road connects to a hub that makes it easier for Navaho to engage in commerce with the local community. Right? If there are things that the tribes are purchasing from the outside, is there a way to start a business where it's produced on the inside. Because if the tribe is spending money, it would be useful to find areas where potentially you could—a young person like you starts a business, and suddenly, you're producing the pencils or the lunches or what have you. And then, that money gets recirculated. And that increases incomes for everybody.

But as I said, I think when you look now at communities that are most successful, nothing is more important than young people and talent and education. The way that—the most important way that Indian Country is going to improve its economic prospects is to make sure every young person has the skills and talent they need to succeed. And in some cases, that's going to be because they come back to a reservation and start a business or they're managing a non-for-profit or a tribal development organization. In some cases, it's going to be, yes, they leave the reservation and they're working, they're succeeding, they're making money, and now they are finding ways to reconnect with their community.

And we should—and both things are legitimate, right? There's nothing wrong—if anybody here on this panel—Blossom, if after you graduate, you decide, I want to be a businessperson, and you're successful, I have confidence that you're going to stay connected to Navaho Country. And you're going to then be able to give back. And you're going to open up opportunities for cousins and brothers and not just by way of example, but because you're part of that community, part of that tribe.

And that is going to be part of how we also grow the economy. So young people investing in education and really being focused on being able to compete in the larger economy, that's really important as well. Good.

2016 Presidential Election

Ms. Schimmel. Out next question is—we got it from online also—it is: "What measures are you and your team taking to ensure the next administration pays attention to Native voices?"

The President. Well, I've got to admit I'm biased here. I'm really trying to make sure it's a Democrat. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Johnson. That's amazing!

The President. But there are some Republican Members of Congress who represent

Native communities and are really supportive of these issues like Tom Cole in Oklahoma. And so I don't want to sound too partisan.

I mean, part of what we've done is, we've tried to institutionalize just new practices. And my expectation is whoever is the next President, they're going to see that we've been able to build, I think, some real trust with tribal nations. And if they're smart, they'll want to continue what we've done because I think we're really making progress.

And the good news is, is that the tribes now know what's possible so they can hold accountable the next administration and say: "Hey, we were meeting with Obama and his team once a year, and they were going out and visiting us and doing all kinds of things. And we haven't seen you." Right? And I think that can make a difference.

But I do think it's important for the next President to be able to articulate very clearly how they're going to interact. One thing I'm proud of—because a lot of you I knew before I was President—I made a commitment. I made a promise about what I would do, and I've done it.

And the—it starts with, as you're listening to various candidates, making sure that you ask them now before you offer them support, and that's true whether it's a Republican or a Democrat: "Okay, here's what we've been able to build over the last 7 years. Are you committed to continuing it?" And if they say yes, then now you've got something that you can hold them accountable to.

Ms. Schimmel. Since we have more time, Blossom, would you like to answer—ask your second question?

Suicide Prevention Efforts

Ms. Johnson. Oh, yes. Well, I just wanted to let you know that I lost four friends to suicide since middle school. And I want to know how your administration can support health and mental wellness of Native youth and our veterans?

The President. Well, they're two different groups, right? Veterans have some very specific needs. And through the VA, we are really focusing on this. And in the Department of Defense when people are still in uniform, we're focused on this. Letting people know that it's not a weakness, it's a strength for you to seek out help when you are suffering from severe depression or other challenges like that.

With respect to young people, I'd be interested—this is one where I think I'd really like to hear from all of you because this is a story I hear too often. When I was at Standing Rock, I mean, it was just—the number of stories that I heard was heartbreaking. And we can provide more resources, and we are doing so. I've asked Sally and others to really focus on, how do we prevent suicide, addiction, provide more mental health services and counseling? But I think I'd love to hear from you guys who are in it what you think would make the biggest difference, what you think would be most helpful.

So I don't know about—since you asked it, Blossom, why don't you——

Ms. Johnson. Well, I feel like it's very taboo to speak about it in Native American communities, especially the older adults might think that it is. But I feel like the youth are really ready to speak about it, and I feel like there should be a little bit more support in the school system. Because some of the schools I've actually got to work with on the reservation, they don't really have after-school programs. They have—like, they're very—they're, like, really strict on education, but there's really nothing that can connect you to your culture after school or teach you some of your traditions after school. But I feel like some of these are very important to youth. And I don't know, there might be some kind of, like, cultural identity or identity loss. And some of them may be confused and feel like there's no help. So the only situation—the only, like, logical explanation that they might have or they might think is maybe suicide.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Johnson. And for me, I want to, I guess, prevent suicide. And I'm theater. So I do theater. I love theater. And I try to do a lot of that in my work and try to understand why these youth think the only answer is suicide. It could be something at home like abuse, child abuse,

or just, like, their parents might be, like, alcoholics or something. But no one really speaks to these kids.

The President. Anybody else want to offer some thoughts?

Mr. White. Well, I think talking about suicide is very crucial. It should be talked about. We should knock down the stigma of talking about, like, your problems. A lot of people look at it as it's a sign of weakness, and it isn't. It's actually like you stated, a sign of strength.

Like, I lost a friend, a very good friend. He was a—he was at prep school, and he came home, and he committed suicide. Like, I never—we constantly search for the answers, but, like, the answer usually is that there's—it's that stigma. Like, you don't want to be looked at as a weak person. And I think we need to knock down that barrier and have it be known that talking about isn't a sign of weakness.

The President. Anybody else have any thoughts on this?

Ms. Ticknor. I do. So I'd like to shout out my friend Jazmyn over here because she did the Warrior Circle Project.

The President. Hey, Jazmyn. [*Laughter*] So what's the Warrior Circle Project?

Ms. Ticknor. Well, as she explains it, she helps children that think about suicide and also have problems within schools, right? And she talks about them because people can actually connect to youth more, like, youth to youth instead of youth to adult. So I just thought that was a good project to bring up because I work with her, like, kind of.

The President. Absolutely. That's great. Jude, do you have any thoughts on this?

Ms. Schimmel. Through my experience of traveling and speaking and seeing a lot of Native Americans across the country, I've also come to realize that—and growing up and living on a reservation, I've realized that young Native Americans do struggle with—whether it's emotional or mental or physical abuse. I know that it can be frustrating being a young Native American in a society that you feel like you really are the minority and things like that.

But I just feel like we, as Native people, need a resource or need an outlet. And a lot of the times, I feel like young Native Americans are scared to speak about it, whether it's because they feel like they're weak or because whatever the reason might be. But I know it's easier said than done. But there is—we need to get through to them to let them know that that really isn't the answer and that there—you need to find somebody to talk to. But how do we get that through to them?

The President. Right. Well, one of the things—I talked about Generation Indigenous. The goal is to get Native American youth leaders to be able to network with each other nationally. And then, we're trying to set up a youth network digitally, right, through the Internet so that if there's a good idea like the one that Tatiana was just talking about, a program that we know is working, then somebody across the country can learn about it and try to set up a similar model and share ideas.

And I think one of the things that I'm hearing a lot of you guys saying is, is that making sure that young people are supporting each other is really important. Because adults have to be there, but I will tell you from my experience talking to Malia and Sasha that sometimes when I'm talking to them, I sound like—you guys see—ever see "A Charlie Brown Christmas"? [*Laughter*] It's like wah, wah, wah. [*Laughter*] You know? You can just tell they're just looking at me, but the words, like, make no sense to them. [*Laughter*]

And—but I think that how their peers are supporting them and talking to them and encouraging them a lot of times can make even more of a difference than what they're hearing from adults.

Now, obviously, if somebody has got a severe depression, that's a medical issue, and they may need medical help. And if somebody even at a young age is already—has an addiction, they need help. If they are experiencing abuse in the home, then they need adult help and law enforcement help to prevent that, right?

And you're right, it has to be talked about. And we have to be honest about it. But sometimes with young people, everything is magnified. And you're just going through a lot of

stuff, especially in the teenage years. And just having friends and people your age who are bucking you up and supporting you and listening to you and relating to what you're going through, that, a lot of times, can make a difference before it gets worse. Right? So we're going to see how we can help facilitate more of those youth communities around the country.

Brayden, you want to say something?

Mr. White. And just to add no to what you were saying, about, like, when I was in high school—I was a senior—we had a program, and it was called Sources of Strength. And that's what it was; it was a student-to-student peer—if you were getting bullied, if you were—there was problems at home, you could speak about it in.

The President. Right.

Mr. White. Because there's that barrier. Like, it's hard for a student to speak to a teacher about it, but for a student to talk to another student, it was more easier. And it was—a lot of the students were able to relate to it because they might have experienced it in their life at some point.

The President. Right.

Mr. White. So I mean, that seemed to work very well.

The President. Good.

Ms. Schimmel. That concludes our question-and-answer session. I would just like to thank you, Mr. President, and each of our panelists for being up here with us today.

The President. Okay, let's give everybody a big round of applause. [*Laughter*] All right. Good job. [*Inaudible*]—say something?

Ms. Schimmel. Yes, closing remarks. Yes, it's all you. [*Laughter*]

The President. The—so Jude just said I'm supposed to make closing remarks. And the only thing I want to say in closing is just this is an example of the incredible talent and potential of our young people, and it's true in every tribe across the country. We have a huge stake as a country in making sure that they get opportunity, that their voices are heard, and I want to be a partner with you to make sure that every possible door is open to them. Okay?

And they inspire me. You guys inspire me. You make me feel good. Thank you, everybody. Come on, let's get a good picture. Come on. We're going to stand right here, and there going to take these pictures right here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Shoni Schimmel, guard, Women's National Basketball Association's Atlanta Dream, and sister of moderator Jude Schimmel; and Jazmyn Espinoza, founder, Warrior Circle Project. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Notice of Intention To Enter Into the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement
November 5, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with section 106(a)(1)(A) of the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (Public Law 114–26, Title I; the "Trade Priorities Act"), I am pleased to notify the Congress of my intention to enter into a free trade agreement, known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement. The TPP Agreement will generate export opportunities for U.S. manufacturers, service suppliers, farmers, ranchers, and businesses; help create jobs in the United States; and help American consumers save money while offering them more choices. The TPP Agreement will also benefit the other signatories by providing economic opportunity and by strengthening democracy. I am negotiating to enter into the TPP Agreement with the following countries: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam; provided that those countries meet the market-ac-