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TRANSCRIPT OF ALASKA TRIBAL CONSULTATION

HELD ON

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025

10:07 A.M.

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<p style="text-align: right;">Page 2</p> <p>1 ALASKA TRIBAL CONSULTATION 2 HELD ON 3 TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025 4 10:07 A.M. 5 6 BEN DUNCAN: Good morning. Thank you. I 7 want to welcome everyone to today's Consultation 8 that's serving to seek input on two topics, but 9 first the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs 10 Reorganization Plan as part of Executive Order 11 14210, "Department of Government Efficiency" 12 Workforce Optimization Initiative. And second, the 13 Department of Interior Emergency Permitting 14 Procedures as part of Executive Order 14156, 15 declaration of a National Energy Emergency. 16 And as we go through today, I'm not going 17 to say those in their full title. We'll be 18 referencing those as Workforce Efficiency and 19 Productivity, and Emergency Permitting Procedures. 20 As a matter of introduction, my name's Ben 21 Duncan. My -- 22 (Automated voice interruption.) 23 BEN DUNCAN: Okay, this meeting is being 24 recorded. As a matter of introduction, my name's 25 Ben Duncan. I'm part of a contractor team. Sam,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 4</p> <p>1 get out of the building. 2 Next slide. 3 And so just a few pieces as I'm going 4 through some of this housekeeping, make sure 5 everyone's oriented to how we're going to spend our 6 time together. So this is a hybrid Consultation, so 7 we have a lot of beautiful faces in the room as well 8 as folks that are joining online. 9 For our virtual attendees that are 10 participating today, you will be muted throughout 11 the conversation until we open it up for public 12 comment, and then we'll do raise hand. We'll invite 13 you to, and I'll talk a little bit more about that 14 procedure, but folks will be muted and off camera 15 throughout the Consultation. 16 For those who are joining virtually, we're 17 going to ask you to re-name yourself with your name, 18 position title, and the Tribal organization that 19 you're attending on behalf of. If you haven't done 20 that before, you can hover over your -- your square 21 where your face is or name is, click the ellipses, 22 click re-name, and then put in that information. 23 We do have, as I said, technical support 24 here today so for folks online, you can either chat 25 or you can email Elizabeth, eherrera@kernswest.com.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 3</p> <p>1 I'm going to look to you to give a wave to the 2 group, and Elizabeth here who are part of my team. 3 We also have Derrick Beetso from Hayiilka, okay. 4 Thank you. He's part of the contractor team as 5 well. 6 So we're brought on by Department of 7 Interior. Our team is providing, in partial, 8 facilitation and a tech support, hopefully making 9 sure everything goes smooth today. Derrick and his 10 team is going to capture comments that are -- are 11 contributed during today, and I'll talk a little bit 12 more about some of the other infrastructure that we 13 have. 14 And then of course along with our 15 contractor team, we have leaders from -- from the 16 bureaus and department as well as other Department 17 of Interior representatives, again actively 18 listening to hear the contributions and -- and 19 comment from folks in the room. 20 See if I can -- can we go to the next 21 slide? Not responding, okay. 22 Just really quickly, some of the building 23 logistics. You came up the stairs. The restrooms 24 are downstairs. There's exits on each corner of the 25 room. In case of emergency, we'll orderly leave and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 5</p> <p>1 We'll put that in the chat as well so you have that 2 as a reference for any technical difficulties that 3 you might have. 4 I will note for those online, we are not 5 accepting comments via the chat. We will provide -- 6 we will provide a link for written public comment 7 both now and throughout this time together. 8 As you heard loud and clear in the room, 9 this session is being recorded and it is closed to 10 the public and to the press. 11 A couple other notes, just for our online 12 folks. We do have closed-captioning available. So 13 if that's helpful for your participation, there 14 should be either a "more" button on the bottom of 15 your screen or some three dots or ellipses. You 16 click on that, show captions, and hopefully if 17 that's helpful for your participation you can 18 utilize that. 19 And then Zoom might ask about spoken 20 language. So of course if you see the language, 21 select what works best for you and then you can 22 click cancel, and go on. 23 Next slide. 24 So before I pass it on, just going to walk 25 through how we're going to spend our time in the</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 room together. We will have an opening prayer, open 2 and invite folks into the space.</p> <p>3 You'll get a briefing from Department and 4 Bureau leaders on kind of the purpose of -- of 5 today's Consultation. You'll get to meet leaders 6 that are in the room, and then we will -- it's 7 designed in kind of two parts. So I talked about 8 both -- both executive orders, the emergency order.</p> <p>9 We will have a few hours of conversation 10 on the Executive Order 14210. We will end up taking 11 a break, and then coming back and adding 12 Consultation around Executive Order 14156, so it 13 will be kind of broken up into two. I'll just ask 14 folks as we go through that process to be mindful of 15 trying to stay in alignment with that agenda.</p> <p>16 Can you go to the next slide.</p> <p>17 Okay. And then finally, just a few notes 18 on our comment period. We are really focused today 19 on -- on hearing comments from leadership, so 20 elected or designated leadership from federally 21 recognized Tribes. We would like -- as you see, we 22 have a lot of folks in the room.</p> <p>23 Just as a temperature check, could you 24 raise your hand if you're planning to offer a public 25 comment in the room? I'm trying to do my math</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 Consultation@bia.gov. We will also throw that in 2 the chat, or by mail to the Department of Interior. 3 I'm not going to read off the whole address. It's 4 online, it's on the screen. Those are all due 5 before -- on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on 6 July 7th, 2025.</p> <p>7 And last slide.</p> <p>8 As I said, this is closed to the public 9 and to the press. It is recorded. We do have a 10 court reporter that's going to be creating a 11 transcript to make sure that we accurately capture 12 the substance of the comments that are received, and 13 to support that process, please, when you give 14 comment if you could state your name, your title, 15 and your Tribal affiliation.</p> <p>16 So I'm going to get out of the way. 17 Appreciate folks being here. Appreciate Alaska 18 Pacific University for hosting us in their space, 19 and let's have a wonderful time together.</p> <p>20 With that, I'll pass it to Kelly Rael.</p> <p>21 KELLY RAE: Thank you so much for being 22 here. I know this is a difficult time of year with 23 Breakup happening, and so I'm just grateful that you 24 guys are all here to have this really important 25 conversation.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 quickly. Okay. And then I don't know if you can 2 get a sense of how many people are online. And I 3 say that, and obviously you're not committed if you 4 raised your hand. You can come later.</p> <p>5 I say that because we are trying to hear 6 from everyone, so I'm not going to ask folks to come 7 up twice before we've heard from everyone. We also 8 do want to -- want to open it up for folks that are 9 either affiliated or just offering public comment 10 not in that elected, designated, or appointed 11 leadership.</p> <p>12 So I'm just going to ask, I'm not going to 13 cut people off and I'm not going to put a time limit 14 on comment, but as you saw the hands in the room, we 15 have some strained time here and we have a number of 16 people online, I'm just going to ask that you 17 respect each other.</p> <p>18 If you go on and on, then I might gently 19 try to encourage you to wrap up your comments, but 20 we really don't want to get to a place -- I really 21 don't want to get to a place where I'm interrupting 22 anybody's contributions today, okay. So I'll just 23 ask in advance that we operate with that agreement.</p> <p>24 And then finally we do have written 25 comments that can be provided to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 9</p> <p>1 I'm going to open it up with Tlingit &amp; 2 Haida, Executive Counsel Rob Anderson (sic) to come 3 and give the opening blessing.</p> <p>4 ROB SANDERSON: Good morning, everyone. 5 It's good to see everybody here. Rob Sanderson, 6 executive committee member, Tlingit &amp; Haida Central 7 Council.</p> <p>8 Please pray in your own way, so we'll go 9 before you in prayer this morning. Salana 10 (phonetic). Dear Heavenly Father, we come before 11 you in prayer this morning. We ask that you bless 12 this meeting. We ask that you bless the 13 participants. We ask that you bless our Tribal 14 leaders, our government officials. And Dear 15 Heavenly Father, we ask that you be with our loved 16 ones back home while we are on travel. And we ask 17 for safe travel mercies for those who made it to 18 Anchorage for this session. We ask that you bless 19 each and every one of us. Thank you. Haua 20 (phonetic).</p> <p>21 KELLY RAE: Thank you so much for that. 22 I'm going to open up with a message that Secretary 23 Burgum's office has asked me to share before we get 24 started.</p> <p>25 During his tenure as North Dakota</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 10</p> <p>1 governor, Secretary Burgum was recognized for 2 fostering positive relationships with the state's 3 native -- or Tribal Nations. The Department of 4 Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs remain 5 committed to our trust responsibilities of 6 protecting Tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, 7 resources. 8 In addition to its duty to carry out 9 mandates of federal law with respect to American 10 Indian Alaska Native Tribes and Villages. 11 Before proceeding with any potential 12 reduction in force actions, the department will work 13 through Tribal Consultation process to ensure that 14 any proposed actions are informed by meaningful 15 input from Tribal Nations and are fully considered 16 the delivery of services to Indian countries. 17 So I wanted to start off with that 18 message. 19 Next slide. 20 All right. So here, my name is Kelly 21 Rael. I am serving as a Special Advisor to the 22 Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. As many of 23 you guys know, we are still awaiting a confirmation 24 date for our Assistant Secretary Billy Kirkland. So 25 we are hoping within the next month or two we will</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 12</p> <p>1 Next slide. 2 All right. We'll just kind of touch on 3 this. Executive Order 14210. With the purpose of 4 restoring accountability to the American public, 5 this executive order is intended to begin a critical 6 transformation of the federal bureaucracy by 7 eliminating waste, bloat, and abuse. 8 To be honest, there's -- there's been 9 quite a lot of things that have come out amongst 10 different agencies throughout the federal 11 government, and ultimately we want to ensure these 12 funds are being spent the way they are supposed to. 13 And if those funds need to get to Indian country, we 14 want to ensure that there's not a whole lot of 15 middle man getting those funds. We want it going 16 directly to Indian country. 17 Consistent with that task, Indian Affairs 18 seeks feedback for the following topics: 19 Restructuring of Indian Affairs to support more 20 efficient interactions with Tribes. Current funding 21 structures including identifying efficiency barriers 22 to expedite funding to Tribes and Tribal programs. 23 Increasing Indian Affairs' support for Tribal self- 24 governance and self-determination. 25 That is a big initiative of this</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 11</p> <p>1 have him in the AS-IA hallway. 2 So today we have Bureau of Indian Affairs. 3 We have Bryan Mercier. We have BTFA, Kevin 4 Bearquiver, and from DASM we have Jason Freihage, 5 and then from BIE we have Sharon Pinto. 6 Next slide. 7 We are -- so the Office of the Assistant 8 Secretary of Indian Affairs, BIA, the Bureau of 9 Education, BTFA collectively Indian Affairs, we seek 10 to have a direct conversation with you guys. I know 11 that there's a lot of uncertainties in the air, and so 12 we are here. This is important to this 13 administration that we have this dialogue to go over 14 Executive Order 1420 (sic), Department of Government 15 Efficiency, Workforce Optimization Initiative, and 16 Secretary Order 3429, Consultation, unification, and 17 optimization of administrative functions. 18 We do want to hear your input, and we -- 19 we want to hear from you what is going right, what 20 isn't going right, and how can we better streamline 21 or processes to ensure that we are delivering to 22 Indian country. 23 And then we'll also go over Executive 24 Order 14156, Emerging Permitting Procedures under 25 the National Energy Emergency Declaration.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 13</p> <p>1 administration. We believe in Tribal sovereignty 2 and self-governance. 3 Next slide. 4 All right. We'll just go over this, the 5 Secretarial Order, consolidation, unification, and 6 optimization of administrative functions. 7 The purpose is to take steps to 8 consolidate, unify within the Department of Interior 9 to achieve effectiveness, accountability, cost 10 savings for the American taxpayer. Functions to be 11 consolidate include Human Resources, information 12 technology, financial management, training and 13 development, international affairs, contracting, 14 communications, federal financial assistance, among 15 other administrative orders. 16 With the exception of international 17 affairs, training and development, these business 18 functions exist across DASM, BIA, BIE, and BTFA. 19 Next slide. All right. Next slide. 20 Obviously we provide direction and the 21 leadership over AS-IA, BIA, BIE, BTFA. Oversee the 22 development of new and revised regulations to 23 address statutory requirements and the related 24 Consultation and listening with having these 25 listening sessions with Tribes, develop operational</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 14</p> <p>1 policies to support Indian Affair functions, 2 oversees the White House Council of Native American 3 Affairs as well as congressional relationships and 4 public affairs. 5 Through the Deputy Assistant Secretary 6 policy and economic development, provides oversight 7 for management and operations regarding Indian 8 gaming, federal acknowledgement, self-governance, 9 and Tribal economic development. 10 Next slide. 11 All right. I'm going to turn it over to 12 Jason Freihage to go over DASM. 13 JASON FREIHAGE: Okay. Next slide. Okay, 14 thanks. So I'll just quickly walk through the 15 functions for Deputy Assistant Secretary for 16 Management. That's a mouthful of a name for an 17 acronym, but we really just are the business 18 operations for Indian Affairs. 19 So we have five main components. And 20 first is Office of Budget and Performance 21 Management. They lead budget formulation, execution 22 across Indian Affairs, are the lead for working with 23 Appropriations and O&amp;B in the department. And then 24 they coordinate with the budget staff within BTFA, 25 BIE, and parts of BIA.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 16</p> <p>1 BIE to implement their projects. And the BIA 2 regions also do projects for smaller ones. About 5 3 to 10 million and below, and they do the daily 4 monitoring. 5 This team also, this might be a little 6 more familiar to some of you up here because we 7 don't have as many Indian Affairs facilities in 8 Alaska, but this team also runs the 105(1) Tribal 9 Lease Program, and it's a small but mighty team of 10 three federal employees. And then they -- we also 11 have a Public Health and Safety Team we stood up 12 during the pandemic. 13 And then finally we have our Office of 14 Information Technology. So they do all the core 15 enterprise IT across AS-IA, Office of the Assistant 16 Secretary for Indian Affairs, BIA, and BIE, all kind 17 of -- everything from just your, you know, security 18 of the email system to building out the learning 19 management system that work in BIE schools. 20 So, thank you. 21 KELLY RAE: Next slide. 22 All right. I'm going to turn it over to 23 Bryan Mercier. 24 BRYAN MERCIER: Hi, I'm Bryan Mercier, 25 Naganien (phonetic). Good morning, everyone. I'm</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 15</p> <p>1 Secondly Office of the Chief Financial 2 Officer. So that's kind of what the name says. 3 It's our finance shop. They also do acquisitions. 4 Leave been the lead on the Buy Indian Act where 5 we've taken about -- we used to do about \$200 6 million a year in acquisitions. Last year was about 7 \$600 million, and we got up to 75 percent of that 8 funding being awarded through Indian economic 9 enterprises. So they're really doing our classic 10 finance, acquisition activities, audit, those types 11 of things. 12 Next Office of Human Capital Management. 13 So they do the HR. They do direct service for HR, 14 providing the actual services within AS-IA, BIA, and 15 then they do policy coordination with BIE and BTFA. 16 They both have their own ways -- their own HR for 17 doing that. 18 Next is Office of Facilities Property and 19 Safety Management. So this is the team that does 20 oversight for safety activities across Indian 21 Affairs. They also lead construction overall. They 22 do the large projects which are now edging closer to 23 \$10 million or more, or up to \$200 million projects 24 for schools and detention centers. And then they 25 work with the Construction and Facilities Team and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 17</p> <p>1 Bryan Mercier. I'm the director of the BIA. I'm an 2 enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand 3 Ronde. I have Calapooia and Clackamas descent from 4 the Portland, Oregon, area. 5 I was appointed the director of the BIA 6 about seven or eight months ago after I served for 7 almost seven years as a regional director in the 8 Northwest region in Portland, Oregon. 9 And so next slide, please. 10 It's my honor to be here to talk a little 11 bit about our current state and current structure of 12 the BIA, and obviously we want to get through this 13 as quickly as possible because we're really here to 14 hear from you. 15 And I just noticed earlier that the 16 wonderful staff in the Alaska regional office is 17 passing out water, so if you ever need water, maybe 18 raise your hand, or we have a water bottle over here 19 for folks to grab that. So thank you to the team 20 from the regional office for doing that. 21 So obviously the major functions at the 22 BIA, its mission is largely to, and I'll paraphrase 23 here, enhance the lives of Tribes and Indian people, 24 Indigenous people across the United States. And to 25 me, it's one of the best missions the federal</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 18</p> <p>1 government has. It's -- it's an honored tradition 2 that we as the United States must uphold, that those 3 treaty and trust obligations to the Tribes. 4       Most of us that work at the BIA are 5 enrolled Tribal members of Tribes, and so we get to 6 serve the very communities that we come from. So 7 it's really a privilege to be here with you all 8 today and to hear from you all how we continue to do 9 that going forward. 10       We have, as you can see here, there's a 11 big land function to what we do, and Alaska is a 12 great example of that with over 55 million surface 13 acres and 57 million acres of subsurface minerals 14 that we're responsible for. 15       We're also the primary federal trustee 16 within the federal family. So Interior is often 17 meeting with other departments to represent Tribal 18 interests and Alaska Native interests in the 19 Villages here as well, in those meetings back in 20 Washington DC. And we do everything we can to 21 ensure that the government -- the government and 22 Nation to Nation relationship is maintained and 23 sustained going forward. 24       We administer the laws and programs that 25 are established. And as policy shifts with any new</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 20</p> <p>1 so the Indian Self-Determination Act contracting of 2 those functions that the vast majority of Tribes 3 have done over -- over the last few decades. 4       Indian Services. That includes a lot of 5 our Human Services, Self-Determination, Tribal 6 Government, Transportation. I think a big program 7 here in Alaska, and Workforce Development as well. 8 This is one of our smaller deputy bureaus, and with 9 only just over 150 staff I think in its central 10 office function, but plays a critical role. 11       Trust Services. This is a larger function 12 we have, one of our deputy bureaus, and they do much 13 of the realty, the forestry, the trust assets that 14 we work with across the country. 15       And then finally our Office of Field 16 Operations, the Deputy Bureau Director Bart Stevens 17 is here. I saw him earlier. Bart, do you want to 18 raise your hand real quick, wherever you're at. So 19 this is the Deputy Bureau Director Bart Stevens, and 20 he oversees the 12 regions across the country. 21       Next slide. 22       Okay. Sharon Pinto. I'm going to hand it 23 off to Sharon to talk to us a little bit about the 24 BIE's current state. 25       SAM LEVY: And Presenters, just make sure</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 19</p> <p>1 administration, we adapt. And we have a 2 professional workforce to ensure that those services 3 are not impacted, and we continue to provide those 4 services as we adjust and prioritize our policy with 5 any change in administration. 6       And then so the current structure we have 7 is I have four Deputy Bureau Directors, one of Field 8 Ops, Trust Services, Indian Services, and Justice 9 Services. And those Deputy Bureau Directors have 10 teams as well to manage the various functions that 11 we have across the 12 regions. 12       Alaska is very unique because of its 13 history, its geography, and obviously the regional 14 office is based out of -- here in Anchorage, and I 15 believe we have a field office in Fairbanks as well. 16       Next slide, please. 17       So I touched on this. So Justice 18 Services, that's our law enforcement function. Most 19 of the Tribes in the country have contracted the Law 20 Enforcement and Detention Services programs, but we 21 still do have a number of Tribes that receive direct 22 services from the Office of Justice Services. 23       We have just over 300 law enforcement 24 officers across the country, and a few hundred 25 administrative staff as well that support the 638,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 21</p> <p>1 you're talking directly into the microphone so that 2 our Zoom folks can hear you loud and clear. 3       SHARON PINTO: Good morning, Yatayabina 4 (phonetic). My name is Sharon Pinto. I am a member 5 of the Navajo Nation. I am the Deputy Bureau 6 Director for School Operations with the BIE, and 7 I've been the Deputy Bureau Director for going on my 8 seventh year right now. 9       And previous to that I served eight years 10 as the regional director for the Navajo region under 11 BIA, so thank you again this morning for being here 12 with us and allowing us an opportunity to hear from 13 you directly on the Consultation topics that we have 14 brought before you today, so appreciate that. Thank 15 you for your time. 16       Next slide. 17       BIE doesn't necessarily have too heavy of 18 a presence in the Alaska region outside of the JOM 19 program that we deliver to a lot of your schools and 20 the funding that we provide through JOM. 21       Outside of that, nationwide BIE has -- we 22 have a capacity of 40,000 Indian students that we 23 serve across the country through 183 bureau operated 24 schools located on 64 reservations in -- in the 25 lower 48 and in 23 states. We serve approximately,</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 22</p> <p>1 as I said, K through 12 students.</p> <p>2 We also have two colleges that we provide</p> <p>3 direct services through, and that is Haskell Indian</p> <p>4 University located in Kansas as well as the SIPI</p> <p>5 Vocational Tech School located in Albuquerque, New</p> <p>6 Mexico.</p> <p>7 Also out of our 183 school locations, 55</p> <p>8 of those are direct service bureau operated schools</p> <p>9 that we provide, and in the rest, 128 locations are</p> <p>10 Tribally controlled and managed schools through</p> <p>11 public law 100-297 grant agreements that we have</p> <p>12 entered into various Tribes at those locations.</p> <p>13 Again, as part of the oversight that I</p> <p>14 provide directly, we also provide direct services</p> <p>15 through facility management, budget and finance, as</p> <p>16 well as acquisitions control, and managing some</p> <p>17 minimal environmental compliance across all of our</p> <p>18 schools to ensure the safe environment for our</p> <p>19 students that we serve and the staffing and the</p> <p>20 community that we engage in.</p> <p>21 And that's all we have for our update at</p> <p>22 this point in time. Thank you so much.</p> <p>23 KELLY RAE: BTFA, we have Kevin</p> <p>24 Bearquiver.</p> <p>25 KEVIN BEARQUIVER: Good morning, everyone,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 24</p> <p>1 after you, you know, entered into a lease or</p> <p>2 liquidated through a timber sale or oil and gas, we</p> <p>3 manage the financial. We manage it on the financial</p> <p>4 end for the -- for the secretary to fulfill the</p> <p>5 secretary's fiduciary trust responsibilities.</p> <p>6 You know, we, you know, we're also, you</p> <p>7 know, we are charged to accurately account for in</p> <p>8 receipt, invest, disburse, reconcile, and report all</p> <p>9 the Indian trust funds across the -- across the</p> <p>10 country. That includes all of the accounts up here</p> <p>11 for Alaska Natives and Alaskan Tribes.</p> <p>12 We were established by Secretarial Order,</p> <p>13 what is that, 30 -- I can't read, I can't see that.</p> <p>14 We were established by Secretarial Order 3384 in</p> <p>15 2020, that's BTFA. We were renamed from OST to</p> <p>16 BTFA, so in 2020 we were reestablished as BTFA. So</p> <p>17 most of you know us as the Office of the Special</p> <p>18 Trustee, but under Secretarial Order we were re-</p> <p>19 organized as the Bureau of Trust Funds</p> <p>20 Administration.</p> <p>21 We manage over \$9 billion in active</p> <p>22 investments on behalf of the Tribes and individual</p> <p>23 beneficiaries across -- with about 4,300 total</p> <p>24 accounts. And then for the beneficiaries we have</p> <p>25 over 414,000 IIM accounts.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 23</p> <p>1 so good to see so many familiar faces. It's been</p> <p>2 seven years since I've been up here last. Beautiful</p> <p>3 weather, so I couldn't ask for anything more.</p> <p>4 I'm a member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and</p> <p>5 Arikara Nation from the great state of North Dakota.</p> <p>6 I also have some Northern Cheyenne blood in me, so a</p> <p>7 little bit of a fighter, ayy.</p> <p>8 I would be remiss if I didn't say that I'm</p> <p>9 only up here representing Margaret Williams.</p> <p>10 Margaret is online and she's our acting director.</p> <p>11 She's under doctor's orders not to travel, so she</p> <p>12 send her deepest regrets that she couldn't be here.</p> <p>13 She really wanted to be here and get, you know,</p> <p>14 direct feedback from everybody on how we can improve</p> <p>15 and be -- be more efficient in serving the</p> <p>16 beneficiaries, so, but she is online.</p> <p>17 So with that being said, let's go ahead</p> <p>18 and go to the next slide.</p> <p>19 So BTFA's major functions, and I'm going</p> <p>20 to try to paraphrase because I'm just like Bryan,</p> <p>21 that's a lot to read, but our -- our mission is to</p> <p>22 manage the trust beneficiaries' financial assets.</p> <p>23 BIA manages the land assets and the forestry and all</p> <p>24 the -- the other assets that are on the land.</p> <p>25 We manage the financial assets. That's</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 25</p> <p>1 We disburse about 1.85 billion annually,</p> <p>2 that -- and then additionally we also, you know,</p> <p>3 have to account for all of funding and -- and then,</p> <p>4 let's see.</p> <p>5 We develop and implement an investment</p> <p>6 strategy aimed for returns of total assets investing</p> <p>7 in the U.S. Treasury Government Fixed Income</p> <p>8 Securities, so which are called, you know, GFCs. So</p> <p>9 we -- and then BTFA is the primary point of contact</p> <p>10 for trust beneficiaries, delivering assistance and</p> <p>11 information regarding their financial trust assets.</p> <p>12 We also support beneficiaries who live in</p> <p>13 all 50 states, three U.S. territories, 27 countries,</p> <p>14 and we utilize direct outreach, education, and then</p> <p>15 we also have the Trust Beneficiary Call Center.</p> <p>16 And then we recently moved to more, what</p> <p>17 do you want to say, access for individual</p> <p>18 beneficiaries through 24-hour access using what's</p> <p>19 called an IVR, interactive voice response.</p> <p>20 And then since 2019, BTFA has earned the</p> <p>21 designation of a High Impact Service Provider. And</p> <p>22 really what that is, is we provide, is because we</p> <p>23 have so much contact with -- with the beneficiaries,</p> <p>24 that we have to -- and we've been doing this,</p> <p>25 modernizing all of our systems in order to provide</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 26</p> <p>1 better access for the beneficiaries, improve our 2 customer relationship. 3 We've done relationship mapping two times 4 now across the country, and look at -- and if you 5 were to see the way our systems currently operate, 6 it's almost like looking at a bowl of spaghetti. 7 And really what we're trying to do is -- is to take 8 it and -- and manage the systems in a more 9 appropriate way that allows for not having to go 10 through so many steps in order to process a 11 transaction. 12 Right now, you know, we're trying to 13 streamline anyone wanting to access their funding, 14 to eliminate and move and improve the systems. 15 And then we -- we also have -- we support 16 document production for litigation for settlements, 17 FOIA. So any -- we also have the Office of 18 Historical Accounting who goes through and does the 19 historical trust accounting any time there's 20 litigation for -- for a lot of these accounts, for a 21 lot of these Tribes that -- that, you know, go back 22 decades. 23 And of course we also have the trust, the 24 American Indian Records Repository. That's under 25 our jurisdiction, and we manage all the trust</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 28</p> <p>1 Implement collective and sustainable workforce 2 strategies to support long term Tribal development 3 and resilience. 4 Number two, ensure alignment with 5 Executive Orders. All workforce efficiency 6 initiatives will be assigned with Executive Order 7 14210 and related federal mandates, reaffirming 8 Indian Affairs' commitments to fulfilling its 9 obligations and honoring commitments to Tribes. 10 Our core approach will be data driven 11 decision making aligned with the priorities and 12 needs of Tribal communities, invest in technology 13 automation to utilize comprehensive data analysis 14 and industry's best practices. 15 Number three, efficient use of the 16 Department of Interior resources. Indian Affairs 17 will support and leverage the Department's efforts 18 to streamline and unify core business and 19 administrative services. This lead will enhance 20 processes, reduce redundancies. And if we're all 21 honest with ourselves, we know we've seen it. 22 And improve delivery of service to Tribal 23 Nations. Our core proposed approach, realign 24 internal resources and mission objectives to better 25 meet emerging Tribal priorities. Explore merging</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 27</p> <p>1 records across the country. Help manage, help 2 Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Assistant 3 Secretary's office with records to the trust 4 records. 5 Next slide. 6 Those are our major functions. I think 7 the next slide is then back to you, I would imagine. 8 Thank you, or I don't know. 9 KELLY RAEL: All right. Next slide. 10 Proposed Indian Affairs Workforce 11 Efficiency Strategies. Up hold the trust 12 responsibilities to the Tribe. I want to 13 reemphasize that. It is to uphold the trust 14 responsibilities that we owe it to Tribes. 15 Indian Affairs will continue to prioritize 16 subject matter expertise to ensure timely and 17 effective fulfillment of federal trust 18 responsibility to all Tribal Nations. 19 Employees remain dedicated to advancing 20 the mission and goals that are critical to the 21 success and sovereignty of Tribes. 22 Our core proposed approach, focus on 23 continuity and improvement of federal services, 24 expand Tribal self-determination and self-governance 25 to reduce the federal bureaucracy and regulations.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 29</p> <p>1 offices and removing management layers where 2 efficiencies are possible. Build capacity in 3 critical function areas to improve performance and 4 service delivery. 5 And when I say that, no, we're not 6 referring to Reddit, because I know everyone have 7 seen posts regarding alignments. That's not what 8 we're talking about here. 9 Next slide. 10 All right. BIA -- did you guys want to go 11 over BIE and BTFA, or I can continue. Just 12 continue? Okay. All right. 13 In addition to the proposed IA workforce 14 strategies, BIE, BTFA goals include commitment to 15 high quality education. BIE is committed to 16 ensuring every Indian student has access to world 17 class, culturally grounded education. 18 Central to this effort is the 19 prioritization of school level personnel whose 20 direct impact on student outcomes make them 21 essential to education success. Our approach will 22 be invest in front line educators, empower and 23 support teachers, counselors, student leaders 24 through targeted professional development, 25 recruitment, and retention efforts.</p>



Page 30	Page 32
<p>1 Use data to access student needs, and</p> <p>2 drive resource allocation decisions that support</p> <p>3 academic achievement well-being to all students.</p> <p>4 Strengthen Tribal Consultation in education policy</p> <p>5 and program development to ensure culturally</p> <p>6 responsive practices are embedded to every level.</p> <p>7 And I want to make a note. I know we</p> <p>8 recently had a Tribal Consultation regarding BIE,</p> <p>9 and I -- and I -- we recognize that, no, the</p> <p>10 timeline might not have been the best, but we were</p> <p>11 following Executive Orders so we did have to push</p> <p>12 that out. But we want to continue to have Tribal</p> <p>13 Consultation in meaningful ways.</p> <p>14 All right. Number two for BTFA.</p> <p>15 Streamline and prioritize. BTFA plays a vital role</p> <p>16 in safeguarding and managing financial trust sets</p> <p>17 for Tribal and individual Indian beneficiaries.</p> <p>18 Ensuring fiduciary responsibilities, operational</p> <p>19 transparency, and beneficiary services essential to</p> <p>20 building and maintaining trust with Native American</p> <p>21 communities.</p> <p>22 Our core proposed approach, focus on</p> <p>23 statutory requirements, prioritize fiduciary trust</p> <p>24 responsibilities of receipting, investing,</p> <p>25 disbursing, reconciling, and reporting. Strengthen</p>	<p>1 to better support Tribes by reducing the</p> <p>2 administrative burden to access and administer</p> <p>3 funding, improving communications with Tribes and</p> <p>4 funding opportunities, and improving technical</p> <p>5 assistance and direct support to Tribes to obtain</p> <p>6 and administer funding.</p> <p>7 And finally, increasing Indian Affairs</p> <p>8 support for Tribal self-governance and self-</p> <p>9 determination. How can Indian Affairs optimize its</p> <p>10 functional and effectiveness to provide Tribes with</p> <p>11 improved flexibility to foster economic growth,</p> <p>12 address the specific local needs of their</p> <p>13 communities, and increase pathways to self-</p> <p>14 determination and self-governance.</p> <p>15 We can go to the next slide.</p> <p>16 So as we go through, I'm going to invite,</p> <p>17 as a reminder, we have a number of folks in the room</p> <p>18 that will be providing comment, and we have folks</p> <p>19 online that are also going to do so.</p> <p>20 We're going to do a little bit of back and</p> <p>21 forth -- oh.</p> <p>22 SAM LEVY: Ben, if you wouldn't mind using</p> <p>23 the podium mic instead of the lapel mic, we'll be</p> <p>24 able to hear you much better online.</p> <p>25 BEN DUNCAN: I was all excited about my</p>
Page 31	Page 33
<p>1 beneficiaries' understanding of their financial</p> <p>2 trust assets. Utilize comprehensive data to</p> <p>3 identify opportunities to modernize and update</p> <p>4 existing systems and processes to increase</p> <p>5 transparency, access, and efficiency.</p> <p>6 Next slide.</p> <p>7 All right. I'm going to turn it over to</p> <p>8 -- oh, wait. All right. Yeah, I'll turn it over to</p> <p>9 Ben.</p> <p>10 BEN DUNCAN: Okay, I'm back on. So we're</p> <p>11 going to -- we're going to transition into the</p> <p>12 public comment -- or the comment section, sorry, for</p> <p>13 the rest of our time together. So there's questions</p> <p>14 around 14210 that would have been kind of placed in</p> <p>15 your Tribal Leader letter, and we'll set a</p> <p>16 foundation for what we're hoping to hear from folks</p> <p>17 today.</p> <p>18 So around the restructuring of Indian</p> <p>19 Affairs, what recommendations would you make to</p> <p>20 Indian Affairs to improve efficiency through</p> <p>21 staffing changes, resource sharing, process</p> <p>22 improvements, and potential consolidation of</p> <p>23 programs and offices?</p> <p>24 In terms of addressing current funding</p> <p>25 structures, Indian Affairs is seeking input on how</p>	<p>1 lapel mic. We don't get to have these very often.</p> <p>2 SAM LEVY: Appreciate it.</p> <p>3 BEN DUNCAN: Okay. Is this better?</p> <p>4 Hopefully this is better.</p> <p>5 So we're going to go back and forth.</p> <p>6 We'll have some folks in the room. We're going to</p> <p>7 ask you, if you see the microphone in front of me,</p> <p>8 we brought a table up. I know a lot of folks are</p> <p>9 either reading off laptops, papers. Hopefully</p> <p>10 that's helpful. If you need me to hold something</p> <p>11 for you, I'll do it too. Let's just make sure that</p> <p>12 folks can give a comment effectively.</p> <p>13 So we're going to ask folks in the room to</p> <p>14 queue up, likely along the back line, and we'll kind</p> <p>15 of go in order. If for any reason accessibility to</p> <p>16 coming and standing is an issue, please raise your</p> <p>17 hand. We've got some roaming mics. I'll run around</p> <p>18 so you don't have to stand there if it's going to be</p> <p>19 difficult.</p> <p>20 For folks online, I'm going to ask you to</p> <p>21 raise your hand, so there should be either a Raise</p> <p>22 Hand button, hopefully. I got you, sir. For folks</p> <p>23 online, you'll raise your hand and that will get you</p> <p>24 in the queue for comment as well.</p> <p>25 A couple other notes. Please speak into</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 34</p> <p>1 the microphone. As I said earlier, we have a court 2 reporter that's capturing as well as Derrick and his 3 team will be capturing the comments that are 4 received today. So please state your name, Tribal 5 affiliation, and really speak into the mic. 6 If there are folks on the phone, you can 7 press star 9 to raise your hand. Our team is -- for 8 online folks, you will get an invite to unmute. So 9 you have to -- you'll get an invite. It will pop up 10 on your screen. You have to click yes, accept that, 11 otherwise you'll stay muted, but we'll work with 12 you. 13 The last thing I'll say just before we go. 14 All of these slides are available online. Team, if 15 we have a link we'll put that in the chat, and then 16 make sure folks have that coming out of here. Okay. 17 And then just last, again, written 18 comments, reminder, you can see the queue already 19 lining up. I'll ask folks to be respectful of time 20 to the extent you can. We'll accept comments until 21 11:50 p.m. -- 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, July 7th, 22 2025. 23 Sir, we'll start with you, please. 24 PJ SIMON : Yeah, so, hello, can you hear 25 me?</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 36</p> <p>1 through NGOs, which is okay at the start. 2 It was okay fifty years ago, but now in 3 2025 we can manage our own funding. And when we 4 manage our own funding, we have -- it's more direct. 5 You'll see it next week. You'll see it two weeks 6 from now. Not three months. Oh, how much money are 7 we going to get? 8 Plus IHS, they -- they tell Alaska how 9 much money coming to Alaska. BIA does not tell how 10 much money Alaska gets. So to level the playing 11 field, to -- to make it more efficient for my Tribe 12 to get our fair share of that federal trust dollar 13 that comes from DC, give us our money direct 14 funding. 15 I'm told that a dollar bill leaves DC and 16 it goes from one region, 8, region 10, to Anchorage, 17 to Fairbanks, to our NGO. But the time it gets to 18 Allakaket Village, it's about 12 cents. That's not 19 efficient in 2025. 20 I go home. We bury people with picks and 21 shovels and axes and whatever we can, just doing it, 22 you know. I want change. Direct fund our Tribes. 23 I hope this is not one of those run-of- 24 the-mill meetings where you guys just check it off, 25 oh, we talked to them. Nothing gets done. We're</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 35</p> <p>1 BEN DUNCAN: Just real quickly, those 2 slides are available on the BIA web page. So if you 3 go to the BIA web page, click Consultation, go to 4 the Consultation Schedule. Click "this session." 5 They are there for you to download. Thank you. 6 PJ SIMON: Thank you. My name is PJ 7 Simon, Chief of Allakaket Tribe up there in the 8 Brooks Range. We're a small Tribe, and we're 9 interested in practicing self-determination. 10 Since the '50s when the Interior 11 Department took over our funding years ago, to look 12 after us. In seventy-plus years we -- we're 13 smarter. We're more capable. We're accountable. 14 We want direct funding from the Interior Department. 15 Cut out the middle man. Department of Justice does 16 it. FEMA does it. 17 So if we cut out the middle man, it's more 18 effective to my people. We're practicing self- 19 determination. Allakaket Tribe, we're in support of 20 development. There's a bunch of rivers, mines 21 around us, gold mining. We're supported. 22 And we welcome the Secretary to Allakaket 23 to do a field visit any time. To practice self- 24 determination, we've been -- it's been a hurdle. 25 How much money do we have? Well, we -- we go</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 37</p> <p>1 ready for direct funding. 2 That's my comment. Respect. Everybody 3 else, all the other Tribes in Alaska, but we want to 4 be strong. I'm a Koykondinna (phonetic). My Indian 5 name is Bucko-ou-dali-da (phonetic). That means, 6 His Arrow Doesn't Miss. And I represent people who 7 want to be strong, want to stand on their own feet. 8 Our vision is different than other Tribes' 9 vision, but respect our vision. And with all due 10 respect, that's my comments. Thank you. 11 VIVIAN KORTHUIS: Good morning. I do have 12 prepared comments. Good morning. My name -- my 13 name is Vivian Korthuis. I serve as the Chief 14 Executive Officer for the Association of Village 15 Council Presidents. 16 AVCP is the regional Tribal consortium, 17 serving the 56 Tribes along the Yukon River, 18 Kuskokwim River, and Bering Sea coast in Western 19 Alaska. We are located -- located in 48 Villages 20 servicing approximately 30,000 people. 21 As the Chief Executive Officer for the 22 Association of Village Council Presidents, I am here 23 to advocate for the 56 federally recognized Tribes 24 that we serve. Our Tribes have identified 25 priorities and we provide services through our</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 38</p> <p>1 programs directly to our clients, families, 2 communities, our region, and our Tribes. 3       The key to our success is the flexibility 4 and funding under our compact, reduced reporting and 5 increased trust which has led the unique service 6 delivery model that our Tribes have designed to 7 provide services to our people efficiently and with 8 incredible effectiveness. 9       Tribes know how to best serve and provide 10 services to our people. Through self-governance, 11 this model works for us. Designed by us and fits 12 our challenging environment in our very large 13 region. 14       Through the unique consortia modeled in 15 Alaska, we are able to provide dozens of services 16 by, for, and with our 56 Tribes. Self-governance 17 works for us. We need the Bureau of Indian Affairs 18 to continue to support Alaska Tribes and to support 19 and understand our model. Like Ron Allen says all 20 the time, self-governance works. 21       Through this Consultation we hope to 22 demonstrate that Tribes in Alaska are standing up 23 for ourselves. Tribes have generations of 24 experience in Alaska, this that the federal 25 government can learn from. Tribes in Alaska have</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 40</p> <p>1 potential funding cuts. 2       I want to speak to the issue of public 3 safety. Our Tribes in our region gather annually. 4 We have identified public safety as the number one 5 issue in our region. We have asked the federal 6 government for the past eight years that I've been 7 in this position, to demonstrate to us a model in 8 our region that we know that will work for our 9 Tribes based on the health care model. 10       In addition to identifying improvements 11 with current services, I want to bring to the 12 forefront those services, like public safety, we do 13 not receive. 14       Our Tribes are not asking for anything 15 more or anything less than anyone else in Alaska or 16 any place in the United States. It's a basic 17 function that we're asking for, and we don't get it. 18       Again, I am testifying going on nine years 19 that a Tribal Consultation -- at a Tribal 20 Consultation as CEO for AVCP on behalf of the 56 21 Tribes, and I want to know if this Consultation is 22 the one that will be listened to. 23       I also want to speak to the salmon crash 24 we are experiencing on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. 25 For the past five years the Tribes all along the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 39</p> <p>1 always worked together to provide services to make 2 sense in Alaska with special care to be innovative, 3 efficient, responsible, and united, considering the 4 many, many challenges we face including extremely 5 rural and no roads connecting us to the rest of the 6 state. 7       In the AVCP region alone, our Tribes are 8 uniquely innovative and driven to serve Tribal 9 members. There are so many examples of success, and 10 Tribes cannot have the rug pulled out from under 11 them. 12       This Consultation's stated objective is to 13 streamline operations while minimizing any potential 14 impact on the quality of services provided to 15 Tribes. 16       Change is scary. In our region, when the 17 first Executive Orders came out, we held a region- 18 wide teleconference. Our Tribes shared that they 19 were confused and lacked basic information. 20       Here in Alaska we have the BIA offices in 21 our state. Imagine how difficult it would be if the 22 BIA offices were located in the lower 48, and we 23 were continue to address all of the challenges our 24 Tribes face, including specifically in our region, 25 public safety and the salmon crash, and now the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 41</p> <p>1 Yukon River and the Kuskokwim River have not met our 2 subsistence needs to feed our families and 3 communities. 4       I am asking the Department of Interior to 5 hear our Tribes when we describe these conditions as 6 we are currently experiencing. The Yukon River has 7 been put on a seven-year moratorium by the State of 8 Alaska without any Consultation with Tribes. 9       What I want to know is, if the Department 10 of Efficiency is going to help our Tribes on the 11 rivers so we can fill our freezers with salmon. 12       In short, some specific recommendations 13 include Tribes must be included in the decisions 14 about reorganization or any cuts to the bureau. 15 Alaska needs its BIA regional office. 16       BIA needs to centralize decision making 17 and increase staff for Alaska's regional office. We 18 need BIA to staff -- BIA staff in the offices 19 answering the phones, responding to emails, and 20 sharing information. 21       New reporting requirements are overly 22 burdensome. Tribes must navigate half a dozen 23 portals with limited internet across the Villages 24 for compliance and reporting. Competitive grants 25 disadvantage small Tribes in rural Alaska.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 42</p> <p>1 Those communities are already stressed</p> <p>2 with other challenges. Tribes need the support from</p> <p>3 BIA to be stable, not unpredicted -- unpredictable.</p> <p>4 We would like to see an expansion of self-governance</p> <p>5 and compacting to other federal agencies.</p> <p>6 The federal government needs to fulfill</p> <p>7 its trust obligations fully in Alaska.</p> <p>8 Lastly, Tribes know best how to meet the</p> <p>9 needs of our Tribal members, and we feel -- and we</p> <p>10 need to feel that we have been heard at this Tribal</p> <p>11 Consultation.</p> <p>12 Thank you.</p> <p>13 BEN DUNCAN: Let's take one more. So</p> <p>14 we're going to go one more at the mic. Then I'm</p> <p>15 going to come to you, and then I'm going to go</p> <p>16 online, and then we'll come back to the line.</p> <p>17 CLINTON COOK: Good morning. Before I</p> <p>18 speak, I'd like to offer up the land acknowledgement</p> <p>19 to the peoples at Dena'ina for allowing me to</p> <p>20 represent my Tribe and speak on your land. Ow-a</p> <p>21 (phonetic).</p> <p>22 My name is Clinton Cook and I serve as the</p> <p>23 president of the Craig Tribal Association, which is</p> <p>24 a federally recognized Tribe on the West Coast of</p> <p>25 Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 44</p> <p>1 be a foundation, not an afterthought. Right now</p> <p>2 it's underfunded and unreliable. That's not</p> <p>3 equitable, and it's not sustainable.</p> <p>4 The same goes for indirect cost</p> <p>5 reimbursement. Tribes like Craig are running</p> <p>6 programs that used to be federal responsibilities,</p> <p>7 and we're not even fully reimbursed for the</p> <p>8 administrative burden.</p> <p>9 And competitive grants, they don't work</p> <p>10 for small Tribes. We shouldn't have to hire</p> <p>11 consultants to access basic funding while larger</p> <p>12 entities dominate regional impact metrics. We need</p> <p>13 direct, advanced, and fair funding.</p> <p>14 Craig Tribal Association in 2017 put land</p> <p>15 into trusts successfully. That's not okay. That is</p> <p>16 simply not okay. Tribes need land in a trust for</p> <p>17 self-determination accesses. And we have used that</p> <p>18 as a vehicle for real economic sovereignty. We</p> <p>19 built housing, created jobs, increased local</p> <p>20 revenue. Not with hand-outs, but with true self-</p> <p>21 determination.</p> <p>22 That's what trust lands allowed us to do,</p> <p>23 but the process is too slow, too expensive, too</p> <p>24 bureaucratic. Tribes shouldn't have to spend tens</p> <p>25 of thousands of dollars on lawyers to reclaim what</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 43</p> <p>1 We serve over 500 Tribal members and</p> <p>2 operate a full service Tribal government. Like many</p> <p>3 small Tribes, rural Tribes, we do a lot with our</p> <p>4 limited resources, but what we have built is</p> <p>5 working. And it's working because we pushed through</p> <p>6 the bureaucracy and asserted our rights to govern</p> <p>7 ourselves.</p> <p>8 If this administration wants to improve</p> <p>9 efficiency, let's start with the basics, the 105(1)</p> <p>10 lease. Three strong is not okay. Leases are</p> <p>11 backlogged by years.</p> <p>12 That's not just paperwork. Those are</p> <p>13 stalled services and broken promises. When Tribes</p> <p>14 miss deadlines, we risk losing funding, but when the</p> <p>15 federal government misses deadlines and obligations,</p> <p>16 we're just simply told to wait.</p> <p>17 That's not efficiency. That's a double</p> <p>18 standard. Don't cut services. Don't close field</p> <p>19 offices. Fix what's broken. Staff up the Alaska</p> <p>20 region and hold your agencies accountable for the</p> <p>21 same standard Tribes are held to.</p> <p>22 And a reminder, Alaska holds over 40</p> <p>23 percent of federally recognized Tribes across the</p> <p>24 U.S.</p> <p>25 The small Tribe supplement is supposed to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 45</p> <p>1 was taken from us.</p> <p>2 If this administration is serious about</p> <p>3 efficiency and economic growth, then land in the</p> <p>4 trust must be streamlined and supported,</p> <p>5 specifically in Alaska.</p> <p>6 In closing, the Craig Tribal Association</p> <p>7 has done what the federal government says it wants</p> <p>8 Tribes to do; govern ourselves, build local</p> <p>9 economies, and reduce dependency. We're doing it in</p> <p>10 spite of federal systems, not because of them.</p> <p>11 That's the real issue.</p> <p>12 Honor the trust responsibility. Remove</p> <p>13 these barriers. Invest in all these people in this</p> <p>14 room who are Tribal people, and let us be the</p> <p>15 leaders in our communities.</p> <p>16 Thank you.</p> <p>17 BEN DUNCAN: So we're going to -- we're</p> <p>18 going to come over here. We're going to come over</p> <p>19 here, and then we'll take Jones and Brian, and then</p> <p>20 we'll come back into the room.</p> <p>21 JOEL JACKSON: Good morning. My name is</p> <p>22 Joel Jackson. I'm the president of the Organized</p> <p>23 Village of Kake. We're a small community in</p> <p>24 Southeast Alaska located in central Southeast</p> <p>25 Alaska. We've got less than 500 people that live</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 46</p> <p>1 there.</p> <p>2 Our Tribal government is a federally</p> <p>3 recognized Tribe. We're a compact Tribe, and we do</p> <p>4 a lot, just like President Cook said that -- with</p> <p>5 the little money that we do get, because we're used</p> <p>6 to working with that, but we can't sustain ourself</p> <p>7 with that amount of money, with that amount of</p> <p>8 funds.</p> <p>9 But I want to back up and acknowledge the</p> <p>10 land we're on, the Dena'ina people and the</p> <p>11 Athabascan people. It's an honor to be on your land</p> <p>12 and allowed to speak.</p> <p>13 But I've got a prepared testimony here</p> <p>14 where we're grateful that our right to Tribal count</p> <p>15 station has been recognized here today. However, we</p> <p>16 also know that decisions were already made and</p> <p>17 implemented before this Consultation occurred.</p> <p>18 This isn't government-to-government</p> <p>19 Consultation. There are a lot of BIA, Dear Tribal,</p> <p>20 letters, subsequent addendums. This is a big</p> <p>21 undertaking by Tribal staff and Tribal leaders to</p> <p>22 respond only within a few weeks.</p> <p>23 We request more time. There is no</p> <p>24 emergency that we know of. We were not consulted on</p> <p>25 any, if there are any emergency in Kake, or any</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 48</p> <p>1 be a seven-day notification will not do anything to</p> <p>2 rapidly create more energy in the United States.</p> <p>3 Growing up in my little Village, I</p> <p>4 attended meetings with my father when I was in high</p> <p>5 school with the Forest Service. After I attended</p> <p>6 one or two or three of them and listened to them, I</p> <p>7 asked my father, why do you go there? He said, what</p> <p>8 do you mean?</p> <p>9 I said, they come here, they talk. They</p> <p>10 tell us what they're going to do. They have already</p> <p>11 decided. By coming to our Village, they are merely</p> <p>12 checking a box that they did come and talk to us.</p> <p>13 I have seen this all my life. I'm 69</p> <p>14 years old. We're still talking about true</p> <p>15 Consultation. Meaningful Consultation. And what is</p> <p>16 happening today with these Executive Orders about</p> <p>17 emergency, energy, or whatever it's called, is</p> <p>18 nonsense.</p> <p>19 But I speak for my heart. I very rarely</p> <p>20 read from a script, because what I believe in is for</p> <p>21 our native people to have the right as being one of</p> <p>22 the first peoples of the land everywhere across the</p> <p>23 United States.</p> <p>24 We should be allowed to conduct our</p> <p>25 business without any oversight. The United States</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 47</p> <p>1 other Village or Tribe in Alaska to declare this.</p> <p>2 BIA is already underfunded, understaffed.</p> <p>3 There will be more delays in trust realty,</p> <p>4 engineered time, human services, leases, land into</p> <p>5 trust. How is that efficient?</p> <p>6 Efficiencies cannot be achieved by, if</p> <p>7 there aren't enough people to do the work. So the</p> <p>8 government needs to maintain staffing at appropriate</p> <p>9 levels. Does that mean less oversight and Tribes</p> <p>10 making their own important decisions without a heavy</p> <p>11 hand from the BIA?</p> <p>12 Self-government trust. Self-governance</p> <p>13 Tribes should be exempt from just identifying any --</p> <p>14 any drawdowns. Energy emergency. We cannot cut</p> <p>15 departments that declare -- then declare an</p> <p>16 emergency on energy development.</p> <p>17 There were already programs in place where</p> <p>18 affordable, sustainable energy development, created</p> <p>19 and passed by Congress. Tribes have deep concerns</p> <p>20 about the use of National Historic Preservation Act</p> <p>21 in emergency procedures. The United States is not</p> <p>22 in the midst of an emergency, energy emergency, as</p> <p>23 declared by Executive Order that was signed January</p> <p>24 20, 2025.</p> <p>25 The established Tribal Consultation to now</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 49</p> <p>1 has a trust responsibility to all Tribes, but I do</p> <p>2 appreciate you guys coming here today and listening</p> <p>3 to everything we have to say, because it is</p> <p>4 important.</p> <p>5 And I know a lot of people, they traveled</p> <p>6 from a long ways. I'm here for one day. I leave</p> <p>7 right after the meeting. It cost me almost \$4,000.</p> <p>8 Well, not me. My Tribe. So it's spendy. It's</p> <p>9 spendy to come to these meetings. And I'm glad</p> <p>10 you're not limiting us to three to five minutes.</p> <p>11 That is important that you hear from every</p> <p>12 one of these people that want to talk. And I</p> <p>13 appreciate your time, and I hope more people get up</p> <p>14 and say what they have to say.</p> <p>15 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.</p> <p>16 So couple reminders. So we're not going</p> <p>17 to -- please, I just recognize there's two sessions,</p> <p>18 so good blending. You blended, but there will be</p> <p>19 time specifically on the emergency permitting</p> <p>20 procedures after a break.</p> <p>21 So let's go Jones and Bryan, and then</p> <p>22 let's come back into the room, and then Nathan,</p> <p>23 Justina, and Kevin, we'll come to you.</p> <p>24 SAM LEVY: All right, Jones. I'm going to</p> <p>25 go ahead and ask you to unmute. You can turn your</p>



Page 50	Page 52
<p>1 camera on if you'd like, and you are welcome to 2 provide your comment.</p> <p>3 Brian, you will be up next, so get ready 4 to unmute in just a few minutes here.</p> <p>5 Jones, it looks like you're unmuted, but 6 we're not hearing you in the room. I want to make 7 sure that we have your correct microphone.</p> <p>8 BEN DUNCAN: Try saying something, Jones. 9 Let's see if we can hear you.</p> <p>10 SAM LEVY: So we can't hear you in the 11 room. If you click the little up arrow next to the 12 audio button in the lower left corner, you should be 13 able to adjust your microphone. You can also do a 14 microphone test.</p> <p>15 And we're going to move to Brian while we 16 do that, and I can chat you directly.</p> <p>17 BEN DUNCAN: Okay. So look out for a 18 chat, Jones.</p> <p>19 Brian?</p> <p>20 SAM LEVY: Brian, you can go ahead and 21 unmute and turn your camera on if you'd like, as 22 well.</p> <p>23 BEN DUNCAN: Brian, you're unmuted. 24 Camera's on.</p> <p>25 BRIAN RIDLEY: Okay. Can you hear me?</p>	<p>1 restructure? TCC would request additional Tribal 2 Consultation.</p> <p>3 Keep the Alaska BIA office open, as we 4 have almost half the Tribes in the country. One of 5 the key duties DOI must maintain in self-governance 6 compacting and contracting are financial 7 transactions. However, the BIA's investment in 8 tracking and payment processes lags far behind.</p> <p>9 Some of the systems remain in place from 10 nearly two decades ago. TCC believes a modern 11 approach to recording funding allocations is needed 12 to drive timely payments. Similarly, we recommend 13 that as the internal tracking process is modernized, 14 the payment process for Tribal organizations and 15 Tribes also be improved.</p> <p>16 The BIA's payment process is 17 administratively burdensome, and often delays 18 because the system is neither centralized nor 19 streamlined.</p> <p>20 Second, efficiencies should prevent 21 increasing administrative burdens that eliminate 22 small Tribes from opportunities. It is essential to 23 avoid centralizing grant programs, as this makes it 24 difficult for Alaska Tribes to compete in national 25 or regionally scoped applications.</p>
Page 51	Page 53
<p>1 BEN DUNCAN: Loud and clear.</p> <p>2 BRIAN RIDLEY: Oh, good, because I'm 3 having trouble hearing you guys.</p> <p>4 I'm Brian Ridley. I'm the Chief Chairman 5 of the Tanana Chiefs Conference, and I'm from the 6 Native Village of Eagle. TCC is a consortium 7 representing 42 communities and 37 federally 8 recognized Tribes across interior Alaska with an 9 area about 37 percent of Alaska and nearly the size 10 of the State of Texas.</p> <p>11 The majority of TCC Tribes are remote 12 communities that can only be accessed by air or 13 boat. On behalf of TCC, I offer the following 14 recommendations to assist the Department of Interior 15 in delivering effective services under self- 16 governance authority.</p> <p>17 Our first priority is to maintain the 18 Alaska regional office and its related functions.</p> <p>19 The Villages, Tribes, and Tribal 20 Organizations in Alaska are unique from those in the 21 lower 48. As such, any change to the regional 22 office structure or significant reduction in staff, 23 would require additional training and education 24 about uniquely Alaskan issues.</p> <p>25 Should DOI explore a regional level</p>	<p>1 We need direct allocations and equitable 2 funding mechanisms to ensure fair access for all 3 Tribes. The small Tribe supplement is a critical 4 source of base funding, and making it a permanent 5 Tribal priority allocation would provide stability 6 and predictability.</p> <p>7 Third, expand successful self-governance 8 mechanisms. The success of PL 102-477 in 9 consolidating employment, training, and related 10 programs into a single plan has demonstrated 11 significant reductions in administrative burdens for 12 both the federal government and Tribes, and this 13 model should be expanded.</p> <p>14 Finally, improve efficiency for realty 15 functions performed under self-governance 16 agreements. TCC currently operates realty functions 17 including probate on behalf of BIA. Our case load 18 has exponentially increased along with significant 19 increases in trespassing complaints and demands in 20 program oversight.</p> <p>21 Audits are challenges because BIA does not 22 share or does not possess a centralized system to 23 accommodate file sharing, nor a tracking system that 24 could efficiently close probates. As a result, TCC 25 has probates that have been open for more than two</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 54</p> <p>1 decades due to fractionization of native allotments. 2 TCC recommends that the realty related 3 regulations be updated to streamline information 4 sharing, and centralization of data to allow for 5 more timely probate closures. 6 We encourage the federal government to 7 host additional Consultations and bring specific 8 questions when considering changes to Indian 9 programs. 10 We look forward to working with you to 11 balance the demands of the trust responsibility and 12 the operational needs of Tribal Organizations and 13 Tribes. We reiterate that reductions in force and 14 consolidation of offices will only serve to further 15 confound the services required to be provided 16 without a hard look at updating and modernizing 17 systems. 18 Thank you. Mos-i-cho (phonetic). 19 BEN DUNCAN: So let's come -- we're going 20 to come back in the room. I think we're going to -- 21 still working on Jones' technology. 22 We're also -- we're going to get a 23 numbering system like the DMV so folks don't have to 24 stand up. And then we'll call you back up so y'all 25 don't have to stand the whole time.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 56</p> <p>1 Alaska is home to 229 federally recognized 2 Tribes, nearly half of all of the U.S., spread 3 across more than 663,000 square miles. Southeast 4 Alaska spans roughly the same area as the State of 5 Indiana, but unlike Indiana, most of our communities 6 are only accessible by plane or boat. 7 A centralized approach to efficiency 8 simply doesn't work in our region. True efficiency 9 means investing in field offices, retaining 10 experienced regional staff, and delegating decision 11 making authority where it's needed most: In our 12 communities. 13 Tribes must be the co-designers, not 14 passive consultees, in any restructuring effort. 15 Our local knowledge is a resource, not a roadblock. 16 And let's talk about accountability. 17 Critical functions like 105(1) leases and probate 18 are backlogged by more than a year. If Tribes were 19 this late on our reporting, we'd be facing strict 20 consequences. 21 We're asking the federal government to 22 meet the same standard of accountability we're held 23 to every day. Tlingit &amp; Haida was the first 477 24 Tribe in the Nation. We have shown that self- 25 governance leads to better results, faster service,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 55</p> <p>1 RICHARD PETERSON: Thank you. Can you 2 hear me? 3 Good morning, and thank you for being 4 here. My name is Chu-ya-aish (phonetic). My 5 English name is Richard Peterson, and I serve as the 6 President of Central Council, Tlingit &amp; Haida Indian 7 Tribes of Alaska. 8 We are a sovereign, federally recognized 9 Tribe serving over 38,000 Tribal citizens here in 10 Alaska. 11 As Tribal Nations, we share your goal of 12 efficient and effective government. For us, that 13 means ensuring resources and decisions are as close 14 to our communities as possible, not tied up in 15 federal bottlenecks. 16 For far too long, federal policy has been 17 developed without the full participation of Tribal 18 governments. The result: Systems that don't 19 reflect our realities, that delay services, and that 20 treat Tribal Nations as afterthoughts instead of 21 your governing partners. 22 Tribes should no longer be subject -- be 23 the subject of failed social experiments. It's time 24 for a new chapter, one where Tribal sovereignty is 25 honored not only in words, but in practice.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 57</p> <p>1 and culturally grounded solutions. 2 We need to treat compacting as the norm, 3 not the exception, and we ask DOI to work with other 4 agencies like the USDA, EPA, and FEMA to expand 5 these pathways across the federal government. 6 Land into trust must be made accessible to 7 all Alaska Tribes. The current process is too slow, 8 too costly, and creates barriers to economic 9 development and sovereignty. And if we're serious 10 about reducing bureaucracy, then invest in Tribal 11 capacity. 12 Give us direct, flexible funding, just 13 like the territories receive. And reduce the need 14 for burdensome grant applications and duplicative 15 reporting. 16 At the end of the day, Tribes aren't 17 asking for special treatment. We're asking for 18 respect for our governments, our communities, and 19 our ability to lead. If the goal is a more 20 efficient government, then we're ready to help you 21 get there, but we expect to be treated as equals in 22 that effort. 23 We urge you to honor the trust 24 responsibility by advancing real co-governments with 25 Tribal Nations.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 58</p> <p>1 Two things I'll leave you with. This 2 administration has staked a claim on bringing the 3 things local. Nothing is more local than Tribal 4 government. And the last piece, I have been saying 5 this for years, healthy Tribes make healthy 6 communities. 7 How-a gon-as-chish (phonetic) to the 8 Dena'ina people for allowing us to be here on their 9 land to share these words, and I hope that you carry 10 them back with the good intention that we give them. 11 Thank you. 12 BEN DUNCAN: I think we're at number one 13 on the -- 14 JACQUELINE PATA: Gon-as-chish (phonetic). 15 (Speaking Native American language.) My name is 16 Jacqueline Pata, and I serve as the First Vice 17 President for the Central Council of Tlingit &amp; 18 Haida, and I want to build upon President Peterson's 19 remarks by offering some specific recommendations 20 rooted in our experience as the Tribal government. 21 On the first point on addressing federal 22 inefficiency, first of all I want to say that 23 consolidated government should not create 24 inefficiencies for those that we are serving. 25 So for example, the Tribes -- the federal</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 60</p> <p>1 important, but also access to address other -- the 2 partnerships is important. 3 So for example, the backlog in the 106 4 approvals sometimes is just -- is short of staffing. 5 We only have one staff in the Anchorage office that 6 would be able to do that on any given time, and 7 maybe sometimes two, but you can't address those if 8 you don't have appropriate staffing levels. 9 And of course, if you don't have the 10 agreements and partnerships with other federal 11 agencies or other agencies, so Alaska -- we lack the 12 MOA agreement with SHPO which leads to substantially 13 long delays in getting approvals. 14 On funding a bureaucracy, Tribes are 15 called self-determination Tribes, yet we're made to 16 account for every penny despite clean annual audits. 17 The Single Audit Act should be sufficient. Even if 18 you look at territories across that the United 19 States gives money to, they do it in block grant 20 kind of components. 21 They don't make them have to have the same 22 reporting requirements, and we are Nations within a 23 Nation. Reporting has become overly burdensome, 24 especially past COVID with Tribes navigating 25 multiple federal portals, wasting time and resources</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 59</p> <p>1 agencies that they consolidate shouldn't shift the 2 burden to the Tribes that they are providing 3 services to, and be able to make sure that we have 4 access. Backlogs in probate, Tribal probate in 5 105(1) leasing agreements reflects some of the 6 systematic inefficiencies. 7 And yet, Tribes are delayed with, you 8 know, as was stated, delayed with federal reporting 9 over by a year, we would face undue consequences, 10 but yet we are expected to just accept those delays 11 without any recourse. 12 The Alaska field offices are not 13 redundant. They are essential. What may look like 14 an inefficient in a spreadsheet, reflects logistical 15 realities of serving remote communities. 16 I have this little picture here, 8-1/2 by 17 11, with a postage stamp. The postage stamp 18 represents Alaska's communities that are on the road 19 system. The rest of us are not. And so I think 20 it's really important, particularly in Alaska when 21 you look at the number of Tribes, you look at the 22 geographic. 23 And we're not the only ones in the Nation 24 that have systems that are outside in rural and 25 remote parts of America. Access on that system is</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 61</p> <p>1 better spent actually implementing the programs, and 2 spent servicing our citizens. 3 Competitive grants focus on regional 4 impact, disproportionately harms small Tribes and 5 Villages. We need direct allocation, substantial 6 increases to TPA, the small Tribe supplement, and 7 aid to Tribal government. 8 Advanced funding does not route through 9 the state. I want to say that again. Advanced 10 funding doesn't route through the state, and nor 11 should Tribes have to go to the state to get their 12 programs, resources. 13 On self-governance and cross-agency 14 support, Tlingit &amp; Haida Support 77 program proves 15 that streamlined Tribally led service delivery 16 works, but we need the federal government to align 17 behind that success, and that means the other 18 federal agencies. 19 Working through the inner governmental 20 council is a good way for getting cross-agencies to 21 have similar streamlining efforts and reporting 22 consolidation. 23 Land into trust is a critical tool for 24 Tribal sovereignty and economic development. In 25 Alaska we have demonstrated we need a streamlined</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 62</p> <p>1 approach, and not the legal maze that's cost us 2 50,000 in legal fees.</p> <p>3 Agencies that we partner with, like USDA, 4 EPA, and FEMA must join DOI in supporting, 5 compacting, and contracting. Co-stewardship 6 agreements are a good thing, and Central Council's 7 good example is with USDA, our co-management 8 agreement that we have.</p> <p>9 By the way, was upheld only because we 10 upheld it, even as the federal agency exited by not 11 staffing or letting key staff go, that the Tribe 12 staffing levels remained in place, and that's one of 13 the reasons why the Mendenhall Glacier is still open 14 for visitors right now.</p> <p>15 I want to make sure that we ensure that 16 the DSM, the Office of Budget and Management, 17 continues to work with TBAC, the Tribal Budget 18 Advisory Committee. Let's not get rid of the things 19 that are working as we're looking at consolidation.</p> <p>20 Making sure that we're streamlining our 21 efforts, as I said, with the inner governmental 22 agency, and to ensure that the staff has a viable 23 voice directly with the secretary and policymakers 24 within Department of Interior.</p> <p>25 And then lastly, I just want to be able to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 64</p> <p>1 comments.</p> <p>2 GAYLA HOSETH: Thank you. Hi, good 3 morning everybody. Good to see you guys again. My 4 name is Gayla Hoseth. I'm the First Chief of 5 Curyung Tribal Council that's located in Southwest 6 Alaska.</p> <p>7 We represent about 3,200 Tribal members in 8 our region, and then for my day job I'm the Director 9 of Natural Resources for Bristol Bay Native 10 Association, serving 31 Tribes in the Bristol Bay 11 region. Also on the Alaska Federation of Natives, 12 I'm board of directors and currently the subsistence 13 chair.</p> <p>14 And I just wanted to think the people 15 speaking before me and the people speaking after me, 16 as we are on Dena'ina land, but I just wanted to 17 give a note of the room. As you see the artwork and 18 it kind of displays the people, and then at the end 19 over here to the right, my sister Bayou (phonetic) 20 is the artist that painted the salmonberries, and 21 those are a lot of the berries that are valued and a 22 prize possession of Alaska Natives for our 23 subsistence foods.</p> <p>24 I'm currently the Department of Interior 25 Secretary of Tribal Advisory Committee primary rep,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 63</p> <p>1 say that I was disappointed to see in your core 2 systems, the core programs that you're providing, 3 that BIA HIP wasn't there, because housing is a 4 number one critical issue in many of our 5 communities.</p> <p>6 And even though the funding levels are low 7 in BIA HIP, it's an essential product that is 8 helpful to our communities. In Southeast Alaska we, 9 as a region, decided housing is our number one 10 priority, and we need every resource there to be 11 able to help us deliver it.</p> <p>12 We appreciate that based upon our Tribal 13 resolution that it was honored at BIA and that we 14 were able to get those exemptions in place, and we 15 hope those exemptions continue. Those are ways of 16 streamlining when policies don't work, make 17 decisions to make exemptions work.</p> <p>18 Thank you so much. This goal to optimize 19 services and support true Tribal self-governance is 20 something that we want to be a partner with.</p> <p>21 Gon-as-chish (phonetic).</p> <p>22 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.</p> <p>23 So let's go numbers 2, 3, 4, and then 24 we'll go online starting with Jones, we're going to 25 try you again, and we'll take a couple online</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 65</p> <p>1 as I had just seen you guys a couple weeks ago, and 2 Walter Jim is our alternate. And so being in this 3 space with other fellow Alaska leaders is really 4 important, but important for you guys to kind of 5 hear the highlighted speech of what we have to talk 6 about that have so many integrated little bunny 7 trails that we could hop down as to how all of this 8 effects all of us.</p> <p>9 With that, you know, we talked about 10 federal trust responsibility and true meaningful 11 Consultation, and this is more of a public comment 12 period than anything. And how we're going to engage 13 in Consultation today and moving into the future 14 concerns me as a Tribal leader, because we're 15 supposed to be having meaningful Consultation with 16 you guys commenting back and having a dialogue of 17 conversation. But we all already know that.</p> <p>18 So for Alaska, it was stated, you know, 19 we're a huge state. We have 229 Tribes. We have 20 about 740,000 people that live here. Of the 740,000 21 people, 180,000 people are Tribal members, so just 22 to kind of give you guys a perspective of our size 23 mass, but then we have kind of a low population mass 24 for the area that we represent.</p> <p>25 Anchorage is the hub of Alaska. Everybody</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 66</p> <p>1 flies through here mainly to go to where they're 2 going outside of the State of Alaska, and the more 3 far you go into the remote Villages, I know I've 4 seen some people here from smaller Villages around 5 the state, the more our cost of living gets, the 6 more air fare costs, and the more of these services 7 that are provided under the Department of Interior 8 impact us whereas your dollar here in Anchorage goes 9 a lot farther than a dollar in the smaller 10 communities.</p> <p>11 Currently the BIA and the funds that we do 12 receive under Department of Interior are already not 13 enough. We've been flat funded for a long time, and 14 having cuts to these funds is going to -- how are we 15 going to survive and -- and be in this time and 16 space.</p> <p>17 And we already know that decisions are 18 being made without having input from us. It's 19 really important for us to be at the table when 20 decisions are being made, and hearing things from 21 our perspective instead of reading things on it in 22 transcripts, reading things on public comments, 23 testimonies, and such and such.</p> <p>24 When you're hearing and engaging with us, 25 it means a lot different than to actually see things</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 68</p> <p>1 really impacts us as we're trying to fill our 2 freezers as Vivian stated prior to that, to make 3 sure that we have enough food to feed our families 4 with the high cost of living.</p> <p>5 Most recently the three Tribal additional 6 public Tribal seats got added to the Federal 7 Subsistence Board. It is a must that we keep those 8 three Tribal designated seats on the Federal 9 Subsistence Board. We have heard that there is 10 possibly people are, I guess, petitioning to change 11 the structure of the Federal Subsistence Board and 12 how that is going to be working.</p> <p>13 Those have very -- those impact us a lot 14 here in Alaska, and we need to be at the table for 15 those decisions. And I think that we need to see 16 how is it going to work first before we make any 17 changes with those three Tribally designated seats 18 on the Federal Subsistence Board.</p> <p>19 Also the OSM recently got moved under U.S. 20 Fish and Wildlife Service under the Office of 21 Assistant Secretary. It's important that we keep 22 OSM and doesn't put it back under U.S. Fish and 23 Wildlife Service.</p> <p>24 A lot of times, and I just want to -- I 25 cannot emphasize enough of how important subsistence</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 67</p> <p>1 with your own eyes.</p> <p>2 So I just really wanted to really focus on 3 the importance of subsistence, because a lot of us 4 value our subsistence way of life. Anything that 5 has to do with fur, fins, feathers, flippers, 6 animals of the land, the air, and the water are what 7 we harvest. That has fed our people for generations 8 and generations, and since time immemorial.</p> <p>9 That is who we are. And so when we have 10 -- when ANCSA was implemented, we had to extinguish 11 our Aboriginal hunting and fishing rights. And it 12 was a Secretary Interior in the State of Alaska had 13 to protect our subsistence needs.</p> <p>14 That didn't happen, and so in 1989 the 15 Alaska Supreme Court ruled that the Alaska couldn't 16 have a rural preference, which violated the state 17 constitution. Therefore the Federal Subsistence 18 Board was formed of the six federal agencies and 19 then the three public seats.</p> <p>20 We live in a dual management system with 21 the state and the feds on our fish and wildlife 22 management, and having to navigate those regulations 23 and to how, when you're standing on a land of what 24 you can harvest and what you can't harvest, am I on 25 state land, federal land, and how does that work,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 69</p> <p>1 is. Having OSM under the secretary's office is a 2 lot better than under U.S. Fish and Wildlife 3 Service. They have the freedom to actually go into 4 the anthropologists' reviews of the proposals that 5 are being presented before them to weigh in on how 6 this is going to affect us. It has helped us 7 greatly because we've had some challenges with that.</p> <p>8 In Alaska, our subsistence needs are still 9 not being met. Where I live, I live in Bristol Bay, 10 and we have an abundance of wild sockeye salmon; 11 however, with that abundance of wild sockeye salmon, 12 we're also seeing a decline of our Chinook and our 13 Chum. We're also seeing decline of our caribou.</p> <p>14 We're also having limited access of 15 gathering some moose at different times of the year, 16 and having to make sure that we can have those 17 resources. So I just wanted to say that our 18 subsistence needs are still not being met.</p> <p>19 All of the programs under DOI have huge 20 impacts on how we continue our way of life. And 21 navigating through this world of change, navigating 22 through all of the things that are moving at a very 23 fast pace and trying to keep on top of everything is 24 challenging, I'm sure not only for you guys but for 25 all of us, and we don't have the resources that you</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 70</p> <p>1 guys have to keep up on all of this information that 2 we're having.</p> <p>3 So everything is connected. Public 4 safety, education, MMIP, wellness, all of these 5 things impact our wellness and who we are as people.</p> <p>6 I really want to emphasize a lot too on 7 the PL 93-638 compacting, it's important for this to 8 be easier to be implemented in the State of Alaska, 9 but as I sit around this stock table I hear how easy 10 it is for the lower 48 Tribes to get this 11 compacting, but we run into hurdles up here in 12 Alaska.</p> <p>13 And a good example of that is the Alaskan 14 Migratory Bird Co-Management Council. We've been 15 trying to get that compacted for a long time to get 16 it out of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and as an 17 organization in itself, because none of that -- 18 whatever the percentage they receive right off the 19 top, as our funding gets decreased for AMBCC for 20 Migratory Birds, that could be worked with the 21 groups of the 10 regions that are currently involved 22 in AMBCC.</p> <p>23 Probates. As stated before, there's -- I 24 found out at the last meeting there was 48,000 25 probates that are needing to be processed with the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 72</p> <p>1 Consultation, but I'm really happy to see everybody 2 here.</p> <p>3 And I was trying to think before coming 4 here is, when was the last time outside of Alaska 5 Federation of Natives that Tribes are coming 6 together to really advocate of how these programs 7 under DOI are impacting us, and they're impacting us 8 greatly.</p> <p>9 So thank you.</p> <p>10 MIKE JONES: Thank you for allowing me to 11 speak today. (Speaking Native American language.) 12 My Haida name is Sa-ju-ju (phonetic). My name is 13 Mike Jones. I'm the Tribal President in Kasaan. We 14 are a Haida Village way down by Ketchikan on the 15 very southern point.</p> <p>16 And I want to read a statement here. The 17 United States government must fundamentally 18 transform its approach to Tribal Nations by 19 recognizing and fully implementing its trust and 20 treaty responsibilities.</p> <p>21 This requires a paradigm shift from 22 paternalistic oversight to genuine government-to- 23 government Consultation that respects Tribal 24 sovereignty. Meaningful Consultation is not a 25 bureaucratic check box, but a constitutional and</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 71</p> <p>1 Probate Strike Team task force that was formed. I 2 think that's going to be helpful.</p> <p>3 But also my dad has been doing land 4 management for a long time under Bristol Bay Native 5 Association, and has worked with BIA, has things to 6 be implemented to where things could be contracted 7 or compacted to the organizations to streamline that 8 process, to basically we could just send the 9 documents to you guys and sign those off. So that 10 there shouldn't be any reason why we have the 11 probate backlogs.</p> <p>12 Tribal liaisons are very, very important 13 within the DOI. I know that a lot of Tribal 14 liaisons' positions got cut maybe within the first 15 probationary period that we're in, but it's very 16 important that we have those Tribal liaison 17 positions within DOI because they understand the 18 needs that we have, and then we also build 19 relationships with those Tribal liaisons.</p> <p>20 I don't want to take up too much more of 21 your time. We will follow up with written comments, 22 but I just want to emphasize enough of the federal 23 trust responsibility, and how are we going to go and 24 engage into true government-to-government 25 Consultation during these times? Because this isn't</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 73</p> <p>1 moral obligation that demands comprehensive, timely, 2 and substantive engagement.</p> <p>3 Tribes must be equal partners in decision 4 making process affecting their lands, resources, 5 communities with sufficient time, resources, and 6 platforms to provide informed input.</p> <p>7 The federal government must move beyond 8 superficial interactions such as 7 to 10-day comment 9 periods. That can't be emphasized enough. What a 10 joke, 7 to 14 days to comment. Half of us can't 11 even get notified within that time to get it to our 12 councils, to talk about it.</p> <p>13 It's got to, you know, if we don't have a 14 council meeting right then, then we have to have a 15 special council meeting and get everybody together 16 to talk about these things.</p> <p>17 And create robust mechanisms that 18 integrate Indigenous knowledge, support Tribal self- 19 determination, and provide direct, predictable 20 funding. By honoring these principles, the United 21 States can begin to repair historical injustices and 22 create a collaborative framework that truly reflects 23 the Nation to Nation relationship promised in 24 treaties and affirmed by federal law.</p> <p>25 Key policy objectives and concrete</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 74</p> <p>1 examples.</p> <p>2 1. Direct funding.</p> <p>3 The objective: Provide direct allocations</p> <p>4 to Tribes bypassing state intermediaries.</p> <p>5 Examples: Guarantee a \$300,000 base</p> <p>6 allocation directly to small Tribes instead of a</p> <p>7 competitive \$50,000 grants. Eliminate state level</p> <p>8 intermediaries for USDA or HUD grants. Provide</p> <p>9 advanced predictable funding mechanisms.</p> <p>10 2. Land and economic sovereignty.</p> <p>11 Objective: Streamline land into trust</p> <p>12 processes, and support Tribal economic development.</p> <p>13 Examples: Expedite all Tribes' land into</p> <p>14 trust application within reasonable time frame.</p> <p>15 Reduce land transfer legal costs from \$250,000 to</p> <p>16 under 25,000. Allow Tribes to develop economic</p> <p>17 projects on trust lands without additional state</p> <p>18 approvals.</p> <p>19 3. Self-governance expansion.</p> <p>20 Objective: Expand Tribal contracting and</p> <p>21 self-determination opportunities.</p> <p>22 Examples: Allow Tribes to contract</p> <p>23 directly with National Park Service for Visitor</p> <p>24 Center management. Expand Tribal contracts with EPA</p> <p>25 for environmental monitoring. Allow Tribes to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 76</p> <p>1 federal government, moving from paternalistic model</p> <p>2 to a true government-to-government partnership.</p> <p>3 In closing, I just want to reflect a</p> <p>4 little bit on the people that I'm here representing</p> <p>5 today. We are a small Village. We have only about</p> <p>6 80 people in our Village. In our bay, I live in</p> <p>7 Kasaan. It's in Kasaan Bay. We live underneath of</p> <p>8 Kasaan Mountain. Kasaan Island is right out front.</p> <p>9 That is our bay. Generational wealth came out of</p> <p>10 our bay, and I am here representing single mothers</p> <p>11 that have to make a choice between internet and</p> <p>12 feeding their kids, and that's not okay.</p> <p>13 We have elders that can't afford to build</p> <p>14 a wheelchair ramp into their house as they're aging.</p> <p>15 We have mental health. We've spent a lot of our own</p> <p>16 money out of our general fund to help our citizens</p> <p>17 with mental health, and finding avenues for them to</p> <p>18 get the treatment that they need to get off of the</p> <p>19 drugs that have been funneled into our communities,</p> <p>20 in my opinion, intentionally.</p> <p>21 This is not organic, and I don't think</p> <p>22 it's by accident that all these drugs are</p> <p>23 devastating and decimating our communities, and so</p> <p>24 it's up to us to find avenues for them to get the</p> <p>25 help that they need to get.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 75</p> <p>1 manage their own health care administration across</p> <p>2 federal agencies.</p> <p>3 4. Reduce administrative burdens.</p> <p>4 Objective: Simplify reporting</p> <p>5 requirements and recognize Tribal governance.</p> <p>6 Example: Accept single-audit reports as</p> <p>7 sufficient documentation. Reduce monthly reporting</p> <p>8 to quarterly. Eliminate Davis-Bacon wage</p> <p>9 requirements for small Tribal infrastructure</p> <p>10 projects.</p> <p>11 5. Meaningful Consultation.</p> <p>12 Objective: Provide genuine comprehensive</p> <p>13 Consultation process.</p> <p>14 Example: Provide draft NEPA environmental</p> <p>15 assessment 60 days before comment period. Include</p> <p>16 Tribal elders in environmental review panels. Allow</p> <p>17 sufficient time for Tribal input, not 7 to 14-day</p> <p>18 window.</p> <p>19 6. Funding equity.</p> <p>20 Objective: Increase funding for Tribal</p> <p>21 administrative capacity.</p> <p>22 Examples: Increase Tribal priority</p> <p>23 allocation from 500,000 to 1 million.</p> <p>24 These recommendations aim to transform the</p> <p>25 relationship between Tribal governments and the U.S.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 77</p> <p>1 We've made great progress with that, but</p> <p>2 we need -- we need help. We shouldn't be using our</p> <p>3 own funds out of general -- out of our general fund</p> <p>4 when so much generational wealth has come out of</p> <p>5 Alaska.</p> <p>6 And it's probably the same for everybody</p> <p>7 here, but the owners of these canneries and cold</p> <p>8 storages, they're descendants are living off of our</p> <p>9 resources today, while our people are struggling to</p> <p>10 get by, and that's not okay.</p> <p>11 (Speaking Native American language.)</p> <p>12 Thank you very much.</p> <p>13 BEN DUNCAN: We're going to go, you're</p> <p>14 number four, and then five through eight, but we're</p> <p>15 going to jump online after you're comment. Thank</p> <p>16 you.</p> <p>17 GERRY HOPE: Currently I'm known as number</p> <p>18 four, but I'd like to to introduce myself as Ja-ake</p> <p>19 (phonetic). I am Tlingit. I am of the Sitna-utti</p> <p>20 (phonetic) clan in Wrangell, born and raised in</p> <p>21 Sitka, however, and I'm here on behalf of our Tribal</p> <p>22 chairwoman, Gaida-ku-kah (phonetic) who authorized</p> <p>23 me to speak on behalf of Sitka Tribe of Alaska.</p> <p>24 I do want to say a little bit of history.</p> <p>25 I was first elected to the Tribal Council in 1979.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 78</p> <p>1 I was around when the Sitka, at that time called the 2 Sitka Community Association, was in the pilot 3 program with Tlingit Central Council and Haida 4 Tribes of Alaska, and that was in the '70s. 5 I recall the kind of thing that we went 6 through, which was a great act of Congress supported 7 by the president, at that time Nixon, who 8 transitioned all the programs from the Bureau of 9 Indian Affairs to the Tribes. 10 However, in the Indian Self-Determination 11 Act, there was a little bit of a transition that we 12 all went through to identify how we need to manage 13 the programs. And in the Self-Determination Act, 14 you were required to go by the code of federal 15 regulations. So what did that mean? Practically it 16 was awkward, because we ended up operating like a 17 little BIA. 18 Can we do this? Oh, go to the code of 19 federal regulations and we'll find out if we could 20 do that. Can we spend money here, or there, or what 21 about pens? Which program? I'm in the social 22 services program, so where do I spend money to get 23 pens and paper? Go to the CFR. 24 Whoever knew the code of federal 25 regulations were primary people. They were highly</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 80</p> <p>1 There was a 20-year effort just to get to 2 that through the FAST Act, and then it took another 3 five years to go through the negotiation process to 4 establish self-governance in the DOT. 5 After that, the Progress Act was enacted 6 by Congress which meant that we needed to do another 7 generation of self-governance in the Department of 8 Interior. Again, Tribal Council appointed me to be 9 on the Neg-Reg Committee on their behalf. 10 I was the alternative, the alternate to 11 President Richard Peterson representing, and that 12 was a two-year process. So self-governance works. 13 Yeah, we need to tweak it, we need to upgrade it. 14 We need to negotiate what that means with the 15 Department of Interior, but we do that. We did 16 that. We are now in that. So I do appreciate that. 17 I did want to say one final thing about 18 the introduction piece. Our Tribal Vice Chairman, 19 in 1990 when we were going through the revision of 20 our constitution, said, if you are saying you are a 21 government, act like a government. Refer to those 22 -- again, Bill Brady was his name. He's also the 23 Tribal judge. 24 He said, if you're going to act like a 25 government, refer to those who are in your Tribal</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 79</p> <p>1 regarded, because then you could just go to them 2 instead of having to look it up yourself. 3 Self-governance was a major step because 4 we ended up doing away with having to do that acting 5 like the boss-Indians-around thing. And I recall 6 going to a self-governance advisory committee 7 meeting in DC in March, and there was somebody from 8 the Office of Indian Affairs that was speaking, and 9 she was talking about how we needed to do some re- 10 branding. 11 I was teasing with her, but then too, I 12 wasn't, saying okay, so let's change boss-Indians- 13 around to believe-Indians-already. Let's hear a 14 clap of hands. 15 Believe-Indians-already. We need to do 16 that, and I'm hoping that as we go through these 17 Tribal Consultations, these series of Tribal 18 Consultations, that that's a message, bottom line, 19 that will be listened to and lived. 20 A little more introduction before I get 21 into my copious notes. I was appointed by our 22 Tribal Council to represent them in the Department 23 of Transportation's self-governance negotiations, 24 Tribal Consultation, but the negotiations, the Neg- 25 Reg Committee.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 81</p> <p>1 government as Tribal citizens. Members are a 2 colonial term that did not want to recognize a 3 sovereign within a sovereign. 4 So I wanted to represent his words. He 5 passed along a number of years ago, but the Tribe 6 listened to him, heard him, and now I have an 7 enrolled citizen of over 4,200 enrolled Tribal 8 citizens of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. 9 Here are some comments that are important, 10 pertinent, I believe, to the efficiency that you're 11 talking about and that you're here to listen. 12 The federal government should increase 13 technical assistance and prioritize streamlined 14 technology to support it. The Department of 15 Interior should increase investment and technical 16 assistance to Tribes and Tribal organizations to 17 support grant writing, financial management, 18 procurement systems, and data collecting. 19 These investments should prioritize 20 Tribally led training and peer-to-peer models, not 21 only outside contractors unfamiliar with Indian 22 country, Alaska Tribes are often forced to rely on 23 third party consultants to apply for and implement 24 federal funding opportunities and perform required 25 reporting.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 82</p> <p>1 To create in-house technical expertise 2 will maximize Tribal resources and improve outcomes 3 for Tribes and their citizens. Many federal 4 tracking and reporting systems are outdated and lack 5 transparency. Updated programs which are consistent 6 across agencies, user friendly, and easy to train 7 would support consistency and oversight that Tribes 8 and Tribal organizations can use to ensure every 9 dollar goes where it is intended. 10 Payment platforms should be easy to use, 11 easy to access, and allow Tribes to track every 12 dollar they've owed and where payments are in 13 realtime. Awards should be easy to process without 14 burdensome layers of review and approvals, and 15 should occur as soon as Indian Affairs has the funds 16 available. No gatekeeping mechanism should control 17 Tribes across their federal funds. 18 There are a couple of more points, but I'm 19 going to email those to you, and I do appreciate 20 that. 21 I did want to say thank you to the 22 Dena'ina for allowing me to speak here, and I did 23 want to honor you by asking you who are Dena'ina to 24 stand so we could appreciate you. Dena'ina, would 25 you please stand, those of you who are Dena'ina.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 84</p> <p>1 people's land we are talking on. 2 What is happening here, it's two topics on 3 one call and it's not doing justice to either topic. 4 Both of them are very serious and it's really hard 5 to, I mean, they need to be separate talks, and 6 Chilkat Village, we are inviting you folks for a 7 one-on-one Consultation. 8 And we can't see the critical emergency 9 is. The emergency that we see is our way of life is 10 at risk with the so-called critical emergency. 11 We have been living this life since time 12 immemorial, and we will continue to do this to the 13 seventh generation. That has always been our goal, 14 and it will always be our goal. And we echo the 15 thoughts that one gentleman was speaking on, direct 16 funding. 17 We like that Tribal Nations have long 18 requested the ability to determine for themselves the 19 extent to which NEPA compliance should apply on 20 Tribal lands. And any expedited process must not 21 sacrifice Tribal co-stewardship in the name of 22 expediency. 23 Tribal historic preservation is essential 24 for the integrity of federal review process, and 25 more importantly it is critical to the protection</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 83</p> <p>1 Thank you. 2 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. So we're going to 3 move to our online folks. It's going to go Jones, 4 Nathan, Justina, Evelyn, Dean. So we're going to 5 try to get through our online hands, and then we'll 6 start back in the room with five. 7 So let's go Jones, can we try? 8 SAM LEVY: And Jones, I see you're 9 unmuted. You can turn your camera on if you'd like. 10 Please go ahead with your comment. 11 BEN DUNCAN: Let's try again, Jones. You 12 broke up a little bit. 13 JONES HOTCH, JR.: Can you hear me yet? 14 Hello. 15 BEN DUNCAN: We can barely hear you. Keep 16 talking, Jones, let's see if we can get you. I can 17 see you leaning in. Keep trying to talk, and let's 18 see if we can hear you. 19 JONES HOTCH, JR.: My name is Jones Hotch, 20 Jr. Can you hear me now? 21 BEN DUNCAN: We can hear you loud and 22 clear now, Jones. 23 JONES HOTCH, JR.: Okay. President of 24 Chilkat Village. We are a federally recognized 25 Tribe, and I'd like to recognize the Indigenous</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 85</p> <p>1 and preservation of our religious freedom, our 2 cultural heritage. 3 Tribal Consultation is most effective for 4 the federal government and most effective for Tribal 5 Nations when there is transparency and clear purpose 6 of scope. 7 We look forward to the day when we will 8 have a one-on-one Consultation with you folks on 9 these very important matters, and it's very hard to 10 cover both topics in one day and in the hours that 11 are set for it today. 12 I appreciate the time, and I thank 13 everyone that's there in person, and those that are 14 on Zoom. I will just close with this. (Speaking 15 Native American language.) Be strong, have courage. 16 Thank you. 17 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 18 SAM LEVY: All right. Nathan, you can go 19 ahead and unmute. You can turn your video on if 20 you'd like, and please go ahead with your comment. 21 NATHAN ELSWICK: Can you guys hear me all 22 right? 23 BEN DUNCAN: Got you Nathan, thank you. 24 NATHAN ELSWICK: Thank you. Nathan 25 Elswick, I'm the First Chief of The Native Village</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 86</p> <p>1 of Anvik located on the Yukon River. Just got a 2 couple of comments on the talking points, and then 3 also a statement on the main reason that I'm 4 attending today.</p> <p>5 First off, I'd like to say, as we all 6 know, effective Consultation strengthens the 7 government-to-government relationship. Tribal 8 Consultation is a right, and we come here today as 9 rights holders, not as mere stakeholders, to work 10 together to find consensus on issues that impact us 11 all.</p> <p>12 We are grateful that our right to Tribal 13 Consultation has been recognized here today, 14 although we all know it seems more like a public 15 comment process. We hope to work closely with this 16 administration on any future meaningful dialogue 17 that relates to any of these topics in the future 18 and beyond.</p> <p>19 As we all know, Tribal Consultation is 20 most efficient for the federal government and most 21 effective for Tribal Nations when there's 22 transparency and a clear purpose of the scope.</p> <p>23 Tribal Consultation must take place before 24 decisions are made. The second addendum to the 25 Tribal Leaders letter that went out tells us that</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 88</p> <p>1 productivity.</p> <p>2 So actually I wanted to make a statement. 3 We're 40-member Tribes which formed back in 2014, we 4 formed the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission.</p> <p>5 I am here today representing the 40-member 6 Tribes of the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission. 7 Tribal Commission staff are attending in person, and 8 will present a document as I am speaking.</p> <p>9 Five Tribal Commission member Tribes have 10 signed this cooperative agreement we are submitting 11 today to ask the Department of Interior to 12 collaborate with us. Disagreement would commit to 13 the department to consult and communicate with 14 Tribal Commission Tribes concerning the D-D-1 lands 15 and its intent to strengthen land management 16 effectiveness and increase cooperation with Tribes' 17 management of natural and cultural resources on D-1 18 lands for 40-member Tribes.</p> <p>19 In 2014 the Tribal Commission member 20 Tribes nominated salmon producing local watersheds 21 for protection from extraction, development in areas 22 of critical environmental concern. And Tribes were 23 continually active as cooperating agency 24 participants throughout the 10 years of BLM's 25 resource management planning processes.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 87</p> <p>1 DOI has already decided to adopt an alternative NEPA 2 compliance process with expedited ESA Section 7 3 process, and the National Historic Preservation Act 4 alternative procedures.</p> <p>5 We were not consulted before these 6 decisions were made. The administration must 7 prioritize the delivery of services and funding to 8 Indian country as mandated by the trust and treaty 9 obligations, and any efforts to restructure Indian 10 Affairs.</p> <p>11 Indian Affairs programs are already 12 operating with inadequate staffing and support, 13 including in key areas like trust resources 14 associated with land, natural resources, water and 15 timber, education, public safety, social services, 16 and trust fund management.</p> <p>17 So any reductions in cuts to be BIA and 18 even thinking about cutting the Alaska office would 19 have drastic effects on the Tribes in Alaska, and 20 really doesn't make any sense on, when you talk 21 about workforce efficiency and productivity, how 22 that's supposed to work when you guys are planning 23 to have all these cuts within the BIA and possibly 24 closing down the Alaska office. It really doesn't 25 make any sense on what that workforce efficiency and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 89</p> <p>1 And to finalize the Bering Sea Western 2 Interior plan, the Bureau of Land Management 3 rejected all Tribes' dominations and designated no 4 protections. Instead they opened up 99 percent of 5 BLM managed land in the planning area to mineral 6 entry and development.</p> <p>7 Land was finalized with no protections the 8 Tribes asked for. The proposed review and changes 9 to the NEPA and National Historic Preservation Act 10 under the emergency permitting procedures, our 11 member Tribes will be virtually cut out of the 12 process when changes are considered to ANCSA 17 D-1 13 withdrawals.</p> <p>14 Our development is proposed on these lands 15 that sustain our Tribal communities. The 40-member 16 Tribes of the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission 17 are voicing solid opposition to the use of emergency 18 permitting procedures under the supposed national 19 emergency energy emergency.</p> <p>20 And we are formally asking for a 21 Consultation from the Department of Interior, 22 proposed actions relating to the D-1 lands.</p> <p>23 It is not efficient to get rid of people 24 whose jobs it is to reach out and ensure 25 Consultation with Tribes in the remote places like</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 90</p> <p>1 Alaska when that is already hard enough. Workforce 2 reductions will make it harder for people to meet 3 their legal obligation and to do their jobs. 4       Communication in Alaska, because of its 5 distance and remote access, often influenced by 6 weather, communication infrastructure, and other 7 challenges, reducing time for review and input 8 regarding impacts to proposed energy development -- 9 (call dropped). 10       SAM LEVY: Might have been a Wi-Fi issue. 11 Looks like he dropped from the meeting. 12       BEN DUNCAN: Oh, okay. 13       SAM LEVY: But if he re-joins, we can make 14 sure he gets added back into the queue. 15       BEN DUNCAN: In the queue, will you call 16 on who is next? 17       SAM LEVY: Yes. Justina, you will be next 18 to provide comment. I will go ahead and ask you to 19 unmute, and you can feel free to provide your 20 comment. 21       JUSTINA: Good afternoon. My name is 22 Justina Wilhelm. I am the president here at 23 Ilisagvik College located in Utqiagvik, Alaska, 24 formerly known as Barrow. 25       I'm here today to represent our Tribal</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 92</p> <p>1 acquired throughout the years from BIE staff by 2 building trusting relationships with communities, 3 school staff is vital for program development and 4 efficiency. 5       Should one individual be terminated or 6 moved, essential knowledge will be lost and new 7 relationships will have to be built. The TCU system 8 urges protection for Haskell Indian Nations 9 University and Southwestern Indian Polytech 10 Institute from future RIFs. 11       These federally operated institutions were 12 likely unintentionally targeted during February's 13 probationary employee terminations which affected 24 14 to 27 percent of staff, and disrupted essential 15 services. 16       Although faculty and staff have since been 17 reinstated, there is on going concern about future 18 cuts impacting those who support American Indian and 19 Alaska Native students. AIHEC is respectfully 20 requesting that DOI exempt all Haskell and SIPI 21 employees, recognizing their vital roles. 22       In the 2022 GAO report, GAO found that the 23 BIE had an overall staff vacancy rate of 33 percent, 24 and that high staff vacancy rate significantly 25 inhibits BIE's ability to support and oversee</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 91</p> <p>1 colleges and universities. Ilisagvik College is 2 also sanctioned by the Inupiat Community of the 3 Arctic Slope. 4       Regarding the overall message for our 5 Tribal colleges and universities, we are chartered 6 but our respective Tribal Nations and act as 7 extensions of the Tribal Nation. Tribal higher 8 education is rooted in the trust and treaty 9 responsibility, and TCU's programs and funding are 10 essential to the economic success of our rural 11 communities through higher education opportunities, 12 workforce development, and agriculture development. 13       Regarding the question of what 14 recommendations would you make to Indian Affairs to 15 improve efficiencies through staffing changes -- 16 sharing improvements and potential consolidations. 17       The BIE staff who provide vital technical 18 assistance to Tribal colleges were already limited 19 before the Trump administration took office. Higher 20 education, specifically TCUs, have been overlooked 21 in agency representation as there is only one 22 program analyst to provide support for all 35 23 accredited and three developing Tribal colleges and 24 universities. 25       The institutional knowledge that has been</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 93</p> <p>1 schools. 2       Regarding topic two, addressing current 3 funding structures including identifying 4 efficiencies and barriers, and what program 5 recommendations would you make to Indian Affairs to 6 improve access to federal programs. For the TCUs, 7 operational funding is forward funding. However, 8 TCUs often wait months to receive funding. 9       The delay of these critical resources can 10 interrupt TCU's operations and impede TCU's efforts 11 to provide the department with accurate accounting 12 and timely reporting. A more streamlined process 13 for transferring funds to TCUs would be greatly 14 beneficial. 15       Delay ranges from a combination of issues 16 that occur during the budget process or within the 17 agency. Reporting requirements for TCUs are often 18 burdensome, as most reporting documents are not 19 listed within the regulations, or requests more 20 detail than what is listed in the regulations. 21       The 1978 Tribally controlled Colleges and 22 Universities Assistance Act, TCU Act, called for 23 facility needs to study for Tribal colleges and 24 universities, but it has never been completed. To 25 effectively advocate for infrastructure needs, a</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 94</p> <p>1 comprehensive study is essential.</p> <p>2 Funding for this study should not reduce</p> <p>3 existing TCU funding. While TCU construction</p> <p>4 funding began in 2021, the BIE has not requested an</p> <p>5 increase since 2022. When they added the funding</p> <p>6 line to their budgets, a funding increase could</p> <p>7 support the long overdue study.</p> <p>8 There needs to be increased communication</p> <p>9 between the different agencies within the DOI,</p> <p>10 specifically between BIA and BIE. This increased</p> <p>11 communication could increase transparency and</p> <p>12 overall efficiency within the department.</p> <p>13 Lastly, how can the Indian Affairs</p> <p>14 optimize its functionality and effectiveness to</p> <p>15 Tribes? The TCU Act includes an endowment for TCUs</p> <p>16 from the BIE. AIHEC, which is the American Indian</p> <p>17 Higher Education Consortium, recommends</p> <p>18 administrative improvements to the endowment that</p> <p>19 the department can make, as well as amendments to</p> <p>20 the endowment that the department can support.</p> <p>21 For administrative recommendations, we are</p> <p>22 requesting to de-link the TCCUAA endowment funds</p> <p>23 from operating funds; allow construction and</p> <p>24 renovation as an allowable use; recommend a formula</p> <p>25 for endowment distribution not based on TCU's</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 96</p> <p>1 unmute and turn your camera on.</p> <p>2 EVELYN BEETER: Hello. This is Evelyn</p> <p>3 Beeter with Cheesh'na Tribal Council. I'm a council</p> <p>4 member. We're a compacted Tribe, and some of our</p> <p>5 concerns are Alaska needs to have the BIA regional</p> <p>6 office. We need to keep it here.</p> <p>7 We're a huge state and we have many</p> <p>8 smaller Tribes, and we're all an underserved region.</p> <p>9 And the local staff, they understand the unique</p> <p>10 needs of Alaska communities, and they need to act</p> <p>11 without the red tape and bureaucracy.</p> <p>12 Tribes need to be involved in any</p> <p>13 decisions about any specific proposed reorganization</p> <p>14 or cuts to BIA, especially trust responsibilities to</p> <p>15 the Tribes. Need to address the current funding</p> <p>16 structures including identifying efficiency barriers</p> <p>17 to expedite funding to the Tribes and Tribal</p> <p>18 programs.</p> <p>19 Need to get the funding out without all</p> <p>20 the red tape and delays. Reporting requirements are</p> <p>21 burdensome for the smaller Tribes, and just doing</p> <p>22 programs. It holds the program back. You have to</p> <p>23 spend so much time trying to report.</p> <p>24 The competitive grant structure</p> <p>25 disadvantages the small and rural Tribes, and the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 95</p> <p>1 financial status, and examine opportunities to</p> <p>2 develop a system of stable BIE endowment funding for</p> <p>3 recipients that create a degree of financial</p> <p>4 certainty.</p> <p>5 And for the congressional recommendations</p> <p>6 that BIE can support, eliminate the match</p> <p>7 requirement for the BIE TCCUAA endowment by allowing</p> <p>8 payment from sources other than private and Tribal</p> <p>9 funds, provide the Separate of Interior with</p> <p>10 authority to grant a waiver if a college</p> <p>11 accidentally spends the corpus or waiver to allow</p> <p>12 TCUs to use corpus in case of emergencies, and</p> <p>13 provide expiration dates similar to the Department</p> <p>14 of Education endowment, at which time Tribal</p> <p>15 colleges would not have to repay the federal</p> <p>16 contribution and could use their endowment funding</p> <p>17 as needed.</p> <p>18 Again, my name is Justina Wilhelm. I'm</p> <p>19 with Ilisagvik College, and I thank you for this</p> <p>20 time. Kwee-nup-a (phonetic).</p> <p>21 BEN DUNCAN: So let's go Evelyn, and then</p> <p>22 I'll ask 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 to come up to the queue. So</p> <p>23 if you remember your numbers, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, but</p> <p>24 Evelyn, please.</p> <p>25 SAM LEVY: Evelyn, you can go ahead and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 97</p> <p>1 Tribal governments, they're the most localized</p> <p>2 government in Alaska and should be treated as a</p> <p>3 government managing its own issues and providing</p> <p>4 services.</p> <p>5 The Tribes should be having single direct</p> <p>6 allocations, and some of the other programs that are</p> <p>7 really important to us as a small Tribe is like the</p> <p>8 housing. Subsistence is a priority. That's our way</p> <p>9 of life. It needs to be protected. The roads</p> <p>10 program. The probate is backed up in our state, so</p> <p>11 we need to make sure that we figure out how to</p> <p>12 address that.</p> <p>13 And I just want to say thank you for</p> <p>14 listening to the Tribes, and hope our words are</p> <p>15 valued and help support restructuring of the Indian</p> <p>16 Affairs in a good way.</p> <p>17 Thank you.</p> <p>18 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. So we'll go back</p> <p>19 in the room.</p> <p>20 ROB SANDERSON: Thank you. Rob Sanderson,</p> <p>21 Tlingit &amp; Haida Central Council, third Vice</p> <p>22 President. I have over 25 years of Tribal</p> <p>23 experience, most of the time flying under the radar.</p> <p>24 I wear many hats, and I'm going to go on script, and</p> <p>25 I'm going to go off script after, as I'm assuming I</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 98</p> <p>1 only have just a limited time to speak before you 2 today, so much appreciated.</p> <p>3 I am from the Haida Tribe, from Hydaburg, 4 Alaska. So I want to speak about what real Tribal 5 governance looks like, not in theory but in 6 practice. Tlingit &amp; Haida is a national model for 7 compacting and consolidation of services, but that 8 not did happen by accident.</p> <p>9 It took decades of work, advocacy, and 10 intentional investment in our capacity as a Tribal 11 government. At one time the BIA had a full-service 12 office in Juneau. Over time -- has entered into 13 compacts and other contracts under this as we took 14 on more and more of these services.</p> <p>15 We don't do it to replace the BIA. We did 16 it because we had the capacity to infrastructure, 17 and most importantly the trust of our communities. 18 Today we operate over 30 departments, employ over 19 500 staff, and manage \$100 million budget.</p> <p>20 We provide social services, public safety, 21 workforce programs, child welfare, Tribal court 22 operations, much of which were once handled by 23 federal agencies. It's just not compacting, that's 24 full spectrum Tribal governance in action.</p> <p>25 Let me be clear. It wasn't the BIA</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 100</p> <p>1 opportunity to serve in many different capacities, 2 NCAI, Alaska area vice chair, AFN. I served four 3 years on the Alaska Statewide Suicide Prevention 4 Council under Governor Walker, vetted by his team, 5 and that is one thing that we really need to pay 6 attention to.</p> <p>7 Every community in this great state of 8 ours, every community has lost at least one person, 9 okay. The numbers are staggering. They're going up 10 more and more. We re-wrote the manual. It had one 11 faith in there. Now it has all cultures and faiths 12 in that manual, but that does not seem to be 13 working. So I'm calling on the powers that be 14 before us to do what they can to help us combat that 15 dark scourge.</p> <p>16 Tribes here in Alaska take less than one 17 percent of the total take of subsistence, and I 18 don't really like that word, but that's the word we 19 use when we are out there practicing our pay of 20 life.</p> <p>21 Now, if the federal government just took a 22 step back and actually looked at how we live our 23 life and how we have provided for our families for 24 centuries here, it would actually take what they 25 assume was a burden to them, on regulating the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 99</p> <p>1 downsizing that made things better. It was 2 investment in Tribal capacity. Restructuring Indian 3 Affairs should be about meeting Tribes where they 4 are, not assuming one model fits all.</p> <p>5 What worked for Tlingit &amp; Haida might not 6 work for others, or other parts of Alaska. That's 7 why the federal staff in our regions still matter. 8 That's why Tribal Consultation and local decision 9 makings matter.</p> <p>10 Efficiency does not come from cutting 11 corners or collapsing offices. It comes from 12 investing in Tribal Nations and trusting us to lead. 13 What Tlingit &amp; Haida needs now is sustained support 14 for compacting technical assistance for smaller 15 Tribes that want to follow this path, and meaningful 16 coordination across DOI, USDA, EPA, FEMA, and others 17 because sovereignty doesn't stop at BIA.</p> <p>18 We are living proof that Tribal 19 governments can operate full-service systems with 20 better results when the federal government stops 21 trying to manage and provide the service for us to 22 lead. The question, whether this administration 23 about build on that success or retreat into top-down 24 models that have already failed.</p> <p>25 Now, going off script. I've had the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 101</p> <p>1 Tribes.</p> <p>2 If the government just let the Tribes go 3 after and practice their way of life on that one 4 percent, they would actually save themselves money. 5 You think about that. Less regulations, less money.</p> <p>6 Where is the damage being done at? It's 7 being done at the state, the federal level on our 8 people being able to put food on our table because 9 there's too damn much red tape going around. You 10 have to do this, you have to do that.</p> <p>11 And finally, you know, we're going to talk 12 about fishing here, just a little bit here. Our 13 people are losing their fishing rights at an 14 alarming rate here, not only in Western Alaska, the 15 interior, but also Southeast Alaska.</p> <p>16 I think Interior, the BIA has the power to 17 influence the powers that be in this industry. Out- 18 of-staters, people that come up and hunt and fish in 19 our great state, they have more rights than we do. 20 They really do, you know. You think about that.</p> <p>21 And a lot of the regulations that are put 22 on the Tribes are based on the need of the outside 23 people that come and fish and hunt in our land, in 24 our territories. I've been a participant in the 25 North Pacific Fisheries Management Council for 25-</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 102</p> <p>1 plus years.</p> <p>2 I've learned a lot from a very smart man,</p> <p>3 my father. He talked about this to me when I was a</p> <p>4 young kid, of what was coming, because of the red</p> <p>5 king crab crash that happened in the Gulf of Alaska.</p> <p>6 Nobody learned that lesson. There were times when</p> <p>7 we were attending a North Pacific Fisheries</p> <p>8 Management Council when there were only two Tribes</p> <p>9 in there. We were trying to sound the alarm, but it</p> <p>10 wasn't being heeded. Now look at where we are at</p> <p>11 today.</p> <p>12 It's devastating our people. It's</p> <p>13 devastating the sea floor, and, you know, I hope</p> <p>14 that Interior has the power or the wherewithal to</p> <p>15 engage with Congress on what's going on out in the</p> <p>16 Bering Sea and the Western Gulf of Alaska and the</p> <p>17 Central Gulf of Alaska, and not over in our area,</p> <p>18 the Eastern Gulf of Alaska where trawling is not</p> <p>19 permitted right now, but who is to say that they'll</p> <p>20 take that off the plate and go after our area next.</p> <p>21 Since 2017 they have killed off what we</p> <p>22 believe to be over 20 orcas, killer whales. That's</p> <p>23 my clan, but yet it's a legal take. Wanton waste,</p> <p>24 kicked off over the side, but we as Alaska natives,</p> <p>25 if we go out and take one halibut over the limit,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 104</p> <p>1 is a buyer, which we believe will be China. And</p> <p>2 that mine is so colossal, that would make the Pebble</p> <p>3 look small.</p> <p>4 Do your homework. Look at it. And these</p> <p>5 are the mines that we're looking at and protecting,</p> <p>6 and trying to protect our rivers here, I mean down</p> <p>7 there in Southeast Alaska, the Una, the Stikine, the</p> <p>8 Taku, the Chilkat, the Chilkoot, the Alsek, and most</p> <p>9 importantly I'm going to ask my Tribal brothers and</p> <p>10 sisters that live up in the interior, pay close</p> <p>11 attention what's going on in the Yukon Territory and</p> <p>12 in British Columbia, because it's coming your way,</p> <p>13 you know. Trust me, it is.</p> <p>14 We're finding high levels of selenium</p> <p>15 below the Red Chris Mine on the Stikine River, which</p> <p>16 is on the Canadian side but flowing into Southeast</p> <p>17 Alaska by Wrangell, Alaska, and other toxic minerals</p> <p>18 that are used, or chemicals that are used to break</p> <p>19 up the rock to get at the precious minerals that</p> <p>20 they're looking at, copper, gold, whatever.</p> <p>21 So with that, in closing, along with HHS's</p> <p>22 releases that they want a healthy America, let's</p> <p>23 give them what they want. Let our people practice</p> <p>24 their food. Let them practice their way of life.</p> <p>25 Let's let them get their fish oils the natural way,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 103</p> <p>1 we're met at the dock, we're chastised, sometimes</p> <p>2 our gear taken, our boats tied up, this and that.</p> <p>3 You look at the weekly reports on the NOAA</p> <p>4 website, and those numbers that are taken off that</p> <p>5 website we believe are an undercount of what they're</p> <p>6 taking out there in the Bering Sea and in the</p> <p>7 Western Gulf of Alaska, where they can kill off</p> <p>8 10,000 Chinook salmon every other week, and our</p> <p>9 people can't even fish in our rivers here in Alaska.</p> <p>10 And lastly, transboundary rivers, okay.</p> <p>11 That's just a big a threat to our Native people</p> <p>12 living here not only out West in the interior, but</p> <p>13 in Southeast. Let me tell you, down by Ketchikan</p> <p>14 where I live. I'm not from Ketchikan, I live in</p> <p>15 Ketchikan. I'm from the Haida Nation. I live in</p> <p>16 Hydaburg.</p> <p>17 Tlingit &amp; Haida has been invested in</p> <p>18 transboundary for years now. A lot of you have</p> <p>19 heard about the Pebble Mine. We know that, but let</p> <p>20 me tell you, just because it's in a different</p> <p>21 country doesn't mean it's less of a threat.</p> <p>22 Okay. Let's talk about the KSM Mine, 85</p> <p>23 miles to the east of Ketchikan, 25 miles inside the</p> <p>24 Canadian border, the Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell Mine.</p> <p>25 The infrastructure is already there. All they need</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 105</p> <p>1 right, instead of having to go to the store and buy</p> <p>2 fish oil pills.</p> <p>3 Let them hunt. It would save the</p> <p>4 government untold millions of dollars just to let us</p> <p>5 practice our way of life instead of having us</p> <p>6 regulated right out of the -- I'm don't know the</p> <p>7 correct word for that is, but they're regulating us</p> <p>8 right off the dinner table.</p> <p>9 So with that, I thank you for your time.</p> <p>10 Good afternoon.</p> <p>11 BEN DUNCAN: Let's keep going. You have</p> <p>12 6, 7, 8, 9, and you might see some activity</p> <p>13 happening. Speak into the mic. Folks are having a</p> <p>14 little bit of challenge online hearing, so we're</p> <p>15 going to do some technical solutions. Nothing</p> <p>16 should -- don't be distracted by that.</p> <p>17 NATHAN LOJEWSKI: Hi, my name is Nathan</p> <p>18 Lojewski. I'm the Forestry Director with</p> <p>19 Chugachmiut. We're a Tribal consortium. We serve</p> <p>20 seven Tribes in the Chugach region of Alaska. I</p> <p>21 think we've already heard Alaska has about 40</p> <p>22 percent of the Tribes in the nation.</p> <p>23 Our Native allotments in the state make up</p> <p>24 approximately 1.2 million acres, and those are small</p> <p>25 parcels of approximately 160 acres each.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 106</p> <p>1 And I want to focus on trust services for 2 this Consultation. In our region we have about 63 3 Native allotments, and about the same number of 4 townsite lots where our people live and have their 5 homes and our communities. That's approximately 6 10,000 acres.</p> <p>7 We need a knowledgeable local staff at the 8 BIA to deliver trust services. Chugachmiut has been 9 compacting those trust services through the 93-638 10 contracts and compacts for decades, but there are 11 certain processes that the BIA holds and does not 12 let the Tribes take.</p> <p>13 And so those, we need the local and 14 knowledgeable BIA staff to be able to fulfill our 15 duties and get projects done.</p> <p>16 One important project we have in Port 17 Graham and Nanwalek is a new airport that's been in 18 the works since 2005, so nearly 20 years ago, and 19 just three weeks ago we had multiple fatalities in 20 an airline accident, and one person is still in the 21 hospital here in Anchorage.</p> <p>22 That project has needs through probates, 23 SHPO surveys, NEPA, archeological, and so we need a 24 local Alaska based staff who can do those services 25 so we can move these projects forward.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 108</p> <p>1 We need the ability to use our 638 2 compacts and contracts to support our crews in the 3 state. In Alaska we have about 11 of our 23 crews, 4 are Tribal crews, and many of us are funded through 5 our sub governance compacts.</p> <p>6 We're concerned that the proposed budget 7 from the Trump administration is proposing a 8 consolidation of all federal firefighting into one 9 agency, and we're worried that we might lose the 10 ability to use 638 contracts and compacts if that 11 consolidation happens.</p> <p>12 If it does happen and we still have that 13 ability, that would be a great thing. Our 14 experience with other DOI agencies who have the 15 ability to use those sorts of agreements is the 16 awarding officials or granting officers aren't 17 willing to do it because they don't know or are not 18 comfortable with those authorities.</p> <p>19 We have worked with the U.S. Forest 20 Service and the Department of Ag. We're one of 21 three Tribes in the Nation to enter into the first 22 Good Neighbor Authority Agreements for doing work on 23 the Chugach National Forest, so there are other ways 24 we can do work.</p> <p>25 The Forest Service has the ability to use</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 107</p> <p>1 Staff in Alaska understand the ANCSA and 2 ANILCA. A lot of staff in the lower 48 don't. And 3 some of our BIA realty functions require live 4 signatures on documents, and a remote logistical, 5 like, puzzle to get a signed document in a village 6 where the airport is unsafe, there's not a notary 7 public maybe. We have to fly someone out, charter 8 aircraft.</p> <p>9 A lot of federal employees can't charter 10 aircraft because of regulations in the government. 11 It's extremely complicated and difficult. So having 12 staff in the state who understand the realities of 13 Alaska is very important for our Tribes and for 14 providing our services.</p> <p>15 Another program that we operate that I 16 haven't heard folks talk about is Wildland Fire and 17 Fields Program. In Alaska we have 40 seasonal 18 firefighters on our two crews, the Yukon crew and 19 the Denali Wildland Fire Module.</p> <p>20 We don't receive any suppression funding 21 through the BIA or the DOI. That comes through the 22 State of Alaska through a cooperative agreement, but 23 all of our work when we're not on fire assignment is 24 funded primarily through 638 compacts through the 25 BIA.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 109</p> <p>1 638 contracts. That was authorized through the 2004 2 Tribal Force Protection Act, but it requires trust 3 lands to be adjacent or in close proximity to the 4 National Forest system, which isn't really the case 5 in most of Alaska.</p> <p>6 So I guess in closing, from Chugachmiut, 7 we have two priorities, for providing trust services 8 is one. We need local Alaska staff at the BIA so 9 that we can provide our services to our people.</p> <p>10 And we request that the government still 11 maintain the ability to fund Fields Agreements 12 through 638 regardless of where the fire and fields 13 function is located within the federal government.</p> <p>14 Thank you.</p> <p>15 CYNTHIA PETERSEN: Gon-as-chish (phonetic) 16 to the Dena'ina for allowing us to speak on their 17 land. (Speaking Native American language.) My name 18 is Cynthia Petersen and I serve as the President of 19 the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, a federally recognized 20 Tribe on the northernmost part of Southeast Alaska.</p> <p>21 I am here today to advocate for meaningful 22 structural changes that honor our inherent 23 sovereignty, and improve the efficiency, equity, and 24 accountability of our government-to-government 25 relationship.</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 110</p> <p>1 We appreciate the Department of Interior's</p> <p>2 efforts to engage Tribes in dialogue regarding the</p> <p>3 Executive Order on government efficiency, EO 14210.</p> <p>4 This effort must be guided by the principles of</p> <p>5 self-governance, cultural survival, and the</p> <p>6 protection of our Hashagoon, our ancestral ways of</p> <p>7 life.</p> <p>8 True efficiency means putting decision</p> <p>9 making closer to the people by empowering the Tribes</p> <p>10 as the primary stewards of their lands, service</p> <p>11 providers, and partners. The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe</p> <p>12 has long worked toward the vision of operating our</p> <p>13 own schools.</p> <p>14 Tribal control over education is critical</p> <p>15 to reversing the long term impacts of the policies,</p> <p>16 and improving outcomes for Native students. Our</p> <p>17 state is failing our youth. Families are leaving</p> <p>18 our community in search of better opportunities.</p> <p>19 We urge the Indian Affairs to create</p> <p>20 direct funding streams that Tribal education</p> <p>21 departments, not reliant on LEAs or states to</p> <p>22 support the operation of Tribal schools, immersion</p> <p>23 programs, and vocational pathways.</p> <p>24 Remove federal policy barriers such as the</p> <p>25 Ted Stevens rider that blocks BIE funding from being</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 112</p> <p>1 to support regional place based co-management</p> <p>2 frameworks where Tribal governments are recognized</p> <p>3 as equal decision makers, not merely stakeholders.</p> <p>4 For Alaska Natives, subsistence is not</p> <p>5 recreation. It is survival, identity, and</p> <p>6 resilience, yet federal and state regulations too</p> <p>7 often override our rights, diminish traditional</p> <p>8 harvests, and prioritize outside commercial</p> <p>9 interests.</p> <p>10 The Situk River Chinook fishery, for</p> <p>11 example, continues to decline while state actions</p> <p>12 neglect the urgent need to co-manage and enforce</p> <p>13 sustainable practices. We urge Indian Affairs to</p> <p>14 elevate Tribal subsistence rights as a protected</p> <p>15 federal trust responsibility.</p> <p>16 Restore full Tribal management authority</p> <p>17 under the Alaska National Interest Lands</p> <p>18 Conservation Act, ANILCA. Increase funding and</p> <p>19 staffing for Tribal fish and wildlife departments.</p> <p>20 Provide legal support for Tribes defending</p> <p>21 traditional use rights in administrative and</p> <p>22 judicial settings.</p> <p>23 We recommend establishing a dedicated</p> <p>24 office of Tribal subsistence and wildlife management</p> <p>25 within Indian Affairs, with both regulatory</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 111</p> <p>1 used in Alaska. Fund teacher certification programs</p> <p>2 in workforce development, and Indigenous values and</p> <p>3 cultural responsive curriculum.</p> <p>4 Our recommendation is to expedite</p> <p>5 compacting authority for Tribal education and the</p> <p>6 establishment of the dedicated Tribal Education</p> <p>7 Office within Indian Affairs to support self-</p> <p>8 determined governance, especially in regions where</p> <p>9 public schools have failed our Native students.</p> <p>10 For generations, we have been stewards of</p> <p>11 these lands, long before federal jurisdiction, yet</p> <p>12 federal land management policies often restrict</p> <p>13 Tribal authority, even over areas of deep cultural</p> <p>14 and historical significance.</p> <p>15 We request Indian Affairs coordinate with</p> <p>16 the USDA Forest Service to formally recognize Tribal</p> <p>17 co-management and expand Indigenous stewardship</p> <p>18 agreements. The Department of the Interior</p> <p>19 streamlined the process for Tribes to assume real</p> <p>20 property title, conservation management</p> <p>21 responsibilities, and ecosystem restoration efforts.</p> <p>22 Funding be prioritized for Indigenous</p> <p>23 climate resilience projects that blend scientific</p> <p>24 and traditional ecological knowledge. We recommend</p> <p>25 restructure Indian Affairs natural resource programs</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 113</p> <p>1 authority and robust funding to support Tribal</p> <p>2 enforcement and restoration.</p> <p>3 Despite countless funding programs, Tribes</p> <p>4 are too often overwhelmed but duplicative processes,</p> <p>5 unclear eligibility rules, and burdensome reporting</p> <p>6 requirements. Efficiency should not mean cutting</p> <p>7 services, but making the federal system more</p> <p>8 responsive to the needs of the Tribal governments.</p> <p>9 We recommend simplifying indirect cost</p> <p>10 negotiation processes, increasing the use of master</p> <p>11 agreements and pre-approved scopes of work.</p> <p>12 Developing a single Tribal grants portal across</p> <p>13 interior agencies to reduce fragmentation.</p> <p>14 We recommend creating a Tribal</p> <p>15 administrative reform task force to identify cross-</p> <p>16 agency inefficiencies, propose regulatory</p> <p>17 simplifications, and co-design solutions with the</p> <p>18 Tribal leaders.</p> <p>19 Behavioral health is central to overall</p> <p>20 health in our communities, especially in Alaska</p> <p>21 Native Villages where intergenerational trauma,</p> <p>22 isolation, and systematic negative have taken a toll</p> <p>23 on the families and the youth.</p> <p>24 The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe is working hard</p> <p>25 to provide culturally grounded wellness programs,</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 114</p> <p>1 but we face persistent funding gaps, rigid 2 reimbursement systems, and a shortage of licensed 3 providers willing to stay in rural Alaska. 4       We urge Indian Affairs and partner 5 agencies to expand funding eligibility for Tribes to 6 operate integrated behavioral health programs 7 including substance use recovery, suicide 8 prevention, and traditional healing. Allow 9 behavioral health compacting under ISDEAA for Tribes 10 ready to take on that responsibility. 11       Create mental health infrastructure grants 12 for rural Tribal clinics and wellness centers, 13 support training and licensing pathways for Native 14 providers embedded in their own communities. 15       We recommend behavioral health be 16 recognized as an essential pillar of the Tribal 17 sovereignty and public health infrastructure. 18 Expand compacting authority. Streamline 19 credentialing, and invest in culturally based 20 systems of care that work for our communities, not 21 just within them. 22       True Tribal sovereignty includes not only 23 the protection of our lands, but the right to manage 24 and benefit from their natural wealth, on our terms. 25       Right now mineral leasing, land</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 116</p> <p>1 has proven that when given the tools and authority, 2 we can lead. We can educate our children in their 3 language, heal our lands, and feed our people from 4 our waters, but we need the federal government to 5 walk alongside us, not ahead of us, and to fully 6 recognize the rights we have always held. 7       We call on Indian Affairs to modernize its 8 systems, not by reducing its presence, but by 9 expanding Tribal authority to govern, manage, and 10 thrive in accordance with our cultural values. 11       Gon-as-chish (phonetic) for taking the 12 time to listen. Thank you. 13       BEN DUNCAN: Just come up, we'll do 9, and 14 then we had built in kind of a break in transition 15 around 1:00, so I think we'll try to get as much as 16 we can to -- 17       TRACY CHARLES-SMITH: I'll be fast. 18       BEN DUNCAN: Fast is great. I'm not going 19 to cut you all off. I promised that at the 20 beginning, so we'll probably take a break at 1:00, 21 maybe a truncated break, 15 minutes to get up, move 22 around, and then we'll come back and try to get as 23 much as we can, and then move into the other 24 session. Does that work for folks? Okay. 25       SAM LEVY: I hate that we're running out</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 115</p> <p>1 management, and permitting often fall under federal 2 agencies like BLM without Tribal consent or 3 participation. 4       The Yakutat and many Tribes are seeking 5 authority to review, approve, and deny mineral 6 exploration and extraction on or near our Tribal 7 lands. Reclaim and restore lands previously harmed 8 by extracted industries. Develop renewable energy 9 and carbon credit projects grounded in Tribal 10 values. 11       Receive revenue sharing on direct benefit 12 from federal mineral leases on Indigenous 13 territories. 14       We recommend Indian Affairs work with 15 Tribes and Congress to expand Tribal authority over 16 lands, minerals, and permitting functions currently 17 held by BLM and others, and pilot Tribal land 18 management authorities in key regions. 19       The Yakutat is not asking for less 20 government. We are asking for the right kind of 21 government, one that centers Tribal sovereignty, 22 invests in our well-being, and recognizes us as the 23 right stewards of our children, lands, and futures. 24       We ask that Consultation leads to 25 transformation, not just acknowledgement. Yakutat</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 117</p> <p>1 of time, and I don't want to put folks off. It's up 2 to you. If you want to break, we can still have a 3 break, but if you want to just roll through so we 4 have an extra half hour, that's fine too. 5       BEN DUNCAN: Yeah, I think we have, 6 between our -- just for our court reporter, we've 7 got potentially a hungry tech guy, water and coffee 8 flowing through our bodies -- yeah, yeah. Okay. 9       Yes, we got it. So let's get through 10 this. We'll take our break at 1:00 for about 15 11 minutes, but let's keep going. 12       TRACY CHARLES-SMITH: And as I stated when 13 I first got here, you know, we have a lot of Tribal 14 leaders here, and we're leaders. We should be given 15 preference over Native organizations and colleges 16 and all that to say our piece. 17       We've been, you know, we've traveled 18 thousands of miles and spent a lot of money, like 19 the lady said. (Speaking Native American language.) 20 Tracy Charles-Smith. 21       My name is Tracy Charles-Smith. I'm from 22 the Native Village of Dot Lake where I serve as 23 President. My band is Nal-bay-chishu (phonetic). I 24 fall on the red paint side. We're the grandchildren 25 of the seagull.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 118</p> <p>1 Thank you for allowing this Consultation. 2 Tribal Nations have had an ongoing relationship with 3 the United States since its creation. Like in any 4 relationship, communication is key to our 5 government-to-government relationship. 6 Tribal Consultation is a right, and we 7 come here today as rightholders, not mere 8 stakeholders, to work together to find consensus on 9 issues that impact us all. We are grateful for that 10 right to consult with the government. 11 Tribal Consultation is most efficient for 12 the federal government, and most effective for 13 Tribal Nations when there is transparency and clear 14 purpose of scope. 15 While we have come here today as prepared 16 as we can be, the reality is that the scope of this 17 Tribal Consultation as laid out in DOI's DTL and 18 addendums, is enormous and has evolved. It is very 19 difficult to come to a session like this with weeks' 20 notice and be expected to talk about every issue 21 abstract. 22 Tribal Consultations must take place 23 before a decision is made. And you all know Tribal 24 news travels faster than TikTok news. 25 We have heard that under the Department of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 120</p> <p>1 Fremin. I am an elected council member for the 2 Village of Dot Lake, and I just wanted to address 3 the second point on current funding structures. 4 So specifically, federal funding for 5 Tribal programs are pretty disrupted and delayed in 6 a lot of cases in smaller communities where there 7 are lack of connectivity, decreased mail services. 8 There's delays in rolling out programs 9 because, you know, they didn't get the funding on 10 time. They didn't get a notice saying that there 11 was a delay in it, so you know, it doesn't look very 12 great when you're trying to rely services to a 13 community that are your relatives, that are your 14 family members, that are community members that work 15 in close relationships with your Tribe on why you 16 can't fulfill a service. 17 You say you're going to do it. We want to 18 be able to make sure that we can follow through on 19 the stuff that we are staying we're going to do in 20 these communities, and if there's delays in funding, 21 there's delays in awards being given out. If there 22 are different issues on the platforms that these 23 grants come through, nothing is more frustrating 24 than working on a report and your connectivity going 25 out, and then having to re-start over and over</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 119</p> <p>1 Government Efficiency, DOGE, initiatives reports 2 that 22 percent of the BIA and Bureau of Trust Funds 3 administration employees have accepted buyouts or 4 early retirement offers. Reports also indicate that 5 these reductions have led to the elimination of four 6 BIA regional director positions. 7 Can you confirm whether these positions 8 have been permanently eliminated? Additionally, 9 does the BIA plan to reduce the number of regional 10 offices nationwide? How does the department intend 11 to maintain effective regional leadership and 12 support for Tribal Nations amidst these staffing 13 changes? 14 Tribal Consultation must take place before 15 a decision is made. The administration must 16 prioritize the delivery of services and funding to 17 Indian country as mandated by trust and treaty 18 obligations, and any effort to restructure Indian 19 Affairs. 20 We ask that you directly fund Tribes. 21 We're often in competition with Native organizations 22 and other entities for funding that help our people, 23 and who best to help our people than the people that 24 know them. 25 CARY FREMIN: Hello, my name is Cary</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 121</p> <p>1 again. Nothing is more frustrating than that. 2 And it creates an environment of not just 3 frustration, but lack of efficiency. I mean, if I'm 4 going to have to write the same report five times, 5 that's not efficient. And I know that's kind of why 6 we are here, is to really look at the efficiency of 7 things moving forward. 8 If at the BIA offices there's been a 9 reduction in force and we can't get ahold of people, 10 that again is not efficient. It's very expensive to 11 fly into the hub communities from the smaller ones 12 off the road system, to try to find somebody to talk 13 to. 14 I know a lot of smaller communities are 15 facing some pretty significant cuts in their federal 16 funding, and it's just going to make it harder in 17 the long run. 18 Tribes know what works best for their 19 geographical location, for the folks that they work 20 with, and it may not follow a subscribed script 21 coming from the East Coast. It may look good on 22 paper, but in practice, unefficient, absolutely 23 inefficient. 24 So some of the recommendations that I 25 would like to put forth is advanced appropriations</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 122</p> <p>1 for funding coming directly to Tribes specifically. 2 I would love to see some direct funding 3 for Tribal justice in this state specifically, 4 because what we've seen, what we've lived through, 5 and what we know is that it doesn't work. So I know 6 everybody is chomping at the bit to have lunch, but 7 leaving it with Tribes is the most efficient way 8 forward. 9 And at the end of the day, like we still 10 get stuff done. If we don't have funding, guess 11 what? We're still at work. We're still working. 12 We are still having to answer to our Tribes, answer 13 to our communities. 14 Thank you. 15 SAM LEVY: Thank you very much. We're 16 going to go over to our virtual participants. So 17 Dean, you'll be our first commenter. David, you 18 will be up next, and Kevin you will be after David. 19 Dean, I'm going to go ahead and ask you to 20 unmute. You can go ahead and unmute yourself, turn 21 your camera on, and start your comment. 22 DEAN BARLIP: Hello, my name is Dean 23 Barlip. I'm the (audio cut out) administrator for 24 Native Village of Chitina. Thank you for the time 25 today. Get right into my comment.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 124</p> <p>1 flexibility and reduce the bottleneck. 2 Tribal liaisons. Expand the number of 3 liaison officers who are culturally competent and 4 familiar with the Alaska Native governance guidance. 5 Resource sharing. Shared service models (audio cut 6 out). Shared administrator services such as HR IT 7 procurement across multiple Tribal offices to reduce 8 overhead. 9 Digital resource libraries. Create 10 centralized digital platforms for grant templates, 11 compliance guides, and training materials accessible 12 to Alaska Tribes. Processing improvements, realtime 13 communication tools (audio cut out) digital 14 platforms such as dashboards and multiple apps for 15 realtime updates on funding and compliance, and 16 program changes. 17 Feedback loops. Institutionalize 18 recommended feedback mechanisms from Tribes to BIA 19 to continuously refine the processes. Consolidation 20 in programs and offices. Program integration. 21 Merge overlapping perhaps, i.e. housing and 22 infrastructure under unified management to reduce 23 duplication. 24 Pilot projects. Want pilot programs in 25 select regions to have consolidation strategies</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 123</p> <p>1 The recommendations to improve Indian 2 Affairs' efficiency through staffing changes, 3 resource sharing, process of improvements and 4 potential (audio cut out) of programs and changes 5 that I just want to start off by saying I hope that 6 the federal government doesn't make the same 7 mistakes that they made with Region 9 with BIA. 8 And EPA Region 9, they didn't mess with 9 the funding, but they cut the funding to the project 10 manager to the EPA Region 9, so they effectively cut 11 out the internal employees that process the 12 paperwork that released the funding to the Tribe. 13 And now, you know, and Region 8 and (audio 14 cut out) are going to assume those responsibilities, 15 so that's going to slow down the communication with 16 an Alaskan Tribe, so I hope that any changes or 17 staffing changes to not effect the self- 18 determination specialists within BIA. 19 So other ideas we had were de-centralizing 20 staffing authority and power in regional and local 21 BIA offices in Alaska to make quicker (audio cut 22 out) decisions tailored to Tribal needs. 23 Cross-training staff. Train personnel 24 across multiple program areas such as natural 25 resources, education, and housing, to increase</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 125</p> <p>1 before farther implementation. 2 Thank you for your time. 3 I have -- there's going to be other 4 commentary, right, for the other questions? 5 BEN DUNCAN: Yes. 6 DEAN BARLIP: Okay. Thank you for your 7 time, then. 8 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 9 SAM LEVY: All right. David, you are up 10 next. You can go go ahead and unmute, and start 11 your comment. 12 DAVID: (Speaking Native American 13 language.) My name is Man On Top Of The Fort, and I 14 come from the People of the Pleasant Fjord. I live 15 in Chilkat Village of Klukwan, and I'm one of the 16 council members there. 17 Our President Hotch has spoken, and I just 18 would like to add a couple things in regards to 19 things I've heard, and as far as trust 20 responsibility and fiduciary responsibility. 21 We have requested DOI and BLM allow us to 22 sit in with their expert consultants as we do not 23 have the financial capacity to hire our own 24 consultants. 25 In fact, whatever the workforce efficiency</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 126</p> <p>1 and productivity comment period, I'd kind of like to 2 hear a little bit more about what are we facing, you 3 know, from the BIA directly as far as any kind of 4 cuts or changes in our funding.</p> <p>5 I am going to speak as a member of the 6 Tribe that has worked the 638 programs in our Tribe 7 as a young man 20-some years ago, and spent a lot of 8 time, seven days a week, even past the hours they 9 were able to pay me, to make sure things are done on 10 time, because there is a schedule set for us.</p> <p>11 I did not make enough money to really take 12 care of myself financially in this expensive state 13 of Alaska. It takes a lot of money to bring in 14 groceries and all kinds of other goods that people 15 live on. So we live on the land. The land, 16 everything has a yaqua-hegu (phonetic) spirit. We 17 respect the land. We live on that land, yet we 18 don't exactly have the rights that we should have on 19 this land.</p> <p>20 We don't exactly have the place that we 21 can speak our own truth as experts of our own 22 people, like Section 106 states.</p> <p>23 I feel like in this case, with 24 responsibility there comes accountability, and 25 previously in the 106 process our Tribe has been</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 128</p> <p>1 speaking of which, in regards to the protections of 2 the D-1 lands, well, we've had some agreements here 3 and some contracts. And usually when we have 4 agreements and contracts, there is discussion, a 5 negotiation that's to be had when things change.</p> <p>6 Yet, I don't feel like there has been much 7 of that, at least in my lifetime. I was born in 8 '79. I am not a member of any corporation. I don't 9 have shares to anything. My community is what I 10 belong to. I'm only one person out of 75, and I 11 can't speak for absolutely everybody, even though 12 I'm a council member.</p> <p>13 But I am speaking from experience, just 14 like our president says, it would be nice to have a 15 personal consultation with BIA in regards to this, 16 because I still haven't heard about these cuts. And 17 I would like to have some kind of accountability to 18 the D-1 lands and agreements we had on this, with 19 our state.</p> <p>20 We shouldn't be losing our rights that we 21 have established. We shouldn't be losing the 22 funding that we have established. We should be on 23 the conversation when things change. It's time for 24 the federal government, in my opinion, in my 25 observation, to start working with us on making</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 127</p> <p>1 told that our culture is our bones and our tools, 2 rather than our living culture, even though the 3 bones that they were looking for are the people that 4 pass down the culture that we have today, like that 5 yaqua-hegu (phonetic) that lives in all things I 6 mentioned.</p> <p>7 We didn't just make it up. And for us, to 8 have this kind of Consultation that's meaningful, 9 being that we are the experts, I feel like we need 10 to hear a little bit more that's going on with these 11 programs and how funding is going to change.</p> <p>12 It's going to affect our people even more 13 so immensely. We are a Tribe that has 75 people 14 left here in this community, and we have many hats 15 in our government. Some of the positions I hold 16 don't even have a title to it for myself. We just 17 got to do the work, and that's with the current 18 funding situation for the past so many decades.</p> <p>19 So in this commentary, workforce 20 efficiency and productivity, how more efficient do 21 our Tribes need to get? How much productivity do we 22 need to bring forth until it's efficient and 23 productive enough?</p> <p>24 Losing funding is just going to make that 25 process much harder for our way of life. In fact,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 129</p> <p>1 programs instead of making them for us, without the 2 Consultation process.</p> <p>3 My commentaries are not coming from a 4 place of malice. It's coming from a place of 5 struggle. I'm just asking to be more than heard, 6 but to be considered in whatever plans is coming up 7 in the future with our Tribes and our funding.</p> <p>8 Thank you.</p> <p>9 SAM LEVY: All right, thank you.</p> <p>10 Kevin, you are up next. And Mabel, you 11 will be right behind Kevin.</p> <p>12 Kevin, you can go ahead and unmute.</p> <p>13 You're welcome to turn your camera on if you'd like, 14 and start your comment.</p> <p>15 KEVIN GUNTER: Hello. Can everybody hear 16 me?</p> <p>17 BEN DUNCAN: We got you.</p> <p>18 KEVIN GUNTER: Okay, perfect. So I got 19 invited to this. My name is Kevin Gunter. I am the 20 ad hoc committee spokesperson for the Tetlin Tribal 21 members. That has stuff that's going on, but I'd 22 like to talk about consent.</p> <p>23 Consent is really a key topic with what's 24 going on. Consent merely isn't just about asking 25 for permission. It's about ensuring continuous</p>



Page 130

1 information and genuine involvement agreements with  
2 the phrase, no means no, becomes a profound and  
3 simple, yet reminds us of the consent we should  
4 always immediately and fully respect.  
5       With that being said and everything going  
6 on, my concern was with the permitting, the fast  
7 track permitting, how things are happening, and how  
8 consent gets stripped away from these Tribes that  
9 are actually -- it's very vital for their survival.  
10       You got the 1940 IRA which had happened,  
11 and that was the law of the land, where all these  
12 Tribes had to sign the constitution, and there was  
13 no way these laws could ever be changed, unless it  
14 went through the Secretary of Interior with consent  
15 from the Tribes.  
16       And then in 1970, the Alaska Native Claims  
17 Settlement Act came along and had changed these laws  
18 without the consent of the Tribes to begin with. So  
19 now that brings you up to the 14th amendment of the  
20 United States Constitution where you have equal  
21 protection under the law.  
22       So it becomes a very disadvantaged  
23 situation for the Alaskan Tribes here to where the  
24 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act does put us  
25 right directly under the State of Alaska, whose

Page 131

1 intentions is not always for the benefit of the  
2 Tribes in general.  
3       During this whole situation of what I have  
4 been kind of undergoing and discovering is that I'm  
5 starting to find out that with permitting, things  
6 like that, that money does become a situation of,  
7 where is it going. And it's not intended for what  
8 it was intended for.  
9       You look, for instance, in these mining  
10 projects that are happening with the Ambler Road  
11 project, the Montrose project where you've got up to  
12 a billion dollars being spent in ways that it should  
13 not have been being spent, considering that  
14 taxpayers are the ones who are contributing to it.  
15       Where I found \$25 million in one instance  
16 that was hidden with the DOT. I've had to go and  
17 reach out to some federal officials to try to get  
18 some help in this situation, but what really is  
19 important about that consent, that all these Tribes  
20 have a say-so in what happens to their land.  
21       Like what I'm starting to see now is a  
22 complete violation of the 1867 treaty concession  
23 here in the State of Alaska, a breach of the IRA  
24 1943, the infringement upon civil rights for Native  
25 Americans.

Page 132

1       I can really keep on going. Violations of  
2 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, if you want to  
3 throw that in there, but a lot of it has to do with  
4 how people attack funding. And you start looking at  
5 a billion dollars and how somebody is going to try  
6 to skin that up.  
7       Now, they're not going to ask for consent  
8 for any of these Tribes to go in there. They're  
9 going to go ahead and actively take what they need  
10 to. Like for Tetlin, for instance, how we've lost  
11 or Tribal government. We lost a piece of land  
12 that's pretty much the size of Rhode Island that was  
13 actually a congressional land patent to where these  
14 mining operations had went in there and stripped it.  
15       In 2019 they stripped us of all our laws  
16 with their contractors. And they re-wrote  
17 everything to marginalize two-thirds of our entire  
18 Tribe from voting.  
19       So when you want to do these expedited and  
20 emergency permitting, please consider consent for  
21 all the Tribes. Those are the people who need to  
22 really be heard, and those are the invisible people.  
23       That's kind of all I wanted to say. I  
24 didn't want to take up too much time.  
25       BEN DUNCAN: Thank you, Kevin.

Page 133

1       SAM LEVY: Mabel, you're up next. And  
2 Christine, you'll be after Mabel.  
3       Mabel, you can go ahead and unmute  
4 yourself, and begin your comment.  
5       MABEL BALDWIN-SCHAEFFER: Good afternoon,  
6 everybody. My name is Mabel Baldwin-Schaeffer. I'm  
7 a Tribal member of the Native Village of Kiana, and  
8 my formative experiences are centered in my Inupiaq  
9 culture and the Alaska Native subsistence activities  
10 and traditions.  
11       I'm an Alaska Pacific alumna with a  
12 Bachelor of Arts in Sustainability Studies, and a  
13 Master of Science in Environmental Science. While  
14 at APU I focused on real world projects in the  
15 Fisheries Aquatic Science and Technology Lab led by  
16 Dr. Brad Harris.  
17       In the spring of 2021, I became the first  
18 Tribal Research Coordinator at the NOAA Fisheries in  
19 Alaska, at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. In  
20 this position I was primarily responsible for  
21 fostering relationships with subsistence communities  
22 and fishing sectors to identify opportunities for  
23 scientific collaboration and co-production of  
24 research.  
25       I believe that this collaboration was

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 134</p> <p>1 crucial in improving the future of Alaska Tribal 2 communities in the institutions and agencies 3 committed to supporting sustainable subsistence 4 based likelihoods.</p> <p>5 I also worked with education and outreach, 6 and we continue to see funding being choked up to 7 support our Alaska Native students.</p> <p>8 As my term ends as the Tribal Research 9 Coordinator, comes to an end this Friday, as did the 10 majority of my colleagues, I find myself deeply 11 concerned about the future of Alaska fisheries.</p> <p>12 The communications department, I have had 13 the privilege of working with, shares this concern 14 alongside with the communities in Alaska. We are 15 left wondering where Alaska fisheries research and 16 management will go from here.</p> <p>17 Thank you.</p> <p>18 SAM LEVY: Thank you, Mabel.</p> <p>19 Christine, you can go ahead and unmute 20 yourself. If you'd like to turn your camera on, you 21 can do so, but I may go ahead and start your 22 comment.</p> <p>23 CHRISTINE: I -- can you hear me?</p> <p>24 BEN DUNCAN: We can hear you.</p> <p>25 CHRISTINE: My name is Christina Hurt</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 136</p> <p>1 or is every agency that receives funding being 2 required to do this as well? This seems to go 3 against the efficiency and productivity mandate by 4 adding an additional redundant step to access our 5 funding.</p> <p>6 Also I see that congressional hearings are 7 going on at the same time that this Consultation is 8 happening, and I think it's important that Tribal 9 leaders are able to address Congress also. So it 10 was disappointing to see that we can't be here and 11 there at the same time.</p> <p>12 And those are my comments. Thank you.</p> <p>13 BEN DUNCAN: All right. Thank you.</p> <p>14 So we're going to bring back to the room, 15 I think we have 10 -- are we on number 10? Does 16 that sound right? Who's number 10? Okay. So 10 17 through 16.</p> <p>18 I do want to ask the group, do you all 19 want 10 minutes? A show of hands for a break? 20 Otherwise we're just going to keep going.</p> <p>21 Okay, keep going. Okay. I will note 22 there is about 40 pre-made meals for sale at the 23 cafeteria right here, so feel free if you need -- 24 they only take cards, but if that's helpful for you, 25 please take care of yourself.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 135</p> <p>1 (phonetic), and I am an elected council member for 2 the Native Village of Tanana as well as the 3 comptroller for the finance department.</p> <p>4 I wanted to comment on the potential 5 closure and relocation of the BIA office in 6 Anchorage, and the additional burden that it will 7 put on our realty and probate office. All probates 8 are required to undergo a judicial review, which is 9 currently backlogged because there's only one judge 10 in Alaska to do the reviews.</p> <p>11 Our probate office has submitted over 20 12 files, completed files in 2024, and we have not 13 received any information back on them.</p> <p>14 We had a lot of deaths since the COVID 15 pandemic, and the probate files keep piling up. We 16 will then be required to send our highly 17 confidential files outside of Alaska to Oregon if 18 the office is moved, which adds additional burden to 19 our Tribes.</p> <p>20 I'm also concerned about the new 21 requirement that took place yesterday to enter 22 justification for every drawdown that a Tribe makes. 23 Tribes submit all financial and narrative reports as 24 required to account for all funding they receive.</p> <p>25 Are only Tribes being required to do this,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 137</p> <p>1 So let's go 10 through 16. Oh, and 2 there's evidently some pizzas that were ordered. 3 Thank you.</p> <p>4 SPEAKER 10: Hi everyone. I figured out 5 after I stood in line that I wanted to testify for 6 one after the break, and so number 11 can go.</p> <p>7 BEN DUNCAN: Okay, thank you. Thanks for 8 your patience.</p> <p>9 Number 11.</p> <p>10 MARY DAVID: Good afternoon, now. My name 11 is Mary David. I am here representing Kawerak, but 12 I am also a Nome Eskimo Community Tribal member.</p> <p>13 So Kawerak is a Tribal consortium in the 14 Bering Straits region of Alaska, northwest of here. 15 We have 20 federally recognized Tribes in the 16 region, and 16 communities. Our service area is 17 approximately 26,000 square miles, about the size of 18 West Virginia.</p> <p>19 We have about 9,000 people and about 75 20 percent Alaska Native. So we've been providing 21 services successfully since 1973, and we have 22 successfully been compacting under a 93-638 compact 23 for self-government since 1992.</p> <p>24 So we will also be providing written 25 comments, and those written comments will probably</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 138</p> <p>1 go into much more detail than what I'm going to be 2 saying today.</p> <p>3 But you may have heard this saying before, 4 something like, not without us but with us. And so 5 I just want to add that, you know, Tribes which 6 you've heard all morning today, Tribes must be 7 involved in decisions about any specific proposed 8 reorganization or cuts to BIA.</p> <p>9 BIA is intertwined with Tribal 10 governments, communities, and organizations. Tribes 11 must be co-designers in any restructuring, not 12 passive consultees.</p> <p>13 Any changes to BIA, reorganization or 14 organization including staffing and funding, should 15 only be done after research and evidence that the 16 changes will really improve outcomes.</p> <p>17 Cuts must not be made to places of 18 strategic importance for trust responsibility. So 19 obviously there's a lot of rumor and things going 20 around, and talks about, you know, staffing cuts and 21 staff shortages. You've heard all the concerns 22 mentioned today, but that is also a concern for us.</p> <p>23 Recent staff cuts have led to immense 24 difficulty in being able to contact BIA TCR, the 25 Tribal Community Resilience Management. This is</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 140</p> <p>1 Tribal programs are chronically 2 underfunded and must be substantially increased, and 3 they also should keep pace with inflation. As 4 working for Kawerak, we just notice year after year 5 that our Tribal operations costs just continue to 6 rise, but our funding remains relatively flat.</p> <p>7 So the one-time funding that BIA often 8 provides or provides is important to us, and I'm 9 going to mention a particular area rather than talk 10 about generalities. I'll try to provide an example.</p> <p>11 So one-time funding for Tribal justice 12 services creates uncertainty and a lack of 13 stability. Our legal team relies on one-time 14 special funding from BIA for our child welfare 15 attorney, our domestic violence justice coordinator, 16 and our paralegal.</p> <p>17 BIA recently capped these funds at 200,000 18 which is sufficiently and sorely insufficient. 19 Without consistent adequate funding, we will not be 20 able to provide legal services that are really 21 needed in our communities, and having those 22 challenges also impacts recruitment of staff, 23 retention of staff for example. So maintaining 24 those funds are important.</p> <p>25 I also want to talk about another area,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 139</p> <p>1 leading to stalled projects, uncertainty, and 2 inefficiency.</p> <p>3 BIA TCR have necessary institutional 4 knowledge, and their staff must be maintained.</p> <p>5 So another area of potential cuts that 6 we've heard was to staffing with the BIA 7 transportation program. The proposed reduction in 8 staffing to BIA transportation will create delays 9 and impact safety and well-being in our communities.</p> <p>10 The Kawerak transportation program 11 coordinates with BIA transportation in relation to 12 the emergency relief for federally owned roads, 13 ERFO, after a disaster strikes, for example.</p> <p>14 BIA plays a critical role in approving 15 roads and any reduction in staff will create delays 16 to repairs, to critical transportation corridors in 17 Tribal communities, including roads that provide 18 access to our subsistence resources which impacts 19 food security and could also impact our health and 20 well-being.</p> <p>21 So the other area that I want to talk 22 about is in relation to funding, one-time funding, 23 ongoing funding, multi-year funding. So I'll talk a 24 little bit about one-time funding first, but I want 25 to make a general statement.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 141</p> <p>1 and it was mentioned before, and that's with 2 probates. I want to also advocate for funding for 3 probate, probate funds. BIA must fund the probate 4 and the hearing offices at adequate levels. Earlier 5 mentioned it was a BIA land function.</p> <p>6 So Kawerak is massively underfunded to run 7 its probate program. We only receive \$47,000 and we 8 have to subsidize this program with other funds. So 9 we just encourage you all to consider adequately 10 funding probates to address the backlog that is 11 impacting the estates of hundreds of families.</p> <p>12 BIA obligation in this area needs some 13 particular attention. Also earlier the 105(1) lease 14 program was mentioned, so I too just want to 15 advocate for the need for additional funding for 16 more than three staff, considering Kawerak also has 17 an application in this program, and waiting two 18 years does not seem appropriate.</p> <p>19 So the other area that I want to talk 20 about in our region is funding for Tribal climate 21 resilience. This area is important. Our region, 22 and many areas in Alaska I'm sure, experience severe 23 weather events. These seem to happen more often, 24 and again a lot more severely, such as like Typhoon 25 Merbok.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 142</p> <p>1 This funding is important for remote 2 Tribes and communities where a rapidly changing 3 environment can yield natural disasters with 4 negative impacts to health and safety. TCR allows 5 Tribes and Tribal consortia to apply for funding for 6 regional projects that fit the unique needs of that 7 local and regional environment and the Tribes' 8 specific needs. Alaska is a huge state. Each 9 region of our state may have different needs. 10 Kawerak was awarded a grant in 2024 to 11 survey and map Tribal cemeteries across the region 12 that are currently experiencing or at risk of 13 erosion. Just imagine that happening. Coffins 14 becoming visible due to erosion being close to the 15 coastline, of which many of our communities are. So 16 these funds are important to address erosion, the 17 importance of cultural preservation, and to help 18 prevent health risks if graves are not preserved in 19 the permafrost, and if the permafrost is exposed. 20 Maintaining BIA TCR funding for 21 relocation, managed retreat, or protect in place, 22 RMP coordinators at the 2024 level is also 23 important. The RMP multi-year coordinator capacity 24 funding to Tribes is particularly important as the 25 stability from multi-year funding allows for the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 144</p> <p>1 the Arctic Slope as ICAS, is one of two federally 2 recognized regional Alaska Native Tribal governments 3 in the state. We are responsible for providing 4 services to more than 14,000 ICAS Tribal members, 5 most of them who are also dually enrolled in the 6 Native Village Tribes of Anaktuvuk Pass, Atkasuk, 7 Barrow, Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Point Hope, Point Lay, 8 and Wainwright. 9 ICAS is often faced with unique obstacles 10 ranging from our reliance on planes and barges, to 11 shipping basic supplies such as food, and the lack 12 of redundancy in critical infrastructures like 13 Broadband and also our housing infrastructure. 14 These obstacles make economic and 15 infrastructure development opportunities costly, and 16 the administration of critical programs in a service 17 delivery area larger than the state of Minnesota. 18 This is why ICAS's relationship with 19 Indian Affairs and other Interior staff working in 20 partnership as two governments is critical to making 21 progress wherever we can for our members. 22 In regards to Interior's efforts to 23 restructure Indian Affairs, ICAS agrees that certain 24 services Indian Affairs provides and the processes 25 it has developed desperately need examination to</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 143</p> <p>1 project development cycle to yield critical pace- 2 appropriate projects that address the biggest 3 challenges based by communities due to erosion, 4 flooding, or permafrost degradation. 5 Also having that technical assistance is 6 important. The RMP coordinator should remain funded 7 at 2024 level to support the Tribes' adaptation and 8 mitigation activities. 9 So lastly, I just want to say that Tribes 10 are successful compacters in that it is an exercise 11 of self-governance when Tribes opt to pool their 12 funding through consortia, like Kawerak, and have 13 consortia represent them in Tribal consultation. 14 Funds spent maintaining layers of federal 15 bureaucracy could be better invested in Tribes' 16 infrastructure, staffing, and systems. 17 Quyanaa for your time for allowing me to 18 speak today. 19 DOREEN LEVITZ: Good afternoon. My name 20 is Doreen Levitz and I am the elected Tribal council 21 secretary of the Inupiat Community of the Arctic 22 Slope. I want to welcome you to Alaska, and of 23 course extend an open invitation to Utqiagvik, the 24 farthest north city in the United States. 25 ICAS, I'll refer to Inupiat Community of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 145</p> <p>1 determine how to make them more efficient and 2 effective. 3 We are often waiting on Indian Affairs to 4 act so that we can make critical investments and 5 progress within our service delivery area. 6 One example is our Section 17 application. 7 Alaska BIA regional office reviewed and worked 8 through small amendments with us on our Section 17 9 charter last year, and informed us that the charter 10 was being sent to the DC office. Since then it's 11 been sitting on someone's desk in DC without any 12 communication on the status or timeline for final 13 approval. 14 This is not efficient or effective. In 15 fact, it is hindering our ability to use Section 17 16 to promote our own economic development. Surely 17 there is a way for Indian Affairs to be more 18 efficient in this review process, and we would 19 welcome investments in Indian Affairs technology 20 that would allow us to transparently see where our 21 application is sitting, or funding is in the review 22 process. 23 ICAS is concerned about rumors that we've 24 been hearing about Interior proposing to move 25 certain staff and functions from the BIA Alaska</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 146</p> <p>1 regional office to BIA offices in other states. 2 For example, we heard that Interior is 3 trying to move Realty and Probate from BIA Alaska 4 regional to the Portland, Oregon, office. Is this 5 true? 6 Okay. I want to make sure that we're 7 clear. Oregon is two states from us, and you 8 yourself, Mr. Mercier, said Alaska is very unique. 9 The Portland office is not familiar with 10 our cases in our region, and for our state, for that 11 matter. ICAS is already located a plane ride away 12 from many services and staff at the BIA Alaska 13 regional office. 14 With just two of our villages, we have 48 15 outstanding probate cases, five realty cases, and 16 about 19 veteran allotment cases. A couple of these 17 cases are 20 years old, and it's sitting in BIA's 18 office. 19 Moving staff and certain functions to 20 another state would not help us address this 21 backlog. It will only make it worse. If Interior 22 really wants to improve efficiency and 23 restructuring Indian Affairs, it should enter into 24 638 agreements with Tribes, ICAS namely, and use us 25 as a federally recognized regional Tribe as a hub</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 148</p> <p>1 on an annual basis. Sometimes the Dear Tribal 2 Leader letters get lost or not directed to the right 3 Tribal department. 4 For example, this Tribal Leader letter, 5 ICAS never received. However, the more the process 6 is normalized, we can ensure our numbers are 7 regularly updated. 8 Third, we encourage Indian Affairs to move 9 away from competitive grant funding. As part of the 10 trust and treaty obligations to Tribes, the federal 11 government should not force us to compete against 12 each other. 13 Instead, funding should be distributed 14 according to a formula that considers factors such 15 as enrollment numbers, size of service delivery 16 areas, employees, and other critical factors. 17 And lastly, Alaska Tribes are often 18 hindered by lack of increases in federal funding. 19 While we try to be creative in pooling our funds and 20 going to additional grants to offset our shortfalls, 21 we cannot and should not be left behind when 22 Congress provides increases in appropriations. 23 Question 3, with regard to Interior's 24 efforts to promote greater use of Tribal self- 25 governance and self-determination, as mentioned</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 147</p> <p>1 for administering Indian Affairs services within my 2 region. 3 When you equip ICAS with the tools 4 necessary to carry out critical services, both by 5 granting authority and properly funding these 6 functions, we can be a powerful partner in 7 delivering services. 8 This would furthermore allow the Alaska 9 BIA office to focus on matters that require regional 10 review and approval, and/or invest more time 11 providing technical assistance for Tribes within our 12 jurisdiction. 13 Question 2, with regards to addressing 14 current funding structures, we have a few points to 15 raise. 16 First, ICAS encourages funding to be 17 distributed directly to Tribes rather than through 18 state or regional BIA offices. We have found that 19 when money goes through the states or regional 20 offices, access to critical dollars is bogged down 21 by unnecessary processes. 22 Secondly, we appreciate Indian Affairs' 23 efforts to certify Tribal enrollment numbers to 24 ensure Tribes are receiving their fair share of 25 federal dollars. This process should be conducted</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 149</p> <p>1 earlier ICAS strongly encouraged the Indian Affairs 2 and Interior as a whole to utilize the 638 3 contracting and compacting to the fullest extent 4 possible. 5 Tribes know best how to identify and meet 6 the unique needs of our communities. We would 7 welcome the opportunity to enter into a 638 8 agreement for various BIA regional office service 9 and functions, probate and realty, the first 10 function that comes to mind. 11 However, there are many others that we 12 could and are willing to step in. To support these 13 arrangements, we encourage Interior to examine its 14 inventory of old federal buildings and 15 infrastructures across Alaska and within my region, 16 the Arctic Slope, that no longer are in use and 17 could be used to aid us in delivering BIA services 18 and functions. 19 Beyond Indian Affairs, ICAS is ready to 20 partner in the management of federal lands 21 throughout the utilization of 638 contracting and 22 compacting. We are the original stewards of our 23 lands, and we have embraced resource development 24 while also protecting our traditional ways of life, 25 including our subsistence practices.</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 150</p> <p>1 We have had several conversations with BLM 2 over the years about taking over the management of 3 federal lands within our region. These areas are 4 difficult for BLM to manage because of their 5 location, and resources needed for proper 6 management. 7 We hope this administration fully embraces 8 638 contracting and compacting to more efficiently 9 manage federal funds. 10 I'm just going to move on to the emergency 11 permitting question and not wait. 12 ICAS supports the use of emergency 13 permitting for the development of critical 14 infrastructure like Broadband. On June 11, 2023, 15 sea ice severed an undersea fiberoptic cable which 16 connects the Arctic Slope to internet and cell phone 17 coverage for our region. 18 Remember, our region is the size of larger 19 than Minnesota. Because of the lack of redundant 20 Broadband infrastructure, there were outages across 21 the entire Arctic Slope. ICAS Tribal members were 22 not only disconnected from communications with the 23 outside world, but more importantly they were unable 24 to access critical services needed for everyday 25 life, such as medical and public safety.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 152</p> <p>1 emergency permitting to provide an immediate 2 solution. For this reason, we support the use of an 3 expedited emergency permitting process. 4 I want to note, though, that for energy 5 and natural resource development, which ICAS 6 generally supportive of, the expedited emergency 7 permitting process should not replace or override 8 Consultation with Tribes. 9 As previously stated, we are original 10 stewards of our lands. We have embraced resource 11 development while also protecting our traditional 12 ways of life including our subsistence practices. 13 By consulting with Tribes early and often, we can 14 help aid in the expedited approval of permits 15 necessary for critical resource development. 16 And I want to reiterate what the woman 17 from Bristol Bay had said about how great it is to 18 see our Tribes come together and band together so 19 quickly with such short notification to share our 20 concerns. And I know people have left for lunch, 21 but just looking at the space, I think the BIA 22 underestimated the 229 Tribes within Alaska who have 23 traveled hundreds and hundreds of miles to get here. 24 So I want to thank you for hearing us, but 25 please take this Consultation seriously, and I just</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 151</p> <p>1 Phones stopped working. Hospitals and 2 clinics suffered from unusable medical equipment. 3 Local flights were stopped, and sadly a young child 4 died because the family was unable to call emergency 5 services. 6 In January 2025, sea ice once again 7 damaged the sub sea fiberoptic cable causing 8 widespread outages again, and it also extended to 9 Northwest Alaska as well, so Kotzebue and Nome were 10 also effected. 11 While ICAS tried to apply for funds 12 through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant, we 13 were unfairly denied because the NTIA, National 14 Telecommunications and Information Administration, 15 deemed our area served. The U.S. Department of 16 Agriculture Reconnect Broadband Program also deemed 17 our area served. I can tell you we are not. 18 To try and aid in a long term solution for 19 the recent outage, ICAS partnered with a local 20 telecommunications company to apply for the FEMA 21 Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities 22 Grant. Unfortunately, this funding opportunity was 23 canceled with this administration. 24 Nonetheless, in both instances our Tribal 25 members would have benefited from the use of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 153</p> <p>1 want to close with a question for you, BIA, is how 2 will our comments be evaluated from this 3 Consultation? 4 Thank you. 5 BEN DUNCAN: So just as you're coming up, 6 I want to welcome, if there's anybody online who's 7 joined as part of the second part of this 8 conversation. 9 We're going to move through some folks 10 that have already signed up this morning for the 11 first part of the Consultation. And then I do have 12 a sign-up sheet so we're not putting numbers on 13 people, but your actual names. So if you're 14 interested in providing specific comment on the 15 emergency permitting procedures, I'll have a sign-up 16 list. Let me know. We'll get it in the queue. 17 Otherwise let's keep going through the 18 list we have. Thank you. 19 KEVIN BEARQUIVER: And Ben, if I may just 20 real quick, so at the very end I will address the 21 questions that are going on as well, so just reserve 22 some time for me to address some of the questions 23 that are out there, okay? Thank you. 24 MARCIE HAYNES: Pauline Koronavic 25 (speaking Native American language), Barbara Fields</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 154</p> <p>1 (speaking Native American language). 2 My name is Marcie Haynes. I am a Haida 3 and my clan is Eagle Frog, and I serve as secretary 4 on Ketchikan Indian Community Tribal Council. We 5 serve 6,576 citizens of the Haida, Tlingit, and 6 Tsimshian people of Ketchikan, and I join you today 7 on the traditional territory of the Dean'ina people. 8 I stand before you representing my Tribe, 9 the Ketchikan Indian community, and we strongly 10 oppose any budget cuts, staffing reductions, or 11 restructuring efforts within the Bureau of Indian 12 Affairs and Indian Education that threaten our 13 services and our rights. 14 While efficiency is important, it cannot 15 come at the expense of our communities and our 16 inherent sovereignty. We demand an immediate 17 moratorium on all cuts until the following steps are 18 taken. 19 Issue a formal suspension of all staffing, 20 budget reductions, and office closures affecting 21 Alaska Tribes. Begin meaningful Nation to Nation 22 Consultation before decisions are made, not after. 23 We suggest a Tribal-led review panel to assist 24 impacts and develop alternatives. Ensure legal and 25 fiduciary compliance with federal trust</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 156</p> <p>1 suggestion is a timely notice from BIA of future 2 Consultations, because there is where collaboration, 3 trust, and relationships are made. 4 We call on the Department of the Interior 5 to honor their mission statement, which I will read. 6 Department of the Interior protects and manages the 7 nation's natural resources and cultural heritage, 8 provides scientific and other information about 9 those resources, and honors its trust 10 responsibilities or special commitments to American 11 Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, and 12 affiliated islands. 13 As the first owners of this land, the 14 biggest resource is our Native people, our 15 traditional territories, and our cultural heritage. 16 In turn, we can provide scientific and historical 17 knowledge about our collective resources. We demand 18 that the DOI honors its trust responsibilities to 19 American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, 20 and island communities. 21 Your legal obligations and mission 22 statement demand that together, and I want to say 23 that again, together, we strengthen our communities. 24 25 How-a (phonetic), and thank you.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 155</p> <p>1 responsibilities. Provide a transparency with 2 impact reports and staffing data before 3 Consultation. I know I say that funny, but I cannot 4 fix it. 5 Prioritize Native employment and 6 retention, not layoffs. Budget cuts threaten vital 7 programs, education, health, safety, language, and 8 social services; all essential in upholding our 9 sovereignty and well-being, and furthermore budget 10 cuts violate or trust and disproportionately impact 11 Alaska Native communities who face unique 12 environmental and logistical challenges. 13 The federal government and Tribes have a 14 profound and very important shared responsibility. 15 Together we share the fiduciary duty built on trust, 16 treaty obligations rooted in law and court 17 precedent, which demands responsible management and 18 respect for Tribal self-governance. 19 Tribal Nations are sovereign. We are not 20 line items on a budget. This is not an issue of 21 race or equality. True efficiency means 22 partnership, respect, and Native leadership. Never 23 austerity without consent. 24 Decisions were made before this 25 Consultation which makes it unmeaningful. My</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 157</p> <p>1 JACOB TIMMONS: Good afternoon. I'm here 2 on behalf of Aleutian Pribilof Island Association 3 with designated authority from President and CEO 4 Dimitri Philemonof to provide some Consultation 5 recommendations for you today. 6 My name is Jacob Timmons. I'm the 7 Division Administrator for the Employment Training 8 and Related Services Division at APIA. APIA 9 appreciates this administration's efforts to 10 increase government efficiency and fiscal 11 responsibility. 12 APIA serves some of the most rural and 13 remote communities in the United States which lie on 14 a chain of islands spanning roughly 1,200 miles 15 separating the Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean. We 16 have operated Indian Self-Determination and 17 Education Assistance Act, ISDEAA self-governance 18 compacts, as well as a public law 102-477 integrated 19 program plan, for well over 25 years to reduce 20 administrative burdens and to increase flexibility 21 of funds, and adapt to the unique and changing needs 22 in the communities that we serve, and to overall 23 increase the efficiency and program delivery while 24 adhering to fiscal integrity and responsibility. 25 To this alignment of goals, we are</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 158</p> <p>1 providing the following Consultation points to the 2 U.S. Department of Interior Indian Affairs. 3 In regards to restructuring of Indian 4 Affairs, APIA recommends that action be taken to 5 examine and create change that minimizes internal 6 process barriers, to streamline those internal 7 processes, and to remove silos across Indian 8 Affairs. 9 APIA also recommends that Indian Affairs 10 protects and assures adequate staffing for positions 11 that interface directly with Tribes, so positions 12 such as the workforce development specialists, 13 AOTRs. They're essential, direct points of contact 14 that Tribes rely on to support the success of our 15 programs, to respond to questions and concerns, and 16 to provide training and technical assistance. 17 APIA further recommends that Indian 18 Affairs protects and assures adequate staffing for 19 financial specialist positions who oversee funding 20 transfers which is necessary for Tribal operations 21 and programming. 22 In terms of addressing current funding 23 structures, APIA has seen delays in funding 24 transfers and identification of funding. So for 25 example, we have at times received lump sums of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 160</p> <p>1 expansion, and extension of these models across 2 other U.S. departments. 3 Similarly to the previous point, APIA 4 maximizes the flexibility of funding to promote 5 economic growth, enhance family and community self- 6 sufficiency, and address our community's unique and 7 specific needs through the operation of our BIA 8 self-governance compacts and the 477 integrated 9 program plan. 10 Once again, we recommend that these 11 successful models be utilized across Indian Affairs, 12 and that Indian Affairs advocate for their continued 13 funding, expansion, and extension across other U.S. 14 departments. 15 So in closing, APIA appreciates the 16 opportunity to offer these recommendations aimed at 17 enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness within 18 Indian Affairs. Our experience over the past 25- 19 plus years with ISDEAA self-governance compact and 20 the integrated 477 program plan clearly demonstrates 21 the benefits of reduced administrative burdens, 22 increased funding flexibility, and the ability to 23 adapt to the unique needs of our remote communities. 24 To further these goals, we urge Indian 25 Affairs to prioritize actions that minimize internal</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 159</p> <p>1 self-governance funds, but our ability to allocate 2 those funds to the appropriate budgets was delayed 3 until we received a proper authority to obligate. 4 We recommend that Indian Affairs simplify 5 and streamline the process of funding transfers, 6 including those interdepartmental transfers, and 7 ensure that the process includes a specification of 8 funds. We also recommend that adequate staffing be 9 dedicated to this process. 10 APIA significantly reduces administrative 11 burdens through the operation of our BIA self- 12 governance compacts, and through our 477 integrated 13 program plan, by directly compacting or integrating 14 various streams, broaden the scope of allowable 15 costs, and completing a single report rather than 16 numerous reports for each funding stream. 17 We recommend that these successful models 18 be utilized across Indian Affairs. For example, 19 grants such as those supporting natural resource 20 management activities could swiftly be replaced by 21 direct compacting using existing policies that have 22 already been demonstrated to be successful and 23 efficient under BIA's self-governance. 24 Additionally we recommend that Indian 25 Affairs advocate for their continued funding,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 161</p> <p>1 process barriers, to streamline operations, and to 2 eliminate silos while ensuring adequate staffing for 3 crucial Tribal liaisons and financial specialists. 4 Addressing current funding structures to 5 expedite the transfer of resources to Tribes is also 6 paramount. We strongly advocate for the broader 7 utilization of successful models such as ISDEAA 8 compacts and 477 integrated program plans across 9 Indian Affairs and other U.S. departments. 10 These approaches in power Tribes foster 11 economic growth, address local needs effectively, 12 and pave the way for greater self-determination. We 13 believe the implementation of these recommendations 14 will lead to a more efficient, responsive, and 15 ultimately more effective partnership between the 16 federal government and Tribal communities. 17 Thank you. 18 ESTELLE THOMSON: Can you hear me? First 19 off, I would like to thank the original inhabitants 20 of Dena'ina Elnena, the Dena'ina people of Alaska. 21 Secondly I would like to thank every 22 single one of you who have traveled far to be here 23 to testify to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to 24 the Department of Interior. Your sacrifice, your 25 financial assignment, and also your time is greatly</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 162</p> <p>1 appreciated.</p> <p>2 For those of you that are not going to be</p> <p>3 testifying today, I hope you will submit comments to</p> <p>4 the Department of Interior.</p> <p>5 And thirdly, I'd like to thank those of</p> <p>6 you on the panel who have actively listened</p> <p>7 throughout this process instead of scrolling on your</p> <p>8 phone or seeming to be uninterested. (Speaking</p> <p>9 Native American language.) My Yup'ik calling name</p> <p>10 is Anuit-kalap (phonetic). It means The One Who Is</p> <p>11 Supposed To Be A Man, or more appropriately, The One</p> <p>12 Who Will Provide.</p> <p>13 My English name is Estelle Thomson, and I</p> <p>14 am the President of the Native Village of Paimiut</p> <p>15 Traditional Council. I'm also, as many people in</p> <p>16 this room, representative of people and</p> <p>17 organizations that we serve in different capacities</p> <p>18 on, some of which for me include the Yukon River</p> <p>19 Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, the Alaska Wildlife</p> <p>20 Alliance, the Alaska Ocean Observing System, the</p> <p>21 Northern Latitudes Partnership, Western Alaska</p> <p>22 Landscape Initiative, and the International Union</p> <p>23 for the Conservation of Nature, on the committee for</p> <p>24 the environmental, economic, and social policy.</p> <p>25 I'm honored to represent my village and my</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 164</p> <p>1 frustration that has been shared by other people</p> <p>2 within this room. The Consultation lacks clear</p> <p>3 direction and does not follow the usual and</p> <p>4 customary protocols for true Tribal Consultation.</p> <p>5 We do not know how our testimony will be</p> <p>6 used, how our feedback will shape policy, or what</p> <p>7 decisions are being influenced by our participation.</p> <p>8 Without transparency from the Department of Interior</p> <p>9 and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, this process risks</p> <p>10 falling short of the principles of free, prior, and</p> <p>11 informed consent.</p> <p>12 The United States has endorsed the United</p> <p>13 Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous</p> <p>14 people which requires a standard for free, prior,</p> <p>15 and informed consent by Indigenous peoples prior to</p> <p>16 government action impacting Indigenous communities.</p> <p>17 BIA didn't reach out to Tribes when we</p> <p>18 started having all these funding freezes and such,</p> <p>19 and that was troubling for those of us that have</p> <p>20 small Tribes that depend on BIA funding.</p> <p>21 Some of the questions that have come up</p> <p>22 have been like, what does restructuring the</p> <p>23 Department of Interior and Indian Affairs, what</p> <p>24 would it look like? How can we be expected to talk</p> <p>25 about some of the issues that are important to us,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 163</p> <p>1 people, and to speak alongside these other dignified</p> <p>2 Tribal leaders, all of us who are deeply engaged in</p> <p>3 the survival and the strength of our communities,</p> <p>4 cultures, and lands.</p> <p>5 In addition, in these other capacities we</p> <p>6 represent our Indigenous communities and our lands,</p> <p>7 waters, and wildlife locally and sometimes globally.</p> <p>8 The U.S. federal government has recognized U.S.</p> <p>9 Tribes as independent nations for quite a long time.</p> <p>10 Tribal sovereignty for us is an inherit</p> <p>11 right and pre-dates the U.S. Constitution, something</p> <p>12 this administration has occasionally ignored and</p> <p>13 seemingly wishes weren't so entrenched in law. The</p> <p>14 United States has a trust responsibility to all</p> <p>15 federally recognized Tribes. This is not symbolic.</p> <p>16 It is a binding legal obligation to protect our</p> <p>17 lands, cultural resources, and the well-being of our</p> <p>18 people.</p> <p>19 For Alaska Tribes, this responsibility</p> <p>20 carries special weight. Alaska has almost half of</p> <p>21 all federally recognized Tribes, as you've been made</p> <p>22 aware. Although we might have not reservations like</p> <p>23 in the lower 48, we still are sovereign Tribal</p> <p>24 Nations.</p> <p>25 I want to begin by acknowledging a</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 165</p> <p>1 in an abstract sort of way, without having any kind</p> <p>2 of clear determination and direction from your</p> <p>3 agency.</p> <p>4 Turning to the DOI's Consultation on</p> <p>5 workforce efficiency and productivity, we also have</p> <p>6 deep concerns. Streamlining government services</p> <p>7 should never come at the expense of Tribal self-</p> <p>8 determination or culturally informed service</p> <p>9 delivery.</p> <p>10 Alaska Tribes rely on BIA and other DOI</p> <p>11 personnel to navigate federal systems that are</p> <p>12 already understaffed, undertrained, and</p> <p>13 overburdened. And for those of us that come from</p> <p>14 remote communities, our ability to access some of</p> <p>15 these platforms is hindered by our lack of stable</p> <p>16 Broadband and/or the capacity of our peoples.</p> <p>17 Reducing staff, cutting regional offices,</p> <p>18 or prioritizing automation over human relationships</p> <p>19 would devastate Tribal access to essential services.</p> <p>20 Relationships are everything to us Indigenous</p> <p>21 peoples, everything.</p> <p>22 When I give my traditional introduction, I</p> <p>23 will tell you who I come from so that you know how</p> <p>24 to relate to me. Every single person in this room,</p> <p>25 if I was able to give you my lineage, you'd know how</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 166</p> <p>1 to treat me, how to talk to me, whether you were 2 going to be teaching me or working with me. 3 We think that the DOI should expand 4 workforce recruitment focused on Native 5 professionals from Alaska who understand our 6 geography and ways of life. We want to increase the 7 funding for cultural competency and Tribal 8 sovereignty training all across DOI agencies. 9 We want to make sure that the decision 10 making is de-centralized. As several people have 11 mentioned throughout this Consultation, Alaska is 12 unique. Not only in geography and the distance from 13 Washington DC, but also with the 11 cultures and 20 14 languages that we have here in Alaska. 15 We want those decision making powers to be 16 de-centralized to empower our Tribal serving 17 personnel and regional directors to act quickly and 18 effectively. And saying that, we also want to make 19 sure that the BIA office here in Alaska is not only 20 fully funded, but fully staffed to meet the needs of 21 all of the Tribes here in Alaska. 22 These many Tribes, almost half of the 23 United States federally recognized Tribes residing 24 here, need the kind of support and assistance that 25 BIA can offer.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 168</p> <p>1 These are not paper exercises. These are 2 not things that you can check off on a box. These 3 processes are how we as Indigenous people, Alaska 4 Natives, protect our sacred ancestral lands, our 5 traditional subsistence practices, and the way that 6 we run our communities. 7 Also emergency procedures under Section 7 8 of the ESA must never bypass Tribal Consultation. 9 Through the Secretarial Order 3206 requires it, any 10 attempt to sidestep this legal duty violates our 11 rights and the federal trust obligation. We live in 12 some of the most environmentally threatened regions 13 in the country. 14 For my area, just to give context, we are 15 experiencing climate change at a rate that's four 16 times faster than the rest of the world. And just 17 because some people in this administration don't 18 want us to use the words doesn't make it any less 19 real for those of us who are experiencing it. 20 We are expecting all the permafrost in our 21 area to be gone by 2040, and the Bering Sea to 22 subsume our lands by the end of the century. 23 Any attempt to sidestep this legal duty, 24 this Tribal Consultation, violates our rights and 25 the federal trust obligation. We live in some of</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 167</p> <p>1 We want to make sure that all our 2 workforce reforms are co-designed with Tribal 3 governments, not after. We want that to happen 4 before any major decisions are made on how the 5 agency is going to be reorganized so that our voices 6 can be heard, and our voices can help shape the way 7 that the BIA is able to serve us in the best way 8 possible. 9 Our communities already face delays in 10 land transfers, environmental assessments, and 11 infrastructure approvals. Efficiency cannot mean 12 less access for us. It cannot mean less expertise 13 for our Tribal people seeking assistance, or less 14 accountability from the federal government. 15 True productivity for us in Alaska must be 16 defined by the outcomes in our Tribal communities, 17 not just by cost savings for the federal government. 18 We also must express concern about the 19 department's proposed expedited environmental review 20 procedures under NEPA and the Endangered Species 21 Act. Cutting review timelines to 14 or 28 days, not 22 just for these specific issues, but for all Tribal 23 Consultation, cutting those review timelines to that 24 14 or 28 days make meaningful Tribal Consultation 25 impossible.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 169</p> <p>1 the most environmentally threatened regions in the 2 country. In addition to climate change, our 3 communities face coastal erosion, permafrost thaw, 4 wildfire, and flooding. Those are some of the 5 byproducts of climate change, but they're also some 6 of the things that we experienced in our lands prior 7 to any of these major changes occurring in our 8 lands. 9 Seasonal flooding is something that was 10 very regular for us. Programs like the BIA Tribal 11 Community Resilience Program are vital for our 12 survival. They provide erosion and flood 13 assessments, climate adaptation tools, and the staff 14 support that makes federal promises real, on the 15 ground, and to our people. 16 We also rely on DOI science and 17 forecasting tools. Cuts to the USGS or NOAA 18 programs are weakening the Alaska Tribal Climate 19 Adaptation Science Center would directly harm our 20 food systems, Tribal safety, and ability to plan for 21 our future. 22 I really want to be clear on this. 23 Science funding is not optional for us. It's a 24 matter of life, food security, and cultural 25 continuity.</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 170</p> <p>1 I urge the Department of Interior to</p> <p>2 clarify the purpose and intended outcomes of this</p> <p>3 Consultation prior to us being able to have the</p> <p>4 final comments submitted in July.</p> <p>5 I want the Department of Interior to</p> <p>6 affirm the trust responsibility to Alaska Tribes in</p> <p>7 both law and action. I want the Department of</p> <p>8 Interior to reject workforce efficiency protocols</p> <p>9 that reduce our access to federal programs or</p> <p>10 diminish our culturally grounded service.</p> <p>11 I want the Department of Interior to fully</p> <p>12 fund science and resilience programs essential to</p> <p>13 Alaska's future. I want the Department of Interior</p> <p>14 to protect Tribal rights under NEPA and ESA with</p> <p>15 timelines and processes that allow real</p> <p>16 participation.</p> <p>17 We're not asking for anything special.</p> <p>18 We're asking for the federal government to honor</p> <p>19 their trust responsibilities that were promised to</p> <p>20 us. We want to make sure that the BIA and DOI</p> <p>21 design the workforce services and environmental</p> <p>22 policies in partnership with us, not around us.</p> <p>23 I was thinking about what I was going to</p> <p>24 say for this specific testimony. The questions are</p> <p>25 so broad that it made me consider that perhaps I</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 172</p> <p>1 these larger Tribes and Tribal organizations.</p> <p>2 But I will say this, the comment that I</p> <p>3 think people underestimated, you guys maybe</p> <p>4 underestimated the will of the 229 Tribes here in</p> <p>5 Alaska to be here and to speak and represent their</p> <p>6 peoples, our different Nations, we will always find</p> <p>7 a way.</p> <p>8 Back when I was a little kid, I knew</p> <p>9 people in my community that would pass the hat to be</p> <p>10 able to go to testify in front of panels like you,</p> <p>11 in front of agencies in D.C., in Juneau, in all</p> <p>12 these different places, and regardless of the fact</p> <p>13 that we may be looking at a different future with</p> <p>14 funding, that might not be there, we will always</p> <p>15 find a way.</p> <p>16 And just like we've been here since before</p> <p>17 the inception of this country, Indigenous peoples in</p> <p>18 Alaska will always be here, and we'll always be</p> <p>19 fighting for our people.</p> <p>20 Thank you.</p> <p>21 BEN DUNCAN: Two things. So one, I want</p> <p>22 to invite, there's a couple folks online that I want</p> <p>23 to invite in. I also want to acknowledge the Alaska</p> <p>24 Native Heritage Center that's brought some pizzas in</p> <p>25 the back. So feel free to indulge in pizza.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 171</p> <p>1 wouldn't be able to touch on everything, so I will</p> <p>2 be providing written comments.</p> <p>3 When the BIA was established, was it 201</p> <p>4 years ago, it was nestled in the Department of War,</p> <p>5 and it was to manage us like farmers and other</p> <p>6 people manage livestock, and that's not something</p> <p>7 that the department should be proud of in its</p> <p>8 history.</p> <p>9 We are complex, robust, and full people.</p> <p>10 We have governed our Nations for thousands of years,</p> <p>11 long before this government was instituted, long</p> <p>12 before the Constitution was written, and long before</p> <p>13 any of these agencies were established.</p> <p>14 In our history, the agencies haven't</p> <p>15 always been kind to us, and if the BIA and DOI are</p> <p>16 clearly interested in navigating the restructuring</p> <p>17 of these agencies, we implore you to include us in</p> <p>18 shaping what that's going to look like for us.</p> <p>19 I echo the sentiment of the people who</p> <p>20 don't want us to have to compete with one another</p> <p>21 for funds. Some of our Tribes are small and they</p> <p>22 lack the capacity as well as the money to be able to</p> <p>23 do so effectively. Some of our Tribes don't have</p> <p>24 the people within their communities that can</p> <p>25 advocate for them at levels that we are some of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 173</p> <p>1 And then I think we're on number 17, so if</p> <p>2 you are still holding a number, I'll invite you into</p> <p>3 the queue. And then reminder, specifically provide</p> <p>4 input on the emergency permitting procedure, we're</p> <p>5 capturing a list here.</p> <p>6 So let's start, I think we're on 17. If</p> <p>7 you all can get in line, but Sam, if you want to go</p> <p>8 to the two online.</p> <p>9 SAM LEVY: All right. Charlotte, you'll</p> <p>10 be up first, and then Nicholas, you'll be after</p> <p>11 Charlotte.</p> <p>12 Charlotte, you can go ahead and unmute</p> <p>13 yourself. You're welcome to turn your camera on as</p> <p>14 well, and you can go ahead and provide your comment.</p> <p>15 CHARLOTTE: Yes. Thank you, very, very</p> <p>16 much and for inviting us for this panel and</p> <p>17 discussion for the efficiency and productivity,</p> <p>18 preparing for the guidelines that we all need to</p> <p>19 share.</p> <p>20 My name is Charlotte Nyagup (phonetic).</p> <p>21 I'm originally from Chevak Native Village, and I'm</p> <p>22 one of the Tribal Council here at Chevak. In the</p> <p>23 many years I've been living over there since my</p> <p>24 childhood, I have very well known BIA.</p> <p>25 BIA does so much for us over the years,</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 174</p> <p>1 even from my older siblings that lived before, even 2 before they were sent out to places when they were 3 in elementary. But now we have schools now. BIA 4 did so many for us, even for housing, but over the 5 years the housing issues has been declining. 6 Over the years some of our Native in our 7 surrounding villages, in these 56 Tribes of Y-K 8 Delta, one of the places, one individual who crossed 9 for new housing under BIA, but not got one housing 10 for it. 11 It hurts. I know the fundings are 12 depleting and whatever we were supposed to be 13 getting, it's not going to be there anymore. The 14 housing issues, we've been talking about it over 15 many, many years. 16 As I became adult, I've been hearing it, 17 but nothing has moved, and our way of life, our 18 fishing is now being bothered, hurting many people. 19 Between the Yukon And Kuskokwim Delta area, our way 20 of life is disappearing. 21 Where did we all go wrong? Where did we 22 lose it? Maybe if the BIA had, like those other 23 people had stated that the pilot programs and 24 someone to be a representative or a liaison, or even 25 the BIA's that come out and walk through our</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 176</p> <p>1 education part was the best ever taught school that 2 I had accomplished, with my elders talking to me 3 that who I will say, what I will say, and what will 4 I do. 5 Even we learn from papers the policy and 6 procedures, we follow them. Even the missions, we 7 should learn how to mean it when we make missions, 8 statements. 9 On behalf of Chevak Native Village, I am 10 thankful for this Zoom and this meeting that all the 11 Tribes that are attending. My full support to each 12 and every one of you. Truly we need a liaison, a 13 representative, somebody that will voice out 14 constantly 24/7 to let people, those people from 15 Washington DC understand. 16 Try to open them up, let them feel our 17 voice. We don't have to use big words in order to 18 someone to listen to us. (Speaking Native American 19 language) for listening to me. Thanks so much for 20 listening to me. 21 Thank you. 22 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 23 SAM LEVY: Thank you very much. 24 Nicholas, you'll be up next. I'm going to 25 go ahead and invite you to unmute. You can do so.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 175</p> <p>1 village, reaching out, working with the people, 2 being more active, maybe we will be accomplishing 3 something from there. 4 And the whole Tribe of Alaska is facing so 5 many issues that we all need to work together. I 6 know I don't have that much of an education in my 7 background, but I completed my high school, but 8 listening to my elders for my educational teachers, 9 they taught me. 10 Maybe in other way too that for issues 11 that all the Tribes are facing problems, how can we 12 be well-known? By advertising? Reaching out? Or 13 voicing out? Not just for a one-time being. 14 Constantly and daily we need to stretch out our 15 voice. 16 We need to let people understand from 17 Washington DC. They don't know our lifestyle. They 18 don't know how we live out here. We are resilient. 19 We can reach out to them with our voice and with 20 what our elders before us have spoken. 21 My elders taught me to voice out, not to 22 be quiet. I voice out. Listen. We need your help. 23 We need your advice, and BIA has been our own voice 24 many, many years ever since I was small, and when I 25 got to know them. I had a good school. That</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 177</p> <p>1 You can turn your camera on if you'd like, and you 2 are free to provide your comment. 3 NICHOLAS: Is my camera working? 4 SAM LEVY: Keep talking. I think we can 5 hear you, but I just want to make sure. 6 NICHOLAS: Oh, okay, there. 7 SAM LEVY: We can hear you loud and clear. 8 Go ahead. 9 NICHOLAS: I come here on behalf of the 40 10 Tribes of the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission. 11 We are voicing solid opposing use of emergency 12 permitting procedures, and are formally asking for 13 Consultation from the Department of the Interior 14 concerning any proposed, as relating to D-1 lands. 15 Proposed emergency permitting procedures 16 for energy projects, completing environmentally, 17 have statements in 28 days, a process that generally 18 takes about two years, and providing 7-day comment 19 period in National Historic Preservation Act, 20 Section 106, Culture Resource Review, completing an 21 environmental assessment in 14 days, a process that 22 normally takes up to a year. 23 It's not efficient to get rid of people 24 whose job it is to reach out and ensure Consultation 25 with Tribes in remote places like Alaska when that</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 178</p> <p>1 is already hard enough. Workforce reductions will 2 make it harder for people to meet their legal 3 obligations and to do their jobs. 4 It would be more efficient to find ways to 5 work more closely and collaborate with Tribes who 6 know the land and resource throughout a range of 7 efforts like 638 contracting and co-management. 8 If Tribes are allowed to work in 9 collaboration with federal agencies, they might then 10 be able to do more with less. Communication in 11 Alaska, because of distance and remote access, is 12 often influenced by weather and communication 13 infrastructure. Reducing time for review and input 14 regarding impacts of proposed energy development 15 projects could unreasonably short timelines will 16 result in Alaska Tribes and community members being 17 cut off of the process that the National 18 Environmental Policy Act and National Historic 19 Preservation Act were established to provide. 20 Consultation must occur with Tribes before 21 a decision is made here. The Department of the 22 Interior has declined to adopt alternatives, NEPA 23 and NHPA process without Tribal Consultation. 24 On D-1s, any decision impacting D-1 lands 25 must meaningfully include Tribes and the Bering Sea</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 180</p> <p>1 So can I invite the folks that are still 2 holding a number? Just come up to the queue, I 3 think. Is there 17 or 18? 17, okay. 18? And then 4 anybody still holding a number? Then we have a 5 sign-up sheet for others, particularly around 6 emergency permitting. 7 RHONDA PITKA: Hi, my number is 17, also 8 known as Chief Rhonda Pitka of the Village of 9 Beaver. I am also the Executive Director -- no, 10 wait, no, I'm not. I'm the chairwoman of the 11 Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments. 12 We serve eight Tribes in the Yukon Flats 13 region of Alaska. Our region is very remote. We 14 have very little road access to our region. The 15 cost of doing business in our area has been very 16 expensive, and we oppose a lot of these executive 17 orders because they've caused a slowdown in our 18 operations. 19 Funding basic programs has been cut 20 considerably. At the beginning of the year and the 21 beginning of the Trump administration we have had 22 numerous times where we couldn't access funding that 23 was already contracted to us, and that's happened in 24 a lot of different areas in our organizations. 25 This kind of taking back of contracted</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 179</p> <p>1 Interior Tribal Commission, requests the Department 2 of the Interior enter into a cooperative agreement 3 with the commissions to consult with its member 4 Tribes before any action is taken on D-1s. 5 D-1 lands are important for the health and 6 well-being of our Tribes' units and sustaining our 7 subsistence hunting and fishing, is essential to our 8 sovereignty and food security. We cannot lose 9 federal priority for subsistence hunting and fishing 10 on these lands. 11 We are already struggling enough. All the 12 D-1 lands in our area, they all have salmon, salmon 13 spawning areas. They all lead into the mountains 14 around, or the D-1s they're proposing to open in our 15 area. They all lead to salmon spawning areas, and 16 we have also subsistence hunting lands that we go 17 to. And I'd like to do, I'd do anything to help 18 protect those lands. 19 So hopefully you guys are able to do 20 something with this to go into negotiations with the 21 bare sea Interior Tribal Commission. 22 That's my testimony, and I'd like to thank 23 you guys for allowing us to speak. 24 Thank you. 25 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you, Nicholas.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 181</p> <p>1 funding has been so detrimental to our operations. 2 We've had to lay off three people and now we're not 3 sure how we are going to continue funding 4 administrative tasks that basically are the whole -- 5 we have program staff, but we also need the 6 administrative portion of the program staffing in 7 order to meet all of the requirements that the 8 government has. 9 Every single program that we operate has 10 compliance staff. We need audits. We need all of 11 the things, and that takes money. That takes time, 12 and that takes people. And that also takes away 13 from our ability to operate programs. 14 We have a very small Early Head Start 15 program that at the beginning of the year we 16 couldn't access any of the funding for, so our 17 children couldn't have their Early Head Start 18 visits. This has been so detrimental to our 19 operations, and it's effected all of our people very 20 negatively. 21 This is also a really unusual 22 Consultation. I've kind of never been to a 23 Consultation like this before, and I was like oh, 24 this is interesting. 25 I do this kind of thing all the time for</p>

Page 182

1 any job, to usually there's recorders and all this  
2 other kind of stuff, so the comments are taken down.  
3 Our executive director will be sending our  
4 written comments also to the email just to make sure  
5 that it's recorded somewhere, because I'm not sure  
6 what's going on here.  
7 Thank you. Oh, good, okay.  
8 It's just interesting because, you know,  
9 we usually have a lot more back-and-forth at  
10 Consultation. I think one of the things that my  
11 executive director did tell me to talk about was  
12 that ASAP.gov, new requirement for a justification  
13 to draw down awarded funding.  
14 It's ridiculous and it's onerous. This is  
15 already contracted funding. It's already written  
16 into a program agreement. It's already been agreed  
17 on and negotiated.  
18 Having to write that justification on  
19 those systems is pretty unnecessary because it's  
20 already laid out in the contract pretty clearly.  
21 These are so cumbersome and unnecessary. They  
22 require our small staff to spend so much time on  
23 grants management, that our program delivery has  
24 been effected.  
25 It's very difficult in our area to access

Page 183

1 a lot of basic services. Right now our executive  
2 director would have been here for CATG, but the  
3 building, our administrative building in Fort Yukon  
4 flooded and she's dealing with that right now with  
5 buckets and a hose.  
6 Like this is the kind of stuff that we  
7 deal with in rural Alaska all the time, and adding  
8 to that administrative burden has just become so  
9 tiring and time consuming.  
10 It's not actually doing any real work.  
11 It's making sure that little boxes are checked for  
12 the government, which, you know, it's important, but  
13 there are a million other ways that the government  
14 has made these requirements, that these little box  
15 checking exercises are really tiresome.  
16 I think it's very unnecessary to have that  
17 ASAP.gov requirement, especially because those line  
18 items are already listed out in our contracts. It's  
19 unnecessary.  
20 She will definitely be submitting those  
21 written comments. She would have had them to me  
22 already, except for she has now got a hose and a  
23 bucket trying to get water out of the ceiling.  
24 It's been a really interesting few months  
25 trying to navigate how we work with government when

Page 184

1 all of our Tribal relations specialists have been  
2 cut. All of the people that are supposed to be  
3 doing these Tribal Consultations have been cut.  
4 There's a lot of new faces, and a lot of  
5 people don't know the mechanisms that we work with,  
6 which is unfortunate, and it makes it a lot less  
7 efficient for us to do our work.  
8 Every time we fill out for a grant, we  
9 have to go on grants.gov, sign in, and then you get  
10 a code and all this other authentication stuff. So  
11 each little administrative task, when we have slow  
12 internet, causes a burden on our staff.  
13 And by "our staff," I usually mean me  
14 because I come from a village of 70 people, and I  
15 can do a lot of different things, but dealing with  
16 slow internet and government bureaucracy is probably  
17 the worst part of my job.  
18 I really appreciate the time today, and I  
19 would hope that everybody that came in here to speak  
20 today in person gets their chance to comment, and  
21 that we continue commenting until all those comments  
22 have been reached.  
23 Thank you.  
24 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
25 MARK ROSEBERRY: Good afternoon, my name

Page 185

1 is Mark Roseberry. I'm the Director of Education  
2 for the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, and  
3 I'm here on behalf of our Ed Committee. Danny  
4 Pakuka (phonetic) is one of our Ed Committee  
5 members, and asked me to speak for him.  
6 We're still training him, and I do want to  
7 say thank you for being here, and also thank you,  
8 BIE. We just recently received a grant to help  
9 develop our Tribal Education Department.  
10 On the other side of that, I will say I  
11 hope that you can get a grants program that works,  
12 because we've run into a lot of things. One of the  
13 areas that they said, you're going to get awarded  
14 but we just can't download your application.  
15 And then right now we're waiting for the  
16 funding to be distributed, but there is a holdup  
17 there because of the technology, and I'm just like  
18 confused as to why in these day and ages where we  
19 have AI and everything, that they can't even access  
20 our applications or can't send us the funding that's  
21 already been awarded.  
22 And then we have to go through these  
23 things, and they have to go, I don't know how  
24 inefficient that could possibly be, but we've been  
25 waiting months now. And we appreciate it, but we

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 186</p> <p>1 haven't seen it yet, so we know it's there 2 somewhere.</p> <p>3 I do want to say, Tribal sovereignty has a 4 foundation in education, and that's what we're 5 looking for. However, Alaska Tribes must be able to 6 educate their over. However, while ICAS has a 7 constitutional responsibility to provide education 8 to the young and adult citizens, there is very 9 little funding available to do this.</p> <p>10 Alaska Tribes cannot really operate 11 schools because there's no funding directly either 12 from BIE or BIA or anywhere else. It's blocked, 13 which doesn't make sense for Tribal sovereignty here 14 in Alaska.</p> <p>15 And there's very little funding available 16 to Alaska Tribes to operate schools as well, and 17 that funding that is available is a competitive 18 grant, and the competitive grants are longstanding. 19 They're meant for short term, and it's not 20 sustainable.</p> <p>21 And then Tribes have to compete with 22 everybody else, so how do you start a school that 23 you may have a three-year grant and then you're not 24 sure where the next funding is going to come from.</p> <p>25 And what we do know here in Alaska, when</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 188</p> <p>1 Alaska Tribes to offer education.</p> <p>2 An Alaskan Tribe that wants to manage its 3 own school system will have difficulty doing so 4 because there's no current mechanism to receive 5 trust responsibility funding for education. The 6 Tribe must have some type of business or some kind 7 of revenue generating endeavor.</p> <p>8 And that's very difficult, especially in 9 some of our rural areas. And so there are ways to 10 do it, but there's no tax base. None of these 11 things that so many places have that fund education, 12 so we have to come up with a way.</p> <p>13 And one of the things I wanted to share, 14 you know, so our request is this. We're also 15 looking at how do you build facilities. It's very 16 expensive in rural Alaska. We just don't have 17 facilities sitting around that, oh, we can go rent 18 that, or we can, like we do here in Anchorage or 19 Fairbanks or on the road system.</p> <p>20 You have to almost build everything, and 21 then it's seasonal because you don't have, you know, 22 on the North Slope we have snow roads in the winter, 23 but that's ending. And then you have the barges, 24 but you don't have a regular system of moving large 25 amounts, and then it's very expensive if you're</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 187</p> <p>1 we see Tribes like ours working with their youth, 2 they respond to that. We get local teachers, they 3 respond to that. They improve. Their social 4 emotional well-being improves. We see all of that.</p> <p>5 And so the question would be, if we're 6 looking for efficiency and we're looking for having 7 success, why are we not supporting our Tribes to do 8 this, yet it's blocked.</p> <p>9 And so I know there's ways. We've been 10 working with BIA in some aspects of it, but this 11 really needs to be looked into. And one of the 12 things, Alaska Tribes, as you know, do not have a 13 sustainable source of funding either for education 14 and we are forced to either work and consult with 15 our public education systems if we want to have any 16 influence in the education of our youth.</p> <p>17 And this isn't Tribal sovereignty. While 18 the Tribes do have the option, and we do, we take 19 time and work with our local school districts and 20 everything. That needs to be by choice, not by 21 force, to have influence.</p> <p>22 So one of the things we ask as you go 23 forward and communicate to the administration, the 24 Trump administration, if they really want to see 25 sovereignty, then it has to be, they have to support</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 189</p> <p>1 doing it by plane and everything.</p> <p>2 So how do we do this and support our 3 Tribes to, in a reasonable amount of time, acquire 4 facilities, get facilities, and because we can't 5 contract with the BIE or BIA for education, we're 6 not eligible for 105(1) leases.</p> <p>7 And so in never way that, and this is what 8 we're dealing with at ICAS. At every area we try to 9 move education forward, we almost have a block, and 10 we have to eliminate those blocks.</p> <p>11 And we know, again, if you look at the 12 stats where the Tribes are conducting education, 13 whether it's in Head Start or in the areas that we 14 are doing, or we're just starting Tribal schools, or 15 there are some charter schools, but again we in the 16 -- we're one of the Tribes for Tribal compacting.</p> <p>17 And there's a reason why there's Tribes 18 that have worked with charter schools that want to 19 do Tribal compacting. The Tribe sovereignty is not 20 being respected when you're working with a school 21 district that has the right to tell you what to do.</p> <p>22 And again, charter schools, some Tribes 23 are going the charter school way because it's the 24 only way you can do that right now if you want to 25 get funding, but that impedes on their sovereignty.</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 190</p> <p>1 If they want to do anything different, then they 2 can't.</p> <p>3 And a lot of times it's very difficult 4 here in Alaska because if a school system or school 5 board decides you're getting too big or you're going 6 in a direction that may politically not benefit 7 them, then they're putting blocks in the road.</p> <p>8 So you have several Tribes that have been 9 working to operate charter schools, but are part of 10 the Tribal compacting because they want that 11 sovereignty relationship with the state, which is 12 appropriate and what should be happening.</p> <p>13 So the request that we have is, break down 14 the barriers that block financial and other 15 resources, support to Tribes in Alaska that are 16 providing pre-K through 12 and postsecondary 17 education.</p> <p>18 Advocate for adequate funding to support 19 the basic services for education. We know that's a 20 problem with BIE because there's been a funding 21 freeze, which doesn't make sense. If you want to 22 see, in Indian country, even though we really don't 23 have Indian country up here by the legal definition, 24 but if you really want to see our Tribes and 25 everything succeed, you wouldn't be freezing funds.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 192</p> <p>1 There can be some remediation, but you can 2 never make up if it's lost at those early ages, so 3 we have to focus on them if we want success here.</p> <p>4 Thank you.</p> <p>5 LISA WADE: (Speaking Native American 6 language.) Hi, my name is Lisa Wade and I am Ahtna 7 Dene' from Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, 8 and I am part of the Water Clan.</p> <p>9 I'm here today not on behalf of all the 10 229 Tribes, but I'm here representing our Ahtna 11 Dene' specifically. I want to thank you the elders 12 in the room for sharing their gifts of wisdom with 13 us.</p> <p>14 I'd also like to share a special 15 appreciation for my Dena'ina relations who are 16 allowing me to speak here today.</p> <p>17 I'm the Executive Officer for Chickaloon 18 presently, but I've been working in a capacity with 19 Chickaloon for the past 18 years. I served as the 20 health director, social services director, education 21 director, janitor, doing a little bit of everything, 22 and that's really the small Tribal world that we 23 live in.</p> <p>24 Today I have the pleasure of fulfilling 25 the Health Director seat, the Culture and Historic</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 191</p> <p>1 We all know that.</p> <p>2 And put enough funds in so that Tribes 3 aren't competing with each other to get the basic 4 funds just it operate the schools. And then support 5 the commerce clause to fully support Tribes through 6 current and creative means to create sustainable 7 revenue necessary for Tribes to provide all services 8 that they are expected to provide.</p> <p>9 And the commerce clause basically says 10 that the legislature has the right not only to 11 negotiate and contract with states, but Tribes, and 12 it says specifically Tribes in there. We're in that 13 commerce clause. That is a part of the 14 constitution.</p> <p>15 And we ask that that be honored because 16 when I'm looking and we're giving millions and 17 billions of dollars to other countries, why are we 18 not supporting nations within our boundaries? And 19 that's the question that we all should be asking.</p> <p>20 And then for Head Start, an early learning 21 program, funding so that we maintain that. We know 22 that if we start young, it's in the best interest of 23 the students. We know by, if you look at the 24 research starting at those young ages, they cannot 25 make up educational losses at those young ages.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 193</p> <p>1 Preservation Department seat, the Education Director 2 seat, and I serve as the Executive Officer attending 3 events like this fun one. I hope you have stamina 4 today.</p> <p>5 The reason I bring that up is because to 6 come here today to plan for this event, I didn't get 7 notification of this.</p> <p>8 I heard about it through word of mouth 9 through the Tribal channels, so that's really 10 problematic for the many people that weren't able to 11 attend today, and I want to put that on record.</p> <p>12 I also want to say that I really don't 13 feel like this is meaningful Consultation because if 14 you were to come to Chickaloon and in meaningful 15 Consultation, we would first get to know each other. 16 We would build relationship so that I could know the 17 intent with which you're coming to us to have this 18 conversation.</p> <p>19 So today I appreciate that you're 20 listening. I appreciate that you're taking things 21 down. I hope it isn't just performative. I hope 22 you will take this information back. And I think 23 you can pretty plainly and clearly hear here there 24 are some real concerns with how this process is 25 going and how it's moving forward. And I imagine</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 194</p> <p>1 you'll probably hear that nationally at several 2 stops along the way.</p> <p>3       Regarding the restructuring of Indian 4 Affairs to support more more efficient interactions 5 with Tribes, if you really want to learn how to be 6 efficient, come to my small Tribe. You should be in 7 one-on-one Consultation with us. We piece together 8 funding from all different pots of money, and we 9 make it stretch a very long ways in our small 10 community, much like the rest of them do here.</p> <p>11       We would invite you to come to Chickaloon. 12 We would love to have one-on-one Consultation so 13 that it could be transparent, fully transparent, 14 that we would better understand your plans before 15 they're implemented rather than after the fact, 16 which it seems like has been happening.</p> <p>17       The pace with which the current 18 administration is de-stabilizing agencies through 19 DOGE has been creating havoc for Tribes, 20 specifically ours. We've lost funding after the 21 fact, that we've committed those resources, and had 22 to go back and try and reclaim them.</p> <p>23       And the unfortunate thing; when we reach 24 out to people it goes into the black hole of we 25 don't know who to contact, because they're already</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 196</p> <p>1       So we live in a small community north of 2 Anchorage in the Mat-Su Borough. It's the fastest 3 growing borough in the State of Alaska. We have a 4 small Tribe of around 500, maybe a little bit less, 5 and we serve more than 6,000 people in our area who 6 are migrating, moving into this area, with very 7 limited resources.</p> <p>8       Not having dedicated funding is really 9 challenging in that it's hard for us to 10 strategically plan how to best serve those people, 11 and also I will tell you that I've become tech 12 support for many of your agencies and departments, 13 in that I know how to operate ERA comments, Just 14 Grants, grants.gov, Grant Solutions.</p> <p>15       If you need to know anything about them, 16 you can call me. That's not a good thing.</p> <p>17       Competitive funding is really challenging 18 for us. We need to have base funding allocations. 19 We need to know what we can count on. We can't 20 build and sustain our people without that. We can't 21 tax. We could try, but I don't think we'd get away 22 with it.</p> <p>23       We can't tax, but we also don't know what 24 we can depend on from one year to the next.</p> <p>25       So Chickaloon is in strong support of</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 195</p> <p>1 gone. And so there was no plan in place for, we are 2 going to be restructuring this department, this 3 division. Here's who you should contact in the 4 future.</p> <p>5       This restructuring is really concerning. 6 We would consider it a direct attack on our Tribal 7 sovereignty, and the trust responsibilities that the 8 federal government has, specifically the deferred 9 resignation program that's already having the 10 negative impacts that I spoke to a minute ago.</p> <p>11       Regarding addressing current funding 12 structures, the current system of allocations and 13 formulaic funding really does not work for Tribes, 14 in that we have been underfunded for years.</p> <p>15       I am the primary grant writer in my Tribe, 16 and along with all the other jobs that I have, so I 17 can say when we're in competition with others, many 18 times we take a step back because it isn't right for 19 us to have when others do not have.</p> <p>20       So when there's four grants for the 21 administration and Native American and we're trying 22 to reclaim our language, we will oftentimes pass 23 those up to give other Tribes the opportunity to 24 have those grant funds. This creates a hardship for 25 Tribes.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 197</p> <p>1 Tribal self-governance and self-determination, 2 however again there still remain shortages in 3 current funding levels. We can't fully partner with 4 our trusted federal agencies like we'd like to.</p> <p>5       We want to be part of the solution. There 6 are several positions that remain unfunded and 7 vacant, even from the first presidential Trump 8 administration that were never filled. Special now 9 this further complicated by the restructuring and 10 the deferred resignations.</p> <p>11       And many of those were under duress. We 12 need our regional partners. We need them to be 13 adequately funded, and we need them to help 14 represent us as well as the other 228 Tribes in 15 Alaska.</p> <p>16       I had the pleasure the sitting in IHS 17 compacts this past week across from the Indian 18 Health Service, and there were tears because they 19 don't know what to expect in this administration. 20 They don't know what they can count on right now.</p> <p>21       We are de-stabilized.</p> <p>22       Furthermore, compacting mechanisms like 23 the Indian Health Service should be expanded to 24 include education, ICWA, environmental protection, 25 and others to further strengthen the Tribal</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 198</p> <p>1 sovereignty, co-stewardship, and to allow us to 2 enforce areas of void that exist within Alaska, to 3 ensure Alaska's resources are utilized responsibly 4 and protected into the future.</p> <p>5       Regarding the president's national energy 6 emergency, Chickaloon is a surviving Tribal nation 7 of past bad environmental destruction and planning, 8 or lack of planning.</p> <p>9       Gold mines and coal mining projects 10 destroyed prolific salmon streams, hunting areas, 11 and created toxic areas dating back over a hundred 12 years which have to date never been fully reclaimed.</p> <p>13       Our family members were taken away to 14 boarding schools and left out of any decision being 15 made to get at those resources. Had there been a 16 full NEPA process and Section 106 process, our Tribe 17 would not have suffered from the many things that 18 today we are still trying to remedy at great cost to 19 our Tribal citizens, and to our funders, including 20 the federal government.</p> <p>21       Who gets to decide what projects are, and 22 I quote, not likely to have significant 23 environmental impacts? Without Tribal input, how 24 can you ensure that actions that are taken today 25 won't be the ones that create environmental and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 200</p> <p>1 information that can be provided will increase the 2 likelihood that the 500-plus Tribes across the 3 Nation will be able to provide that meaningful 4 feedback to you.</p> <p>5       And my last comment is this. It's really 6 hard to stand up here and read these talking points 7 to you and try and cover all the bases of the 8 breadth of information that you've put forward for 9 us to address, but I will sum it up this way for 10 you.</p> <p>11       What you're talking about with the 12 restructuring of these departments, the quickening 13 of NEPA and shortening everything up equates to us 14 to the death of our people. It's happened before, 15 and it will happen again.</p> <p>16       So I just want to leave you with the words 17 that, if an elder comes before you to tell you to 18 pay attention, like we had that lovely elder up 19 there, we should be all paying attention to that, 20 because they lived that, and we're going to be 21 living that again.</p> <p>22       They're telling us we're going to live 23 that again. And it is the health, well-being, and 24 the potential lives of our people that are at risk 25 right now.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 199</p> <p>1 societal impacts that we will have to spend federal 2 and state dollars to remedy tomorrow.</p> <p>3       We are losing our salmon, our belugas are 4 endangered, and what this administration deems 5 energy emergencies I would suggest are really short- 6 sided and poor planning.</p> <p>7       We cannot rely on finite resources because 8 they may not run out in this administration, but at 9 some point they are limited and we will be in the 10 same position we are in today, but probably worse, 11 without the food and water that we need to survive.</p> <p>12       Chickaloon Native Village is adamantly 13 opposed to the proposed restructuring of the NEPA 14 and Section 106 processes as they are being 15 presented. We would welcome the opportunity to 16 provide feedback on the restructuring of those 17 processes.</p> <p>18       We are grateful that we could drop 19 everything on short notice to come before you today. 20 I want to thank you for your time. I hope that you 21 are not just checking the box by attending the 22 Consultation.</p> <p>23       I look forward to open and meaningful 24 dialogue, not just today, but regularly during the 25 administration and beyond. In the future, the more</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 201</p> <p>1       Chin'an.</p> <p>2       BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.</p> <p>3       RICK HARRISON: Good afternoon. I'm Rick 4 Harrison, Vice Chair of Chickaloon Village 5 Traditional Council, an Alaska Region TIBC rep, and 6 TIBC co-chair.</p> <p>7       I wanted to go towards the end because 8 I've had this conversation with many of you through 9 my role at TIBC. We've talked about these issues, 10 and you've heard what the Tribal leaders have said.</p> <p>11       I know that you understand and agree with 12 most, if not all of the points being made here 13 today. I want to thank all the Tribal leaders in 14 the room that have presented and brought their 15 feelings and thoughts forward.</p> <p>16       So I know I'm speaking to the choir, so 17 that does make me concerned that this is just a 18 check box. This is not a Consultation. You can't 19 consult on something when the administration has 20 already begun making dramatic changes without any 21 Consultation, and is now trying to do Consultations 22 after or during the fact.</p> <p>23       And some of you may not even be part of 24 the bureau after Friday, is my understanding. These 25 changes have and/or will have severe consequences</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 202</p> <p>1 for Tribes.</p> <p>2 So I came up here today just to state some</p> <p>3 of the things for the record that I know that you</p> <p>4 all have already heard. I'm sure there are some</p> <p>5 savings and efficiencies to be found, and everybody</p> <p>6 is for that, but administration should be using a</p> <p>7 scalpel, not a hatchet.</p> <p>8 Current vacancies and chronic</p> <p>9 underfunding, those are two of the big points I want</p> <p>10 to make here. Before this administration even came</p> <p>11 in this year, there was already a lot of vacancies.</p> <p>12 It's hard to determine where efficiencies and where</p> <p>13 cuts should be made without having everything filled</p> <p>14 to begin with.</p> <p>15 Because you can just, it looks like it's</p> <p>16 not working, so that we need to cut people. By</p> <p>17 creating additional random vacancies with the</p> <p>18 deferred resignation program or with RIFs, when the</p> <p>19 bureau was already short staffed, is not going to</p> <p>20 create efficiencies or cost savings.</p> <p>21 It is only going to create chaos and make</p> <p>22 the bureau more inefficient. It is very expensive</p> <p>23 to recruit, hire, train, and educate, and the</p> <p>24 historic knowledge and experience is invaluable and</p> <p>25 irreplaceable.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 204</p> <p>1 fact, you could look at it and say, wow, these</p> <p>2 Tribes have to be very efficient to be providing the</p> <p>3 services that they are with this lack of funding.</p> <p>4 Just imagine what they could do if they were</p> <p>5 adequately funded.</p> <p>6 I was also glad to see the acknowledgement</p> <p>7 of trust responsibilities around education at the</p> <p>8 beginning of the program today for Alaska. The</p> <p>9 legislation restricting BIE funding doesn't</p> <p>10 eliminate that responsibility. Alaska Tribes should</p> <p>11 be eligible/receiving education funding from the</p> <p>12 Department of Education to provide appropriate</p> <p>13 education for their children, if they can't get it</p> <p>14 from the BIE.</p> <p>15 That would be the federal government</p> <p>16 fulfilling their trust responsibility. Likewise,</p> <p>17 lack of appropriate funding through OJS doesn't</p> <p>18 eliminate the trust responsibility in the area of</p> <p>19 justice for Alaska Tribes. And competing with all</p> <p>20 of the Tribes for DOJ funding does not fulfill their</p> <p>21 fiduciary trust responsibility either.</p> <p>22 That was the end of my things I wanted to</p> <p>23 capture. I just, again, wanted to thank you guys</p> <p>24 for being here. I hope that these thoughts and</p> <p>25 feelings from the Tribal leaders gets to the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 203</p> <p>1 However, there is an opportunity to reduce</p> <p>2 bureau staff through expanded contracting with</p> <p>3 Tribes in a strategic manner that doesn't disrupt</p> <p>4 services.</p> <p>5 Now I want to talk about the chronic</p> <p>6 underfunding. Through my role at TIBC the last</p> <p>7 several years we've been, or since TIBC's inception</p> <p>8 we put out a proposed BIA budget. The last several</p> <p>9 years we've been using either data that we have or</p> <p>10 national averages for programs that the national</p> <p>11 American gets, that the average American gets, to</p> <p>12 demonstrate the difference between our current</p> <p>13 funding level and where it should be, at a minimum.</p> <p>14 And we say a minimum, because in Indian</p> <p>15 country, rural Alaska, it is more expensive, harder</p> <p>16 to get things there, get people there, and so forth.</p> <p>17 So right now our budget is around \$4.5 billion.</p> <p>18 This year our proposed budget, and this was only</p> <p>19 doing this to 31 out of 226 line items, brought it</p> <p>20 up to over 32 billion.</p> <p>21 That's a tremendous gap, and it's only a</p> <p>22 handful of line items compared to all the line items</p> <p>23 available to do these changes to.</p> <p>24 Without adequate funding, you can't</p> <p>25 determine if there's inefficiencies. As a matter of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 205</p> <p>1 appropriate people to make the necessary changes to</p> <p>2 enhance Tribal governments and not detrimentally</p> <p>3 effect them.</p> <p>4 Thank you.</p> <p>5 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.</p> <p>6 DAVID GILILA, SR.: Good afternoon. My</p> <p>7 name is David Gilila, Sr. I'm from Akiachak Native</p> <p>8 Community. I am one of the Akiachak IRA council</p> <p>9 members.</p> <p>10 I'm here to request to see if they could</p> <p>11 get their fundings on our projects. That Akiachak</p> <p>12 Native Community is seeking reimbursement from the</p> <p>13 Bureau of Indian Affairs under sub part J, contract</p> <p>14 number A23AV01085 for \$253,117.22 for the overhead</p> <p>15 electrical light improvements that were completed in</p> <p>16 December 2024 for a 32-lot housing subdivision.</p> <p>17 The Tribe desires to construct roads and</p> <p>18 sanitation improvements in 2025 under contract</p> <p>19 number A23AV01085 for the aforementioned 32-lot</p> <p>20 housing subdivision. If contract number A23AV01085</p> <p>21 remains frozen, totaling \$2,706,775, the Tribe is</p> <p>22 not able to request the required paid construction</p> <p>23 contracts on BIA to be able to work this year, nor</p> <p>24 extras to contract funding.</p> <p>25 Hopefully that money will come out to help</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 206</p> <p>1 us out.</p> <p>2 Akiachak is in a unique situation. With</p> <p>3 that, I'd like to introduce our projects manager for</p> <p>4 the projects that we've done, that we are trying to</p> <p>5 get done, Mr. Joe Neimeyer, and he is one of our</p> <p>6 Tribal members for Akiachak Native Community.</p> <p>7 Thank you.</p> <p>8 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you, David.</p> <p>9 Let me ask a quick question. Is this</p> <p>10 Tribal climate resilience funding?</p> <p>11 JOE NEIMEYER: Yes. Although we call it</p> <p>12 Tribal resilience funding because that's how it was</p> <p>13 funded.</p> <p>14 So six years ago and one day, David called</p> <p>15 me and he said, Joe, you got to come out here,</p> <p>16 something's happening we've never seen. So imagine</p> <p>17 chunks of land the size of this room, sliding into</p> <p>18 the river.</p> <p>19 And it was the first time anyone in the</p> <p>20 community ever seen springtime erosion. It's always</p> <p>21 fall time in the scale of a couple feet to tens of</p> <p>22 feet across maybe a couple hundred feet.</p> <p>23 So in the course of 48 hours the river</p> <p>24 claimed 50 to 75 feet of river bank along 1,200 feet</p> <p>25 of riverfront, unheard of it. It continues to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 208</p> <p>1 So that resource isn't available to Tribes</p> <p>2 currently. I will say that for the last six years</p> <p>3 we've been working with the BIA Tribal Resilience</p> <p>4 Program. Fantastic people, and I've watched and so</p> <p>5 has the council watched, that program get better and</p> <p>6 better and better every year.</p> <p>7 That's also a message you should take back</p> <p>8 to DC. That program is getting better. It's hard</p> <p>9 to stand up a new program, let alone a nationwide</p> <p>10 program. So we lend our support for that program.</p> <p>11 And then in January, all these grants were</p> <p>12 frozen and this and that. One of the executive</p> <p>13 orders was, analysis of FEMA. How is FEMA going to</p> <p>14 be restructured? The discussion that I'm hearing is</p> <p>15 that FEMA is going to be broken up and the money</p> <p>16 parceled out to the states. Well, I don't have an</p> <p>17 opinion on that. That's above my pay grade, but I</p> <p>18 can tell you this. FEMA has been a very good</p> <p>19 program partner working with Tribes.</p> <p>20 That came about in 2013, 2014. That</p> <p>21 allowed Tribes to represent themselves directly to</p> <p>22 FEMA. I've been impressed with FEMA's approach, but</p> <p>23 if they're no longer there and the money goes to the</p> <p>24 states, what I can tell you for those of us from</p> <p>25 Alaska, the Alaska Division of Homeland Security</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 207</p> <p>1 claim.</p> <p>2 The community has never represented that</p> <p>3 this is climate change. They don't know why it's</p> <p>4 happening. The science of why the erosion is</p> <p>5 occurring is pretty obvious, high water, spring</p> <p>6 melt, poor soils. It slides in. But why is the</p> <p>7 river choosing to migrate westerly? We do not know.</p> <p>8 Back in March 2020, your agency, under the</p> <p>9 previous Trump administration, chose to fund this</p> <p>10 project. You chose to invest \$150,000 into Tribal</p> <p>11 planning. We use those funds and we developed the</p> <p>12 32-lot subdivision. And then we applied in the</p> <p>13 prior administration, it got funded for 2.7 million</p> <p>14 last fall. We installed overhead power. We are</p> <p>15 ready to do the roads. We're ready to do sanitation</p> <p>16 improvements, but that grant is frozen.</p> <p>17 So we ask that you take this message back</p> <p>18 to folks in DC. Tribe is ready. Construction</p> <p>19 ready. Material is there. Permits are there.</p> <p>20 They've got contractors in place. They got crews</p> <p>21 and equipment ready to go. We think it's a good</p> <p>22 project.</p> <p>23 So let's speak about some of the other</p> <p>24 items. Akiak applied for a FEMA brick grant and was</p> <p>25 in the process of being final. That got canceled.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 209</p> <p>1 Emergency Management has been an excellent partner</p> <p>2 too.</p> <p>3 So maybe it won't be so bad for Alaska,</p> <p>4 but what about all the lower 48 Tribes? Are their</p> <p>5 states going to have a state emergency management</p> <p>6 arm as well-positioned at ours to work with rural</p> <p>7 Alaska? They may not be able to work with Tribes</p> <p>8 down below as well as here.</p> <p>9 So my concern, I'm speaking on behalf of</p> <p>10 the all Tribal Nations, is if this administration</p> <p>11 chooses to take the FEMA money and parcel out to</p> <p>12 states, I think Department of Interior and BIA</p> <p>13 should raise your hands and say, not so fast. We</p> <p>14 have a voice.</p> <p>15 I think you need to get in there and</p> <p>16 express your voice on behalf of all the Tribes. Oh,</p> <p>17 and you have a wonderful platform to do that. It's</p> <p>18 your Tribal Resilience Program which we always spoke</p> <p>19 highly of.</p> <p>20 There is legislation that the lower 48</p> <p>21 Tribes have sponsored. It's called the Terra Act,</p> <p>22 T-E-R-R-A, you may be aware of it. Shoalwater Bay</p> <p>23 is one of the folks who are pushing that, and I</p> <p>24 reason why I know about this is because BIA had a</p> <p>25 first-year cohort of Tribes coming together. We</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 210</p> <p>1 were in that, so we were able to work with the lower 2 48 Tribes and see what they're facing. 3 They are facing very similar environmental 4 threats the Alaskans face. We don't know if it's 5 climate change. It may be exacerbated by climate 6 change, but we don't know why. They are just 7 environmental threats. 8 And if FEMA is not going to be there, we 9 need for you to be there. 10 So let's talk about some of the specifics, 11 because I've had the good fortune of working for six 12 years in trying to do this implementation. We've 13 expended \$5 million. We moved eight houses. We've 14 done a number of other things, and I've worked with 15 your agency before. 16 So here are some points. I recently tried 17 to share files on our Sub Part J contract, and I 18 wasn't able to share them electronically. So I 19 guess I have to send a whole bunch of emails to 20 them. 21 It would be nice if I could just put one 22 Google drive, put them all there, and you guys can 23 access them. I don't know if that's an issue on my 24 side or your side, but I just found it yesterday. 25 I want to speak highly of U.S. Department</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 212</p> <p>1 accept the Tribe's NEPA document, so there's an 2 opportunity there for all the agencies that work 3 with Tribes to come together and accept NEPA. 4 The final thing I wanted to share with you 5 is the Sub Part J contract is based upon the FAR, 6 Federal Acquisition Regulations. Well, over ten 7 years ago the federal government consolidated all 8 their grant requirements under 2 CFR 200. Fantastic 9 idea, OMB manages that, and all the Tribes know how 10 to work under 2 CFR 200. They've been trained on 11 how to do that. 12 And many Tribal procurement policies I 13 see, they're based upon 2 CFR 200. Well, now we're 14 working on this contract and I've got to use the 15 FAR. And so I've got to work with the council, 16 train them up. Got to work with administration, 17 Tribal administration. It's awkward. 18 Take advantage that the Tribes know what 2 19 CFR 200 is, and migrate over to that on all your 20 platforms. 21 That's all I have, and thank you for your 22 time. 23 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 24 CANDACE BRANSON: (Speaking Native 25 American language.) My Alutiiq name is Chutman</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 211</p> <p>1 of Housing and Urban Development. They've been a 2 wonderful partner with Akiak as well. One of the 3 things, I would just say that I'm a retired Fed. I 4 did 34 years as a federal engineer. 5 I'd never seen this before. HUD has this 6 thing called Part 50 and Part 58 about environmental 7 regulations, and you as a responsible entity, you 8 get to do NEPA. And what's fun is we went and 9 talked to HUD about this, and HUD said, you don't 10 even have to apply for ICDBG grant funding. All you 11 have to say is you intend to apply. That makes you 12 a responsible entity. 13 So the Tribe is, our Tribe Akiak, is 14 saying we're going to apply for everything ICDBG. 15 So we have been, the entire managed retreat project, 16 we've been doing it under Part 58 and we've got all 17 our environmental documents in place. 18 If you want to streamline things, accept 19 what HUD does. Don't make it wait. Just say, go 20 and have an agreement in place with HUD, and you 21 know, if a Part 58 or Part 50 NEPA document comes to 22 you, accept it. Don't delay it. 23 Towards that end, maybe you can encourage 24 IHS to partner with you, so IHS, BIA, HUD, ONAP. 25 You guys are all in the Tribal settings. IHS didn't</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 213</p> <p>1 (phonetic) and my English name is Candace Branson. 2 I'm the Tribal Administrator for Native Village of 3 Afognak in Kodiak, Alaska. Qu yana for the 4 opportunity to speak today. 5 I'll start with the DOI's original request 6 for consultation and say that effective consultation 7 requires a plan, not just a list of open-ended 8 questions. 9 We're being ask to react to abstract 10 concepts without a cohesive vision or operational 11 roadmap. Before any changes are implemented, we 12 expect the department to return to us with a 13 concrete plan detailing the proposed structure, 14 timeline, and intended outcomes so that we can 15 evaluate the impact and provide meaningful input 16 through additional opportunities for Consultation. 17 Tribal leaders need to have meaningful 18 Consultation before actions are taken and decisions 19 are made. The department has asked us to provide 20 feedback on staffing changes, research sharing, 21 process improvements, and potential consolidations. 22 I offer the following. 23 There is no fat to trim in Alaska or 24 Indian Affairs broadly. Our offices are already 25 critically understaffed and essential services are</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 214</p> <p>1 delayed. There are many unresolved allotments, two- 2 year delay for 105(1) leases, and probate cases are 3 stuck in the department's care, each facing long 4 backlogs due to understaffing and funding gaps. 5       We've heard reports of reducing Indian 6 Affairs to six regional offices with Alaska merged 7 into the Pacific Northwest. This will not work. 8 Alaska is home to 229 Tribes which is almost half of 9 the Tribes in the whole Nation, serving some of the 10 most remote communities in the nation. 11       Consolidating regional offices will only 12 increase service delays and degrade the trust 13 responsibilities. We need Alaska based staffing 14 with cultural competency and authority, not 15 centralization far from the realities of our 16 villages. 17       Before making any structural changes, 18 Department of Interior must fill existing vacancies, 19 conduct thorough workforce planning, and consult 20 with Tribes about where efficiencies can be gained 21 without service cuts. 22       We have heard that there has been a 23 reduction in workforce already with staff being 24 offered early retirement. This was done prior to 25 consultation. The Native Village of Afognak has</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 216</p> <p>1 Self-governance requires not just compacting 2 authority, but adequate timing and flexible funding. 3 Compacting a chronically underfunded program simply 4 shifts the burden to Tribes. 5       We urge Department of Interior to fully 6 fund all compacts and contracts, including 105(1) 7 leases and contract support costs which match the 8 Tribes' negotiated indirect rate. Alaska Tribes 9 operate under diverse governance structures. This 10 must be respected. 11       Our ability to exercise local control 12 depends on funding, staffing, and regional support 13 that is responsive to our distinct cultural and 14 geographic needs. Our staff is on the ground in 15 Kodiak and is able to respond to Tribal needs more 16 efficiently than staff outside of the state. 17       Tribal programs are the fulfillment of the 18 United States trust and treaty obligations, 19 obligations that we paid for with our lands, our 20 resources, and our ancestors' lives. These programs 21 are essential to sovereignty, economic opportunity, 22 and community well-being. 23       We share a foundational understanding that 24 local governance works best. The exercise of Tribal 25 sovereignty is the most local form of government.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 215</p> <p>1 seen changes in our ability to work with the EPA and 2 the Department of Health and Human Services in 3 managing grants due to restructuring in those 4 departments. 5       Those impacts include our inability to 6 complete budget revision process and communicate 7 with our federal partners on grant management. The 8 Department of Interior has also asked about funding 9 inefficiencies. From our perspective, we need to a 10 stable, predictable, and streamlined federal funding 11 process. Current systems involve months of delays, 12 even for services that are legally mandated. 13       The BIA Tribal Transportation program is 14 an example of programs that award funds after the 15 start of the budget period. Late disbursements of 16 Tribal priority allocations and long wait times for 17 105(1) leases force Tribes to front the cost until 18 the BIA can catch up on their payments. 19       We call on the Department of Interior to 20 fix the unstable funding cycles but supporting 21 advanced appropriations and mandatory funding, and 22 expand models like public law 102-477 that allows us 23 to consolidate funds and cut red tape. 24       Regarding the Department of Interior's 25 third question, how to support self-governance.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 217</p> <p>1 We ask the department and all federal agencies to 2 engage in Tribal consultation prior to taking any 3 action. Do not proceed based on abstract questions. 4       We can help you identify which services 5 are essential to Tribal Nations and must be 6 preserved. Affirm in writing that Tribal funding 7 and programs are delivered in recognition of our 8 unique political status, trust responsibilities, and 9 treaty rights, and not based on race or 10 discretionary policy. 11       Exempt programs from every pause and 12 reduction in federal funding. Exempt Tribal facing 13 federal positions from every workforce reduction or 14 hiring freeze that includes any employee or office 15 whose function directly supports the delivery of 16 services to Tribes. 17       Moving on to the emergency permitting 18 procedures. The emergency framework presented 19 bypasses standard timelines and limits opportunities 20 for Tribal engagement. This raises concerns about 21 environmental protection, cultural site 22 preservation, and Tribal sovereignty. 23       Given the remoteness and scale of the 24 State of Alaska, our unique infrastructure and all 25 of the Tribes we have in our state, Alaska demands a</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 218</p> <p>1 more careful approach than what has been outlined. 2 Mail and communication delays in our region mean 3 that a 7 or 14-day comment window is totally 4 unworkable for most of our communities. 5 Remote villages often lack reliable 6 internet or cell service. They rely on delayed 7 physical mail, and may face logistical obstacles to 8 convene a Tribal council meeting. It is not clear 9 that Tribes must be informed on environmental 10 assessment in the proposed process, or given the 11 opportunity to provide Consultation. 12 Communication and Consultation should be a 13 requirement of each assessment prior to approval. 14 These realities must be factored in to any process 15 that requires our feedback or consent, Consultation 16 windows must be adjusted accordingly. 17 We were given less than 30 days' notice of 18 the opportunity to Tribal Consultation on the 19 changes to the permitting process. This is not 20 sufficient to hold community meetings, gather input, 21 and bring you informed consensus-based feedback. 22 We urge the department to extend deadlines 23 and include a standing process for follow-up 24 consultation as emergency procedures evolve. 25 In closing, I'd like to say that we are</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 220</p> <p>1 like this with only a few weeks' notice and be 2 expected to talk about huge issues in the abstract, 3 especially here in Alaska where there are 229 4 federally recognized Tribes. Our interests may 5 overlap, but we are nonetheless distinct sovereigns. 6 And I just want to go off of what somebody 7 had said recently, that even though when these items 8 come to the Tribal council, it doesn't just sit with 9 the council. We involve our committees. We involve 10 whoever needs to have input on these. And so it's 11 not something that happens within a couple weeks, 12 but we do agree with all the time frames that have 13 been laid out, so we are in favor of that. 14 And also, we also agree with the comments 15 made that it feels like this is more of a public 16 comment time, that decisions have already been made 17 with very little input, or none actually from 18 Tribes, because it's after the fact. 19 And so we would really like that you 20 would, moving forward, that we are always part of 21 that discussion, because we do have a lot to share. 22 We're the ones living here, and the ones that are 23 going to be following through with anything that you 24 present or want us to put on the table. So we're 25 the ones that are going to be making it happen, so</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 219</p> <p>1 not resistant to government efficiency, but reform 2 must not come at the expense of Tribal sovereignty, 3 service equity, and our legal rights. 4 Quyaná. 5 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 6 BERNADINE ATCHISON: My name is Bernadine 7 Atchison. I am the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's 8 chairperson, and a lot of people have covered a lot 9 of areas that we have written down, but what I'm 10 going to do is just go through and just highlight of 11 these. So I'm just going to kind of jump through 12 them. 13 So first, on Tribal Consultation, it is a 14 right, and we are here to work together to find 15 consensus on issues that impact us all. We are 16 grateful that DOI has recognized this Consultation 17 right today, and look forward to an open and 18 meaningful dialogue. 19 The scope of this Tribal Consultation 20 session as laid out in DOI Dear Leader letter is 21 enormous, and the department has not presented a 22 transparent and comprehensive vision on what a 23 restructuring of DOI and Indian Affairs might look 24 like. 25 It is very difficult to come to a session</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 221</p> <p>1 we need to be part of that problem-solving. 2 So moving forward, we hold meaningful 3 Consultation before an action is taken or a decision 4 is made. But the second DT addendum tells us that 5 DOI has already decided to adopt an alternative NEPA 6 compliance process, an expedited ESA Section 7 7 process, and NEPA alternative procedures. 8 And on May 9, DOI started RFIs at Indian 9 Affairs, even though it stated in a March 17th 10 memorandum that Indian Affairs' program would be 11 exempt pending Tribal Consultations. We were not 12 consulted before these decisions were made. 13 So moving down to restructuring of Indian 14 Affairs to support more efficient interactions with 15 Tribes. In key areas like trust resources, 16 education, public safety, social services, and trust 17 fund management, Indian Affairs programs are already 18 operating with inadequate staffing. 19 For example, Alaska Tribes already 20 experience multi-year delays when working with 21 BIA's, Alaska Native Veteran Allotment Program, the 22 105(l) leasing program, and probate estate services. 23 In Alaska, local responsiveness is essential as most 24 Tribes don't have the resources to travel to DC to 25 meet with decision makers. Alaska is bigger than</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 222</p> <p>1 California, Texas, and Montana combined, and it's 2 geography and infrastructure is one of a kind with 3 the majority of Alaska Tribes located off the road 4 system.</p> <p>5 Many Alaska Tribes also lack reliable and 6 consistent broadband accesses. Indian Affairs 7 should take steps to address management deficiencies 8 identified by the USGA, all that land at the BIA, 9 and BIA on the GAO high risk list. Specifically GAO 10 identified that high staff vacancy rates 11 significantly inhibit BIA and BIE's ability to 12 support and oversee programs to address this 13 deficiency.</p> <p>14 Indian Affairs should undertake 15 comprehensive workforce planning activities to 16 ensure current decisions do not further hinder the 17 effectiveness of Indian Affairs.</p> <p>18 Moving to the current funding structure. 19 Federal funding should be equitable, an opportunity 20 acknowledging the geographic and political reality 21 of Alaska. Too often Alaskan Tribes lose out on 22 federal funding opportunities because of their 23 unique geography and environment.</p> <p>24 When competitive grant applications are 25 scored based on community or regional impacts,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 224</p> <p>1 across the government often look to DOI to set the 2 tone. The Indian Affairs website should be a hub 3 where information on every Tribal consultation 4 across the entire federal government is published 5 and can be found in one centralized location.</p> <p>6 Indian Affairs should protect funding 7 levels for all Tribal programs to support Tribal 8 governance. Tribal self-governance requires full 9 funding, including full and direct costs for all 10 funding sources. It does no good to increase 11 pathways to self-determination and self-governance 12 if the funding from Tribal programs is slashed in 13 the process.</p> <p>14 There must be stable programs for Tribal 15 governments to assume under self-determination or 16 self-governance agreements.</p> <p>17 And I just wanted to add on with earlier a 18 speaker had mentioned about education, that we don't 19 have the BIA/BIE funding in Alaska, and so I know we 20 are pretty lucky as a Tribe that we are doing a 21 charter school, but it is because we used our own 22 Tribal funds to build our own school, and so we were 23 able to work with the State of Alaska so that they 24 could provide to have a charter school.</p> <p>25 But it is something that we've been</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 223</p> <p>1 Alaska Tribes have a competitive disadvantage 2 because they are often remote, off the road system, 3 and serve smaller populations but with outside 4 needs, and therefore don't have the same economics 5 of scale as states and local governments in other 6 regions of the country.</p> <p>7 The DOI's restructuring should prioritize 8 breaking down barriers that prevent the timely 9 obligation and disbursement of funds. Many Tribes 10 experience late distribution of Tribal priority 11 allocations, delays in contract support cost 12 payments, and repeated grant cycle disruptions due 13 to short term continuing resolutions, among other 14 delays.</p> <p>15 Payment platforms should be easy to use, 16 easy to access, and allow Tribes to track every 17 dollar they've owed and where payments are in real 18 time. Awards should be easy to process without 19 burdensome layers of review and approvals, and 20 should occur as soon as Indian Affairs has the funds 21 available.</p> <p>22 Tribes consistently report difficulty 23 objecting timely and accurate information from DOI. 24 Restructuring should include improvements and 25 communication infrastructure. Tribal agencies</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 225</p> <p>1 wanting to do for over 20 years, and the fact that 2 it took us over that long just to have a charter 3 school is ridiculous. We know our children are 4 falling through the cracks, and that is why it 5 became a very big priority for us to do this.</p> <p>6 And so we did make it happen, but also we 7 have a Head Start program and that is another one 8 that we feel very strongly, that having our children 9 being able to identify any needs that they may have 10 at the age of 3, 4, and 5, is very helpful on them 11 being successful as they grow up and go through the 12 education system.</p> <p>13 And then with that, when the federal 14 government fails to fully fund trust obligation, it 15 shifts the burden on to Tribal governments to 16 subsidize federal communities, forcing Tribes to 17 make a difficult choice between operating critical 18 services at a loss or cutting programs.</p> <p>19 And then, I'm almost done, thank you. 20 Safety and justice are crucial to Tribal self- 21 governance. The administration should prioritize 22 removing judicial barriers that impede those goals.</p> <p>23 If DOI intends to sell surplus federal 24 lands in Alaska, Tribes should have a right of first 25 refusal. These lands were Alaska Native lands in</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 226</p> <p>1 the first instance, and Alaska Tribes have proved to 2 be deft environmental and economic stewards. 3       Some of our key recommendations is 4 transition and existing advocacy role in Secretary's 5 Office to serve as a self-governance advisor to the 6 secretary, to ensure all departments and boroughs 7 within DOI are promoting and supporting self- 8 governance opportunities. 9       To guarantee full stable and timely 10 funding for all compacts and contracts including 11 mandatory CSC and lease payments, and streamline the 12 compacting process and reduce red tape. 13       And I just thank you for your time today. 14       Thank you. 15       ELIAS SAYLOR: Hello, my name is Elias 16 Saylor, Chief of Healy Lake Village Council. I'll 17 try to make this quick. 18       So I've just got a few things to share 19 here with people. So for next year's proposed 20 budget, President Trump proposes to make cuts to BIA 21 by \$617 million. In addition to that, he wants to 22 make cuts to BIA public safety and justice programs 23 at \$107 million, and also wants to make cuts to BIE 24 by \$187 million. 25       I confess, I don't know what you guys'</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 228</p> <p>1           And so that's really all I had to share. 2 Thank you for giving me the time. Thank you. 3       BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 4       Excuse me, could you -- I'm sorry. What 5 was your name and organization? 6       ELIAS SAYLOR: Healy Lake Village Council. 7       BEN DUNCAN: So we're going to informally 8 transition. We have a few folks that have signed up 9 specifically for the permitting. 10       Bryan, I don't know if you wanted to 11 provide any brief background. 12       BRYAN MERCIER: We have a couple slides. 13       BEN DUNCAN: I know we've heard some 14 comments already, but just before you go, Chance, 15 I'll invite you up. 16       BRYAN MERCIER: So, yeah, we have a couple 17 slides here that I'll hop through here, but I think 18 the first lesson we've learned just from this 19 Consultation is that we're going to go through all 20 our slides first so that we can reserve the balance 21 of the day for comments, right. 22       So lesson already learned from you all, so 23 thank you for being first in our Consultation on 24 this, because we will adjust in the next few to make 25 sure that we get through the slides to that we're</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 227</p> <p>1 budget was before this administration, but I imagine 2 that's a pretty big hit, and it's one that all of us 3 Tribes are going to feel. 4       Also right now as we speak, your guys' 5 departments and offices are being gutted. A lot of 6 employees are being offered compensation packages, 7 and it just makes me think with that lack of 8 funding, and that lack of staff in your guys' 9 departments, how are you going to efficiently serve 10 us Tribes, you guys who are obligated to serve us. 11       It doesn't sound like you can. I'm sure 12 there's a lot of people in this room who would agree 13 that BIA maybe fell short in some ways before this 14 administration, and I know this isn't your guys' 15 fault. You're not the ones who are cutting the 16 budget, and firing your employees, but the fact is 17 that this is going to hurt everybody. 18       And so I don't see how these -- you're 19 asking us how you can be more efficient. I don't 20 see how you can be, not with these cuts coming. 21       And maybe instead of making these cuts to 22 these offices like BIA and DOI, maybe the 23 administration needs to look at other programs and 24 offices that they can cut funding from, because this 25 right here, this is just going to hurt everybody.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 229</p> <p>1 not interrupting again in transitioning, and so 2 appreciate everybody. 3       So about three weeks ago the 4 administration asked us to include this recent 5 Secretarial Order in these Consultations. So we 6 acknowledged that it was not ideal to add this to an 7 already broad subject that we were consulting on 8 most of the morning today about the workforce 9 efficiencies. 10       But the president has declared a national 11 emergency around energy development, and these knew 12 NEPA regulations and streamlining the processes are 13 taking effect in other hallways and other branches, 14 and so we felt compelled to add this to these agenda 15 and talk a little bit about it. 16       So the Secretarial Executive Order and the 17 subsequent Secretarial Order really is to address 18 this national emergency that the president has 19 declared, and they are looking to develop energy 20 resources across the country. 21       Next slide, please. 22       I can't see over here. Is in right in 23 front of me? Okay, perfect. I've got to put my 24 glasses on though, it's too small. There we go. 25 Will do, I'll try to speak louder.</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 230</p> <p>1 So the alternative NEPA compliance process</p> <p>2 is largely shortening the time frames for the</p> <p>3 assessments and the public comment periods for our</p> <p>4 EASes and environmental assessments. I heard folks</p> <p>5 speak to that earlier today. They've obviously seen</p> <p>6 the news and understand what is happening there.</p> <p>7 They're also modifying some of the</p> <p>8 definitions in the expedited Section 7 of the ESA</p> <p>9 Consultation, and important to the Tribes because of</p> <p>10 our Section 106 Historic Preservation Act</p> <p>11 Consultations, they're expediting this process as</p> <p>12 well to just 7 days of notification for NEPA Section</p> <p>13 6 -- Section 106 undertakings, shortening that time</p> <p>14 frame.</p> <p>15 And we are noting from Alaska that that is</p> <p>16 not a sufficient time period to actually even notify</p> <p>17 folks, so we will be taking this back, what we've</p> <p>18 heard today, but that is largely it. I think that's</p> <p>19 the last slide that I had. The right next slide I</p> <p>20 think is -- was that it? Yes.</p> <p>21 So lesson learned. We will, at the next</p> <p>22 Consultations, just get through all the slide deck</p> <p>23 and open it up, but I think we intended for this</p> <p>24 section to now be for comments specifically to this</p> <p>25 Executive Order and the Secretarial Order of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 232</p> <p>1 The Dot Lake Tribe believes the decision</p> <p>2 to adopt an alternative NEPA compliance process will</p> <p>3 prioritize the compressed timeline for projects over</p> <p>4 prioritizing Tribal Consultation. NEPA is an</p> <p>5 important tool for ensuring Tribal Nations have a</p> <p>6 seat at the table in federal decision making that</p> <p>7 effects us.</p> <p>8 The Tribe believes an environmental</p> <p>9 assessment should not be limited to only 14 days,</p> <p>10 and that a project requiring a full environmental</p> <p>11 impact statement should not be limited to 28 days.</p> <p>12 These expedited timelines do not provide sufficient</p> <p>13 time for Tribal Consultation on impacts to Tribal</p> <p>14 lands and our natural and cultural resources</p> <p>15 including our critical water resources.</p> <p>16 In addition, the timelines don't provide</p> <p>17 sufficient time for Tribal participation as a</p> <p>18 cooperating agency. Given the need for development</p> <p>19 of memoranda of understanding between the lead</p> <p>20 agency and any non-federal agency, including because</p> <p>21 such timelines, they need to take into account that</p> <p>22 Tribal government decision making.</p> <p>23 The expedited timelines also do not allow</p> <p>24 sufficient time for critical studies to be</p> <p>25 completed, including scientific and cultural</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 231</p> <p>1 streamlining the NEPA process.</p> <p>2 So I'll turn it back over for public</p> <p>3 comment.</p> <p>4 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. So Chance, you'll</p> <p>5 be first, and then we do have a sign-up sheet if</p> <p>6 anybody is still interested. We have a list of</p> <p>7 folks.</p> <p>8 CHANCE SHANK: Hi everyone. My name is</p> <p>9 Chance Shank. I'm the Vice President of the Dot</p> <p>10 Lake Village Council. I came here today with my</p> <p>11 Tribe to represent my people and to speak on this</p> <p>12 Executive Order.</p> <p>13 I'm here to submit input on the U.S.</p> <p>14 Department of Interior's request for comments</p> <p>15 concerning the emergency permitting procedures</p> <p>16 announced on April 23rd, 2025, in response to the</p> <p>17 national energy emergency.</p> <p>18 This emergency references delays in energy</p> <p>19 project approvals that pose risks to the Nation's</p> <p>20 economic stability, national security, and foreign</p> <p>21 policy interests. The plan for the department to</p> <p>22 utilize emergency authorities under existing</p> <p>23 regulations such as the National Environmental</p> <p>24 Policy Act are a big significant concern for my</p> <p>25 Tribe.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 233</p> <p>1 resource studies that assess the impact of a</p> <p>2 proposed project on federally protected Tribal</p> <p>3 resources.</p> <p>4 The Tribe believes the current timelines</p> <p>5 for both an environmental review and an</p> <p>6 environmental impact statement allow for adequate</p> <p>7 meaningful Tribal consultation on these projects.</p> <p>8 The current timelines give Tribal Nations a voice to</p> <p>9 ensure federal actions avoid damage to Tribal lands,</p> <p>10 our natural and cultural resources including our</p> <p>11 critical water resources, as well as to avert</p> <p>12 potentially costly litigation activities.</p> <p>13 The Dot Lake Tribe would like to stress</p> <p>14 that the main focus of any NEPA changes should be</p> <p>15 maintaining meaningful Tribal input without</p> <p>16 compromising that input for development.</p> <p>17 NEPA reviews should continue to be robust</p> <p>18 and should not, as a result of expedited timelines</p> <p>19 gloss through analysis of impacts of major federal</p> <p>20 actions on Tribal interests and resources.</p> <p>21 I represented my Tribe at the National</p> <p>22 Congress of American Indians in 2023 at New Orleans,</p> <p>23 and we brought two resolutions forward that</p> <p>24 concerned the NEPA process. There is more</p> <p>25 development that's coming into Alaska, especially in</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 234</p> <p>1 the interior, and there's like policies that are so 2 outdated that it's meant for like the villages that 3 are up north where they're used to, like, you have 4 to do like a drilling pad and then there's nowhere 5 for them to go.</p> <p>6 In the interior, there's roads and you 7 could get to it, so when they do like a manned camp 8 or something like that, those policies are outdated. 9 And when you cut the process in such a way, you 10 bypass things like an enforceable safety plan. That 11 was one of the resolutions that we put forward that 12 passed.</p> <p>13 Tribes that are by a manned camp, 14 especially in the lower 48, even in Canada, there's 15 a rise in violence, all kinds of crimes. That 16 resolution passed and, you know, we also lost our 17 ability to like be a cooperating agency because 18 there was no environmental impact statement for like 19 a big project that's happening in our area.</p> <p>20 One of the speakers before, he referenced 21 it, it was a mine in Tetlin called the Manh Choh 22 Mine, but as a cooperating agency the village could 23 have held really strong input in the matter, and 24 when the studies got released on like things that 25 that mine could have did to prevent contamination to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 236</p> <p>1 for giving me the opportunity to speak today.</p> <p>2 In addition to serving as the first vice 3 president for Tlingit &amp; Haida, I also serve as the 4 president and COE of Tlingit &amp; Haida Regional 5 Housing Authorities whose mission is to connect 6 Southeast Alaskans with sustainable housing 7 opportunities and innovative financial solutions.</p> <p>8 And I also serve as the co-chair of the 9 Tribal Interagency Advisory Council, the TIAC, for 10 the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and 11 Urban Development.</p> <p>12 And so, and under that role and capacity I 13 have submitted written comments to HUD also about 14 the streamlining of environmental, and some of those 15 apply to other agencies, and so I'd like to just 16 speak a little bit to those recommendations.</p> <p>17 So we understand the administration's goal 18 to respond to this national emergency through 19 streamlined environmental permitting, but the path 20 forward must not sacrifice the rights of Tribal 21 Nations or disregard the realities on the ground 22 where we are working on building and maintaining 23 affordable housing in our communities and other 24 infrastructure.</p> <p>25 And it's a great importance of the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 235</p> <p>1 the land or anything like that, they gave 2 recommendations to like more safeguards, and I don't 3 believe those safeguards were put in place, but if 4 the Tribe was a cooperating agency, we could have 5 said, put that extra thing in, like take your time, 6 but that just wasn't done.</p> <p>7 My Tribe has worked with other Tribes 8 there's one that worked and had development in their 9 area, and they became a cooperating agency, and they 10 got word from that developer, future projects, so 11 they had a run time for the other things and they're 12 able to collaborate in that way.</p> <p>13 There's no way you could get that done in 14 28 days or 14 days, so that's why I felt it was 15 really important to come here and give that 16 testimony on behalf of Dot Lake Village.</p> <p>17 Thank you.</p> <p>18 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.</p> <p>19 So Ms. Jackie, can I have you go? So this 20 is emergency request. PJ, I'm going to have you go 21 next, if that's okay, so you can make a flight. All 22 right.</p> <p>23 JACQUELINE PATA: Thank you. Gon-as-chish 24 (phonetic). I did want to speak to this area of 25 NEPA, ESA, and NHPA. So I'm Jackie Pata. Thank you</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 237</p> <p>1 proposed expedited comment periods for the National 2 Environmental Protection Act, NEPA, the Endangered 3 Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act. 4 These proposed expedited periods do not provide 5 adequate time for meaningful Consultation with 6 Tribes.</p> <p>7 And Tlingit &amp; Haida supports the efforts 8 to improve permitting and environment review 9 processes, especially when the process delay urgent 10 housing and infrastructure development in our 11 communities, reform must not come at the cost of our 12 sacred lands, natural resources, or our cultural 13 heritage.</p> <p>14 And these changes are not about cutting 15 corners. They are about respecting Tribal self- 16 determination, avoiding waste, and getting roofs 17 over our peoples' heads faster.</p> <p>18 With that said, I have five 19 recommendations that I'd like to make today that can 20 focus on the challenges faced by Tribes and Tribal 21 designated housing entities during the environmental 22 review process.</p> <p>23 The first one is exempt low dollar 24 projects from environmental review. So Tribal 25 communities often rely upon small grants, especially</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 238</p> <p>1 small Tribes, and sometimes they're under \$250,000 2 for essential services or improvements. 3 And yet, even these minor efforts are 4 delayed sometimes by burdensome environmental 5 reviews, and we recommend that statutory language 6 exempt low dollar or non-ground disturbing projects, 7 especially when they are already categorically 8 excluded under NEPA. 9 Additionally as I said earlier, BIA does 10 not currently have an MOA with the state historic 11 preservation officers like other agencies do, and 12 this causes undue delays as limited staff at BIA to 13 initiate and manage all the 106 reports as part of 14 the environmental review process. 15 And I want to follow up on a previous 16 speaker when he talked about Part 50 and Part 58. I 17 urge that. I can tell you that, especially for BIA, 18 as at our housing authority, we do all of our 19 environmental reviews internally, and I tried to do 20 them for BIA during COVID when you didn't have any 21 satisfy there, and I got my hand slapped. 22 And so I just wanted to say, if we can do 23 it faster and make the job happen, then that should 24 be the ultimate result. Stop redundant reviews 25 across agencies. Our housing projects often use</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 240</p> <p>1 especially when you're working in a consortia model, 2 like many times I have worked with, I have 12 3 different Tribes that I partner with, and how many 4 times we have to follow up or, you know, cause 5 challenges to smaller Tribes to have to get a 6 signature for us to be able to move forward, when 7 the Tribe has already given their authority and 8 their approval for us to move forward and implement 9 the project as spelled out in their designated 10 resolution. 11 So honor the sovereign rights of Tribes 12 and honor their decisions in letting them determine 13 who can be the certifying official. 14 Alaska's specific wetlands challenge. So 15 in Alaska wetlands are everywhere. Roughly 130 16 million acres with substantial percentage of the 17 acreage throughout Southeast Alaska. 18 And federal agencies, not all federal 19 agencies, federal agencies' refusal to accept Army 20 Corps general permits like the RGP01 is causing 21 unnecessary confusion and delay. Before making 22 significant changes, we need to better understand if 23 statutory changes are needed to streamline 24 compliance without compromising environmental 25 standards and our Tribal values.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 239</p> <p>1 funding from multiple housing agencies, and right 2 now that means sometimes repeating environmental 3 reviews for the same project. 4 So once again, you know, if we're going to 5 husband HIP money and Healthy Homes money or any, 6 USDA's money, we should all be able to do that, and 7 I know for many years we tried to get a lead agency 8 designation to actually work, even though it's 9 allowed under NEPA, but somehow the agencies don't 10 want to play together in the sandbox sometimes. 11 And so that continues to be a challenge, 12 and I also sit on the Interagency Environmental 13 Review task force working group. We still don't 14 have that solution in place. So I would say if you 15 want to save time and energy and Tribal time and 16 energy, let's cross that hurdle. 17 Respect Tribal authority in the process. 18 Tribes should be able to designate our own 19 environmental certifying official. Tribes pass 20 resolutions under their recognition of their own 21 sovereign rights. They make decisions about who's 22 going to represent them on certain projects and what 23 they're going to do. They should be able to 24 designate their certifying individual. 25 Do you know how much time it takes,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 241</p> <p>1 But those general permits, especially in 2 the small, you know, the Army Corps general permit, 3 recognized especially in the small villages that 4 sometimes we may be in the line of sight of a fuel 5 storage unit, or we may be, you know, some of those 6 other things can affect us and we shouldn't create 7 additional barriers because those are the conditions 8 of the communities that we are living in, especially 9 in the smaller communities. 10 And then another one that I would like to 11 put on this is the flood insurance and unfounded 12 mandates. So the FEMA flood insurance requirements 13 are not workable for many of our Tribal communities, 14 and especially in rural communities. And the Tribes 15 shouldn't lose funding because local governments 16 refuses to join into the NFIP, or FEMA lacks the 17 support capacity. 18 Tribal funding should have statutory 19 exemption from flood insurance. 20 And then I wanted to lastly speak to the 21 notice requirement. So you heard from a lot of 22 people here saying that the shortened time period 23 creates great stress, and largely it's because most 24 Tribes and small Tribes, but most Tribes just don't 25 have enough staff, just like you don't have enough</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 242</p> <p>1 staff to do the jobs that you have.</p> <p>2 And the person who has to look at these</p> <p>3 notices or identify the notices that they care</p> <p>4 about, usually is wearing multiple hats, and doesn't</p> <p>5 really get to them. And so when we were dealing</p> <p>6 with that challenge before when we were trying to</p> <p>7 deal with cell tower placement with the FCC, we</p> <p>8 created a process.</p> <p>9 So Tribes can self-identify the areas of</p> <p>10 jurisdiction that they cared about so that there was</p> <p>11 a preliminary way of looking at the maps and saying,</p> <p>12 I care about these area, they have culture</p> <p>13 significance to me, and therefore I want to limit</p> <p>14 the notices I get to this area.</p> <p>15 It's kind of like a registry, and we tried</p> <p>16 to create something like that again when we were</p> <p>17 dealing with the pipeline issues in the Dakotas and</p> <p>18 the water challenges. And we tried to see if there</p> <p>19 was a way of making that work more nationally for</p> <p>20 other environmental reviews rather than just for</p> <p>21 cell tower placement.</p> <p>22 I still think it's a great idea. I think</p> <p>23 it would allow Tribes to be contacted earlier and</p> <p>24 there would be more transparency in the process. A</p> <p>25 lot of times, especially with energy development,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 244</p> <p>1 opportunity to testify on this process. Just a</p> <p>2 short history on my Tribe. About 10, 12 years ago,</p> <p>3 we're great hosts. We invited at NCAI, Chris</p> <p>4 Anderson with IHS. He came to Allakaket. Under the</p> <p>5 Obama administration we had Lordes Ramirez who was</p> <p>6 under Julien Castro talking about housing.</p> <p>7 Well, fast forward from their visit, not</p> <p>8 much has changed. We didn't get another house. It</p> <p>9 was nice to see them, though.</p> <p>10 Allakaket, we're pro development. We have</p> <p>11 a resolution of proposed Ambler Road. Those types</p> <p>12 of developments provide jobs and opportunities for</p> <p>13 my Native people. As a chief, I have to look after,</p> <p>14 you know, our elders, our immediate Tribal members,</p> <p>15 and down the road a little bit.</p> <p>16 What are we going to do? As an Indian, I</p> <p>17 get special monies from the U.S. government, federal</p> <p>18 subsidies. Why? Why are we fighting development?</p> <p>19 Ninety days we work, we can get benefits, health</p> <p>20 benefits, better than what IHS provides.</p> <p>21 So when we fight development, we just</p> <p>22 fight ourselves, and we fight among each other, you</p> <p>23 know. There's an old joke around here, there's</p> <p>24 chief of Facebook. Somebody would say something at</p> <p>25 council meeting, somebody don't like it, then they</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 243</p> <p>1 that those conversations have already happened at</p> <p>2 the state level and with the developer level before</p> <p>3 Tribes ever get involved.</p> <p>4 And if there was a better way for Tribes</p> <p>5 to be identified earlier in the process, it could</p> <p>6 probably help make for maybe some more meaningful</p> <p>7 engagement. So look for a longer term solution than</p> <p>8 just a short term emergency fix.</p> <p>9 And so my closing statement is I'm not</p> <p>10 opposed to improving the permitting environment or</p> <p>11 review processes. As I said earlier, I have lots of</p> <p>12 recommendations myself, especially when those</p> <p>13 processes delay urgent housing and infrastructure</p> <p>14 needs in our communities, but reform cannot come at</p> <p>15 the cost of our safeguard lands or natural</p> <p>16 resources, or our cultural heritage.</p> <p>17 And these changes are not about cutting</p> <p>18 corners, they're especially about respecting Tribal</p> <p>19 self-determination, avoiding waste, and getting</p> <p>20 roofs over our peoples' heads faster.</p> <p>21 Gon-as-chish (phonetic). Thank you.</p> <p>22 I will, thank you. Thank you.</p> <p>23 BEN DUNCAN: All right, thank you.</p> <p>24 PJ.</p> <p>25 PJ SIMON: Thank you again for this</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 245</p> <p>1 run to the social media.</p> <p>2 But the reality is, the cuts are coming.</p> <p>3 LIHEAP, we have SNAP program, Medicaid expansion.</p> <p>4 That's all going to be cut under the CBO score</p> <p>5 coming out of the Trump administration, pretty much</p> <p>6 says a lot of that's going to be gutted. BIA.</p> <p>7 What are my people going to do in a few</p> <p>8 years, five years, 10 years, when those 8-year-olds</p> <p>9 are 18, right out of high school. We can have</p> <p>10 mining jobs. My great great grandfather came up the</p> <p>11 Koyukuk river in the 1890s. He was a gold miner.</p> <p>12 My grandfather on my dad's side worked at Hog River</p> <p>13 gold mine, his brother did. They made half less</p> <p>14 than the white people at Hog River gold mine, maybe</p> <p>15 1930 or 1940.</p> <p>16 Then my dad and his brother worked at Hog</p> <p>17 River gold mine. My son worked at Hog River gold</p> <p>18 mine, straight out of Bozeman, Montana. Now he's</p> <p>19 working in Portland, standing on his own two feet.</p> <p>20 I just want my people to be strong, to</p> <p>21 work, to have a retirement, to have health. How do</p> <p>22 we get there? Well, we have to have compromise,</p> <p>23 some sort of development. Allakaket Tribe, we</p> <p>24 respect other people's vision. This is our vision.</p> <p>25 There's UCOR rivers elements (phonetic) in the rain</p>

Page 246

1 mountains. You got Doyon, our own ANC have Doyon  
2 Wiseman Metals. Then you have South 32 right out of  
3 Allakaket, and then proposed Ambler Road.  
4 So we're blocked in by mining, but we need  
5 the jobs. It's imperative, we need the jobs and the  
6 training, and Interior is supposed to provide stuff  
7 like that if we ask.  
8 Where's our 477 dollars? Please bring  
9 back to the secretary that he is invited to  
10 Allakaket. We embrace development. We had meetings  
11 with our elders. We thought, well, we had the  
12 pipeline in the '70s. We totally blew that one, but  
13 now with this new development, in creating a long  
14 range plan for our people, for our children to work  
15 right out of high school, so they don't have to walk  
16 just having a tough life.  
17 None of us want our kids to have a tough  
18 life and struggle and bury some that are less  
19 fortunate, and our elders have to see it, and they  
20 look at us and say, why didn't you guys do  
21 something? We're burying our young before we pass  
22 away.  
23 This is a tough subject. It's an  
24 emotional subject. We say, our lands. When I talk  
25 to the mining companies, when I talk to the state,

Page 247

1 and I talk to ADA I tell them. Talk to our village  
2 corporation. They own the lands. Talk to Doyon.  
3 They own surface and subsurface.  
4 Then you guys talk to them. That are in  
5 ANCSA and ISDEAA. They're a Tribe up to a certain  
6 level. CIRI gets health care here in Anchorage  
7 because they're a Tribe. Same thing in Fairbanks  
8 with NAHASDA. Doyon gets NAHASDA dollars because  
9 they're a Tribe.  
10 So in all of this, we come here a long way  
11 from Allakaket. We're between a rock and a hard  
12 place, but we want training. We want a visit from  
13 Interior. Actually, visit every single Tribe, every  
14 single Tribe in the state. If there's a thousand of  
15 you guys, and you guys go out and, you know, just  
16 one night. The Tribal council meet every two weeks  
17 or every month, and you guys can listen to them,  
18 because they'll have elders. They'll have the  
19 people that couldn't make it today because of  
20 whatever reason, but we got to do something for our  
21 kids.  
22 You guys know the cuts are coming. The  
23 cuts are coming, and if we fund every ask today,  
24 that's not going to happen. We might as well fly  
25 around the world in a hot air balloon while we're at

Page 248

1 it. It ain't going to happen. There's cuts. We're  
2 \$37 trillion in debt, our country.  
3 We've got to work. So, you know, give us  
4 some work programs. We tried the state. We tried  
5 the mining companies, but you guys with our trust  
6 responsibility, have to come up and work, meet us.  
7 All of you guys have to work together.  
8 I don't want to take up everybody's time,  
9 but you know, Interior Department, right now this  
10 administration is welcome in Allakaket, so you guys  
11 come out, talk with us. No disrespect to any other  
12 Tribe here opposing development, because we all live  
13 different lives, and we all see the world in a  
14 different lens, but in a way we're all together.  
15 So thank you. Thank you for your time.  
16 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. Mary David.  
17 MARY DAVID: All righty. I don't know if  
18 this is picking me up all right, but hello again.  
19 Mary David. I am with Kawerak Incorporated in the  
20 Bering Straits region. I am a Nome Eskimo Community  
21 Tribal member.  
22 So my comments are as follows. We will  
23 also make written comments on this area as well. We  
24 are the first conservationists and managers of our  
25 resources. We are stewards of our lands and our

Page 249

1 lands have sustained us for thousands of years.  
2 We are the knowledge holders of our lands,  
3 our resources, including our subsistence resources.  
4 We have 20 Tribes in our region, and therefore my  
5 advocacy is particularly around ensuring that Tribal  
6 Consultation takes place around this area before any  
7 decision is made regarding permitting procedures,  
8 but it sounds like with the second addendum that DOI  
9 has already decided to adopt an alternative process  
10 and procedure before even Tribes were consulted and  
11 included in the decision making process.  
12 We have concerns about the expedited  
13 timelines. They are far too quick, and doesn't  
14 include Tribes in the conversation or even the  
15 decision making process.  
16 These accelerated timelines risk bypassing  
17 legally required environmental and cultural reviews,  
18 or limit our ability to participate meaningfully in  
19 them. Given our region's challenges, like you've  
20 heard today regarding Broadband and communication  
21 connectivity issues, even getting the mail, it just  
22 limits our capacity to respond quickly.  
23 And you all may have access to other  
24 federal agencies that provide technical assistance,  
25 data, facts. You have all that available to you,



Page 250

1 but oftentimes we at the Tribal level have to become  
2 experts, therefore it may take us time to respond,  
3 so I hope you will keep that in mind.  
4 And because we rely on subsistence  
5 resources, our sensitive Arctic ecosystems, the food  
6 resources that we rely on may suffer irrevocable and  
7 irreversible harm without adequate time to evaluate  
8 the long term environmental impacts and climate  
9 risks, and also disruptions to our traditional  
10 practices, which is really vital to our community's  
11 health and well-being, and our resilience.  
12 So lastly, I just want to again just state  
13 that we need all four seasons to have an accurate  
14 environmental assessment regardless of what project  
15 is planned. It is important to allow for that  
16 thorough assessment to take place.  
17 So quyana for the time once again, and I  
18 appreciate you all listening. Thank you.  
19 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
20 Next up is Charles. Charles.  
21 CHARLES SINK: Hello. My name is Charlie  
22 Sink, or Charles Sink. I work for Chugachmiut which  
23 is a Tribal consortia. I'd like to do something a  
24 little different, if you'll allow me. I used to  
25 live in Galena, and I'd sit in a session like this

Page 251

1 and an elder would get up and speak, and they would  
2 tell a story and I wouldn't know where they were  
3 going, but my job as a land manager was, I had  
4 agency people there and they'd get all nervous  
5 about, what's this guy talking about.  
6 And I said, well, calm down, listen. And  
7 the elder would tell a story, and it would be  
8 disconnected and I wouldn't understand, as my people  
9 that I was hosting wouldn't understand what I was  
10 talking about. Calm down, they'll get to it.  
11 And then he would. I'm going to do a  
12 little performance art for you guys.  
13 Up on a cliff here, got a bank into the  
14 spit here. Got to kind of back a little bit, come  
15 around, you got to power down a little bit. Oh,  
16 wheel touches down, the other wheel touches down.  
17 Oh, there's a dog on the runway! Dog on the runway!  
18 We got to feather the prop! Feather the prop!  
19 Wooo.  
20 This happened three weeks ago. Two people  
21 died. Another plane landed behind them. People  
22 jumped out. People from the community came down.  
23 They lifted up the wings. One person was alive,  
24 maybe two people.  
25 Who are they? What's going on? Hey

Page 252

1 daddy, I saw a plane go down. Okay, we've got to  
2 get everybody up. Is there a chap in the community?  
3 Get the defibrillator. It's an emergency. We got  
4 to find out who it is, who's there.  
5 I'm at my office, and I hear about this on  
6 a telephone call. Let's look up our Tribal status.  
7 Who of our employees is out there? We got three  
8 employees going into that community today.  
9 Who are they? Oh, no, we got -- heard  
10 from had one kid. His dad reported that he was on  
11 the other plane and he got out. What about the  
12 other two? Oh, one landed earlier, so who's left?  
13 Joe.  
14 Joe Nyholm. There's a defibrillator out  
15 there. Got to save these lives. We pulled them out  
16 of the plane. How do we get there? Oh, can't land  
17 anymore. Got to get a helicopter. Who's got a  
18 helicopter? Call the Coast Guard. No, the troopers  
19 got there with a helicopter. They pulled the guy up  
20 into the health clinic. He was still alive.  
21 The second person that defibrillated  
22 didn't make it. Oh. Three weeks ago, Joe is still  
23 alive and he's recovering. So what does this story  
24 tell us?  
25 We've got a story about the State of

Page 253

1 Alaska has identified the Nanwalek Airport as the  
2 worst airport in the State of Alaska.  
3 When did you guys start working on funding  
4 this airport to get it replaced? Oh, about 2008.  
5 We had NEPA. We had soil studies, engineering  
6 studies, surveys. Now we're acquiring property.  
7 How long does it take to acquire property? For us  
8 it's about 18 months to acquire a parcel of  
9 property.  
10 How many parcels do we need? Well,  
11 there's two Native allotments and there's six other  
12 Native allotments that are going to need right-of-  
13 ways.  
14 Okay. How many owners are on those  
15 properties? Well, there's four there, two there,  
16 two there, four there. On this other property there  
17 was 68, but about 40 percent of the people died, so  
18 that's about 26, 27 people. Oh, yeah, they're in  
19 probate. Okay, that might take a while.  
20 You know, when the state looked at the  
21 job, they were trying to find out where the sand and  
22 gravel was. So they had to do a survey and find out  
23 where the sand and gravel was because they wanted to  
24 use local materials.  
25 Airports need astro certified grade

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 254</p> <p>1 material. Where do you find that? Well, there's no 2 committed rock sources out there, so we're going to 3 have to ship that in. Original price for this 4 airport, 30 million. Price around 2020, 60 million. 5 COVID hit. Little bill of inflation. 6 About 2022 I was on a building project. 7 We got a report from the Associated General 8 Contractors Association that construction costs were 9 rising in double digit figures per month. So we got 10 a deadly airport, and it's taken a few years to do a 11 project. 12 I'm speaking to the choir out here, 13 because they all know how long it takes us to build 14 something, but people are dying. 15 Thank you. 16 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 17 I'm going to invite Dean online. Dean, 18 can you hear us? 19 SAM LEVY: Dean, I'm going to invite you 20 to unmute. You can also turn your camera on, and 21 you are free to provide your comment. 22 DEAN BARLIP: Hello everybody. I wanted 23 to talk a little bit about the funding, the federal 24 funding and the (audio cut out) expanding the wide 25 support and outreach (audio cut out) increase in</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 256</p> <p>1 gaps. Invest in Broadband access. Prioritize 2 funding and internet infrastructure in rural and 3 remote Alaska Native communities. Digital access 4 points. Create community based access centers with 5 internet, computers, and trained staff to help 6 Tribes engage with federal services. 7 Improve coordination across agencies 8 (audio cut out) Tribal services. Co-locate services 9 from BIA, IHS, and HUD and other agencies with the 10 regional centers for streamlined access. Align 11 funding cycles. Coordinate deadlines and reporting 12 requirements across federal programs to reduce 13 administrative burdens. 14 Increase flexibility and equity in 15 funding. Adjusting eligible criteria. Modify 16 programs rules to reflect the unique governance and 17 geographic realities of Alaska Native villages and 18 corporations. Advance an emergency funding options. 19 Allow Tribes to receive funds up front or on an 20 emergency basis, especially for disaster response 21 and infrastructure. 22 Moving on to the next section on how can 23 Indian Affairs optimize its functionality and 24 effectiveness to provide Tribes with improved 25 flexibility and foster economic growth. Address</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 255</p> <p>1 Tribal liaison presences (audio cut out) staff in 2 Alaska cultural and regional (audio cut out) to 3 assist in (audio cut out) directly mobile outreach 4 teams. 5 Establish mobile units to travel to remote 6 villages to provide (audio cut out) for application 7 and services. Simplify and streamline the access 8 (audio cut out). 9 BEN DUNCAN: Okay. 10 DAEN BARLIP: Simplify and streamline 11 access to unified application portals. Develop and 12 centralize digital platforms and Tribes can apply 13 for multiple federal programs with a single 14 application (audio cut out) language materials. 15 Ensure all program documents are written in clear 16 accessible language and translated into Alaskan 17 Native languages where needed. 18 Building Tribal capacity. Technical 19 assistance for grants. Fund Tribal staff positions 20 dedicated to grant writing compliance and program 21 management. Training and mentorship programs. 22 Offer regular workshops and peer mentorship 23 opportunities to build local expertise navigating 24 federal systems. 25 Address infrastructure and connectivity</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 257</p> <p>1 (audio cut out) local needs of the communities and 2 create pathways for self-determination and self- 3 governance. 4 The first part on that was expand Tribal 5 self-governance and compacting opportunities. I 6 really believe that should have said in broadening 7 638 contracting and Tribal self-governance, because 8 not all Tribes are eligible to become Tribal self- 9 governance right now. 10 Broaden 638 contracting and compacting. 11 Allow more Alaskan Tribes to manage federal programs 12 under the Indian Self-Determination and Education 13 Assistance Act with tailored support for smaller 14 remote communities. 15 Flexible funding use. A lot of grants are 16 flexible funding streams that allow Tribes to 17 allocate recourses based on local priorities rather 18 than the rigid federal categories. Support economic 19 development tailored in Alaska. Invest in local 20 industries (audio cut out) like ecotourism, 21 fisheries, cultural arts, and (audio cut out) in 22 line with Alaska's geography and traditions. 23 Access to capital (audio cut out). Expand 24 Tribal access to federal loan guarantees, venture 25 capital, and revolving loan funds for business</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 258</p> <p>1 development (audio cut out) local governments 2 capacity (audio cut out) governance training. 3       Funding programs that would build Tribal 4 leadership skills and finance the planning and 5 negotiations. Data sovereignty and planning tools. 6 Provide Tribes with tools and training to collect 7 and manage their own data planning, grant writing, 8 and advocacy. 9       Improve infrastructure and connectivity. 10 Invest in transportation and broadband. Prioritize 11 infrastructure projects that connect remote villages 12 to markets, services, and each other. Sustainable 13 infrastructure models supporting community-led 14 design and maintenance of infrastructure suited to 15 Alaska climate and geography. 16       Fostering interagency and 17 intergovernmental collaboration. Tribal federal and 18 state compacts. Encouraging collaborative 19 governance models that respect Tribal sovereignty 20 while aligning resources across governments. 21       Institutionalize Tribal Consultation and 22 co-design. Establish permanent Alaska Pacific 23 advisory bodies to guide BIA policy and program 24 design. Participatory budgeting. Involve Tribes 25 directly in setting priorities for federal funding</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 260</p> <p>1 including lands near and overlapping with Alaskan 2 Native corporation holdings. This may shift 3 undermine Tribal authority over land use decisions, 4 create conflicts between Tribal governments, and 5 federal and state agencies, and favor corporate and 6 state interests over Tribal priorities. 7       Limited economic benefits for Tribes. 8 While a policy promotes energy development, it does 9 not guarantee equitable economic participation for 10 Alaska Native Tribes. Without Tribal Consultation 11 (audio cut out) and benefits sharing mechanism, 12 Tribes may bear the environmental cause without 13 receiving proportional economic returns. 14       These changes would really jeopardize our 15 salmon, moose, and caribou populations in Alaska. 16 The salmon stocks in the Copper River are essential 17 to ecosystems of the culture of the Ahtna region. 18 Chinook salmon from the Copper River contribute 19 significantly to the Gulf of Alaska population which 20 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 21 is currently assessing for Endangered Species Act 22 listings due to the substantial declines. 23       All species of salmon in the Copper River 24 are currently in a state of low abundance. The 25 reduction of habitat protections under ESA could</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 259</p> <p>1 allocations in Alaska. 2       Moving on to the second topic that was 3 added related to Executive Order 14210 concerning 4 the department's emergency permitting. 5       Reduce Tribal Consultation and oversight. 6 The emergency permitting process significantly 7 shortens environmental review times from months or 8 years to as little as 14 days. This compressed 9 schedule may limit meaningful Tribal Consultation, 10 undermining Tribal sovereignty and the ability for 11 Tribes to protect culturally significant lands, 12 sacred sites, and subsistence resources. 13       Environmental and cultural risk. Fast 14 track projects may bypass through assessment under 15 the National Environmental Policy Act, NEPA, the 16 Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic 17 Preservation Act. This could lead to increased risk 18 in environmental degradation of ecologically 19 sensitive areas, disruption in traditional hunting 20 and fishing and gathering practices, and damage to 21 archeological and cultural heritage sites. 22       Erosion of Tribal sovereignty. The Alaska 23 executive order accompanied the emergency 24 declaration defines federal policy to prioritize 25 energy development on state and federal lands,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 261</p> <p>1 exacerbate the degradation of spawning and marine 2 grounds in the upper Copper River, consequently 3 worsening these declines. 4       Escapement numbers were below the 5 threshold by 90,000 last year. Any actions that can 6 contribute to the decline of the species will only 7 intensify this issue, leading to food shortages in 8 numerous Alaska villages, towns, and communities. 9       The Copper River Chinook salmon play a 10 critical role in supporting the Gulf of Alaska stock 11 which are currently undergoing ESA review of the 12 demand due to the marked population decline. All 13 five species of salmon within the Copper River are 14 presently low. 15       So any kind of re-defining harm may allow 16 for activities to damage spawning and rearing 17 habitats in the upper Copper River, thereby 18 aggravating the ongoing problem. 19       The local caribou population is currently 20 experiencing a significant decline and is under 21 considerable stress due to climate change and 22 alterations to the landscape, destructions to 23 habitat including tundra fragmentation, noise 24 disturbance, and modified migration corridors have 25 grown the decline of these herds.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 262</p> <p>1 Excluding habitat from the definition of 2 harm eliminates essential tools for safeguarding 3 caribou populations before they reach a state of 4 crisis. 5 Historically we were engaged in hunting 6 caribou in the Kenny Lake and Upper Tonsina regions. 7 Nonetheless, as regardless of wildfires and 8 population declines, caribou migrations have not 9 been observed in these areas for over a decade. 10 Caribou herds within the Ahtna region are 11 currently low population levels. Habitat 12 fragmentation, increasing disturbances, and 13 diminished protections may further hinder recovery 14 efforts. This altercation remains a crucial 15 safeguard for species such as caribou and their 16 listing on the Endangered Species Act. 17 In the Ahtna region, we have found 18 cultural artifacts that have been carbon dating back 19 over 10,000 years. The people in the Ahtna region, 20 we have successfully managed our land, our 21 resources, and our game management for almost ten 22 millennia. 23 We just ask the government to stop telling 24 us our priorities. Bring us to the table. We'll 25 tell you our needs. We'll tell you our priorities.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 264</p> <p>1 States. 2 (Speaking Native American language.) 3 Via interpreter: She is sharing that she 4 is from the Village of Chefnak where actively 5 today they continue to use honeybuckets as a form of 6 waste system in their homes, and there are at least 7 500 residents. 8 (Speaking Native American language.) 9 Via interpreter: Chefnak, at one point, 10 because it's by a mountain they experienced a 11 volcanic action where the volcanic ash came out, and 12 so their land is, the terrain is rocky. It is flat, 13 however permafrost degradation is causing a lot of 14 environmental damage, including causing deep water 15 sources around their land. 16 (Speaking Native American language.) 17 Via interpreter: So due to the ongoing 18 erosion, their community is basically melting 19 underneath, thereby causing homes to sink into the 20 tundra. I know they're a boardwalk village, so 21 they're boardwalk system is also sinking into the 22 tundra. The homes that are near the edge of the 23 rivers also are causing havoc with concerns of them 24 falling into the river. 25 (Speaking Native American language.)</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 263</p> <p>1 We are willing to work with you to meet those needs. 2 Thank you for your time. 3 BEN DUNCAN: All right, thank you, Dean. 4 Let's go Janet and Estelle. Janet. Janet Erik, 5 yes. I see you. And then Estelle, you'll be next. 6 JANET ERIK: Hi. Thank you for the 7 opportunity. I would like to ask for APIC 8 translator, please. 9 Jolene? Would you mind translating for 10 me? 11 BEN DUNCAN: Ad hoc? 12 JANET ERIK: Obviously I can speak 13 English, but I want to demonstrate how challenging 14 it is for Tribes and communities, 229 of them in 15 Alaska, communicate with the federal government or 16 anybody in the outside world, because there are so 17 many different languages and dialects, and they all 18 have to communicate in English. 19 (Speaking Native American language.) 20 Via interpreter: She is from the Village 21 of Chefnak and she is also the daughter of 22 (speaking Native American language), and she is also 23 the granddaughter of (speaking Native American 24 language). Her father is by blood a nonnative and 25 her grandparents are also Vernon and Jean from the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 265</p> <p>1 Via interpreter: The federal government, 2 way back when, had encountered her ancestors, the 3 elders. At that time the federal government 4 basically required them to become not nomadic any 5 longer, but be residents of that community and 6 forced their children to attend school. 7 (Speaking Native American language.) 8 Via interpreter: So it's been since after 9 the federal government has forced them to be there 10 in that community. They are also on the other hand 11 neglecting to help their when they need the support 12 in terms of, like, fixing their community, 13 installing water and sewer system as well. 14 (Speaking Native American language.) 15 Via interpreter: Thank you for listening 16 to her. She is on the Tribal Council of the Village 17 of Chefnak, and she is encouraging all of us to 18 visit her community, and you will be welcomed and 19 entertained. 20 So, thank you, Jolene. 21 My name is Janet Erik. I am from 22 Chefnak. I am the Tribal Council President since 23 February 2020. Trial by COVID. As mentioned, our 24 community faces a lot of challenges, a lot of it due 25 to permafrost degradation, erosion, and much, much</p>

Page 266

1 more.

2 But I wanted to have this demonstration

3 here to show that one two-week time frame a month is

4 not enough to communicate with Tribes and expecting

5 them to come back with solid informed decisions that

6 are going to affect the rest of their lives, that's

7 going to affect the whole community and for

8 generations to come.

9 So I really wanted to show that, and by

10 the way, that was not my idea. I was going to say

11 something totally different, but I do have written

12 comments for my Tribe, submitted already. This has

13 not been. This was somebody else's idea and I loved

14 it.

15 So translation in itself is also

16 challenging. Jolene captured the essence of what I

17 wanted to say, but not exactly the way I had

18 intended to say them.

19 So things get lost in translation, and she

20 did great. She took notes and we're both fluent in

21 Yup'ik. We know who each other is, but we don't

22 know each other in a more personal level, so that's

23 a good example of how when we're trying to go back

24 to our communities, to our Tribal members and try to

25 explain this thing from the federal government to

Page 267

1 them, it's really hard because a lot of the

2 technical language and terms do not exist in the

3 Yup'ik language.

4 And their messages back, their questions,

5 their concerns that we bring back are also hard to

6 translate because as fluent as I am in Yup'ik, there

7 are a lot of words, older words that are not heard

8 so much anymore, I don't know what they are. So

9 that disappoints me when I can't fully communicate

10 back exactly what my elders are trying to share.

11 So like I said, we had already committed

12 comments, just not this right here. It's something

13 else. And I also want to say I talked about the

14 erosion that we're facing, and we are retreating

15 from the river.

16 We have -- oh, shoot, I lost the term.

17 Resilience monies already awarded to us, but are

18 frozen and we cannot access them. We have

19 piecemealed little bits of money here and there to

20 try to get us up.

21 We have, like that other community, we

22 have identified a subdivision. We have done all the

23 leg work for it. We have work that has been done by

24 a contractor to study the temperature of the

25 permafrost, and now we can't pay them because one of

Page 268

1 them, a \$3 million grant, is frozen and we can't pay

2 them.

3 Why is it frozen? I mean, the work

4 started. It's taken us years, and we're stuck. We

5 have no other way to pay them. It doesn't make

6 sense to me.

7 Well, thanks again for taking the time and

8 giving us the opportunity to speak to you today.

9 Qu yana.

10 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.

11 Estelle? Yep.

12 ESTELLE THOMSON: Here I am again, wearing

13 one of my other wardrobe pieces. It's not a hat.

14 We don't wear -- we don't just wear different hats

15 in our communities. It's an entire wardrobe.

16 And you'll have to excuse my voice. Again

17 (speaking Native American language) my name is

18 Anuit-kalap (phonetic). My English name is Estelle

19 Thomson. You'll have to excuse my voice. I have

20 some thyroid issues potentially from the

21 contamination that was left by the U.S. Air Force

22 near my village.

23 I come from a contaminated site, so NEPA

24 protections are really, really important to me.

25 Every single one of my elders in my mother's family,

Page 269

1 and in my village, have died of cancer, various

2 types of cancer.

3 And had the Army and the Air Force, and

4 any other federal agency complied with environmental

5 regulations, perhaps I wouldn't be facing the health

6 issues that I have today.

7 In addition to this wonderful throat thing

8 that I have that has just come up recently, I've

9 also lost my entire reproductive system because of

10 contaminants. I'm almost 51 years old. Every

11 single person in my family has been affected by

12 people not following laws.

13 The U.S. Air Force left barrels of

14 contaminants. And they buried it in the ground

15 thinking that the permafrost would keep them safe,

16 but as you know, or maybe you should know, the

17 levels of permafrost in Alaska fluctuate depending

18 on how much they thaw, how quickly they thaw, and

19 whether or not those containers can remain sealed.

20 Obviously they haven't. So the people in

21 my community are acutely aware of what can happen

22 when agencies and the federal government do not

23 follow regulations. Acutely aware.

24 We have buried many, and we will continue

25 to bury more. NEPA procedures must ensure that



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 270</p> <p>1 environment information is available to all of our 2 public officials. That doesn't just mean the agency 3 people. It means community members. It means 4 Tribal leaders. It means state and local agencies, 5 and our citizens. Not only the American citizens, 6 but our Tribal citizens, before decisions are made 7 and before actions are taken.</p> <p>8 Accurate scientific analysis, expert 9 agency comments, consultation with scientific 10 experts and community members, along with the public 11 scrutiny, are essential to implementing NEPA 12 correctly.</p> <p>13 NEPA documents must concentrate on those 14 issues that are truly significant to these actions 15 and questions. And as far as the questions go, I'll 16 answer them in just a moment.</p> <p>17 The whole process is intended to help 18 officials like yourself and other agency officials 19 make decisions that are based on the understanding 20 of these consequences, and to take actions that 21 protect, restore, and enhance the environment.</p> <p>22 The CEQ regulations provide the direction 23 to achieve this purpose. And for those of you that 24 are wondering, I don't have all kinds of 25 credentials, fancy credentials after my name. I've</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 272</p> <p>1 harmonious balance.</p> <p>2 I'm going to refer back to my testimony 3 where I mentioned that we as Indigenous Tribes 4 required standard for free, prior, and informed 5 consent by us, our Indigenous peoples, prior to the 6 government action impacting Indigenous communities.</p> <p>7 And some of those factors that influence 8 the time that has been spent on some of these 9 assessments and why they've taken so long, have just 10 been illustrated by Janet and by Jolene. That's 11 just one.</p> <p>12 That's just one of the factors.</p> <p>13 Communication. As Janet said, there is much that's 14 lost in translation. Janet also mentioned that we 15 don't even have words in our languages for some of 16 the things that are occurring.</p> <p>17 My Tribe has been spending the past couple 18 years working with an organization on developing a 19 dictionary in our dialect of Yup'ik that talks about 20 climate change and what each of those actions mean.</p> <p>21 And the people that have been working on 22 that dictionary have been working extraordinarily 23 hard, not only to access some of these ancient 24 words, but also to create new ones that people can 25 understand.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 271</p> <p>1 had to learn this because this directly affects me, 2 my family, and will affect my descendants.</p> <p>3 The kind of contaminants that live inside 4 my body I pass on to my children, in utero. Two of 5 them have never lived in the village but they have 6 exactly the same chances of dying from cancers that 7 affect our internal organs.</p> <p>8 The federal government is legally 9 obligated by these environmental laws to analyze all 10 land use applications it receives, and it's required 11 to do so through scientifically based environmental 12 studies and traditional ecological knowledge.</p> <p>13 Title 1 of NEPA contains a declaration of 14 the National Environmental Policy. That policy 15 requires the federal government to use all 16 practicable means to create and maintain conditions 17 under which man and nature can exist in productive 18 harmony.</p> <p>19 For those of us that are from Indigenous 20 communities, especially from rural Alaska, we 21 understand that relationship between us and our 22 lands and waters and air implicitly. It's inherent 23 to us. It's what we've been brought up with.</p> <p>24 We don't believe the abbreviated timeline 25 allows us to meet the goal that maintains that</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 273</p> <p>1 And I don't know if you know, if you speak 2 your own Tribal languages, that is a daunting task.</p> <p>3 So some of these factors, the complexity of whatever 4 project is coming up, for permitting for drilling, 5 for minerals, for oil. That takes a lot.</p> <p>6 The more complex the project, the more 7 extensive the environmental impacts and alternatives 8 that it will take longer for us to review, for them 9 to be reviewed. To coordinate with agencies, NEPA 10 requires agencies to coordinate and provide comments 11 which can add to the timeline, just as Janet and 12 Jolene illustrated.</p> <p>13 Not only hearing, collecting, translating, 14 and recording those comments can take. You can 15 imagine doing that with an entire community.</p> <p>16 Cheformak has something like 240-some-today people I 17 think, somewhere around that. My village has 1,500.</p> <p>18 If you can imagine taking comments from 19 1,500 people in Yup'ik and translating it, how long 20 it would take. Just that short little introduction 21 took quite a bit of time, and it wasn't even 22 completely accurate.</p> <p>23 Public involvement. To do a proper public 24 review and to do a comment period, it can influence 25 that pace, that process. My village is displaced.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 274</p> <p>1 My people are displaced. Where I grew up has 1,500 2 people but my village is small, and our people are 3 displaced between three neighboring villages. 4 Whenever we go out to the main village 5 where I grew up, it can take all day to get there 6 and thousands of dollars. In addition, we are at 7 the mercy of weather. One of the times we went out 8 for a meeting for our Tribe to do an election, we 9 had to come back because of a ground blizzard that 10 just hit us really quickly. So we had to turn 11 around in Bethel. We didn't even get out to my 12 village for that meeting. 13 Another community meeting we had for one 14 of our environmental programs, we had to pivot and 15 do a hybrid meeting because there was a Russian 16 volcano that erupted and blew ash up into the air 17 that prohibited us from traveling. It stopped 18 travel for maybe two weeks. 19 So those are some of the things that we 20 have just as challenges. This is normal, everyday, 21 Alaskan challenges, to be able to meet and to be 22 able to collect the information that we need to 23 convene some of these meanings, and meet the NEPA 24 requirements. 25 As Tribes, we acknowledge intent to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 276</p> <p>1 And our bird numbers are declining. One 2 of the things that we've been really spending a lot 3 of time on is working with other organizations, 4 institutions, agencies, governments, and Indigenous 5 people on the other end of our flyway. 6 Currently my village has started working 7 with over 20 countries that has our birds. They 8 winter our birds on the other ends of these flyways. 9 And what we've been able to ascertain is the 10 challenges and the impacts that we have on our lands 11 as well as the challenges and impacts that are 12 happening on the other end of the flyway or on some 13 of these areas where they kind of rest. They load 14 up, they feed again before they fly. 15 And that paints a really broad picture. 16 So it's not just something that happens here. 17 Something small that can happen here will 18 detrimentally effect the numbers that end up 19 migrating. 20 And as a few other people mentioned here, 21 we're already facing critical extinction, mass 22 extinction level events with the salmon crash. 23 We're about ready to lose our king salmon 24 completely. 25 With the removal of some of those</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 275</p> <p>1 streamline the NEPA processes, but we have concerns, 2 and we do have recommendations. Our concerns 3 include the risk of insufficient environmental 4 review. 5 The categorical exclusion or projects 6 resulting in up to 25 acres of new surface 7 disturbance may be overly broad. Even small scale 8 disturbances have significant cumulative and long 9 term impact on sensitive ecosystems, subsistence 10 resources, and cultural sites. 11 The proposed exclusion could limit 12 necessary site specific environmental reviews. 13 I spend a lot of time working with 14 migratory birds because my village is smack dab in 15 the nesting grounds of over 220 species of birds 16 that come from all over the world. Not only do 17 those birds need those nesting grounds to lay their 18 eggs, hash, and rear their young, they also need 19 stable food sources. 20 Having impacting from drilling or mining 21 or gas development on some of those critical nesting 22 habitats could mean extinction. Our lands are the 23 only nesting habitat for emperor geese and Black 24 Brant in the entire world. It's the only place 25 where they nest.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 277</p> <p>1 regulations on fishing and on this, that could 2 impact not only our fishing grounds, but also the 3 habitat where these salmon go to lay their eggs. 4 So our habitat is unique in the world. It 5 literally could be considered a UNESCO World 6 Heritage Site, and some of those criteria for that 7 include not only does it have a scientific 8 significance, it has to have a cultural 9 significance. It has to be unique, and we are so 10 unique up here in Alaska. 11 And it also has to have, you know, other 12 significance as well. So we have a very unique 13 ecosystem in Alaska that is very easily upset by 14 disturbance from our land. 15 And as you heard Janet and as you've heard 16 others, we are already experiencing some severe 17 environmental impacts to our people, to our lands, 18 to our waters, that's effecting our food security, 19 our food sovereignty, and also, you know, the 20 ability for some of our nonhuman relatives to live 21 peacefully and successfully grow their young in our 22 lands. 23 So those ecosystems can be affected. Our 24 subsistence resources can be affected, and our 25 cultural sites. The proposed exclusion could limit</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 278</p> <p>1 those necessary site specific environmental reviews. 2 Those limited Tribal consultation 3 requirements. The current language in this 4 particular exclusion, it doesn't not sure for 5 adequate consultation with the Tribes that are going 6 to be affected prior to the project approval. 7 Tribal governments must be given proper 8 consideration and enough time to evaluate those 9 concerns to be able to talk about the traditional 10 knowledge about that particular site, and the 11 cultural impacts. It's a process that you can't 12 rush. 13 So some of the situations not covered by 14 the process, subsistence and traditional use. The 15 exclusion doesn't adequately consider the importance 16 of our traditional knowledge, traditional ecological 17 knowledge, or the potential impact on subsistence 18 hunting, fishing, and gathering. 19 Any project, even within whatever little 20 footprints that are existing already, should be 21 assessed for impact on these critical practices, 22 especially considering the changes that our current 23 environment is experiencing right now. 24 Our cultural and historical sites outside 25 mapped area. Many of our culturally significant</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 280</p> <p>1 resources under ANILCA and any other federal laws 2 regarding subsistence are honored, our traditional 3 use areas are protected, and our unmapped cultural 4 sites are also protected. 5 When you include Alaska specific concerns 6 like permafrost and our vulnerability into these 7 NEPA procedures, it will make things a lot easier 8 for all of us around. 9 So we also encourage you to uphold your 10 trust responsibilities as we have mentioned prior, 11 in prior testimony, and we really also encourage you 12 to live up to your own Tribal knowledge to uphold 13 our traditional ways of life. 14 Alaska is a really unique place. It's one 15 of the last places that we can live this way here in 16 the United States, and it is far too delicate and 17 unique to destroy just for a little bit of oil or 18 some minerals. 19 Thanks. 20 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 21 Counsel woman, I can't read the writing so 22 I'll just invite you up, Counselor. 23 GAYLA HOSETH: Thank you. Hi. I'm, for 24 the record, again Gayla Hoseth, the First Chief of 25 Curyung Tribal Council from Dillingham, Alaska.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 279</p> <p>1 areas, our heritage sites, are undocumented or not 2 formally mapped. That exclusion may allow for 3 disturbances or even, you know, destroying some of 4 those areas without our prior identification, 5 mitigation, or our ability to preserve some of those 6 things from those sites. 7 Climate and permafrost sensitivity. Here 8 in Alaska, even these small scale activities can 9 effect permafrost and add to climate impacts, and 10 also as far as like everything else goes, throwing 11 this in at the very last second was not something 12 that we would recommend that the Department of 13 Interior or the Bureau of Indian Affairs does again. 14 This should be its own thing, own complete 15 thing, because we might not have all the people here 16 that can speak to this adequately. 17 So we recommend limiting the categorical 18 exclusion to projects within previously disturbed 19 areas only. That's it. We request that site 20 specific analysis for all new disturbances 21 regardless of acreage. 22 We expect early and formal Consultation 23 with Tribes, and thorough Consultation, not rushed, 24 for all actions under this exclusion. We also want 25 to make sure that protections for subsistence</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 281</p> <p>1 I just have to say that the two ladies 2 that spoke before me, I hope that you guys are able 3 to get the understanding of how difficult it is that 4 when we are at those meetings of how do we translate 5 the information that is being put upon us into -- 6 one of my latest mottos is education to 7 understanding. 8 And for us to be informed, we need to 9 understand what it is that we are going to be voting 10 on all our Tribal council levels, at our regional 11 meeting levels, statewide boards that we serve on, 12 but we need to know what we're voting on, understand 13 what we're voting on to make good decisions that 14 will have the least impacts for us. 15 And a lot of times what I see is that if 16 you see somebody who is an expert in a certain 17 field, possibly going with what that person says 18 because we don't understand it yet. Somebody 19 doesn't want to just say, hey I don't really 20 understand what that person just said, but since you 21 said yes, I'm going to go with a yes. 22 And I think that's common across, doesn't 23 necessarily matter if it's Tribally or non-Tribally. 24 It just is in general, I see it around a lot of 25 meetings.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 282</p> <p>1 In regards to the emergency permitting 2 process, I guess, you know, this just was a little 3 bit mind boggling to me because the first NEPA 4 process that I was ever involved in was Pebble, with 5 Pebble Mine, and that started in 2003. 6 We just got the final permanent 7 protections in 2023. That took 20 years. Twenty 8 years of meetings. Twenty years of rollercoasters. 9 Twenty years of understanding what the information, 10 even if we speak English, to know what it is of what 11 these impacts will have on us and how we're going to 12 vote at the council level and then at our nonprofit 13 level, our ANCSA corporation levels. 14 And so the analogy or what was just 15 presented to you really just spoke volumes to really 16 get that through the door. And then what's going to 17 happen to the person who doesn't understand. 18 They're going to say, well what do you think? Yes 19 or no? And you could have somebody who has really 20 good intentions telling them to vote yes or no, or 21 somebody who has their best interests in mind for 22 their pocketbooks to have them vote a certain way. 23 So understanding a DEIS process and the 24 projects in itself. I think ours was about 5,400 25 pages long. Didn't read it all. Didn't have the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 284</p> <p>1 frame that we had to sign up to be a cooperating 2 agency, and there was a deadline. Is that going to 3 still be that way? 4 Because I think there were two Tribes, if 5 I recall correctly, that were a part of the 6 cooperating agency, and lucky we were there, because 7 if we weren't there some of those key basic 8 information that we thought needed to be in there 9 got put in there. 10 And we're not scientists. We're not 11 lawyers. We're just leaders and people within the 12 community. So I guess my point is, that it's a long 13 process, and from what I know of my understanding is 14 that, you know, is every agency going to have a 15 different NEPA process that they're going through? 16 How -- what's DOI's plan for NEPA going 17 forward with the agencies within the Department of 18 Interior to comment and get engaged with the draft 19 environmental impact statements? 20 U.S. Fish and Wildlife was a key for us 21 for Bristol Bay for Pebble, all the birds that 22 migrate through, all of the animals, everything that 23 happens within U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 24 National Park Service commented. 25 A lot of the agencies under DOI commented</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 283</p> <p>1 time. I worked with people who I trusted for key 2 points to talk about at the microphone during our 3 three minutes that we had for a speech to advocate 4 on what we were going to be doing. 5 But I guess I have a question for you 6 guys, and I don't know if you guys are able to 7 comment or anything since this is a Consultation, is 8 how is the federal trust responsibility going to be 9 upheld during the NEPA process? How is the 10 government-to-government Consultation going to be? 11 In Alaska, you know, there is 229 Tribes 12 of us. Regionally in the Bristol Bay region that we 13 had our Consultation, we have 31 Tribes. 28 days, 14 31 villages, how is that going to happen for the 15 full impact, full environmental impact statement? 16 The scoping meetings that need to take 17 place. How is that going to happen? When you guys 18 travel out to our villages and our communities and 19 key hubs, and we fly people to those areas, have to 20 work with people to get grants to get people to go 21 to these meetings. 22 It costs us a lot of money. I don't even 23 know how much money we spent on that yet. 24 We were a cooperating agency during the 25 process, our Tribe was. This was a certain time</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 285</p> <p>1 individually as agencies, and how is that going to 2 work? That's a question moving forward. 3 Because I was sitting here thinking about 4 that. There's no way that could happen in 28 days. 5 And Pebble, it's not that we're against 6 any development. We're not against development. 7 We're not against mineral exploration, oil and gas. 8 We're not against any of that, just needs to be in 9 the right place. And your Tribal people who live on 10 the land, who has always been there, are going to 11 know the areas that need to be protected, the areas 12 that are our key subsistence areas of use, and maybe 13 what areas will have the least impact for that. 14 And if anything does go through, your best 15 partnership is going to be with the Tribes to 16 empower the Tribes of anything that is moving 17 forward. Don't forget about the Tribes if you're 18 going to be having things in their backyard, because 19 they're the ones that are going to be living there. 20 For the ESAs, the seven days, I'm still 21 wrapping my brain around us just commenting on these 22 just really brief paragraphs with such big impacts 23 to us, not everybody has broadband. 24 Tribal administrators' email boxes are 25 full. How are we going to get the notices in time</p>

Page 286

1 to be engaged in these processes to have a voice and  
2 then to finally get something in the mail, and then  
3 we miss the deadline?  
4 And you know, in conversations and kind of  
5 joking around, we were like, we're going to have to  
6 have something that's going to be constantly having  
7 to monitor everything. We don't have the funds to  
8 pay somebody to do that.  
9 Maybe you guys could have a listserv that  
10 we can, a database or something or a listserv that  
11 we could get automatic emails of things coming our  
12 way that we need to have a separate email box just  
13 for DOI, but just, you know, figure out how we're  
14 going to get notice of all these information that  
15 you guys are sending out.  
16 And then when we get to the Historic  
17 Preservation Act, I need more time to understand  
18 what that means, I really do. I don't even  
19 understand what that means of the new -- the new --  
20 I don't even know what it's called. The streamline  
21 process for the Historic Preservation, are those not  
22 going to be included anymore?  
23 Is it something with the emergency  
24 permitting process that they're not going to be  
25 valid because -- or not valid, they're not going to

Page 287

1 be taken to the same level they were taken before  
2 with our historical sites and our cultural areas?  
3 So those are my comments, but I just  
4 wanted to know if you guys can say anything in  
5 regards to what is it going to look like for the  
6 NEPA process or the Department of Interior?  
7 Can you guys say anything?  
8 BRYAN MERCIER: Yeah, Gayla, so the -- we  
9 don't, I mean, we don't know what it's going to look  
10 like. I don't think -- the scope of this is very  
11 narrow.  
12 It's just energy projects that are  
13 declared as part of this national emergency. So it  
14 won't be a standard process for our routine NEPA  
15 actions that are occurring.  
16 We will still have the same -- Section 106  
17 is typically a 60-day. There's a 30-day kind of  
18 notice, and then a 30-day if the Tribe wants to  
19 consult, a 30-day consultation period for a Section  
20 106 in HPA, so there's usually 60 days built into  
21 Section 106.  
22 This reduces that to 7 if it's an energy  
23 project that falls under this national emergency.  
24 We haven't done one yet, so I don't know how it will  
25 look. And I don't know if the department has done

Page 288

1 one elsewhere, because it just got issued the end of  
2 April.  
3 They asked us immediately consult. That's  
4 why we added it to this agenda a week later, and  
5 we're trying to -- we're playing catch-up.  
6 We have not implemented it yet because  
7 we're waiting until after Consultation. We want to  
8 hear from you all, a lot of these concerns are very  
9 valid that we'll be taking back. And I don't know  
10 what -- if -- or I don't know what will happen after  
11 we go back to the secretary and explain to him after  
12 we've consulted with all the Tribes in the country,  
13 the concerns that we're hearing.  
14 We're also hearing some support though.  
15 Some folks are wanting to have, you know,  
16 streamlined NEPA so they can do development. And we  
17 have energy producing Tribes in this country that  
18 would love -- love this idea of streamlining NEPA  
19 for their resources.  
20 So it's not going to be a one-size-fits-  
21 all, ever in any country, right. 574 Tribes, all  
22 very unique and different. And so I think we're  
23 going to gather all these comments and take it back,  
24 and present it to the secretary. And then we will  
25 see how ultimately the proposal is to implement it,

Page 289

1 if at all.  
2 GAYLA HOSETH: Yeah, some things need to  
3 go a lot faster than they are, obviously.  
4 And then I guess as another follow up is,  
5 are we going to have a follow-up on this  
6 Consultation of a write-up of what was discussed  
7 here, kind of answers to some of the concerns that  
8 people have as a dialogue back and forth?  
9 Or is this just -- it just -- it's just so  
10 big of hitting the tip of the iceberg when there's  
11 so many things that one thing has a domino effect  
12 that connect everything.  
13 BRYAN MERCIER: Yeah, and I think this is  
14 another lesson learned for our future Consultations  
15 here is to build in a little bit more back and  
16 forth, early.  
17 You know, I was trying to wait until the  
18 end to answer a lot of the questions that have come  
19 up and I've heard, and you know, one of them that we  
20 wanted to probably earlier nip in the bud, and I  
21 think Kelly tried to do that by referring to the  
22 Reddit post.  
23 This idea that there is also a decision to  
24 consolidate the Alaska region with the Northwest  
25 region is false. Like, that is nowhere in the



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 290</p> <p>1 Department of Interior that I'm aware of, and I'm 2 speaking directly to the DOGE people and the 3 secretary, and so that is just a rumor run a mock 4 that is not actually planned at all at this point. 5 That's not to say that there won't be some 6 changes in the future, just there is no discussion 7 at all about having Alaska be consolidated with 8 Portland. That is false. 9 GAYLA HOSETH: Okay, that's good to know. 10 BRYAN MERCIER: It is completely false. 11 GAYLA HOSETH: Yeah. Okay. 12 BRYAN MERCIER: And we've been -- I've 13 been telling everybody, because you're not the first 14 folks here to raise this over the last couple weeks. 15 And we're just saying, that's not true. And I 16 understand, because there's not any information 17 coming out because we're still consulting. People 18 are running with their own stories, right. 19 So the other that, the question that came 20 up earlier from the ICAS, lady from the ICAS was, 21 what happens next? What are we going to do? 22 So we're going to go through these three 23 weeks of Consultation. There will be a 30-day 24 written comment period as well. We'll be gathering 25 the recordings of these meetings, all the comments</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 292</p> <p>1 clients, so whatever we do here, we're trying to 2 minimize any effects to the services to our 3 customers and clients. 4 And you know, we're looking at leveraging 5 technology. We're trying to figure out ways to 6 invest in the BIA so that it's not so people and 7 paper based that we currently are. And that's going 8 to be a challenge in Alaska. We recognize that, 9 because of the infrastructure things up here. 10 But, you know, Starlink and other things 11 that are available may make it possible with the 12 rate of technology development. It is going so 13 fast, maybe there's opportunity to leverage that, 14 right. 15 So a lot of this, there have been very few 16 decisions made. There was another comment I heard. 17 Have decisions been made, this is just a check-the- 18 box exercise? I can assure you, at least from the 19 conversations I'm having in the Interior, there are 20 very few decisions that have been made around Indian 21 Affairs. 22 Other than the DRP, the voluntary buyouts. 23 GAYLA HOSETH: Okay. 24 BRYAN MERCIER: And that was largely 25 because staff were demanding it from us, right.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 291</p> <p>1 that we've had. 2 We are paying people to actually compile 3 that, consolidate it, and help us understand what we 4 are hearing across the country. And ultimately we 5 will be taking that back to the secretary as well to 6 inform him on both workforce efficiently. 7 And there we're going to be working to 8 have a reorganization plan. So all the other 9 hallways in the Department of Interior have already 10 submitted their reorganization plans and their 11 potential reductions in force, which the Executive 12 Order called for. 13 We have not. We have been exempt from 14 that pending this Consultation. So this 15 Consultation will help inform our reorganization 16 plan, and I'm hopeful we won't have any RIFs, 17 largely because the DRPs that we've done have 18 allowed for those that are eligible to retire, to 19 retire with this buyout package. 20 And so my hope is that we've met whatever 21 goals there may be, and we will just restructure and 22 streamline ourselves to provide services. 23 Part of the strategy we have there is 24 we're focused on maintaining services to our 25 customers and clients. You are our customers and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 293</p> <p>1 They can see what is happening in all hallways and 2 across the government, and they did not want to miss 3 out on this opportunity and then be RIFed later in 4 the year, right. 5 So we owed it to our staff to give them 6 the opportunity to retire and get a buyout and find 7 their next opportunities as well. 8 And so it's been all voluntary so far, and 9 we haven't had anything that's been a forcing 10 function, if you will, to date because we've been 11 really -- we've been exempt, and we've been waiting 12 to complete these Consultations, hear from you all 13 before we propose a reorganization plan. 14 GAYLA HOSETH: Okay. Thanks for answering 15 some questions, and I look forward to working back 16 with you guys and seeing what comes out of these 17 meetings. 18 And good luck on your travels, and I hope 19 all you guys are here in Anchorage, that you guys 20 get a chance to kind of see the beauty that's around 21 you. Go for a drive, maybe down towards Girdwood or 22 something tonight, but at least see how nice it is 23 and not just inside a building. 24 But thanks. Thank you. 25 BRYAN MERCIER: Can I share just quick</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 294</p> <p>1 funny stories? The first time I came to Alaska, I 2 went to the Dog Salmon Festival in the Village of 3 Kakes. When that gentleman was talking about that, 4 they asked me to volunteer. I was in my 20s, and 5 they asked for a volunteer to hop in a canoe for the 6 canoe races. So I actually have raced at the canoe 7 races at the Dog Salmon Festival at the Village of 8 Kakes.</p> <p>9 So I've been out in the communities here 10 before.</p> <p>11 GAYLE HOSETH: Nice.</p> <p>12 BRYAN MERCIER: It is very, very 13 beautiful.</p> <p>14 GAYLE HOSETH: Nice.</p> <p>15 KELLY RAE: And the Fourth Brigade, 25th 16 Infantry Division, so this place has always been 17 very special to me.</p> <p>18 GAYLE HOSETH: Nice. Thanks. All right. 19 Thank you, guys.</p> <p>20 BEN DUNCAN: Great, thank you. I saw 21 we're at Kerry. Thank you for your patience. We 22 have one comment online, one comment in person, and 23 then Director, I'll have you kind of close us out. 24 Kerry, are you still there? 25 SAM LEVY: Kerry, you can go ahead and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 296</p> <p>1 understanding what the potential impact of each and 2 every project is, is extremely short-sighted.</p> <p>3 The science supports moving to clean 4 energy, and while I know that this is not what this 5 administration wants to hear, our Native villages 6 must pursue these alternatives and lower our 7 dependence on fossil fuels, not just to slow climate 8 change, but to survive.</p> <p>9 The cost of our dependence on diesel 10 generator is not only the devastating impact on our 11 environment, but also on our finances, as both 12 governments and community members pay a very high 13 price for their use.</p> <p>14 If we're talking about actual emergencies, 15 let's tuck about the crash of fisheries impacting 16 numerous communities and countless families, and 17 inhibiting customary use of these fish by Tribal 18 communities.</p> <p>19 Let's talk about the lack of affordable 20 and livable housing throughout Alaska villages. 21 Let's talk about the erosion problems in the Y-K 22 Delta. Let's talk about the permafrost thaw that is 23 threatening homes and infrastructure in Native 24 villages.</p> <p>25 How about the lack of running water in</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 295</p> <p>1 unmute.</p> <p>2 KERRY IVORY: We are still here, yes. I'm 3 here with a council member and a Tribal member. 4 We're what's left of the council who was here this 5 morning.</p> <p>6 My name is Kerry Ivory. I am the Tribal 7 administrator for the Native Village of Ouzinkie, 8 and my comments are going to be fairly short.</p> <p>9 I wanted to point out that typically the 10 NEPA process is a long process, but decisions that 11 impact generations to come need to be thoroughly 12 thought out and planned thoroughly as well.</p> <p>13 Our Tribe vehemently opposes suspension of 14 any part of the permitting process that limits 15 Tribal input or defers environmental impact studies 16 that might allow projects to go forward that will 17 endanger our already threatened environments.</p> <p>18 This so-called energy emergency is a 19 manufactured emergency meant to increase revenue 20 gained by the consumption of fossil fuel. This puts 21 our Tribal communities, our ecological environments, 22 and the very world that we live in at risk.</p> <p>23 Our land is changing so rapidly due to 24 climate change, a dirty word to this administration. 25 Adding additional stressors without completely</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 297</p> <p>1 Alaska Native villages? These are real emergencies 2 affecting real people, not manufactured emergencies 3 affecting the pocketbooks and bottom lines of 4 wealthy oil companies and individuals.</p> <p>5 Qu yana. Thank you.</p> <p>6 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.</p> <p>7 DONNA BACH: I'm really nervous to be 8 here, but just for transparency purposes, but name 9 is Donna Bach. I am Tribal member of the 10 Orutsararmiut Native Council. I am speaking as a 11 personal citizen. I also am still employed with the 12 Bureau of Land Management as one of the Tribal 13 liaisons.</p> <p>14 And I don't have prepared notes, but I do 15 plan on submitting comments essentially speaking to 16 you as a U.S. citizen and as an Alaskan, and as a 17 descendant of ancestors who have been in discussions 18 with the Department of Interior since before I was 19 born.</p> <p>20 I am 48 years old. I am essentially an 21 afterborn of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement 22 Act, so full disclosure as well. I'm a Doyon 23 shareholder, I Bethel Native Corporation 24 shareholder, and a Calista shareholder.</p> <p>25 I love Alaska. I understand a little bit</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 298</p> <p>1 about NEPA. Looking at this particular 2 implementation procedure on 25 acres for renewal 3 rights. I understand the State of Alaska's owner 4 wealth condition.</p> <p>5 I also understand the political whiplash 6 that our resilient Indigenous people have 7 encountered since before the Prudhoe discovery. I 8 feel like there's a little bit of a history lesson 9 here that might benefit you or anyone that might be 10 listening.</p> <p>11 My great grandfather participated in the 12 people's heritage dialogue in the early '60s, and 13 this was essentially galvanizing of forces of before 14 Prudhoe discovery, but after the proposal of Project 15 Plowshare under the atomic energy commission that 16 basically, you know, gave Alaska an opportunity to 17 say, we're going to do a peaceful atomic 18 demonstration.</p> <p>19 Many people here in Alaska may know it as 20 Project Chariot. I think of it as the first 21 galvanization of a conservation effort. Before Ada 22 Deer, before Tribal Indian self-determination, 23 before NEPA, before -- it was sort of in that post 24 '40s era when, you know, the gold mining industry 25 subsided, but it was a new exciting scientific</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 300</p> <p>1 part of the history, even the broken parts of our 2 history of our state, to do well for itself.</p> <p>3 Let's fast forward to the 1970s when the 4 Trans-Alaska Pipeline was constructed. I know that 5 there was an EIS environmental process that went 6 through three years, and it actually created an 7 influx of people coming to our state. There were 8 probably broken promises, probably still very hard 9 feelings about that time and era.</p> <p>10 However, year after year our state 11 legislature is having to deliberate or possibly 12 borrow from our funds to administer solvency, 13 whether it's building of our roads, maintenance of 14 our schools, maintenance of our roadways, runways. 15 And right now we're seeing exodus of people leaving 16 our state.</p> <p>17 I think again going back to this, you 18 know, 25 acres, approval modification. I can see 19 the silver lining of possibility of this working as 20 long as there are compliances and assurances with 21 all applicable requirements including regulations 22 and onshore orders if it does lend to acknowledging 23 the sovereignty of Tribes and people that are 24 adjacent or near those 25 acres.</p> <p>25 If it's geothermal, I'm not sure if this</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 299</p> <p>1 endeavor that a lot of academia supported at the 2 time.</p> <p>3 Think of the Oppenheimer era. And I lean 4 on that, not only because my great grandfather was, 5 you know, a descendant of living on the Kuskokwim. 6 He was in his elderly years, but the Indigenous 7 voice at that time was maybe when there was one 8 telephone that was working in a village.</p> <p>9 And the word of mouth went around, and 10 there was a dialogue that occurred multiple times in 11 Point Barrow. And what eventually happened was the 12 scientific community and the Indigenous community of 13 leadership got together, and they didn't take the 14 million dollar deal of, you know, an atomic 15 detonation occurring in the Ogotoruk Valley of 16 47,000 acres, in an era where it might have been 17 enticing because Alaska wasn't solvent, and I think 18 we're still dealing with this situation currently in 19 the year of 2025.</p> <p>20 I understand that our nation is 21 encountering \$36 trillion in debt. I try to 22 rationalize maybe an understanding of what a 23 national energy emergency means when we're operating 24 on debt as a nation.</p> <p>25 And energy security I think has allowed a</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 301</p> <p>1 is speaking to L&amp;G, you know. There's other forces 2 at hand that I'm also really having a difficult time 3 understanding the broadness of this question.</p> <p>4 However, advancement of those things will 5 only work if the money is intended to go quickly and 6 swiftly to the people that you are working with in 7 proximity to those lands.</p> <p>8 I just want to thank you for your time. I 9 also feel like there is a level of anxiety that is 10 attached to wearing multiple hats. Like Estelle 11 said, there is a wardrobe that comes in Alaska. You 12 -- I don't even know how many people were in this 13 room earlier. There's not very many anymore, but 14 it's a critical mass of ingenious Indigenous 15 ingenuity.</p> <p>16 And that is the safeguard of everything 17 that came before me, and it is going to be constant 18 and steady in the wake of we are smarter, we 19 understand business. Yes, there are aspects of the 20 federal government that can be reduced. However, if 21 there are aspects of advancements within the federal 22 government, fund it to the degree and fortify these 23 agencies to work in tandem with Tribes or 24 corporations, or Native allottees, to advance these 25 things in a true sovereign fashion.</p>

Page 302

1 Thank you for your time.  
2 BEN DUNCAN: Okay, thank you.  
3 So we're going to go take one last comment  
4 online. If it's Kerry -- so if I'm mispronouncing  
5 your name, and then we have once last in-person  
6 comment that will close out our day.  
7 Is it Kerry? We're going to invite you to  
8 come off mute.  
9 SAM LEVY: All right. Can you go ahead  
10 and unmute. You're also welcome to turn your camera  
11 on if you'd like, and go ahead with your comment.  
12 CORY ERICKSON: Hi, thank you. It's  
13 pronounced Cory, but appreciate it. My name is Cory  
14 Sikuaq Erickson. I am a member of the Native  
15 Village of Unalakleet. I was there for most of the  
16 day, and I thought I would share this comment at the  
17 end.  
18 When you guys are talking about making  
19 these processes more efficient, I think you should  
20 really think about who is it making it more  
21 efficient for.  
22 Obviously you heard a lot today that the  
23 back-and-forth communication that the NEPA and these  
24 other -- that these processes allow is because of  
25 these huge communication and geographical gaps that

Page 303

1 we have, and cultural gaps.  
2 If we look back at 1946, the  
3 Administrative Procedures Act, which is the reason  
4 why we're sitting here giving you comments and not  
5 knowing where they're going to go, are they going to  
6 end up in a binder on a shelf somewhere? Are they  
7 going to get ignored? Is because we've become  
8 conditioned to this process of this notice and  
9 comment process.  
10 Go back to 1946, and that's when they  
11 wanted to make it more streamlined, more efficient  
12 for the federal government to make decisions with  
13 federal land and federal projects, and that was in  
14 the Procedures Act.  
15 So if you look at what you have in Alaska  
16 to the, in rural Alaska specifically, you have  
17 roughly around 240,000 people with around 220  
18 million acres of land across rural Alaska, which  
19 breaks down to roughly 931 acres per person, if  
20 you're looking at it per capita-wise.  
21 Look down at the lower 48, you have  
22 roughly 326 million acres of federal land and 418  
23 million people -- I'm sorry. 418 million acres of  
24 land and 326 million people. It breaks down it  
25 about one acre person if you're looking at it per

Page 304


1 capita. So we have almost a thousand-fold acres of  
2 federal land around our rural communities.  
3 And we have such a various group of  
4 federal agencies trying to do projects and trying to  
5 communicate and everything. Our people are forced  
6 to go to these notify-and-comment kind of hearings  
7 as a revolving door. And it's -- so at the end of  
8 the day, the communication and I just wanted to ask,  
9 who would -- the streamlined processes, who is it  
10 making it more efficient for?  
11 If it's very obvious that it's making it  
12 more efficient for energy developers and it's making  
13 it tougher for us, it's been pretty obvious today  
14 that people are really concerned about that, so I  
15 just wanted to crunch those numbers.  
16 We have a thousand-fold federal land  
17 surrounding our villages out there, so thank you.  
18 BEN DUNCAN: All right. Thank you, Cory.  
19 KIMBERLEY STRONG: Just when you thought  
20 you were out the door. Thank you for your patience.  
21 (Speaking Native American language.) I'm Kimberley  
22 Strong. I'm with the Chilkat Indian Village, people  
23 of Chilkat, Chilkat Klukwan.  
24 I just, I was listening online and I'm  
25 here in Anchorage from Southeast Alaska, and I felt

Page 305

1 it important enough to come in here and give you  
2 some of our thoughts on the processes that's going  
3 on here.  
4 Really not much notice for us to come and  
5 pull our thoughts together, but I want -- a question  
6 that's burning in our minds, what is the energy  
7 emergency we're talking about?  
8 What is it that we want to feed with  
9 curtailing all of the NEPA processes that are in  
10 place today?  
11 Where it was going to take us two years to  
12 go through a very good environmental study to see  
13 what the impacts were going to be on our  
14 environment, is now going to happen within 28 days?  
15 That's a little bit insane. We have a  
16 very difficult time believing that in any way that  
17 the Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian  
18 Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, can possibly do  
19 these things in any meaningful way to protect our  
20 traditional lands.  
21 In Klukwan, our traditional lands was 2.6  
22 million acres. We're down to 1,800 acres for our  
23 village. One thousand eight hundred acres. We rely  
24 on the D-1 set-asides.  
25 When land claims happened, our land was

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 306</p> <p>1 picked down because there is no area left in the 2 Chilkat Valley because of the big give-away of our 3 ancestral lands to the State of Alaska, Department 4 of Education, for the mental health trust which is 5 another crazy institution that is really stressing 6 our mental health as Native people. 7       The D-1 land set-asides were set aside 8 during the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to 9 protect our way of life, to ensure that we would 10 have lands to hunt and fish on. 11       With this speed-up process of getting the 12 energy, digging up the lands for mining, expediting 13 that whole exploration for essential minerals, my 14 little quotation marks here. What are essential, is 15 really disheartening. 16       My community has lived for thousands of 17 years along the Chilkat River. Jilthka-heeni 18 (phonetic) means The River That Belongs To The 19 Salmon. 20       We get all five species of salmon that run 21 in that river, plus other androgynous fish. We 22 jeopardize -- we're currently being jeopardized by a 23 hard rock acid mine that BLM manages. 24       We've asked BLM during their community 25 meetings with us, our Consultations so to speak. A</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 308</p> <p>1       But if you guys would invite us to the 2 table when you're getting these consultations from 3 those experts out there that are going to tell you 4 why they believe that helicopters should be flying 5 around with the mountain goats that are just jumping 6 off of the cliffs, because those helicopters for 7 heli skiing are scaring those mountain goats. 8       They're frightening them. They're causing 9 bears to come out of their dens in the middle of the 10 winter, so we could have heli skiing on the ring of 11 fire with the BLM lands. 12       There's so many just atrocities that are 13 happening over and over and over again for our 14 people, not just in my Chilkat Valley, but across 15 the State of Alaska and across the Nation. 16       We are just, again, asking you, please, 17 when you go forward and you represent the Tribes in 18 Alaska and the Tribes across the Nation, that you 19 continue to realize it's your voice. It's our 20 voices. We need your voice to sound like us. The 21 urgencies of wanting to protect our way of life. 22       Again, I don't want to hold everybody up 23 this have been waiting here for the time to leave, 24 but again, look at those D-1 lands and look at the 25 purpose of them during the Alaska Native Claims</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 307</p> <p>1 meaningful Consultation means that you listen to us 2 and take our advice, and you try and make 3 adaptations to what we're asking. 4       We've gone with BLM. We are -- we do our 5 darnedest for the past forever having government-to- 6 government Consultations that we someday believe and 7 hope that it will be meaningful, meaningful for the 8 federal government to listen to us, meaningful for 9 the Tribes to get our needs met. 10       When we meet with BLM, I've constantly 11 said, we don't have enough funding to have these 12 experts to come in to our meeting. You come in and 13 you tell us when the experts say. The experts are 14 your experts. 15       Can we ask them those questions in a 16 different way? In a way of the Native people on the 17 land, that we are looking to protect for the next 18 seven generations. I think my president said that 19 when he spoke earlier today. 20       We don't have any of these -- we don't 21 have the funds. If you would give us like millions 22 of dollars in funding so we can hire the experts 23 that could come in to help us advise the Tribe, 24 these are the areas and how we could possibly push 25 back.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 309</p> <p>1 Settlement Act. 2       It's my last holdout to protect it from 3 the extractions. The river, as I said, I think that 4 the coho run on the Chilkat River is the largest -- 5 the third largest coho run in the State of Alaska. 6       The run of sockeye salmon, cohos and 7 pinks, and chum salmon used to be, but ever since 8 the exploration of mining right above my village has 9 been happening off of the Klehini River, which is 10 Klehini is the mother river, ever since they started 11 doing exploration there, the number of chum salmon 12 have declined significantly. 13       The number of eagles, because Chilkat 14 Valley is known for being the Valley of the Eagles. 15 The number of eagles that perch, bald eagles that 16 perch on the trees on the Klehini declined. 17       The question to Department of Fish and 18 Game, what's going on? Is there a water issue going 19 on since the mining exploration started? 20       DEC said -- they said good to DEC, we 21 don't monitor the waterways. DEC, Department of 22 Environmental Conservation monitors the waterways. 23       I called DEC up. They say, do you know 24 how many waterways there are in Alaska? We can't 25 possibly monitor all of them. I'm not asking them</p>



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 310</p> <p>1 to monitor all of them. I'm asking them to monitor 2 one that has five species of salmon. 3 The idea that the State of Alaska, through 4 the Department of Natural Resources, is going to 5 protect our way of life is crazy. They have a 6 mission, whether it's Department of Natural 7 Resources, houses, all of these different agencies 8 that are in conflict with conservation. 9 We look upon the federal government to 10 protect us, to protect our way of life. I hate the 11 whole idea of -- I think I say if I was considered 12 an endangered species, maybe we would get 13 protection, but that's what's happening. 14 The genocide of our people continues. It 15 continues with every inch of taking. Taking the 16 resources because there's some kind of energy 17 crisis. Taking the riches out of Alaska is taking 18 from us. 19 And it's not even taking the riches that 20 we honor and -- and love. They're taking those 21 riches of minerals and oil in extraction. Not the 22 renewable resources that we could enhance, like the 23 salmon. 24 I'm not anti-logging because I believe 25 that's a renewable resource, done well, but come on</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 312</p> <p>1 about the rumors that we were hearing, so I won't go 2 into that, but again, this is just the start of the 3 Consultation period. 4 We'll have six more Consultation sessions 5 that will all be virtual, so those online that 6 hadn't had a chance to add a comment, you'll have 7 ample opportunity in the future to do it. 8 And then we will have a 30-day written 9 comment period before we actually start to compile 10 and take this to the separate for consideration, 11 both on workforce and on the national emergency 12 energy NEPA regulations. 13 So appreciate everybody's comments, and 14 thank you all for your time. Appreciate it. 15 BEN DUNCAN: I think that's it, right? 16 That's the chat. Thank you. Thank you all for 17 coming. 18 We did have some questions just around the 19 transcripts. They will be posted on the BIA 20 website. 21 So thanks everybody, have a great night. 22 (WHEREUPON, the ALASKA TRIBAL CONSULTATION 23 concluded at 5:27 p.m.) 24 25</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 311</p> <p>1 you guys, let's, please, I beg of you on behalf of 2 my Tribe and my people, to let our voices be heard. 3 Let our voices be heard on our grandfather's land. 4 Gon-as-chish (phonetic). 5 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 6 Director. 7 BRYAN MERCIER: Yeah, so almost seven and 8 a half hours straight. That might be some kind of 9 record, I don't know, but I appreciate everybody's 10 participation. 11 I should have said this earlier. The 12 reason we are here at Alaska Pacific University is 13 because our previous spot downtown, a federal 14 building, fell through because of the virtual 15 connectivity. We couldn't do the Zoom there. 16 So we didn't underestimate the Alaska 17 region by any means. This was the only place that 18 could take us on a week's notice, so we appreciate 19 the Alaska Pacific University giving us this space. 20 It was a little tight earlier, so please 21 pass on to those that are still here, pass on to the 22 folks that were here, that this was -- we made do 23 and it went -- went pretty well, all things 24 considered. 25 I answered a few other questions earlier</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 313</p> <p>1 CERTIFICATE 2 3 I, Miriam ODell, do hereby certify that I 4 reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing 5 matter and that the foregoing transcript pages 6 constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said 7 proceedings to the best of my ability. 8 9 I further certify that I am neither related to 10 counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any 11 interest in the outcome of the proceedings. 12 13 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand 14 this 28th day of May, 2025. 15 16  17 18 Miriam ODell, #3658 19 20 21 22 23 24 25</p>

<b>\$</b>	<b>1,800</b> 305:22	<b>14156</b> 2:14 6:12 11:24	<b>1992</b> 137:23
<b>\$10</b> 15:23	<b>1.2</b> 105:24	<b>1420</b> 11:14	<b>1:00</b> 116:15,20 117:10
<b>\$100</b> 98:19	<b>1.85</b> 25:1	<b>14210</b> 2:11 6:10 12:3 28:7 31:14 110:3 259:3	<b>2</b>
<b>\$107</b> 226:23	<b>10</b> 16:3 36:16 70:21 88:24 136:15,16,19 137:1,4 244:2 245:8	<b>14th</b> 130:19	<b>2</b> 63:23 74:10 147:13 212:8,10,13, 18
<b>\$150,000</b> 207:10	<b>10,000</b> 103:8 106:6 262:19	<b>15</b> 116:21 117:10	<b>2.6</b> 305:21
<b>\$187</b> 226:24	<b>10-day</b> 73:8	<b>150</b> 20:9	<b>2.7</b> 207:13
<b>\$2,706,775</b> 205:21	<b>100-297</b> 22:11	<b>16</b> 136:17 137:1,16	<b>20</b> 47:24 102:22 106:18 135:11 137:15 146:17 166:13 225:1 249:4 276:7 282:7
<b>\$200</b> 15:5,23	<b>102-477</b> 53:8 157:18 215:22	<b>160</b> 105:25	<b>20-some</b> 126:7
<b>\$25</b> 131:15	<b>105(I)</b> 16:8 43:9 56:17 59:5 141:13 189:6 214:2 215:17 216:6 221:22	<b>17</b> 89:12 145:6,8,15 173:1,6 180:3,7	<b>20-year</b> 80:1
<b>\$250,000</b> 74:15 238:1	<b>106</b> 60:3 126:22,25 177:20 198:16 199:14 230:10,13 238:13 287:16,20, 21	<b>17th</b> 221:9	<b>200</b> 212:8,10,13,19
<b>\$253,117.22</b> 205:14	<b>11</b> 59:17 108:3 137:6,9 150:14 166:13	<b>18</b> 180:3 192:19 245:9 253:8	<b>200,000</b> 140:17
<b>\$3</b> 268:1	<b>11:50</b> 34:21	<b>183</b> 21:23 22:7	<b>2003</b> 282:5
<b>\$300,000</b> 74:5	<b>11:59</b> 8:5 34:21	<b>1867</b> 131:22	<b>2004</b> 109:1
<b>\$36</b> 299:21	<b>12</b> 19:11 20:20 22:1 36:18 190:16 240:2 244:2	<b>1890s</b> 245:11	<b>2005</b> 106:18
<b>\$37</b> 248:2	<b>128</b> 22:9	<b>19</b> 146:16	<b>2008</b> 253:4
<b>\$4,000</b> 49:7	<b>130</b> 240:15	<b>1930</b> 245:15	<b>201</b> 171:3
<b>\$4.5</b> 203:17	<b>14</b> 73:10 167:21,24 177:21 232:9 235:14 259:8	<b>1940</b> 130:10 245:15	<b>2013</b> 208:20
<b>\$47,000</b> 141:7	<b>14,000</b> 144:4	<b>1943</b> 131:24	<b>2014</b> 88:3,19 208:20
<b>\$5</b> 210:13	<b>14-day</b> 75:17 218:3	<b>1946</b> 303:2,10	<b>2017</b> 44:14 102:21
<b>\$50,000</b> 74:7		<b>1970</b> 130:16	<b>2019</b> 25:20 132:15
<b>\$600</b> 15:7		<b>1970s</b> 300:3	<b>2020</b> 24:15,16 207:8 254:4 265:23
<b>\$617</b> 226:21		<b>1973</b> 137:21	<b>2021</b> 94:4 133:17
<b>\$9</b> 24:21		<b>1978</b> 93:21	<b>2022</b> 92:22 94:5 254:6
<b>1</b>		<b>1979</b> 77:25	
<b>1</b> 74:2 75:23 271:13		<b>1989</b> 67:14	
<b>1,200</b> 157:14 206:24		<b>1990</b> 80:19	
<b>1,500</b> 273:17,19 274:1			

<b>2023</b> 150:14 233:22 282:7	<b>27</b> 25:13 92:14 253:18	<b>4,200</b> 81:7	<b>500-plus</b> 200:2
<b>2024</b> 135:12 142:10, 22 143:7 205:16	<b>28</b> 167:21,24 177:17 232:11 235:14 283:13 285:4 305:14	<b>4,300</b> 24:23	<b>50s</b> 35:10
<b>2025</b> 8:6 34:22 36:3, 19 47:24 151:6 205:18 231:16 299:19		<b>40</b> 43:22 105:21 107:17 136:22 177:9 253:17	<b>51</b> 269:10
<b>2040</b> 168:21	<hr/> <b>3</b> <hr/>	<b>40,000</b> 21:22	<b>55</b> 18:12 22:7
<b>20s</b> 294:4	<b>3</b> 63:23 74:19 148:23 225:10	<b>40-member</b> 88:3,5, 18 89:15	<b>56</b> 37:17,23 38:16 40:20 174:7
<b>22</b> 119:2	<b>3,200</b> 64:7	<b>40s</b> 298:24	<b>57</b> 18:13
<b>220</b> 275:15 303:17	<b>30</b> 24:13 98:18 218:17 254:4	<b>414,000</b> 24:25	<b>574</b> 288:21
<b>226</b> 203:19	<b>30,000</b> 37:20	<b>418</b> 303:22,23	<b>58</b> 211:6,16,21 238:16
<b>228</b> 197:14	<b>30-day</b> 287:17,18,19 290:23 312:8	<b>42</b> 51:7	<hr/> <b>6</b> <hr/>
<b>229</b> 56:1 65:19 152:22 172:4 192:10 214:8 220:3 263:14 283:11	<b>300</b> 19:23	<b>47,000</b> 299:16	<b>6</b> 75:19 95:22,23 105:12 230:13
<b>23</b> 21:25 108:3	<b>31</b> 64:10 203:19 283:13,14	<b>477</b> 56:23 159:12 160:8,20 161:8 246:8	<b>6,000</b> 196:5
<b>23rd</b> 231:16	<b>32</b> 203:20 246:2	<b>48</b> 21:25 37:19 39:22 51:21 70:10 107:2 146:14 163:23 206:23 209:4,20 210:2 234:14 297:20 303:21	<b>6,576</b> 154:5
<b>24</b> 92:13	<b>32-lot</b> 205:16,19 207:12	<b>48,000</b> 70:24	<b>60</b> 75:15 254:4 287:20
<b>24-hour</b> 25:18	<b>3206</b> 168:9	<hr/> <b>5</b> <hr/>	<b>60-day</b> 287:17
<b>24/7</b> 176:14	<b>326</b> 303:22,24	<b>5</b> 16:2 75:11 95:22, 23 225:10	<b>60s</b> 298:12
<b>240,000</b> 303:17	<b>33</b> 92:23	<b>5,400</b> 282:24	<b>63</b> 106:2
<b>240-some-today</b> 273:16	<b>3384</b> 24:14	<b>50</b> 25:13 206:24 211:6,21 238:16	<b>638</b> 19:25 107:24 108:1,10 109:1,12 126:6 146:24 149:2, 7,21 150:8 178:7 257:7,10
<b>25</b> 97:22 103:23 157:19 275:6 298:2 300:18,24	<b>34</b> 211:4	<b>50,000</b> 62:2	<b>64</b> 21:24
<b>25,000</b> 74:16	<b>3429</b> 11:16	<b>500</b> 43:1 45:25 98:19 196:4 264:7	<b>663,000</b> 56:3
<b>25-</b> 101:25 160:18	<b>35</b> 91:22	<b>500,000</b> 75:23	<b>68</b> 253:17
<b>25th</b> 294:15	<b>37</b> 51:7,9		<b>69</b> 48:13
<b>26</b> 253:18	<b>38,000</b> 55:9		<hr/> <b>7</b> <hr/>
<b>26,000</b> 137:17	<hr/> <b>4</b> <hr/>		<b>7</b> 73:8,10 75:17 87:2 95:22,23 105:12
	<b>4</b> 63:23 75:3 225:10		

168:7 218:3 221:6 230:8,12 287:22 <b>7-day</b> 177:18 <b>70</b> 184:14 <b>70s</b> 78:4 246:12 <b>740,000</b> 65:20 <b>75</b> 15:7 127:13 128:10 137:19 206:24 <b>77</b> 61:14 <b>79</b> 128:8 <b>7th</b> 8:6 34:21	<hr/> <b>A</b> <hr/> <b>A23av01085</b> 205:14, 19,20 <b>aallows</b> 142:4 <b>abbreviated</b> 271:24 <b>ability</b> 57:19 84:18 92:25 108:1,10,13, 15,25 109:11 145:15 159:1 160:22 165:14 169:20 181:13 215:1 216:11 222:11 234:17 249:18 259:10 277:20 279:5 <b>Aboriginal</b> 67:11 <b>absolutely</b> 121:22 128:11 <b>abstract</b> 118:21 165:1 213:9 217:3 220:2 <b>abundance</b> 69:10, 11 260:24 <b>abuse</b> 12:7 <b>academia</b> 299:1 <b>academic</b> 30:3 <b>accelerated</b> 249:16 <b>accept</b> 34:10,20 59:10 75:6 211:18, 22 212:1,3 240:19 <b>accepted</b> 119:3 <b>accepting</b> 5:5 <b>access</b> 25:17,18 26:1,13 29:16 30:1 31:5 32:2 44:11 53:2 59:4,25 60:1	69:14 82:11 90:5 93:6 136:4 139:18 147:20 150:24 165:14,19 167:12 170:9 178:11 180:14,22 181:16 182:25 185:19 210:23 223:16 249:23 255:7,11 256:1,3,4,10 257:23,24 267:18 272:23 <b>accessed</b> 51:12 <b>accesses</b> 44:17 222:6 <b>accessibility</b> 33:15 <b>accessible</b> 56:6 57:6 124:11 255:16 <b>accident</b> 76:22 98:8 106:20 <b>accidentally</b> 95:11 <b>accommodate</b> 53:23 <b>accompanied</b> 259:23 <b>accomplished</b> 176:2 <b>accomplishing</b> 175:2 <b>accordance</b> 116:10 <b>account</b> 24:7 25:3 60:16 135:24 232:21 <b>accountability</b> 12:4 13:9 56:16,22 109:24 126:24 128:17 167:14 <b>accountable</b> 35:13	43:20 <b>accounting</b> 26:18, 19 93:11 <b>accounts</b> 24:10,24, 25 26:20 <b>accredited</b> 91:23 <b>accurate</b> 93:11 223:23 250:13 270:8 273:22 <b>accurately</b> 8:11 24:7 <b>achieve</b> 13:9 270:23 <b>achieved</b> 47:6 <b>achievement</b> 30:3 <b>acid</b> 306:23 <b>acknowledge</b> 46:9 172:23 274:25 <b>acknowledged</b> 229:6 <b>acknowledgement</b> 14:8 42:18 115:25 204:6 <b>acknowledging</b> 163:25 222:20 300:22 <b>acquire</b> 189:3 253:7, 8 <b>acquired</b> 92:1 <b>acquiring</b> 253:6 <b>acquisition</b> 15:10 212:6 <b>acquisitions</b> 15:3,6 22:16 <b>acre</b> 303:25 <b>acreage</b> 240:17 279:21
<hr/> <b>8</b> <hr/> <b>8</b> 36:16 95:22,23 105:12 123:13 <b>8-1/2</b> 59:16 <b>8-year-olds</b> 245:8 <b>80</b> 76:6 <b>85</b> 103:22			
<hr/> <b>9</b> <hr/> <b>9</b> 34:7 95:22,23 105:12 116:13 123:7,8,10 221:8 <b>9,000</b> 137:19 <b>90,000</b> 261:5 <b>93-638</b> 70:7 106:9 137:22 <b>931</b> 303:19 <b>99</b> 89:4			

<p><b>acres</b> 18:13 105:24, 25 106:6 240:16 275:6 298:2 299:16 300:18,24 303:18, 19,22,23 304:1 305:22,23</p> <p><b>acronym</b> 14:17</p> <p><b>act</b> 15:4 20:1 47:20 60:17 78:6,11,13 80:2,5,21,24 87:3 89:9 91:6 93:22 94:15 96:10 109:2 112:18 130:17,24 132:2 145:4 157:17 166:17 167:21 177:19 178:18,19 209:21 230:10 231:24 237:2,3 257:13 259:15,16, 17 260:21 262:16 286:17 297:22 303:3,14 306:8 309:1</p> <p><b>acting</b> 23:10 79:4</p> <p><b>action</b> 98:24 158:4 164:16 170:7 179:4 217:3 221:3 264:11 272:6</p> <p><b>actions</b> 10:12,14 89:22 112:11 160:25 198:24 213:18 233:9,20 261:5 270:7,14,20 272:20 279:24 287:15</p> <p><b>active</b> 24:21 88:23 175:2</p> <p><b>actively</b> 3:17 132:9 162:6 264:4</p> <p><b>activities</b> 15:10,20 133:9 143:8 159:20</p>	<p>222:15 233:12 261:16 279:8</p> <p><b>activity</b> 105:12</p> <p><b>actual</b> 15:14 153:13 296:14</p> <p><b>acutely</b> 269:21,23</p> <p><b>ad</b> 129:20 263:11</p> <p><b>Ada</b> 247:1 298:21</p> <p><b>adamantly</b> 199:12</p> <p><b>adapt</b> 19:1 157:21 160:23</p> <p><b>adaptation</b> 143:7 169:13,19</p> <p><b>adaptations</b> 307:3</p> <p><b>add</b> 125:18 138:5 224:17 229:6,14 273:11 279:9 312:6</p> <p><b>added</b> 68:6 90:14 94:5 259:3 288:4</p> <p><b>addendum</b> 86:24 221:4 249:8</p> <p><b>addendums</b> 46:20 118:18</p> <p><b>adding</b> 6:11 136:4 183:7 295:25</p> <p><b>addition</b> 10:8 29:13 40:10 163:5 169:2 226:21 232:16 236:2 269:7 274:6</p> <p><b>additional</b> 51:23 52:1 54:7 68:5 74:17 135:6,18 136:4 141:15 148:20 202:17 213:16 241:7 295:25</p>	<p><b>additionally</b> 25:2 119:8 159:24 238:9</p> <p><b>address</b> 8:3 13:23 32:12 39:23 60:1,7 96:15 97:12 120:2 136:9 141:10 142:16 143:2 146:20 153:20,22 160:6 161:11 200:9 222:7,12 229:17 255:25 256:25</p> <p><b>addressing</b> 31:24 58:21 93:2 147:13 158:22 161:4 195:11</p> <p><b>adds</b> 135:18</p> <p><b>adequate</b> 140:19 141:4 158:10,18 159:8 161:2 190:18 203:24 216:2 233:6 237:5 250:7 278:5</p> <p><b>adequately</b> 141:9 197:13 204:5 278:15 279:16</p> <p><b>adhering</b> 157:24</p> <p><b>adjacent</b> 109:3 300:24</p> <p><b>adjust</b> 19:4 50:13 228:24</p> <p><b>adjusted</b> 218:16</p> <p><b>Adjusting</b> 256:15</p> <p><b>administer</b> 18:24 32:2,6 300:12</p> <p><b>administering</b> 147:1</p> <p><b>administration</b> 11:13 13:1 19:1,5 24:20 43:8 45:2 58:2 75:1 86:16</p>	<p>87:6 91:19 99:22 108:7 119:3,15 144:16 150:7 151:14,23 163:12 168:17 180:21 187:23,24 194:18 195:21 197:8,19 199:4,8,25 201:19 202:6,10 207:9,13 209:10 212:16,17 225:21 227:1,14,23 229:4 244:5 245:5 248:10 260:20 295:24 296:5</p> <p><b>administration's</b> 157:9 236:17</p> <p><b>administrative</b> 11:17 13:6,15 19:25 28:19 32:2 44:8 52:21 53:11 75:3,21 94:18,21 112:21 113:15 157:20 159:10 160:21 181:4,6 183:3,8 184:11 256:13 303:3</p> <p><b>administratively</b> 52:17</p> <p><b>administrator</b> 122:23 124:6 157:7 213:2 295:7</p> <p><b>administrators</b> 285:24</p> <p><b>adopt</b> 87:1 178:22 221:5 232:2 249:9</p> <p><b>adult</b> 174:16 186:8</p> <p><b>advance</b> 7:23 256:18 301:24</p> <p><b>advanced</b> 44:13 61:8,9 74:9 121:25</p>
--	--	--	---



<p>215:21</p> <p><b>advancement</b> 301:4</p> <p><b>advancements</b> 301:21</p> <p><b>advancing</b> 27:19 57:24</p> <p><b>advantage</b> 212:18</p> <p><b>advertising</b> 175:12</p> <p><b>advice</b> 175:23 307:2</p> <p><b>advise</b> 307:23</p> <p><b>advisor</b> 10:21 226:5</p> <p><b>advisory</b> 62:18 64:25 79:6 236:9 258:23</p> <p><b>advocacy</b> 98:9 226:4 249:5 258:8</p> <p><b>advocate</b> 37:23 72:6 93:25 109:21 141:2, 15 159:25 160:12 161:6 171:25 190:18 283:3</p> <p><b>Affair</b> 14:1 221:17</p> <p><b>affairs</b> 2:9 10:4,22 11:2,8,9 12:17,19, 23 13:13,17 14:3,4, 18,22 15:21 16:7,16 27:2,10,15 28:8,16 31:19,20,25 32:7,9 38:17 78:9 79:8 82:15 87:10,11 91:14 93:5 94:13 97:16 99:3 110:19 111:7,15,25 112:13, 25 114:4 115:14 116:7 119:19 123:2 144:19,23,24 145:3, 17,19 146:23 147:1, 22 148:8 149:1,19</p>	<p>154:12 158:2,4,8,9, 18 159:4,18,25 160:11,12,18,25 161:9,23 164:9,23 194:4 205:13 213:24 214:6 219:23 221:9,10,14 222:6,14,17 223:20 224:2,6 256:23 279:13 292:21 305:18</p> <p><b>affect</b> 69:6 127:12 241:6 266:6,7 271:2,7</p> <p><b>affected</b> 92:13 269:11 277:23,24 278:6</p> <p><b>affecting</b> 73:4 154:20 297:2,3</p> <p><b>affects</b> 271:1</p> <p><b>affiliated</b> 7:9 156:12</p> <p><b>affiliation</b> 8:15 34:5</p> <p><b>affirm</b> 170:6 217:6</p> <p><b>affirmed</b> 73:24</p> <p><b>afford</b> 76:13</p> <p><b>affordable</b> 47:18 236:23 296:19</p> <p><b>AFN</b> 100:2</p> <p><b>Afognak</b> 213:3 214:25</p> <p><b>aforementioned</b> 205:19</p> <p><b>afterborn</b> 297:21</p> <p><b>afternoon</b> 90:21 105:10 133:5 137:10 143:19 157:1 184:25 201:3 205:6</p>	<p><b>afterthought</b> 44:1</p> <p><b>afterthoughts</b> 55:20</p> <p><b>Ag</b> 108:20</p> <p><b>age</b> 225:10</p> <p><b>agencies</b> 12:10 42:5 43:20 57:4 59:1 60:11 61:18 62:3 67:18 75:2 82:6 94:9 98:23 108:14 113:13 114:5 115:2 134:2 166:8 171:13, 14,17 172:11 178:9 194:18 196:12 197:4 212:2 217:1 223:25 236:15 238:11,25 239:1,9 240:18,19 249:24 256:7,9 260:5 269:22 270:4 273:9, 10 276:4 284:17,25 285:1 301:23 304:4 310:7</p> <p><b>agency</b> 62:10,22 88:23 91:21 93:17 108:9 113:16 136:1 165:3 167:5 207:8 210:15 232:18,20 234:17,22 235:4,9 239:7 251:4 269:4 270:2,9,18 283:24 284:2,6,14</p> <p><b>agenda</b> 6:15 229:14 288:4</p> <p><b>ages</b> 185:18 191:24, 25 192:2</p> <p><b>aggravating</b> 261:18</p> <p><b>aging</b> 76:14</p> <p><b>agree</b> 201:11 220:12,14 227:12</p>	<p><b>agreed</b> 182:16</p> <p><b>agreement</b> 7:23 60:12 62:8 88:10 107:22 149:8 179:2 182:16 211:20</p> <p><b>agreements</b> 22:11 53:16 59:5 60:10 62:6 108:15,22 109:11 111:18 113:11 128:2,4,18 130:1 146:24 224:16</p> <p><b>agrees</b> 144:23</p> <p><b>agriculture</b> 91:12 151:16</p> <p><b>ahead</b> 23:17 49:25 50:20 83:10 85:19, 20 90:18 95:25 116:5 122:19,20 125:10 129:12 132:9 133:3 134:19, 21 173:12,14 176:25 177:8 294:25 302:9,11</p> <p><b>ahold</b> 121:9</p> <p><b>Ahtna</b> 192:6,10 260:17 262:10,17, 19</p> <p><b>AI</b> 185:19</p> <p><b>aid</b> 61:7 149:17 151:18 152:14</p> <p><b>AIHEC</b> 92:19 94:16</p> <p><b>aim</b> 75:24</p> <p><b>aimed</b> 25:6 160:16</p> <p><b>ain't</b> 248:1</p> <p><b>air</b> 11:11 51:12 66:6 67:6 247:25 268:21 269:3,13 271:22</p>
--	--	--	--

<p>274:16</p> <p><b>aircraft</b> 107:8,10</p> <p><b>airline</b> 106:20</p> <p><b>airport</b> 106:17 107:6 253:1,2,4 254:4,10</p> <p><b>Airports</b> 253:25</p> <p><b>Akiachak</b> 205:7,8,11 206:2,6</p> <p><b>Akiak</b> 207:24 211:2, 13</p> <p><b>alarm</b> 102:9</p> <p><b>alarming</b> 101:14</p> <p><b>Alaska</b> 8:17 10:10 16:8 17:16 18:11,18 19:12 20:7 21:18 24:11 36:8,9,10 37:3,19 38:15,18, 22,24,25 39:2,20 40:15 41:8,15,25 42:7,25 43:19,22 45:5,24,25 47:1 51:8,9,18,20 52:3, 24 55:7,10 56:1,4 57:7 59:12,20 60:11 61:25 63:8 64:6,11, 22 65:3,18,25 66:2 67:12,15 68:14 69:8 70:8,12 72:4 77:5, 23 78:4 81:8,22 87:18,19,24 90:1,4, 23 92:19 96:5,10 97:2 98:4 99:6 100:2,3,16 101:14, 15 102:5,16,17,18, 24 103:7,9 104:7,17 105:20,21 106:24 107:1,13,17,22 108:3 109:5,8,20 111:1 112:4,17 113:20 114:3</p>	<p>123:21 124:4,12 126:13 130:16,24, 25 131:23 132:2 133:9,11,19 134:1, 7,11,14,15 135:10, 17 137:14,20 141:22 142:8 143:22 144:2 145:7, 25 146:3,8,12 147:8 148:17 149:15 151:9 152:22 154:21 155:11 156:19 161:20 162:19,20,21 163:19,20 165:10 166:5,11,14,19,21 167:15 168:3 169:18 170:6 172:5, 18,23 175:4 177:25 178:11,16 180:13 183:7 186:5,10,14, 16 190:4,15 196:3 197:15 198:2 201:5 203:15 204:8,10,19 208:25 209:3,7 213:3,23 214:6,8,13 216:8 217:24,25 220:3 221:19,21,23, 25 222:3,5,21 223:1 224:19,23 225:24, 25 226:1 230:15 233:25 240:15,17 253:1,2 255:2 256:3,17 257:19 258:15,22 259:1,22 260:10,15,19 261:8, 10 263:15 269:17 271:20 277:10,13 279:8 280:5,14,25 283:11 289:24 290:7 292:8 294:1 296:20 297:1,21,25 298:16,19 299:17</p>	<p>301:11 303:15,16, 18 304:25 306:3,8 308:15,18,25 309:5, 24 310:3,17 311:12, 16,19</p> <p><b>Alaskan</b> 24:11 51:24 70:13 123:16 130:23 156:11 188:2 222:21 255:16 257:11 260:1 274:21 297:16</p> <p><b>Alaskans</b> 210:4 236:6</p> <p><b>Alaska's</b> 41:17 59:18 170:13 198:3 240:14 257:22 298:3</p> <p><b>Albuquerque</b> 22:5</p> <p><b>Aleutian</b> 157:2</p> <p><b>align</b> 61:16 256:10</p> <p><b>aligned</b> 28:11</p> <p><b>aligning</b> 258:20</p> <p><b>alignment</b> 6:15 28:4 157:25</p> <p><b>alignments</b> 29:7</p> <p><b>alive</b> 251:23 252:20, 23</p> <p><b>Allakaket</b> 35:7,19,22 36:18 244:4,10 245:23 246:3,10 247:11 248:10</p> <p><b>Allen</b> 38:19</p> <p><b>Alliance</b> 162:20</p> <p><b>allocate</b> 159:1 257:17</p> <p><b>allocation</b> 30:2 53:5</p>	<p>61:5 74:6 75:23</p> <p><b>allocations</b> 52:11 53:1 74:3 97:6 195:12 196:18 215:16 223:11 259:1</p> <p><b>allotees</b> 301:24</p> <p><b>allotment</b> 146:16 221:21</p> <p><b>allotments</b> 54:1 105:23 106:3 214:1 253:11,12</p> <p><b>allowable</b> 94:24 159:14</p> <p><b>allowed</b> 44:22 46:12 48:24 178:8 208:21 239:9 291:18 299:25</p> <p><b>allowing</b> 21:12 42:19 58:8 72:10 82:22 95:7 109:16 118:1 143:17 179:23 192:16</p> <p><b>alongside</b> 116:5 134:14 163:1</p> <p><b>Alsek</b> 104:8</p> <p><b>alterations</b> 261:22</p> <p><b>altercation</b> 262:14</p> <p><b>alternate</b> 65:2 80:10</p> <p><b>alternative</b> 80:10 87:1,4 221:5,7 230:1 232:2 249:9</p> <p><b>alternatives</b> 154:24 178:22 273:7 296:6</p> <p><b>alumna</b> 133:11</p> <p><b>Alutiiq</b> 212:25</p>
---	--	--	--

<p><b>AMBCC</b> 70:19,22</p> <p><b>Ambler</b> 131:10 244:11 246:3</p> <p><b>amendment</b> 130:19</p> <p><b>amendments</b> 94:19 145:8</p> <p><b>America</b> 59:25 104:22</p> <p><b>American</b> 10:9 12:4 13:10 14:2 26:24 30:20 58:15 72:11 77:11 85:15 92:18 94:16 109:17 117:19 125:12 153:25 154:1 156:10,19 162:9 176:18 192:5 195:21 203:11 212:25 233:22 263:19,22,23 264:2, 8,16,25 265:7,14 268:17 270:5 304:21</p> <p><b>Americans</b> 131:25</p> <p><b>amidst</b> 119:12</p> <p><b>amount</b> 46:7 189:3</p> <p><b>amounts</b> 188:25</p> <p><b>ample</b> 312:7</p> <p><b>Anaktuvuk</b> 144:6</p> <p><b>analogy</b> 282:14</p> <p><b>analysis</b> 28:13 208:13 233:19 270:8 279:20</p> <p><b>analyst</b> 91:22</p> <p><b>analyze</b> 271:9</p> <p><b>ANC</b> 246:1</p>	<p><b>ancestors</b> 216:20 265:2 297:17</p> <p><b>ancestral</b> 110:6 168:4 306:3</p> <p><b>Anchorage</b> 9:18 19:14 36:16 60:5 65:25 66:8 106:21 135:6 188:18 196:2 247:6 293:19 304:25</p> <p><b>ancient</b> 272:23</p> <p><b>ANCSA</b> 67:10 89:12 107:1 247:5 282:13</p> <p><b>and/or</b> 147:10 165:16 201:25</p> <p><b>Anderson</b> 9:2 244:4</p> <p><b>androgynous</b> 306:21</p> <p><b>ANILCA</b> 107:2 112:18 280:1</p> <p><b>animals</b> 67:6 284:22</p> <p><b>announced</b> 231:16</p> <p><b>annual</b> 60:16 148:1</p> <p><b>annually</b> 25:1 40:3</p> <p><b>answering</b> 41:19 293:14</p> <p><b>answers</b> 289:7</p> <p><b>anthropologists</b> 69:4</p> <p><b>anti-logging</b> 310:24</p> <p><b>Anuit-kalap</b> 162:10 268:18</p> <p><b>Anvik</b> 86:1</p> <p><b>anxiety</b> 301:9</p> <p><b>anybody's</b> 7:22</p>	<p><b>anymore</b> 174:13 252:17 267:8 286:22 301:13</p> <p><b>AOTRS</b> 158:13</p> <p><b>APIA</b> 157:8,12 158:4,9,17,23 159:10 160:3,15</p> <p><b>APIC</b> 263:7</p> <p><b>applicable</b> 300:21</p> <p><b>application</b> 74:14 141:17 145:6,21 185:14 255:6,11,14</p> <p><b>applications</b> 52:25 57:14 185:20 222:24 271:10</p> <p><b>applied</b> 207:12,24</p> <p><b>apply</b> 81:23 84:19 142:5 151:11,20 211:10,11,14 236:15 255:12</p> <p><b>appointed</b> 7:10 17:5 79:21 80:8</p> <p><b>appreciated</b> 98:2 162:1</p> <p><b>appreciates</b> 157:9 160:15</p> <p><b>appreciation</b> 192:15</p> <p><b>approach</b> 27:22 28:10,23 29:21 30:22 52:11 56:7 62:1 72:18 208:22 218:1</p> <p><b>approaches</b> 161:10</p> <p><b>appropriately</b> 162:11</p> <p><b>appropriations</b> 14:23 121:25</p>	<p>148:22 215:21</p> <p><b>approval</b> 145:13 147:10 152:14 218:13 240:8 278:6 300:18</p> <p><b>approvals</b> 60:4,13 74:18 82:14 167:11 223:19 231:19</p> <p><b>approve</b> 115:5</p> <p><b>approving</b> 139:14</p> <p><b>approximately</b> 21:25 37:20 105:24, 25 106:5 137:17</p> <p><b>apps</b> 124:14</p> <p><b>April</b> 231:16 288:2</p> <p><b>APU</b> 133:14</p> <p><b>Aquatic</b> 133:15</p> <p><b>archeological</b> 106:23 259:21</p> <p><b>Arctic</b> 91:3 143:21 144:1 149:16 150:16,21 185:2 250:5</p> <p><b>area</b> 17:4 51:9 56:4 65:24 89:5 100:2 102:17,20 137:16 139:5,21 140:9,25 141:12,19,21 144:17 145:5 151:15,17 168:14, 21 174:19 179:12, 15 180:15 182:25 189:8 196:5,6 204:18 234:19 235:9,24 242:12,14 248:23 249:6 278:25 306:1</p> <p><b>areas</b> 29:3 87:13</p>
---	---	--	--

88:21 111:13 123:24 141:22 148:16 150:3 179:13,15 180:24 185:13 188:9 189:13 198:2,10,11 219:9 221:15 242:9 259:19 262:9 276:13 279:1,4,19 280:3 283:19 285:11,12,13 287:2 307:24  <b>aren't</b> 47:7 57:16 108:16 191:3  <b>Arikara</b> 23:5  <b>arm</b> 209:6  <b>Army</b> 240:19 241:2 269:3  <b>arrangements</b> 149:13  <b>arrow</b> 37:6 50:11  <b>art</b> 251:12  <b>artifacts</b> 262:18  <b>artist</b> 64:20  <b>arts</b> 133:12 257:21  <b>artwork</b> 64:17  <b>AS-IA</b> 11:1 13:21 15:14 16:15  <b>ASAP.GOV</b> 182:12 183:17  <b>ascertain</b> 276:9  <b>ash</b> 264:11 274:16  <b>aspects</b> 187:10 301:19,21  <b>asserted</b> 43:6  <b>assess</b> 233:1	<b>assessed</b> 278:21  <b>assessing</b> 260:21  <b>assessment</b> 75:15 177:21 218:10,13 232:9 250:14,16 259:14  <b>assessments</b> 167:10 169:13 230:3,4 272:9  <b>assets</b> 10:6 20:13 23:22,23,24,25 25:6,11 31:2  <b>assigned</b> 28:6  <b>assignment</b> 107:23 161:25  <b>assist</b> 51:14 154:23 255:3  <b>assistance</b> 13:14 25:10 32:5 81:13,16 91:18 93:22 99:14 143:5 147:11 157:17 158:16 166:24 167:13 249:24 255:19 257:13  <b>Assistant</b> 2:9 10:22, 24 11:7 14:5,15 16:15 27:2 68:21  <b>Association</b> 37:14, 22 42:23 44:14 45:6 64:10 71:5 78:2 157:2 254:8  <b>assume</b> 100:25 111:19 123:14 224:15  <b>assuming</b> 97:25 99:4  <b>assurances</b> 300:20	<b>assure</b> 292:18  <b>assures</b> 158:10,18  <b>astro</b> 253:25  <b>Atchison</b> 219:6,7  <b>Athabaskan</b> 46:11 180:11  <b>Atmospheric</b> 260:20  <b>atomic</b> 298:15,17 299:14  <b>Atqasuk</b> 144:6  <b>atrocities</b> 308:12  <b>attached</b> 301:10  <b>attack</b> 132:4 195:6  <b>attempt</b> 168:10,23  <b>attend</b> 193:11 265:6  <b>attended</b> 48:4,5  <b>attendees</b> 4:9  <b>attending</b> 4:19 86:4 88:7 102:7 176:11 193:2 199:21  <b>attention</b> 100:6 104:11 141:13 200:18,19  <b>attorney</b> 140:15  <b>audio</b> 50:12 122:23 123:4,13,21 124:5, 13 254:24,25 255:1, 2,3,6,8,14 256:8 257:1,20,21,23 258:1,2 260:11  <b>audit</b> 15:10 60:17  <b>audits</b> 53:21 60:16 181:10  <b>austerity</b> 155:23	<b>authentication</b> 184:10  <b>authorities</b> 108:18 115:18 231:22 236:5  <b>authority</b> 51:16 56:11 95:10 108:22 111:5,13 112:16 113:1 114:18 115:5, 15 116:1,9 123:20 147:5 157:3 159:3 214:14 216:2 238:18 239:17 240:7 260:3  <b>authorized</b> 77:22 109:1  <b>automated</b> 2:22  <b>automatic</b> 286:11  <b>automation</b> 28:13 165:18  <b>AVCP</b> 37:16 39:7 40:20  <b>avenues</b> 76:17,24  <b>average</b> 203:11  <b>averages</b> 203:10  <b>avert</b> 233:11  <b>avoid</b> 52:23 233:9  <b>avoiding</b> 237:16 243:19  <b>awaiting</b> 10:23  <b>award</b> 215:14  <b>awarded</b> 15:8 142:10 182:13 185:13,21 267:17  <b>awarding</b> 108:16  <b>awards</b> 82:13
---	--	--	--

120:21 223:18 <b>aware</b> 163:22 209:22 269:21,23 290:1 <b>awkward</b> 78:16 212:17 <b>axes</b> 36:21 <b>ayy</b> 23:7	<b>backlog</b> 60:3 141:10 146:21 <b>backlogged</b> 43:11 56:18 135:9 <b>backlogs</b> 59:4 71:11 214:4 <b>backyard</b> 285:18 <b>bad</b> 198:7 209:3 <b>balance</b> 54:11 228:20 272:1 <b>bald</b> 309:15 <b>Baldwin-schaeffer</b> 133:5,6 <b>balloon</b> 247:25 <b>band</b> 117:23 152:18 <b>bank</b> 206:24 251:13 <b>Barbara</b> 153:25 <b>bare</b> 179:21 <b>barely</b> 83:15 <b>barges</b> 144:10 188:23 <b>Barlip</b> 122:22,23 125:6 254:22 255:10 <b>barrels</b> 269:13 <b>barriers</b> 12:21 45:13 57:8 93:4 96:16 110:24 158:6 161:1 190:14 223:8 225:22 241:7 <b>Barrow</b> 90:24 144:7 299:11 <b>Bart</b> 20:16,17,19 <b>base</b> 53:4 74:5 188:10 196:18	<b>based</b> 19:14 40:9 63:12 94:25 101:22 106:24 112:1 114:19 134:4 143:3 212:5,13 214:13 217:3,9 222:25 256:4 257:17 270:19 271:11 292:7 <b>bases</b> 200:7 <b>basic</b> 39:19 40:16 44:11 144:11 180:19 183:1 190:19 191:3 284:7 <b>basically</b> 71:8 181:4 191:9 264:18 265:4 298:16 <b>basics</b> 43:9 <b>basis</b> 148:1 256:20 <b>bay</b> 64:9,10 69:9 71:4 76:6,7,9,10 152:17 209:22 283:12 284:21 <b>Bayou</b> 64:19 <b>bear</b> 260:12 <b>Bearquiver</b> 11:4 22:24,25 153:19 <b>bears</b> 308:9 <b>beautiful</b> 4:7 23:2 294:13 <b>beauty</b> 293:20 <b>Beaver</b> 180:9 <b>Beeter</b> 96:2,3 <b>Beetso</b> 3:3 <b>beg</b> 311:1 <b>began</b> 94:4	<b>begin</b> 12:5 73:21 130:18 133:4 154:21 163:25 202:14 <b>beginning</b> 116:20 180:20,21 181:15 204:8 <b>begun</b> 201:20 <b>behalf</b> 4:19 24:22 40:20 51:13 53:17 77:21,23 80:9 157:2 176:9 177:9 185:3 192:9 209:9,16 235:16 311:1 <b>behavioral</b> 113:19 114:6,9,15 <b>believe-indians- already</b> 79:13,15 <b>believes</b> 52:10 232:1,8 233:4 <b>believing</b> 305:16 <b>belong</b> 128:10 <b>Belongs</b> 306:18 <b>belugas</b> 199:3 <b>Ben</b> 2:6,20,23,25 31:9,10 32:22,25 33:3 35:1 42:13 45:17 49:15 50:8, 17,23 51:1 54:19 58:12 63:22 77:13 83:2,11,15,21 85:17,23 90:12,15 95:21 97:18 105:11 116:13,18 117:5 125:5,8 129:17 132:25 134:24 136:13 137:7 153:5, 19 172:21 176:22 179:25 184:24
<hr/>			
<b>B</b>			
<hr/>			
<b>Bach</b> 297:7,9 <b>Bachelor</b> 133:12 <b>back</b> 6:11 9:16 18:19 26:21 27:7 31:10 32:20 33:5,14 42:16 45:20 46:9 49:22 54:20,24 58:10 65:16 68:22 83:6 88:3 90:14 96:22 97:18 100:22 116:22 135:13 136:14 172:8,25 180:25 193:22 194:22 195:18 198:11 207:8,17 208:7 230:17 231:2 246:9 251:14 262:18 265:2 266:5, 23 267:4,5,10 272:2 274:9 288:9,11,23 289:8,15 291:5 293:15 300:17 303:2,10 307:25 <b>back-and-forth</b> 182:9 302:23 <b>backed</b> 97:10 <b>background</b> 175:7 228:11			



<p>201:2 205:5 206:8 212:23 219:5 228:3, 7,13 231:4 235:18 243:23 248:16 250:19 254:16 255:9 263:3,11 268:10 280:20 294:20 297:6 302:2 304:18 311:5 312:15</p> <p><b>beneficial</b> 93:14</p> <p><b>beneficiaries</b> 23:16, 22 24:23,24 25:10, 12,18,23 26:1 30:17 31:1</p> <p><b>beneficiary</b> 25:15 30:19</p> <p><b>benefit</b> 114:24 115:11 131:1 190:6 298:9</p> <p><b>benefited</b> 151:25</p> <p><b>benefits</b> 160:21 244:19,20 260:7,11</p> <p><b>Bering</b> 37:18 88:4,6 89:1,16 102:16 103:6 137:14 157:15 168:21 177:10 178:25 248:20</p> <p><b>Bernadine</b> 219:6</p> <p><b>berries</b> 64:21</p> <p><b>Bethel</b> 274:11 297:23</p> <p><b>BIA</b> 11:8 13:18,21 14:25 15:14 16:1,16 17:1,5,12,22 18:4 21:11 23:23 29:10 35:2,3 36:9 39:20, 22 41:15,16,18 42:3</p>	<p>46:19 47:2,11 52:3 53:17,21 63:3,7,13 66:11 71:5 78:17 87:17,23 94:10 96:5,14 98:11,15,25 99:17 101:16 106:8, 11,14 107:3,21,25 109:8 119:2,6,9 121:8 123:7,18,21 124:18 126:3 128:15 135:5 138:8, 9,13,24 139:3,6,8, 11,14 140:7,14,17 141:3,5,12 142:20 145:7,25 146:1,3,12 147:9,18 149:8,17 152:21 153:1 156:1 159:11 160:7 164:17,20 165:10 166:19,25 167:7 169:10 170:20 171:3,15 173:24,25 174:3,9,22 175:23 186:12 187:10 189:5 203:8 205:23 208:3 209:12,24 211:24 215:13,18 222:8,9,11 226:20, 22 227:13,22 238:9, 12,17,20 245:6 256:9 258:23 292:6 312:19</p> <p><b>BIA/BIE</b> 224:19</p> <p><b>BIA'S</b> 52:7,16 146:17 159:23 174:25 221:21</p> <p><b>BIE</b> 11:5 13:18,21 14:25 15:15 16:1, 16,19 21:6,17,21 29:11,14,15 30:8 91:17 92:1,23 94:4, 10,16 95:2,6,7 110:25 185:8</p>	<p>186:12 189:5 190:20 204:9,14 226:23</p> <p><b>BIE'S</b> 20:24 92:25 222:11</p> <p><b>big</b> 12:25 18:11 20:6 46:20 103:11 176:17 190:5 202:9 225:5 227:2 231:24 234:19 285:22 289:10 306:2</p> <p><b>bigger</b> 221:25</p> <p><b>biggest</b> 143:2 156:14</p> <p><b>bill</b> 36:15 80:22 254:5</p> <p><b>billion</b> 24:21 25:1 131:12 132:5 203:17,20</p> <p><b>billions</b> 191:17</p> <p><b>Billy</b> 10:24</p> <p><b>binder</b> 303:6</p> <p><b>binding</b> 163:16</p> <p><b>bird</b> 70:14 276:1</p> <p><b>birds</b> 70:20 275:14, 15,17 276:7,8 284:21</p> <p><b>bit</b> 3:11 4:13 17:11 20:23 23:7 32:20 76:4 77:24 78:11 83:12 101:12 105:14 122:6 126:2 127:10 139:24 192:21 196:4 229:15 236:16 244:15 251:14,15 254:23 273:21 280:17 282:3</p>	<p>289:15 297:25 298:8 305:15</p> <p><b>bits</b> 267:19</p> <p><b>black</b> 194:24 275:23</p> <p><b>blend</b> 111:23</p> <p><b>blended</b> 49:18</p> <p><b>blending</b> 49:18</p> <p><b>bless</b> 9:11,12,13,18</p> <p><b>blessing</b> 9:3</p> <p><b>blew</b> 246:12 274:16</p> <p><b>blizzard</b> 274:9</p> <p><b>BLM</b> 89:5 115:2,17 125:21 150:1,4 306:23,24 307:4,10 308:11</p> <p><b>BLM'S</b> 88:24</p> <p><b>bloat</b> 12:7</p> <p><b>block</b> 60:19 189:9 190:14</p> <p><b>blocked</b> 186:12 187:8 246:4</p> <p><b>blocks</b> 110:25 189:10 190:7</p> <p><b>blood</b> 23:6 263:24</p> <p><b>board</b> 64:12 67:18 68:7,9,11,18 190:5</p> <p><b>boarding</b> 198:14</p> <p><b>boards</b> 281:11</p> <p><b>boardwalk</b> 264:20, 21</p> <p><b>boat</b> 51:13 56:6</p> <p><b>boats</b> 103:2</p> <p><b>bodies</b> 117:8 258:23</p> <p><b>body</b> 271:4</p>
---	---	---	--

<b>bogged</b> 147:20	<b>Brant</b> 275:24	<b>broadening</b> 257:6	227:1,16
<b>boggling</b> 282:3	<b>breach</b> 131:23	<b>broader</b> 161:6	<b>budgeting</b> 258:24
<b>bones</b> 127:1,3	<b>breadth</b> 200:8	<b>broadly</b> 213:24	<b>budgets</b> 94:6 159:2
<b>border</b> 103:24	<b>break</b> 6:11 49:20 104:18 116:14,20, 21 117:2,3,10 136:19 137:6 190:13	<b>broadness</b> 301:3	<b>build</b> 29:2 45:8 58:18 71:18 76:13 99:23 188:15,20 193:16 196:20 224:22 254:13 255:23 258:3 289:15
<b>born</b> 77:20 128:7 297:19	<b>breaking</b> 223:8	<b>broke</b> 83:12	<b>building</b> 3:22 4:1 16:18 30:20 92:2 151:21 183:3 236:22 254:6 255:18 293:23 300:13 311:14
<b>borough</b> 196:2,3	<b>breaks</b> 303:19,24	<b>broken</b> 6:13 43:13, 19 208:15 300:1,8	<b>buildings</b> 149:14
<b>boroughs</b> 226:6	<b>Breakup</b> 8:23	<b>Brooks</b> 35:8	<b>built</b> 43:4 44:19 92:7 116:14 155:15 287:20
<b>borrow</b> 300:12	<b>Brian</b> 45:19 50:3,15, 19,20,23,25 51:2,4	<b>brother</b> 245:13,16	<b>bunch</b> 35:20 210:19
<b>boss-indians-</b> 79:12	<b>brick</b> 207:24	<b>brothers</b> 104:9	<b>bunny</b> 65:6
<b>boss-indians-</b> <b>around</b> 79:5	<b>briefing</b> 6:3	<b>brought</b> 3:6 21:14 33:8 172:24 201:14 203:19 233:23 271:23	<b>burden</b> 32:2 44:8 59:2 100:25 135:6, 18 183:8 184:12 216:4 225:15
<b>bothered</b> 174:18	<b>Brigade</b> 294:15	<b>Bryan</b> 11:3 16:23,24 17:1 23:20 49:21 228:10,12,16 287:8 289:13 290:10,12 292:24 293:25 294:12 311:7	<b>burdens</b> 52:21 53:11 75:3 157:20 159:11 160:21 256:13
<b>bottle</b> 17:18	<b>bring</b> 40:11 54:7 126:13 127:22 136:14 193:5 218:21 246:8 262:24 267:5	<b>BTFA</b> 11:3,9 13:18, 21 14:24 15:15 22:23 24:15,16 25:9,20 29:11,14 30:14,15	<b>burdensome</b> 41:22 52:17 57:14 60:23 82:14 93:18 96:21 113:5 223:19 238:4
<b>bottleneck</b> 124:1	<b>bringing</b> 58:2	<b>BTFA'S</b> 23:19	<b>bureau</b> 6:4 10:4 11:2,8 19:7,9 20:16, 19 21:5,7,23 22:8 24:19 27:2 38:17 41:14 78:8 89:2
<b>bottlenecks</b> 55:15	<b>brings</b> 130:19	<b>bucket</b> 183:23	
<b>bottom</b> 5:14 79:18 297:3	<b>Bristol</b> 64:9,10 69:9 71:4 152:17 283:12 284:21	<b>buckets</b> 183:5	
<b>boundaries</b> 191:18	<b>British</b> 104:12	<b>Bucko-ou-dali-da</b> 37:5	
<b>bowl</b> 26:6	<b>broad</b> 170:25 229:7 275:7 276:15	<b>bud</b> 289:20	
<b>box</b> 48:12 72:25 168:2 183:14 199:21 201:18 286:12 292:18	<b>broadband</b> 144:13 150:14,20 151:12, 16 165:16 222:6 249:20 256:1 258:10 285:23	<b>budget</b> 14:20,21,24 22:15 62:16,17 93:16 98:19 108:6 154:10,20 155:6,9, 20 203:8,17,18 215:6,15 226:20	
<b>boxes</b> 183:11 285:24	<b>broaden</b> 159:14 257:10		
<b>Bozeman</b> 245:18			
<b>Brad</b> 133:16			
<b>Brady</b> 80:22			
<b>brain</b> 285:21			
<b>branches</b> 229:13			
<b>branding</b> 79:10			
<b>Branson</b> 212:24 213:1			

<p>119:2 154:11 161:23 164:9 201:24 202:19,22 203:2 205:13 279:13 297:12 305:17,18</p> <p><b>bureaucracy</b> 12:6 27:25 43:6 57:10 60:14 96:11 143:15 184:16</p> <p><b>bureaucratic</b> 44:24 72:25</p> <p><b>bureaus</b> 3:16 20:8, 12</p> <p><b>Burgum</b> 10:1</p> <p><b>Burgum's</b> 9:23</p> <p><b>buried</b> 269:14,24</p> <p><b>burning</b> 305:6</p> <p><b>bury</b> 36:20 246:18 269:25</p> <p><b>burying</b> 246:21</p> <p><b>business</b> 13:17 14:17 28:18 48:25 180:15 188:6 257:25 301:19</p> <p><b>button</b> 5:14 33:22 50:12</p> <p><b>buy</b> 15:4 105:1</p> <p><b>buyer</b> 104:1</p> <p><b>buyout</b> 291:19 293:6</p> <p><b>buyouts</b> 119:3 292:22</p> <p><b>bypass</b> 168:8 234:10 259:14</p> <p><b>bypasses</b> 217:19</p>	<p><b>bypassing</b> 74:4 249:16</p> <p><b>byproducts</b> 169:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>C</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>cable</b> 150:15 151:7</p> <p><b>cafeteria</b> 136:23</p> <p><b>Calapooia</b> 17:3</p> <p><b>California</b> 222:1</p> <p><b>Calista</b> 297:24</p> <p><b>call</b> 25:15 54:24 84:3 90:9,15 116:7 151:4 156:4 196:16 206:11 215:19 252:6,18</p> <p><b>called</b> 25:8,19 48:17 60:15 78:1 93:22 206:14 209:21 211:6 234:21 286:20 291:12 309:23</p> <p><b>calling</b> 100:13 162:9</p> <p><b>calm</b> 251:6,10</p> <p><b>camera</b> 4:14 50:1,21 83:9 96:1 122:21 129:13 134:20 173:13 177:1,3 254:20 302:10</p> <p><b>Camera's</b> 50:24</p> <p><b>camp</b> 234:7,13</p> <p><b>Canada</b> 234:14</p> <p><b>Canadian</b> 103:24 104:16</p> <p><b>cancel</b> 5:22</p> <p><b>canceled</b> 151:23 207:25</p>	<p><b>cancer</b> 269:1,2</p> <p><b>cancers</b> 271:6</p> <p><b>Candace</b> 212:24 213:1</p> <p><b>canneries</b> 77:7</p> <p><b>canoe</b> 294:5,6</p> <p><b>can't</b> 24:13 46:6 50:10 60:7 67:24 73:9,10 76:13 84:8 103:9 107:9 120:16 121:9 128:11 136:10 185:14,19, 20 189:4 190:2 196:19,20,23 197:3 201:18 203:24 204:13 229:22 252:16 267:9,25 268:1 278:11 280:21 309:24</p> <p><b>capable</b> 35:13</p> <p><b>capacities</b> 100:1 162:17 163:5</p> <p><b>capacity</b> 21:22 29:2 57:11 75:21 98:10, 16 99:2 125:23 142:23 165:16 171:22 192:18 236:12 241:17 249:22 255:18 258:2</p> <p><b>capita</b> 304:1</p> <p><b>capita-wise</b> 303:20</p> <p><b>capital</b> 15:12 257:23,25</p> <p><b>capped</b> 140:17</p> <p><b>captions</b> 5:16</p> <p><b>capture</b> 3:10 8:11 204:23</p>	<p><b>captured</b> 266:16</p> <p><b>capturing</b> 34:2,3 173:5</p> <p><b>carbon</b> 115:9 262:18</p> <p><b>cards</b> 136:24</p> <p><b>care</b> 39:2 40:9 75:1 114:20 126:12 136:25 214:3 242:3, 12 247:6</p> <p><b>cared</b> 242:10</p> <p><b>careful</b> 218:1</p> <p><b>caribou</b> 69:13 260:15 261:19 262:3,6,8,10,15</p> <p><b>carries</b> 163:20</p> <p><b>carry</b> 10:8 58:9 147:4</p> <p><b>Cary</b> 119:25</p> <p><b>case</b> 3:25 53:17 95:12 109:4 126:23</p> <p><b>cases</b> 120:6 146:10, 15,16,17 214:2</p> <p><b>Castro</b> 244:6</p> <p><b>catch</b> 215:18</p> <p><b>catch-up</b> 288:5</p> <p><b>categorical</b> 275:5 279:17</p> <p><b>categorically</b> 238:7</p> <p><b>categories</b> 257:18</p> <p><b>CATG</b> 183:2</p> <p><b>caused</b> 180:17</p> <p><b>causing</b> 151:7 240:20 264:13,14, 19,23 308:8</p>
---	---	---	---

<b>CBO</b> 245:4	240:13	244:8	273:16
<b>ceiling</b> 183:23	<b>CFR</b> 78:23 212:8,10, 13,19	<b>changing</b> 142:2 157:21 295:23	<b>chemicals</b> 104:18
<b>cell</b> 150:16 218:6 242:7,21	<b>chain</b> 157:14	<b>channels</b> 193:9	<b>Chevak</b> 173:21,22 176:9
<b>cemeteries</b> 142:11	<b>chair</b> 64:13 100:2 201:4	<b>chaos</b> 202:21	<b>Cheyenne</b> 23:6
<b>Center</b> 25:15 74:24 133:19 169:19 172:24	<b>Chairman</b> 51:4 80:18	<b>chap</b> 252:2	<b>Chickaloon</b> 192:7, 17,19 193:14 194:11 196:25 198:6 199:12 201:4
<b>centered</b> 133:8	<b>chairperson</b> 219:8	<b>chapter</b> 55:24	<b>chief</b> 15:1 35:7 37:13,21 51:4 64:4 85:25 180:8 226:16 244:13,24 280:24
<b>centers</b> 15:24 114:12 115:21 256:4,10	<b>chairwoman</b> 77:22 180:10	<b>charged</b> 24:7	<b>Chiefs</b> 51:5
<b>central</b> 9:6 20:9 29:18 45:24 55:6 58:17 62:6 78:3 97:21 102:17 113:19	<b>challenge</b> 105:14 239:11 240:14 242:6 292:8	<b>Chariot</b> 298:20	<b>child</b> 98:21 140:14 151:3
<b>centralization</b> 54:4 214:15	<b>challenges</b> 39:4,23 42:2 53:21 69:7 90:7 140:22 143:3 155:12 237:20 240:5 242:18 249:19 265:24 274:20,21 276:10, 11	<b>Charles</b> 250:20,21, 22	<b>childhood</b> 173:24
<b>centralize</b> 41:16 255:12	<b>challenging</b> 38:12 69:24 196:9,17 263:13 266:16	<b>Charles-smith</b> 116:17 117:12,20, 21	<b>children</b> 115:23 116:2 181:17 204:13 225:3,8 246:14 265:6 271:4
<b>centralized</b> 52:18 53:22 56:7 124:10 224:5	<b>chance</b> 184:20 228:14 231:4,8,9 293:20 312:6	<b>Charlie</b> 250:21	<b>Chilkat</b> 83:24 84:6 104:8 125:15 304:22,23 306:2,17 308:14 309:4,13
<b>centralizing</b> 52:23	<b>chances</b> 271:6	<b>Charlotte</b> 173:9,11, 12,15,20	<b>Chilkoot</b> 104:8
<b>cents</b> 36:18	<b>change</b> 19:5 36:22 39:16 51:21 68:10 69:21 79:12 127:11 128:5,23 158:5 168:15 169:2,5 207:3 210:5,6 261:21 272:20 295:24 296:8	<b>charter</b> 107:7,9 145:9 189:15,18,22, 23 190:9 224:21,24 225:2	<b>China</b> 104:1
<b>centuries</b> 100:24	<b>changed</b> 130:13,17	<b>chartered</b> 91:5	<b>Chinook</b> 69:12 103:8 112:10 260:18 261:9
<b>century</b> 168:22		<b>chastised</b> 103:1	<b>Chin'an</b> 201:1
<b>CEO</b> 40:20 157:3		<b>chat</b> 4:24 5:1,5 8:2 34:15 50:16,18 312:16	<b>Chitina</b> 122:24
<b>CEQ</b> 270:22		<b>check</b> 6:23 36:24 72:25 168:2 201:18	<b>Choh</b> 234:21
<b>certainty</b> 95:4		<b>check-the-</b> 292:17	<b>choice</b> 76:11 187:20 225:17
<b>certification</b> 111:1		<b>checked</b> 183:11	<b>choir</b> 201:16 254:12
<b>certified</b> 253:25		<b>checking</b> 48:12 183:15 199:21	
<b>certify</b> 147:23		<b>Cheesh'na</b> 96:3	
<b>certifying</b> 239:19,24		<b>Chefornak</b> 263:21 264:4,9 265:17,22	

<p><b>choked</b> 134:6</p> <p><b>chomping</b> 122:6</p> <p><b>chooses</b> 209:11</p> <p><b>choosing</b> 207:7</p> <p><b>chose</b> 207:9,10</p> <p><b>Chris</b> 104:15 244:3</p> <p><b>Christina</b> 134:25</p> <p><b>Christine</b> 133:2 134:19,23,25</p> <p><b>chronic</b> 202:8 203:5</p> <p><b>chronically</b> 140:1 216:3</p> <p><b>Chu-ya-aish</b> 55:4</p> <p><b>Chugach</b> 105:20 108:23</p> <p><b>Chugachmiut</b> 105:19 106:8 109:6 250:22</p> <p><b>chum</b> 69:13 309:7, 11</p> <p><b>chunks</b> 206:17</p> <p><b>Chutman</b> 212:25</p> <p><b>CIRI</b> 247:6</p> <p><b>citizen</b> 81:7 297:11, 16</p> <p><b>citizens</b> 55:9 61:2 76:16 81:1,8 82:3 154:5 186:8 198:19 270:5,6</p> <p><b>city</b> 143:24</p> <p><b>civil</b> 131:24</p> <p><b>Clackamas</b> 17:3</p> <p><b>claim</b> 58:2 207:1</p> <p><b>claimed</b> 206:24</p>	<p><b>claims</b> 130:16,24 132:2 297:21 305:25 306:8 308:25</p> <p><b>clan</b> 77:20 102:23 154:3 192:8</p> <p><b>clap</b> 79:14</p> <p><b>clarify</b> 170:2</p> <p><b>class</b> 29:17</p> <p><b>classic</b> 15:9</p> <p><b>clause</b> 191:5,9,13</p> <p><b>clean</b> 60:16 296:3</p> <p><b>clear</b> 5:8 21:2 51:1 83:22 85:5 86:22 98:25 118:13 146:7 164:2 165:2 169:22 177:7 218:8 255:15</p> <p><b>click</b> 4:21,22 5:16, 22 34:10 35:3,4 50:11</p> <p><b>clients</b> 38:1 291:25 292:1,3</p> <p><b>cliff</b> 251:13</p> <p><b>cliffs</b> 308:6</p> <p><b>climate</b> 111:23 141:20 168:15 169:2,5,13,18 206:10 207:3 210:5 250:8 258:15 261:21 272:20 279:7,9 295:24 296:7</p> <p><b>clinic</b> 252:20</p> <p><b>clinics</b> 114:12 151:2</p> <p><b>Clinton</b> 42:17,22</p> <p><b>close</b> 43:18 53:24 55:13 85:14 104:10</p>	<p>109:3 120:15 142:14 153:1 294:23 302:6</p> <p><b>closed</b> 5:9 8:8</p> <p><b>closed-captioning</b> 5:12</p> <p><b>closely</b> 86:15 178:5</p> <p><b>closer</b> 15:22 110:9</p> <p><b>closing</b> 45:6 76:3 87:24 104:21 109:6 160:15 218:25 243:9</p> <p><b>closure</b> 135:5</p> <p><b>closures</b> 54:5 154:20</p> <p><b>co-chair</b> 201:6 236:8</p> <p><b>co-design</b> 113:17 258:22</p> <p><b>co-designed</b> 167:2</p> <p><b>co-designers</b> 56:13 138:11</p> <p><b>co-governments</b> 57:24</p> <p><b>Co-locate</b> 256:8</p> <p><b>co-manage</b> 112:12</p> <p><b>co-management</b> 62:7 70:14 111:17 112:1 178:7</p> <p><b>co-production</b> 133:23</p> <p><b>co-stewardship</b> 62:5 84:21 198:1</p> <p><b>coal</b> 198:9</p> <p><b>coast</b> 37:18 42:24 121:21 252:18</p>	<p><b>coastal</b> 169:3</p> <p><b>coastline</b> 142:15</p> <p><b>code</b> 78:14,18,24 184:10</p> <p><b>COE</b> 236:4</p> <p><b>coffee</b> 117:7</p> <p><b>Coffins</b> 142:13</p> <p><b>cohesive</b> 213:10</p> <p><b>coho</b> 309:4,5</p> <p><b>cohort</b> 209:25</p> <p><b>cohos</b> 309:6</p> <p><b>cold</b> 77:7</p> <p><b>collaborate</b> 88:12 178:5 235:12</p> <p><b>collaboration</b> 133:23,25 156:2 178:9 258:17</p> <p><b>collaborative</b> 73:22 258:18</p> <p><b>collapsing</b> 99:11</p> <p><b>colleagues</b> 134:10</p> <p><b>collect</b> 258:6 274:22</p> <p><b>collecting</b> 81:18 273:13</p> <p><b>collective</b> 28:1 156:17</p> <p><b>collectively</b> 11:9</p> <p><b>college</b> 90:23 91:1 95:10,19</p> <p><b>colleges</b> 22:2 91:1, 5,18,23 93:21,23 95:15 117:15</p> <p><b>colonial</b> 81:2</p> <p><b>colossal</b> 104:2</p>
---	--	---	--



<p><b>Columbia</b> 104:12</p> <p><b>combat</b> 100:14</p> <p><b>combination</b> 93:15</p> <p><b>combined</b> 222:1</p> <p><b>comfortable</b> 108:18</p> <p><b>comment</b> 3:19 4:12 5:6 6:18,25 7:9,14 8:14 31:12 32:18 33:12,24 37:2 50:2 65:11 73:8,10 75:15 77:15 83:10 85:20 86:15 90:18,20 122:21,25 125:11 126:1 129:14 133:4 134:22 135:4 153:14 172:2 173:14 177:2,18 184:20 200:5 218:3 220:16 230:3 231:3 237:1 254:21 273:24 283:7 284:18 290:24 292:16 294:22 302:3,6,11,16 303:9 312:6,9</p> <p><b>commentaries</b> 129:3</p> <p><b>commentary</b> 125:4 127:19</p> <p><b>commented</b> 284:24, 25</p> <p><b>commenter</b> 122:17</p> <p><b>commenting</b> 65:16 184:21 285:21</p> <p><b>comments</b> 3:10 5:5 6:19 7:19,25 8:12 34:3,18,20 37:10,12 64:1 66:22 71:21 81:9 86:2 136:12</p>	<p>137:25 153:2 162:3 170:4 171:2 182:2,4 183:21 184:21 196:13 220:14 228:14,21 230:24 231:14 236:13 248:22,23 266:12 267:12 270:9 273:10,14,18 287:3 288:23 290:25 295:8 297:15 303:4 312:13</p> <p><b>commerce</b> 191:5,9, 13</p> <p><b>commercial</b> 112:8</p> <p><b>commission</b> 88:4,6, 7,9,14,19 89:16 162:19 177:10 179:1,21 298:15</p> <p><b>commissions</b> 179:3</p> <p><b>commit</b> 88:12</p> <p><b>commitment</b> 29:14</p> <p><b>commitments</b> 28:8, 9 156:10</p> <p><b>committed</b> 7:3 10:5 29:15 134:3 194:21 254:2 267:11</p> <p><b>committee</b> 9:6 62:18 64:25 79:6,25 80:9 129:20 162:23 185:3,4</p> <p><b>committees</b> 220:9</p> <p><b>common</b> 281:22</p> <p><b>communicate</b> 88:13 187:23 215:6 263:15,18 266:4 267:9 304:5</p> <p><b>communication</b></p>	<p>90:4,6 94:8,11 118:4 123:15 124:13 145:12 178:10,12 218:2,12 223:25 249:20 272:13 302:23,25 304:8</p> <p><b>communications</b> 13:14 32:3 134:12 150:22</p> <p><b>communities</b> 18:6 28:12 30:21 32:13 38:2 41:3 42:1 45:15 51:7,12 55:14 56:5,12 57:18 58:6 59:15,18 63:5,8 66:10 73:5 76:19,23 89:15 91:11 92:2 96:10 98:17 106:5 113:20 114:14,20 120:6,20 121:11,14 122:13 133:21 134:2,14 137:16 138:10 139:9,17 140:21 142:2,15 143:3 149:6 151:21 154:15 155:11 156:20,23 157:13, 22 160:23 161:16 163:3,6 164:16 165:14 167:9,16 168:6 169:3 171:24 214:10 218:4 225:16 236:23 237:11,25 241:8,9, 13,14 243:14 256:3 257:1,14 261:8 263:14 266:24 268:15 271:20 272:6 283:18 294:9 295:21 296:16,18 304:2</p>	<p><b>community</b> 22:20 45:23 78:2 91:2 100:7,8 110:18 120:13,14 127:14 128:9 137:12 138:25 143:21,25 154:4,9 160:5 169:11 172:9 178:16 185:2 194:10 196:1 205:8, 12 206:6,20 207:2 216:22 218:20 222:25 248:20 251:22 252:2,8 256:4 264:18 265:5, 10,12,18,24 266:7 267:21 269:21 270:3,10 273:15 274:13 284:12 296:12 299:12 306:16,24</p> <p><b>community-led</b> 258:13</p> <p><b>community's</b> 160:6 250:10</p> <p><b>compact</b> 38:4 46:3 137:22 160:19</p> <p><b>compacted</b> 70:15 71:7 96:4</p> <p><b>compacters</b> 143:10</p> <p><b>compacting</b> 42:5 52:6 57:2 62:5 70:7, 11 98:7,23 99:14 106:9 111:5 114:9, 18 137:22 149:3,22 150:8 159:13,21 189:16,19 190:10 197:22 216:1,3 226:12 257:5,10</p> <p><b>compacts</b> 98:13 106:10 107:24</p>
---	---	--	---

108:2,5,10 157:18 159:12 160:8 161:8 197:17 216:6 226:10 258:18  <b>companies</b> 246:25 248:5 297:4  <b>company</b> 151:20  <b>compared</b> 203:22  <b>compelled</b> 229:14  <b>compensation</b> 227:6  <b>compete</b> 52:24 148:11 171:20 186:21  <b>competency</b> 166:7 214:14  <b>competent</b> 124:3  <b>competing</b> 191:3 204:19  <b>competition</b> 119:21 195:17  <b>competitive</b> 41:24 44:9 61:3 74:7 96:24 148:9 186:17, 18 196:17 222:24 223:1  <b>compile</b> 291:2 312:9  <b>complaints</b> 53:19  <b>complete</b> 131:22 215:6 279:14 293:12  <b>completed</b> 93:24 135:12 175:7 205:15 232:25  <b>completely</b> 273:22 276:24 290:10 295:25	<b>completing</b> 159:15 177:16,20  <b>complex</b> 171:9 273:6  <b>complexity</b> 273:3  <b>compliance</b> 22:17 41:24 84:19 87:2 124:11,15 154:25 181:10 221:6 230:1 232:2 240:24 255:20  <b>compliances</b> 300:20  <b>complicated</b> 107:11 197:9  <b>complied</b> 269:4  <b>components</b> 14:19 60:20  <b>comprehensive</b> 28:13 31:2 73:1 75:12 94:1 219:22 222:15  <b>compressed</b> 232:3 259:8  <b>compromise</b> 245:22  <b>compromising</b> 233:16 240:24  <b>comptroller</b> 135:3  <b>computers</b> 256:5  <b>concentrate</b> 270:13  <b>concepts</b> 213:10  <b>concern</b> 88:22 92:17 130:6 134:13 138:22 167:18 209:9 231:24  <b>concerned</b> 108:6 134:11 135:20 145:23 201:17	233:24 304:14  <b>concerns</b> 47:19 65:14 96:5 138:21 152:20 158:15 165:6 193:24 217:20 249:12 264:23 267:5 275:1, 2 278:9 280:5 288:8,13 289:7  <b>concession</b> 131:22  <b>concrete</b> 73:25 213:13  <b>condition</b> 298:4  <b>conditioned</b> 303:8  <b>conditions</b> 41:5 241:7 271:16  <b>conduct</b> 48:24 214:19  <b>conducted</b> 147:25  <b>conducting</b> 189:12  <b>Confederated</b> 17:2  <b>Conference</b> 51:5  <b>confess</b> 226:25  <b>confidential</b> 135:17  <b>confirm</b> 119:7  <b>confirmation</b> 10:23  <b>conflict</b> 310:8  <b>conflicts</b> 260:4  <b>confound</b> 54:15  <b>confused</b> 39:19 185:18  <b>confusion</b> 240:21  <b>Congress</b> 47:19 78:6 80:6 102:15 115:15 136:9	148:22 233:22  <b>congressional</b> 14:3 95:5 132:13 136:6  <b>connect</b> 236:5 258:11 289:12  <b>connected</b> 70:3  <b>connecting</b> 39:5  <b>connectivity</b> 120:7, 24 151:12 249:21 255:25 258:9 311:15  <b>connects</b> 150:16  <b>consensus</b> 86:10 118:8 219:15  <b>consensus-based</b> 218:21  <b>consent</b> 115:2 129:22,23,24 130:3, 8,14,18 131:19 132:7,20 155:23 164:11,15 218:15 272:5  <b>consequences</b> 56:20 59:9 201:25 270:20  <b>conservation</b> 111:20 112:18 162:23 298:21 309:22 310:8  <b>conservationists</b> 248:24  <b>considerable</b> 261:21  <b>considerably</b> 180:20  <b>consideration</b> 278:8 312:10
--	--	--	--

<p><b>considered</b> 10:15 89:12 129:6 277:5 310:11 311:24</p> <p><b>considers</b> 148:14</p> <p><b>consistency</b> 82:7</p> <p><b>consistent</b> 12:17 82:5 140:19 222:6</p> <p><b>consistently</b> 223:22</p> <p><b>consolidate</b> 13:8,11 59:1 215:23 289:24 291:3</p> <p><b>consolidated</b> 58:23 212:7 290:7</p> <p><b>consolidating</b> 53:9 214:11</p> <p><b>consolidation</b> 13:5 31:22 54:14 61:22 62:19 98:7 108:8,11 124:19,25</p> <p><b>consolidations</b> 91:16 213:21</p> <p><b>consortia</b> 38:14 142:5 143:12,13 240:1 250:23</p> <p><b>consortium</b> 37:16 51:6 94:17 105:19 137:13</p> <p><b>constant</b> 301:17</p> <p><b>constantly</b> 175:14 176:14 286:6 307:10</p> <p><b>constitution</b> 67:17 80:20 130:12,20 163:11 171:12 191:14</p> <p><b>constitutional</b> 72:25 186:7</p>	<p><b>construct</b> 205:17</p> <p><b>constructed</b> 300:4</p> <p><b>construction</b> 15:21, 25 94:3,23 205:22 207:18 254:8</p> <p><b>consult</b> 88:13 118:10 179:3 187:14 201:19 214:19 287:19 288:3</p> <p><b>consultants</b> 44:11 81:23 125:22,24</p> <p><b>consultation</b> 2:7 4:6,15 6:5,12 10:13 11:16 13:24 21:13 30:4,8,13 35:3,4 38:21 40:19,20,21 41:8 42:11 46:17,19 47:25 48:15 52:2 65:11,13,15 71:25 72:1,23,24 75:11,13 79:24 84:7 85:3,8 86:6,8,13,19,23 89:21,25 99:8 106:2 115:24 118:1,6,11, 17 119:14 127:8 128:15 129:2 136:7 143:13 152:8,25 153:3,11 154:22 155:3,25 157:4 158:1 164:2,4 165:4 166:11 167:23,24 168:8,24 170:3 177:13,24 178:20, 23 181:22,23 182:10 193:13,15 194:7,12 199:22 201:18,21 213:6,16, 18 214:25 217:2 218:11,12,15,18,24 219:13,16,19 221:3 224:3 228:19,23</p>	<p>230:9 232:4,13 233:7 237:5 249:6 258:21 259:5,9 260:10 270:9 278:2, 5 279:22,23 283:7, 10,13 287:19 288:7 289:6 290:23 291:14,15 307:1 312:3,4</p> <p><b>Consultation@bia. gov.</b> 8:1</p> <p><b>consultations</b> 54:7 79:17,18 118:22 156:2 184:3 201:21 221:11 229:5 230:11,22 289:14 293:12 306:25 307:6 308:2</p> <p><b>Consultation's</b> 39:12</p> <p><b>consulted</b> 46:24 87:5 221:12 249:10 288:12</p> <p><b>consultees</b> 56:14 138:12</p> <p><b>consulting</b> 152:13 229:7 290:17</p> <p><b>consuming</b> 183:9</p> <p><b>consumption</b> 295:20</p> <p><b>contact</b> 25:9,23 138:24 158:13 194:25 195:3</p> <p><b>contacted</b> 242:23</p> <p><b>containers</b> 269:19</p> <p><b>contaminants</b> 269:10,14 271:3</p> <p><b>contaminated</b></p>	<p>268:23</p> <p><b>contamination</b> 234:25 268:21</p> <p><b>context</b> 168:14</p> <p><b>continually</b> 88:23</p> <p><b>continue</b> 18:8 19:3 27:15 29:11,12 30:12 38:18 39:23 63:15 69:20 84:12 134:6 140:5 181:3 184:21 233:17 264:5 269:24 308:19</p> <p><b>continued</b> 159:25 160:12</p> <p><b>continues</b> 62:17 112:11 206:25 239:11 310:14,15</p> <p><b>continuing</b> 223:13</p> <p><b>continuity</b> 27:23 169:25</p> <p><b>continuous</b> 129:25</p> <p><b>continuously</b> 124:19</p> <p><b>contract</b> 74:22 182:20 189:5 191:11 205:13,18, 20,24 210:17 212:5, 14 216:7 223:11</p> <p><b>contracted</b> 19:19 71:6 180:23,25 182:15</p> <p><b>contracting</b> 13:13 20:1 52:6 62:5 74:20 149:3,21 150:8 178:7 203:2 257:7,10</p> <p><b>contractor</b> 2:25 3:4,</p>
--	--	---	--

<p>15 267:24</p> <p><b>contractors</b> 81:21 132:16 207:20 254:8</p> <p><b>contracts</b> 74:24 98:13 106:10 108:2, 10 109:1 128:3,4 183:18 205:23 216:6 226:10</p> <p><b>contribute</b> 260:18 261:6</p> <p><b>contributed</b> 3:11</p> <p><b>contributing</b> 131:14</p> <p><b>contribution</b> 95:16</p> <p><b>contributions</b> 3:18 7:22</p> <p><b>control</b> 22:16 82:16 110:14 216:11</p> <p><b>controlled</b> 22:10 93:21</p> <p><b>convene</b> 218:8 274:23</p> <p><b>conversation</b> 4:11 6:9 8:25 11:10 65:17 128:23 153:8 193:18 201:8 249:14</p> <p><b>conversations</b> 150:1 243:1 286:4 292:19</p> <p><b>Cook</b> 42:17,22 46:4</p> <p><b>cooperating</b> 88:23 232:18 234:17,22 235:4,9 283:24 284:1,6</p> <p><b>cooperation</b> 88:16</p> <p><b>cooperative</b> 88:10</p>	<p>107:22 179:2</p> <p><b>coordinate</b> 14:24 111:15 256:11 273:9,10</p> <p><b>coordinates</b> 139:11</p> <p><b>coordination</b> 15:15 99:16 256:7</p> <p><b>coordinator</b> 133:18 134:9 140:15 142:23 143:6</p> <p><b>coordinators</b> 142:22</p> <p><b>copious</b> 79:21</p> <p><b>copper</b> 104:20 260:16,18,23 261:2, 9,13,17</p> <p><b>core</b> 16:14 27:22 28:10,18,23 30:22 63:1,2</p> <p><b>corner</b> 3:24 50:12</p> <p><b>corners</b> 99:11 237:15 243:18</p> <p><b>corporate</b> 260:5</p> <p><b>corporation</b> 128:8 247:2 260:2 282:13 297:23</p> <p><b>corporations</b> 256:18 301:24</p> <p><b>Corps</b> 240:20 241:2</p> <p><b>corpus</b> 95:11,12</p> <p><b>correct</b> 50:7 105:7</p> <p><b>correctly</b> 270:12 284:5</p> <p><b>corridors</b> 139:16 261:24</p> <p><b>Cory</b> 302:12,13</p>	<p>304:18</p> <p><b>cost</b> 13:9 44:4 49:7 62:1 66:5 68:4 113:9 167:17 180:15 198:18 202:20 215:17 223:11 237:11 243:15 296:9</p> <p><b>costly</b> 57:8 144:15 233:12</p> <p><b>costs</b> 66:6 74:15 140:5 159:15 216:7 224:9 254:8 283:22</p> <p><b>couldn't</b> 23:3,12 67:15 180:22 181:16,17 247:19 311:15</p> <p><b>council</b> 9:7 14:2 37:15,22 55:6 58:17 61:20 64:5 70:14 73:14,15 77:25 78:3 79:22 80:8 96:3 97:21 100:4 101:25 102:8 120:1 125:16 128:12 135:1 143:20 154:4 162:15 173:22 180:11 192:7 201:5 205:8 208:5 212:15 218:8 220:8,9 226:16 228:6 231:10 236:9 244:25 247:16 265:16,22 280:25 281:10 282:12 295:3,4 297:10</p> <p><b>councils</b> 73:12</p> <p><b>Council's</b> 62:6</p> <p><b>Counsel</b> 9:2 280:21</p> <p><b>Counselor</b> 280:22</p>	<p><b>counselors</b> 29:23</p> <p><b>count</b> 46:14 196:19 197:20</p> <p><b>countless</b> 113:3 296:16</p> <p><b>countries</b> 10:16 25:13 191:17 276:7</p> <p><b>country</b> 11:22 12:13,16 19:19,24 20:14,20 21:23 24:10 26:4 27:1 52:4 81:22 87:8 103:21 119:17 168:13 169:2 172:17 190:22,23 203:15 223:6 229:20 248:2 288:12,17,21 291:4</p> <p><b>couple</b> 5:11 33:25 49:16 63:25 65:1 82:18 86:2 125:18 146:16 172:22 206:21,22 220:11 228:12,16 272:17 290:14</p> <p><b>courage</b> 85:15</p> <p><b>court</b> 8:10 34:1 67:15 98:21 117:6 155:16</p> <p><b>cover</b> 85:10 200:7</p> <p><b>coverage</b> 150:17</p> <p><b>covered</b> 219:8 278:13</p> <p><b>COVID</b> 60:24 135:14 238:20 254:5 265:23</p> <p><b>crab</b> 102:5</p> <p><b>cracks</b> 225:4</p>
--	---	---	---

<p><b>Craig</b> 42:23 44:5,14 45:6</p> <p><b>crash</b> 39:25 40:23 102:5 276:22 296:15</p> <p><b>crazy</b> 306:5 310:5</p> <p><b>create</b> 48:2 58:23 73:17,22 82:1 95:3 110:19 114:11 124:9 139:8,15 158:5 191:6 198:25 202:20,21 241:6 242:16 256:4 257:2 260:4 271:16 272:24</p> <p><b>created</b> 44:19 47:18 198:11 242:8 300:6</p> <p><b>creates</b> 57:8 121:2 140:12 195:24 241:23</p> <p><b>creating</b> 8:10 113:14 194:19 202:17 246:13</p> <p><b>creation</b> 118:3</p> <p><b>creative</b> 148:19 191:6</p> <p><b>credentialing</b> 114:19</p> <p><b>credentials</b> 270:25</p> <p><b>credit</b> 115:9</p> <p><b>crew</b> 107:18</p> <p><b>crews</b> 107:18 108:2, 3,4 207:20</p> <p><b>crimes</b> 234:15</p> <p><b>crisis</b> 262:4 310:17</p> <p><b>criteria</b> 256:15 277:6</p>	<p><b>critical</b> 12:5 20:10 27:20 29:3 53:3 56:17 61:23 63:4 84:8,10,25 88:22 93:9 110:14 139:14, 16 143:1 144:12,16, 20 145:4 147:4,20 148:16 150:13,24 152:15 225:17 232:15,24 233:11 261:10 275:21 276:21 278:21 301:14</p> <p><b>critically</b> 213:25</p> <p><b>cross</b> 239:16</p> <p><b>cross-</b> 113:15</p> <p><b>cross-agencies</b> 61:20</p> <p><b>cross-agency</b> 61:13</p> <p><b>Cross-training</b> 123:23</p> <p><b>crossed</b> 174:8</p> <p><b>crucial</b> 134:1 161:3 225:20 262:14</p> <p><b>crunch</b> 304:15</p> <p><b>CSC</b> 226:11</p> <p><b>cultural</b> 85:2 88:17 110:5 111:3,13 116:10 142:17 156:7,15 163:17 166:7 169:24 214:14 216:13 217:21 232:14,25 233:10 237:12 243:16 249:17 255:2 257:21 259:13,21 262:18 275:10 277:8,25 278:11,24 280:3</p>	<p>287:2 303:1</p> <p><b>culturally</b> 29:17 30:5 57:1 113:25 114:19 124:3 165:8 170:10 259:11 278:25</p> <p><b>culture</b> 127:1,2,4 133:9 177:20 192:25 242:12 260:17</p> <p><b>cultures</b> 100:11 163:4 166:13</p> <p><b>cumbersome</b> 182:21</p> <p><b>cumulative</b> 275:8</p> <p><b>current</b> 12:20 17:11 19:6 20:24 31:24 40:11 57:7 93:2 96:15 120:3 127:17 147:14 158:22 161:4 188:4 191:6 194:17 195:11,12 197:3 202:8 203:12 215:11 222:16,18 233:4,8 278:3,22</p> <p><b>curriculum</b> 111:3</p> <p><b>curtailing</b> 305:9</p> <p><b>Curyung</b> 64:5 280:25</p> <p><b>customary</b> 164:4 296:17</p> <p><b>customer</b> 26:2</p> <p><b>customers</b> 291:25 292:3</p> <p><b>cut</b> 7:13 35:15,17 43:18 47:14 71:14 89:11 116:19 122:23 123:4,9,10,</p>	<p>14,21 124:5,13 178:17 180:19 184:2,3 202:16 215:23 227:24 234:9 245:4 254:24, 25 255:1,2,3,6,8,14 256:8 257:1,20,21, 23 258:1,2 260:11</p> <p><b>cuts</b> 40:1 41:14 66:14 87:17,23 92:18 96:14 121:15 126:4 128:16 138:8, 17,20,23 139:5 154:10,17 155:6,10 169:17 202:13 214:21 226:20,22, 23 227:20,21 245:2 247:22,23 248:1</p> <p><b>cutting</b> 87:18 99:10 113:6 165:17 167:21,23 225:18 227:15 237:14 243:17</p> <p><b>cycle</b> 143:1 223:12</p> <p><b>cycles</b> 215:20 256:11</p> <p><b>Cynthia</b> 109:15,18</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>D</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>D-1</b> 88:17 89:12,22 128:2,18 177:14 178:24 179:5,12 305:24 306:7 308:24</p> <p><b>D-1S</b> 178:24 179:4, 14</p> <p><b>D-D-1</b> 88:14</p> <p><b>D.C.</b> 172:11</p>
--	---	--	--



<b>dab</b> 275:14	205:6,7 206:8,14 248:16,17,19	17 299:18	220:16 221:12 222:16 239:21 240:12 260:3 266:5 270:6,19 281:13 292:16,17,20 295:10 303:12
<b>dad</b> 71:3 245:16 252:10	<b>Davis-bacon</b> 75:8	<b>Dean</b> 83:4 122:17, 19,22 125:6 254:17, 19,22 263:3	<b>deck</b> 230:22
<b>daddy</b> 252:1	<b>day</b> 49:6 56:23 57:16 64:8 85:7,10 122:9 185:18 206:14 228:21 274:5 302:6,16 304:8	<b>Dean'ina</b> 154:7	<b>declaration</b> 2:15 11:25 164:13 259:24 271:13
<b>dad's</b> 245:12	<b>days</b> 73:10 75:15 126:8 167:21,24 177:17,21 218:17 230:12 232:9,11 235:14 244:19 259:8 283:13 285:4, 20 287:20 305:14	<b>Dear</b> 9:10,14 46:19 148:1 219:20	<b>declared</b> 47:23 229:10,19 287:13
<b>DAEN</b> 255:10	<b>DC</b> 18:20 36:13,15 79:7 145:10,11 166:13 175:17 176:15 207:18 208:8 221:24	<b>death</b> 200:14	<b>decline</b> 69:12,13 112:11 261:6,12,20, 25
<b>daily</b> 16:3 175:14	<b>de-centralized</b> 166:10,16	<b>deaths</b> 135:14	<b>declined</b> 178:22 309:12,16
<b>Dakota</b> 9:25 23:5	<b>de-centralizing</b> 123:19	<b>debt</b> 248:2 299:21, 24	<b>declines</b> 260:22 261:3 262:8
<b>Dakotas</b> 242:17	<b>de-link</b> 94:22	<b>DEC</b> 309:20,21,23	<b>declining</b> 174:5 276:1
<b>damage</b> 101:6 233:9 259:20 261:16 264:14	<b>de-stabilized</b> 197:21	<b>decade</b> 262:9	<b>decreased</b> 70:19 120:7
<b>damaged</b> 151:7	<b>de-stabilizing</b> 194:18	<b>decades</b> 20:3 26:22 52:10 54:1 98:9 106:10 127:18	<b>dedicated</b> 27:19 111:6 112:23 159:9 196:8 255:20
<b>damn</b> 101:9	<b>deadline</b> 284:2 286:3	<b>December</b> 205:16	<b>deemed</b> 151:15,16
<b>Danny</b> 185:3	<b>deadlines</b> 43:14,15 218:22 256:11	<b>decide</b> 198:21	<b>deems</b> 199:4
<b>dark</b> 100:15	<b>deadly</b> 254:10	<b>decided</b> 48:11 63:9 87:1 221:5 249:9	<b>deep</b> 47:19 111:13 165:6 264:14
<b>darnedest</b> 307:5	<b>deal</b> 183:7 242:7 299:14	<b>decides</b> 190:5	<b>deepest</b> 23:12
<b>dashboards</b> 124:14	<b>dealing</b> 183:4 184:15 189:8 242:5,	<b>decimating</b> 76:23	<b>deeply</b> 134:10 163:2
<b>DASM</b> 11:4 13:18 14:12		<b>decision</b> 28:11 41:16 56:10 73:3 99:8 110:8 112:3 118:23 119:15 166:9,15 178:21,24 198:14 221:3,25 232:1,6,22 249:7, 11,15 289:23	<b>Deer</b> 298:22
<b>data</b> 28:10,13 30:1 31:2 54:4 81:18 155:2 203:9 249:25 258:5,7		<b>decisions</b> 30:2 41:13 46:16 47:10 55:13 63:17 66:17, 20 68:15 86:24 87:6 96:13 123:22 138:7 154:22 155:24 164:7 167:4 213:18	<b>defending</b> 112:20
<b>database</b> 286:10			<b>deferred</b> 195:8
<b>date</b> 10:24 198:12 293:10			
<b>dates</b> 95:13			
<b>dating</b> 198:11 262:18			
<b>daughter</b> 263:21			
<b>daunting</b> 273:2			
<b>David</b> 122:17,18 125:9,12 137:10,11			

<p>197:10 202:18</p> <p><b>defers</b> 295:15</p> <p><b>defibrillated</b> 252:21</p> <p><b>defibrillator</b> 252:3, 14</p> <p><b>deficiencies</b> 222:7</p> <p><b>deficiency</b> 222:13</p> <p><b>defined</b> 167:16</p> <p><b>defines</b> 259:24</p> <p><b>definition</b> 190:23 262:1</p> <p><b>definitions</b> 230:8</p> <p><b>deft</b> 226:2</p> <p><b>degradation</b> 143:4 259:18 261:1 264:13 265:25</p> <p><b>degrade</b> 214:12</p> <p><b>degree</b> 95:3 301:22</p> <p><b>DEIS</b> 282:23</p> <p><b>delay</b> 55:19 93:9,15 120:11 211:22 214:2 237:9 240:21 243:13</p> <p><b>delayed</b> 59:7,8 120:5 159:2 214:1 218:6 238:4</p> <p><b>delays</b> 47:3 52:17 59:10 60:13 96:20 120:8,20,21 139:8, 15 158:23 167:9 214:12 215:11 218:2 221:20 223:11,14 231:18 238:12</p> <p><b>delegating</b> 56:10</p> <p><b>deliberate</b> 300:11</p>	<p><b>delicate</b> 280:16</p> <p><b>deliver</b> 21:19 63:11 106:8</p> <p><b>delivered</b> 217:7</p> <p><b>delivering</b> 11:21 25:10 51:15 147:7 149:17</p> <p><b>delivery</b> 10:16 28:22 29:4 38:6 61:15 87:7 119:16 144:17 145:5 148:15 157:23 165:9 182:23 217:15</p> <p><b>Delta</b> 40:24 174:8,19 296:22</p> <p><b>demand</b> 154:16 156:17,22 261:12</p> <p><b>demanding</b> 292:25</p> <p><b>demands</b> 53:19 54:11 73:1 155:17 217:25</p> <p><b>demonstrate</b> 38:22 40:7 203:12 263:13</p> <p><b>demonstrated</b> 53:10 61:25 159:22</p> <p><b>demonstrates</b> 160:20</p> <p><b>demonstration</b> 266:2 298:18</p> <p><b>Denali</b> 107:19</p> <p><b>Dena'ina</b> 42:19 46:10 58:8 64:16 82:22,23,24,25 109:16 161:20 192:15</p> <p><b>Dene</b> 192:7,11</p> <p><b>denied</b> 151:13</p>	<p><b>dens</b> 308:9</p> <p><b>deny</b> 115:5</p> <p><b>department</b> 2:11,13 3:6,16 6:3 8:2 10:3, 12 11:14 13:8 14:23 28:16 35:11,14,15 41:4,9 51:14 62:24 64:24 66:7,12 79:22 80:7,15 81:14 88:11,13 89:21 93:11 94:12,19,20 95:13 108:20 110:1 111:18 118:25 119:10 134:12 135:3 148:3 151:15 156:4,6 158:2 161:24 162:4 164:8, 23 170:1,5,7,11,13 171:4,7 177:13 178:21 179:1 185:9 193:1 195:2 204:12 209:12 210:25 213:12,19 214:18 215:2,8,19,24 216:5 217:1 218:22 219:21 231:14,21 236:10 248:9 279:12 284:17 287:6,25 290:1 291:9 297:18 305:17 306:3 309:17,21 310:4,6</p> <p><b>departments</b> 18:17 47:15 98:18 110:21 112:19 160:2,14 161:9 196:12 200:12 215:4 226:6 227:5,9</p> <p><b>department's</b> 28:17 167:19 214:3 259:4</p> <p><b>depend</b> 164:20 196:24</p>	<p><b>dependence</b> 296:7, 9</p> <p><b>dependency</b> 45:9</p> <p><b>depending</b> 269:17</p> <p><b>depends</b> 216:12</p> <p><b>depleting</b> 174:12</p> <p><b>deputy</b> 14:5,15 19:7, 9 20:8,12,16,19 21:5,7</p> <p><b>Derrick</b> 3:3,9 34:2</p> <p><b>descendant</b> 297:17 299:5</p> <p><b>descendants</b> 77:8 271:2</p> <p><b>descent</b> 17:3</p> <p><b>describe</b> 41:5</p> <p><b>design</b> 170:21 258:14,24</p> <p><b>designate</b> 239:18,24</p> <p><b>designated</b> 6:20 7:10 68:8,17 89:3 157:3 237:21 240:9</p> <p><b>designation</b> 25:21 239:8</p> <p><b>designed</b> 6:7 38:6, 11</p> <p><b>desires</b> 205:17</p> <p><b>desk</b> 145:11</p> <p><b>desperately</b> 144:25</p> <p><b>destroy</b> 280:17</p> <p><b>destroyed</b> 198:10</p> <p><b>destroying</b> 279:3</p> <p><b>destruction</b> 198:7</p> <p><b>destructions</b> 261:22</p>
--	--	--	---

<b>detail</b> 93:20 138:1	92:3 111:2 143:1	118:19 150:4	169:19 186:11
<b>detailing</b> 213:13	144:15 145:16	182:25 188:8 190:3	208:21 217:15
<b>detention</b> 15:24 19:20	149:23 150:13	219:25 225:17	255:3 258:25 271:1
<b>determination</b> 32:9, 14 35:19,24 44:21 73:19 123:18 165:2, 8 237:16	152:5,11,15 158:12 178:14 211:1 229:11 232:18 233:16,25 235:8 236:11 237:10 242:25 244:10,18, 21 245:23 246:10, 13 248:12 257:19 258:1 259:25 260:8 275:21 285:6 288:16 292:12	281:3 301:2 305:16	290:2
<b>determine</b> 84:18 145:1 202:12 203:25 240:12	<b>developments</b> 244:12	<b>difficulties</b> 5:2	<b>director</b> 17:1,5,7 20:16,19 21:6,7,10 23:10 64:8 105:18 119:6 180:9 182:3, 11 183:2 185:1 192:20,21,25 193:1 294:23 311:6
<b>determined</b> 111:8	<b>dialect</b> 272:19	<b>difficulty</b> 138:24 188:3 223:22	<b>directors</b> 19:7,9 64:12 166:17
<b>detonation</b> 299:15	<b>dialects</b> 263:17	<b>digging</b> 306:12	<b>dirty</b> 295:24
<b>detrimental</b> 181:1, 18	<b>dialogue</b> 11:13 65:16 86:16 110:2 199:24 219:18 289:8 298:12 299:10	<b>digit</b> 254:9	<b>disadvantage</b> 41:25 223:1
<b>detrimentally</b> 205:2 276:18	<b>dictionary</b> 272:19, 22	<b>digital</b> 124:9,10,13 255:12 256:3	<b>disadvantaged</b> 130:22
<b>devastate</b> 165:19	<b>didn't</b> 23:8 67:14 120:9,10 123:8 127:7 132:24 164:17 193:6 211:25 238:20 244:8 246:20 252:22 274:11 282:25 299:13 311:16	<b>dignified</b> 163:1	<b>disadvantages</b> 96:25
<b>devastating</b> 76:23 102:12,13 296:10	<b>died</b> 151:4 251:21 253:17 269:1	<b>Dillingham</b> 280:25	<b>Disagreement</b> 88:12
<b>develop</b> 13:25 25:5 74:16 95:2 115:8 154:24 185:9 229:19 255:11	<b>diesel</b> 296:9	<b>diminish</b> 112:7 170:10	<b>disappearing</b> 174:20
<b>developed</b> 55:17 144:25 207:11	<b>difference</b> 203:12	<b>diminished</b> 262:13	<b>disappointed</b> 63:1
<b>developer</b> 235:10 243:2	<b>difficult</b> 8:22 33:19 39:21 52:24 107:11	<b>Dimitri</b> 157:4	<b>disappointing</b> 136:10
<b>developers</b> 304:12		<b>dinner</b> 105:8	<b>disappoints</b> 267:9
<b>developing</b> 91:23 113:12 272:18		<b>direct</b> 11:10 15:13 19:21 22:3,8,14 23:14 25:14 29:20 32:5 35:14 36:4,13, 22 37:1 44:13 53:1 57:12 61:5 73:19 74:2,3 84:15 97:5 110:20 115:11 122:2 158:13 159:21 195:6 224:9	<b>disaster</b> 139:13 256:20
<b>development</b> 13:13, 17,22 14:6,9 20:7 28:2 29:24 30:5 35:20 47:16,18 57:9 61:24 74:12 88:21 89:6,14 90:8 91:12		<b>directed</b> 148:2	<b>disasters</b> 142:3
		<b>direction</b> 13:20 164:3 165:2 190:6 270:22	<b>disburse</b> 24:8 25:1
		<b>directly</b> 12:16 21:1, 13 22:14 38:1 50:16 62:23 74:6,23 119:20 122:1 126:3 130:25 147:17 158:11 159:13	<b>disbursement</b> 223:9
			<b>disbursements</b> 215:15
			<b>disbursing</b> 30:25
			<b>disclosure</b> 297:22

<b>disconnected</b> 150:22 251:8	<b>distribution</b> 94:25 223:10	<b>DOGE</b> 119:1 194:19 290:2	105:6,16 107:2,20 108:17 117:1
<b>discovering</b> 131:4	<b>district</b> 189:21	<b>DOI</b> 51:25 52:5 57:3 62:4 69:19 71:13,17 72:7 87:1 92:20 94:9 99:16 107:21 108:14 125:21 156:18 165:10 166:3,8 169:16 170:20 171:15 219:16,20,23 221:5, 8 223:23 224:1 225:23 226:7 227:22 249:8 284:25 286:13	122:10 126:18,20 127:16 128:6,8 168:17 171:20,23 175:6,17,18 176:17 184:5 185:23 188:16,21,24 190:22 193:12 194:25 196:21,23 197:19,20 207:3 208:16 210:4,6,23 211:9,19,22 221:24 223:4 224:18 226:25 227:18,19 228:10 232:16 235:2 239:9,13 241:24,25 244:25 246:15 248:8,17 266:21 267:8 268:14 270:24 271:24 272:15 273:1 281:18,19 283:6,22 285:17 286:7,18,20 287:9, 10,24,25 288:9,10 297:14 301:12 307:11,20 308:22 309:21 311:9
<b>discovery</b> 298:7,14	<b>districts</b> 187:19	<b>DOJ</b> 204:20	<b>door</b> 282:16 304:7, 20
<b>discretionary</b> 217:10	<b>disturbance</b> 261:24 275:7 277:14	<b>dollar</b> 36:12,15 66:8, 9 82:9,12 223:17 237:23 238:6 299:14	<b>Doreen</b> 143:19,20
<b>discussed</b> 289:6	<b>disturbances</b> 262:12 275:8 279:3, 20	<b>dollars</b> 44:25 105:4 131:12 132:5 147:20,25 191:17 199:2 246:8 247:8 274:6 307:22	<b>Dot</b> 80:4 117:22 120:2 131:16 231:9 232:1 233:13 235:16
<b>discussion</b> 128:4 173:17 208:14 220:21 290:6	<b>disturbed</b> 279:18	<b>domestic</b> 140:15	<b>dots</b> 5:15
<b>discussions</b> 297:17	<b>disturbing</b> 238:6	<b>dominate</b> 44:12	<b>double</b> 43:17 254:9
<b>disheartening</b> 306:15	<b>diverse</b> 216:9	<b>dominations</b> 89:3	<b>download</b> 35:5 185:14
<b>displaced</b> 273:25 274:1,3	<b>division</b> 157:7,8 195:3 208:25 294:16	<b>domino</b> 289:11	
<b>displays</b> 64:18	<b>DMV</b> 54:23	<b>Donna</b> 297:7,9	
<b>disproportionally</b> 61:4	<b>dock</b> 103:1	<b>don't</b> 7:1,20,21 16:7 27:8 33:1,18 40:17 43:18 44:9 54:23,25 55:18 60:8,9,21 63:16 69:25 71:20 73:13 76:21 98:15 100:18	
<b>disproportionately</b> 155:10	<b>doctor's</b> 23:11		
<b>disregard</b> 236:21	<b>document</b> 26:16 88:8 107:5 211:21 212:1		
<b>disrespect</b> 248:11	<b>documentation</b> 75:7		
<b>disrupt</b> 203:3	<b>documents</b> 71:9 93:18 107:4 211:17 255:15 270:13		
<b>disrupted</b> 92:14 120:5	<b>doesn't</b> 21:17 37:6 56:8 61:10 68:22 87:20,24 99:17 103:21 120:11 122:5 123:6 168:18 186:13 190:21 203:3 204:9,17 220:8 227:11 242:4 249:13 268:5 270:2 278:4,15 281:19,22 282:17		
<b>disruption</b> 259:19	<b>dog</b> 251:17 294:2,7		
<b>disruptions</b> 223:12 250:9			
<b>distance</b> 90:5 166:12 178:11			
<b>distinct</b> 216:13 220:5			
<b>distracted</b> 105:16			
<b>distributed</b> 147:17 148:13 185:16			

<p><b>downsizing</b> 99:1</p> <p><b>downstairs</b> 3:24</p> <p><b>downtown</b> 311:13</p> <p><b>Doyon</b> 246:1 247:2, 8 297:22</p> <p><b>dozen</b> 41:22</p> <p><b>dozens</b> 38:15</p> <p><b>draft</b> 75:14 284:18</p> <p><b>dramatic</b> 201:20</p> <p><b>drastic</b> 87:19</p> <p><b>draw</b> 182:13</p> <p><b>drawdown</b> 135:22</p> <p><b>drawdowns</b> 47:14</p> <p><b>drilling</b> 234:4 273:4 275:20</p> <p><b>drive</b> 30:2 52:12 210:22 293:21</p> <p><b>driven</b> 28:10 39:8</p> <p><b>drop</b> 199:18</p> <p><b>dropped</b> 90:9,11</p> <p><b>DRP</b> 292:22</p> <p><b>DRPS</b> 291:17</p> <p><b>drugs</b> 76:19,22</p> <p><b>DSM</b> 62:16</p> <p><b>DT</b> 221:4</p> <p><b>DTLL</b> 118:17</p> <p><b>dual</b> 67:20</p> <p><b>dually</b> 144:5</p> <p><b>due</b> 8:4 37:9 54:1 142:14 143:3 214:4 215:3 223:12 260:22 261:12,21 264:17 265:24 295:23</p>	<p><b>Duncan</b> 2:6,21,23, 25 31:10 32:25 33:3 35:1 42:13 45:17 49:15 50:8,17,23 51:1 54:19 58:12 63:22 77:13 83:2, 11,15,21 85:17,23 90:12,15 95:21 97:18 105:11 116:13,18 117:5 125:5,8 129:17 132:25 134:24 136:13 137:7 153:5 172:21 176:22 179:25 184:24 201:2 205:5 206:8 212:23 219:5 228:3, 7,13 231:4 235:18 243:23 248:16 250:19 254:16 255:9 263:3,11 268:10 280:20 294:20 297:6 302:2 304:18 311:5 312:15</p> <p><b>duplication</b> 124:23</p> <p><b>duplicative</b> 57:14 113:4</p> <p><b>duress</b> 197:11</p> <p><b>duties</b> 52:5 106:15</p> <p><b>duty</b> 10:8 155:15 168:10,23</p> <p><b>dying</b> 254:14 271:6</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>E</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Eagle</b> 51:6 154:3</p> <p><b>eagles</b> 309:13,14,15</p> <p><b>earlier</b> 17:15 20:17 34:1 141:4,13 149:1</p>	<p>224:17 230:5 238:9 242:23 243:5,11 252:12 289:20 290:20 301:13 307:19 311:11,20, 25</p> <p><b>early</b> 119:4 152:13 181:14,17 191:20 192:2 214:24 279:22 289:16 298:12</p> <p><b>earned</b> 25:20</p> <p><b>EASES</b> 230:4</p> <p><b>easier</b> 70:8 280:7</p> <p><b>easily</b> 277:13</p> <p><b>east</b> 103:23 121:21</p> <p><b>Eastern</b> 8:5 34:21 102:18</p> <p><b>easy</b> 70:9 82:6,10, 11,13 223:15,16,18</p> <p><b>echo</b> 84:14 171:19</p> <p><b>ecological</b> 111:24 271:12 278:16 295:21</p> <p><b>ecologically</b> 259:18</p> <p><b>economic</b> 14:6,9 15:8 32:11 44:18 45:3 57:8 61:24 74:10,12,16 91:10 144:14 145:16 160:5 161:11 162:24 216:21 226:2 231:20 256:25 257:18 260:7,9,13</p> <p><b>economics</b> 223:4</p> <p><b>economies</b> 45:9</p>	<p><b>ecosystem</b> 111:21 277:13</p> <p><b>ecosystems</b> 250:5 260:17 275:9 277:23</p> <p><b>ecotourism</b> 257:20</p> <p><b>Ed</b> 185:3,4</p> <p><b>edge</b> 264:22</p> <p><b>edging</b> 15:22</p> <p><b>educate</b> 116:2 186:6 202:23</p> <p><b>education</b> 11:9 25:14 29:15,17,21 30:4 51:23 70:4 87:15 91:8,11,20 94:17 95:14 110:14, 20 111:5,6 123:25 134:5 154:12 155:7 157:17 175:6 176:1 185:1,9 186:4,7 187:13,15,16 188:1, 5,11 189:5,9,12 190:17,19 192:20 193:1 197:24 204:7, 11,12,13 221:16 224:18 225:12 257:12 281:6 306:4</p> <p><b>educational</b> 175:8 191:25</p> <p><b>educators</b> 29:22</p> <p><b>effect</b> 123:17 205:3 229:13 276:18 279:9 289:11</p> <p><b>effected</b> 151:10 181:19 182:24</p> <p><b>effecting</b> 277:18</p> <p><b>effective</b> 27:17 35:18 51:15 55:12</p>
---	---	---	--



<p>85:3,4 86:6,21 118:12 119:11 145:2,14 161:15 213:6</p> <p><b>effectively</b> 33:12 93:25 123:10 161:11 166:18 171:23</p> <p><b>effectiveness</b> 13:9 32:10 38:8 88:16 94:14 160:17 222:17 256:24</p> <p><b>effects</b> 65:8 87:19 232:7 292:2</p> <p><b>efficiencies</b> 29:2 47:6 52:20 91:15 93:4 202:5,12,20 214:20 229:9</p> <p><b>efficiency</b> 2:11,18 11:15 12:21 27:11 28:5 31:5,20 41:10 43:9,17 45:3 53:14 56:7,8 81:10 87:21, 25 92:4 94:12 96:16 99:10 109:23 110:3, 8 113:6 119:1 121:3,6 123:2 125:25 127:20 136:3 146:22 154:14 155:21 157:10,23 160:17 165:5 167:11 170:8 173:17 187:6 219:1</p> <p><b>efficient</b> 12:20 23:15 28:15 36:11,19 39:3 47:5 55:12 57:20 86:20 89:23 118:11 121:5,10 122:7 127:20,22 145:1,14, 18 159:23 161:14 177:23 178:4 184:7</p>	<p>194:4,6 204:2 221:14 227:19 302:19,21 303:11 304:10,12</p> <p><b>efficiently</b> 38:7 53:24 150:8 216:16 227:9 291:6</p> <p><b>effort</b> 29:18 56:14 57:22 80:1 110:4 119:18 298:21</p> <p><b>efforts</b> 28:17 29:25 61:21 62:21 87:9 93:10 110:2 111:21 144:22 147:23 148:24 154:11 157:9 178:7 237:7 238:3 262:14</p> <p><b>eggs</b> 275:18 277:3</p> <p><b>eherrera@ kernswest.com.</b> 4:25</p> <p><b>EIS</b> 300:5</p> <p><b>elder</b> 200:17,18 251:1,7</p> <p><b>elderly</b> 299:6</p> <p><b>elders</b> 75:16 76:13 175:8,20,21 176:2 192:11 244:14 246:11,19 247:18 265:3 267:10 268:25</p> <p><b>elected</b> 6:20 7:10 77:25 120:1 135:1 143:20</p> <p><b>election</b> 274:8</p> <p><b>electrical</b> 205:15</p> <p><b>electronically</b> 210:18</p>	<p><b>elementary</b> 174:3</p> <p><b>elements</b> 245:25</p> <p><b>elevate</b> 112:14</p> <p><b>Elias</b> 226:15 228:6</p> <p><b>eligibility</b> 113:5 114:5</p> <p><b>eligible</b> 189:6 256:15 257:8 291:18</p> <p><b>eligible/receiving</b> 204:11</p> <p><b>eliminate</b> 26:14 52:21 74:7 75:8 95:6 161:2 189:10 204:10,18</p> <p><b>eliminated</b> 119:8</p> <p><b>eliminates</b> 262:2</p> <p><b>eliminating</b> 12:7</p> <p><b>elimination</b> 119:5</p> <p><b>Elizabeth</b> 3:2 4:25</p> <p><b>ellipses</b> 4:21 5:15</p> <p><b>Elnena</b> 161:20</p> <p><b>else's</b> 266:13</p> <p><b>Elswick</b> 85:21,24,25</p> <p><b>email</b> 4:25 16:18 82:19 182:4 285:24 286:12</p> <p><b>emails</b> 41:19 210:19 286:11</p> <p><b>embedded</b> 30:6 114:14</p> <p><b>embrace</b> 246:10</p> <p><b>embraced</b> 149:23 152:10</p>	<p><b>embraces</b> 150:7</p> <p><b>emergencies</b> 95:12 199:5 296:14 297:1, 2</p> <p><b>emergency</b> 2:13,15, 19 3:25 6:8 11:25 46:24,25 47:14,16, 21,22 48:17 49:19 84:8,9,10 89:10,17, 19 132:20 139:12 150:10,12 151:4 152:1,3,6 153:15 168:7 173:4 177:11, 15 180:6 198:6 209:1,5 217:17,18 218:24 229:11,18 231:15,17,18,22 235:20 236:18 243:8 252:3 256:18, 20 259:4,6,23 282:1 286:23 287:13,23 295:18,19 299:23 305:7 312:11</p> <p><b>emerging</b> 11:24 28:25</p> <p><b>emotional</b> 187:4 246:24</p> <p><b>emperor</b> 275:23</p> <p><b>emphasize</b> 68:25 70:6 71:22</p> <p><b>emphasized</b> 73:9</p> <p><b>employ</b> 98:18</p> <p><b>employed</b> 297:11</p> <p><b>employee</b> 92:13 217:14</p> <p><b>employees</b> 16:10 27:19 92:21 107:9 119:3 123:11 148:16 227:6,16</p>
--	--	---	---

<p>252:7,8</p> <p><b>employment</b> 53:9 155:5 157:7</p> <p><b>empower</b> 29:22 166:16 285:16</p> <p><b>empowering</b> 110:9</p> <p><b>enacted</b> 80:5</p> <p><b>encountered</b> 265:2 298:7</p> <p><b>encountering</b> 299:21</p> <p><b>encourage</b> 7:19 54:6 141:9 148:8 149:13 211:23 280:9,11</p> <p><b>encouraged</b> 149:1</p> <p><b>encourages</b> 147:16</p> <p><b>encouraging</b> 258:18 265:17</p> <p><b>end</b> 6:10 24:4 57:16 64:18 122:9 134:9 153:20 168:22 201:7 204:22 211:23 276:5,12,18 288:1 289:18 302:17 303:6 304:7</p> <p><b>endanger</b> 295:17</p> <p><b>endangered</b> 167:20 199:4 237:2 259:16 260:21 262:16 310:12</p> <p><b>endeavor</b> 188:7 299:1</p> <p><b>ended</b> 78:16 79:4</p> <p><b>ending</b> 188:23</p> <p><b>endorsed</b> 164:12</p>	<p><b>endowment</b> 94:15, 18,20,22,25 95:2,7, 14,16</p> <p><b>ends</b> 134:8 276:8</p> <p><b>energy</b> 2:15 11:25 47:14,16,18,22 48:2,17 89:19 90:8 115:8 152:4 177:16 178:14 198:5 199:5 229:11,19 231:17, 18 239:15,16 242:25 259:25 260:8 287:12,22 288:17 295:18 296:4 298:15 299:23,25 304:12 305:6 306:12 310:16 312:12</p> <p><b>enforce</b> 112:12 198:2</p> <p><b>enforceable</b> 234:10</p> <p><b>enforcement</b> 19:18, 20,23 113:2</p> <p><b>engage</b> 22:20 65:12 71:24 102:15 110:2 217:2 256:6</p> <p><b>engaged</b> 163:2 262:5 284:18 286:1</p> <p><b>engagement</b> 73:2 217:20 243:7</p> <p><b>engaging</b> 66:24</p> <p><b>engineer</b> 211:4</p> <p><b>engineered</b> 47:4</p> <p><b>engineering</b> 253:5</p> <p><b>English</b> 55:5 162:13 213:1 263:13,18 268:18 282:10</p> <p><b>enhance</b> 17:23</p>	<p>28:19 160:5 205:2 270:21 310:22</p> <p><b>enhancing</b> 160:17</p> <p><b>enormous</b> 118:18 219:21</p> <p><b>enrolled</b> 17:2 18:5 81:7 144:5</p> <p><b>enrollment</b> 147:23 148:15</p> <p><b>ensure</b> 10:13 11:21 12:11,14 18:21 19:2 22:18 27:16 28:4 30:5 53:2 62:15,22 82:8 89:24 147:24 148:6 154:24 159:7 177:24 198:3,24 222:16 226:6 233:9 255:15 269:25 306:9</p> <p><b>ensuring</b> 29:16 30:18 55:13 129:25 161:2 232:5 249:5</p> <p><b>enter</b> 108:21 135:21 146:23 149:7 179:2</p> <p><b>entered</b> 22:12 24:1 98:12</p> <p><b>enterprise</b> 16:15</p> <p><b>enterprises</b> 15:9</p> <p><b>entertained</b> 265:19</p> <p><b>enticing</b> 299:17</p> <p><b>entire</b> 132:17 150:21 211:15 224:4 268:15 269:9 273:15 275:24</p> <p><b>entities</b> 44:12 119:22 237:21</p> <p><b>entity</b> 211:7,12</p>	<p><b>entrenched</b> 163:13</p> <p><b>entry</b> 89:6</p> <p><b>environment</b> 22:18 38:12 121:2 142:3,7 222:23 237:8 243:10 270:1,21 278:23 296:11 305:14</p> <p><b>environmental</b> 22:17 74:25 75:14, 16 88:22 133:13 155:12 162:24 167:10,19 170:21 177:21 178:18 197:24 198:7,23,25 210:3,7 211:6,17 217:21 218:9 226:2 230:4 231:23 232:8, 10 233:5,6 234:18 236:14,19 237:2,21, 24 238:4,14,19 239:2,12,19 240:24 242:20 249:17 250:8,14 259:7,13, 15,18 260:12 264:14 269:4 271:9, 11,14 273:7 274:14 275:3,12 277:17 278:1 283:15 284:19 295:15 300:5 305:12 309:22</p> <p><b>environmentally</b> 168:12 169:1 177:16</p> <p><b>environments</b> 295:17,21</p> <p><b>EO</b> 110:3</p> <p><b>EPA</b> 57:4 62:4 74:24 99:16 123:8,10 215:1</p>
--	--	---	--

<b>equal</b> 73:3 112:3 130:20	63:7 84:23 91:10 92:6,14 94:1 114:16 155:8 158:13 165:19 170:12 179:7 213:25 216:21 217:5 221:23 238:2 260:16 262:2 270:11 306:13,14	<b>everyday</b> 150:24 274:20	230:25 231:12 259:3,23 291:11
<b>equality</b> 155:21		<b>everyone's</b> 4:5	<b>exempt</b> 47:13 92:20 217:11,12 221:11 237:23 238:6 291:13 293:11
<b>equals</b> 57:21		<b>evidence</b> 138:15	
<b>equates</b> 200:13		<b>evidently</b> 137:2	
<b>equip</b> 147:3		<b>evolve</b> 218:24	<b>exemption</b> 241:19
<b>equipment</b> 151:2 207:21	<b>essentially</b> 297:15, 20 298:13	<b>evolved</b> 118:18	<b>exemptions</b> 63:14, 15,17
<b>equitable</b> 44:3 53:1 222:19 260:9	<b>establish</b> 80:4 255:5 258:22	<b>exacerbate</b> 261:1	<b>exercise</b> 143:10 216:11,24 292:18
<b>equity</b> 75:19 109:23 219:3 256:14	<b>established</b> 18:25 24:12,14 47:25 128:21,22 171:3,13 178:19	<b>exacerbated</b> 210:5	<b>exercises</b> 168:1 183:15
<b>era</b> 196:13 298:24 299:3,16 300:9	<b>establishing</b> 112:23	<b>examination</b> 144:25	<b>exist</b> 13:18 198:2 267:2 271:17
<b>ERFO</b> 139:13	<b>establishment</b> 111:6	<b>examine</b> 95:1 149:13 158:5	<b>existing</b> 31:4 94:3 159:21 214:18 226:4 231:22 278:20
<b>Erickson</b> 302:12,14	<b>estate</b> 221:22	<b>examples</b> 39:9 74:1, 5,13,22 75:22	<b>exited</b> 62:10
<b>Erik</b> 263:4,6,12 265:21	<b>estates</b> 141:11	<b>excellent</b> 209:1	<b>exits</b> 3:24
<b>erosion</b> 142:13,14, 16 143:3 169:3,12 206:20 207:4 259:22 264:18 265:25 267:14 296:21	<b>Estelle</b> 161:18 162:13 263:4,5 268:11,12,18 301:10	<b>exception</b> 13:16 57:3	<b>exodus</b> 300:15
<b>erupted</b> 274:16	<b>evaluate</b> 213:15 250:7 278:8	<b>excited</b> 32:25	<b>expand</b> 27:24 53:7 57:4 74:20,24 111:17 114:5,18 115:15 124:2 166:3 215:22 257:4,23
<b>ESA</b> 87:2 168:8 170:14 221:6 230:8 235:25 260:25 261:11	<b>evaluated</b> 153:2	<b>exciting</b> 298:25	<b>expanded</b> 53:13 197:23 203:2
<b>ESAS</b> 285:20	<b>Evelyn</b> 83:4 95:21, 24,25 96:2	<b>excluded</b> 238:8	<b>expanding</b> 116:9 254:24
<b>Escapement</b> 261:4	<b>event</b> 193:6	<b>Excluding</b> 262:1	<b>expansion</b> 42:4 74:19 160:1,13 245:3
<b>Eskimo</b> 137:12 248:20	<b>events</b> 141:23 193:3 276:22	<b>exclusion</b> 275:5,11 277:25 278:4,15 279:2,18,24	<b>expect</b> 57:21 197:19 213:12 279:22
<b>essence</b> 266:16	<b>eventually</b> 299:11	<b>excuse</b> 228:4 268:16,19	<b>expected</b> 59:10
<b>essential</b> 29:21 30:19 52:22 59:13	<b>everybody's</b> 248:8 311:9 312:13	<b>execution</b> 14:21	
		<b>executive</b> 2:10,14 6:8,10,12 9:2,6 11:14,23 12:3,5 28:5,6 30:11 37:14, 21 39:17 47:23 48:16 110:3 180:9, 16 182:3,11 183:1 192:17 193:2 208:12 229:16	

<p>118:20 164:24 191:8 220:2</p> <p><b>expecting</b> 168:20 266:4</p> <p><b>expediency</b> 84:22</p> <p><b>expedite</b> 12:22 74:13 96:17 111:4 161:5</p> <p><b>expedited</b> 84:20 87:2 132:19 152:3, 6,14 167:19 221:6 230:8 232:12,23 233:18 237:1,4 249:12</p> <p><b>expediting</b> 230:11 306:12</p> <p><b>expended</b> 210:13</p> <p><b>expense</b> 154:15 165:7 219:2</p> <p><b>expensive</b> 44:23 121:10 126:12 180:16 188:16,25 202:22 203:15</p> <p><b>experience</b> 38:24 58:20 97:23 108:14 128:13 141:22 160:18 202:24 221:20 223:10</p> <p><b>experienced</b> 56:10 169:6 264:10</p> <p><b>experiences</b> 133:8</p> <p><b>experiencing</b> 40:24 41:6 142:12 168:15, 19 261:20 277:16 278:23</p> <p><b>experiments</b> 55:23</p> <p><b>expert</b> 125:22 270:8 281:16</p>	<p><b>expertise</b> 27:16 82:1 167:12 255:23</p> <p><b>experts</b> 126:21 127:9 250:2 270:10 307:12,13,14,22 308:3</p> <p><b>expiration</b> 95:13</p> <p><b>explain</b> 266:25 288:11</p> <p><b>exploration</b> 115:6 285:7 306:13 309:8, 11,19</p> <p><b>explore</b> 28:25 51:25</p> <p><b>exponentially</b> 53:18</p> <p><b>exposed</b> 142:19</p> <p><b>express</b> 167:18 209:16</p> <p><b>extend</b> 143:23 218:22</p> <p><b>extended</b> 151:8</p> <p><b>extension</b> 160:1,13</p> <p><b>extensions</b> 91:7</p> <p><b>extensive</b> 273:7</p> <p><b>extent</b> 34:20 84:19 149:3</p> <p><b>extinction</b> 275:22 276:21,22</p> <p><b>extinguish</b> 67:10</p> <p><b>extra</b> 117:4 235:5</p> <p><b>extracted</b> 115:8</p> <p><b>extraction</b> 88:21 115:6 310:21</p> <p><b>extractions</b> 309:3</p> <p><b>extraordinarily</b> 272:22</p>	<p><b>extras</b> 205:24</p> <p><b>extremely</b> 39:4 107:11 296:2</p> <p><b>eyes</b> 67:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>F</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>face</b> 4:21 39:4,24 59:9 114:1 155:11 167:9 169:3 210:4 218:7</p> <p><b>Facebook</b> 244:24</p> <p><b>faced</b> 144:9 237:20</p> <p><b>faces</b> 4:7 23:1 184:4 265:24</p> <p><b>facilitation</b> 3:8</p> <p><b>facilities</b> 15:18,25 16:7 188:15,17 189:4</p> <p><b>facility</b> 22:15 93:23</p> <p><b>facing</b> 56:19 121:15 126:2 175:4,11 210:2,3 214:3 217:12 267:14 269:5 276:21</p> <p><b>fact</b> 125:25 127:25 145:15 172:12 194:15,21 201:22 204:1 220:18 225:1 227:16</p> <p><b>factored</b> 218:14</p> <p><b>factors</b> 148:14,16 272:7,12 273:3</p> <p><b>facts</b> 249:25</p> <p><b>faculty</b> 92:16</p> <p><b>failed</b> 55:23 99:24 111:9</p>	<p><b>failing</b> 110:17</p> <p><b>fails</b> 225:14</p> <p><b>fair</b> 36:12 44:13 53:2 147:24</p> <p><b>Fairbanks</b> 19:15 36:17 188:19 247:7</p> <p><b>fairly</b> 295:8</p> <p><b>faith</b> 100:11</p> <p><b>faiths</b> 100:11</p> <p><b>fall</b> 115:1 117:24 206:21 207:14</p> <p><b>falling</b> 164:10 225:4 264:24</p> <p><b>falls</b> 287:23</p> <p><b>false</b> 289:25 290:8, 10</p> <p><b>familiar</b> 16:6 23:1 124:4 146:9</p> <p><b>families</b> 38:1 41:2 68:3 100:23 110:17 113:23 141:11 296:16</p> <p><b>family</b> 18:16 120:14 151:4 160:5 198:13 268:25 269:11 271:2</p> <p><b>fancy</b> 270:25</p> <p><b>Fantastic</b> 208:4 212:8</p> <p><b>fare</b> 66:6</p> <p><b>farmers</b> 171:5</p> <p><b>farther</b> 66:9 125:1</p> <p><b>farthest</b> 143:24</p> <p><b>fashion</b> 301:25</p> <p><b>fast</b> 69:23 80:2</p>
--	--	--	---

<p>116:17,18 130:6 209:13 244:7 259:13 292:13 300:3 <b>faster</b> 56:25 118:24 168:16 237:17 238:23 243:20 289:3 <b>fastest</b> 196:2 <b>fat</b> 213:23 <b>fatalities</b> 106:19 <b>father</b> 9:10,15 48:4, 7 102:3 263:24 <b>fault</b> 227:15 <b>favor</b> 220:13 260:5 <b>FCC</b> 242:7 <b>feather</b> 251:18 <b>feathers</b> 67:5 <b>February</b> 265:23 <b>February's</b> 92:12 <b>fed</b> 67:7 211:3 <b>federal</b> 10:9 12:6,10 13:14 14:8 16:10 17:25 18:15,16 27:17,23,25 28:7 36:12 38:24 40:5 42:5,6 43:15 44:6 45:7,10 53:12 54:6 55:15,16 56:21 57:5 58:21,25 59:8 60:10,25 61:16,18 62:10 65:10 67:17, 18,25 68:6,8,11,18 71:22 73:7,24 75:2 76:1 78:14,19,24 81:12,24 82:3,17 84:24 85:4 86:20 93:6 95:15 98:23</p>	<p>99:7,20 100:21 101:7 107:9 108:8 109:13 110:24 111:11,12 112:6,15 113:7 115:1,12 116:4 118:12 120:4 121:15 123:6 128:24 131:17 143:14 147:25 148:10,18 149:14, 20 150:3,9 154:25 155:13 161:16 163:8 165:11 167:14,17 168:11, 25 169:14 170:9,18 178:9 179:9 195:8 197:4 198:20 199:1 204:15 211:4 212:6, 7 215:7,10 217:1, 12,13 222:19,22 224:4 225:13,16,23 232:6 233:9,19 240:18,19 244:17 249:24 254:23 255:13,24 256:6,12 257:11,18,24 258:17,25 259:24, 25 260:5 263:15 265:1,3,9 266:25 269:4,22 271:8,15 280:1 283:8 301:20, 21 303:12,13,22 304:2,4,16 307:8 310:9 311:13 <b>federally</b> 6:20 37:23 42:24 43:23 46:2 51:7 55:8 56:1 83:24 92:11 109:19 137:15 139:12 144:1 146:25 163:15,21 166:23 220:4 233:2 <b>Federation</b> 64:11</p>	<p>72:5 <b>feds</b> 67:21 <b>feed</b> 41:2 68:3 116:3 276:14 305:8 <b>feedback</b> 12:18 23:14 124:17,18 164:6 199:16 200:4 213:20 218:15,21 <b>feeding</b> 76:12 <b>feel</b> 42:9,10 90:19 126:23 127:9 128:6 136:23 172:25 176:16 193:13 225:8 227:3 298:8 301:9 <b>feelings</b> 201:15 204:25 300:9 <b>feels</b> 220:15 <b>fees</b> 62:2 <b>feet</b> 37:7 206:21,22, 24 245:19 <b>fell</b> 227:13 311:14 <b>fellow</b> 65:3 <b>felt</b> 229:14 235:14 304:25 <b>FEMA</b> 35:16 57:4 62:4 99:16 151:20 207:24 208:13,15, 18,22 209:11 210:8 241:12,16 <b>FEMA'S</b> 208:22 <b>Festival</b> 294:2,7 <b>fiberoptic</b> 150:15 151:7 <b>fiduciary</b> 24:5 30:18,23 125:20 154:25 155:15</p>	<p>204:21 <b>field</b> 19:7,15 20:15 35:23 36:11 43:18 56:9 59:12 281:17 <b>fields</b> 107:17 109:11,12 153:25 <b>fifty</b> 36:2 <b>fight</b> 244:21,22 <b>fighter</b> 23:7 <b>fighting</b> 172:19 244:18 <b>figure</b> 97:11 286:13 292:5 <b>figured</b> 137:4 <b>figures</b> 254:9 <b>file</b> 53:23 <b>files</b> 135:12,15,17 210:17 <b>fill</b> 41:11 68:1 184:8 214:18 <b>filled</b> 197:8 202:13 <b>final</b> 80:17 145:12 170:4 207:25 212:4 282:6 <b>finalize</b> 89:1 <b>finalized</b> 89:7 <b>finally</b> 6:17 7:24 16:13 20:15 32:7 53:14 101:11 286:2 <b>finance</b> 15:3,10 22:15 135:3 258:4 <b>finances</b> 296:11 <b>financial</b> 13:12,14 15:1 23:22,25 24:3 25:11 30:16 31:1 52:6 81:17 95:1,3</p>
--	---	---	---



125:23 135:23 158:19 161:3,25 190:14 236:7 <b>financially</b> 126:12 <b>find</b> 76:24 78:19 86:10 118:8 121:12 131:5 134:10 172:6, 15 178:4 219:14 252:4 253:21,22 254:1 293:6 <b>finding</b> 76:17 104:14 <b>fine</b> 117:4 <b>finite</b> 199:7 <b>fins</b> 67:5 <b>fire</b> 107:16,19,23 109:12 308:11 <b>firefighters</b> 107:18 <b>firefighting</b> 108:8 <b>firing</b> 227:16 <b>first-year</b> 209:25 <b>fiscal</b> 157:10,24 <b>fish</b> 67:21 68:20,22 69:2 70:16 101:18, 23 103:9 104:25 105:2 112:19 162:19 284:20,23 296:17 306:10,21 309:17 <b>fisheries</b> 101:25 102:7 133:15,18,19 134:11,15 257:21 296:15 <b>fishery</b> 112:10 <b>fishing</b> 67:11 101:12,13 133:22 174:18 179:7,9	259:20 277:1,2 278:18 <b>fit</b> 142:6 <b>fits</b> 38:11 99:4 <b>fix</b> 43:19 155:4 215:20 243:8 <b>Fixed</b> 25:7 <b>fixing</b> 265:12 <b>Fjord</b> 125:14 <b>flat</b> 66:13 140:6 264:12 <b>Flats</b> 180:12 <b>flexibility</b> 32:11 38:3 124:1 157:20 160:4, 22 256:14,25 <b>flexible</b> 57:12 216:2 257:15,16 <b>flies</b> 66:1 <b>flight</b> 235:21 <b>flights</b> 151:3 <b>flippers</b> 67:5 <b>flood</b> 169:12 241:11, 12,19 <b>flooded</b> 183:4 <b>flooding</b> 143:4 169:4,9 <b>floor</b> 102:13 <b>flowing</b> 104:16 117:8 <b>fluctuate</b> 269:17 <b>fluent</b> 266:20 267:6 <b>fly</b> 107:7 121:11 247:24 276:14 283:19	<b>flying</b> 97:23 308:4 <b>flyway</b> 276:5,12 <b>flyways</b> 276:8 <b>focus</b> 27:22 30:22 61:3 67:2 106:1 147:9 192:3 233:14 237:20 <b>focused</b> 6:18 133:14 166:4 291:24 <b>FOIA</b> 26:17 <b>folks</b> 3:19 4:8,14,24 5:12 6:2,14,22 7:6,8 8:17 17:19 21:2 31:16 32:17,18 33:6,8,12,13,20,22 34:6,8,16,19 54:23 83:3 84:6 85:8 105:13 107:16 116:24 117:1 121:19 153:9 172:22 180:1 207:18 209:23 228:8 230:4,17 231:7 288:15 290:14 311:22 <b>follow</b> 71:21 99:15 120:18 121:20 164:3 176:6 238:15 240:4 269:23 289:4 <b>follow-up</b> 218:23 289:5 <b>food</b> 68:3 101:8 104:24 139:19 144:11 169:20,24 179:8 199:11 250:5 275:19 277:18,19 <b>foods</b> 64:23 <b>foot</b> 261:7	<b>footprints</b> 278:20 <b>force</b> 10:12 54:13 71:1 109:2 113:15 121:9 148:11 187:21 215:17 239:13 268:21 269:3,13 291:11 <b>forced</b> 81:22 187:14 265:6,9 304:5 <b>forces</b> 298:13 301:1 <b>forcing</b> 225:16 293:9 <b>forecasting</b> 169:17 <b>forefront</b> 40:12 <b>foreign</b> 231:20 <b>Forest</b> 48:5 108:19, 23,25 109:4 111:16 <b>forestry</b> 20:13 23:23 105:18 <b>forever</b> 307:5 <b>forget</b> 285:17 <b>form</b> 216:25 264:5 <b>formal</b> 154:19 279:22 <b>formally</b> 89:20 111:16 177:12 279:2 <b>formative</b> 133:8 <b>formed</b> 67:18 71:1 88:3,4 <b>formula</b> 94:24 148:14 <b>formulaic</b> 195:13 <b>formulation</b> 14:21 <b>Fort</b> 125:13 183:3
--	---	--	--

<b>fortify</b> 301:22	<b>frameworks</b> 112:2	<b>fulfillment</b> 27:17 216:17	225:14 247:23 255:19 301:22
<b>fortunate</b> 246:19	<b>free</b> 90:19 136:23 164:10,14 172:25 177:2 254:21 272:4	<b>full</b> 2:17 43:2 55:17 98:24 112:16 171:9 176:11 198:16 224:8,9 226:9 232:10 283:15 285:25 297:22	<b>fundamentally</b> 72:17
<b>fortune</b> 210:11	<b>freedom</b> 69:3 85:1	<b>full-service</b> 98:11 99:19	<b>funded</b> 66:13 107:24 108:4 143:6 166:20 197:13 204:5 206:13 207:13
<b>forward</b> 18:9,23 54:10 85:7 93:7 106:25 121:7 122:8 187:23 189:9 193:25 199:23 200:8 201:15 219:17 220:20 221:2 233:23 234:11 236:20 240:6,8 244:7 284:17 285:2,17 293:15 295:16 300:3 308:17	<b>freezers</b> 41:11 68:2	<b>fullest</b> 149:3	<b>funders</b> 198:19
<b>fossil</b> 295:20 296:7	<b>freezes</b> 164:18	<b>fully</b> 10:15 42:7 44:7 72:19 116:5 130:4 150:7 166:20 170:11 191:5 194:13 197:3 198:12 216:5 225:14 267:9	<b>funding</b> 12:20,22 15:8 21:20 25:3 26:13 31:24 32:3,4, 6 35:11,14 36:3,4, 14 37:1 38:4 40:1 43:14 44:11,13 52:11 53:2,4 57:12 60:14 61:8,10 63:6 70:19 73:20 74:2,9 75:19,20 81:24 84:16 87:7 91:9 93:3,7,8 94:2,3,4,5, 6 95:2,16 96:15,17, 19 107:20 110:20, 25 111:22 112:18 113:1,3 114:1,5 119:16,22 120:3,4, 9,20 121:16 122:1, 2,10 123:9,12 124:15 126:4 127:11,18,24 128:22 129:7 132:4 134:6 135:24 136:1, 5 138:14 139:22,23, 24 140:6,7,11,14,19 141:2,10,15,20 142:1,5,20,24,25 143:12 145:21 147:5,14,16 148:9, 13,18 151:22 158:19,22,23,24 159:5,16,25 160:4,
<b>foster</b> 32:11 161:10 256:25	<b>freezing</b> 190:25	<b>fun</b> 193:3 211:8	
<b>fostering</b> 10:2 133:21 258:16	<b>Freihage</b> 11:4 14:12,13	<b>function</b> 18:11 19:18 20:10,11 29:3 40:17 109:13 141:5 149:10 217:15 293:10	
<b>found</b> 70:24 92:22 131:15 147:18 202:5 210:24 224:5 262:17	<b>Fremin</b> 119:25 120:1	<b>functional</b> 32:10	
<b>foundation</b> 31:16 44:1 186:4	<b>Friday</b> 134:9 201:24	<b>functionality</b> 94:14 256:23	
<b>foundational</b> 216:23	<b>friendly</b> 82:6	<b>functions</b> 11:17 13:6,10,18 14:1,15 17:21 19:10 20:2 23:19 27:6 51:18 53:15,16 56:17 107:3 115:16 145:25 146:19 147:6 149:9,18	
<b>Fourth</b> 294:15	<b>frightening</b> 308:8	<b>fund</b> 36:22 76:16 77:3 87:16 109:11 111:1 119:20 141:3 170:12 188:11 207:9 216:6 221:17	
<b>fractionization</b> 54:1	<b>Frog</b> 154:3		
<b>fragmentation</b> 113:13 261:23 262:12	<b>front</b> 29:22 33:7 76:8 172:10,11 215:17 229:23 256:19		
<b>frame</b> 74:14 230:14 266:3 284:1	<b>frozen</b> 205:21 207:16 208:12 267:18 268:1,3		
<b>frames</b> 220:12 230:2	<b>frustrating</b> 120:23 121:1		
<b>framework</b> 73:22 217:18	<b>frustration</b> 121:3 164:1		
	<b>fuel</b> 241:4 295:20		
	<b>fuels</b> 296:7		
	<b>fulfill</b> 24:4 42:6 106:14 120:16 204:20		
	<b>fulfilling</b> 28:8 192:24 204:16		

13,22 161:4 164:18, 20 166:7 169:23 172:14 180:19,22 181:1,3,16 182:13, 15 185:16,20 186:9, 11,15,17,24 187:13 188:5 189:25 190:18,20 191:21 194:8,20 195:11,13 196:8,17,18 197:3 203:13,24 204:3,9, 11,17,20 205:24 206:10,12 211:10 214:4 215:8,10,20, 21 216:2,12 217:6, 12 222:18,19,22 224:6,9,10,12,19 226:10 227:8,24 239:1 241:15,18 253:3 254:23,24 256:2,11,15,18 257:15,16 258:3,25 307:11,22  <b>fundings</b> 174:11 205:11  <b>funds</b> 12:12,13,15 24:9,19 46:8 66:11, 14 77:3 82:15,17 93:13 94:22,23 95:9 119:2 140:17,24 141:3,8 142:16 143:14 148:19 150:9 151:11 157:21 159:1,2,8 171:21 190:25 191:2,4 195:24 207:11 215:14,23 223:9,20 224:22 256:19 257:25 286:7 300:12 307:21  <b>funneled</b> 76:19	<b>funny</b> 155:3 294:1  <b>fur</b> 67:5  <b>future</b> 65:13 86:16, 17 92:10,17 129:7 134:1,11 156:1 169:21 170:13 172:13 195:4 198:4 199:25 235:10 289:14 290:6 312:7  <b>futures</b> 115:23  <hr/> <b>G</b> <hr/> <b>Gaida-ku-kah</b> 77:22  <b>gained</b> 214:20 295:20  <b>Galena</b> 250:25  <b>galvanization</b> 298:21  <b>galvanizing</b> 298:13  <b>game</b> 262:21 309:18  <b>gaming</b> 14:8  <b>GAO</b> 92:22 222:9  <b>gap</b> 203:21  <b>gaps</b> 114:1 214:4 256:1 302:25 303:1  <b>gas</b> 24:2 275:21 285:7  <b>gatekeeping</b> 82:16  <b>gather</b> 40:3 218:20 288:23  <b>gathering</b> 69:15 259:20 278:18 290:24  <b>gave</b> 235:1 298:16  <b>Gayla</b> 64:2,4 280:23,	24 287:8 289:2 290:9,11 292:23 293:14  <b>GAYLE</b> 294:11,14, 18  <b>gear</b> 103:2  <b>geese</b> 275:23  <b>general</b> 76:16 77:3 131:2 139:25 240:20 241:1,2 254:7 281:24  <b>generalities</b> 140:10  <b>generally</b> 152:6 177:17  <b>generating</b> 188:7  <b>generation</b> 80:7 84:13  <b>generational</b> 76:9 77:4  <b>generations</b> 38:23 67:7,8 111:10 266:8 295:11 307:18  <b>generator</b> 296:10  <b>genocide</b> 310:14  <b>gentleman</b> 84:15 294:3  <b>gently</b> 7:18  <b>genuine</b> 72:22 75:12 130:1  <b>geographic</b> 59:22 216:14 222:20 256:17  <b>geographical</b> 121:19 302:25  <b>geography</b> 19:13 166:6,12 222:2,23	257:22 258:15  <b>geothermal</b> 300:25  <b>GERRY</b> 77:17  <b>get all</b> 251:4 306:20  <b>GFCS</b> 25:8  <b>gifts</b> 192:12  <b>Gilila</b> 205:6,7  <b>Girdwood</b> 293:21  <b>give</b> 3:1 8:13 9:3 33:12 36:13 57:12 58:10 64:17 65:22 104:23 165:22,25 168:14 195:23 233:8 235:15 248:3 293:5 305:1 307:21  <b>give-away</b> 306:2  <b>giving</b> 191:16 228:2 236:1 268:8 303:4 311:19  <b>Glacier</b> 62:13  <b>glad</b> 49:9 204:6  <b>glasses</b> 229:24  <b>globally</b> 163:7  <b>gloss</b> 233:19  <b>goal</b> 55:11 57:19 63:18 84:13,14 236:17 271:25  <b>goals</b> 27:20 29:14 157:25 160:24 225:22 291:21  <b>goats</b> 308:5,7  <b>gold</b> 35:21 104:20 198:9 245:11,13,14, 17 298:24  <b>gon-as-chish</b> 58:7, 14 63:21 109:15
--	--	---	---

<p>116:11 235:23 243:21 311:4</p> <p><b>good</b> 2:6 9:4,5 16:25 21:3 22:25 23:1 37:11,12 42:17 45:21 49:18 51:2 55:3 58:10 61:20 62:6,7 64:2,3 70:13 90:21 97:16 105:10 108:22 121:21 133:5 137:10 143:19 157:1 175:25 182:7 184:25 196:16 201:3 205:6 207:21 208:18 210:11 224:10 266:23 281:13 282:20 290:9 293:18 305:12 309:20</p> <p><b>goods</b> 126:14</p> <p><b>Google</b> 210:22</p> <p><b>govern</b> 43:6 45:8 116:9</p> <p><b>governance</b> 12:24 51:16 56:25 75:5 98:5,24 108:5 111:8 124:4 148:25 159:12 216:9,24 224:8 225:21 226:8 256:16 257:3,9 258:2,19</p> <p><b>governed</b> 171:10</p> <p><b>governing</b> 55:21</p> <p><b>government</b> 2:11 9:14 11:14 12:11 18:1,21 20:6 25:7 38:25 40:6 42:6 43:2,15 45:7 46:2 47:8 53:12 54:6 55:12 56:21 57:5,20</p>	<p>58:4,20,23 61:7,16 72:17,23 73:7 76:1 80:21,25 81:1,12 85:4 86:20 97:2,3 98:11 99:20 100:21 101:2 105:4 107:10 109:10,13 110:3 115:20,21 116:4 118:10,12 119:1 123:6 127:15 128:24 132:11 148:11 155:13 157:10 161:16 163:8 164:16 165:6 167:14,17 170:18 171:11 181:8 183:12,13,25 184:16 195:8 198:20 204:15 212:7 216:25 219:1 224:1,4 225:14 232:22 244:17 262:23 263:15 265:1,3,9 266:25 269:22 271:8,15 272:6 293:2 301:20, 22 303:12 307:6,8 310:9</p> <p><b>government-to-</b> 72:22 307:5</p> <p><b>government-to-</b> <b>government</b> 46:18 71:24 76:2 86:7 109:24 118:5 283:10</p> <p><b>governmental</b> 61:19 62:21</p> <p><b>governments</b> 55:18 57:18 75:25 97:1 99:19 112:2 113:8 138:10 144:2,20 167:3 180:11 205:2</p>	<p>223:5 224:15 225:15 241:15 258:1,20 260:4 276:4 278:7 296:12</p> <p><b>governor</b> 10:1 100:4</p> <p><b>grab</b> 17:19</p> <p><b>grade</b> 208:17 253:25</p> <p><b>Graham</b> 106:17</p> <p><b>Grand</b> 17:2</p> <p><b>grandchildren</b> 117:24</p> <p><b>granddaughter</b> 263:23</p> <p><b>grandfather</b> 245:10, 12 298:11 299:4</p> <p><b>grandfather's</b> 311:3</p> <p><b>grandparents</b> 263:25</p> <p><b>grant</b> 22:11 52:23 57:14 60:19 81:17 95:10 96:24 124:10 142:10 148:9 151:12,22 184:8 185:8 186:18,23 195:15,24 196:14 207:16,24 211:10 212:8 215:7 222:24 223:12 255:20 258:7 268:1</p> <p><b>granting</b> 108:16 147:5</p> <p><b>grants</b> 41:24 44:9 61:3 74:7,8 113:12 114:11 120:23 148:20 159:19 182:23 185:11 186:18 195:20</p>	<p>196:14 208:11 215:3 237:25 255:19 257:15 283:20</p> <p><b>grants.gov</b> 184:9 196:14</p> <p><b>grateful</b> 8:23 46:14 86:12 118:9 199:18 219:16</p> <p><b>gravel</b> 253:22,23</p> <p><b>graves</b> 142:18</p> <p><b>great</b> 18:12 23:5 77:1 78:6 100:7 101:19 108:13 116:18 120:12 152:17 198:18 236:25 241:23 242:22 244:3 245:10 266:20 294:20 298:11 299:4 312:21</p> <p><b>greater</b> 148:24 161:12</p> <p><b>greatly</b> 69:7 72:8 93:13 161:25</p> <p><b>grew</b> 274:1,5</p> <p><b>groceries</b> 126:14</p> <p><b>ground</b> 169:15 216:14 236:21 269:14 274:9</p> <p><b>grounded</b> 29:17 57:1 113:25 115:9 170:10</p> <p><b>grounds</b> 261:2 275:15,17 277:2</p> <p><b>group</b> 3:2 136:18 239:13 304:3</p> <p><b>groups</b> 70:21</p>
--	---	---	---

<p><b>grow</b> 225:11 277:21</p> <p><b>growing</b> 48:3 196:3</p> <p><b>grown</b> 261:25</p> <p><b>growth</b> 32:11 45:3 160:5 161:11 256:25</p> <p><b>guarantee</b> 74:5 226:9 260:9</p> <p><b>guarantees</b> 257:24</p> <p><b>Guard</b> 252:18</p> <p><b>guess</b> 68:10 109:6 122:10 210:19 282:2 283:5 284:12 289:4</p> <p><b>guidance</b> 124:4</p> <p><b>guide</b> 258:23</p> <p><b>guided</b> 110:4</p> <p><b>guidelines</b> 173:18</p> <p><b>guides</b> 124:11</p> <p><b>Gulf</b> 102:5,16,17,18 103:7 260:19 261:10</p> <p><b>Gunter</b> 129:15,18,19</p> <p><b>gutted</b> 227:5 245:6</p> <p><b>guy</b> 117:7 251:5 252:19</p> <p><b>guys</b> 8:24 10:23 11:10 29:10 36:24 49:2 51:3 64:3 65:1, 4,16,22 69:24 70:1 71:9 85:21 87:22 172:3 179:19,23 204:23 210:22 211:25 226:25 227:4,8,10,14 246:20 247:4,15,17, 22 248:5,7,10</p>	<p>251:12 253:3 281:2 283:6,17 286:9,15 287:4,7 293:16,19 294:19 302:18 308:1 311:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>H</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>habitat</b> 260:25 261:23 262:1,11 275:23 277:3,4</p> <p><b>habitats</b> 261:17 275:22</p> <p><b>hadn't</b> 312:6</p> <p><b>Haida</b> 9:2,6 55:6 56:23 58:18 61:14 72:12,14 78:3 97:21 98:3,6 99:5,13 103:15,17 154:2,5 236:3,4 237:7</p> <p><b>half</b> 41:22 52:4 56:2 73:10 117:4 163:20 166:22 214:8 245:13 311:8</p> <p><b>halibut</b> 102:25</p> <p><b>hallway</b> 11:1</p> <p><b>hallways</b> 229:13 291:9 293:1</p> <p><b>hand</b> 4:12 6:24 7:4 17:18 20:18,22 33:17,21,22,23 34:7 47:11 238:21 265:10 301:2</p> <p><b>hand-outs</b> 44:20</p> <p><b>handful</b> 203:22</p> <p><b>handled</b> 98:22</p> <p><b>hands</b> 7:14 79:14 83:5 136:19 209:13</p>	<p><b>happen</b> 67:14 98:8 108:12 141:23 167:3 200:15 220:25 225:6 238:23 247:24 248:1 269:21 276:17 282:17 283:14,17 285:4 288:10 305:14</p> <p><b>happened</b> 102:5 130:10 180:23 200:14 243:1 251:20 299:11 305:25</p> <p><b>happening</b> 8:23 48:16 84:2 105:13 130:7 131:10 136:8 142:13 190:12 194:16 206:16 207:4 230:6 234:19 276:12 293:1 308:13 309:9 310:13</p> <p><b>happy</b> 72:1</p> <p><b>hard</b> 54:16 84:4 85:9 90:1 113:24 178:1 196:9 200:6 202:12 208:8 247:11 267:1, 5 272:23 300:8 306:23</p> <p><b>harder</b> 90:2 121:16 127:25 178:2 203:15</p> <p><b>hardship</b> 195:24</p> <p><b>harm</b> 169:19 250:7 261:15 262:2</p> <p><b>harmed</b> 115:7</p> <p><b>harmonious</b> 272:1</p> <p><b>harmony</b> 271:18</p>	<p><b>harms</b> 61:4</p> <p><b>Harris</b> 133:16</p> <p><b>Harrison</b> 201:3,4</p> <p><b>harvest</b> 67:7,24</p> <p><b>harvests</b> 112:8</p> <p><b>hash</b> 275:18</p> <p><b>Hashagoon</b> 110:6</p> <p><b>Haskell</b> 22:3 92:8,20</p> <p><b>hat</b> 172:9 268:13</p> <p><b>hatchet</b> 202:7</p> <p><b>hate</b> 116:25 310:10</p> <p><b>hats</b> 97:24 127:14 242:4 268:14 301:10</p> <p><b>Haua</b> 9:19</p> <p><b>haven't</b> 4:19 107:16 128:16 171:14 186:1 269:20 287:24 293:9</p> <p><b>havoc</b> 194:19 264:23</p> <p><b>Hawaiians</b> 156:11, 19</p> <p><b>Hayiilka</b> 3:3</p> <p><b>Haynes</b> 153:24 154:2</p> <p><b>Head</b> 181:14,17 189:13 191:20 225:7</p> <p><b>heads</b> 237:17 243:20</p> <p><b>heal</b> 116:3</p> <p><b>healing</b> 114:8</p> <p><b>health</b> 16:11 40:9 75:1 76:15,17</p>
---	--	---	---



<p>113:19,20 114:6,9, 11,15,17 139:19 142:4,18 155:7 179:5 192:20,25 197:18,23 200:23 215:2 244:19 245:21 247:6 250:11 252:20 269:5 306:4,6</p> <p><b>healthy</b> 58:5 104:22 239:5</p> <p><b>Healy</b> 226:16 228:6</p> <p><b>hear</b> 3:18 7:5 11:18, 19 17:14 18:8 21:2, 12 31:16 32:24 34:24 41:5 49:11 50:9,10,25 55:2 65:5 70:9 79:13 83:13,15,18,20,21 126:2 127:10 129:15 134:23,24 161:18 177:5,7 193:23 194:1 252:5 254:18 288:8 293:12 296:5</p> <p><b>heard</b> 5:8 7:7 42:10 68:9 81:6 103:19 105:21 107:16 118:25 125:19 128:16 129:5 132:22 138:3,6,21 139:6 146:2 167:6 193:8 201:10 202:4 214:5,22 228:13 230:4,18 241:21 249:20 252:9 267:7 277:15 289:19 292:16 302:22 311:2,3</p> <p><b>hearing</b> 6:19 50:6 51:3 66:20,24 105:14 141:4</p>	<p>145:24 152:24 174:16 208:14 273:13 288:13,14 291:4 312:1</p> <p><b>hearings</b> 136:6 304:6</p> <p><b>heart</b> 48:19</p> <p><b>Heavenly</b> 9:10,15</p> <p><b>heavy</b> 21:17 47:10</p> <p><b>heeded</b> 102:10</p> <p><b>held</b> 39:17 43:21 56:22 115:17 116:6 234:23</p> <p><b>heli</b> 308:7,10</p> <p><b>helicopter</b> 252:17, 18,19</p> <p><b>helicopters</b> 308:4,6</p> <p><b>helped</b> 69:6</p> <p><b>helpful</b> 5:13,17 33:10 63:8 71:2 136:24 225:10</p> <p><b>herds</b> 261:25 262:10</p> <p><b>Here's</b> 195:3</p> <p><b>heritage</b> 85:2 156:7, 15 172:24 237:13 243:16 259:21 277:6 279:1 298:12</p> <p><b>hey</b> 251:25 281:19</p> <p><b>he's</b> 3:4 80:22 245:18 252:23</p> <p><b>HHS'S</b> 104:21</p> <p><b>Hidatsa</b> 23:4</p> <p><b>hidden</b> 131:16</p> <p><b>high</b> 25:21 29:15 48:4 68:4 92:24 104:14 175:7 207:5</p>	<p>222:9,10 245:9 246:15 296:12</p> <p><b>higher</b> 91:7,11,19 94:17</p> <p><b>highlight</b> 219:10</p> <p><b>highlighted</b> 65:5</p> <p><b>highly</b> 78:25 135:16 209:19 210:25</p> <p><b>hinder</b> 222:16 262:13</p> <p><b>hindered</b> 148:18 165:15</p> <p><b>hindering</b> 145:15</p> <p><b>HIP</b> 63:3,7 239:5</p> <p><b>hire</b> 44:10 125:23 202:23 307:22</p> <p><b>hiring</b> 217:14</p> <p><b>historic</b> 47:20 84:23 87:3 89:9 177:19 178:18 192:25 202:24 230:10 237:3 238:10 259:16 286:16,21</p> <p><b>historical</b> 26:18,19 73:21 111:14 156:16 278:24 287:2</p> <p><b>Historically</b> 262:5</p> <p><b>history</b> 19:13 77:24 171:8,14 244:2 298:8 300:1,2</p> <p><b>hit</b> 227:2 254:5 274:10</p> <p><b>hitting</b> 289:10</p> <p><b>hoc</b> 129:20 263:11</p> <p><b>Hog</b> 245:12,14,16,</p>	<p>17</p> <p><b>hold</b> 27:11 33:10 43:20 127:15 218:20 221:2 308:22</p> <p><b>holders</b> 86:9 249:2</p> <p><b>holding</b> 173:2 180:2,4</p> <p><b>holdings</b> 260:2</p> <p><b>holdout</b> 309:2</p> <p><b>holds</b> 43:22 96:22 106:11</p> <p><b>holdup</b> 185:16</p> <p><b>hole</b> 194:24</p> <p><b>home</b> 9:16 36:20 56:1 214:8</p> <p><b>Homeland</b> 208:25</p> <p><b>homes</b> 106:5 239:5 264:6,19,22 296:23</p> <p><b>homework</b> 104:4</p> <p><b>honest</b> 12:8 28:21</p> <p><b>honeybuckets</b> 264:5</p> <p><b>honor</b> 17:10 45:12 46:11 57:23 82:23 109:22 156:5 170:18 240:11,12 310:20</p> <p><b>honored</b> 18:1 55:25 63:13 162:25 191:15 280:2</p> <p><b>honoring</b> 28:9 73:20</p> <p><b>honors</b> 156:9,18</p> <p><b>hop</b> 65:7 228:17 294:5</p>
--	--	--	--

<p><b>hope</b> 36:23 38:21 49:13 58:9 63:15 77:17 86:15 97:14 102:13 123:5,16 144:7 150:7 162:3 184:19 185:11 193:3,21 199:20 204:24 250:3 281:2 291:20 293:18 307:7</p> <p><b>hopeful</b> 291:16</p> <p><b>hoping</b> 10:25 31:16 79:16</p> <p><b>hose</b> 183:5,22</p> <p><b>Hoseth</b> 64:2,4 280:23,24 289:2 290:9,11 292:23 293:14 294:11,14, 18</p> <p><b>hospital</b> 106:21</p> <p><b>Hospitals</b> 151:1</p> <p><b>host</b> 54:7</p> <p><b>hosting</b> 8:18 251:9</p> <p><b>hosts</b> 244:3</p> <p><b>hot</b> 247:25</p> <p><b>Hotch</b> 83:13,19,23 125:17</p> <p><b>hour</b> 117:4</p> <p><b>hours</b> 6:9 85:10 126:8 206:23 311:8</p> <p><b>house</b> 14:2 76:14 244:8</p> <p><b>housekeeping</b> 4:4</p> <p><b>houses</b> 210:13 310:7</p> <p><b>housing</b> 44:19 63:3, 9 97:8 123:25</p>	<p>124:21 144:13 174:4,5,9,14 205:16,20 211:1 236:5,6,10,23 237:10,21 238:18, 25 239:1 243:13 244:6 296:20</p> <p><b>hover</b> 4:20</p> <p><b>How-a</b> 58:7 156:25</p> <p><b>HPA</b> 287:20</p> <p><b>HR</b> 15:13,16 124:6</p> <p><b>hub</b> 65:25 121:11 146:25 224:2</p> <p><b>hubs</b> 283:19</p> <p><b>HUD</b> 74:8 211:5,9, 19,20,24 236:13 256:9</p> <p><b>huge</b> 65:19 69:19 96:7 142:8 220:2 302:25</p> <p><b>human</b> 13:11 15:12 20:5 47:4 165:18 215:2</p> <p><b>hundred</b> 19:24 198:11 206:22 305:23</p> <p><b>hundreds</b> 141:11 152:23</p> <p><b>hungry</b> 117:7</p> <p><b>hunt</b> 101:18,23 105:3 306:10</p> <p><b>hunting</b> 67:11 179:7,9,16 198:10 259:19 262:5 278:18</p> <p><b>hurdle</b> 35:24 239:16</p> <p><b>hurdles</b> 70:11</p>	<p><b>hurt</b> 134:25 227:17, 25</p> <p><b>hurting</b> 174:18</p> <p><b>hurts</b> 174:11</p> <p><b>husband</b> 239:5</p> <p><b>hybrid</b> 4:6 274:15</p> <p><b>Hydaburg</b> 98:3 103:16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>I</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>i.e.</b> 124:21</p> <p><b>IA</b> 29:13</p> <p><b>ICAS</b> 143:25 144:1, 4,9,23 145:23 146:11,24 147:3,16 148:5 149:1,19 150:12,21 151:11, 19 152:5 186:6 189:8 290:20</p> <p><b>ICAS'S</b> 144:18</p> <p><b>ICDBG</b> 211:10,14</p> <p><b>ice</b> 150:15 151:6</p> <p><b>iceberg</b> 289:10</p> <p><b>ICWA</b> 197:24</p> <p><b>idea</b> 212:9 242:22 266:10,13 288:18 289:23 310:3,11</p> <p><b>ideal</b> 229:6</p> <p><b>ideas</b> 123:19</p> <p><b>identification</b> 158:24 279:4</p> <p><b>identified</b> 37:24 40:4 222:8,10 243:5 253:1 267:22</p> <p><b>identify</b> 31:3 78:12</p>	<p>113:15 133:22 149:5 217:4 225:9 242:3</p> <p><b>identifying</b> 12:21 40:10 47:13 93:3 96:16</p> <p><b>identity</b> 112:5</p> <p><b>IHS</b> 36:8 197:16 211:24,25 244:4,20 256:9</p> <p><b>IIM</b> 24:25</p> <p><b>Ilisagvik</b> 90:23 91:1 95:19</p> <p><b>illustrated</b> 272:10 273:12</p> <p><b>imagine</b> 27:7 39:21 142:13 193:25 204:4 206:16 227:1 273:15,18</p> <p><b>immediately</b> 130:4 288:3</p> <p><b>immemorial</b> 67:8 84:12</p> <p><b>immense</b> 138:23</p> <p><b>immensely</b> 127:13</p> <p><b>immersion</b> 110:22</p> <p><b>impact</b> 25:21 29:20 39:14 44:12 61:4 66:8 68:13 70:5 86:10 118:9 139:9, 19 155:2,10 213:15 219:15 232:11 233:1,6 234:18 275:9 277:2 278:17, 21 283:15 284:19 285:13 295:11,15 296:1,10</p> <p><b>impacted</b> 19:3</p>
--	---	---	---

<p><b>impacting</b> 72:7 92:18 141:11 164:16 178:24 272:6 275:20 296:15</p> <p><b>impacts</b> 68:1 69:20 90:8 110:15 139:18 140:22 142:4 154:24 178:14 195:10 198:23 199:1 215:5 222:25 232:13 233:19 250:8 273:7 276:10, 11 277:17 278:11 279:9 281:14 282:11 285:22 305:13</p> <p><b>impede</b> 93:10 225:22</p> <p><b>impedes</b> 189:25</p> <p><b>imperative</b> 246:5</p> <p><b>implement</b> 16:1 25:5 28:1 81:23 240:8 288:25</p> <p><b>implementation</b> 125:1 161:13 210:12 298:2</p> <p><b>implemented</b> 46:17 67:10 70:8 71:6 194:15 213:11 288:6</p> <p><b>implementing</b> 61:1 72:19 270:11</p> <p><b>implicitly</b> 271:22</p> <p><b>implore</b> 171:17</p> <p><b>importance</b> 67:3 138:18 142:17 236:25 278:15</p>	<p><b>important</b> 8:24 11:12 47:10 49:4,11 59:20 60:1,2 65:4 66:19 68:21,25 70:7 71:12,16 81:9 85:9 97:7 106:16 107:13 131:19 136:8 140:8, 24 141:21 142:1,16, 23,24 143:6 154:14 155:14 164:25 179:5 183:12 230:9 232:5 235:15 250:15 268:24 305:1</p> <p><b>importantly</b> 84:25 98:17 104:9 150:23</p> <p><b>impossible</b> 167:25</p> <p><b>impressed</b> 208:22</p> <p><b>improve</b> 23:14 26:1, 14 28:22 29:3 31:20 43:8 53:14 82:2 91:15 93:6 109:23 123:1 138:16 146:22 187:3 237:8 256:7 258:9</p> <p><b>improved</b> 32:11 52:15 256:24</p> <p><b>improvement</b> 27:23</p> <p><b>improvements</b> 31:22 40:10 91:16 94:18 123:3 124:12 205:15,18 207:16 213:21 223:24 238:2</p> <p><b>improves</b> 187:4</p> <p><b>improving</b> 32:3,4 110:16 134:1 243:10</p> <p><b>in-house</b> 82:1</p>	<p><b>in-person</b> 302:5</p> <p><b>inability</b> 215:5</p> <p><b>inadequate</b> 87:12 221:18</p> <p><b>inception</b> 172:17 203:7</p> <p><b>inch</b> 310:15</p> <p><b>include</b> 13:11 29:14 41:13 75:15 162:18 171:17 178:25 197:24 215:5 218:23 223:24 229:4 249:14 275:3 277:7 280:5</p> <p><b>included</b> 41:13 249:11 286:22</p> <p><b>includes</b> 20:4 24:10 94:15 114:22 159:7 217:14</p> <p><b>including</b> 12:21 39:4,24 53:17 87:13 93:3 96:16 114:7 138:14 139:17 149:25 152:12 159:6 198:19 216:6 224:9 226:10 232:15,20,25 233:10 249:3 260:1 261:23 264:14 300:21</p> <p><b>Income</b> 25:7</p> <p><b>Incorporated</b> 248:19</p> <p><b>increase</b> 31:4 32:13 41:17 75:20,22 81:12,15 88:16 94:5,6,11 112:18 123:25 157:10,20, 23 166:6 200:1</p>	<p>214:12 224:10 254:25 256:14 295:19</p> <p><b>increased</b> 38:5 44:19 53:18 94:8,10 140:2 160:22 259:17</p> <p><b>increases</b> 53:19 61:6 148:18,22</p> <p><b>increasing</b> 12:23 32:7 52:21 113:10 262:12</p> <p><b>incredible</b> 38:8</p> <p><b>independent</b> 163:9</p> <p><b>Indian</b> 2:9 10:4,10, 16,22 11:2,8,9,22 12:13,16,17,19,23 14:1,7,18,22 15:4,8, 20 16:7,16 17:23 19:8 20:1,4 21:22 22:3 24:9 26:24 27:2,10,15 28:8,16 29:16 30:17 31:18, 20,25 32:7,9 37:4 38:17 54:8 55:6 78:9,10 79:8 81:21 82:15 87:8,9,11 91:14 92:8,9,18 93:5 94:13,16 97:15 99:2 110:19 111:7, 15,25 112:13,25 114:4 115:14 116:7 119:17,18 123:1 144:19,23,24 145:3, 17,19 146:23 147:1, 22 148:8 149:1,19 154:4,9,11,12 157:16 158:2,3,7,9, 17 159:4,18,24 160:11,12,18,24 161:9,23 164:9,23</p>
---	--	--	---

190:22,23 194:3 197:17,23 203:14 205:13 213:24 214:5 219:7,23 221:8,10,13,17 222:6,14,17 223:20 224:2,6 244:16 256:23 257:12 279:13 292:20 298:22 304:22 305:17 <b>Indiana</b> 56:5 <b>Indians</b> 156:11,19 233:22 <b>Indigenous</b> 17:24 73:18 83:25 111:2, 17,22 115:12 163:6 164:13,15,16 165:20 168:3 172:17 271:19 272:3,5,6 276:4 298:6 299:6,12 301:14 <b>indirect</b> 44:4 113:9 216:8 <b>individual</b> 24:22 25:17 30:17 92:5 174:8 239:24 <b>individually</b> 285:1 <b>individuals</b> 297:4 <b>indulge</b> 172:25 <b>industries</b> 115:8 257:20 <b>industry</b> 101:17 298:24 <b>industry's</b> 28:14 <b>inefficiencies</b> 58:24 59:6 113:16 203:25 215:9	<b>inefficiency</b> 58:22 139:2 <b>inefficient</b> 59:14 121:23 185:24 202:22 <b>Infantry</b> 294:16 <b>inflation</b> 140:3 254:5 <b>influence</b> 101:17 187:16,21 272:7 273:24 <b>influenced</b> 90:5 164:7 178:12 <b>influx</b> 300:7 <b>inform</b> 291:6,15 <b>informally</b> 228:7 <b>information</b> 4:22 13:11 16:14 25:11 39:19 41:20 54:3 70:1 130:1 135:13 151:14 156:8 193:22 200:1,8 223:23 224:3 270:1 274:22 281:5 282:9 284:8 286:14 290:16 <b>informed</b> 10:14 73:6 145:9 164:11,15 165:8 218:9,21 266:5 272:4 281:8 <b>infrastructure</b> 3:12 75:9 90:6 93:25 98:16 103:25 114:11,17 124:22 143:16 144:13,15 150:14,20 151:21 167:11 178:13 217:24 222:2 223:25 236:24	237:10 243:13 255:25 256:2,21 258:9,11,13,14 292:9 296:23 <b>infrastructures</b> 144:12 149:15 <b>infringement</b> 131:24 <b>ingenious</b> 301:14 <b>ingenuity</b> 301:15 <b>inhabitants</b> 161:19 <b>inherent</b> 109:22 154:16 271:22 <b>inherit</b> 163:10 <b>inhibit</b> 222:11 <b>inhibiting</b> 296:17 <b>inhibits</b> 92:25 <b>initiate</b> 238:13 <b>initiative</b> 2:12 11:15 12:25 162:22 <b>initiatives</b> 28:6 119:1 <b>injustices</b> 73:21 <b>innovative</b> 39:2,8 236:7 <b>input</b> 2:8 10:15 11:18 31:25 66:18 73:6 75:17 90:7 173:4 178:13 198:23 213:15 218:20 220:10,17 231:13 233:15,16 234:23 295:15 <b>insane</b> 305:15 <b>inside</b> 103:23 271:3 293:23 <b>installed</b> 207:14	<b>installing</b> 265:13 <b>instance</b> 131:9,15 132:10 226:1 <b>instances</b> 151:24 <b>Institute</b> 92:10 <b>instituted</b> 171:11 <b>institution</b> 306:5 <b>institutional</b> 91:25 139:3 <b>Institutionalize</b> 124:17 258:21 <b>institutions</b> 92:11 134:2 276:4 <b>insufficient</b> 140:18 275:3 <b>insurance</b> 241:11, 12,19 <b>integrate</b> 73:18 <b>integrated</b> 65:6 114:6 157:18 159:12 160:8,20 161:8 <b>integrating</b> 159:13 <b>integration</b> 124:20 <b>integrity</b> 84:24 157:24 <b>intend</b> 119:10 211:11 <b>intended</b> 12:5 82:9 131:7,8 170:2 213:14 230:23 266:18 270:17 301:5 <b>intends</b> 225:23 <b>intensify</b> 261:7
---	--	---	--

<p><b>intent</b> 88:15 193:17 274:25</p> <p><b>intention</b> 58:10</p> <p><b>intentional</b> 98:10</p> <p><b>intentionally</b> 76:20</p> <p><b>intentions</b> 131:1 282:20</p> <p><b>Inter-tribal</b> 162:19</p> <p><b>interactions</b> 12:20 73:8 194:4 221:14</p> <p><b>interactive</b> 25:19</p> <p><b>interagency</b> 236:9 239:12 258:16</p> <p><b>interdepartmental</b> 159:6</p> <p><b>interest</b> 112:17 191:22</p> <p><b>interested</b> 35:9 153:14 171:16 231:6</p> <p><b>interesting</b> 181:24 182:8 183:24</p> <p><b>interests</b> 18:18 112:9 220:4 231:21 233:20 260:6 282:21</p> <p><b>interface</b> 158:11</p> <p><b>intergenerational</b> 113:21</p> <p><b>intergovernmental</b> 258:17</p> <p><b>interior</b> 2:13 3:7,17 8:2 10:4 13:8 18:16 28:16 35:10,14 41:4 51:8,14 62:24 64:24 66:7,12 67:12 80:8, 15 81:15 88:4,6,11</p>	<p>89:2,16,21 95:9 101:15,16 102:14 103:12 104:10 111:18 113:13 130:14 144:19 145:24 146:2,21 149:2,13 156:4,6 158:2 161:24 162:4 164:8,23 170:1,5,8, 11,13 177:10,13 178:22 179:1,2,21 209:12 214:18 215:8,19 216:5 234:1,6 246:6 247:13 248:9 279:13 284:18 287:6 290:1 291:9 292:19 297:18 305:17</p> <p><b>Interior's</b> 110:1 144:22 148:23 215:24 231:14</p> <p><b>intermediaries</b> 74:4, 8</p> <p><b>internal</b> 28:24 52:13 123:11 158:5,6 160:25 271:7</p> <p><b>internally</b> 238:19</p> <p><b>international</b> 13:13, 16 162:22</p> <p><b>internet</b> 41:23 76:11 150:16 184:12,16 218:6 256:2,5</p> <p><b>interpreter</b> 263:20 264:3,9,17 265:1,8, 15</p> <p><b>interrupt</b> 93:10</p> <p><b>interrupting</b> 7:21 229:1</p>	<p><b>interruption</b> 2:22</p> <p><b>intertwined</b> 138:9</p> <p><b>introduce</b> 77:18 206:3</p> <p><b>introduction</b> 2:20, 24 79:20 80:18 165:22 273:20</p> <p><b>Inupiaq</b> 133:8</p> <p><b>Inupiat</b> 91:2 143:21, 25 185:2</p> <p><b>invaluable</b> 202:24</p> <p><b>inventory</b> 149:14</p> <p><b>invest</b> 24:8 28:12 29:22 45:13 57:10 114:19 147:10 207:10 256:1 257:19 258:10 292:6</p> <p><b>invested</b> 103:17 143:15</p> <p><b>investing</b> 25:6 30:24 56:9 99:12</p> <p><b>investment</b> 25:5 52:7 81:15 98:10 99:2</p> <p><b>investments</b> 24:22 81:19 145:4,19</p> <p><b>invests</b> 115:22</p> <p><b>invisible</b> 132:22</p> <p><b>invitation</b> 143:23</p> <p><b>invite</b> 4:12 6:2 32:16 34:8,9 172:22,23 173:2 176:25 180:1 194:11 228:15 254:17,19 280:22 302:7 308:1</p>	<p><b>invited</b> 129:19 244:3 246:9</p> <p><b>inviting</b> 84:6 173:16</p> <p><b>involve</b> 215:11 220:9 258:24</p> <p><b>involved</b> 70:21 96:12 138:7 243:3 282:4</p> <p><b>involvement</b> 130:1 273:23</p> <p><b>IRA</b> 130:10 131:23 205:8</p> <p><b>irreplaceable</b> 202:25</p> <p><b>irreversible</b> 250:7</p> <p><b>irrevocable</b> 250:6</p> <p><b>ISDEAA</b> 114:9 157:17 160:19 161:7 247:5</p> <p><b>island</b> 42:25 76:8 132:12 156:20 157:2</p> <p><b>islands</b> 156:12 157:14</p> <p><b>isn't</b> 11:20 46:18 71:25 109:4 129:24 187:17 193:21 195:18 208:1 227:14</p> <p><b>isolation</b> 113:22</p> <p><b>issue</b> 33:16 40:2,5 45:11 63:4 90:10 118:20 154:19 155:20 210:23 261:7 309:18</p> <p><b>issued</b> 288:1</p> <p><b>issues</b> 51:24 86:10</p>
--	--	--	---



93:15 97:3 118:9 120:22 164:25 167:22 174:5,14 175:5,10 201:9 219:15 220:2 242:17 249:21 268:20 269:6 270:14  <b>items</b> 155:20 183:18 203:19,22 207:24 220:7  <b>it's</b> 6:6 8:3,4 9:5 15:3 16:9 17:10,25 18:1,7 23:1 26:6 33:18 35:17,24 36:4,18 40:16 43:5 44:2,3 46:11 48:17 49:8 55:23 56:11 59:20 63:7 66:18 68:21 70:7 71:15 73:13 76:7,22,24 77:6 83:3 84:2,3,4 85:9 98:23 101:6 102:12,23 103:20, 21 104:12 107:11 117:1 121:10,16 127:12,22 128:23 129:4,25 130:9 131:7 136:8 145:10 146:17 169:23 174:13 177:23 181:19 182:5,8,14, 15,16,19,25 183:10, 11,12,16,18,24 186:1,12,19 187:8 188:15,21,25 189:13,23 190:3 191:22 192:2 193:25 196:2,9 200:5,14 202:12,15 203:21 206:20 207:3,21 208:8 209:17,21 210:4	212:17 220:10,18 222:1 227:2 229:24 234:2 236:25 239:8 241:23 242:15,22 246:5,23 252:3 253:8 254:10 264:10 265:8 267:1, 12 268:4,13,15 271:10,22,23 275:24 276:16 278:11 280:14 281:23 284:12 285:5 286:20 287:9, 12,22 288:20 289:9 292:6 293:8 300:13, 25 301:14 302:4,12 304:7,11,12,13 308:19 309:2 310:6, 19  <b>Ivory</b> 295:2,6  <b>IVR</b> 25:19  <b>I'd</b> 42:18 77:18 83:25 86:5 126:1 129:21 162:5 179:17,22 192:14 206:3 211:5 218:25 236:15 237:19 250:23,25  <b>I'll</b> 3:11 4:13 6:13 7:22 8:20 14:14 17:22 31:8 33:11,17 34:13,19 58:1 95:22 116:17 139:23 140:10 143:25 153:15 173:2 213:5 226:16 228:15,17 229:25 231:2 270:15 280:22 294:23  <b>I'm</b> 2:16,25 3:1 4:3 6:25 7:6,12,13,16, 21 8:3,16,23 9:1,22	14:11 16:22,24,25 17:1 20:22 23:4,8, 19,20 31:7,10 32:16 33:20 36:15 37:4 42:14,15 45:22 48:13 49:6,9,24 51:2,4,5 64:4,8,12, 24 69:24 72:1,13 76:4 77:17,21 78:21 79:16 82:18 85:25 86:3 90:25 95:18 96:3 97:24,25 100:13 103:14,15 104:9 105:6,18 116:18 117:21 121:3 122:19,23 125:15 128:10,12 129:5 131:4,21 133:6,11 135:20 138:1 140:8 141:22 150:10 157:1,6 162:15,25 173:21 176:24 180:10 182:5 185:1,3,17 191:16 192:9,10,17 201:3,16 202:4 205:7,10 208:14 209:9 211:3 213:2 219:9,11 225:19 227:11 228:4 231:9, 13 235:20,25 243:9 251:11 252:5 254:12,17,19 269:10 272:2 280:23 281:21 285:20 290:1 291:16 292:19 295:2 297:7,22 300:25 301:2 302:4 303:23 304:21,22, 24 309:25 310:1,24  <b>I've</b> 21:7 23:2 40:6 46:13 66:3 99:25	101:24 102:2 125:19 131:16 173:23 174:16 181:22 192:18 196:11 201:8 208:4, 22 210:11,14 212:14,15 226:18 229:23 269:8 270:25 289:19 290:12 294:9 307:10  <hr/> <b>J</b> <hr/> <b>Ja-ake</b> 77:18  <b>Jackie</b> 235:19,25  <b>Jackson</b> 45:21,22  <b>Jacob</b> 157:1,6  <b>Jacqueline</b> 58:14,16 235:23  <b>Janet</b> 263:4,6,12 265:21 272:10,13 273:11 277:15  <b>Janet also</b> 272:14  <b>janitor</b> 192:21  <b>January</b> 47:23 151:6 208:11  <b>Jason</b> 11:4 14:12,13  <b>Jean</b> 263:25  <b>jeopardize</b> 260:14 306:22  <b>jeopardized</b> 306:22  <b>Jilthka-heeni</b> 306:17  <b>Jim</b> 65:2  <b>job</b> 64:8 177:24 182:1 184:17
--	--	--	---

238:23 251:3 253:21 <b>jobs</b> 44:19 89:24 90:3 178:3 195:16 242:1 244:12 245:10 246:5 <b>Joe</b> 206:5,11,15 252:13,14,22 <b>Joel</b> 45:21,22 <b>join</b> 62:4 154:6 241:16 <b>joined</b> 153:7 <b>joining</b> 4:8,16 <b>joke</b> 73:10 244:23 <b>joking</b> 286:5 <b>Jolene</b> 263:9 265:20 266:16 272:10 273:12 <b>JOM</b> 21:18,20 <b>Jones</b> 45:19 49:21, 24 50:5,8,18 54:21 63:24 72:10,13 83:3,7,8,11,13,16, 19,22,23 <b>Jr</b> 83:13,19,20,23 <b>judge</b> 80:23 135:9 <b>judicial</b> 112:22 135:8 225:22 <b>Julien</b> 244:6 <b>July</b> 8:6 34:21 170:4 <b>jump</b> 77:15 219:11 <b>jumped</b> 251:22 <b>jumping</b> 308:5 <b>June</b> 150:14 <b>Juneau</b> 98:12	172:11 <b>jurisdiction</b> 26:25 111:11 147:12 242:10 <b>justice</b> 19:8,17,22 35:15 84:3 122:3 140:11,15 204:19 225:20 226:22 <b>justification</b> 135:22 182:12,18 <b>Justina</b> 49:23 83:4 90:17,21,22 95:18 <hr/> <b>K</b> <hr/> <b>Kake</b> 45:23 46:25 <b>Kakes</b> 294:3,8 <b>Kaktovik</b> 144:7 <b>Kansas</b> 22:4 <b>Kasaan</b> 72:13 76:7,8 <b>Kawerak</b> 137:11,13 139:10 140:4 141:6, 16 142:10 143:12 248:19 <b>Kelly</b> 8:20,21 9:21 10:20 16:21 22:23 27:9 289:21 294:15 <b>Kenaitze</b> 219:7 <b>Kenny</b> 262:6 <b>Kerr-sulphurets- mitchell</b> 103:24 <b>Kerry</b> 294:21,24,25 295:2,6 302:4,7 <b>Ketchikan</b> 72:14 103:13,14,15,23 154:4,6,9	<b>Kevin</b> 11:3 22:23,25 49:23 122:18 129:10,11,12,15,18, 19 132:25 153:19 <b>key</b> 38:3 52:5 62:11 73:25 87:13 115:18 118:4 129:23 221:15 226:3 283:1, 19 284:7,20 285:12 <b>Kiana</b> 133:7 <b>kicked</b> 102:24 <b>kid</b> 102:4 172:8 252:10 <b>kids</b> 76:12 246:17 247:21 <b>kill</b> 103:7 <b>killed</b> 102:21 <b>killer</b> 102:22 <b>Kimberley</b> 304:19, 21 <b>kind</b> 6:4,7,13 12:2 15:2 16:16 31:14 33:14 60:20 64:18 65:4,22,23 78:5 115:20 116:14 121:5 126:1,3 127:8 128:17 131:4 132:23 165:1 166:24 171:15 180:25 181:22,25 182:2 183:6 188:6 219:11 222:2 242:15 251:14 261:15 271:3 276:13 286:4 287:17 289:7 293:20 294:23 304:6 310:16 311:8 <b>kinds</b> 126:14 234:15	270:24 <b>king</b> 102:5 276:23 <b>Kirkland</b> 10:24 <b>Klehini</b> 309:9,10,16 <b>Klukwan</b> 125:15 304:23 305:21 <b>knew</b> 78:24 172:8 229:11 <b>knowing</b> 303:5 <b>knowledge</b> 56:15 73:18 91:25 92:6 111:24 139:4 156:17 202:24 249:2 271:12 278:10,16,17 280:12 <b>knowledgeable</b> 106:7,14 <b>Kodiak</b> 213:3 216:15 <b>Koronavic</b> 153:24 <b>Korthuis</b> 37:11,13 <b>Kotzebue</b> 151:9 <b>Koykondinna</b> 37:4 <b>Koyukuk</b> 245:11 <b>KSM</b> 103:22 <b>Kuskokwim</b> 37:18 41:1 174:19 299:5 <b>Kwee-nup-a</b> 95:20 <hr/> <b>L</b> <hr/> <b>L&amp;g</b> 301:1 <b>Lab</b> 133:15 <b>lack</b> 60:11 82:4 120:7 121:3 140:12
---	--	--	---

<p>144:11 148:18 150:19 165:15 171:22 198:8 204:3, 17 218:5 222:5 227:7,8 296:19,25</p> <p><b>lacked</b> 39:19</p> <p><b>lacks</b> 164:2 241:16</p> <p><b>ladies</b> 281:1</p> <p><b>lady</b> 117:19 290:20</p> <p><b>lags</b> 52:8</p> <p><b>laid</b> 118:17 182:20 219:20 220:13</p> <p><b>Lake</b> 117:22 120:2 226:16 228:6 231:10 232:1 233:13 235:16 262:6</p> <p><b>land</b> 18:11 23:23,24 42:18,20 44:14,16 45:3 46:10,11 47:4 48:22 57:6 58:9 61:23 64:16 67:6, 23,25 71:3 74:10, 11,13,15 84:1 87:14 88:15 89:2,5,7 101:23 109:17 111:12 114:25 115:17 126:15,17, 19 130:11 131:20 132:11,13 141:5 156:13 167:10 178:6 206:17 222:8 235:1 251:3 252:16 260:3 262:20 264:12,15 271:10 277:14 285:10 295:23 297:12 303:13,18,22,24 304:2,16 305:18,25 306:7 307:17 311:3</p>	<p><b>landed</b> 251:21 252:12</p> <p><b>lands</b> 10:6 44:22 73:4 74:17 84:20 88:14,18 89:14,22 109:3 110:10 111:11 112:17 114:23 115:7,16,23 116:3 128:2,18 149:20,23 150:3 152:10 163:4,6,17 168:4,22 169:6,8 177:14 178:24 179:5,10,12,16,18 216:19 225:24,25 232:14 233:9 237:12 243:15 246:24 247:2 248:25 249:1,2 259:11,25 260:1 271:22 275:22 276:10 277:17,22 301:7 305:20,21 306:3,10,12 308:11, 24</p> <p><b>landscape</b> 162:22 261:22</p> <p><b>language</b> 5:20 58:15 72:11 77:11 85:15 109:17 116:3 117:19 125:13 153:25 154:1 155:7 162:9 176:19 192:6 195:22 212:25 238:5 255:14,16 263:19,22,24 264:2, 8,16,25 265:7,14 267:2,3 268:17 278:3 304:21</p> <p><b>languages</b> 166:14 255:17 263:17 272:15 273:2</p>	<p><b>lapel</b> 32:23 33:1</p> <p><b>laptops</b> 33:9</p> <p><b>large</b> 15:22 38:12 188:24</p> <p><b>largely</b> 17:22 230:2, 18 241:23 291:17 292:24</p> <p><b>larger</b> 20:11 44:11 144:17 150:18 172:1</p> <p><b>largest</b> 309:4,5</p> <p><b>lastly</b> 42:8 62:25 94:13 103:10 143:9 148:17 241:20 250:12</p> <p><b>late</b> 56:19 215:15 223:10</p> <p><b>latest</b> 281:6</p> <p><b>Latitudes</b> 162:21</p> <p><b>law</b> 10:9 19:18,19,23 22:11 73:24 130:11, 21 155:16 157:18 163:13 170:7 215:22</p> <p><b>laws</b> 18:24 130:13, 17 132:15 269:12 271:9 280:1</p> <p><b>lawyers</b> 44:25 284:11</p> <p><b>lay</b> 144:7 181:2 275:17 277:3</p> <p><b>layers</b> 29:1 82:14 143:14 223:19</p> <p><b>layoffs</b> 155:6</p> <p><b>lead</b> 14:21,22 15:4, 21 28:19 57:19 99:12,22 116:2</p>	<p>161:14 179:13,15 232:19 239:7 259:17</p> <p><b>leader</b> 31:15 65:14 148:2,4 219:20</p> <p><b>leaders</b> 3:15 6:4,5 9:14 29:23 45:15 46:21 65:3 86:25 113:18 117:14 136:9 163:2 201:10, 13 204:25 213:17 270:4 284:11</p> <p><b>leadership</b> 6:19,20 7:11 13:21 119:11 155:22 258:4 299:13</p> <p><b>leading</b> 139:1 261:7</p> <p><b>leads</b> 56:25 60:12 115:24</p> <p><b>lean</b> 299:3</p> <p><b>leaning</b> 83:17</p> <p><b>learn</b> 38:25 176:5,7 194:5 271:1</p> <p><b>learned</b> 102:2,6 228:18,22 230:21 289:14</p> <p><b>learning</b> 16:18 191:20</p> <p><b>LEAS</b> 110:21</p> <p><b>lease</b> 16:9 24:1 43:10 141:13 226:11</p> <p><b>leases</b> 43:10 47:4 56:17 115:12 189:6 214:2 215:17 216:7</p> <p><b>leasing</b> 59:5 114:25 221:22</p>
---	--	---	--

<p><b>leave</b> 3:25 15:4 49:6 58:1 200:16 308:23</p> <p><b>leaves</b> 36:15</p> <p><b>leaving</b> 110:17 122:7 300:15</p> <p><b>led</b> 38:5 61:15 81:20 119:5 133:15 138:23</p> <p><b>left</b> 50:12 127:14 134:15 148:21 152:20 198:14 252:12 268:21 269:13 295:4 306:1</p> <p><b>leg</b> 267:23</p> <p><b>legal</b> 62:1,2 74:15 90:3 102:23 112:20 140:13,20 154:24 156:21 163:16 168:10,23 178:2 190:23 219:3</p> <p><b>legally</b> 215:12 249:17 271:8</p> <p><b>legislation</b> 204:9 209:20</p> <p><b>legislature</b> 191:10 300:11</p> <p><b>lend</b> 208:10 300:22</p> <p><b>lens</b> 248:14</p> <p><b>lesson</b> 102:6 228:18,22 230:21 289:14 298:8</p> <p><b>let alone</b> 208:9</p> <p><b>letter</b> 31:15 86:25 148:4 219:20</p> <p><b>letters</b> 46:20 148:2</p> <p><b>letting</b> 62:11 240:12</p>	<p><b>let's</b> 8:19 23:17 25:4 33:11 42:13 43:9 49:21,22 50:9 54:19 56:16 62:18 63:23 79:12,13 83:7,11,16,17 95:21 103:22 104:22,25 105:11 117:9,11 137:1 153:17 173:6 207:23 210:10 239:16 252:6 263:4 296:15,19,21,22 300:3 311:1</p> <p><b>level</b> 29:19 30:6 36:10 51:25 74:7 101:7 142:22 143:7 203:13 243:2 247:6 250:1 266:22 276:22 282:12,13 287:1 301:9</p> <p><b>levels</b> 47:9 60:8 62:12 63:6 104:14 141:4 171:25 197:3 224:7 262:11 269:17 281:10,11 282:13</p> <p><b>leverage</b> 28:17 292:13</p> <p><b>leveraging</b> 292:4</p> <p><b>Levitz</b> 143:19,20</p> <p><b>LEVY</b> 20:25 32:22 33:2 49:24 50:10,20 83:8 85:18 90:10, 13,17 95:25 116:25 122:15 125:9 129:9 133:1 134:18 173:9 176:23 177:4,7 254:19 294:25 302:9</p> <p><b>liaison</b> 71:16 124:3 174:24 176:12</p>	<p>255:1</p> <p><b>liaisons</b> 71:12,14,19 124:2 161:3 297:13</p> <p><b>libraries</b> 124:9</p> <p><b>licensed</b> 114:2</p> <p><b>licensing</b> 114:13</p> <p><b>lie</b> 157:13</p> <p><b>life</b> 48:13 67:4 69:20 84:9,11 97:9 100:20,23 101:3 104:24 105:5 110:7 127:25 149:24 150:25 152:12 166:6 169:24 174:17,20 246:16, 18 280:13 306:9 308:21 310:5,10</p> <p><b>lifestyle</b> 175:17</p> <p><b>lifetime</b> 128:7</p> <p><b>lifted</b> 251:23</p> <p><b>light</b> 205:15</p> <p><b>LIHEAP</b> 245:3</p> <p><b>likelihood</b> 200:2</p> <p><b>likelihoods</b> 134:4</p> <p><b>Likewise</b> 204:16</p> <p><b>limit</b> 7:13 102:25 242:13 249:18 259:9 275:11 277:25</p> <p><b>limited</b> 41:23 43:4 69:14 91:18 98:1 196:7 199:9 232:9, 11 238:12 260:7 278:2</p> <p><b>limiting</b> 49:10 279:17</p>	<p><b>limits</b> 217:19 249:22 295:14</p> <p><b>lineage</b> 165:25</p> <p><b>lines</b> 297:3</p> <p><b>lining</b> 34:19 300:19</p> <p><b>link</b> 5:6 34:15</p> <p><b>liquidated</b> 24:2</p> <p><b>Lisa</b> 192:5,6</p> <p><b>list</b> 153:16,18 173:5 213:7 222:9 231:6</p> <p><b>listed</b> 93:19,20 183:18</p> <p><b>listen</b> 81:11 116:12 175:22 176:18 247:17 251:6 307:1, 8</p> <p><b>listened</b> 40:22 48:6 79:19 81:6 162:6</p> <p><b>listening</b> 3:18 13:24, 25 49:2 97:14 175:8 176:19,20 193:20 250:18 265:15 298:10 304:24</p> <p><b>listing</b> 262:16</p> <p><b>listings</b> 260:22</p> <p><b>listserv</b> 286:9,10</p> <p><b>literally</b> 277:5</p> <p><b>litigation</b> 26:16,20 233:12</p> <p><b>livable</b> 296:20</p> <p><b>live</b> 25:12 45:25 65:20 67:20 69:9 76:6,7 100:22 103:14,15 104:10 106:4 107:3 125:14 126:15,17 168:11,</p>
---	--	--	---

<p>25 175:18 192:23 196:1 200:22 248:12 250:25 271:3 277:20 280:12,15 285:9 295:22</p> <p><b>lived</b> 79:19 122:4 174:1 200:20 271:5 306:16</p> <p><b>lives</b> 17:23 127:5 200:24 216:20 248:13 252:15 266:6</p> <p><b>livestock</b> 171:6</p> <p><b>living</b> 66:5 68:4 77:8 84:11 99:18 103:12 127:2 173:23 200:21 220:22 241:8 285:19 299:5</p> <p><b>load</b> 53:17 276:13</p> <p><b>loan</b> 257:24,25</p> <p><b>local</b> 32:12 44:19 45:8 56:15 58:3 88:20 96:9 99:8 106:7,13,24 109:8 123:20 142:7 151:3, 19 161:11 187:2,19 216:11,24,25 221:23 223:5 241:15 253:24 255:23 257:1,17,19 258:1 261:19 270:4</p> <p><b>localized</b> 97:1</p> <p><b>locally</b> 163:7</p> <p><b>located</b> 21:24 22:4,5 37:19 39:22 45:24 64:5 86:1 90:23 109:13 146:11 222:3</p>	<p><b>location</b> 121:19 150:5 224:5</p> <p><b>locations</b> 22:7,9,12</p> <p><b>logistical</b> 59:14 107:4 155:12 218:7</p> <p><b>logistics</b> 3:23</p> <p><b>Lojewski</b> 105:17,18</p> <p><b>long</b> 28:2 49:6 55:16 60:13 66:13 70:15 71:4 84:17 94:7 110:12,15 111:11 121:17 151:18 163:9 171:11,12 194:9 214:3 215:16 225:2 246:13 247:10 250:8 253:7 254:13 272:9 273:19 275:8 282:25 284:12 295:10 300:20</p> <p><b>longer</b> 55:22 149:16 208:23 243:7 265:5 273:8</p> <p><b>longstanding</b> 186:18</p> <p><b>looked</b> 100:22 187:11 253:20</p> <p><b>loops</b> 124:17</p> <p><b>Lordes</b> 244:5</p> <p><b>lose</b> 108:9 174:22 179:8 222:21 241:15 276:23</p> <p><b>losing</b> 43:14 101:13 127:24 128:20,21 199:3</p> <p><b>loss</b> 225:18</p> <p><b>losses</b> 191:25</p>	<p><b>lost</b> 92:6 100:8 132:10,11 148:2 192:2 194:20 234:16 266:19 267:16 269:9 272:14</p> <p><b>lot</b> 4:7 6:22 11:11 12:9,14 20:4 21:19 23:21 26:20,21 33:8 43:3 46:4,19 49:5 64:21 66:9,25 67:3 68:13,24 69:2 70:6 71:13 76:15 101:21 102:2 103:18 107:2, 9 117:13,18 120:6 121:14 126:7,13 132:3 135:14 138:19 141:24 180:16,24 182:9 183:1 184:4,6,15 185:12 190:3 202:11 219:8 220:21 227:5,12 241:21 242:25 245:6 257:15 264:13 265:24 267:1,7 273:5 275:13 276:2 280:7 281:15,24 283:22 284:25 288:8 289:3, 18 292:15 299:1 302:22</p> <p><b>lots</b> 106:4 243:11</p> <p><b>loud</b> 5:8 21:2 51:1 83:21 177:7</p> <p><b>louder</b> 229:25</p> <p><b>love</b> 122:2 194:12 288:18 297:25 310:20</p> <p><b>loved</b> 9:15 266:13</p>	<p><b>lovely</b> 200:18</p> <p><b>low</b> 63:6 65:23 237:23 238:6 260:24 261:14 262:11</p> <p><b>lower</b> 21:25 39:22 50:12 51:21 70:10 107:2 163:23 209:4, 20 210:1 234:14 296:6 303:21</p> <p><b>luck</b> 293:18</p> <p><b>lucky</b> 224:20 284:6</p> <p><b>lump</b> 158:25</p> <p><b>lunch</b> 122:6 152:20</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>M</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Mabel</b> 129:10 133:1, 2,3,5,6 134:18</p> <p><b>made</b> 9:17 46:16 57:6 60:15 66:18,20 77:1 86:24 87:6 99:1 118:23 119:15 123:7 138:17 154:22 155:24 156:3 163:21 167:4 170:25 178:21 183:14 198:15 201:12 202:13 213:19 220:15,16 221:4,12 245:13 249:7 270:6 292:16, 17,20 311:22</p> <p><b>mail</b> 8:2 120:7 218:2,7 249:21 286:2</p> <p><b>main</b> 14:19 86:3 233:14 274:4</p> <p><b>maintain</b> 47:8 51:17</p>
---	---	---	--



<p>52:5 109:11 119:11 191:21 271:16</p> <p><b>maintained</b> 18:22 139:4</p> <p><b>maintaining</b> 30:20 140:23 142:20 143:14 233:15 236:22 291:24</p> <p><b>maintains</b> 271:25</p> <p><b>maintenance</b> 258:14 300:13,14</p> <p><b>major</b> 17:21 23:19 27:6 79:3 167:4 169:7 233:19</p> <p><b>majority</b> 20:2 51:11 134:10 222:3</p> <p><b>make</b> 4:4 8:11 20:25 29:20 30:7 31:19 33:11 34:16 36:11 39:1 50:6 58:5 59:3 60:21 62:15 63:16, 17 68:2,16 69:16 76:11 87:20,25 88:2 90:2,13 91:14 93:5 94:19 97:11 104:2 105:23 120:18 121:16 123:6,21 126:9,11 127:7,24 139:25 144:14 145:1,4 146:6,21 166:9,18 167:1,24 168:18 170:20 176:7 177:5 178:2 182:4 186:13 190:21 191:25 192:2 194:9 201:17 202:10,21 205:1 211:19 225:6,17 226:17,20,22,23 228:24 235:21 237:19 238:23</p>	<p>239:21 243:6 247:19 248:23 252:22 268:5 270:19 279:25 280:7 281:13 292:11 303:11,12 307:2</p> <p><b>makers</b> 112:3 221:25</p> <p><b>makes</b> 52:23 135:22 155:25 169:14 184:6 211:11 227:7</p> <p><b>making</b> 3:8 28:11 41:16 47:10 53:4 56:11 62:20 73:4 110:9 113:7 128:25 129:1 144:20 166:10,15 183:11 201:20 214:17 220:25 227:21 232:6,22 240:21 242:19 249:11,15 302:18,20 304:10, 11,12</p> <p><b>makings</b> 99:9</p> <p><b>malice</b> 129:4</p> <p><b>man</b> 12:15 35:15,17 102:2 125:13 126:7 162:11 271:17</p> <p><b>manage</b> 19:10 23:22,25 24:3,21 26:8,25 27:1 36:3,4 75:1 78:12 98:19 99:21 114:23 116:9 150:4,9 171:5,6 188:2 238:13 257:11 258:7</p> <p><b>managed</b> 22:10 89:5 142:21 211:15 262:20</p>	<p><b>management</b> 13:12 14:7,16,21 15:12,19 16:19 22:15 29:1 62:16 67:20,22 71:4 74:24 81:17 87:16 88:15,17,25 89:2 101:25 102:8 111:12,20 112:16, 24 115:1,18 124:22 134:16 138:25 149:20 150:2,6 155:17 159:20 182:23 209:1,5 215:7 221:17 222:7 255:21 262:21 297:12 305:18</p> <p><b>manager</b> 123:10 206:3 251:3</p> <p><b>managers</b> 248:24</p> <p><b>manages</b> 23:23 156:6 212:9 306:23</p> <p><b>managing</b> 22:16 30:16 97:3 215:3</p> <p><b>Mandan</b> 23:4</p> <p><b>mandate</b> 136:3</p> <p><b>mandated</b> 87:8 119:17 215:12</p> <p><b>mandates</b> 10:9 28:7 241:12</p> <p><b>mandatory</b> 215:21 226:11</p> <p><b>Manh</b> 234:21</p> <p><b>manned</b> 234:7,13</p> <p><b>manner</b> 203:3</p> <p><b>manual</b> 100:10,12</p> <p><b>manufactured</b> 295:19 297:2</p>	<p><b>map</b> 142:11</p> <p><b>mapped</b> 278:25 279:2</p> <p><b>mapping</b> 26:3</p> <p><b>maps</b> 242:11</p> <p><b>March</b> 79:7 207:8 221:9</p> <p><b>Marcie</b> 153:24 154:2</p> <p><b>Margaret</b> 23:9,10</p> <p><b>marginalize</b> 132:17</p> <p><b>marine</b> 261:1</p> <p><b>Mark</b> 184:25 185:1</p> <p><b>marked</b> 261:12</p> <p><b>markets</b> 258:12</p> <p><b>marks</b> 306:14</p> <p><b>Mary</b> 137:10,11 248:16,17,19</p> <p><b>mass</b> 65:23 276:21 301:14</p> <p><b>massively</b> 141:6</p> <p><b>master</b> 113:10 133:13</p> <p><b>Mat-su</b> 196:2</p> <p><b>match</b> 95:6 216:7</p> <p><b>material</b> 207:19 254:1</p> <p><b>materials</b> 124:11 253:24 255:14</p> <p><b>math</b> 6:25</p> <p><b>matter</b> 2:20,24 27:16 99:7,9 146:11 169:24 203:25 234:23 281:23</p> <p><b>matters</b> 85:9 147:9</p>
---	---	---	--

<p><b>maximize</b> 82:2</p> <p><b>maximizes</b> 160:4</p> <p><b>maze</b> 62:1</p> <p><b>meals</b> 136:22</p> <p><b>meaningful</b> 10:14 30:13 48:15 65:10, 15 72:24 75:11 86:16 99:15 109:21 127:8 154:21 167:24 193:13,14 199:23 200:3 213:15,17 219:18 221:2 233:7,15 237:5 243:6 259:9 305:19 307:1,7,8</p> <p><b>meaningfully</b> 178:25 249:18</p> <p><b>meanings</b> 274:23</p> <p><b>means</b> 37:5 55:13 56:9 61:17 66:25 80:14 110:8 130:2 155:21 162:10 191:6 239:2 270:3,4 271:16 286:18,19 299:23 306:18 307:1 311:17</p> <p><b>meant</b> 80:6 186:19 234:2 295:19</p> <p><b>mechanism</b> 82:16 188:4 260:11</p> <p><b>mechanisms</b> 53:2,8 73:17 74:9 124:18 184:5 197:22</p> <p><b>media</b> 245:1</p> <p><b>Medicaid</b> 245:3</p> <p><b>medical</b> 150:25 151:2</p> <p><b>meet</b> 6:5 28:25 42:8</p>	<p>56:22 90:2 149:5 166:20 178:2 221:25 247:16 248:6 263:1 271:25 274:21,23 307:10</p> <p><b>meet all</b> 181:7</p> <p><b>meeting</b> 2:23 9:12 18:17 49:7 70:24 73:14,15 79:7 90:11 99:3 176:10 218:8 244:25 274:8,12,13, 15 281:11 307:12</p> <p><b>meetings</b> 18:19 36:24 48:4 49:9 218:20 246:10 281:4,25 282:8 283:16,21 290:25 293:17 306:25</p> <p><b>melt</b> 207:6</p> <p><b>melting</b> 264:18</p> <p><b>member</b> 9:6 17:2 21:4 23:4 88:9,19 89:11 96:4 120:1 126:5 128:8,12 133:7 135:1 137:12 179:3 248:21 295:3 297:9 302:14</p> <p><b>members</b> 18:5 39:9 42:9 43:1 64:7 65:21 81:1 120:14 125:16 129:21 144:4,21 150:21 151:25 178:16 185:5 198:13 205:9 206:6 244:14 266:24 270:3,10 296:12</p> <p><b>memoranda</b> 232:19</p> <p><b>memorandum</b> 221:10</p>	<p><b>Mendenhall</b> 62:13</p> <p><b>mental</b> 76:15,17 114:11 306:4,6</p> <p><b>mention</b> 140:9</p> <p><b>mentioned</b> 127:6 138:22 141:1,5,14 148:25 166:11 224:18 265:23 272:3,14 276:20 280:10</p> <p><b>mentorship</b> 255:21, 22</p> <p><b>Merbok</b> 141:25</p> <p><b>Mercier</b> 11:3 16:23, 24 17:1 146:8 228:12,16 287:8 289:13 290:10,12 292:24 293:25 294:12 311:7</p> <p><b>mercies</b> 9:17</p> <p><b>mercy</b> 274:7</p> <p><b>mere</b> 86:9 118:7</p> <p><b>Merge</b> 124:21</p> <p><b>merged</b> 214:6</p> <p><b>merging</b> 28:25</p> <p><b>mess</b> 123:8</p> <p><b>message</b> 9:22 10:18 79:18 91:4 207:17 208:7</p> <p><b>messages</b> 267:4</p> <p><b>met</b> 41:1 69:9,18 103:1 291:20 307:9</p> <p><b>Metals</b> 246:2</p> <p><b>metrics</b> 44:12</p> <p><b>Mexico</b> 22:6</p>	<p><b>mic</b> 32:23 33:1 34:5 42:14 105:13</p> <p><b>microphone</b> 21:1 33:7 34:1 50:7,13, 14 283:2</p> <p><b>mics</b> 33:17</p> <p><b>middle</b> 12:15 35:15, 17 308:9</p> <p><b>midst</b> 47:22</p> <p><b>mighty</b> 16:9</p> <p><b>migrate</b> 207:7 212:19 284:22</p> <p><b>migrating</b> 196:6 276:19</p> <p><b>migration</b> 261:24</p> <p><b>migrations</b> 262:8</p> <p><b>migratory</b> 70:14,20 275:14</p> <p><b>Mike</b> 72:10,13</p> <p><b>miles</b> 56:3 103:23 117:18 137:17 152:23 157:14</p> <p><b>millennia</b> 262:22</p> <p><b>million</b> 15:6,7,23 16:3 18:12,13 75:23 98:19 105:24 131:15 183:13 207:13 210:13 226:21,23,24 240:16 254:4 268:1 299:14 303:18,22, 23,24 305:22</p> <p><b>millions</b> 105:4 191:16 307:21</p> <p><b>mind</b> 32:22 149:10 250:3 263:9 282:3, 21</p>
--	--	---	---

<p><b>mindful</b> 6:14</p> <p><b>minds</b> 305:6</p> <p><b>mine</b> 103:19,22,24 104:2,15 234:21,22, 25 245:13,14,17,18 282:5 306:23</p> <p><b>miner</b> 245:11</p> <p><b>mineral</b> 89:5 114:25 115:5,12 285:7</p> <p><b>minerals</b> 18:13 104:17,19 115:16 273:5 280:18 306:13 310:21</p> <p><b>mines</b> 35:20 104:5 198:9</p> <p><b>minimal</b> 22:17</p> <p><b>minimize</b> 160:25 292:2</p> <p><b>minimizes</b> 158:5</p> <p><b>minimizing</b> 39:13</p> <p><b>minimum</b> 203:13,14</p> <p><b>mining</b> 35:21 131:9 132:14 198:9 245:10 246:4,25 248:5 275:20 298:24 306:12 309:8,19</p> <p><b>Minnesota</b> 144:17 150:19</p> <p><b>minor</b> 238:3</p> <p><b>minute</b> 195:10</p> <p><b>minutes</b> 49:10 50:4 116:21 117:11 136:19 283:3</p> <p><b>mispronouncing</b> 302:4</p>	<p><b>misses</b> 43:15</p> <p><b>mission</b> 17:22 23:21 27:20 28:24 156:5, 21 236:5 310:6</p> <p><b>missions</b> 17:25 176:6,7</p> <p><b>mistakes</b> 123:7</p> <p><b>mitigation</b> 143:8 279:5</p> <p><b>MMIP</b> 70:4</p> <p><b>MOA</b> 60:12 238:10</p> <p><b>mobile</b> 255:3,5</p> <p><b>mock</b> 290:3</p> <p><b>model</b> 38:6,11,19 40:7,9 53:13 76:1 98:6 99:4 240:1</p> <p><b>modeled</b> 38:14</p> <p><b>models</b> 81:20 99:24 124:5 159:17 160:1, 11 161:7 215:22 258:13,19</p> <p><b>modern</b> 52:10</p> <p><b>modernize</b> 31:3 116:7</p> <p><b>modernized</b> 52:13</p> <p><b>modernizing</b> 25:25 54:16</p> <p><b>modification</b> 300:18</p> <p><b>modified</b> 261:24</p> <p><b>Modify</b> 256:15</p> <p><b>modifying</b> 230:7</p> <p><b>Module</b> 107:19</p> <p><b>moment</b> 270:16</p> <p><b>money</b> 35:25 36:6,9, 10,13 46:5,7 60:19</p>	<p>76:16 78:20,22 101:4,5 117:18 126:11,13 131:6 147:19 171:22 181:11 194:8 205:25 208:15,23 209:11 239:5,6 267:19 283:22,23 301:5</p> <p><b>monies</b> 244:17 267:17</p> <p><b>monitor</b> 286:7 309:21,25 310:1</p> <p><b>monitoring</b> 16:4 74:25</p> <p><b>monitors</b> 309:22</p> <p><b>Montana</b> 222:1 245:18</p> <p><b>month</b> 10:25 247:17 254:9 266:3</p> <p><b>monthly</b> 75:7</p> <p><b>months</b> 17:6 36:6 93:8 183:24 185:25 215:11 253:8 259:7</p> <p><b>Montrose</b> 131:11</p> <p><b>moose</b> 69:15 260:15</p> <p><b>moral</b> 73:1</p> <p><b>moratorium</b> 41:7 154:17</p> <p><b>morning</b> 2:6 9:4,9, 11 16:25 21:3,11 22:25 37:11,12 42:17 45:21 55:3 64:3 138:6 153:10 229:8 295:5</p> <p><b>Mos-i-cho</b> 54:18</p> <p><b>mother</b> 309:10</p>	<p><b>mothers</b> 76:10</p> <p><b>mother's</b> 268:25</p> <p><b>mottos</b> 281:6</p> <p><b>mountain</b> 76:8 264:10 308:5,7</p> <p><b>mountains</b> 179:13 246:1</p> <p><b>mouth</b> 193:8 299:9</p> <p><b>mouthful</b> 14:16</p> <p><b>move</b> 26:14 50:15 73:7 83:3 106:25 116:21,23 145:24 146:3 148:8 150:10 153:9 189:9 240:6,8</p> <p><b>moved</b> 25:16 68:19 92:6 135:18 174:17 210:13</p> <p><b>moving</b> 65:13 69:22 76:1 121:7 146:19 188:24 193:25 196:6 217:17 220:20 221:2,13 222:18 256:22 259:2 285:2,16 296:3</p> <p><b>multi-year</b> 139:23 142:23,25 221:20</p> <p><b>multiple</b> 60:25 106:19 123:24 124:7,14 239:1 242:4 255:13 299:10 301:10</p> <p><b>mute</b> 302:8</p> <p><b>muted</b> 4:10,14 34:11</p> <hr/> <p><b>N</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Naganiem</b> 16:25</p>
---	--	--	--

<b>NAHASDA</b> 247:8	72:18 84:17 85:5	23 297:1,10,21,23	<b>negatively</b> 181:20
<b>Nal-bay-chishu</b> 117:23	86:21 91:6 92:8	301:24 302:14	<b>neglect</b> 112:12
<b>names</b> 153:13	99:12 118:2,13	304:21 306:6,8	<b>neglecting</b> 265:11
<b>name's</b> 2:20,24	119:12 155:19	307:16 308:25	<b>negotiate</b> 80:14
<b>Nanwalek</b> 106:17	163:9,24 164:13	<b>natives</b> 24:11 64:11,	191:11
253:1	171:10 172:6	22 72:5 102:24	<b>negotiated</b> 182:17
<b>narrative</b> 135:23	191:18 209:10	112:4 156:11,19	216:8
<b>narrow</b> 287:11	217:5 232:5 233:8	168:4	<b>negotiation</b> 80:3
<b>Nathan</b> 49:22 83:4	236:21	<b>natural</b> 64:9 87:14	113:10 128:5
85:18,21,23,24	<b>nationwide</b> 21:21	88:17 104:25	<b>negotiations</b> 79:23,
105:17	119:10 208:9	111:25 114:24	24 179:20 258:5
<b>nation</b> 18:22 21:5	<b>nation's</b> 156:7	123:24 142:3 152:5	<b>Neighbor</b> 108:22
23:5 56:24 59:23	231:19	156:7 159:19	<b>neighboring</b> 274:3
60:23 73:23 91:7	<b>native</b> 10:3,10 14:2	232:14 233:10	<b>Neimeyer</b> 206:5,11
103:15 105:22	18:18 30:20 48:21	237:12 243:15	<b>NEPA</b> 75:14 84:19
108:21 154:21	51:6 54:1 58:15	310:4,6	87:1 89:9 106:23
198:6 200:3 214:9,	64:9 71:4 72:11	<b>nature</b> 162:23	167:20 170:14
10 299:20,24	77:11 85:15,25	271:17	178:22 198:16
308:15,18	92:19 103:11	<b>Navajo</b> 21:5,10	199:13 200:13
<b>national</b> 2:15 11:25	105:23 106:3	<b>navigate</b> 41:22	211:8,21 212:1,3
47:20 52:24 74:23	109:17 110:16	67:22 165:11	221:5,7 229:12
87:3 89:9,18 98:6	111:9 113:21	183:25	230:1,12 231:1
108:23 109:4	114:13 117:15,19,	<b>navigating</b> 60:24	232:2,4 233:14,17,
112:17 151:13	22 119:21 122:24	69:21 171:16	24 235:25 237:2
177:19 178:17,18	124:4 125:12	255:23	238:8 239:9 253:5
198:5 203:10	130:16,24 131:24	<b>NCAI</b> 100:2 244:3	259:15 268:23
229:10,18 231:17,	132:2 133:7,9 134:7	<b>necessarily</b> 21:17	269:25 270:11,13
20,23 233:21	135:2 137:20 144:2,	281:23	271:13 273:9
236:18 237:1,3	6 153:25 154:1	<b>needed</b> 52:11 56:11	274:23 275:1 280:7
259:15,16 260:20	155:5,11,22 156:11,	79:9 80:6 95:17	282:3 283:9 284:15,
271:14 284:24	14,19 162:9,14	140:21 150:5,24	16 287:6,14 288:16,
287:13,23 299:23	166:4 172:24	240:23 255:17	18 295:10 298:1,23
312:11	173:21 174:6 176:9,	284:8	302:23 305:9
<b>nationally</b> 194:1	18 192:5 195:21	<b>needing</b> 70:25	312:12
242:19	199:12 205:7,12	<b>Neg-</b> 79:24	<b>nervous</b> 251:4
<b>nations</b> 10:3,15	206:6 212:24 213:2	<b>Neg-reg</b> 80:9	297:7
27:18 28:23 55:11,	214:25 221:21	<b>negative</b> 113:22	<b>nest</b> 275:25
20 57:25 60:22	225:25 244:13	142:4 195:10	<b>nesting</b> 275:15,17,
	253:11,12 255:17		
	256:3,17 260:2,10		
	263:19,22,23 264:2,		
	8,16,25 265:7,14		
	268:17 295:7 296:5,		

21,23	<b>nonsense</b> 48:18	<b>noting</b> 230:15	<b>obligation</b> 73:1 90:3 141:12 163:16 168:11,25 223:9 225:14
<b>nestled</b> 171:4	<b>norm</b> 57:2	<b>NTIA</b> 151:13	<b>obligations</b> 18:3 28:9 42:7 43:15 87:9 119:18 148:10 155:16 156:21 178:3 216:18,19
<b>news</b> 118:24 230:6	<b>normal</b> 274:20	<b>Nuiqsut</b> 144:7	<b>observation</b> 128:25
<b>NFIP</b> 241:16	<b>normalized</b> 148:6	<b>number</b> 7:15 19:21 28:4,15 30:14 32:17 40:4 58:12 59:21 63:4,9 77:14,17 81:5 106:3 119:9 124:2 136:15,16 137:6,9 173:1,2 180:2,4,7 205:14, 19,20 210:14 309:11,13,15	<b>observed</b> 262:9
<b>NGO</b> 36:17	<b>north</b> 9:25 23:5 101:25 102:7 143:24 188:22 196:1 234:3	<b>numbering</b> 54:23	<b>Observing</b> 162:20
<b>NGOS</b> 36:1	<b>Northern</b> 23:6 162:21	<b>numbers</b> 63:23 95:23 100:9 103:4 147:23 148:6,15 153:12 261:4 276:1, 18 304:15	<b>obstacles</b> 144:9,14 218:7
<b>NHPA</b> 178:23 235:25	<b>northernmost</b> 109:20	<b>numerous</b> 159:16 180:22 261:8 296:16	<b>obtain</b> 32:5
<b>nice</b> 128:14 210:21 244:9 293:22 294:11,14,18	<b>northwest</b> 17:8 137:14 151:9 214:7 289:24	<b>Nyagup</b> 173:20	<b>obvious</b> 207:5 304:11,13
<b>Nicholas</b> 173:10 176:24 177:3,6,9 179:25	<b>notary</b> 107:6	<b>Nyholm</b> 252:14	<b>occasionally</b> 163:12
<b>night</b> 247:16 312:21	<b>note</b> 5:4 30:7 64:17 136:21 152:4	<b>O</b>	<b>occur</b> 82:15 93:16 178:20 223:20
<b>Ninety</b> 244:19	<b>notes</b> 5:11 6:17 33:25 79:21 266:20 297:14		<b>occurred</b> 46:17 299:10
<b>nip</b> 289:20	<b>notice</b> 118:20 120:10 140:4 156:1 199:19 218:17 220:1 241:21 286:14 287:18 303:8 305:4 311:18		<b>occurring</b> 169:7 207:5 272:16 287:15 299:15
<b>Nixon</b> 78:7	<b>noticed</b> 17:15		<b>Ocean</b> 157:15 162:20
<b>NOAA</b> 103:3 133:18 169:17	<b>notices</b> 242:3,14 285:25	<b>O&amp;b</b> 14:23	<b>Oceanic</b> 260:20
<b>noise</b> 261:23	<b>notification</b> 48:1 152:19 193:7 230:12	<b>Obama</b> 244:5	<b>of-staters</b> 101:18
<b>nomadic</b> 265:4	<b>notified</b> 73:11	<b>objecting</b> 223:23	<b>offer</b> 6:24 42:18 51:13 160:16 166:25 188:1 213:22 255:22
<b>Nome</b> 137:12 151:9 248:20	<b>notify</b> 230:16	<b>objective</b> 39:12 74:3,11,20 75:4,12, 20	<b>offered</b> 214:24 227:6
<b>nominated</b> 88:20	<b>notify-and-comment</b> 304:6	<b>objectives</b> 28:24 73:25	<b>offering</b> 7:9 58:19
<b>non-federal</b> 232:20		<b>obligate</b> 159:3	
<b>non-ground</b> 238:6		<b>obligated</b> 227:10 271:9	
<b>non-tribally</b> 281:23			
<b>nonetheless</b> 151:24 220:5 262:7			
<b>nonhuman</b> 277:20			
<b>nonnative</b> 263:24			
<b>nonprofit</b> 282:12			



<p><b>offers</b> 119:4</p> <p><b>office</b> 9:23 11:7 14:20 15:1,12,18 16:13,15 17:16,20 19:14,15,22 20:10, 15 24:17 26:17 27:3 41:15,17 51:18,22 52:3 60:5 62:16 68:20 69:1 79:8 87:18,24 91:19 96:6 98:12 111:7 112:24 135:5,7,11,18 145:7,10 146:1,4,9, 13,18 147:9 149:8 154:20 166:19 217:14 226:5 252:5</p> <p><b>Officer</b> 15:2 37:14, 21 192:17 193:2</p> <p><b>officers</b> 19:24 108:16 124:3 238:11</p> <p><b>offices</b> 29:1 31:23 39:20,22 41:18 43:19 54:14 56:9 59:12 99:11 119:10 121:8 123:21 124:7, 20 141:4 146:1 147:18,20 165:17 213:24 214:6,11 227:5,22,24</p> <p><b>official</b> 239:19 240:13</p> <p><b>officials</b> 9:14 108:16 131:17 270:2,18</p> <p><b>offset</b> 148:20</p> <p><b>oftentimes</b> 195:22 250:1</p> <p><b>Ogotoruk</b> 299:15</p> <p><b>oil</b> 24:2 105:2 273:5 280:17 285:7 297:4</p>	<p>310:21</p> <p><b>oils</b> 104:25</p> <p><b>OJS</b> 204:17</p> <p><b>older</b> 174:1 267:7</p> <p><b>OMB</b> 212:9</p> <p><b>ONAP</b> 211:24</p> <p><b>one-on-one</b> 84:7 85:8 194:7,12</p> <p><b>one-size-fits-</b> 288:20</p> <p><b>one-time</b> 139:22,24 140:7,11,13 175:13</p> <p><b>onerous</b> 182:14</p> <p><b>ongoing</b> 118:2 139:23 261:18 264:17</p> <p><b>online</b> 4:8,24 5:4,11 7:2,16 8:4 23:10,16 32:19,24 33:20,23 34:8,14 42:16 63:24,25 77:15 83:3,5 105:14 153:6 172:22 173:8 254:17 294:22 302:4 304:24 312:5</p> <p><b>onshore</b> 300:22</p> <p><b>open</b> 4:11 6:1 7:8 9:1,22 52:3 53:25 62:13 143:23 176:16 179:14 199:23 219:17 230:23</p> <p><b>open-ended</b> 213:7</p> <p><b>opened</b> 89:4</p> <p><b>opening</b> 6:1 9:3</p> <p><b>operate</b> 7:23 26:5 43:2 98:18 99:19</p>	<p>107:15 114:6 181:9, 13 186:10,16 190:9 191:4 196:13 216:9</p> <p><b>operated</b> 21:23 22:8 92:11 157:16</p> <p><b>operates</b> 53:16</p> <p><b>operating</b> 78:16 87:12 94:23 110:12 221:18 225:17 299:23</p> <p><b>operation</b> 110:22 159:11 160:7</p> <p><b>operational</b> 13:25 30:18 54:12 93:7 213:10</p> <p><b>operations</b> 14:7,18 20:16 21:6 39:13 93:10 98:22 132:14 140:5 158:20 161:1 180:18 181:1,19</p> <p><b>opinion</b> 76:20 128:24 208:17</p> <p><b>Oppenheimer</b> 299:3</p> <p><b>opportunities</b> 31:3 32:4 52:22 74:21 81:24 91:11 95:1 110:18 133:22 144:15 213:16 217:19 222:22 226:8 236:7 244:12 255:23 257:5 293:7</p> <p><b>opportunity</b> 21:12 100:1 149:7 151:22 160:16 195:23 199:15 203:1 212:2 213:4 216:21 218:11,18 222:19 236:1 244:1 263:7 268:8 292:13 293:3, 6 298:16 312:7</p>	<p><b>oppose</b> 154:10 180:16</p> <p><b>opposed</b> 199:13 243:10</p> <p><b>opposes</b> 295:13</p> <p><b>opposing</b> 177:11 248:12</p> <p><b>opposition</b> 89:17</p> <p><b>Ops</b> 19:8</p> <p><b>opt</b> 143:11</p> <p><b>optimization</b> 2:12 11:15,17 13:6</p> <p><b>optimize</b> 32:9 63:18 94:14 256:23</p> <p><b>option</b> 187:18</p> <p><b>optional</b> 169:23</p> <p><b>options</b> 256:18</p> <p><b>orcas</b> 102:22</p> <p><b>order</b> 2:10,14 6:8, 10,12 11:14,16,24 12:3,5 13:5 24:12, 14,18 25:25 26:10 28:6 33:15 47:23 110:3 168:9 176:17 181:7 229:5,16,17 230:25 231:12 259:3,23 291:12</p> <p><b>ordered</b> 137:2</p> <p><b>orderly</b> 3:25</p> <p><b>orders</b> 6:8 13:15 23:11 28:5 30:11 39:17 48:16 180:17 208:13 300:22</p> <p><b>Oregon</b> 17:4,8 135:17 146:4,7</p> <p><b>organic</b> 76:21</p>
---	---	--	---

<p><b>organization</b> 4:18 70:17 138:14 228:5 272:18</p> <p><b>organizations</b> 51:20 52:14 54:12 71:7 81:16 82:8 117:15 119:21 138:10 162:17 172:1 180:24 276:3</p> <p><b>organized</b> 24:19 45:22</p> <p><b>organs</b> 271:7</p> <p><b>oriented</b> 4:5</p> <p><b>original</b> 149:22 152:9 161:19 213:5 254:3</p> <p><b>originally</b> 173:21</p> <p><b>Orleans</b> 233:22</p> <p><b>Orutsararmiut</b> 297:10</p> <p><b>OSM</b> 68:19,22 69:1</p> <p><b>OST</b> 24:15</p> <p><b>ourself</b> 46:6</p> <p><b>Out-</b> 101:17</p> <p><b>outage</b> 151:19</p> <p><b>outages</b> 150:20 151:8</p> <p><b>outcomes</b> 29:20 82:2 110:16 138:16 167:16 170:2 213:14</p> <p><b>outdated</b> 82:4 234:2,8</p> <p><b>outlined</b> 218:1</p> <p><b>outreach</b> 25:14 134:5 254:25 255:3</p>	<p><b>outstanding</b> 146:15</p> <p><b>Ouzinkie</b> 295:7</p> <p><b>overburdened</b> 165:13</p> <p><b>overdue</b> 94:7</p> <p><b>overhead</b> 124:8 205:14 207:14</p> <p><b>overlap</b> 220:5</p> <p><b>overlapping</b> 124:21 260:1</p> <p><b>overlooked</b> 91:20</p> <p><b>overly</b> 41:21 60:23 275:7</p> <p><b>override</b> 112:7 152:7</p> <p><b>oversee</b> 13:21 92:25 158:19 222:12</p> <p><b>oversees</b> 14:2 20:20</p> <p><b>oversight</b> 14:6 15:20 22:13 47:9 48:25 53:20 72:22 82:7 259:5</p> <p><b>overwhelmed</b> 113:4</p> <p><b>Ow-a</b> 42:20</p> <p><b>owe</b> 27:14</p> <p><b>owed</b> 82:12 223:17 293:5</p> <p><b>owned</b> 139:12</p> <p><b>owner</b> 298:3</p> <p><b>owners</b> 77:7 156:13 253:14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>P</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>p.m.</b> 8:5 34:21</p>	<p><b>pace</b> 69:23 140:3 194:17 273:25</p> <p><b>pace-</b> 143:1</p> <p><b>Pacific</b> 8:18 101:25 102:7 133:11 157:15 214:7 258:22 311:12,19</p> <p><b>package</b> 291:19</p> <p><b>packages</b> 227:6</p> <p><b>pad</b> 234:4</p> <p><b>pages</b> 282:25</p> <p><b>paid</b> 205:22 216:19</p> <p><b>Paimiut</b> 162:14</p> <p><b>paint</b> 117:24</p> <p><b>painted</b> 64:20</p> <p><b>paints</b> 276:15</p> <p><b>Pakuka</b> 185:4</p> <p><b>pandemic</b> 16:12 135:15</p> <p><b>panel</b> 154:23 162:6 173:16</p> <p><b>panels</b> 75:16 172:10</p> <p><b>paper</b> 78:23 121:22 168:1 292:7</p> <p><b>papers</b> 33:9 176:5</p> <p><b>paperwork</b> 43:12 123:12</p> <p><b>paradigm</b> 72:21</p> <p><b>paragraphs</b> 285:22</p> <p><b>paralegal</b> 140:16</p> <p><b>paramount</b> 161:6</p> <p><b>paraphrase</b> 17:22 23:20</p> <p><b>parcel</b> 209:11 253:8</p>	<p><b>parceled</b> 208:16</p> <p><b>parcels</b> 105:25 253:10</p> <p><b>Park</b> 74:23 284:24</p> <p><b>part</b> 2:10,14,25 3:2,4 22:13 109:20 148:9 153:7,11 176:1 184:17 190:9 191:13 192:8 197:5 201:23 205:13 210:17 211:6,16,21 212:5 220:20 221:1 238:13,16 257:4 284:5 287:13 291:23 295:14 300:1</p> <p><b>partial</b> 3:7</p> <p><b>participant</b> 101:24</p> <p><b>participants</b> 9:13 88:24 122:16</p> <p><b>participate</b> 249:18</p> <p><b>participated</b> 298:11</p> <p><b>participating</b> 4:10</p> <p><b>participation</b> 5:13, 17 55:17 115:3 164:7 170:16 232:17 260:9 311:10</p> <p><b>Participatory</b> 258:24</p> <p><b>partner</b> 62:3 63:20 114:4 147:6 149:20 197:3 208:19 209:1 211:2,24 240:3</p> <p><b>partnered</b> 151:19</p> <p><b>partneringship</b> 285:15</p>
--	---	---	--

<p><b>partners</b> 55:21 73:3 110:11 197:12 215:7</p> <p><b>partnership</b> 76:2 144:20 155:22 161:15 162:21 170:22</p> <p><b>partnerships</b> 60:2, 10</p> <p><b>parts</b> 6:7 14:25 59:25 99:6 300:1</p> <p><b>party</b> 81:23</p> <p><b>pass</b> 5:24 8:20 127:4 144:6 172:9 195:22 239:19 246:21 271:4 311:21</p> <p><b>passed</b> 47:19 81:5 234:12,16</p> <p><b>passing</b> 17:17</p> <p><b>passive</b> 56:14 138:12</p> <p><b>past</b> 40:6,25 60:24 126:8 127:18 160:18 192:19 197:17 198:7 272:17 307:5</p> <p><b>Pata</b> 58:14,16 235:23,25</p> <p><b>patent</b> 132:13</p> <p><b>paternalistic</b> 72:22 76:1</p> <p><b>path</b> 99:15 236:19</p> <p><b>pathways</b> 32:13 57:5 110:23 114:13 224:11 257:2</p> <p><b>patience</b> 137:8 294:21 304:20</p>	<p><b>Pauline</b> 153:24</p> <p><b>pause</b> 217:11</p> <p><b>pave</b> 161:12</p> <p><b>pay</b> 100:5,19 104:10 126:9 200:18 208:17 267:25 268:1,5 286:8 296:12</p> <p><b>paying</b> 200:19 291:2</p> <p><b>payment</b> 52:8,14,16 82:10 95:8 223:15</p> <p><b>payments</b> 52:12 82:12 215:18 223:12,17 226:11</p> <p><b>peaceful</b> 298:17</p> <p><b>peacefully</b> 277:21</p> <p><b>Pebble</b> 103:19 104:2 282:4,5 284:21 285:5</p> <p><b>peer</b> 255:22</p> <p><b>peer-to-peer</b> 81:20</p> <p><b>pending</b> 221:11 291:14</p> <p><b>penny</b> 60:16</p> <p><b>pens</b> 78:21,23</p> <p><b>people</b> 7:2,13,16 17:23,24 35:18 36:20 37:6,20 38:7, 10 45:13,14,25 46:10,11 47:7 48:21 49:5,12,13 58:8 64:14,15,18 65:20, 21 66:4 67:7 68:10 70:5 76:4,6 77:9 78:25 89:23 90:2 101:8,13,18,23 102:12 103:9,11 104:23 106:4 109:9</p>	<p>110:9 116:3 119:22, 23 121:9 125:14 126:14,22 127:3,12, 13 132:4,21,22 137:19 152:20 153:13 154:6,7 156:14 161:20 162:15,16 163:1,18 164:1,14 166:10 167:13 168:3,17 169:15 171:6,9,19, 24 172:3,9,19 174:18,23 175:1,16 176:14 177:23 178:2 181:2,12,19 184:2,5,14 193:10 194:24 196:5,10,20 200:14,24 202:16 203:16 205:1 208:4 219:8 226:19 227:12 231:11 241:22 244:13 245:7,14,20 246:14 247:19 251:4,8,20, 21,22,24 253:17,18 254:14 262:19 269:12,20 270:3 272:21,24 273:16, 19 274:1,2 276:5,20 277:17 279:15 283:1,19,20 284:11 285:9 289:8 290:2, 17 291:2 292:6 297:2 298:6,19 300:7,15,23 301:6, 12 303:17,23,24 304:5,14,22 306:6 307:16 308:14 310:14 311:2</p> <p><b>peoples</b> 42:19 48:22 164:15 165:16,21 172:6,17 237:17 243:20 272:5</p>	<p><b>people's</b> 84:1 245:24 298:12</p> <p><b>percent</b> 15:7 43:23 51:9 89:4 92:14,23 100:17 101:4 105:22 119:2 137:20 253:17</p> <p><b>percentage</b> 70:18 240:16</p> <p><b>perch</b> 309:15,16</p> <p><b>perfect</b> 129:18 229:23</p> <p><b>perform</b> 81:24</p> <p><b>performance</b> 14:20 29:3 251:12</p> <p><b>performative</b> 193:21</p> <p><b>performed</b> 53:15</p> <p><b>period</b> 6:18 65:12 71:15 75:15 126:1 177:19 215:15 230:16 241:22 273:24 287:19 290:24 312:3,9</p> <p><b>periods</b> 73:9 230:3 237:1,4</p> <p><b>permafrost</b> 142:19 143:4 168:20 169:3 264:13 265:25 267:25 269:15,17 279:7,9 280:6 296:22</p> <p><b>permanent</b> 53:4 258:22 282:6</p> <p><b>permanently</b> 119:8</p> <p><b>permission</b> 129:25</p> <p><b>permit</b> 241:2</p> <p><b>permits</b> 152:14</p>
---	--	--	--

207:19 240:20 241:1 <b>permitted</b> 102:19 <b>permitting</b> 2:13,19 11:24 49:19 89:10, 18 115:1,16 130:6,7 131:5 132:20 150:11,13 152:1,3,7 153:15 173:4 177:12,15 180:6 217:17 218:19 228:9 231:15 236:19 237:8 243:10 249:7 259:4, 6 273:4 282:1 286:24 295:14 <b>persistent</b> 114:1 <b>person</b> 85:13 88:7 100:8 106:20 128:10 165:24 184:20 242:2 251:23 252:21 269:11 281:17,20 282:17 294:22 303:19,25 <b>personal</b> 128:15 266:22 297:11 <b>personnel</b> 29:19 123:23 165:11 166:17 <b>perspective</b> 65:22 66:21 215:9 <b>pertinent</b> 81:10 <b>Petersen</b> 109:15,18 <b>Peterson</b> 55:1,5 80:11 <b>Peterson's</b> 58:18 <b>petitioning</b> 68:10	<b>Philemonof</b> 157:4 <b>phone</b> 34:6 150:16 162:8 <b>phones</b> 41:19 151:1 <b>phonetic</b> 9:10,20 16:25 21:4 37:4,5 42:21 54:18 55:4 58:7,14 63:21 64:19 72:12 77:19,20,22 95:20 109:15 116:11 117:23 126:16 127:5 135:1 156:25 162:10 173:20 185:4 213:1 235:24 243:21 245:25 268:18 306:18 311:4 <b>phrase</b> 130:2 <b>physical</b> 218:7 <b>picked</b> 306:1 <b>picking</b> 248:18 <b>picks</b> 36:20 <b>picture</b> 59:16 276:15 <b>piece</b> 58:4 80:18 117:16 132:11 194:7 <b>piecemealed</b> 267:19 <b>pieces</b> 4:3 268:13 <b>piling</b> 135:15 <b>pillar</b> 114:16 <b>pills</b> 105:2 <b>pilot</b> 78:2 115:17 124:24 174:23 <b>pinks</b> 309:7 <b>Pinto</b> 11:5 20:22	21:3,4 <b>pipeline</b> 242:17 246:12 300:4 <b>Pitka</b> 180:7,8 <b>pivot</b> 274:14 <b>pizza</b> 172:25 <b>pizzas</b> 137:2 172:24 <b>PJ</b> 34:24 35:6 235:20 243:24,25 <b>PL</b> 53:8 70:7 <b>place</b> 7:20,21 40:16 47:17 52:9 62:12 63:14 86:23 112:1 118:22 119:14 126:20 129:4 135:21 142:21 195:1 207:20 211:17,20 235:3 239:14 247:12 249:6 250:16 275:24 280:14 283:17 285:9 294:16 305:10 311:17 <b>placement</b> 242:7,21 <b>places</b> 89:25 138:17 172:12 174:2,8 177:25 188:11 280:15 <b>plainly</b> 193:23 <b>plan</b> 2:10 53:10 89:2 119:9 157:19 159:13 160:9,20 169:20 193:6 195:1 196:10 213:7,13 231:21 234:10 246:14 284:16 291:8,16 293:13 297:15	<b>plane</b> 56:6 146:11 189:1 251:21 252:1, 11,16 <b>planes</b> 144:10 <b>planned</b> 250:15 290:4 295:12 <b>planning</b> 6:24 87:22 88:25 89:5 198:7,8 199:6 207:11 214:19 222:15 258:4,5,7 <b>plans</b> 129:6 161:8 194:14 291:10 <b>plate</b> 102:20 <b>platform</b> 209:17 <b>platforms</b> 73:6 82:10 120:22 124:10,14 165:15 212:20 223:15 255:12 <b>play</b> 239:10 261:9 <b>playing</b> 36:10 288:5 <b>plays</b> 20:10 30:15 139:14 <b>Pleasant</b> 125:14 <b>pleasure</b> 192:24 197:16 <b>Plowshare</b> 298:15 <b>pocketbooks</b> 282:22 297:3 <b>podium</b> 32:23 <b>point</b> 22:22 25:9 58:21 72:15 120:3 144:7 160:3 199:9 264:9 284:12 290:4 295:9 299:11
--	---	---	--

<p><b>points</b> 82:18 86:2 147:14 158:1,13 200:6 201:12 202:9 210:16 256:4 283:2</p> <p><b>policies</b> 14:1 63:16 110:15 111:12 159:21 170:22 212:12 234:1,8</p> <p><b>policy</b> 14:6 15:15 18:25 19:4 30:4 55:16 73:25 110:24 162:24 164:6 176:5 178:18 217:10 231:21,24 258:23 259:15,24 260:8 271:14</p> <p><b>policymakers</b> 62:23</p> <p><b>political</b> 217:8 222:20 298:5</p> <p><b>politically</b> 190:6</p> <p><b>Polytech</b> 92:9</p> <p><b>pool</b> 143:11</p> <p><b>pooling</b> 148:19</p> <p><b>poor</b> 199:6 207:6</p> <p><b>pop</b> 34:9</p> <p><b>population</b> 65:23 260:19 261:12,19 262:8,11</p> <p><b>populations</b> 223:3 260:15 262:3</p> <p><b>Port</b> 106:16</p> <p><b>portal</b> 113:12</p> <p><b>portals</b> 41:23 60:25 255:11</p> <p><b>portion</b> 181:6</p> <p><b>Portland</b> 17:4,8 146:4,9 245:19</p>	<p>290:8</p> <p><b>pose</b> 231:19</p> <p><b>position</b> 4:18 40:7 133:20 199:10</p> <p><b>positions</b> 71:14,17 119:6,7 127:15 158:10,11,19 197:6 217:13 255:19</p> <p><b>positive</b> 10:2</p> <p><b>possess</b> 53:22</p> <p><b>possession</b> 64:22</p> <p><b>possibility</b> 300:19</p> <p><b>possibly</b> 68:10 87:23 185:24 281:17 300:11 305:18 307:24 309:25</p> <p><b>post</b> 289:22 298:23</p> <p><b>postage</b> 59:17</p> <p><b>posted</b> 312:19</p> <p><b>posts</b> 29:7</p> <p><b>postsecondary</b> 190:16</p> <p><b>potential</b> 10:11 31:22 39:13 40:1 91:16 123:4 135:4 139:5 200:24 213:21 278:17 291:11 296:1</p> <p><b>potentially</b> 117:7 233:12 268:20</p> <p><b>pots</b> 194:8</p> <p><b>power</b> 101:16 102:14 123:20 161:10 207:14 251:15</p>	<p><b>powerful</b> 147:6</p> <p><b>powers</b> 100:13 101:17 166:15</p> <p><b>practicable</b> 271:16</p> <p><b>Practically</b> 78:15</p> <p><b>practice</b> 35:23 55:25 98:6 101:3 104:23, 24 105:5 121:22</p> <p><b>practices</b> 28:14 30:6 112:13 149:25 152:12 168:5 250:10 259:20 278:21</p> <p><b>practicing</b> 35:9,18 100:19</p> <p><b>pray</b> 9:8</p> <p><b>prayer</b> 6:1 9:9,11</p> <p><b>pre-approved</b> 113:11</p> <p><b>pre-dates</b> 163:11</p> <p><b>pre-k</b> 190:16</p> <p><b>pre-made</b> 136:22</p> <p><b>precedent</b> 155:17</p> <p><b>precious</b> 104:19</p> <p><b>predictability</b> 53:6</p> <p><b>predictable</b> 73:19 74:9 215:10</p> <p><b>preference</b> 67:16 117:15</p> <p><b>preliminary</b> 242:11</p> <p><b>prepared</b> 37:12 46:13 118:15 297:14</p> <p><b>preparing</b> 173:18</p> <p><b>presence</b> 21:18</p>	<p>116:8</p> <p><b>presences</b> 255:1</p> <p><b>present</b> 88:8 220:24 288:24</p> <p><b>presented</b> 69:5 199:15 201:14 217:18 219:21 282:15</p> <p><b>Presenters</b> 20:25</p> <p><b>presently</b> 192:18 261:14</p> <p><b>preservation</b> 47:20 84:23 85:1 87:3 89:9 142:17 177:19 178:19 193:1 217:22 230:10 237:3 238:11 259:17 286:17,21</p> <p><b>preserve</b> 279:5</p> <p><b>preserved</b> 142:18 217:6</p> <p><b>president</b> 42:23 45:22 46:4 55:6 58:17,18 72:13 78:7 80:11 83:23 90:22 97:22 109:18 117:23 125:17 128:14 157:3 162:14 226:20 229:10,18 231:9 236:3,4 265:22 307:18</p> <p><b>presidential</b> 197:7</p> <p><b>Presidents</b> 37:15,22</p> <p><b>president's</b> 198:5</p> <p><b>press</b> 5:10 8:9 34:7</p> <p><b>pretty</b> 120:5 121:15 132:12 182:19,20</p>
---	--	--	---



<p>193:23 207:5 224:20 227:2 245:5 304:13 311:23</p> <p><b>prevent</b> 52:20 142:18 223:8 234:25</p> <p><b>prevention</b> 100:3 114:8</p> <p><b>previous</b> 21:9 160:3 207:9 238:15 311:13</p> <p><b>previously</b> 115:7 126:25 152:9 279:18</p> <p><b>Pribilof</b> 157:2</p> <p><b>price</b> 254:3,4 296:13</p> <p><b>primarily</b> 107:24 133:20</p> <p><b>primary</b> 18:15 25:9 64:25 78:25 110:10 195:15</p> <p><b>Prince</b> 42:25</p> <p><b>principles</b> 73:20 110:4 164:10</p> <p><b>prior</b> 68:2 164:10, 14,15 169:6 170:3 207:13 214:24 217:2 218:13 272:4, 5 278:6 279:4 280:10,11</p> <p><b>priorities</b> 28:11,25 37:25 109:7 257:17 258:25 260:6 262:24,25</p> <p><b>prioritization</b> 29:19</p> <p><b>prioritize</b> 19:4 27:15 30:15,23 81:13,19 87:7 112:8 119:16</p>	<p>155:5 160:25 223:7 225:21 232:3 256:1 258:10 259:24</p> <p><b>prioritized</b> 111:22</p> <p><b>prioritizing</b> 165:18 232:4</p> <p><b>priority</b> 51:17 53:5 63:10 75:22 97:8 179:9 215:16 223:10 225:5</p> <p><b>private</b> 95:8</p> <p><b>privilege</b> 18:7 134:13</p> <p><b>prize</b> 64:22</p> <p><b>pro</b> 244:10</p> <p><b>probate</b> 53:17 54:5 56:17 59:4 71:1,11 97:10 135:7,11,15 141:3,7 146:3,15 149:9 214:2 221:22 253:19</p> <p><b>probates</b> 53:24,25 70:23,25 106:22 135:7 141:2,10</p> <p><b>probationary</b> 71:15 92:13</p> <p><b>problem</b> 190:20 261:18</p> <p><b>problem-solving</b> 221:1</p> <p><b>problematic</b> 193:10</p> <p><b>problems</b> 175:11 296:21</p> <p><b>procedure</b> 4:14 173:4 249:10 298:2</p> <p><b>procedures</b> 2:14,19 11:24 47:21 49:20</p>	<p>87:4 89:10,18 153:15 167:20 168:7 176:6 177:12, 15 217:18 218:24 221:7 231:15 249:7 269:25 280:7 303:3, 14</p> <p><b>proceed</b> 217:3</p> <p><b>proceeding</b> 10:11</p> <p><b>process</b> 6:14 8:13 10:13 26:10 31:21 44:23 52:13,14,16 57:7 71:8 73:4 75:13 80:3,12 82:13 84:20,24 86:15 87:2,3 89:12 93:12, 16 111:19 123:3,11 126:25 127:25 129:2 145:18,22 147:25 148:5 152:3, 7 158:6 159:5,7,9 161:1 162:7 164:9 177:17,21 178:17, 23 193:24 198:16 207:25 213:21 215:6,11 218:10,14, 19,23 221:6,7 223:18 224:13 226:12 230:1,11 231:1 232:2 233:24 234:9 237:9,22 238:14 239:17 242:8,24 243:5 244:1 249:9,11,15 259:6 270:17 273:25 278:11,14 282:2,4,23 283:9,25 284:13,15 286:21, 24 287:6,14 295:10, 14 300:5 303:8,9 306:11</p> <p><b>processed</b> 70:25</p>	<p><b>processes</b> 11:21 28:20 31:4 52:8 74:12 88:25 106:11 113:4,10 124:19 144:24 147:21 158:7 168:3 170:15 199:14,17 229:12 237:9 243:11,13 275:1 286:1 302:19, 24 304:9 305:2,9</p> <p><b>Processing</b> 124:12</p> <p><b>procurement</b> 81:18 124:7 212:12</p> <p><b>producing</b> 88:20 288:17</p> <p><b>product</b> 63:7</p> <p><b>production</b> 26:16</p> <p><b>productive</b> 127:23 271:17</p> <p><b>productivity</b> 2:19 87:21 88:1 126:1 127:20,21 136:3 165:5 167:15 173:17</p> <p><b>professional</b> 19:2 29:24</p> <p><b>professionals</b> 166:5</p> <p><b>profound</b> 130:2 155:14</p> <p><b>program</b> 16:9 20:6 21:19 30:5 53:20 61:14 78:3,21,22 91:22 92:3 93:4 96:22 97:10 107:15, 17 123:24 124:16, 20 139:7,10 141:7, 8,14,17 151:16 157:19,23 159:13 160:9,20 161:8</p>
--	--	---	---

<p>169:11 181:5,6,9,15 182:16,23 185:11 191:21 195:9 202:18 204:8 208:4, 5,8,9,10,19 209:18 215:13 216:3 221:10,21,22 225:7 245:3 255:15,20 258:23</p> <p><b>programming</b> 158:21</p> <p><b>programs</b> 12:22 18:24 19:20 31:23 38:1 44:6 47:17 52:23 53:10 54:9 61:1,12 63:2 69:19 72:6 78:8,13 82:5 87:11 91:9 93:6 96:18,22 97:6 98:21 110:23 111:1,25 113:3,25 114:6 120:5,8 123:4 124:20,24 126:6 127:11 129:1 140:1 144:16 155:7 158:15 169:10,18 170:9,12 174:23 180:19 181:13 203:10 215:14 216:17,20 217:7,11 221:17 222:12 224:7,12,14 225:18 226:22 227:23 248:4 255:13,21 256:12,16 257:11 258:3 274:14</p> <p><b>progress</b> 77:1 80:5 144:21 145:5</p> <p><b>prohibited</b> 274:17</p> <p><b>project</b> 106:16,22 123:9 131:11 143:1 207:10,22 211:15</p>	<p>231:19 232:10 233:2 234:19 239:3 240:9 250:14 254:6, 11 273:4,6 278:6,19 287:23 296:2 298:14,20</p> <p><b>projects</b> 15:22,23 16:1,2 74:17 75:10 106:15,25 111:23 115:9 124:24 131:10 133:14 139:1 142:6 143:2 177:16 178:15 198:9,21 205:11 206:3,4 232:3 233:7 235:10 237:24 238:6,25 239:22 258:11 259:14 275:5 279:18 282:24 287:12 295:16 303:13 304:4</p> <p><b>prolific</b> 198:10</p> <p><b>promised</b> 73:23 116:19 170:19</p> <p><b>promises</b> 43:13 169:14 300:8</p> <p><b>promote</b> 145:16 148:24 160:4</p> <p><b>promotes</b> 260:8</p> <p><b>promoting</b> 226:7</p> <p><b>pronounced</b> 302:13</p> <p><b>proof</b> 99:18</p> <p><b>prop</b> 251:18</p> <p><b>proper</b> 150:5 159:3 273:23 278:7</p> <p><b>properly</b> 147:5</p> <p><b>properties</b> 253:15</p>	<p><b>property</b> 15:18 111:20 253:6,7,9,16</p> <p><b>proportional</b> 260:13</p> <p><b>proposal</b> 288:25 298:14</p> <p><b>proposals</b> 69:4</p> <p><b>propose</b> 113:16 293:13</p> <p><b>proposed</b> 10:14 27:10,22 28:23 29:13 30:22 89:8, 14,22 90:8 96:13 108:6 138:7 139:7 167:19 177:14,15 178:14 199:13 203:8,18 213:13 218:10 226:19 233:2 237:1,4 244:11 246:3 275:11 277:25</p> <p><b>proposes</b> 226:20</p> <p><b>proposing</b> 108:7 145:24 179:14</p> <p><b>protect</b> 67:13 104:6 142:21 163:16 168:4 170:14 179:18 224:6 259:11 270:21 305:19 306:9 307:17 308:21 309:2 310:5,10</p> <p><b>protected</b> 97:9 112:14 198:4 233:2 280:3,4 285:11</p> <p><b>protecting</b> 10:6 104:5 149:24 152:11</p> <p><b>protection</b> 84:25 88:21 92:8 109:2</p>	<p>110:6 114:23 130:21 197:24 217:21 237:2 310:13</p> <p><b>protections</b> 89:4,7 128:1 260:25 262:13 268:24 279:25 282:7</p> <p><b>protects</b> 156:6 158:10,18</p> <p><b>protocols</b> 164:4 170:8</p> <p><b>proud</b> 171:7</p> <p><b>proved</b> 226:1</p> <p><b>proven</b> 116:1</p> <p><b>proves</b> 61:14</p> <p><b>provide</b> 5:5,6 13:20 19:3 21:20 22:2,9, 14 25:22,25 32:10 37:25 38:7,9,15 39:1 50:2 53:5 73:6, 19 74:3,8 75:12,14 90:18,19 91:17,22 93:11 95:9,13 98:20 99:21 109:9 112:20 113:25 139:17 140:10,20 152:1 155:1 156:16 157:4 158:16 162:12 169:12 173:3,14 177:2 178:19 186:7 191:7,8 199:16 200:3 204:12 213:15,19 218:11 224:24 228:11 232:12,16 237:4 244:12 246:6 249:24 254:21 255:6 256:24 258:6 270:22 273:10 291:22</p>
--	---	--	--

<p><b>provided</b> 7:25 39:14 54:15 66:7 100:23 200:1</p> <p><b>Provider</b> 25:21</p> <p><b>providers</b> 110:11 114:3,14</p> <p><b>providing</b> 3:7 15:14 32:18 59:2 63:2 97:3 107:14 109:7 137:20,24 144:3 147:11 153:14 158:1 171:2 177:18 190:16 204:2</p> <p><b>proximity</b> 109:3 301:7</p> <p><b>Prudhoe</b> 298:7,14</p> <p><b>public</b> 4:11 5:6,10 6:24 7:9 8:8 12:4 14:4 16:11 22:11 31:12 39:25 40:2,4, 12 65:11 66:22 67:19 68:6 70:3 86:14 87:15 98:20 107:7 111:9 114:17 150:25 157:18 187:15 215:22 220:15 221:16 226:22 230:3 231:2 270:2,10 273:23</p> <p><b>published</b> 224:4</p> <p><b>pull</b> 305:5</p> <p><b>pulled</b> 39:10 252:15, 19</p> <p><b>purpose</b> 6:4 12:3 13:7 85:5 86:22 118:14 170:2 270:23 308:25</p> <p><b>purposes</b> 297:8</p>	<p><b>pursue</b> 296:6</p> <p><b>push</b> 30:11 307:24</p> <p><b>pushed</b> 43:5</p> <p><b>pushing</b> 209:23</p> <p><b>put</b> 4:22 5:1 7:13 34:15 41:7 44:14 68:22 101:8,21 117:1 121:25 130:24 135:7 191:2 193:11 200:8 203:8 210:21,22 220:24 229:23 234:11 235:3,5 241:11 281:5 284:9</p> <p><b>puts</b> 295:20</p> <p><b>putting</b> 110:8 153:12 190:7</p> <p><b>puzzle</b> 107:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Q</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>quality</b> 29:15 39:14</p> <p><b>quarterly</b> 75:8</p> <p><b>question</b> 91:13 99:22 147:13 148:23 150:11 153:1 187:5 191:19 206:9 215:25 283:5 285:2 290:19 301:3 305:5 309:17</p> <p><b>questions</b> 31:13 54:8 125:4 153:21, 22 158:15 164:21 170:24 213:8 217:3 267:4 270:15 289:18 293:15 307:15 311:25 312:18</p> <p><b>queue</b> 33:14,24</p>	<p>34:18 90:14,15 95:22 153:16 173:3 180:2</p> <p><b>quick</b> 20:18 153:20 206:9 226:17 249:13 293:25</p> <p><b>quickening</b> 200:12</p> <p><b>quicker</b> 123:21</p> <p><b>quickly</b> 3:22 7:1 14:14 17:13 35:1 152:19 166:17 249:22 269:18 274:10 301:5</p> <p><b>quiet</b> 175:22</p> <p><b>quotation</b> 306:14</p> <p><b>quote</b> 198:22</p> <p><b>quyana</b> 213:3 219:4 250:17 268:9 297:5</p> <p><b>Quyanaa</b> 143:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>R</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>race</b> 155:21 217:9</p> <p><b>raced</b> 294:6</p> <p><b>races</b> 294:6,7</p> <p><b>radar</b> 97:23</p> <p><b>Rael</b> 8:20,21 9:21 10:21 16:21 22:23 27:9 294:15</p> <p><b>rain</b> 245:25</p> <p><b>raise</b> 4:12 6:24 17:18 20:18 33:16, 21,23 34:7 147:15 209:13 290:14</p> <p><b>raised</b> 7:4 77:20</p> <p><b>raises</b> 217:20</p>	<p><b>Ramirez</b> 244:5</p> <p><b>ramp</b> 76:14</p> <p><b>random</b> 202:17</p> <p><b>range</b> 35:8 178:6 246:14</p> <p><b>ranges</b> 93:15</p> <p><b>ranging</b> 144:10</p> <p><b>rapidly</b> 48:2 142:2 295:23</p> <p><b>rarely</b> 48:19</p> <p><b>rate</b> 92:23,24 101:14 168:15 216:8 292:12</p> <p><b>rates</b> 222:10</p> <p><b>rationalize</b> 299:22</p> <p><b>re-</b> 24:18 79:9</p> <p><b>re-defining</b> 261:15</p> <p><b>re-joins</b> 90:13</p> <p><b>re-name</b> 4:17,22</p> <p><b>re-start</b> 120:25</p> <p><b>re-wrote</b> 100:10 132:16</p> <p><b>reach</b> 89:24 131:17 164:17 175:19 177:24 194:23 262:3</p> <p><b>reached</b> 184:22</p> <p><b>reaching</b> 175:1,12</p> <p><b>react</b> 213:9</p> <p><b>read</b> 8:3 23:21 24:13 48:20 72:16 156:5 200:6 280:21 282:25</p> <p><b>reading</b> 33:9 66:21, 22</p>
--	---	--	--

<p><b>ready</b> 37:1 50:3 57:20 114:10 149:19 207:15,18, 19,21 276:23</p> <p><b>reaffirming</b> 28:7</p> <p><b>real</b> 20:18 35:1 44:18 45:11 57:24 98:4 111:19 133:14 153:20 168:19 169:14 170:15 183:10 193:24 223:17 297:1,2</p> <p><b>realign</b> 28:23</p> <p><b>realities</b> 55:19 59:15 107:12 214:15 218:14 236:21 256:17</p> <p><b>reality</b> 118:16 222:20 245:2</p> <p><b>realize</b> 308:19</p> <p><b>realtime</b> 82:13 124:12,15</p> <p><b>realty</b> 20:13 47:3 53:14,16 54:2 107:3 135:7 146:3,15 149:9</p> <p><b>rear</b> 275:18</p> <p><b>rearing</b> 261:16</p> <p><b>reason</b> 33:15 71:10 86:3 152:2 189:17 193:5 209:24 247:20 303:3 311:12</p> <p><b>reasonable</b> 74:14 189:3</p> <p><b>reasons</b> 62:13</p> <p><b>rebust</b> 233:17</p>	<p><b>recall</b> 78:5 79:5 284:5</p> <p><b>receipt</b> 24:8</p> <p><b>receipting</b> 30:24</p> <p><b>receive</b> 19:21 40:13 57:13 66:12 70:18 93:8 107:20 115:11 135:24 141:7 188:4 256:19</p> <p><b>received</b> 8:12 34:4 135:13 148:5 158:25 159:3 185:8</p> <p><b>receives</b> 136:1 271:10</p> <p><b>receiving</b> 147:24 260:13</p> <p><b>recent</b> 138:23 151:19 229:4</p> <p><b>recently</b> 25:16 30:8 68:5,19 140:17 185:8 210:16 220:7 269:8</p> <p><b>recipients</b> 95:3</p> <p><b>reclaim</b> 44:25 115:7 194:22 195:22</p> <p><b>reclaimed</b> 198:12</p> <p><b>recognition</b> 217:7 239:20</p> <p><b>recognize</b> 30:9 49:17 75:5 81:2 83:25 111:16 116:6 292:8</p> <p><b>recognized</b> 6:21 10:1 37:23 42:24 43:23 46:3,15 51:8 55:8 56:1 83:24 86:13 109:19 112:2 114:16 137:15</p>	<p>144:2 146:25 163:8, 15,21 166:23 219:16 220:4 241:3</p> <p><b>recognizes</b> 115:22</p> <p><b>recognizing</b> 72:19 92:21</p> <p><b>recommend</b> 52:12 94:24 111:24 112:23 113:9,14 114:15 115:14 159:4,8,17,24 160:10 238:5 279:12,17</p> <p><b>recommendation</b> 111:4</p> <p><b>recommendations</b> 31:19 41:12 51:14 58:19 75:24 91:14 93:5 94:21 95:5 121:24 123:1 157:5 160:16 161:13 226:3 235:2 236:16 237:19 243:12 275:2</p> <p><b>recommended</b> 124:18</p> <p><b>recommends</b> 54:2 94:17 158:4,9,17</p> <p><b>reconcile</b> 24:8</p> <p><b>reconciling</b> 30:25</p> <p><b>Reconnect</b> 151:16</p> <p><b>record</b> 193:11 202:3 280:24 311:9</p> <p><b>recorded</b> 2:24 5:9 8:9 182:5</p> <p><b>recorders</b> 182:1</p> <p><b>recording</b> 52:11 273:14</p>	<p><b>recordings</b> 290:25</p> <p><b>records</b> 26:24 27:1, 3,4</p> <p><b>recourse</b> 59:11</p> <p><b>recourses</b> 257:17</p> <p><b>recovering</b> 252:23</p> <p><b>recovery</b> 114:7 262:13</p> <p><b>recreation</b> 112:5</p> <p><b>recruit</b> 202:23</p> <p><b>recruitment</b> 29:25 140:22 166:4</p> <p><b>red</b> 96:11,20 101:9 102:4 104:15 117:24 215:23 226:12</p> <p><b>Reddit</b> 29:6 289:22</p> <p><b>reduce</b> 27:25 28:20 45:9 57:13 74:15 75:3,7 94:2 113:13 119:9 124:1,7,22 157:19 170:9 203:1 226:12 256:12 259:5</p> <p><b>reduced</b> 38:4 160:21 301:20</p> <p><b>reduces</b> 159:10 287:22</p> <p><b>reducing</b> 32:1 57:10 90:7 116:8 165:17 178:13 214:5</p> <p><b>reduction</b> 10:12 51:22 121:9 139:7, 15 214:23 217:12, 13 260:25</p> <p><b>reductions</b> 53:11 54:13 87:17 90:2</p>
--	--	---	--

119:5 154:10,20 178:1 291:11 <b>redundancies</b> 28:20 <b>redundancy</b> 144:12 <b>redundant</b> 59:13 136:4 150:19 238:24 <b>reemphasize</b> 27:13 <b>reestablished</b> 24:16 <b>refer</b> 80:21,25 143:25 272:2 <b>reference</b> 5:2 <b>referenced</b> 234:20 <b>references</b> 231:18 <b>referencing</b> 2:18 <b>referring</b> 29:6 289:21 <b>refine</b> 124:19 <b>reflect</b> 55:19 76:3 256:16 <b>reflects</b> 59:5,14 73:22 <b>reform</b> 113:15 219:1 237:11 243:14 <b>reforms</b> 167:2 <b>refusal</b> 225:25 240:19 <b>refuses</b> 241:16 <b>Reg</b> 79:25 <b>regard</b> 148:23 <b>regarded</b> 79:1 <b>region</b> 17:8 21:10, 18 36:16 38:2,13 39:7,16,24 40:3,5,8 43:20 56:8 63:9	64:8,11 96:8 105:20 106:2 123:7,8,10,13 137:14,16 141:20, 21 142:9,11 146:10 147:2 149:15 150:3, 17,18 180:13,14 201:5 218:2 248:20 249:4 260:17 262:10,17,19 283:12 289:24,25 311:17 <b>region-</b> 39:17 <b>regional</b> 17:7,16,20 19:13 21:10 37:16 41:15,17 44:12 51:18,21,25 56:10 61:3 96:5 112:1 119:6,9,11 123:20 142:6,7 144:2 145:7 146:1,4,13,25 147:9,18,19 149:8 165:17 166:17 197:12 214:6,11 216:12 222:25 236:4 255:2 256:10 281:10 <b>regionally</b> 52:25 283:12 <b>regions</b> 16:2 19:11 20:20 70:21 99:7 111:8 115:18 124:25 168:12 169:1 223:6 262:6 <b>region's</b> 249:19 <b>registry</b> 242:15 <b>regrets</b> 23:12 <b>regular</b> 169:10 188:24 255:22 <b>regularly</b> 148:7 199:24	<b>regulated</b> 105:6 <b>regulating</b> 100:25 105:7 <b>regulations</b> 13:22 27:25 54:3 67:22 78:15,19,25 93:19, 20 101:5,21 107:10 112:6 211:7 212:6 229:12 231:23 269:5,23 270:22 277:1 300:21 312:12 <b>regulatory</b> 112:25 113:16 <b>reimbursed</b> 44:7 <b>reimbursement</b> 44:5 114:2 205:12 <b>reinstated</b> 92:17 <b>reiterate</b> 54:13 152:16 <b>reject</b> 170:8 <b>rejected</b> 89:3 <b>relate</b> 165:24 <b>related</b> 13:23 28:7 51:18 53:9 54:2 157:8 259:3 <b>relates</b> 86:17 <b>relating</b> 89:22 177:14 <b>relation</b> 139:11,22 <b>relations</b> 184:1 192:15 <b>relationship</b> 18:22 26:2,3 73:23 75:25 86:7 109:25 118:2, 4,5 144:18 190:11 193:16 271:21	<b>relationships</b> 10:2 14:3 71:19 92:2,7 120:15 133:21 156:3 165:18,20 <b>relatives</b> 120:13 277:20 <b>released</b> 123:12 234:24 <b>releases</b> 104:22 <b>reliable</b> 218:5 222:5 <b>reliance</b> 144:10 <b>reliant</b> 110:21 <b>relief</b> 139:12 <b>relies</b> 140:13 <b>religious</b> 85:1 <b>relocation</b> 135:5 142:21 <b>rely</b> 81:22 120:12 158:14 165:10 169:16 199:7 218:6 237:25 250:4,6 305:23 <b>remain</b> 10:4 27:19 52:9 143:6 197:2,6 269:19 <b>remained</b> 62:12 <b>remains</b> 140:6 205:21 262:14 <b>remarks</b> 58:19 <b>remediation</b> 192:1 <b>remedy</b> 198:18 199:2 <b>remember</b> 95:23 150:18 <b>reminder</b> 32:17 34:18 43:22 173:3
--	---	---	--



<p><b>reminders</b> 49:16</p> <p><b>reminds</b> 130:3</p> <p><b>remiss</b> 23:8</p> <p><b>remote</b> 51:11 59:15, 25 66:3 89:25 90:5 107:4 142:1 157:13 160:23 165:14 177:25 178:11 180:13 214:10 218:5 223:2 255:5 256:3 257:14 258:11</p> <p><b>remoteness</b> 217:23</p> <p><b>removal</b> 276:25</p> <p><b>remove</b> 45:12 110:24 158:7</p> <p><b>removing</b> 29:1 225:22</p> <p><b>renamed</b> 24:15</p> <p><b>renewable</b> 115:8 310:22,25</p> <p><b>renewal</b> 298:2</p> <p><b>renovation</b> 94:24</p> <p><b>rent</b> 188:17</p> <p><b>reorganization</b> 2:10 41:14 96:13 138:8, 13 291:8,10,15 293:13</p> <p><b>reorganized</b> 167:5</p> <p><b>rep</b> 64:25 201:5</p> <p><b>repair</b> 73:21</p> <p><b>repairs</b> 139:16</p> <p><b>repay</b> 95:15</p> <p><b>repeated</b> 223:12</p> <p><b>repeating</b> 239:2</p>	<p><b>replace</b> 98:15 152:7</p> <p><b>replaced</b> 159:20 253:4</p> <p><b>report</b> 24:8 92:22 96:23 120:24 121:4 159:15 223:22 254:7</p> <p><b>reported</b> 252:10</p> <p><b>reporter</b> 8:10 34:2 117:6</p> <p><b>reporting</b> 30:25 38:4 41:21,24 56:19 57:15 59:8 60:22,23 61:21 75:4,7 81:25 82:4 93:12,17,18 96:20 113:5 256:11</p> <p><b>reports</b> 75:6 103:3 119:1,4 135:23 155:2 159:16 214:5 238:13</p> <p><b>Repository</b> 26:24</p> <p><b>represent</b> 18:17 37:6 42:20 64:7 65:24 79:22 81:4 90:25 143:13 162:25 163:6 172:5 197:14 208:21 231:11 239:22 308:17</p> <p><b>representation</b> 91:21</p> <p><b>representative</b> 162:16 174:24 176:13</p> <p><b>representatives</b> 3:17</p> <p><b>represented</b> 207:2 233:21</p>	<p><b>representing</b> 23:9 51:7 76:4,10 80:11 88:5 137:11 154:8 192:10</p> <p><b>represents</b> 59:18</p> <p><b>reproductive</b> 269:9</p> <p><b>request</b> 46:23 52:1 109:10 111:15 188:14 190:13 205:10,22 213:5 231:14 235:20 279:19</p> <p><b>requested</b> 84:18 94:4 125:21</p> <p><b>requesting</b> 92:20 94:22</p> <p><b>requests</b> 93:19 179:1</p> <p><b>require</b> 51:23 107:3 147:9 182:22</p> <p><b>required</b> 54:15 78:14 81:24 135:8, 16,24,25 136:2 205:22 249:17 265:4 271:10 272:4</p> <p><b>requirement</b> 95:7 135:21 182:12 183:17 218:13 241:21</p> <p><b>requirements</b> 13:23 30:23 41:21 60:22 75:5,9 93:17 96:20 113:6 181:7 183:14 212:8 241:12 256:12 274:24 278:3 300:21</p> <p><b>requires</b> 72:21 109:2 164:14 168:9 213:7 216:1 218:15</p>	<p>224:8 271:15 273:10</p> <p><b>requiring</b> 232:10</p> <p><b>research</b> 133:18,24 134:8,15 138:15 191:24 213:20</p> <p><b>reservations</b> 21:24 163:22</p> <p><b>reserve</b> 153:21 228:20</p> <p><b>residents</b> 264:7 265:5</p> <p><b>residing</b> 166:23</p> <p><b>resignation</b> 195:9 202:18</p> <p><b>resignations</b> 197:10</p> <p><b>resilience</b> 28:3 111:23 112:6 138:25 141:21 169:11 170:12 206:10,12 208:3 209:18 250:11 267:17</p> <p><b>resilient</b> 151:21 175:18 298:6</p> <p><b>resistant</b> 219:1</p> <p><b>resolution</b> 63:13 234:16 240:10 244:11</p> <p><b>resolutions</b> 223:13 233:23 234:11 239:20</p> <p><b>resource</b> 30:2 31:21 56:15 63:10 88:25 111:25 123:3 124:5, 9 149:23 152:5,10, 15 156:14 159:19 177:20 178:6 208:1</p>
---	--	--	--

<p>233:1 310:25</p> <p><b>resources</b> 10:7 13:11 28:16,24 43:4 55:13 60:25 61:12 64:9 69:17,25 73:4, 5 77:9 82:2 87:13, 14 88:17 93:9 123:25 139:18 150:5 156:7,9,17 161:5 163:17 190:15 194:21 196:7 198:3,15 199:7 216:20 221:15,24 229:20 232:14,15 233:3,10, 11,20 237:12 243:16 248:25 249:3 250:5,6 258:20 259:12 262:21 275:10 277:24 280:1 288:19 310:4,7,16, 22</p> <p><b>respect</b> 7:17 10:9 37:2,9,10 57:18 126:17 130:4 155:18,22 239:17 245:24 258:19</p> <p><b>respected</b> 189:20 216:10</p> <p><b>respectful</b> 34:19</p> <p><b>respecting</b> 237:15 243:18</p> <p><b>respective</b> 91:6</p> <p><b>respects</b> 72:23</p> <p><b>respond</b> 46:22 158:15 187:2,3 216:15 236:18 249:22 250:2</p> <p><b>responding</b> 3:21</p>	<p>41:19</p> <p><b>response</b> 25:19 231:16 256:20</p> <p><b>responsibilities</b> 10:5 24:5 27:12,14 30:18,24 44:6 72:20 96:14 111:21 123:14 155:1 156:10,18 170:19 195:7 204:7 214:13 217:8 280:10</p> <p><b>responsibility</b> 27:18 45:12 49:1 54:11 57:24 65:10 71:23 91:9 112:15 114:10 125:20 126:24 138:18 155:14 157:11,24 163:14, 19 170:6 186:7 188:5 204:10,16,18, 21 248:6 283:8</p> <p><b>responsible</b> 18:14 39:3 133:20 144:3 155:17 211:7,12</p> <p><b>responsibly</b> 198:3</p> <p><b>responsive</b> 30:6 111:3 113:8 161:14 216:13</p> <p><b>responsiveness</b> 221:23</p> <p><b>rest</b> 22:9 31:13 39:5 59:19 168:16 194:10 266:6 276:13</p> <p><b>restoration</b> 111:21 113:2</p> <p><b>restore</b> 112:16 115:7 270:21</p> <p><b>restoring</b> 12:4</p>	<p><b>restrict</b> 111:12</p> <p><b>restricting</b> 204:9</p> <p><b>restrooms</b> 3:23</p> <p><b>restructure</b> 52:1 87:9 111:25 119:18 144:23 291:21</p> <p><b>restructured</b> 208:14</p> <p><b>restructureing</b> 146:23</p> <p><b>restructuring</b> 12:19 31:18 56:14 97:15 99:2 138:11 154:11 158:3 164:22 171:16 194:3 195:2, 5 197:9 199:13,16 200:12 215:3 219:23 221:13 223:7,24</p> <p><b>result</b> 53:24 55:18 178:16 233:18 238:24</p> <p><b>resulting</b> 275:6</p> <p><b>results</b> 56:25 99:20</p> <p><b>retaining</b> 56:9</p> <p><b>retention</b> 29:25 140:23 155:6</p> <p><b>retire</b> 291:18,19 293:6</p> <p><b>retired</b> 211:3</p> <p><b>retirement</b> 119:4 214:24 245:21</p> <p><b>retreat</b> 99:23 142:21 211:15</p> <p><b>retreating</b> 267:14</p> <p><b>return</b> 213:12</p> <p><b>returns</b> 25:6 260:13</p>	<p><b>revenue</b> 44:20 115:11 188:7 191:7 295:19</p> <p><b>reversing</b> 110:15</p> <p><b>review</b> 75:16 82:14 84:24 89:8 90:7 115:5 135:8 145:18, 21 147:10 154:23 167:19,21,23 177:20 178:13 223:19 233:5 237:8, 22,24 238:14 239:13 243:11 259:7 261:11 273:8, 24 275:4</p> <p><b>reviewed</b> 145:7 273:9</p> <p><b>reviews</b> 69:4 135:10 233:17 238:5,19,24 239:3 242:20 249:17 275:12 278:1</p> <p><b>revised</b> 13:22</p> <p><b>revision</b> 80:19 215:6</p> <p><b>revolving</b> 257:25 304:7</p> <p><b>RFIS</b> 221:8</p> <p><b>RGP01</b> 240:20</p> <p><b>Rhode</b> 132:12</p> <p><b>Rhonda</b> 180:7,8</p> <p><b>Richard</b> 55:1,5 80:11</p> <p><b>riches</b> 310:17,19,21</p> <p><b>Rick</b> 201:3</p> <p><b>rid</b> 62:18 89:23 177:23</p> <p><b>ride</b> 146:11</p>
---	---	--	---

<p><b>rider</b> 110:25</p> <p><b>ridiculous</b> 182:14 225:3</p> <p><b>Ridley</b> 50:25 51:2,4</p> <p><b>RIFED</b> 293:3</p> <p><b>RIFS</b> 92:10 202:18 291:16</p> <p><b>right-of-</b> 253:12</p> <p><b>rightholders</b> 118:7</p> <p><b>rights</b> 10:6 43:6 67:11 86:9 101:13, 19 112:7,14,21 116:6 126:18 128:20 131:24 154:13 164:13 168:11,24 170:14 217:9 219:3 236:20 239:21 240:11 298:3</p> <p><b>righty</b> 248:17</p> <p><b>rigid</b> 114:1 257:18</p> <p><b>ring</b> 308:10</p> <p><b>rise</b> 140:6 234:15</p> <p><b>rising</b> 254:9</p> <p><b>risk</b> 43:14 84:10 142:12 200:24 222:9 249:16 259:13,17 275:3 295:22</p> <p><b>risks</b> 142:18 164:9 231:19 250:9</p> <p><b>river</b> 37:17,18 41:1,6 86:1 104:15 112:10 162:18 206:18,23, 24 207:7 245:11,12, 14,17 260:16,18,23 261:2,9,13,17 264:24 267:15</p>	<p>306:17,18,21 309:3, 4,9,10</p> <p><b>riverfront</b> 206:25</p> <p><b>rivers</b> 35:20 41:11 103:9,10 104:6 245:25 264:23</p> <p><b>RMP</b> 142:22,23 143:6</p> <p><b>road</b> 59:18 121:12 131:10 180:14 188:19 190:7 222:3 223:2 244:11,15 246:3</p> <p><b>roadblock</b> 56:15</p> <p><b>roadmap</b> 213:11</p> <p><b>roads</b> 39:5 97:9 139:12,15,17 188:22 205:17 207:15 234:6 300:13</p> <p><b>roadways</b> 300:14</p> <p><b>roaming</b> 33:17</p> <p><b>Rob</b> 9:2,4,5 97:20</p> <p><b>robust</b> 73:17 113:1 171:9</p> <p><b>rock</b> 104:19 247:11 254:2 306:23</p> <p><b>rocky</b> 264:12</p> <p><b>role</b> 20:10 30:15 139:14 201:9 203:6 226:4 236:12 261:10</p> <p><b>roles</b> 92:21</p> <p><b>roll</b> 117:3</p> <p><b>rollercoasters</b> 282:8</p> <p><b>rolling</b> 120:8</p>	<p><b>Ron</b> 38:19</p> <p><b>Ronde</b> 17:3</p> <p><b>roofs</b> 237:16 243:20</p> <p><b>room</b> 3:19,25 4:7 5:8 6:1,6,22,25 7:14 32:17 33:6,13 45:14,20 49:22 50:6,11 54:20 64:17 83:6 97:19 136:14 162:16 164:2 165:24 192:12 201:14 206:17 227:12 301:13</p> <p><b>rooted</b> 58:20 91:8 155:16</p> <p><b>Roseberry</b> 184:25 185:1</p> <p><b>roughly</b> 56:4 157:14 240:15 303:17,19, 22</p> <p><b>route</b> 61:8,10</p> <p><b>routine</b> 287:14</p> <p><b>rug</b> 39:10</p> <p><b>ruled</b> 67:15</p> <p><b>rules</b> 113:5 256:16</p> <p><b>rumor</b> 138:19 290:3</p> <p><b>rumors</b> 145:23 312:1</p> <p><b>run</b> 33:17 70:11 121:17 141:6 168:6 185:12 199:8 235:11 245:1 290:3 306:20 309:4,5,6</p> <p><b>run-of-</b> 36:23</p> <p><b>running</b> 44:5 116:25 290:18 296:25</p>	<p><b>runs</b> 16:8</p> <p><b>runway</b> 251:17</p> <p><b>runways</b> 300:14</p> <p><b>rural</b> 39:5 41:25 43:3 59:24 67:16 91:10 96:25 114:3, 12 157:12 183:7 188:9,16 203:15 209:6 241:14 256:2 271:20 303:16,18 304:2</p> <p><b>rush</b> 278:12</p> <p><b>rushed</b> 279:23</p> <p><b>Russian</b> 274:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>S</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Sa-ju-ju</b> 72:12</p> <p><b>sacred</b> 168:4 237:12 259:12</p> <p><b>sacrifice</b> 84:21 161:24 236:20</p> <p><b>sadly</b> 151:3</p> <p><b>safe</b> 9:17 22:18 269:15</p> <p><b>safeguard</b> 243:15 262:15 301:16</p> <p><b>safeguarding</b> 30:16 262:2</p> <p><b>safeguards</b> 235:2,3</p> <p><b>safety</b> 15:19,20 16:11 39:25 40:3,4, 12 70:4 87:15 98:20 139:9 142:4 150:25 155:7 169:20 221:16 225:20 226:22 234:10</p>
--	--	--	--

<p><b>Salana</b> 9:9</p> <p><b>sale</b> 24:2 136:22</p> <p><b>salmon</b> 39:25 40:23 41:11 69:10,11 88:20 103:8 179:12, 15 198:10 199:3 260:15,16,18,23 261:9,13 276:22,23 277:3 294:2,7 306:19,20 309:6,7, 11 310:2,23</p> <p><b>salmonberries</b> 64:20</p> <p><b>Sam</b> 2:25 20:25 32:22 33:2 49:24 50:10,20 83:8 85:18 90:10,13,17 95:25 116:25 122:15 125:9 129:9 133:1 134:18 173:7,9 176:23 177:4,7 254:19 294:25 302:9</p> <p><b>sanctioned</b> 91:2</p> <p><b>sand</b> 253:21,23</p> <p><b>sandbox</b> 239:10</p> <p><b>Sanderson</b> 9:4,5 97:20</p> <p><b>sanitation</b> 205:18 207:15</p> <p><b>satisfy</b> 238:21</p> <p><b>save</b> 101:4 105:3 239:15 252:15</p> <p><b>savings</b> 13:10 167:17 202:5,20</p> <p><b>say-so</b> 131:20</p> <p><b>Saylor</b> 226:15,16 228:6</p>	<p><b>scale</b> 206:21 217:23 223:5 275:7 279:8</p> <p><b>scalpel</b> 202:7</p> <p><b>scaring</b> 308:7</p> <p><b>scary</b> 39:16</p> <p><b>schedule</b> 35:4 126:10 259:9</p> <p><b>school</b> 21:6 22:5,7 29:19 48:5 92:3 175:7,25 176:1 186:22 187:19 188:3 189:20,23 190:4 224:21,22,24 225:3 245:9 246:15 265:6</p> <p><b>schools</b> 15:24 16:19 21:19,24 22:8,10,18 93:1 110:13,22 111:9 174:3 186:11, 16 189:14,15,18,22 190:9 191:4 198:14 300:14</p> <p><b>science</b> 133:13,15, 19 169:16,19,23 170:12 207:4 296:3</p> <p><b>scientific</b> 111:23 133:23 156:8,16 232:25 270:8,9 277:7 298:25 299:12</p> <p><b>scientifically</b> 271:11</p> <p><b>scientists</b> 284:10</p> <p><b>scope</b> 85:6 86:22 118:14,16 159:14 219:19 287:10</p> <p><b>scoped</b> 52:25</p> <p><b>scopes</b> 113:11</p> <p><b>scoping</b> 283:16</p>	<p><b>score</b> 245:4</p> <p><b>scored</b> 222:25</p> <p><b>scourge</b> 100:15</p> <p><b>screen</b> 5:15 8:4 34:10</p> <p><b>script</b> 48:20 97:24, 25 99:25 121:20</p> <p><b>scrolling</b> 162:7</p> <p><b>scrutiny</b> 270:11</p> <p><b>sea</b> 37:18 88:4,6 89:1,16 102:13,16 103:6 150:15 151:6, 7 157:15 168:21 177:10 178:25 179:21</p> <p><b>seagull</b> 117:25</p> <p><b>sealed</b> 269:19</p> <p><b>search</b> 110:18</p> <p><b>seasonal</b> 107:17 169:9 188:21</p> <p><b>seasons</b> 250:13</p> <p><b>seat</b> 192:25 193:1,2 232:6</p> <p><b>seats</b> 67:19 68:6,8, 17</p> <p><b>Secretarial</b> 13:5 24:12,14,18 168:9 229:5,16,17 230:25</p> <p><b>secretary</b> 2:9 9:22 10:1,22,24 11:8,16 14:5,15 16:16 24:4 35:22 62:23 64:25 67:12 68:21 130:14 143:21 154:3 226:6 236:10 246:9 288:11,24 290:3 291:5</p>	<p><b>secretary's</b> 24:5 27:3 69:1 226:4</p> <p><b>section</b> 31:12 87:2 126:22 145:6,8,15 168:7 177:20 198:16 199:14 221:6 230:8,10,12, 13,24 256:22 287:16,19,21</p> <p><b>sectors</b> 133:22</p> <p><b>Securities</b> 25:8</p> <p><b>security</b> 16:17 139:19 169:24 179:8 208:25 231:20 277:18 299:25</p> <p><b>seek</b> 2:8 11:9</p> <p><b>seeking</b> 31:25 115:4 167:13 205:12</p> <p><b>seeks</b> 12:18</p> <p><b>seemingly</b> 163:13</p> <p><b>select</b> 5:21 124:25</p> <p><b>selenium</b> 104:14</p> <p><b>self-</b> 12:23 32:8,13 35:18,23 44:20 51:15 56:24 73:18 111:7 123:17 148:24 159:11 160:5 165:7 225:20 226:7 237:15 257:2, 8</p> <p><b>self-determination</b> 12:24 20:1,5 27:24 35:9 44:17 60:15 74:21 78:10,13 148:25 157:16 161:12 197:1 224:11,15 243:19 257:2,12 298:22</p>
---	---	--	--

<p><b>self-governance</b> 13:2 14:8 27:24 32:8,14 38:10,16,20 42:4 47:12 52:5 53:7,15 61:13 63:19 74:19 79:3,6,23 80:4,7,12 110:5 143:11 155:18 157:17 159:1,23 160:8,19 197:1 215:25 216:1 224:8, 11,16 226:5 257:5,7</p> <p><b>self-government</b> 47:12 137:23</p> <p><b>self-identify</b> 242:9</p> <p><b>sell</b> 225:23</p> <p><b>send</b> 23:12 71:8 135:16 185:20 210:19</p> <p><b>sending</b> 182:3 286:15</p> <p><b>sense</b> 7:2 39:2 87:20,25 186:13 190:21 268:6</p> <p><b>sensitive</b> 250:5 259:19 275:9</p> <p><b>sensitivity</b> 279:7</p> <p><b>sentiment</b> 171:19</p> <p><b>separate</b> 84:5 95:9 286:12 312:10</p> <p><b>separating</b> 157:15</p> <p><b>series</b> 79:17</p> <p><b>serve</b> 18:6 21:23,25 22:19 37:13,24 38:9 39:8 42:22 43:1 54:14 55:5 58:16 100:1 105:19 109:18 117:22</p>	<p>154:3,5 157:22 162:17 167:7 180:12 193:2 196:5, 10 223:3 226:5 227:9,10 236:3,8 281:11</p> <p><b>served</b> 17:6 21:9 100:2 151:15,17 192:19</p> <p><b>serves</b> 157:12</p> <p><b>service</b> 15:13 22:8 25:21 28:22 29:4 38:5 43:2 48:5 56:25 61:15 68:20, 23 69:3 70:16 74:23 99:21 108:20,25 110:10 111:16 120:16 124:5 137:16 144:16 145:5 148:15 149:8 165:8 170:10 197:18,23 214:12, 21 218:6 219:3 284:23,24</p> <p><b>services</b> 10:16 15:14 19:2,4,8,9,18, 20,22 20:4,5,11 22:3,14 27:23 28:19 30:19 37:25 38:7, 10,15 39:1,14 40:11,12 43:13,18 47:4 51:15 54:15 55:19 59:3 63:19 66:6 78:22 87:7,15 92:15 97:4 98:7,14, 20 106:1,8,9,24 107:14 109:7,9 113:7 119:16 120:7, 12 124:6 137:21 140:12,20 144:4,24 146:12 147:1,4,7 149:17 150:24</p>	<p>151:5 154:13 155:8 157:8 165:6,19 170:21 183:1 190:19 191:7 192:20 203:4 204:3 213:25 215:2,12 217:4,16 221:16,22 225:18 238:2 255:7 256:6,8 258:12 291:22,24 292:2</p> <p><b>servicing</b> 37:20 61:2</p> <p><b>serving</b> 2:8 10:21 23:15 37:17 55:9 58:24 59:15 64:10 166:16 214:9 236:2</p> <p><b>session</b> 5:9 9:18 35:4 116:24 118:19 219:20,25 250:25</p> <p><b>sessions</b> 13:25 49:17 312:4</p> <p><b>set</b> 31:15 85:11 126:10 224:1 306:7</p> <p><b>set-asides</b> 305:24 306:7</p> <p><b>sets</b> 30:16</p> <p><b>setting</b> 258:25</p> <p><b>settings</b> 112:22 211:25</p> <p><b>Settlement</b> 130:17, 24 132:2 297:21 306:8 309:1</p> <p><b>settlements</b> 26:16</p> <p><b>seven-day</b> 48:1</p> <p><b>seven-year</b> 41:7</p> <p><b>seventh</b> 21:8 84:13</p> <p><b>seventy-plus</b> 35:12</p> <p><b>severe</b> 141:22</p>	<p>201:25 277:16</p> <p><b>severed</b> 150:15</p> <p><b>severely</b> 141:24</p> <p><b>sewer</b> 265:13</p> <p><b>Shank</b> 231:8,9</p> <p><b>shape</b> 164:6 167:6</p> <p><b>shaping</b> 171:18</p> <p><b>share</b> 9:23 36:12 53:22 55:11 58:9 147:24 152:19 155:15 173:19 188:13 192:14 210:17,18 212:4 216:23 220:21 226:18 228:1 267:10 293:25 302:16</p> <p><b>shared</b> 39:18 124:5, 6 155:14 164:1</p> <p><b>shareholder</b> 297:23, 24</p> <p><b>shares</b> 128:9 134:13</p> <p><b>sharing</b> 31:21 41:20 53:23 54:4 91:16 115:11 123:3 124:5 192:12 213:20 260:11 264:3</p> <p><b>Sharon</b> 11:5 20:22, 23 21:3,4</p> <p><b>sheet</b> 153:12 180:5 231:5</p> <p><b>shelf</b> 303:6</p> <p><b>she's</b> 23:10,11 183:4</p> <p><b>shift</b> 59:1 72:21 260:2</p>
---	---	---	--



<p><b>shifts</b> 18:25 216:4 225:15</p> <p><b>ship</b> 254:3</p> <p><b>shipping</b> 144:11</p> <p><b>Shoalwater</b> 209:22</p> <p><b>shoot</b> 267:16</p> <p><b>shop</b> 15:3</p> <p><b>short</b> 41:12 60:4 152:19 164:10 178:15 186:19 199:19 202:19 223:13 227:13 243:8 244:2 273:20 295:8</p> <p><b>short-</b> 199:5</p> <p><b>short-sighted</b> 296:2</p> <p><b>shortage</b> 114:2</p> <p><b>shortages</b> 138:21 197:2 261:7</p> <p><b>shortened</b> 241:22</p> <p><b>shortening</b> 200:13 230:2,13</p> <p><b>shortens</b> 259:7</p> <p><b>shortfalls</b> 148:20</p> <p><b>shouldn't</b> 44:10,24 59:1 71:10 77:2 128:20,21 241:6,15</p> <p><b>shovels</b> 36:21</p> <p><b>show</b> 5:16 136:19 266:3,9</p> <p><b>shown</b> 56:24</p> <p><b>SHPO</b> 60:12 106:23</p> <p><b>siblings</b> 174:1</p> <p><b>sic</b> 9:2 11:14</p>	<p><b>side</b> 102:24 104:16 117:24 185:10 210:24 245:12</p> <p><b>sided</b> 199:6</p> <p><b>sidestep</b> 168:10,23</p> <p><b>sight</b> 241:4</p> <p><b>sign</b> 71:9 130:12 184:9 284:1</p> <p><b>sign-up</b> 153:12,15 180:5 231:5</p> <p><b>signature</b> 240:6</p> <p><b>signatures</b> 107:4</p> <p><b>signed</b> 47:23 88:10 107:5 153:10 228:8</p> <p><b>significance</b> 111:14 242:13 277:8,9,12</p> <p><b>significant</b> 51:22 53:11,18 121:15 198:22 231:24 240:22 259:11 261:20 270:14 275:8 278:25</p> <p><b>significantly</b> 92:24 159:10 222:11 259:6 260:19 309:12</p> <p><b>Sikuaq</b> 302:14</p> <p><b>silos</b> 158:7 161:2</p> <p><b>silver</b> 300:19</p> <p><b>similar</b> 61:21 95:13 210:3</p> <p><b>Similarly</b> 52:12 160:3</p> <p><b>Simon</b> 34:24 35:6,7 243:25</p> <p><b>simple</b> 130:3</p>	<p><b>simplifications</b> 113:17</p> <p><b>simplify</b> 75:4 159:4 255:7,10</p> <p><b>simplifying</b> 113:9</p> <p><b>simply</b> 43:16 44:16 56:8 216:3</p> <p><b>single</b> 53:10 60:17 76:10 97:5 113:12 159:15 161:22 165:24 181:9 247:13,14 255:13 268:25 269:11</p> <p><b>single-audit</b> 75:6</p> <p><b>sink</b> 250:21,22 264:19</p> <p><b>sinking</b> 264:21</p> <p><b>SIPI</b> 22:4 92:20</p> <p><b>sir</b> 33:22 34:23</p> <p><b>sister</b> 64:19</p> <p><b>sisters</b> 104:10</p> <p><b>sit</b> 70:9 125:22 220:8 239:12 250:25</p> <p><b>site</b> 217:21 268:23 275:12 277:6 278:1, 10 279:19</p> <p><b>sites</b> 259:12,21 275:10 277:25 278:24 279:1,6 280:4 287:2</p> <p><b>Sitka</b> 77:21,23 78:1, 2 81:8</p> <p><b>Sitna-utti</b> 77:19</p> <p><b>sitting</b> 145:11,21 146:17 188:17 197:16 285:3 303:4</p>	<p><b>situation</b> 127:18 130:23 131:3,6,18 206:2 299:18</p> <p><b>situations</b> 278:13</p> <p><b>Situk</b> 112:10</p> <p><b>size</b> 51:9 65:22 132:12 137:17 148:15 150:18 206:17</p> <p><b>skiing</b> 308:7,10</p> <p><b>skills</b> 258:4</p> <p><b>skin</b> 132:6</p> <p><b>slapped</b> 238:21</p> <p><b>slashed</b> 224:12</p> <p><b>slide</b> 3:21 4:2 5:23 6:16 8:7 10:19 11:6 12:1 13:3,19 14:10, 13 16:21 17:9 19:16 20:21 21:16 23:18 27:5,7,9 29:9 31:6 32:15 229:21 230:19,22</p> <p><b>slides</b> 34:14 35:2 207:6 228:12,17,20, 25</p> <p><b>sliding</b> 206:17</p> <p><b>Slope</b> 91:3 143:22 144:1 149:16 150:16,21 185:2 188:22</p> <p><b>slow</b> 44:23 57:7 123:15 184:11,16 296:7</p> <p><b>slowdown</b> 180:17</p> <p><b>smack</b> 275:14</p> <p><b>small</b> 16:9 35:8 41:25 43:3,25 44:10</p>
---	---	---	---

<p>45:23 52:22 53:3 61:4,6 74:6 75:9 76:5 96:25 97:7 104:3 105:24 145:8 164:20 171:21 175:24 181:14 182:22 192:22 194:6,9 196:1,4 229:24 237:25 238:1 241:2,3,24 274:2 275:7 276:17 279:8</p> <p><b>smaller</b> 16:2 20:8 66:4,9 96:8,21 99:14 120:6 121:11, 14 223:3 240:5 241:9 257:13</p> <p><b>smart</b> 102:2</p> <p><b>smarter</b> 35:13 301:18</p> <p><b>smooth</b> 3:9</p> <p><b>SNAP</b> 245:3</p> <p><b>snow</b> 188:22</p> <p><b>so-called</b> 84:10 295:18</p> <p><b>social</b> 55:23 78:21 87:15 98:20 155:8 162:24 187:3 192:20 221:16 245:1</p> <p><b>societal</b> 199:1</p> <p><b>sockeye</b> 69:10,11 309:6</p> <p><b>soil</b> 253:5</p> <p><b>soils</b> 207:6</p> <p><b>solid</b> 89:17 177:11 266:5</p> <p><b>solution</b> 151:18</p>	<p>152:2 197:5 239:14 243:7</p> <p><b>solutions</b> 57:1 105:15 113:17 196:14 236:7</p> <p><b>solvency</b> 300:12</p> <p><b>solvent</b> 299:17</p> <p><b>someday</b> 307:6</p> <p><b>someone's</b> 145:11</p> <p><b>something's</b> 206:16</p> <p><b>son</b> 245:17</p> <p><b>sorely</b> 140:18</p> <p><b>sort</b> 165:1 245:23 298:23</p> <p><b>sorts</b> 108:15</p> <p><b>sound</b> 102:9 136:16 227:11 308:20</p> <p><b>sounds</b> 249:8</p> <p><b>source</b> 53:4 187:13</p> <p><b>sources</b> 95:8 224:10 254:2 264:15 275:19</p> <p><b>South</b> 246:2</p> <p><b>Southeast</b> 42:25 45:24 56:3 63:8 101:15 103:13 104:7,16 109:20 236:6 240:17 304:25</p> <p><b>southern</b> 72:15</p> <p><b>Southwest</b> 64:5</p> <p><b>Southwestern</b> 92:9</p> <p><b>sovereign</b> 55:8 81:3 155:19 163:23 239:21 240:11</p>	<p>301:25</p> <p><b>sovereigns</b> 220:5</p> <p><b>sovereignty</b> 13:1 27:21 44:18 55:24 57:9 61:24 72:24 74:10 99:17 109:23 114:17,22 115:21 154:16 155:9 163:10 166:8 179:8 186:3,13 187:17,25 189:19,25 190:11 195:7 198:1 216:21, 25 217:22 219:2 258:5,19 259:10,22 277:19 300:23</p> <p><b>space</b> 6:2 8:18 65:3 66:16 152:21 311:19</p> <p><b>spaghetti</b> 26:6</p> <p><b>spanning</b> 157:14</p> <p><b>spans</b> 56:4</p> <p><b>spawning</b> 179:13,15 261:1,16</p> <p><b>speak</b> 33:25 34:5 40:2,23 42:18,20 46:12 48:19 72:11 77:23 82:22 98:1,4 105:13 109:16 126:5,21 128:11 143:18 163:1 172:5 179:23 184:19 185:5 192:16 207:23 210:25 213:4 227:4 229:25 230:5 231:11 235:24 236:1,16 241:20 251:1 263:12 268:8 273:1 279:16 282:10 306:25</p>	<p><b>speaker</b> 137:4 224:18 238:16</p> <p><b>speakers</b> 234:20</p> <p><b>speaking</b> 58:15 64:15 72:11 77:11 79:8 84:15 85:14 88:8 109:17 117:19 125:12 128:1,13 153:25 154:1 162:8 176:18 192:5 201:16 209:9 212:24 254:12 263:19,22,23 264:2, 8,16,25 265:7,14 268:17 290:2 297:10,15 301:1 304:21</p> <p><b>special</b> 10:21 24:17 39:2 57:17 73:15 140:14 156:10 163:20 170:17 192:14 197:8 244:17 294:17</p> <p><b>specialist</b> 158:19</p> <p><b>specialists</b> 123:18 158:12 161:3 184:1</p> <p><b>species</b> 167:20 237:3 259:16 260:21,23 261:6,13 262:15,16 275:15 306:20 310:2,12</p> <p><b>specific</b> 32:12 41:12 54:7 58:19 96:13 138:7 142:8 153:14 160:7 167:22 170:24 240:14 275:12 278:1 279:20 280:5</p> <p><b>specifically</b> 39:24 45:5 49:19 91:20 94:10 120:4 122:1,3</p>
--	--	---	--

173:3 191:12 192:11 194:20 195:8 222:9 228:9 230:24 303:16 <b>specification</b> 159:7 <b>specifics</b> 210:10 <b>spectrum</b> 98:24 <b>speech</b> 65:5 283:3 <b>speed-up</b> 306:11 <b>spelled</b> 240:9 <b>spend</b> 4:5 5:25 44:24 78:20,22 96:23 182:22 199:1 275:13 <b>spending</b> 272:17 276:2 <b>spends</b> 95:11 <b>spendy</b> 49:8,9 <b>spent</b> 12:12 61:1,2 76:15 117:18 126:7 131:12,13 143:14 272:8 283:23 <b>spirit</b> 126:16 <b>spit</b> 251:14 <b>spite</b> 45:10 <b>spoke</b> 195:10 209:18 281:2 282:15 307:19 <b>spoken</b> 5:19 125:17 175:20 <b>spokesperson</b> 129:20 <b>sponsored</b> 209:21 <b>spot</b> 311:13 <b>spread</b> 56:2	<b>spreadsheet</b> 59:14 <b>spring</b> 133:17 207:5 <b>springtime</b> 206:20 <b>square</b> 4:20 56:3 137:17 <b>Sr</b> 205:6,7 <b>stability</b> 53:5 140:13 142:25 231:20 <b>stable</b> 42:3 95:2 165:15 215:10 224:14 226:9 275:19 <b>staff</b> 14:24 17:16 19:25 20:9 41:17,18 43:19 46:21 51:22 56:10 60:5 62:11,22 88:7 91:17 92:1,3, 14,16,23,24 96:9 98:19 99:7 106:7, 14,24 107:1,2,12 109:8 123:23 138:21,23 139:4,15 140:22,23 141:16 144:19 145:25 146:12,19 165:17 169:13 181:5,10 182:22 184:12,13 203:2 214:23 216:14,16 222:10 227:8 238:12 241:25 242:1 255:1, 19 256:5 292:25 293:5 <b>staffed</b> 166:20 202:19 <b>staffing</b> 22:19 31:21 47:8 60:4,8 62:11, 12 87:12 91:15 112:19 119:12 123:2,17,20 138:14,	20 139:6,8 143:16 154:10,19 155:2 158:10,18 159:8 161:2 181:6 213:20 214:13 216:12 221:18 <b>staggering</b> 100:9 <b>stairs</b> 3:23 <b>staked</b> 58:2 <b>stakeholders</b> 86:9 112:3 118:8 <b>stalled</b> 43:13 139:1 <b>stamina</b> 193:3 <b>stamp</b> 59:17 <b>stand</b> 33:18 37:7 54:24,25 82:24,25 154:8 200:6 208:9 <b>standard</b> 43:18,21 56:22 164:14 217:19 272:4 287:14 <b>standards</b> 240:25 <b>standing</b> 33:16 38:22 67:23 218:23 245:19 <b>star</b> 34:7 <b>Starlink</b> 292:10 <b>start</b> 10:17 34:23 36:1 43:9 83:6 122:21 123:5 125:10 128:25 129:14 132:4 134:21 173:6 181:14,17 186:22 189:13 191:20,22 213:5 215:15 225:7 253:3 312:2,9	<b>started</b> 9:24 164:18 221:8 268:4 276:6 282:5 309:10,19 <b>starting</b> 63:24 131:5,21 189:14 191:24 <b>state</b> 8:14 17:11 20:24 23:5 34:4 39:6,21 41:7 51:10 56:4 61:9,10,11 65:19 66:2,5 67:12, 16,21,25 70:8 74:4, 7,17 96:7 97:10 100:7 101:7,19 105:23 107:12,22 108:3 110:17 112:6, 11 122:3 126:12 128:19 130:25 131:23 142:8,9 144:3,17 146:10,20 147:18 190:11 196:3 199:2 202:2 209:5 216:16 217:24,25 224:23 238:10 243:2 246:25 247:14 248:4 250:12 252:25 253:2,20 258:18 259:25 260:5,6,24 262:3 270:4 298:3 300:2, 7,10,16 306:3 308:15 309:5 310:3 <b>stated</b> 39:12 59:8 65:18 68:2 70:23 117:12 152:9 174:23 221:9 <b>statement</b> 72:16 86:3 88:2 139:25 156:5,22 232:11 233:6 234:18 243:9 283:15
--	--	---	--

<p><b>statements</b> 176:8 177:17 284:19</p> <p><b>states</b> 17:24 18:2 21:25 25:13 40:16 47:21 48:2,23,25 60:19 72:17 73:21 110:21 118:3 126:22 130:20 143:24 146:1,7 147:19 157:13 163:14 164:12 166:23 191:11 208:16,24 209:5,12 216:18 223:5 264:1 280:16</p> <p><b>statewide</b> 100:3 281:11</p> <p><b>state's</b> 10:2</p> <p><b>station</b> 46:15</p> <p><b>stats</b> 189:12</p> <p><b>status</b> 95:1 145:12 217:8 252:6</p> <p><b>statutory</b> 13:23 30:23 238:5 240:23 241:18</p> <p><b>stay</b> 6:15 34:11 114:3</p> <p><b>staying</b> 120:19</p> <p><b>steady</b> 301:18</p> <p><b>step</b> 79:3 100:22 136:4 149:12 195:18</p> <p><b>steps</b> 13:7 26:10 154:17 222:7</p> <p><b>Stevens</b> 20:16,19 110:25</p> <p><b>stewards</b> 110:10 111:10 115:23</p>	<p>149:22 152:10 226:2 248:25</p> <p><b>stewardship</b> 111:17</p> <p><b>Stikine</b> 104:7,15</p> <p><b>stock</b> 70:9 261:10</p> <p><b>stocks</b> 260:16</p> <p><b>stood</b> 16:11 137:5</p> <p><b>stop</b> 99:17 238:24 262:23</p> <p><b>stopped</b> 151:1,3 274:17</p> <p><b>stops</b> 99:20 194:2</p> <p><b>storage</b> 241:5</p> <p><b>storages</b> 77:8</p> <p><b>store</b> 105:1</p> <p><b>stories</b> 290:18 294:1</p> <p><b>story</b> 251:2,7 252:23,25</p> <p><b>straight</b> 245:18 311:8</p> <p><b>strained</b> 7:15</p> <p><b>Straits</b> 137:14 248:20</p> <p><b>strategic</b> 138:18 203:3</p> <p><b>strategically</b> 196:10</p> <p><b>strategies</b> 27:11 28:2 29:14 124:25</p> <p><b>strategy</b> 25:6 291:23</p> <p><b>stream</b> 159:16</p> <p><b>streamline</b> 11:20 26:13 28:18 30:15 39:13 54:3 71:7 74:11 114:18 158:6</p>	<p>159:5 161:1 211:18 226:11 240:23 255:7,10 275:1 286:20 291:22</p> <p><b>streamlined</b> 45:4 52:19 61:15,25 81:13 93:12 111:19 215:10 236:19 256:10 288:16 303:11 304:9</p> <p><b>streamlining</b> 61:21 62:20 63:16 165:6 229:12 231:1 236:14 288:18</p> <p><b>streams</b> 110:20 159:14 198:10 257:16</p> <p><b>strength</b> 163:3</p> <p><b>strengthen</b> 30:4,25 88:15 156:23 197:25</p> <p><b>strengthens</b> 86:6</p> <p><b>stress</b> 233:13 241:23 261:21</p> <p><b>stressed</b> 42:1</p> <p><b>stressing</b> 306:5</p> <p><b>stressors</b> 295:25</p> <p><b>stretch</b> 175:14 194:9</p> <p><b>strict</b> 56:19</p> <p><b>Strike</b> 71:1</p> <p><b>strikes</b> 139:13</p> <p><b>stripped</b> 130:8 132:14,15</p> <p><b>strong</b> 37:4,7 43:10 85:15 196:25 234:23 245:20</p>	<p>304:19,22</p> <p><b>strongly</b> 149:1 154:9 161:6 225:8</p> <p><b>structural</b> 109:22 214:17</p> <p><b>structure</b> 17:11 19:6 51:22 68:11 96:24 213:13 222:18</p> <p><b>structures</b> 12:21 31:25 93:3 96:16 120:3 147:14 158:23 161:4 195:12 216:9</p> <p><b>struggle</b> 129:5 246:18</p> <p><b>struggling</b> 77:9 179:11</p> <p><b>stuck</b> 214:3 268:4</p> <p><b>student</b> 29:16,20,23 30:1</p> <p><b>students</b> 21:22 22:1,19 30:3 92:19 110:16 111:9 134:7 191:23</p> <p><b>studies</b> 133:12 232:24 233:1 234:24 253:5,6 271:12 295:15</p> <p><b>study</b> 93:23 94:1,2,7 267:24 305:12</p> <p><b>stuff</b> 120:19 122:10 129:21 182:2 183:6 184:10 246:6</p> <p><b>subdivision</b> 205:16, 20 207:12 267:22</p> <p><b>subject</b> 27:16 55:22, 23 229:7 246:23,24</p>
--	--	---	---

<p><b>submit</b> 135:23 162:3 231:13</p> <p><b>submitted</b> 135:11 170:4 236:13 266:12 291:10</p> <p><b>submitting</b> 88:10 183:20 297:15</p> <p><b>subscribed</b> 121:20</p> <p><b>subsequent</b> 46:20 229:17</p> <p><b>subsided</b> 298:25</p> <p><b>subsidies</b> 244:18</p> <p><b>subsidize</b> 141:8 225:16</p> <p><b>subsistence</b> 41:2 64:12,23 67:3,4,13, 17 68:7,9,11,18,25 69:8,18 97:8 100:17 112:4,14,24 133:9, 21 134:3 139:18 149:25 152:12 168:5 179:7,9,16 249:3 250:4 259:12 275:9 277:24 278:14,17 279:25 280:2 285:12</p> <p><b>substance</b> 8:12 114:7</p> <p><b>substantial</b> 61:5 240:16 260:22</p> <p><b>substantially</b> 60:12 140:2</p> <p><b>substantive</b> 73:2</p> <p><b>subsume</b> 168:22</p> <p><b>subsurface</b> 18:13 247:3</p> <p><b>succeed</b> 190:25</p>	<p><b>success</b> 27:21 29:21 38:3 39:9 53:8 61:17 91:10 99:23 158:14 187:7 192:3</p> <p><b>successful</b> 53:7 143:10 159:17,22 160:11 161:7 225:11</p> <p><b>successfully</b> 44:15 137:21,22 262:20 277:21</p> <p><b>suffer</b> 250:6</p> <p><b>suffered</b> 151:2 198:17</p> <p><b>sufficiency</b> 160:6</p> <p><b>sufficient</b> 60:17 73:5 75:7,17 218:20 230:16 232:12,17, 24</p> <p><b>sufficiently</b> 140:18</p> <p><b>suggest</b> 154:23 199:5</p> <p><b>suggestion</b> 156:1</p> <p><b>suicide</b> 100:3 114:7</p> <p><b>suited</b> 258:14</p> <p><b>sum</b> 200:9</p> <p><b>sums</b> 158:25</p> <p><b>superficial</b> 73:8</p> <p><b>supplement</b> 43:25 53:3 61:6</p> <p><b>supplies</b> 144:11</p> <p><b>support</b> 3:8 4:23 8:13 12:19,23 14:1 19:25 25:12 26:15 28:2,17 29:23 30:2 32:1,5,8 35:19</p>	<p>38:18 42:2 61:14 63:19 73:18 74:12 81:14,17 82:7 87:12 91:22 92:18,25 94:7,20 95:6 97:15 99:13 108:2 110:22 111:7 112:1,20 113:1 114:13 119:12 134:7 143:7 149:12 152:2 158:14 166:24 169:14 176:11 187:25 189:2 190:15,18 191:4,5 194:4 196:12,25 208:10 215:25 216:7,12 221:14 222:12 223:11 224:7 241:17 254:25 257:13,18 265:11 288:14</p> <p><b>supported</b> 35:21 45:4 78:6 299:1</p> <p><b>supporting</b> 62:4 134:3 159:19 187:7 191:18 215:20 226:7 258:13 261:10</p> <p><b>supportive</b> 152:6</p> <p><b>supports</b> 150:12 217:15 237:7 296:3</p> <p><b>supposed</b> 12:12 43:25 65:15 87:22 89:18 162:11 174:12 184:2 246:6</p> <p><b>suppression</b> 107:20</p> <p><b>Supreme</b> 67:15</p> <p><b>Surely</b> 145:16</p> <p><b>surface</b> 18:12 247:3 275:6</p>	<p><b>surplus</b> 225:23</p> <p><b>surrounding</b> 174:7 304:17</p> <p><b>survey</b> 142:11 253:22</p> <p><b>surveys</b> 106:23 253:6</p> <p><b>survival</b> 110:5 112:5 130:9 163:3 169:12</p> <p><b>survive</b> 66:15 199:11 296:8</p> <p><b>surviving</b> 198:6</p> <p><b>suspension</b> 154:19 295:13</p> <p><b>sustain</b> 46:6 89:15 196:20</p> <p><b>Sustainability</b> 133:12</p> <p><b>sustainable</b> 28:1 44:3 47:18 112:13 134:3 186:20 187:13 191:6 236:6 258:12</p> <p><b>sustained</b> 18:23 99:13 249:1</p> <p><b>sustaining</b> 179:6</p> <p><b>swiftly</b> 159:20 301:6</p> <p><b>symbolic</b> 163:15</p> <p><b>system</b> 16:18,19 52:18 53:22,23 54:23 59:19,25 67:20 92:7 95:2 109:4 113:7 121:12 162:20 188:3,19,24 190:4 195:12 222:4 223:2 225:12 264:6, 21 265:13 269:9</p>
---	--	--	--



<p><b>systematic</b> 59:6 113:22</p> <p><b>systems</b> 25:25 26:5, 8,14 31:4 45:10 52:9 54:17 55:18 59:24 63:2 81:18 82:4 99:19 114:2,20 116:8 143:16 165:11 169:20 182:19 187:15 215:11 255:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>T</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>T-E-R-R-A</b> 209:22</p> <p><b>table</b> 33:8 66:19 68:14 70:9 101:8 105:8 220:24 232:6 262:24 308:2</p> <p><b>tailored</b> 123:22 257:13,19</p> <p><b>takes</b> 126:13 177:18,22 181:11, 12 239:25 249:6 254:13 273:5</p> <p><b>taking</b> 6:10 103:6 116:11 150:2 180:25 193:20 217:2 229:13 230:17 268:7 273:18 288:9 291:5 310:15,17,19,20</p> <p><b>Taku</b> 104:8</p> <p><b>talk</b> 3:11 4:13 17:10 20:23 48:9,12 49:12 56:16 65:5 73:12,16 83:17 87:20 101:11 103:22 107:16 118:20 121:12 129:22 139:21,23 140:9,25 141:19</p>	<p>164:24 166:1 182:11 203:5 210:10 220:2 229:15 246:24,25 247:1,2,4 248:11 254:23 278:9 283:2 296:19,21,22</p> <p><b>talked</b> 6:7 36:25 65:9 102:3 201:9 211:9 238:16 267:13</p> <p><b>talking</b> 21:1 29:8 48:14 79:9 81:11 83:16 84:1 86:2 174:14 176:2 177:4 200:6,11 244:6 251:5,10 294:3 296:14 302:18 305:7</p> <p><b>talks</b> 84:5 138:20 272:19</p> <p><b>Tanana</b> 51:5 135:2</p> <p><b>tandem</b> 301:23</p> <p><b>tape</b> 96:11,20 101:9 215:23 226:12</p> <p><b>targeted</b> 29:24 92:12</p> <p><b>task</b> 12:17 71:1 113:15 184:11 239:13 273:2</p> <p><b>tasks</b> 181:4</p> <p><b>taught</b> 175:9,21 176:1</p> <p><b>tax</b> 188:10 196:21, 23</p> <p><b>taxpayer</b> 13:10</p> <p><b>taxpayers</b> 131:14</p> <p><b>TBAC</b> 62:17</p>	<p><b>TCC</b> 51:6,11,13 52:1,10 53:16,24 54:2</p> <p><b>TCCUAA</b> 94:22 95:7</p> <p><b>TCR</b> 138:24 139:3 142:4,20</p> <p><b>TCU</b> 92:7 93:22 94:3,15</p> <p><b>TCUS</b> 91:20 93:6,8, 13,17 94:15 95:12</p> <p><b>TCU'S</b> 91:9 93:10 94:25</p> <p><b>teacher</b> 111:1</p> <p><b>teachers</b> 29:23 175:8 187:2</p> <p><b>teaching</b> 166:2</p> <p><b>team</b> 2:25 3:2,4,7, 10,15 15:19,25 16:5,8,9,11 17:19 34:3,7,14 71:1 100:4 140:13</p> <p><b>teams</b> 19:10 255:4</p> <p><b>tears</b> 197:18</p> <p><b>teasing</b> 79:11</p> <p><b>tech</b> 3:8 22:5 117:7 196:11</p> <p><b>technical</b> 4:23 5:2 32:4 81:13,15 82:1 91:17 99:14 105:15 143:5 147:11 158:16 249:24 255:18 267:2</p> <p><b>technology</b> 13:12 16:14 28:12 54:21 81:14 133:15 145:19 185:17 292:5,12</p>	<p><b>Ted</b> 110:25</p> <p><b>telecommunications</b> 151:14,20</p> <p><b>teleconference</b> 39:18</p> <p><b>telephone</b> 252:6 299:8</p> <p><b>telling</b> 200:22 262:23 282:20 290:13</p> <p><b>tells</b> 86:25 221:4</p> <p><b>temperature</b> 6:23 267:24</p> <p><b>templates</b> 124:10</p> <p><b>ten</b> 212:6 262:21</p> <p><b>tens</b> 44:24 206:21</p> <p><b>tenure</b> 9:25</p> <p><b>term</b> 28:2 81:2 110:15 134:8 151:18 186:19 223:13 243:7,8 250:8 267:16 275:9</p> <p><b>terminated</b> 92:5</p> <p><b>terminations</b> 92:13</p> <p><b>terms</b> 31:24 114:24 158:22 265:12 267:2</p> <p><b>Terra</b> 209:21</p> <p><b>terrain</b> 264:12</p> <p><b>territories</b> 25:13 57:13 60:18 101:24 115:13 156:15</p> <p><b>territory</b> 104:11 154:7</p> <p><b>test</b> 50:14</p>
--	---	---	---

<p><b>testify</b> 137:5 161:23 172:10 244:1</p> <p><b>testifying</b> 40:18 162:3</p> <p><b>testimonies</b> 66:23</p> <p><b>testimony</b> 46:13 164:5 170:24 179:22 235:16 272:2 280:11</p> <p><b>Tetlin</b> 129:20 132:10 234:21</p> <p><b>Texas</b> 51:10 222:1</p> <p><b>thankful</b> 176:10</p> <p><b>that's</b> 2:8 5:13,17 8:10 14:16 15:2 19:18 22:21 23:21, 25 24:15 26:24 29:7 33:10 34:2 36:18 37:2,10 43:12,17 44:2,15,22 45:11 62:1,12 64:5 71:2 76:12 77:10 79:18 85:13 87:22 97:8 98:23 99:6,8 100:18 102:22 103:11 106:5,17 117:4 121:5 123:15 127:8, 10,17 128:5 129:21 132:12,23 136:24 141:1 168:15 171:6, 18 172:24 179:22 180:23 185:20 186:4 188:8,23 190:19 191:19 192:22 193:9 195:9 196:16 203:21 206:12 208:7,17 210:23 212:21 227:2 228:1 230:18 233:25 234:19 235:14,21 245:4,6</p>	<p>247:24 253:18 266:6,22 272:10,12, 13 277:18 279:19 281:22 285:2 286:6 288:3 290:5,9,15 292:7 293:9,20 303:10 305:2,6,15 310:13,25 312:15, 16</p> <p><b>thaw</b> 169:3 269:18 296:22</p> <p><b>the-mill</b> 36:24</p> <p><b>themselves</b> 84:18</p> <p><b>theory</b> 98:5</p> <p><b>there's</b> 3:24 11:11 12:8,14 18:10 26:19 31:13 35:20 49:17 70:23 86:21 101:9 107:6 120:8,20,21 121:8 125:3 135:9 137:2 138:19 153:6 172:22 182:1 184:4 186:11,15 187:9 188:4,10 189:17 190:20 195:20 203:25 212:1 227:12 234:1,4,6,14 235:8,13 244:23 245:25 247:14 248:1 251:17 252:14 253:11,15 254:1 285:4 287:17, 20 289:10 290:16 292:13 298:8 301:1, 13 308:12 310:16</p> <p><b>they'd</b> 251:4</p> <p><b>they'll</b> 102:19 247:18 251:10</p> <p><b>they're</b> 15:9 48:10 66:1 72:7 76:14 77:8 97:1 100:9</p>	<p>103:5 104:20 105:7 132:7,8 158:13 169:5 179:14 186:19 190:7 194:15,25 200:22 208:23 210:2 212:13 230:7,11 234:3 235:11 238:1 239:23 243:18 247:5,7,9 253:18 264:20,21 282:18 284:15 285:19 286:24,25 303:5 308:8 310:20</p> <p><b>they've</b> 82:12 180:17 207:20 211:1 212:10 223:17 230:5 272:9</p> <p><b>thing</b> 34:13 62:6 78:5 79:5 80:17 100:5 108:13 181:25 194:23 196:16 211:6 212:4 235:5 247:7 266:25 269:7 279:14,15 289:11</p> <p><b>things</b> 12:9 15:11 58:1,3 62:18 66:20, 21,22,25 69:22 70:5 71:5,6 73:16 99:1 121:7 125:18,19 126:9 127:5 128:5, 23 130:7 131:5 138:19 168:2 169:6 172:21 181:11 182:10 184:15 185:12,23 187:12, 22 188:11,13 193:20 198:17 202:3 203:16 204:22 210:14 211:3,18 226:18 234:10,24 235:11</p>	<p>241:6 266:19 272:16 274:19 276:2 279:6 280:7 285:18 286:11 289:2,11 292:9,10 301:4,25 305:19 311:23</p> <p><b>thinking</b> 87:18 170:23 269:15 285:3</p> <p><b>thirdly</b> 162:5</p> <p><b>Thomson</b> 161:18 162:13 268:12,19</p> <p><b>thought</b> 246:11 284:8 295:12 302:16 304:19</p> <p><b>thoughts</b> 84:15 201:15 204:24 305:2,5</p> <p><b>thousand</b> 247:14 305:23</p> <p><b>thousand-fold</b> 304:1,16</p> <p><b>thousands</b> 44:25 117:18 171:10 249:1 274:6 306:16</p> <p><b>threat</b> 103:11,21</p> <p><b>threaten</b> 154:12 155:6</p> <p><b>threatened</b> 168:12 169:1 295:17</p> <p><b>threatening</b> 296:23</p> <p><b>threats</b> 210:4,7</p> <p><b>three-year</b> 186:23</p> <p><b>threshold</b> 261:5</p> <p><b>thrive</b> 116:10</p>
---	---	---	--

<b>throat</b> 269:7	13,16 232:13,17,24	271:13	<b>Tonsina</b> 262:6
<b>throw</b> 8:1 132:3	235:5,11 237:5	<b>Tlingit</b> 9:1,6 55:6	<b>tool</b> 61:23 232:5
<b>throwing</b> 279:10	239:15,25 241:22	56:23 58:17 61:14	<b>tools</b> 116:1 124:13
<b>thyroid</b> 268:20	248:8,15 250:2,7,17	77:19 78:3 97:21	127:1 147:3 169:13,
<b>TIAC</b> 236:9	263:2 265:3 266:3	98:6 99:5,13 103:17	17 258:5,6 262:2
<b>TIBC</b> 201:5,6,9	268:7 272:8 273:21	109:19 110:11	<b>top</b> 69:23 70:19
203:6	275:13 276:3 278:8	113:24 154:5 236:3,	125:13
<b>TIBC'S</b> 203:7	283:1,25 285:25	4 237:7	<b>top-down</b> 99:23
<b>tied</b> 55:14 103:2	286:17 294:1 299:2,	<b>today</b> 2:16 3:9,11	<b>topic</b> 84:3 93:2
<b>tight</b> 311:20	7 300:9 301:2,8	4:10,24 6:18 7:22	129:23 259:2
<b>Tiktok</b> 118:24	302:1 305:16	11:2 18:8 21:14	<b>topics</b> 2:8 12:18
<b>timber</b> 24:2 87:15	308:23 312:14	31:17 34:4 46:15	21:13 84:2 85:10
<b>time</b> 4:6 5:7,25 7:13,	<b>timeline</b> 30:10	48:16 49:2 65:13	86:17
15 8:5,19,22 21:15	145:12 213:14	72:11 76:5 77:9	<b>total</b> 24:23 25:6
22:22 26:19 31:13	232:3 271:24	85:11 86:4,8,13	100:17
34:19,21 35:23	273:11	88:5,11 90:25 98:2,	<b>totaling</b> 205:21
36:17 38:20 46:23	<b>timelines</b> 167:21,23	18 102:11 109:21	<b>totally</b> 218:3 246:12
47:4 49:13,19 54:25	170:15 178:15	118:7,15 122:25	266:11
55:23 60:6,25	217:19 232:12,16,	127:4 138:2,6,22	<b>touch</b> 12:2 171:1
66:13,15 67:8 70:15	21,23 233:4,8,18	143:18 154:6 157:5	<b>touched</b> 19:17
71:4,21 72:4 73:5,	249:13,16	162:3 184:18,20	<b>touches</b> 251:16
11 74:14 75:17	<b>timely</b> 27:16 52:12	192:9,16,24 193:4,	<b>tough</b> 246:16,17,23
78:1,7 84:11 85:12	54:5 73:1 93:12	6,11,19 198:18,24	<b>tougher</b> 304:13
90:7 95:14,20 96:23	156:1 223:8,23	199:10,19,24	<b>tower</b> 242:7,21
97:23 98:1,11,12	226:9	201:13 202:2 204:8	<b>towns</b> 261:8
105:9 116:12 117:1	<b>times</b> 26:3 68:24	213:4 219:17	<b>townsite</b> 106:4
120:10 122:24	69:15 71:25 102:6	226:13 229:8 230:5,	<b>toxic</b> 104:17 198:11
125:2,7 126:8,10	121:4 158:25	18 231:10 236:1	<b>TPA</b> 61:6
128:23 132:24	168:16 180:22	237:19 247:19,23	<b>track</b> 82:11 130:7
136:7,11 143:17	190:3 195:18	249:20 252:8 264:5	223:16 259:14
147:10 153:22	215:16 240:2,4	268:8 269:6 302:22	<b>tracking</b> 52:8,13
161:25 163:9	242:25 259:7 274:7	304:13 305:10	53:23 82:4
178:13 181:11,25	281:15 299:10	307:19	<b>Tracy</b> 116:17
182:22 183:7,9	<b>timing</b> 216:2	<b>today's</b> 2:7 6:5	117:12,20,21
184:8,18 187:19	<b>Timmons</b> 157:1,6	<b>told</b> 36:15 43:16	
189:3 199:20	<b>tip</b> 289:10	127:1	
206:19,21 212:22	<b>tiresome</b> 183:15	<b>toll</b> 113:22	
220:12,16 223:18	<b>tiring</b> 183:9	<b>tomorrow</b> 199:2	
226:13 228:2 230:2,	<b>title</b> 2:17 4:18 8:14	<b>tone</b> 224:2	
	111:20 127:16	<b>tonight</b> 293:22	

<b>tradition</b> 18:1	<b>transformation</b> 12:6 115:25	<b>travels</b> 118:24 293:18	16,17,20,22,25 77:21,25 79:17,22, 24 80:8,18,23,25 81:1,7,16 82:2,8 84:17,20,21,23 85:3,4 86:7,12,19, 21,23,25 88:4,6,7,9, 14,19 89:15,16 90:25 91:5,6,7,18, 23 93:23 95:8,14 96:3,17 97:1,22 98:4,10,21,24 99:2, 8,12,18 104:9 105:19 108:4 109:2 110:14,20,22 111:5, 6,13,16 112:2,14, 16,19,24 113:1,8, 12,14,18 114:12,16, 22 115:2,6,9,15,17, 21 116:9 117:13 118:2,6,11,13,17, 22,23 119:12,14 120:5 122:3 123:22 124:2,7 129:20 132:11 133:7,18 134:1,8 136:8 137:12,13 138:9,25 139:17 140:1,5,11 141:20 142:5,11 143:13,20 144:2,4 147:23 148:1,3,4,24 150:21 151:12,24 154:4 155:18,19 158:20 161:3,16 163:2,10,23 164:4 165:7,19 166:7,16 167:2,13,16,22,24 168:8,24 169:10,18, 20 170:14 172:1 173:22 177:10 178:23 179:1,21 180:11 184:1,3 185:9 186:3,13 187:17 189:14,16,
<b>traditional</b> 111:24 112:7,21 114:8 149:24 152:11 154:7 156:15 162:15 165:22 168:5 192:7 201:5 250:9 259:19 271:12 278:9,14,16 280:2,13 305:20,21	<b>transition</b> 31:11 78:11 116:14 226:4 228:8  <b>transitioned</b> 78:8  <b>transitioning</b> 229:1  <b>translate</b> 267:6 281:4  <b>translated</b> 255:16  <b>translating</b> 263:9 273:13,19  <b>translation</b> 266:15, 19 272:14  <b>translator</b> 263:8  <b>transparency</b> 30:19 31:5 82:5 85:5 86:22 94:11 118:13 155:1 164:8 242:24 297:8  <b>transparent</b> 194:13 219:22  <b>transparently</b> 145:20  <b>transportation</b> 20:6 139:7,8,10,11,16 215:13 258:10  <b>Transportation's</b> 79:23  <b>trauma</b> 113:21  <b>travel</b> 9:16,17 23:11 221:24 255:5 274:18 283:18  <b>traveled</b> 49:5 117:17 152:23 161:22  <b>traveling</b> 274:17	<b>trawling</b> 102:18  <b>Treasury</b> 25:7  <b>treat</b> 55:20 57:2 166:1  <b>treated</b> 57:21 97:2  <b>treaties</b> 73:24  <b>treatment</b> 57:17 76:18  <b>treaty</b> 10:6 18:3 72:20 87:8 91:8 119:17 131:22 148:10 155:16 216:18 217:9  <b>trees</b> 309:16  <b>tremendous</b> 203:21  <b>trespassing</b> 53:19  <b>Trial</b> 265:23  <b>Tribal</b> 4:18 8:15 9:13 10:3,6,13,15 12:22, 23 13:1 14:9 16:8 18:5,17 20:5 27:18, 24 28:2,12,22,25 30:4,8,12,17 31:15 32:8 34:4 37:16 39:8 40:19 42:9,10, 23 43:1,2 44:14 45:6,14 46:2,14,19, 21 47:25 51:19 52:1,14 53:5 54:12 55:9,11,17,20,24 57:10,25 58:3,20 59:4 61:7,24 62:17 63:12,19 64:5,7,25 65:14,21 68:5,6,8 71:12,13,16,19 72:13,18,23 73:18 74:12,20,24 75:5,9,	
<b>traditions</b> 133:10 257:22  <b>trails</b> 65:7  <b>train</b> 82:6 123:23 202:23 212:16  <b>trained</b> 212:10 256:5  <b>training</b> 13:12,17 51:23 53:9 81:20 114:13 124:11 157:7 158:16 166:8 185:6 246:6 247:12 255:21 258:2,6  <b>Trans-alaska</b> 300:4  <b>transaction</b> 26:11  <b>transactions</b> 52:7  <b>transboundary</b> 103:10,18  <b>transcript</b> 8:11  <b>transcripts</b> 66:22 312:19  <b>transfer</b> 74:15 161:5  <b>transferring</b> 93:13  <b>transfers</b> 158:20,24 159:5,6 167:10  <b>transform</b> 72:18 75:24			

<p>19 190:10 192:22 193:9 195:6 197:1, 25 198:6,19,23 201:10,13 204:25 205:2 206:6,10,12 207:10 208:3 209:10,18 211:25 212:12,17 213:2,17 215:13,16 216:15, 17,24 217:2,5,6,12, 20,22 218:8,18 219:2,13,19 220:8 221:11 223:10,25 224:3,7,8,12,14,22 225:15,20 232:4,5, 13,17,22 233:2,7,8, 9,15,20 236:9,20 237:15,20,24 239:15,17 240:25 241:13,18 243:18 244:14 247:16 248:21 249:5 250:1, 23 252:6 255:1,18, 19 256:8 257:4,7,8, 24 258:3,17,19,21 259:5,9,10,22 260:3,4,6,10 265:16,22 266:24 270:4,6 273:2 278:2,7 280:12,25 281:10 285:9,24 295:3,6,15,21 296:17 297:9,12 298:22</p> <p><b>Tribal-led</b> 154:23</p> <p><b>Tribally</b> 22:10 61:15 68:17 81:20 93:21 281:23</p> <p><b>Tribe</b> 27:12 35:7,8, 19 36:11 42:20,24 43:25 46:3 47:1 49:8 53:3 55:9 56:24 61:6 62:11</p>	<p>77:23 81:5,8 83:25 96:4 97:7 98:3 109:19,20 110:11 113:24 120:15 123:12,16 126:6,25 127:13 132:18 135:22 146:25 154:8 175:4 188:2,6 189:19 194:6 195:15 196:4 198:16 205:17,21 207:18 211:13 224:20 231:11,25 232:1,8 233:4,13,21 235:4,7 240:7 244:2 245:23 247:5,7,9, 13,14 248:12 266:12 272:17 274:8 283:25 287:18 295:13 307:23 311:2</p> <p><b>Tribes</b> 6:21 10:10 12:20,22 13:25 17:2,23 18:3,5 19:19,21 20:2 22:12 24:11,22 26:21 27:14,21 28:9 32:1, 3,5,10 36:22 37:3,8, 17,23,24 38:2,6,9, 16,18,22,23,25 39:7,10,15,18,24 40:3,9,14,21,25 41:5,8,10,13,22,25 42:2,8 43:3,13,21, 23 44:5,10,16,24 45:8 47:9,13,19 49:1 51:8,11,19 52:4,15,22,24 53:3, 12 54:13 55:7,22 56:2,13,18 57:7,16 58:5,25 59:2,7,21 60:14,15,24 61:4,11 64:10 65:19 70:10</p>	<p>72:5 73:3 74:4,6,13, 16,22,25 78:4,9 81:16,22 82:3,7,11, 17 87:19 88:3,6,9, 14,16,18,20,22 89:3,8,11,16,25 94:15 96:8,12,15, 17,21,25 97:5,14 99:3,15 100:16 101:1,2,22 102:8 105:20,22 106:12 107:13 108:21 110:2,9 111:19 112:20 113:3 114:5, 9 115:4,15 119:20 121:18 122:1,7,12 124:12,18 127:21 129:7 130:8,12,15, 18,23 131:2,19 132:8,21 135:19,23, 25 137:15 138:5,6, 10 142:2,5,7,24 143:7,9,11,15 144:6 146:24 147:11,17, 24 148:10,17 149:5 152:8,13,18,22 154:21 155:13 158:11,14 161:5,10 163:9,15,19,21 164:17,20 165:10 166:21,22,23 170:6 171:21,23 172:1,4 174:7 175:11 176:11 177:10,25 178:5,8,16,20,25 179:4,6 180:12 186:5,10,16,21 187:1,7,12,18 188:1 189:3,12,16,17,22 190:8,15,24 191:2, 5,7,11,12 192:10 194:5,19 195:13,23, 25 197:14 200:2 202:1 203:3 204:2,</p>	<p>10,19,20 208:1,19, 21 209:4,7,16,21,25 210:2 212:3,9,18 214:8,9,20 215:17 216:4,8 217:16,25 218:9 220:4,18 221:15,19,24 222:3, 5,21 223:1,9,16,22 225:16,24 226:1 227:3,10 230:9 234:13 235:7 237:6, 20 238:1 239:18,19 240:3,5,11 241:14, 24 242:9,23 243:3,4 249:4,10,14 255:12 256:6,19,24 257:8, 11,16 258:6,24 259:11 260:7,10,12 263:14 266:4 272:3 274:25 278:5 279:23 283:11,13 284:4 285:15,16,17 288:12,17,21 300:23 301:23 307:9 308:17,18</p> <p><b>Tribe's</b> 212:1 219:7</p> <p><b>trillion</b> 248:2 299:21</p> <p><b>trim</b> 213:23</p> <p><b>troopers</b> 252:18</p> <p><b>trouble</b> 51:3</p> <p><b>troubling</b> 164:19</p> <p><b>true</b> 44:20 48:14 56:8 63:19 65:10 71:24 76:2 110:8 114:22 146:5 155:21 164:4 167:15 290:15 301:25</p> <p><b>Trump</b> 91:19 108:7 180:21 187:24 197:7 207:9 226:20</p>
---	---	--	---



<p>245:5</p> <p><b>truncated</b> 116:21</p> <p><b>trust</b> 10:5 18:3 19:8 20:11,13 23:22 24:5,9,19 25:10,11, 15 26:19,23,25 27:3,11,13,17 30:16,20,23 31:2 36:12 38:5 42:7 44:16,22 45:4,12 47:3,5,12 49:1 54:11 57:6,23 61:23 65:10 71:23 72:19 74:11,14,17 87:8, 13,16 91:8 96:14 98:17 104:13 106:1, 8,9 109:2,7 112:15 119:2,17 125:19 138:18 148:10 154:25 155:10,15 156:3,9,18 163:14 168:11,25 170:6,19 188:5 195:7 204:7, 16,18,21 214:12 216:18 217:8 221:15,16 225:14 248:5 280:10 283:8 306:4</p> <p><b>trusted</b> 197:4 283:1</p> <p><b>trustee</b> 18:15 24:18</p> <p><b>trusting</b> 92:2 99:12</p> <p><b>trusts</b> 44:15</p> <p><b>truth</b> 126:21</p> <p><b>Tsimshian</b> 154:6</p> <p><b>tuck</b> 296:15</p> <p><b>tundra</b> 261:23 264:20,22</p> <p><b>turn</b> 14:11 16:22 31:7,8 49:25 50:21</p>	<p>83:9 85:19 96:1 122:20 129:13 134:20 156:16 173:13 177:1 231:2 254:20 274:10 302:10</p> <p><b>Turning</b> 165:4</p> <p><b>tweak</b> 80:13</p> <p><b>Twenty</b> 282:7,8,9</p> <p><b>two-</b> 214:1</p> <p><b>two-thirds</b> 132:17</p> <p><b>two-week</b> 266:3</p> <p><b>two-year</b> 80:12</p> <p><b>type</b> 188:6</p> <p><b>types</b> 15:10 244:11 269:2</p> <p><b>Typhoon</b> 141:24</p> <p><b>typically</b> 287:17 295:9</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>U</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>U.S.</b> 25:7,13 43:24 56:2 68:19,22 69:2 70:16 75:25 108:19 151:15 158:2 160:2, 13 161:9 163:8,11 210:25 231:13 236:10 244:17 268:21 269:13 284:20,23 297:16</p> <p><b>UCOR</b> 245:25</p> <p><b>ultimate</b> 238:24</p> <p><b>ultimately</b> 12:11 161:15 288:25 291:4</p> <p><b>Una</b> 104:7</p>	<p><b>unable</b> 150:23 151:4</p> <p><b>Unalakleet</b> 302:15</p> <p><b>uncertainties</b> 11:11</p> <p><b>uncertainty</b> 139:1 140:12</p> <p><b>unclear</b> 113:5</p> <p><b>undercount</b> 103:5</p> <p><b>underestimate</b> 311:16</p> <p><b>underestimated</b> 152:22 172:3,4</p> <p><b>underfunded</b> 44:2 47:2 140:2 141:6 195:14 216:3</p> <p><b>underfunding</b> 202:9 203:6</p> <p><b>undergo</b> 135:8</p> <p><b>undergoing</b> 131:4 261:11</p> <p><b>undermine</b> 260:3</p> <p><b>undermining</b> 259:10</p> <p><b>underneath</b> 76:7 264:19</p> <p><b>undersea</b> 150:15</p> <p><b>underserved</b> 96:8</p> <p><b>understaffed</b> 47:2 165:12 213:25</p> <p><b>understaffing</b> 214:4</p> <p><b>understand</b> 38:19 71:17 96:9 107:1,12 166:5 175:16 176:15 194:14 201:11 230:6 236:17 240:22 251:8,9 271:21 272:25 281:9,12,18,</p>	<p>20 282:17 286:17, 19 290:16 291:3 297:25 298:3,5 299:20 301:19</p> <p><b>understanding</b> 31:1 201:24 216:23 232:19 270:19 281:3,7 282:9,23 284:13 296:1 299:22 301:3</p> <p><b>undertake</b> 222:14</p> <p><b>undertaking</b> 46:21</p> <p><b>undertakings</b> 230:13</p> <p><b>undertrained</b> 165:12</p> <p><b>undocumented</b> 279:1</p> <p><b>undue</b> 59:9 238:12</p> <p><b>inefficient</b> 121:22</p> <p><b>UNESCO</b> 277:5</p> <p><b>unfairly</b> 151:13</p> <p><b>unfamiliar</b> 81:21</p> <p><b>unfortunate</b> 184:6 194:23</p> <p><b>unfounded</b> 241:11</p> <p><b>unfunded</b> 197:6</p> <p><b>unheard</b> 206:25</p> <p><b>unification</b> 11:16 13:5</p> <p><b>unified</b> 124:22 255:11</p> <p><b>unify</b> 13:8 28:18</p> <p><b>unintentionally</b> 92:12</p>
---	---	---	--

<p><b>uninterested</b> 162:8</p> <p><b>Union</b> 162:22</p> <p><b>unique</b> 19:12 38:5, 14 51:20 96:9 142:6 144:9 146:8 149:6 155:11 157:21 160:6,23 166:12 206:2 217:8,24 222:23 256:16 277:4,9,10,12 280:14,17 288:22</p> <p><b>uniquely</b> 39:8 51:24</p> <p><b>unit</b> 241:5</p> <p><b>united</b> 17:24 18:2 39:3 40:16 47:21 48:2,23,25 60:18 72:17 73:20 118:3 130:20 143:24 157:13 163:14 164:12 166:23 216:18 280:16</p> <p><b>units</b> 179:6 255:5</p> <p><b>universities</b> 91:1,5, 24 93:22,24</p> <p><b>University</b> 8:18 22:4 92:9 311:12,19</p> <p><b>unlike</b> 56:5</p> <p><b>unmapped</b> 280:3</p> <p><b>unmeaningful</b> 155:25</p> <p><b>unmute</b> 34:8 49:25 50:4,21 85:19 90:19 96:1 122:20 125:10 129:12 133:3 134:19 173:12 176:25 254:20 295:1 302:10</p> <p><b>unmuted</b> 50:5,23</p>	<p>83:9</p> <p><b>unnecessary</b> 147:21 182:19,21 183:16,19 240:21</p> <p><b>unpredictable</b> 42:3</p> <p><b>unpredicted</b> 42:3</p> <p><b>unreasonably</b> 178:15</p> <p><b>unreliable</b> 44:2</p> <p><b>unresolved</b> 214:1</p> <p><b>unsafe</b> 107:6</p> <p><b>unstable</b> 215:20</p> <p><b>untold</b> 105:4</p> <p><b>unusable</b> 151:2</p> <p><b>unusual</b> 181:21</p> <p><b>unworkable</b> 218:4</p> <p><b>update</b> 22:21 31:3</p> <p><b>updated</b> 54:3 82:5 148:7</p> <p><b>updates</b> 124:15</p> <p><b>updating</b> 54:16</p> <p><b>upgrade</b> 80:13</p> <p><b>upheld</b> 62:9,10 283:9</p> <p><b>uphold</b> 18:2 27:13 280:9,12</p> <p><b>upholding</b> 155:8</p> <p><b>upper</b> 261:2,17 262:6</p> <p><b>upset</b> 277:13</p> <p><b>Urban</b> 211:1 236:11</p> <p><b>urge</b> 57:23 110:19 112:13 114:4 160:24 170:1 216:5</p>	<p>218:22 238:17</p> <p><b>urgencies</b> 308:21</p> <p><b>urgent</b> 112:12 237:9 243:13</p> <p><b>urges</b> 92:8</p> <p><b>USDA</b> 57:4 62:3,7 74:8 99:16 111:16</p> <p><b>USDA'S</b> 239:6</p> <p><b>user</b> 82:6</p> <p><b>USGA</b> 222:8</p> <p><b>USGS</b> 169:17</p> <p><b>usual</b> 164:3</p> <p><b>utero</b> 271:4</p> <p><b>utilization</b> 149:21 161:7</p> <p><b>utilize</b> 5:18 25:14 28:13 31:2 149:2 231:22</p> <p><b>utilized</b> 159:18 160:11 198:3</p> <p><b>Utqiagvik</b> 90:23 143:23</p> <hr/> <p><b>V</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>vacancies</b> 202:8,11, 17 214:18</p> <p><b>vacancy</b> 92:23,24 222:10</p> <p><b>vacant</b> 197:7</p> <p><b>valid</b> 286:25 288:9</p> <p><b>Valley</b> 299:15 306:2 308:14 309:14</p> <p><b>valued</b> 64:21 97:15</p> <p><b>values</b> 111:2 115:10</p>	<p>116:10 240:25</p> <p><b>vast</b> 20:2</p> <p><b>vehemently</b> 295:13</p> <p><b>vehicle</b> 44:18</p> <p><b>venture</b> 257:24</p> <p><b>Vernon</b> 263:25</p> <p><b>veteran</b> 146:16 221:21</p> <p><b>vetted</b> 100:4</p> <p><b>viable</b> 62:22</p> <p><b>vice</b> 58:16 80:18 97:21 100:2 201:4 231:9 236:2</p> <p><b>video</b> 85:19</p> <p><b>village</b> 36:18 37:14, 22 45:23 47:1 48:3, 11 51:6 72:14 76:5, 6 83:24 84:6 85:25 107:5 117:22 120:2 122:24 125:15 133:7 135:2 144:6 162:14,25 173:21 175:1 176:9 180:8 184:14 192:7 199:12 201:4 213:2 214:25 226:16 228:6 231:10 234:22 235:16 247:1 263:20 264:4, 20 265:16 268:22 269:1 271:5 273:17, 25 274:2,4,12 275:14 276:6 294:2, 7 295:7 299:8 302:15 304:22 305:23 309:8</p> <p><b>villages</b> 10:10 18:19 37:19 41:23 51:19 61:5 66:3,4 113:21</p>
--	--	---	---

<p>146:14 174:7 214:16 218:5 234:2 241:3 255:6 256:17 258:11 261:8 274:3 283:14,18 296:5,20, 24 297:1 304:17</p> <p><b>violate</b> 155:10</p> <p><b>violated</b> 67:16</p> <p><b>violates</b> 168:10,24</p> <p><b>violation</b> 131:22</p> <p><b>Violations</b> 132:1</p> <p><b>violence</b> 140:15 234:15</p> <p><b>Virginia</b> 137:18</p> <p><b>virtual</b> 4:9 122:16 311:14 312:5</p> <p><b>virtually</b> 4:16 89:11</p> <p><b>visible</b> 142:14</p> <p><b>vision</b> 37:8,9 110:12 213:10 219:22 245:24</p> <p><b>visit</b> 35:23 244:7 247:12,13 265:18</p> <p><b>Visitor</b> 74:23</p> <p><b>visitors</b> 62:14</p> <p><b>visits</b> 181:18</p> <p><b>vital</b> 30:15 91:17 92:3,21 130:9 155:6 169:11 250:10</p> <p><b>Vivian</b> 37:11,13 68:2</p> <p><b>vocational</b> 22:5 110:23</p> <p><b>voice</b> 2:22 25:19 62:23 175:15,19,21, 22,23 176:13,17 209:14,16 233:8</p>	<p>268:16,19 286:1 299:7 308:19,20</p> <p><b>voices</b> 167:5,6 308:20 311:2,3</p> <p><b>voicing</b> 89:17 175:13 177:11</p> <p><b>void</b> 198:2</p> <p><b>volcanic</b> 264:11</p> <p><b>volcano</b> 274:16</p> <p><b>volumes</b> 282:15</p> <p><b>voluntary</b> 292:22 293:8</p> <p><b>volunteer</b> 294:4,5</p> <p><b>vote</b> 282:12,20,22</p> <p><b>voting</b> 132:18 281:9, 12,13</p> <p><b>vulnerability</b> 280:6</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>W</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Wade</b> 192:5,6</p> <p><b>wage</b> 75:8</p> <p><b>Wainwright</b> 144:8</p> <p><b>wait</b> 31:8 43:16 93:8 150:11 180:10 211:19 215:16 289:17</p> <p><b>waiting</b> 141:17 145:3 185:15,25 288:7 293:11 308:23</p> <p><b>waiver</b> 95:10,11</p> <p><b>wake</b> 301:18</p> <p><b>Wales</b> 42:25</p> <p><b>walk</b> 5:24 14:14 116:5 174:25</p>	<p>246:15</p> <p><b>Walker</b> 100:4</p> <p><b>Walter</b> 65:2</p> <p><b>wanted</b> 10:17 23:13 64:14,16 67:2 69:17 81:4 88:2 120:2 132:23 135:4 137:5 188:13 201:7 204:22,23 212:4 224:17 228:10 238:22 241:20 253:23 254:22 266:2,9,17 287:4 289:20 295:9 303:11 304:8,15</p> <p><b>wanting</b> 26:13 225:1 288:15 308:21</p> <p><b>Wanton</b> 102:23</p> <p><b>War</b> 171:4</p> <p><b>wardrobe</b> 268:13,15 301:11</p> <p><b>Washington</b> 18:20 166:13 175:17 176:15</p> <p><b>wasn't</b> 63:3 79:12 98:25 102:10 210:18 235:6 273:21 299:17</p> <p><b>waste</b> 12:7 102:23 237:16 243:19 264:6</p> <p><b>wasting</b> 60:25</p> <p><b>watched</b> 208:4,5</p> <p><b>water</b> 17:17,18 67:6 87:14 117:7 183:23 192:8 199:11 207:5 232:15 233:11 242:18 264:14</p>	<p>265:13 296:25 309:18</p> <p><b>waters</b> 116:4 163:7 271:22 277:18</p> <p><b>watersheds</b> 88:20</p> <p><b>waterways</b> 309:21, 22,24</p> <p><b>wave</b> 3:1</p> <p><b>ways</b> 15:16 30:13 49:6 63:15 108:23 110:6 131:12 149:24 152:12 166:6 178:4 183:13 187:9 188:9 194:9 227:13 253:13 280:13 292:5</p> <p><b>weakening</b> 169:18</p> <p><b>wealth</b> 76:9 77:4 114:24 298:4</p> <p><b>wealthy</b> 297:4</p> <p><b>wear</b> 97:24 268:14</p> <p><b>wearing</b> 242:4 268:12 301:10</p> <p><b>weather</b> 23:3 90:6 141:23 178:12 274:7</p> <p><b>web</b> 35:2,3</p> <p><b>website</b> 103:4,5 224:2 312:20</p> <p><b>week</b> 36:5 103:8 126:8 197:17 288:4</p> <p><b>weekly</b> 103:3</p> <p><b>weeks</b> 36:5 46:22 65:1 106:19 118:19 220:1,11 229:3 247:16 251:20 252:22 274:18</p>
---	---	---	--

290:14,23	172:18 262:24,25	286:5,13 288:5,7,	<b>Where's</b> 246:8
<b>week's</b> 311:18	288:9 290:24 312:4	13,14,22 290:15,17,	<b>whiplash</b> 298:5
<b>weigh</b> 69:5	<b>we're</b> 3:6 4:5,16	22 291:7,24 292:1,	<b>white</b> 14:2 245:14
<b>weight</b> 163:20	5:25 17:13 18:14,15	4,5 294:21 295:4	<b>who's</b> 136:16 153:6
<b>welcomed</b> 265:18	24:6 26:7,12 28:20	296:14 298:17	239:21 252:4,12,17
<b>welfare</b> 98:21	29:5,8 31:10,11,16	299:18,23 300:15	<b>Wi-fi</b> 90:10
140:14	32:20 33:5,6,13	302:3,7 303:4	<b>wide</b> 39:18 254:24
<b>well-being</b> 30:3	35:8,12,13,18,19,21	305:7,22 306:22	<b>widespread</b> 151:8
115:22 139:9,20	36:25 40:17 42:14	307:3	<b>wild</b> 69:10,11
155:9 163:17 179:6	43:16 44:7 45:9,17,	<b>we've</b> 7:7 15:5	<b>wildfire</b> 169:4
187:4 200:23	18,23 46:3,5,10,14	25:24 26:3 28:21	<b>wildfires</b> 262:7
216:22 250:11	48:14 49:16 50:6,15	33:17 35:24 45:25	<b>Wildland</b> 107:16,19
<b>well-known</b> 175:12	54:19,20,22 56:21,	66:13 69:7 70:14	<b>wildlife</b> 67:21 68:20,
<b>well-positioned</b>	22 57:9,17,20 58:12	76:15 77:1 105:21	23 69:2 70:16
209:6	59:23 60:15 62:19,	117:6,17 122:4	112:19,24 162:19
<b>wellness</b> 70:4,5	20 63:24 65:12,14,	128:2 132:10	163:7 284:20,23
113:25 114:12	19 68:1 69:12,13,14	137:20 139:6	<b>Wilhelm</b> 90:22 95:18
<b>weren't</b> 163:13	70:2 71:15 77:13,14	145:23 172:16	<b>Williams</b> 23:9
193:10 284:7	83:2,4 88:3 96:4,7,8	174:14 181:2	<b>window</b> 75:18 218:3
<b>West</b> 42:24 103:12	101:11 103:1 104:5,	185:12,24 187:9	<b>windows</b> 218:16
137:18	14 105:14,19	194:20,21 201:9	<b>wings</b> 251:23
<b>westerly</b> 207:7	107:23 108:6,9,20	203:7,9 206:4,16	<b>winter</b> 188:22 276:8
<b>Western</b> 37:18 89:1	116:25 117:14,24	208:3 210:12,13	308:10
101:14 102:16	119:21 120:19	211:16 214:5	<b>wisdom</b> 192:12
103:7 162:21	122:11,15 136:14,	224:25 228:13,18	<b>Wiseman</b> 246:2
<b>wetlands</b> 240:14,15	20 146:6 153:9,12	230:17 248:3 252:1,	<b>wishes</b> 163:13
<b>we'd</b> 56:19 196:21	170:17,18 173:1,4,6	25 271:23 276:2,9	<b>withdrawals</b> 89:13
197:4	181:2 185:6,15	288:12 290:12	<b>woman</b> 152:16
<b>we'll</b> 2:17 3:25 4:12	186:4 187:5,6	291:1,17,20 293:10,	280:21
5:1 9:8 11:23 12:2	188:14 189:5,8,14,	11 303:7 306:24	<b>wonderful</b> 8:19
13:4 31:15 32:23	16 191:12,16	307:4	17:16 209:17 211:2
33:6,14 34:11,15,	195:17,21 200:20,	<b>whales</b> 102:22	269:7
20,23 42:16 45:19,	22 207:15 211:14	<b>what's</b> 25:18 43:19	<b>wondering</b> 134:15
20 49:23 54:24	212:13 213:9	102:15 104:11	270:24
63:24,25 78:19 83:5	220:22,24 228:7,19,	129:23 182:6 211:8	
97:18 116:13,15,20,	25 239:4 244:3,10	251:5,25 282:16	
22 117:10 153:16	246:4,21 247:11,25	284:16 295:4	
	248:1,14 253:6	309:18 310:13	
	254:2 266:20,23	<b>wheel</b> 251:16	
	267:14 268:4	<b>wheelchair</b> 76:14	
	276:21,23 281:12,	<b>wherewithal</b> 102:14	
	13 282:11 284:10,		
	11 285:5,6,7,8		

<p><b>won't</b> 198:25 209:3 287:14 290:5 291:16 312:1</p> <p><b>Wooo</b> 251:19</p> <p><b>word</b> 100:18 105:7 193:8 235:10 295:24 299:9</p> <p><b>words</b> 55:25 58:9 81:4 97:14 168:18 176:17 200:16 267:7 272:15,24</p> <p><b>work</b> 10:12 15:25 16:19 18:4 20:14 34:11 40:8 44:9 47:7 56:8 57:3 62:17 63:16,17 67:25 68:16 86:9,15 87:22 98:9 99:6 107:23 108:22,24 113:11 114:20 115:14 116:24 118:8 120:14 121:19 122:5,11 127:17 175:5 178:5, 8 183:10,25 184:5,7 187:14,19 195:13 205:23 209:6,7 210:1 212:2,10,15, 16 214:7 215:1 219:14 224:23 239:8 242:19 244:19 245:21 246:14 248:3,4,6,7 250:22 263:1 267:23 268:3 283:20 285:2 301:5, 23</p> <p><b>workable</b> 241:13</p> <p><b>worked</b> 39:1 70:20 71:5 99:5 108:19 110:12 126:6 134:5</p>	<p>145:7 189:18 210:14 235:7,8 240:2 245:12,16,17 283:1</p> <p><b>workforce</b> 2:12,18 11:15 19:2 20:7 27:10 28:1,5 29:13 87:21,25 90:1 91:12 98:21 111:2 125:25 127:19 158:12 165:5 166:4 167:2 170:8,21 178:1 214:19,23 217:13 222:15 229:8 291:6 312:11</p> <p><b>working</b> 14:22 43:5 46:6 54:10,21 61:19 62:19 68:12 100:13 113:24 120:24 122:11 128:25 134:13 140:4 144:19 151:1 166:2 175:1 177:3 187:1, 10 189:20 190:9 192:18 202:16 208:3,19 210:11 212:14 221:20 236:22 239:13 240:1 245:19 253:3 272:18,21,22 275:13 276:3,6 291:7 293:15 299:8 300:19 301:6</p> <p><b>works</b> 5:21 38:11, 17,20 61:16 80:12 106:18 121:18 185:11 216:24</p> <p><b>workshops</b> 255:22</p> <p><b>world</b> 29:16 69:21 133:14 150:23 168:16 192:22 247:25 248:13</p>	<p>263:16 275:16,24 277:4,5 295:22</p> <p><b>worried</b> 108:9</p> <p><b>worse</b> 146:21 199:10</p> <p><b>worsening</b> 261:3</p> <p><b>worst</b> 184:17 253:2</p> <p><b>wouldn't</b> 32:22 171:1 190:25 251:2, 8,9 269:5</p> <p><b>wow</b> 204:1</p> <p><b>Wrangell</b> 77:20 104:17</p> <p><b>wrap</b> 7:19</p> <p><b>wrapping</b> 285:21</p> <p><b>write</b> 121:4 182:18</p> <p><b>write-up</b> 289:6</p> <p><b>writer</b> 195:15</p> <p><b>writing</b> 81:17 217:6 255:20 258:7 280:21</p> <p><b>written</b> 5:6 7:24 34:17 71:21 137:24, 25 171:2,12 182:4, 15 183:21 219:9 236:13 248:23 255:15 266:11 290:24 312:8</p> <p><b>wrong</b> 174:21</p>	<p><b>yaqua-hegu</b> 126:16 127:5</p> <p><b>Yatayabina</b> 21:3</p> <p><b>year</b> 8:22 15:6 21:8 56:18 59:9 69:15 140:4 145:9 177:22 180:20 181:15 196:24 202:11 203:18 205:23 208:6 214:2 261:5 293:4 299:19 300:10</p> <p><b>years</b> 17:7 21:9 23:2 35:11,12 36:2 40:6, 18,25 43:11 48:14 58:5 80:3 81:5 88:24 92:1 97:22 100:3 102:1 103:18 106:18 126:7 141:18 146:17 150:2 157:19 160:19 171:4,10 173:23,25 174:5,6, 15 175:24 177:18 192:19 195:14 198:12 203:7,9 206:14 208:2 210:12 211:4 212:7 225:1 239:7 244:2 245:8 249:1 254:10 259:8 262:19 268:4 269:10 272:18 282:7,8,9 297:20 299:6 300:6 305:11 306:17</p> <p><b>year's</b> 226:19</p> <p><b>yesterday</b> 135:21 210:24</p> <p><b>yield</b> 142:3 143:1</p> <p><b>young</b> 102:4 126:7 151:3 186:8 191:22,</p>
--	--	--	---



24,25 246:21 275:18 277:21 <b>youth</b> 110:17 113:23 187:1,16 <b>you'd</b> 50:1,21 83:9 85:20 129:13 134:20 165:25 177:1 302:11 <b>you'll</b> 6:3,5 33:23 34:9,11 36:5 122:17 133:2 173:9,10 176:24 194:1 231:4 250:24 263:5 268:16,19 312:6 <b>you're</b> 4:19 6:24 7:3 20:18 21:1 49:10 50:5,23 63:2 66:24 67:23 77:13, 15 80:24 81:10,11 83:8 120:12,17 129:13 133:1 153:5, 13 173:13 185:13 186:23 188:25 189:20 190:5 193:17,19,20 200:11 227:15,18 240:1 285:17 290:13 302:10 303:20,25 308:2 <b>you've</b> 131:11 138:6,21 163:21 200:8 201:10 249:19 277:15 <b>Yukon</b> 37:17 41:1,6 86:1 104:11 107:18 162:18 174:19 180:12 183:3 <b>Yukon-kuskokwim</b> 40:24 <b>Yup'ik</b> 162:9 266:21 267:3,6	272:19 273:19 <b>y'all</b> 54:24 <hr/> <b>Z</b> <hr/> <b>Zoom</b> 5:19 21:2 85:14 176:10 311:15	
--	---	--