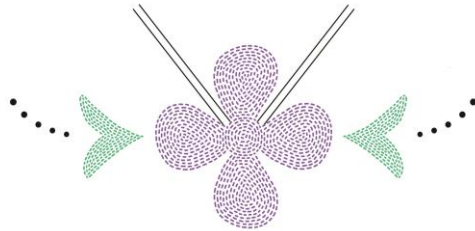


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



Enquête nationale
sur les femmes et les filles
autochtones disparues et assassinées

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Public Hearings
Chateau Nova Hotel, Main Ballroom
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories**



PUBLIC

Tuesday January 23, 2018

**Public Volume 40
Kathy Meyer, Dean Meyer & Candice Meyer,
In relation to Angela Meyer;**

**Les Semmler & Esther Semmler,
In relation to Joyce Semmler;**

**Noeline Villebrun, John Landry, Roxane Landry
& Cindi-Rae Harris, In relation to Stella Cardinal**

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II
APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Julie McGregor (Legal counsel)
Government of Northwest Territories	Jana Shoemaker (Legal counsel)
Government of Canada	Anne McConville (Legal counsel)
	Donna Keats (Legal counsel)
	Jennifer Clarke (Paralegal)
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Native Women's Association of The Northwest Territories	No appearances

Note: For the purpose of establishing this record of attendance, Counsel and Representatives are considered present whether they attended one or all of the hearings held over the course of the day at the Chateau Nova Hotel.

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The use of square brackets [] in this transcript indicates that amendments have been made to the certified transcript in order to replace information transcribed phonetically or mistranscribed by the original transcriptionist. Bryan Zandberg, Registrar for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls at Vancouver, British Columbia, listened back to the source audio recording of the proceedings and made these amendments on April 10, 2019.

Hearing - Public
Kathy, Dean & Candice Meyer
(Angela Meyer)

1

1 Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

2 --- Upon commencing on Tuesday, January 23, 2018,

3 at 9:21 a.m.

4 OPENING CEREMONIES

5 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Good morning. Good
6 morning, ladies and gentlemen. Good morning. Good to hear
7 you. I woke up at a quarter to 6:00. My wife checked for
8 me, and at my age, she doesn't check to see if I'm awake,
9 she was checking to see if I was still breathing.

10 (Laughter) And I was. So we are ready to charge the day.
11 I would like to say good morning to all our purple shirt
12 workers out there. And good morning to each and every one
13 of you. Minus 24 this morning. No mosquitos. So I always
14 look for the silver lining.

15 We like to start the day like we did
16 yesterday, and we will call upon Bobby Drygeese to say a
17 few words on behalf of Yellowknife's Dene First Nation.
18 And we will begin today with a morning prayer. So ladies
19 and gentlemen, put your hands together and welcome Bobby
20 Drygeese.

21 MR. BOBBY DRYGEESE: Good morning. I want
22 to welcome everybody this morning, and I want to make sure
23 that everybody has a good day and good discussions and
24 making sure that we find solutions and find the truth to
25 how things will work out. And we will make sure that

Hearing - Public
Kathy, Dean & Candice Meyer
(Angela Meyer)

2

1 everybody is taken care of because we have lots of support
2 here and lots of support out there.

3 So you just need to talk. And that's what
4 our elders always say, our parents always say, to make sure
5 if something is bothering you, something is nagging at you
6 or anything, make sure you tell the truth all the time, and
7 things will be okay. So we will say a prayer song so that
8 everybody will have good thoughts and make sure to find
9 what they are looking for. (Song was sung)

10 Thank you very much, Yellowknife Dene
11 First Nation drummers, to start our day in song and the
12 spoken word in a prayer. We are very happy to have with us
13 Mabel Brown, if she will come forward at this time.

14 MS. MABEL BROWN: Please stand, thank you.
15 Thank you. Our Lord and heavenly Father, we thank you for
16 this day, a brand new day to work in. I thank you for
17 pouring out your spirit upon us, Father. The spirit of
18 love, forgiveness, and healing. We thank you, Father, God,
19 as we go about our work today that great change we expect
20 to come for women, people that are suffering.

21 Thank you for the hands of helping hands
22 here today. And all who provide, I thank you for blessing
23 them. Bless their homes, their families, keep us safe, and
24 deliver us, Lord, God from anything that has been
25 tormenting, harassing, or trying to kill our joy. Father,

Hearing - Public
Kathy, Dean & Candice Meyer
(Angela Meyer)

3

1 we thank you. In Jesus's name we ask. Amen. Amen.

2 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Thank you very much,
3 Mabel. Now we make way for the lighting of the sacred
4 qulliq. We call upon Rassi Nashalik to perform that duty
5 for us.

6 MS. RASSI NASHALIK: Good morning,
7 everyone. I would like to say a few words in my language.
8 (Different language spoken) Thank you very much.

9 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Thank you very much,
10 Rassi Nashalik, and the lighting of the sacred qulliq. And
11 now I would like to turn the microphone over to Marie
12 Speakman, who has been in charge of the beautiful display
13 that we see here of the hearts that have been prepared just
14 for this Yellowknife hearing and, Marie.

15 MS. MARIE SPEAKMAN: Thank you, everyone,
16 for coming. I just wanted to show, here, the Northern
17 Lights. And there has been lots of labour of love and
18 caring that went into the tapestry. And the Northern
19 Lights, in my language it's called Nowka (ph). I remember
20 when we were kids and -- I sound so old. In those days, in
21 the small community, there are only a few lights. So they
22 come very close, and some elders used to say that they can
23 smell them. I remember we could hear them. It goes (sound
24 made) like that.

25 But today, they are way high because of

Hearing - Public
Kathy, Dean & Candice Meyer
(Angela Meyer)

4

1 all the lights. So I just wanted to touch base on the
2 Northern Lights. We call it Nowka. And it is so unique
3 and so much part of the North that it dances at night. And
4 we call it Dogweh (ph). So I just wanted to touch base on
5 that.

6 And there are many hands, there are many
7 women and even men had beaded the hearts on this tapestry.
8 And there are some young students from Behchoko, they
9 travel -- it is, like, about an hour. They came here, and
10 they sewed in their hearts that they made. And there are
11 quilts in here, too.

12 Anyway, there is so much -- yes. There is
13 the quilt here. There are fish scales. They are coloured.
14 They are beautiful. And there are some that came in from
15 Yukon, people that have sent some beaded hearts to the Dene
16 National Assembly. The bag is up here. So I just wanted
17 to show that they brought in a feather, so the feather is
18 hung in the middle. And also there is porcupine. We call
19 it cho (ph) in our language. And then there is embroidery.

20 I just wanted to mention that there is
21 lots of suffering, silent suffering that goes on. And that
22 is one of the ways that they express by beading and
23 embroidering and sewing and putting that into what we see,
24 now, today. So I just wanted -- and also, at the bottom,
25 here, and on this side, here, it's representing there is a

1 seal skin. Here is representing Inuit and the hide is Dene
2 and then the Metis sash that is representing Metis.

3 So I just wanted to -- it's so beautiful,
4 and I really want to thank many, many people even from
5 India. She put lots of beadwork in it and taking time to
6 measure. And it's just beautiful how many people can just
7 come in and just sew and sew and sew. Many laughter and
8 sharing food. There were tears. So the ones -- by the end
9 of the day, it's about the families, the missing and
10 murdered Aboriginal women. And there are so many barriers
11 and silent suffering that it is one of the ways, the
12 beadwork that they do. With that, (different language
13 spoken) thank you, thank you.

14 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Thank you very much,
15 Marie, for that beautiful explanation of the beautiful
16 tapestry that is in honour of the missing and murdered
17 Indigenous women and girls. And we are very pleased to
18 have with us three of the Commissioners here with us today.
19 We will call on Qajaq to say a few words, Qajaq Robinson.
20 Give her a nice Yellowknife welcome.

21 --- OPENING REMARKS BY COMMISSIONERS

22 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: (Different
23 language spoken) It is such an honour to be here in your
24 community, in your territory, with my friends and
25 colleagues, Brian and Michele. I send love and warm

1 greetings from our Chief Commissioner, Marion.

2 There is a lot of work to be done, and we
3 cannot always all be in a community. So I have to tell
4 you, it was quite a debate about who gets to go. So being
5 from Nunavut, I got to come, of course. I was not up for
6 debate. But those three had some debates going on, and
7 what did they say, "Marion drew the short straw."

8 But there is so much work that we are
9 doing in this Inquiry, and Marion is in the office working
10 hard on the next phases of our work. And as many of you
11 may know, we will be asking for some more time. We want to
12 go to more places. We want to hear from more people. We
13 want to really get into this issue at a national level and
14 at a regional level to get to the heart of things. So
15 Marion is always working on that request, but I send her
16 love.

17 I want to acknowledge that we are on the
18 traditional lands of the Yellowknives, Dene First Nation,
19 the Chief Drygeese's territory. It is always a territory
20 that is home to the Inuit, Inuvialuit, Dene, Metis. And
21 also many visitors from other countries that have made this
22 land home. And I welcome everybody, and I am grateful to
23 see many faces here to learn and grow with us.

24 I want to talk a little bit about our
25 mandate. Just a little over two years ago, not quite two

Hearing - Public
Kathy, Dean & Candice Meyer
(Angela Meyer)

7

1 years ago. A year and six months, I guess, now, we woke up
2 with a piece of paper and each other. Our terms of
3 references, it is called, our mandate. The questions that
4 the governments wanted us to ask and answer. To look at
5 what are the root causes, the systemic causes of violence
6 against Indigenous women and girls and trans and two-
7 spirited. All forms of violence.

8 We are called the National Inquiry into
9 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, but it is bigger
10 than that. It is about violence. The violence that took
11 the lives of loved ones, the violence that has resulted in
12 disappearances. But it is also the violence children
13 experience at home, women and children face with
14 institutions.

15 Violence is also the denial of rights. It
16 does not always have to be fists. It can be words. It can
17 be denying of fundamental rights and the necessities of
18 life. So I want us to think about that and always remember
19 that. That this is the place where we need to learn about
20 all these things. And that this is a space where we want
21 to hear from those who have lost loved ones, those who have
22 missing loved ones, and those that have survived violence,
23 continue to face violence. Because this is the space.

24 We are doing our work in a number of
25 phases. The first phase is to hear from you, to hear from

1 families and survivors. We also want to hear from
2 institutions and experts on different issues to help us
3 understand this from a more holistic perspective. We are
4 also doing a forensic audit of police files to understand
5 that when it comes to policing, what are the issues? What
6 is going wrong? What needs to be done, moving forward?

7 In addition to finding answers and
8 understanding the root causes, we have been asked to find
9 solutions. We have also been asked to understand how we
10 can honour those that have survived and those that have
11 been victims to violence, those who have been lost to
12 violence. But also to educate, to educate ourselves and to
13 educate the entire country.

14 This is to be a process of reconciliation,
15 a word that is used a lot. I want to talk about how
16 important your voice is to reconciliation. You coming
17 forward and speaking and sharing and being heard in a
18 country where your voices have been muzzled for so long is
19 a fundamental first step to reconciliation and for us, in
20 the country, to gain understanding of this issue.

21 That is why, for us, it was so important
22 to start with you, to start with families, to start with
23 survivors, to start in the community. Because these are
24 the voices that have guided us and that will continue to
25 guide us, guide this whole country, moving forward. I

Hearing - Public
Kathy, Dean & Candice Meyer
(Angela Meyer)

9

1 cannot overemphasize how important your voice is. When it
2 comes to experts, to us, you are the experts. And I want
3 to thank you for that.

4 This week we are going to hear from about
5 40 families in different ways: In the public forum here,
6 in some private spaces, and we also have statement
7 gatherers. So if you are listening and you are in the area
8 and you have experiences, recommendations, and knowledge
9 you want to share with us, but you have not connected with
10 the Inquiry yet, come. Come. You are still welcome. You
11 are always welcome.

12 I want to thank Rassi (different language
13 spoken). Thank you, Rassi, for the prayer. Your words and
14 the qulliq. I shared a little bit of this yesterday, the
15 importance of light and fire to our work and for Indigenous
16 people across the country in different ways has been very
17 profound. We have felt the importance of the fire for
18 providing us life and providing new life. And I am so
19 grateful for the gift from Inuit women who have tended the
20 qulliq and kept the light going since time and memorial.
21 And to have it in this space and to shine light, keep us
22 warm, and shine light on these issues, I think, is
23 beautiful. (Different language spoken)

24 And I want to say a few words to those
25 listening on the cameras, watching from home. So many

1 times, issues facing Indigenous peoples are seen as just --
2 what is the word we have heard? An Indian problem. This
3 is not a problem. It is a reality. And it is all of our
4 realities.

5 I want to call on those watching to see
6 your mother, to see your daughter, your granddaughters,
7 your sisters, your cousins, your nieces in the families and
8 in the women you are going to hear from and hear about.
9 What affects your neighbour, affects you.

10 And I call on all those listening to see
11 your role in this situation, in these issues, and to see
12 your role in raising awareness, calling upon your leaders
13 to take this situation seriously, to listen to those who
14 have not been listened to, to give them space. It is the
15 Indigenous women that need to be heard from, that need to
16 lead this issue forward with the solutions.

17 Be an ally. Create that space at your
18 table, and welcome Indigenous women to your table.

19 (Different language spoken)

20 Masi (ph) is thanks and cho (ph) is big;
21 right? So masi cho, cho, cho. (Different language spoken)
22 I will pass the mic on to one of my beautiful colleagues.
23 Michele tells me it will be Brian.

24 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Good
25 morning. It is such an honour to be here with you all in

1 this community this week. I just want to begin by
2 acknowledging the spirits of the missing and murdered
3 Indigenous women and girls and trans and two-spirited
4 people.

5 We are here this week to hear from
6 survivors and family members who have lost loved ones. And
7 it is in memories and stories of your lost loved ones or
8 about yourselves that informs the work that we are doing,
9 informs the work of the National Inquiry, and carries this
10 work forward. So I am grateful for all of your being here
11 to participate.

12 I also want to say it is an honour to be
13 on the traditional territory of the Yellowknives, Dene, and
14 I want to say thank you for the welcome we received
15 yesterday at the beautiful opening ceremonies that we had
16 here. And it is during this community hearing here this
17 week that the voices of people from you, from the North,
18 will be heard and shared with all of our relatives across
19 Canada.

20 I just want to say to the families in this
21 room, to those of you who may be listening remotely, to all
22 the survivors and families who have registered, or who are
23 contemplating, thinking about registering to come and
24 share, this is a time this week for you all to be able to
25 share in a way that is safe and comfortable or in the best

1 way possible for you.

2 We met with families and survivors across
3 the country, with organizations, including grassroots
4 organizations, to talk about how should these hearings take
5 place. And what we have heard is, it is important to have
6 different ways for people to participate. So whether you
7 want to participate in a public hearing room with
8 Commissioners here or in private, in camera, with a
9 Commissioner, or perhaps, with a statement gatherer or
10 through artistic expression, these are the various ways
11 that you can participate. Whatever feels best for you.

12 We are here to listen and to hear your
13 stories. And I know it can be difficult, but these
14 stories, these truths, are very important. So I admire
15 your courage and resilience for being here and
16 participating. Thank you.

17 I just want to say, finally, to all the
18 Indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ2S people, you are
19 loved and valued. The other Commissioners and I are
20 committed to the mandate on the Inquiry, and we are
21 committed to you. Thank you very much. (Different language
22 spoken)

23 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: (French
24 spoken) And the drummers. Where are they? They are still
25 in my heart. When I was listening the sound of the drum,

1 it sound just like the (indiscernible) drum. Like, there
2 is something behind the skin, I guess, that makes it like
3 thunder. And either we use caribou bones or goose, the end
4 of the feather. It was beautiful. I felt home, like, just
5 home.

6 And when I landed last night, I said to my
7 colleagues, "Oh, my God. It looks like Schefferville. For
8 those who know, it is my north. A little bit of French
9 before I switch to English. (French spoken)

10 People who lost some loved ones, these
11 women told us their truth during the community hearings.
12 We still have a lot of families -- access difficulty of
13 having adapted programs to their culture. And this week,
14 Commissioners and the team of the National Inquiry, we will
15 listen to your truth, we will honour it, and we will make
16 sure that this (indiscernible) and this suffering is heard
17 and that the message will be in the recommendations that we
18 will propose.

19 I can see your face doing this, she is so
20 right. (Laughter) So a little bit of translation. I will
21 do my best. I had too much coffee. And when I take too
22 much coffee, my mouth goes like this, and my spirit is over
23 there. I will do my best. I was saying in French how
24 honoured I am to be here, and, of course, I said thank you
25 to the beautiful elders and the drummers. But that part,

1 you got it.

2 But also, eight months ago, when we
3 started the first hearing coming from the North, her and I,
4 it was important that we start with the North. Usually it
5 is always in the big cities, in the South. But we started
6 in Whitehorse in 2017. Here we are 2018. And we are
7 starting in the North, again, with you. With the Dene, the
8 Inuit, and, of course, the Metis people. So it is very
9 important. We have listened to so many families, so many
10 survivors across Canada. Close to 600.

11 But, of course, for the four of us and the
12 National Inquiry, this is not enough. There is more than
13 600 who registered, and there will be more that want to
14 share their truth, their stories, and like Qajaq said,
15 their recommendations for this National Inquiry to make a
16 better place to live.

17 In order to do that, there are many people
18 behind the scene, many people behind the beautiful quilt or
19 behind this amazing and unique work. People that come from
20 across Canada with different backgrounds, from the
21 academic, grassroots, family members, survivors, lawyers,
22 social workers, and the list is beautiful. A beautiful
23 diversity. We are creating, here, a community on its own.
24 A community with your strength, with your stories, with
25 your vision, but with your love, also, for this to make

1 sure that when we will present the final report, it will be
2 very alive, very alive.

3 Your voice will be in that document, that
4 report. And making sure that any government, federal,
5 provincial, territorial, Indigenous government,
6 municipalities, like my colleague talked about, the
7 responsibilities, will be accountable, will be responsible
8 to say, "This is not only a women's issue or an Indigenous
9 women's issue, but it is all our issue, our
10 responsibilities."

11 So we are making history. And we are
12 still standing. Regardless the tsunami we had in 2017, we
13 are still standing. We are still making this history all
14 together. And I am blessed. I have amazing colleagues,
15 very good and patient with me and teaching me English. But
16 we are also human beings, so we are not perfect. We are
17 here to learn.

18 And for me, an expert, it is you. It is
19 the elders. It is the people from the community. It is
20 the women who lost loved ones. It is a mother who is
21 looking for her daughter. It is a person who made a change
22 or many changes for a better life. You, too, you are an
23 expert for us and, maybe, the best one.

24 So we are surrounded by love. I can see,
25 and I can feel it. I was yesterday on the plane watching

1 you, and I saw you on Facebook Live. And I saw the love
2 from where I was, so now I feel it. (French spoken) And
3 family, it is your time now. Survivors, it is your time.
4 (French spoken)

5 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Thank you very much.
6 Thank you, Commissioners. Just a few notes, pretty much
7 housekeeping. We just had breakfast, but whenever you
8 finish breakfast, you are always thinking, when is the next
9 meal? That would be at 12:00 noon. It will be here in the
10 main ballroom and over at the Explorer Hotel
11 (indiscernible) A.

12 I hear a phone ringing, and it is mine.
13 Sorry. It is a good reminder that when the sessions are
14 on, we turn off our electronics. I just didn't get a
15 chance to check it. Other things we wanted to mention to
16 you today, as well, is that health support is available,
17 again, in the purple shirts that you see around. And they
18 will be here throughout all the sessions each and every day
19 and in the evening.

20 There is also a registered nurse that is
21 on-site, and you can see the registration desk if you need
22 to see the registered nurse. We also have people that are
23 doing the health supports and traditional and western-
24 trained counselors, elders, faith based, smudging, and the
25 (indiscernible) gown of the individual as well.

1 There is also one-to-one counseling
2 available, and the sign-up sheet is at the registration
3 desk. There is also a shuttle service, bus that goes from
4 this hotel over to the Explorer Hotel. It goes from 8:00
5 in the morning until 6:00 o'clock. So if you need to get
6 to the other hotel, you just contact the front desk, and
7 they will let you know when the bus is going to move.

8 Lost items. You know, we sometimes get
9 very busy, and we are running around, and we forget
10 something, and something is lost. If you see something
11 that does not belong there, bring it to the registration
12 desk, because that is where everybody is going to go to
13 look for lost items that may turn up in the next few days.

14 If anyone is wanting to donate an artistic
15 expression to the National Inquiry's legacy archive, you
16 can see the registration table and there will be contact --
17 and the senior archivist will come directly and speak with
18 you. And the next time you see me will be tonight at the
19 Dene cultural evening as part of the Inquiry. We will be
20 over at the Explorer Hotel in Room A and B. It starts at
21 6:00 o'clock. And we will go until probably later evening.
22 It will be long days, so it will probably be 9:00, 10:00
23 o'clock by the time they finish the entertainment.

24 So that is all I have for you at this
25 time. It is my pleasure to wake you up this morning and

1 get you all going. And while I was at home, again, I took
2 time to write a little something down that will, maybe,
3 help you through this day. Take the time you need to heal
4 emotionally. Moving on doesn't take a day. It takes a lot
5 of little steps to be able to break free of your broken
6 self. We are here to support you with love and caring.
7 Have yourself a great day. Thank you very much. We have
8 one presentation to make. I will give this to Marie.

9 MS. MARIE SPEAKMAN: Yesterday we gave the
10 gift of a book with (indiscernible) on it to the other two
11 Commissioners. And you were not here yesterday so we are
12 going to present - I forgot to mention to give it to you
13 from the Native Women's Association of the NWT.

14 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Thank you very much,
15 Marie. And with that, we will take a five-minute break,
16 and we will get started with the session this morning.
17 Thank you very much. Take care. God bless.

18 --- Upon recessing at 10:04 a.m.

19 --- Upon resuming at 10:25 a.m.

20 **Hearing #1**

21 **Witnesses: Kathy Meyer, Dean Meyer, and Candice Meyer**

22 **In relation to Angela Meyer**

23 **Heard by Commissioners Qajaq Robinson, and Michèle Audette**

24 **Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe and Lillian**

25 **Lundrigan**

1 **Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge-keepers: Anita Pokiak,**
2 **Ronalda Wilcox, Gail Cyr, Kathy Louis, Bernie Poitras,**
3 **Rassi Nashalik and Lillian Elias**
4 **Clerk: Trudy Mckinnon**
5 **Registrar: Bryan Zandberg**

6 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good morning,
7 Commissioners. I would like to introduce you to the first
8 family that will be presenting
9 their story. Immediately beside me is Kathy Meyer and her
10 husband Dean and their daughter Candice.
11 They have a number of support people with them
12 today, as well. They have Anita Pokiak, who is
13 Kathy's cousin; Ronalda Wilcox, who is Angela's cousin; and
14 a family friend support, Gail Cyr.

15 The Meyer family will be sharing the story
16 of Angela Meyer today. And it is, actually, Kathy who will
17 begin by sharing with you some of Angela's stories in life.
18 And before we start, could we please have the clerk promise
19 the witnesses in.

20 MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Okay. We will go one
21 by one. Good morning. Kathy, do you promise to tell your
22 truth to the Commissioners in a good way this morning?

23 MS. KATHY MEYER: I promise.

24 MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Thank you. Dean.
25 Good morning, Dean. Do you promise to tell your truth to

1 the Commissioners in a good way this morning?

2 (Inaudible)

3 Thank you. And Candice, do you promise to
4 tell your truth to the Commissioners in a good way this
5 morning?

6 (Inaudible)

7 Okay. Thank you.

8 --- KATHY MEYER, PROMISED

9 --- DEAN MEYER, PROMISED

10 --- CANDICE MEYER, PROMISED

11 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And Kathy would
12 like to start sharing the story.

13 MS. KATHY MEYER: Good morning. Thank you
14 very much for having us. And I would, actually, too, like
15 to acknowledge the Yellowknives, Dene. I know many people
16 from here as being -- our daughter Angela has been missing
17 since November 27, 2010. Eight Christmases without her.

18 I didn't write anything, but I am going to
19 speak from our experience. Angela is the third oldest,
20 second youngest. She's got two older siblings and one
21 younger. She was the perfect, perfect baby. I often call
22 her our summer baby. Her siblings were all born in the
23 spring, but Angela was born a week after solstice. And the
24 doctor was late, So our nurse, Clare (ph), delivered her,
25 but she assured us she was shaking. Mosquitos were coming

Kathy, Dean & Candice Meyer
(Angela Meyer)

1 into the hospital room. I hold that very dear.

2 She was never sick as a child, never
3 caught colds, no ear infections. Only once did she get
4 some ear thing from being at the beach in the summertime.
5 And she was always very quiet and loving, and she never got
6 in trouble. She had many friends. Her and her sister
7 shared many friends.

8 She did good in school, not excelling.
9 Just your average student. She tried soccer one year. She
10 was not very athletic. She's a girl. She likes makeup,
11 nice clothes. She never took drugs or drank alcohol. She
12 might have tried it once, but she did not. She never
13 participated in that way.

14 She was a very loving girl. I don't like
15 using "was." She is. We had many birthday parties. And
16 we always had many kids at our house. Not just her
17 friends, but her siblings' friends. Everyone got along
18 great. It was when she was about 15 or 16 when she started
19 developing a mental illness. They couldn't quite figure
20 out what to diagnose her with. Bipolar, but eventually, I
21 think, she had schizophrenia.

22 It seemed to progress quite quickly. And
23 when that progressed quickly, she lost many, many friends
24 to the stigma, I suppose, of having a mental illness. So
25 she relied a lot on her family for support. We come from a

1 very large extended family. She's got many cousins and
2 many aunts and uncles. She was proud -- well, she was jut
3 an average person. We are an average family.

4 She tried her hand at high school, but due
5 to her illness, she couldn't quite get it or continue.
6 Really, that was when her schizophrenia, mental illness
7 started. There was not a lot of help for Angela when she
8 was a teenager, and I don't think there still is. We know
9 that. There are many in our community, Yellowknife, that
10 have this.

11 There was really nothing that could be
12 done for her according to them, the health-care
13 professionals. Well, limited resources. It was only when
14 she became 18 that she was able to access programs in the
15 community, because she was an adult. And when she became
16 an adult, it seems, again, there were limited things for
17 her. And then we decided, okay. She will go into
18 independent living with other people in the same situation.
19 And that was good.

20 But her illness progressed so quickly, it
21 manifested. It is so hard to understand. She had bouts of
22 violence. And then we tried to understand her illness. A
23 lot of times there were frustrations and anger, of course.

24 But I would like to talk about Angela
25 before -- even now. She was -- I miss her very much.

1 Every morning when I'm getting ready to go to work, I think
2 of Angela. She is always at the back of my mind. And all
3 we really wanted was the help she needed. And, of course,
4 with the medications came the weight gain and getting
5 diabetes. We had to deal with that.

6 So then she lived with us up until she was
7 about 18 or 19 when she was able to access some of the
8 programs that are available here in Yellowknife. And they
9 are great programs. The people are so wonderful, the
10 grassroots people are awesome. And they helped where they
11 could. They got her involved with -- what is it? Oh, the
12 Special Olympics. And she was nominated female athlete of
13 the year the summer she disappeared.

14 It is just a big hole in our hearts that
15 she's not here. It is very difficult to move on, really,
16 as a family. We do daily, daily -- you know, go to work,
17 and it's a chore in itself for me, anyway. But like I
18 said, she was with me for nine months before she was born.
19 And we saw this beautiful, young girl. You know, we
20 thought she was going to do really good. She was very
21 happy to be going on to high school. And then this mental
22 illness got her.

23 Our kids are a year apart, the three
24 oldest. And there are two years apart between Angela and
25 her younger brother, Brett (ph). When Brett was about four

1 months old, he was sitting in his chair, and Angela just
2 walked by and gave him a swat. But she grew to love him.
3 He loved her.

4 Everyone around her loved her very much.
5 She always had hugs for everybody. We had many birthday
6 parties. We had many fun Christmases together. And when
7 the kids were young, we drove almost every fall to Alberta
8 just for a road trip. Go Ski-Dooing in the winter, go
9 picnicking anywhere, find a spot. Took a few trips North.
10 But we all know the cost of travel, so we couldn't travel
11 often to visit. I just wish we can find her. She was
12 really a good baby. Well, they all were, I suppose, but
13 she was not too much work.

14 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you so much
15 for sharing with us about Angela. You had mentioned that
16 the grassroots organizations here that were supporting her
17 were awesome and amazing. Is it fair to say that you wish
18 there were more services or many more awesome people to
19 help out?

20 MS. KATHY MEYER: I'm sorry?

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Is it fair to say
22 that you wish that there were more services available and
23 more programs she could have accessed?

24 MS. KATHY MEYER: I think so. For her
25 age. And for her being a young Indigenous woman, you know,

1 I think there could have been a bit more, but she was able
2 to access -- they gave her good help.

3 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Did you want to
4 share with us -- or maybe Dean will -- did you want to
5 share with us when Angela disappeared?

6 MS. KATHY MEYER: I will do the initial.
7 Angela, again, ended up on the third floor at the hospital,
8 the psychiatric ward. She had spent some time there in and
9 out but never, like -- for a week or two weeks at a time.
10 So the previous night, which was a Friday night, we had
11 signed her out. Her siblings, Candice, Brett, and I signed
12 her out of the hospital.

13 We went to Diamante for pasta. And while
14 we were there, we started discussing, well, maybe we should
15 sign you out for tomorrow. So we decided, yes. We will do
16 that. So we went home, and the next day, next morning, we
17 were getting ready to go back to the hospital to sign her
18 out. We were all checking our social media accounts.

19 So Angela, after she did her thing, she
20 wanted to go out for a cigarette. She went out to the
21 porch, and we checked on her to make sure she was there.
22 She was still there. And I was getting ready to go to the
23 hospital, so I just -- five minutes later, I looked out the
24 door. She was not there. We haven't seen her since.

25 That was about 1:15, November 27, 2010. I

1 called the hospital immediately to the psychiatric ward.

2 And the nurse that was on duty told me, "No. Wait."

3 I said, "Should I call the," -- I was in a
4 bit of a panic. I said, "Should I call the police? What
5 should I do? Could you help me out?"

6 "Oh, just wait a few hours. Maybe she
7 will show up." And I live with that every day. I should
8 have followed my gut. But finally, she told me to wait
9 until 5:00. But I decided to -- I drove down to the RCMP
10 station, and I reported her missing. And then Candice,
11 Brett, and I, we drove around. Dean was driving back from
12 Hay River. He hadn't known yet what had happened until he
13 got home. We tried to get ahold of him, but he had left
14 already.

15 So I went down to the RCMP, reported her
16 missing right away. And I told them, you know she's --
17 they do know Angela, because a couple of times the RCMP had
18 to be called because of some action she had done, her
19 behaviour. So they put the call out to look for Angela.
20 We did describe what she was wearing.

21 And we were driving around and around.
22 And I don't seem to remember Sunday or Monday for some
23 reason, but immediately, as soon as we were able to make
24 photocopies of her, like, what do you call it? Not
25 posters. Yes. Posters, I guess. And we gave them -- we

1 posted them around town. Went to, there's a CD (ph) hotel
2 or two of them in town. And we took them there just in
3 case. But they were all very concerned. Everyone was
4 concerned when she went missing.

5 I'm going to let my husband speak on the
6 logistics of that, of the other part. If you have any
7 other questions, maybe I can answer.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Actually, maybe we
9 can let Dean go into the logistics. And we can come back
10 to some other questions, if you are okay with that.

11 MS. KATHY MEYER: I am.

12 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Perfect.

13 MR. DEAN MEYER: Good morning. First of
14 all, I would like to give you my thoughts. When I first
15 heard about this Inquiry being started, I was wondering to
16 myself, like, "Why are they having this? Why? It's going
17 to take so long, and doesn't the federal government know
18 what we need up here?" Not just the federal government,
19 the territory government.

20 And the territory government does know
21 what we need, but we don't have the funding to do anything
22 up here. We need our social programs looked after,
23 addictions, mental health. But now that I've been here and
24 talking to you people these last few days, I am so glad
25 that you're here. I am very glad that you're here. Let

1 the victims say their pieces.

2 First, I would like to talk about Angie
3 (ph) when she was up in the hospital. Sometimes it was so
4 heartbreaking to go visit her. She went through so many
5 doctors and psychiatrists. And every time she saw a new
6 one, they would change her medications. And some days she
7 would be way out there. And then other days she would be
8 so doped up that you could hardly talk to her. And she
9 wouldn't remember you visiting the next day.

10 It was very stressful for our family. We
11 even had one psychiatrist tell us that she was faking it.
12 When they told me that I said, "Well, good. Then you can
13 go back to wherever you came from, and we won't have to
14 talk anymore." And I'm sorry, but that was the politest
15 thing that I could think of saying at the moment. I wanted
16 to share that.

17 In NWT we don't have any addictions or
18 long-term mental health facilities. When a person with
19 mental illness has a problem, they put them in the hospital
20 for a while, but they can't stay there for long. The
21 hospital is no fix. So Angie bounced around from group
22 home to group home quite a few times. And our social
23 service programs are getting cut because of funding. And
24 there are a lot of programs that are (indiscernible) could
25 be sponsoring, training Northern people to stay here,

1 people that want to stay here.

2 The people that want to take that program,
3 maybe they don't want to go down south to learn it.
4 They've got family, and they've got children to look after.
5 I would like to see them stay up here and learn a
6 profession. If Angie wasn't -- if she hadn't gone missing,
7 in one week she was booked to go down south because they
8 couldn't look after her here anymore.

9 She was just in and out of the hospital,
10 group home to group home. When they told me that, I just
11 couldn't believe that we would have to send her down south,
12 that there was no place here. I had to write everything
13 out the last couple of days. I'm sorry.

14 Another issue I would like to talk about
15 is the RCMP, when they did their search. I know you guys
16 have probably heard a lot of horror stories about the
17 RCMP's investigations, and that is not our case. You won't
18 hear any RCMP bashing. We are proud of the way that they
19 did that. The RCMP went around. Not just the RCMP, but
20 there was off-duty officers, firemen, bylaw officers, and
21 just volunteers traveling. Volunteers went door-to-door
22 for blocks around us that night, looking for her. They did
23 a fantastic job, and I would just like to thank them.

24 The community of Yellowknife also put on a
25 search, our own search. And when some friends of ours

1 started organizing it, we thought there was going to be 50
2 or 60 people show up. And it turned out. There was, like,
3 250 people. It was just incredible. Our family is so
4 proud of our community.

5 The was two issues that I had, though.
6 One was that they never closed down the highway and did a
7 search. There is only one road out of Yellowknife. And I
8 was hoping that they would close the road at the Mackenzie
9 Ferry at that time. But that didn't happen.

10 And the second was, they found a coat in a
11 bush area that they believed to be Angie's. And on
12 numerous occasions I had asked for DNA sample of that coat,
13 just to determine that it was hers and to see if there was
14 anybody else's DNA on that coat. Today, that is still an
15 outstanding issue. There was a private lab that wanted to
16 look at it. And we kind of had our hopes up there, but the
17 RCMP didn't want to allow that, because any DNA that was
18 found on that coat would not be admissible in court because
19 it wasn't an RCMP lab that took the result. This is what
20 I've been told. That was very frustrating. We thought
21 something was going to happen.

22 This is my last one. I just want to
23 acknowledge Kathy and Candice, our sons Byron (ph) and
24 Brett, for all the pain and suffering that they have gone
25 through. Times have been very hard on us. I can see it in

1 your eyes, and I can hear it in your voices every day. I
2 just want to let them know I'm proud of them.

3 In closing, I would just like to leave you
4 with a story about Angie. Her name was Pitchulak (ph).
5 One day, I was visiting her up in the third floor of the
6 hospital. And we were sitting on a couch, and she looks at
7 me and says, "Dad, I want you to buy me a ring."

8 And I said, "What kind of ring?"

9 And she said, "Here, I'll show you." So
10 she went and got this magazine. And she brought it to me
11 and showed me it.

12 And I was looking at it, and it was a
13 father and daughter ring. And I looked at it, and I said,
14 "Angie, that's \$269. Are you crazy?"

15 And she, kind of, looked around the room
16 and says, "Well, a little." (Laughter)

17 We had a really good laugh. And we were
18 laughing so loud the nurse came in to see if everything was
19 all right. That is all I got to say right now.

20 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Dean, can I just
21 ask you a couple of questions about some of the things you
22 shared with us?

23 MR. DEAN MEYER: Yes.

24 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: You were talking
25 about the community search and the fact that so many people

1 came. Was there more than one search, or was it all just,
2 sort of, immediately after Angela disappeared?

3 MR. DEAN MEYER: Well, how that developed
4 was, every night I used to go out. It was at the end of
5 November, it was getting close to dark season, but every
6 night I used to go out. And I would walk to the bush and
7 through the snow and to the ditches, trying to find her.

8 And a friend of mine spotted me one time,
9 and they talked to me the next day and asked if they could
10 start a community search. So it was just friends of ours
11 that started it.

12 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And you were
13 saying that the community -- not just the community, but
14 the police services and fire services were all very helpful
15 in assisting with the search. Were there posters other
16 than the ones that you guys made? How did you guys use
17 social media? What were the ways that you were sharing the
18 message that you were looking for Angela?

19 MR. DEAN MEYER: Candice and they made up
20 posters and went around and put them all over town. All
21 the businesses supported us, and Crime Stoppers was also
22 involved in it.

23 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I only have
24 one more question. And then I am going to, maybe, ask
25 Candice some questions if she is up for it.

1 I am just going to also just -- just a
2 friendly reminder that while we are in hearings, while
3 families are sharing their truths, if we could kindly put
4 our ringers off, because it does disrupt when families are
5 trying to talk. Thank you.

6 Sorry, Dean. When you went to visit and
7 something you had said about -- both of you -- and either
8 of you can answer this. When Angela was in the hospital,
9 and she was being moved around, do you think that the
10 knowledge of her having to go down south upset her? Did
11 she know that she was, maybe, going to be going down south?

12 MR. DEAN MEYER: We talked about that.
13 She knew she was going. It didn't seem to bother her,
14 though. Like, not to the point where she would just get up
15 and run away. It was -- she, actually, was looking forward
16 to it, because going down south was always a special thing
17 for us. We don't travel that much as a family, but she
18 probably remembered as younger, all seven of us -- there
19 would be six or seven of us jump in a Ford little van and
20 take off down south.

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: You had mentioned
22 the idea of her having to go there, though, because there
23 was not support here, was daunting. What kind of hardship
24 would that have been for you guys to go visit her if she
25 had been moved down south?

1 MR. DEAN MEYER: When we were first --
2 when they were talking about sending her south, me and
3 Kathy were talking about it. She was working for an
4 airline at the time, so we did have access to passes and
5 stuff. But what really hurt me was -- and I'm not going to
6 tell you the exact times -- but there was visitation
7 rights. And we were only allowed to go see her so many
8 times a year. But I don't remember the facts about that,
9 so I don't want to comment on that.

10 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: But just the idea
11 that, as a parent, you would have to engage in how many
12 times you would be allowed to visit her, was frustrating.
13 Is that fair to say?

14 MR. DEAN MEYER: Yes.

15 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And is it okay,
16 Candice? Can I ask you a couple of questions, please?

17 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Absolutely.

18 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you for
19 coming today, Candice.

20 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Thank you.

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I understand you
22 guys -- your mom had shared with us that both you and
23 Angela had a lot of the same friends growing up. I just
24 wanted to ask you, first, if you wanted to share any fond
25 memories or stories or anything about Angela before I ask

1 you a couple of questions about social media and how you
2 have helped looking for Angela.

3 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Yes. Absolutely.
4 Saturdays was sister Saturdays for her and I. I would pick
5 her up after work, and we went for a drive and coffee kind
6 of date every week. And, not to mention, even throughout
7 the week, she would come stop by my work and visit me just
8 to stop in and say hi and called all the time.

9 You know, we go visiting family and
10 friends together a lot and just -- she was a big presence.
11 I wanted to be involved with her especially after, like,
12 being in and out of the hospital and stuff. It was really
13 important for me to -- I don't know -- keep some common
14 ground. Family and close friends were very important to
15 her.

16 She just loved to brighten up your day.
17 Even when we were walking down the street, she could go and
18 make friends. It was incredible. She would go up and say
19 hi to a random person and make them smile. It was so
20 incredible.

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I understand you
22 are the older sister; right?

23 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Yes.

24 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So when you were
25 little, you shared a lot of friends. Can you tell us a

1 little bit about -- because your mom was explaining, when
2 mental illness hit her, it hit her quick, and it developed
3 really fast. Because you were closer in age to her and you
4 were close as a sister, what did you see? What did you
5 watch her going through, and how were you able to help her
6 or be with her?

7 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Well, kind of, like,
8 her manners would change and, kind of, a little more
9 distant. She started to notice people started to call less
10 and stop by the house a little less often. I think that
11 really made her feel a little down. I could see that was
12 affecting her.

13 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: You talked about
14 the sister Saturdays. Just because you are her sister and
15 you love her, you wanted to spend time with her, and that
16 is obvious when you talk about her. What were the other
17 things that you guys would try to do just to stay in touch?
18 And you said she would come visit you at work. What was
19 that like? Would she just walk and come stop at where you
20 were working?

21 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Yes. She would just,
22 kind of, walk right in. And the security guard, kind of,
23 knew who she was already. And they would stop and chat a
24 bit. And she would come in and like, "Oh, I'm just in
25 between my mail runs and want to come say hi," and, "Can I

1 call you later? Can I come over?" And, "Oh, yes." This,
2 that.

3 It was always just quick conversations,
4 like, "Okay. Got to go. I'm busy." Or it was just, like,
5 "I'll call you on my break, though, or I'll call you when I
6 get off work." And it was just, like -- it was so cute.
7 It was so adorable. I miss it so much.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I imagine, because
9 you guys seemed to be in constant contact.

10 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Yes. Absolutely.

11 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Your dad was
12 saying that when your sister went missing, it was you and
13 your mom that did most of the social media and the posters.
14 Can you tell us a little bit about that? Like, what were
15 some of the things you did to let people know and what has
16 happened since? Like, do you guys still do things on
17 social media?

18 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Oh, yes. Even now, I
19 absolutely keep sharing and sharing and reposting. And I
20 talk about her as much as I possibly can. Yes. I remember
21 I went into work on my day off, and my boss, Kelly (ph),
22 she was like, "What on Earth are you doing here this
23 early?"

24 It was, like -- it was the Sunday after
25 everything happened, and I was just -- I can just remember

1 hitting up the printer and printing off all these crazy
2 posters of Angela. And just, like, I got to put them as
3 many places as I can around the house.

4 And it was just total disbelief. I can
5 remember there being so much shock. Like, everybody was
6 like, "Angie. We can't find Angie," or "We haven't heard
7 from Angie," or "She went missing, and she left the house."
8 And everyone was just like, "What on Earth? How? How?
9 How?" And to this day, some people stop me on the street,
10 and they're like, "Angela?"

11 And I'm like, "No. I'm not Angie. But
12 thank you very much. Thank you for recognizing." Some
13 people I don't even know just stop me and they're like, "Is
14 there anything? Have you heard anything?" And oh, man.
15 That is one of the hardest questions, I think, ever. It's,
16 like, I don't know how else to say we haven't heard
17 anything. To say that every time, it just brings
18 everything back so much.

19 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Is there anything
20 else that you want to share or add? Either about Angela or
21 what happened when she went missing or since then?

22 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Mom and dad covered a
23 lot. I just miss my sister so much. I don't know what
24 else to say.

25 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: That is okay.

1 Kathy, can I ask you a couple more questions?

2 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes.

3 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: We heard Dean,
4 actually, make some really good recommendations in relation
5 to services and stuff, in terms of what was available and
6 what was not available. And I want to talk to you a little
7 bit about ideas you may have or your experience as a
8 mother.

9 What is something you could share with
10 other parents that -- what you went through -- that would
11 maybe be helpful or that they should be aware of?

12 MS. KATHY MEYER: Just keep after the
13 doctors and the psychiatrists, I think. And maybe to our
14 politicians, perhaps. And take a good look at the extent
15 of the mental health issues we have in the North or all
16 across Canada, I think. I don't know what else. And get
17 respite help, if you can, especially if they are under
18 you're care.

19 That's another thing I should mention, as
20 well, is, I am her guardian, like, through the public
21 trustee, because she was not capable of making decisions
22 that a normal -- like, any other person would. So I was
23 her guardian. I am her guardian. It was difficult for me,
24 at first, to have someone else care for Angela, especially
25 before she became an adult. Being a mother, you know?

1 But, sometimes, you have to let that go. You need the
2 rest. It is what I would recommend, I think.

3 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: That is helpful.
4 In terms of other supports, can you share with us -- I know
5 the community was very helpful. Police services were
6 helpful. Have you guys been able to access help, emotional
7 help, spiritual help, counseling since Angela disappeared?
8 Have you been able to tap into resources that would help
9 you as a family?

10 MS. KATHY MEYER: My family, I know, they
11 are not quite ready. It is a very difficult decisions to
12 make to render yourself helpless, but I sought help not
13 long after Angela went missing. And it seemed to just -- I
14 went for about a year, year and a half, I think. But it
15 seemed like there was -- what else can we do? So, you
16 know?

17 Collectively, as a family, no. We
18 haven't. It's very difficult to make that decision. But I
19 think that it is important that a family should.

20 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And in terms of
21 the resources up here, would it help or what would help
22 your family access that? Does there need to be more
23 resources? I understand the family is not at all
24 criticizing any of the existing resources, but what other
25 resources would, maybe, help your family towards healing

1 and also towards finding out more answers about Angela's
2 disappearance?

3 MS. KATHY MEYER: I think so. Yes, I do.
4 As a mother, yes.

5 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Do you have any
6 ideas what would be helpful?

7 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes, I do. And I think
8 we are suffering from PTSD, our family is.

9 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And it is obvious
10 by what Dean shared with you and how proud he is that you
11 guys have a lot of love, and you support each other well.
12 But just if there were more supports available for each of
13 you, individually, or as a unit, that would be helpful?

14 And I noticed in some of the pictures that
15 were up, there were quite a few of them camping and out-on-
16 the-land pictures. And I just had a quick question about
17 any type of services that could have been used with Angela
18 for out on the land. In some areas there are out-on-the-
19 land type programs that are designed for mental health
20 issues. Would that have helped her if it had been
21 available up here more regularly?

22 MS. KATHY MEYER: After Angela got sick,
23 we would go out berry picking and stuff. But she could not
24 stand to be out there. So it was hard for her to do
25 anything out on the land, out in the bush. She didn't

1 really enjoy it like she did.

2 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: That is good to
3 know.

4 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes. She enjoyed it
5 when she was younger. But it seemed after the illness, she
6 would rather not.

7 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I only have
8 one more question in relation to when Angela disappeared,
9 and Dean brought up this point. They would not shut down
10 the road or put up a stop. For people who are not from
11 here or anyone who might be listening across the country,
12 can you explain to us a little bit about the highway in and
13 out and where the Mackenzie area, at that time, was and
14 what it would have meant to put a roadblock up?

15 MR. DEAN MEYER: Well, the last place that
16 Angie was seen was at an intersection, and it was, kind of,
17 a truck route. So as soon as I heard that, I thought,
18 "Well, we should shut the road down." There was only one
19 road leaving Yellowknife and there is about -- there was a
20 ferry at the Fort Providence Mackenzie River crossing.
21 There is a bridge there now, but there was a ferry. And I
22 thought it was running intermittent, the ferry.

23 But the RCMP felt that she wouldn't have
24 been able to get out that way, like, if she was taken or
25 went out, because the ferry wasn't constant. But it was

1 running intermittent. So it would have been easy to check
2 the vehicles at the ferry crossing.

3 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: How far to town is
4 the ferry crossing? Like, how long does it take to drive
5 there from here?

6 MR. DEAN MEYER: It's about a three-hour
7 drive.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I just want to
9 offer the family another opportunity if there is anything
10 else they want to share. If the Commissioners -- if they
11 have any more ideas or recommendations before I ask the
12 Commissioners if they have questions for you.

13 And so I would like to offer the
14 Commissioners an opportunity to ask questions or make
15 comments to the Meyer family.

16 --- QUESTIONS BY THE COMMISSIONERS

17 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Thank you.
18 I do have some questions, if you do not mind me asking.
19 Some for clarification, and some to, sort of, gain more
20 understanding. I am just going to go through my notes
21 because I always, sort of, write questions as I am
22 listening.

23 You talked a lot about the limited
24 resources when she started developing the symptoms, and you
25 started recognizing this. And she did not have a lot of

1 access to the services until she was an adult. Why is
2 that? Why when she was not yet 18? Was it because the
3 services were not available or, like, the do not exist here
4 or --

5 MS. KATHY MEYER: There was really -- I
6 imagine they are available now, hopefully, for our young
7 people. But then it was really, really quite difficult to
8 access anything for Angela and she -- there was very
9 limited availability for her, for her age I suppose. She
10 was seeing one psychiatrist, took her in. But, of course,
11 the psychiatrist retired and left town and it was after
12 that. We would see a lot of (indiscernible). Nothing
13 constant.

14 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: You
15 mentioned that it was that way a lot at the hospital, too,
16 even after she was 18. A lot of change in the people that
17 were caring for her and helping her. Is that very common
18 in the North?

19 MS. KATHY MEYER: I think so. There is
20 really no consistency with the care.

21 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: And Dean, to
22 your point, there is not a lot of training of local people
23 to provide those services. Is that turnover and transition
24 because it is mostly people from out of the territory that
25 come and fill those roles?

1 MR. DEAN MEYER: Yes, it is. Most of the
2 psychiatrists -- I don't think she had any of the
3 psychiatrists that was actually from Yellowknife or a
4 northerner.

5 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I understand
6 you are originally from Nunavut; is that correct, Kathy?

7 MS. KATHY MEYER: No. I'm from the
8 Northwest Territories.

9 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Okay.

10 MS. KATHY MEYER: I've been here since
11 before Nunavut.

12 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Okay.

13 MS. KATHY MEYER: Well, I do have roots,
14 there, in Taloyoak (ph). I have a sister in Iqaluit who
15 could not be here because of the weather, but I hope she
16 still comes because I miss her. Yes. I come from quite a
17 large family.

18 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Is your
19 family members of the land claim in the Nunavut Territory?

20 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes, we are.

21 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: And Angela
22 is, as well?

23 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes, she is.

24 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Are there
25 any services that she and you could have gotten? I know

1 for some families, I have heard how hard it is to get
2 services when you are outside of your land claim territory.
3 Is that something that you have experienced?

4 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes, it is. I should
5 mention, you know, not long after Angela went missing,
6 Victim Services, Marie (ph), and one other lady came over.
7 And she has been a constant in our life. I'm going to be
8 very honest here. I thought I would hear from Pauktuutit,
9 the Inuit women's organization. But I never received a
10 call to this day from them. And I am a little
11 disappointed.

12 And I'm of mixed blood, so I don't know if
13 that has anything to do with it. I have experienced that a
14 lot in my life. Just because my father is part white, my
15 mom is Inuk, I've known marginalization for a long time.
16 Yes. That's where I am.

17 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Thank you.
18 And I just want to understand and be clear for sure that
19 they were sending her for residential care to another
20 facility or to a hospital?

21 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes. In Edmonton. To
22 independent living with other members. I really don't
23 think that was a good idea because her illness really,
24 really wasn't manifesting. She would have been -- she was
25 ready to go, or it was in the works for her. I should also

1 mention that about a month before that, I took a cash
2 advance out at work to pay for an assessment at a
3 psychology centre in Edmonton. It was told to about me,
4 but the government would not cover the cost. So I paid for
5 the assessment.

6 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Right now,
7 are there more services here? Or is it still the case that
8 to get more of these services, you have to go to Edmonton?

9 MS. KATHY MEYER: I think I've seen a few
10 through work with the family -- the employee assistance
11 programs. I have gone to a few of the psychiatrists,
12 psychologists, counselors, whatever. But there was never
13 really one that fit for me. And it was, like, it was, kind
14 of, rushed and to please, rate their work.

15 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I think that
16 sort of leads to my final question and that is about the
17 continued support you are getting and your engagement with
18 the police. I understand that their work continues. How
19 is the communication? How are you getting information?
20 What is your relationship in an ongoing way?

21 MR. DEAN MEYER: Well, since Pitchulak
22 went missing, we've had about three officers now, I think,
23 taken over the case. The fellow we've got that is assigned
24 to the case now is very good to us. He keeps in touch with
25 me all the time. He was the one that I was talking to

1 about getting the DNA from the private lab. And I think he
2 hinted that there was going to be a recommendation coming
3 from this Inquiry about that, about using DNA. And I don't
4 know if you know anything about that.

5 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: We have not
6 heard from them, no.

7 MR. DEAN MEYER: But no. He's been very
8 good. I have had no problems with the way the RCMP has
9 been handling it since.

10 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Thank you.
11 I think those are all my questions. Michele may have some.
12 I just want to thank you for bringing the photos. And I
13 have seen the posters and the social media. And all that
14 must continue.

15 I also want to just say to those
16 listening, you have heard from this family. You have heard
17 from Kathy and Dean and Candice. And if you know
18 something, speak up. Speak out. You deserve answers. And
19 I just want to thank you for sharing with us.

20 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: (French
21 spoken) Thank you. Before I ask some questions, I want to
22 say thank you. And I am very humbled and honoured to be
23 here. When I left home and started this journey with you,
24 I opened my mind, my spirit, and my heart to absorb every
25 word that you shared to us. We are just tools so Canada

1 can hear your story and your struggle. But your hope,
2 also, and your visions. I thank you so much for that.

3 And what really struck me or touched me,
4 it is Kathy, when you talk about, we are suffering of PTSD.
5 That concerns me and a concern I'm sure my colleagues, they
6 will read your testimony, because it is a reality. But
7 also, what is very, I will say, shocking, coming from the
8 North, also, is the difficulty to have access for proper
9 services, or programs, and so on. And it is important. We
10 took good notes about the lack of services.

11 For those who are here, the services are
12 good. But for those that are missing, like you mentioned
13 about the treatment or addictions -- centre for addictions
14 or mental health. It must be hard for a family to let go
15 of a daughter or children to seek help far from that
16 circle, that family.

17 You mentioned, also, something very
18 important. The Inquiry listened. I received a lot of
19 information or facts or stories about the relationship
20 between the survivors and the families and the police. And
21 you mentioned that you had a good relationship or a good
22 interaction with the RCMP. And I think we need to hear
23 what went good so we can propose those recommendations for
24 other places that did not go the way it should go. So can
25 you share or elaborate more about that good relationship

1 you had?

2 MR. DEAN MEYER: Well, when she first went
3 missing, I commented on the search that they did. And they
4 were in touch with us all the time as it was going on. I
5 mean, they went door to door with pamphlets and asking if
6 anybody had seen her for blocks around us. And then they
7 also got their search dog. It took a long time to get the
8 search dog here. That was another thing that I had a bit
9 of an issue with. But they also had their search dog here.
10 They were always in contact with us. That's what I liked
11 about it.

12 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: Okay. And
13 you mentioned also about the DNA. It is, of course,
14 something we did not see coming from the RCMP. They
15 explained to you that they cannot do the test? Or they
16 will not do the test? What did they say?

17 MR. DEAN MEYER: They said they couldn't -
18 - wouldn't do the test. I think when they found the
19 jacket, it was that time of year when they just figured
20 that she had just taken off the jacket and walked away and
21 died of hypothermia. So I, personally, walked that area
22 and a mile around it every day all winter, all spring, and
23 all summer. And there was no sign of her there.

24 But I still, today, I don't know why they
25 won't do it. I think -- the last time I talked with the

1 RCMP they hinted that something was coming out of this
2 Inquiry that might be able to help us.

3 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: (French
4 spoken) And just to finish, you mentioned that you met
5 some psychologists or people to help you to go through
6 this. What would fit for you? What would be the best
7 approach or the best thing or a good fit, I guess, we say
8 in English?

9 MS. KATHY MEYER: I think for young people
10 in the North to have well-trained psychologists for the
11 young people -- that are aimed at young people, because
12 there are so many influences, as we know now. I wish I
13 could do something. I don't know. We do need more help
14 for our youngsters, yes. This is all I can say.

15 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: You said a
16 lot and very beautiful, your beautiful family. (French
17 spoken) And we will honour your truth.

18 MS. KATHY MEYER: Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: (French
20 spoken)

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I believe if there
22 are no further questions and the family has nothing else to
23 add, I do understand that there may be some gifts for the
24 family?

25 MS. BERNIE POITRAS: I was asked to

1 explain these beautiful handmade scarves that were made by
2 the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories
3 for the family here that are testifying and also to explain
4 about the eagle feathers. I wish my niece was here. These
5 eagle feathers started their journey from my home in [Haida
6 Gwaii]. And then the matriarchs picked them on the
7 shorelines and that.

8 So over 400 were donated at the beginning
9 of the hearings, so now it's made it all the way to
10 [Sechelt]. And literally, the eagle wings had been donated
11 to where my niece is, the one that does the work with them.
12 And these are the gifts that have been given from all
13 across Canada. Also from family members in the
14 communities, too. So these are the feathers and that. I
15 just wanted to explain that to you, the family.

16 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I believe
17 there is also some Labrador tea as a gift. We also just
18 want to thank the support people for being here for the
19 family.

20 At this point I would just like to request
21 an adjournment until our next hearing at 1:00 p.m. There
22 may be announcements, but if we could just adjourn until
23 1:00, that would be great. Thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: Thank you.
25 We will adjourn and take a break until after lunch. So

1 1:00 o'clock, we will be back here in this room. And lunch
2 is served here out in the hallway. And there are tables in
3 the back to sit and eat. Thank you.

4 --- Exhibits (code: P01P09P0101)

5 Exhibit 1: Folder containing 93
6 digital images provided by the family
7 and displayed during their public
8 hearing.

9 --- Lunch recess taken at 11:35 a.m.

10 --- Whereupon resuming at 1:00 p.m.

11 **Hearing #2**

12 **Witnesses: Lesa Semmler and Esther Semmler**

13 **In relation to Joyce Semmler**

14 **Heard by Commissioners Qajaq Robinson, Brian Eyolfson and**

15 **Michèle Audette**

16 **Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe**

17 **Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge-keepers: Lillian Elias,**

18 **Esther Semmler, Josef Carnojursky, Laureen "Blu" Waters**

19 **Gaudio, Bernie Poitras Williams and Kathy Louis**

20 **Clerk: Trudy Mckinnon**

21 **Registrar: Bryan Zandberg**

22 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good afternoon.
23 Commissioners, I would like to introduce you to the next
24 family that will be sharing a story with you. I am just
25 going to introduce each of them to you as they are sitting

1 with me. Only two are actually witnesses, and the rest are
2 support.

3 So today, here in support of Lesa and
4 Esther, right beside me, is Dorothy McLeren (ph). And
5 beside her is Esther Semmler who will be sharing some of
6 the stories about Joyce Semmler. And the family calls her
7 Joy. Her formal name is Joyce, but the family refers to
8 her as Joy.

9 And then we have Lesa Semmler, and beside
10 her is her husband Josef Carnojursky. And also in support
11 is Lillian Elias. So the witnesses would like to swear on
12 the Bible.

13 MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Esther, we can start
14 with you. Esther, do you swear that the evidence you will
15 give today will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing
16 but the truth, so help you God? Okay. Thank you. Hi,
17 Lesa.

18 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Hi.

19 MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Do you swear that the
20 evidence you will give today will be the truth, the whole
21 truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God? Okay.
22 Thank you.

23 --- ESTHER SEMMLER, SWORN

24 --- LESA SEMMLER, SWORN

25 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Today Lesa and

1 Esther are going to be sharing the story of Joy. But
2 before we, actually, get into any of that, I want to ask
3 Lesla if she could give a little introduction of herself and
4 her family members, here, to the Commissioners.

5 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: All right. So beside
6 me, I have my grandmother Esther. And this is my mother's
7 mom. Beside her is my grandmother Esther's sister,
8 Dorothy, and my husband, Joseph, is here. And behind us is
9 my grandma and Dorothy's cousin and my elder. And we are
10 all from Inuvik, Northwest Territories.

11 My grandmother lives here, in Yellowknife
12 with her sister, Dorothy. But our family is originally
13 from the Delta. So we are Delta people, and we have a huge
14 family in the Delta. So we have come from very large
15 families, and so we can't all be here. We didn't have
16 enough room in this room.

17 So some of the things that we are going to
18 talk about, and I am going to reference a lot, is my great
19 grandparents, too, as part of this story, like, of our
20 story is her in-laws. They are my great grandparents,
21 Agnes and Slim, who were the lead caregivers of me. But I
22 was cared for by lots of my family, growing up, so I think
23 I had lots of parents, growing up.

24 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Can you tell us a
25 little bit about your family's background in terms of --

1 you are in the Delta region, but there are different people
2 in the Delta region there --

3 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: Yes. So we are
4 ["Gwich'aluits"] We come from [Gwich'in] background, so we
5 have on my grandmother's side, like, her mother is half
6 [Gwich'in], half Inuvialuit. And then on my grandfather's
7 side, my mom's father, his background is my granny was
8 [Vuntut Gwitchin] from Yukon. But everyone thought she was
9 Inuvialuit.

10 Even I did, until I was older, because
11 with her father and all that they grew up around the coast
12 and copper mine area and things like that. He worked for
13 Hudson's Bay and was a trader. And her husband was also a
14 fur trader, so that's kind of how they met each other. A
15 [Gwich'in] woman and somebody from the U.S.A. met each
16 other in copper mine area.

17 So our family is [Gwich'in] and
18 Inuvialuit. And we have strong people in our family. We
19 have, like, one of the people, like, my granny Agnes who
20 raised me, she is a pioneer and lots of different, like,
21 Native women. And she was one of the first presidents of
22 COP, Committee of Original Peoples (ph). And they were the
23 group that pushed forward. And now we have the Inuvialuit
24 Regional Corporation, is our land claim and she was very --
25 if people know me, they always say, "You are so much like

1 your granny. You say whatever you want, don't matter." It
2 was bad to swear. I watch old news clippings of her, and
3 sometimes there's beep, beep, beep. (Laughter)

4 So I think in us and from both sides, we
5 have strong voices and strong women. My grandmother is a
6 strong woman. She raised her kids as a single mother and,
7 you know, just -- and we're all very vocal. Sometimes we
8 don't realize we might hurt your feelings because we are
9 just so blunt and straightforward. But we don't mean to
10 be. We just don't beat around the bush, kind of. That's
11 sometimes - but I think we all have big, caring hearts and
12 care for everybody.

13 And I think we hold in a lot of that for
14 everybody else's pain. Like I was telling my husband,
15 "Like, I need to be here afterwards for the other families
16 because I'm a helper." That's the type of person I am.
17 And in order for me to heal, I need to help other people.
18 So that's why my 17 years as a nurse and now working for my
19 own people and just that's, kind of, how we were raised.
20 That's how -- just how we are, how we survive.

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you for
22 sharing that background. It is helpful. It is funny
23 because we sit here today in Yellowknife, but people are
24 watching all over the country. So knowing a little bit
25 about the northern geography, I think, is important. So

1 for people to understand, you have to fly down here to
2 participate. And that when you are up on the Delta, you
3 are literally on the coast of the Northwest Territories of
4 the Arctic Ocean, are some key things. So thank you. I
5 know that what you really want to do today is you want to
6 talk about Joy.

7 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Yes.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And so the
9 starting point that we wanted to cover was, if you and
10 Esther could share some of Joy's strengths and tell us a
11 bit about Joy.

12 MS. LESA SEMMLER: So Joy, like my grandma
13 says, legally when they had to register them back in the
14 day, and we all know how when the government and she
15 registered her, her name was Joy. But they register her as
16 Joyce. So anything that says Joyce, my grandma and me
17 always say, "Her name is Joy." But everybody -- Joyce,
18 Joy. Everybody knew when we say, they know who we are
19 talking about.

20 What I can say, for me, what I remember
21 about her strengths and, even today, about what some of
22 what people tell me about her was she was beautiful. She
23 was so kind. She had the best intentions and everyone,
24 anybody from kids to elders in our community and
25 surrounding communities, they all knew her. They all clung

1 to her.

2 I remember growing up, and she was working
3 at the receiving home where the kids that were in foster
4 care. And they always just clung to her like she was --
5 she cared for everybody. She never -- you could walk down
6 the street, and, you know, you could be on the street, and
7 you say, "Hi, Joy." And she would stop and talk to you
8 just like you're any other person stopping on the street
9 and saying hi and don't treat you any different.

10 And, you know, I remember she was a really
11 good ratter shot. And I know when we were preparing before
12 this, and we were talking in front of the country as
13 rapping, so there is a picture of her in a bush. And
14 rapping is muskrat hunting. So in the Delta, we have lots
15 of muskrats. And that's one of the things that I remember,
16 is in the springtime, being able to go out rapping.
17 Because even whether she was at school or she would come
18 home, we would always go rapping.

19 And my granny and her -- and if it was my
20 uncles that were coming out -- because my mom was always in
21 the boat, either skinning or shooting when they would go
22 hunting. And then we would come home and so many muskrats.
23 And we would have to skin them and stretch them and she was
24 just -- that was her. She did everything.

25 But one thing that I always hear is, you

1 know, she was kind. She was beautiful. She was --
2 everybody loved her. But she always figured she could fix
3 everybody. And, maybe, when she died, that was her
4 weakness, because she thought she could talk to anybody and
5 fix any problems by just talking.

6 And so and I remember my grandma saying,
7 you know, she was always so close with her siblings. She
8 was the oldest of the five, but she has an older sister
9 which she also grew up close with. They were very close.
10 And I think when my mom was murdered, I think a lot of her
11 siblings, you know, I was young so my grandma had to be
12 there for them to cope. And usually --

13 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: When this happened,
14 one of my boys was down in Edmonton, going to school, and
15 he started phoning me. "Mom, what hospital is the guy in?"

16 He phoned me four or five times a day and
17 I kept saying, "No. I'm not telling you." And finally I
18 asked him when he phoned again, "Why do you keep asking?
19 Why do you want to know what hospital he is in?"

20 "Mom, it would be so easy to pull the
21 plug."

22 I said, "No." I said, "I'm not going to
23 have this guy take another one of my kids." So I talked to
24 him, and I said, "You know, I want this guy to live, get
25 through what happened to him, get well, and live to be an

1 old man. And this is going to be his torture for the rest
2 of his life." What he took away from us for nothing, just
3 out of being jealous.

4 Another thing, when he wrote me a letter
5 asking me for forgiveness. To me, to this day, when I
6 think about it, I try to find some way, maybe. No. My
7 answer is always how? I can't. It just hurts too much.
8 But I don't like to sound like I'm a mean person, but she
9 was my daughter and the most beautiful -- thanks to her,
10 she left me Lesla. And Lesla -- now I can see Lesla as doing
11 exactly what her mom wanted to do. I love you.

12 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: I love you too. Yes.
13 So I think when we, you know, she was only 25 when she --
14 but she, you know, she was -- she had me when she was 17
15 years old. And I was born here in Yellowknife because my
16 grandma was living here. And then, you know, my dad and
17 her were young, so it didn't work out. And home for her
18 was Inuvik, so she packed me up and moved me back to
19 Inuvik. I think I was what -- three months?

20 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: Yes.

21 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: Three months old and
22 went home to Granny and Papa's, that's Agnes and Slim. And
23 she went back to school because that's how my granny
24 preached always, "You need to go to school. You need to
25 finish school. You need to -- " So my mom, my grandma,

1 everybody is always about education, you know? So she went
2 back to school.

3 And I just stayed with my grandparents in
4 Inuvik while she was at school. And then when she wasn't
5 in school, she would come back to Inuvik, and I would stay
6 with her. But I was so used to being with Granny and Papa
7 that I would always be like, "Okay. You can bring me home
8 now?"

9 And she would always say, "No. You can
10 stay with me."

11 And I would be, "I'm going to go home
12 now." But she was close with all -- like, my aunt Dorothy,
13 everybody. Like, even on her dad's side, growing up, my
14 granny used to always have, like, she even sent her down
15 while she was younger, before she had me to her daughter
16 who lived just outside of Seattle in Gig Harbor. And she
17 had a farm with horses, so she used to ride horses. And
18 she had all these medals from riding horses.

19 And she figure skated. And my granny in
20 Inuvik had all these medals of her figure skating awards.
21 And I remember when I was probably two or three, she would
22 make me these stupid figure skating dresses, at the time,
23 and throw me on the Dave Jones Arena (ph), freezing, trying
24 to teach me how to skate so I could be a figure skater.

25 Well, I didn't end up being the figure

1 skater. It's my daughter that's the figure skater. So it
2 skipped a generation. But that's how she was. She was
3 always sewing. Like, we still have some of her sewing.
4 And she loved to sew. Like, some of her pictures, you'll
5 see that she has her homemade outfits back then that they
6 used to make. For being 25, she could do anything.

7 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Esther, did you
8 want to add anything about Joy or a fond memory about Joy
9 before we talk about what happened?

10 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: Them days in Inuvik,
11 you had no place to go where you could buy dresses, so
12 Granny used to always make her figure skating dresses. But
13 this time, it was my turn because, I don't know, she got
14 picked to go down to a competition, and she wanted two
15 figure skating dresses. And of all the material she could
16 pick, she picked that -- how do you say? Felt or --
17 Velvet.

18 Oh, my God. I was up until 5:00 o'clock
19 in the morning making this dress, and here she is just
20 sound asleep. I finally got it done. Oh, my God. My
21 heart was just beating because she was so fussy, too, about
22 everything. When she decided to try it on, both dresses
23 fit perfect. She was happy. So we sent her off, and she
24 came home with a medal, anyway.

25 Lesla said she liked going out. She liked

1 going out camping and stuff like that. When her younger
2 brother Larry (ph) got old enough, when he got old enough
3 to go out hunting, they used to go out hunting. And I used
4 to say, the boys like her to go with them, because they
5 don't have to worry about skinning their muskrats when they
6 got home, because it was all done while they were traveling
7 and hunting at the same time. All they had to do was
8 stretch them.

9 So, you know, just stuff like that. Just
10 the way she always wanted to help people. Even when Lesla
11 was saying, when she first was working in that group home.
12 I guess her supervisors, one day, start asking her, "Well,
13 how do you know so much about everything? Did you go to
14 school for this or take courses?"

15 And she said, "no. I learned it from my
16 mom and my grandma." Nana was my mother. Granny was her
17 dad's. So she said she learned it from us. And her
18 supervisor wanted to meet me. So the next thing, she's
19 phoning me. She says, "Mom, can you cook supper, something
20 for supper? I'm going to bring my supervisor home to meet
21 you." You know, just stuff like that.

22 She was always wanting everybody to just
23 stick together and just be happy. She was a happy person.
24 Like her sewing. I remember one time she made a pair of
25 mukluks, and she was so proud of them when she got them

1 finished. She said, "Come on, Mom. We have to go
2 somewhere so I can wear my mukluks and I can show them
3 off."

4 So there was a meat draw going on down at
5 the (indiscernible). And we decided to go down there. And
6 everybody was looking at her and she was like, "Don't look
7 at my face. Look at my legs. Look at my mukluks."

8 And everyone was going, "Okay." (Laughter)
9 Just stuff like that. This is what keeps me going, you
10 know, and the rest of my family will always be here, my
11 grandchildren.

12 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Lesla, can I ask
13 you some questions about when you were a kid and when you
14 and your mom were in Fort Smith?

15 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: So when my mom went to
16 Fort Smith, she went there to take the social work program
17 at the college in Fort Smith. And I think she was working
18 at the women's jail at the same time, while she was there,
19 and going to school.

20 And I was living in Inuvik. And I think
21 she felt that she was in a place where she had a home, and
22 she could take care of me, and I would have my own room and
23 that it would be okay for me to go and live with her
24 instead of living with my grandparents, because that was,
25 kind of, always the plan.

1 My grandparents were there, but they were
2 my great grandparents, and they were raising me young. And
3 they were in their seventies, so when you think about it,
4 do you want to be 80 taking care of a teenager and all that
5 kind of stuff? So I think her plan was to get her
6 schooling, get settled, and then be able to have a place
7 for me to come home to her. And so I was there for about a
8 year. I think it was almost a year.

9 I left Inuvik, and I went to live in Fort
10 Smith with her. And you know, the first day I was there,
11 she had a party for me. And all the kids in the
12 neighbourhood were at my house when I got home from the
13 airport. And that's just how she was. And the first
14 little while was good, and I had lots of friends. I was
15 meeting lots of people. I started school.

16 There was actually some kids there that
17 their families were from the Delta, as well, like, so I
18 knew some of them. And I always remember my mom tried to
19 have -- growing up with my grandparents, my granny was
20 sleeping during the day and up at night. And my
21 grandfather was always home for breakfast, lunch, supper.
22 He was like that. And so when I went to live her, it was,
23 I had a cooked breakfast in the morning. When I got home
24 from school at lunch, there was always lunch on the table
25 ready to go, and supper. So everything was just like how

1 you would picture a normal life.

2 And then the bad stuff started happening.

3 And, like I say, she was 25. I think he was around the

4 same age. And they go out and then they come home. My

5 babysitter would go home, and the fighting would start.

6 And in our house in Forth Smith where we lived, was called

7 Inran Crescent (ph), I'm pretty sure that's -- like I

8 always say, I think I left that little eight-year-old girl

9 in Fort Smith. It was a long time ago.

10 So the past three years, like, all these

11 memories have been coming back since I've been thinking

12 about it. And that's why working with the lawyers for the

13 Inquiry, I was, like, getting a flood of all of these

14 things that I remembered. But I wasn't sure if they were

15 just my brain imagining it, or could I really remember that

16 much detail?

17 And so confirming things that I remember,

18 especially the way our family is, like, my 13-year-old

19 daughter was going to be here today, but she chose at the

20 last minute to just say, "No. I don't want to. I don't

21 want to take part in it." And that's her choice.

22 But after my mom was murdered and all of

23 the different things -- we always say we were so nosy, all

24 of us, when we were growing up. And when we ask questions,

25 we just get our answers even if they were hard answers. We

1 try to -- my grandparents used to -- when things were going
2 on after the court and during the court and all that and I
3 would ask questions, I knew a lot of things. And so when I
4 confirmed with the lawyer and those things and the court
5 case were really real, then I started to realize that a lot
6 of my memories were real. They weren't made up.

7 So where we lived was, kind of, outside of
8 town. And most of the people that lived out there, we were
9 close. Like, all the kids played together. And in our
10 house, it was not finished because it was a log house. So
11 downstairs was the living room and the kitchen and dining
12 room. And then upstairs were the two bedrooms and the
13 bathroom. We had no walls. We just had framing.

14 So anything that went on in the house,
15 fighting, it wasn't that you could shut your door and plug
16 your ears and you know? So it was just right there. And
17 so being eight years old, it just seemed like -- I can't
18 remember if it was every weekend or if it was every other
19 weekend or if it was once a month. But at that age, it was
20 a lot. There was lots of fighting. There was lots of
21 physical violence towards my mother. And I had to watch it
22 all and put my blankets over my head.

23 I always say, I was never hurt. He never
24 hurt me. But now that I'm an adult, I'm thinking, just
25 because he didn't touch me doesn't mean he didn't hurt me.

1 So the things that I had seen and witnessed growing up and
2 that's kind of one of the things -- not even about this
3 case.

4 Growing up in the North, growing up in my
5 community, it wasn't just in my house. Like, we live in a
6 small community. So when you are in kindergarten, you're
7 five, six years old. You don't get walked to school. You
8 walk to school yourself. And when you are done after
9 school, you go play with your friends at their house. And
10 nobody is looking for you. You're not missing. You're not
11 lost. You just make sure you go home for supper.

12 But even going into other friends' houses,
13 you see the violence, you see the drinking, and you just
14 start to think. At my home at my grandparents, I didn't
15 see it. But I would go into other homes, and I saw it. So
16 when I went to live -- and sometimes, even when my mom was
17 living in Inuvik, I remember. And I remember I was in
18 kindergarten, because when she was living there, she lived
19 in Altan (ph). And she used to drive me to school on her
20 motorbike, and I thought I was the coolest because my mom
21 rode a motorbike.

22 And so I know that I was in kindergarten,
23 because she dropped me off at school in kindergarten. And
24 even then, the relationship that she was in, I remember
25 hearing fighting and then coming into the porch, and her

1 boyfriend is beating her up. And I remember crying and
2 saying, "Stop."

3 And him turning around and looking at me
4 and telling me to shut up, "I'm not doing anything to you.
5 Get out of here. You are five years old." And I remember
6 the room. I remember everything, like, I remember being
7 told to get out and shut up because I'm not hurting you.

8 So, you know, it's, like, five years old.
9 So it doesn't go away. And, you know, we sometimes think,
10 "Oh, they were kids. They're not going to remember." But
11 we remember. And so that was my first time seeing my mom
12 getting assaulted in her relationship.

13 And then going to Fort Smith, it was -- I
14 remember him fighting with her and dragging her around
15 naked by her hair. And our house was a log house, so, of
16 course, the stairs were logs, half logs. So dragging her
17 down the stairs and down at the bottom of the stairs was
18 where the gun rack was.

19 And you know, like, he would always be
20 fighting with her. And I was telling my husband this. You
21 know, you're a kid, and you think you're just so smart.
22 And I used to have this little reflector thing that had
23 really sharp edges on one side. And after they would
24 fight, I would stick it under the sheet under his side of
25 the bed so that he could sit on it and get poked in the

1 ass. But that was, like, you know, I think I'm just
2 getting back at him for being mean to my mom. And it's,
3 kind of, what I had to do.

4 But I never told anybody, because why
5 would I? It happens in everybody's houses. And as an
6 eight-year-old kid, why would you tell somebody something
7 that is normal? It's, like, you know, you just wake up the
8 next day, and everything is going to be good the next day
9 and that you are probably going to get treated way better.
10 Even myself, I remember.

11 And that's, kind of, some of the things I
12 say. Like, in my brain I always think I'm mad at this
13 person for taking my mother, but, you know, he did treat me
14 good other than the violence that he had towards my mother.
15 And I'll never forget those nights where they were
16 fighting. And it's just the screams, her screams, and the
17 blood and trying to hide under my sheets because I have no
18 walls. And then sometimes trying to hide under my bed,
19 because I don't know if he's going to come into my room and
20 do something to me. That was how it was the first few
21 times, because I didn't know. I didn't know.

22 But when I think about my childhood other
23 than that and the things that you think about -- okay.
24 Well, I did witness lots of violence in different houses
25 and in our community. And when I went to Fort Smith, I saw

1 it. Not in my house, but some of my friends' houses too.
2 Women with their black eyes that were so common. But we
3 don't know any different as kids.

4 But there were lots of -- growing up I
5 think -- when I think about when I grew up, what I always
6 say is, I think my best times were out ratting at the rat
7 camp and being in the bush, because I got to leave school
8 for a month. But even then, my granny used to make me do
9 homework.

10 And then I remember going home for
11 Christmas. And I was just thinking about this the other
12 day, because she had died January 11. So I had just gotten
13 back there after, because for Christmas, I got to go home
14 to Granny and Papa. And I remember being home and all my
15 friends and telling my mom, "I don't want to go back. I
16 just want to stay here."

17 And she was like, "No. You got to come
18 back." And I just wanted to stay in Inuvik. I didn't want
19 to go back. And then she, kind of, convinced me and some
20 of the reasons -- I can't remember why I didn't want to go.
21 And, you know, when you're a kid, you just think it's your
22 friends. That's why. But maybe, I think, now, that I
23 didn't want to go and see any more of that because I didn't
24 see it in my house in Inuvik, you know?

25 At least if I saw it at my friends' houses

1 or somewhere else, I was able to go home and go crawl into
2 my granny's bed and just be safe behind her. My friends
3 used to tease me because I slept with her until I was about
4 12. That was my safe spot. And for me, the memories,
5 there's no one fight that was worse than the other. They
6 were all bad. They were all -- it didn't matter.

7 Sometimes it would be at lunchtime, and
8 they would argue about something, and it was just as bad.
9 Like, he would push her. It was always physical. It just
10 seemed like there was always physical. He would slap her,
11 and then it would be done for that fight. But it always
12 got physical. And then I remember, I don't know how many
13 times after they fought, sometimes the neighbours would
14 hear the fighting, and they would come over and try to
15 intervene. And she would run away with me to people's
16 houses.

17 And sometimes we would just walk around,
18 because we had really nowhere to go. And after so many
19 times of running to your friends' you just feel ashamed
20 that you keep going back. I don't know. But sometimes we
21 would just not go anywhere. We would just walk around.
22 And it would be in the middle of the night.

23 And, like, the night before she died, we
24 walked from where our house is to the shelter -- to the
25 Madonna House (ph) where the nuns were. And they took us

1 in -- it was like a women's shelter, an emergency shelter,
2 kind of. And we walked there. I remember we walked there
3 in the middle of the night afterwards.

4 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Esther, did you
5 want to tell us about when Joy called you that night?

6 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: Yes. She called
7 between 3:30 and 4:00 in the morning. That was the morning
8 of that day. She just wanted to talk. I heard the phone
9 ringing, so I answered. It was her, so I got up. And I
10 sat up, and we talked until about after 6:00 o'clock in the
11 morning. For over two hours, we talked. And the thing she
12 was asking me was because she knew that I used to be
13 abused, too. And she wanted to know if it gets better, if
14 this would get better. Or does it change?

15 And I told her I didn't think so, because
16 for me, it didn't. She wanted to know if they ever change.
17 And I said, no. Once they get used to -- I don't know.
18 Maybe it's just me. That's the way I see it. Once they
19 start abusing you, your partner starts abusing you, it
20 would be good for one, two days, three days, sometimes it
21 could go for a week. And then it will start all over
22 again.

23 So it's just a cycle when you are in an
24 abusive home. So we talked, and this is what I told her.
25 And she remembered a lot of what I went through, too. So

1 this is why she was asking. And I was expecting her to
2 come to Yellowknife that Saturday. I told her, I said, the
3 best thing for her to do is just not go back home and just
4 go to the airport and just come to Yellowknife, because she
5 was supposed to anyway, her and Lesla.

6 And, like we both say, she was the person
7 that thought she can always talk to people. Talk to people
8 and fix things. And this her life ended, because after she
9 dropped Lesla off at school, apparently, she decided to --
10 because even after I told her, if she needed to go home to
11 pick up some of her stuff and for Lesla, that she should
12 bring somebody with her, even if she has to call the RCMP.
13 Because the way she was talking to me, I just felt that she
14 shouldn't be.

15 And another thing I told her is, not to
16 even leave the shelter, that there is a flight going from
17 Yellowknife -- I mean there's always anyway. I was
18 planning on going down there that evening. But that didn't
19 happen. And I got the news by 11:00 o'clock that morning.
20 So that was it. And I still wanted to go down there, but I
21 think that is when Denise (ph) brought you to Yellowknife,
22 later that day. That was the last time I talked to my
23 daughter.

24 MS. LESA SEMMLER: So that night, I think,
25 we got to the shelter, they just gave us a room. I think I

1 went to sleep. And that's why I said, even that's when I
2 was thinking about it. And then after I spoke with my
3 grandma just these last few days, I couldn't even remember
4 if we stayed there overnight, two nights. You know, it is
5 just one of those memories. I knew we stayed there, but
6 it's not enough detail that I could remember.

7 But I do remember the next day or the day
8 she told me we were going to get our stuff. Then we were
9 going to jump on the plane, and we were going to go to
10 Grandma's house. We are going to Yellowknife. And so we
11 started to walk. And we had to walk by the school, and we
12 left. I think it was recess time. So all my friends were
13 outside, playing recess. And I was going with her to the
14 house to pick up our stuff, until I saw my friends. And
15 then I was like, "You know, I just want to go to school.
16 Can I go to school?"

17 And then she was like, "Okay. And I will
18 go to the house, and I'll get what we need. And I'll be
19 here at lunch to pick you up. I'll come and pick you up."
20 And she never picked me up. And I remember standing
21 outside the school. And all the kids had left, by now, for
22 lunch and gone home. And I think it was the principal who
23 came out and asked me to come back in with her.

24 And then I think -- I'm not sure if it was
25 a social worker. And then I remember they were bringing me

1 to the hospital, because, I think, that's where the social
2 worker's office or something was there. I just remember
3 them taking me somewhere. And I remember having lunch,
4 because I didn't know what was going on at the time. And
5 then I remember I was just going to eat my cherry pie, but
6 then they told me my mom was killed.

7 And I remember that clearly because I was
8 like now I can't eat my cherry pie. And it was just my way
9 of -- like, I cried. And then I remember being with
10 Denise, and I remember going to her house because I used to
11 play with her sons. And she is from home, so she grew up,
12 and she knew my mom, and they were friends. And I remember
13 that evening. And I remember talking about it to her
14 afterwards, recently, and she was like, "We were all just
15 trying to hold it together and be normal for you."

16 And so she took me over. And I can't
17 remember whose house she took me over to, but there was an
18 older lady. I wanted ringlets in my hair, and so she
19 wrapped my hair with sheets. And so I was able to sleep
20 with those on. And the next day when I got to Yellowknife,
21 I had real nice ringlets. But that's kind of what she
22 said. We just tried to be normal that night. And then the
23 next day Denise took me to Yellowknife. And then, I think,
24 my granny came and picked me up from there and went back to
25 Inuvik.

1 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Can I ask you a
2 couple of questions before we turn our attention to what
3 happened at the trial in court and stuff? You keep
4 referring to him. Is it okay, can you say his name?

5 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Peter Emile.

6 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Peter Emile. So
7 because you were so little, you did not know, exactly, what
8 had happened?

9 MS. LESA SEMMLER: No.

10 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So everything you,
11 kind of, learned about that incident, kind of, came after
12 the fact?

13 MS. LESA SEMMLER: It came after.

14 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Okay. But you
15 knew that Peter Emile was your mother's boyfriend and that
16 was the house you were living in with him; right?

17 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Yes.

18 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And so we have
19 talked about this, briefly, because everything in relation
20 to the trial, the transcripts, are available online. They
21 are publicly available and so, essentially, Lesa will be
22 talking about her experience of the justice system.

23 But I just want to put before the
24 Commissioners, and Lesa is aware of this, and it is a very
25 large pile of transcripts. And what it includes is, first,

1 the preliminary hearing. So it went before the Territorial
2 Court. And I am just going to read the titles off of the
3 documents for you.

4 There is a transcript of proceedings of
5 preliminary inquiry held before His Honour, Judge R. W.
6 Halifax, sitting at Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories
7 on Wednesday, June 19, 1985. There is Volume I and Volume
8 II. And so preliminary in this jurisdiction, as in most
9 Canadian jurisdictions, a preliminary inquiry occurs to
10 establish that there is enough evidence to take the matter
11 before a jury when someone is pleading not guilty.

12 And the transcript will demonstrate that
13 there was enough evidence. And then it did go to the
14 Supreme Court here. And the charge was murder. And yes,
15 the charge was second-degree. So second-degree and it was
16 pursuant to 218-1 of the criminal code in 1985. So the
17 provision has slightly changed since then. And so the
18 first things I am just passing to you include the
19 transcript. And it, actually, details quite a bit of the
20 event and the circumstances of the murder.

21 The next document I am passing to you is
22 the transcript of the jury charge delivered by the
23 Honourable Mr. Justice M. M. Dewart, sitting at Fort Smith
24 in the Northwest Territories on Tuesday, February 4, 1986.
25 So there are not transcripts available of the actual trial,

1 but there is the charge to the jury in which the judge
2 takes the time to explain all the legal obligations to the
3 jury but does go over the facts of the situation into the
4 circumstances of Joy's murder.

5 And finally, we also have the transcript
6 of sentencing comments delivered by the Honourable Justice
7 M. M. Dewart -- and I apologize if I am saying that wrong
8 for anyone in the North -- sitting at Fort Smith in the
9 Northwest Territories on Tuesday, February 4. So the same
10 time frame of when the jury charge and when they come back.
11 And then he is immediately sentenced.

12 And the last single sheet of paper that I
13 will be passing to you is the warrant of committal upon
14 conviction.

15 Peter John Emile was convicted upon a
16 charge that he, on or about the 11 day of
17 January, 1985 at the town of Fort Smith in
18 the Northwest Territories, did commit
19 second-degree murder on the person of
20 Joyce Susan Semmler contrary to section 218-
21 1 of the criminal code. (As read)

22 And I am just going to turn to the one
23 page, again as part of the public record. And we are going
24 to hear from Esther about the court, as well, but because
25 this is part of the public record, I am just going to read

1 the part where he is convicted right into the record,
2 please.

3 As to the circumstances
4 surrounding the death that
5 the jury's verdict that they
6 found that you -- so they are speaking
7 to him -- that you fired the first two
8 shots against Joyce Semmler and then
9 turned the gun upon yourself. The gun
10 upon himself wasn't a successful attempt.
11 As to the circumstances surrounding that,
12 these have been made known to me through
13 evidence. And so I must consider those
14 things together with the jury's
15 recommendation that you be eligible for
16 parole after ten years. Were it not for
17 the (indiscernible) I have heard from your
18 Counsel here today, in which he points out
19 that your attempt to shoot yourself can be
20 taken as a sign of remorse on your part,
21 and I do take it in that light. And were
22 it not for that fact, that, generally, you
23 appear to have been a person of good
24 character in spite of some
25 difficulties that you have faced in

1 life, your record of convictions
2 being more for what I can take to
3 be mischief than more serious crime,
4 although I do see you were convicted of
5 causing bodily harm in April of 1981, for
6 which you were fined. And as your Counsel
7 pointed out, your record indicates you may
8 have or had a potentially serious problem
9 with alcohol, which is quite common and is
10 something that only you can do anything
11 about.

12 The Court is fully conscious, also, that
13 you will have to live with this and find a
14 way to reconcile yourself with it and
15 perhaps show that you can rise above it.
16 If you can take it up to your relatives,
17 and that may not be easy, it may help to
18 lighten your burden. The sentence of the
19 court then is that you shall be
20 eligible for parole after ten years. (As
21 read)

22 So essentially, he was convicted of second-degree murder
23 which he got life for but with parole eligibility in ten
24 years. And so essentially, as Lesa has just indicated, she
25 was a child at this point and does not recall the facts the

1 same way. But I do have one question just so the
2 Commissioners can understand. Have you actually seen all
3 of these documents?

4 MS. LESA SEMMLER: No.

5 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And why is that?

6 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Because I don't want
7 to. There was a time where I thought, maybe, if I read
8 them, I would be able to deal with it better. I don't
9 know. And just talking with different people, with family,
10 and my husband. And I even contacted the Inquiry. And
11 that was one of the things. When I first talked with the
12 lawyer, I said, "Can you get all the documents? Can you
13 get all the court files? Because I don't know if I want to
14 go over them or I want to ask questions."

15 And I think when they called back and said
16 they had the ones that you have, I had already had that
17 discussion with different people. And I kind of felt that
18 I know she was murdered. I know she was shot. I know from
19 me asking a hundred million questions when I was a kid.
20 And being the way I was, listening to every conversation my
21 granny had with the lawyer because our living room and our
22 kitchen were the office when they came to town. And I
23 would just sit in, and I would never get kicked out, so I
24 took everything in.

25 And I remember them telling that she was

1 shot in the head and in the body, and so I knew. I don't
2 need to know any more details. And I knew that because I
3 know when my family was really angry because the son of a
4 bitch tried to shoot himself, and that was the way my
5 granny spoke. And when you go through the court, he pled
6 not guilty, self-defense. And then he even appealed it
7 after he was convicted.

8 Like, to take a life, to take a mother, to
9 take a niece, to take a daughter, a sister, to take my
10 children's grandmother they never got to know. And then to
11 try and be a weasel and say it was self-defense. My mom
12 was not a crooked shot. If she wanted to shoot him, she
13 would have shot him dead. That was his way to feel sorry
14 for himself. To try to get off now that he did it and,
15 "how am I going to deal with this? Oh, I will shoot
16 myself, and I'll claim self-defense."

17 And here is my grandma, the strong one,
18 saying, "Don't do nothing to him." And that was the thing.
19 We didn't. Sitting here today, I was having this
20 conversation with my grandma. And my husband and I said,
21 when they had court, I was supposed to testify. And I met
22 with the lawyers, and we went over all the things that I
23 remember that happened the night before and what we did
24 and, you know, just to be able to tell them what happened
25 that night, because I was the only one there prior to her

1 going back the next day.

2 And everything was fine when I am sitting
3 with the lawyer in whatever room or office or whatever.
4 And then once I walked into that courtroom, it was a public
5 court, so there were people in there. And me being nine
6 years old at the time of the court case, I said to my
7 grandma, "I don't remember seeing him." I don't know if I
8 put my head up or looked at him.

9 Because I remember them telling me, "This
10 is where he'll be sitting. This is where you'll go. This
11 is where the judge is." And then I remember the judge
12 asking me questions, just simple questions like what grade
13 I was in, what's my favourite subject in school.

14 And then he asked me, "Do you know why you
15 are here today?"

16 And then I remember just in my head, being
17 nine years old, I wanted to say -- and I was, like, in my
18 head I was thinking, "I'm here because of my mother's
19 death. I'm here because my mother was murdered." And I
20 kept going back and forth in my head as to which one I was
21 going to say. And then I just broke down and started
22 crying because I just couldn't figure out which one to say.
23 And then I just left the courtroom. I wasn't able to -- so
24 I always felt that I failed my mom because that was the
25 only time I was able to fight for her.

1 And after that day, I left that kid there,
2 in Fort Smith, and never looked back. And I remember
3 growing up and, like, yesterday and the day before a lot of
4 my childhood friends have been texting me and giving me
5 their support and saying, "You know, we all knew what
6 happened, but we never talked about it. We never brought
7 it up." Like, I never talked about it. I never wanted
8 anyone to feel sorry for me. I wanted to do everything
9 because I did it. Like, when you grow up, the way your
10 brain thinks, I didn't want anyone to give me anything
11 because they felt sorry for me. Or everything I got was
12 because I worked hard for it.

13 So growing up, I didn't talk about it.
14 Even up until the last few years. I've been with my
15 husband since we were in Grade 6, off and on when you're
16 young -- my first boyfriend in Grade 6. And you know, I
17 didn't share with him any of this up until the last couple
18 of years, he's only got to really know what really happened
19 because it's not something -- when we were talking we say
20 we all put it behind us, and we just left it there.

21 And none of us got counseling. None of us
22 got any followup. I don't ever remember getting anything.
23 I talked to my grandma and nothing. She never got nothing.
24 Just the family, we were all there for each other. How we
25 are brought up is all the bad stuff, you just don't talk

1 about it. You put it away and just don't acknowledge it
2 and move on. You have to live. And so that's what we did.

3 But, I think, I was saying when we were
4 talking yesterday, I was saying to my grandma that this
5 whole process that I've been worried I don't want to hurt
6 her. I don't want to bring up memories that are going to
7 hurt her. This is my journey, but I feel like I don't want
8 to push. And she says to me, "I am so glad you finally get
9 to talk about it."

10 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: After all these
11 years, I'm glad you decided to open everything up now and
12 let everybody know who she was and what happened to her.

13 MS. LESA SEMMLER: And so that's how a lot
14 of us are, especially where we come from. We all know
15 everybody's family stories. We all know the things that
16 the families have gone through. And we all care for each
17 other. And even some of the people who are here at the
18 Inquiry from my home, like, they knew my mom. They knew me
19 growing up. We all know each other's lives, and we don't
20 talk about. We don't deal with it.

21 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: We just talk about
22 the good stuff.

23 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Yes. We talk about the
24 good stuff. As I say, we always sit around and laugh
25 about, remember this? Remember that? And it's always the

1 fun stuff. But we just don't. And I think the thing is,
2 we haven't dealt with the bad stuff. So this is our way of
3 dealing with it now. And I was saying this is my way of
4 being that eight-year-old girl, that nine-year-old and
5 standing up for my mom and testifying.

6 And I'm able to do it now, because I'm
7 stronger even though I cry all the time. I cry for
8 everything. My daughter was showing me a clip of a nine-
9 year-old singing, and I start crying. Yesterday when I
10 started crying, she started shaking her head at me, because
11 that's what I do. I cry. So I think that's just our way
12 sometimes. And now we're getting it out.

13 And I was saying yesterday to my husband,
14 like, even at the media and stuff, sometimes when I'm
15 talking, I'm emotional, and I'll say things. And he's
16 like, "Well, what do you mean by, 'My mom didn't die for
17 nothing'?" And I'm just saying my mom died, but I am going
18 to make sure that I am going to do something good out of
19 her death.

20 And I'm going to speak, and I'm going to
21 show people it doesn't matter how much shit you've been
22 through in your life and the things that you've seen and
23 the things that -- use it. And use it as, you're not going
24 to bring me down. And use it as power to do better things,
25 because we know we have so many of our people struggling.

1 And you walk around on the streets and we
2 have a lot of our people in Yellowknife. And they all have
3 a story and they all have something that has brought them
4 to where they are. When our people lived out on the land
5 and lived in the Delta, they didn't drink and party until
6 it was introduced to them. They were too busy getting
7 water and food and feeding their dogs because there were dog
8 teams. But now, it seems like it's easy to turn to
9 alcohol. It's easy to turn to drugs.

10 I've been lucky. And that's one of the
11 things I said. When I had the tragic thing happen to me, I
12 had a family and a community that loved me and took care of
13 me. And it didn't matter where I went. If I was doing
14 something bad, it could be anybody, they would be like,
15 "Don't do that. I'm going to tell your granny." And you
16 know, everybody is watching out for everybody.

17 And as a teenager, when I just started
18 acting out, I went and lived with my grandmother for a
19 little while, and then I went back home. And I think it
20 was because I had a strong, supportive family, I didn't end
21 up in foster care. They took me in, and they loved me,
22 everybody. I had surrogate moms all over Inuvik that I was
23 able to talk to about boys and those kinds of things that I
24 couldn't talk to my 70-year-old grandma about. But I
25 always consider myself lucky.

1 But one of the things that I do say is
2 that I know it was 1985 that she was murdered, but our
3 family was never offered support. And I don't know.
4 Because I was young, I always thought after all the time,
5 well, maybe I did get counseling. But when I talk to my
6 grandma, like, this was her daughter, and she never got
7 nothing.

8 And I mean even, when we started down this
9 road with the Inquiry and with the NFAC (ph) that I was the
10 member of. And the way the Inquiry was set up, you know,
11 the advice came from some communities that you can't reach
12 out to them because you might cause them more hurt. But in
13 our culture, we're not going to reach out to you. So you
14 need to reach out to us.

15 And that's what we didn't get. We didn't
16 get no one reaching out to us to say, "This is who I am.
17 This is the support that I can provide you and your family.
18 Call us when you're ready." You know, none of that was
19 given to us. And I know now there are more things in
20 place, and we have more organizations that are there to
21 support families, but I don't think we have it right yet.

22 When I think about the way that some of
23 the -- like when you think about violence in the homes and
24 a man and a wife and their children live in a home. Well,
25 if the man is abusing the wife and the wife has to run away

1 because the cops can't take the man out of the house. He's
2 the one doing it. Vice versa if it's the woman that's
3 being the abuser. Because they live there. You know?
4 They can't keep them away because they live there. And so
5 it's best that you just leave.

6 So now you have to displace kids because
7 kids are going to go; right? Or else you are going to
8 leave them. And sometimes what ends up happening is you
9 leave the kids because you're so scared and you want to get
10 away. And you can't get out of these relationships because
11 we don't have the right systems in place for families to be
12 protected.

13 And when I think about my mom's case, she
14 went to the RCMP. I'm pretty sure she pressed charges the
15 night before on the assault. And at that time there was
16 nothing provided to her. It's like, "Okay. You go to the
17 shelter now." It's not, "Okay. Well, do you need anything
18 from the house? Let's go back to the house, and we'll get
19 whatever you need so that you don't have to go back there
20 again." Something like that, my mom maybe could have been
21 here, and I wouldn't be here, because we would have left.
22 But again, who's to say, with her big heart, that she would
23 have gone back. That's the story of a lot of families is
24 that they just keep going back.

25 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So you now know

1 that, that little girl did not fail; right? You know that;
2 right? That a nine-year-old could not hold the whole case
3 against someone who committed second-degree murder. But I
4 think we are all really happy that you had the courage to
5 come here today and share everything that you have.

6 At this point what I would to ask is, if
7 you guys have any other -- you have already given some
8 really great recommendations about what needs to happen or
9 the types of supports, but I want to ask you, specifically,
10 if you have recommendations for the Commissioners about
11 what else could help, what could be done.

12 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Well, I know one of the
13 things that we had discussed was -- and that's kind of one
14 of the pictures I had, was my granny when I had my son in
15 1996. So that would have been Peter Emile's ten-year
16 marker when he would have been eligible for parole. I had
17 my first son, our first child. And he was born in February
18 of 1996, so it would have been ten years after Peter Emile
19 was convicted. My son was probably about four or five days
20 when we were in the hospital. Then we got home. The first
21 place I went. Grandma was supposed to be there, but of
22 course, I had him early, so she wasn't able to be there.

23 I went to Granny and Papa's to share my
24 son with my granny and papa. But I couldn't share him with
25 my mom. And at the same time, this guys is eligible for

1 parole to get out and be free. It's not fair. And then I
2 was 19. And then I had the conversation with -- because I
3 didn't know. Like, I knew he did ten years. In my head I
4 always knew that. And then when I spoke with the lawyer --
5 yes. He got 25, but he was eligible for parole at ten
6 years. But in my head, it was always ten years because
7 that was all I remember him doing. But we were never given
8 the opportunity to give any impact statements or anything
9 at his parole hearing. Like, I said to my grandma, I said
10 --

11 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: None of the family
12 was given a voice or notice to say that we wanted to be
13 there and have our say. Nothing. Same with when they had
14 the court case. I wasn't even allowed to go down to Fort
15 Smith. I even offered to pay my own way. But I was told,
16 no. I shouldn't be there. It's going to be too hard for
17 me. Well, what about my granddaughter and my mother-in-
18 law?

19 So you know, from there, it was just like,
20 "No. You don't do this. You don't do that." Like, just
21 shut out from everything. Like, we weren't allowed to do
22 anything for our daughter. I don't know. This is
23 something that should be changed. I mean, the families
24 should always be involved in everything. Everything.

25 MS. LESA SEMMLER: And I was 19, so don't

1 you think that I should have been notified to be able to
2 know that he was going up for parole so that I would have
3 been able to make a victim impact statement? Maybe I would
4 have dealt with it long ago. Maybe I would have went down
5 this journey long ago.

6 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: A lot sooner.

7 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: A lot sooner. Maybe
8 some things would have been different for our family, you
9 know? Because I always wondered whatever happened to all
10 of my mom's stuff? And I asked my grandma and she said,
11 when she inquired about it, they told her they had no next
12 of kin, so it was destroyed. Like, her purse, any of her
13 personal belongings, and they sent her a box of old clothes
14 and things like that. Like, what are we going to do with
15 that?

16 She was thinking her jewelry, her things
17 that she could give to me when I was older. And how could
18 they not have a next of kin when there is a court trial and
19 she has a child? She has a mother. It just seems like
20 laziness, just disregard for her as a person and us as a
21 family. And that's why one of the reasons, too, that I
22 asked for all of her court documents to be pulled, because
23 I always figured she got a fair trial, you know, and he got
24 what he got.

25 But sometimes, in my head, you hear so

1 much, especially in 1985. Was she given everything? If
2 you took her case and you put it next to somebody who was
3 in a non-Aboriginal relationship who was murdered, maybe he
4 wouldn't have been eligible for parole so soon. Because
5 ten years, to me, is nothing. We talked about it today.

6 You always think about forgiveness. We
7 always say, forgiveness. You need to do that to move on.
8 But how do you forgive when somebody has murdered your
9 daughter, your mother? How do you forgive? It's not for
10 me to forgive. And that's, kind of, how I feel. And
11 that's how I move forward. I live with it. I deal with
12 it. I don't let myself get angry about it. I don't think
13 of ways that I'm going to get back at him.

14 But I want him to remember her, the
15 beautiful person, the beautiful mother, beautiful daughter
16 that he took away because he's selfish. Because he wanted
17 to control somebody. Because he wanted, if he couldn't
18 have her, none of us could. Just selfish. And I want him
19 to remember that. Like, when I saw his name in the paper
20 on Monday flying here, and I know he raised dogs. That's
21 what they do in Fort Smith and out wherever we lived.
22 Everybody had dogs.

23 And we were flying in the plane, and I'm
24 reading the paper. And there's an article they posted
25 about a dog mushing thing that happened in December. And

1 his name is in there. And I just kind of was like -- and
2 halfway through the flight I broke down. "You can't live a
3 normal life. You're not allowed to. You're not allowed to
4 just do what you did before and carry on." But we, as
5 people, are so forgiving. And maybe we don't forget, but
6 we just don't talk about it.

7 You know, we all know people in our
8 communities that have murdered people. And we don't say
9 anything. I think the way we're raised is, it's not our
10 problem. We're not getting involved. We're too small of a
11 community, and we might hurt somebody's feelings. You
12 know, we might hurt the family's feelings. Because maybe
13 we are angry at this person, but we really do care about
14 their siblings. And we do care about their mother or their
15 father. And maybe, at one point, we cared about them.

16 It's hard. I can't forgive. But we can
17 move on. And we can be strong. And one of the things that
18 I said from this is, even though this has been my journey,
19 kind of, in the last three years, that I've finally been
20 going down this, the way I think of it is, by me telling my
21 story, and especially the people that know me, you know, I
22 try hard. I try to do good things. I try to be kind. I
23 try to be kind to my community. I always try to help out.
24 You can be strong after these kinds of things. And that's
25 why I wanted to share my memories of when I was five, when

1 I was seven, eight years old and remembering the detail of
2 the violence that I lived in and watched.

3 And if somebody is living in that right
4 now and they look at their children and they say, "Let's
5 go. I don't want you to have these memories," then this is
6 all worth it. And this is why I say, if my mom died, I'm
7 going to do good things in her name. And I'm going to
8 speak about how this happened and how it impacts people
9 differently.

10 And not everybody ends up stronger. But
11 we have a lot of people who don't when they go through
12 these things. And I'm not saying that I'm the only one.
13 There are people that I know that are very strong. And
14 they have families that they might be the only strong one
15 in it, and the rest of them aren't doing well. But our
16 voices, together that are here, and that are being able to
17 share our stories and talk about this because our kids.

18 Like I said, at eight years old, at five
19 years old, we don't talk about this. We don't talk about
20 this in school. We don't talk about how we need -- we talk
21 about not bullying and all these things. But we don't talk
22 to our kids about relationships and if we are seeing these
23 types of things, what we can do about it? Because every
24 kid has a voice, and every kid has power. And we need to
25 give those kids that are living in this, because sometimes

1 the parents don't have any power, and they're not strong
2 enough.

3 But our kids are strong and we need to
4 teach them that. And that's, kind of, one of the things
5 that I try to do with my kids is. I try to tell my
6 daughter that -- talk to her about unhealthy relationships
7 and that they are not okay. You don't need to stay in
8 those types of relationships. She is only 13, so hopefully
9 we don't have to worry too soon.

10 But our son, who is 21, and it's, like,
11 he's not in a relationship. We talk to him. And I talk to
12 him about respecting women. And if a relationship is bad,
13 and it's starting off bad, do you really want to stay in
14 it? Like, you just move on. And if you find yourself
15 always arguing and jealousy, a lot of times it's not going
16 to change. So move on. There's lots of women out there,
17 and you'll find the right one.

18 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: One thing that you
19 told the Commissioners that triggered or reminded something
20 that you did want to touch on is, now that Peter is out,
21 what do you worry about?

22 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: Well, in my head, I
23 don't remember what he looks like. So I could be sitting
24 next to him, and I don't know if I would recognize him
25 because it's been 33 years, too. So even, like, this year

1 for Arctic Winter Games, I didn't even want my daughter to
2 try out, because I didn't want her to end up being in Fort
3 Smith for any part of the games, at all.

4 I think since my mother died, I've been to
5 Fort Smith twice. Once I went with an aunt. We just went
6 for a weekend to -- my little cousin -- when I was in high
7 school with Nadia (ph) -- and at the time, because I knew
8 he wasn't there. So to me it was like -- and then once
9 when I was in nursing school, my husband's sister was
10 living there, and we had gone for Thanksgiving.

11 And I remembered driving and going there.
12 And I, kind of, felt uncomfortable. But we went, and I,
13 actually, ran into a couple of girls that were my
14 neighbours. It was just the weekend. But after that, now,
15 I just have no intentions of ever wanting to go back there.
16 And so when Arctic Winter Games came, I was glad that she
17 didn't try out for anything, because I didn't want to have
18 to go there, even though she could have ended up in Hay
19 River. Just the possibility.

20 And if he's out and he's just free, I
21 don't know how it will trigger me if I ran into him. And
22 now we know he's here in the territory, and he's back. And
23 I don't know how long he's been here, but it kind of
24 worries me just because I don't know how I'm going to
25 react.

1 I think with what happened to us, the only
2 things that I have for the Commissioners for
3 recommendations is, you know, to take into consideration my
4 story. I was lucky. I had a supportive family. We need
5 to work with the families when tragedies happen, because if
6 we find in the families that there are strong people in
7 families, that the kids don't go into care. We don't need
8 any more of our kids in care.

9 And if it's not a family member, at least
10 it's somebody within their own culture, like, in their
11 community, so they're not uprooted from their community and
12 their friends. But not all the families have financial
13 means to do this. And so the hardest thing I think for
14 families is, I was lucky because there was no burden on my
15 family financially. I probably spent a lot of money.

16 (Laughter) I always wanted everything, and I always wanted
17 to do sewing. And it doesn't come cheap.

18 But the families need to be financially
19 supported. And the families aren't going to come forward
20 if they're going to be interrogated by all of the rules of
21 criminal record checks. Okay. You know what? Would you
22 rather have this kid with this family who you still will,
23 kind of, monitor and you can financially support them -- I
24 can see if you are giving them to a stranger that you need
25 to make sure of certain things, but this is their family.

1 Who are we to judge their family as a
2 system, as a society? And that's what causes barriers in
3 our communities. And sometimes, when a family knows that
4 they are going to step up for these kids, you know, they'll
5 straighten out, even if they do have struggles. They don't
6 need social services judging them. Because I think that's
7 a barrier. And that's why our kids end up in care. And I
8 think that's one of the things.

9 I know you're protecting the kids, and I
10 know you want the homes to be safe and all this, but the
11 homes that they're going into, and you're taking them away
12 from their culture and, sometimes, even their community.
13 And you're separating the siblings and things like that.
14 You're not going to get a productive person in life once
15 they're older. They're going to be struggling.

16 And that's why I feel that I was always
17 lucky that I had my family, and they kept me, and nothing
18 changed. Like, I just continued on my life. And I think
19 that's important. And I think for women in these types of
20 relationships, I think we really need to look at how we're
21 protecting them, how our services are in place for them.
22 Because I know our systems are so Monday to Friday, 9:00 to
23 5:00, 8:30 to 5:00, lunch is closed, weekends there's no
24 one.

25 Some of our shelters, you know, they have

1 to go by rules that are provided by the government because
2 that's how they are funded. And you're not going to get
3 the funding if you let this person in and they don't meet X
4 number of this. Because you're not going to get the women
5 who are going to disclose anything. And so I think we
6 really need to look at how we provide that safe security
7 for our women and our girls and our family units.

8 When a family is running away, they need
9 to be able to take all their kids. And I was having this
10 discussion with another family member last night. Whether
11 they are girls or boys and be able to go into a shelter,
12 because that is not always the case. And then you have to
13 split them up. You're stronger as a group. But we need to
14 be able to provide that support for women when they're the
15 most ready to leave. Not two or three days later or you
16 need to meet this requirement in order to stay here.

17 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you. I just
18 want to give the Commissioners an opportunity to ask any
19 questions or make any comments, as well, please.

20 --- QUESTIONS BY THE COMMISSIONERS

21 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you.
22 Lesla, Esther, I just want to thank you very much for coming
23 and sharing with us and telling us about Joy and what she
24 went through and for sharing your incredible strength with
25 us. Thank you.

1 I just had a couple of questions of
2 clarification, if you do not mind. So Lesa, I think you
3 said with respect to your mom that you are pretty sure she
4 pressed charges at one point?

5 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Yes.

6 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: I did not
7 quite understand when that was. Could you maybe --

8 MS. LESA SEMMLER: That was one of the
9 questions that I had was the night before. Like, I asked
10 if she went to the cops and charged him with assault.
11 Because that was the night that we left. And I think that
12 was clarified that she did. But then he was -- I don't
13 know if he was picked up or anything.

14 That's, kind of, the detail that I, kind
15 of, was wanting to see if it was part of the file. But I
16 just -- I didn't want to read it. I want to remember my
17 mom for the things that I do remember, even though there
18 were some bad things that I saw and I remember. And I
19 don't want to be skewed by the details of her court case
20 and the details of her murder. Because from my
21 understanding, it's very, very extensive detail. Two
22 volumes of detail.

23 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: And I know
24 you were young at the time when you were living with your
25 mother, but do you recall any police involvement in the

1 home prior to then?

2 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Never. It was usually
3 neighbours coming over and usually -- I don't ever remember
4 seeing men. It was the women neighbours that were coming.
5 And I remember him fighting with other neighbour women when
6 he was fighting with her because they were trying to stick
7 up for her.

8 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: And I think
9 this is just my last question. But you explained how you
10 had walked in the middle of the night to the women's
11 shelter. Was that the first time?

12 MS. LESA SEMMLER: The first time we
13 stayed at the shelter, but it wasn't the first time that we
14 left the house in the middle of the night.

15 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: You know me.
17 I write, and I write questions. And then you answer them,
18 so I have to go back. And that is not a question I have
19 anymore. But there are a few questions that I just want to
20 get your opinion on, get your thoughts on.

21 You talked about how the violence, like,
22 as an eight-year-old, because you are seeing it, you are
23 hearing about it, you do not talk about it with anybody
24 because it is normalized. With your great grandparents'
25 generation, it was not there in the same way. Have you

1 thought about why it was normalized?

2 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: From when I asked a lot
3 of what happened in the bush -- when I refer to the bush,
4 we all lived in our camps on the Delta and not everybody
5 lived in town, way before my time. But when I would ask,
6 they would -- families were just too busy. You're
7 preoccupied because you're waking up early. You're getting
8 wood. Everybody has their jobs to do.

9 And then I always say, I never had to go
10 to residential school. I lived at home and went to school.
11 My grandma and her sister went to residential school. My
12 granny, great, great grandmother went to residential
13 school. And I hear a lot of other families, their stories
14 of residential school. And by being taken out of the home
15 -- and this is, kind of, quoting one of my people who I've
16 talked to about it -- the way that they explained it is
17 that they were taken out of their homes. They had to live
18 in residential school by these rules. They never were
19 nurtured.

20 And then they get out of school, have
21 children. Because they're educated, they have jobs. So
22 then they have money. So what you do is, you go out, and
23 you have a good time. But sometimes, I always say, we
24 don't know how to drink. We don't handle our alcohol well.
25 Maybe it's something with that.

1 And the violence started in the homes
2 because you don't know how to parent. You don't know how
3 to care. You don't know how to cohabit other than rules.
4 So then you just fight because you're drinking. And a lot
5 of the time when you think of all these issues, you hear
6 about it as alcohol. But in my mom's case -- and that was
7 one of the things I asked the lawyer was -- they were both
8 sober when she was murdered. He was sober. So he was not
9 drunk. They might have been the night before but not
10 during when he killed her.

11 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: That was the
12 finding in the decision. That they were both sober at the
13 time of the incident.

14 MS. LESA SEMMLER: So growing up, I think
15 we just saw so much violence. And you see it everywhere
16 you go. You think it's just what happens, even though I
17 didn't have it in my house. But I had seen it at my mom's,
18 and I had seen it at my friends' houses and the drinking.

19 And you know, my grandfather, he was an
20 alcoholic. And he drank a lot. And he was mean. And
21 until he stopped drinking was when I started to have a
22 relationship with him, until he died. That was what we
23 saw, you know. So we just normalized it as, it just
24 happens. And couples fight. People drink. And it's just
25 normal.

1 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: You shared
2 with us ideas about the importance of teaching kids about
3 healthy relationships, about respect, about dealing with
4 jealousy and things like that. And that strikes me as
5 being a really important step in breaking this idea that
6 violence is normal. Do you have any other thoughts on how
7 the cycle of the normalization of violence -- what we can
8 do about that as a community, as a society?

9 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: I always say, I know we
10 can always try and work with our older families that are
11 struggling. And we can always provide them support. We
12 can't force it on them. They have to be ready. But kids,
13 they're pure. And when we teach them when they're young
14 and we continue to reinforce that as they're growing up,
15 it's just like the impacts of residential school.

16 You know, like we always say that it's
17 going to affect generations, until we can break that cycle
18 of parents that are struggling. Because there are parents
19 that are my age that didn't go to residential school, but
20 their parents did, and they're struggling. And now they're
21 raising children, you know? And we still have to support
22 them and the family as a unit. We have to quit tearing
23 them apart.

24 But it's the kids that, I think, will make
25 the biggest impact. In educating the kids, in respecting

1 each other. And you know, as young, you start with the
2 basics and then as they get older -- and we always think
3 about, "Okay. You're 15 we got to teach you about," --
4 like, I was a health teacher.

5 But we have to do that earlier because
6 it's get it in their brains before they're actually getting
7 into relationships. So when they are getting into them --
8 because we don't know what age they're going start. I
9 mean, my boyfriend in Grade 6. So we have to talk to them.
10 And you know, I think we, as mothers and grandmothers and
11 fathers, and I think that's the break, a lot of times.
12 Sometimes it's easier for mothers to talk with their
13 daughters, but it's not so easy for fathers to talk with
14 their sons. Especially when you are unhealthy to say, "Do
15 as I say, not as I do," because you feel bad because you
16 know.

17 I always say, "I'm not perfect." I always
18 tell my daughter, "I'm not perfect, and I have never lived
19 a perfect life, and I have made mistakes." But we need to
20 talk to our kids, and we need to be open. And we can't shy
21 away from those hard questions. And we just need to be
22 there for them and love them and respect them.

23 And that's where, I think -- all our kids,
24 we can engage them in schools and being part of a
25 curriculum that we teach this to our kids. Like, not only

1 at home. And have a collaboration with the schools that we
2 teach healthy relationships right from the start.

3 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: You talked
4 about, like, with your great grandparents, you grew up a
5 lot in the bush. Are there teachings you gained there that
6 you think can also help break the cycle?

7 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: A lot of times when I
8 think about when we were in the bush, we always had duties.
9 And now we think of our kids, and I'm guilty of it for my
10 kids. I don't know when the last time was our kids ever
11 did dishes or took the garbage out, you know?

12 But when we're in the bush, we all have
13 our duties that we have to take care of whether it's -- I
14 could be eight, nine years old and that's my duty to go get
15 water. And I have to go get water, or I have to fill the
16 water bowl. Not necessarily go out to the lakes. That's
17 somebody else's job to get the water, but fill the water
18 bowls in the house. Or it's my job to burn the garbage, or
19 it's my job -- you know, we all have those kinds of things,
20 and we are not giving those things.

21 I think this new generation -- and I don't
22 know what generation we're at now, X, Y, Z. We're giving
23 them everything, I think, because now we have more educated
24 families. We are trying to give our kids everything that
25 we think we should have had or could have had. And we're

1 not letting them have rules. Twenty-one years old, and I'm
2 still waking up my son to go to college in the morning,
3 even though he's like, "I have my alarm, Mom."

4 I think that's, kind of, one of the things
5 that we need to go back to, is making sure our kids know
6 that they need to do things. Not all families are like
7 that. I know I have some friends that their kids are like
8 -- I'm like, "Whoa (ph), that's a lot of rules." But when
9 I think about the bush, though, we were always working
10 together, and we had to make it work.

11 Now, when we are in town, we don't have to
12 work together. Everybody is on their own and doing their
13 own thing. And I always say to my kids, they could stay
14 home a whole weekend, but they're socializing, because it's
15 on the phone. They don't even leave the house sometimes.
16 And we're working ourselves into silos alone, so we're not
17 able to work on those relationships.

18 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I do not
19 have any more questions.

20 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Texting from one room
21 to the next. I'm getting bad. I got to text my kids,
22 "Come down for supper." (Laughter)

23 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I want to
24 thank you all. And Esther, you and Lesa, especially, for
25 coming and sharing with us. Lesa, you and I met a number

1 of years ago, now, and this is the first time I got to see
2 pictures of your mom. And thank you for sharing those and
3 sharing with us the impact she has had on your lives and
4 your community and continues to through you and your kids.

5 I want to also acknowledge the support you
6 have given us. Bold and outspoken, yes. But I am so
7 grateful for it and so grateful for the wisdom and the
8 insight you have given us and that has brought us here and,
9 I hope, has created a good space for us to be doing this.

10 And I want to acknowledge the years of
11 work that you have done in the healthcare profession in the
12 Inuvialuit region in the Northwest Territories, your role
13 on education boards. I know the eight-year-old girl feels
14 like she stepped out today and honours your mom in this
15 process, but I see that you have been doing it forever, and
16 I want to acknowledge that. And I hope our paths cross
17 again. Thank you.

18 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: (French
19 spoken) Your name resonates far, far through Quebec. It
20 was a few years ago that, "You have to meet Lesla." And
21 also Qajaq, when we started this beautiful and important
22 journey, and media talked about you when they were asking
23 me questions, groups, or social movement.

24 And also, like I said, Qajaq and I was
25 like, "I can't wait to meet that woman." And we did near

1 Toronto a year ago. But now I understand why that I had to
2 sit down and listen and receive. You are so powerful. I
3 was moved by your words, how you were teaching me what was
4 your experience when you were a little girl. And today, as
5 a mother, but also, as a woman. I was touched. I am still
6 touched, very moved.

7 And so proud that Canada can see, today,
8 your granddaughter, you and all the people in this room and
9 people everywhere that follow this journey, that you are a
10 person that it proves me as a mom, but also as a woman who
11 fights for this, that we can break that culture of we do
12 not talk about this.

13 We can break that culture of the
14 normalization. It is normal it happens everywhere. You
15 broke it. And many women did, but we do not hear enough.
16 And also, to have a stand to say, finally we can talk about
17 it and this journey gives the chance, the opportunity,
18 creates that space. And I'll say "safe space" for the
19 great grandmothers, the grandmothers, the mothers, the
20 aunties, the sisters, but also, the men that walk with us,
21 beside us to take that space and speak up for the first
22 time or explain again and share again.

23 Everybody needs to hear that. So I am so,
24 like, wow. And it is a huge impact on the work that we
25 need to do and the recommendations, also, are very good.

1 And Esther, it is also an honour for us to be part of the
2 spirit of your mom, your daughter, and to be able to honour
3 with you what you shared to us, what we saw, the pictures.
4 She is beautiful, she looks like an actress. I will not
5 say the name, but I will tell you later. She is gorgeous.
6 How do we say in English? She said you are like your
7 daughter -- you are strong like your mom, I was told.
8 (French spoken)

9 And if I may say, I am not going to
10 dictate to you what to do or what to say, but please, you
11 never failed your mom. You did not fail your mom at all
12 (French spoken) Because when you mentioned that, I was
13 like, "Oh, my God. You are honouring her every second of
14 your life." And it is huge. It is huge. (French spoken)
15 And husband since Grade 6.

16 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Well, we only got
17 married seven years ago. We do things backward up North.
18 We see if it will work out before we get married, have
19 kids.

20 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: Well, it is
21 important to have the proper support. (French spoken)
22 Thank you for being here. And every man should be like
23 you, beside the woman. I am raising three boys. (French
24 spoken) Thank you so much. And thank you for the support.
25 (French spoken)

1 MS. LESA SEMMLER: I just wanted to say
2 one last thing. And I wanted to just thank you. That as
3 part of the NFAC, one of the things that we kept stressing
4 was that we wanted this space to feel safe. It feels safe.
5 I feel safe, and I feel good that we've been able to share
6 my mom, my grandma's daughter.

7 And to the other families that are out
8 there that want to share, it's safe here. This is a good
9 thing. And you guys are doing great. And like I said
10 yesterday, thank you for continuing on this journey for the
11 families. And we're the families. We're not part of any
12 organization. We are the families, and we are telling our
13 stories to you. And I don't need anybody to speak for me.
14 Thank you.

15 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: The lawyer has
16 also known Lesa for about ten years because I used to live
17 in Inuvik. But I did not know Lesa --

18 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Because I didn't talk
19 about it.

20 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: She did not talk
21 about this. But a proud moment to see someone with so much
22 courage.

23 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Before we
24 wrap up this session, I think we have some small gifts that
25 we would like to share with you. And I am going to ask our

1 grandmothers that are here to help us distribute those
2 gifts with us.

3 --- Exhibits (code: P01P09P0102).

4 Exhibit 1: Folder containing 13
5 digital images provided by the family
6 and displayed during their public
7 hearing.

8 MS. BERNIE POITRAS: I was asked to
9 explain about the eagle feathers again. It started its
10 journey in Hidiguay. Again, over 400 that were given. And
11 now it has made its way across to all across Turtle Island
12 up here, up north. My niece is the one that takes care of
13 the eagle wings when they are gifted. So it has come from
14 sea shell, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, Nova
15 Scotia. Many territories have donated. And also a scarf
16 that has been given to a family member, here, that was made
17 by the Native Women's Association of the Northwest
18 Territories. So again, to the families again.

19 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Please take your
20 seats, we're about to begin. My name is Wendy van
21 Tongeren, and as soon as you take your seats. You'll have
22 the benefit of the singing of a song. A very special
23 presentation.

24 --- Short adjournment -

25 **Hearing # 3**

Hearing - Public

116

Villebrun, Landry & Harris
(Stella Cardinal)

1 **Witnesses: Noeline Villebrun, John Landry, Roxane Landry**
2 **and Cindi-Rae Harris**

4 **In relation to Stella Cardinal**

5 **Heard by Commissioners Brian Eyolfson, and Michèle Audette**

6 **Commission Counsel: Wendy van Tongeren**

7 **Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge-keepers: Laureen "Blu"**

8 **Waters Guadio, Bernie Poitras Williams, Denise Pictou-**

9 **Maloney and Maggie Mercredi**

10 **Clerk: Trudy Mckinnon**

11 **Registrar: Bryan Zandberg**

12

13 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: All right. Now
14 that we have all done our daily exercise, both spiritually
15 and physically, let's have an introduction of the special
16 people who are up here to speak to you today, and the first
17 encounter that I had that started basically this
18 preparation that has been done by Noeline Villebrun was the
19 meeting of Noeline, so I wonder if you could just start by
20 just put your name on the record and then we're going to
21 hand the mic around to everyone who is seated with you in
22 support just to start in a good way so everyone knows who
23 is with you today.

24 MS. NOELINE VILLEBRUN: Masi cho.

25 (Speaking in native language).

Villebrun, Landry & Harris
(Stella Cardinal)

1 MS. CINDI-RAE HARRIS: Hi, my name is
2 Cindi-Rae Bonorouge (phonetic) Harris.

3 MS. ROXANNE LANDRY: (Speaking native
4 language)

5 MR. JOHN LANDRY: Masi. My name is Johnny
6 Landry, and I'm from Fort Providence and I'm a singer-song
7 writer. I want to thank you very much for inviting me to
8 sing for you, Masi cho.

9 MS. MAGGIE MERCREDI: My name is Maggie
10 Mercredi, I'm from Yellowknife. I'm Dene,
11 and I am here to support in is sharing today. Masi.

12 MS. RITA AERY: My name is Rita Aery, I'm
13 a family support liaison person from the Native Women's and
14 I'm from Aklavik, Northwest Territories.

15 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Now, this
16 afternoon, we're anticipating that Noeline will be the
17 lead, but we can anticipate as well that other members of
18 the group here will speak when they feel that it's
19 something that they would like to do. So that means that
20 everyone is going to actually affirm on the eagle feather,
21 so this is kind of a group project to start off with. So
22 Mr. Registrar.

23 THE REGISTRAR: Good afternoon, everybody.
24 I'll maybe just affirm everyone all together since you're
25 speaking as a group. So just give me a second to good

1 afternoon, John, Roxane, Noeline and Cindi-Rae, you can see
2 seated or you would like --

3 MS. NOELINE VILLEBRUN: I would prefer to
4 stand please.

5 THE REGISTRAR: Yes, whatever you prefer.
6 So John, Roxane, Noeline and Cindi-Rae, do each of you
7 promise to tell your truth in a good way to the
8 commissioners today. Yes, from all of you. Thank you very
9 much. Looks like I missed two people. Could you just
10 remind me quickly, your name was? Rita, okay. And Maggie?
11 Okay. So Rita and Maggie, do both of you promise to tell
12 your truth in a good way this afternoon as well. Thank
13 you.

14 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So you know, the
15 audio/visual fellows do have the photographs that you
16 submitted, so when you are ready to show those, just give
17 the direction and they will appear. But I have listened to
18 you, and I look forward to hearing what you have to say. I
19 know that there are things that you want to say to the
20 commissioners and to the people in the room and to the
21 world, and so I kindly ask you to start. Masi cho.

22 MS. NOELINE VILLEBRUN: Before I begin, I
23 would like to acknowledge some people that I feel need -- I
24 need to recognize them. She may not be Dene, but this
25 women has been an inspiration to me for many years. I read

1 her story and she is actually a murdered woman. And she
2 was a warrior, a woman warrior. And her daughter is here
3 with the inquiry right now, so I am so on honoured to meet
4 with her and to know that she is here. That also gives me
5 comfort besides the people that are here around with me.
6 Her name, the warrior's name is Anna Mae Pictou. She was
7 murdered during the American-Indian movement. Her daughter
8 is here and I would like to acknowledge Denise Pictou-
9 Maloney. I want to welcome her to my territory and that
10 she does us a great honour. She has been a voice out there
11 for many years standing up not with organizations, but
12 bringing in truth so I wanted to honour her and her mother,
13 (speaking native language). Masi cho. Thank you from my
14 heart.

15 I also want to acknowledge my husband and
16 my children and my grandchildren that could not be with us.
17 I want to acknowledge Carol. She is 42 years old. She
18 gave me four grandchildren. My second oldest daughter is
19 here with me, Cindi-Rae, and she gifted me with four
20 grandchildren. My youngest son, he is my pride and my joy
21 for being a young Dene man today. Not that my girls don't
22 honour me, but my son is carrying on the tradition of my
23 father my grandfather, and all of his ancestors before him.
24 So I wanted to honour them too.

25 But my husband too for being my foundation

1 for supporting me and supporting all the Dene that have
2 come for help to our home or reached out and I want to
3 thank you him. He could not be here with us today, but I
4 wanted to bring balance to this circle so I asked Johnny,
5 the elder Johnny Landry, the artist to come and sing, and
6 bring that balance of having a man with us. So Masi cho,
7 Johnny. Roxane, thank you for being there for me, for
8 being my little sister, thank you. Maggie and Rita, thank
9 you for having my back. Masi cho.

10 I also want to acknowledge all the women
11 that are here struggling with their grief, with the loss of
12 their loved ones. I acknowledge your pain, I feel it, I
13 understand it. This is why I find that prayers are so
14 powerful and so helpful in my journey, my healing.

15 But before I go on, there is some items
16 that I had brought with me that are very precious to me.
17 One of them is an RCMP medicine bag. Even though that was
18 gifted to me by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, it
19 signifies my family members that are/were RCMPs. I also
20 have a copper knife that was given to me made from the
21 Copper Mine River. It was given to me by one of my
22 counsellor's from Aurora college by the name of Dave Grundy
23 who has since passed on. So I want to acknowledge also
24 Dave's help and to his family. And my auntie, my little
25 auntie for all her love and her wisdom and when I answer

1 her, I would ask her a question, she would help me to
2 understand the difference between Dene and speaking
3 English and the meaning between English and Dene, that was
4 my little auntie Agnes Villebrun.

5 I also want to acknowledge all of my
6 relatives, the women, the young girls that have been
7 murdered or missing. And many of the women in my community
8 that have been murdered or are still missing.

9 The flag was given to me in 2012 by a Dene
10 gathering in Saskatchewan, and there for the first time in
11 200 years, there was a ceremony for clan mother. So in 200
12 years, I was given the honour of being a clan mother for
13 some families, so it is a great honour to be able to sit
14 here and know that through our traditions, practices and
15 beliefs that we are still being able to talk for our
16 people, help them to understand.

17 I have a [staff] that was given to me last
18 year in New York. I was invited to the grandmother and
19 grandfather sacred circle sage. When I left New York, I
20 was given this [staff] and my duty is to share the common
21 struggles that we have in all three of our countries,
22 Mexico, US and Canada. That all of the grandmothers and
23 all the grandfathers, our struggles are the same. We are
24 faced with the same issues so when I was asked to carry the
25 [staff] and to share the message in Canada, I have tried my

1 best and I -- I am honoured.

2 It's hard sometimes when you are going to
3 tell a story. You know, when that story is about your
4 life, the struggles, the barriers, that we face as women.
5 You know, not just Dene, not just tribal women, but all
6 women on this earth, and this is why I wear the scarf
7 proudly today because this scarf was given to me but the
8 women of Israel when I went to Jerusalem to talk about
9 women gender and issues, and how we as Dene were able to
10 overcome some of the assimilation and colonization, and
11 that I shared the message that we used our elders to go
12 back our grandmothers to go back to our teachings because
13 they are the knowledge holders and the keepers.

14 I also want to help the commissioners
15 understand and hopefully have bring some solutions and
16 recommendations. I know your jobs are stuff right now
17 because of all that is going on out there in the media, the
18 insinuations, and I am -- I was no different. I was no
19 different. I was frustrated, frustrated with the system,
20 and it is just like another process, that's how I feel,
21 that's how I felt and why, because I have survived. I have
22 survived many, many changes in the policies and the laws.
23 And this is why I feel our women are so vulnerable today,
24 we have been put in a vulnerable position.

25 I have been told through teachings not to

1 blame and I'm trying hard to -- not to. I know when I was
2 assaulted I was brutally raped, kidnapped, held against my
3 will. Sexually assaulted over and over with a knife.
4 Those were the times when I did not think that I would
5 leave that room alive. But what was the hardest to accept
6 that there were people in the next room that did nothing to
7 help. And this is what we're [faced] with as women I asked
8 myself why wouldn't they help. What are they afraid of?
9 But I know one thing they were afraid of that man just like
10 I was afraid of him for my life. The sad part is, this is
11 not the first time I was raped. The assault started when I
12 was a little girl. The first time I remember I had little
13 red coveralls with a bib, that's how small I was, and it
14 was done by a family member, a relative. No one did
15 anything. I don't think anyone back then knew what to do.
16 I went to residential school, it started there too.

17 There are many times that it I would ask
18 myself that question are our lives of any value? Is my
19 life worth anything as a child growing up? I have some
20 photos that I wanted to show and it started when I was --
21 the first one of the photos is black and white -- or no,
22 it's a coloured photo with three little girls and I would
23 like that shown. The one in the middle is me. The other
24 one is another close friend of mine Catrine Boucher
25 (phonetic), and the other is Cecil Sanderson (phonetic),

1 and at this age, and I look at this picture how young and
2 innocent we are, but at this age, we're already -- they're
3 already predators.

4 The next photo is a black and white one.
5 If you can enhance that picture, this was taken in 1967 in
6 Lapointe Hall, Fort Simpson. And the one lady with the
7 glasses is Pauline Lafferty (phonetic) and Lorraine
8 Bunerouge (phonetic) and some of the other girls I don't
9 remember. But it was here too that in residential schools
10 that we were punished and at times molested, raped. So it
11 didn't matter where we went, you know, we were affected; we
12 were impacted; we were traumatized.

13 There is a picture of my dad, my
14 grandfather and my grandmother. My parents Archie
15 Villebrun married Elizabeth King Beaulieu, my mother. But
16 back then, there was arranged marriages. That picture
17 there is a photograph of my grandmother in the plaid,
18 that's the one that raised me that spoke only Dene. The
19 young lady there sitting there is getting married is my
20 aunt, my mom's youngest sister. And my uncle Leonard and
21 his mom and dad. And the bridesmaid in the blue in the
22 back there, if you can point that, yes, that is Stella
23 Cardinal, she was my neighbour. She also went to
24 residential school with us.

25 When I was in residential school many

1 times we were very lonely and it was the older girls like
2 Stella that would come and give us comfort and hold us and
3 tell us it's okay, we're going to be home one day. She
4 went missing from one of the places in islands, called Long
5 Island, and it's a tour, fire tower, but her sister is
6 here, and will be speaking about her, but I just wanted to
7 acknowledge Stella and that she is missed, that she is of
8 value, but all of these women were murdered and are
9 missing, are of value. Our lives have to mean something
10 out there. If not, then what kind of have we created.
11 It's not a country that's inclusive, it's exclusive.

12 It's a country that's created for me on
13 lies because I know my Dene history, (speaking native
14 tongue) I still speak my language. (Speaking native
15 tongue) I still hear my language.

16 When my parents split up, they were in
17 Fort Smith the welfare took my brother and I was only a
18 baby my grandfather found -- found out so he went to Fort
19 Smith. He went to Fort Smith to get us, my brother and I,
20 and he said my grandchildren are not dogs to just be given
21 away, to be thrown away, abused, starved, chained up. When
22 my grandparents took me home, I had love. I had security.
23 There was safety, that's what the system takes away.

24 I became a ward of the government at the
25 age of 14 years old. For me that was one of the most

1 humiliating times of my life the government put me through.
2 They brought my mother into a place, into the courtroom,
3 made her sign papers while I stood there, put me up for
4 adoption, that's this is government. This is the
5 government, that makes these types of laws and policies.
6 This is the institution that has no heart. If these
7 institutions had a heart and they were to do what they're
8 supposed to do to begin with is to help the Dene people
9 survive in townships. It didn't happen because the
10 government institution abandoned the people. The federal
11 government for development, left a lot of families
12 destitute, they re-located. My families, many families
13 because the government wanted to build the Talson
14 (phonetic) River Dam.

15 There is the stories that the elders
16 gathers for our consultant, and it's called the way -- "The
17 Way We Lived; The Way We Were". And some of my relatives
18 are in there, so I read, but one of the things that I found
19 most profound was the words we were happy. We were never
20 hungry. We had lots of food. So even if the elders tell
21 us their stories, we know that even at that time, the
22 changes had come and this is why our lives, even as women
23 fell apart. And that's what I'm finding today is this
24 government institution took down our tepees. And now they
25 want to put it back up for us, but they don't want to

1 listen to the women, how they should fix their tepees and
2 how they should put up the tepees.

3 The government doesn't want to listen to
4 that for some reason. I shouldn't say that because I have
5 come to answer understanding of why the government is doing
6 this, and I will come to that later.

7 When I was in the system, a ward of the
8 government, there were other young girls, vulnerable that
9 were also beaten and raped. We had workers, government
10 workers that were perpetrators, yet the institution turned
11 a blind eye. Why? Today I say, so they can fulfill their
12 contracts. And that my life growing up and in the system
13 as a ward of the government was just one big contract. But
14 I can the honestly say today to Prime Minister Trudeau and
15 that Parliament that all of your service contract is one
16 big failure. Why? If it was working very well, we
17 wouldn't have women homeless, destitute, turning to alcohol
18 and drugs to numb the pain. I know, I took that path for a
19 while. What brought me back was my grandmother's
20 teachings. That kept me alive because, like, many other
21 children of the government, wards of the government, many
22 of my family members, along with friends, family up and
23 down the Mackenzie River committed suicide, and are still
24 committing suicide to this day, as far back as last week a
25 Dene mother, grandmother took her life. Is this what this

1 government has given us? That there is no hope. That
2 there is so much helplessness around that our women, our
3 men, our youth, our children, are self-harming.

4 Yet, when we go to meetings and your
5 government wants to know, oh, how can we improve? The
6 people sitting there on the other end don't want to listen
7 is the way I see it or they don't understand, or they can't
8 comprehend. Because how do you deal with human lives,
9 that's the problem with this institution, any institution
10 because most of these institution, the federal government
11 has umbrella institutions underneath them, and one of them
12 is the Government of the Northwest Territories, 1964, took
13 25 signatures to create, and that's been our demise ever
14 since because this institution took on the programs and
15 services that were to be delivered to us in a good,
16 respectful and meaningful manner. Instead, we were faced
17 with racism, discrimination, abuse to the point of death.
18 That's a reality. That's our reality. That's our truth.

19 Over the years from my grandmother's
20 teachings, she would tell me about the teachings of the
21 Creator, love, but I knew already I had that love. I
22 didn't have it from government workers. I didn't have it
23 in foster homes. All I was a contract on a daily basis or
24 month or year, and if they didn't have room for me or if
25 the foster family didn't care for me, or anyone else for

1 that fact because it's not just my story, it is every child
2 that has been in the child welfare system who are adults
3 today are the ones that are traumatized are the ones that
4 are affected. We're the abandoned ones. This government
5 abandoned us on the streets.

6 As parents, do we abandon our children on
7 the streets. No, when this government institution said
8 they were my parents, what did they provide for me as
9 parents, absolutely nothing, but a few dollars here and
10 there for a new pair of pants or whatnot, that's it. So I
11 see a system as one big failure that we're just one big
12 contract. And when I talk about the women know how to fix
13 their tepees, we do, but we're not given that opportunity
14 because this institution does not believe in us, does not
15 value, even that education they paid for, they say for on
16 our behalf, they told our parents, they told the world they
17 were doing this to educate us. Okay. Fine, I picked up
18 enough skills to survive.

19 When I was 15, 16 years old, I was here in
20 Akaitcho Hall and I was beaten by some of the girls.
21 That's when I left Akaitcho Hall because the supervisor
22 wanted me to apologize to these girls that beat me up, and
23 the only thing I could see why I had to apologize to them
24 was because they were in the favour with the supervisors
25 and this is what we face with many times in society,

1 favouring, nepotism, inequality. I have tried getting
2 jobs, for example, I could see why our women end up on the
3 streets, end up losing their babies because they don't have
4 enough money to survive, that money that makes this world
5 go around. When you talk about the Northwest Territories
6 thriving, it's not everyone thriving. I see government
7 workers thriving. I see industry thriving and all the
8 workers and contractors and the businesses and the service
9 providers, I see them providing because they are providing
10 us with the programs and services, they are getting the
11 contracts. The thing is for myself, those contracts have
12 failed us. Those service contracts have failed us. Those
13 programs, some of them, have failed us, have failed the
14 Dene women. Some of those programs don't help because the
15 words are not ours and that goes to terminology. How this
16 institution changes our names, our identities at a stroke
17 of a pen.

18 So how can we as women, men and youth, be
19 able to feel good about who we are when this institution
20 will not give us that honour of our own Dene names,
21 registering us in our own Dene names. This is our demise.
22 This is why we are where we are today continuously from the
23 inception of the Government of the Northwest Territories,
24 from the inception when the Government of Canada became a
25 legal body, a corporation called Canada registered under

1 the United States. And all I see is our people, Dene
2 people, our land, our water, our resources, just one big
3 grab, and they don't care who is in the way because
4 remember, they removed my family, they removed a whole
5 nation and changed our name and our identities, relocated
6 us to places that there was no homes for us, but the
7 government had to get us off the land.

8 I learned why -- today I learned why
9 because international law says there can be no tribal
10 sovereign people living on the land you want to develop and
11 if you're going to, you have to ask permission, but the
12 thing is the government ask its permission, and they don't
13 care who they ask it to. Sometimes they ask the wrong
14 people, and that's what I know and that's what I see
15 happening even to this day. Why? Because the government
16 took our identity. They call us Indigenous. They call us
17 First Nation. I'm not Indigenous, I am a sovereign Dene
18 women along with every tribal sovereign woman on this
19 Turtle Island. That's what happens when you're stripped.
20 It's no different than standing in a room full of people
21 and being ridiculed because that's what these institutions
22 and these employment workers under a contract do to us, and
23 this is where our demise is is the people that you hire
24 under these employment contracts. Nobody questions their
25 decisions or their actions when they abuse a child or their

1 hurtful decisions and it's based, not for the well-being,
2 but maybe for political reasons or maybe for religion or
3 for whatever personal reason that is being made.

4 I know today, they have me registered as a
5 First Nations woman under the Government of Canada. I am
6 not a First Nations woman, and I say to all the women and
7 the men on Turtle Island, the only way we're going to stop
8 some of these abuses is if we take back our power. We take
9 back our names. We take back our language. We take back
10 our identities, our true identities, our true language.
11 This institution allow us freely to practice it, and not
12 allow another registered society to speak for us. Because
13 there are many registered societies with a name because
14 anybody can get a society number and give it a name. My
15 point is these registered societies are funded by the
16 federal government, so they follow contribution agreements.
17 They have to abide by the contribution agreement whether
18 it's for housing, education, health, social programs.

19 I have worked in the system also. I
20 worked with youth, young offenders. The government trained
21 me to be a young offenders worker. I was trained to guard
22 in an institution that housed our men when they committed a
23 crime, a federal crime. And that's one of the issues today
24 is if this institution is failing it's because they are
25 enforcing institution laws versus our Dene law. Dene along

1 with every other tribe had laws in our language that was
2 given to us directly from the Creator, and what I do know
3 today is the language I speak is one of the oldest
4 languages in the world. It helped win World War II, so
5 obviously our language was of value, but not good enough
6 for this Canadian corporation. But I could see why today
7 they have that. They want to continue and assume that
8 control because without our names, they have nothing. They
9 use our names as lines for of credit each province and
10 territory. Maybe some of you don't -- some people may not
11 understand in this room, but when I learned, and I stepped
12 outside that box, I stepped outside the box because of what
13 I was seeing inside the box. I was fed up, tired,
14 frustrated, hurt because whatever is going on inside that
15 box with the First Nations, with our people, it seems like
16 we can never get out, we can never get ahead, so I learned,
17 I went out and I learned.

18 I spent time with different tribes, with
19 different elders to help understand. I reached out in the
20 world, and got advice from experts, international treaty
21 experts. Financial experts. I learned Wall Street, what
22 makes their world go around is exactly what has been
23 happening here is a land grab, the resource grab. Because
24 remember this territory that we come from is one of the
25 richest territories in the world. How many other

1 territories has six diamond mines and had three gold mines.
2 How many billions were taken out of here, and yet our women
3 are murdered and missing and why? Because your government
4 cannot afford a home, they say, or we're on a budget that
5 kind of makes me shake my head and think, yeah, get
6 frustrated, so I go and I pray, and I asked for guidance
7 two summers ago an elder, Nancy Scanny (phonetic).
8 (Speaking native tongue). And why do I want to thank
9 Nancy? Because she delivered to me a document a Queen's
10 Bargain. I would like to have that shown up there, please.

11 So notwithstanding, the elder, brought the
12 document to me, she had heard what I was trying to
13 accomplish up here with our tribal rights and our
14 sovereignty and when we say we're Dene, there's meaning
15 behind that word Dene, that we are tribal, we are
16 sovereign. I read this document over and over and over to
17 try to understand what the Queen was trying to do with our
18 people. She puts the new King of Canada, that for me was
19 very profound. Why? Because that says right there, the
20 Queen did not look at us Dene people as subjects, but as
21 equals. So why is her representatives today have us in
22 servitude under this institution that is created in her
23 name where the Dene today and all the regions are
24 (inaudible) surrendering Dene land for public interest.
25 That's the problem today is this public interest is our

1 demise because it's a public interest that is put forth.

2 Even from lifting the sanctuary of the
3 spawning, where the coney spawn here at Yellowknife, this
4 is why Yellowknife and the name, the original name is
5 (speaking native tongue) that means no teeth, fish with no
6 teeth. (Speaking native tongue) that means mouth, that's
7 where the coney spawn, the mouth of the Coney River.
8 That's the Yellowknife River. They lifted that sanctuary
9 of the spawning of the fish so they can build giant mine,
10 okay.

11 Despite that agreement, and I can see why
12 because there is no monitoring, right. Nobody monitoring
13 what's going on here. If you -- if you can just put it
14 down just a bit, because what -- if you -- down some more.
15 Yes, some more. Okay. So she put: I am writing to you,
16 okay, we have to change the rules of the whites. We will
17 put head offices in Canada and on the Indian Act and
18 superintendent on provincial rules and lawyers for your
19 business, doctor, Indian Affairs. Sorry. Okay.

20 So the reason why I need to read and to
21 bring this out is because the demise of our people started
22 with this document, but this document was hidden in the New
23 York archives. This document when it was delivered, the
24 elder Nancy Scanny said it took her close to five years to
25 get this document because, number one, she couldn't get it

1 certified from the university or the archives here in
2 Canada because the original was not here, it was in the New
3 York archives. Okay. And when she went there they said
4 she could not get a copy and get it certified because she
5 was not a United States resident, so she had to go and get
6 her friend from North Carolina to pay for the document and
7 then the document was sent actually directly to Nancy in
8 Cold Lake -- to Cold Lake, Alberta.

9 But this document here, Nancy has brought
10 in to a few court cases with her and has won and shut down
11 some court cases with this document. And this why I feel
12 this is so profound and so important because when she says
13 we have to change the rules of the whites, we will put head
14 offices, that's because in the year of 1820, she says we
15 sent Simpson to control the company. That's Simpson and
16 that's where Fort Simpson was named after, and you got to
17 remember the doctrine of discovery and how today a lot of
18 our rivers and our schools and that are all named after
19 these explorers and fur traders. So she sent Simpson to
20 control the company in the year 1821. We sued Hudson for
21 selling your goods.

22 So now we have another problem, we have a
23 whole company, trading company with investors, whether it's
24 the royal you know, Prince Rupert or Queen Victoria or the
25 Queen of Spain because they were all in this together, so I

1 am renewing the treaty and money so the last bargain on
2 treat we was -- she had fired Hudson, which is now the
3 Hudson Bay Company. And I know today that they had
4 obtained this Charter falsely. So she is renewing the
5 treaty and money, the rules of the Indian Act of Canada
6 when the years went the superintendent will give you the
7 money tax free. Now you will have to make the townships
8 and this is where -- when they -- when they wanted to
9 develop an area that they were interested in or had mineral
10 claims. That they moved us into these towns. And these
11 communities are recognized through the Government of Canada
12 through council of orders, okay. If you don't have a
13 council of orders, you don't get -- you don't get
14 infrastructure dollars, okay. So even if a little
15 community is trying to thrive, if they're not under the
16 government, they don't get the same. So the whites will
17 have to pay you for everything you have, you make head
18 townships in Canada, have reservations to keep the whites
19 off the reserve and free Indian navigations, free gates for
20 settlers and timber of 100 acres. We leave it to as you
21 gave it to the settlers, only the pine for the lumberman
22 and 60 cents share on navigation rights if you are on the
23 boat. It's free travelling all over Canada, any place you
24 want to go, but yet the founding fathers and the people
25 that created that institution ensured that we were put on

1 reserve and were not allowed or were jailed or shot or
2 murdered because I can say today, I feel that this
3 institution has murdered many of our people whether they're
4 Dene or not, for assimilation, for colonization, for
5 development and for immigration.

6 If you want a home, a house in Canada, you
7 go to the superintendent, put in your order and he will see
8 that it is built. When I read that, that means that I as a
9 Dene tribal woman, when I want to start my family, I can
10 get a home that the -- that relationship should have given
11 me that home or any other woman for that fact, or any other
12 man and family. Because what I see what they did with
13 that, they put it under their institution, under their
14 Housing Act. And they're housing acts have rules and
15 regulations, and if we don't meet them, you're homeless.
16 And this is what I don't understand, this institution
17 saying, well, what -- how can we improve it, do we build
18 more houses? Well, if you have to, build more houses.

19 But my point is today, and my
20 recommendation is today and my solution is today on that is
21 to give us back that responsibility because the government
22 is failing. The institution is failing. The institution
23 has rules and laws, but in order for this institution to be
24 effective, it has to have enforcers, so this Canadian
25 government uses the RCMP to enforce. They use wildlife

1 officers to enforce. They use housing officers to enforce.
2 They use the sheriff to enforce. They use the GNWT courts
3 to enforce and to evict. Because how many times the
4 Government of the Northwest Territories land officers would
5 go to my relatives' place and threaten, took them to court,
6 brought her a document and said if you're not off your --
7 this land in 30 days, we will remove -- forcibly remove
8 you, but her comment back, they were -- they were going to
9 die for their land. Because that's exactly what I told the
10 income tax man too when he came to my home to assess my
11 home. If I am not to pay taxes why am I paying taxes? Why
12 am I being evicted? Why are the people, the women, being
13 evicted from their homes, even under the Government of the
14 Northwest Territories housing program? When a mother loses
15 her children, oh, you don't have any children out in the
16 street she goes. If a woman becomes widowed, they kick her
17 out. That's not right. That's where the failure is. I
18 see the solution to that. Does this institution give us
19 back the monies, they don't need to be the middleman
20 anymore. They don't need to be the service providers
21 anymore because if they hold my name, when I was born this
22 government of the Northwest Territories took my name and
23 registered it to their public corporation. I didn't ask
24 their permission. They didn't ask my mother's permission.
25 They just took it and if they didn't sign, then they would

1 have to pay the bill because our names are not registered
2 for payment or who is eligible, let alone that we are the
3 Dene and why do we have to prove. You know today, I say I
4 don't need ancestry.com to know where I come from because
5 Dene blood have been in here from time and memorial, and I
6 am still here and my grandchildren are still here. My
7 daughter is here. And this is why our women are destitute
8 and our women are vulnerable to the point where their lives
9 are of no value.

10 If this institution does not value our
11 lives, you think the world is going to value it also? No.
12 Because the way I see it, this institution is a just about
13 every country where there are tribal people. This is why I
14 hold this [staff] proudly today because our grandmothers
15 and our grandfathers have struggled in the past and today
16 we're still carrying on that struggle, and we are up
17 against institutions rules and laws that have no heart.
18 Industry doesn't have a heart, machine don't have a heart,
19 but our people do. And this is why I feel that the women's
20 lives and the Dene lives are of no value. Only -- the only
21 time I see the government coming around is when they need
22 to consult. When they say consult because they do not know
23 how to consult. They are consultants, that's their jobs to
24 consult, to find information, and that's the problem
25 there's too many consultants here in the north, but they

1 don't come and ask us how we should fix our tepees, how we
2 should bring our children back for healing. They're not
3 our saviours, they're on a paid contract to fulfill a
4 contract, that's it. That's what we do when we take up an
5 employment contract, whether it's for the government or
6 private industry, we follow the policy of the business and
7 the institution, and that's the demise of the Dene people,
8 the women and the youth.

9 The north is one of the highest places in
10 this area and Canada for suicide we have a high rate and
11 that tells me that our -- our people are feeling so
12 hopeless and helpless. They don't love themselves enough
13 or not thinking ahead, that it's only at this time that
14 it's -- there's hardship, you know, our ancestors always
15 hung on to their beliefs, their traditions, their practices
16 because that's what helped them to survive so we can be
17 here today but that was taken away. They took away Dene
18 law and they replaced it with corporate law, so now when
19 somebody, a Dene did something, they didn't understand what
20 they were doing and years ago there was no mercy. It was
21 degrading how they treated the men if they broke the law of
22 the federal government or they broke The Wildlife Act.
23 Remember these men out to hunt, to feed their families and
24 because the queen wants to build an economic trade
25 relationship because that's what I see, that bargain and

1 that treaty as, it's not a bargain to seed and surrender
2 our lands, for what? For someone else to have control to
3 the point where we cannot even say how we can better
4 ourselves or how we can make ourselves well.

5 Even with our healing, Dene are going to
6 heal by going back on the land, every tribal person is
7 going to heal if they are given back their circle, their
8 teepee and be allowed to hunt freely, be allowed to fish,
9 to harvest because this is where this institution is making
10 us break the law, enough is enough. I have had enough. I
11 am up against all kinds of odds because I want to speak
12 out.

13 It's a good thing I'm a strong woman I go
14 to meetings they have these meetings advertised. I go to
15 the meetings. Somebody will see me in the crowd. Oh,
16 there's Noeline, she's going to create trouble, so I'll
17 have a chief, I'll have a government lawyer or I'll have
18 the deputy minister come up to me and say you got to leave,
19 you're not a chief. So it's not about government. It's
20 not about helping -- helping us because they don't want to
21 hear the truth, they want their paperwork to look really
22 nice with all these fancy words. Remember the government
23 institutional language is all made up, their terminologies
24 for each project, each whatever because in Dene, we're
25 descriptive, we tell a story, okay.

1 I have been wanting to blame, point
2 fingers because I'm only human, but I have my teachings. I
3 have my prayers. I think about my grandmothers and
4 watching them grow up. It was safe. It was happy. My
5 grannies would laugh together. They would tell each other
6 stories, and there was no swearing. I didn't hear them
7 swear to one another or call each other down, but it was
8 encouraging. They encouraged one another. You don't have
9 this, I'll help you, but they all made something together
10 for one another. And that's what we don't have today
11 because this institution puts in rules because they don't
12 know.

13 This institution also created a forum for
14 negotiating and it's going to get worse. It's not going to
15 get better. I feel it's not going to get better, it's
16 going to get worse because it is already and nothing stop.
17 There's a continuation of the hurt, the suffering, the lack
18 of, that's what I see going on and continuing on. These
19 institutions, First Nations, or whether they're First
20 Nations or what I call competing funding agencies, you
21 know, friendship centres, all these groups that apply for
22 money to help us sometimes we don't access those programs
23 and services. You know, there's, it doesn't always meet
24 the need of the individual because there's paperwork.
25 There is -- when a woman, and I have gone through it, you

1 know, trying to fill out forms to satisfy the government
2 that I am going to use that money for what it is to be used
3 for, that's what the contribution agreements are all about,
4 right. And that's a problem with all of these programs,
5 they're on a budget from Ottawa, but yet, that money that's
6 coming from Ottawa is coming from, like, a royalty fund,
7 and all the monies that are taken from the diamonds, the
8 gold, everything that was taken from the Northwest
9 Territories was sent to Ottawa and sent back and divvied
10 out to us in programs and services that have failed.
11 Health is failing us.

12 They're trying to make this great big
13 super board. You know, I don't, I see the super board
14 failing like every other board. All these boards do is
15 create a process for their institutions. Sometimes these
16 boards are a barrier to the communities because when you
17 take money away, it doesn't go into the community, because
18 a lot of the funding is divvied out on population or
19 residency or membership. And if you live in a place like
20 Yellowknife and you're from another area or another town,
21 they tell you, sorry, can't help you, you don't, you're not
22 from our band. That's -- that's the mentality that some of
23 the people have today, and I call that brainwashing into an
24 institution, accepting without question that this is the
25 way it is. It's not because I have been dealing with this

1 institution since the time I could speak English.

2 I spoke Dene first through my grandmother,
3 and then English when I went to school. And when we had to
4 live in Fort Resolution because of the building of the
5 Taltson River Dam and the re-location and giant mine and
6 the highway and Pine Point Mine, all of this development
7 usurped all the Dene people in the area. Our lives. The
8 women. The women had no more homes. When they -- we were
9 all put into Fort Resolution after Residential School, it
10 was all -- it was a township. It was for the church. It
11 was for the institutions that had workers, and that
12 community is built on the church and even the church did
13 not value our lives. Many of our women and our men died in
14 that institution and only today the government has
15 acknowledged. They haven't fully acknowledged the deaths.
16 I acknowledge it because I lived through Residential School
17 for how many years. I lived through their child welfare
18 system for how many years. I lived through every law and
19 policy that this government of the Northwest Territories
20 and federal government has put out to control our lives and
21 this is what I see as these institutions controlling our
22 lives for development. Not giving us enough to live on,
23 but ensuring their own wages, their own pensions are in
24 place, and this is what I see, this devolution doing to us
25 women and men and youth.

1 This is why we're still having our women
2 and our youth committing suicide to this day. Because the
3 system is not about the tribal people. The system is about
4 economics and building and the money. Yes, the provinces
5 and territories are -- have their own -- they run their own
6 system. But also, remember the Dene people were sent to
7 Edmonton. We were sent to Charles Camsell Hospital,
8 Aberhart Hospital. The women were sent away from home.

9 So this institution did a lot of damage
10 and is still doing many damage today. If people use these
11 institutions against the membership, it is harmful because
12 the north is known for nepotism and whatnot. To the point
13 where this government had to put in a policy called
14 affirmative action because there wasn't enough Dene working
15 in their system. There wasn't enough Dene in housing. But
16 yet, there is still not enough Dene in housing. We're
17 still out on the streets. You still a lot of empty federal
18 houses. The government should be ashamed of themselves.
19 Behind my behind my home, that house has been empty for
20 year-and-a-half, and yet people are freezing to death
21 because this institution and the people who make the rules
22 and the laws have other priorities. We're not a priority.
23 Our lives don't seem to be a priority, but the economics
24 getting the permission to build these diamond mines.

25 I'm a descendant. I have yet to receive a

1 benefit. Why? Because I don't belong to this band here.
2 See, the government created division through these bands.
3 They have membership, and if you don't meet the criteria,
4 you don't -- you're not a member. You don't get help. How
5 many times my people were turned away and were told go back
6 to where you come from, that's tribal people saying that to
7 one another, hurting one another. These institutions that
8 are created to help us are hurting us because the people
9 that are running them are hurting us. They're not well
10 themselves. They are still chiefs that have been
11 exonerated. There are healers exonerated from rape. It's
12 who you know is the way I see it, the hiring, the nepotism.
13 It is who you know. It's not what you can do. It's not
14 what you know. It's who you know. It's who accept you.

15 You know what the joke is with myself and
16 my friends? About a month ago, three weeks ago, I was
17 asked to leave a leadership meeting because I was not a
18 chief, although I was a Dene national chief, although I was
19 the vice president of the Native Women's, Michelle was with
20 me, Michelle may have been a witness that year when I push
21 for Bill C-31. I am proud to say that I push those issues
22 for women to the forefront, every chance I got, I stood up.
23 Why? Because of the inequality, the imbalance in the
24 institution, they can't fix it. The only way they're going
25 to fix it is if they take us out of that institution and we

1 create our own registry. We create our own governance
2 system. We have enough young minds, beautiful minds, smart
3 with technology. We can create then our own process for
4 our own people.

5 We need to get our royalty monies from the
6 federal government's trust because we are of age today I'm
7 a grown woman. I'm a grandmother of nine. My oldest is 22
8 and my youngest is six years old. But that's not counting
9 the many young girls and the young guys that went through
10 my home that I helped, whether they were Dene or whether
11 they were white, it didn't matter because I have Dene
12 heart. You help everybody because those are the values of
13 our ancestors. You help. You care. You share. And
14 that's what we did when the Europeans came here. Our
15 grandparents never turned anybody that was hungry away
16 because that's the law of the land. That's natural law.
17 But government law is different. Government law takes
18 away, takes away everything you have to the point of death.
19 Why else would our children and our women and our men and
20 our grandmothers and grandfathers commit suicide because of
21 the hopelessness.

22 My granddaughter's grandfather committed
23 suicide and many other family relatives committed suicide
24 because they didn't have that hope in their heart, they
25 didn't feel loved. They didn't feel they were worth it. I

1 know today I'm worth it, that's why I stand up because many
2 of you women out there told me, hugged me, Noeline you
3 stand up for us, you speak for me. Don't stop. How many
4 times I go to meetings and I'm asked to leave and I'm, you
5 know, I leave because I have pride, I have dignity and I
6 think about my grandmother, my grandparents how they treat
7 each other and how it should be but I go in there not to
8 create distention, but to bring in good information.

9 These institutions, they spend millions of
10 dollars in one year with consultants to come and consult
11 with us and to ask us how to fix our tepees. How to fix --
12 how to get our education. How to do this. I think it's
13 time that that stops because our women are the backbone and
14 always have been. It's a European concept of the male
15 inherits. In our culture, it is the woman's bloodline.
16 That's why these membership codes are detrimental to our
17 women and our people because that brings division and if
18 you don't meet the criteria, you're not allowed to be part.

19 I was told by a Metis president at a
20 meeting and they said Noeline is not a Metis, but yet, I
21 carry two Metis bloodline. But I am Dene first in my
22 territory because I speak the language. I was raised by a
23 Dene grandmother. Bilbra (phonetic), I found out about
24 Bilbra, they were part of the Riel rebellion. Our family
25 separated, some of us came up here up north, some ended up

1 in the States, Minnesota. We just found each other about
2 four years ago, five years ago so I know back then they
3 were already dividing the families, and in -- through
4 force, through death, treason, accusing our people of
5 protecting of treason when I see that Queen's bargain, that
6 document and anybody who handled it, is the one who
7 committed treason against the Dene and the tribal people in
8 the Canada, because when they took that document and they
9 bastardized it and they said this is what is to be, that's
10 not what the Queen's Bargain says.

11 If I'm not to pay taxes, why is the
12 federal government tax office coming and knocking on my
13 door after telling them I'm Dene, and the thing is I don't
14 owe them that money. It's an institution that I was
15 getting a wage from they should have fixed it, but
16 political interference, so who has to suffer through all of
17 that process, it's myself as a woman. But in the meantime,
18 I'm going to meetings and presenting to tax committees and
19 telling them that they should not be evicting the people
20 from the land for taxes because that's what's happening
21 that they should not be taxing our people. They should not
22 be turning our lands freely over for development the way it
23 is. Because where are our women going to go? They can't
24 meet the public needs and the criteria for housing. Do you
25 know public housing means that anybody that comes to

1 Yellowknife can apply, any resident in Canada, so we are
2 competing as Dene people who have that right to housing and
3 who have a right to those funds, and that is being
4 administered by the government that is not being divvied
5 out properly. That's why the women are suffering. That's
6 why there are broken homes and children in care and being
7 murdered and abused and raped.

8 I have three nephews, three ashes of my
9 nephews that were on the street. It's hard, you know, to
10 see -- see them suffering and -- needlessly, and you know
11 they come from a good background that their grandfathers
12 were good men, their grandmothers were good women, good
13 people, all was the matter was that we had good hearts,
14 that we shared. That we cared for another human being, but
15 the other end, didn't. It's like when they said the treaty
16 party would come around. You know, when my people, my
17 family members were at the table too from what I understand
18 and I know my family members went to the treaty table with
19 good intentions, they didn't go to the table to lie or
20 steal or cheat, it was their land. It was the other people
21 that came and lied and stole and cheated and took. Any
22 way, it didn't matter at whose expense, at times a whole
23 nation, at times a whole family unit, and this is what
24 we're still faced with today. This is why our women and
25 our men and our children are still vulnerable because of

1 these institutions and how they are being run.

2 You know our elders too thought it would
3 make it better if we ran in these elections and if we
4 applied for these jobs, but our demise is that these
5 institutions and these jobs have rules. So how could we
6 help our own people freely when you have these rules. I
7 learned. I worked in Alberta. I was a constituent worker
8 for Ray Martin. He was the opposition leader NDP, and
9 that's where I learned quite a bit how programs run. How
10 they're being divvied out. Who to talk to. That was my
11 job. Until I came home, I had to come home because I also
12 at that time was not in a healthy relationship. I had to
13 leave I came home. I came back north to try to better
14 myself and heal and to help my family because that was what
15 was happening. My relatives were saying move back home,
16 help us. Our political system was in a turmoil. Families
17 were against families because of the politics who wanted to
18 be a chief, who wanted to be an MLA, it was terrible, the
19 division. So as national chief, I fought to have the NWT
20 human rights also implemented, but I also had a clause and
21 put in there that we should not be discriminated for
22 political reasons, family affiliation because I got tired.
23 It was like if you weren't a friend or a family of a
24 leader, you got nothing. Or if you didn't vote for them,
25 there was retaliation, you weren't able to access the

1 housing or your home fixed. Or allowed any of the programs
2 and services, that's what we're facing as women too. Other
3 women that are jealous to our -- that's a barrier to our
4 healing, and I see this in the institution because it's all
5 hierarchy. And the higher you get, the more money you get.
6 And the more authority and power you have. It's not the
7 way this institution should be running. You know the
8 population in the Northwest Territories is only 42,000. We
9 don't even fit into the corner of Edmonton.

10 When you break down that population, when
11 I was national chief, I had responsibility for 21,000 Dene,
12 not including the organizations that have what they call
13 Metis. I'm of mixed blood, I'm Metis. I'm also a half
14 breed because I have if Scottish blood from the fur trade.

15 Sometimes I want to apologize, I get my
16 mind jumps all over sometimes, and I want -- I want to be
17 able to do justice for the women. There are older women
18 from the past that have been murdered and no one speaks
19 about them at times. In our community, where I come from
20 because of residential school. The women started getting
21 hurt, beaten, because of the frustration from the men, not
22 able to provide a home. Everyone turning to alcohol and
23 all of a sudden, the alcohol is free, freely distributed by
24 the government. They subsidize alcohol first before they
25 subsidize milk and bread, but then I forgot, they got this

1 new program in and that's what the government is doing
2 today.

3 There is an announcement, Minister
4 Philpot. They made an announcement, they're changing the
5 services now Indigenous Services. For me, it's just the
6 change of terminology because it still falls under a
7 contribution agreement, it still comes from the federal
8 government, there are still rules and criteria attached and
9 to meet. The bottom line is for myself as a Dene women and
10 having learned out there in the world about the finances
11 and whatnot, if all of this money is held in trust for the
12 Dene or for every tribal people and nation in Canada, then
13 the leaders should make a movement along with all the women
14 and take back what is rightfully ours because I believe we
15 are educated enough in the system.

16 I speak good English today (speaking
17 native tongue) but today I could speak English. My
18 comprehension level is pretty good because that's the one
19 thing I wanted to do was to become a journalist and write
20 when I seen my grandmother looking at the pictures, and she
21 didn't want to learn and read like the rest of the grannies
22 when they tried to teach them the basic English and
23 writing. She said (speaking native tongue) she says: No,
24 my girl. I'm a Dene. I'm not a white person (speaking
25 native tongue) I'm a Dene. She says you bring (inaudible)

1 you learn it, but (speaking native tongue) because it's
2 going to be useful to you that's what she told me growing
3 up. She seen the change.

4 My grandmother, my great grandmother and
5 this is why we wanted court by the way when my cousin was
6 evicted we wanted court because we proved that our lineage,
7 our bloodline came right from this land here called
8 Yellowknife. My great grandmother hunted and trapped. She
9 was medicine gatherer, she delivered babies and she was
10 four-and-a-half foot. Beautiful woman, tough, she
11 persevered and she wanted nothing but the best for her
12 children and her grandchildren, and I know my ancestors did
13 not sign any agreements or any kind of document to suffer
14 us until death or for the rest of our lives because this is
15 what this relationship has done to us women, it's taken
16 away. So whatever they take away, they took away from us
17 is my solution. They took away our Dene law, replaced it
18 with corporate law, we bring back our Dene law. They took
19 away our Dene language, we bring back our Dene language.
20 And that's what should be the language of this land, not
21 French and English because that is our demise too when our
22 people are trying to phone for help, the first line --
23 front line worker is French or immigrated worker that
24 barely speaks any English. This is not to discredit them.
25 This is to point out a fact that is a barrier to our

1 people. This is why we don't get the proper help or the
2 help that we need right away because of these types of
3 barriers, language, you know, the contractors that have
4 taken on these contracts, all they care about is fulfilling
5 that contract and meeting the requirements of that
6 contract, and that's why I always say we're just one big
7 contract. And that's why the system is if failing because
8 those contracts have failed, the service contracts that
9 this government is providing on our behalf is failing on
10 us, whether it is housing, whether it is education, whether
11 it is health, it doesn't matter. Because if this city is
12 thriving, it's not because of us, although, it's because of
13 our resources and our taxes that are coming back here.

14 So that's what I see as a barrier and this
15 is the type of information, because I hear, I listen, when
16 chiefs are talking and they say, why can't we do this, or
17 why this and that, you know, I'll approach them after and
18 say, look, I have some really good information to share
19 that we just found, you know. It hurts when they turn you
20 away. And then you realize they're not there for the
21 people, they're there for that wage, that pay cheque and
22 that title, the travelling, the honorariums because a lot
23 of these the trips, I know from my area they go to Edmonton
24 to negotiate a lot of their people don't hear the
25 negotiations, they don't hear the information. We have

1 women living in the cities, majority of the chiefs don't
2 visit their membership, they don't talk to their
3 membership, they don't have meetings in the city. The band
4 that I come, that I'm registered to has a few meetings.
5 You know, there have been rulings in the supreme -- in the
6 courts about behaviours and chiefs breaking the law and
7 whatnot. Okay. This one judge said, this one chief ran
8 the band like she was an aristocratic, you know, so if
9 that's the kind of attitude that we're up against, that is
10 how the services are being divvied out to us, nepotism,
11 favoritism, racism, discrimination, for political beliefs,
12 family affiliation.

13 So I see the continuation on, especially
14 under this government of the Northwest Territories. I see
15 an institution, many institutions because I've seen many
16 frameworks of corporations or setting up one and they all
17 have by-laws. They all have a constitutions. So how many
18 constitutions are there? You know, all these corporation
19 have constitutions, and Canada corporation has a
20 constitution, and that's where they're looking after us, us
21 women under the constitution, under the federal laws. When
22 they try to give us back our rights through Bill C-31, I
23 look at it now and all they're doing is negotiating within
24 the system, within their corporation and appeasing. How?
25 By changing words, terminology. Today, we're Indigenous.

1 I'm not an Indigenous person, I'm a sovereign tribal Dene
2 grandmother, mother, auntie, cousin, friend, woman.

3 I want to say, though, that the only way I
4 see resolve is if our names are taken out of the federal
5 government, the federal government no longer house our
6 names, that all responsibility go back to the tribes the
7 way it was before. But we use our modern technology, we
8 use the tools around us because the one thing I do know for
9 a fact if Dene have survived from time and memorial, we did
10 have trade, we did have an economy, but all of that was
11 replaced with corporate rules and laws. And institutions
12 so that's what I see as one solution that every tribal man,
13 woman, and babies name be removed from the federal
14 territorial institutions and not be registered as a
15 civilian or a public, okay. Because remember, our names
16 are used to get money. And this is why many of us have
17 stood up and said that we are part of a budget you use our
18 names to negotiate, more monies or benefits or interim
19 benefits agreement with the mines and that. Our names are
20 continuously being used but they do not -- that institution
21 does not give us back that same value.

22 When I look at the institution and who
23 makes up the institution it's human beings, and that's,
24 there's a history here, and a legacy in the north we're --
25 we're not free from corruption. We have been known, the

1 north and Government of the Northwest Territories took
2 their premier down for corruption, that went right back to
3 my community. That hurt a lot of families. But for them,
4 it was more about political gain. There's corruption at
5 the First Nations level. I see it all the time. The
6 people in the communities feel it, there's no -- I don't
7 see a lot of the negotiations being open a lot of the
8 people when they see the final document and they see the
9 seed and surrender to the Government of the Northwest
10 Territories and the federal government and the Queen that
11 you surrender all your Aboriginal rights and title, All
12 your treaty rights to public government so that we could
13 share all of the land, all the resources. Okay, fair
14 enough. But you know what, we need our homes because this
15 money from the resources and right from the time the influx
16 of the Europeans and the fur trade, we should have had
17 proper homes. If the government took over our names and
18 divvied out in programs and services, they failed because
19 our women are missing, our women are murdered, our men are
20 murdered. Our youth are missing and murdered because of no
21 homes. There's barriers, doors being closed to them.

22 And this political system is not our
23 system. We know that. But we have to put up with it. If
24 the people want money for programs and services, we have to
25 put up with what's going on, whether we agree with it or

1 not. It's not -- you know, our lives are not what it, you
2 know, like the same way they treat businesses on the stock
3 exchange. You know, that's how they treat our land.
4 That's how they treat our resources. We go up -- run bid
5 to the highest bidder. Now there's, you know, going to
6 countries and China is buying dam C, site C. You know, so
7 what's -- what's going to happen to the people around
8 there. Look what happened to the Dene people, look what
9 happened to my family when they built Talson River Dam.
10 They told us, oh, you have to move here. It's a good thing
11 my grandfather, had enough money, he bought a piece of land
12 from the church that was already ours because of the
13 exchange of land between the queen and the representatives
14 and the Hudson Bay and them selling to the government of
15 the Northwest Territories.

16 You know, it's all over the land, the land
17 grab. That's why the people in Canada, US and Mexico are
18 in a situation because of the land grab. Even your own
19 Supreme Court judge in Canada said that, I think it was
20 Beverly McLachlin. She said, and it's recorded that the
21 people in Canada, the tribal people in Canada, the
22 government has created cultural genocide against them. So
23 this, whatever I'm speaking about is all part of the
24 cultural genocide. This is the examples. This is the
25 experiences of the cultural genocide. And it's called also

1 systemic because we don't get any help unless we go into
2 this system and we agree to whatever is in this system.
3 It's derogatory. Our elders, our women, our men, even if
4 they go sit there and they get \$200 for food for the next
5 month. In the north what is \$200? When a loaf of bread is
6 like \$5 or in the communities it's like \$10 for a quart of
7 milk. So this is what this institution is doing to the
8 people and this is why we're having a public inquiry for
9 the government to try to figure out what is going on.

10 We know what is going on. It's the
11 institution that wants the answer, but when they get the
12 answer, they don't know what to do with it because it's an
13 institution. They're not human beings. The human beings
14 are the ones that enforce the policy. It's Parliament that
15 makes the laws and they have to follow it, and that's why
16 we're in this mess is because of the laws, the health care,
17 the housing that is being controlled manipulate and looked
18 after by this federal institution and this is why I know
19 and I learned that if I want answers and I want resolve, I
20 have to take that next step, and that next step, I need
21 answers. And I'm going to take those steps. If I have to
22 file lawsuits against those contracts, then that's what I'm
23 going to do, and that's what I encourage every child that
24 was a ward of the government and every child that went
25 through the child welfare system to file a case against the

1 government for failed contracts, failed contracts to ensure
2 that our lives were not at risk, that we were safe, we were
3 healthy, happy and fed.

4 The government knew and they -- the people
5 working for the government new and some of them were
6 perpetrators themselves, so this is what we were up
7 against. This is the only way that I see the people
8 getting out of this enslavement because that's where we
9 are. We're enslaved. We're enslaved to the system because
10 the government has taken over our sovereignty, has taken
11 over our lands for public interest. And they say your
12 names are in there so your interest is looked after, but
13 it's not because we're here at this inquiry and the
14 government is trying to figure out what they did wrong.
15 They have to quit kicking us out, us women out into the
16 streets, they have to quit refusing, you know, to quit --
17 to stop their ideologies and enforcing them upon the
18 people. That's the only way our lives are going to get
19 better.

20 Because there's no law in the world that
21 says this Government of Canada has to continue to keep our
22 monies in trust. There is a process for a trust fund that
23 I learned right when you reach a certain age. That through
24 the courts you receive the funds that is entrusted on your
25 behalf. Well, I was told -- a figure I was given, Noeline,

1 when you were born, this is how much you're worth as a
2 Dene, you're born, you're probably worth at 100 million,
3 each Dene that's born, each baby, tribal baby that's born
4 in this world it's probably worth 100 million each, that's
5 what the government holds in trust through the lands,
6 through their resources because remember, they come from a
7 world of trust funds, they come from a world of inheriting,
8 they come from a world where money is everything.

9 Dene the way they look at their
10 everything, was a land, the water, the animals, the people,
11 the air. We thrived, we were happy. There was
12 interference, interference by a society and that society
13 has to change their attitudes and their behaviours also.
14 Because as civilians, they vote for their government, when
15 they vote their government in and their political party,
16 that's another demise of the people because it's the will
17 of the party, and we've seen it many times in negotiations,
18 thank you to Elijah Harper who became a good friend and a
19 mentor. I learned a lot of from Elijah Harper. And to his
20 message to me was, Noeline, don't ever give up, keep going
21 and this is why I keep going despite being ostracized.
22 Despite my home being egged. Despite my property being
23 damaged. Despite the people going after my children
24 because of my political beliefs. My family suffered and
25 they stood up with me. They persevered. I'm very proud of

1 them because we were all on this journey together. They
2 all gave me strength. They gave me the reason to live.

3 I have a beautiful granddaughter sitting
4 over there. You know, she's my reason to live too today.
5 I don't want anyone to hurt her. The way I've been hurt
6 and the way my relatives and the way all the women have
7 been hurt. I would give my life to protect them. Because
8 we do not want any other women to feel the pain, the
9 suffering that we face on a daily basis. And we know, and
10 how do we know because our teachings says the only time our
11 grandmothers in the spirit world will intervene if the
12 earth and the people, the animals are at risk, she will use
13 the weather. The people, the animals, the earth, the
14 water, everything is at risk, so she is doing what she can
15 and we haven't had this from the time of the flood, from
16 the time of the ice the age, from the time of the
17 (inaudible) and remember, this is how long the Dene have
18 survived. And we're still going to survive because we are
19 women, we are live givers. This is what this creator gave
20 us, this gift, to give life. The men were put by our side
21 to protect us, to help us, to provide us with food. The
22 children gave the grandmothers -- the grandparents joy
23 because that's now what they had the responsibility to
24 teach.

25 So today, I understand why the system is

1 failing and what has happened to me as a survivor of a
2 rape. Kidnapping. This man that did this to us because
3 I'm not the only one, there was many women in the community
4 that he did this to. He was one of them that they put away
5 for life, he can never come out because he is detrimental
6 to the world out there. We're not safe with men and women
7 that are hurting us, we need a build -- we need to build a
8 relationship again, and the one thing I do understand
9 because I'm Dene and my grandmothers, they had a heart, but
10 they wanted unity, they wanted peace, they wanted
11 cooperation, harmony, and we can bring that back with each
12 other.

13 I have mixed blood I'm of French decent,
14 Scottish, Dene. So I can't fight myself. I can't be mad
15 at myself that bloodline but I do know from way back that
16 we do co-exist together, whether it's good or bad. But we
17 can do a better job and if the people in the government
18 want to know how to fix it, then they have to talk to us.
19 Talk to the women, we know how to fix our tepees. We don't
20 need consultants. We don't need any outside help. We can
21 do it ourselves. We can heal back on the land. And that's
22 what our women want. That's what our men want, that's what
23 the youth want. They are starving for that information and
24 when they get it, they're so proud of who they are.

25 I think my tummy is growling. Masi cho.

1 (Speaking native tongue). What I said was I wanted to
2 thank you guys for coming here for listening and for
3 allowing us to speak, but thank you for having the courage
4 sit across and not take it personal, thank you. That I
5 hope message that you bring back is that we need to do
6 better, but to do better, we need to take those certain
7 steps I mentioned, we have to remove ourselves from the
8 corporation, it's not working, okay. And then we'll maybe
9 -- and maybe then our people will not get charged for
10 hunting or doing any of this stuff and the one thing I do
11 know, is that when Dene don't have their food, they also
12 get traumatized and they get cranky. Our grannies used to
13 get cranky, so that's my story. My survival. My
14 encounters. The barriers. My hope. My dreams. My wish,
15 you know, that, you know, the people that are you supposed
16 to help us do help us because that's -- we got to stop.
17 This has to stop, that's all I know, that's all I want.
18 Maybe, you know, before our lifetime is over, we will see
19 it, but that's my dream and this earth, we have all kinds
20 of nations, all kinds of people and we do all have to live
21 together, but we all have to change together, especially in
22 Canada that's what I do know, and it will come through
23 education, through our voices, through media, without
24 prejudice, because we're only here to help.

25 So with that, I want to say masi cho for

1 allow me speak freely without interference. Thank you
2 (speaking native tongue) with all my heart. (Speaking
3 native tongue) I love you all. Masi.

4 MS. ROXANE LANDRY: (Speaking native
5 tongue) I have my Uncle Johnny here, Uncle Johnny Landry he
6 tried to up us, our family, to help us heal through his
7 music, to help us not forget where we come from because the
8 first wave of residential school (speaking native tongue)
9 are the first ones. Itso (phonetic) is buried right beside
10 the residential school in Fort Chip even though they took
11 my grandma from the three islands in Fort Simpson with her
12 siblings, her brothers and sisters, and they took them to
13 Fort Chip. When they were in Fort Chip, my uncle lost two
14 great grandfathers because they were murdered in the
15 residential school. And in our culture, what I remember is
16 that we do not ask why, ,we don't question Creator. We
17 don't question (speaking native tongue) we know what had
18 happened there. Now it is for us to help the white
19 nations, the yellow nation, the black nation and the red
20 nation to form a unity to respect (speaking native tongue)
21 because when the ships came along with the Queen's Bargain
22 and the Queen's men and the government along the whole
23 Mackenzie River on the Mackenzie River, we got two skull
24 mountains of murdered families. In Fort Laird, we have a
25 cliff, the red cliff from massacre.

1 When they came, the government and the
2 Queen knew, the government and his men, Sir John A.
3 MacDonald, Duncan Scott Campbell, along with the Bishop
4 Grandin College, like Bishop Grandin, he said, take the
5 Indian off the land, break the spiritual inheritance to the
6 land. Break the spirit out of the Indian, take the Indian
7 out of the Indian. And now you're having to do the
8 impossible. The impossible thing because our spiritual
9 foundation is not tangible because there's no spirit in
10 that paper as (speaking native tongue) one of the chiefs
11 had said (speaking native tongue). All those corporations
12 that come in, they see the value, the dollar in the land.
13 They don't see the spiritual connection in the land. For
14 us (speaking native tongue) mother earth because it's
15 through their unconditional love that we are supposed to
16 help each other in the circle of life. If we help the
17 four-legged, the flyers and the swimmers, mother earth and
18 the water, the sun, the moon, the stars and the air, they
19 help us. They help us heal.

20 Because now, we come to a point where so
21 much chaos, even our babies -- our babies, my great
22 grandmother had all her babies taken away from her in the
23 first wave of residential school. She died when her sons
24 died in the residential school, and she was buried right
25 along with them in Fort Chip next to the residential

1 school. They never -- they never questioned the
2 residential school, they just accepted it because in their
3 culture, peace because you got to have peace, when you lose
4 a loved one, you have peace and love because that's what is
5 going to help us get through. Like (speaking native
6 tongue) said, love overrides hate. Love will cure
7 sickness. You pray over the water, you help cure the
8 impossible, you help cure your broken spirit, your broken
9 heart because those things we cannot see. And then from
10 that in the failed services that are happening, are the
11 front line workers that (speaking native tongue) they don't
12 speak any of the Dene languages. Half of our problems are
13 due to suppressing and sedating those hurt feelings that we
14 were robbed of how the residential school taught us how
15 discipline came in the fist and then when our men went home
16 to try to discipline the family the way they taught them in
17 residential school. No, that's wrong. That's wrong. You
18 have to go to jail now. You couldn't ask why, even though
19 you seen the educational genocide system discipline our
20 loves ones, and in that genocide educational system, you
21 were alienated against your own brother and sister. You
22 weren't even allowed to hug your brother. You could not
23 love him, you could not touch him, that's why in
24 residential school, do not touch, do not cry, do not feel.
25 Well, our heart and because our children. I have family

1 who have went to the RCMP because assault, rape, and the
2 RCMP told my family it's all in your head, you're
3 delusional. That's what they told our family and the RCMP
4 at the time to deliver that message on a Saturday night,
5 while family was by herself away, and she was suicidal
6 after that. What do you do? What do you go to the RCMP
7 and they tell you it's all in your head, you're delusional
8 and then at the same time, you're alone, you're away from
9 home for school to better educate yourself so you would
10 make it in this world. But thank God for (speaking native
11 tongue) and for our teachers and our healers and thank you
12 for healing -- hearing our story because together we are
13 going to work at it. We are going to work at it together
14 because the nations are coming together if we put our
15 wisdom and understanding together and all our resources in
16 the right spot, Canada will be the most powerful country on
17 this planet because we have vibrant, vibrant, vibrant soil,
18 mother earth has blessed us with our food and our medicine
19 and the our shelter and in those things and the teachings
20 that our grandmothers and grandfathers have taught us and
21 with the prayers, we are going to do this because we are
22 going to respect -- the government is going to respect our
23 spiritual inheritance. (Speaking native tongue).

24 MR. JOHN LANDRY: Well, my name is Johnny
25 Landry and I have been writing songs for maybe about 30

1 years and all of the songs that I have written maybe about
2 30, 37 songs, but all the things that I have written are
3 from Dene values like helping, respecting, loving each
4 other and things like that, that's how I wrote -- I learned
5 from elders and I had to stop. I had to straighten out my
6 life maybe about 20 something years ago so the elders could
7 respect me to tell me these values and in the last 10
8 years, I learned one of the values was before the
9 residential came to our land is that you don't hit women,
10 you don't talk back to women or you don't argue with women,
11 it was a Dene value, and we lost those things, those
12 values. And today, like, in my home, like everyone one in
13 my hometown, you wanted to learn about Dene, there is no
14 place you can go, you're on your own like all my life,
15 like, all the things I done, I done it on my own, I never
16 got no hand out from nobody, not everyone the government,
17 that's how I'm still going, you know that's Dene. That's
18 how Dene was before white man came, they were independent
19 people, and they all help each other. The woman was really
20 highly respected, and maybe we should learn and teach our
21 grand kids, that's what I've been doing about to respect
22 women again, maybe things might change, you know, for
23 everybody in the home. In the home, that's where it's
24 going to happen, that was all taken away from us. Dene
25 people is about the family, that's what it is about, number

1 1, it's family, you know. Thank you very much for
2 listening. I hope positive -- that's where we come from,
3 we are positive people, we're not negative people. They
4 brought that to us, and today we're dealing with it, but
5 the way to solve it is to share, thank you very much.
6 Masi.

7 MS. CINDI-RAE HARRIS: Hi, my name is
8 Cindi. Noeline is my. Mom from my experiences of
9 violence, we need more help. We shouldn't be questioned on
10 why we want to leave I had to do it on my own with my mom's
11 help, but I don't know sometimes I think of the incidents
12 that have happened to me, in my relationship, my marriage
13 that I had to leave and I did try a few times but I always
14 questioned by organizations. Are you sure you want to do
15 this, are you sure you want to go somewhere else, your home
16 is here that's not my home, that was my ex-husband's home.
17 You know and we just to need not to be questioned when
18 somebody wants to leave a relationship nobody questioned me
19 when I wanted to be in the relationship, so why should
20 somebody question me when I want to leave that
21 relationship.

22 You know you live unhappy, you live
23 because other people want you to live like that, you know,
24 there should be no question when a woman wants to leave
25 with her children because of violence and because of

1 drinking. You know, I lived for many years behind closed
2 doors with a lot of abuse, a lot of abuse that my family
3 did not know about. It was always, you know, nothing
4 above, I was always bruised, hurt, called down to the point
5 where I actually thought that I was no good, you know, I
6 thought wrong of myself and I knew that that's not the way
7 you're supposed to live because you're supposed to be
8 happy, you're supposed to be, you know -- but my
9 recommendation would be, you know, that when somebody
10 reaches out, that they get that no questions asked, you
11 know, if they want help to leave this relationship, they
12 should just be helped, know, in small community, there's no
13 resources there. There's no place where somebody could go.
14 You know, in small communities, everybody is related, so
15 it's hard to reach out to somebody that is related to your
16 partner or your ex-partner.

17 You know, I grew up in the Sahtu, and I
18 know of a few people that have been murdered. And you
19 know, if the -- it moves down to -- down this, down to Fort
20 Providence in 1999, and I lived there up until December
21 26th, 2015, when I finally had to leave. Christmas is
22 never going to be the same for me or my family or my
23 children. When I wanted to leave years before that, there
24 was no help. You know, there was no somewhere I could go
25 to ask for help to get me out of here, out of this

1 situation, so I stayed, you know, until it just got to the
2 point where I couldn't. I couldn't stay, so you know, I
3 had to call my mom. My mom helped me get out of that
4 relationship. And I am, today, I am very happy where I am.
5 I did a lot of work on myself, but it wasn't just myself
6 that helped me, it was my kids and my partner that I have
7 now that we really made me see the light of different
8 things of how beautiful you are, how -- how you could be
9 loved, you know, because you don't receive that love
10 besides your parents and, you know, your family members.
11 When somebody is special to you, they tell you that you
12 start to believe it. And you know, I am, if you were to
13 see me three years ago, you wouldn't recognize me, because
14 I am smiling today. It took a lot of courage, and you
15 know, we need help out there for people that are stuck in
16 these abusive relationships. Especially in the smaller
17 communities, they need a resource place or, you know,
18 somewhere to go. There's no place to go there in small
19 communities. That's what they need. They need help. A
20 home, you know, a safe place. Where they could go and know
21 that it's safe and they are protected. But that's what I
22 think that, you know, a lot of the smaller communities need
23 is not to be questioned when they want to leave, it does
24 cost a lot of money to leave, but you know, these people
25 shouldn't be questioned if they want to be happy. If they

1 want to feel safe, that's all I have to say. Thank you.

2 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And Madam, Mr.
3 Commissioner, is there anything that you would like to say
4 at this juncture?

5 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you.
6 I just want to thank you -- thank you all very much for
7 being here and for sharing, and for sharing your strength
8 and resilience. You've given us so much to think about, I -
9 - I don't have any specific questions. I know it's getting
10 late, but I just -- I'm really grateful for you coming and
11 participating and contributing to the work of the inquiry,
12 what you share with us is a gift to the work that we're
13 doing at the national inquiry, so thank you very much.

14 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: Merci,
15 Commissioner Brian. It was -- for me, I have to use the
16 right word that we can understand each other. What you
17 shared to us every time we listen and receive and honour
18 the truth that come from a family or a survivor, there's
19 transcription after that come a couple days after, and then
20 we discuss. For me, for sure, if you're okay with that,
21 Noeline, that we can -- we can -- we are, I am inspired by
22 what you shared to us. And we have to talk about the
23 impact of colonization so people can understand why women
24 are missing today. Why women are murdered, men and boys,
25 you mentioned also our men and boys. It doesn't just

1 happen like this. There is many, many ripple effect, many
2 reason. And I felt like I was in the old days, that
3 passion you brought us back there where people need to
4 understand the root cause and you brought so many of them,
5 so many with documentation, also if we can access of that
6 photo that you put there. The bargain with the Queen. And
7 if we could use your passion, your knowledge, to help us
8 when we will write the report to make the government
9 accountable, responsible, understanding for real our
10 realities. So I'm asking you if we can, and of course, in
11 a respectful way, and everything was there in your words,
12 you used the English words, we are (inaudible) people also,
13 descriptive when we speak (inaudible) my mom, my auntie,
14 and your people wrote a book together about caribou, I was
15 young. I should have brought it, so proud of that. Now I
16 understand why they fell in love with you.

17 So thank you so much and to listen also
18 our ceremonies, our laws, that we teach in the song are
19 with the drum, our recognition with mother earth, our
20 connection with everything. Everything was there. I see
21 hope. And many generation also with you that we can stop
22 that cycle of violence, that many of us think we can't
23 another fact today. Some people need to see fact. Well, I
24 had some today amazing ending with you this beautiful
25 journey so it's a gift. I will honour it, and thank you

1 for giving me the 2018 fire again to continue. (Inaudible)
2 you want to fire me. English. So I have so much left for
3 you and I hope we stay in touch, technology I hope we stay
4 in touch. And if we feel down, lift us up, we need your
5 love, we need your gentleness that you showed us and that
6 you showed to the world today. (Speaking native tongue)
7 thank you very much.

8 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And there's just
9 one last the thing too, but I know there's more. Noeline
10 actually put together kind of a summary of her life and her
11 experience in the various positions, and she has asked that
12 I share this, and in fact, if anybody in the room, would
13 like a copy, we can make that available. So I would like
14 to start with the commissioners, and also filing one as an
15 exhibit.

16 A Copy of Noeline's History.

17 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And I have,
18 apologize, I didn't appreciate that Maggie also wanted to
19 say something when the microphone was being passed, so
20 please, that would be delightful if you would like to do
21 that.

22 MS. MAGGIE MERCREDI: Masi cho, I would
23 like to say it has been an honour to be a part of this
24 hearing this afternoon, and I have known these women a
25 couple of them for just a very short time, but the other

1 for quite a while, and it is through their voice that helps
2 me every single day to live my truth and to say no when
3 it's time to say no, and to let go when it's time to let
4 go. And to hear Noeline's words are so powerful is like
5 that flame is being lit again within me. The support in
6 our communities are so vital not just the Non-Indigenous,
7 our brothers, our sisters, our other Indigenous groups to
8 support each other now today, right now, and not wait until
9 we're a statistic. When we're missing, when we're in
10 trouble, when we're murdered, when we're raped or in a
11 violent situation, not then but right now to support and to
12 help us to be everything that we can be. That is what is
13 missing in our communities. It's like Noeline said, we,
14 the women, are the leaders in the community and the men are
15 there to support and it has been backwards where the men
16 are taking up and leading when the heart of our communities
17 are sitting with the women. There's a prophecy that says:
18 When the hearts of the women are on the ground, that will
19 be the end of our people. Meaning our women have all
20 fallen. And so as an Indigenous woman, to support -- like,
21 I need that support from my community, from my sisters, my
22 brothers, from my community, to help me so that I can
23 continue. Continue to be everything that I am capable of
24 being, everything that I'm able to provide, and bring for
25 the wellness and for the health of my community. It is an

1 honour to be a part of this. It's an honour to meet
2 everybody and I wish the commissioners and everybody in
3 this process well and healing. Masi cho.

4 MS. RITA AREY: I too would like to say,
5 I'm very honoured to be a part of this process and very
6 humble, feel very humble in witnessing the stories and
7 hearing the passion in our women. And like Johnny said,
8 the women are the leaders and we've got to learn to teach
9 our communities again to respect our great leaders who are
10 the women. Noeline and I go back to residential school.
11 She was over at Breynat Hall in Fort Smith and I was at
12 Grandin College. And Grandin College, if you were in
13 Grandin College in those days, you were in the upper class,
14 and if you were at Breynat Hall, you were the kids down
15 there, but we became good friends, and we didn't see one
16 another for many, many years, and it was like we never even
17 lost those years. We just picked up where we had left one
18 another, and I had the honour of having her in my home
19 community in Aklavik and she came, I share my food with
20 her, my home, and we enjoyed many laughs, and I'm very
21 proud of Noeline because she speaks with passion from her
22 heart, and she knows the history of the Dene people.
23 Noeline, masi cho for having me here and thank you to the
24 commissioners for listening, you did an awesome job.

25 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Okay. With all

1 these amazing word, we have reached the end of this session
2 and now is the time for you to do some self-care, find
3 something to eat. Oh, John is going to sing a song? Okay.
4 Great, even better -- and there's gifts, so it's now 20 to
5 7:00 and we'll do the final ceremonies and gift giving and
6 end with a song. Take rest eventually, everyone.

7 --- Exhibits (code: P01P09P0103)

8 Exhibit 1: Folder Containting 18
9 digital images provided by the family
10 and displayed during the public
11 hearing

12 Exhibit 2: One-page CV of Noeline
13 Villebrun

14 Exhibit 3: Document entitled
15 "Agreement between Dekis and Queen
16 Victoria, The year 1665 on the
17 Bargain 1835" (one page)

18 --- FINAL CEREMONIES.

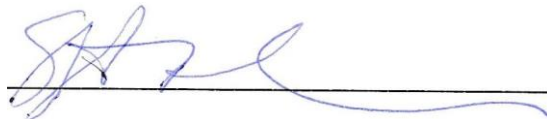
19 --- Whereupon the hearing concluded at 7:57 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best
of my skill and ability,
accurately transcribed from a pre-existing recording
the foregoing proceeding.



Jennifer Rotstein, Court Reporter

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best
of my skill and ability,
accurately transcribed from a pre-existing recording
the foregoing proceeding.



Stephanie Menard, CSR(A)