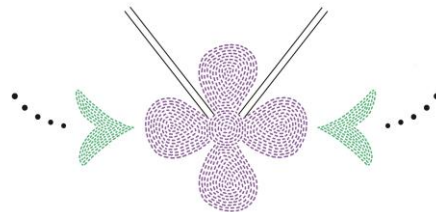


National Inquiry into  
Missing and Murdered  
Indigenous Women and Girls



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  
Edmonton Inn, Wildrose Ballroom  
Edmonton, Alberta**



**PUBLIC**

**Wednesday November 8, 2017**

**Public Volume 23:**

**Ricki Munro, In relation to Linda May Scott;**

**Andrienne Boostrom & Wilbert Alook, In relation to Elaine Freda  
Alook;**

**Marilyn Buffalo, In relation to Brenda Poundmaker**

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## II

### APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Non-appearance
Government of Alberta	Nicole Pfeifer (Counsel)
Government of Canada	Christine Ashcroft (Counsel) Tania Tooke (Paralegal)
Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women	Non-appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, AnânuKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women's Association Inc., Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, Manitoba Inuit Association	Non-appearance
Women of Metis Nation / Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak	Non-appearance

**Note:** For the purpose of establishing this record of attendance, counsel and representatives are considered present whether they attended one or all of the public hearings held over the course of the day at the Edmonton Inn and Convention Centre - Wildrose Ballroom (Public #2).

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3	CBC news article "Evan Munday tweets images of missing, murdered women to Stephen Harper" by Kim Wheeler posted January 7, 2015 12:40 PM ET last updated January 9, 2015 2:47 PM ET, four-page copy.	71
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1 Edmonton, Alberta

2 --- Upon commencing on Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at 10:52  
3 a.m.

4 **Hearing # 1**

5 **Witness: Ricki Munro**

6 **In relation to Linda May Scott**

7 **Heard by Commissioner Qajaq Robinson**

8 **Commission Counsel: Jennifer Cox**

9 **Grandmothers, Elders, Knowledge-keepers: Emily Mesher**

10 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** Can he hear you?

11 So Ricki, why don't you tell the Commissioner  
12 a little bit about yourself first before we get started.

13 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Okay. Just make sure, just  
14 one second here. Just want to get (indiscernible).

15 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** To your left -- to your  
16 right -- to your right.

17 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Well, my name is Ricki  
18 Charles (ph) Munro, and it's Ricki with an "I" at the end.  
19 I'm born October 3rd, 1990, and I'm -- I was born and  
20 raised here in the city.

21 And I'm originally -- as I found out, I'm --  
22 I'm from Cowessess First Nation. And I was registered there  
23 in 1997, so about 20 years now. I've got five siblings and  
24 I don't wish to release their names at -- at this present  
25 time, but I'm second -- second oldest.

1                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And so Ricki, who are we  
2 here to speak about today?

3                   **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** We're here to speak about  
4 my mom. Her name is Linda May Scott.

5                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And you -- we have a  
6 picture up on the screen that we found on the CBC website,  
7 and you've been told about that picture, right?

8                   **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Yeah.

9                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** Yeah. And what about your  
10 mom? What -- what would you like to tell the Commissioner  
11 about your mom?

12                   **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Where to begin? I mean I  
13 don't really have very -- very much of a past with my mom;  
14 only a few years. But those four years -- well more, could  
15 -- were the best years I've ever had.

16                   You know, she was a very -- she -- she is --  
17 I'm not going to say was, because you know, I always have  
18 faith, and you know, she's -- she's a very dear woman. She  
19 was very smart, very caring. She always had you know, she  
20 always had us kids first.

21                   And you know, when I look at it now, I'm  
22 always in awe, you know, that I'm always -- that I'm -- you  
23 know, taking some characteristics from her. She's -- she  
24 was very patient. She always put herself first -- oh, put  
25 others first, sorry.

1           You know, and I remember going on a train  
2 ride to Ontario with Via Rail, and my memory of that was,  
3 you know, being very small, probably, I'd say this tall.  
4 She was very -- like basically we -- on the way there I was  
5 running around the train car, and I heard water, and I was  
6 thinking to myself, "Well what could that -- what could  
7 that be? There must be a water fall." And so I -- I ran  
8 to where I heard it, and here, as she put it point blank,  
9 "Why are you spying on a guy?" So -- yeah, I'll always  
10 remember that.

11           And you know, I was growing up, I would  
12 always tell people that memory, and when I was in -- in  
13 care you know, it was -- it was hard for me to tell those  
14 memories because I was always told, "No, those memories are  
15 not true."

16           So it's something that you know, I -- that  
17 was one of the good memories but all of them -- all of the  
18 other ones that I've had were of her in fights. And I -- I  
19 never know who the fights were with, or anything like that  
20 and it still makes me sad to this day.

21           **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So Ricki, when you say  
22 that you still have hope, what is it -- is your mom alive?

23           **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** I -- I really want to say  
24 she is, absolutely. Because you know, people always tell  
25 me that she may be part of the -- the -- the Pickton

1 murders, and I don't know about that. You know, I don't  
2 know anything about -- you know, I've heard about what he's  
3 done, but you know, I don't want to think that my mom was  
4 part of that. You know, and until something comes up  
5 different I'm always going to believe in my heart that  
6 she's still with us today.

7 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So Ricki, when was the  
8 last time your mom was seen?

9 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** From -- from what people  
10 are telling me that it was March 3rd of 2000. Some people  
11 say it was from Vancouver, some people say it was here,  
12 from Edmonton. And I can't recall if any -- on any of the  
13 websites if you know -- if there was a time, but all I know  
14 it is March 3rd of 2000.

15 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And you know to the day  
16 how long -- how long she's been missing, right?

17 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Today's what? The 8th?

18 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** M'hm. The -- yes.

19 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** So it would have been 17  
20 years, eight months, and five days. And those have been  
21 the hardest years -- you know, her birthday's on  
22 Valentine's Day. And whenever people say, "Happy  
23 Valentine's Day," I -- I always have one tear that comes  
24 out of my left eye. And I say, "Thank you, but you -- you  
25 can't forget my mom. It's her birthday too." And there's



1 a lot of people that, you know, that tell me, "Oh, we don't  
2 know if she's alive." And I said, "You know what, I  
3 believe that she is." I a hundred percent believe that  
4 she's still alive today.

5 And you know, you can -- you can have  
6 whatever thoughts you want, but you can't tell somebody  
7 that loves her as much as I do, you know, you're -- the --  
8 the hardest things are going through your mind because my  
9 love for her may be different than anybody else.

10 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So Ricki, I wonder if we  
11 can talk a little bit about your mom's childhood. What do  
12 you know about your mom's years when she was growing up?

13 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** She was very smart. And  
14 really intelligent. Never had homework. She always looked  
15 -- looked after her -- her classmates. Helped them  
16 whenever they -- they needed help in school, and she always  
17 had good grades, high marks.

18 And you know, as the CBC News report states,  
19 from my grandma, that she says that there was always  
20 something missing from her life.

21 And you know, I don't know -- you know, from  
22 what I -- from what I know that as she grew older I -- I've  
23 told that she had a very high risk lifestyle, into drugs  
24 and alcohol, but what my grandpa always tells me was that  
25 us kids were always first.

1           If she wanted to go for a party, or anything  
2 like that, she was always responsible in telling us kids,  
3 you know, that she'll be back, and we were always left with  
4 our -- our grandpa and -- yeah, it was that one day that  
5 she wanted to go do something and dropped us off at my  
6 grandma's and that four hours was -- you know, not the way  
7 anybody had expected it to be.

8           **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So Ricki, when you say  
9 grandpa or grandma, are those your biological grandparents?

10          **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** No. Adoptive.

11          **MS. JENNIFER COX:** Okay, and so who was  
12 adopted?

13          **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** So my grandma -- or no,  
14 sorry, my mom was adopted, so she was adopted from the  
15 Blood reserve. I don't know who my real grandma and  
16 grandpa are, or you know, any of my biological -- you know,  
17 I don't know if I have any like, biological aunts and  
18 uncles. I know I have -- like, adopted ones, but that's  
19 all I know.

20          **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And when you and your  
21 siblings were young, did you live all the time with your  
22 mom, or did you live with other people?

23          **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** From what I remember I was  
24 always with my mom, and you know, I remember the fun times.  
25 I remember when I was young my brother tried pushing me

1 down the stairs in a laundry basket. But you know, I  
2 remember that too. And those weren't very gentle stairs  
3 either, they were pretty high up. You know, those stairs  
4 that have like the big gaps in between them, yeah, well,  
5 that was a pretty scary sight, but I just had to keep my  
6 eyes closed, you know.

7 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So did -- did you ever  
8 have -- did -- was there ever a time that you didn't live  
9 with your mom when she was alive -- when she was around?

10 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Yeah, I lived with my mom  
11 probably till about -- now see this is where everything's  
12 unclear, is you know, with -- with my mom, I believe, it  
13 was either till four, five, or six because I don't even  
14 know how long I lived with my grandma for, but you know, it  
15 was really hard.

16 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So you lived with her till  
17 you were around -- between four and six; is that what you  
18 say?

19 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** I'd say so, yeah.

20 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And did you or your  
21 siblings ever live in foster care?

22 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Yeah. We all were put into  
23 foster care at the age of -- I think it was age -- for me  
24 age six to age eight was the first one, and then from eight  
25 to 17 was the second one, so a total of about 11 years,

1 give or take.

2 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And you said that you had  
3 five siblings, or including yourself, right?

4 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Yeah.

5 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And how many of those were  
6 with you in the same home?

7 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** For -- well, first of all  
8 it was three, it was me, my second oldest sister, and my  
9 brother, and my youngest sister lived with -- started  
10 living with us when she was just a toddler. And that was  
11 in the second foster home.

12 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And do you have a  
13 relationship with the people you lived with in the foster  
14 home now?

15 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** No.

16 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** Okay, what was that  
17 experience like for you, Ricki?

18 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** It was very -- very hard  
19 for me to endure. You know, with the -- the fact that, as  
20 I grew older and wanting to know more about my mom and -- I  
21 just don't know how to explain it all in a very -- like,  
22 I'm just trying to be careful on what I say to you, right,  
23 but I felt a lot of my dreams were -- like, weren't there.  
24 You know, when I had dreams of becoming a better person or  
25 you know, going into -- going into school.

1           You know, I was always told it was not  
2 possible, and that things are going to be hard for me and  
3 that I'm not going to be as successful, or -- I was told  
4 that I was also never going to be very independent.

5           And knowing my mom, if she was -- like, if  
6 she was with me none of that would have -- would even be  
7 able to pass, you know. She always told me when I was  
8 younger that I'm -- I'm always going to push through and  
9 I'm always going to be that person that I've always wanted  
10 to be. And that I need to have people around me that are  
11 going to support me in my goals, in my endeavors. And she  
12 told me I'm her little warrior.

13           I can't see with my eyes, but I -- I can see  
14 with my heart, and many people didn't understand that, and  
15 that's why I felt, for me, foster care was really -- really  
16 hard.

17           **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And so you think that your  
18 mom would have been a very strong advocate for you?

19           **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Absolutely.

20           **MS. JENNIFER COX:** She would have helped you.  
21 Can you tell the Commissioner maybe some of the things that  
22 you think she would have been able to help you with?

23           **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** I know that she -- like,  
24 because of my hearing loss -- if -- if I may, after this is  
25 done, if the Commissioner has any time I'd like to tell her

1 some of the -- some of the reasons why in more details, but  
2 I think that she would have been able to help me get  
3 more -- like, get hearing aids and you know, more  
4 technology to be in -- more contact with other people.

5 You know, you see other blind people who have  
6 like, note takers, and you know, for me I'm needing hearing  
7 aids, because my independence is going downhill, right.  
8 And I think she would have stood behind me and made sure  
9 that I got -- you know, got everything that I needed.

10 And it's been a struggle because now I'm 27  
11 and I never had the -- the assistance getting that when I  
12 was younger.

13 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And maybe for the benefit  
14 of the Commissioner, what are some of the technology --  
15 like, you said note takers, so that she understands what  
16 kinds of things you could benefit from having.

17 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Well, like with -- like  
18 with hearing aids it would be to help me get around a lot  
19 more freely and independently. To be able to hear you  
20 know, more of the traffic. You know, people talking  
21 easier. You know, to be able to just to have a lot more  
22 contact with people. And note takers would be you know,  
23 'cause I do want to go into school, and so the note takers  
24 would be used for every day life, but more so for  
25 educational purposes, work purposes.

1           And I'm really hoping that you know, I could  
2           get funding to go to school you know, either for culinary  
3           arts, you know, massage therapy, or even just to upgrade my  
4           30 credits. You know, those are -- those are what I'd  
5           really like to see happen because I feel lost with all  
6           that.

7                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So one of your dreams is  
8           to be able to go back to school, right?

9                   **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Yeah.

10                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And with -- with the  
11           supports in place?

12                   **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Absolutely.

13                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** Okay. And now, Ricki, how  
14           -- how do you live? Who do you live with? Who do you  
15           live with?

16                   **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Oh, who do I live with?  
17           I'm currently living with a -- a school friend that I've  
18           known since elementary. And that hasn't been the best  
19           experience either because you know, she's been somebody  
20           that's pulled -- like, very manipulative. And she has  
21           never really believed in boundaries, and especially with my  
22           mom. I've told her a few things here and there, and  
23           there's a lot of force behind there and it's very mentally  
24           and emotionally draining and damaging for me because when  
25           I've tried to set up a boundary it's just been like, taken

1 down, you know. Like, so I -- I'm left every day feeling  
2 vulnerable and feeling unsure of myself and really unable  
3 to cope because having these things reopened and you know,  
4 when you've tried closing them.

5 And you know, this being opened in a better  
6 way where it's in a -- it's in a -- you know nonjudgmental  
7 environment and there's people there to support me, but you  
8 know when you're left with hearing all this manipulation  
9 and degrading it's -- it's really hard for me to pull  
10 through.

11 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So Ricki, you're here to  
12 speak to the Commissioner today, and to the National  
13 Inquiry, are there specific things that you would like the  
14 National Inquiry to do for you?

15 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** I want to know more. I  
16 really want to know more about you know, what are, you  
17 know, some of the things that may be left in the police  
18 files that aren't disclosed.

19 I'd also really like to know you know, what  
20 information is in the files that you know, pictures that  
21 may be in there, or you know, just any bits of -- of  
22 information that other people have told about her that I  
23 don't even know about.

24 And I'd like to know also about, like, my --  
25 my life as a child in foster care.



1           You know, because to be honest with you, I  
2           don't know why I'm -- I'm blind. I don't know, you know,  
3           really anything about my -- my childhood, and if that's  
4           okay with you, as well, I'd like -- with the Commissioner,  
5           I'd like to also disclose some more information, and  
6           hopefully shed some more light because really it's getting  
7           kind of dark.

8           **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So in terms of the more  
9           information, how do you think that would help you, Ricki,  
10          because you -- I think we talked a little bit how you think  
11          the information knowing more would help. Maybe you could  
12          explain that to the Commissioner.

13          **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** I think this information  
14          would help with closure, more understanding, just more -- I  
15          don't want this -- like I -- I feel lost, you know, I don't  
16          know that -- that person that I can -- you know, like she  
17          was always somebody that I could turn to if I was feeling  
18          sad or scared. And you know, if she was -- she would  
19          always had a -- had always told me when I was younger that,  
20          "Ricki, it's never good to do things -- to do these things  
21          alone. You should never have to go through life on your  
22          own. You have to have somebody there that's going to you  
23          know, that it's going to -- that things are going to change  
24          for the better and not for the worse, because I don't -- I  
25          don't want anything to happen to you, you're too precious

1 to me."

2 And that's why I think closure would really  
3 help me to push forward and to become that better person  
4 that people want to see. And it's time that I move forward  
5 and I don't want to be stuck in this place of -- of  
6 unknown, you know, where there's this grey area where I'm  
7 in between.

8 That things are going to be okay and -- oh, I  
9 don't know if things are going to be okay. And I think  
10 that's what this information would really do, is to put me  
11 in a place of understanding, and that I can share my  
12 thoughts and feelings with -- with people that are going to  
13 support me, help me up when I need it the most.

14 Because honestly, I'm -- I'm really tired of  
15 doing this alone. I'm -- I'm, I'm done with feeling lost  
16 and confused and I don't want to feel like I don't know  
17 where my life is going to take me next.

18 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So, Ricki, have you had  
19 contact with any of the police with respect to your mom's  
20 file?

21 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** I have spoken with victim  
22 services, and -- I believe that was like two or three years  
23 ago. But it was a -- I got to speak with the one of the  
24 investigators and them, with that being said, I think  
25 having that -- that little bit of a tidbit, you can call

1       it, I -- I still feel that there's some -- something  
2       missing.

3                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So you think it was --  
4       this two or three years ago is the last time you spoke to  
5       somebody?

6                   **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Yeah.

7                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** Ricki, is there anything  
8       else that we haven't talked about that you would like to  
9       tell the Commissioner?

10                  **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Not having the supports.  
11       Not having you know, my mom around has made things -- has  
12       made life really -- really hard. You know, having like --  
13       like not having people that I can turn to when I'm feeling  
14       scared, or -- or even unsure about what to do for the  
15       future like, how to progress. I don't -- like I keep  
16       saying, I don't want to do this alone.

17                   And you know, I'm thankful that the Inquiry's  
18       here. I'm thankful for you guys. I'm thankful that  
19       there's being a step taking that -- like, taken now, but I  
20       honestly wish that this was taken a long -- long time ago,  
21       and that I don't have to carry this heavy burden. That I  
22       can you know, get -- like -- give it to you guys to help me  
23       carry it. And honestly, I just -- I -- I feel scared  
24       because I want my future to change in a good way and you  
25       know, I really want to be a better person, and I want to

1 show my mom that I'm -- and make her proud. I want her to  
2 be proud of who I am.

3 I know in my younger years I've made a lot of  
4 mistakes. And I don't have memories of those mistakes I  
5 made because I've made them, and that's a long time ago. I  
6 want to focus on me, and -- and I want to do what my mom  
7 has set out for me to do, and that is to -- to be a better  
8 person, but also to help people that are struggling and to  
9 continue to you know, to put one foot in front of other and  
10 know that I'm -- I'm not doing this alone.

11 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** Thank you, Ricki.

12 Madam Commissioner, did you have any  
13 questions for Ricki?

14 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Thank you,  
15 Ricki. I do have a few questions just so I can better  
16 understand. How old were you when she went missing?

17 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** That was ten years old.

18 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Okay. And when  
19 did you learn of that -- that she had gone missing? Did  
20 you learn about it when you were ten or later in your life?

21 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Like me personally, I knew  
22 that something was missing -- missing for quite a while.

23 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** M'hm.

24 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** That -- that day that my --  
25 that I was taken away from her I knew that I wasn't get the

1       comfort -- that that comfort was gone. But when I had  
2       learned about it was probably between the ages of like, 12  
3       and up, and this was two years over -- after her  
4       disappearance. And you know, nothing was really said about  
5       it, nothing was really done, you know.

6               I had given DNA to the police just -- just a  
7       prick of the finger, that was really about it and -- that's  
8       all that was said. And as I grew older my yearning to know  
9       about her, and my yearning to find her, grew.

10              **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:**     M'hm.

11              **MR. RICKI MUNRO:**    You know, I -- I began to  
12       mourn and I began to feel like, not a bitterness, but I  
13       began to feel like, an anger that something has been hidden  
14       from me. And that you know, that something wasn't being  
15       told. And I felt like I -- like a big veil was just thrown  
16       over my head and I couldn't see around me. You know, I --  
17       I wasn't allowed to -- to know anything.

18              **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:**   Who did you  
19       ultimately learn about Linda missing -- your mom missing?

20              **MR. RICKI MUNRO:**    Through -- like, through my  
21       grandma. Bits and pieces that she told me.

22              Now, as I grew older -- now this is probably  
23       about four years ago, now, I met my grandpa, that I haven't  
24       seen for you know, for most of my life, and he had  
25       willingly told me a lot about her, and that's how I knew

1 that she was smart. How caring she was. How loving she  
2 was. And that we were the apple of her eye.

3 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** M'hm.

4 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** And I tell you I did things  
5 when I was younger that nobody would -- would believe  
6 today.

7 There was two bottles of milk and one bottle  
8 of water, and the water was the one in the middle, and they  
9 told me to go find the water, and it was like I could see  
10 because I went right for it and I grabbed it. So they had  
11 thought that I had some vision. But I guess my -- my sixth  
12 -- sixth sense -- sense is a lot stronger because of my  
13 loss of vision.

14 And also if I may say, Commissioner, in  
15 foster care you know, I never knew why I was blind. I  
16 don't know the reason of that. Right, so that's why when -  
17 - when I mention that I'd like to know more about my  
18 childhood is because you know, what if there is a cure,  
19 right? What if there is a cure for my blindness?

20 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** M'hm. Did you  
21 get -- after you were put in foster care, you and your  
22 siblings, did you get to see your mom at all during those  
23 years after you were taken?

24 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** No

25 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Do you -- do

1 you know why you didn't get to see her?

2 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** No.

3 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Okay.

4 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Not at all. I wanted to,  
5 and that's always going to remain a mystery of why I was  
6 never allowed. Why -- you know, why we were never allowed,  
7 right. And it's one of the -- it's the hard -- hard --  
8 hardest things that I still can't comprehend is why we  
9 weren't allowed, right, because I'm sure if we were allowed  
10 to see her again, she would still be here today.

11 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Do you think  
12 losing her kids -- what impact do you think that had on  
13 her?

14 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** I don't think she expected  
15 it.

16 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** M'hm.

17 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Because from what I found  
18 out from my grandpa, was that after those four hours she  
19 came looking for us and we were gone. Like, doesn't that  
20 say something good about her that she actually wanted to  
21 come back for her kids?

22 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Absolutely.

23 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Or -- or is it just me  
24 thinking that it's okay. You know, like why? That's what  
25 I don't understand is why we were taken when she clearly

1 came back for us, when she clearly wanted us to be in her  
2 life.

3 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** And this was  
4 all in Edmonton? Yeah.

5 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Yeah.

6 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Have you been  
7 able to get any of your files and stuff from -- from  
8 Children's Aid, or...

9 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** No.

10 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Have you asked  
11 for that?

12 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** I don't know any of the  
13 phone numbers. I don't --

14 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Okay.

15 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** -- know who to ask.

16 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Yeah. And the  
17 police too, in terms of the information about her file?

18 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** I've -- again, I don't know  
19 who to ask about that either.

20 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Yeah.

21 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** That's what you want our  
22 help with, right? Yeah.

23 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Yeah, I can  
24 understand that. I don't have any other questions. I, I  
25 want to acknowledge that what you've shared with us is a



1 lot about answering those questions that -- that you have  
2 and -- and now I have. And I want to thank you for sharing  
3 what you remember about Linda. Her love for you guys. Her  
4 character. Her intelligence. You know, I -- I've read in  
5 the media the stories, and I'm really honoured to hear your  
6 memories of her, and what you want to share about her with  
7 us today. I just want to express my gratitude for that.  
8 Thank you, Ricki.

9 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** And before I go, and you're  
10 very welcome. You know, I just wanted to -- a little bit  
11 feedback now that I'm -- just a little bit more  
12 comfortable, you know, in foster care I don't think I would  
13 have gone through a lot of the -- a lot of the abuse that I  
14 would have gone through, through -- you know, if my mom  
15 wasn't here, and it's left me feeling very alone and very  
16 frightened.

17 You know -- you know, going through that I've  
18 -- you know, I was always told that you know, going through  
19 school or having your own independence -- independence is  
20 going to be hard. And I was always a fighter, and I always  
21 told myself, "No. I'm going to go through school. I'm  
22 going to be okay. I'm going to go to school. I'm going to  
23 be okay."

24 You know, and hearing that time and time  
25 again you know, back in -- when I was in -- in school I --

1 I heard that there was an open house where there was you  
2 know, DJ programs like, for radio stations, and for you  
3 know, stuff like that, and you know, it was something that  
4 I really had an interest in, in hearing, "No, it's not  
5 possible. Don't try it. No, it's not going to ever  
6 happen."

7 You know, I've -- I've decided in the past  
8 year to step into that, and let me tell you this, it's --  
9 I'm glad I'm -- I'm rediscovering what I've missed and you  
10 know, again, before -- before I go today I do want to tell  
11 you more about what's happened, but that's all I have to  
12 say for now.

13 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** I -- I look  
14 forward to hearing more. Thank you.

15 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** You're welcome.

16 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So Madam Commissioner, if  
17 we could adjourn, or conclude this matter. Thank you.

18 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Thank you.

19 **MR. RICKI MUNRO:** Thank you.

20 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** I want to give  
21 you -- I'm just going to put the mic down. If you can  
22 explain it to the audience, I'd like to speak directly with  
23 Ricki.

24 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** Sure. So the Commissioner  
25 is going to provide you with a gift, Ricki, of seeds, and



1            (speaking native language), which is the translation for  
2            the buffalo lands.

3                      We have a sister, and a mother, and a  
4            grandmother. Elaine was my younger sister. Family of ten.  
5            And we're here to share her story, and also my family's  
6            story for -- for the benefit of the search that we're  
7            doing.

8                      **MR. MATTHEW (ph):** My name's Matthew. I'm  
9            Elaine's nephew.

10                     **MR. EDWARD ALOOK:** My name's Edward Martin  
11            (ph) Alook. My sister's brother, Elaine's brother.

12                     **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Tell her who you are.

13                     **MS. JEANNIE (ph):** My name is --

14                     **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Jeannie.

15                     **MS. JEANNIE:** -- Jeannie.

16                     **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And Mr. Registrar, if we  
17            could have the promise on the Eagle Feather for Andrienne.  
18            So you'll pick up the microphone like that.

19                     **ANDRIENNE BOOSTROM, Affirmed**

20                     **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So Mr. Commissioner, we're  
21            going to start with Wilbert, and he's going to begin the  
22            family story.

23                     So Wilbert, if you want to begin by telling  
24            the Commissioner a little bit about your family, and where  
25            you grew up.

1                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** Our family's descended  
 2 from the Alook family, which is descended from the Testwich  
 3 (ph) family. It relates back to early 1800s. We were --  
 4 or all of our -- all of our -- our -- our -- our ancestors  
 5 are from Bigstone Cree Nation area.

6                   My -- my grandfathers and my grandmothers --  
 7 some of them had moved to the Fort Vermilion area in the  
 8 Tallcree region years and years ago, and our -- our -- our  
 9 family -- my dad's name is George Alook, and my mother is  
 10 Cecile Gladue (ph). They got married in about 1955. And  
 11 they grew -- they were both born in Wabasca.

12                   There's two -- there's a rock in Wabasca on  
 13 the north shore of the lake, they were born not very far  
 14 from there. Obviously different years. I think my mom is  
 15 just a year older than my dad, 1933, 1934. Their families  
 16 were from the area -- from the Chip Lake's area as well as  
 17 the -- the north Wabasca area they descended from there.

18                   Years and years ago the people that lived on  
 19 the land never lived in one area. They lived where the  
 20 harvesting was good. The families could feed from the lake  
 21 or from the bush, so they were raised in those areas. They  
 22 were born in those areas actually, and then their parents  
 23 were -- were -- were from that area.

24                   The Gladues and the Alooks and the Ojays (ph)  
 25 and the Cardinals (ph) from the Wabasca area.

1                   And in my father, I think was two -- two  
2 years old when he left with his dad and his mom down the  
3 north Wabasca River to go to -- they travelled down river  
4 to -- to Fort Vermilion from -- from -- the Wabasca river  
5 flows towards Fort Vermilion there.

6                   There was families that had moved originally  
7 that way and some of their families were already  
8 established over there. Like the Ojays.

9                   My great grandfather was John Baptise-Ojay  
10 (ph). And my grandmother's dad. So that's where they --  
11 they ended up in the Fort Vermilion area.

12                   My grandfather was -- was Paulette (ph)  
13 Alook, and he was in that area as well back in the 30s.  
14 That's where my father grew up in Fort Vermilion, but they  
15 were born in Wabasca, both my parents.

16                   A lot of the people that -- some of them had  
17 a Métis background as well, but the mode of travel was  
18 horse or walking. My mother recalls walking from Wabasca  
19 to a place called Little Red River, which is northeast of  
20 Fort Vermilion, and that's where a lot of her family had  
21 moved. And this was during the -- the 30s.

22                   However, there was a couple hundred years  
23 there of the families living that whole region; the Cree  
24 people.

25                   We were -- my dad was -- and -- and my mother

1 were foster parents at first because during that time --  
2 way before I was born probably after they were married they  
3 didn't have children right away so they raised my -- one of  
4 my -- I guess it would be one of my uncles, Charlie (ph)  
5 Ojay, and then my -- my sister, Caroline (ph) was born in  
6 the hospital there. But they went and got her when she was  
7 two or three days old from my -- my aunties that -- that  
8 gave her up there, so that was the oldest of my siblings.

9 There's Caroline (ph), and then my sister  
10 Janet (ph) was born to my parents, and my sister Louise  
11 (ph), and then from there's it's my brother, Gerry (ph), or  
12 Gerard (ph), and then by brother Delbert (ph), and then my  
13 sister Lorraine (ph), and then my sister Noella (ph), and  
14 then there's myself, and then there's my -- there was a boy  
15 that was -- that didn't make it. He came into this world,  
16 but he was -- I don't know, he was stillborn or something  
17 happened. My mom didn't carry him to full term. So my mom  
18 has a scar on her body where the German doctor sliced her  
19 open from here to here, take out the baby.

20 I was born in 1966. This baby boy was --  
21 should have been born in '67. Elaine was born in '68.  
22 Then my brother Ed here was born in '69. Mom was 1970 I  
23 think, but -- so there was about ten of us in the family,  
24 six girls and four boys.

25 In Fort Vermilion there -- because my -- my

1 parents were a generation of the residential school system  
 2 as well. Well, just going back to where my father was  
 3 raised was it's a tradition in our family (speaking Cree  
 4 language).

5 **MR. INTERPRETER:** The person has a boy that  
 6 my dad told me, his grandmother and his grandfather were,  
 7 were given to...

8 **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** My father had other older  
 9 -- older brothers, but they passed away, so he was -- in --  
 10 in 1938 he happened to end up in the mission because my  
 11 great grandfather, John Baptise-Ojay, had passed away  
 12 and -- and he was -- he recall -- he recalls about maybe  
 13 being four -- four -- four years old, his uncle coming to  
 14 get him in the bush north of -- south of Fort Vermilion on  
 15 a trap line.

16 So he was given over to the -- the  
 17 residential schools because at that time all of the -- the  
 18 Native kids are -- whatever kids -- I think are getting  
 19 five dollars a head to bring a child into the residential  
 20 school.

21 So his uncle came to get him in the bush, on  
 22 a horse, to take him because the grandfather had passed  
 23 away, so only his grandmother was left there. So they  
 24 brought him into the residential school, and that's where  
 25 he was raised.



1           The family, from there -- he spent 15 years  
2           in residential school there, and my mother happened to  
3           be -- he was travelling with her family back and forth from  
4           Wabasca to Little Red, so they -- they were around that  
5           residential school system as well.

6           And so my parents eventually got together and  
7           they started raising their adopted children and us that  
8           came along. It was a time where -- where the -- the -- the  
9           -- the Indian reserves also had a lot of influence on where  
10          people lived. How they lived and what they did.

11          My father happened to be mentally strong and  
12          saw the need not to raise us on the Indian reserve, so he  
13          left the Indian reserve in 1955, right around the time he  
14          was married to go on his own and establish. He was very  
15          fluent in -- in Cree, and also in English.

16          So he was a -- he was a contractor, he was a  
17          businessman, but he also wanted to own his own land, so he  
18          went out and started his own company and bought the land  
19          there where we -- where I -- I remember being raised, in  
20          Fort Vermilion there. He -- he hand cut, with an axe, 160  
21          acres, and did -- did that work with a horse and an axe,  
22          and worked on it, got a mortgage, and lived off the  
23          reserve. That's how we were raised.

24          We were -- we were born there in Fort  
25          Vermilion, but leading up to where my sister Elaine. When

1 she was probably about five years old in that -- four years  
2 old, she woke up one morning and she couldn't move the  
3 bottom -- bottom part of her body. I remember that -- that  
4 day that she was yelling for help and she couldn't move.  
5 So my dad and my mom took her to a doctor and we had a  
6 babysitter there and they took her out to -- eventually end  
7 up in Toronto, I think it was for surgery on her back.

8 She came back, and Eddie (ph) and I were --  
9 eventually she go -- they gave her a brace and she came  
10 home with a plastic brace. And I remember playing with  
11 that brace. Putting it on, trying it on. Didn't know what  
12 it was about, but she eventually outgrew that, the brace,  
13 and she walked again.

14 When -- when -- when my dad got -- you know,  
15 like he was -- he was looking -- he always worked in the  
16 oil field. He had his own crews, that's how he raised us  
17 over there. He -- he bought a house and he moved it onto  
18 the land where he cleared. We were living in an old house  
19 at first and then he cleared that land and then we went to  
20 a different house, a smaller house, and that's where we  
21 grew up.

22 A lot of my sister -- older sisters and --  
23 they were given the opportunity to go to school elsewhere  
24 so they left to go to school, but the core of the family,  
25 seven -- about seven of us were there until 1977, and we

1            grew up with the -- going to school in a public school  
2            system so my older brothers and sisters went to the  
3            separate school system. Separate school system was based  
4            on residential school. So there was a lot of those times  
5            where you -- you went to -- you went to school where you  
6            were told to go to school, I guess. And so we grew up  
7            there in Fort Vermilion.

8                              That -- and plus my dad was -- also invested  
9            in farm -- farm implements and cattle, horses, we had 16  
10          horses, and 150 cattle, chickens, and we planted our own  
11          vegetables.

12                             The influence from the residential schools  
13          was they used to the children to plant gardens and used  
14          them as labourers. And being around the farm areas, the  
15          farmers in that area not on the reserve, but the farmers in  
16          that area, my dad was really good with making friends and  
17          learning how to make a livelihood, so we planted a big  
18          garden every year too. We worked on the farm looking after  
19          the animals while dad did contracting.

20                             He was gone maybe six months out of the year  
21          to do the work, but he always came home and -- and we  
22          celebrated the holidays by him coming home.

23                             But it wasn't -- we never -- but we -- my mom  
24          spoke straight Cree at home, so we had that instilled in us  
25          from -- since we were young. We understood it and we spoke

1       it until we started going to school. (Speaking Cree  
2       language).

3                   **MR. INTERPRETER:** My mother always spoke Cree  
4       all the time as she was raising us. If she -- if she  
5       didn't want us to do something --

6                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** The teachings --

7                   **MR. INTERPRETER:** -- she would scold us.

8                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** -- came from my father  
9       and my mother that instilled a lot of the values is what  
10      the people called them, I guess. But for us, as kids,  
11      growing up we -- we were taught there's hard -- there's  
12      work to do, and there's school to go to, and -- well, our  
13      chores, what we had to do, so there was a lot of work that  
14      became involved in our family life, hard work, and we  
15      valued that.

16                   But -- but as a family growing up they also  
17      instilled in us our Cree way of life, and as you grow up  
18      and learn you ask questions and this is where the teachings  
19      came in Cree (speaking Cree language).

20                   **MR. INTERPRETER:** My mom raised us in the  
21      Indian way. How the Indian lives.

22                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** And my dad was very  
23      fluent in English and Cree, so he did both. Unfortunately,  
24      there was a lot of times where he wasn't home so my mother  
25      was a base of our home life and our family. And she didn't

1 speak English or write English, but we managed somehow to  
2 live through the six months my dad wasn't there and take  
3 care of this and that. So -- so my older brothers stayed  
4 there, Gerry and Delbert went down -- we stayed on the farm  
5 mostly while the older ones went away to school and  
6 whatnot.

7 But leading up to that, 1977 my dad got a job  
8 at Syncrude Canada in Fort McMurray, and he moved us that  
9 way. He got a big station wagon came and gave us -- came  
10 and hauled us out of there one day. Held on to that land  
11 for a few years, but we never did go back in Fort McMurray.  
12 I think my brother Ed was in grade three in Fort McMurray  
13 and that's where we -- Elaine was in grade four. I know I  
14 -- how I ended up -- I think I was grade six or seven  
15 there. But anyway we -- we spent our teenage years in Fort  
16 McMurray.

17 My sister, Elaine, went to school there right  
18 until high school and then each one of us that had grew up  
19 in that area or already had started families. In the  
20 tradition in our families who was still carried on is the  
21 male of each family member, my mom raised a lot of the male  
22 grandchildren in the family, like my nephew, Matthew, here,  
23 my nephew DJ (ph), my nephew Darcy (ph), nephew Michael  
24 (ph), they all were raised around my mom.

25 So in 1977 I think a lot of us moved out as

1            we were getting to the age where we could look after  
2            ourselves and go to school or do what we had to do.  
3            Started our own families, and that's where my sister,  
4            Elaine, she's -- she's got four -- four sons. They live  
5            here in Edmonton now. There's a lot of times that I  
6            remember that we always went back home to your parents, or  
7            that the door was always open for the support and what have  
8            you.

9                            So leading up to that time were the -- where  
10            she was going through her experience with separating from  
11            her common-law she moved back in with my parents in Anzac.

12                            My dad retired in the 90s from Syncrude after  
13            working there about 25 years. And he had purchased  
14            property in Anzac. He invested in property in Anzac, so he  
15            had built a house there.

16                            So they -- I was already out of the house. I  
17            never lived with my parents after I was 18. And then they  
18            established a home there in Anzac, and some of the boys  
19            were raised in there in Anzac, and my sister had gone back  
20            there.

21                            I was already living -- I had gone to a  
22            school down south, Edmonton here, then Lethbridge  
23            University, and by the time I moved back I was -- moved  
24            back to Wabasca, and then I moved from Wabasca to -- to  
25            Conklin where -- where my ex-wife is from. So the family

1 was there in Anzac, now established, my parents, my sister,  
2 she had the kids there for a little bit, and then she --  
3 and then my nephews were living there as well Darcy, DJ,  
4 and Matthew, and Michael -- Michael.

5 And so that's where that was from -- in the  
6 90s, in Anzac, she was -- Elaine was -- had a job there  
7 doing work in that area. I was already living in Christina  
8 Lake Conklin, so I'd drop in on my parents every now and  
9 then.

10 Then I was -- I was out of work, so I went to  
11 look for work in Anzac there because I knew my parents were  
12 there. If I found work at least I'd have a place to work  
13 from. I found a job there in a park cleaning the park  
14 because I had my -- my own equipment and tools and truck  
15 and whatnot.

16 But I remember in May of that year that she  
17 disappeared, she phoned my -- my -- my phone and she -- she  
18 -- in the afternoon about two o'clock and she said, "I need  
19 a ride. I need a ride home." It was a Monday. And she  
20 said -- I said, "Well, I'm -- I'm in the -- I'm in the  
21 park. I can't leave my job. I can't -- I can't leave  
22 my -- my position or else I'll lose it." And I said, "Why  
23 don't you try Delbert?" And my parents had a flip phone.  
24 So Delbert -- Delbert was already living -- my brother,  
25 Delbert was always living with my parents because he had

1 got sick years and years ago with kidney degeneration, so  
2 he was more or less a caregiver of my parents.

3           So he was living there -- and he was a single  
4 father, with his daughter, in Anzac. And it just so  
5 happened that I was working in the park when Elaine phoned  
6 and she said, "I need a ride home." And I said, "Well, why  
7 don't you try Delbert's -- why don't you try the house?  
8 Maybe Delbert will give you a ride." And this was within  
9 the school system there -- his -- my -- my niece was on the  
10 bus, they got off school at 3:30. So by the time she  
11 phoned him, he only had about an hour, so it's a half an  
12 hour from Anzac to Fort McMurray around -- it's a round  
13 trip an hour, so he said, "I'll try go and find her."  
14 Because he -- because he phoned me after that at the park  
15 there, and then he -- he was going to go get her.

16           The last thing she said to me was, "I'm --  
17 I'm in Mom's Kitchen," which is a restaurant in Plazatou  
18 (ph). "I'm sitting here with my friend, having a clubhouse  
19 sandwich." And it doesn't occur to you to ask, or to -- to  
20 want to inquire about your sibling's life. I don't know  
21 what friend she's sitting with, male, female. I don't  
22 know.

23           We got along -- all of our family got along  
24 carrying on our lives, we worked, and we visit -- we stayed  
25 with our parents or visited our parents or what have you.



1 So I never asked her, "Who are you it sitting with?"

2 And that's one of the things that -- if I had  
3 taken -- taken the time to ask who she was with maybe I  
4 would have known who was the last person that she was with.  
5 I don't know. It was so hard over the years, from the time  
6 that she disappeared, maybe if I had taken that time to --  
7 if I had taken the time to -- to spend -- to say, "The hell  
8 with my job," and maybe go and pick her up myself, maybe  
9 she'd be here today.

10 I have regrets that the decisions that you  
11 make, and you don't know your family member is going to  
12 disappear or not. (Speaking Cree language).

13 **MR. INTERPRETER:** I'm always thinking about  
14 that. I think -- I think slowly if I would have moved and  
15 go get my -- my sister that she might be here today. My  
16 heart is broken. When I -- when I think about this.

17 It's very hard when you lose a person -- when  
18 a person goes missing. We carry that all with us. I see  
19 it. Every -- every day we think about her is very hard.  
20 The one who missing. Have nothing to do but -- but to be  
21 strong. To try and work every day for something go forward  
22 to -- to go ahead with life.

23 That's what I think about all the time. I  
24 should have taken my -- take time off work and gone to get  
25 my little sister. I carry that today.

1                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** I wish I had made that  
2 choice, that decision, to go, but you don't control that,  
3 you're -- you're doing what you're -- you're taught to do,  
4 is work hard and try to do the best that you can do and  
5 carry on. I regret that today. And I still remember the  
6 phone call. I'll never forget that.

7                   And things progressed from there during that  
8 week. She was seen at the casino. She was seen with a few  
9 other people. I don't know. But I think from the time  
10 that she disappeared, and we didn't -- it didn't dawn on us  
11 that because the lifestyle that she had was -- it was her  
12 own personal life, you don't get -- well, you don't ask  
13 questions.

14                   I didn't ask who she was with, or where she  
15 was or who her friends were or whatnot, and that's what I  
16 told the RCMP when I sat down with them. We carry on our  
17 own lives and our own responsibilities so we don't ask, and  
18 you don't -- in hindsight you don't -- you -- you -- you  
19 wish you could have did more or -- or asked the questions  
20 that might lead to something that -- where you could've did  
21 a little bit more maybe; I don't know. I don't know how my  
22 brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces feel about  
23 that, but I think maybe we don't expect someone to  
24 disappear or leave or -- or leave without a trace.

25                   Seems like -- today, 13 years later we still

1 have that need to try to -- we still have that hope. We  
2 still have that -- we -- I -- I look for her on the street  
3 here in Edmonton. I -- wherever I go. Doesn't matter  
4 where I travel, I still look for her. If I see somebody  
5 that's on the street that's looks like her then I go and  
6 make sure it's not her, or make sure it's her. I go and  
7 look because this girl -- this woman looks like my sister.

8 I don't know how her boys feel about that, I  
9 only see my nephew once, Dallas (ph) in the mall once, say  
10 "Hello, uncle," and whatnot, but really it doesn't cross my  
11 mind. It's there, like for them for their mother, you  
12 know, it's their mother, but they don't mention it. We're  
13 there for them now, and if your mom can't be there we're  
14 just there for -- for -- for the family.

15 But the other thing is too, you're -- when  
16 someone is missing, part of your family, you don't have  
17 that -- there's always a piece missing there. There's --  
18 you never have that connection anymore. You don't say  
19 hello to them. You can't tell them, "How are you today?"  
20 Or, "Are you going to work?" Or just carrying on as a -- a  
21 family unit. Part of you is missing. It's like your body,  
22 you lose a part of your body, well, it's not -- it's not  
23 whole anymore.

24 And that's the thing with -- when you're  
25 raised in a traditional family following the traditions and

1 whatnot, you try to do what you can do to respect your  
2 whole life, your whole existence. You don't have that --  
3 there's always a piece missing there.

4 We tried to hold a memorial for her, a  
5 Catholic memorial; wasn't the same. Because she's not  
6 there. The casket is empty. But we prayed. And I think  
7 that's the thing that we're instilled with, with our  
8 parents regardless of how they're raised in residential  
9 school or the influence of society or what -- what have  
10 you, they always maintained that prayer was the first and  
11 foremost thing and the last thing. "So prayer is the first  
12 and foremost thing and the last thing. Don't ever let that  
13 go," they said. And that's how we were raised.

14 My mom still's alive. I was up there a  
15 few -- last month and she asked me, she said (speaking Cree  
16 language).

17 **MR. INTERPRETER:** "Do -- do -- do you -- do  
18 you know if your little sister is still alive?"

19 **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** Yeah. (Speaking Cree  
20 language).

21 **MR. INTERPRETER:** "Yeah, I think she's still  
22 alive."

23 **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** So from the time that she  
24 disappeared I watched my father pray almost every day,  
25 carry on his life, but there was always that longing, that

1 need there, and my mother as well. They would say -- they  
2 would say (speaking Cree language).

3 **MR. INTERPRETER:** They would -- my parents  
4 would say --

5 **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** Or sometimes they'd get  
6 frustrated and say --

7 **MR. INTERPRETER:** -- Where would my -- I  
8 wonder where my daughter is. I -- I wonder who it is that  
9 -- that hurt my daughter. I wonder why she's missing."

10 **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** These questions that are  
11 always there. Why did she leave? Or how come this is this  
12 way, and whatnot. Because they have nothing to grasp.  
13 They have nothing to -- to hold onto other than just asking  
14 the questions. And that's the thing, when you -- with the  
15 -- the way things are with Native people -- the way I was  
16 raised, the way I understand with Native people, the way it  
17 was instilled in us is we -- we don't necessarily bring out  
18 or talk about something that can't be done.

19 It's doing what you can do with what you have  
20 now, so you have to be able to -- to support each other in  
21 that way. Sitting in the room with people, with your  
22 family, you're supporting each other. It's the things that  
23 are left -- that are not said that are strong sometimes and  
24 sometimes the things that are said are strong. Say my mom  
25 would say (speaking Cree language).

1                   **MR. INTERPRETER:** My mother would say, "I  
2 wonder where my daughter is? Maybe she'll come home.  
3 We'll see her again."

4                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** You have to tell them  
5 that they -- you will -- you'll see her again. We -- we --  
6 we never acknowledge that she's -- she's deceased. Because  
7 she's still alive in our hearts. (Speaking Cree language).

8                   **MR. INTERPRETER:** It's very -- it's very  
9 hard.

10                  **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** My hearts go out to the  
11 families that go through the same thing. Whether they're  
12 female or male or children, or what have you. When you  
13 lose something, you don't lose that -- that person or their  
14 spirit. What you lose is the -- the -- the comfort that  
15 you know, that your family is there. You lose that piece.  
16 You try to rebuild it, but you can't. Your house is --  
17 your house is broken. Your home is broken. But if your  
18 spirit is strong this carries you through to what you need  
19 to do to move on to the next step. You don't ever heal.  
20 And you can -- it's like a scab, I guess. You're going to  
21 pick at your scab and it's going to bleed.

22                   So we're searching. We still did a month  
23 ago. I put out the word to the agencies. I thought -- my  
24 sister, Lorraine, and I sat down and we got a tip from a --  
25 somewhere that she was in one area in Anzac -- Anzac, and

1 that area of Anzac we wanted to search. I said, "Well,  
2 let's go look. We can't sit here. That file box that the  
3 RCMP have is not going to talk to us. Let's move."

4 And my dad -- one of his words in the  
5 newsfeed, news column was to say, "I'll never give up." I  
6 used to talk to my dad, because he passed away two years  
7 ago, and I still talk to him, once in a while, and I said,  
8 "Dad, we carry on," so we did. We got together as a  
9 family, and some of us were working and couldn't be there,  
10 and some of us live in different parts of the country now,  
11 but we all -- we all put it out there that we were going to  
12 go look, we were going search. I had people say, "You're  
13 not going to find nothing." They didn't have that hope.  
14 They didn't have that. But I -- I don't think my dad would  
15 give up.

16 I thought, so we better do that. We'll do  
17 this -- we'll do this -- we'll keep on searching. So we  
18 put together the search real -- really quick and I reached  
19 out to the Indian Bands, Bigstone Cree Nation, where some  
20 of us are from, Tallcree First Nation, and I knew that  
21 Anzac was regulated by Fort McMurray First Nation, 468.

22 I have to thank those people because those  
23 people allowed us to use their Indian beach area as a base.  
24 I reached out to the investigator, the RCMP, and I said,  
25 "We're going to search based on this tip. We're going to





1                      One of the things that I learned is if you  
2 have a goal in your mind, or you want to ask somebody to  
3 help you with something, ask them. It's either yes or no.  
4 "Are you going support or no?" Some people say, "I'll do  
5 what I can." So the RCMP said they'd have their forensics  
6 on standby. It's been 13 years. I knew -- I -- I -- it's  
7 not the fact of finding my sister's remains there.

8                      It's the fact of making the effort to do  
9 something instead of just a box sitting in some office  
10 somewhere. You can talk to the box all day, you ain't  
11 going to -- you ain't going to get an answer. But at least  
12 if we go out there -- the only that's what's going to slow  
13 us down is the weather. And I talked to my brother about  
14 it and maybe it will snow or rain or something because  
15 October's unpredictable, but it was okay. He said, "At  
16 least we'll go pray." That would be one of the things we  
17 focused on. We did that.

18                     We managed to set gridlines. We set -- we  
19 had a plan. My sister, Lorraine, was really involved in a  
20 lot of the planning, and sister, Noella, and one of my  
21 sisters came from up north, Louise, and we all got together  
22 in Anzac there, and we did a four-day search, or as best as  
23 we could with little -- little or no resources. And some  
24 of us are -- are not medically able to do things, or some  
25 of us are not well off financially, but we managed to come

1 together and we did a four-day preliminary search over  
2 there.

3 And I don't think it was a fact that -- I  
4 mean it -- it gives you strength when you do a ground  
5 search. It gives you strength. It's not the fact whether  
6 are you going to find somebody there, or the bones, or  
7 whatever you're looking for. You're doing something  
8 instead of nothing. That's how we feel. Because the RCMP  
9 never -- they did -- and I don't know if they had a lot of  
10 these investigate -- the investigators that were with the  
11 file for years and years, there may have been five  
12 investigators, and I was told by someone there that, "Well  
13 they're -- they're doing their job. They're doing a good  
14 job."

15 Well, what job are they doing? Like, it's --  
16 we don't have that -- we don't have that system in place  
17 where there's an answer given and as soon as you walk in  
18 the door, so I don't know, like, it's -- the investigators  
19 were maybe five of them over the 13-year course that the  
20 file's been sitting there, so we had to do something.

21 I'm just going to let my daughter, Andrienne,  
22 talk a little bit on the -- on the process of following the  
23 murdered and missing Aboriginal woman, and whatever she  
24 wants to talk about too, because it's a lot -- well, I  
25 wouldn't see sitting here today if she didn't organize or

1 keep on top of how the Commission could help -- how the  
2 system works, and how what happens, and what her concerns  
3 are as well. Besides that my throat's getting sore.

4 **MS. ANDRIENNE BOOSTROM:** I just have to say  
5 first off, that the strength I have to do this comes from  
6 my family. I speak for some of them who can't be here. I  
7 speak on behalf of my daughter who is six years old. I  
8 worry for her when she's older, how am I going to explain  
9 the topic of missing and murdered women to her? Why do I  
10 have to tell her to be careful? You know, as a parent you  
11 worry for your children and you worry about things that  
12 you're going to say, will it affect her? Is this issue  
13 going to be an issue years down the road still? Are we  
14 going to make progress and you know, working with families?  
15 All these questions I still have. And some of them have  
16 been answered, some of them haven't.

17 I do a lot of marches. I work with you know,  
18 organisers who hold rallies. I attend meetings when I can.  
19 And I follow what the Inquiry is doing. But there's still  
20 that concern there. There's still that animosity there.  
21 That I feel personally from the RCMP. I'm not comfortable  
22 speaking with them.

23 When organisers get together and hold an  
24 Inquiry, I mean I'm getting different phone calls left and  
25 right from different people. I'm always speaking to

1 somebody different. "Oh, we passed your file along." Or,  
2 "I'm the one that's going to be doing this, working with  
3 you now." I mean I must have spoke with -- with ten people  
4 so far.

5 And I just feel like there could be a lot  
6 more done for these families in regards of healing. In  
7 regards of searching. You know, in regards of mentally  
8 preparing families and for parents. You know, parents of  
9 daughters. Parents of sons. You never want to have that  
10 conversation with them, like, "Hey, you might go missing,  
11 be careful when you walk out the door." That's my main  
12 concern as a parent. I just -- like, I dread that  
13 conversation. That's something I just don't want to share  
14 with her.

15 But I know that if I bring awareness and I  
16 bring people together, like my family, or anybody, and I  
17 talk about it more, and I speak about it more, you know  
18 we're going to be heard. And I will make sure that we will  
19 be heard regardless. I will speak on behalf of my aunt.  
20 On behalf of my family. On behalf of daughter. And  
21 myself.

22 That this process, the Inquiry, is putting  
23 out there, there's still a lot of things that need to be  
24 done. You know, there's still -- it's going to take time.  
25 It could be years down the road, we don't know, but I mean

1 I expect more from the government. I don't expect promises  
2 to be made and not be followed through. I don't expect you  
3 know, "Oh, maybe we'll just work on this at another time,  
4 et cetera." I -- I don't want to hear those things.

5 Another thing is that there was a cartoonist,  
6 Evan Munday, who had sent Stephen Harper, when he was prime  
7 minister, he sent pictures of Aboriginal women that were  
8 missing. Particularly because Stephen Harper had said that  
9 missing women was not on his radar, a non-Aboriginal person  
10 took a step, made it aware that, "Hey, this is an issue in  
11 Canada. This is, you know, something that we need to work  
12 on." My aunt's portrait was the first picture that was  
13 drawn and sent to Stephen Harper on Twitter. That tells  
14 you right there that you know, this is obviously a national  
15 issue. Not just for us in this room, or the Inquiry as a  
16 whole, but as the whole country you know, there's missing  
17 and murdered boys, men out there, women, you know, like  
18 there's a -- and it's not just an issue that Aboriginal  
19 people face. It's an issue that everybody faces.

20 I guarantee that you will meet somebody who  
21 has a loved one, or a relative, somebody in their family is  
22 missing, or somebody in their family has been murdered.  
23 You know, that's -- that -- that is coming up way too much.  
24 I know Edmonton has 40 people on their missing person list  
25 right now from when I last checked.

1                   That's too many people you know, there's no  
2 compliance with the RCMP regarding our safety as women.  
3 There are been times where I have been followed. I have  
4 been encountered by people here in the city. I call the  
5 RCMP to follow up on it and I just get a, "Oh, we'll call  
6 you back," or, "Just be careful."

7                   You know, who's going to -- you know, like  
8 help me with my safety basically as a woman? My children's  
9 safety? Who's going to you know, these are all questions  
10 that I have that I expect to be answered. And I really do  
11 honestly hope that we move forward and continue moving  
12 forward with this process and do not stop. Because I will  
13 not give up. And that's all I have to say.

14                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So Andrienne or Wilbert, I  
15 have a few questions. I'm not sure which one of you, so  
16 maybe what I'll do is I'll ask some questions just for  
17 clarification and then --

18                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** Fire away.

19                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** And you guys -- so with  
20 respect to the police investigation itself, did either one  
21 of you want to speak about how you felt after your -- your  
22 sister or your aunt disappeared?

23                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** That investigation was  
24 almost like individual based. They never sat down with us  
25 as a whole family. It was just like, "We're going to pick

1           you, come and -- come and talk to us." It was not this,  
2           "Hi, how are you," whatnot. It was a cold -- a cold  
3           question type of intimidating process, very cold. And  
4           regardless -- regardless of who's missing at least  
5           acknowledge that person and say, you know, "We -- we know  
6           you're -- your -- your father is missing, or your sister,  
7           or your brother is missing, come sit down with us and talk  
8           to us." It could be -- it doesn't have to be in a -- in a  
9           room with no windows, that's the way -- the way it was. It  
10          was very -- you didn't feel like you were -- it was kind of  
11          like you were being interrogated. Not willing to share the  
12          information.

13                           And the thing that really struck me after a  
14          while was okay, I didn't know who was being interviewed.  
15          There was quite a few people that I guess the RCMP had  
16          inquired about. My father was the contact of the family,  
17          the one main contact of the family, and sometimes they  
18          would -- he would go and put posters up, or he would try  
19          and do that -- reach out to them, "Is there any word?"  
20          "No." That was it. There was no, you know, "We talked to  
21          these people," or whatnot.

22                           Only when this -- this prime minister here  
23          implemented this system where I got a phone call all of  
24          sudden, things are starting to happen, holy smokes, you  
25          know. It's kind of like they're moving on a different --

1 different way instead of this non-communication manner.

2 And the thing that really struck me was they  
3 -- they did a lie detector test on my dad. How do you do  
4 that to somebody that's lost their kid, you know? A lie  
5 detector on an Elder. A Native Elder. That's so -- that's  
6 unbelievable.

7 Just like that time that -- I can only  
8 compare to the time my dad told me a story that he lost his  
9 glove when he was five years old, living in a mission, they  
10 were only given -- issued one pair of gloves and he dropped  
11 it in a toilet and the nun beat him and told him to go get  
12 it. Same damn thing. You put a lie detector on -- on a  
13 father that's -- that's hurting every day for his daughter  
14 and put a lie detector on him. And they did the same thing  
15 to my brother, my brother Delbert, they did a lie detector  
16 on him too.

17 So the -- the manner that they did the  
18 investigation you could put a lot of things into question,  
19 but -- but why does it -- does it have to follow that  
20 system. There's two systems in this country. There's one  
21 for us and one for them.

22 Native people in this country have lived with  
23 this system that is not their own for years and years,  
24 whether it's their -- their -- their life, or how they --  
25 they're perceived, racial profiling, you have a lot of







1       There was a lot of non -- non-verbal communication, the  
2       writing, the questions. "Is that it? Okay. See you  
3       later. Have a nice day." So that doesn't make you feel  
4       good. Doesn't sit well with you anyway, hey. It should be  
5       a little bit more open. When they...

6               I'll give it to her to -- to -- I'll ask  
7       about the -- ask her to relay how that (indiscernible) when  
8       she was asked questions as well, because she was -- you  
9       were living in McMurray, right?

10               **MS. ANDRIENNE BOOSTROM:** I was living on  
11       reserve with my ex-common-law at the time I was questioned.  
12       They had came up to the house and, the RCMP came to the  
13       door and said, "We need to can you a few questions about  
14       your aunt." So I went -- I mean thinking about it now,  
15       it's 13 years ago, I went inside the police car, and I  
16       remember sitting in the back, it wasn't, "Can we speak to  
17       you inside?" Or, "Do you have a place we can sit down and  
18       talk?" It wasn't nothing like that. It was, "Let's just  
19       have a few words."

20               So I mean when I was asked questions like,  
21       "When did you see her last?" Or, "When's the last time you  
22       talked to her?" Or -- I mean they were just basic simple  
23       questions and that was it. "Okay, we'll follow up with  
24       you. See you later." Maybe about four questions in total,  
25       I'm guessing. As far, as far as I can remember there was

1 probably about four. And I told them what I knew. And I  
2 wasn't given a card. I wasn't given, "Here's who handling  
3 the investigation." I wasn't given you know, any more  
4 information as to -- maybe if I did think of something I  
5 can call them, you know, that was 13 years ago.

6 Because of that, and because of many other  
7 reasons why I don't go into detail, I don't feel  
8 comfortable with the RCMP, still to this day. I still hold  
9 that anger towards them, that animosity, just because of  
10 the way they handle case files. And not just for me. I  
11 have friends who have relatives who are missing. I have  
12 you know, a lot of people I know, they have a loved one  
13 missing, and they tell me, like, "The RCMP is not doing a  
14 good job." They're not being polite. They're not being  
15 respectful.

16 Only now that the Inquiry is here you see  
17 progress, it shouldn't be like that, at all. It should --  
18 they should always be respectful. They should always, you  
19 know, reach out to families in a proper manner. And that's  
20 basically it.

21 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So Andrienne or Wilbert,  
22 you -- you had some recommendations for the Inquiry, and  
23 particularly some sort of facility here in Edmonton, did  
24 you want to talk a little bit about that? Give the  
25 Commissioner some of your ideas?

1                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** There's enough -- there's  
2 enough people missing now you don't have to justify  
3 directing -- there should be a -- a fast track on  
4 developing a place where our families could go to as -- as  
5 a daily base house. A place where we feel comfortable  
6 coming to share, or even coming together. There should be  
7 somebody -- somebody that's working on a one -- a one --  
8 one -- one spot in the province where we could come. It  
9 doesn't have -- you don't have to have these people like,  
10 these mental health workers sitting in a corner over here  
11 waiting for us. It doesn't have to be like that.

12                   It can be just a building where some of the  
13 stuff is stored. Maybe we could come and add a nice little  
14 picture with a prayer on it to -- for one of our -- our --  
15 our -- our family members that's missing. It can be  
16 somewhere where we could have a -- a family meeting, if we  
17 want to come together and talk about without being  
18 monitored, or whatever. Or somewhere where we, you know,  
19 like some of us it's hard to find a combination. Some of  
20 us the financial need is great there because we don't have  
21 the gas money to come and do that. If they -- or some of  
22 us are -- are working and if there's -- you know, there's a  
23 family meeting coming up, or other -- support -- to support  
24 other families as -- as a -- as a -- our own people support  
25 each other, come and sit and talk and this is what's

1           happening with this.

2                         Because what it does is it creates a comfort  
3           for us. It doesn't -- I mean there's some people that go  
4           to church, I guess to feel comfortable and get together.  
5           Well, we could come together for missing people in one  
6           building, and have that office there that -- or that little  
7           boardroom there, or whatever, and we could come and just  
8           even pray there, if we have to, once a month, or do  
9           something instead of this.

10                        You guys are hitting piecemeal right across  
11           the country with -- we have 52 different languages in this  
12           country. We have about 140 dialects of -- of -- of Native  
13           -- of Native languages. We could come to there and we  
14           could feel comfortable and some of us -- the older people  
15           that understand -- I -- I worked with a lot of Elders  
16           (speaking Cree language).

17                        **MR. INTERPRETER:** The Elders will come there  
18           so that they can talk quietly with other -- like -- so that  
19           they can talk quietly, and talk about these things. And --  
20           and they will learn something from there that they had take  
21           home and tell the younger people.

22                        **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** This is where it -- it  
23           builds -- you don't -- it's not difficult to help. It's  
24           not difficult to help. You want to do something for  
25           missing people in this province, there's -- the government

1 spends I'll -- and I'm just generalizing the government,  
2 but government spends a lot of money on buildings that are  
3 just sitting doing nothing. Give it over. Put a caretaker  
4 there. But have somebody watching that and you know, like  
5 they have people sign in, and come in, and we're going to  
6 have this meeting here. We're going to talk about this.  
7 We all have to work together.

8           You -- you don't need to throw 58 million  
9 dollars at it. You need to throw the system together where  
10 you have the opportunity for people to come together as a  
11 people not -- and not make it so -- so -- I guess  
12 bureaucratic, you know, I think, that's my big word for  
13 today. I might use marmalade, but bureaucratic, but that  
14 in itself is providing a base for an answer, just some of  
15 needs that are needed for our people that are -- are gone,  
16 even if it's women, men, children, what have you, the  
17 database should be there for access as well.

18           Well, you know, some of these files they  
19 might -- I mean some of people they might come together and  
20 they might figure out something that can be passed onto the  
21 RCMP too. It can be something that they might trigger a  
22 memory together. They might trigger something that they  
23 remember now, "Oh, yes, that was -- that happened and this  
24 is similar." Or they might be able to figure out, you  
25 know, something that might help somebody else's case. It's

1 all positive to work like that. It's not a -- a negative  
2 thing. We don't have to take apart a -- a building to use  
3 it. We just use the building, right.

4 An analogy that was given along time ago was  
5 if we come together, if you -- if you hold up one arrow --  
6 one arrow, you can bend it and break it. But if you hold  
7 all the arrows together let's see you try to break all  
8 those. You can't. I think that's how we have to come  
9 together on this whole issue of -- of missing people. I  
10 think that's one of the things -- the RCMP are part of that  
11 arrow system.

12 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So one of the things that  
13 you talked about is that -- in that support network, did  
14 you want the police involved in that, or do you want that  
15 completely community driven?

16 **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** I think both would work  
17 because at least we'd be able to -- at least some of the  
18 people that have questions for the RCMP, even though they  
19 might not be able to answer the specific files, is let's  
20 all work together. You might be policing us, but that  
21 doesn't mean you can't talk to us. That's a simple --  
22 simplicity in it. Look for the simple way to do things  
23 because why do we have to always make things hard?

24 The Creator gave us brains, let's figure out  
25 something simple to work together instead of always working





1           Some kind of benefit package should be given  
2 to them. They shouldn't have to be begging for it. This  
3 is -- this is -- this is the richest country in the world,  
4 you know, we've shared all our resources out of faith --  
5 out of faithfulness, so we could be -- a more united  
6 Aboriginal entity in this country. Just something should  
7 be given to them. That's all I'm saying. Because I'm not  
8 here -- I'm not out here begging or asking for anything for  
9 myself personally, or anybody else, but something for --  
10 out of good faith should be given to the -- to the children  
11 to the nephews, nieces; things like that. Because there's  
12 -- there's a lot more -- we have a lot more gifts for  
13 ourselves that we could share (indiscernible) like isn't  
14 anything for -- for nothing. Out of good faith. Ay-ay.

15           **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** There's -- there is --  
16 when we came together as a family to do the ground search I  
17 invited agencies, the police, Search and Rescue out of Fort  
18 McMurray. I invited mental health out of Fort McMurray. I  
19 invited victim services. I invited murdered, missing women  
20 because for my sister, murdered, missing women advocates,  
21 and whatnot. But that's what I found there's one thing, is  
22 it everybody's working on their own thing. They're not  
23 working together.

24           It seems like we're working like -- like the  
25 Federal government, we're spending -- we're spending time

1 in individual, we're not coming together as one unit to  
2 actually get to the heart of what we need -- what needs to  
3 be done. I don't know what the Commission is looking for.  
4 But sometimes you can't see what's in front of your face.  
5 You can't see the forest for the trees. I don't know. You  
6 have to be -- I mean -- why -- why does it -- why does it  
7 take 58 million dollars to decide something?

8 It's just the same thing as that Royal  
9 Commission that they did quite a few years back. The same  
10 thing with all of the healing funds that are going into  
11 this reconciliation thing. You know, you want to talk to  
12 somebody, probably the Elders have the most meaningful  
13 things.

14 That's one of the things that I want to point  
15 out to you too, is there's -- with our language, and I  
16 respect with the other languages, we always carry that one  
17 thing which means sacred. It also means don't take it for  
18 granted. (Speaking Cree language).

19 **MR. INTERPRETER:** Respect --

20 **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** Keep it sacred, don't  
21 take it for granted. That's what the Elders say. So these  
22 -- this mission that you're on, recognize that word.  
23 Recognize it for the people. Recognize it for people in  
24 general. Don't take things for granted. Things won't  
25 happen if you expect things to happen just because you --

1       you -- you -- you want them that way, or whatnot. You have  
2       to accept it as it is. Acceptance is one of those things  
3       that -- that is really hard too.

4                When we went to look for my sister, I didn't  
5       -- I had to accept what the weather was. I had to accept  
6       how many lack of volunteers, or volunteers that came out,  
7       or my friends came through and brought us a meal there,  
8       that was so good of them to bring that. Victim services  
9       gave us a couple of gas cards. Some of our family got --  
10      spent hundreds and hundreds of dollars to do that. And I  
11      have a bag of receipts in my back pocket I'm going to give  
12      to you so you could give that back. Share that 58 million.

13               Because we would -- we want to go back in the  
14      springtime look for my sister again. My dad's words are in  
15      -- in the news, newsfeed paper there, it says, "I'll never  
16      give up." "I'll never give up." And my sister's words are  
17      there too, Louise, she said, "It breaks my heart."

18               When you listen to us talk, and I don't  
19      distinguish myself from anybody, when you listen to a  
20      person talk, listen with your heart. Don't listen with  
21      your ears. These are the words that are spoken by a lot of  
22      people, and the young gentleman yesterday that was talking  
23      about his sister, Amber Tuccaro, he wanted to say a lot of  
24      things that -- he brought me to tears three times. He  
25      didn't even have to say very much for me to understand

1 where he was coming from.

2 I can't speak for my whole family as a whole,  
3 how they hurt, but what I can tell you is, there's no such  
4 thing as little hurt. It's all hurt. So if you want to  
5 take something your Inquiry from across this country for  
6 all of these people -- meaningful, meaningful,  
7 understanding of what needs to be done and fast tracking it  
8 so it doesn't take -- doesn't sit on a shelf for four or  
9 five years, or what have you.

10 And I don't know where this country is going.  
11 I don't have no opinion about that, but I do know I'll be,  
12 when I spoke with victim services and -- and the care  
13 workers and everybody here that I invited. I told them, I  
14 said, "Get yourself a pair of rubber boots. I'll give you  
15 a walking stick, you come." That's what I said to them.  
16 I'm not going to sit here and ask you to -- to sit down  
17 with me and feel bad for me. Come and help me. That's  
18 what I said. That's all I need to do.

19 And it's the same thing you should do with  
20 your inquiry. If you need people to people to help you  
21 understand or to do what you need to do with this Inquiry  
22 tell them, "Come, let's do it." You know. You don't have  
23 to make it so confusing.

24 But did we leave out anything there?

25 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** Andrienne, is there



1 to be more support. I mean I haven't met with the FFADA  
2 worker yet. I haven't you know, I'm very -- I'm not very  
3 open to who I share with, my story with. So that's why I  
4 asked there needs to be more support workers in place.

5 **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** A little bit more on that  
6 search there. What I got out of it was, there was other  
7 families that are -- that are wanting to do their own  
8 searches, and whatnot. We're -- we're going to sit down  
9 with them and work together. I don't know what kind of  
10 resources we'll have, but at least we'll be able to provide  
11 that information. That's the way I wanted to keep the  
12 whole...

13 And I'll give you that package. I have it on  
14 my -- on my -- my little -- what do you call those sticks?  
15 A USB stick. I have it on there. It's -- it's a list of  
16 my family, the agencies I reached out to, a little bit on  
17 my sister, and this is the introductory letter that I gave  
18 to all these people. And -- and I wanted them to know that  
19 they should all -- we should all come, and actually even go  
20 over to the Indigenous Relations Minister too because I  
21 believe that the more information that people have at their  
22 hand, at their disposal, helps in every single way, and  
23 that's what we're here to do.

24 The Alook family never gave up, and we're not  
25 going to give up, and we're going keep on doing what we

1 have to do, and if we help our brothers and sisters along  
2 the way that are missing people too, it doesn't matter if  
3 they're Native or not. We're here, so let's -- let's all  
4 work together, and let's all try to come up with -- let's  
5 start to take down a little bit of that hurt that everybody  
6 feels. Because I'm sure I'm not the only one with a --  
7 with a heart. Everybody has a heart. So let's all work  
8 another and trying and move forward and help each other,  
9 even if it's just with a ground search, or do what -- what  
10 have you, or even come together to eat, or to -- marches,  
11 like she said, the marches we do. And if he's walking on  
12 that march there. It was good -- good to do that, so we  
13 need -- we need that -- we need that. We need to do that  
14 process. We need to get there. We can get there together.  
15 And that's all I have to say. I can't say anymore.

16 **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So including the USB stick  
17 that we're going to get for the Commission, there's a  
18 couple of articles as well, one that speaks to the  
19 caricature that was -- the picture that was posted that we  
20 would like to leave with the Commission, as well as an  
21 article that speaks about the ground search that the  
22 Commission has heard about, so if we could give those to  
23 the Commissioner.

24 **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** I want to thank these  
25 people (speaking Cree language).



1                   **MR. INTERPRETER:** I'm very thankful for you  
2 being here to come and listen to us today.

3                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** Thank you very much from  
4 the Alook family, from the bottom of our hearts, for coming  
5 to listen with your heart. You didn't come to listen with  
6 your ears. You came here because your heart is open. This  
7 is what you have to take home to your families. Take your  
8 heart home open. Leave the hurt here with this smudge.  
9 This is what the Creator gave us. So come pray with me.  
10 We'll pray here. For these women and everybody that's  
11 missing. This is where we need to leave it.

12                   But we're going to take home that hope and  
13 that love to kids -- your families, your grandkids, and  
14 especially for the people in this whole country. Give them  
15 the support. I'm going to pray. I'll ask the Creator to  
16 bless everybody, and everybody that has come to listen  
17 here. (Speaking Cree language).

18                   **MR. INTERPRETER:** Hello to Creator, we all  
19 worry today with a broken heart we carry a broken heart.  
20 Bless us today and every day that we carry you're the Holy  
21 Father. We give you (indiscernible) first. You put us  
22 where we walk. (Indiscernible) Creator, we beg you that we  
23 have a strong voice today. You rule over everything. We  
24 give you this. Our broken hearts, that we will walk going  
25 forward so that everything is better. Our minds --

1                   **MR. WILBERT ALOOK:** In our hearts, in our  
2 minds, in our spirit, in our body. This is where it will  
3 be, the strength of the Creator, ay-ay.

4                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** (Indiscernible)  
5 questions?

6                   **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Yeah.

7                   **MS. JENNIFER COX:** So Mr. Commissioner, if we  
8 could adjourn the matter. And we'll conclude with the gift  
9 giving or would you like to ask some questions?

10                   **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** I don't have  
11 any questions. So if there's nothing further we can  
12 conclude and thank you very much for coming here today and  
13 sharing with us about your sister and your Aunt Elaine.  
14 Thank you very much.

15 --- Exhibits (code: P1P05P0205)

16 **Exhibit 1:** Folder of three digital images displayed on  
17 monitors during testimony.

18 **Exhibit 2:** CBC news article "Ground search underway for  
19 missing First Nations woman south of Fort  
20 McMurray" by David Thurton posted October  
21 14, 2017 6:00 AM MT last updated October 14,  
22 2017 6:00 AM MT, two-page copy.

23 **Exhibit 3:** CBC news article "Evan Munday tweets images  
24 of missing, murdered women to Stephen  
25 Harper" by Kim Wheeler posted January 7,

1                   2015 12:40 PM ET last updated January 9,  
2                   2015 2:47 PM ET, four-page copy.

3           --- Upon recessing at 3:21 p.m.

4           **Hearing # 3 Marilyn Buffalo**

5           **In relation to Brenda Poundmaker**

6           **Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson**

7           **Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe**

8           **Grandmothers, Elders, Knowledge-keepers: Ivy Rain, Pauline**

9           **Paulson and Bernie Skundaal Williams**

10          --- Upon resuming at 3:45 p.m.

11                   **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Good afternoon. Good  
12           afternoon, Commissioner Eyolfson. I would like to  
13           introduce you to Marilyn Buffalo, who is the next  
14           participant. Marilyn will be sharing the story of her  
15           sister, Brenda Poundmaker. And I would like to take the  
16           time to allow her just to introduce herself.

17                   **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** Good afternoon. My  
18           name is (speaking in Native language), which means morning  
19           sun woman. I'm from Treaty 6 from the Samson Cree Nation.  
20           And born and raised in Samson Cree.

21                   And I want to introduce my Elders, Ivy Rain  
22           from the Louis Bull First Nation and Sheila Potts (ph),  
23           both from my Nation, thank you.

24                   **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you, Marilyn,  
25           and thank you for coming this afternoon to share the story

1 of your sister, Brenda. And so one of the first things I'd  
2 like to ask you if you can share with the Commissioner some  
3 of the -- your sister's strengths and contributions.

4 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** My -- my sister,  
5 Brenda...

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Sorry. I'm sorry. I  
7 forgot to ask you to make a -- the oath. My apologies. It  
8 okay if the clerk gives you your oath?

9 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** Yes.

10 **MARILYN BUFFALO, Affirmed**

11 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you, and I'm  
12 sorry, and again my question was talking about Brenda's  
13 strengths and contributions.

14 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** My late sister,  
15 Brenda, was a very humorous, beautiful, young woman, who  
16 passed in her early 20s. She was a mother of two children,  
17 two daughters. And she got into a very abusive  
18 relationship when she was in her late teens. And so she  
19 suffered greatly as a result.

20 She is -- she is the daughter of my father,  
21 my late father, Ellyot (ph) Tootoosis, from the Poundmaker  
22 First Nation, from my dad's second marriage, so she was my  
23 half-sister, but we were very close. And she spent a lot  
24 of time with me and my family.

25 Brenda was raised the Tootoosis family by my

1 grandparents, John (ph) and Louisa (ph) Tootoosis in  
2 Poundmaker. And she was, you know, an aspiring artist and  
3 -- and was very much in the lead in our traditional family,  
4 in the community. And was taught all the protocols of  
5 childcare and maternal health as a young person herself.

6 And one of the things that I remember most  
7 about my sister is that she was a very good caregiver of  
8 elders, and also of children, and I can attest to that --  
9 to the fact that she lived with me for a number of years  
10 where she took care of my children while I was at work.  
11 And that really meant a lot to me and my children.

12 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I understand you come  
13 from a very large family that you're the eldest of a number  
14 of siblings, can you just tell us a little bit about your  
15 family background?

16 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** My -- my father, Elloyt  
17 Tootoosis, was in the Korean War and -- and then in  
18 1950s -- I was born in 1950, so he travelled a lot  
19 throughout the world, and was an engineer in the military,  
20 and he was also involved in rodeo, and -- and other sports,  
21 boxing and so on, and so he didn't even know until much  
22 later that I even existed, while he was in the Korean War.  
23 I -- he was over there already when I was born. And  
24 because of that relationship and his travel, my mother  
25 married and had -- I have 11 siblings in my mother's

1 marriage.

2                   And so my father remarried, his wife passed,  
3 which is why Brenda ended up in my grandfather's,  
4 grandmother's care, and remarried and had two sisters, so  
5 all together he had four daughters. I have a sister that  
6 lives here in Edmonton and works as a -- a youth addictions  
7 support worker and has her degrees in social work. So my  
8 father raised all of us and -- and I guess in an extended  
9 family way I had the benefit of having grandparents that  
10 were very caring and loving, supporting all of us in a  
11 traditional Cree way.

12                   And my grandfathers all were politicians,  
13 John Tootoosis, who was good friends with my maternal  
14 grandfathers, great grandfathers, and they sang in the Sun  
15 dance and performed ceremonies from very early age. So I  
16 had the benefit of both families.

17                   **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. Now you  
18 had mentioned that your sister had spent time, and was  
19 pretty close with your children as well.

20                   **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** M'hm, yes.

21                   **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And you also told us  
22 that she had two children of her own. Could you tell me a  
23 little bit about that abusive relationship and -- and sort  
24 of what she had to do and choices she had to make.

25                   **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** From my nearest memory,

1 the children were -- her two children were born in  
2 Saskatchewan, and she was very -- the babies were really  
3 young when she moved to Edmonton. She fled (sic) from her  
4 abusive relationship, and found it very difficult to adjust  
5 and got very depressed and you know, many times gave up and  
6 -- in her struggle as a single mother because she was very  
7 young and her children being very small as well, and at  
8 that time in the city of Edmonton there wasn't a lot of  
9 support services for -- for single mothers.

10 And so my sister got very depressed, as I  
11 said, and got into -- I would say with friends that were  
12 not of very good background and got into drinking. And  
13 much to, you know, my -- my -- I guess, what she would say,  
14 my preaching, I was a young mother of -- of course, myself.  
15 I was working at the University of Alberta as the Native  
16 Affairs advisor to the president in 1975. So already I had  
17 four children of my own.

18 And one day -- she would come and go. She  
19 would stay with me for two, three months and then she'd  
20 disappear and her friends would find out where she was and  
21 so on. And then one day she said to me that she had given  
22 up her two girls for permanent guardianship. Of course, I  
23 wasn't too happy with that and I said, "Why did you do  
24 that? Why didn't you give them to me?" And she said, "You  
25 already have four children. You don't need any more."

1           So that began, I think, again a very  
2           difficult journey for me, knowing all I had of my nieces  
3           were pictures, baby pictures, sitting in chairs at that  
4           time of course, it didn't matter what you did or how much  
5           money you had, you know, if you had lawyers or whatever,  
6           you wouldn't access any information from Child Services in  
7           Alberta. This is in the 70s. And so it didn't matter who  
8           I talked to of any authority, the law is the law, so I lost  
9           those two girls. And there was no way, even after she  
10          passed.

11                 She passed in 1982, she was murdered and  
12          severe head injury. She was beat up really bad. I was  
13          living in Fort McMurray again at the time and she had come  
14          stayed with me a few times in Fort McMurray. I would come  
15          down here and I would look for her in the streets of  
16          Edmonton. And due to privacy reasons the woman's shelters  
17          and other support workers, which were very few at the time  
18          would never tell me, where she was.

19                 So I would go from bar to bar and I would  
20          look for her. And again, of course, the women that she was  
21          hanging around with wouldn't tell me anything. They saw me  
22          as kind of like the enemy and hid her. So it was  
23          impossible for me to -- to find her. And when I did find  
24          her sometimes I'd bring her home.

25                 But when she died in 1982 it was -- it was



1 almost at that point for me that I realized that one day  
2 I'm going to get that phone call. One day my sister is not  
3 going to come home, because I saw in her symptoms that she  
4 was increasingly giving up, depressed, not taking care of  
5 herself. And drinking really hard liquor. And I don't  
6 think that at that time there was much drug activity, so --  
7 but I know that there were no support for her at all. Even  
8 under child welfare or social workers, there was no support  
9 at all for -- for her or for me.

10 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Marilyn, when -- when  
11 Brenda had to give up her children, did you notice an  
12 increase in her drinking or her depression?

13 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** Well, she -- she would  
14 talk to me, you know when she was high and telling me about  
15 you know, "There's no use for me to continue on." "There's  
16 no point." "I give up." "That's it." And my -- my sister  
17 spoke fluent Cree and so she would tell me these -- these  
18 things you know, and really upset me because I didn't think  
19 that anybody, you know, even my own sibling, would ever get  
20 to that point where there would be no hope, and she got  
21 there many times, and I -- many time was I able to pull her  
22 out and -- and give her you know, some stability, but it  
23 was never enough.

24 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And so you had  
25 explained to the Commissioner that she gave the children up

1 and they went in, they became permanent wards. You  
2 couldn't access the information. They became adopted.  
3 Have you ever been able to contact or communicate with them  
4 subsequently?

5 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** One night we went to a  
6 New Year's Eve party and this woman approached me and she  
7 said, "You know, we found your niece, your daughter. I  
8 think she's your relative. She showed up. She's 17 years  
9 old." And immediately the party stopped there. You know,  
10 it was not -- I -- I went into shock and decided, "Well,  
11 I'm going home. I have to do some more work on this. I  
12 have to find her." It turns out one of them was adopted in  
13 a nearby community, near my reserve, and the two girls got  
14 separated. And again, you know, that was after I think the  
15 laws had changed, but it's never been the same, you know.  
16 I -- I still don't know who this -- the second, the  
17 youngest one, and even where she is right now.

18 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And so one of the  
19 other things is, you know, when you were talking about your  
20 sister and the fact that she was -- was killed, can you  
21 share a little more detail maybe about how your family came  
22 to know about her, or what -- what they did once they  
23 heard?

24 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** I was sleeping one  
25 morning and my -- my husband, at the time, was working at

1        Syncrude Canada and he would get up early in the morning to  
2        go to work. And so the phone rang, I could barely faintly  
3        hear the phone ringing and in my mind I was thinking, "I  
4        don't want to answer that phone. I'm tired. I'm going to  
5        stay in bed." Because I, you know, myself I could feel  
6        that I wasn't well. I wasn't dealing with this very well  
7        at all. And I was afraid that one day, yes, I'm going to  
8        get that horrible phone call, and I fell back asleep, and I  
9        could feel -- I was laying on my tummy and -- and this  
10       person came and stood by my bed and was pulling my right  
11       hand and said, "Come with me." This woman said to me,  
12       "Come with me." I said, "No, I'm -- I'm going to stay  
13       here. I can't -- can't go with you, I have to stay here  
14       with my children."

15                    And a half an hour later the phone rang again  
16        and it was my -- my Auntie Shirley Tootoosis. And then she  
17        told me that Brenda had been found, and she had passed here  
18        in Edmonton. And I thought she said Charles Camsell  
19        Hospital, although I -- sometimes my memory you know, that  
20        part of my memory has somehow been deleted; I don't know.  
21        But my grandfather, John, came here and spoke with the  
22        police and tried to do his best to try and find out how she  
23        died, and who -- who killed her.

24                    And all I remember him telling me is that her  
25        head had been smashed on the -- it looked like on the

1 cement, in -- on the street. But who was there, none of  
2 that ever -- no -- no closure was ever given to us, or him  
3 for sure.

4 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And -- and you had  
5 just told us that was in 1982. And your grandfather, John  
6 Tootoosis, I understand he was a fairly influential man  
7 with --

8 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** Yes, he was.

9 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** -- the First Nation  
10 communities.

11 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** M'hm.

12 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So what -- what --  
13 what was his background a little?

14 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** Grandfather John  
15 Tootoosis was a Treaty rights advocate of 53 years of his  
16 life, from 19 onwards, till he passed about 1990. He was  
17 the founding president of the Federation of Saskatchewan  
18 Indians, and he was a hereditary Chief. That's my dad's  
19 dad. And he was a very, very powerful leader who travelled  
20 internationally advocating for our people.

21 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And I guess the point  
22 of my question was to know was somebody who was affluent as  
23 he was, and sort of recognized within First Nations, even  
24 when he came to Edmonton he wasn't able to get answers?

25 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** No. No -- no -- no

1 closure was ever there for my grandfather. Him and I, we  
2 talked about this. He was my mentor, and he was my guide  
3 throughout my life. My professional career. And I know  
4 that he -- you know, after she passed we spent a lot of  
5 hours -- sleepless nights talking about this, about how --  
6 how difficult it was for him to, to lose a granddaughter  
7 with such a you know, beautiful, bright, future and -- and  
8 a beautiful young woman she was.

9 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Now, if you don't  
10 mind, I'm going to ask you a couple of questions about your  
11 life, so following your -- your sister's death I understand  
12 that you eventually became a single mother yourself?

13 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** M'hm.

14 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can you share a  
15 little bit about that, please?

16 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** My -- sadly, I myself  
17 fell into drinking after that. I would say for about a  
18 good year-and-a-half. I too found friends that were the  
19 life of the party in Fort McMurray and elsewhere, and they  
20 were my only friends, and at that time I already had four  
21 children, like I said, and my -- I think because now and in  
22 retrospect I've never been angry at the church. I've  
23 always been a good faithful church goer, even in my teen  
24 years. As a residential school survivor I was taught never  
25 to be angry at God. Not to hate the church or anything.

1           So what helped me was a young pastor, a  
2 priest, in -- in Fort McMurray and said, "Would you like to  
3 come on a retreat?" I said, "Sure. I'd love to go on a  
4 retreat. I haven't been away from my children for many  
5 months and I'm -- I'm grieving." He said, "Yeah, I know  
6 that, Marilyn, I know you're grieving." He said, "You've  
7 changed." And so they took me a four-day retreat. And at  
8 that retreat is when I found myself again and -- like I  
9 wasn't drinking every day. I was going on parties and  
10 hockey games and you know, my behaviour definitely had  
11 changed.

12           So when I came to the realization, and my  
13 husband and I were going and getting counselling, which I  
14 insisted, he couldn't meet me halfway. He -- I said,  
15 "Well, You know, we -- we got married and I think you  
16 should come to that yourself. In my mind," I said, "We  
17 made a commitment to God that we're going to be together  
18 for life and I don't like the way you treat me. You don't  
19 respect me and you're not respecting our family home. And  
20 don't want you bringing drinking here ever -- ever again."

21           So that started the warfare. And so I left  
22 December 1985. I left with six children. I had six  
23 children again at that -- or already. I had two in Fort  
24 McMurray.

25           And I had saved a bunch of money and I came

1 to Edmonton, back to my home community. And no one in our  
2 family of all of us had ever had been divorced or separated  
3 so my parents, my step-father, they took it really hard.  
4 My brothers cried, and I know my brother Danny (ph) picked  
5 me up at the airport, he's like, "I can't believe this  
6 sister, I can't believe this is happening to you. To us."  
7 So I stayed with him until I got well.

8 Then I ended up in a women's shelter in Red  
9 Deer, and 21 days, I went there myself, and I would sit at  
10 night thinking about my sister, and what she'd been through  
11 and I thought, God -- help me, God, I'm not going to ever  
12 go through this myself because I could see how women could  
13 slip into a deep depression and never come out. And I was  
14 a prime candidate you know, as a single mother of six kids  
15 and how am I going to survive. I'm 35 years old. I had  
16 already had a full career.

17 And I had already established the faculty of  
18 Native Studies at the University of Alberta before I was 30  
19 and I just -- I did not like Fort McMurray at all. There  
20 was no support services there. I was president of the  
21 friendship centre in Fort McMurray, and I seen the women  
22 and how devastated they were with all that development and  
23 -- and challenges that they had, and I was working at the  
24 college, "I'm out. I got to get out." So I went to a  
25 priest. No, the director said to me, one night about two

1 o'clock, I was sitting, and I started smoking cigarettes  
2 too and drinking coffee.

3 I never drank coffee in my life, and he said,  
4 "What's wrong with you, Marilyn?" He said, "Why are you  
5 here? You're different from others," he said, "Why are --  
6 why -- why are you here? Talk to me. You haven't talked  
7 to anybody." So I said, "Well, I took a vow of marriage,  
8 of holy matrimony, and -- and now I've broken it. I need  
9 to understand that." "So what can I do for you?" "I need  
10 to talk to a priest, and an Elder."

11 So next morning at seven o'clock my children  
12 got taken to swimming and the priest came. For the first  
13 four hours I talked about my marriage and he said to me,  
14 "In Canon law, he explained in Canon law to me, when two  
15 people are not together -- that one is more abusive -- or  
16 one is abusing the other that means that he is the one that  
17 broke the marriage, not you, under Canon law," and he  
18 explained it all in detail to me.

19 Then I was fine. I realized I'm not the one  
20 that's breaking this marriage. So from then on I never  
21 looked back. And raised my children by myself for all  
22 these years I've been alone.

23 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can we talk a little  
24 bit about -- you talked about, you know, what it meant in  
25 your family for the marriage, can we talk about what it



1       meant in your family that your sister ended up giving her  
2       children up, and sort of some of the shame or some of the -  
3       - the feelings that would have been around...

4                   **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** Well, because no one in  
5       our family had never had their children taken. My parents,  
6       my grandparents, there was no such thing as apprehension in  
7       our family. Somebody always took over, there was always a  
8       support there if someone was no longer able to care for  
9       their children. The government never ever took our  
10      children because my grandfathers were all -- they stood up  
11      against the Church and said, "No, you're not taking our  
12      children."

13                   So when had happened to my sister, it was  
14      absolutely devastating for everybody, but again we didn't  
15      have the -- we didn't have the wherewithal, the legal --  
16      and -- and -- there were even, if you studied the law then  
17      there was no way you would get those children out of that  
18      system. And the boarding school system did enough damage  
19      to our families prior to that, that all we were doing was  
20      rebuilding our culture, and rebuilding our spirituality,  
21      and our Nations, and, and following my grandfather's  
22      teachers, grandmothers. It was -- it was a bad time in the  
23      80s in this -- in this province.

24                   **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And -- and sorry,  
25      when I used the word shame, I -- I didn't mean it

1 derogatorily. I think when we look back -- like I think if  
2 you were standing here now and you look back can you maybe  
3 talk to how that decision maybe weighed on your sister?  
4 And how it might have made her feel around the family?

5 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** Well, because we never  
6 abandoned our children, it's almost like she -- she felt  
7 helpless, and shame, you know, the -- like she wouldn't  
8 talk about it unless she was high. She -- she became  
9 really angry towards me because I would always be asking  
10 questions. I was trying to figure out a way that I could  
11 get those children -- and maybe it's not a permanent  
12 guardianship order. Maybe it's -- there's a legal you  
13 know, mechanism, some kind that we could find to bring them  
14 back.

15 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Now, based on your  
16 life experience between the loss of your sister and the  
17 breakdown of your marriage and abuse, what happened in your  
18 life? What happened in your career? Did you become driven  
19 in new directions or advocate harder in new areas?

20 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** Well, I remember, I  
21 went to my council, one of my leaders, women counsellors  
22 and I asked her, I said, "Do -- you know, can you help me?  
23 Is there support in our Nation for -- to relocate me? To  
24 help me find a home?" And she said, "Aren't you ashamed?"  
25 I said, "For what?" I said, "Aren't you ashamed that you

1 know, your leaving your marriage?" And I said, "No." I  
2 looked at her and I said, "Aren't you ashamed? You're  
3 living in a very abusive relationship." She didn't like  
4 that. But I knew that she was probably in a worse  
5 situation than I was.

6 And so there was no support, you know, for --  
7 for me. But the one thing that I made a -- a pledge, my  
8 daughter -- my oldest daughter was 14 at the time when I  
9 left my husband. And I had taught her enough about  
10 ceremony, and so on, and she went for me because I couldn't  
11 go at the time. It was my time, and I couldn't go to the  
12 lodge. And so I told her what she needed to do for me and  
13 the family, and she -- you know, the -- she went to the  
14 Elder on our behalf, and I stayed back, about a mile away  
15 from the lodge, and my Elder told me, he said, "Marilyn,  
16 there nothing wrong with you," and that's all I needed to  
17 hear.

18 So in my prayers I set goals, which I've  
19 always done in my life, and my number one goal was going to  
20 be in that year I was going to be the president of Native  
21 Women of Canada, come hell or high water. And I made that  
22 pledge to that priest, and also to that Elder, and to the  
23 director of that women's shelter in Red Deer, so I achieved  
24 that, but in that process of advocacy is very -- it's a  
25 very demeaning exercise. It's not for the weak because

1 you're always constantly being judged, not only by your own  
2 peer group, but by people that live in the community.  
3 Women that are outspoken are chastised and they're often  
4 seen as trouble makers and called manipulative and  
5 deceptive. And that's not nice. It's not a -- it's not a  
6 good environment for women leaders. Especially if you're  
7 Indigenous.

8                   And people in the community sometimes of  
9 different faith do not -- they don't honour that. It's  
10 very, very tough work. It's not something that you do out  
11 of choice. It's something you have to do. It's -- because  
12 it's a matter of survival. I've never put money first.  
13 I've always put my people first. And my career. And my --  
14 in my lodge with my ceremonies, grandfathers talk to me.  
15 And the grandmothers. I'm not ashamed to say that.

16                   Maybe if you went to a psychiatrist they lock  
17 you up, but if they locked me up I'd drive them crazy. I'd  
18 drive them all around the bend. But because -- and I think  
19 my aunts here can attest to that. We've all been -- we are  
20 born and -- by good stock. We Buffalo women are -- are  
21 strong. If it wasn't for the women in our Nations nobody  
22 would be alive. No one would survive. And I'm of that age  
23 now, I'm 67, my early childhood teacher was my great  
24 grandmother, who taught me from the time I was small till I  
25 was born, until I went to school when I was seven years

1 old, so I still reap the benefits of my grandmother's  
2 teachings.

3 I know the value of that good traditional  
4 family life and living, and so in that process what you do  
5 is you mentor people. You -- you constantly aspire to  
6 higher levels of leadership whether it be elected or not,  
7 it doesn't matter you're still a leader as a woman. And so  
8 if anything, I've tried to do in my work, and education,  
9 and leadership, or whether it's working with policy of any  
10 kind, social policy, it's always been from a traditional  
11 perspective. It's -- sometimes you break the rules, you  
12 rewrite the policy, you reshape it, and sometimes you trash  
13 it, and you do that unapologetically. And -- and it  
14 doesn't make you very popular. But then you don't do it  
15 for gain anyway so it doesn't matter.

16 And that's everything you  
17 would -- everything I've done. I'm not trying to make  
18 myself sound like a hero, or -- but that's the way my  
19 grandfather mentored me. And we can't behave like victims.  
20 We are not victims. We are -- people call us survivors. I  
21 don't like that word "survivors" because it keeps you in  
22 one place. And I think of myself as a thriver. I -- I go  
23 and beyond the rule of law.

24 And that's why I've always kept my sister's  
25 memory and honour in a high place, and imagined that there

1 are other Brenda's out there that will, that -- whose lives  
2 will improve because of the policy work that -- that I've  
3 done maybe. I've gone all the way to the Supreme Court of  
4 Canada on many issues.

5 I've lost my Indian status when I married my  
6 -- my ex-husband at the age of 24, so I learned how to  
7 budget, save money. Prioritize my -- my goals, and I've  
8 never been to university, but I've lectured in every  
9 university in Canada. Sometimes two, three times, and --  
10 and I've advised -- I've worked in two colleges and two  
11 universities as an advisor, and I still do that currently.  
12 I'm a senior Indigenous advisor to the University of  
13 Alberta again after 40 years. So we have a lot to be  
14 thankful for. It hasn't been easy. But thousands of  
15 people have graduated from there and still more to go.

16 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** On that note of  
17 education, I know that the impact of the loss of your  
18 sister and your own lived experience really shaped your  
19 career in terms of advocating for women, but can you tell  
20 me a little bit about how important education is for  
21 Indigenous women?

22 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** Well, education did a  
23 lot of damage to our people. And there's no doubt in my  
24 mind, after knowing the history of our families how many  
25 generations of single mothers we have, the highest

1 statistics of suicide in our Nations, and that's been  
2 throughout the last probably three, 400 years our women  
3 have been exploited and dealt with like they're chattels or  
4 properties of somebody else, never having their own  
5 destiny. I think that we have the highest single parent  
6 mothers, the Indigenous women in this country, Statistics  
7 Canada, I think can prove that.

8 We have -- how many of our children are  
9 having children. Faster than any general populations, but  
10 there's -- the social policy elements that are out there do  
11 not know how to honour that, respect that. We have a need  
12 of support services in urban centers because that's where  
13 the majority of our women are living. There's no homes in  
14 our communities. There's high break ups and breakdowns of  
15 families in our families. So they're moving to the urban  
16 centers, and it seems to me that there's more focus on  
17 providing support services for immigrants, recent  
18 immigrants, than there are for our own people. And I am  
19 not happy with that.

20 And it bothers me that you know, there's a  
21 high diabetes problem, mental health issues, gangs,  
22 addictions, and we don't even have the -- the wherewithal  
23 in our Nations to combat that, and as a result our children  
24 suffer in school. There's high transiency between on the  
25 reserve, off reserve. And it's difficult for us, even when

1 a child goes missing, and that's for boys and girls, that  
2 sometimes you have to wait too long before the police will  
3 put it out as an alert, and that's a problem.

4 The other issues that we're dealing with here  
5 is privacy. We don't know if a child has been brought to a  
6 -- maybe got arrested, maybe in the hospital, but due to  
7 privacy we can't access that information, so it -- it's --  
8 it's a big issue.

9 We're now dealing with the generations in our  
10 Nations where children that are put into foster care are  
11 now aged out and now don't belong to any reserve. Are not  
12 registered Métis or -- or First Nation with any particular  
13 First Nations, and so how do we rebuild families if  
14 children don't know how -- or don't know who to go talk to  
15 about searching for their families?

16 So mothers get depressed, very, you know, and  
17 many times give up, but that doesn't mean -- you know, I  
18 have eight brothers, they're all lovely guys, real strong  
19 guys. Respecting women. The men too, suffer. They suffer  
20 silently and you just have to go to the surrounding  
21 community here in the Provincial jails, the Federal jails  
22 are full, and I ask Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister  
23 Carolyn Bennett, "How come they're building more jails and  
24 not colleges?" That does not make sense to me.

25 So knowing the history of our people in



1 education, we're trying to break free of the residential  
2 school era, but they're not helping us. They're not  
3 helping us because the provincial -- our kids are being  
4 educated in a provincial system that does not respect our  
5 cultures.

6 And there's no languages being taught. Our  
7 languages are being lost. Our Elders are not being hired  
8 at the same rate as others. And like my mother says, she's  
9 88 years old, "Do my boys have to go to jail before they  
10 can get cultural training? Or is that somehow we can  
11 instill that pride and understanding and teachings  
12 traditional knowledge in the existing systems?" Those are  
13 my mother's words.

14 And I think that's where we really need to  
15 seriously look at -- we can't keep locking people up. We  
16 can't. We're criminalizing poverty. We're criminalizing  
17 you know, disease, mental health illness, addictions, and  
18 we just can't keep going the way we are.

19 And I guess for me, in my career, I've  
20 participated in the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples.  
21 I've even done peer reports and I've written reports. And  
22 I've worked with the TRC in promotion of child and murdered  
23 and missing indigenous women, advocating for a public  
24 inquiry.

25 And now I've been following and supporting

1 the work of Dr. Cindy Blackstock, and the work that she's  
2 doing, and I think, "Who's going to stop the train? How --  
3 how is this going to be finally put to a place where we can  
4 change?" And -- and where our women will be supported and  
5 empowered, and the men too. Thank you.

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I understand that you  
7 have some recommendations. Can we talk about those  
8 recommendations?

9 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** You know, we try and  
10 make good out of bad all the time. One of the  
11 recommendations I would like to make is for the -- this  
12 Inquiry, Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women to hold a  
13 community hearing at the Mikisew Cree Nation, which is an  
14 hour south of here, a population of 20,000, four Nations;  
15 Ermineskin, Samson, Louis Bull, and Montana. And my aunts  
16 here are -- are from Louis Bull and Montana. And for us to  
17 be given the opportunity to -- to say -- to be heard and --  
18 because again we don't have access to the information, but  
19 my well informed sources tell me that in our Nation we have  
20 39 missing men and 27 missing women, and we don't know how  
21 many have been murdered.

22 Every week we are -- we do this work without  
23 support. I have enough work on my desk over and above my  
24 regular work duties at the U of A, which is a very large  
25 institution, for ten people to actually do the research and

1 to help as social workers, therapists, and helpers for the  
2 people just in my Nation alone, off reserve.

3 Our people are poor, they don't have  
4 Internet. They don't have Wifi, all the modern  
5 conveniences. They don't know that this hearing is being  
6 held here. And if I hadn't advocated probably I wouldn't  
7 be here either.

8 There's no busing, there's no Greyhound bus  
9 that comes to our Nations. A lot of our people have to  
10 hitchhike. And they don't have the money to come here.  
11 Our Chief and council are inundated with all of the  
12 requests that come on a daily basis. Two of my brothers  
13 are on council, so I know how much work is involved in  
14 this, so that would be my request. Our four Nation Chiefs,  
15 I know they would support this.

16 I had made this request before to two of the  
17 support workers for previous Commissioner Marilyn Buttress  
18 (ph) here in Edmonton, they came and met with us at the  
19 women's shelter on a Thursday. The following Friday I read  
20 on CBC that they resigned. She resigned. So it's not  
21 unusual for us to make this request.

22 Also my friend, Elder Ruth Scalplock (ph)  
23 from Siksika was there with me at that meeting, and also  
24 Jan Reimer who is the executive director of the Alberta  
25 women's shelters was also there at that meeting and very

1 credible leaders in this province. So we were told, "No,  
2 at that time." But I said, "That's fine. I'll come back.  
3 We'll find another avenue."

4 My second recommendation would be the  
5 creation of a memorial honour scholarships for Indigenous  
6 memory, Indigenous women who are murdered, and I recommend  
7 their respective Chief and councils raise funds for the  
8 creation of these postsecondary scholarship awards to  
9 honour and encourage Indigenous women attending university.

10 Presently I'm involved in, we're calling it:  
11 Women's Resiliency at the University of Alberta, a project  
12 that's being lead by Dr. Tracy Bear, and discussing on how  
13 we can encourage our women to be more resilient,  
14 encouraging them to be powerful women Nation members again.

15 My third recommendation, is a development of  
16 a murdered and missing indigenous women memorial honour  
17 park where -- parks where families and survivors of missing  
18 and/or murdered indigenous women can plant trees in honour  
19 of their loved ones with a name and a plaque of their name  
20 and origin to be memorialized. And -- and that every  
21 region should do this.

22 That these women should never go in vain, and  
23 maybe probably many have never been properly buried with  
24 their traditional rights and memory of their loved ones.  
25 So that these fallen women could live on forever while

1 replenishing mother earth and provided much needed oxygen  
2 for life to continue.

3 So those are my recommendations that I -- I  
4 want to bring forward. Like I said before, I have had  
5 difficulty and I guess to -- to continue hope in this  
6 process I will continue to -- as a former president of  
7 Native Women of Canada, and also as a former chair of the  
8 UN Global forum on Indigenous Women, which I've chaired,  
9 continue to -- to advocate for this. So I appreciate being  
10 heard at this forum.

11 And if -- if you are able to honour my  
12 request to have a community hearing in Mikisew we know who  
13 the good workers are there. They're very honourable women  
14 and -- and well educated women that we could -- or you  
15 could hire. Possibly we could have -- make an application  
16 or a joint application for funding so that it's done  
17 properly. And -- and make sure that our Elders, both men  
18 and women are -- are well paid as well.

19 So -- and I also want to request that your  
20 extension of the Commission be extended. As a former  
21 leader and still continuing to advocate I knew when this  
22 announcement was made that you couldn't do this work in two  
23 years. I know that.

24 And also it has to be in a reframe --  
25 reframing exercise for the commission itself to seek a new

1 mandate in the process of that extension to break free from  
2 Privy Council and the Prime Minister's office. Much like  
3 the same way was done when the TRC went for their new  
4 mandate under Justice Sinclair, after Harry LaForme  
5 resigned, Justice Sinclair and Dr. Wilton Littlechild,  
6 Marie Wilson did the same, so I encourage you to do that in  
7 the same way. Whatever legal means there are for you to go  
8 to the Federal court and seek that new mandate for it to be  
9 truly independent and to be heard. Thank you.

10 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. Thank you  
11 for sharing your recommendations. I know that you've  
12 already shared a lot of your story, but I always just want  
13 to make sure I've afforded an opportunity in case there's  
14 anything we missed if you wanted to add anything before I  
15 ask Commissioner Eyolfson if he'd like to ask questions or  
16 comments. Is there anything else that you wanted to add?

17 **MS. MARILYN BUFFALO:** I think that there --  
18 our women are really -- really powerful. If -- if there  
19 was some way that you could recommend -- I guess -- I don't  
20 know how you would call it -- support services for those  
21 men and women whose children are in care. Right now all  
22 they do is apprehend -- apprehend -- apprehend. That's all  
23 they know how to do. And so we've become this new  
24 industry, and I don't care who and how powerful the Federal  
25 and Province civil servants think they are. But if you

1 don't have an end result that's positive to rebuilding the  
2 family, then all they're doing is stealing children. No  
3 different from what they did in the residential school era,  
4 and they're profiting from it. I know that because I've  
5 done enough work in that policy area to know.

6 That the legislations have to change. The  
7 Provincial legislation has to change. And I know that  
8 there's a lot of promises that are made, but when the  
9 rubber hits the road it's always the -- the non-Aboriginal  
10 families that have the final say. It's never the parents.  
11 The -- the biological parents, and the -- and the  
12 grandmothers. So if you go to the family court in the City  
13 of Edmonton you will see nothing but Indigenous people's  
14 names. And there's no support. There's no legal support  
15 for those grandparents and the parents. And there's  
16 definitely no means for them to get up on their two feet to  
17 get a job, to get training, employment, to rebuild  
18 themselves. There's nothing like that. And it's really --  
19 really -- all we're doing is building a pipeline from the  
20 cribs to the grave and our people are completely powerless  
21 in that process.

22 So I would highly recommend that somehow with  
23 your authority and influence that that change be made, to  
24 address that whole process of stealing children and not  
25 giving the support to the parents is wrong. Thank you.

1                   **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Commissioner  
2 Eyolfson, do you have any questions or comments for  
3 Marilyn?

4                   **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** I don't have  
5 any additional questions.

6                   Marilyn, I just want to thank you very much  
7 for coming and sharing with us this afternoon about your  
8 sister, Brenda, and also about your life experience and  
9 your incredible work experience. I want to thank you very  
10 much for your recommendations that you brought forth for us  
11 as well. It's very much appreciated.

12                   And I just have a -- a small token, or gift  
13 of appreciation for your participation this afternoon that  
14 I'd like to share with you before we -- we close.

15                   **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Grandmother Marilyn,  
16 these Eagle Feathers were donated -- or not donated, they  
17 were given from the Haida Nation, from the matriarchs that  
18 were collecting them on the beaches in Haida Gwaii, and  
19 also there was a call out nationally from other family  
20 members and villages, reserves all across Canada so this is  
21 gifts to the families. (Speaking native language).

22                   **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you,  
23 Commissioner Eyolfson. I believe that for today we're  
24 actually finished so I would kindly request an adjournment  
25 until tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m.



1                   **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you,  
2 let's adjourn for the day, and we'll resume tomorrow  
3 morning at 9:00 a.m., thank you.

4                   **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you.

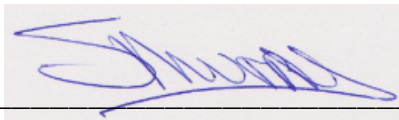
5 --- Exhibits (code: P1P05P0206)

6 **Exhibit 1:** One-page copy of list of three  
7 recommendations by Marilyn Buffalo dated  
8 November 8, 2017.

9 --- Upon adjourning at 4:45 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Shannon Munro, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this matter.



Shannon Munro

February 13, 2018