

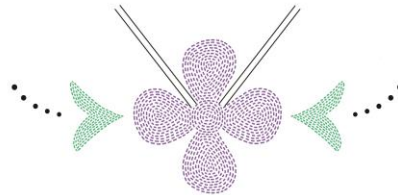
National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

**National Inquiry into Missing & Murdered
Indigenous Women & Girls
Truth-Gathering Process - Part 1 Public Hearings
Riverlodge Place**

Thompson, Manitoba



PUBLIC

Wednesday March 21, 2018

**Public Volume 77
Susan Clipping & Christine Merasty,
In relation to Clara Dantouze**

**Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette
Commission Counsel: Shelby Thomas**

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APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations		Non-appearance
Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs		Non-appearance
Government of Canada	Lucy Bell	(Legal Counsel)
Government of Manitoba	Samuel Thomson	(Legal Counsel)
Manitoba Moon Voices Inc.		Non-appearance
MMIWG Coalition (Manitoba)		Non-appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada & Manitoba Inuit Association		Non-appearance
Winnipeg Police Service		Non-appearance
Women of the Metis Nation		Non-appearance

III
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Clerk & Registrar: Bryan Zandberg	

1 Thompson, Manitoba

2 --- Upon commencing on Wednesday, March 21, 2018 at 3:55
3 p.m.

4 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Okay. I think we're
5 ready to get started. Good afternoon, Commissioner
6 Audette. This afternoon we'll be hearing from Christine
7 Merasty and Susan Clipping who will be sharing the story of
8 Clara Dantouze. Mr. Registrar, they would both like to
9 promise to tell the truth.

10 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Okay. We'll start with
11 Susan. Okay. Good afternoon, Susan.

12 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** My name is Susan
13 Clipping.

14 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Oh, Susan, before --
15 just going to do a quick little formality first.

16 **SUSAN CLIPPING, Sworn:**

17 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Okay. And then I'll ask
18 the same question of Christine and then we'll get going.

19 **CHRISTINE MERASTY, Sworn:**

20 **MR. BRYAN ZANBERG:** Okay. Thank you.

21 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Susan and Christine, if
22 we could just get started by having yourselves introduce
23 yourself to the commissioner and telling us where you're
24 from.

25 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** My name is Susan

1 Clipping and I'm from Tadoule Lake, Manitoba.

2 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** And I'm Christine
3 Merasty and I'm from -- I live in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

4 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Christine could you just
5 introduce your health support.

6 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Oh, yes. And this
7 is Agnes (ph) Dantouze. And she's my cousin; that's
8 Susan's daughter. And she's our support.

9 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** All right. Susan, can
10 you share with the commissioner a little bit about Clara
11 and who she was.

12 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** Yes. Clara was my
13 sister. She was a couple a -- about four years older than
14 I was. Clara was a nice, joyful person. She always had
15 laughter in her voice. She was always so willing to help
16 people. And every person that she met or she knew always
17 had good things to say about Clara.

18 I remember when I was a little girl
19 something that made me happy that Clara did for me. At
20 that time there was no dolls or no doll houses that we had.
21 So one day, we're living at a fish camp and I must have
22 been getting bored or I had nothing to do so Clara made me
23 a -- a doll house from a box that she found. She put the
24 windows in there. She cut out the doors and that made me
25 happy. Also, she made a doll. She -- she must have got

1 some -- a cloth somewhere, stuffed it with moss and she
2 says, "Sister I made a doll for you. Now you're going to
3 be happy. You're going to play with it in your doll
4 house." I always remember that -- a good memory about
5 that.

6 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Susan, can you share
7 with the commissioner the impacts of losing Clara and the
8 impacts of residential school on your family.

9 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** When I went to
10 residential school in 1963, I was five years old going on
11 to seven year old. But at that time my sister had already
12 been through residential school. I remember she wasn't
13 there. But my other brother was. My brother John (ph).
14 And I remember my dad saying something about residential
15 school that he felt impacted as -- he said, the time when
16 the kids left for school, he said, they were all nice.
17 They were kind to each other, not angry all the time. But
18 now that you guys came back he said, "You children are
19 different now. You get angry easily. You're, like,
20 scared." Because in residential school we were unhappy.
21 We were lonely. And then he saw that -- that we didn't
22 listen to him anymore. And he could never understand why.
23 So that was the impact that my -- my dad noticed when we
24 came back from residential school. And we were like eight,
25 nine year old kids.

1 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Susan, can you share a
2 bit about what happened with Clara and how you received the
3 information about what happened to her.

4 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** I always remember that
5 in the fall time, this must have been in November. That
6 day was a cloudy -- I always remember that vivid day. At
7 that time my dad went to adult education, you know. And he
8 took off. And I went to school at that time too, but I
9 guess I didn't go to school on time. Maybe I was going to
10 hear this. But anyway, we're looking out the window and
11 there was two cops that were coming home with my dad,
12 walking him home. I guess -- but he didn't tell them when
13 he met them because he didn't hardly -- could speak
14 English. Now, my dad said the cops met him. They told
15 him, "We're going to go to your house now. We got to take
16 you home." And dad was kind of puzzled, he didn't
17 understand. And they came in and my sister, my older
18 sister, happened to be there. And then they sat us down
19 and the cops start talking about my sister, Clara. And she
20 said -- and he said, "Do you remember when was the last
21 time you heard from your sister, Clara?" he said. And,
22 like, at that time, there was no phone calls, no any kind
23 of communication. And then we said, "No. We -- she just
24 left here in August. And that was the last time we heard
25 from her or seen her." And then the cops start telling us

1 that she got killed Winnipeg, he said. They found her
2 body. And he said, "This happened on Transcona Highways."
3 I always remember that Transcona. That never leave me.
4 And then he start telling us the details about what
5 happened to her. And my mother, she took it very -- very
6 hard. I remember that. My mother went into shock. She
7 just cried, just almost fell back. And the cops, they held
8 her, gave her water and she came back. That's how much we
9 miss my -- my sister. My mom especially. My mom died with
10 a heart -- heart -- heart broken. She could never get over
11 the fact what happened to my sister.

12 And I have some details that I want to
13 share. She came -- her body came back from Winnipeg. And
14 I guess it was at the Bartle (sic) -- Bardal Funeral Home
15 that they kept her body and that. And the minister at that
16 time, you know, when they have a service for a person and
17 they kept the body -- her body at my house for about three
18 days. And when they took her body to the church, the
19 minister said that she cannot come to the front of the
20 church and get blessing. Because, Clara was, like, a
21 sinner, he said. He judge her. Who -- I thought, "Who is
22 he to -- to judge, you know." Everybody that dies, like,
23 they get in front of the church to get their last blessing.
24 And for the funeral they go into the -- the grave. But,
25 Clara wasn't given that chance. Everybody was sad because

1 they -- the -- at the back of the church, that's where her
2 body laid. Like, she got killed and now the priest judge
3 her and give her -- destroyed her dignity, you know. That
4 what bothers me lots today because of that minister what he
5 did.

6 Although she was a very kind lady, always
7 had a heart for everybody, always joyful, just an all
8 around person. If she was alive today, she could have been
9 meeting people, laughing, cracking jokes, everything.
10 Clara had that kind of personality and traits that what my
11 mom and dad had taught us to be like. So that's what --
12 that's what happened to her when -- when somebody took her
13 life and ended it.

14 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Susan, do you know what
15 -- if anyone was charged with Clara's murder? And if so,
16 how did you receive that information?

17 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** At that time, people
18 were not really in tune with what happened in society.
19 Like, the cops and what we're told. Like, everything went
20 through the minister that was in Brochet at that time. And
21 whatever the cops told him -- tell him, they got to --
22 he -- and translated that to our parents and let the people
23 know. And then that happened and then -- and when he said
24 -- dad usually goes to visit the minister and he said that,
25 "The minister said that they caught the guy that did that

1 to your sister." That's what he said. But there was no
2 names mentioned. There was no details about it. It didn't
3 come from the cops. The cops was like a third party thing.
4 They never came up to us and they told -- never told
5 nothing like that. Just the -- the minister relay the
6 message to us. Told us -- told my dad. And that -- that
7 is how we got the -- the news that this guy was caught.
8 But we never knew, no.

9 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Christine, you did some
10 research into looking to what happened to your mom and you
11 came across some news articles. Do you want to talk about
12 what you noticed in the news articles you found?

13 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** So my mom was
14 murdered in 1973. I was adopted out. I was part of the
15 '60s scoop. So when I -- when I found my family, they told
16 me -- they told me that I'll never get to meet her again
17 because she was murdered. I never got to meet my mom, so I
18 wasn't reunited with her. So -- but that didn't stop my
19 interest. I wanted to know what happened. So they
20 introduced me to her friends. And I asked her friends
21 questions. And they told me that -- that they were -- that
22 when she had me, workers -- so I'm assuming that meant CFS
23 workers were at the hospital right away. And that -- that
24 they were to take me for six months and that she -- she
25 needed to, I guess, clean up her life a bit to get me back.

1 She agreed. She never got me back. I was adopted out at
2 four months old. They just gave me away. So I needed to
3 know more. So I started trying to understand the
4 situation. I was raised in a white home. So -- and my
5 parents, they never -- they raised me telling me I'm
6 French. So I had no knowledge of being Indigenous. I --
7 in white community, very racist community, growing up with
8 those kids over there was not -- was not good. Left me
9 with a lot of anger. I -- so I had to understand that to;
10 what was -- like, what -- what happened. Like, why? I
11 started -- I started educating myself on the history of
12 what took place because I'm a part of it.

13 To find out that my mom went to
14 residential school, ended up drinking and living on Main
15 Street in Winnipeg. And then I was born at that time. And
16 then the government decided that I'm better off somewhere
17 else so they just adopted me out. And then to find out
18 that she goes missing and murdered, that I don't get to be
19 reunited with her which was -- I didn't know her. Like, I
20 never got to meet her but it was very sad for me because I
21 grew up wondering, my whole life, who gave birth to me.
22 Why -- why do I look the way I do. Who gave me these
23 traits, right. Isn't that what everybody does, like, when
24 you're a child. Oh, I look like my dad or I look like --
25 right. I didn't have that chance. But then when I met my

1 family and I met my grandparents they loved me. So I
2 wondered why the government never asked them to take me.
3 Then I could have had a bond, something I didn't have.

4 My adopted parents did the best they could.
5 My dad loved me. My mom loved me as best as she could to
6 with her history. Her children didn't. They didn't like
7 me. They didn't accept me. The community -- I was just a
8 little Indian kid. And I experience that racism a lot
9 growing up. But what doesn't kill you makes you stronger,
10 right. So you -- so what I did was became very proud of
11 who I am as an Indigenous woman and taught myself. And I
12 learned and asked a lot of questions from my family and
13 from the community about who my mom was. But what -- what
14 the government took from me -- what the government took was
15 my culture and my language and my ability to speak to my
16 grandparents while they were alive. And that would have
17 been perfect if I could do that because they sure showed me
18 a lot of love when I -- when I found them. But I didn't
19 have that. But I knew they loved me because of how they
20 treated me. And that's -- that's what matters. And my
21 family, they all love me. Like, they looked for me for 20
22 years while I'm in a foster home or in an adopted home.
23 Not feeling connected there, feeling like this wasn't my
24 place to finding a family who loved me. And that's where I
25 should have been.

1 So -- so I kept searching for what happened
2 to my mom. And I found news articles. And the news
3 articles aren't even the same. Like, the one in the Free
4 Press says, Transcona. The one in the Winnipeg Sun says,
5 Oak Point Highways. And they're not even next to each
6 other. That's like -- they don't even -- do you know what
7 I mean. So the stories that are out there is different.
8 Then it says that she died at -- I think she -- she died at
9 the age of 26. She was 21. The -- and then the police
10 never even came to my family to say anything. So -- so to
11 this day, and this happened in 1973, we still don't know.
12 2018 and we still don't know what happened to her. That's
13 not right. Like, no closure for our family. No
14 understanding. No -- no knowledge of -- so I wanted to try
15 and go put a cross where she passed on, where she lost her
16 life. When I'm driving down any highway you see crosses,
17 right, where people lost their lives. So I want to do that
18 for her. She lost her life there. I phoned RCMP and
19 Winnipeg Police. They don't know who has the file. So
20 then, my aunt, in 2016, also called and left a message for
21 them to get back to her. They never called her back. So
22 same thing. Just another Native woman. Like, it's not a
23 issue. It's not a -- the families don't matter. But she
24 matters to us. It's been a -- since 1973 but we still want
25 to know. We have a right to know, she's our family. They

1 didn't let me get to know her but I can do right by her
2 today, right.

3 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Susan, can you explain
4 to the commissioner how your family was consistently trying
5 to reconnect with Christine over the years?

6 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** Like I said, in those
7 days, people were not really familiar with Child and Family
8 Services or anything to that matter about policeman and
9 anything in society they didn't really know. Like, there
10 were Native people that live in -- in a bush and they
11 didn't speak English, they didn't understand. Although the
12 kids understood English then we were afraid to even mention
13 a cop's name or let alone talk to them about something. So
14 we kind of just left it. Like, we're -- we were young, we
15 didn't understand. And I remember my mom and dad they
16 said, "In our culture if somebody is murdered or somebody
17 take their life, he said they're going to go to heaven," he
18 said. "So we're going to leave her there as it happened
19 and we're not going to say nothing about it or -- we're
20 just going to let her rest in peace." That's what my mom
21 and dad said. And I often thought about it, like, in my
22 way. Like, we want to know for sure what really happened
23 to her; the whole story behind, you know, why and where and
24 how. All those kind of things. And we just read it from a
25 newspaper clipping. And I don't know how true they are.

1 Even that, like, people didn't understand in those days; in
2 the '70s. Probably my parents didn't understand also that
3 we should talk about an issue or open up a case and that
4 kind of stuff. But I'm glad that we are -- are here today
5 to discuss the situation. First, I really didn't want to
6 talk about it because I thought of my mom and dad what --
7 what they had said. But I know deep down in my heart that
8 I want to know the truth. I want to know what really
9 happened to my sister, know why she had died.

10 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Christine can you share
11 about how you were able to reconnect with your family.

12 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Okay. I -- so when
13 my mom adopted me a medication bottle came with me and they
14 were never to know my history, like, where I come from or
15 who's my biological family. But on that medication bottle
16 was my last name, Dantouze. So my adopted mother took that
17 off that bottle and put it in her pocket before the social
18 worker could take that away from her. So she kept that
19 name, Dantouze, in her mind my whole life growing up. She
20 never told me but she said afterwards that she would have
21 told me if I had asked.

22 So what happened is she applied -- life
23 carried on, I was doing my own thing, I had a daughter
24 and -- and then my mom applied to Indian and Northern
25 Affairs to see if I had any treaty rights and if I was

1 status. And I was. I belonged to Northlands Band and even
2 my daughter was on there. Like, okay, how did that happen?
3 But it did. And -- so the Indian and Northern Affairs sent
4 a package to us stating my rights as a status Indian. And
5 I -- it said in there that my education could be paid for.
6 So I was in my twenties. I was about 20 when I found out
7 this information. I didn't know what it meant. It said I
8 was a number. So I made a joke that, "Oh, okay, I'm a
9 number." Because that's what it said to -- in the package;
10 to Indian and Northern Affairs you're this number to your
11 band. I was like, okay, yeah. That's interesting.

12 So I called there because I wanted to go to
13 school and I wanted to see what my process was to -- to get
14 some -- to apply for education, right. And nobody knew
15 what to -- to do with my call because I'm adopted child.
16 So they don't know in the Band office what to -- who to
17 forward me to. So I talked to quite a few people. And
18 then they said to talk to the chief. And the chief ended
19 up being my -- my uncle. So that's when -- that's when he
20 finds out who was adopted out. He went and asked, again,
21 my mom's friends and they told him the babies name was
22 Christine and my birth date. And I was like, "Okay." I
23 was really shocked, I didn't expect to find family. I
24 don't know what -- I just wanted to go to school. By the
25 way, I ended up going to school, so that was good.

1 But yeah -- and that's when I found my
2 family and went really fast after that. I met everybody
3 and it was a really great meeting. Like, it was so
4 awesome. Like, I flew into the community and it -- when I
5 was looking out the plane it looked like the whole
6 community came out to meet me. It was so -- like, it
7 probably wasn't the whole community but it really looked
8 like it from my perspective, right. So, yeah, it was -- it
9 was really amazing meeting my grandparents for the first
10 time and my whole family. And I was just meant to know
11 them because it came to me. And everything -- what happens
12 happens for a reason. So I -- I was meant to know them,
13 meet them. I also met my biological father. Again, by
14 accident, but meant to happen. And my biological
15 grandmother and aunt, also met them and a couple of sisters
16 on that side. So it was -- it was okay.

17 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** How old were you when
18 you -- like, at what age were you when you when you were
19 reconnecting?

20 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Twenty-three. I was
21 23 when I found my biological family. Little bit older
22 than my mom when she was murdered. You know, if I think
23 about that, I look at my children right now and one's 22
24 and one's 19. And she was a child, like, right. Twenty-
25 one, that's so young. I can't -- she's just a -- that's

1 how young, like, I -- I can't even comprehend that for her
2 to be on her own, living in the city and -- and then to be
3 taken. So young and naïve.

4 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Susan, before when we
5 were talking, you were mentioning about how you act towards
6 your daughters and feelings you have towards them. Can you
7 explain that a little bit?

8 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** Yes. Today, I know
9 that a lot of young people like drinking, going out, going
10 to places, meeting people that they don't know. When I
11 know that my daughter is in town and, kind of, don't know
12 where she is I get really scared. I feel really jumpy. I
13 really need to find out where she is, what she's doing at
14 that moment because the memories always fall back to my
15 late sister. You know, drinking, not knowing people she's
16 hanging around with, doing whatever they want. And it's so
17 scary.

18 I like to share something about when I go to
19 Winnipeg. What the cops said to us, my sister might have
20 gotten a ride with a stranger. And this happened at the
21 Balmoral Hotel. And every time I go to Winnipeg, when I
22 see the Balmoral Hotel, oh, it just -- I don't like it. It
23 just scares me. I don't even want to be there let alone
24 look at, see it. Anger, that's what I have and scared.
25 And when I hear about that Transcona Highway, Transcona

1 that -- that scares me too. Always brings back that
2 memory. If I get on the bus to Winnipeg from Thomson,
3 going to Winnipeg, when I see the city, first moment --
4 first thought I have is about my sister; my sister died
5 here. And I don't really want to be there type of thing.
6 But I guess I have to get adjusted to it because I can't --
7 I can't forget about it, it's always with me every time I
8 see the city of Winnipeg. I get scared.

9 And there's something else that I'd like to
10 share. I'm sure that you've heard about the book about
11 April Raintree, In Search of April Raintree. And that book
12 always reminds about my late sister, how she used to be.
13 Like, one was different, those girls. And my sister went
14 the other way. That's what I thought. And -- and
15 Christine just told me yesterday about when she met her
16 father that they had a house on Jarvis Avenue and -- and in
17 that -- In Search of April Raintree, the book, it said they
18 had a house on Jarvis Avenue. Like, it all -- like,
19 connecting. Things are connecting. Yeah, so --

20 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Susan, I don't think
21 Commissioner Audette has read the book and probably not a
22 lot people in the room. Can you just explain this -- a bit
23 about the story of -- of the story, In Search of April
24 Raintree?

25 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** In Search of April

1 Raintree is about a story of two sister, if I can recall.
2 And they had different lives. They were both Metis --
3 Metis children. One was acting like a -- a Native person
4 and the other girl wanted to be in -- in the white society.
5 She wanted to be like a white girl or whatever. And
6 then -- and therefor they were not connecting. And I think
7 one of the girls died in that story. I think the one that
8 wanted to be like a white person, that girl died. And so
9 therefor, that story always reminds me of my sister. And
10 when she said they live on Jarvis Avenue I was kind of
11 shocked. Like, you know -- oh wow. So, I don't know
12 what else to say.

13 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Christine, can you
14 explain in a little more detail what it was like growing up
15 in a -- a white home?

16 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** When I was living
17 in -- in my adopted home my parents were good to me growing
18 up. It was the kids that weren't. To this day, no
19 connection. But to this day also, no real connection
20 with -- not that unconditional love that I feel for my
21 children. That connection that you have with children, I
22 never felt that. Not ever, not from parents. You just see
23 the difference too. And the -- where I went to school and
24 stuff the way the kids treated you, like -- my parents took
25 in a lot of foster children, mostly Native children. And

1 so you were just another one of the Indian kids, right, in
2 that community. Like, you weren't -- they taunt you and
3 call you names and stuff. You are never connected. Not --
4 not in white communities, like -- and to this day you still
5 see it. Like, I see it. It's -- the racism is bad.
6 Like -- and you see it all the time. And the effects of
7 that on me is anger; angry for all the racism that I had to
8 endure. I mean, like -- I don't -- affects -- it affected
9 my jobs; working along another race. When you're a child
10 and you're faced with that daily it doesn't do any good on
11 you as a person. It affects you. You live with it, it
12 makes you angry. You have to work on yourself, you have to
13 heal, you have to let it go. You have to -- you have to
14 build your own self-worth and your own self esteem because
15 they broke it. The government broke -- the government
16 broke my mom putting her in residential school, then broke
17 her a little bit more for adopting me out and then broke me
18 because I had to live with it. Like, how much can one
19 family go through. I mean, my mom could have been a
20 family. I believe that if -- if they didn't adopt me out
21 she'd be alive. We probably would have went back to Lac.

22 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Susan and Christine, do
23 you have any ideas of what needs to change in our society
24 so that the racism and these experienced -- experiences
25 stop?

1 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** For a long time -- I've
2 been thinking and thinking about this for a long time. The
3 woman who are in society today and men, they need to watch
4 themselves. They need to know what they're doing at a
5 certain time and moment in their lives. I think they need
6 to watch each other's back; the one forward and the one
7 backward, in the back. They need to really watch
8 themselves so something this tragic don't happen. Like,
9 some girls still go out, talk to strangers, people they
10 don't even know. They need to take care of their families,
11 where they come from. Listen to what your elders tell you
12 or what your brother or your sister is trying to tell you.
13 They need to listen to that.

14 Also, in the schools, I was just thinking
15 about the seven sacred teachings needs to be implemented in
16 the schools so everybody is aware of what humility means,
17 what respect means. Maybe they don't know. Maybe that's
18 why they don't listen. But if it's incorporated in the
19 health program, like -- they say this humility and all of
20 this, it's not Native problems. This -- the white society
21 needs to learn about these seven grandfathered teachings.
22 What it means in depth. Maybe examples of what it really
23 means. I think the school needs to -- to start teaching
24 that. Maybe they don't know. Maybe they don't understand.
25 But I think everybody in Canada needs to know how to treat

1 one another. Yeah, to understand one another, where
2 they're coming from and why things happen the way they do.
3 Because we're different people, we -- we have different
4 learnings, teachings. But the seven sacred teachings,
5 grandfather teachings needs to be implemented in the
6 schools. Or if the teachers, they don't understand it
7 maybe they got to learn too or elders to come to the school
8 and teach them. They need to have more elder teachings in
9 the schools, people coming in, learning from their
10 experiences because they lived that life already so they
11 understand already.

12 That's what I would recommend is the woman
13 please keep an eye on yourselves. Look out for yourselves,
14 what you're doing. Make the right choices, make the right
15 decisions. Don't let other people take you astray. You
16 know, somebody might say, "Let's go there, let's go there."
17 Don't do that. Think about it before you go if you don't
18 know where you're going. So if all the ladies and men and
19 women can listen, please follow that. That's what I want
20 to say. Please watch your backs. Look out for each other.

21 If somebody needs support talk to them,
22 maybe give them advice or how things -- or -- or go for
23 help, some kind of help because it's out there, it's
24 available. If you don't ask for help how do you know that
25 somebody -- you need help. There's a lot of AA programs

1 that they can go to. People can help them out if they ask.
2 And the society says that we can't help you because you
3 don't ask for it. So people need to start asking for help
4 and looking out for yourself. Maybe that way that things
5 don't repeat itself. Because it's not a good feeling
6 when -- when somebody in your family has been taken away by
7 somebody else. It lives with you forever. You never
8 forget.

9 When November comes around every year, oh, I
10 feel the hurt and I feel it in my heart. This is the month
11 that is going to be sad for me, I know that. And when the
12 day comes, I cry because that's the day my sister died.
13 And I'll never ever see her again. But it's happened a
14 long time ago. I mean, it's still in my heart but some of
15 it I -- I've learned to let go. Because no matter how
16 angry or how sad I am, how many words I've said that's
17 going to hurt other's feelings, I know in my heart that she
18 not going to come back. She's gone the spirit world now
19 and we got to leave her there. So please, women, please
20 look after yourselves. Know where you are at all times,
21 what you're doing, what your plans are. Nobody going to do
22 it for you, you got to do it yourself.

23 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Commissioner Audette, do
24 you have any questions?

25 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Oui, Me*

1 *Thomas*, I hear myself. You talked about elders and my
2 grandmother was very important very -- she was short, but
3 very powerful. So it is normal for me that when I travel
4 and receive the truth from families and survivors I ask
5 people from the land to sit with us so I have beautiful
6 Kokum's. So if you want to say something before I ask my
7 question.

8 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** (Indiscernible).

9 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Oui. Yes, of
10 course. In 19 -- in the '70s was -- Susan, you mentioned
11 that you -- your family heard from a third party that your
12 sister was killed or she was dead. So it was the church,
13 it was the priest?

14 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** Yes, that came from the
15 priest that was living in Brochet right at that time. He
16 was -- how do you say that word -- mediator.

17 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Okay.

18 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** Yeah, mediator. Yeah.

19 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Mediator for
20 what?

21 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** For the community.
22 Like, everything went through him; a spokesperson for the
23 people.

24 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Okay.

25 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** And he resided at -- at

1 the -- in the community with the people. He did the
2 services, he did the baptisms. He -- when all the kids had
3 their birthdates, what year they were going to go to
4 residential school, he kept all those records. When people
5 were married, he married them. He did the burials,
6 everything, the priest there. Yeah.

7 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** And how long
8 it was like that that he was a spokesperson or the church,
9 the representative from the church?

10 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** He did that all his
11 life, all the time that he was staying there until the
12 Band, Northlands Band -- or Bearlands Band had the chief
13 and counsel and that started existing in maybe 1969 -- '68.
14 And that's when they were developed.

15 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** But you
16 mentioned that you would have like that the police
17 explained to you instead of third person. Is that what I
18 understood?

19 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** Yes.

20 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Okay.

21 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** Yeah.

22 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** And --

23 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** The police should have
24 come to our house and told us instead of saying to the
25 minister that the -- the killer was caught. I don't know

1 why he -- they had to go through him.

2 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** M'hm.

3 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** They could have come
4 over because me and my sister, we already understand
5 English at that time, my older sister.

6 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yeah.

7 **MS. SUSAN CLIPPING:** She went to residential
8 school too and she understood Cree too. She understood
9 Dene, Cree and English. And she could interpret and --
10 smart lady. But they had to go through the priest to give
11 us that information. Maybe that's for guidance, maybe. I
12 don't know.

13 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Merci
14 Beaucoup, Susan and thank you for your wisdom and your
15 recommendation. And, Christine, you mentioned that in your
16 own family -- it's probably my weaks (sic) -- just in my
17 family, we have many trauma's or many tragedy -- tragédie.

18 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** M'hm.

19 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Residential
20 schools, your mom took -- they took away her identity and
21 then her self-esteem. They took away her daughter. And
22 you today growing up without a mom, what would you say to
23 the government? Today you have that chance and we have --
24 I say, we have the obligation to teach the Canadian about
25 what happened to so many of our women and girls, our men

1 and boys. And still today in 2018. And we have, you were
2 asking, Agnes, what is our role. It's also to -- to write
3 a report. A report with call for actions or
4 recommendation. How should we do things differently this
5 time so Canada is a safer place for you and our children.
6 And it's not a third person who will come and say what
7 happened to my loved one. And if I ask question can you
8 feed me on the research or investigation. That we have
9 those rights. That we are treated equally. So that's one
10 of our many mandates because the question was asked before
11 we start. So what would you say? What would you --

12 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Maintain the
13 family -- maintain the family. Don't break up the family.
14 Look to the family. Like, if -- my mom was young, she was
15 18, 19, 20 -- like, she had me when she was 18, she's
16 murdered when she's 21. So if there's anything that can be
17 done today, 2018, should have been done then, but, today,
18 go to the family, take the child back to the family. Work
19 with the family, work with the parents and the kids
20 together. Don't separate them. You're doing more harm
21 than you are good separating the family.

22 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Merci.
23 Merci. And what do you say to us and the government --
24 us -- we're the tool to write that report. But very
25 passionate and also that they took away your culture, your

1 identity, that was powerful statement.

2 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** M'hm.

3 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** That was very
4 powerful. But what do we say? What do we demand or ask?

5 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** We're the first
6 peoples of this land. Maintain our culture. Maintain our
7 life, right.

8 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yes.

9 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** I didn't get that
10 chance. I didn't get that chance. But today we could for
11 everybody. It should be -- so much time was put into us
12 learning English and French culture, a lot of time,
13 centuries, right, years. So many years.

14 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** 150 years.

15 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Okay. There you go.
16 There -- that's how long. Make change now. Learn our
17 language. Help us maintain our language. Help us maintain
18 our culture. It's important. We're not -- we're Dene, we
19 have a language, we have a culture. We should have a right
20 to have it, to keep it. And the government should
21 recognize that and do all that they can to maintain it.

22 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yeah.

23 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Not continue to
24 strip us of it.

25 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yeah. You

1 said Dene?

2 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Dene.

3 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Okay. Short
4 and sweet, there's a beautiful relationship with my auntie
5 and your nation.

6 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Oh.

7 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** The elders
8 met with our elders from Schefferville --

9 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** M'hm.

10 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** -- and with
11 your nation, and the two groups create a -- a book about
12 the caribou.

13 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Oh.

14 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yes.

15 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Nice.

16 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yes. And it
17 says there, even before 150 years ago they were so may
18 attempion (sic) to take away our identity. So -- but
19 we're been there for thousands of years so we will
20 continue. I hope that you're connected. I can see. But
21 for you and your children connected because this is who we
22 are.

23 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Yeah.

24 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Our identity
25 is the foundation. That's how I survive today.

1 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** M'hm.

2 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** And
3 surrounded by amazing women across Canada. So I'd like to
4 ask if our elders have few words for you.

5 **MS. DARLENE OSBORNE:** Excuse me. Well,
6 thank you very much for your -- for your story. And I'm
7 sorry about you being robbed with your identity and your
8 culture and your language. That almost happened to my
9 sister, my younger sister when she went and had her baby in
10 Winnipeg in Misericordia Hospital. And this was in 1978.
11 And when she went and had her baby there she called us and
12 she called me and said, "You know -- you know, sister, you
13 know what they're trying to do me? They're trying to get
14 me to sign papers so they can keep the baby for a while
15 because I'm too young to be a mother." And I said, "Oh --
16 oh my gosh." And then so my parents were still living and
17 then lucky I -- I had English in me and I -- I told my
18 parents, I said, "You know, mom, dad, Elizabeth just called
19 me." I said, "Those doctors and those nurses -- and those
20 were the nuns that looked after Misericordia. And then I
21 said, "Mom, dad, you know what they're trying to do to
22 Elizabeth. They're trying to force her to sign a form so
23 she can give up her baby." And in that time, you know,
24 my -- we didn't have very much money and then my dad said,
25 "Okay, you know, I got money. I want you to leave in the

1 morning. And I want you to go and stay with your sister
2 until she's ready to come home." And in those days the
3 mother had to stay in the hospital for maybe a week in
4 order for her to bring her baby home. So I -- I left and I
5 was 19, 20 years old already. So I left and I just took a
6 cab right there. I didn't even bother going to the hotel.
7 And my brother was already living in Winnipeg so I just
8 went there and I -- and then I -- I was kind of angry. And
9 then I said to the nurse, I said, "I want to see the
10 doctor. Who's doctor is my sister?" So the doctor came --
11 came along and said, "How dare you. What are you trying to
12 do? Are you trying to force my sister to sign these forms
13 so she can give up her baby?" I said, "That baby's no
14 puppy," I said. I said, "I'm going to take her home." And
15 so we -- I sat there, I called my brother. My brother came
16 and sat with me and we didn't -- I didn't budge. I stayed
17 in the hospital with my sister. And I said, "I don't ever
18 want you to do that to my sister." And today my -- my
19 niece is 39 years old already. And I was -- I guess I was
20 very lucky because I was very vocal already. And -- and
21 especially my mom and dad, you know, they -- they were
22 angry. But a lot of -- my sister-in-law went through the
23 same thing. Same thing, but her son got taken away and he
24 got transferred to Tennessee. And the same story you're
25 telling is the same thing that he had to go through. We

1 had him back about 15 years now. And he's living back home
2 in the north where he belongs. And -- but I know that he's
3 starting to ask questions. He knows his grandparents,
4 sadly, that his granny passed away before he -- he arrived.
5 And -- but the family are there. And so many children and
6 what you had to go through losing your mom. But, you know,
7 your mom is in the spirit world. I -- I believe that. And
8 I just want you to get to know your -- your family there.
9 They're beautiful people. (Indiscerible).

10 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Merci --
11 merci.

12 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** You remind -- you
13 reminded me of something when you were sharing. And when I
14 was given up for adoption my adopted parents received five
15 pictures and they picked me. So when you said, my niece is
16 not a puppy, I was. Just kidding. No. But that's how
17 they did it. They sent them five pictures and they picked
18 me out of that five. I wanted to share that.

19 **MS. ISABELLE MORIS:** Masi cho. Masi cho. I
20 have Dene grandchildren also. She knows -- she knows them.
21 Yeah. Yes. They're beautiful. She -- she'll tell -- tell
22 you which ones, your cousin. Yeah. Yeah, that's a shame
23 the way to hear that what happened to you. And they call
24 it '60s scoops. You know what, it was way beyond that.
25 And it had -- it was happening in the '70s too. I say that

1 because I was sent here to go to high school. And then I
2 met this -- this Ojibway man that I'm still with to this
3 day. So anyways, I was an unwed mom at the age of 17 when
4 I had my son. And I was at Grace Hospital at that time.
5 And I -- my husband -- I'm -- I'm not going to say his
6 name. Nobody's going to know his name. But anyways, I
7 said -- I told him, I said, "Come and visit me." Like, he
8 was working at that time. I was in the city here. And I
9 had to go all the way to Grace Hospital to give birth to my
10 son. So anyways, I said, "Come and -- come and visit me."
11 I said, "This lady keeps coming to my room and asking me,
12 do you want to give up your baby? You want to give up your
13 baby?" And she kept coming in there continuously. Like,
14 oh my God, what's happening here. Because my family were
15 up north, right. And I'm always -- I'm -- I was a unwed
16 mom and I'm 17, right. So therefore this, you know -- I --
17 I thought about it. But anyways, my -- my -- my common-
18 law, back then, came and his family started coming,
19 visiting me, right. So they, like, you know -- they kept
20 us -- they kept women in the hospital long, right. A whole
21 week.

22 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** Yeah.

23 **MS. ISABELLE MORIS:** Yeah. So, you know,
24 yeah. It was -- it's way beyond '70s. And I bet you it's
25 still happening to this day. Like, you know. Yeah. And I

1 worked in a hospital -- Thompson. You know, we're always
2 working under the policies and stuff like that. And keep
3 quiet and shut your mouth and not say nothing.
4 Confidentiality's important, yeah. We see a lot.

5 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** M'hm.

6 **MS. ISABELLE MORIS:** So anyways, I will not
7 go there. So yeah, it was happening. So my -- my son
8 probably would have been in the States and I probably would
9 have gone through that process that you have gone through.
10 And I wouldn't have never -- never known my -- my own son,
11 right. But anyways. It was the result of the Constitution
12 to, like, you know, the Indian -- Indian Act that made --
13 played a role back then where if we -- we marry a -- a --
14 like, I remember, my husband or common-law, he -- he wanted
15 to marry me and I said, "No, I can't marry you, I'm going
16 to lose my treaty." And then my -- my -- my baby won't be
17 treaty, right.

18 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** M'hm.

19 **MS. ISABELLE MORIS:** So at least knew that
20 part. And then 1980 when it became, you know, that Queen
21 and Elliot Trudeau had signed the Constitution, right. Oh,
22 I was so happy. All right, now I can get married and --
23 but -- but anyways, that's the thing, like, a -- a lot of
24 that -- those issues, you know, it was -- it took women --
25 it took the women to make those changes, to stand up

1 together and the First Nation's people. And that's what it
2 takes, for people to stand together.

3 **MS. CHRISTINE MERASTY:** M'hm.

4 **MS. ISABELLE MORIS:** Yeah. To make those
5 changes and that's took. But anyways, I'm still with my --
6 my husband to this day and we have grandchildren, we have
7 Dene grandchildren. It's my oldest son that is giving us
8 Dene grandchildren. They're so cute and loveable. Okay.

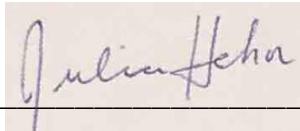
9 **REV. AGNES SPENCE:** Yeah. I want to thank
10 you for your story because it hit's right at home. I have
11 five family members that were stolen. I had a sister, my
12 mother's youngest daughter, had a heart murmur and had to
13 be kept in the hospital at The Pas. And she disappeared.
14 My mom spent most of the rest of her life trying to find
15 her. Finally, she made it home when she was 18. I had an
16 auntie who had TB. She went to the sanatorium, hospital.
17 She was there for two years and her children were taken
18 care at the hospital. When she came back she never got her
19 children back and she spent at least 50 years looking for
20 her children. One of them came home. But the girl, her
21 name is Susan, never made it home. And she would have been
22 around my age. And then my sister's. My oldest sister,
23 she had a baby when she was 19. She delivered the baby in
24 the hospital in The Pas. The nuns walked in, took the baby
25 because she was under age at that time. She was 19. The

1 age of maturity was 21. They took the baby away. And she
2 never found the baby until he -- he was grown up. I guess
3 he was -- he was -- he grew up in the States. And that's
4 where he came to visit family. And then we have another --
5 my other sister, she was 16. She had a baby at the same
6 hospital. Same thing, the nurse walk -- the nuns walked in
7 after the delivery and took her away. Her name was Shirley
8 (ph). My sister's -- my sister died of a broken heart,
9 never found her child. Shirley has yet to make it home.
10 But still, deep in my heart, if Shirley ever makes it home,
11 we know that she was loved by her mother and cherished in
12 the hearts of the grandparents and the great-grandparents
13 and so many of us family. But I want you to know that you
14 are not alone. And we thank you for your story. Hai-hai.

15 **MS. FLORENCE CATCHEWAY:** My -- my first time
16 I'm going to share this story. I -- I went to a meeting in
17 Toronto about two months ago. And four o'clock in the
18 morning the grandmothers came to me and they talked to me
19 and they told me the -- the ladies that passed on, the
20 other side of life, they have a good life. And please,
21 tell the staff just to be positive and do their work. And
22 I didn't have a chance to share with the staff that were
23 sent home early. It was kind of sad. But I'm glad I'm
24 back here. And thanks for your story. Stories are good.
25 And thank you.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Julia Hehn, 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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julia Hehn". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured paper background.

Julia Hehn

May 7, 2018