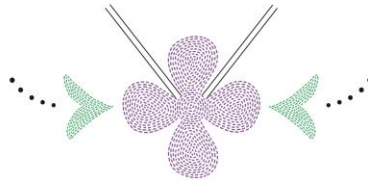


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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 I Public Hearings
Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel
Britannia Ballroom
Metro Vancouver, British Columbia**



Public

Thursday April 5, 2018

**Public Volume 90:
Heiltsuk Women Community Perspective Panel:
Chief Marylin Slett, Joann Green, Leona Humchitt
& Mavis Windsor**

**Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller
Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe**

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II

APPEARANCES

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Assembly of First Nations | Julie McGregor (Legal Counsel) |
| Government of British Columbia | Sara Pye (Representative) |
| Government of Canada | Anne McConville (Legal Counsel) |
| Heiltsuk First Nation | Non-appearance |
| Northwest Indigenous Council Society | Non-appearance |
| Our Place - Ray Cam Co-operative Centre | Non-appearance |
| Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada | Beth Symes (Legal Counsel) |
| Vancouver Sex Workers' Rights Collective | Non-appearance |
| Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation | Non-appearance |

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Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller

Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe

Grandmothers, Elders, Knowledge-keepers: Kathy Louis, Penny Kerrigan, Florence Catcheway, CeeJai Julian, Audrey Siegl, Bernie Poitras Williams, Merle Williams, Deni Paquette, Donna Dickison, Ruth Alfred, Harriet Prince, Gladys Radek, Louise Haulli, Laureen "Blu" Waters- Gaudio, Reta Blind, Elaine Bissonnette, Eunice McMillan, Candace Ruth, Janice Brown, Theresa Russ, Deanna Lewis, Jennifer Thomas, Margerat George, Juanita Desjarlais

Clerk & Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

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| Witnesses: Heiltsuk Women Community Perspective Panel Chief Marylin Slett, Joann Green, Leona Humchitt, and Mavis Windsor Exhibits (code: P01P15P0202) | | |
| 1 | Folder containing 17 digital images displayed on monitors during the public panel's testimony. | 80 |
| 2 | Heiltsuk Women's Declaration, one-page text. | 80 |
| 3 | Video presented during the panel (106MB, 4 minutes 8 seconds, MP4 format). | 80 |
| 4 | Declaration by B.C. Indigenous Women. | 81 |
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PUBLIC

1 Heiltsuk Women Community
Perspective Panel: Chief Marylin Slett, Joann Green,
Leona Humchitt, and Mavis Windsor

1 Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Thursday, April 5, 2018, at 1:30 p.m.

3 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Good afternoon,
4 Chief Commissioner Buller, as -- I couldn't have done that
5 introduction without your excellent words and speaking your
6 language, thank you for introducing the panel that is
7 before the Commissioner today.

8 Before we actually start though, I would
9 request that the registrar promise each of the witnesses in
10 an on Eagle Feather. And I'd be happy to again introduce
11 -- if we could -- if we could please, start Mr. Registrar,
12 right now the lovely lady holding the microphone is Leona
13 Humchitt.

14 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Okay.

15 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Feather.

16 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Leona.

17 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Right.

18 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Leona, do you promise to tell
19 you your truth in a good way this afternoon?

20 **MS. LEONA HUMCHITT:** I promise.

21 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Thank you.

22 **LEONA HUMCHITT, Affirmed:**

23 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And beside her is
24 Joann Green.

2 Heiltsuk Women Community
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Leona Humchitt, and Mavis Windsor

1 MR. REGISTRAR: Do you want to pass it down.

2 Sorry? Jo ...

3 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Joann Green.

4 MR. REGISTRAR: Jolene (sic), Jolene --

5 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Oh Ann Green.

6 MR. REGISTRAR: Joann, hi. Joann, do you
7 promise to tell your truth in a good way this afternoon?

8 MS. JOANN GREEN: I do, yes.

9 JOANN GREEN, Affirmed:

10 MR. REGISTRAR: You do, thank you. Okay.

11 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And this is -- the
12 next is Chief Marylin Slett.

13 MR. REGISTRAR: Okay. Chief Marlane (sic).

14 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Marylin.

15 MR. REGISTRAR: Okay. Chief Marylin, do you
16 promise to tell your truth in a good way this afternoon?

17 CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT: I do.

18 MR. REGISTRAR: Thank you.

19 MARYLIN SLETT, Affirmed:

20 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And right beside me
21 is Mavis Windsor.

22 MR. REGISTRAR: Okay. Good afternoon, Mavis.
23 Do you promise to tell your truth in a good way this
24 afternoon?

3 Heiltsuk Women Community
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Leona Humchitt, and Mavis Windsor

1 MS. MAVIS WINDSOR: I do.

2 MAVIS WINDSOR, Affirmed:

3 MR. REGISTRAR: Okay, thank you.

4 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I believe that --
5 the reason the panel is here today and the important things
6 that they want to talk about, the introduction I believe
7 Leona, you're going to provide for us.

8 MS. LEONA HUMCHITT: I am, thank you.

9 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you.

10 MS. LEONA HUMCHITT: (Speaking Hailhzaqvla
11 language). Greetings hereditary Chiefs, Matriarchs, our
12 precious Elders, and children, people from this community,
13 and all our relatives. It's a real honour to be here
14 today. And I'm here to discuss how we got here.

15 We bring warm greetings, love, and blessing
16 from the Heiltsuk people of Bella Bella, B.C. We want to
17 thank the Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, Musqueam, and
18 Tsawwassen First Nations for allowing us to do this work on
19 your traditional unceded territory.

20 I want to start by remembering a beautiful
21 beloved Elder who's no longer with us today. As you know
22 Commissioner, our Nation, along with many other First
23 Nations, the language is at risk of being lost. And we
24 have been strategically working toward, you know, an

4 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 aggressive plan to ensure that we do not lose the
2 cornerstone of who we are. And so the reason I want to
3 remember this beautiful Elder, Granny Margaret Campbell
4 (phonetic), she was one of our very fluent Heiltsuk
5 speakers and she always addressed our community in
6 Heiltsuk, so to speak Heiltsuk is to Hailhzaqvla. And we
7 were very blessed, you know, that she maintained that
8 fluency and that English was her second language. So to
9 convey something in English was difficult because you can
10 not translate one Heiltsuk word to an English word or vice
11 versa. For example, reconciliation in our language is --
12 sorry (Speaking in Hailhzaqvla), and in Heiltsuk that means
13 to turn anything around and make it right again. So our
14 dear beloved Elder, you knew in your heart when she
15 expressed in English, her second language, that something
16 touched her heart, something set her soul on fire when she
17 spoke and said, it's a big deal. It's a big deal to be
18 here today.

19 Last year we made application for standing
20 today and we're very blessed that -- to have that
21 opportunity to be here and it's a big deal for us. We made
22 the journey here from Bella Bella a couple of days ago.
23 Our -- our delegation, we -- we met upon our arrival
24 because we wanted to check-in, and about this special day,

5 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 and we sat and -- and intended on a -- a short debrief at
2 check-in. But it turned out to be three -- three hours
3 long. And it was a very emotional check-in.

4 And we talked and we -- the common thread
5 from each and every one of us as individuals, we did not
6 feel qualified to be here. We didn't feel that our
7 individual pain was worthy and we didn't mean that to
8 minimize who we are. We mean that in terms of those
9 families that have lost their loved ones, that have not had
10 the opportunity for closure.

11 We're a remote isolated community. We're an
12 island on the northwest coast of B.C. And that, you know,
13 is a blessing in terms of being insulated from the
14 processes that some -- some families are going through
15 right now. We are mariners. We have an inalienable
16 connection to our waters. And sometimes by accident or by
17 act of nature -- act of God, those sacred waters can become
18 our burial grounds for our loved ones. So it is in that
19 way that we can relate, but it's difficult when you don't
20 have closure.

21 And we're so very blessed to be able to be
22 here today. I want to say it's a big deal to be here.
23 It's a big deal that we're blessed to be here today from
24 all the grassroots work of the frontline people that made

6 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 it possible for us to be here today. It's a big deal that
2 those families, that have not had closure, have an
3 opportunity to share their story, to feel like they've been
4 heard. It's a big deal, that it's an opportunity to
5 release some of the burden that they carry, knowing that
6 their story is going to be documented, and it's a big deal
7 -- it's an opportunity to step out of darkness and into
8 light, so we're really blessed for the opportunity to be
9 here.

10 And when we talked about, you know, not
11 feeling qualified we recognize that -- that behaviour of
12 feeling worthless, or not cared about has been ingrained in
13 us for many -- many years through residential school, the
14 60s Scoop. It's been a really -- really difficult journey
15 for Indigenous people of Canada.

16 At the end of our -- our circle (Speaking
17 Hailhzaqvla language) reminded us that we need to *Gvi'ilas*.
18 We need to uphold the law of our ancestors. The teachings
19 that are been passed down since Creation. And her -- her
20 father reminded her that we all matter and it was that --
21 it was that message that brought us strength to be here to
22 sit before you and to share our story about violence
23 against women and girls from a Heiltsuk perspective. So we
24 all matter and that's why we're here.

7 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 Commissioner Marion, I was here for the
2 opening ceremonies, and it was really a blessing to be here
3 and to witness what took place and you know, the key sound
4 bite from your message was about pain. The Elder that said
5 that we're -- we're all different, but we're all the same
6 by being connected to pain. I want to offer us a channel
7 that pain as women, as life givers, who know all too well
8 that the -- the pain, the birthing pain, the labour of love
9 of bringing a new loved one, a precious milestone, and a
10 beautiful miracle to life. If we channel the pain that we
11 share -- a birthing pain, to birth something new, to be
12 waiting in great expectation for something good to come
13 from standing together, working together, collaborating.

14 As an elected leader I've learned that it's
15 important for me -- I -- I never would have known that
16 becoming a grandmother is a whole new level of love. And
17 it's really important for us to personalize the work that
18 we're doing today to make it meaningful. So for me it's
19 important to put a new memory in the minds of my
20 grandchildren; Maggie (phonetic), and Cassie (phonetic),
21 Charlie (phonetic), and Addie (phonetic).

22 I heard that beautiful inspirational quote
23 that it came from an (Speaking Hailhzaqvla) Elder during
24 their land claims, and it really inspired me and I

8 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 encourage all of us to remember that quote, to put a new
2 memory in the minds of our children. It's a real beautiful
3 thing.

4 We are all here because of the pain that we
5 share, the history of the violence against Indigenous women
6 and girls has made each and every one of us feel less
7 deserving and at times like no one cares about us. But
8 this is wrong, because we all matter.

9 Heiltsuk women and girls have been the victim
10 of violence against them in numerous forms. There are
11 women and girls who had suffered directly violence
12 including being murdered, sexually assaulted, and
13 physically beaten. Heiltsuk women and girls have always
14 been the subject of spiritual and psychological violence
15 through physical violence and institutional structures.

16 The Canadian legal and politic system has
17 systemically excluded and directly denigrated Indigenous
18 women and men. While we have historical examples such as
19 legislation and policies designed to erase the identity of
20 Indigenous identity through residential schools, the 60
21 Scoop, and land and reserve legislation. We still have
22 those current legislation government policies, judicial
23 enforcement, that are designed to do the same thing.

24 In today's legislation the effects of

9 Heiltsuk Women Community
Perspective Panel: Chief Marylin Slett, Joann Green,
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1 legislation regarding families and children legibility for
2 membership through marriage and birth, governance of
3 Indigenous communities, the justice system, and the
4 allocation of harvesting of food resources continue to
5 break down our family structures, to erase our cultural
6 structures, and denigrate the role of women in our
7 societies.

8 Even laws and policies which may appear
9 neutral are not. One would think something like the
10 Federal Fisheries Act, or the Provincial Environmental
11 Management Act are neutral towards women, but this is not
12 the case. These Acts exclude Indigenous interests, which
13 breaks down our family structures, our role as women within
14 our culture, and attempt to control our erase our
15 identities. Violence occurs where we can feel it, see it,
16 and hear it, but also invisibly through Canadian written
17 laws.

18 This Commission has been plagued with public
19 criticism and still faces significant challenges and that
20 to conduct regional hearings will require an extension of
21 time and budget allocation for a minimum of another two
22 years. I want to way that we were really blessed to
23 Indigenous people on this panel and I value and appreciate
24 the work that you and your colleagues are doing. I know it

10 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 hasn't been easy, but you keep on, and I know why,
2 *Gayaxsixa*.

3 We are cautious about the possibility of any
4 positive outcome through this process, but we have no
5 choice but to speak about the wrongs of violence that have
6 been visited upon our Indigenous women and girls, and let
7 it be known that we will fight back. What has happened to
8 women and girls and our families is not morally or legally
9 acceptable. We hope that our participation, and all the
10 people who are participating in this Commission will prove
11 to create a positive outcome for all Indigenous people, but
12 particular -- in particular women and girls.

13 We have developed a Heiltsuk women's
14 declaration. The Heiltsuk women from Bella Bella passed a
15 resolution to adopt the Heiltsuk women's declaration in May
16 of 2016, which was later supported by Heiltsuk Tribal
17 Council by a resolution in February 2018. I will read it
18 at this time, the Heiltsuk women's declaration, "We are
19 Heiltsuk women. We are strong as cedar
20 trees. We are the mothers who give
21 birth to Nations. We are the mother's
22 who bring future generations into
23 being. We are the lifeblood of our
24 people. We are the daughters, the

11 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 grandmothers, and granddaughters, the
2 aunties and nieces, the sisters of our
3 Nation. We make our Nation rich. We
4 come from the matriarchy and our
5 womanhood is a blessing. We are the
6 heart of Heiltsuk ceremonies. We are
7 the heart of Heiltsuk families. We
8 have the right to health and wellness,
9 and the responsibility to ensure the
10 health and wellness of our children,
11 and of our families. This is a
12 principle of reciprocity. We have the
13 right to safety. We deserve lives that
14 are free of emotional, verbal,
15 physical, and sexual abuse. This is
16 the principle of respect. We have the
17 right to bless and care for our loved
18 ones and to be blessed and cared for in
19 turn. This is a principle of love. We
20 have the right to relationships that
21 are balanced and respectful, where we
22 have freedom of individuals. This is
23 the principle of equality. We have the
24 right to a community that is vocal,

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1 aware, and supportive, with the
2 resources in place to support us and
3 uplift us. This the principle of
4 justice. We have the right to freedom
5 from fear and shame, to healing, and to
6 happiness. This is the principle of
7 joy. We are here through the strength
8 of our family ties. We are here
9 through the guidance of our Heiltsuk
10 Hailhzaqvla, the teachings that have
11 sustained our people since the time of
12 Creation. We are here with the hands
13 of our ancestors on our shoulders. We
14 are here with future generations before
15 us. We are sacred in mind, body, and
16 spirit. We are women of integrity who
17 have strengthened by our Heiltsuk
18 culture. We honour ourselves. We
19 honour one another. This is consistent
20 with the principles of our culture, and
21 the foundation of our work as Heiltsuk
22 women and as matriarchs. These are the
23 guiding principles that we exercise in
24 everything that we do to remind us that

13 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 we are worthy. That we are powerful.
2 That we are resilient. That we are
3 strong. And that we all matter. The
4 Heiltsuk Nation have been engaged in
5 reconciliation of its rights and title
6 with the Province and the Federal
7 government. This work is critical to
8 the wellbeing of women and girls, as
9 well as every person in our Nation.
10 Because self-government means a real
11 opportunity to restore our cultural
12 identity and re-establish the true
13 governance of our society."

14 At this time we'll see the video. That we're
15 going to present.

16 (VIDEO PRESENTATION)

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just have a quick
18 technical issue. We'll start it again in a moment from the
19 same spot. Our apologies.

20 (VIDEO PRESENTATION CONTINUES)

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So I believe Chief
22 Marylin, you're now also be addressing a number of issues.

23 CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT: Thank you. Good
24 afternoon everybody. I would like to thank everybody for

14 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 being here today, and all of my Heiltsuk sisters that are
2 here with me, and the Commissioners and the Elder, thank
3 you.

4 So Leona and Ayla gave a really good overview
5 of -- of Heiltsuk, and the context for who we are. And I
6 want to share a statement of sovereignty that we rely upon
7 as -- as a Heiltsuk Nation, and this is something that also
8 guides our work. And this is a -- a statement that was
9 made 105 years ago by Bob Anderson, and I'll just read it
10 out for you. It's a -- a short statement. "We feel we own
11 the whole of this country, every bit
12 of it, and we ought to have something
13 to say about it. We own it all. We
14 will never change our mind in that
15 respect and after we are dead our
16 children will hold the same ideas. It
17 does not matter how long the government
18 takes to determine this question. We
19 will remain the same in our ideas about
20 this matter."

21 And this was made by a young Heiltsuk Chief.
22 He was with in his early 20s at the McKenna-McBride
23 Commission in August of 1913. And this statement is
24 something that we share with -- with government, and it's

15 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 -- it's a statement of sovereignty. It's a statement of our
2 strength, and it's also a statement of the vision and the
3 ownership that we hold over our traditional territory.

4 I also wanted to share, for some context to
5 -- to Heiltsuk, more recently we -- with the guidance of
6 our -- our community and the guidance of our Heiltsuk
7 traditional Chiefs, our *Hemas*, we -- we declared a Heiltsuk
8 declaration over our title and rights and this was in
9 October 2015. And this builds upon the statements from --
10 from Bob Anderson.

11 We are the Heiltsuk people, descendants of
12 ancestors who exercise sovereign authority and ownership
13 over our land and waters for thousands of years. Today we
14 reaffirm the continued existence of Heiltsuk title and our
15 rights as a Nation to exercise jurisdiction and management
16 authority to derive economic benefits from the lands,
17 waters, and resources within our territory. The source of
18 Heiltsuk title flows from our historic ownership,
19 occupation, stewardship, use, and control of our territory.

20 Our title predates and survives the assertion
21 of European sovereignty. Each generation is taught the
22 history of our lineage and how it connected our people to
23 the ownership and responsibilities related to our
24 territory. Heiltsuk territory includes the (Speaking

16 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 Hailhzaqvla) encompassing 35,553 square kilometres on the
2 central coast of B.C.

3 We have never surrendered our title to our
4 homeland, ecosystems and resources, as they are essential
5 to our way of life.

6 For more than 14,000 years the Heiltsuk's
7 relationship and understanding of the land and waters has
8 been passed down from generation to generation. It has
9 formed a rich and cultural, social and economic fabric in
10 our community. And it builds upon our spiritual
11 relationship with our territory. This relationship extends
12 from the past and shaped both present and future of our
13 Nation.

14 We have developed our own systems of
15 knowledge and understanding of our territory, which is
16 representative of a living symbolic relationship with the
17 lands and waters. We're connected to -- to the land and
18 sea, our culture is intertwined with -- with our living
19 environment. Our history is passed down from generation to
20 generation and we rely upon the -- the land and sea for our
21 way of life.

22 We live in a -- on an island up on the
23 central coast of British Columbia, and the -- the way of
24 life we have, has sustained us for time immemorial, most

17 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 recently some archeological evidence pre-dates us back
2 before the -- the ice age. So we have a long history of
3 survival within Heiltsuk territory. And we wanted to -- to
4 share some of that context as we share some of our
5 presentation here today. Thank you.

6 **MS. JOANN GREEN:** Good afternoon. My
7 Heiltsuk name is (Speaking Hailhzaqvla language), my
8 borrowed name is Joann Green. I want to thank all of the
9 witnesses here today. We thank the Commissioners for
10 listening to what we have to share because we think it's so
11 important and we matter.

12 I'm going to be talking about our self-
13 government. Prior to colonization our Heiltsuk people
14 were always followed their -- *Gvi'ilas*, the laws of our
15 land. Our Nation worked together with our Chiefs and our
16 Elders that held our community together.

17 Self-government and reconciliation. Heiltsuk
18 are currently in exploratory discussions with the
19 Government of Canada and British Columbia on reconciliation
20 of our rights and title. Prominent in these discussions is
21 establishing our self-government. With the Federal
22 government we have spent many months exchanging ideas,
23 proposals, and working collaboratively to give shape to
24 what reconciliation may look like between Canada and our

18 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 Heiltsuk Nation.

2 To us this means recognizing our Heiltsuk
3 title, our rights and self-government. We have identified
4 five priority areas; self-government, housing, economic
5 development, language preservation, and revitalization in
6 fish and marine resources.

7 As a *Hemas* in our community I struggle with
8 the idea that our language -- our Heiltsuk language is so
9 close to extinction. In August of this year I conducted a
10 research project and was so disheartened because I realized
11 that our fluent speakers were only at one percent of our
12 entire population and that real broke my heart.

13 We refer to priority areas as priority house
14 posts. They are fundamental pillars required to build
15 reconciliation. (Speaking Hailhzaqvla language), a
16 traditional *potlatch*, term meaning -- term meaning to turn
17 something around and make it right again. That is so
18 important to us as a people.

19 Establishing self-government means that the
20 role of women and girls can take their proper place within
21 our modern traditions and not be subject to the resurrections
22 of colonization.

23 I will now speak to the government --
24 government structure. Heiltsuk leadership is a

19 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 collaborative exercise of traditional leadership lead by
2 the *Hemas* and political leadership led by Heiltsuk Tribal
3 Council. Together our Heiltsuk leadership governs the --
4 the Nation and the cultural wellbeing of its people. Women
5 are known to be the backbone of the community and play a
6 large role in Heiltsuk leadership. The majority of our
7 council members are women and the Chief counsellor, is
8 Chief Marylin Slett. The *omucks* (phonetic) are a society
9 of women of high standing in the community who give advice
10 to our *Humas*, our Chiefs. Their advice centers on
11 maintaining the unity and wellbeing of the community
12 including advice on justice, family, and cultural
13 practices. *Gayaxsixa*.

14 **MS. MAVIS WINDSOR:** (Speaking Hailhzaqvla
15 language). My given name is (Speaking Hailhzaqvla
16 language), my English name is Mavis Windsor. I'm the
17 social development director in my community, and I've been
18 working in my community since 1996.

19 I'm going to make reference to how -- or make
20 reference to the historical colonialism and impacts on our
21 people and not -- not only the Heiltsuk people, but many --
22 many Indigenous Nations across Canada. The Constitutional
23 Act of 1967, and in particular Section 9124, the Indian Act
24 of 1986, and the National Projects of Assimilation.

20 Heiltsuk Women Community
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1 Residential schools and cultural genocide, whose main
2 purpose was to take the Indian out of the child. And this
3 is made reference to in the Truth and Reconciliation
4 Commission to Canada's cultural genocide and is darkest
5 history. Thank you, Marylin.

6 Cultural prohibitions. Our people were
7 prohibited from practicing their culture and our languages,
8 they were prohibited from speaking, and as a result our
9 language as -- as Joann made reference to, is near
10 extinction.

11 Discrimination with Band membership. I
12 remember growing up with our women being discriminated
13 against when they married a non-Indigenous man. And I
14 remember feeling so hurt for my aunt, and for many other
15 women who suffered the same discrimination.

16 In the 60ies -- in the 1960s large numbers of
17 Indigenous child were taken from their homes and placed in
18 foster care, and today it's referred to as the 60s Scoop.

19 Indigenous child are overrepresented in -- in
20 the foster care system, and as a social worker I know that
21 children from our own Nation -- or Heiltsuk Nation, have
22 the highest percentage of children in care.

23 There has been over incarceration of
24 Indigenous peoples in -- in Canada -- in the jails in

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1 Canada, and tuberculosis was also a disease that was
2 transported to communities through the (Speaking
3 Hailhzaqvla language) and I remember my -- my Elders
4 talking about the canoes that were sent from Victoria to
5 Bella Bella, to our -- our Heiltsuk territories, and how we
6 lost so many of our people. So many that they amalgamated
7 into one community, and I believe that what they said to me
8 was that the population was decimated to just over a
9 hundred people, from about 20,000 is what they estimate,
10 that's how many of our people were lost.

11 The lasting impacts of colonialism, on not
12 only the Heiltsuk, but on all Indigenous people across
13 Canada and North America are; racism, inequality, suicide,
14 dependency, Indigenous women are marginalized, and
15 traditional roles are replaced by imposed patriarchal
16 systems. Traditional governments have been replaced by an
17 imposed electoral governing system. We've lost much of our
18 identity. We've lost much of our language, as Joann made
19 reference to. We only have one percent of our population
20 that speaks our language. Our women -- women across Canada
21 are made to feel worthless in our society. The violence
22 against women is not addressed in an expedient manner and
23 more often than not women's lives continue to be in danger.

24 Many of our people, including our women and

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1 our children live in poverty. Suffer from social
2 inequality, and breakdown of families, addiction, premature
3 mortality rates, and low levels of literacy and education,
4 and high levels of mental illness and physical diseases.

5 We are the legacy, despite the trauma, our
6 communities continue to live through we are capable of
7 addressing the violence again women in our communities; the
8 solution is within us -- within our communities.

9 However, we do have barriers. The barriers
10 to developing resources that are impediments as we try to
11 address these issues. We look at them as modern challenges
12 to our cultures that are thousands and thousands of years
13 old.

14 Our Nation, our Heiltsuk Nation is considered
15 to be one of the foremost, progressive communities, but we
16 face many challenges. We face many gaps in our services.
17 And over the years our membership have identified the
18 following health and mental wellness. Our people now
19 suffer from illnesses that are not known to our members in
20 years past. I remember as a child there was no -- I never
21 ever heard that someone was suffering from heart disease,
22 from diabetes, from gallstones, and kidney stones. From
23 having multiple sclerosis and fibromyalgia, cancer, and
24 severe allergies, and asthma, these are all diseases that

1 exist in our community today.

2 And for -- for me, as a social worker, who
3 has worked with families over the years one of the
4 challenges that I -- I've noticed in our community is
5 technology. Technology contributes to family breakdown.
6 It contributes to miscommunication, it contributes to lost
7 relationships. Children are spending far too much time
8 with technology and not spending time with their loved
9 ones. To me it's a -- it's a real strong barrier and a
10 challenge.

11 Other issues are child and mental health
12 wellness, and men's wellness. We have been -- as I said,
13 we're challenged with lack of resources. We have very few
14 women support services. We don't have as much Elders
15 programs as we would like. For instance, we don't have
16 enough services for Elders; homemaking services, home
17 improvement services, workshops.

18 Our challenges in education, as Joann made
19 reference to, is our loss of language. Culture and arts
20 program, music programs, leadership and life planning, and
21 in the social service area our lack of resources are seen
22 in the need for life skills and essential skills training
23 and for on-the-job training programs for our community
24 members, and connecting to our land and our seas, our

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1 resources has -- has been an area where our -- especially
2 our community, professionals, resource professionals have
3 noted that there a real need to promote harvesting and
4 preparation of our traditional foods, to share our food, to
5 prepare food together, and to have large family gatherings,
6 and meals together, preserving our foods, harvesting our
7 medicines, and preparing them for use, and community garden
8 expansion.

9 I'll now pass it on to Marylin, and she's
10 going to talk about resource development and violence
11 against women.

12 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** Thank you, Mavis. We
13 had one last area that we wanted to share that provides a
14 context to -- to our presentation here today and I just
15 wanted to share with you, I was looking at my note book as
16 we were making our presentation here, and I have note book
17 that I started when I was up in Haida Gwaii, and I was
18 there with many of the -- the women that are here with me
19 today, and I entitled it, Strong Resilient Heiltsuk. And
20 just gives me strength, and one of the things that we
21 talked about as women, when we were up in Haida Gwaii, is
22 that we're using our collective voices to give a platform
23 for action. And we're using our collective voices as
24 Indigenous women to strengthen one another across -- across

1 the sea that connects us. And resource development is
2 something that affects us as -- as a Heiltsuk community,
3 but any of the communities on the coast of British
4 Columbia.

5 And I wanted to share a bit about an
6 experience that we had in -- in our community. In October,
7 a couple of years ago -- October, we had a -- an incident
8 with -- a barge and tug, that's also called the Nathan E.
9 Stewart.

10 Living on unsurrendered land our people have
11 is felt immense pressures from extractive industries which
12 weigh heavy on our way of life and sense of balance with
13 our homelands. Heiltsuk territory is rich with resources
14 that have sustained our way of life of thousands of years.
15 We have stewarded our lands through principles. If your
16 family had a right to fish a river system you also have the
17 responsibility to maintain it for future generations.

18 Because of our relationship to the lands and
19 waters, our communities also face threats brought on by
20 climate change. The Federal and Provincial governments
21 approach to the extraction and allocation of resources
22 undermine the ability of Indigenous communities to maintain
23 their culture for Heiltsuk, the loss of land, or the
24 limitation and destruction of resources degrades cultural

1 values, family structure, and traditional practices.

2 On October 13, 2016, we had an oil spill in a
3 major harvesting area of our territory. It has been
4 incredibly stressful on our community. The full breath of
5 the impact is largely unknown. We are reaching a one-and-
6 a-half year anniversary of the oil spill, post spill we
7 have been very busy on every front with regards to health
8 impacts, environmental impacts, economic impacts, and
9 cultural losses. Members of our community also experience
10 post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the spill.

11 We have completed our own investigation
12 report because the Federal government would not discuss
13 their investigation with us. We have completed an
14 adjudication process made up of traditional leaders and
15 matriarchs. And their review -- their -- their process was
16 to review our investigation report through the lens of our
17 traditional laws and also record what traditional laws
18 would have been violated as a result of the Nathan E.
19 Stewart incident, so that report just being completed, or
20 completed now. It hasn't been made public yet, they're
21 just completing it. But we will be making that available
22 to -- to the public in the future.

23 Our community's recovery efforts are
24 undermined by government and polluters refusing to take

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1 responsibility for the spill, and to cooperate in its
2 aftermath. We have had no choice but -- but to prepare for
3 litigation for the losses that we've encountered and for
4 the reimbursement of our expenses in responding to the oil
5 spill. The stress caused by this event has been severe in
6 that members have not been able to harvest in that area
7 causing a loss of dissemination of knowledge, a loss of
8 food, and the loss of use of that part of the territory.

9 And I wanted to share with you the women --
10 some of the women that were out there as first responders
11 at the -- at the Nathan E. Stewart. Tracey Robinson
12 (phonetic) is a member of the Heiltsuk Nation and was one
13 of the first people on the scene of the spill. The
14 organization that oversees oil spills was a full day's trip
15 away. And the planes that were delivering supplies and
16 support were delayed due to bad weather. In this absence
17 Heiltsuk Nation took control and stepped in.

18 Tracey was on the water for 21 days straight
19 after the spill. And this is a quote that is attributed to
20 Tracey, "My partner and I were out there just before 10:00,
21 just after the tug sank. There were
22 Heiltsuk boats pushing on the barge to
23 keep it off the rocks. We started
24 grabbing boom and waited for other

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1 Heiltsuk members to come out with
2 the absorbent noodle boom just trying
3 to stop the diesel from spewing into
4 Gale Pass, that was all we had, and all
5 we can do."

6 Tracey is a lifelong harvester, and her
7 mother was a commercial clam digger for 20 years. "When I
8 was younger my mom and I did a
9 restorative justice program where we
10 lived out in Gale Creek for a month.
11 Revealed Robinson, her voice breaking,
12 we had brought food, but we tried to
13 eat as much as we could off the land.
14 We ate mussels off the rocks, picked
15 seaweed and sea asparagus off the
16 beach. My mom pulled cedar bark, and
17 we would weave baskets in roses -- in
18 cedar roses trying to learn how to live
19 off the land. It was rejuvenating and
20 brought back the culture in me. Now I
21 feel so lost and I feel so sorry for my
22 kids. They're never going to
23 experience the full riches and the full
24 amazingness of Gale Creek."

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1 Megan (phonetic) Humchitt is also a member of
2 the Heiltsuk Nation, and a lifelong harvester. Her father,
3 Harvey (phonetic) Humchitt, is a traditional hereditary
4 chief. Megan was one -- was on the scene in the morning of
5 the incident before the tug sank. "On the morning of
6 October 13th my husband, father, and I
7 heard that a tanker had run aground.
8 We left for the incident site about
9 7:45, 8:00 a.m. It was such a serious
10 incident, so there was no question
11 about going. I felt compelled to be
12 out there to witness what was happening
13 and to see if we could help at all. We
14 were one of the first boats at the
15 incident site. No one came over to see
16 us when we got there. We basically
17 just sat there and watched as the tug
18 and barge rolled into the swells. We
19 can hear the tug grinding onto the
20 rocks, at that time it was mid-tide and
21 going up. When the tug sank there were
22 tons of diesel everywhere. The tug
23 took seconds to sink. There was a
24 discolouration of the water. It was

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1 milky. It looks like a herringbone."
2 And this quote is also attributed to -- to
3 Megan Humchitt, "It was really hard. Very heartbreaking to
4 watch. I have a connection to the area
5 as a Heiltsuk person. I have not spent
6 a lot of time, but -- I have not spent
7 a lot of time there as a kid, but I
8 have spent a lot of time in Seaforth
9 Channel around Ivory Island. We
10 harvest food from the affected area
11 such as (Speaking Hailhzaqvla
12 language),
13 salmon, halibut, clams. We also buy
14 food that people harvest there was
15 well, such as cod and lincod. My dad
16 harvested there for commercial purposes
17 from the affected area. This has
18 affected our family and community quite
19 profoundly. The fear for the future of
20 that area is immense. Increased tanker
21 traffic is very concerning. When our
22 environment is sick we are sick. I
23 feel like this has had -- this has made
24 our community sick. It effects

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1 Heiltsuk traditional life, as Heiltsuk
2 people are so tied to places are so
3 tied to places, and if those places are
4 devastated then it will have an effect
5 on our traditional way of life in a
6 huge way. It has an effect on the
7 people who harvest and on the stories."

8 We felt that that was really important to
9 share with you, and it does tie in to what we're talking
10 about here today with supporting women in our communities,
11 and the impacts a resource development in our territories.

12 And we wanted to share with you some
13 recommendations that came out of our report from Amnesty
14 International called, Out of sight, Out of Mind. Amnesty
15 International has recognized the negative impact of
16 resource extraction and development on women's health and
17 safety. Their most recent report discusses how resource
18 extraction and development can degrade the role of women in
19 their societies, and introduce economic and social
20 instability.

21 Amnesty International makes recommendations
22 to counter those impacts. And I'll just briefly summarize
23 what those recommendations are. Apply the standard of
24 free, prior, and informed consent to all decision-making

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1 processes related to resource development where the rights
2 of Indigenous peoples may be affected.

3 Increase the social service funding in
4 British Columbia.

5 Review and approvals of resource development
6 projects be informed by a gender based analysis conducted
7 in consultation with women's rights and Indigenous
8 organizations.

9 Work with Indigenous peoples to implement the
10 Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action,
11 including the application of the United Nations declaration
12 on the rights of Indigenous peoples.

13 And finally, to ensure that the Missing and
14 Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry leads to the
15 adoption of a comprehensive plan on violence against women
16 and girls, including specific measure to decrease resource
17 related risks.

18 We wanted to share with you our -- our
19 concerns around the -- the impact to our land and sea. We
20 heard from some of our -- our panelists here today -- we're
21 -- we're seafaring people. We live on the sea. On an
22 island on the coast, so the -- having a healthy ecosystem
23 is very important to -- to the Heiltsuk. It will ensure
24 that our survival is for another 14,000 years going

1 forward.

2 So I wanted to thank you for listening to the
3 contextual background of Heiltsuk, and who we are as
4 Heiltsuk people and Heiltsuk women, and I believe we have a
5 -- we have questions, okay.

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you very much.
7 Actually, Chief, if I might ask you a question first, I
8 think it seemed obvious as you shared this story about the
9 spill and how it impacted the community, the women, and all
10 of the resources that there's a tie between the health of
11 our environment and the health of women, but I was
12 wondering if you could maybe speak to you know, the concept
13 of resource extraction, or when there's an exploitation
14 where there's not stewardship, how that -- do you feel that
15 that -- that is representative of the way the environment
16 treated when it's exploited like that, or not taken care of
17 with steward, that also representative of the issues we're
18 seeing with missing and murdered Indigenous women and the
19 violence they experience?

20 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** It is. One of the
21 issues raised in the Amnesty International report was the
22 influx of people that come in when -- when there are big
23 resource development projects happening in or around their
24 communities, and you know, it comes with transient workers

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1 that come in, and that does make it unsafe for -- for women
2 that live in that area and we see, you know, here on -- on
3 the north coast of B.C., and -- and other areas where
4 industry is very prevalent and -- and active, so it's
5 directly linked, thank you.

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Chief Commissioner,
7 at this time we would like to ask to have our 15-minute
8 break because the panel will continue following the break,
9 and we'll be moving towards contextualizing. Now that we
10 have sort of the context of the community, the context of
11 the colonial legacy -- I believe that the panel will be
12 addressing a lot of that, so modern initiatives, not just
13 the impacts, but initiatives the community is taking from a
14 place of leadership, from women leadership in community,
15 and also be providing recommendations, but at this point I
16 kindly ask for a 15-minute break.

17 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Sure,
18 let's take a 15-minute break. Thank you.

19 **(SHORT PAUSE)**

20 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Chief Commissioner,
21 if we could actually commence with the panel again. With
22 the -- the starting point before we actually transition
23 into the women leadership, and how they're taking
24 initiatives, I'm just going to ask the panel a couple of

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1 clarification questions and if we could get a little more
2 information. The amount of information that every one
3 shared with amazing and the context was so important so
4 thank you for sharing that.

5 One of the things that was discussed in your
6 presentation was sort of the impacts of laws and policies
7 and the discussion of the Indian Act. I know that the
8 implementation of the reserve system, or who can be
9 registered as an Indian pursuant to the law has had an
10 impact on a number of women across the country, and I just
11 wanted to ask what that imposition of the reserve system,
12 or how women have status in law, has impacted your Nation?

13 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** Thank you. Part of
14 what we had mentioned in the earlier part of the
15 presentation is the size of our Heiltsuk traditional
16 territory. We're made up of five tribal groups that
17 amalgamated, that make up the Heiltsuk Nation, and our
18 traditional territory is 35,553 square kilometres, so it's
19 -- it's vast, and it's land and sea.

20 We've spent a lot of time and -- and
21 financial resources on developing land use plans marine use
22 plans, stewardship plans, how we're going to steward our
23 territory, training people. We have coastal guardian
24 watchmen that are out on the water every day being the eyes

1 and ears of -- of the sea.

2 And as a part of the collective on -- on the
3 coast we work with seven other communities up and down from
4 central coast, north coast, up to Haida Gwaii. And between
5 all of us we all have stewardship departments in -- in our
6 territories, and we have a guardian watchmen network where
7 our guardian watchmen get together and -- and speak on an
8 annual basis and share information on -- on what they can
9 do to support each other.

10 So we have a lot of investment in our
11 communities, you know, to -- to protect our -- our way of
12 life, and -- but it's not reflective with the -- with the
13 Indian Act and the reserve system that the Indian Act
14 imposed on -- on the Heiltsuk Nation and placed us in these
15 little pockets of little reserves.

16 And one of the things that our Elders say you
17 know, and our people and our -- our women that we're
18 connected to the land and sea, we're one. And with that I
19 -- I always hear this in my -- in my head, with my late
20 Uncle Cyril (phonetic), he would say, When the tide goes
21 out the table is set. And -- and that's reflective of you
22 know, our connection, and our bread basket, which is --
23 which is the sea.

24 So the Indian Act has really oppressed our --

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1 our Nation in terms of these reserves systems imposed on us
2 had you know, effected our -- our governance structures
3 that we had in place, had affected our -- our own economies
4 -- our economies, we were thriving communities. We were
5 self-sustaining communities with governance systems in
6 place. So certainly the -- the oppression of this -- this
7 Indian Act has -- has affected us with women in terms of
8 identity, and the Indian Act providing you know, their
9 rules, Canada's rules, on who is a Heiltsuk person.

10 As Heiltsuk people we know who Heiltsuk are.
11 You know, we can self-identify, and identify our own
12 people. And this Indian Act status registration system is
13 not something that is reflective of Heiltsuk identity.
14 It's very much been imposed on us.

15 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** If I might follow up
16 on one question because you had explained that you're a
17 matriarchal community, we know that you have hereditary
18 chiefs, and elected chiefs, chief counsellors that are
19 women, because women leadership important within your
20 traditions. The Indian Act, how has that impacted
21 historically, or even currently, the ability for women
22 leadership, and women guidance to correct a lot of the
23 issues that have been created by the laws and policies?

24 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** Well, certainly women

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1 in our community have been marginalized with the Indian Act
2 and -- and the policies of the Indian Act. You know, with
3 the Indian agents, you know, coming into our community
4 aided by you know, the Government of Canada and the -- the
5 various churches took that power, you know, away from our
6 hereditary system and replaced it with an elected system
7 that was answerable to -- to the government, not to our
8 people. And you know, that has been you know, something
9 that you know, has had devastating you know, effects on our
10 community in terms of self-reliance and you know, our
11 inherent governance and -- and holding up our -- our own
12 governance structures. And it's really -- placed you know,
13 in its place a lot of dependency and -- and that's
14 something that we weren't, you know, we weren't a dependent
15 Nation. You know, we were very self-sustaining with
16 economies.

17 The Heiltsuk Nation has Supreme Court
18 affirmed right, it's call the *Gladstone* decision, and that
19 is based on our collective history of you know, having that
20 strong economy and -- and selling you know, our -- you
21 know, making a life -- making a livelihood, you know, in --
22 in our Nations. So you know, for us you know, that's --
23 you know been -- we hold that up.

24 You know, right now as we speak it's herring

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1 season in our community, people are out there harvesting
2 today as we're sitting here, and they're harvesting --
3 their spawn on kelp.

4 And you know, one of things to -- to get a
5 better context to that, we -- we practice what we call a
6 non-kill fishery, so our -- our people will harvest kelp,
7 and they'll put it onto lines, and then they'll place it
8 into certain areas, and the herring will come and spawn on
9 it, and that's where we harvest, the spawn off -- off the
10 herring.

11 The commercial harvest is quite different.
12 They'll fish for the whole herring and only take the -- the
13 eggs you know, from -- from the -- that's why it's called a
14 kill fishery. So you know, our fishery is very
15 sustainable, and it's sustained our people for thousands
16 and thousands and thousands of years.

17 And in our -- in our traditional territory we
18 have stone fish trapped that are still in place, clam
19 gardens that are you know, still in place, and we have a
20 very rich history of -- you know, our connection to -- to
21 those harvests, and just to bring it back to herring, this
22 is our New Year. We -- you know, it's the start of our --
23 our harvest New Year.

24 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. I have a

1 question, and maybe Mavis might be in a good position to
2 answer it.

3 Mavis, when you were talking -- a couple
4 things, you had mentioned a large number of issues that the
5 Commission has heard from -- from across the country about
6 the colonial legacy of things like residential school, the
7 child apprehension and 60s Scoop, and then you gave us a
8 list of lasting impacts, and they went on and on, and you
9 also talked about the health impacts. Things that your
10 community didn't see, but now do see.

11 And so I wanted to ask you more specifically
12 you know, in terms of things like the laws and government,
13 things such as residential school or 60s Scoop, what has
14 the impacts been specifically on the Heiltsuk Nation?

15 **MS. MAVIS WINDSOR:** The impacts that we've
16 observed over time in our community is that families have
17 been severely impacted. Our parents didn't know how to
18 parent. My mother didn't know how to parent me. And so a
19 lot of what I learned about being a person, about being a
20 woman, came from my landlady, who was a white person. And
21 that's only example.

22 Relationships, the parent and child
23 relationships, as I just explained to you, is severely
24 impacted. Lack of parenting goes back to my grandmothers,

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1 and has carried on, so we're slowly offering programs
2 through -- the Kaxla Child and Family Service Agency offers
3 parenting programs to families in our community, and you
4 know, the -- the impact is far reaching.

5 It hasn't only affected relationships, it's
6 affected you know, how we see ourselves as Heiltsuk women.
7 You know, it can be said over and over and over again
8 because it's very real for us and it's very real for -- for
9 women who feel that they're worthless. They feel that
10 they're not heard, and that's why something know like this
11 is so important is because this is a vehicle to give voice
12 for women who don't have a voice.

13 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. That
14 leads to sort of where we want to go down in talking about
15 women leadership and initiatives, but one of the things,
16 before we sort of go down there, like everyone on this
17 panel is a leader, or is a frontline worker in a community
18 where you're trying to ensure wellness, health,
19 sustainability of your community, and I can't help but when
20 I was listening to you earlier, see all of the things that
21 you've had to address, and by and large those have not been
22 issues that you've brought or raised. They're not problems
23 that you created, it's often been external forces such as
24 law and policy, governments, other people that have brought

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1 to your community, the way that way impact you now with
2 your health and wellness, but as women leadership in a
3 community now, you're charged, using those principles you
4 shared us with earlier, with the -- with the Heiltsuk women
5 declaration, you're now charged with kind of fixing or
6 trying to address all those harms that were caused, and to
7 me that seen seems like a large task, and I know you guys
8 are up for it because the way you're talking about these
9 issues you've already identified them. You've already laid
10 out the principles you want -- that you want to ensure are
11 put into place as you move forward in heal.

12 But to me it seems really apparent that a lot
13 of what's happened wasn't your doing, but now you're the
14 one that will be having to address it. That seems like a
15 pretty big task, and so my -- my question to you is how do
16 you start doing that as the leadership -- the women
17 leadership in the community? How do you start making those
18 initiatives? What does it take -- what -- what are the
19 things that you have to consider on how to address these
20 impacts and these problems that weren't caused by you?

21 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** As women in -- in our
22 community, and we're not unique on this. I -- I think that
23 you know, I -- I've certainly witnessed it in other
24 communities, but women can mobilize, you know, they're the

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1 backbones of our communities. The strength and -- and give
2 the life you know, to our communities so you know, for us
3 we have a long history of sisterhood in our community and
4 supporting women in our community.

5 And we were talking about it over the last
6 couple of days, going back to organized support with one
7 another, going back to the Native Brotherhood days. And we
8 had a Bella Bella chapter of the Native Sisterhood in Bella
9 Bella that provided all of the fundraising and organisation
10 for our men to partake with the Native Brotherhood. And
11 you know, at one point the women in our community, there
12 were two, Brenda Campbell (phonetic), and Kitty Carpenter
13 (phonetic) that said, "You know, we also want to vote. We
14 don't want just fundraise and organize for -- for you to go
15 down. But you know, all of these issues, you know, are --
16 are our issues too."

17 And they brought it into the -- the
18 convention and said, "Yeah, we'll -- we'll think about it."
19 And Brenda and Kitty got up and said, "Well, if we don't
20 get to vote we're not going to continue to fundraise and
21 organize for you to partake in this anymore." And they got
22 that vote.

23 And, you know, so you know going back to --
24 to that and -- and the Native Brotherhood, as we know, in

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1 B.C. is you know foundational for a lot of the -- for the
2 -- Native movement, you know, that happens you know, across
3 our country and -- and British Columbia, you know.

4 And then after that we've had other social
5 networks that my grandmother, Florence (phonetic), used to
6 be a part of and -- and I know I was talking to our Aunt
7 Peggy (phonetic) about it, and they had a group called the
8 -- the Helping Hands (phonetic), and they used to fundraise
9 in the community to help families because they saw that you
10 know, that there were shortfalls you know, with -- with
11 families that you know, couldn't maybe get out for medical
12 or -- or you know, just were having a hard time. So you
13 know, we have a network of women that used to you know,
14 fundraise and -- and get together and help.

15 And going back probably to early -- that was
16 you know, the 70s and 80s and then going to about the year
17 2000 and onwards we had a Heiltsuk women's council, and
18 these were made up of primarily women that were working
19 within our communities, and we are very honoured and I know
20 that we're very privileged sometimes to be able to go out
21 and take training and go to places and -- and you know,
22 partake in -- in workshops and -- and that sort of thing.
23 And we knew that you know, our women in our community not
24 all of them had that opportunity to go out. So we got

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1 together and -- and started fundraising to bring
2 professional development workshops within the community,
3 and we would have annual conferences to -- to provide that
4 to -- to women in our community. And most recently, and --
5 and it will be presented later on, is another group that
6 came together and developed that women's declaration that
7 was read by -- by Leona.

8 So we have a -- a long history of -- of
9 collaboration and strength in our community, and you know,
10 it's -- it's been there to address the inequalities that
11 our community is you know, has you know that oppression,
12 and that inequality of not being able to sometimes provide
13 you know, and that comes down to sometimes you know, the
14 access to resources. The policies that you know, the
15 Federal and Provincial governments had placed you know,
16 upon our communities for you know, making a living. You
17 know, that's -- that's really affected us dramatically.

18 You know, we have issues of what you know,
19 leaders you know, have, you know, brought forward in terms
20 of you know, we -- we didn't also live this way. We -- we
21 had you know a thriving economy and you know, that's
22 something that, you know, we uphold and -- and know that we
23 can achieve that in a sustainable way going forward.

24 You know, and that's -- that's the vision of

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1 our community, and it's also a vision of women in our
2 community around that sustainable economic vision that we
3 are have that we can be a thriving community. We're
4 thriving spiritually within our hearts, we're strong and
5 resilient people. You know, but certainly those outside
6 forces you know, still had its grip you know, and those are
7 the things that we do need to address.

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. I
9 understand that you would like to talk about some of the
10 women leadership initiatives in the community. I'm not
11 sure who would you like to start with, but ...

12 **MS. LEONA HUMCHITT:** I just wanted to touch
13 on and provide context into the Heiltsuk women's
14 declaration. It was spawned out of the leadership of my --
15 my dear cousin, Louisa Jones (phonetic), she rallied our
16 people to -- to provide input into what the Heiltsuk
17 women's declaration can look like, and they had meetings
18 that were seeds of inspiration, and that beautiful piece,
19 I'm happy to acknowledge my Heiltsuk tribal council
20 colleague, Jess Houstee (phonetic), penned that -- that
21 piece, and it's so beautiful, and it's something that we're
22 really proud of. It is guiding principles for us as women.
23 It's guidance principles for us on a go forward basis. We
24 want to be strategic, we want to -- as I mentioned, put a

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1 new memory in the minds of our -- our little ones, and to
2 do that you know we needed to demonstrate that we have a
3 foundation. That we have guiding principles going forward.

4 The Heiltsuk people have a -- a peace Treaty
5 with the Haida, and it's something that's been nurtured
6 over the last few years. We continue to exchange trips to
7 Haida, and this last visit -- last month, we had a women's
8 dialogue session, and it was very -- very beautiful,
9 inspirational.

10 The connections that we made with the Haida
11 women were natural, organic, it was like we knew each other
12 for -- for years and years, and we really want to build on
13 that and to be able to continue to nurture the good work
14 that we intend to do through these guiding principles, and
15 we've invited them to come back to Bella Bella for a
16 women's dialogue, and we invite you, Commissioner Buller
17 and Elder Kathy to come and join us, we'll be happy to send
18 you an invite for the continued good work that we're --
19 we're trying to build upon.

20 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** Thank you, Leona. One
21 of the other things that we've participated in is the
22 British Columbia Assembly of First Nations has hosted some
23 dialogue sessions over the last couple of years, and the --
24 coming out of that has -- as women leadership with --

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1 within B.C. we've developed an Indigenous women's
2 declaration and that was supported by the Chiefs of
3 Assembly on Women's -- International Women's Day, on March
4 8th of last month.

5 And you know, that's something that you know,
6 we're very proud of and that we've participated in as
7 Heiltsuk women and -- and leaders, for us you know, in
8 terms of that regional approach and that -- bringing it
9 back to -- to the -- the panel and -- and some of the
10 challenges that we have, the AFN has certainly been a
11 strong voice for pressing for the establishment of the
12 National Inquiry. And you know, we've supported through
13 resolutions that the Inquiry would support families to
14 ensure that all governments and policing servicing are met,
15 and their obligations to protect the fundamental human
16 rights of Indigenous women and girls, these are
17 foundational within the -- within the declaration for
18 Indigenous women as a regional context for that
19 declaration. And women from all over British Columbia came
20 to the sessions and provided their input to the declaration
21 and was supported by -- as I said, the Chiefs of Assembly
22 last month on -- on International Women's Day.

23 We wanted to -- to take sure that B.C. women
24 also had a voice and you know, had a declaration and a

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1 statement you know, of -- of our strengths you know, going
2 forward as women in leadership. There are 203 First Nation
3 communities in British Columbia, and of that 203 I think
4 the last count there were 47 First Nation elected female
5 leaders in British Columbia.

6 Part of the other foundational pieces, from a
7 regional perspective include the examination -- or we're
8 hoping that the examination will report on the systemic
9 causes. We've talked about some of that here today, behind
10 violence with Indigenous women and girls. And the
11 vulnerability that you know, that violence factors into --
12 into our lives. And it includes the historical -- the
13 social, the economic, institutional, and cultural factors,
14 and they also contribute to that continual risk that we're
15 talking about. We've -- we've shared you know, from a
16 Heiltsuk perspective, but it's very much from a regional
17 perspective as well.

18 So we -- we also recommended through a
19 regional body that, much like you're speaking with a
20 Heiltsuk panel here today, but there would also be panels
21 for institutional and expert witnesses to be able to
22 provide some contextual information to help us understand
23 you know, the systemic causes and these impacts that you
24 know, a regional level at a -- at a national level.

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1 So we've also provided many resolutions to
2 support the -- the Inquiry. We'll continue to support the
3 -- the work of the B.C. Indigenous women's declaration.
4 It's new to -- to British Columbia, but it's also something
5 that woman felt was very important in a leadership -- in a
6 leadership role, being a woman, and it is -- it is hard.

7 You know, it's -- it's you know, we face some
8 challenges, and by supporting one another we can get
9 through them and you know, this declaration, we also know
10 that there's commonalties you know, in -- you know, across
11 our communities. And you know, some of those threats that
12 we talked about here today also you know, reach into other
13 communities, so you know, that is important that we -- from
14 a regional perspective, work together to -- to try to
15 address them in a way that we can you know, with that
16 collective leadership.

17 And I know Commissioner, that you've provided
18 reports to -- to the Chief's Assemblies, and I just wanted
19 to thank you for coming out and -- and providing those
20 reports because it's very important to -- to hear it
21 directly from -- from yourself and -- and the Commissioners
22 that assist you. And we know that there's been challenges,
23 you know, along the way, but we also have largely, in B.C.
24 supported -- fully supported the -- the Inquiry, so that's

1 something I just wanted to share with you.

2 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** May I ask a question.
3 Did you have anything to add to that point? Did you want
4 to add to that point? Okay.

5 We -- we -- you're talking about the women
6 dialogue sessions and that -- and that the declaration by
7 B.C. Indigenous women and if you're okay I'd just like to
8 ask a little bit more about this so that anyone watching
9 that's not from B.C., or other Indigenous women
10 organizations can maybe get a context of what the dialogue
11 sessions look like, or how they're being helpful. So the
12 dialogue sessions are part of this -- they're a part an
13 point for the leadership to get together and actually talk
14 about specific issues. Can you tell us just a little bit
15 about the dialogue sessions and a touch more about the
16 declaration? Like who was involved in making the
17 declaration by B.C. Indigenous women. And we know it's
18 new, but you know the hope for it maybe it's a good model
19 to look in -- in other jurisdictions.

20 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** Definitely. So one of
21 the things -- I'm also a member of the B.C. Assembly of
22 First Nations. I'm one of the board of directors, and also
23 the women's representative from B.C. for the National
24 Women's Council and you know, I've you know, attended

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1 different forums throughout the years, and one of the
2 things that always comes forward from women in leadership
3 is we need some space for women -- women that are in
4 leadership roles to come together and talk.

5 You know, because we -- we were doing it, you
6 know -- you know, in -- in caucus rooms, you know, having
7 these conversations during lunch, you know, during some
8 regional sessions or you know, over breaks, in very
9 informal, but organic ways. But we -- we knew that we had
10 to create that space, so the -- the BCAFN sought resources
11 to be able to bring women together. So we got together in
12 a couple of different locations here in -- in the lower
13 mainland, and the sessions were a couple days in length and
14 they were -- the participation from women were from the
15 front -- frontline, Band administrators, executive
16 directors, female Chiefs, female elected Chiefs, hereditary
17 leaders, and so it was women that are participating in
18 leadership in their communities.

19 And we -- we talked about the -- the -- the
20 strength of our communities, but also you know, the -- the
21 challenges of our communities and how we can support each
22 other, so the -- the declaration speaks you know, from --
23 from that regional level, and it was written by the B.C.
24 women that participated. It was shared widely with -- with

1 the Chiefs in Assembly over the past couple of years,
2 before it was passed by resolution, and it was really
3 important for us to be able to do that, and we felt it was
4 really important that there was a declaration that talked
5 about the challenges that we have, but also the strength
6 that we have to be able to address that in a collective
7 way. And you know, we do face barriers in our daily lives,
8 and we wanted to also come from a place of strength as a
9 collective voice for women.

10 And you know, we shared our Heiltsuk woman's
11 declaration at this dialogue session and it supported the
12 B.C. Indigenous women's declaration. One of the other
13 declarations that were shared -- that was shared was from
14 the Nuu-chah-nulth people.

15 And Deb Foxcroft was there, and -- and she
16 provided that declaration that was created in -- I believe
17 the 1980s and you know, it -- it talks about how we want to
18 be -- it's about reclaiming our roles. The reclamation of
19 our roles in our communities. And the reclamation of our
20 voice in our communities, and we -- we had talked about you
21 know, some of the pressing factors that you know, our
22 community has gone through including you know, culture
23 being oppressed and -- and went underground.

24 And my father tells me about a story that --

1 it's a very short story. That he shared with me growing
2 up. He was at -- he would be at this grandmother's house,
3 sitting on -- on the stairs and watching his grandmother
4 have tea -- afternoon tea with ladies, and he said that
5 they'd be drinking tea out of these little -- big mugs and
6 bowls sometimes, you know, having tea. But he said that
7 they would sing, and they would sit in a circle and they
8 would converse with each other and they would use sticks to
9 you know, to replicate the drum and they would sing in a
10 circle, and -- and he said they were the ones that kept our
11 culture alive.

12 You know, they -- they kept it -- it was
13 underground, but they kept it alive and we practiced our
14 ceremonies you know, in our homes. So these are the things
15 you know, the strengths that we talked about during these
16 women's sessions largely you know, with the women all
17 across British Columbia.

18 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Did you want a turn
19 to (indiscernible) recommendation, okay.

20 **MS. MAVIS WINDSOR:** So before we move on I
21 just would like to expand on what Leona had to share about
22 the Heiltsuk and women -- Heiltsuk Haida women's sessions.

23 Over the last few years there's been some
24 discussion on -- on the two communities having a women's

1 gathering, and it did come to fruition at the end of
2 February, we all -- there was 36 of us all together that
3 went up to Haida Gwaii. We were so excited and they were
4 excited because many of us hadn't been there ever in our
5 lives, and it was one of our bucket list items, so we all
6 went up there, and as Leona said, it was very spiritual.
7 It was very organic.

8 We talked -- the goal was to discuss issues
9 -- common issues that affect the overall wellbeing of women
10 in our communities, and we all left there feeling like we
11 are now on another journey of -- as a group of women, and
12 hopefully in the very near future addressing some of these
13 issues will contribute largely to the wellness of women in
14 our communities and -- and start some healing for families.

15 But I wanted to read the coastal unity
16 declaration, or the coastal unity call to action. I think
17 they have a copy of it on your -- okay. It was put up on
18 the screen earlier, but I just wanted to bring -- to
19 highlight it. I have it on my phone, just hang on, it was
20 something that we as a group of women brought to the
21 gathering -- the very last day when we were acknowledging
22 -- when we were acknowledging our -- the work that we had
23 been doing with the Haida group of women and so we felt it
24 was really important to emphasize that it was coastal

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1 unity, the coastal unity of women of our -- our two
2 communities, and we called it our commitment to action, "As
3 women, aunties, mothers,
4 daughters, and grandmothers,
5 together we will protect the land and
6 the waters and the culture. We will do
7 it in unity. This is our call to
8 action."

9 And you'll see the -- one of the words that
10 is on the screen is -- is (Speaking Hailhzaqvla language)
11 and in our language it is one heart one mind, *Gayaxsixa*,
12 thank you.

13 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** So we also come bearing
14 recommendations. And we'd like to go into that right now.

15 So recommendations that we have for -- for
16 the Commission, the first is the recognition of Indigenous
17 jurisdiction is an important step in addressing violence
18 against women and the need to provide resources and
19 assistance in this regard.

20 So one of the things -- and we talked about
21 it quite a bit today, is the -- the Indian Act, and their
22 jurisdiction that you know, the Federal Government still
23 has over -- that it asserts over Indigenous communities.
24 So the recognition of Indigenous jurisdiction is very

1 important as a step going forward to address violence
2 against women and the need to provide those resources as
3 well.

4 Also connected to that is Heiltsuk
5 recognition of our inherent right to self-government and
6 that we no longer be treated as wards of the State, but as
7 Nations with collective rights. We also shared earlier
8 today the strength of our -- of our Nation and the -- the
9 self-sustaining Nations that -- that we had, and this is
10 one of the visions behind that recommendation.

11 Another recommendation is a decolonized
12 Canada where Indigenous communities enjoy the same standard
13 of living as the rest of Canadians. And want -- it brings
14 to me a -- a comment that one of my colleagues, Pamela
15 Wilson (phonetic) shares with me. She's one of our elected
16 counsellors, and when we talk about reconciliation and
17 bridging the gaps she's really strong in saying our needs
18 are not our desires. And you know -- you know, so this
19 standard of living in equality is important but it isn't
20 reconciliation in itself, it's a part of it.

21 And the support for Indigenous communities to
22 develop their own domestic violence codes to reduce or
23 deter domestic violence. I think that there's -- not, I
24 think, I know, we have the solutions within our

1 communities. We know what we need to do and -- and we have
2 you know, the creativity and the courage and the capacity
3 to be able to do that. And we also -- you know, have the
4 benefit of looking at other communities to see what they've
5 done, and you know, others have developed domestic violence
6 codes you know, we've seen that example in the -- in the
7 United States with the Cheyenne and the Hopi, you know, so
8 there's examples to look at.

9 And supporting reconciliation to achieve
10 self-government which will address strengthening in our
11 community, and that really goes back to the video that we
12 shared earlier today and our vision around reconciliation
13 on Heiltsuk's terms. You know, and -- and you know, for
14 that reconciliation to be something it's really important
15 for us to be able to (speaking Hailhzaqvla language) to
16 turn something around and make it right again and those
17 priority house posts are symbolic of the house posts of our
18 -- of our big -- of big house, and it's foundational for
19 the strength of our community, and it will be foundational
20 for the healing of our community as well.

21 And I'll pass this to Leona, who will provide
22 additional recommendations.

23 **MS. LEONA HUMCHITT:** Thank you. A lot of our
24 recommendations are going to take commitment from Canada

1 and the Provincial Government, not just -- just to the
2 Heiltsuk but to Indigenous people from across Canada
3 realistically.

4 I had the opportunity to listen to former
5 Chief -- Grand Chief Bill Erasmus, and you know, back in
6 the day you know, he's instrumental in working the Royal
7 Commission on Aboriginal people you know, out of the Royal
8 Commission came the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,
9 and there's a lot of other good work yet to be completed.
10 And Canada has a role to play in truth and reconciliation.
11 They go hand in hand.

12 This opportunity for truth telling today, and
13 through the residential school work that was done we cannot
14 have reconciliation if Canada doesn't know the truth of
15 what happened.

16 And out of RCAP was the recommendation of a
17 healing foundation. It started, but they -- they
18 discontinued it. And we need to retrigger that process and
19 we need to look at you know, communities that are -- are
20 ready for self-governance, have been progressive in -- in
21 being able to use them to help other people across Canada
22 to get to that point, but realistically we will need high
23 fund transfers from the Federal Government to enact all
24 these recommendations.

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1 The -- one of the recommendations we have is
2 bringing birthing back to the communities, midwifery and
3 bringing back birthing to the hospitals. As we mentioned
4 Heiltsuk is a very remote isolated community. We have a
5 small hospital with I believe, 12 beds and there's about
6 six of those beds that are dedicated to long-term care
7 because we don't have a long-term care facility.

8 But I want to say you know, it's for us as
9 First Nations people, and I know it's not -- not just the
10 Heiltsuk, again that you know, to not be able to witness
11 that beautiful, magical, miracle of birth -- for 25 years
12 my daughters -- my youngest daughter is going to be 25
13 that's when they started sending Heiltsuk women out to
14 facilities in the lower mainland to have their babies. And
15 it's been 25 years that you know, our people or missing
16 that most important part of the cycle of life, so we are
17 burdened with you know -- you know, the end of life, you
18 know, we -- we honour our loved ones, but we don't get to
19 see the birthing anymore, so it's really important you
20 know, that we bring that back to our -- our communities.

21 And so 25 years ago when I was ready to have
22 my daughter they -- they tried to send me out and I said,
23 No, I'm not going. I need my family to support me, and I
24 stayed. And then I have an 18-year-old boy and I refused

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1 to leave as well. They couldn't make me, so I stayed, and
2 I -- I -- I had my son in our -- in our own hospital.

3 And it's -- it's a really beautiful thing and
4 we've -- we've been really progressive with -- in terms of
5 research. We have a -- a local physician who loves the
6 Heiltsuk people, who's done a lot of work with us, and has
7 done research with UBC on the importance of bringing
8 midwifery back to remote communications (sic) --
9 communities, sorry. And then I seen lately a communication
10 that, I believe, the Manitoba women -- that they brought an
11 Indigenous midwifery program for them so that they could
12 bring the birthing back to their communities, so it's --
13 it's good to know that this concern you know, goes across
14 Canada.

15 We also wanted to make some recommendation
16 about education. Two of our knowledge-keepers and former
17 teachers together they did education and capacity building
18 report so we have all the documentation about the different
19 -- the different jobs and careers that we need from our
20 Heiltsuk people in our community and we want to be able to
21 build on that. We want to be able to facilitate life
22 skills and employ -- employability skills, literacy
23 programs, and more importantly financial literacy.

24 We have -- over the years managed poverty, we

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1 manage poverty through the programs and services that the
2 Federal Government has given us over the years. And I want
3 to highlight Minister Carolyn Bennett's statement about,
4 "We want to move away from delivering programs and services
5 and building institutions."

6 The Heiltsuk have done that. We have our own
7 institution for stewardship; it's called the Heiltsuk
8 Integrated Resource Management Department. We have a
9 business arm, the Heiltsuk Economic Development
10 Corporation. We own our school. We own our -- our -- our
11 health department, and we're very progressive in -- in the
12 way that we need to continue to enhance these institutions.
13 But once again you know, to be able to carry that out we're
14 going to need those high fund transfer agreements with the
15 Federal Government. We would like to see funding in place
16 for college prep, college and university.

17 One of the fathers and builders -- builders
18 of our Nation was a -- a -- a well respected community
19 leader named Cecil Reid, he was the Chief counsellor in our
20 Nation for many -- many -- many years. Cecil went to
21 residential school, but he was one of the -- the few that
22 were able to carry on and -- and acquire a career in
23 education. He taught down in the lower mainland for a
24 number of years and was called home.

1 Cecil, is that you? I love you.

2 But a very -- very well respected man, very
3 grounded in cultural teachings. His -- his mentor -- his
4 dear Aunt Gim (phonetic) was the one that -- that raised
5 him and that taught him traditional values and the
6 principles of being Heiltsuk.

7 We never shared earlier, but Heiltsuk means
8 to speak and act correctly.

9 And he had all that groundings from his --
10 his grandmother -- or his aunt, sorry. And she always
11 expressed to him you know, that we need to have *sala*
12 (phonetic), we need to have the ideal behaviour to know
13 what our actions are going to entail. And -- one sec,
14 *bucula* (phonetic), he also expressed that we had to have
15 *bucula*, to be hard working, and that's really important
16 because over the years as -- as Marylin has -- has
17 expressed, you know, through colonialism there's a real
18 dependency that we're trying to move away from. And we
19 know without a shadow of a doubt that our ancestors were
20 hard working, and that's a kind of mentoring that we want
21 to be able to do through some of these programs. We want
22 to have a girl power program, healthy male mentorship
23 program for young men.

24 We also want to acknowledge you know, that

1 this process for murdered and missing Indigenous women and
2 girls is very important, and that we're very holistic in
3 our -- in our thoughts in our minds, in our hearts, and we
4 want to remember the murdered and missing Indigenous men
5 and young -- young guys.

6 We have a loved one that had gone missing a
7 couple of years ago. His name is Max Brown (phonetic), and
8 -- and it's in that that we again that we recognize you
9 know, as a community we're all related one way or another
10 by marriage or bloodline, so when we lose a community
11 member we all feel it. And we just want to remember Max's
12 family today because they have had no closure.

13 We want to be able to teach Heiltsuk values.
14 We want to be able to have funding to develop our own
15 curriculum about Heiltsuk history, about Heiltsuk values
16 and principles in our schools.

17 So those are some of the things that you
18 know, we want to bring to light and recommend and -- and
19 again that it's going to take -- it's going to take the
20 government to work with us to meet these recommendations.
21 *Gayaxsixa.*

22 **MS. MAVIS WINDSOR:** Okay, so moving on from
23 what Leona was discussing.

24 We have -- we've had several discussions on

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1 the healing centre for trauma and family violence, and part
2 of the programs that we would like to include and offer to
3 our community our men's wellness programs, a cultural
4 program for men, and *bucula*, as Leona mentioned, *bucula*
5 programs for our men who, over the years due to many --
6 many factors, including economical factors, no longer go
7 hunting. They don't go fishing. And many of our people
8 don't know how to prepare our traditional foods. Many of
9 our people no longer eat our traditional foods.

10 We also would like to have a women's centre.
11 And an emergency shelter program or emergency shelter
12 building, because more often than not we have homes in our
13 community where there are three or four families living
14 together in very crowded circumstances and that affects the
15 health and wellbeing of -- of not only you know, the women
16 in the family, but the men and the children and it can
17 create situations where there's tension and you know, just
18 it's not a very healthy situation.

19 We also would like to see an advocate program
20 for women and expanding our family support programs. I
21 know that they have offered parenting programs, as I said
22 earlier, through the Kaxla Child and Family Service Agency,
23 and certainly would like to you know, recommend that
24 parenting programs, not only in our community, but

1 throughout Canada be culturally appropriate because we all
2 have our -- what we call our -- our *Gui'ilas*, which is our
3 laws -- our laws of our ancestors, and -- and they were so
4 inclusive in the days of our ancestors that they addressed
5 things like domestic violence, they addressed things like
6 parenting, and that's no longer done in our traditional
7 houses anymore.

8 Drug and alcohol addiction programs and
9 single people -- single persons' advocate -- an advocate
10 for single people, and that's one of the longstanding
11 issues in our community is that our single people are
12 homeless, in many cases some of our single people are couch
13 surfing. And some of them have been on the emergency
14 housing list for 15 plus years. You know, so and I'm --
15 I'm sure many of issues are in many communities across
16 Canada.

17 I'll pass the mic over to Joann and she talk
18 about some cultural recommendations.

19 **MS. JOANN GREEN:** *Gayaxsixa*. Again, I would
20 like to thank you for taking the time to listen to us.

21 Earlier you heard Marylin -- Chief Marylin
22 talking about her dad witnessing some of the earlier
23 singing and dancing. In the 1960s my grandmother along --
24 Gerti White (phonetic) was my grandmother, Hanna Hall

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1 (phonetic), Beatrice Brown (phonetic), Mable (phonetic)
2 Humchitt, Johnny (phonetic) Humchitt, would all get
3 together in homes, and my grandmother would take me with
4 her, and they would -- it was the women that did all of the
5 singing and they would teach us how to sing and dance.

6 Today we are very fortunate to have a camp --
7 (Speaking Hailhzaqvla language) camp where our children go
8 every summer, where they learn about who they are, where
9 they find out about their identity through singing and
10 dancing, and to us that's very important. For many
11 families in our community all of that's been lost with the
12 residential school.

13 It's frustrating when you think about how
14 hard and how big of a job we're going to have to do all of
15 these programs in the community when colonization took all
16 of this away from us over 150 years ago. All the women in
17 our community are trying really hard to work together to
18 find ways to strengthen each other and strengthen our
19 cultural programs.

20 One of the things we see that's very
21 important is connecting our youth and our Elders together.
22 Our children continue to learn their singing and dancing.
23 Have family singing and dance programs on a weekly basis,
24 not just before *potlatches*, have a languageness program,

1 that so important. Language -- without our language we
2 don't really have a connection with our Elders.

3 Our Elders are our knowledge-keepers. They
4 have stories that connect us to our territory and those are
5 very important. It is our hope that we can have drum
6 making -- have a drum making program, cedar weaving.

7 Every summer our college takes staff and
8 students out to gather cedar, and for some of those young
9 people that we take out they've never been, and it's re-
10 connecting to our land and our resources and teaching them
11 how to strip cedar bark. It's overwhelming for some of
12 them.

13 Having art therapy is really important
14 because it's healing. Our -- our Heiltsuk art teaches our
15 children about who they are. Storytelling is really
16 important, bringing our Elders and youth together so that
17 they can reconnect. You know, with the breakdown of
18 families, you heard earlier than a lot of our grandmothers
19 and our mothers lost the ability to parent. I often think
20 about what my son said to me, "I wish I had the same kind
21 of relationship you had with your grandparents when you
22 were growing up," because there was a breakdown. You heard
23 Leona talk about how important it is to have grandchildren
24 and the feeling that you have. We need to bring that all

1 back.

2 Making regalia is another important part of
3 our Heiltsuk traditions, and it's making button blankets
4 and vests for *potlatching*. Many of our own community
5 members don't own those. It's something that we are
6 fighting to bring back and teach them about how important
7 it is to own those because it gives us strength.

8 When we have the regalia making, have
9 language and storytelling at the same time, this connects
10 our generations of families because our grandmothers and
11 our aunties and our uncles will be passing their knowledge
12 to their -- their grandchildren and their children.

13 Medicine gathering is such an important part
14 of who we are. It's local harvesting, and developing small
15 businesses. As I said, I work in the community college and
16 I have an Elder in residence who is 78, I believe, and she
17 makes traditional medicine. She prepares the medicine and
18 she distributes it to community members. You heard Marylin
19 say, "When the tide goes down our table is set." We open
20 our back door and we have our pharmacy. That's where we
21 get all of our medicine, you can walk up in the bush and
22 you can pick (Speaking Hailhzaqvla language). You can pick
23 Salal berry leaves, those are medicine. We pick -- you can
24 go up into the forest and you can get cedar bark, you go in

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1 there and you get the hemlock branches for our
2 (indiscernible), we're very rich. We're very rich. And it
3 is our hope that you can take all this because these are
4 very important recommendations, *Gayaxsixa*.

5 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Did you want to do
6 the presentation, but then kind of before we close with a
7 song I'll ask the Commissioner (indiscernible) okay.

8 So at this point actually I understand that
9 there will be a presentation to the Commission to the
10 National Inquiry, it's an art expression, and I believe
11 that Chief Marylin will be explaining it.

12 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** One of the things we
13 had reviewed when we were preparing for -- for this panel
14 here today was the opportunity to provide some of our
15 stories and strength through art expression, and this
16 painting, or paintings -- my sister here in the -- in the
17 shawl, here -- that's my younger sister Nicole Carpenter
18 (phonetic), and she's joined with Jenna (phonetic), Mavis's
19 daughter, and Nicole painted this and she went through a
20 couple of iterations in terms of putting something
21 together. But I asked her to -- to paint something for the
22 Inquiry, and to -- so she said -- she didn't hesitate, and
23 she said okay.

24 And my sister is very humble, she's -- she's

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1 an artist from the heart. She does a lot of it for
2 -- with socializing with friends and -- and getting
3 together, so she's self-taught, and this is probably --
4 probably her fifth or so painting, yeah.

5 And I asked her to -- to paint something for
6 -- for today and she asked me, "Well, okay. What gives you
7 strength?" And I shared with her that our families give us
8 strength, our connection to the land and sea gives us
9 strength, our connection to the living world gives us
10 strength, our sisterhood gives us strength, and our
11 ancestors give us strength, so she -- she went back and --
12 and she painted this. And it is -- you can see the women
13 on the beach dancing, and she has my mother holding a
14 copper, and myself holding a feather, and that's actually
15 my blanket that she painted in, it's -- it's beautiful, and
16 my sister and my niece -- Tracey's (phonetic) -- Nicole's
17 daughter, Tracey, and you can see the -- the whale and the
18 eagle, and these ladies over here are our ancestors.

19 So this is Nicole's painting, and she wanted
20 to present it to -- to you today. And it represents the --
21 the strength of her -- of our women, and of our community
22 and she's named them, the first one here is called, Bella
23 Spirit, and on the bottom, Walk with Us.

24 So thank you. Did you want to look at that?

1 We -- we just wanted to -- to share that it's something
2 that Nicole has shared with some of the ladies that have
3 been coming out, and I've been sharing with our ladies from
4 our community, and just so proud of my sister and -- yeah,
5 thank you for -- thank you for listening, and thank you for
6 your attention to -- to everything that we're able to share
7 today.

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Chief Commissioner, I
9 -- at this point if you have any questions or comments the
10 panel would be happy to hear from you.

11 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I do have
12 some questions to start with. With your women's
13 declaration in particular, how do you give life to that?
14 How do you hold people accountable to that declaration?

15 **MS. MAVIS WINDSOR:** Well, historically our
16 women -- you've heard, our women are very strong. We come
17 from a matriarchal society, and so you know, I believe that
18 it will be our women that will -- will be the ones to take
19 action and to ensure that the principles that they
20 mentioned in their declaration, because it's their
21 declaration, they own it, and I believe that -- that's
22 where the ownership lies and that they will take
23 responsibility. They will take the stands that they need
24 to do to address the overall health and wellbeing of the

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1 women in our communities.

2 Specifically for us, it's in our Heiltsuk
3 community, and the commitment -- the commitment that they
4 have to uplift each other and to make sure that the issues
5 that it -- that continue to impact their day to day lives
6 are -- are not -- are no longer pushed aside or shoved
7 under the carpet like they have been for many -- many
8 years, and that's -- that is to me what I -- when I listen
9 to the words that were penned. They came out of statements
10 that were made by our women, and the author who penned it,
11 she read everything that the women spoke to, and what she
12 felt they said is how she came to develop our declaration
13 -- our women's declaration, and so from my perspective you
14 know, I believe that it's time for the women in our
15 communities to stand up and say, no more. We matter, and
16 that our lives, and the health and wellbeing of our
17 children and our families are important.

18 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank
19 you. I'd appreciate your comments on some things that I've
20 heard from other communities across Canada who face similar
21 challenges because of geographical isolation.

22 I've been to your beautiful community several
23 times and I can see there are benefits of being isolated,
24 but also there are drawbacks to being isolated sometimes.

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1 I've heard elsewhere in Canada that things
2 like when we have to go through a turnover in teachers or
3 nurses, or police, it's disruptive to our community, and
4 that effects the safety of our women and girls, and it also
5 effects the community because you have to constantly be re-
6 educating the -- the nurses, the teachers, and police
7 officers who come to your community, and they're not always
8 the same and in their ability to do their job, or they're
9 not always the same in -- in their philosophy about how
10 they do their jobs, so I'm just wondering if you have any
11 comments about -- if you've observed or experienced the
12 same sort of issues about women's safety when there are
13 turnovers in these types of positions, and then what you
14 might see as a way of remedying those situations.

15 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** Thank you for -- for
16 that question. You know, certainly one of the -- the --
17 well, it was embedded in many of the recommendations that
18 we had, the -- the lack of resources that our community
19 has, and to be able to address the -- the issues that we
20 talked about here today will take many people and
21 collaboration between the Province and Canada and Heiltsuk
22 talking and -- and collaborating, and also helping to
23 provide some resources to be able to address them because
24 these issues are -- are legacies of colonialism. So you

1 know, certainly for us some of the -- the gaps that we see
2 are -- are certainly with mental health professional
3 support within our community, and turnover is something
4 that definitely we've seen.

5 And one of the things that has helped to
6 provide continuity is providing training and support for
7 our own people to fulfill those roles and not to have to
8 depend on teachers and other professional resources to --
9 to come into town because really they only have a shelf
10 life of a couple of years before they leave, and that's, if
11 that.

12 So for us to -- to regain and -- and -- and
13 heal and go through some of those recommendations it will
14 mean that we need to have further investment in our
15 communities so our people -- because we have the solutions.
16 You know, we have -- you know, we talked about that
17 earlier, we have the creativity that the human capacity you
18 know, in terms of people that you know, are -- are going
19 out for that training, but you know, there -- there is some
20 gaps in that support and there is you know, more that we
21 can do.

22 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I hope I
23 don't put you in a difficult position by asking you this
24 question, I apologize in advance if I do.

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1 We've heard from woman leaders elsewhere in
2 Canada about how they've coped with being leaders, about
3 the lateral violence that they've experiences because they
4 are women leaders in their own communities, also because of
5 really upsetting the status quo I suppose in some respects,
6 I don't know if being in -- or being a matrilineal and --
7 and matriarchal society if it's perhaps different, but I
8 just wonder if you would like to comment about the violence
9 that is -- is lateral in our own communities.

10 **CHIEF MARYLIN SLETT:** You know, certainly the
11 challenges and the barriers you know, that we face -- and
12 going back to some of the dialogue sessions that we talked
13 back that the BCAFN had -- had hosted, there were women
14 that were -- were in the audience or -- or within you know,
15 participating, and when we were going the end of the
16 session and had you know, sort of an open dialogue, some
17 women were -- were getting up and saying, You know what,
18 I'm going to run you know, for council. I'm going to run
19 to be the Chief counsellor. I'm going to go home and form
20 you know, a women's council. I'm going to go home and
21 start these dialogue sessions at home.

22 And you know, the Haida people are an example
23 of that, they -- they went back and hosted a variety of --
24 of women's dialogue sessions in Masset and Skidegate, in

1 Queen Charlotte City, Port Clements, and -- and then their
2 last session they invited the Heiltsuk women up and we
3 travelled two days to get up there by boats and by -- by
4 car and -- and you know, Mavis had mentioned there were you
5 know, 36 of us that went up, and some of our women from
6 Vancouver you know, made the journey up as well and you
7 know, but you know, certainly that network is a support for
8 women in leadership as well because it is -- we do face you
9 know, the -- the -- the lateral violence and we do face you
10 know, the challenges of -- of being a female leader.

11 I'm my entering my tenth year as the elected
12 leader for -- for Heiltsuk and it hasn't been without its
13 challenges and you know, it's -- but it's supportive, you
14 know, women supportive -- there are a lot of -- and I need
15 to say this, a lot of spectacular men in our communities
16 that support their -- their wives and support their mothers
17 and their sisters in their leadership roles and you know,
18 create that space you know, for us having that platform to
19 -- to use our voices. But it is something that is -- is
20 still in our communities and -- and it's a legacy of the --
21 of the oppression that, you know, we're -- we're still --
22 you know, living through and -- and you know, that still in
23 our communities and you know, but there -- there is a
24 movement you know, with women.

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1 And I was thinking about that and I wrote
2 some notes, and this is from the Haida session, that we're
3 healing together and we're taking an intergenerational
4 approach and that our voices are our platform for action.
5 And we have many women who enact changes in our community
6 and we have a history of it.

7 So for us, you know, it's -- it's drawing on
8 that strength to get us through the challenges that are
9 still very much there today

10 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I don't
11 have any other questions now because there's so much for me
12 to take in. I want to thank you all for being here. What
13 you've said this afternoon is very important to our work,
14 so I thank you for that. Also for me personally I'm so
15 grateful that you came and -- and talked to us today
16 because I've seen the -- the strength of the Heiltsuk women
17 firsthand, and I'm so glad to be able to share that with
18 the rest of Canada. So thank you all very much.

19 Also I -- I want to say that at times it's
20 been very difficult to remain in my chair because I wanted
21 to jump up and cheer for you.

22 I'm very grateful for your gift as well thank
23 you.

24 You know, I don't necessarily have to tell

1 you this, other parts of Canada I have to explain, but not
2 so much with you, we have gifts because we're so grateful
3 of the gifts you've given us today with your stories and
4 your recommendations, your history, very important gifts to
5 us, we want to give you something back as best we can
6 today. We have Eagle Feathers for you to lift you up and
7 hold you up and -- and keep you flying high. To give you
8 courage when you need it, to give you comfort when you need
9 it as well. So we're very grateful and we -- we want to
10 keep you lifted up.

11 We also have some seeds for you. I think
12 they're the wild strawberry seeds. When we first started
13 this National Inquiry the Commissioners and I hoped that we
14 would help healing start and from healing new growth for
15 people. Well, it's already started, we're hearing back
16 from people about how they've re-claimed their rightful
17 positions in their communities, and women who have had the
18 -- found the strength after coming to talk to us to go to
19 the police and have their foster parents charged for
20 example, so there's wonderful growth happening, but we're
21 going to ask you to plant the seeds. I hope you have
22 better luck than I did in my backyard. If something grows
23 will you please, take a picture of it and send it to us for
24 a part of our legacy archive, but also it's a way to show

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1 new growth because new growth is so important to have -- to
2 put new dreams in -- in the minds of our children.

3 As you said earlier, this is a big deal for
4 us too, so thank you so much for coming, it's been a -- a
5 real -- a real treat for me that you're here, so thank you
6 again, and I hope we do right by you by committing to a
7 thorough and -- and good report that's going to move all of
8 us forward. So I wish you a safe trip home to your
9 families. I thank your families for sharing you with us
10 today and -- and while you're here, and you've made a big
11 difference -- all of you. Thank you very much.

12 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Chief Commissioner,
13 once the gifts are given out -- okay. Once the gifts are
14 given out the panel has asked if they can finish with a
15 song.

16 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Oh, of
17 course, thank you, and after that we'll adjourn.

18 --- CLOSING SONG

19 --- Exhibits (Code P01P15P0202)

20 **Exhibit 1:** Folder containing 17 digital images
21 displayed on monitors during the public
22 panel's testimony.

23 **Exhibit 2:** Heiltsuk Women's Declaration, one-page text.

24 **Exhibit 3:** Video presented during the panel (106MB, 4

1 minutes 8 seconds, MP4 format).

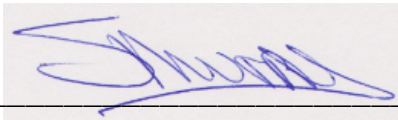
2 **Exhibit 4:** Declaration by B.C. Indigenous Women.

3 **Exhibit 5:** British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
4 Resolution 01/2018 "Support for BC
5 Indigenous Women's Declaration.

6 --- Upon adjourning at 5:09 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

April 14, 2018