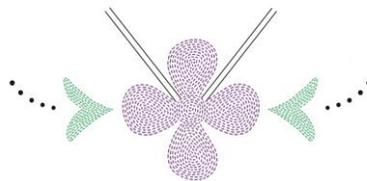


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

Saturday April 7, 2018

Public Volume 102:

Patrick Smith & Althea Wilson, In relation to Laura Smith

**Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson
Commission Counsel: Meredith Porter**

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II

APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Non-appearance
Government of British Columbia	Sara Pye (Representative)
Government of Canada	Lucy Bell (Legal Counsel)
Heiltsulk First Nation	Non-appearance
Northwest Indigenous Council Society	Non-appearance
Our Place - Ray Cam Co- operative Centre	Non-appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada	Non-appearance
Vancouver Sex Workers' Rights Collective	Non-appearance
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Metis Nation	Non-appearance

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1 Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Saturday, April 7, 2018 at 9:22 a.m.

3 --- **OPENING CEREMONIES**

4 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Good morning,
5 Commissioner Eyolfson. I'm Meredith Porter. I'm
6 Commission counsel with the National Inquiry and I'm here
7 today with Patrick Smith. And he is here to speak about
8 the loss of his sister, Laura. She was murdered in 1986 at
9 the age of 18 years old. Patrick's going to share about
10 that loss and he's also going to speak about the pathway to
11 healing that he has followed. But prior to hearing from
12 Patrick, I'm going to ask that he be promised in by the
13 registrar.

14 **PATRICK SMITH, Sworn:**

15 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** We also will hear some
16 evidence from Althea Wilson who is a family member of
17 Patrick's and also knew Laura.

18 **MR. PATRICK SMITH:** First cousin.

19 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** First cousin of Laura.

20 So at this time I'll ask the registrar also promise in
21 Althea.

22 **ALTHEA WILSON, Sworn:**

23 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thank you. And so,
24 Patrick I'm going to ask that you begin with your story
25 about Laura.

1 MR. PATRICK SMITH: You know, in my family,
2 you know, we had a lot -- we started off with nine kids, I
3 believe. But we didn't really talk about things too much
4 in my family. But there was three younger ones and I was
5 the youngest, my -- my sister, Rose, is a year older. It's
6 said that she's passed away too. And my sister, Laura, was
7 a year older than her. You know, so we were always
8 together. There was all three of us always, you know,
9 going to school together, growing up, you know, playing
10 together, living our lives together, you know, being
11 brothers and sisters, you know. And our family had already
12 -- already been going through struggles and things like
13 that, you know. My mom had severe mental illness and, you
14 know alcoholism. And, you know, it was a struggle keeping
15 her family together for her. But she, my mom, always did
16 her best, you know, to feed us and put clothes on the
17 table.

18 But I'll never forget that day, I think it
19 was in '86, I think so. Or I got the dates wrong, I think
20 it was more like '81, things were kind of fuzzy in my mind
21 of dates, so I apologize. But I will never remember that
22 day when my mom answered the phone. When I, you know --
23 and she said, "Laura's dead." And I just heard that over
24 the phone and, you know, I could not, you know -- because
25 my grandma's name's Laura too and I thought she meant my

1 grandma. You know, I just -- you know, for a 15 year old
2 boy to know that, you know, his beautiful sister was taken
3 [sic] away from him, I just could not understand it. You
4 know, I still, to this day, you know, have, you know,
5 moments where I don't -- you know, it hurts. I mean, I
6 have a hard time understanding why, you know. I mean, my
7 sister Laura, you know, she is -- I know a lot of the women
8 in the room here who, you know, stand up for women and my
9 sister Laura would be right there with them. You know, she
10 spent her whole life, you know, fighting for justice in
11 whatever way, you know, that looked like to her.

12 You know, because of what happened on that
13 day, you know, when Bernie James Leslie, when he shot her,
14 you know, my mom had been trying to, you know -- like I
15 said, my mom had troubles and struggles in her life and
16 she'd been trying to, you know, change her life and get on
17 track and things like that. And so my sister, Laura, you
18 know, told him he had to leave. So then he went into the,
19 you know, the bedroom and he came out with a gun. You
20 know, and he pointed at her head and she just -- she just
21 still stared him down and said, "You know, you go ahead.
22 You won't do it. You need to leave our family. You're
23 hurting our family." You know, and then he shot her in the
24 head. You know, he took her life right there.

25 You know, and for any family that, you know,

1 has gone through this, I don't know about other families,
2 but I imagine it's similar. It's like a bomb drops in your
3 family. You know, it just (unreportable sound), you know,
4 shatters it, splinters it. And you just, you do whatever
5 you can to hold yourself together, you know. And for me
6 for many, many years, you know -- you know, the pain and
7 the hurt and the suffering I was carrying, you know, I
8 just, you know, tried to self-medicate with alcohol and
9 drugs and things like that. But, you know, that didn't
10 work, you know.

11 And, you know, the one thing I -- I really
12 want to say is, I started to, you know, want to change my
13 life, myself, you know. Because I was tired of carrying
14 all that hurt and rage. Because, you know, I was a really
15 -- really angry young man growing up, you know. You know,
16 I was angry to begin with. Through, you know, foster care
17 and, you know, all the other losses I went through, you
18 know, as a child. And when my sister's life, you know -- I
19 used to carry a knife around with me all the time. And I
20 swore that I would -- if I ever seen Bernie Leslie on the
21 street I would go up and cut his throat on the spot. You
22 know, I was -- I was just focused on that all the time.
23 That's how angry and hurt I was. And then after, you know,
24 I started trying to clean up and -- and change my life, I
25 was seeing a counsellor and she told me, "You know, if

1 you're that hurt and that you're that angry, Patrick,
2 you're going to have to pray for that man." You know, and
3 I didn't know anything about prayer and I just -- I didn't
4 really like that idea at the moment. But I had nowhere to
5 turn, you know. So I started praying for him. And that's
6 what I call -- that's where I got the greatest gift of my
7 life from my sister. You know, once I -- and I know all
8 families need to go through their own process, you know.
9 But I just -- the way I see it is that I was carrying so
10 much hurt and pain and anger, you know. The good Creator
11 had compassion on me and just, you know, removed that.
12 Because once I started praying for him, you know, after
13 just two days of praying for all the good things I wanted
14 in my life, you know, a family, a home, a job, you know --
15 you know, happiness, health, all those things, you know, I
16 started praying for Bernie Leslie and something melted
17 inside me. And I could see, you know, just that, you know,
18 inside he was just a hurt little boy himself who had been,
19 you know, abused and traumatized and was just trying to,
20 you know, reclaim his power in any way he could, you know.
21 And sadly, that took my sister's life to try and, you know,
22 get that, you know. But, you know, I could understand it
23 at least, you know, about why and be compassionate for him.
24 And why I call that my sister's gift is I have the great
25 honour of working in the downtown east side and I've been

1 able to share that compassion and kindness from my sister,
2 you know, the sacrifice of her life, you know, with many,
3 many sisters and brother is the downtown east side, you
4 know, who struggle. And, you know, that's how, you know,
5 the -- the ripples in the pond keep rippling across, you
6 know, from the spirit world to this world, you know -- you
7 know, the love, you know, continues. It doesn't stop in
8 this world, it continues between us. We just have to keep
9 those doorways open through prayer and love and health and
10 happiness. You know, so I just wanted to share that about
11 my sister's gift. You know -- I mean, you know, it's -- I
12 know for me, I had to learn to forgive and become -- if I
13 wanted to have a happy life and a whole life and a family
14 and all those things I was talking about, I had to learn to
15 forgive and be kind, you know.

16 As First Nation's people that's always been
17 a gift we have, you know. Since contact we have had, you
18 know, abuse after abuse after abuse, layered and layered
19 and layered upon us, you know. And yet we still do our
20 best to be kind, considered, compassionate people. That's
21 who we are, you know. That's -- and then, you know -- I
22 mean, I guess, just for me, at the heart of our culture,
23 the big drum we were singing earlier, that came from a
24 woman. The sacred pipe came from a woman. The sweat lodge
25 came from a woman, you know. Our whole culture is centered

1 around, you know, Indigenous feminism. Yet, because the
2 colonial processes, you know, that divide us and subjugate
3 us, you know, somehow we have adopted those models, you
4 know of hierarchy and patriarchy, you know, to run, you
5 know, this world and it does not work anymore. It, you
6 know -- if there's ever a time that we have needed to look
7 deep inside ourselves as human beings, as a human family,
8 the time's now, you know. Our children and our children's
9 children are way too important for us to hang on to
10 processes that keep us stuck in a medieval past, you know.
11 The only way forward is, you know, into our hearts. And I
12 applaud, you know, the women in my life who have patiently,
13 you know, painstakingly tried to, you know, encourage me
14 and support me to be a better man, you know. I have three
15 daughter, you know; Reagan (ph) and Journey (ph) and Honour
16 (ph), my three daughters. And every day I wake up and I
17 pray I -- you know, I want to be a better man and create a
18 better world, a safer world for my girls, you know.
19 Because it's a very unsafe, you know, world out there for a
20 woman.

21 Canada had a hero a few years ago, you know.
22 You know him. He is a very honourable man. You know,
23 Terry Fox, he ran across Canada; The Marathon of Hope. You
24 know, and I'd just to say every Indigenous person who is
25 born has a ran a marathon of hope their whole life, you

1 know. They should applauded for the strength, the
2 resilience, the beauty and the power that they carry within
3 them, you know. Those are my hero's, you know. You know,
4 I work in the downtown east side and for over two years now
5 there has been onslaught of, you know, Fentanyl related
6 deaths, you know. Yeah, I was downtown yesterday, there
7 was nine overdoses before lunch time. You know,
8 thankfully, because it is such a closely knit community of,
9 you know, good hearted people who know how to love one
10 another and care one another despite the, you know, the
11 many layers of stigma that's put upon them, you know, they
12 still love and care about their community. Thankfully, you
13 know, most of them are okay, I think, you know. But, you
14 know, it's no accident that Indigenous women and Indigenous
15 men, you know, are leading the stats in the opiate crisis,
16 you know. People can only cope with so much, you know, and
17 the system just keeps putting more and more, you know,
18 unrealistic expectations that do not fit a person's world
19 view or belief system. And, you know, it just oppresses
20 people more and more, this, you know, systemic oppression,
21 you know.

22 And so, I mean, for me our only way forward,
23 you know, is to, you know -- we have to end our 150 year
24 reign of terrorism, you know, from the very top. We cannot
25 -- that -- that model has, you know, taken [sic] us to the

1 brink of destruction, you know. And, you know, the very
2 future of our children depends upon us. Enable that, you
3 know, listen to our mother earth, you know. Because if our
4 mother earth is -- I think of my relatives up in Burnaby
5 Mountain. If our mother earth is under threat all of our
6 mothers and women are under threat. If our women are under
7 threat our culture is under threat. If our culture is
8 under threat all of us are under threat, you know. And we
9 have to, you know, throw off that yolk of colonialism that
10 is so heavy and oppresses each and every one of us from the
11 Nuu-chah-nulth to the Mi'kmaw, you know, and unite
12 together, you know, as one family to throw off that yolk of
13 colonialism and work together, you know, to make a better
14 future for our children or loved ones, you know.

15 And the way I have found the most value,
16 that has changed me and helped me to grow as a human being
17 and make me a better person, has been our culture, you
18 know. You know, I was so incensed one time and I know it
19 touched me in a deep place that I've been talking about.
20 But a couple of years ago, I think it's about three year
21 ago now, they came out with something called the -- the
22 Paige Report. And in there there was -- it talked about a
23 young girl who had had contact with 40 different systems of
24 care that were -- people payed to take care of her. She
25 had 40 social workers. Those social workers would not go

1 into the hotels she was staying in. She was, I think, 13
2 or 14 at that time. Because they were afraid, you know.
3 She was a 13-year-old girl and then they would not in there
4 and help her. And, you know -- you know, she was legally
5 blind, she had contact with education, she had contact with
6 justice, she had contact with health, you know. Nobody
7 intervened. The one line in that Paige Report that stood
8 out to me, it said, "The one time Paige had stability, when
9 she was in Young Bear's Treatment Centre, a youth based
10 cultural treatment centre." That was the one time she had
11 stability they said in the report. And I believe that
12 because that has been what has stabilized my life, you
13 know, learning about, you know, my culture. And I have a
14 great -- a great debt of gratitude to the Dakota, Lakota
15 and Nakota people who adopted me into their ceremonies, you
16 know, and taught me how to pray and how to heal and, you
17 know, look after myself, you know. So I have a great debt
18 of gratitude for them, you know. But anyways, back up to
19 that Paige Report. From that one line, you know, we
20 started a -- a program to try and, you know, put more
21 culture into people's lives. It's called -- it's called
22 exactly that, Culture Save's Lives.

23 You know, your boss's predecessor, you know,
24 he came on camera like this and admitted, you know, Canada,
25 you know, committed cultural genocide on First Nation's

1 People. You know, that is a very simple equation to me.
2 If we have cultural genocide then we need cultural justice,
3 you know. What cultural justice means is that where the
4 dominant culture has subjugated our beliefs, values and
5 customs and, you know, brain washed who we are and even our
6 children, we have to replace that, you know. No child on
7 this, you know -- in Canada should ever want to think, "Oh
8 I want a drum, I don't have a drum, I can't afford a drum,
9 you know, because Canada burnt them on me when -- burnt
10 them on my ancestors and they've been replaced, you know."
11 But on that note, you know, there is -- there is bright
12 spots of hope, you know. I say, you know, all these
13 systems, they're all unfriendly. But, you know, there is
14 people -- friendly people in the system. We all have to
15 unite and work together, you know. Find those common
16 points that we have as a human family, you know. A lot of
17 us are parents, a lot of us are, you know, have kids.
18 Those things that we connect as human beings, you know.
19 You know, we have to find those and work from that point of
20 reconciliation. I mean, if we look at the negatives and
21 the things that split us apart, we can do that forever, you
22 know. You have to find those small things that seem small.
23 But what's more important than the future of our children.
24 That's one thing we can all unite around this planet, you
25 know; that the beauty and the value of our children, you

1 know. So, you know -- and there -- I really want to give
2 thanks to the -- the B.C. government, the Provincial
3 government. And I hope I'm okay to say this. You know,
4 last week I emailed the B.C. government because we do lots
5 of singing in the downtown east side. My brothers behind
6 me, you know, me. So I emailed the B.C. government and
7 they, you know -- I said we needed some -- some drums.
8 They gave us \$6000.00 to get -- buy drums, you know. So
9 Gila'kasla for that. Because some being in that department
10 got it, you know. So for people who get it, you know, I
11 applaud you, you know, who understand. This is our
12 medicine, this is what we need for our children, our
13 future, you know. There's nothing more I can, you know,
14 think that has more value and more worth than, you know,
15 our culture, you know. It's what our elders hung on so
16 deeply; our songs, our dances, our medicines, you know.

17 We had -- we had ceremonies from coast to
18 coast from the Nuuchahnulth to the Mi'kmaq, to the Cree,
19 Dakota, you know, many -- the Ojibway, you know, my people
20 the Kyuquot, who had hundreds of ceremonies to deal with
21 any ailment that we had, you know, whether it's oppression,
22 whether it's anxiety, whether it's physical stuff, you
23 know. We had, you know, a process to deal with that, you
24 know. We were never broken, we were never defeated, you
25 know, we're not surrendered, you know. We hear a lot about

1 how traumatized and how, you know, poor, you know, how much
2 poverty First Nation's people live in, but we really do not
3 hear about their resilience, you know, and the strength
4 that we have, you know.

5 I've just been fortunate to witness some
6 amazing human beings in my life, you know. I'll tell you
7 one. I was in the downtown east side, it was pouring rain,
8 end of November. It was about 7:00 in the morning, I was
9 going to take a guy for a housing appointment, a Native
10 guy. He was sleeping under sod and cardboard all night.
11 He was -- he woke up with a smile on his face because he
12 had the hope of finding, you know, a home, you know. So
13 that -- we have to focus -- there's a Rumi saying, the --
14 you know, you focus on the light. The light is where
15 the -- the cracks are where the light comes in. I'm not
16 Rumi, you know. The cracks is where the lights come in and
17 that's -- that's what I want to, you know, if I can say
18 anything is that, you know, we really have to focus on the
19 strength of each other, you know.

20 Because when I started -- when we started
21 our Culture Saves Lives program we seen that as inclusive,
22 you know. You know, no matter what race you come from, the
23 black, the white, the yellow, the red, you know, we all
24 come from somebody. We all have ancestors. The more we
25 connect with them, it's like roots in a tree, the stronger

1 we will be through the storms of life, you know. We all
2 need to embrace who we come from and honour the -- our
3 ancestors who have, you know -- because of what they've
4 done, we're here, you know, we have existence, you know.
5 You know, our ancestors came through a lot, you know. So I
6 am very, very grateful, you know, that they knew the tools
7 that we needed to survive. And we still have them, you
8 know. And we just need to, you know, bring it back to
9 light and convince, you know, the people in power, you
10 know, this is what we need. We do not need, you know,
11 outside consultants come in to fix us. We're not broken,
12 you know. We need to empower to heal. We have the tools
13 to heal, we just need those processes to help support in
14 that work. So I'm very happy that this process is
15 happening and, you know, in a very cultural competent way,
16 that you guys are doing your best to, you know, make it
17 safe and inclusive, you know, and all are allowed. So
18 thank you for that, you know.

19 And I -- I mean, I'd be remiss without
20 talking about my -- my sister Rose. Because after my
21 sister Laura was murdered then, like I was saying, it was a
22 bomb goes off. In our family it was like a bomb -- I -- I
23 -- a bomb went off in our family, you know. It was already
24 a family that was kind of, you know, had a lot of cracks
25 and was teetering already. So we just all scattered and

1 just -- but my sister Rose, you know -- you know, right
2 after her sister died, who was never really close. She was
3 only a year older. Yeah, you know, she lost her life about
4 ten years later. She just -- you know, her -- her
5 addictions, her health and everything spiralled out of
6 control. And she was, you know -- couldn't maintain it.
7 So, you know -- you know, a violent death in your family
8 causes a lot. It does not just affect the immediate
9 family, you know. You know, it affects a lot of people,
10 you know. A lot of your cousins, you know, a lot of your
11 loved ones, you know. It changes you forever. But, like I
12 was saying, we don't have to stay stuck in the hurt and the
13 pain of it. And the only way I know is to, you know, get
14 in contact with our good Creator, you know, who has been
15 with us since moment we were born and is always there, you
16 know. None of us has, I don't think, has questioned
17 whether this chair is going to hold us up for this hour or
18 however long I ramble on for, you know. We haven't -- how
19 is this chair going to hold us up. Yet, so many of us
20 questions, with the beauty of the mountains, the sun, the
21 stars the ocean, we question that the Creator has a plan
22 for each and every one of us, you know, to take care of us,
23 you know. We just have to step into that power, you know.

24 And I had a very interesting experience a
25 few years ago about that. And I was praying, actually a

1 few months ago, I was praying and I heard a whisper and I
2 knew that all my life I'd prayed in a -- in a masculine
3 type term, you know, as that was my frame of reference.
4 And I heard a whisper and I know -- I knew that, you know,
5 there's a sacred femininity that I'd never been able to tap
6 into before then, you know. And that's what we all have to
7 tap into as human beings. Because that's our only way
8 forward, is being able to go into our hearts, you know --
9 you know, and communicate, you know, with one another, with
10 love and kindness and respect, you know. It's the only way
11 forward I see, you know. I see this system is built on
12 just technology and it's -- I call it the house of cards,
13 you know. If you pull one of those cards away it's all
14 coming crashing down pretty fast, you know. But this
15 system has been around since the beginning of time. This
16 is what I value, this is what I trust, you know. I'd just
17 like to say Gila'kasla to each and every one of you, you
18 know. I give the opportunity for my much more articulate
19 cousin if she wants to say anything, you know. I might
20 come back and say some more at the -- but I, you know, say
21 thank you.

22 **MS. ALTHEA WILSON:** I'd like to thank you
23 all for this opportunity for me to share in any words that
24 I could offer, of comfort and support to your great losses
25 today and honour the people who have been here in -- on

1 this earth with -- with us and shared their valuable love
2 and time and family and support for us. I wanted to stop
3 for a moment, elders, chiefs, esteemed women, I would like
4 to just give a moment to cover my cousin. This is work --
5 this is hard work and this is spiritual work. We're not
6 from here. We're from Lummi Nation and our mother was the
7 late Roberta Hunt Wilson. She was from Comox and she was
8 also from Kwakwaka'wakw people. My father was the late
9 James Wilson and he was from Penelakut, the Wilson's in
10 Penelakut. And he was also a saw man from the Lummi
11 Nation. I would just like to take one moment.

12 As Indian people we do not take this work
13 lightly. There's ancestors behind us that are hearing us
14 do this work. All of our people from every nation is here
15 with us. And we have to stand up for that, we have to
16 believe that. My cousin Patrick was talking about
17 colonialism. We've been so set up to forget who we are.
18 We forget who we are. My chief, my brother, Culaxten,
19 Negatsi (ph), Dana Wilson, took the name of my father,
20 Chief Culaxten, Jim Wilson. My sister, Heather, we're
21 matriarchs of our family. We are the female energy that
22 Patrick talks about. We must understand our roles as
23 Indigenous people. It is important for us to stop
24 believing what that cement is saying. We must believe in
25 mother earth. We must believe in the opportunity to go

1 back to her and ask her to forgive us. Forgive us. Not
2 just the people who have harmed us but our ignorance
3 because we were once believed that we weren't worthy. We
4 weren't worthy of that grass, we weren't worthy of that
5 pristine water, we weren't worthy of the animals that flew
6 by us. So today this is a beautiful day because the day
7 that recognizes who we are as Indian people and as women
8 and as men in our rightful place, our rightful place as
9 human beings.

10 Many of the teachings that we learn from our
11 ceremony tells us that we're pitiful. We don't understand
12 the ways of our spirit, our -- our -- our greater -- our --
13 in my language, you know, the -- the spirit, the Creator.
14 We don't understand all of what Creator has for us and
15 we're not supposed to. We just have to be who we are, you
16 know. And for those of us who are Indigenous we understand
17 that that -- that that means that we have a responsibility.
18 We're stewards of this land. We share and reciprocate the
19 relationship to the land to who we are and it feeds us. It
20 gives us everything we need. We don't have to ask for one
21 thing. We don't got to go buy our food at Wal-Mart,
22 K-Mart, McDonald's, you know. We can go fish it out of the
23 sea. We can go hunt it out of the mountains, you know.
24 And we ask ourselves, "What are we protecting?" We're not
25 protecting just our food source, we're not just protecting

1 our belly's, you know. We're protecting our language.
2 We're protecting our history. We're protecting our
3 ancestral right to be who we are.

4 You know, I -- I'm honoured and I'm
5 privileged to stand before you today. And I would like to
6 thank those of you who are listening, very much, from the
7 bottom of my heart. You know, I was really good friends
8 with my cousin, Laura. We grew up together. My mother was
9 from Canada which is so funny. I still have to laugh about
10 that today because we're Canadian's more than we're
11 American's, but we live in America. And we would come up
12 and visit our family a lot; our cousin Patrick. I love my
13 cousin Patrick so much. And a lot of our cousins who live
14 in Canada. My mother was the only -- only sister of, what,
15 four or five of us -- four or five of them who -- who moved
16 to the U.S. but -- with my dad, but we would all come up.
17 We felt more Canadian than we did American because all of
18 our family was here in Canada. And so we would come up and
19 visit. And we spent a lot of time, my sister, Heather, and
20 I, playing with Laura and Rosemary (ph) when we were little
21 kids. And they were vibrant. They were full of life.
22 They were beautiful. They were, you know -- there were
23 some things, some characteristics about Laura that I really
24 wished I had. Like, she was so beautiful, you know.
25 Her -- she just looked like a -- she kind of looked like an

1 angel, you know. And when you -- when you look at her
2 you'd like, "Oh I just wish -- I just wished I looked more
3 like Laura." You know, and -- and she was happy all the
4 time. And she was so glad to see us. And we played
5 together as kids and it was really beautiful. And when we
6 got older and she had her child and -- and I was, you know,
7 back home and I moved away to school, to Oregon, we would
8 write letters back and forth and she was always encouraging
9 me. She encouraged me to be -- just to be happy and just
10 to be alive, you know. As -- she had this spirit of
11 liveliness that really just exuberated, you know. You
12 couldn't -- you couldn't stop her. She was just full of
13 life and every time I seen her I felt really good, you
14 know. Just -- just her presence made me feel good. And it
15 was hard to know after she had passed away, in '81, it was
16 hard to -- to take that, you know. I felt like I lost my
17 best friend. And, you know, myself, my sister and Laura
18 and her sister Rosemary, we kind of all had a pact that we
19 would always be best cousins forever, you know. And, you
20 know -- so I lost my best friend, you know. And it -- it
21 has been really -- I was -- we were just talking about, you
22 know, the missing and murdered women in Canada is a -- a
23 very big issue right now, you know. Even in the States --
24 and, you know, so our prayers are always -- are always put
25 out there for everyone, you know. We -- we stand behind

1 you. We pray for you, you know. We -- we mention you in
2 our circles when we talk about, you know, what Indigenous
3 values we have. We remember the missing Indigenous women
4 in Vancouver and in Canada. And we just want you to know
5 that we're here for you and that we love you all. Haishka.

6 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thank you so much.
7 Patrick, I just have some -- some questions in relation to
8 your earlier childhood and -- and in particular to Laura.
9 I know that poverty, you've -- you've spoken about it
10 previously and I know that it's a very key issue both
11 leading up to her death and -- and, sort of, was -- it was
12 a -- poverty had a presence in your -- in your childhood
13 and it preceded her death. And I wondered if you could
14 explain what role poverty had in, you know, leading up to
15 her death and afterwards?

16 **MR. PATRICK SMITH:** Thank you. Yeah, you
17 know, as I was saying, my mom, you know -- we had that time
18 in our family there was six kids at home, I believe. You
19 know, my mom, she had bipolar is what they call it at the
20 time. And she was, you know, always struggling to feed her
21 -- feed us as kids. Like, I remember one time she brought
22 -- there was a -- a supermarket just down the block from us
23 and, you know, my mom brought us there. And it's one of my
24 most bittersweet memories is that, you know, my mom was
25 asking for soup bones for the dog, you know. You know, but

1 we didn't have a dog, you know. It was just so she could
2 make us soup, right -- for us kids, you know. So what I
3 want to address about poverty is that, you know -- you
4 know, a rich like Bernie Leslie, you know, to her he was
5 pretty rich and wealthy and stuff like that, you know. How
6 powerless a woman must feel having to, you know, feed their
7 children, you know, and having to make these choices, you
8 know, about feeding their children. And how many other
9 families are in that place right now across Canada, you
10 know, where they just struggling to feed their kids, you
11 know, and keep their family together, you know. We got to
12 put more supports in place for those -- them, you know.
13 They're our future, you know, our young families, you know.
14 So, you know, it was, you know, that's -- our life was a
15 very cyclical. Like, I mean, it would be relatively stable
16 when Bernie was in logging camp, you know. But then he'd
17 come back from camp, you know, with all his cheques and
18 stuff and yeah, it was, you know -- it would just be a big
19 party for the next few weeks. And, you know, there's, you
20 know -- violence was never a stranger in our house, you
21 know. The -- this, you know -- why he never went to jail
22 earlier I have no idea, because he had stabbed my mom, you
23 know. He had -- there was always violence following us
24 around in our -- our house.

25 MS. MEREDITH PORTER: Thank you. And

1 what -- what ultimately happened in terms of -- of when --
2 when Bernie had murdered your sister. What were the charges
3 and the conviction? Can you speak a little bit about that
4 process as well?

5 **MR. PATRICK SMITH:** Yeah. I mean, as best
6 as I can recollect, because he was intoxicated at that
7 time, he had -- although he had said -- he'd clearly said
8 to my mom, "If you ever leave me, I'll hurt one of your
9 kids." You know, and so when -- when that happened, you
10 know, after he shot and murdered my sister he, you know, he
11 was convicted for manslaughter. But, I think, he got a
12 five year sentence and a then a one year sentence for the
13 gun. So I believe he got six years. But I think he did
14 about four, you know, four, four-and-a-half years, you
15 know. And, you know, for me that just seemed so unjust
16 that my beautiful, vibrant sister, as my cousin was
17 describing, you know -- she had a three month old baby boy,
18 Tyler, you know. She was just, you know, doing her best to
19 -- to heal and grow as, you know -- and her life was gone
20 and over with, you know. And for six years or four years,
21 he did, you know. That seems just travesty of justice.

22 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thank you. And you --
23 you also have described the time following your sister's
24 death as a bomb going off in your family. She had a young
25 son and there were obviously family members who were deeply

1 mourning her loss. Can you speak a little bit more about
2 what you mean by that bomb going off, sort of? What are
3 some of the things that happened immediately following her
4 death and in the years that followed?

5 **MR. PATRICK SMITH:** You'd always kind of get
6 -- just paint a bit of a picture, you know. If you're
7 growing up, you know, in an Indigenous family in a small
8 town and you have, you know, alcoholism and mental health
9 and, you know, you're already pretty stigmatized, you know.
10 You already get judged a lot by being who you are. Like, I
11 recall my mom -- my friend's mom saying, you know -- you
12 know, Patrick can come over to our -- well, they used to
13 call me Patty. Patty can come to our house but you guys
14 can't go over to his house, you know. But -- so we already
15 had that kind of stigma as being, you know, that family,
16 you know, in town. And so, you know, once, you know,
17 you -- there's violence you just feel even more stigma and
18 more, kind of, you know, shame about who you are as a human
19 being. This was how I was feeling, you know, that life
20 would never give us a break, you know. There's always
21 something. And so I just basically ran away from home. I
22 mean -- oh, my mom had a stroke shortly after, you know.
23 And she had an aneurysm so she was hospitalized. So, you
24 know, I was kind of left on my own. So I, you know, I hit
25 the streets of downtown Vancouver and thought I could, you

1 know, bury my pain in alcohol and drugs and things like
2 that, you know.

3 But I just want to just touch on that again
4 because I think that, you know, we all want our families
5 and our kids and our communities to be well, you know. But
6 I think when we try to force people, you know, we just push
7 them into hiding. And that just contributes to, you know,
8 this opiate crisis. So I think we just have to learn to
9 embrace people and love them for exactly who they are. You
10 know, if we had more of that in the world we'd have a whole
11 lot less, you know, death.

12 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thank you. I guess my
13 last questions would be for the -- for Commissioner
14 Eyolfson. Do you have any recommendations that you'd like
15 to make to Commissioner Eyolfson and to the National
16 Inquiry in general?

17 **MR. PATRICK SMITH:** I mean, I -- can I tell
18 a story first? I prepared a story I wanted to tell. As I
19 was saying, I work in the downtown east side. So we
20 were -- we were at the opening for 48 Cordova, Saa-ust
21 Centre. And, you know, so there, you know -- I -- it was
22 really beautiful to see how, you know, people, you know, my
23 brother Earl behind me, myself, you know, just started
24 donating, my brother Dwayne Howard (ph), you know, just
25 started just donating their artwork and trying to, you

1 know, get this Centre together, you know, for the
2 community, you know. And I -- so I had this little beaded
3 deer and I was really compelled to put it on the wall,
4 right. And I liked that. And I'm like, "Oh, why don't I
5 put it on their wall?" But anyways, I was really compelled
6 to do it. And -- but then, you know, afterwards, after I
7 put it I remember this -- and this will date myself a bit,
8 there used to be a thing in the back of magazines and tv
9 guides, just like a little drawing contest, right. And I
10 remember my sister, Laura, sent away for it. And she used
11 to love drawing deer, you know, little beautiful deer.
12 She'd draw them all the time, you know. I'm like, oh, that
13 makes sense why I put that deer up on that wall, you know.

14 I mean, I think I -- I covered
15 recommendations. We have to take all the men out of power
16 out. Actually, can I -- I'll tell a story. I know an
17 elder told me a story about that just last week, you know.
18 We have all these terminologies, you know; settlers,
19 allies, all this stuff, you know. And it kind of gets
20 confusing, you know, as most language does. There's about
21 13 different terms to describe a First Nation's person,
22 where none of them were correct. But anyways, what I
23 wanted to say was that, you know, an elder told me a story
24 last week. And he said, "There's white people -- there's
25 white men and there's white people." And I was like, "Oh,

1 that's curious." No offense to anybody here. This isn't
2 about gender and it's not about race. He said, "White
3 people are the people we, you know, the white nation we
4 intersect with; our school teachers, our friends, our --
5 you know, that we -- don't try and impress us, don't try
6 and change us, just accept us who we are and, you know,
7 we're -- we're good neighbors with them, basically." And
8 he said, "White men are those people, you know, whatever
9 gender they may be, who subjugate us, who oppress us, who
10 still, you know, cling blindly to that dominant, you know,
11 that paradigm of power, of hierarchy, you know. Those are,
12 you know, white men." And like I said, it doesn't always
13 have to be gender, you know. And I think some of the -- is
14 that we start empowering First Nations people to take care
15 of themselves. As many layers we can get between us and
16 what is valuable to us, our culture, you know, and get
17 those people out of the way, who are payed to take care of
18 us. Because I mean, I -- I hate to say it, but I've worked
19 for non-profits for many years, you know, and most of them
20 are not Indigenous led, you know. They're led -- we have
21 -- there's -- so there's always a layer -- always a buffer
22 between us and an actual conversation like we're having
23 today, you know. So I think as many layers, as many
24 buffers, you know, we can get out of the way, you know, and
25 make it inclusive, you know, of all people, you know.

1 One of my favorite quotes is, you know, "A
2 nation can only move as fast as its slowest member." You
3 know, a real -- a real leader leads from behind. So, you
4 know, if those people in power can -- can learn that, you
5 know, it's the most vulnerable, you know, that's where we
6 need to shine the lens of equity, you know. We can't judge
7 our people who are struggling with a burden, you know, of
8 colonialism, of residential school, of foster care, of
9 uncountable losses. You cannot judge them for, you know,
10 doing whatever they can do to survive on a day to day
11 basis, whatever that looks like. We have to, you know --
12 the ones who are suffering the most -- I don't know if my
13 good uncle Shane Point's (ph) in the room but he -- we
14 bring them closest, you know. We don't push them out and
15 say, "You have to be different, you have to change, you
16 have to do this. You don't have a right to your culture
17 because, you know -- you know, of what you're doing to try
18 to cope." You know, we have to stop that. You know, we
19 have to just embrace our family. You know, because they're
20 all our family.

21 You know, I had an epiphany once. I was
22 praying about how do I work, you know, and -- you know,
23 with people who are still, you know, struggling or just
24 doing their best to get through life, you know. And I had
25 this epiphany. I was praying and it was like, you know,

1 our chief medicines, mother earth, the air we breathe, the
2 sun, the water, they don't judge, they give life to each
3 and every person on the earth indiscriminately, you know.
4 We can learn a lot from them.

5 Yeah, I guess -- yeah, one other thing I,
6 kind of -- I forgot about was, you know -- you know, like I
7 said, we lived in a small town up in Powell River and there
8 was a couple lawyers and one was a defence lawyer. And I
9 don't think we had even buried my big sister yet and that
10 defence lawyer was in our house, you know, interviewing me
11 and my mom, my sister Rose, you know. And it was just
12 harsh, intrusive -- it was just -- it was a devastating --
13 I remember, that was one of the most hurtful things, was
14 just trying to answer these questions. And, you know, now
15 in hindsight it's like, you know, that's what got him off.
16 He came and he exploited a vulnerable family to, you know,
17 to change it into manslaughter, you know. How that happens
18 in the legal system I have no idea, you know. But -- yeah
19 -- and his name's Dave Garling (ph). So yeah, I really
20 hope that there's more safe guards in place for families.
21 So I really hope we never have to go through this again.
22 But unless those systems change tomorrow, you know, sadly
23 this will continue, you know. It's the only way forward
24 is, you know.

25 You know, my -- my niece has a drum group

1 and I love the name of her drum group, you know. It's
2 called Red Women Rising. You know, and that's -- that's --
3 for me that's -- that's the path forward for me, you know,
4 is being able to tap into that, you know, holistic way of
5 expressing ourselves as human beings and Indigenous people,
6 you know. And we can learn a lot as cultures and grow
7 together as cultures, you know, empower one another as
8 cultures. But where one thinks they, you know, have all
9 the answers for the other one, that's never going to work,
10 you know. We don't have all the answers for you but you
11 certainly don't have all the answers for us. The answers
12 are in here -- in here.

13 And on that I just want to say, our culture
14 -- if you work really hard -- an elder told me this once.
15 You know, our culture is as deep as the shells that have
16 layered it up since the beginning of time on the bottom of
17 the ocean. If you work really, really hard you might make
18 it through the first layer in a lifetime. That's how deep
19 our culture is, you know.

20 You know, I don't know if I have too much
21 more to say. I appreciate very, very much for being able
22 to share my story and, you know -- so, you know, I say
23 Gila'kasla, you know, to all the friends and family, my
24 wife for coming to support me, you know. And I just, you
25 know, want to do whatever I can do to, you know, make it a

1 safer world for my girls and for all girls throughout the
2 world, you know, all women throughout the world, you know.
3 In that case -- so Gila'kasla.

4 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Commissioner Eyolfson,
5 do you have any questions or comments for the witness, or
6 either of them?

7 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Sure. Thank
8 you. Patrick, coming back to just speaking about culture
9 and I was wondering if you'd be willing to tell us a little
10 bit more about the organization Culture Saves Lives. Or if
11 you had any further comments on, you referred to cultural
12 justice and also the importance of culture in healing,
13 either personally or through your work. I was wondering if
14 you could tell us a little bit more about the role of
15 culture?

16 **MR. PATRICK SMITH:** So it started with a
17 prayer, about 15 years ago, that -- I didn't even know it
18 started with a prayer about 15 years ago. But I clearly
19 recall that prayer, you know. But it was about no one's
20 left out of the circle, you know. The sacred -- the sacred
21 hoop is mending when no one's left out of the circle, you
22 know. So for me we've always, you know, worked on a
23 principle of equity, you know. Those very people who I was
24 talking about -- and there are relatives who get judged a
25 lot, you know, for, you know, maybe still using or things

1 like that. We wanted to find a way that we could include
2 them, you know. You know, that they felt valued, they had
3 a sense of belonging, they had a sense of community, you
4 know, they felt empowered, they're part of, you know -- so,
5 you know, we created that. So, you know, the best -- I
6 always tell things in stories to answer a question. But a
7 -- a story I heard once was there was -- a man was walking
8 down the beach looking for his purpose in life and then he
9 seen a shell shining the light into the dark places under a
10 rock, under a dark place under a rock. And he had an aha
11 moment. That's it, we're just meant to shine the light in
12 the dark places. So for me that's what our -- our program
13 is, our culture. We -- we try and shine that light that
14 culture does not usually get into, you know, to this SRO's,
15 into the back alleys, you know, wherever it's needed, you
16 know, wherever there's First Nation's people. We're hoping
17 to bring it out more into the rural areas, you know, where
18 people may be under bridges, anywhere our -- and just
19 simply let them know, we love you and we're here for you,
20 you know. We'll -- this has been a path that's helped us
21 and if we can show you and help you on that path we'll do
22 our best, you know. You know, one of my good elders taught
23 me that, you know, being a singer's the life of service,
24 you know. But, you know, carrying any of these tools is a
25 life of service. Yeah. And we do our best just to, you

1 know -- you know, if someone comes to ask for help we do
2 our best to show up, you know. I have to acknowledge these
3 guys behind me, you know, for -- since the opiate crisis
4 has been going on they've -- I have lost count of how many
5 memorials we've sang at; 70 or 80, probably, in the last
6 few years, you know. And a lot of those were, you know,
7 First Nation's women, you know, First Nations men, you
8 know, because we lead those stats. And I have to commend
9 them for that, you know, because that's -- that's our
10 heartbeat, you know. That's what keeps our community going
11 is our drums and our songs, you know.

12 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you very
13 much. I don't have any other questions. So I just want to
14 say thank you, Patrick, thank you, Althea for -- for coming
15 to Inquiry and sharing with us this morning. And, you
16 know, Patrick you referred to the need to, you know, hear
17 about strength and resilience and I just want to
18 acknowledge your strength and resilience and thank you for
19 sharing that with us here this morning. And before we --
20 we close, as a sign of reciprocity for you sharing your
21 gifts of truth with us we have some small gifts to share
22 with you and I'm going to let Grandmother Blu speak to
23 those. Thank you.

24 **MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS GAUDIO:** Good
25 morning and thank you again for coming and sharing your

1 truths, for digging deep down inside and bringing out those
2 hurts, those wounds and helping us to realize that we need
3 to show forgiveness, we need to show compassion and
4 kindness. These feathers were gifted to us when we were in
5 Thomson. It started off here where the matriarchs knew
6 that we needed feathers. And we put a call out and all
7 those grandmother's and those people sent us, I think, 500
8 feathers. And we've been handing them out now to those who
9 bear witness as a thank you because these eagle feathers
10 are the ones that fly the closest to the Creator. So we
11 want to offer them to you so that they help you with your
12 continual journey. As well as that there's packages of
13 seeds there and those seeds, which are wild strawberries
14 and yarrow, they will help you when you plant them to
15 remember to see the beauty in life, as you say, that light
16 that shines through those cracks. These seeds are the same
17 as that, right. You'll plant them, you'll nourish them,
18 and then you'll see the beauty once they grow. So to help
19 you with your journey, as well, and to make sure that we
20 stay focused on those things because culture is our life.
21 And we thank you so much for sharing that with us and with
22 the rest of Canada because the rest of Canada needs to know
23 how we're going to heal and how we're going to be well. So
24 Hai-hai.

25 MS. MEREDITH PORTER: Thank you. Thank you

1 so much. And with that, we're going to close this portion
2 of the hearing with another song. Following the drumming
3 we are going to adjourn for 15 minutes for a break. Thank
4 you.

5 --- CLOSING SONG

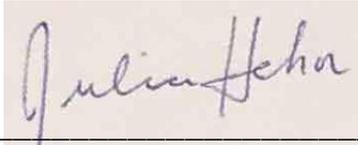
6 --- Exhibits (code: P01P15P0401)

7 **Exhibit 1:** Digital Image shown during the public
8 testimony of Patrick Smith and Althea Wilson

9 --- Upon adjourning at 10:27 a.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

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



Julia Hehn

April 9, 2018