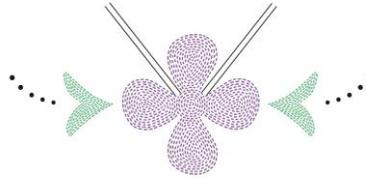


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Elmbridge Room
Metro Vancouver, British Columbia**



Public

Saturday April 7, 2018

**Public Volume 105:
Angela Lavallee
In relation to Zaylyn Lavallee**

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

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.
41-5450 Canotek Road, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 9G2
E-mail: info@irri.net – Phone: 613-748-6043 – Fax: 613-748-8246

II

APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Julie McGregor (Legal counsel)
Government of Canada	Anne McConville (Legal counsel)
Government of British Columbia	Leah Greathead (Legal counsel)
Heiltsuk First Nation	No Appearance
Northwest Indigenous Council Society	No Appearance
Our Place - Ray Cam Co-operative Centre	No Appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada	No Appearance
Vancouver Sex Workers' Rights Collective	No Appearance
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Métis Nation	No Appearance

III

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Public Volume 105: Angela Lavallee In relation to Zaylyn Lavallee	1
Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller	
Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe	
Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge-keepers: Kathy Louis	
Clerk: Bryana Bouchir	
Registrar: Bryan Zandberg	

IV

LIST OF EXHIBITS

NO.	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
Witness: Angela Lavallee		
Exhibits (code: P01P15P0404)		
1	Order of Guardianship made by the Queen's Bench (Manitoba) granting guardianship of the Child born on December 5, 2012 to Angela Lavallee, File No. CP 15-01-15163.	60
2	Autopsy report of Zaylynn Lavallee, Hospital Autopsy No. 15M314, with attached Toxicology Report as well as two letters of John K. Younes Acting Chief Medical Examiner, to Angela Lavallee, the first letter dated May 13, 2016 and the second June 21, 2016.	61
3	Folder containing three digital images and one Powerpoint presentation displayed during the public testimony of Angela Lavallee.	61

1 Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Saturday, April 7, 2018 at 09:14

3 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Good morning, Chief
4 Commissioner. I'd like to introduce you Angela Lavallee.
5 Angela actually has supports with her that she just wants
6 to introduce before we begin, please.

7 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Hi, I'm going to pass
8 the microphone to them, because these Ikway women have
9 their own voices and are very strong.

10 **MS. KATHERINE POMPANA:** Hi, I'm Katherine
11 Pompana. I'm Angela's adopted sister. I adopted her
12 through ceremony five years ago now, so she's my sister.
13 So I'm here to support her, and I was also there -- not
14 there, but I was with her when the events occurred. So I'm
15 here for her and I'll always be there for her.

16 **MS. ANGIE HUTCHINSON:** Good morning. I'm
17 Angie Hutchinson and Angela is my spirit sister, and I'm
18 here to support her.

19 **MS. HILDA ANDERSON-PYRZ:** Good morning. My
20 name is Hilda Anderson-Pyrz. Angela is my sister as well,
21 and I'm here to support her both in my role as a sister and
22 as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
23 liaison from the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak.

24 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Before Angela begins
25 to share her story, I would ask that she's promised in on

1 an eagle feather, please.

2 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Angela,
3 do you promise to give your evidence today in a good way?

4 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** (inaudible)

5 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Was that
6 recorded? No, okay. I'm sorry. We'll have to do it
7 again.

8 Angela, do you promise to give your evidence
9 today in a good way?

10 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yes.

11 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank
12 you.

13 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So Angela will be
14 sharing her own story of surviving violence, as well as the
15 story of her granddaughter, Zaylyn. But before we actually
16 do that, I want to give you the opportunity to introduce
17 yourself as well, because I understand you have a strong
18 voice too.

19 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** I wanted to ask if my
20 sister can open up with a prayer first, if that's all
21 right? Okay. Thank you.

22 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** (Speaking in
23 Indigenous language)

24 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Hi. My name is Angela
25 Dina (phonetic) Lavallee. One of my spirit names that I

1 bring here today are four grandmothers woman. I am a
2 single mother of four children, for -- their ages are 23,
3 21, 19, 9. And I'm raising my granddaughter who is five
4 years old. I'm originally from Cormack, Manitoba, that's
5 where I have -- I grew up. I am Tataskweyak Cree Nation
6 Treaty.

7 I resigned from a position with
8 māmawêyatitân Center to go back to university and I'm doing
9 a double major in conflict resolution and criminal justice.
10 My plan is to apply at the University of Victoria or the
11 University of Manitoba into their law program. The death
12 of my granddaughter guides that path and the results
13 surrounding the issues with -- on the violence on our women
14 and girls are what take me there.

15 I'm also a focus-oriented therapist. So I
16 do a lot of work -- I don't call it work because I
17 volunteer my time -- to help others who are experiencing
18 family violence. So that would be women that were sexually
19 assaulted, or women that are fleeing violent relationships,
20 as well as little girls. And I'm a sister, grandma,
21 auntie.

22 Most importantly, I think a part of me is
23 acknowledging who I am and that outside all of those roles,
24 I'm somebody who tries to just get on through the day and
25 plow through these systems and carry a little bit of weight

1 on my shoulders. But as you can see, I have a circle of
2 supports and it's a lot larger than this, but we are in
3 B.C. and I originate in Manitoba and a lot of the supports
4 could not fly out here. Thanks.

5 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Now, Angela, I
6 understand that you yourself have experienced some
7 violence. So with whatever level you're comfortable
8 sharing with us, I'm going ask if you can talk a little bit
9 about that before we turn to Zaylyn.

10 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** As my first experience
11 that I did not ask for with violence happened when I was
12 three years old. I was sexually abused by a man that was a
13 friend of the family and he used me and abused me until I
14 was age 12, or no I was age -- yeah, about age 12. And it
15 was done fairly -- very sneaky and very cruel, and the
16 sexual abuse was done when family wasn't around.

17 I come from a very woman dominated family, a
18 trusting family. My grandmother actually raised me. My
19 mum -- my grandmothers older daughter -- oldest daughter,
20 and she took me in as her own daughter and she took me away
21 from that bad lifestyle. However, he found his way back
22 into my life and it continued on until I was 12. And then
23 I went to school and -- so he couldn't follow me to school
24 because I went to Frontier Collegiate, and that's where I
25 met the father of my children.

1 And without getting into too much detail
2 with that story, because he is an indigenous man who has
3 experienced his own way of childhood stuff, and it never
4 should have happened to him. So we were the shadows of his
5 abuse. But the abuse with him was 10 years and every time
6 it was very physical, a lot of emotional. So my three
7 older kids were exposed to a lot of that violence.

8 I had to get some face surgeries because my
9 nose was fractured, took three -- three surgeries. The
10 doctors wanted to do more, but I'd had enough being prodded
11 at. I left him when I was 26 and it took some time. I
12 think the longest was -- to heal from -- was the emotional
13 abuse and the understanding of that, and why it happened,
14 and try not to hate myself because of what had happened to
15 me, and learning that it was not my fault, and knowing
16 where to go for help and support. And also reconnecting
17 with him, without trusting him again and hearing his story.
18 I think there was a lot of restorative justice between us
19 in that. So yeah, that's ---

20 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And I think it's
21 fair to say you introduced yourself with all of the work
22 you do, the volunteer work you do. I'm assuming a lot of
23 that is also driven by your life experience and ---

24 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

25 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** --- learning to heal

1 and come to terms with that type of reconciliation.

2 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

3 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Those are tools, I'm
4 guessing, you use every day in your work with others?

5 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can we talk about
7 how having experienced that violence also gives you an
8 ability to recognize when violence is occurring, even if
9 people can't say it or talk about it themselves?

10 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** I think there's a lot
11 of signs that lived experience opens up for you. I can go
12 to school for five, 10 years, and sit there and learn about
13 what violence really is. But if I don't have the
14 experience of what it knows -- what it feels like to be
15 hit, what it feels like to be raped of your money, what it
16 feels like to be raped, what it feels like to be sexually
17 violated, I think I would have a really hard time
18 resonating with people that come in and see me.

19 I think I'm -- there's going to be a lens
20 that I'm going to carry into the support, and I think an
21 education is valued more in our society if you have a
22 diploma. However, there's so many indigenous people out
23 there that have overcome violence, that overcome
24 residential school, that overcome colonization, however
25 we're not acknowledged and we're not valued because we

1 don't carry a colonial -- that colonial certificate to say
2 I've done it, and I can do it, and I can help you, let
3 alone help myself.

4 So I think we're not valued in that way and
5 it needs to be -- so our voices are smothered. They're not
6 acknowledged. As a kokum trying to protect her
7 grandbabies, I was pushed back. So -- by the systems that
8 were there to protect them, and that didn't happen, and it
9 needs to stop. Yeah.

10 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And if you could,
11 because you have -- you've told us about your own -- your
12 own children, some of the strengths and stuff that you're
13 able to instill in them based on that experience. What do
14 those type of things include?

15 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** I think empathy is a
16 huge one. To understand that hurt comes from a place of
17 hurt and you can't hurt others in order to get justice.
18 You need to walk with -- you need to lead with love.
19 Sometimes it's really hard. People are not always going to
20 love you back, including your own family members.

21 It's really, really hard and challenging,
22 sometimes for myself to acknowledge the exposure that I put
23 my own kids in. That's what they knew, was domestic
24 violence. That's what we lived in for 10 years. So my
25 daughter carried that into her relationships and that is

1 really challenging to get over. That intergenerational
2 stuff that bleeds in the everyday practices.

3 It's really hard to break when you go to
4 some of these places that are supposed to be supportive to
5 you and they're judging you. Because then you're just back
6 into that life that you were raised in. When you go and
7 you're asking support from workers or policing agencies and
8 they look at you like you're scum, or they're like, "What
9 did you do? Why did you do that? Why would you even go
10 back to him?"

11 So trying to learn from that and, you know,
12 understand that we have a whole community of Elders, a
13 whole community of families that are rebuilding, and we're
14 rebuilding that circle, we're rebuilding that connection
15 and we don't need to rely on places that are not validating
16 that pain.

17 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So and you touched
18 on sort of living with the fact that your children were
19 exposed to that domestic violence and sometimes there's a
20 perceived shame that comes with that.

21 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** M'hm.

22 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** But can you tell me
23 the strength it took you to move past the relationship and
24 what made you decide that you had to end the relationship?

25 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** I walked into a place

1 within myself and met up with somebody that had said I
2 wouldn't have long to live if I continued to live the way I
3 was. And I was able to recognize that I was circling down
4 into a place and around me there were families being lost,
5 there were families being put into the system and I didn't
6 want my kids there.

7 So I phoned their kokum and she picked them
8 up and she took them away until I was better, and I went
9 back home to be close to my family. And that helped a lot
10 and I was able to do that because I had nothing holding me
11 back. I had no worker to tell me that, "Oh no, you have to
12 stay here." I just left because I was able to.

13 So I barely just skimmed past that system
14 and got myself out of Winnipeg and I went back home, and
15 where my aunties and my grandma were, and my mum actually
16 moved back there too and stayed close. And my kids went
17 with their grandma until they were -- for about two to
18 three months, and picked myself up and left with only the -
19 - only my bags on my back and my kids, and we came --
20 actually came back to Winnipeg with, I don't know, a big
21 truck full of stuff. So rebuilding my life, not only here,
22 but that physical piece, like those materialistic items,
23 and I also came back with another child. So -- yeah.

24 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Now, if we can talk
25 about Zaylyn, but I know that you want to tell us about

1 Zaylyn, you want to share her strengths with us.

2 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

3 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Zaylyn was born on -
4 - she was born on August 2nd, 2014, and my daughter phoned
5 me, she went into labour. We sat at the women's hospital
6 and my daughter is a very gentle woman. Her spirit name is
7 Water Lilly. Gentle too, but tough at the bottom.

8 So she went into labour and Zaylyn has an
9 older sister of course, and when she was born she was
10 quiet. She'd come out, she was quiet, but the happiest
11 baby. I think she came out smiling and my daughter was
12 very quiet during her labour. Like, I remember when I was
13 in labour and being there with some women that are in
14 labour and they're screaming and they're like, ahh. My
15 daughter is like, "Oh, I think she's coming out." And I'm
16 like, oh my goodness.

17 And then she wasn't loud enough so the
18 nurses used that as a message. They said "No, something's
19 -- she's coming." "I just checked, her, she's five." I
20 said, "No, something -- she's --" And she checked, "She's
21 10, oh my goodness." And they're running around, and you
22 have to listen to the kokum's voices. So it was that whole
23 energy of being there and watching her be born and it was
24 so amazing. And she was so loved.

25 She would come to māmawêyatitân Centre where

1 I worked, and people would hold her, and her eyes -- like,
2 her eyes were -- they were old. You'd look at her and she
3 was -- she had these amazing eyes and my daughter would
4 tell me stories. She'd take her on the bus, "Oh this
5 little old lady came up to her and started talking about
6 her eyes and squeezing her cheeks." And my daughter is
7 like, "She shouldn't be squeezing her cheeks."

8 So she was really loved, very loved. And
9 she spent a lot of time -- I acknowledged how she travelled
10 in our family. Like, she -- it's almost like she touched
11 so many lives in her nine months of living. She was 10
12 pounds heavier than her older sister. So that was really
13 amazing, like, she was a big girl and she loved cheezies.

14 And I loved sleepovers with her. We would
15 spend -- I remember this one morning we spent. She got up
16 about 8:30 and we spent in bed just laying there, changed
17 her diaper, just rolling. She's sucking on her toes and
18 she's playing with my face, and she just laid there. We
19 laid there for about two and a half hours. And just
20 different things. And this little thing, like, she used to
21 love this and she'd play with it, with the ears, and she
22 left it in my van.

23 And she was also an auntie's girl and a
24 mommy's girl. So she was all over. I had a hard time
25 having Zaylyn sleepover because she was always attached to

1 her mum's hip. And then it was really challenging, I
2 remember though something that just sticks with me.

3 This one night when she slept over she came
4 and she laid, and I was bathing her and putting on her
5 little sleeper, and she was playing. And we -- I remember
6 the light, I had a lamp right here, and then this feeling
7 just came over me, just like this feeling that she wasn't
8 going to be here long. And then I was just like, no, and I
9 felt it. And as quick as it came, is as quick as it went
10 away. But it was months later, a couple months later, she
11 was gone.

12 And it was about a month and a half where
13 she was there, but she was sleeping in the auntie's room
14 and I woke up about 1:30 in the morning and I just felt
15 that feeling again. But it was just like a feeling of
16 death and fear, and I knew I had no control over it, but I
17 wasn't sure who it was going to be. And as quick as it
18 came, is as quick as it left. So she was the joy. That
19 little bundle of -- we called her fatty poof and she was so
20 cute. Yeah.

21 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can you -- can you
22 please tell the Commissioner a little bit about your
23 daughter and her partner's relationship at the time?

24 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Her partner, who is
25 not the father of the girls, came into her life October.

1 Prior to that my daughter was getting back on her feet.

2 Dad of the girls is an indigenous young man
3 who grew up in the system, so walking up against the wind
4 and, you know, he had everything against him bad and he's
5 actually sitting in jail right now for some stuff he never
6 should have done. But he's walked against that wind and he
7 doesn't know anything else, and so he is in -- he went to
8 jail. There were some warrants out for his arrest and then
9 my daughter ended up meeting somebody.

10 She was going to school at the time at APC
11 with the girls and she was pregnant with Zaylyn when she
12 met him, and then she had Zaylyn in August and then by
13 October we started noticing things. She was not answering
14 phone calls as much. I would get phone calls and they
15 would hang up. He -- we know when somebody is not being
16 treated well, our mums know, my mum knew, my grandma knew.
17 I knew my daughter wasn't in a healthy relationship and she
18 challenged that with me.

19 So our focus was to try to make sure the
20 girls were safe and to make sure she was safe. But she was
21 in the denial and she lived him, and that cycle that we all
22 are familiar with, but we're not familiar with when we're
23 in it. And he started answering the door and then we
24 started noticing she was running out of food. We started
25 noticing the girls were not kept the way they should have

1 been.

2 I'll call her J, my older granddaughter. I
3 can't discuss some of the stuff related around her case
4 just because it's still in the courts, and I don't want to
5 talk about some of that stuff right now with her. So she
6 was starting to spend a lot of time at my place and then
7 when I would take her home her body language would read
8 something was going on. She would scream as soon as we'd
9 start going around the corner. And I asked my daughter
10 what that was about, and she told me the stories and the
11 suspicion.

12 So we hovered closer and she pushed us back,
13 and then she went -- I can't talk about that particular
14 piece, but there's piece that are intertwined with Zaylyn's
15 case that I'm trying my hardest not to talk about. It's
16 just part of that being held by those slow justice systems
17 and policies. So I'll try my best.

18 So the relationship with her were -- and it
19 even starts by hickies. That control, that knowing, broken
20 phones, broken doors, holes in the wall, no makeup, all her
21 nice stuff that I was giving her gone. So we knew
22 something was up and she was becoming distant. She would
23 come to me like, even a broken stroller. I had -- we had
24 got the girls a double stroller, so that was missing.

25 He was gang affiliated, I suspected, just by

1 the colours he was wearing and I'm not ignorant to that
2 kind of stuff. And then there was bruises that were
3 questionable and injuries that I had come across, and then
4 she had fed me lies about how she'd already seen the doctor
5 and -- so I can't get into that. I'm going back into that
6 one. And then there were Facebook messages, there were her
7 friends who were concerned. So the whole history of
8 knowing that she was in an abusive relationship.

9 She actually kicked me out of her house a
10 couple times, and I didn't want to break bad with her, so I
11 made sure that I did not become a person that was too
12 invasive, but that was there. Because I was -- I wanted to
13 be there for here and I needed to be in the home and make
14 sure I go in there and look for certain things. And then
15 he was started to -- he was not allowed around my house,
16 but when she did come to my house there were the, when are
17 you coming back?

18 So I actually had my son go and stay there.
19 My son was dealing with some stuff, to kind of monitor
20 things. He ended up getting kicked out. He deals with
21 other stuff so that's his story to tell, I can't talk about
22 that. That's his story.

23 My daughter and I started to see messages
24 when he would come in the room she would just hover and go
25 into our arms and she spent a lot of time with us. And

1 there was other things that were told to us, but not until
2 after Zaylyn died. Not until after we started asking more
3 questions and he was really -- when we would go and visit
4 he'd go and run up the stairs. So there was those signs
5 that sit here that I know exist and make me that expert,
6 and when you live it you see it. So ---

7 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So I understand that
8 you actually, being the advocate in navigating through
9 those systems, actually took the time to contact the Chief
10 Examiner's Office and ask if you could receive a copy of
11 the comprehensive autopsy report.

12 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** M'hm.

13 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And then you'll
14 recall we actually subpoenaed you to get a copy of that so
15 ---

16 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

17 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** --- because it was
18 confidential in nature, and so we subpoenaed you so that we
19 could then have the record.

20 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** M'hm.

21 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I'm going to pass it
22 up, just to the Chief Commissioner. And that's -- I'm just
23 going to start with a couple questions about it. There is
24 a letter from the Chief Medical Examiner's office just --
25 the first page is just here's what you've requested and

1 it's enclosed.

2 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

3 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** But there's a second
4 letter that indicates -- it indicates that the
5 comprehensive autopsy report was recently amended and the
6 amendment was to note that the father listed in the actual
7 document has been changed to stepfather, and this speaks to
8 the fact that your daughter's -- the father of your
9 grandchildren is not the same person they're talking about
10 in the report.

11 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

12 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Normally, I actually
13 request that these documents be sealed for the integrity
14 and for -- to respect and honour the deceased. Although it
15 is what it is, which is a very clinical look at a death,
16 this one is not as graphic and so I'm not going to seek an
17 order in this particular circumstance. She is deceased.
18 I'll give that to you. I don't necessarily need to have
19 it, because you're familiar with it.

20 But if you could -- you don't have to start
21 with -- you don't have to start with the autopsy report.

22 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** No.

23 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** You can start with
24 what you know of Zaylyn's death, please?

25 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** The night that she

1 died I was actually at a meeting and I was -- went for a
2 run, and I was supposed to pick up the girls, and my
3 daughter had plans to go out that night. And the meeting
4 went later so I ended up not getting the girls.

5 So that is something that I have had to
6 overcome, that regret on how we live with what we could
7 have done differently. If they were with me they would --
8 so I've -- I can say that now without crying.

9 So one of the things that -- so that night -
10 - I usually sleep with my phone on silent and I rolled over
11 and then the phone was ringing. And then it was my
12 daughter, Season (phonetic). I'm like, oh no. Is she
13 phoning to argue? Because she was kind of upset with me
14 that night and -- that I couldn't keep the girls, and then
15 she was going on. And she phoned.

16 So I picked it up and she was hysterical,
17 and she's like "Zaylyn is gone, she's gone." And my first
18 thought was CFS, because they were already aware of some
19 issues that were going on and they were supposed to be
20 keeping an eye on the girls. And then I said, "Well, where
21 is Jeneva? Where's -- did they take Jeneva too?" "Mum,
22 she's dead." And then I really don't recall -- I think my
23 cousin or sisters came to pick me up, and we got to the
24 hospital and then just the busyness and the realities.

25 They wouldn't let me see her. They said it

1 -- there was two cops standing there and that really
2 bothered me. Because I said, well if they're -- "Why can't
3 I see her?" And they wouldn't let me see her at all. They
4 just had -- it felt so, I don't know, un-indigenous, I
5 guess. The best I can say it regardless of -- from what I
6 understand, the way, when are people died, regardless of
7 how they died, we get that time with them. And but at the
8 same time I was respecting their -- like, if something did
9 happen to her, they needed to have that place confined.

10 And so then family was there. A lot of that
11 stuff comes in pieces, because I was in a place where it
12 took a while to remember some of the stuff around when she
13 died. And then I remember he was sitting there and I
14 didn't -- I just had a feeling. And then the cops had
15 taken him and my daughter and I didn't want to leave the
16 hospital because I wanted to see her. So I had some
17 supports come in and I just wanted to like, touch her and
18 see her, but they wouldn't let me see her and I ended up
19 going not seeing her. That really bothered me a lot.

20 And from what I understand, from what I
21 remember it was 45 minutes that the police had taken my
22 daughter and him and then interviewed them. Then by -- I
23 remember being in touch with my daughter's neighbour, her
24 friend, and the corners office and them, they were all
25 cleared out by, I think, 7:00. So they were there just

1 doing what they needed to do.

2 And I had asked what happened. And she said
3 that they both went upstairs and found her, and she wasn't
4 breathing and I was like, "Okay. Well, they'll find out
5 what happened." I had that hope that, you know, you still
6 carry on to the hope that things will be found. And so we
7 went around just doing the -- doing all that we needed to
8 do to ensure she was buried, to make sure all of the stuff
9 -- and even during her service and the wake he was there.

10 He was always there and some of my aunties
11 just had that sense about him, and I didn't trust him
12 already. I didn't even want him there, but my daughter, I
13 needed her there and didn't want her -- she was supposed to
14 be staying at my house during that time. She didn't want
15 to go back to the house, but he wasn't allowed in my house,
16 so she had to -- she stayed in the house with him, but I
17 didn't let Jeneva go back. Oh, J.

18 And then -- so then dealing with the grief
19 and the family, and all of the stuff, but not really asking
20 the questions yet. But it sat there. And then I remember
21 sitting at her -- at her coffin wondering what happened,
22 but not being in that place of being able to even ask what
23 happened, because we can't even believe it's actually
24 happened.

25 And then he was walking by with her, my

1 other granddaughter and he -- because we were at
2 Thunderbird House in Winnipeg, honouring her. And he was
3 going to sleep where my daughter was in the room with her,
4 and I had all my sisters and we were all out there, and I
5 was sitting with Zaylyn, just talking to her.

6 And I turned around and I'd seen her face,
7 Zaylyn's sister, and she was just looking at me and I said,
8 "Hey, bring her here." And then he's -- I said, "You're
9 not to touch her again." And he just looked "What, what?"
10 And then my daughter, of course he went and said -- and I
11 just had to say it. I was trying to be non -- not create
12 an awkward place for my daughter as well in her time of
13 grief. But I just didn't want him near her.

14 And told my daughter, "She's not going with
15 you. She's going to stay with me. You need to spend some
16 time with yourself and she shouldn't be in the home where
17 her sister was found -- found in that way." And she's
18 like, "Okay." And then so we got through the services and
19 then Manitoba Housing had actually called me and then I had
20 told -- they said, "What's going on? There's a coroner,
21 blah, blah, blah --" And I said, "Well, my granddaughter
22 died."

23 And I said, "And I know this place is
24 infested with mice." I said, "There's an actual --
25 supposed to be a drafted-up letter by Manitoba Hydro to get

1 these girls out of your place." I said, "Because you
2 shouldn't be telling my daughter to clean up mice." And I
3 just -- that just came out during my time of grief. I took
4 it -- since they called me I took the opportunity and
5 utilized it the best that I can. And then -- "Well, we'll
6 get her suite", they said. I said, "I don't want her to go
7 back there."

8 So they moved her to another apartment,
9 another place. And then I had my -- one of my cousins who
10 lived closer keep an eye on Jeneva, because the workers
11 were not going. They were scheduling visits and when I had
12 talked to the workers and I had said, "This is what's going
13 on, related to Jeneva" -- oh.

14 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** It's okay.

15 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** That "You need to keep
16 an eye on her. You need to watch her, and you know, she's
17 already been -- she was already in the hospital when Zaylyn
18 was still alive, and you need to watch her." And they
19 said, "Well we scheduled a visit." I said, "You don't
20 schedule a visit. These are the families that you need to
21 be invasive with." I said, "If you would give me some
22 authority I can go in when I want, and if she doesn't
23 listen, they you'd be my back up." Like, trying to work
24 with them.

25 We can all sit at the same table and we can

1 ask the questions. We shouldn't be doing it in pieces and
2 trying to bring all the papers together. This is circle,
3 and in that way, when they tell us the story, we all get
4 the story. But I'm hearing five different stories. And
5 then she said, "Oh, you're just being a paranoid Kokum."
6 And I'm -- no. I said, "You need to go in."

7 So I pulled in the aunties and my -- one of
8 my cousins, and then -- who she's really close with around
9 -- and this is after my granddaughter died. So there is
10 some stuff going on that I keep accidentally talking about
11 that I know I can't talk about, but it's tied to Zaylyn's
12 story. And then he had -- still had access to her and he
13 was -- like, there's ---

14 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can I request just a
15 short break, if possible please? Thank you. If we could
16 have five minutes that would be great.

17 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Yeah.

18 --- Upon recessing 9:49 a.m.

19 --- Upon resuming 9:55 a.m.

20 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. If we
21 can carry on, Angela, talking about Zaylyn's death and what
22 you know about it?

23 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** So after Zaylyn died I
24 knew immediately that I needed to find out how and why, and
25 I had some familiar, I guess experiences, to -- I knew I

1 needed to get in touch with the Chief Medical -- like, the
2 officers, the police. The police did not take my call
3 because I was not the guardian to her, or the parent. And
4 I actually -- they were really surprised I got the autopsy
5 report, but I advocated for that.

6 And I said, as somebody who is the
7 matriarch, like in my daughter's life, and she's vulnerable
8 at the moment. She's grieving, she'd getting through a
9 violent relationship, so I am that person, and they managed
10 to send it to me a year later. They did not complete it
11 the year later. How I managed to get it so -- when I did,
12 was I had become fed up. I'm a very patient person and I
13 had told them if the media had a whisper of what was going
14 on with my granddaughters and they had had this highlighted
15 all over Manitoba, or in Winnipeg, you know that a young
16 baby dies, and would you be moving any faster on that
17 autopsy report? And I got it within a few weeks later.

18 So when I did get it, they made it very
19 clear to me that I'm not to show that to anybody, that
20 there would be -- I would be reprimanded if the autopsy
21 report was shown. I said, "I won't show it to anybody."
22 But I did share it with my voice and interpreted it the way
23 that it needed to be interpreted.

24 And that caused -- when I got the autopsy
25 report, at that time I was already questioning -- I was

1 phoning the children's advocate in Manitoba. I wanted to
2 know -- because I knew there should be a death review
3 committee that would meet, because Jeneva -- Zaylyn, the
4 girls were involved in the system. They were not
5 apprehended by the system, but they were involved in the
6 system and they should have been overseen and it was within
7 that timeframe.

8 So after a few calls with the Children's
9 Advocate, with a call with the Chief Medical Officer, with
10 all the other stuff related to her sister and all -- trying
11 to connect everything, I felt like a ping pong ball. Oh
12 no, you have to phone there, you have to phone there. This
13 is who you phone. So getting bounced back and forth and
14 then I had just said, I said, "Why are these people not
15 meeting around the table? And I want to be at that table."
16 They said, "Oh no, the worker will be there. It'll be
17 fine." I said, "Are you talking to -- about the worker
18 that should have been protecting my granddaughters?
19 Because I don't want anybody speaking who is not there for
20 them." I could bring the voice for the girls to this death
21 review committee.

22 And then I got another call -- actually, I
23 never got no calls, I called and inquired again, "Did you
24 get the autopsy report completed? Did you get a copy of
25 the autopsy report?" I phoned Children's Advocate and then

1 they said they were meeting that Friday and everybody was
2 coming together. And I said, "Good. Will I be there as,
3 you know, any family members?" And they said, "Oh no,
4 we'll get back to you." I phoned again, the Chief Medical
5 Officer and he said, "No, we still did not get the autopsy
6 report done." I said, "Well, how does the death review
7 committee meet without an autopsy report?"

8 Oh well -- so I was getting kind of played
9 around is how I felt, like a ping pong ball. So some
10 frustration. Then when I did get the autopsy report and
11 read it and then he said, "Well, you're not going to know
12 what is being said. You don't understand the terminology
13 about it." And I said, "Well, I could read, and I can
14 understand, and I can summarize, and I know how to do
15 research, and maybe I know somebody who could read it with
16 me." And that's when he had said, "Well, you're not
17 allowed to show it."

18 And so when I did get the autopsy report,
19 that's when I requested -- the first thing was he's not
20 their father. For me that was an insult. So I said, this
21 did not happen, this did not happen. Like, who did the
22 investigation? I said, because the police are telling me
23 they were waiting for this and then to determine, and now
24 the death is deemed undetermined. What does that mean?
25 And then they said, "Well, it just means it's -- we don't

1 know what happened. We're not ruling out an unsafe
2 sleeping environment." I said, "Well, he was the unsafe
3 sleeping environment." I said, "When you -- if --" And he
4 said, "Well, that's not our job." And I said, "Well, is it
5 not the job to collaborate with the Winnipeg Police?"
6 Like, who do I talk to?

7 And then so when I got in touch with the
8 Winnipeg Police investigators, prior to even getting the
9 autopsy report, that was their excuse. "Well, we're
10 waiting for the autopsy report." I said, "Well do you not
11 investigate even before, if there's a suspicion?" Like, a
12 healthy baby dies, she's found, and why would you wait for
13 an autopsy report? It's months.

14 I said, "You need to talk to my daughter.
15 She needs to talk to you." She's -- because she had left
16 the relationship and her fear was not -- her voice was not
17 being led by him any longer. So you need to --- "Well,
18 give her our number." I said, "Well, this is the address
19 where you'll find her and, you know, and this is who else
20 you talk to and you -- there were people there that night.
21 There's four versions of what happened to her that night.
22 You have the version my daughter gave you because it was
23 guided by him. You have the version of a lady that was
24 there that will tell you that he brought her body down and
25 was poking at her and asking what he should do. You would

1 hear that from her."

2 I said, "There is also the neighbour when
3 allegedly he was supposed to be doing CPR on her, he was
4 looking out the window. So if there's something that needs
5 to be done --" I said, "-- nobody investigated." And then
6 they had said, "Well, tell them to call us and we'll go see
7 them." And I said, "Okay, well, I hope you do." But
8 nothing was ever done.

9 Then when I did phone and I found out that
10 they closed her file and I found that really -- how do you
11 close a file? It's what you call something half fast, you
12 know? You don't just close a file. It's like making a
13 sandwich and not completing it. You know, there's more to
14 that, you know, there's more to that. There's more that
15 needs to be filled.

16 I said, "When you read the autopsy report in
17 the bruising, they talk about birth bruising. There were
18 never bruises on her like that. She should have had those
19 bruises through her whole little life. You know, you're
20 drafting up an autopsy report and allegedly, could be,
21 could be, could be, when you don't know what was there
22 before because you don't ask the questions."

23 I had to share with my daughter a version of
24 what I had heard that she didn't know because she wasn't in
25 a place to protect her girls. She was vulnerable herself.

1 She takes accountability, she carries her own regret. She
2 carries that a lot. She numbs herself with -- she learned
3 how to numb herself with drugs. She learned how to inject
4 that into her body to be happy. It's so easy for them to
5 just inject that.

6 When she was ready to talk to the police,
7 they dismissed her and then they just said, "Well, why
8 didn't you tell us before?" So to acknowledge that when
9 women are in an -- in violent relationships that they're
10 not empowered, they're not inspired to speak, and you know,
11 we need to remember that. That what they may say in that
12 time is not going to be the truth.

13 And when the truth does come out you
14 validate that, because that's their time, they're ready and
15 they're being full again, and they're being honoured.
16 They're flowing through that healing process and when you
17 dismiss it like that and you say that there's something --
18 it's all lies, it's not. And you connected -- so when I
19 did my -- because as kokums and as family members, we
20 become the experts. We become really good at investigative
21 work. We learn how to get through the loopholes. We learn
22 how to network. We learn how to build the relationships.

23 We don't need a file in front of us to refer
24 to because they file is in us. These women and these girls
25 are more than just numbers. They're more than 1,200 plus.

1 And we don't need anymore of them to die. We don't need
2 that anymore. We don't need anymore little Zaylyns
3 wandering around, like what happened.

4 Her pediatrician had said he would be really
5 surprised if they don't have a committee to come together
6 to find out what happened to her. And a part of me feels
7 like I should have been surprised too, but I think I'm not
8 surprised because I see how inconsistent everybody is
9 treated. You walk into an place and there's no equality.
10 If she was a little girl that died in Charleswood area in
11 Winnipeg, they wouldn't -- it wouldn't have been this way.
12 If I had maybe the ties and the pulls to some political
13 people, maybe they would have looked harder. But I
14 shouldn't have to have that. I'm busy trying to raise my
15 family and live. I don't want to go sit at a table and
16 pretend who I'm not.

17 So I tried to do it on my own with the
18 people in my life and I read her report and to say that she
19 had broken ribs due to an alleged person whose inexperience
20 at giving her CPR, I think there's more to that.
21 Especially when you know there -- that he may not have been
22 doing CPR, but nobody asks but me.

23 The bruising to her body, and then her body
24 was so -- when -- before we buried her my sisters, two of
25 my sisters did the cedar bath on her and it's important for

1 us to do that. And the funeral home director told us that
2 we shouldn't be part of that cedar bath because he -- it
3 was the worst he's ever seen of anybody getting an autopsy.
4 So the digging around that they have done to her, the
5 cutting up and the tissues, and he said it was too much.
6 And then -- but they still -- they did it and they had the
7 strength to do it. And she's a mum, like she shouldn't
8 have to see that, so she carried that strength in there for
9 my family, for our family.

10 So there was just that knowing. Like,
11 there's the knowing that when I read that autopsy report,
12 there's just too many questions. I may not be a medical
13 person, but I know damn well that my Zaylyn didn't have
14 bruising to her body, and I know that he wasn't doing CPR.
15 I know there was something that had happened, that he was
16 the one that was last with her in that room. And when he
17 was in that room is when she stopped crying and then she
18 was gone. And he brought her down to the living room.

19 I had to tell me sister -- my daughter this
20 and she only found that version out two weeks ago because I
21 was protecting her from it. She didn't know that he
22 brought her body down before he went -- he went and got her
23 and said she wasn't breathing. Her first story changed,
24 but I got that story from a kokum that was there that
25 night. And she said he -- she was crying and he kept going

1 upstairs, and the he -- the last time she cried he went up
2 and then he brought her down limp.

3 So he brought her down limp and then he
4 said, "She's not breathing, what do I do?" And she said,
5 "You have to phone 9-1-1." And he started poking at her,
6 according to her story, and she puked and all I can think
7 of after reading the report was she was probably puking
8 from pain because her ribs were already broken.

9 Then he took her back up and apparently went
10 down and then that's when that lady said, "Your daughter's
11 not breathing." And so it's all -- whatever happened. So
12 they need to find out what had happened. I could only do
13 so much and try to keep those stories. And when you wait,
14 and you do an autopsy report and you wait a year for that,
15 the date of the autopsy report to the date she died, like
16 the people don't remember the way some of us do. Some
17 people forget. It's not a big highlight for some of them
18 like it is for me, because it lives here, and we have to be
19 led by suspicion too.

20 And then -- and then that's when -- why I
21 question what had happened. And having to tell me daughter
22 that, over Facetime, because she works up away from -- I do
23 try to get her away from the city because she's injecting
24 and stuff. So she's safer up north. And telling her that
25 and she just -- watching your baby almost die over her

1 baby, and getting her through that and allowing her to
2 understand, you know, there is a part of violence that we
3 carry as women and it weakens our intuition and our
4 motherhood, and sometimes we can't take care of our kids
5 because we're too battered, but then we become bigger than
6 that.

7 Especially when systems don't use that a
8 their authority to remove our children, when they bring in
9 the aunties, and if we don't have aunties, then we have
10 people who are like aunties. We have people who laugh with
11 us like aunties. If we don't have mums, then we have other
12 women in the community who step into that role. If we
13 don't have dads. But we don't need wired workers. We
14 don't need somebody who knows half the story based on a
15 file that sits collecting dust in their cabinet, directed
16 by greenies, and authorities, and -- we need the voices
17 back.

18 So Zaylyn was -- something happened, and we
19 know, and there's special ways that I was told. I know
20 what happened. I was shared by a vision what happened, and
21 if the truth is never found here, if it's never
22 acknowledged here, then he has bigger entities to answer
23 to. But I don't want to have anybody else go through that.

24 I remember sitting at her coffin and I was
25 just sitting there, and that feeling. And there was a

1 moment where it was just us, and then I felt really happy.
2 I just felt like, oh, and it was just like a really
3 overwhelming feeling and then it was almost like I heard
4 it. I said, it was just like I felt, someday this is going
5 to make sense, and someday it's going to help somebody
6 else, if it's shared. Someday it's going to make sense
7 mama. And then as quick as that -- that feeling, it just
8 left, and I wanted it back so bad.

9 But I know I had to grieve, and I know it's
10 making a difference in some way. If it's not at the policy
11 and legislation, it's -- we have moccasin telegraph and
12 that moves really fast, and it's done honourably. And I
13 know my sisters, indigenous Ikway sisters and non-
14 indigenous Ikway sisters that work in these systems that I
15 had to opportunity to share this piece with, with the
16 girls, that they take that with them to work. That
17 sometimes those questions need to be asked, that
18 invasiveness.

19 And that family group conferencing like,
20 māmawēyatitân centre has and exist that keeps that care
21 within the families, it's so important. And I'm familiar.
22 Like, I took myself back to school to learn why the justice
23 system works the way it does, and I'm learning a lot, and
24 it doesn't mean that I have to accept it. But it's
25 allowing me to learn how to help others to get through it.

1 If I can't change it then at least learn it
2 so we can teach others, because I know now about blue wall.
3 I'm familiar with blue wall. I'm familiar with policing
4 and the culture. And I know it's -- it's a hard one. Some
5 people don't go in it, they learn it while they are in
6 policing. I know about the jurisdictions. I know why the
7 RCMP can't go and arrest him where he's hiding, because
8 it's a Winnipeg Police issues, and those things need to
9 stop. And it's not fair and these people shouldn't have
10 access to children until they find themselves. And some of
11 these people are fathers, and are uncles, are mothers that
12 are hurting others, and it comes from -- comes from a place
13 that we don't know.

14 And I don't sit here and claim that I've
15 never done anything wrong. I acknowledge my wrong and I
16 make right from it. I'm not any better than anybody else,
17 but I don't want to accept an undetermined death, because
18 that whole autopsy report, the way they even handled all of
19 that, like, it's unacceptable. Even for somebody to tell
20 me weeks before -- when I first started calling the medical
21 examiner's office and just that whole energy. Like, you
22 don't know me but you're talking to me like I'm an idiot.

23 Sometimes the answers are in the best
24 questions and when you ask them the right way, then they
25 come. And some people don't like that because you know

1 you're putting the fire under their butt to get them on
2 their job, and they have a choice to say, "I'll just deal
3 with her later", or no. But the minute CTV or CKY call and
4 say, "Hey, what's going on with this? We heard this."
5 They move fast. And they shouldn't need that to move fast.
6 They shouldn't need media or highlights of -- you know, I
7 don't want to be a highlight. I don't want to be sitting
8 here.

9 Before I even -- before Zaylyn even died I
10 was sitting in places like that advocating and
11 understanding the issues around Murdered and Missing
12 Indigenous Women and Girls and our two-spirited. I never
13 wanted to be here, and I know no family wants to be here.
14 There's nothing glamorous or pretty about being here. We
15 want our loved ones back. We want something, and we
16 shouldn't really have to have another person dying.

17 Our babies -- I remember when Zaylyn died
18 and about the same time, that news thing came out about the
19 woman that got arrested because a baby died. And she was -
20 - she told me about it and her heart just dropped because
21 she thought oh, it's -- you know, something's going on.
22 Something's moving. Somebody's listening. But it was
23 actually a totally different story, and family, and -- but
24 then we chose not to, like, I didn't want that for my
25 daughter. I didn't want her going through that. She needs

1 to be protected too.

2 But then at the same time, my granddaughters
3 need a voice, because it's hard when all you can do it cry
4 and tell, you know? But we need to listen to body
5 language. If you don't understand Cree, if you don't
6 understand Ojibway, or a certain language and you're
7 working with the family like that, then listen to the body.
8 It tells you a lot of stuff, and people don't do that.
9 They're -- because they don't look up from the file.

10 So when you're fully engaged and you look up
11 from your book and your cell phone and you connect with
12 that family and you read the body, you learn a lot from
13 that. So they need to do that.

14 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So your -- you
15 explained to the Commissioner that your daughter is now
16 working and living north, but that you -- you still have
17 your other granddaughter.

18 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

19 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I'm just going to
20 share with the Commissioner, it's already redacted in terms
21 of names of the parents or of the -- of her granddaughter,
22 but it's an Order of Guardianship. So without getting into
23 a huge amount of details, can you tell us why you decided
24 to actually formalize, and why you had to get this in place
25 so that you can keep your granddaughter?

1 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** I had to do that
2 because I didn't want an authority having guardianship of
3 any of my family members. There's a lot of boundaries that
4 -- like, I could foster her, and I fostered her once we got
5 her safe. She was with me the whole time. And then they
6 were amazing to work with, so I went full circle with being
7 involved, working within the agency, being involved within
8 the agency. And then going full circle and having an
9 agency strongly advocate with me, and I think they -- I
10 think the worker really appreciated that I knew what I was
11 doing and knew how to flow through the system.

12 But one of the things that I did not like
13 was I told her that, "You know, you could die tomorrow."
14 And it's a reality. I said, "And I'm just a case on your
15 desk for the next person who fills your seat." I said,
16 "And I don't want to have to rebuild another relationship
17 with another worker."

18 I said, "So I'm going to go for guardianship
19 of my granddaughter. That way the aunties and everybody
20 that I trust with my granddaughter doesn't need to go
21 through a CFS check." Everybody doesn't have to go for a
22 child abuse registry check. I said, "That within itself is
23 a colonial practice." I said, "Because you have children
24 who are in care, I was sexually abused. So if somebody is
25 sexually abused at age five, they carry that. It's not

1 like a youth charge where if you commit a crime when you're
2 10 years, 12 years old, it wipes away when you're 18. But
3 that CFS thing, it doesn't wipe away.

4 So a lot of people carry that. So when you
5 go and apply for a job, so when Jeneva goes and works when
6 she's older, she'll -- "Oh, you come up in CFS." So I have
7 to prepare that conversation with her, why. I have to
8 prepare that conversation and it shouldn't be that way. So
9 I found it was really important for me to have guardianship
10 of her until my daughter is better.

11 So aunties are involved and they all don't
12 have to go for checks, I don't have to -- I could apply for
13 her birth certificate, if I choose to travel with her I
14 could. Then I can take care of her when I could advocate
15 for her for the doctor, and it was really important for me
16 to connect with the pediatrician that the girls were
17 involved with. So I wanted to advocate for her on that
18 behalf.

19 They are just overloaded with cases, so I
20 wanted to connect with Victim Services to see where her --
21 where her case was in the justice system. Because as a
22 foster parent, even though I was her grandmother, I didn't
23 have any authority to talk and I had to wait for the worker
24 who was too busy doing -- she was really good, I have to
25 say that though. But the reality, they are busy, and just

1 like I said I am -- she's more than just a file and I
2 didn't want her to be that file on somebody's desk, because
3 my daughter has a lot of work to do and I didn't want to be
4 within that system and be involved.

5 And they said, "Well, are you able
6 financially do it? You're a student." Well, I'm not a
7 math person, but doing the simple basic math I said, "You
8 give me a basic amount that I can get child tax for, so
9 that's it, and I will find a way." So and then I was
10 granted guardianship on February 2nd, and last year. So
11 she's with -- been with family and she's circled in safety
12 again, and I don't have to wait for a worker to -- like,
13 for school, daycare, it's just -- it's independent,
14 independency.

15 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And it's fair to say
16 you're obviously a powerful advocate and you kept having to
17 push back.

18 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

19 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Some people don't
20 have that ability. One of the things you were talking
21 about when you were even advocating to find out more
22 information about Zaylyn's death was the fact that you were
23 getting that push back because you didn't have the right
24 sort of connection. But another point you touched on is,
25 you know, why wasn't -- if there was already intervention

1 happening, why wasn't there more checks done?

2 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** M'hm.

3 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can you tell us a
4 little bit more about that? Like, hindsight being such,
5 what should have been happening in the home?

6 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** One of the things that
7 I recommended was I have the girls removed from the home
8 because I suspected domestic violence, until that was
9 undetermined, or until it was proven it was not happening.
10 This was when Jeneva -- when she was in a hospital the
11 first time. That they come home with me, we had a safety
12 plan. They were going to come home with me.

13 He was not allowed at the home, I said. So
14 at least if she wanted to be with him then the agency could
15 say "No, you have to be there, if not then they'll be
16 there. But the girls are not allowed to go home." And
17 this was while she was in the hospital. So the -- I think
18 there was a week in turnover and we had the safety plan
19 done by that Friday. If she was going to get let out of
20 the hospital Monday, they were going to come to my place.

21 So what had happened was they discharged her
22 Sunday, the hospital -- between the hospital and on-call
23 there was no note. They did not -- they did not leave
24 she's only allowed to leave under these conditions. She
25 went home in a cab with him and the girls and phoned me

1 from home. And I said, "What are you doing there?" "Well,
2 nobody told me and you can't just, blah, blah, blah." I
3 said, "But it was for your safety." Well, they have to
4 prove and -- so my daughter just being that own.

5 So I get a call on Monday at work from the
6 incur (phonetic) worker and she was like, "Angela, what had
7 happened? I thought we had a plan." Yes, I thought we
8 did. I said, "So somebody over there needs to get their
9 shit together." And that's what I said. I'm not going to
10 pretty pink it or nothing. And it -- she said, "What do
11 you mean?" I said, "Well, they let her go." I said, "I
12 don't know how the hospital and you coordinate your
13 communication." I said, "But you just did some -- like,
14 anything can happen now." "Okay, well -- okay, well you
15 know, things are going to be okay. I'll go there and
16 check."

17 And I just -- it just -- I was infuriated by
18 that and then, from what I understand, I think there were
19 maybe two home checks done that were planned. And I had
20 communicated that the best thing to do with this family,
21 with my daughter, was to show up. Because he is going to -
22 - he's going to swoon her and he -- because when we walked
23 through the door, when we show up, you'll see something
24 different. Because when we just show up we see the fear,
25 we see the body language, and he goes upstairs so he

1 doesn't have to interact with her.

2 I said, "But if you're going to tell her
3 you're going there at 10:00, he has an hour to give her
4 treats and be like, oh, play with her nice." I know how
5 abuse works. I said, "I know how they prey on the young
6 and how they do that for show." And then it never
7 happened, and then -- yeah, I just -- she ended up dying
8 and there was other stuff happening between that and just
9 too many questions still existing.

10 And it's things that still keep us up at
11 night. And then when we see those other cases, such like
12 that, I -- it leaves me wondering. I'm more curious now
13 about how the medical examiner's officers work. You know,
14 to determine undetermined, I know they do it because they
15 don't know how, and why don't you know how? Like, when --
16 how do you determine an undetermined death without the full
17 story? Without asking questions? And how do you just --
18 it could be from this, "Oh well, I could be home tomorrow
19 or I could be not." So make your own tea. Like, it
20 doesn't make sense.

21 I just -- it should make sense for the
22 amount of monies that go into the programs, that go into
23 these type of places. It -- there shouldn't be so many
24 questions. And these holes need to be cemented, and they
25 need to be cemented, and it needs to be included. We need

1 to be included. When you talk about experts too, what does
2 that mean? Does that mean it's somebody who went to
3 university for seven years, and they sit on five councils,
4 and they have a job, a blue -- white collar job and they're
5 sitting in their office, and they hold a key to all of our
6 files, but not the truth of our stories? We need to
7 connect those somehow, but how? You know?

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So at the beginning
9 you told us the reason why you find yourself back in
10 school, in the program you're taking and the reasons you
11 want to learn more. It's continuing that advocacy and not
12 just for Zaylyn, but for others. I also did want to give
13 you a chance to talk about the shirts you're all wearing.

14 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** I -- before Zaylyn
15 died, before all of this, I was -- I loved running.
16 Running was my form of therapy. I took care of myself
17 running. I cry when I run, I laugh. I think a lot when I
18 run and it's time for myself, plus I had like four little
19 kids and they couldn't come with me. So it was my time
20 alone. Actually, my daughter runs with -- started running
21 with me. She's -- when she was five, and my granddaughter
22 is now running with me.

23 And before all of this with my own family, I
24 was -- I walked a walk with Sandra Delaronde and she
25 brought it to The Pas. I was living in The Pas, in

1 Manitoba, at the time. And it was in honour of our -- of
2 Helen Betty Osborne. So Helen Betty Osborne grew up in the
3 Pas area and her story is close to my heart, and it lives
4 there like that experience of racism and injustice.

5 So I know what the Pas is about and there's
6 some beautifulness in the Pas, but I'm not going to not say
7 the ugliness. It lives. So Sandra brought a walk and we
8 walked from the -- from the pumphouse around the time that
9 Helen would have died, and this was in 2011. And then we
10 walked to the Pas, and during the walk I remember thinking,
11 this would be so beautiful if we had something for the
12 families of the murdered and missing. If we can have our
13 own marathon.

14 So we tried to set up a committee together
15 and we bought the name. We come up with Soles on Fire, and
16 we really wanted this to lift off. And I started a running
17 group, little girls, Soles on Fire. I had 10 little girls
18 and we ran the woman -- Love For Woman, Shoppers Drug Mart
19 run, and it was so much fun. I loved it so much, and the
20 girls.

21 And before that we talked about empowerment
22 and for me the piece of trying to like, talk about
23 empowering your body and yourself, and to be able to honour
24 even your own sexuality. Because abuse comes in all forms,
25 so you need to empower all forms and that includes

1 sexuality, and to honour your own sexuality so nobody else
2 can come and try to teach you what that's about.

3 So I had that and then Zaylyn died so things
4 just kind of went down a little bit. And I've just started
5 running again and I'm going to be running, hopefully if --
6 I haven't been running and training the way I should have,
7 but the Winnipeg Police Marathon. And this is for her and
8 for the women, and I have the questions in the back for the
9 Winnipeg Police so they'll have something they can read.
10 Are the people involved?

11 And just hoping, that is actually just like
12 the template. See it's not the right one, like that is --
13 because undetermined -- yeah. This is the actual -- actual
14 one right here. So these are like the different questions
15 that I found were really important. That's hopefully
16 somebody will read and find, just connecting, like
17 reopening her case, communicate with her family, do a
18 thorough investigation, compare statements with her autopsy
19 report, and -- statement it should say, because I have
20 heard other stories around that night. Not to be blinded
21 by her death being deemed undetermined, be more curious,
22 let the questions lead them to suspicions and connect
23 Zaylyn's case with her sister's.

24 So that was really -- that's what it is, and
25 I found it really healing too. Because I want to run,

1 because when I stopped running and just not connecting with
2 it, it was hard. Because it was my way of grieving and I
3 wasn't ready, or I just disconnected. So I just got back
4 into it again and these are the shirts I run in. And in
5 summer I pray, so hopefully I'll be able to do that half
6 marathon, and I love marathons and I'm starting the little
7 girls' running group again in May. So -- yeah.

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I want to make sure
9 just in case we've forgotten to talk about anything, or if
10 there's anything else you wanted to tell the Commissioner,
11 that you have that opportunity to do that before we turn to
12 the recommendations. Have we overlooked or forgotten
13 anything you wanted to share about Zaylyn?

14 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** She's loved. Like,
15 she's more than just a number. She's more than just all of
16 this. And she's really, really missed a lot. I just don't
17 think it's fair. So sometimes I ask for -- for forgiveness
18 when we talk about murdered and missing indigenous women
19 and they forget to say girls. Or when I look at certain
20 initiatives and stuff and I acknowledge the
21 intersectionality of the little girls like Phoenix and
22 Zaylyn, that we can't forget that they didn't have a chance
23 to grow the way they should have.

24 But the healing piece to that, I know she's
25 guided me to a lot of special places. There's things that

1 never really should have worked out for me that did, and I
2 acknowledge, I think that's her little spirit just all over
3 the place. Her sister misses her, and her sister talks
4 about what's happened to her. Her sister has her own
5 voice. She talks about what has happened. We know they
6 were abused. She knows she was abused and she's alive, she
7 has her voice, and they need to hear her.

8 They shouldn't have to wait until -- we
9 shouldn't have to wait until somebody has been cremated, or
10 six feet under, until we want to hear what it's all about.
11 They should be asking her now, she's still here, her sister
12 is still here and she's grieving. And she asked me a
13 couple -- I think it was about a week ago, "Mama, I know
14 sister died. But how did she die? What happened to her?"
15 And then I told her, I said, "We don't know yet my baby."
16 I said, "But grandma is trying to find out. Hopefully some
17 day we'll know."

18 But even if we don't then we know what she's
19 about then. And I know that friends and -- close friends
20 of mine that are in systems are working with -- gems like
21 them are taking it seriously and are not dismissive. So --
22 but she's gone, and she shouldn't be. She should still be
23 here. When I see two little girls that are sisters around
24 the same age, I find that I compare that time, like it
25 seems like such a -- like yesterday she died, but it seems

1 like such a long time ago when I held her. So it's amazing
2 how time sits with us. It feels like yesterday she died.
3 The pain is still there, but like yesterday. But it feels
4 like forever since I last hold her -- held her, and then I
5 look how she would have been this age.

6 It's coming up on April 24th, it'll be three
7 years and we already have -- I had my auntie come and bake
8 pies because I'm a bad cook. She came and baked pies and I
9 froze them for her, and my cousin brought moose meat, so we
10 honour her that way. We honour her through things like
11 this. We honour her just by being supportive where we can
12 with other families, like, going to marches, and just being
13 there.

14 And I had a really hard time going into
15 little girls' stores, like little sections, baby sections.
16 I would like, find myself having anxiety attacks. But I
17 found a way to deal with that and -- because I love -- I
18 would love to buy my grandbabies things. It would just be
19 like, oh, just buy little dresses and whatever I can
20 afford.

21 So I found a way to heal through that and I
22 have, like, my charm bracelet and I go into like Pandora
23 and I'll see a charm and then I'll remember her that way.
24 So I'll save money. I'll be like, oh, I would have bought
25 her this, so I'll put that \$20 away. Oh, I would have

1 bought her this. So I'll put that \$10 away, and then I'll
2 have enough for a charm. So I accumulated and it started
3 by one -- by one of my friends buying me a charm with her
4 name, with her face on it. I lost it once, that's why the
5 tape's on there.

6 But we have our ways of getting through it
7 and I think going to school -- like, I'm doing very well.
8 I'm bright, like I'm in all As, so doing very well in my
9 classes, and she -- that's what pushes me and I'm very
10 curious and I ask the questions. And her death led me
11 there and if I could have it back, I'd rather have her, on
12 that other path, wherever that's supposed to be. But
13 that's not the case, so this is where we find ourselves
14 today.

15 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** You've actually
16 already raised a bunch of recommendations in explaining the
17 way you believe things should be. But I also just want to
18 check with you if you have particular recommendations you
19 wanted to share?

20 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** I think inclusive with
21 kokums and aunties, and allowing the to be part of that
22 process, that healing process. I think we need to step
23 back a little bit and then -- and I know we need to honour
24 our people that are educated and, you know, we work hard to
25 go to school and carry that, you know, we learn a lot of

1 things there. But we can't devalue life experience. We
2 can't just shove them in the corner and say, you don't
3 know.

4 We need to take those calls seriously. I
5 know there's a lot of lateral valence when it comes to
6 people calling CFS on each other, but there's cases where
7 there's reasons behind it and, you know, we need to -- we
8 need to walk on eggshells if we choose to be a social
9 worker, or a police officer, whatever, and be there to
10 protect. We need to do that and look up from those filing
11 systems and connect and not label every individual that you
12 come across, based on a legislative document or a law.

13 Especially with the front-line workers. Be
14 inclusive with everybody that carries gifts and honour our
15 aunties and our kokums and our mooshums (phonetic), and
16 know that grandmothers that were in these cycles of
17 violence, we carry certain intuitions that nobody else
18 does. We don't want to carry it. I would wish I lived a
19 life where I didn't have to, but if that means helping
20 others then that's how we help.

21 So be mindful of that and -- because we get
22 too stuck up in, "Oh, you don't have a degree and this. So
23 oh no, you can't be part of that." We need to be part of
24 that. We need to look at that things that were taken away
25 from us, even that restorative justice approach.

1 When I think about him and what he's done,
2 what I know he's done, the truth that I carry based on my
3 expert opinion on what he's done, he may never admit it.
4 But when I think about justice do I see him in a cell
5 withering into a raisin of nothing? I think I see -- I
6 think I would see him wanting to give back in a way that
7 he's going to feel it. He's going to feel that. He's
8 going to have to interact with hard places. He's going to
9 have to jump through hoops. He's not just going to sit
10 still. Like, he needs to move, and I know the restorative
11 justice approach is instilled in there somewhere in that --
12 in the way that our people used to do it.

13 Because the way -- when I look at it, we
14 should have been able to take my daughter and her babies
15 with no law. Like, I should have been able to phone the
16 hospital and say "My daughter is telling me this and I have
17 a concern. Can you confirm that she was at this hospital
18 at this time?" They should allow a little leeway, because
19 if it was my grandma and she needed to phone me about an
20 auntie, I'd be like, okay, yes.

21 So there's ways of honouring that protection
22 piece that we try to do that is broken because of the
23 freedom and information, like all of these different
24 things. Like, I don't know how to do that, but it's
25 stepping back a little bit. It's really going back into

1 time and allowing that way to lift again.

2 Because we're burdened down, we're muffled,
3 and we're devalued, and we're considered paranoid. We're
4 not paranoid. We know. We have gifts too that no
5 scientist will ever acknowledge, and we know. I've been
6 told what happened to her by somebody who's gifted, and she
7 knew things that she never should have known and we're okay
8 with that. We've talked about it and she was right on
9 without knowing the story. So we know.

10 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** When you were
11 sharing earlier and you were talking about the possibility
12 of a death review, or importance, and someone had said to
13 you, "Well, you can't come to the meeting because you don't
14 -- you won't be able to understand us."

15 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** M'hm.

16 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** It kind of struck me
17 as this is maybe a recommendation that needs to be
18 explored. Maybe it's not that it's the person coming to
19 the table that needs to understand their language, maybe
20 the language needs to change ---

21 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yes.

22 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** --- so it's
23 understandable to all families.

24 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

25 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And do you have

1 anything you want to talk about with that?

2 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** That is really, really
3 important too. Because even when you say that, there can't
4 be any template in how you do a death review agenda,
5 because each family is different, even within cultures.
6 But the systems have their own things in place. So you can
7 have that implemented in there.

8 But then when you're bringing in families,
9 then you recreate in a way that's fluid for them and the
10 lens is for them, so they understand. And then you do it
11 in a way where there -- they don't leave. Because
12 sometimes I find that it's communicated, but then we leave
13 and then you -- oh, it makes sense after. So the questions
14 won't come until after. So when it's all over and done
15 with and then they already closed their door.

16 So the door needs to be remained open as
17 well, and it needs to be talked about in a way where we
18 understand. It doesn't have to be so complex.

19 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And you've navigated
20 through all of these processes and systems, because that's
21 exactly what it sounds like you've done. Do you think it
22 would have been helpful if you had somebody, or there was
23 better ways to explain these processes? Like, your
24 tenacity, your sheer tenacity and never giving up, it seems
25 like has worked to your advantage.

1 But what about people who aren't able to do
2 that? What do they need to make sure they understand these
3 processes better so that they can actually do things like
4 apply for guardianship, or talk to a coroner's office, or
5 know about a death review? What do we need to start doing
6 to make these processes easier for people to access?

7 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** I think it needs to be
8 outside of those walls. I think we need to have a
9 community driven hub for these types of supports. That
10 we're not running all over the place, because sometimes
11 even in that grief I didn't want to go run to that other
12 office and phone that other number. I want to phone one
13 number. I want to go to one place and these are where the
14 people are going to be.

15 It's not -- it can't be 9:00 to 5:00 because
16 sometimes when, you know, we're sitting up at 3:00 a.m.,
17 you know, it's almost like you have -- when -- like for
18 example for AA, you get matched up with somebody and you
19 have that person when you need somebody at 4:00 a.m. you
20 call your -- you call that person. That's what we need.
21 The numbers -- and it's somebody that you connect with,
22 it's not, "Oh, it's her shift today." You know, it can't
23 be that way.

24 It has to be a relationship and it has to be
25 community driven, it can't be within those walls. It has

1 to be with our organizations. It has to be indigenized.
2 It needs to be understood. Because even when you talk
3 about PODs, you know, the Protection Order Designate, there
4 -- that's even a lot of stuff. Like, okay there are --
5 there's this you need to flow through, but when you phone
6 Victims' services are they going to tell you that? Like,
7 you need to go to one place and then it's almost like you
8 need to be screened and matched for your needs. You --
9 they have everything, you go this -- here for this one
10 need, then you go here for this one need. That's -- that
11 is so much. That's so much.

12 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And the connectivity
13 between the incident you shared where there was a plan in
14 place, but it wasn't seen through. The communication
15 that's needed between the different agencies.

16 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** The different
17 agencies, because they have no clue. There -- we're just a
18 number. We're just a file. We're tucked in in different -
19 - different pieces. So the medical piece is here, and then
20 the CFS piece is here, and the ongoing criminal piece is
21 here, and then -- but it's all related to one person. So
22 how do you bring those all together?

23 So this person is meeting here, but then
24 this piece is missing, so okay, no, I have to get -- sign a
25 form of documentation authorization from this doctor. So

1 then we can attach it here, but then this -- it's too much.

2 Like, that's how I felt, like, I felt like a
3 ping pong ball and I'm so blessed that I had people to
4 connect with and, you know, get me going. Because there
5 was times where it was just too much and I acknowledge
6 people that, you know, when you have language barriers. I
7 am fortunate that -- I wish I had my language because I'm
8 not unfortunate, actually, I wish I spoke Cree, but I
9 don't. That's one of my bucket list, the hell with that,
10 I'm taking that back. And but to be able to call and talk
11 to them in a way where I know what they're saying, but not
12 everybody says that, because English is not their first
13 language. Yeah.

14 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Do you have any more
15 recommendations?

16 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** No. I can't think of
17 any at the moment.

18 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And if you can't
19 think of any at the moment, don't worry. We can touch base
20 and ---

21 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

22 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** --- I know the
23 Commissioner would welcome many more if you wanted to put
24 them in a submission. Chief Commissioner, do you have any
25 questions or comments?

1 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I do have
2 one question. And I'm not too sure if I heard this
3 correctly, but your daughter and her children were living -
4 - I think you said were living in an apartment while under
5 the supervision of CFS.

6 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** M'hm.

7 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** And there
8 were mice in the apartment?

9 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah. And because
10 that was one of the concerns that I had too. I had
11 requested that they also check for a mice -- I can't
12 believe I can't even remember what it's called. They do a
13 test to see, because mice have really toxic -- their poop.
14 My daughter is sending me pictures, they're running around
15 and my nine-year-old went to visit at the home and she was
16 sick within probably seven hours. So yeah, there was mice
17 in them. Yeah, yeah.

18 And then would -- so I told my daughter to
19 get in touch with her worker because CFS would have the
20 authority to request a transfer and it was a health matter.
21 And I was told that a letter was drafted, not from the
22 worker -- this is what my daughter told her -- that a
23 letter was drafted, but that housing had told her to just
24 clean up the mess herself, like, the mice poop, and to get
25 traps. And I said, "Ah, no, no. Like, no, you can't be

1 doing that." Yeah. Okay.

2 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Angela,
3 thank you very much. What you've said this morning is very
4 important to our work and very helpful as well. I so
5 admire you for your strength and courage and tenacity. And
6 for you family who surround each other in love ---

7 **MS. ANGELA LAVALLEE:** Yeah.

8 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** --- and
9 protection. I want to personally thank you for coming
10 forward, because I'm always so concerned about children and
11 I'm glad I'm not alone. So I thank you for that.

12 When people share their truths with us, they
13 give us what we consider to be a sacred gift. We certainly
14 understand how difficult this is for everyone. So if
15 you'll accept them, we have gifts for you as a way -- our
16 way of thanking you for today. One is an eagle feather,
17 and that's to lift you up and hold you up. Especially as
18 you move forward with some very big challenges ahead of
19 you.

20 Also, when the Commissioners and I started
21 this process, we wanted there to be healing and out of
22 healing comes new growth. So we thought, you know, what's
23 the best way of new -- of looking at new growth or
24 encouraging new growth? And that's seeds. So we have some
25 seeds for you. I hope you have better luck than I did in

1 my garden. I hope they grow for you and as a way of
2 signifying new growth for you and your family.

3 If something does grow would you please take
4 a picture and send the picture to us for our legacy
5 archive, so we can keep track.

6 But I do thank you for what you've done
7 today. Zaylyn lives on. She won't be forgotten and in her
8 own way, she's making the world better. So thank you very
9 much. And thank you to your support people who are here.
10 We can't -- we can't do it without our circle of support
11 and I know that it's been hard for you today too. So all
12 three of you, thank you so much for being here, for
13 speaking for Zaylyn, for supporting all of us in the room
14 today. We couldn't do it without you, so thank you. Thank
15 you all very much.

16 (Short pause)

17 We are adjourned, and we will take a short
18 break.

19

20 --- Exhibits (code: P01P15P0404)

21 **Exhibit 1:** Order of Guardianship made by the Queen's
22 Bench (Manitoba) granting guardianship of the
23 Child born on December 5, 2012 to Angela
24 Lavallee, File No. CP 15-01-15163. [Note:
25 redactions made by Christa Big Canoe].

1 **Exhibit 2:** Autopsy report of Zaylynn Lavallee, Hospital
2 Autopsy No. 15M314, with attached Toxicology
3 Report as well as two letters of John K.
4 Younes Acting Chief Medical Examiner, to
5 Angela Lavallee, the first letter dated May
6 13, 2016 and the second June 21, 2016.

7 **Exhibit 3:** Folder containing three digital images and
8 one Powerpoint presentation displayed during
9 the public testimony of Angela Lavallee.

10

11 --- Upon adjourning at 10:58

12

13

14 LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

15

16 I, Nancy Ewing, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I
17 have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and
18 accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this
19 matter.

20

21 
22 _____
23 Nancy Ewing
24 April 13, 2018