

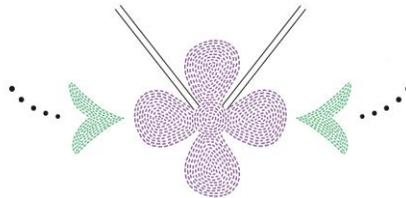
National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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 106:

Candice Coral Stevenson, In relation to Roxanne Fleming

**Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller
Commission Counsel: Meredith Porter**

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APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	No Appearance
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

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Registrar: Bryan Zandberg	

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Vancouver, British Columbia

--- Upon commencing on Saturday, April 7, 2018 at 11:34

MS. MEREDITH PORTER: Good morning, Chief Commissioner Buller. I'm Meredith Porter and I'm Commission counsel with the National Inquiry, and I'm here today with Candice Stevenson and Bonnie McDonald. And Candice is going to share the story about Roxanne Fleming, who was her mother. And I'm not going to go into details about Roxanne, because Candice has put down a timeline that she's going to share as part of her story. So prior to hearing from Candice, I'm going to ask that she be promised in.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Good morning, Candice.

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Good morning.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Do you promise to tell your truth in a good way today?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Yes.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Thank you. I was just going to make a quick announcement that anybody coming and going from this room, please do so quietly. I know that door makes a loud noise, but it can be very distracting to people when they're talking. So just a little quiet coming and going, please.

Go ahead.

1 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** So as said, my name
2 is Candice Stevenson. I'm from the Skatin Nation and I
3 grew up in Lillooet, B.C. I'd like to kind of paint a
4 picture of the family system breakdown that has happened
5 within my family. So I will start with my grandmother.

6 In January 20th, 1962 my grandmother, Laura
7 Copeland had five children. She wanted to go out one night
8 to a party and she had asked somebody to check up on her
9 children. There was five of them that night. And while
10 she was gone the children had tried to light a fire. It
11 was the middle of winter in Lillooet, it's cold. And
12 unfortunately, all five of the children had burnt in the
13 fire. It was Normaline (phonetic) Joan, who was four years
14 old; Felix Marshall, who was three years old; Geraldine
15 Lois was four months old; Susan Kaye was a year old; and
16 the oldest was Rosanne, she was five years old.

17 So when my grandmother became pregnant with
18 my mother Roxanne, she -- I believe that she was
19 apprehended right away. I don't know the specific details,
20 but she was born two years later. She was placed into a
21 non-First Nations home at four months old, later adopted
22 when she was two years old.

23 I was born in 1981 and my mother seemed to
24 have the perfect family -- the family. And then my father
25 was killed when I was five months old in a work-related

1 accident. I was then apprehended by the Ministry. They
2 had decided that she was unfit to be a mother, 17 years
3 old. Had just suffered serious trauma and grief.

4 My birthmother Roxanne and my amazing mother
5 Bonnie had struck up a deal with the Ministry so that I
6 wouldn't get taken into random foster care. And their deal
7 was that there would be a transfer of guardianship for me.
8 So I am now second generation adopted into a non-First
9 Nations family.

10 While I was growing up, I grew up next to --
11 I lived a half a block away from my birthmother's adopted
12 mother Muriel and right next door to her sister Betty. I
13 had absolutely no contact with them. They did not reach
14 out to me at all. They were not interested in me at all.
15 So I grew up. I had a daughter in 2006. My daughter is
16 third generation First Nations child adopted into a non-
17 First Nations family. So you can see that my whole
18 family's system is gone. Like, we don't -- there's no
19 parenting skills there at all.

20 I did have contact with them for a while and
21 it was just too difficult. I stepped back, went back and I
22 had a discussion with my daughter's mother about
23 residential schools and colonization and the impacts. And
24 basically, she cut contact from me and doesn't want me to
25 be in contact with my daughter at this point. And I feel

1 like this is a really common view with a lot of people, is
2 they don't want to acknowledge the impacts of colonization,
3 residential schools, systemic racism that we still deal to
4 -- with this day.

5 And so my daughter is there. I don't have
6 contact with her. I'm trying to follow a timeline, but I'm
7 getting a little mixed up.

8 In 2003 I got a call from the Langley RCMP.
9 They wanted to know if I had any information on my
10 birthmother's whereabouts. They wanted to come and collect
11 DNA and such. They -- she had already been missing for 20
12 years by the time her sister had filed a missing persons
13 report. It wasn't even -- it wasn't even her mother, it
14 was her sister, 20 years after she had been gone, they had
15 finally thought to file one.

16 And I believe it had something to do with
17 her mother passed away a month later, so why would you --
18 unless it had something to do with a will or such. That
19 also shows that there's a complete disregard. I don't know
20 how your daughter can be missing for so long. I was also
21 told that she got a call in the middle of the night one
22 night and it was my mother asking her for help, and she --
23 as far as I know, she did nothing. She didn't hang up the
24 phone or contact the police or nothing. So my mother has
25 been missing for 33 years.

1 I have been dealing with the RCMP in this
2 case. Once I -- I was too young to really think about it
3 before then, but once I had been contacted I've been
4 actively pushing, and pushing, and pushing, and trying to
5 find answers. I feel like there's a complete lack of --
6 they don't want to invest the time. They don't want to
7 invest the money or anything. I probably haven't spoke to
8 them for five years. They've told me they've exhausted
9 pretty much all avenues, which I don't believe is true.
10 I've given them alias' and never heard back.

11 I was told that her DNA was compared to DNA
12 within B.C., but that there was only three unknown remains
13 that it could be compared to. I don't believe there's only
14 three unknown remains in B.C. And I don't know why, if she
15 was -- her DNA was compared to the unknown on Robert
16 Pickton's farm, why they can't do it for the rest of
17 Canada.

18 So I've been dealing with a lot of -- a lot
19 of resistance with them in regards to that. I'm also -- it
20 took them 10 years to do a media release. They had brought
21 it up to me and then 10 years later, that's 30 years after
22 she had gone missing that they're finally doing a media
23 release. People's memories are fading. Things are
24 happening. It's not acceptable that these things are
25 taking so long. For all we know she could be sitting

1 somewhere in a basement, in an evidence box, and I'm trying
2 to continue on with my life, without answers.

3 So I think -- I wasn't going to come here
4 today because I don't believe in the inquiry. I decided to
5 come and kind of tell you why I don't believe in it. And
6 the two major things is the amount of money that it's going
7 to cost to do this, and the time. We don't have time.
8 Every time I open up social media there's another person
9 missing or murdered.

10 How many people, women and men, First
11 Nations men, have been murdered and gone missing in like
12 the two years that it's taken? And now they want a two-
13 year extension. That's four years. We don't have time
14 anymore. We know what the problem is. It's the impacts of
15 colonization, residential schools, family system
16 breakdowns, systemic racism.

17 Like, I don't -- I don't want other families
18 to have to go through what so many people I know and love
19 have. But we're here. We need programs, and services, and
20 things to bring our communities back together and to build
21 up our women to not be vulnerable like they are. And it
22 can't wait. It can't wait any longer. It cannot wait for
23 another two years extension.

24 I also see a lot -- I'm a support worker in
25 the downtown east side. We are currently in the middle of

1 the fentanyl crisis. We are losing people all the time.
2 People that we love and cherish. There's trauma every day
3 at work. We had a woman come in and this kind of ties into
4 the ideals that the police have towards First Nations
5 people. She had come in and she -- a couple of guys went
6 to -- got in a vehicle with a few guys and they tried to
7 slit her throat.

8 She needed to self medicate herself. She
9 had just experienced this huge trauma and the police would
10 not wait for her to do that. They wanted their statement
11 then or they had no time or patience for her. She was
12 First Nations. A First Nations woman. I have so many
13 stories about incidences like this in the downtown east
14 side.

15 It's so -- it's ridiculous the way First
16 Nations people are treated, and these are all things that
17 we know. We know what needs to happen. They just don't
18 want to put the money, or there's too many policies around
19 this, you can't do it, you have to get exceptions to the
20 law, or such and such. I don't believe that Canada wants
21 to end the way that First Nations are treated, because you
22 can't rise -- raise people up and still have exploitation
23 of them and their lands for your benefit.

24 I -- I kind of ran through that really fast.
25 Yeah. I think a huge thing is the policing and the way

1 police treat. I've seen so many bad stories about how they
2 can -- they handle these cases. They don't -- when it
3 comes to a First Nations person, they don't care. Families
4 have to push, and push, and push, and it's exhausting to
5 keep dealing with wall, after wall, after wall. And it
6 kind of -- like, in my situation, I feel like I just --
7 it's so much that I don't know if I want to even deal with
8 them anymore. I mean, there's so many stories that I can
9 tell you, but ---

10 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thanks Candice. You
11 had mentioned that, when you were speaking, that you were a
12 third generation being raised outside of your culture. Can
13 you speak a little bit about what kind of a toll that's
14 taken on your life, being -- feeling that disconnection
15 from your culture? A little bit more about that?

16 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** My daughter is
17 third generation.

18 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Okay, sorry. Your
19 daughter is third generation.

20 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I didn't really
21 realize -- I know that when I was growing up I kind of
22 denied being First Nations. I tried to be everything but.
23 And then when I was working in the downtown east side,
24 seeing how many -- the high percentage of First Nations
25 people in that community that are struggling, it made me

1 really wonder why. Why these things are happening?

2 And that's kind of when I think I went
3 through my own cultural identity crisis, which I'm still
4 kind of going through today, where I don't feel comfortable
5 with who I am, and I don't have a sense of self. So I've
6 been through a lot of things, a lot of things since I moved
7 to Vancouver. A lot of trauma, abuse, because I'm just --
8 I don't know who I am. I'm just starting to finally get
9 back to that.

10 And I think that's a fear that I have for my
11 daughter as well, is I don't want her to have to experience
12 the same things that I went through. Not knowing who you
13 are. And especially the way things are going, like,
14 there's such a divide and there's -- when you see things
15 about First Nations issues on Facebook, all you have to do
16 is look at the comments. It's exactly what society thinks
17 of First Nations People. So I'm really -- I know that I'm
18 slowly getting better, but I do fear for my daughter and
19 where she's going to -- how it's going to impact her.

20 **MS. MICHELLE PORTER:** And I speaking about
21 the work that you're doing in the downtown east side,
22 you've said that really what's needed are programs and
23 service now. What specifically do you see would be of
24 benefit, either in the immediate future, but also in the
25 short term? What kind of programs and service in addition

1 to the work that you're doing and some of the work that
2 you've spoken to about being done by others? What else
3 could be done? How do you see that support?

4 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I think the main
5 thing right now is to keep people alive, and in order to
6 keep them alive people need clean, clean medication when
7 they self-medicate. Because when you don't know what
8 you're taking it's a gamble every single time.

9 There needs to be more support for front-
10 line workers because we're the ones that are dealing with
11 people when -- like, life and death situations. We don't
12 have support, we don't have proper training, but we're put
13 into this kind of an environment to do those things. And I
14 think for -- that's the immediate issue I see right now, is
15 the fentanyl.

16 I think there needs to be more supports, not
17 only in the downtown east side, but in communities to bring
18 the culture back to bring the families back together.
19 Everybody had become so separated and so for themselves
20 that they don't know how to work together anymore. And I
21 see it everywhere I go.

22 I'll just add, I think we need long-term --
23 after detox we need -- or detox and short-term treatment,
24 we need longer -- longer solutions. We need access to
25 things when people want them, not call me every day for two

1 weeks to get into detox. We'll see if there's space.

2 People -- sometimes people don't have two weeks.

3 But I think the main thing is back home, in
4 people's communities they need money, support, programming,
5 so that we can build the women, the children up, before --
6 before it's too late.

7 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thanks. I know that
8 you've spoken about the role that poverty has in the crisis
9 that's faced day to day. Do you want to speak a little bit
10 about that? The effects of poverty.

11 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Poverty has an
12 impact -- it impacts everything. Your mental health, your
13 spiritual health, your physical health, your access to
14 services. Housing, how can somebody help themselves when
15 they don't even have housing? But yet the government
16 continues to give a ridiculously low amount of money for
17 housing, especially in Vancouver, which is where a lot of
18 people tend to gravitate towards.

19 It's really -- it's really, really sad.
20 Especially when you see Elders. Why are Elders not having
21 somewhere stable to live? Why do women, children --
22 there's young children out there who are homeless. Every
23 year we do the homeless count. It's not -- it gets higher
24 and higher despite the fact that they're putting in
25 housing. It's not appropriate housing. There's not enough

1 supportive housing for people. Mostly First Nations
2 People.

3 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Do you have any ideas
4 about reconnecting individuals who have grown up outside of
5 their culture? Do you have any ideas about effectively --
6 effective steps that can be taken to help heal those -- the
7 -- like reconnecting that feeling of loss and emptiness?
8 Do you have any ideas about how support can be offered in
9 that way? What would be meaningful, do you think?

10 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I think more -- in
11 the city, more programs or more access to cultural
12 activities. When you live in the city and they're doing
13 something back in your hometown you can't always leave to
14 go there. So more funding for these programs to happen
15 here. Even things like teaching the language is a huge --
16 would have a huge impact on people.

17 And not necessarily for connecting people to
18 their culture, but better access to counselling even.
19 There's just so many barriers for people to access
20 something so simple like that, which is needed, which is
21 there, there's just no way to navigate the system to get
22 there.

23 **MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Chief Commissioner
24 Buller, do you have any questions or comments for the
25 witness?

1 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Yeah, I
2 do. I have several, if you don't mind?

3 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** No.

4 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Just
5 starting with what you've said, that there are so many
6 barriers to people. Can you tell me what you see those
7 barriers to be?

8 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Things so small as
9 having transportation to get somewhere. Like I said, a
10 home to be able to wake up that morning and be able to go.
11 Access to -- when your mind is in, you need to self
12 medicate yourself to feel better, to suppress your trauma
13 and everything, you're not focussed on the things that you
14 need to be to improve yourself, because you are so focussed
15 on being better.

16 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I've
17 heard people say -- and it may not be your experience, or
18 it may be -- that things like having to have government
19 issued ID can be a barrier to some people. Have you
20 experienced that?

21 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Yes. When you don't
22 have a home, you don't have somewhere safe to have your ID.
23 You need this piece of ID to get that piece of ID, you need
24 photo ID to get a bank, you need photo ID to go to the
25 clinic.

1 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Have you
2 thought of what might be options instead of government
3 issued ID, so we can break down that barrier for people?

4 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** There used to be an
5 organization that would do ID, which their funding got cut
6 so they can't do it anymore. I think the thing is to get
7 the ID, but you also need places to accept non-government
8 ID.

9 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Yeah. So
10 getting away from the government issued ID for a moment,
11 what do you see as other options for identification of an
12 individual? And I'll give you an example, because I think
13 this was tried in the downtown east side and, correct me if
14 I'm wrong, that it used to be that as an example, Bonnie
15 could come with you to one -- to a clinic and say, "Yes, I
16 can vouch for this person being who she says she is." And
17 that was good enough. Do you see that as being a way of
18 breaking down these types of barriers?

19 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** It is with certain
20 things, but you can't -- usually you can't bring that kind
21 of ID to a bank to open a bank account. So you can have
22 this piece of ID, but you still need the organizations and
23 services to be able to accept it as official.

24 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** From your
25 perspective, and your experience on the downtown east side

1 -- I don't know how to ask this question, which is unusual.
2 I know that service providers will say -- and banks, other
3 ones -- but will say, we need government issue ID in order
4 to get our services, or something like that, or to come
5 here. But from your perspective, how important do you
6 think that is, to have government issued ID?

7 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I think it's pretty
8 important when you're not doing just your day to day
9 activities. When you're looking for housing you'd probably
10 need something official. You need something official to
11 say who you are. So outside of everyday living, when
12 you're trying to make steps forward, I think it's pretty --
13 it's pretty important. If I lost my ID ---

14 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Me too.

15 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** --- I'd be lost.

16 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Me too.

17 Yeah.

18 Another thing that I've heard a lot about
19 over the years is the issue of literacy and how that's a
20 barrier for people everywhere. But it seems also in the
21 downtown east side of course, that there are people who
22 either English isn't their first language anyway, or for a
23 variety of reasons they did not either go to school or stay
24 in school for very long. And I'm not blaming anyone for
25 that, it's just for whatever reasons they're not -- they're

1 not able to read and write enough to access services. Or
2 like, to be able to advocate for themselves. From your
3 experience, what role if any does literacy play in creating
4 barriers for people to services?

5 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I'd never thought
6 about that, but now that you mention it, something so easy
7 as filling out a form, if you don't -- if you can't read
8 and write then you can't fill out that form. And there's
9 not always people around that can help to do that.

10 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Or
11 sometimes there are people around, but they're not
12 trustworthy.

13 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Yeah.

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

15 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** And then we have
16 people looking for housing, dealing with the Ministry.
17 Dealing with the Ministry of Children and Families. When
18 you're trying to access your children, you can't fill out a
19 form, that's going to create a huge barrier for you.

20 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I have to
21 say, I'm just about ready to jump out of my chair because
22 I'm so excited about what you're saying. So I'll try to
23 calm down a little bit.

24 You've said there's not enough supportive
25 housing, especially in the downtown east side. What do you

1 see for First Nations People as being the basics for
2 supportive housing in an urban setting?

3 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Staffed
4 appropriately. There's a lot of housing that's not
5 properly staffed.

6 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Now, can
7 I just interrupt you for a moment here? I'm getting really
8 excited. By staffed appropriately, do you mean like number
9 of staff, qualifications of staff?

10 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** All of it.

11 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** All of
12 the above?

13 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Because when you
14 have staff who are not qualified doing things out of their
15 scope and you only have two staff rather than three, it
16 just -- it's so hard on them and there's a lot of people
17 that need to leave their jobs, which is no consistency for
18 the folks. Consistency is huge. Building those
19 relationships with people. It's hard to build trust, and
20 when you have a high turnover of staff ---

21 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Would you
22 see cultural programming, access to Elders, maybe language
23 training, advocacy, do you see that as something that would
24 be part of supportive housing?

25 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Yes. From things as

1 small as making a dream catcher one day, to being able to
2 access a sweat lodge outside of the community, because some
3 people want to get out of the -- out of the downtown east
4 side to access these things.

5 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** And would
6 you see supportive housing being multi-generational? In
7 other words, housing that would include Elders, children,
8 or should it be more focussed than that?

9 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I think we need
10 different housing for the different demographic.

11 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** M'hm.
12 Can you -- from your experience, why would you see it that
13 way?

14 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Sometimes it's
15 really difficult on Elders when they have to live next to a
16 young person who is noisy all night long, high traffic.

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

18 **MS. CANICE STEVENSON:** And it's not very
19 good for -- sometimes it can do more damage, the lack of
20 sleep, the constant traffic, their mental health.

21 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Okay.
22 Next big area, I'm sorry if it sounds like I'm -- or you're
23 feeling as though I'm cross-examining you or something like
24 that. I'm trying not to do that, but you're such a wealth
25 of information that I want to get as much as I can.

1 Mental health, huge issues. Not only in the
2 downtown east side, but our communities all ---

3 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Everywhere. Yeah.

4 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** ---
5 across Canada. You mentioned about detox. I'll just back
6 up for a moment. From my perspective I see mental health
7 and substance abuse as so closely entwined it's really hard
8 to undo the two, separate the two. So you mentioned detox
9 beds being available right away. I've heard from addicts
10 over many years that when they decide they want to get
11 clean, they want to get clean now. Has that been your
12 experience too?

13 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** M'hm.

14 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** So
15 waiting for a detox bed is just waiting for a fix to
16 happen?

17 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Yeah. I mean you
18 have that small space of opportunity for that person to get
19 them from, "I want to do it," to "I'm going there right
20 now."

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

22 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** And maybe it takes
23 several times, but eventually it will make a difference for
24 them. Whereas if you have to wait for two weeks, you --
25 you're not in the moment anymore and you lose your drive,

1 your motivation.

2 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Right.

3 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** You become
4 disheartened by the experience.

5 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** You
6 mentioned longer-term options for treatment. My experience
7 is that 30 days, 90 days, isn't enough for most people.

8 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** No.

9 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Do you
10 find that as well?

11 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Yes.

12 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** By longer
13 term or long term, what are you thinking of in terms of
14 time?

15 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** At least a few
16 years, and somewhere were you can -- on the housing
17 continuum, you go to a 90-day program, you go to another
18 supportive one, housing for like, maybe a year, I don't
19 know dates specifically. But -- and then try to -- you go
20 to another one where you gain life skills and learn how to
21 live on your own, and -- because I can only speak for the
22 people that I work with.

23 A lot of them have been homeless for years,
24 years and years, and it's hard to transition from being
25 homeless into a housing project will all these rules and

1 policies. So we need a wide housing continuum.

2 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I'm
3 interested in your experience about working with people in
4 the downtown east side and mental health. From your
5 experience, what do you see the impact of trauma on people?
6 Be it intergenerational effects of residential school,
7 trauma involved with women who lose their children to the
8 foster care system, children who -- I'm sorry. Children
9 and adults who have been sexually, physically, mentally,
10 emotionally abused. Where does that trauma fit in the
11 mental health picture, from your experience?

12 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I believe that
13 trauma can amplify mental health issues. So many people I
14 see now are struggling with anxiety, depression, bipolar,
15 schizophrenia.

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

17 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** And so many of them
18 have trauma. And I think when you -- like you were saying,
19 addiction and mental health, you're self-medicating. So
20 once you get into the cycle you're not able to properly
21 deal with your trauma because it's just -- it's not
22 important anymore. And then some things, when you self-
23 medicate, also amplify the mental health.

24 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Right.
25 So again, from your experience, do you think that to

1 properly address addiction issues the trauma has to be
2 addressed?

3 **MS. CANICE STEVENSON:** Yes. And we have so
4 many programs that won't deal with your mental health if
5 you self-medicate, or won't deal with your self-medication
6 because you have mental health. But you can't separate the
7 two once you get to there.

8 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Okay.
9 The -- I could go on and ask you lots of questions about
10 trauma and how you see it impacting people's lives. But I
11 think for me the most important question is, if there was
12 one thing that we could recommend to help people address
13 trauma, what would -- or maybe that's an impossible
14 question to answer, what would be the one thing.

15 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I think, like I was
16 saying, is get those programs in there when children are
17 young. Get them in there to build stronger communities.
18 Because so many people have trauma now, but if you can stop
19 that cycle before it starts ---

20 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I've
21 heard from people over the years who have lived on the
22 downtown east side for a long time, that on the one hand
23 it's a very vibrant community, a real sense of community
24 and belonging, and family. But there is sometimes the same
25 people -- but other people will say in order to get clean

1 and stay clean, stay -- get healthy and stay healthy, you
2 have to leave the downtown east side. What do you think
3 about that?

4 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** It depends on what
5 your other options of where to go are. If that's your
6 community and that's your support system, how can you --
7 you can leave, but how can you stay healthy when you don't
8 have that support system anymore? And they are. They're
9 amazing people, everyone down there. They're just
10 struggling, they're desperate. But they're still -- and
11 there's a lot of families down there as well. There's a
12 huge, great community. I think if you -- if you want to
13 stay healthy, it shouldn't matter -- if you're at that
14 point it shouldn't matter where you are.

15 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank
16 you.

17 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** If you haven't -- if
18 you think that you're going to have a hard time going back
19 somewhere, then there hasn't been enough support for you to
20 come to a certain place.

21 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I don't
22 want you to -- I don't want you to be limited by a number
23 of factors, but again, from your experience, what do you
24 see are the most important factors that create lack of
25 safety for indigenous women and girls?

1 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Family system
2 breakdowns and a sense of self. If you know who you are
3 and you're proud of who you are, people will have a harder
4 time to take advantage of you.

5 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Do you
6 see addressing those two issues through programming of any
7 type in particular, or just more programming of a variety
8 of different types?

9 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** The vision I see is
10 to bring communities back to the way I've been told they
11 were. Where hunting -- a traditional hunting trip, you go
12 out, everybody works together. You learn how to work
13 together again. You learn how important each person is
14 within that community, to the system. Canning, just -- I
15 think that simple things like that consistently, will start
16 to bring families back together, communities back together.

17 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I'd like
18 to hear more, if you don't mind, about the -- as you
19 described it, the deal, between your mum and Bonnie. How
20 did that all come about, or what do you know about that?

21 **MS. BONNIE McDONALD:** We just got together.
22 Candy had been apprehended. Candy's dad was a very good
23 family friend, and I had had Candy briefly before she was
24 apprehended, babysitting for, you know, an extended period
25 sort of deal. And then she was apprehended, and it seemed

1 to me that Roxanne was not going to be able to look after
2 her and that she was going to be gone and we would never
3 know her.

4 So I said to her, when I found out she'd
5 been apprehended. I said, "If you will go for you to get,
6 you know, regain your custody and then you make me her
7 guardian." And she jumped on that. So we saw a lawyer and
8 he -- we went to Court, and the Judge was -- he told the
9 Judge that's what the deal would be. If you give Candy
10 back to her mother, her mother will make me guardian and
11 then she'll have a stable home. And that's the way it
12 worked out.

13 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Wow. And
14 here we are. Yeah, okay. Thank you. And then after that
15 point the Ministry is not involved at all?

16 **MS. BONNIE McDONALD:** No, absolutely not.

17 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Okay.
18 Good. I don't have any other questions. But Candice, is
19 there anything that's come to mind as a result of -- I'm
20 sorry -- my 20 questions with you?

21 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Mental health
22 services. We struggle every day to get people access to
23 mental health teams. There's things like, you're not in
24 their -- in catchment, or they don't have enough space, or
25 you don't fit the mandate because you're too young, you're

1 semi connected to this other team that doesn't really
2 connect with you, so we can't work with you as well.
3 There's a lot of people that fall through the cracks.

4 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** If
5 anything else comes to mind that you think, I wish I had
6 mentioned, whatever, please pass it along, okay?

7 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I will.

8 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I would
9 love to hear more from you and your experiences, very much
10 so.

11 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Anytime. I've got
12 lots of stories.

13 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Well, I
14 think from our traditions of course, we honour people with
15 life experiences, they're the experts. So that's how I see
16 you. I don't have any more questions for you right now.
17 In fact, I might have more questions later on as well.

18 But first of all, I want to say what you've
19 told us this morning is really important to our work. So
20 I'm very grateful for what you've been able to tell -- tell
21 me today. And of course, the other commissioners will know
22 this as well, so thank you. Very important and critical
23 work, and you're an amazing advocate by being here for all
24 of the people on the downtown east side. But especially
25 the indigenous women and girls.

1 I'm going to say three things, and I hope
2 they don't hurt you. First, I know some things happened to
3 you that you didn't deserve. They never -- second thing,
4 they never should have happened to you. The third thing
5 is, it wasn't your fault. You're -- so those -- sometimes
6 that can be difficult for people. But most importantly,
7 you are a beautiful, strong, resilient, smart, indigenous
8 woman, and please don't forget that. I see such strength,
9 and beauty, and courage, and good things. I'm sorry to
10 make you cry, but I have to tell you that.

11 I'm going to ask you to don't stop your
12 work. Continue your work because it's really important to
13 everyone. And I'm going to also ask you not only to stop
14 your work, but to push yourself to do things you never
15 thought you could. I want you to dream big, because you're
16 an amazing, awesome, strong indigenous woman.

17 Because what you said today is just so
18 powerful and so important to our work. It's a sacred gift
19 you've given to us, and so if you'll accept them, we have
20 gifts for you. The first one is an eagle feather. And
21 traditions all across Canada say much the same thing.
22 Eagle feathers will lift you up and hold you up in those
23 moments when you need the strength. And on those days,
24 those moments when you can go even higher than you dreamed
25 you could, that eagle feather is going to take you to where

1 you didn't think -- the heights you didn't think you could
2 go to.

3 The second gift, and I hope you have more
4 luck with it than I did, seeds. Because when the
5 Commissioners and I started this work we wanted healing to
6 happen, and out of healing, new life and new growth to
7 come. And you know, we're already hearing about that.
8 People are coming back to us and saying, as a result of
9 coming to this inquiry I've gone to the police and I've
10 charged my abuser, or I've gone back to school, or I've
11 gone for treatment. And that's more than we can ask for.
12 It's so beautiful. So we thought, let's give people seeds
13 and see if new growth will literally happen in ground where
14 it should come from. So I tried some of these in my
15 backyard and it was -- so I hope you have better luck with
16 the seeds than I did.

17 So again, I want to thank you, personally
18 thank you, for putting up with my 20 questions on the spot
19 and I want to thank you for contributing to our work in a
20 critical, critical way today. Thank you very much.

21 **MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Thank you for having
22 me.

23 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** And we're
24 adjourned.

25

1 --- Exhibits (code: P01P15P0405)

2 **Exhibit 1:** Folder containing two digital images that
3 were displayed during the public testimony of
4 the witness.

5
6 --- Upon adjourning at 12:31

7
8 LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

9
10 I, Nancy Ewing, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I
11 have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and
12 accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this
13 matter.

14
15 
16 _____
17 Nancy Ewing
18 April 15, 2018

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