

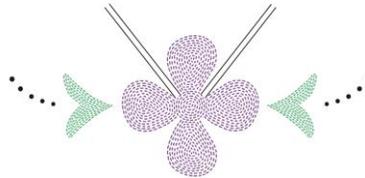
National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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 Hearing
Sheraton Vancouver Hotel Airport
Britannia Ballroom**

Metro Vancouver, British Columbia



Public

**Sunday April 8, 2018
Public Volume 115:**

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
In relation to her mother, Katherine Rose Williams,
Noreen Joyce William & Sharlene MacAdams**

Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette

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APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations		Non-appearance
Government of British Columbia	Rachel Holmes (Legal Counsel)	
Government of Canada	Anne Turley (Legal Counsel)	
Heiltsuk First Nation		Non-appearance
Northwest Indigenous Council Society		Non-appearance
Our Place - Ray Cam Co-Operative Centre		Non-appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada	Beth Symes (Legal Counsel)	
Vancouver Sex Workers' Rights Collective		Non-appearance
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Metis Nation		Non-appearance

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Commission Counsel: None	
Grandmothers, Elders, Knowledge-keepers: Laureen "Blu" Waters Gaudio, Kathy Louis, Florence Catcheway, CeeJai Julian, Audrey Siegl, Merle Williams, Deni Paquette, Donna Dickison, Ruth Alfred, Harriet Prince, Gladys Radek, Louise Haulli, Reta Blind, Elaine Bissonnette, Eunice McMillan, Candace Ruth, Janice Brown, Theresa Russ, Deanna Lewis, Jennifer Thomas, Margerat George, Juanita Desjarlais	
Clerk and Registrar: Bryan Zandberg	

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
In relation to her mother, Katherine Rose Williams,
Noreen Joyce William and Sharlene MacAdams**

1 Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Sunday, April 8, 2018, at 9:05 a.m.

3 (DRUMMING)

4 **MR. PRESLEY WILLIAMS:** I just want to
5 introduce myself. I'm the son of Skundaal Bernie Williams.
6 I just wanted to let everybody know that I really
7 appreciate all the strong and powerful women that's been in
8 my life. My mom's been there through thick and thin, and
9 I'm very, very proud of all of you exposing what's really
10 happened in our lives. It's lateral violence that needs to
11 be taken care of, and I'm affected by that by having
12 children of my own.

13 I'm very, very proud for my mother to stand
14 and speak what is real because that's what people need to
15 know, and that's what people need to hear. We -- we as
16 young people still have a practical voice in this world,
17 and yet our colonial minds tend to forget. We rely on our
18 Elders and our young people to succeed our culture and our
19 traditions.

20 My traditional name is Wadgadagaang (ph). I
21 come from the Stlangng Laanaas clan of Old Masset. We have
22 another subclan, the Dew Claw (ph) Stlangng Laanaas. We
23 are in -- we are in positions to be Hereditary Chiefs as of

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1 this summer. My mother and I are the first two Hereditary
2 Chiefs that will be in -- in that position in -- be the
3 first time in Haida history, and it'd be very, very pleased
4 to -- to be a part of this.

5 I've watched on the television. I've heard
6 a lot of stories in regards to a lot of the things that
7 occurred in our -- our Aboriginal world, and it just seems
8 to me that it's -- it's taken 40 to 50 years for our voices
9 to be heard, and now that we have a chance that we can
10 express ourselves, it's very -- very -- very awesome.

11 This -- to my right is my wife Jamie. We
12 would have liked to bring our children, although due to the
13 content of the conversations we're going to be having, it's
14 going to be a little bit difficult for them to understand.
15 I would have loved to have my brothers here, my older
16 brother and my younger brother here as representatives of
17 our people and our clan, although due to having young new
18 members of our awesome family, it's just too difficult to
19 kind of schedule everybody as well as how many people are
20 sitting beside us.

21 I'd also like to thank the Tsleil-Waututh
22 Musqueam and the Squamish Nations for letting us do our
23 business on their territory, and -- and I'd like to thank

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1 the Tsawwassen aboriginals for also giving us the chance to
2 practice our -- our traditional -- our protocol for
3 expressing ourselves, and -- and I'd like to say thank you
4 for everybody else for attending; the media, thank you for
5 being here. Thank you for the Government officials to be
6 here. Thank you for my Aunty Terri (ph). Thank you for
7 all the beautiful family members that are here to support
8 us. I know a lot of people that are standing beside us and
9 behind us. I really love and appreciate you for helping
10 and representing our -- our voice. It's really important
11 that our -- our young people and our Elders have a voice.
12 Right now, we're dealing with too many problems internally
13 and externally. It's very challenging to express to our
14 children how difficult it really is.

15 So that's the reason why I'm here, to
16 support my mother and her voice, because it needs to be
17 heard, and -- and a lot of the stories that are going to
18 come out of this are going to really shake our people, but
19 it's -- there's no more lateral violence. We are stopping
20 this today. We need to have some closure, and I'm sure
21 it's going to take longer than just this event to occur,
22 but this is a step going forward for our people and for my
23 mother, and -- and I hope -- you know, if I've said

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1 anything to offend anyone, I apologize. I'm still young in
2 this world. As an Aboriginal man, I'm still a baby when it
3 comes to tradition. I'm still learning our culture as well
4 as our language and our songs, so it's very important that
5 we touch back to our culture because that's the protocol
6 that we live and succeed in our lives. This colonial mind
7 is just -- it's -- it's poison, and the only way we can
8 beat it is by being chameleons under the eyes of the
9 Government: Learning, speaking their tongue, and
10 understanding the way they talk and understand the way they
11 deal with things and how we can manipulate it. This is a
12 perfect example of manipulating it. Now we have eyes all
13 over the country that are watching us, and now we have the
14 opportunity to express that feeling in -- in such a way
15 where it's -- it's quite a large impact going from the
16 residential schools to the '60s scoop to, you know,
17 even -- even being adopted. A lot of these things are not
18 spoken about, and it's very nice that I can hear other
19 stories because I've never went through that, and my mom's
20 hidden those things from us our entire lives, and this is
21 one opportunity that I have to swallow my pride and listen
22 to my mother. This is the way our culture is. You listen
23 to your Elders, you listen to your matriarchs, and you

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1 listen to the women that are key in your life, and my
2 mother is the one that's given me this strength and power
3 in my voice, and I'm very nervous, but I'm very proud and
4 courageous that I'm here standing beside my mom and my
5 wife, and, you know, my aunts and my family members from
6 Haida Gwaii and a lot of family that my mother's known and
7 grown upon in her life before my life, and I -- I just want
8 to say thank you and *háv'aa*.

9 In our culture -- or in our Haida, we -- I
10 just learned this yesterday. Being a land-protector of our
11 people is (speaking in Haida); means the warrior Haida, and
12 this is a perfect example of a (speaking in Haida). This
13 is a real warrior.

14 **(APPLAUSE)**

15 **MR. PRESLEY WILLIAMS:** And without further
16 ado, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to
17 speak. Thank you.

18 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** *Háv'aa*.

19 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:** I
20 just want to say good morning, Madam Commissioner Audette,
21 and to the territory of this -- this beautiful territory
22 here that I've been so blessed to do my work since '86
23 here; and to the Elders, to the matriarchs, to the

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1 grandmothers, *háw'aa*; to the survivors, especially to the
2 families.

3 My name is Gul Kit Jaad, which means Golden
4 Spruce Woman. I'm from the territory of the Stlangng
5 Laanaas. I am also a Hereditary Chief in Waiting along
6 with my son. My Hereditary Chief's name is Tas Gai (ph),
7 which means Chief of Two Villages.

8 And to the warrior women that I've been so
9 blessed to work on the front lines with them, and to the
10 women who are still suffering on those streets, and to the
11 women from the Downtown Eastside that are here, I really
12 honour you. I want to say *háw'aa* to you for being here
13 today.

14 I'm also known as Bernie Williams Poitras.
15 I want to make this very and openly clear that I have -- I
16 have declined a lawyer for this process. I spoke to my
17 Elders. I spoke to spiritual people here that I want to do
18 things the old -- the old protocol way. I was not coerced.
19 I was not ever given any advice to have or not have. I
20 just wanted to make that clear that this was of my own
21 choice that I have chosen to come before you,
22 Madam -- Madam Commissioner Audette, that this was my own.
23 I felt at the last minute -- I spoke to my niece Audrey

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1 Siegl. Like I said, I spoke to the Elders that I want to
2 do things, you know, the proper way of my people, my
3 protocol is not to have a lawyer present.

4 I want to say *haw'aa* to my support, and
5 especially Rita Blind, and my cousin Penny and Terri and
6 Carol Martin, so many of you. I want to say *haw'aa*.

7 I'm not really clear on how to start this.
8 I'm probably just going to be, you know, trying
9 to -- because of time-wise and other family members, I
10 would like to just -- I'm probably going to zoom through it
11 really quick. I just want to make it known that my son
12 Presley and his brothers, this is the first time they're
13 going to be hearing my story.

14 For -- I'm going to be 61 this year. I
15 have -- I've always tried to shelter and make sure that my
16 children would -- would never, ever, ever go through the
17 things that I've gone through, and I've never spoken to
18 them. Like I said, this is my first time. I've -- and
19 there's been many times I've been really misunderstood
20 because of who I am.

21 So I want to say how much I honour my
22 children. My children have sacrificed a lot through being
23 on the front lines. Many times I've had to leave at 2, 3

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1 in the morning when I got the calls about our loved ones,
2 our women. Several days I've had to leave my children to
3 go on the front lines, and I really honour them that they
4 never gave up on me.

5 It wasn't until about ten years ago that my
6 oldest son realized that the dynamics of the work that I
7 was doing, and I know Carol went through the same thing,
8 the sacrifices that our -- our children, so many family
9 members across Turtle Island have had to sacrifice just for
10 this work, just to keep the fight, and I really honour my
11 three sons, and I am truly sorry that they felt abandoned.
12 It was not my -- never my intentions.

13 My journey -- I come from a family of 17
14 brothers and sisters. I have a stepfather that is -- who
15 is African-American, a stepfather that is non-Native, and
16 my First Nations dad. I was given up -- I like to -- I
17 always think that I was given up, but I was taken from my
18 mother when I was about three months old, and my
19 grandmother raised me.

20 As far back as I can remember -- and I also
21 want to -- I'm going to be giving the names of my
22 perpetrators. I've been told that I could risk everything,
23 but I cannot live in this hideous -- and to feel sick every

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1 time I go home to Haida Gwaii or I see my perpetrators on
2 the streets in Vancouver.

3 My brother Douglas Williams; Hereditary
4 Chief Cecil Brown, Jr.; Nicholas Brown (ph); Alan Hill, Jr.
5 (ph); Godfrey Wilson (ph), also known as -- I can't think
6 of his nickname right now -- these are my abusers. If I am
7 to be stripped of my beliefs, of my Hereditary Chief's
8 name, you do what you need to do, but this is my truth. I
9 was always taught that you are only as sick as your secret.
10 My sion (ph), my spirit, I have to -- I have to tell the
11 story.

12 My abuse started when I was 3 years old. I
13 remember living in my grandmother's house with her. I had
14 two brothers, Paul Williams, who I thought was my father,
15 but he was my older brother; my brother, Douglas. My abuse
16 started when I was three 3 old, like I said, when he was
17 bathing me in the tub. My grandma used to put a
18 metal -- metal tub outside where the rain can just -- just
19 drip into that tub, and I remember him touching me. I
20 remember to this day, and as I got older, when I was
21 walking, and it always happened when he was drunk, and that
22 continued up until my grandmother passed away. I found a
23 way to burrow myself -- I -- I didn't know that -- our

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1 relative Marina Dixon Nix (ph) had passed away a few months
2 ago, but she was the one that -- she reminded me of so many
3 things that where I used to burrow myself under my
4 grandmother's house with my dog Lucky. I dug a hole in
5 there. That was my only safety net because I could hear
6 him coming home.

7 I always had to sleep on the floor because
8 we were poor, and my grandmother had a -- had an old army
9 cot bed. My grandmother was, to me, one of the greatest
10 women in my life and I -- I always tried to believe that
11 she didn't know about this, but I had to really accept that
12 she knew about my abuse. It became so violent that I
13 remember my brother -- older brother Paul, he had a
14 Winchester shotgun, and I used to watch him and -- he used
15 to clean it, never used it, but I remember the one day
16 because the abuse was so bad, I was bleeding so bad, that I
17 had nowhere to go to, and nobody would help me. I was
18 going to Indian day school.

19 Then my dog -- you know, that was my little
20 best friend. As many as my friends know that I don't like
21 animals. This is one of the hardest thing I -- to talk
22 about is where my brother tried to use the dog for me to
23 perform oral sex on my dog, and then my cousin slaughtered

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1 my dog, skinned him and hung him on my grandmother's
2 clothes line, so I had nobody.

3 When I -- when my grandmother died -- I'm
4 going to skip a lot. When my grandmother died, though,
5 ended up moving to my cousin's place, to my aunt, Ruby
6 Brown, and my Uncle Cecil, who became the Hereditary Chief,
7 end up moving there because nobody wanted me because
8 my -- my aunt was willing to take me. Then my abuse
9 started there with Hereditary Chief Cecil Brown, Jr., then
10 his son. I was so terrified to come home after school and
11 that because I knew one of them would be waiting for me.

12 My cousins Maureen and Deb tried to always
13 protect me. We always tried to protect one another, but I
14 was so little. We used to put dressers by the door to try
15 to keep one of them out of there, especially her dad, but
16 mine was always after school, and -- I used to take off
17 down to my grandmother's old house after she died, and I
18 used to just go underneath her house and hide there and not
19 want to go -- ever go home.

20 Then when I spoke out about the touching,
21 about the rapes and sodomy and that that I was subjected
22 to, the Ministry was called. Then my journey began, and I
23 ended up in Prince Rupert in foster care. I spoke fluent

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1 Haida. In my grandmother's house, you were not allowed to
2 speak English. She was a very, very strict, strict, tough
3 woman and that, that no, it was not -- not acceptable to
4 speak English there, so that was the only language that I
5 knew, and when I was flown over, I didn't even know where I
6 was going. I remember I was slapped in my face, and I was
7 called a liar.

8 When I started my monthly before I left, I
9 was at -- in a fishing boat with my uncle and his wife, and
10 that's when he raped me on the fishing boat there, too, and
11 I started my menstrual time cycle then.

12 When I ended up back in Prince Rupert, I
13 didn't know where I was going. I was met by -- my social
14 worker, Tover Brant (ph). I've -- I've never forgotten
15 her. I ended up in -- in care there in a home of -- with
16 five other kids, and during this time, I didn't know that I
17 had sisters. Didn't even know I had brothers other than my
18 two brothers. Didn't even know I even had a mother, but I
19 ended up in Rupert and that. Then we started running away,
20 and I met a man who's my dear friend, and I don't know if
21 he's here. His name is Darryl Hevner (ph). He was a man
22 that helped to protect us kids.

23 At the age of 11 to 12 years old, six of us

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1 girls were sold into the sex trade work -- we didn't
2 know -- at the Empress Hotel in Prince Rupert. As many of
3 you know that I wear shorts very -- don't wear shorts very
4 often because of my legs. I've got cigarette burns all
5 through my legs right up to my back. Around -- like, my
6 buttock area is very -- scarred really bad. This is what
7 we will endured. We were just kids.

8 We had nobody to -- to protect us but this
9 man that I met because he was also a runaway kid. He
10 became one of my dearest friends that I thought I'd
11 lost -- I thought I actually lost him. So when we met him,
12 like, he helped us to get out of that hotel that us kids
13 were in. The only place that we could live was in these
14 box cars. Like, they were grain cars. That -- that was
15 our home. We would only come out at night to just go
16 through the Dumpsters and to eat whatever we could eat out
17 of the garbage can.

18 Then we -- we lost one of the women that was
19 found in between Prince Rupert and Terrace on the railroad
20 tracks with a -- a beautiful Chinese girl that we grew up
21 on the streets with. She was found on the railroad tracks
22 with a bottleneck, a Coke bottleneck inserted inside her.
23 She was beaten, and we always felt that, you know, because

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1 of these men, these were fishermens, these were
2 longshoremens, and I didn't realize at the time in that
3 hotel, my mother would -- you know, was drinking downstairs
4 in the bar while we were being abused upstairs.

5 Then from there, we started running away.
6 We started heading to Terrace, not even realizing that back
7 then that women, like, were being killed along the Highway
8 of Tears there. My story's no different than anybody's.
9 We all have a common thing, is that it's violence against
10 us women.

11 We managed to get out of the -- of the hands
12 of these men through this really courageous man that I
13 honour and respect so much. It's Darryl Hevner. If it
14 wasn't for him, I really sincerely believe that I would not
15 be alive today, or I would have been one of the statistics
16 on those streets, either becoming an addict or eventually
17 dying.

18 I learned how to read. I have a T-shirt
19 that used to say, "this is my favorite redhead," and a lot
20 of people that I know that really don't like redheads, but
21 it was Archie Andrews off of the Archie comics that I
22 learned how to read, so --

23 **(LAUGHTER)**

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1 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:** I
2 learned years later that, yeah, he -- he was, like, the
3 first man in my life because I learned how to read through
4 them.

5 Ended up in residential school at the Native
6 Institute of Canada outside of Nasgo. That was not
7 recognized by the Federal Government. Ended up in there
8 for about seven years, off and on. They would let us out
9 during the summer. I had a foster family in Smithers. In
10 Rupert, first, though -- in one year, because I
11 was -- because I spoke Haida, that they didn't know what to
12 do with me. I will never forget this one foster family
13 that -- our meals were -- we were asked to be on all fours,
14 and they would put dog food, be treated -- treated just
15 like an animal, and we'd have to, on our fours, just to go
16 and eat out of that bowl. That was our supper.

17 I'm really -- I'm really indifferent with
18 food. I don't know if many of the workers here know that.
19 I always pack Mr. Noodles with me. I don't eat fancy food.
20 I don't eat many foods. I can't drink milk.
21 I -- I -- there's things I just get really nauseous around.
22 I learned to eat really fast -- my kids always say, slow
23 down, Mom -- because I remember the plates always being

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1 pulled from us.

2 I don't ask for pity. I don't ask for
3 sympathy. I -- I am -- I feel a little bit embarrassed
4 that I'm sharing these things because it's -- I live a very
5 private life, that's why, and I'm always worried that
6 whatever I say will be held against me or to be called a ho
7 or -- that's why I never shared my story because I didn't
8 want -- I'm always tired of being put down and called down,
9 and I tell people the only thing I haven't been accused of
10 is sleeping with a man because I'm a two-spirited woman.
11 I've been accused of everything, and it's -- anyways.

12 So my journey began from Smithers. I had a
13 foster family there that was ministers at the Pentecostal
14 church and that, and they tried to beat the Indians out of
15 us, and I -- I just could not conform to -- to their ways
16 because every Friday nights, they would make us go up to
17 the front, get on our knees and -- you know, everything,
18 and -- I don't put people down for their religious beliefs,
19 but I -- I know what happened to us.

20 From there, I ended up in the Native
21 Institute of Canada. Like I said, that was not recognized
22 as a residential school, and it was the most demeaning
23 place I would ever -- I would rather live in a boxcar than

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1 to ever have to subject anybody to how we were treated in
2 there too. Like I said, my story is no different than
3 anybody's.

4 And at that residential school, the same
5 thing, they -- they were trying to cast demons out of us
6 and -- because we were -- as -- as First Nations people,
7 they said that we were savages and we need to change, and
8 then the one tried to use bleach on us because -- I -- I
9 would really get dark during the summer and that,
10 and -- and if we were good, you know, I was allowed to go
11 back to Smithers to be with my foster family there,
12 and -- but if I -- you know, like, if we didn't comply
13 and -- or follow their rules, it was through the
14 Arctic -- the Arctic Bible Institute of Canada, and -- we
15 started running away. I had the honour to -- when I was up
16 in Rankin Inlet, I remember this young man. His name was
17 James Carratuk (ph). I remember him because I thought it
18 was his brother, but it was his relative, that these were
19 two Inuktitut young men that were also taken from their
20 home, from Nunavut, that I'd -- I didn't realize until when
21 I was up there in Rankin Inlet, a couple months of ago,
22 that I went to residential school with him and how they
23 were treated because we spoke our language, and I finally

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1 got to meet his -- his aunty who was, like, an
2 (indiscernible) MLA up there that I had the honours of
3 meeting them, and I was so happy to hear that he was -- he
4 was okay.

5 I have never knew -- you know, understood
6 anything about trauma because I always believed that this
7 is what -- sexual abuse or rape, you know, that seems so
8 normal, that it was okay to hurt us, and -- I started
9 drinking very young, when I was about 6, 7 years old,
10 because my brother -- my oldest brother drank, and I always
11 ended up drinking what he had -- had left, so that became
12 part of my life back then.

13 So when we used to run away from the
14 residential school, we ended up in places, Cache Creek,
15 then the cops would come and gets and bring us back, and
16 then I finally met these two women from the Okanagan
17 where -- that's where I met my son's father. So to get out
18 of that system, because his dad, you know, fell in love
19 with me, and -- but I -- always knew in my life that -- is
20 that I was very different, and -- but to -- I had to get
21 out of that system. I married my son's father because
22 I -- I just got tired of being target, tired of running.

23 This man that I married was the most

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1 beautiful human man I've ever seen. If you ever watched
2 "Urban Cowboy," well, that was my cowboy.

3 (LAUGHTER)

4 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

5 He was very dark, handsome, and man, he could dance on that
6 floor, and I was a friend to his girlfriend back then, but
7 I caught his eye. I was very slim. I'm still short yet.
8 I haven't grown any, but...

9 (LAUGHTER)

10 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

11 But I had no interest, but I knew that was my way out. I
12 had my oldest son Bobby. Then we got married in 1978,
13 June 3rd. Never knew that this man that -- who said he
14 loved me would become the most violent man in my life.
15 Then my journey began with him.

16 I wasn't even married a week, and the abuse
17 started. He threw me out of the car. We were heading down
18 to Montana and Wyoming and -- because my ex-husband used to
19 be a rodeo cowboy, and -- he was a bull-rider and a
20 team-roper, and -- and a musician, and we were on our way
21 down on our honeymoon, and -- and the beating started.

22 I understood that -- you know, now I
23 understand many years down the road that, you know,

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1 violence, there are so many faces to it. I've had my
2 ribs -- they had to wire my -- my jaw. I've had my legs,
3 my feet broken deliberately. I had a plate in my back
4 here. He snapped my arm right back because I wanted to
5 play ball. I used to pitch Triple A women's fastball, and
6 I couldn't even throw anymore.

7 And years down the road, when I finally left
8 him because I ended up in transition houses with my kids,
9 it was one thing to beat me, but when he started to abuse
10 my sons, it's either fight or flight. I stood between my
11 middle son Presley here where his dad had a big rodeo
12 buckle, and he was going to start beating him because my
13 ex-husband was hung over. He was a heavy drinker, very
14 heavy drinker, but he always maintained his job. He worked
15 for Tolko Industry, a big sawmill, but when, like, that
16 belt came out, and I stood between them, and I would --he
17 would physically go into the bedroom and drag -- drag me
18 out of -- on -- on the floor, off the bed, and start
19 grabbing the boys and throw them on the floor. When that
20 started, that was it.

21 I got charged for -- back then, we had a
22 joint bank account, my ex-husband and I, and because he
23 took all the money, he was having affairs with a couple of

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1 women that I didn't care because I was not really -- trust
2 me, I was not interested in. All I ever wanted was
3 children in my life, to have (indiscernible). I would have
4 had five children. Two died of crib death. All I ever
5 wanted was babies, and that -- nobody could take that.

6 But when the abuse started with my children
7 here, that's -- I had to bring my son to the hospital
8 because he was -- he started bleeding internally through
9 his penis, my son Presley here. That's when I had to
10 decide because the only way that he would keep me at home
11 was to beat me and to make sure that I was so badly
12 beaten -- I don't know how many times I ended up in the
13 hospital. Broken ribs. They had to wire my jaw shut. I
14 couldn't walk. I had casts up to here, trying to hold the
15 babies and to look after the home.

16 I'd phone the police and that. The police,
17 because my ex-husband used to party with the police, the
18 RCMP, they would tell -- like, they would tell my
19 ex-husband exactly where my sons and I were, at the
20 transition house, so we weren't safe anywhere.

21 And then, finally, when I got charged for
22 theft because I pawned -- I pawned, like, a VCR because he
23 drained our account, and we had no food, and the family

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1 would not help us, so I pawned that, and then he charged
2 me. I got three months for doing that, and in that period,
3 time period, I didn't know that he had already sexually
4 assaulted my oldest boy Robert while I was in jail.

5 So through my lawyer that I met -- his name
6 is Bob Williamson (ph), he's now retired -- he was the one
7 that also became my saving grace, him and his wife. We set
8 out a plan to remove my sons and myself totally out of the
9 home. The family all knew what was going on. The family,
10 their grandmother, their aunties, their uncles who are very
11 elite, very -- they had a relative who is one of the first
12 MPs in Canada. They protected him. They protected
13 everything right down to the time when the grandmother died
14 many years ago -- actually, a few years ago. I was told
15 not to speak about it because it would do a lot of damage
16 when she got sick. The grandmother got sick, so out of
17 respect for my sons, like, I never said anything.

18 So it -- it was my lawyer, Bob Williamson,
19 and his wife that -- we set a plan in motion. We left
20 everything behind. This is how we ended up in Vancouver in
21 1983. My youngest boy was only three months old.

22 He stalked me for over two years, everywhere
23 I went. Even when we moved down here, he was living in

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1 Surrey, yet we didn't even know that; and today, I don't
2 think my children, other than maybe twice, have spoken with
3 him.

4 It took me six years to leave that man
5 that -- I told my son, you know, even though I am, like, a
6 two-spirited woman, this was my -- all I wanted was
7 children because I know what it was like to not have that
8 love, to -- never to be shown that, and I just wanted to
9 have my own, to love them, and that was in my little bubble
10 world that I -- I've missed out a lot of stuff in between.

11 So when I ended up down here -- before I got
12 married, I needed to find out who I was to apply for my
13 marriage license, and I applied for it, and they denied me
14 under Williams because I'm registered under my
15 grandmother's name as Williams. I didn't know that I was
16 registered under -- at birth, under a different name,
17 LaRochelle. That -- that is not my name. My mother, I
18 believe, was having an affair with a fisherman, and this is
19 where that name came from, and -- so it was one of my
20 aunties that told me, you'll find your mother down on
21 Skid Row, and I didn't know I had a mom. I always believed
22 my grandmother was my mom because my grandmother never
23 spoke about my mother. Nobody spoke about my mom. My mom

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1 was a very violent, violent drunk and person. I didn't
2 know that. So when I found out that my last name was
3 different, and -- then I got married and then ended up down
4 here.

5 When I started to apprentice under
6 Bill Reid, that's all I ever wanted to do was to be an
7 artist. I just wanted to create because that was my
8 healing. I didn't know anything else. Art became who I
9 am. Still to this day, I can just sit for hours and just
10 dream my life away and just, you know, create because
11 that's my self-expression. I forgot to mention, too, that
12 I stuttered really bad. I couldn't even hold a
13 conversation with anybody. It's hard to believe I used to
14 stutter because I'm so yappy now, but...

15 **(LAUGHTER)**

16 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

17 And music was the thing that saved me too. But when I
18 started apprenticing with Bill Reid -- I met a woman years
19 and -- you know, in that era of time, I met Viola Thomas.
20 I used to play ball and we used to travel a lot, and when I
21 lived in the Okanagan, and -- so I had the opportunity of
22 meeting Viola and that, and -- and I was in my early 20s,
23 and she also used to ride -- I used to barrel-race too.

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1 I -- I think I'm probably the only Haida woman that's
2 ever -- as short as I am, man, we were fast, though, on
3 those horses for barrel-racing. I used to barrel-race with
4 the Native Rodeo Circuit and that.

5 And so I met Viola, and we became friends,
6 and -- so when I ended up down here, I reconnected with
7 her, and -- and this is where my journey began with the
8 murdered women and girls here. I met Harriet Nahanee,
9 Kitty Sparrow, Marion Makasko (ph), Loni Bernice Brown
10 (ph), and Rita, Carol, all these incredible women in my
11 life.

12 Then I started finding out about my -- my
13 own family -- I met my family back in 1992 for the first
14 time, and one of the things that I want to say is that my
15 sons never understood why they didn't have any uncles or
16 aunts around them. Because of what I went through, I
17 didn't want my children to ever go through the sexual abuse
18 that I had been subjected to all these years and no
19 accountability and -- for anything.

20 So it was finally a few years ago that I
21 finally told them, this is the reason why. My brother
22 Ron Victor LaRochelle is one of the biggest perpetrators
23 around. He's a pedophile, and I have no problem saying

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1 that publicly. My brother, Douglas George Williams (ph),
2 another one of the biggest pedophiles around. These two
3 have never, ever been charged for anything, even though we
4 had enough evidence against them, and yet the Ministry
5 still allowed these men to still perpetrate out there to
6 this day.

7 So when I met my family, I felt, like, a
8 sense of belonging, but there's a price to it because I was
9 apprenticing yet with Bill Reid, and they knew that I had a
10 pay cheque every two weeks, so I became -- just to be part
11 of that family, they would really guilt me to death: Well,
12 my hydro's getting shut off, this is getting done, I'm
13 short on my rent, I'm this, so I just gave and gave and
14 gave, but I still protected my children away from them. I
15 didn't want my children to be near them, and finally, like
16 I said, a few years ago, my children finally understood
17 why.

18 But for many years, I would never, ever tell
19 a lot of people that I was a Haida woman or even First
20 Nations. I -- I told people I was, like, a Filipino woman
21 because of the systemic racism that was so prevalent around
22 us all the time. My children never really grew up with
23 First Nations kids. I used to come home, 2:30 at night

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1 from work and that, and I'd have the United Nations at my
2 home. I turned my garage into a little social area for my
3 children to have their friends, and my two older boys
4 started learning how to speak Mandarin, Hindu, all these
5 other languages, and I felt bad because, like, they
6 couldn't even learn their own language because I was so
7 ashamed.

8 So when my journey began, all I ever wanted
9 to do was carve. I don't know, in my culture, Haida women,
10 this is not part of our -- is our culture. Haida women,
11 it's -- I mean, it's not against our culture. It's -- it's
12 against protocol, but Sharon Hitchcock Baker Williams (ph),
13 God rest her soul, that -- and Frieda Dazing (ph), you
14 know, to pave the way for us women and how to do this work.

15 So we started working on the many projects
16 with Bill Reid and that, knowing that he was so sick with
17 Parkinson's and that, and I used to administer his
18 medication, and weekends, I don't think I even had a day
19 off sometimes because he would -- Skundaal, you need to
20 pick up my Billmobile and come and pick me up, and -- we
21 always had other projects to do, and then finally one day,
22 through meeting Viola Thomas and Harriet Nahanee and them,
23 and Harriet (indiscernible) and Kitty Sparrow came down to

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1 the studio one day and said, come on, and I honestly
2 thought they were taking me for lunch. I was so happy to
3 see them and that, and they said, no, you grab your stuff,
4 you're coming with us, and that's where my journey began,
5 starting -- doing the front lines back in 1986. My
6 children were just little boys.

7 Then I started to find out about who I was,
8 realizing that I had such a large family and finding out
9 my -- about my mother. My mother died November 5th, 1977.
10 Who would have believed, you know, 40 years later I would
11 raise the survivor's totem pole on her very date that I
12 didn't even know.

13 I started finding about my mother, started
14 finding out about my sisters that I had and how they also
15 went unnoticed in the Downtown Eastside. They were
16 invisible. I blame the coroners. Those coroners should be
17 investigated. There is no due diligence on any of their
18 hearts, that they just wrote my family off as if they never
19 existed.

20 I'm very proud have to my niece Nicole here.
21 That's my second oldest sister's daughter that I just
22 finally got to meet a few years ago. I didn't even know
23 she existed.

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1 But like I said, I met my family in 1992 and
2 that, and very -- a lot of family hidden secrets, and when
3 I found out about my mother, how she was -- ended up in a
4 hospital because of a beating so severely that she bled
5 internally and -- and that. My mother was 56 years old.

6 And I started finding out about my oldest
7 sister, Katherine, how she was strangled to death but yet
8 written off, and I took pictures at her funeral in her
9 casket because what I was told was that my sister did not
10 like things around her neck. I -- and I just want to back
11 up for a minute, about my mother, how her body, because the
12 Haida Nation, through Frank Collison and them, would not
13 decide whether to bring my mother's body home. She was
14 left in that morgue for three months pending their
15 decision, and yet Frank Collison and Reynold Russ are one
16 of the two biggest perpetrators in my village, and one is
17 alive yet, but never, ever been -- they have never, ever
18 been charged. My Aunty Terri and her sister was so
19 courageous to come up against them in court, and they
20 walked. This was my mother that I was denied.

21 I've got a lot to say about the band council
22 and that, but I just wanted to bring this back to this is
23 how my mother was failed through the system but also

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1 through the Nation that I loved so dearly.

2 Then I find out about my oldest sister, like
3 I said, and one of my aunties told me that she knew her
4 very well. My sister Catherine Katherine was a beautiful
5 woman, very quiet. She just went and checked around, like,
6 treatment centre, apparently, and then when she came back,
7 she was found dead at the Cobalt Hotel, but it was written
8 off is that she died of asphyxiation from eating a pork
9 chop bone, but yet at the funeral home when I was asked to
10 go there, when I was told by my aunt that she never liked
11 things around her neck, and I'm curious why she had this
12 scarf around her neck. When everybody walked outside
13 waiting for the casket to come out, I stayed behind. I
14 asked the funeral director to, please, don't take her out
15 yet.

16 I took down the scarves, and there's
17 strangulation hand marks around her neck. Her shoulders
18 had -- were badly bruised. I took pictures of that. After
19 the funeral happened the following week, I went to the
20 coroner's. I said, explain this to me. You tell me that
21 she died of asphyxiation, and yet she's got
22 strangulation -- hand marks around her neck. Nothing had
23 ever happened.

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1 My second-oldest sister, Noreen Joyce, the
2 man that was giving the alcohol to was a man that she had
3 been befriended to, and he was only charged on because it
4 was, like, a non-Native woman. He only got charged for
5 hers, and yet they wrote down that there was nine -- nine
6 First Nations women, but they never even cared about that
7 one of those women were -- was my sister.

8 My baby sister in Merritt, Sharlene
9 MacAdams, the RCMP was also alerted on her common law, and
10 yet -- I'm trying to figure out how the system, when we
11 phoned the RCMP, how they cremated my sister, baby sister,
12 in one day without notifying the next of kin. My sister
13 Noreen was cremated right away, too, without notification.

14 This is what gave me the push to do this
15 work. I don't get paid. I want to make this very clear
16 too. I am not a staff on the National Inquiry. I'm a
17 grandmother. We are not paid staff here. So I want to
18 make that very clear. We are volunteers in -- we were
19 asked to do this work, so just for the record, like, I want
20 to make that clear.

21 So this was at the beginning. You know,
22 Grandmother Rita Blind, we used to go to her place
23 when -- because, like, the Elders knew back then about

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1 Robert willy Pickton. Nobody would listen to them. I
2 believed even to this day that if they would have listened,
3 that there would be many of our loved ones would be alive
4 to this day. You know, Carol Martin, so many of us women
5 who are on the front lines -- and I want -- I want to say
6 this. You know, Carol and I, you know, talked about this
7 years ago and that. I want to acknowledge her sister
8 Delilah. Delilah was the one that started coming forth
9 with informations about Robert Willy Pickton. This young
10 girl by the name of -- her name is Angel, not the one from
11 Haida Gwaii, I want to make that clear -- started coming
12 forward, and I remember in those days how -- we're talking
13 about organizations and that, you know, what -- what roles
14 you play in this, about how those roles were shut on our
15 Elders. I never forget going to wish with them one night
16 when it was at the First United Church. Harriet and Rita
17 were looking for one of our women that was missing, and I'd
18 never forget how those workers there stood like a police
19 officer and try to block them from coming in and say, no,
20 you are not going to come in here. This is our Elders that
21 these organizations were doing this to, and how many of
22 these doors were shut to these women? Right to this day.
23 We talk about lateral violence. It's very, very

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1 much -- and it -- it's right here today.

2 I blame a lot of these organizations. I've
3 witnessed -- I remember back in our time era, the Downtown
4 Eastside Women's Centre was one of the safest places to go.
5 There was not even 30 organizations down there. Now we're
6 over 300. But there's a lot of good organizations out
7 there that do work hard for the women: WAVA (ph), there's
8 BWSS, the Aboriginal Mothers Centre. There's -- I can only
9 count maybe five on my hand.

10 When I look at these statistics right
11 now -- I'm going to jump ahead now -- through all these
12 organizations that are down there, including the policing,
13 including the court systems, including the City -- the City
14 council, everywhere, (indiscernible) -- all these places
15 and that, you figure out that there's a million dollars a
16 day that's being spent in the Downtown Eastside -- spent in
17 the Downtown Eastside. So you're looking at 27 million to
18 31 million a month times 12. Why isn't our people still
19 safe? Why are they still living below the poverty line?
20 Why is our Elders standing in food bank lines? Why is
21 my -- why is my grandchildren not feeling safe and being
22 bullied in these schools with all this money that's being
23 spent every day, a million dollars a day? Why is there

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1 still homeless people, you know, on those streets? We have
2 become the biggest commodity -- like Carol Martin has said
3 over and over, we have become the biggest commodity
4 anywhere in the Downtown Eastside.

5 I've got nothing to lose with what
6 I'm -- you know, with what I'm talking about. I don't work
7 for your organizations. I'm on those front lines. I
8 always believe in my heart, if you were doing your job,
9 there shouldn't be one homeless person out there. I've
10 never had a cordon bleu in my life, but I sure see a lot of
11 these people going out and having those big fatties and
12 whatever out there because those are crumbs that you're
13 giving. I want that whole loaf of bread. I don't want
14 your crumbs. I want to be able to walk in my community,
15 the community that I love so much. I feel the safest in
16 that community is in the Downtown Eastside. I don't feel
17 safe walking up on Davies Street. I don't feel safe
18 walking over well on Robson Street. I don't feel safe in
19 Surrey. I feel safer on those streets and in those alleys,
20 you know, because we go looking for those women in those
21 alleys. We're the ones that are mopping up the blood.
22 What is your organization doing?

23 This is one of the reasons why that the

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1 Elders -- I remember Harriet and Rita were, 20 years ago,
2 talking about a health, healing, and wellness centre, and
3 still today, we are still fighting. I see Lorelai Hawkins
4 fighting for the same thing, you know, back in that time;
5 Grace Tait. These were the women, and yet we are sitting
6 here, and nothing's been done yet. Why has it taken over
7 4,000 women and girls' names to sit here and to still keep
8 asking the same question? We have this right.

9 When we did those walks across Canada, we
10 sat one day with the walkers and that. We went through the
11 human rights, the Indigenous human rights thing. It took
12 us a week to go through it, you know, for our study, little
13 things, you know, at nighttime and that. We counted 17
14 violations against our women and children out of, like,
15 that. Seventeen violations, and yet nothing's done.

16 I was one of the very fortunate and lucky
17 women that I thank my Creator every day I don't have to
18 carry a medicine bag or anything, yet -- you know, and I
19 could tell you, you know, how my gratitude is, you know,
20 for my Creator because that's not my journey. That's not
21 my life. I respect you with the medicine, but I want to
22 say I have seen and I have witnessed so much violence, and
23 it's not because of the Walk4Justice or the Tears 4

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1 Justice, all these coalitions that -- this is the reason
2 we're here today. It's because of women like Rita,
3 Harriet, Lorelai, all these women. This is women
4 nationally that have sacrificed -- Jamie Lee Hamilton, all
5 these women, courageous, Angela MacDougall, all these women
6 nationally who have fought to the bitter -- almost to the
7 bitter end, and yet nothing has changed. Nothing has
8 changed. But instead, the system has set it up where the
9 lateral violence, you know, to fight for those fundings,
10 to -- you know -- you know, and to fight amongst one
11 another.

12 The Government knows exactly what they're
13 doing: Divide and conquer. We all know that, but why are
14 we fighting one another? I'm trying to make sense of all
15 of this. Why is it -- has to get so hurtful, yet we're
16 fighting for the same thing? I -- I don't understand this.
17 This is my only opportunity that I get to say what I need
18 to say from my heart. This hurts me so much. I've been
19 accused of raping a woman. I've been accused of extortion.
20 I've been accused of holding my Elders' hostage. I've been
21 accused of -- you name it. How do you think I feel? My
22 sons didn't even know that I tried to commit suicide three
23 times at the hands of a spiritual person that clawed my

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1 face down who was a pipe-carrier, who's a sun-dancer, and
2 lives in my community but clawed my face. Nobody stood
3 with me. I've been stabbed three times and shot at twice,
4 and I've never, ever had one of you stand beside me or walk
5 with me until after the fact. This is what I'm talking
6 about. You think about these women, how many doors have
7 been shut on them, and yet we're out there: Hey, we've got
8 to do this for the women. How dare you. How dare you
9 stand there in judgment of me and then open that door.

10 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Oh --

11 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

12 Uh-uh. I only have one shot at this to say what I need to
13 do. Shame on you. You're not my friend. Get that knife
14 out of my back. How dare you call me your friend when
15 you're -- you're there, you know, moving that knife into my
16 gut? Because it's easier for you to tear me down than to
17 lift me up.

18 I made a comment to this woman. I said, I
19 want you to be one of my pallbearers. I want six of these
20 women, and I named those women out. I want you to be my
21 pallbearer, and this person said to me, oh, I feel so
22 honored. Why did you ask me that? And I said, so you
23 could let me down one more time. I mean what I said.

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1 My reality is -- is I've walked with these
2 women. I've listened to their cries. Why doesn't anybody
3 want to help us? Don't we matter? I'm not in a leadership
4 role here. I'm a humble servant in my community. Why
5 would you want to be jealous of this? Like, come on. I'm
6 short and I've got an attitude this big.

7 **(LAUGHTER)**

8 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

9 You know? I tell people, I am hated by many and loved by a
10 few. I could -- you know what? I don't care if you like
11 me. I feel very secure with who I am. I got three amazing
12 sons. I got incredible grandchildren. I got -- on two
13 hands, I probably got ten good friends that I'm crazy with
14 and I'm crazy about them. If you don't want to be in my
15 life, don't slander me. You know what these women have
16 gone through? The same thing. I was strong enough to have
17 one Elder come into the hospital when I tried to commit
18 suicide because I couldn't take that abuse coming from a
19 spiritual person that clawed my face for accusations that I
20 stole money from the murdered missing women, and I want
21 this on the record too.

22 The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, and I'm
23 going to say this one last time to you, and

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1 this -- publicly. When we did all these walks, the Union
2 of B.C. Indian Chiefs were looking after those
3 monetaries -- not Gladys, not Bernie Williams,
4 nobody -- because I am sick and tired of taking the brunt
5 of people's bullshit and to be torn down. At whose
6 expense? I make my own money. I'm a working poor woman.
7 And for clarity, too, if I choose to go downtown and have a
8 beer, who the hell are you to judge me when I see you
9 sneaking around the corner with your pipe in hand? How
10 dare you? You don't know my story.

11 I've only shared a little bit of who I am,
12 but I'm going to tell you, it stops today, like my son
13 said. You don't want to be, you know, in my life, bye-bye.
14 I have a T-shirt that says, "want to care but don't." You
15 know? Want to care but don't. I've got work to do. I
16 have a family that I love, I adore, and I respect. These
17 are my warrior men. I don't have time for your bullshit.

18 I hear all the gossip, you know, putting
19 down, losing focus of why we're here, is about the women
20 and those beautiful children that are gone. I don't care
21 about these coalitions. You don't know my story. You
22 don't know anything about my family, and if you think
23 you've got, like, you know, answers on how to solve or

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1 resolve, you better step back because you don't. I have
2 another T-shirt that says "stop" -- "stop trying to fix
3 me." You don't know my story. Instead of trying to push
4 us down, wouldn't it be great -- I said this, like,
5 to -- like these non-Native people, you know, who work in
6 the big organizations downtown. What would happen
7 hypothetically, I said, if we as Aboriginal people started
8 getting healthy? What would happen? Your organization
9 will just -- (unreportable sound) -- like that.

10 As Maya Angelou has one of the greatest
11 sayings around that I love reading her stuff: We rise.
12 Very simple. We rise. But the context of it, look within
13 it. We are red women rising, and we rise. Because you
14 know what? We've had enough.

15 **(APPLAUSE)**

16 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

17 I've had enough. I've had enough. I can't speak for
18 Gladys or Penny or for Carol and that, but I'm sick and
19 tired of having to be the one sent to mop up the blood
20 downtown. All these people that are pushing against, like,
21 this National Inquiry, step back because we're coming
22 through with or without you.

23 **(APPLAUSE)**

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
In relation to her mother, Katherine Rose Williams,
Noreen Joyce William and Sharlene MacAdams**

1 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

2 Step back because if you don't understand -- there's many
3 of you who have walked with us. I remember when we were
4 doing these walks, and again, these organizations -- like I
5 said, I don't care, I don't care if you close a door to me,
6 but I'm going to say this. When we started doing these
7 walks across Canada, seven times and two times on the
8 Highway of Tears, not one of these organizations came out
9 to support us. Not one.

10 So don't stand in front of me and tell me
11 that you -- you want to do all this good work now. Um,
12 like, you're 30, 40 years too late, honey, because we're
13 not going away. I watched you build your empires off the
14 backs of our people. I should have owned a home by now.
15 These women that have gone before us, they should have had,
16 like, a better quality of life under your leaderships, but
17 that didn't happen.

18 Now, speaking of leaderships, I also hold
19 our leaderships well accountable. Instead of blaming the
20 residential schools and that, we need to take a look within
21 our own leaderships on our reserves, our villages. I've
22 seen these men, our leaderships, on those front lines, you
23 know, perpetrating our women, sitting in those bars, like,

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
In relation to her mother, Katherine Rose Williams,
Noreen Joyce William and Sharlene MacAdams**

1 oh, swaggering around, at the casinos, thousands of dollars
2 going in, but yet you can't even provide safe housing for
3 our Elders and our women and children? Shame on you.

4 The leadership -- the leadership that I've
5 been given, I take it very seriously, and so does my son.
6 We want to be the change. We are going to be the change,
7 and we need to step back and hold those men in power, right
8 up to Perry Bellegarde. I've been at those fine dining AFN
9 Congress of Aboriginal People's meetings. So has Carol, so
10 has Penny. We've all been there. So has Viola. We see
11 what's going on there. You ever ask them how much money it
12 costs, like, to put one of those on and at the end of the
13 week, woo-hoo, party on, panties off. That's what it is.
14 I seen our leadership so drunk in their monkey suits.
15 These are our leaders. I'm not ashamed to talk about this.
16 Because I hope that you hold me accountable in my
17 leadership if I ever done shit like that. I apologize for
18 swearing.

19 But I've watched them. Why is all the
20 blame -- I understand, yes, the Government plays a really
21 big key role, but why is it targeted towards the Government
22 when it's right in front of us? Clean up your own backyard
23 with your own people, but nothing -- they -- every time I

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
In relation to her mother, Katherine Rose Williams,
Noreen Joyce William and Sharlene MacAdams**

1 see these meetings, I just cringe. It took us 20 years
2 with the grass roots movement that we were -- you know,
3 have been in, 20 years to get through those doors in these
4 leadership meetings. It shouldn't have been that way.

5 Everybody blames the Government, like, for
6 water, housing. You remember something. I live
7 off-reserve. My reserve is getting money for me still, and
8 I live off-reserve. Why aren't we going after them? The
9 Government is the one that is giving the money out, and our
10 leaders are taking those monetaries. Are we seeing it? I
11 still haven't got a house yet. I got property. Because I
12 don't fit in. I'm not a relative to that Chief that day,
13 or I haven't slept with him or her, whatever way it is. I
14 don't get those perks. Education, the same thing. Why do
15 I have to fight? I took four student loans out to go to
16 school for four years because my band. You think that
17 these women had that opportunity too? You wonder why these
18 women ended up on these streets? Wasn't because of the
19 Government. It was because of what's going on on those
20 reserves or individuals. I hold our leadership accountable
21 for that.

22 I have talked to many of our First Nations
23 women on the streets. Sexual abuse. You can't get a job

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
In relation to her mother, Katherine Rose Williams,
Noreen Joyce William and Sharlene MacAdams**

1 because it's nepotism. Our Elders. I cannot believe some
2 of the housing that we are looking at in my village. The
3 Elders are living below third-world country. Why is it
4 that? But my name is on that band list, and you're getting
5 money for me and my children and my grandchildren. Why is
6 there nothing to sustain us over there?

7 Haida Gwaii is one of the most beautiful
8 country -- or areas in the world, very pristine. Why can't
9 I go home and have a house there to make sure that my
10 grandchildren will learn the language, the culture, and
11 everything? Why does it have to be separate or segregated
12 because I don't fit in with that group over here, I don't
13 fit in with this drum group here, or because I don't speak
14 my language anymore, I'm not Haida? I have been told
15 that: You are not Haida because you don't speak your
16 language. Excuse me? You guys are the ones that signed
17 the paper me to go to Provo, Utah, where I ended up in
18 care. You signed those documents to show my quantum blood
19 as a Haida woman, that I ended up in care.

20 Viola Thomas and I spoke about this years
21 ago, that I wanted to sue the Haida Nation because of that.
22 How can you sign me away? You signed me away to another
23 country. How many other children, you know at -- they had

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
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Noreen Joyce William and Sharlene MacAdams**

1 this welcoming home ceremony. I never got the call.

2 My sisters were on that band list, too, so
3 was my mother, but they collected that money all those
4 years but never helped them. You think about these women,
5 like, the First Nations women. How many of those bands,
6 you know, called, like, to see? I've only seen one Chief
7 come down here from -- from Lake Babine. She came down
8 here, and she still comes down here to see her people,
9 asking them, would you come home? Do you see these Chiefs
10 on the front line other than going into the bars and having
11 a drink and trying to schmooze around?

12 I'm not saying that all Chiefs are bad
13 because there is some great Chiefs that are great leaders,
14 but the ones that I know, mm-mm, should be ashamed of
15 yourself. But you think about these women, is were they
16 given that chance? No.

17 I wanted to talk about that. I wanted to
18 say what I needed to say about, like, that leadership
19 because I am so appalled, and I'm appalled at how the
20 National Inquiry is -- always been, like, a target of
21 silliness and that and -- because -- I'm only going to
22 speak for myself -- because I'm with Michèle Audette as,
23 like -- you know, like, a grandmother, and I want to make

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In relation to her mother, Katherine Rose Williams,
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1 sole purpose here as a survivor was to finally put an end
2 and to name my abusers, and is it going to make me feel all
3 warm and fuzzy after? No. The work still goes on. But
4 what I do, and I will never stop. I will never stop this
5 fight for -- the justice for these women, my mother and my
6 three sisters, and for all the families across Canada and
7 to the north.

8 And this Commissioner Madam Michèle Audette
9 is -- I'm acting as my own lawyer. Do you got anything to
10 ask me?

11 **(LAUGHTER)**

12 **(APPLAUSE)**

13 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** (Speaking in
14 French)?

15 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

16 *Oui.*

17 **(LAUGHTER)**

18 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** I just sworn
19 you.

20 **(LAUGHTER)**

21 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** You know, in
22 our tradition, in the east, I don't know in your beautiful
23 territory, but when a person come with a traditional

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
In relation to her mother, Katherine Rose Williams,
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1 approach, it's automatically sworn for us, that every words
2 that would come from that person, it's the truth, their
3 truth.

4 So I know usually we ask, are you going to
5 do this in a good way, and -- because it's a talking and
6 sharing circle, and because you choose to do it that way, I
7 want to reassure you that everything you said and will say,
8 we know it's the truth. And -- how do we say that? I feel
9 petite. I feel small beside you.

10 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

11 Well, now you know how I feel.

12 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yeah.

13 **(LAUGHTER)**

14 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Big time.

15 Usually I'm a tough cookie, not afraid of anything, but now
16 I'm very nervous -- in a good way, of course -- and before
17 I ask some question, I just want to say the teaching you're
18 giving us, the four of us, the Commissioners, but also the
19 staff that I call my new family, the love that you're
20 giving us every day, you're lifting up us because it's not
21 an easy journey, but we have to do it, and we do it because
22 women like you, Gladys, we had Cynthia and Bonnie who were
23 here, we had Myrna, women from different region, and like

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1 you and, of course, your niece, to remind us why we have to
2 do this and how we have to do it, and the how, it's very
3 different, very different depending where we're from the
4 north, the south, the east, the west, or the prairies. And
5 you never said no to us, ever. It was a Sunday night or a
6 Monday night. It didn't matter. It was five days in a row
7 or a month in a row. You never said that. You never said
8 no, and I'm including all the families and survivors.

9 And you brought some people for a few hours
10 in your beautiful community, but also for me, a very tough
11 place, and you changed them. (Indiscernible) changed. He
12 didn't wear his tie this morning because of you.

13 **(LAUGHTER)**

14 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** And I know
15 you have many, many, many years of dedication. You met so
16 many people, you're very humble, you're not running after
17 camera, hey, I did this, I did that, but because I know, I
18 know, I was young when I was watching you, and one of my
19 mentor was one of your friends, Viola Thomas. When we were
20 young, she was involved with the Quebec Native Women and
21 talked about you, and that's how I started to know who is
22 that Bernie? The Bernie.

23 **(LAUGHTER)**

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1 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** So can you
2 help us, because we have one shot. You mentioned it couple
3 times, and your beautiful testimony, we have one shot, and
4 I will use your expression, we have one shot to do this
5 right, this Inquiry, something that you fought with your
6 sisters, with your grandmothers, and we can start with the
7 coroners, we can start with the police, we can start with
8 the leadership, we can start where you want us to start in
9 this part of this conversation we're having, the
10 recommendation, the action that we have to bring in that
11 report, and this is not my report, but it's our report for
12 those who believes in the Inquiry. For those who doesn't
13 believe, I respect that. Why I respect that? Because
14 we're all different. We have something in common, though:
15 Racism, discrimination, but how we live it, probably it's
16 different. Remember, we have to remember, many of us
17 didn't want this Inquiry. They wanted the money directly
18 to the organizations or services or a program, and we have
19 to honour that and respect that, but there's some of us,
20 also, who said we need this, and Lori Ojic (ph), Lanny
21 Morrison (ph), Sue Martin (ph), you, Gladys, were the first
22 one to answer my calls two years ago: How do we do this?
23 How do we do this to make sure that it's working? And you

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1 have that expertise. You are my expert. You -- I mean,
2 all the women that you mentioned and the women who are
3 listening -- what do we have to bring in that report? And
4 when I'll be finishing this mandate, I will be so proud and
5 so loud to make sure that those recommendation, those totem
6 poles that we have to put in your beautiful territory,
7 Gladys, and other commemorating --

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

9 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** -- yeah,
10 monument that we have to put across Canada, I will stand
11 beside the people who will wish and wants that. I want to
12 hear from you, *les recommandations*.

13 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

14 No.

15 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** No? Okay.
16 You're the boss. She's my boss.

17 **(LAUGHTER)**

18 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:** I
19 think -- I remember, you know, conversations going back
20 over 20 years ago, like I said earlier, and the
21 conversations was with Rita. I -- I -- I really want
22 everybody to acknowledge there's only Rita. As -- as I
23 mentioned the other day at the opening, Carol and I were

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
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1 just, like -- we were like the point guards, and we still
2 are. I really want to acknowledge these two incredible
3 women that are the only two left out of that -- we have our
4 group of seven, you know, the artists that they talk about,
5 the Group of Seven and that? Well, we got our group of
6 seven, and these two women, I really want to acknowledge
7 them and that because these were the ones that really
8 helped to guide Carol and I, you know, through our long
9 years and -- of being on the front line, is our Elder Rita
10 Blind, if she could be so kind to stand, and Viola Thomas.
11 Are you standing, Viola?

12 (LAUGHTER)

13 (APPLAUSE)

14 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

15 Again, too, Viola Thomas and Rita Blind, we also have our
16 oldest walker from -- from Fort St. James that every time
17 there was a walk and she was raring to go, and as
18 grandmother Mabel Todd (ph) from Fort St. James, wants
19 to -- we want to acknowledge her.

20 (APPLAUSE)

21 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:** I

22 just want to say that she's done all the seven walks across
23 Canada. She's done, like, the two walks for the -- for the

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
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1 Highway of Tears, and she hasn't been feeling well lately,
2 but she still wants to do one more walk, and we're saying,
3 no, granny, that's enough.

4 (LAUGHTER)

5 MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:

6 Granny's gone wild again. But I also want to recognize,
7 also -- just like me, she's very misunderstood a lot of
8 times and that, and the reason why I want everybody to
9 recognize these women because these women were -- are part
10 of the heart of the community. They work -- we're -- we're
11 always misunderstood in that, eh? I want to acknowledge
12 Kelly White here.

13 (APPLAUSE)

14 MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:

15 And before I -- before I give my closing, I -- I really
16 want to acknowledge, also, Carol Martin and Penny Kerrigan
17 and Grace Tait here too.

18 (APPLAUSE)

19 MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:

20 This is all the hard work that these women have done on
21 these front lines and to help bring to it where it is
22 today. I just want to really acknowledge all these women,
23 but to also acknowledge all of you, though, too, and there

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1 was times that, okay, you know, we wanted to throw the
2 towel in because not being heard, just not being heard, and
3 all these doors, you know, being closed in our faces,
4 and -- the other person is Gladys Radek. She's -- I've got
5 to share a little story with you.

6 (LAUGHTER)

7 MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS: I
8 have to stand up for this one.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are you standing?

10 MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:
11 Ha, ha, ha, ha.

12 (LAUGHTER)

13 MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:
14 When we were on the walk and that -- I have to put some
15 little lightness to this, okay? When we were on the walk,
16 when -- can't remember which one it was, but anyway, she
17 really pissed me off and that, and she was sitting on --

18 (LAUGHTER)

19 MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:
20 She was sitting -- everybody knows that her and I would be
21 scrappitty-doo a lot along the route here, and, you
22 know -- of, like, the places we were going to, but she was
23 sitting down, and she took her prosthetic leg off, and man,

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1 she just pissed me right off, so like a football, I went
2 and grabbed her prosthetic leg, and I said, come and get
3 it, you bitch, you.

4 (LAUGHTER)

5 MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS: I
6 just ran with it, realizing that she couldn't get up
7 anyways to come after me because I had her leg.

8 (LAUGHTER)

9 MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:
10 And the other time -- I just want to lighten the load for a
11 minute, and -- the other time was -- I had my red Jeep, and
12 so we had -- her van was side by side of my Jeep and that,
13 and I was so tired that -- I usually slept in my Jeep
14 because that's how small I am. Like, I could fit right in
15 the back, and -- so anyways, they had a mattress inside the
16 van, so they pulled everything in, so I finally ended up
17 laying down, and they never even told me that the van got
18 hit by lightning. It got struck by lightning, and --

19 (LAUGHTER)

20 MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS

21 WILLIAMS: -- nobody came to wake me, like, Bernie, are you
22 okay, or --

23 (LAUGHTER)

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Noreen Joyce William and Sharlene MacAdams

1 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS**

2 **WILLIAMS:** -- you know, shake-and-baked or anything like
3 this? No.

4 **(LAUGHTER)**

5 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

6 So I get up and, just, like, stretching away, and then they
7 just looked at me. Like, not one of you came to -- even
8 her, never came to check and see if I was --

9 **(LAUGHTER)**

10 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

11 But they just told me, um, I think your Jeep, all the wires
12 and everything were blown because, like, the Jeep was so
13 close to the van that I just -- it blew my whole panel out,
14 but they didn't even care that I was --

15 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** We did care. We did
16 care.

17 **(LAUGHTER)**

18 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:** I

19 never seen them until eight hours later, but -- anyways, my
20 colleague -- just my sister, Gladys Radek, we've been
21 scrappers together, fighting -- you know, I was scrapping
22 together, words said, but at the end of the day, we always
23 would work it out. This is Gladys Radek here.

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(APPLAUSE)

MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:

1
2
3 I'm just going to wrap it up now. I just want to
4 acknowledge all the families, NFAC (ph) families, also,
5 that have been on those front lines, that have been
6 fighting so hard, and I also like to acknowledge Bev Jacobs
7 and Bridget Tully (ph), so many of these women who have
8 fought so hard, and to please keep in mind that we need to
9 put our differences aside for this great cause and that. I
10 always believe that the Government, you know, has set this
11 up for it to fail. We are not going to let this fail.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:

12
13
14 We've got too many families that have been waiting for so
15 many years. Mine is just a small part of it, and my
16 recommendation to you is, like I said, about 20 -- over
17 20 years ago that these Elders had already spoken
18 about -- to Carol and I, about the health, healing, and
19 wellness center. This health, healing, and well center, I
20 remember it with the TRC how much money was spent in every
21 province that I -- I believe, and it's only my belief, it's
22 not nothing to do with anybody -- that those monies could
23 have been put towards like, a health, healing, and

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1 wellness, that all those millions of dollars that could
2 have been built, and I would like to see as part of that
3 health, healing, and wellness center is, like, for -- a
4 place for the children, for their trauma. Their trauma.
5 They need to be --

(APPLAUSE)

MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS

8 **WILLIAMS:** -- trauma-informed. One of the things that I
9 have asked about. Everybody knows part of my story, but
10 what about my children? Have you heard their story? Have
11 you heard the children's story on, you know, what it was
12 like have to my mother either in jail or on the streets or,
13 you know, having to go out and make a few dollars just to
14 bring a loaf of bread or a thing of milk? Like, you know,
15 what about these children? I would like to see a
16 trauma-informed place that is safe for the children lead by
17 our spiritual Elders.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:

20 That's what I would like to see, that we bring it back to,
21 you know, our culture, and I honour Patrick Smith from
22 Kwagiulth Nation, for Culture Saves Lives and that.

(APPLAUSE)

**Gul Kitt Jaad Bernie Poitras Williams,
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1 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS**

2 **WILLIAMS:** -- because I -- I have noticed, too, that this
3 is really made an incredible difference. When I see these
4 beautiful women, like Tara in the back here, and Nancy,
5 that these are beautiful women from the Downtown Eastside,
6 and I just honour them.

7 **(APPLAUSE)**

8 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

9 And I'm so glad they're here. Come on, give us
10 some -- some love.

11 **(APPLAUSE)**

12 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

13 These are the women that society would like to throw away.
14 These are the women that I work for, that are suffering on
15 these front lines. These are the women that have endured
16 so much, that people turned their backs and their faces
17 away from them. These are the true survivors. These are
18 the ones that ask for nothing, and they get nothing because
19 when they ask, they have to go through process sometimes.

20 I would like to see as part of the -- Viola,
21 Shelly Lewis (ph), Carol -- there's many of us that have
22 asked for -- we want to do our own exiting program, to have
23 a place set up that when our women and our boys that are

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1 being subjected to sexual exploitation or human
2 trafficking, that there is a place immediately put in place
3 so that these -- our families, that would have a place to
4 go, and that is not from 9 to 5 that these doors shut down.
5 We would like as part of that health, healing, and wellness
6 centre that we have a place to bring our children who have
7 been exploited in. We will do the work to get you there.
8 Pam Lewis (ph) was a great advocate, like, for this. She
9 passed away a few years ago and that. This was one of her
10 dreams.

11 We've been working with Viola as part of,
12 like, a pilot project that we want to implement in -- as,
13 like, for down the road and that to work within the
14 Thompson/Okanagan and that where we could bring the women
15 out of these areas from the Downtown Eastside to -- into
16 safe, healthy, places, as to be part of nature and their
17 culture out there.

18 We also spoke with Annita McPhee (ph) here
19 who's our warrior sister from the Tahltan Nation and that,
20 that we are serious about this. This is --

21 **(APPLAUSE)**

22 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS**

23 **WILLIAMS:** -- Annita McPhee here, one of the -- one of our

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1 great women here, warriors.

2 (APPLAUSE)

3 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

4 These are the women that we've been networking with to try
5 to implement, like, those changes and because we know that
6 we're getting a lot of resistance and that, and I
7 understand, like, the organizations. I -- I really do.
8 But I -- I would really like to see that this would
9 be -- is culturally lead by our spiritual Elders and our
10 grandmothers that are out here and our grandfathers to keep
11 that balance and that, but this health, healing, and
12 wellness centre has to be run by our own people. Our own
13 people.

14 (APPLAUSE)

15 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

16 That's a really, you know, important, you know, component
17 to this. It's -- it's got to be culturally, you know, done
18 properly and that, and the youth; we got our children, we
19 got our Elders here, but our youth. What we have noticed
20 on the front lines, Downtown Eastside, is we have more
21 youth downtown. We don't have anywhere for them to go. We
22 have -- yes, you know, we have, you know, Britannia, we got
23 places, but if we want to take our youth out of these

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1 places, there's nowhere to bring them. We have nowhere to
2 bring them.

3 Right now, we're looking at about 43 percent
4 of our women that are dying at a high random rate right now
5 is, like, through the Fentanyl crisis now, but now it's
6 becoming our youth that are dying. So we're losing, like,
7 a whole generation right there because, again, it goes back
8 to the leadership, and I -- I would really like to
9 challenge the -- the Commissioners to -- I would like to
10 have, you know, ideally is to have the Chiefs, you know,
11 sit at those tables with the grass roots and the
12 grandmothers and Elders.

13 **(APPLAUSE)**

14 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

15 That's what I would like to see. I would really like to,
16 you know, push that, and just to have that time because I
17 want to be able to ask the -- you know -- you know, because
18 people talk about what they think it's working. I want to
19 ask a question, what's not working? Reverse it around
20 because we know what's not working, and -- I think that's
21 about it, you know? Like I said, health, healing, and
22 wellness centre that the Elders have fought so hard for and
23 it's still not, and -- and -- you know, what is that going

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1 to look like? I don't know. That's up to the Elders,
2 and -- you know, and to the spiritual people, but I -- I am
3 really -- really sick and tired, and it's no offense to any
4 race or anything. I'm not a racist person, but I'm really
5 tired of the nonNative people telling me what's good for
6 me, what they think.

7 (APPLAUSE)

8 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:** I
9 really am. I'm -- and one of the things that I know that
10 Carol is really passionate about, and she's always fought
11 for this, is how the overmedication of our people, they're
12 undermedicated, they're overmedicated, Downtown Eastside,
13 and I think that we really need to step it up to get a hold
14 of the -- like, the board of physicians and that, that it
15 should be a -- working with our spiritual people again
16 instead of handing out these medications.

17 I remember when I had a breakdown, they
18 Prozaced me. They put me on Paxil and Prozac, that I was
19 walking around like a zombie, and how it -- it almost
20 killed me because I went in -- out of suicide mode. I was
21 found on the streets walking, and then I picked up a small
22 handgun, that I was going to kill myself. I paid 50 bucks
23 for this handgun on the streets. My sons were in the

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1 Okanagan with their grandparents, like, for the summer and
2 that. This is -- it is distorting so many, you know, of
3 our people, and if you don't take those medications, then
4 you're reported because you're not complying with them, and
5 I'm sure that -- that the child apprehension unit has been
6 already spoken about, and I really don't want to go there
7 because my children were -- you know, were also in care
8 that nobody knew about. My ex-husband decided, like, that
9 he wanted to get help to fix us, our marriage, so the best
10 thing to do was to, you know, put my children in care,
11 which I fought hard to get them back out, and -- you know,
12 like, we all know what's wrong with that system. I'm not
13 going to beat that one up and that, but all I know is that
14 these -- that these doctors are -- some of them should be
15 charged. Some of them should be, because you can go down
16 to the Downtown Eastside to a certain doctor's offices and
17 pay 30 to 40 bucks to buy any kind of medication you want,
18 and it's shameful.

19 But my whole thing is about that health,
20 healing, and wellness centre, and stopping the, you know,
21 exploitation of our women and children and that and to have
22 a safe place, you know, for these wonderful people and
23 that, and that's all I have to say.

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1 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

2 Are we spooning?

3 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Tonight.

4 **(LAUGHTER)**

5 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** We'll spoon
6 tonight. We're so --

7 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:** I
8 would just -- I would just like to say *háv'aa* to all my
9 support and to my beautiful niece. I want you guys to see
10 my beautiful niece Nicole. This is my second-oldest
11 sister, Noreen Joyce, this is her daughter, Nicole.

12 **(APPLAUSE)**

13 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**

14 I'm so glad she's here.

15 **(SILENCE DURING GIFTING)**

16 **MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** Oh, gee, that's a
17 first. Somebody calling (indiscernible). Of course it
18 wasn't working.

19 Bernie, the love you've shown to all the
20 women and the children and those that have experienced
21 violence, we wrap you today. We wrap you and comfort you
22 and hug you and protect you because you have done that for
23 all these other people, selfishless, with humility, with

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1 honour and respect you treated every person who came in
2 your path, and we acknowledge that because a lot of the
3 time, it goes unseen, and you need to know that we love
4 you, we want you well, we want you protected, and we want
5 to let you know how much we love you because you've shown
6 your love to everyone you've come into contact with. We're
7 not getting a bill from you.

8 (LAUGHTER)

9 **MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** So, Bernie,
10 I -- it's a pleasure that I've -- I've gotten to know you
11 so well, that we stand almost shoulder to shoulder. You're
12 an inch higher.

13 (LAUGHTER)

14 **MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** But I've learned
15 so much from you, Bernie, and I've seen the compassion and
16 the humility that you carry, and I hope to continue walking
17 in the way that you have and showing that compassion to the
18 people in the way you have, so I honour you today.

19 **MS. GUL KIT JAAD/BERNIE POITRAS WILLIAMS:**
20 *Háw'aa.*

21 **MS. AUDREY SIEGL:** I'm trying not to get
22 emotional. Where the love that I missed from so much of my
23 life, from my own mother, I found in you. The support and

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1 the unconditional strength, I found in you. I'm proud of
2 you and your beautiful family, and I thank you for sharing
3 your mother. I see who you are. I see who you've always
4 been. I see all the women you come from. I see not just
5 the strength that's carried you through but that big
6 beautiful heart that always finds a way to keep moving
7 forward. You inspire me. You kick my ass when I need it,
8 and you show me what love really looks like. You have
9 shared so much with so many, and I know you're working very
10 hard on learning to let people love you, and I thank you
11 for letting me be one of those people.

12 This blanket represents so much than just
13 the fabric that it's made of. This blanket is some of the
14 good that you have done coming back to you. I will always
15 walk with you. I will always be wherever you need me to
16 be, especially in there and in here, not just because I
17 love you, but because it's what you have always deserved.
18 *Háw'aa.*

19 **(APPLAUSE)**

20 **MS. LOUISE HAULLI:** Bernie, I'm speechless
21 because you've taught me so much. You taught me how to
22 stand up for yourself, which I have never learned to do.
23 You taught me so much. I'll walk with you to the end.

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1 Thank you.

2 (APPLAUSE)

3 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** I have one
4 more thing, Bernie. I've been carrying this all week. My
5 mom made it, and I want you to come with me and give it to
6 your son with the eagle feathers.

7 (APPLAUSE)

8 (SILENCE DURING GIFTING)

9 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Thank you.

10 (LAUGHTER)

11 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:**

12 (Indiscernible). It speaks Innu and French.

13 (LAUGHTER)

14 **MR. PRESLEY WILLIAMS:** Thank you so very
15 much. *Háw'aa*. I don't know if people know this, but in
16 our Haida culture, the moment you are blanketed, it's the
17 highest respect, it's the highest gift that you can get
18 given to each other aside from given -- given copper. I
19 had the opportunity, you know, to be bared from my mother
20 and did not realize how much her life went through so much
21 turmoils, and just showing the respect from the
22 Commissioners to myself, I'm -- I'm -- I'm a loss for
23 words, but that tells me the Commissioners have it in

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1 themselves to make this change happen.

2 Like my mother said, it starts from the
3 leadership. It also starts from the Federal Government.
4 They are also at fault. They also need to be put in their
5 place. Culture reigns supreme. We've been here for
6 25,000 years.

7 **(APPLAUSE)**

8 **MR. PRESLEY WILLIAMS:** And we are still
9 going to be here, and our culture is still succeeding, and
10 that is why it works. The Government has -- has to take
11 their step back and reanalyze how culture has perceived
12 better for our people.

13 **(APPLAUSE)**

14 **MR. PRESLEY WILLIAMS:** When we put these
15 leaders and cultural leaders in these positions that my
16 mother's requesting, you will see a difference. These
17 aren't certified government people. This is the way our
18 oral teaching has been brought to us. It is not a
19 certified document saying that you're learned this way and
20 now you can teach it. My grandmother taught me this. My
21 great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandmother
22 taught my great, great, great -- and so on and so forth.
23 That is the practical pride of our people, of being

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1 -- Upon adjourning at 11:18 a.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

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



Jenessa Leriger

April 12, 2018