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 1 Public Hearings Radisson Hotel, Ambassador B Winnipeg, Manitoba



# PUBLIC

Friday October 20, 2017

Public Volume 16: Annie Bowkett

Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson Commission Counsel: Fanny Wylde

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#### APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	No Appearance
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Metis Nation	No Appearance
Government of Canada	Anne Turley (Legal counsel) Amber Elliot (Legal counsel) Christine Ashcroft (Legal counsel)
Government of Manitoba	Samuel Thomson (Legal counsel)
Manitoba MMIWG2S	Angie Hutchinson (Representative) Leslie Spillett (Representative)
Manitoba Moon Voices	Tanis Wheeler (Representative)
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada & Manitoba Inuit Association	Beth Symes (Legal counsel)

Winnipeg Police Service Shannon Hanlin (Legal counsel)

Note: For the purpose of establishing this record of attendance, counsel are considered present whether they attended one or all of the public hearings held over the course of the day at the Radisson Hotel, Ambassador Rooms A & B (i.e. the two main public hearing spaces).

# II

III

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# Hearing # 3 Witnesses: Annie Bowkett Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson Commission Counsel: Fanny Wylde Knowledge-keepers, grandmothers, elders: Laureen "Blu"

Waters-Gaudio Clerk: Christian Rock Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

1 Opening Remarks --- Upon commencing on Friday, October 20, 2017 at 11:32 2 3 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Good morning, Annie. Good morning, Commissioner Eyolfson. Before Annie starts to 4 share her story, she would like to share a prayer. 5 6 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: (Speaking in Inuktitut). I'm going to pray in my own dialect. Ask God, the Creator, 7 to help us and be with us. I'll pray. (Speaking in 8 9 Inuktitut). Thank you. MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you. So, Mr. 10 Registrar, the witness would like to affirm oath on a 11 12 Bible. 13 MR. CHRISTIAN ROCK: Do you swear that the evidence you will give today will be the truth ---14 15 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Yes. MR. CHRISTIAN ROCK: --- the whole truth, 16 17 and nothing but the truth, so help you God? 18 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Yes. Thank you. MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you. 19 So, 20 Commissioner, I would like to introduce you to Annie 21 Bowkett. She's here to share her story as a survivor of different types of violence. Annie, I will leave you to 22 introduce yourself to the Commissioner. Give me -- just 23 24 give your name, where you're from, and also maybe to present who is here to support you today. 25

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1 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Okay. Thank you. My name is Annie Bowkett. And, I'm from Pangnirtung, Nunavut, 2 3 but I live here in Winnipeq. I came here to tell my story 4 as a survivor, and these are my supporters. And, I'll hand this to my husband. 5 6 MR. ROY BOWKETT: I'm Roy, Annie's husband, and I'm here to support her today. 7 8 MS. LEAH MACDONALD: My name is Leah 9 MacDonald (phon), and I'm here to support Annie. MR. FRED FORD: My name is Fred Ford. I'm a 10 friend of Annie's, and I'm here to support her. And, I'm 11 also the President of the Manitoba Inuit Association. 12 13 MS. BARBARA SEVIGNY: My name is Barbara Sevigny. I'm Annie's support worker. 14 15 MS. BETH SYMES: My name is Beth Symes. I'm here to support Annie. I'm here in my role as counsel to 16 17 Pauktuutit, the Inuit Women of Canada, and of the Manitoba Inuit Association. 18 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you. So, Annie, I'm 19 20 just going to ask you an open question. What would you 21 like to share this morning with the Commissioner? MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: 22 Thank you. My experience from my childhood. I was loved, so loved by my 23 24 parents when I was so small, living outpost of Pangnirtung before I was taken away. I was so loved by the whole 25

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community. I remember the glimpse of like being the queen
 of this community, small community where we lived out on
 the outpost. How durable that was in my life.

4 And, when I had to leave, I don't know -- I don't remember because I was so small. Four to -- maybe 5 between four and five. I don't remember how I got to 6 Pangnirtung, who took me there. But, I remember the RCMP, 7 and maybe another Inuk man came to pick me up, and I had no 8 9 idea where I was going. Then, I remember ending up in a big building in Pangnirtung, which was hospital. I don't 10 know how long I stayed there. I don't remember anything. 11 And, I don't remember flying from Pangnirtung, my 12 community, from the hospital to down south. I don't know 13 if it was a plane. I don't remember if it was a plane or a 14 15 dog team. But, it's too far from Pangnirtung to down 16 south.

17 Then when I got to down south, I remember that I went to a huge building. It's because I had TB. 18 And, from there, from in the hospital, I started going to 19 school, down in the basement in Toronto -- which was 20 21 Toronto. And from there, I thought I was fine, well looked after, well washed, and our bed was made every day. But, I 22 found out that nobody loved me, even though I was sick with 23 24 my TB.

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And then I don't know how long, I don't

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remember how long I was in Toronto having TB. Very small.
 Then from Toronto, I remember I had to leave again.
 Somebody held my hand, and she had a veil. I can't see her
 face, her eyes, but I could see her mouth because I was
 speaking English -- speaking in English already.

I did not ask her. She was wearing all
black, I remember. She took me to long, long car, or it
was a train. So, we slept in the train. And, I was put
again to go to school. And, I didn't know that place till
I got bigger, which was Moose Factory. Moosonee and Moose
Factory.

So, I start -- first of all, I used to have 12 very, very long hair, right down to my ankles, even in the 13 14 hospital. I got to the classroom in Moose Factory. They 15 cut my hair right in front of the students, all the people, kids who I didn't know at all. And, the very first day 16 17 when I got to the classroom, when we were finished, they put me to my bedroom where all the girls were. And, I had 18 no idea who they were. They looked at me; no smile, sad 19 That's all I remember. And, I tried to figure out 20 faces. 21 -- because they couldn't speak in English, I tried to figure out who they were. 22

And, I found one girl who was laying
beside my bed. And, she could speak in English, little
bit. So, I start asking her, "Where am I? Who are these

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people?" Then she told me these are Cree people. I said, "What's Cree?" And, she said, "You can call us Indians." "Oh, okay."

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As I continued to stay in school, I don't know how long. I don't remember how long I was in Moosonee and Moose Factory in residential school. We got so abused. We started to get so abused. I still can remember every single day they were bringing kids, new kids every day. But, the person who started to become my friend, she could talk to me, and I could -- I was able to talk with her.

One day, we didn't listen, and I started to 11 get slapped in my ears. I don't have any hearing problem, 12 but my ears can shocked right instantly. And then, I don't 13 know how long, how many months I was there. We didn't 14 15 listen again. We were put to another room. Here, our teacher slapped us, the three of us, with the belt. And, I 16 17 have scars right through my legs to across with the knuckle of the belt. There was so much abuse. We were so abused. 18 And, I totally forgot who I was in Moose Factory. 19

I don't -- I can't tell how long I was in
Moose Factory. Then I had to leave again after being
abused in that residential school. I had to leave again.

23 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Annie, can I ask you a
24 question? When you were at -- when someone came and picked
25 you up from the camp where you were living with your

parents ---1 2 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Yes. 3 MS. FANNY WYLDE: --- I believe that you 4 were transported up to Toronto Hospital. Were your parents accompanying you, or any members of your family? 5 6 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: No, nobody. No, my parents were not there at all. Not even my mother. I 7 can't remember anything of how I leave my camp. But, all I 8 9 remember is the two men came to pick me up. MS. FANNY WYLDE: And, when you were taken 10 away again from Toronto Hospital, did you see your parents? 11 Did you see any members of your family before you were 12 13 brought to Moose Factory? 14 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: No. No, they were too 15 far away. My parents were too far away to be down there. No. No family members. Nothing. 16 17 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Did you have any contacts with them as you were in the hospital? 18 19 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: One time I met an Elder 20 who had TB, which was across from the children's hospital 21 to adult hospital. She came to me and had a letter. And, she read it to me in Inuktitut, my dialect. All I 22 remember, it said -- my mother wrote and said, "I love 23 24 you". That's all I remember. 25 MS. FANNY WYLDE: So, again you had to leave

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1 residential school from Moose Factory. Do you know exactly
2 where you were taken?

3 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: I don't remember nothing
4 at all leaving Moose Factory. How I got -- was it a plane
5 or a train? Must have been in a plane. It's so far, from
6 Moose Factory to Pangnirtung. But, today, I question
7 myself why? Why me? Why was I put there?

8 And so, from Moose Factory, I realized I was 9 in different people again, which is Inuit people in 10 Iqaluit, capital of Nunavut. And, the person who looked 11 after me was very nice to me. That's all I remember.

And, I can't -- and then all of a sudden, I 12 went to another community, which is where I was born, which 13 is where my parents are. And, when I got off, there was a 14 15 man came to pick me up right then; hold my hands, took me down somewhere. And, I don't remember who he took me to 16 17 the salt houses, which is hut houses, Inuit hut houses. It was a big family, and they were looking at me, staring at 18 me every single minute. And, I couldn't say anything. 19 Ι had no dialect, only in English. I couldn't ask to change 20 21 my clothing, or wash.

22 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Do you remember how old23 you were when you got back in Pangnirtung?

24 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: No. I don't remember.
25 I don't remember.

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MS. FANNY WYLDE: But, you were not taken
back to your parents' camp?

3 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: And then somebody made 4 me a parka. Seal skin, or baby seal's parka. Somebody made me clothing. And, I don't know how long I was there 5 6 in the salt house. But, a man entered the salt house before we -- as we were ready, about to go to sleep. A man 7 came in so late. Looks like it was so late because I was 8 9 so used to eight o'clock or nine o'clock, it seemed so late. A man came in. And, somebody said -- one of them 10 said, "Your ataata (phon)." And, I asked what ataata 11 12 means. My father, forgotten father. I thought my parents -- I forgot about my parents. 13

14 Anyway, he said to me with tears, 15 "Daughter." And, I don't remember how we left from Pangnirtung. He came to pick me up. And so, I remember he 16 17 was using dog teams. Why then they -- I don't know how many days I was on dog team alone with him. I was so 18 scared. I prayed and prayed. I prayed and prayed asking 19 not to be scared. Then we finally arrived to a small 20 21 community. And, they were all huts, like little, we call them, (indiscernible) in Inuktitut. Salt houses. 22

And then I was -- my father took me inside,
and there was my -- probably my mother. She kissed me with
her tears. They lost me when I was in Moose Factory. No

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1 letters, nothing. My parents lost me. So, I don't -- I 2 don't remember again how long I lived with my parents out 3 in the outpost.

4 MS. FANNY WYLDE: How was it to be living
5 once again with your parents?

6 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: It was strange, very, very strange. They eat raw meat. They taught me tiny, 7 tiny little bit of raw meat. I couldn't eat it. But, she 8 9 made bannock. I was living on bannock most of the time. And, that was -- that was good. But, I don't know how long 10 I started to eat raw meat again. I don't remember. 11 And, it was warm. My mother, she couldn't talk to me because I 12 was English. We only had to communicate with our fingers. 13 Communicating with my fingers, with my birth mother. 14 15 Excuse me, I need water.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: When you were brought in
the hostel house in Pangnirtung, was there something
particular happening to you there?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: I can say this. I don't remember again how I got to Pangnirtung from this community where my parents were. But, when I was picked, they put me to a little house in Pangnirtung. In a little house. And, because I still didn't learn my own dialect, I couldn't speak. And, there were two fosters looking out for us; he and his wife in the little hostel. And, I start going to

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school. And, there were bunk beds, handmade, wood bunk
 beds in that hostel. There were another girls, all girls.
 And, as I continued to go to school, but my parents were
 not there. I was just put to that little hostel. As I
 continued, I had no choice because I didn't know my own
 dialect. I just listened, listened; taken, taken.

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7 One night, I don't know how long I was in 8 school. I was very tired being moved around, knowing/not 9 knowing where I was. I don't know how long I was in 10 school. I don't remember. And then one night as I was 11 sleeping, I used to cover my whole head inside the blanket, 12 so that I won't be scared.

13 One night, a man started to touch me. Ι don't know who it was. I thought it was one of these girls 14 15 who did this to me, but they weren't. It was a man who I couldn't recognize. A few months later -- a few months 16 17 later as I continue to go to school, and being continued to be touched at night, I started to realize it was the man 18 who looked after me, feeding me; the man who and his wife 19 were looking after me. And, I couldn't understand what it 20 21 was. I feel so dirty. I feel so dirty.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Did you ever talk to
anyone when that incident occurred? Did you talk to an
adult and tell them what was going on with you?

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MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: No. I didn't have the

speech for it. I didn't understand what was going on. All 1 I felt was so dirty; so dirty. I didn't care about myself 2 3 anymore. I ran away from that home. I had no one. One 4 person from Pangnirtung who welcome me, I start going to her house and lived in her house, because I had no parents. 5 6 I had no connections of these people. And then I was picked to go back to school where my friend was. I had to 7 continue. They started bullying me. Kids started to bully 8 9 They called me English Girl, making fun of me. And, me. here I was talking to myself, why are these people doing 10 this to me? Why was I put here? 11

11

It continued, continued, being bullied in the school, until I realized they were my people. I started to become homeless in that small community, sleeping all over, once I got to know the kids in school. I continued to get bullied, making fun of me. "English Girl"; that's all I heard in the school. I just listened.

Every time I go out from the school, I started to -- my life changes. From the school to outside started to become sleeping everywhere, and following this girl, this friend of mine. And, I don't know how long I was in that school.

And then my parents -- an Elder came to me
and said my parents are here, which I had forgotten already
again. They moved to Pangnirtung from outpost, so that

1 they can be with me. They had a house. I stayed with them. I wasn't interested in school any longer. So, I 2 start skipping school, going down to my friend's late at 3 night without my dialect. And, one night as I was going 4 home -- as I was going home, somebody grabbed me in my 5 hair. I remember there -- it was a full moon. There was a 6 moon, and I wasn't scared because it was light outside. 7 Somebody grabbed me and raped me outside in the cold. 8 9 Very, very cold. Took my pants off. I never knew that person until I got older. He ripped my pants. 10 I walked home, bleeding. I was able to reach my home. 11

12

A few years back, I charged him when I was able to fight back. Over the years, I've been so angry. Angry, angry; drinking, drinking. Running away to Iqaluit. I don't remember. I don't know how who was paying me, or nobody paid me for the flights. Just continue, continue. I don't know how I survived. I don't remember how I survived.

A couple of years later, I charged him. I got so angry. He was a church man. I went to the church to kill him. If it wasn't for my husband who was there for me in the church, I could have probably killed him. But, I couldn't. I couldn't do it. I can't kill people. So, he talked to me and stopped it inside the church.

25 So, I was at the court. I didn't win. I

didn't win. 1 MS. FANNY WYLDE: He was acquitted? 2 3 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Huh? 4 MS. FANNY WYLDE: He was acquitted? He was declared not guilty? 5 6 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Not quilty. Not quilty. So, okay. I said, "How come I didn't win again? Who am 7 I?" No -- I had a lawyer. He didn't come to me. No 8 9 information, nothing. Inside the court, the judge didn't even ask for me to talk to me. Nothing; nothing at all. I 10 started to say why? Why? Why did I just show off him to 11 the court, and not winning? No help. Nothing. Nothing. 12 MS. FANNY WYLDE: When you went through 13 court, was there any support for you? 14 15 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: No. No. There was -everybody backed off me. Everybody. They didn't want to 16 17 come near me. They don't want to see me. Nobody. Even when I walked, people backed off from me to walk on the 18 other side. My relatives, they have the power and I'm 19 powerless. They were not there for me. Nobody, except for 20 21 my husband. He and I did support one another. That's all I have. 22 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Can you tell me when or 23 where exactly you met your husband? 24

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MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: We met in Pangnirtung.

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His -- we got married there, in Pangnirtung, my own 1 community. 2 3 MS. FANNY WYLDE: And, I believe you 4 currently are living in Winnipeg? MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Yes. 5 6 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Can you tell me how you got to be coming and living here? 7 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: After we got married, we 8 9 were both working, and we used to come down for holiday. And, we had the house here in Winnipeg. And, when we both 10 -- when we both retired from schools, he decided that he 11 12 was moving here. So, because he's my husband, I moved here with him. It's not easy, very confusing first to move down 13 here where you came from, but I'm living here now. 14 15 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Do you -- how many children do you have? I know you have children. 16 17 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: I got four birth, my own children from my first husband. And, we got nine between 18 us -- eight, because we were fostering for so long, and we 19 adopted one girl. And, she couldn't go back to the birth 20 21 parents, so they just gave her to us. MS. FANNY WYLDE: I believe you want to 22 share some pictures to show to the Commissioner, so they're 23 24 going to appear on the wide screen. Maybe you can describe what are the pictures? So, can you describe what this is? 25

14

1 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Yeah. That is my tag that I carried around to different places. That is my 2 3 Eskimo taq. How did I survive to carry that thing with me, and being so small when I was put to different places? 4 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Next picture? 5 6 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: This is Pangnirtung, where I was born and where I lived. But, outside of 7 Pangnirtung, this community were my outpost. 8 9 This is my grandmother. The second time that I was taken away from -- from the outpost, she looked 10 after me part of my life, my grandmother. She raised me 11 12 partway through. This is me and my late Aunt Ika (phon). She 13 was there for me. That's my grandmother's beautiful 14 15 daughter. She loved me when I wasn't loved. They looked after me partway through. Never said anything, but they 16 17 were always there. 18 Today, this is my project with my business, here -- here in -- living here in Winnipeg. I always 19 20 enjoyed being a business person. That was my dream, because I've got no education. I can't find my education. 21 What else was I supposed to do in my life? I had to enter 22 the Elders, so I was able to get back with my own culture. 23 24 Right now, I'm happy. I'm happy that I am able to bring back, as a business person, to bring back my 25

15

own culture. It is slow, but it keeps me happy, something 1 to do in my own life right now. 2 3 MS. FANNY WYLDE: So, this is your own craft, correct? 4 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: 5 Yes. Yeah. This is my 6 -- this is how we wear amongst our Inuit people. That's my hand embroidering, too, in a duffle that we chew. We have 7 to chew the bottom for the feet with our teeth. 8 9 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Looking back at your life, all the violence that you have survived, what kept you 10 qoing? 11 12 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: What kept me going was to do something in my life. I don't know what I was 13 looking for over the years and years. It was to go out on 14 15 the land, spend time out on the land as much as I can. And, to do the sewing in my house. I was always alone, 16 17 keeping my door locked, just being alone because there was no help. And, it helped me. So many times I tried to 18 commit suicide with alcohol, killing myself, hating myself. 19 I couldn't do it. Because of all this rape I had. 20 21 I want to share this one man. I want to go back to this one man who used to touch me. When I was able 22 to get stronger -- and the first one I charged and they 23 24 didn't do anything. Just before we left here to Winnipeq, me and my husband, because everybody lives so close to one 25

16

another, and the person who used to touch me, I got so 1 angry. Angry. Without letting my husband know where I was 2 3 going, or what I was going to do, I just go out. And, I 4 went to tell him, and he was outside doing something. "Look. Look. I'm going to charge you. I'm going to 5 6 charge you first thing in the morning." The very next day, he shot himself. I need 7 8 water. 9 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Commissioner, I would like for a short recess of five minutes, please? 10 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Okay. Let's 11 12 have a short recess. 13 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you. --- SHORT RECESS 14 15 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you, Commissioner, for that recess. Thank you. Thank you, Annie, for sharing 16 17 your story. This is a great act of courage. And, to conclude your testimony of today, I'm going to ask you if 18 you have any final statements or recommendations to give to 19 Commissioner Eyolfson today. 20 21 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Okay. Thank you. Thank you. I totally -- I apologize that I was going to show my 22 tag that I carried. And, I want everybody in here to pass 23 24 it around, how I carried my tag. My name is there, but it's barely showing now. Thank you. 25

17

Moving here to Winnipeg, this is my real 1 first time to get help with my life, my abuseness [sic] in 2 my life. Eyaa-Keen Healing Centre had helped me for almost 3 over eight years, and Returning of the Spirit Healing 4 Centre have helped me too, but they moved me around. 5 6 But, right now, I don't have any continue who can help me, because there's a lot of me needs to do 7 more healing. And, I ask you, for my own people, if there 8 9 can be a long-term help available, wherever, in Nunavut, or down here, anywhere, because we who have been so hurt, it's 10 living in us rest of our lives. That is my question and 11

ask.

12

13 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you, Annie.

14 Anything else you would like to add?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Right now with my kids,
they're all affected. They're really, really hurting.
And, they never abused me. I know they love me, but as a
mother who had been so -- such abused, and being hurt so
much, it affects the whole family. Thank you. Thank you.

20 MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you, Annie. I would 21 just like to advise, Commissioner Eyolfson, to finalize her 22 sharing of story, Annie will light up the qu'liq because 23 the flame is going down right now. It's a part of her 24 culture. She has been doing this all morning here during 25 the hearings in Winnipeg.

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So, I don't know if you have any final 1 comments or questions before we do go to the qu'liq? 2 3 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Annie, I just 4 want to thank you for coming here and sharing your truths with us; for your strength and courage, and for making your 5 6 recommendations as well. And, for helping us here at the National Inquiry with the qu'liqs. Thank you very much. 7 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: 8 Thank you. 9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Annie, Brian Eyolfson, Commissioner, would like to give you a small 10 token of gratitude. And, he'll be giving you an eagle 11 12 feather for you, for your continual journey of your healing, as well as some artic cotton for the qu'liq ---13 14 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Oh, okay. 15 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** --- to keep your fire burning. 16 17 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Mm-hmm. UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To keep that want of 18 healing, and that journey that you're on now. 19 20 MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Mm-hmm. UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And, we thank you so 21 much for sharing your story, so that your experiences can 22 be included when the Commissioners compile their 23 information to make suggestions and recommendations. So, 24 we thank you very much. 25

19

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Can I light it? 1 MS. FANNY WYLDE: I believe that Annie 2 prefers to turn it off as she concludes her testimony. 3 Thank you. That concludes the hearing of 4 this morning. Thank you, Commissioner. We can adjourn. 5 --- Upon adjourning at 13:01 6 LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE 7 8 I, Shirley Chang, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I 9 have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and 10 accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this 11 12 matter. 13 14 15 Shirley Chang 16 January 18, 2018 17