

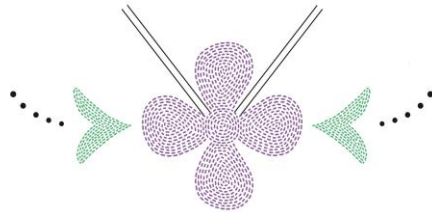
National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Edmonton Inn, Wildrose Ballroom**

Edmonton, Alberta



PUBLIC

Tuesday November 7, 2017

**Public Volume 21:
Gayle Graham & Elaine Dreaver,
In Relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver;**

Melanie Dene, In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

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II

APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	No Appearance
Government of Alberta	Nicole Pfeifer (Counsel)
Government of Canada	Anne McConville (Counsel) Christine Ashcroft (Counsel) Tania Tooke (Paralegal)
Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women	No Appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, AnânuKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women's Association Inc., Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, Manitoba Inuit Association	No Appearance
Women of Metis Nation / Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak	Melanie Omeniho (Representative)

Note: For the purpose of establishing this record of attendance, counsel and representatives are considered present whether they attended one or all of the public hearings held over the course of the day at the Edmonton Inn and Convention Centre - Wildrose Ballroom (Public #2)

III

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Hearing # 1	1
Witness: Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver	
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver	
Heard by: Commissioner Brian Eyolfson	
Commission Counsel: Joseph Murdoch-Flowers	
Elders, Grandmothers, Knowledge-Keepers : Laureen «Blu » Waters	
Clerk: Tasha-Dawn Doucette; Registrar: Bryan Zandberg	
Alberta Commissioner for Oaths: Jeff Weigl	
Hearing # 2 Melanie Dene	28
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene	
Heard by: Chief Commissioner Marion Buller	
Commission Counsel: Breen Ouellette	
Elders, Grandmothers, Knowledge-Keepers: Rick Lightning, Laureen «Blu» Waters	
Clerk: Tasha-Dawn Doucette; Registrar: Bryan Zandberg	
Alberta Commissioner for Oaths: Jeff Weigl	

IV

LIST OF EXHIBITS

NO.	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
Witness: Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver		
Exhibits (code: P1P05P0104)		
1	Digital folder of three images displayed on monitors during public hearing.	27
2	News article "Body in slough still a mystery: Woman disappeared in 1983" by Ian Williams; no publication data, one-page copy.	27

Witness: Melanie Dene
Exhibits: none entered.

**1 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

Edmonton, Alberta

1
2 --- Upon commencing on Tuesday, November 7, 2017 at 10:20
3 a.m.

4 **Hearing # 1**

5 **Witness: Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver**

6 **In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

7 **Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson**

8 **Commission Counsel: Joseph Murdoch-Flowers**

9 **Elders, Grandmothers, Knowledge-Keepers: Laureen "Blu"**

10 **Waters**

11 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Commissioner
12 Eyolfson, today, I have the honour -- the honour of -- of
13 working with Gayle Graham, who is the sister-in-law to
14 Elaine Dreaver, and who is the sister of Linda Dreaver who
15 died in 1983. And as we're -- and we were preparing for
16 this I -- I went over the -- the oath or affirmation, and
17 both told me they wanted to swear an oath on the Bible, so
18 I would ask that that be administered now.

19 **GAYLE GRAHAM, Sworn:**

20 **ELAINE DREAVAR, Sworn:**

21 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** So -- so as we
22 were talking about, we'll need to have the -- the
23 microphone, so if -- are you okay holding the microphone,
24 or would you?

25 **MS. ELAINE DREAVAR:** Yes.

2 **Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver**
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver

1 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Yeah? Okay.
2 Great. And we -- you know, we'll have to pass it back and
3 forth as you take turns talking. So yeah, we -- we had a
4 great meeting yesterday. And it was so wonderful to meet
5 both of you and -- and talk. Thank you for that. And I
6 just wanted to continue that conversation today, and maybe
7 we'll talk about some of the same things that we talked
8 about yesterday, I'm sure. Or maybe we'll talk about some
9 new things. But why don't we start by hearing from you
10 about why you wanted to be here and what do you want to
11 tell the Inquiry?

12 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Thank you very much for
13 the opportunity to speak here. For many years, I've
14 suffered watching my mother, the pain and anguish of losing
15 three, four of her children before she passed on, but the
16 loss of my sister, Catherine Linda Dreaver was overwhelming
17 because she went missing.

18 She was missing for nine months, and it was
19 just out of the hopelessness that hit my mother that there
20 was nothing that was being done. And the not knowing what
21 happened to her. And at the resolution of, actually my
22 sister's body being discovered, there was still a sense of
23 hopelessness that nothing, no accountability, no real
24 feeling that anything, no accountability would happen in
25 regards to what happened to her.

**3 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 And it is actually took so much life out of
2 her, that when she passed away we all felt so -- I don't
3 know, like a sense of uselessness that there was nothing
4 that we could do to comfort her. And I decided that I
5 wanted to come forward, even though this is so incredibly
6 hard for me. But I -- I did want her name added into this
7 list, and I want just, I don't know, to feel better that
8 we're doing something that might change how people perceive
9 how Indigenous people are treated in this country.

10 And I would personally would really love to
11 be able to see that it's -- like for me I look at it and I
12 always feel like it's always open season for Indigenous
13 people. And I'd like to see that end. And I'd like to see
14 some people actually being punished -- caught, punished --
15 caught, and then punished, and held accountable for it.
16 And I want to see that end. And even though how terrifying
17 this is for me, it's very important.

18 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** You -- you
19 mentioned the word hopelessness, even that hopelessness was
20 something that you and your family felt when your sister
21 was found?

22 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Yes.

23 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Why -- where
24 does that hopelessness come from?

25 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** It came from experience

**4 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 of other tragedies that happened earlier in our family.
2 And the police would come, and they take the information,
3 but that would be kind of it. And there was never anything
4 ever done. It was just like, well it's just another
5 typical Saturday night. And -- the stereotypes of being
6 First Nations in Canada is a sense of hopelessness.

7 And it's just been years and years and years
8 and I'm -- I'm an old person now. And since I was a little
9 girl growing up, I have never felt worthy. And that came
10 passed down from my mother. And that must have come from
11 her mother. So we're talking generations and generations,
12 and now at my age a sense of hopelessness I hope is going
13 to come to an end.

14 But it's hard to change the inside of me,
15 because I've known better. Or I've seen the opposite to be
16 true. So I don't know if you can actually change that part
17 of me, but I hope by being here that that will come to an
18 end. And that maybe with my stories, and other stories
19 that are to come here, that we will start to get some pride
20 back into our nation. And maybe some reconciliation, and
21 some accountability.

22 And from here we can start growing forward
23 instead of backwards. Every time we take one step forward,
24 we seem to take two steps back. And I'm hoping between
25 this and the Truth and Reconciliation, that'll happen; and

**5 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 I remain hopeful. It's the first time I've been optimistic
2 in a long time. So, that's it.

3 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** You -- you
4 mentioned also accountability, and you talked about police
5 coming and taking information, and treating it like it's
6 just another Saturday night.

7 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** M'hm.

8 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Do you want to
9 talk about your experience with the police during the --
10 the time that your sister disappeared, and when she was
11 found? Is that something that you want to talk about?

12 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Unfortunately, I don't
13 have that much experience, because I was out of country at
14 the time when she went and disappeared. I had a very close
15 relationship with my sister, and I had seen her about two
16 weeks before she went missing.

17 I lived in Vancouver, she was living in
18 Edmonton. And we had a very close relationship, and we had
19 the most beautiful meeting. And we managed to talk about
20 things that normally we never get to talk about. And for
21 some reason it was the most beautiful goodbye that I've
22 ever had with another human being.

23 And I went back to Vancouver, and two weeks
24 later she went missing. And I knew in my heart that she
25 would not have left me without saying goodbye. Everybody

**6 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 else in my family remained hopeful that -- that she'd just
2 went off and went on a walk about, but I knew that that was
3 not true.

4 So I didn't actually have that much
5 experience in regards to -- because it took nine months.
6 And at that point, I was out of the country. But my
7 stories are literally just from listening to my mother.
8 Her tearful experiences with dealing with the police
9 officers.

10 And then again when they found her body, it
11 wasn't like -- they didn't even want to think of it as a
12 murder. And that hurt immensely because there's no way
13 that my sister would have walked to the outside of the city
14 and thrown herself into a slough. And that's how they
15 found her.

16 And even to this day, they still don't want
17 to admit that that was wrongdoing. And it just seems
18 impossible that that could be the case.

19 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** At the time of
20 her disappearance, where did she live?

21 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** She had just moved to
22 Edmonton. She used to live with us. I used to live with
23 her and her husband in Vancouver. After a long
24 relationship, they broke up. No, they -- I'm sorry. They
25 moved to Kelowna to try to reconcile their relationship,

7 **Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver**
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver

1 but it couldn't happen. So she moved to Edmonton with the
2 idea of a new start.

3 He moved back down to Boulder, Colorado, and
4 I remained in Vancouver.

5 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Hmmm.

6 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** And, but she had just
7 moved here.

8 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** And whereabouts
9 in the city was she living?

10 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** She was living around a
11 102nd Street. I'm sorry, I -- I -- I can't really
12 remember. It was close to the Senate city, but not in a
13 downtown core.

14 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Hmmm. And what
15 was she up to around that time?

16 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** She was a key punch
17 operator. But in the 80's times were tough. And they more
18 or less just kept giving her part time jobs, so it wasn't
19 that she didn't want to work; she was working usually six
20 months, dance everywhere, but continually working.

21 But I think at that -- at that precise time
22 that she was probably unemployed, but only temporary.

23 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** M'hm. And you
24 mentioned that she was -- she disappeared, and she was
25 found outside of town.

8 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver

1 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** That's right. Near
2 Sherwood Park.

3 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** And how far is
4 Sherwood Park from downtown about?

5 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** That's a good question.
6 I don't really live in Edmonton anymore, 15, 12. Yeah.
7 And my sister didn't drive at the time, so there's no way
8 in the world that she would have got to such a remote area
9 on her own.

10 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Right. Oh.
11 Yesterday you spoke quite you know, with -- with such
12 fun -- fun memories of -- of your loving relationship with
13 Linda.

14 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Yes.

15 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Did you want to
16 talk about that?

17 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** My sister -- my sister
18 was six years older than I am. Very protective. So
19 loving. It is a big sister that everybody would love to
20 have. But she moved to Vancouver, I was living in
21 Edmonton. And she welcomed me into her life, into her
22 relationship with her husband. They took me into their
23 home and made me feel so comfortable and a part of their
24 life.

25 She was always the kind of woman that would

**9 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 bring home the dog with one leg, two legs. Any sort of
2 person that didn't fit in well or felt uncomfortable she
3 always brought into the fold. She loved the Moody Blues,
4 she just felt a kinship with them.

5 Even today, I can almost feel her presence
6 here. It's -- she is so warm, she was so loving, and yet,
7 kind of tragic at the same time. You know, she always
8 struggled with being accepted herself. She liked very
9 traditionally Native, and in Edmonton in a few cities
10 through Canada it's not always an easy role.

11 Yeah, but we all loved her so much in our
12 family. It took -- she was the special one in the family,
13 and when she disappeared it -- it ripped a hole in each and
14 every one of us in her hearts. And I'm just hoping that
15 she's here today. I bet she's happy that somebody is
16 standing up for her for a change.

17 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Hmmmm.

18 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** I'd just like to thank
19 her for being (indiscernible). You'd love her.

20 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** I'll just pass
21 the mic to you. So, Gayle, what's your relationship to
22 Linda?

23 **MS. GAYLE GRAHAM:** I was married to Linda's
24 brother, so sister-in-law to Elaine and to Linda. I was
25 living in Edmonton when Linda disappeared. And when Jesse

**10 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 (ph) their -- their mother called me to let me know that
2 Linda had disappeared, the -- the stories that -- that she
3 told me with -- actually the -- the family kind of used to
4 laugh about Linda, because Linda, every -- everything in
5 Linda's place was spotless all the time. And I'm not like
6 that.

7 I -- so when Jesse went over to check
8 Linda's place, there was a teapot, and two cups on the
9 table, but one of the cups had fallen on the floor, and
10 Linda was gone. And knowing Linda, she never would have
11 left a cup on the floor.

12 Besides that, because like Elaine said,
13 times were really difficult in the early 80's, and so Linda
14 was working temporary jobs and at the time she disappeared,
15 she was on unemployment insurance. And her UI cheque was
16 sitting on -- on the night table beside the bed. And she
17 never would have left you know, without having any money.

18 So the cheque -- the cheque was there, the
19 coffee cup was on the floor, Jesse went to the police, and
20 the police said she's 33. She's an adult. There's nothing
21 we can do. And then the land lady told Jesse that she had
22 to clean the place out by the end of the month so that the
23 land lady could re-rent the basement suite.

24 And the basement suite was on about 89th
25 Street and a 114th Avenue, which like Elaine says it's --

**11 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 it's fairly close to downtown, but it's not right in the
2 downtown core. Sherwood Park where -- where the remains
3 were found is like -- like I said, 11 or 12 miles out.

4 But just nobody believed that Linda would
5 have walked out to the middle of nowhere, to a field. The
6 -- the police didn't follow up. Even when Linda didn't
7 show up, Jesse called me at Christmas time and said that
8 she was pretty sure that Linda was dead, because there was
9 no way that Linda would have not called her on Christmas.

10 But they didn't find her body until the
11 following May. She had disappeared in September. And
12 that's -- you know, after the remains were found the -- the
13 investigation changed to the RCMP, because it was outside
14 the city. I don't know if the RCMP ever talked to the city
15 police, or any follow up was done.

16 They interviewed everybody that had known
17 Linda, but nobody knew anything about why she had
18 disappeared or -- or what had happened. They couldn't find
19 a -- a cause of death from the remains, because they had
20 deteriorated.

21 But I remember the -- the funeral. And that
22 Jesse couldn't stand up. They -- her -- her sons were --
23 were carrying her to follow the coffin. She -- I don't
24 know what else to say. I mean Linda -- thank you. Linda
25 was a bridesmaid at my wedding to her brother.

**12 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 I was telling a story before about Linda was
2 a bridesmaid, and my sister was a bridesmaid. And both of
3 them were really shy. And -- and but my sister was a
4 school teacher, and I think Linda expected her to be more
5 outgoing than she was.

6 And my -- my sister kind of sat in the
7 corner at the wedding, because she was afraid to talk to
8 anybody, and Linda -- Linda who was really shy too, pushed
9 herself and went around and greeted all the guests at the
10 wedding. And even though it wasn't at all comfortable for
11 her, she thought -- she told me she thought that's what a
12 bridesmaid was supposed to do; make everybody feel welcome.
13 And I was just so grateful.

14 She was the -- she was the only one of
15 Jesse's kids that went to University. And Jesse was so
16 proud of her, just so proud. And she was really into
17 science, and she was just an amazing person. And I don't
18 know what else to say.

19 She -- she's -- she's missed. She's still
20 missed. And when I first heard about this Inquiry, the
21 first person I thought of was Linda. Like, why -- how can
22 she just be forgotten? 'Cause the people that -- that know
23 her never forgot her. But she didn't have a big circle of
24 friends or family. And I just didn't want her to be left
25 out.

13 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver

1 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: I'm good.

2 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Okay.

3 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: I was just saying that
4 I feel good being here. It actually feels good to talk
5 about her. It's been years. I mean, it happened back in
6 the 80's. A lot of time has lapsed. I feel her presence
7 like I said it before. I feel a certain kind of strength
8 that comes with talking about her.

9 And I'd like to thank everybody here for the
10 opportunity that presents itself here today. And I hope
11 everybody else who presents themselves here today feels the
12 same thing as I do right now. I feel a sense of calmness
13 that I wasn't expecting to happen so quickly. So thank
14 you. Oh.

15 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Yesterday our
16 conversation kind of -- of course we spoke about Linda, but
17 we also spoke about your own experience growing up.

18 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: M'hm.

19 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Did you want to
20 talk about that today too?

21 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: I hadn't expected to
22 speak about myself, but I guess it is part of the picture
23 about being First Nations in this country.

24 My experience was that my mother moved me
25 out of the reservation. We're Cree. We are from the

**14 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 Mistawasis Tribe, just -- you too? My father -- my father
2 Henry Dreaver (ph) and my mother Jesse Margaret (ph) came
3 from John Smith Reserve, but we were all registered in
4 Mistawasis. But my mother felt that the life on the
5 reservation was hard, so she moved me out of the
6 reservation two weeks before I was born.

7 She wanted me to be raised differently than
8 the rest of the family. I -- but when I was younger I
9 looked very Native. I don't know why, as I get older I
10 seem to mellowed out of it in my features, so I've been
11 told. But in my experience in school was as soon as I
12 started to attend school, they labeled me dyslexic without
13 ever teaching me or testing me.

14 So put me into a seven-year program, which
15 meant that on the sixth year or seventh year of my
16 schooling -- I got held back one year, and my whole
17 experience during elementary to -- to grades, grade 9, I
18 sat at a table in the back of the classroom by myself. I
19 was totally isolated.

20 And in the first six years, it wasn't so bad
21 because you got used to being in the same classroom with
22 everybody else even though I -- I was in the back. But
23 come the seventh year, I get held back and now I'm with a
24 bunch of strangers again.

25 And only until I hit grade 10 did I have the

**15 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 opportunity to actually mingle and go to classrooms that
2 were separate. I went to Victoria Composite High School.
3 It was an adult training school at that point. And for the
4 first time in my life I had the opportunity to sit where I
5 wanted to sit in a classroom. And I had the opportunity to
6 talk and meet other people.

7 And I hated school. I absolutely hated
8 school. And came grade 10 I found out that there was
9 teachers out there that knew how to talk to me, or wanted
10 to talk to me, and the last three years were brilliant. I
11 found out that I wasn't dyslexic. I actually did know all
12 the stuff that I was learning. I had no idea. And for the
13 first time in my life I started going to school willingly.

14 But my experience for the first nine years
15 was hellish. It was really hellish. And I -- I'm -- I
16 considered my [sic] still fortunate, because I wasn't in a
17 residential school. And the stories from my family, I'm
18 still very grateful. So to a certain degree I don't really
19 want to say that my life was rough, because it wasn't
20 rough.

21 The only thing that I regret so much is that
22 because my mother's life was so difficult is that she
23 really wanted to raise me being non-Aboriginal. And I've
24 lost so much because of that. And as I grow old, I start
25 realizing how important it is to be proud to be First

**16 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 Nations.

2 And as I was saying a little bit earlier is
3 that deep down I always knew I was First Nations, and I was
4 always proud to be First Nations, but when I looked around
5 the room yesterday, and this morning I felt like -- I feel
6 so un, not First Nations. So -- and it was -- it was
7 terrifying for me.

8 But as I said a little bit earlier, I'm
9 starting to feel like I am -- I am First Nations, and I am
10 proud to be First Nations. And I want everybody to be
11 feeling like this. I hated the fact that we always felt
12 like second class citizens in our own country.

13 And again, thank you for allowing me to be
14 proud. And I wish my mother was here to feel it too, you
15 know? Because she tried so hard to make me not be First
16 Nations, and it would be great for her to see that we're
17 actually taking some of our identity back. You know, my
18 mom, I'm sure she'd be here and strong and happy for all of
19 us.

20 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Do you want to
21 tell us more about your mother?

22 **MS. GAYLE GRAHAM:** My mama -- my mama, she
23 was the best thing that ever happened to everybody she met.
24 She -- like I said, she had a hard life. The first man
25 that she married, wanted to -- the first man that fell in

**17 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 love with was non-Native, and it was the most horrific
2 thing that ever happened to her because the other family
3 did not want to have a First Nations as a -- marrying their
4 son. And at that point, it hit a low for her and she
5 decided that she was no longer proud to be First Nations.

6 So she packed up all the kids and well, this
7 is years later; she packed up all the kids and moved to
8 Edmonton with hope that she could change and become, how
9 was the word, assimilated into white man's society, with
10 the great hope that we would have a better chance than what
11 we would have had on the reserve.

12 And for that I actually thank her, because
13 it did allow me chances and opportunities that I probably
14 would not have had on the reservation. With the
15 consequences of course I've lost my -- my ability to be
16 First Nations.

17 But on the other hand she -- she was the
18 strength in our whole family. We all lived in different
19 places throughout Canada, and every year she'd go on a walk
20 about and visit everybody. And we all got used to seeing
21 her. Everybody back in the res, her sisters, didn't matter
22 where we lived. She'd just hop on the Greyhound bus or she
23 would hitchhike.

24 Because we never had the money hitchhiking
25 was the way to do it back then. Back then when it was a

**18 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 little more safer to do that than it is nowadays.
2 Especially in BC where I come from. She always had a smile
3 on her face. She was always happy. She never wanted
4 anything, she just wanted it all for her kids, which is
5 part of being a mother I'm sure.

6 But she always had a smile on her face, and
7 she was always willing to feed people who came in the door.
8 But the, the disappearance of my sister took that all out
9 of her. And she had lost three of her other children
10 before that too.

11 So the last part of her life, she was tired.
12 And all she wanted was the Lord to come and take her. And
13 eventually he did. But I still choose to remember her with
14 a big smile on her face. She always had the face that
15 didn't have the frown. The frown lines were never there.
16 Frown lines didn't exist on this woman's face.

17 And I still love her. She's been gone 25
18 years now, but that's all I can say about her right now.

19 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Yesterday you
20 spoke about Jesse, about a visit that your parents had.
21 Did you want to talk about that? I -- I found it a very
22 powerful story.

23 **MS. GAYLE GRAHAM:** Okay. Well, this -- this
24 story was when -- when I first met Ray (ph), Elaine's
25 brother and Linda's brother. And we -- we started dating.

**19 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 And we were talking about getting married, and I wanted my
2 parents to come and meet Jesse. And it was just easier for
3 them to come to her place, because she didn't drive, and
4 they lived in Sherwood Park.

5 And so they came -- they came to the door.
6 I was already there. And Jesse invited them in. And we
7 sat around, and we had tea or coffee. Usually tea I'm
8 thinking, because Jesse always drank tea. And then -- so
9 my parents stayed, and we talked for a while. And we
10 talked about a wedding and -- and everything. And then
11 they left. And Jesse came to me and she said, "Your
12 parents are absolutely wonderful people because they didn't
13 look around my place. They -- they walked in, they sat
14 down, and they acted like it was just normal."

15 And you know like I was saying to Joe (ph)
16 yesterday, Jesse thought that because -- I don't know
17 whether it was because they were white, that -- or that she
18 was uncomfortable about her house. Or whether she was
19 uncomfortable because she was Native. I -- and I -- you
20 know, she -- she was saying that they -- they were really
21 kind.

22 That -- I don't -- I kind of got the
23 impression that maybe she expected that they would just
24 look and say, "No, we're not coming in." I -- I don't
25 know. I mean, my parents weren't like that, but she was --

**20 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 I -- I was happy that they came over, because Jesse's place
2 was beautiful.

3 Like, it was so welcoming, so comfortable.
4 And I was you know, telling Joe about my parents' place. I
5 mean, they were like, at various times, you know, my
6 parents had six children. The house was too small, the
7 kitchen was big enough for maybe three, two, three people.
8 So if everybody sat down for supper, the table went out
9 into the living room, because that was the only way
10 everybody could sit around the table.

11 My mother was not much of a house keeper, so
12 usually it looked like a truck drove through it. And I
13 thought Jesse's place was just wonderful. And her -- she,
14 like I say, she was just welcoming and smiling and -- and
15 she was you know, all the time I was married to Ray, I mean
16 she was like my best friend.

17 If -- even when she lived in Vancouver, when
18 my youngest daughter was three, I think three, I had to
19 have surgery. I had to have a hysterectomy, and Jesse flew
20 out from Vancouver and stayed at my place for six weeks.
21 And my house had never been so clean.

22 But she made the kids happy. She did things
23 with the kids. She just loved them to pieces. And she
24 wouldn't let me lift anything. You know, she was like
25 my -- when I got home from the hospital, my little daughter

**21 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 came running up and tried to jump on me, and she was going,
2 "(indiscernible) don't do that." She says, "Your mom can't
3 lift anything."

4 And then she would tell me, "Just sit down."
5 But she was -- she was that kind of person. And Linda was
6 very much like her, you know? Elaine looks like her, like
7 Jesse; when I look at Elaine. Her face is just like
8 Jesse's.

9 And I -- I am so happy to have been married
10 into the Dreaver family and so accepted by them since 1970.
11 It's been amazing. Hell of a ride, but --

12 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** I think -- I
13 think we had some photos set up. So there are some, pardon
14 me, some pictures that we have. Did you want to talk about
15 these photographs then? Either of you?

16 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Yes.

17 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Go ahead.
18 Sure.

19 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** The one thing I forgot
20 to say about my mother was that when my mother took us off
21 the reservation, she did it by herself. She took her and
22 her seven children and raised them by being a cleaning
23 lady. All of the kids, by herself. So we usually lived in
24 poorer neighbourhoods, but when we got older, we all
25 decided that we would go to Hawaii together.

**23 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 think I ever, ever saw her do it again.

2 She was never happy to be any focal point in
3 a room, but that day she was. She was absolutely amazing,
4 and my mother, I've never seen her happier. It was a very
5 happy time. And unfortunately, I don't have an awful lot
6 of pictures of my sister because like I said before, she
7 was not comfortable with her beauty. And there she's so
8 beautiful.

9 And this was our trip. Also in Hawaii, she
10 had a parrot on her shoulder. Took the picture, she
11 smiled, and then the bird pooped all over her.

12 (LAUGHTER)

13 **MS. ELAINE DREAVAR:** That's my memory of
14 that day. But it was very fun. It was in Hawaii, again,
15 like I say. Very happy times, and, like I say, you can
16 look at her. She's -- this was her natural, her look. Her
17 look was just soft and -- and loving. She was a gentle
18 person, a gentle soul. I miss her so much. And that's how
19 I choose to remember her. She deserved better than what
20 she got. She deserved so much more.

21 On the upside, my mother and my sister and
22 buried together in the same plot here in Edmonton. My
23 sister went first obviously. My mother went just back in
24 1992. But that's the one thing she insisted on, was to be
25 buried with my sister.

**24 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 And actually, the most poignant thing I can
2 see when I put on the little stone on her grave was if it
3 has no sorrow that heaven can not cure. And I am very
4 grateful the two of them are together now.

5 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** I don't know what to
6 say.

7 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** You and me both. Like
8 I say, I'm very happy to be here, and to talk about her.
9 And I'd like to thank everybody. Like I say, so much time
10 has elapsed. And many years has gone by without me trying
11 to think about it. And I just hope that other people get
12 to talk about people that have come and gone in their
13 lives. And to rekindle the memories that made them so
14 special.

15 Because time has such terrible habit of
16 removing or easing that pain. And to deny the pain is
17 tragic. I think you really have to talk about it, and I've
18 never been that kind of a person. And I can see now after
19 all the years of people telling me that I should talk about
20 it, that they are probably right. So yeah. Thank you and
21 thank you mother for having my sister. And thank you for
22 allowing me to be here. And thank you, Mr. Commissioner,
23 for listening to me.

24 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Would you like
25 to say any words about...

25 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible)

2 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Okay.

3 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: Ditto.

4 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Well,
5 Commissioner, I -- I -- I leave it in your hands at this
6 point. I -- thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: So I don't
8 have any additional question. I just want to tank you both
9 very much for coming here today and telling us about Linda,
10 and sharing with everybody, you know, what happened. And
11 the bit about your family.

12 And I want to thank you for -- for showing
13 your strength as well in coming to talk about -- about
14 Linda and your family, so thank you very much.

15 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: Thank you.

16 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Remember I said
17 we have surprises?

18 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: M'hm.

19 MS. GAYLE GRAHAM: This isn't a trial run?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So we're going to ask
21 the Commissioner if he'll offer you this tobacco here. And
22 this is for you to -- to pray with after here. And to
23 thank you for sharing your words and your truths. We also
24 have another small gift for you. And I know that before we
25 started, we gave you each an eagle feather to -- to hold on

**26 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver**

1 to that bird that flies the closest, to the one that makes
2 us, and we'd like to give you your own eagle feather.

3 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Oh, thank you.

4 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** And some seeds which
5 are wild sage, one of our medicine's, so that you can plant
6 these in memory of your families, and that you can have
7 this feather to help you with the rest of your journey. To
8 help you with your healing.

9 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Thank you. Thank you.

10 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** This will comfort
11 you. These came from the grandmother's in British
12 Columbia, who on their journeys and their walks, they
13 collected these eagle feathers for the people who would be
14 telling their stories so that it can help give you
15 strength. Because you've shown that you have strength, but
16 this will continue to help you.

17 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** M'hm.

18 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** And to help you with
19 your healing, because our loved ones are always going to be
20 here for us. And they want you to know with these feathers
21 that whenever you need them, you just bring out your
22 feather and talk to them and they'll come and be with you
23 to help you with your journey. So hai'hai (ph).

24 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Okay. And so
25 if there's nothing further, we can adjourn.

27 Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver
In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver

1 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Yeah. And --

2 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: Thank you.

3 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Yeah.

4 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: Thank you very much.

5 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Okay.

6 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: Thank you for the

7 opportunity.

8 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you.

9 --- Exhibits (code: P1P05P0104)

10 **Exhibit 1:** Digital folder of three images displayed on
11 monitors during public hearing.
12

**Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene**

1 **Exhibit 2:** News article "Body in slough still a
2 mystery: Woman disappeared in 1983" by Ian
3 Williams; no publication data, one-page
4 copy.

5 --- Upon adjourning at 11:07 a.m.

6 **Hearing # 2**

7 **Witness: Melanie Dene**

8 **In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene**

9 **Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller**

10 **Commission Counsel: Breen Ouellette**

11 **Elders, Grandmothers, Knowledge-Keepers: Rick Lightening,**

12 **Laureen "Blu" Waters**

13 --- Upon resuming at 1:45 p.m.

14 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Thank you, Chief
15 Commissioner. For the record, my name is Breen OUELLETTE,
16 and I am a lawyer with the National Inquiry. It is my
17 honour to introduce Melanie Dene, who resides in Edmonton.

18 Melanie has brought someone in support who
19 will I -- who I will ask Melanie to introduce.

20 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** So Honey, I have brought
21 with me a dear friend of mine. I consider her to be a
22 sister. Her name is Honey Desjarlais (ph). She's from the
23 Fort McMurray, First Nation, and I am from the Mikisew Cree
24 First Nation and the Treaty 8 Territory.

25 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Thank you. Ms.

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 Registrar, Melanie has requested to affirm using an eagle
2 feather.

3 **MELANIE DENE, Affirmed:**

4 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Melanie --

5 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Go ahead

6 (indiscernible).

7 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** -- would you please
8 tell us the full name of the person you are here to speak
9 about today?

10 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I am here representing my
11 cousin, Shelly Tannis Dene.

12 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** And are you here today
13 because Shelly is missing, or she's been murdered?

14 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** She's been missing since
15 August 2013.

16 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you know how old
17 she was when she went missing?

18 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** She would have been 20 --
19 26. She would have been turning 26 that year.

20 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Did Shelly have a
21 difficult life growing up?

22 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Yeah. We -- we're
23 originally from Fort McMurray, my family. Well, most of us
24 grew up in Fort McMurray. My family comes from Fort
25 Chipewyan area. So Shelly's father was my uncle, and we

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 all grew up in a place called Water Ways (ph) and Shelly,
2 Candace (ph) and her brother lived there with her mom and
3 her dad. And when, growing up for Shelly was a good
4 upbringing because her dad at that time and my auntie were
5 cultural, and they followed traditional values and ways.

6 And then the family had split up, and then
7 after that, that's when the -- the kids had moved with
8 their mom to B.C. and from there a lot of dysfunction I
9 guess you could say happened within the family. So, mainly
10 to do with addictions, alcohol to be more specific, and
11 then eventually drugs.

12 We moved away, me and my mom had moved away
13 from Fort McMurray when I was about nine. So that was
14 like, the last time that I had seen Shelly as a kid. And
15 it wasn't until her father had passed away in 2012 is when
16 I had seen Shelly again. And at that time she -- she was
17 grown up, and she was a mother of her own.

18 And we connected like, through Facebook, and
19 that's how you know, like, most of us stay connected;
20 through social media. And so that was my relationship with
21 my cousins that I hadn't seen since we were all children.

22 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** And so I understand
23 that Shelly had a son?

24 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Yeah. She had -- she --
25 his name is Ivan (ph). He just turned ten in August. He

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 is in a foster home. He's been adopted in B.C. Through
2 this whole process, as our family, we try to -- to adopt
3 him. And because that was the only thing that we had of
4 her left. But between the provincial -- I don't know how
5 it works in the Provinces between B.C. and Alberta;
6 numerous of us that tried to gain custody of Ivan were
7 unable to. And so the family that he was placed with won
8 custody and so now he's in this home. And we -- we don't
9 see him. Go ahead, Breen.

10 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Were you given reasons
11 for why your family's applications were not accepted?

12 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I don't know what the
13 reasons are, you know? When you -- when you can be able to
14 provide a home for a child, especially when it's a -- a
15 member of your family, you would think that the courts
16 would be more open to placing that child into their family
17 circle, as opposed to outside of that.

18 I'm not sure why Ivan was not placed with
19 you know, Shelly's auntie who had applied, myself who had
20 applied, Candace, which is Shelly's sister. I don't know
21 what it is that you need to do or to be recommended, or to
22 be looked at as a safe home.

23 Like, I am -- I'm a mother. I have two
24 daughters myself, and I have another one on the way. You
25 know I -- I don't have much, but I have a home, and I have

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 a lot of love. And I thought that that was enough to be
2 able to take on Ivan, you know?

3 I wanted him to -- I know for myself that I
4 wanted him to be still within our family, and to grow up --
5 to grow up knowing who we were. And to not ever forget who
6 his mom was. And I'm not sure if the home that he's in
7 does that. I don't know if they talk to him about who his
8 mother was. Thank you. Go ahead.

9 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Okay. Do you believe
10 that Child and Family Services is taking care of the best
11 interests of Indigenous children and families in British
12 Columbia and Alberta?

13 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Is that a trick question?
14 No, I don't. I don't believe that the child welfare system
15 is looking out for the best interests of the Indigenous
16 children that are being apprehended daily from their homes,
17 from their communities.

18 I feel that that system has replaced
19 residential school system. To remove a child, not just
20 from the home, but from the community is devastating. It's
21 -- it's impact, and it just speaks to the volume of
22 colonialism that we are still faced with as Indigenous
23 people.

24 And you know, because of the conditions that
25 we might not live up to, you know, we may be looked at as

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 in poverty, but just because you live in a run down house
2 or you know, you're not able to -- I don't know what it is
3 that they look at, but as long as you're able to provide a
4 loving, caring home, and you are able to give that child
5 everything that they need, with a roof over their head,
6 food in their belly, to keep them safe from addictions and
7 stuff like that, then you know, does that make you any less
8 of a parent?

9 I think, I think children need to be, to be
10 in their homes, and they need to be within their family,
11 within their family circle. And especially within their
12 community.

13 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** You mentioned poverty
14 as a potential factor for denying families the right to
15 care for their -- their children. All things being equal
16 between the extended family of a child, or a stranger in
17 foster care, except for perhaps the poverty issue; do you
18 believe it makes sense to pay that stranger thousands of
19 dollars rather than to support the family to allow them to
20 continue to raise that child?

21 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Do I think that makes
22 sense? No. It doesn't make sense. I would be considered
23 poverty. I am a University student. I -- I go to school
24 full time. I'm living off of student loan, and the child
25 tax benefit that the govern [sic] gives to me. I would be

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 considered poverty, and I have two children, and another
2 one on the way. Does that make me less of a person to
3 raise my own children that way?

4 No, because I'm still doing everything I
5 possibly can every damn day to ensure that my kids needs
6 are being met. I ensure that the -- the rent is paid. I
7 struggle to pay utilities, but I do it. You know, I -- I
8 reach out to -- to my friends and to support to help me to
9 -- whenever I need that help.

10 I don't -- I don't rely on -- I don't rely
11 the -- my Band or you know? Like, I always try to find a
12 way to make ends meet, and I've been doing it. And I'm, I
13 feel that a lot of families, a lot of mothers and a lot of
14 fathers, they do that. They -- they struggle. Yeah, sure
15 we struggle, but as long as those needs are being met then
16 that doesn't make you any less of a parent, and it doesn't
17 make you any less worthy to raise your own children.

18 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Can you tell us what
19 Shelly's life was like leading up to her disappearance?

20 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** So like I said, Shelly
21 and her siblings and her mom had moved to -- to B.C. where
22 she grew up most of her teenage life. Shelly had -- she
23 had dropped out of high school, and then when she became
24 pregnant with her son, that gave her the drive to go back
25 to school and to finish, which she did. As you can see,

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 she graduated.

2 She -- she had her own place, she had her
3 own vehicle. You know, she did everything and it's like I
4 said, as a mother you do everything for your children. And
5 that's what Shelly was doing. She -- she put aside you
6 know, her -- her addictions. Like, she was drinking and
7 doing drugs beforehand, but when she had Ivan she -- that
8 was her focus, was her son.

9 And so she had graduated, and then when
10 Shelly's father had passed away, that was the first time I
11 -- I remember meeting little Ivan. And he was -- he was
12 super cute. He was so cute. And she said that she wanted
13 to further, like, further on into school. Looking for work
14 and stuff like that. She was just trying to you know, plan
15 her life on what she wanted to do to ensure that she could
16 make a life for him.

17 And then the last I heard of like, Shelly
18 was that she had -- she had relapsed, and that was the
19 first time that Ivan was taken away. And so if anything
20 that -- that kind of woke her up. And so she, you know,
21 she cleaned herself up again and she -- she worked hard,
22 and she always made sure that she made her appointments to
23 -- to visit with him.

24 She was doing what she could do in order to
25 get her son back. And she stayed sober for -- for three

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 years. And, but I don't know; child welfare system I
2 guess, you know, they -- they get to determine when you're
3 okay, and when they feel that your child should be returned
4 to you. And for Shelly, that was really hard for her.

5 And so during that time she decided to get
6 away from B.C. because that's where a lot of the temptation
7 I guess, was, the influence. So she had moved here to
8 Edmonton. And she came to live here with our -- our
9 grandmother. And she moved here in May of that year.

10 And she wanted to clean up her life. And
11 she wants to figure out what she had to do in order to get
12 her son back. And she figured that being around family
13 would help her. And that year, that summer, I had come
14 down in July from -- at that time I was living in Fort
15 McMurray. And I had come to Edmonton, and I stopped at my
16 grandmother's place. And I didn't even know Shelly was
17 here.

18 And I was sitting there visiting with my
19 grandma, and all of a sudden Shelly came out and I was
20 like, "What the heck?" You know, like, "What are you doing
21 here?" And I just couldn't believe like, how tall she was
22 'cause like, the last time I had seen her was in 2001. And
23 yeah, she -- she was really tall. She was beautiful. And
24 I gave her a big hug, and you know, and asked her what she
25 was doing here. She said, "I'm -- I'm living here now. I'm

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 just trying to get my life together."

2 And so we kind of chit chatted, but I could
3 tell that Shelly was very, kind of distracted. She was on
4 her phone. And that was the last time that I had seen her
5 myself. And it was in August the next month that my mom
6 had called me, and she told me that Shelly was missing.
7 And I was like, "What do you mean she's missing?" And she
8 said, "I don't know." She's like, "We haven't seen her.
9 We haven't heard from her. She's gone."

10 And so I asked like, "Did you go to the
11 police? Did anybody go to the police?" And at that time,
12 Candace, her sister was the one that went to go file the --
13 the complaint with the Edmonton Police, but they didn't
14 file it. They basically said that she's probably just out
15 doing what any young girl's doing. Or that maybe because
16 Shelly was at that time talking about going to the Yukon,
17 and so they assumed that maybe she had just took off to the
18 Yukon.

19 So they didn't you know, they didn't take it
20 seriously. And Candace knew something was wrong because
21 she talked to her sister like, almost every day. And when
22 she doesn't talk to her, that's what worried her.

23 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** So when you say that
24 they wouldn't file a report, are you referring to the
25 Edmonton Police Service?

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Edmonton Police Services,
2 yes. They didn't file the report. It wasn't until
3 November of 2013 that they finally filed her as a missing
4 person.

5 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Why do you think it
6 took them so long to file that report?

7 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** 'Cause she's Indigenous.
8 Because they labeled her as high risk. I don't know. Why
9 wouldn't the police file her? Why do they not file them
10 right away? Why do they wait, take their time? Like,
11 three months is too long.

12 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you know if
13 Candace, tried reporting Shelly missing to Edmonton Police?

14 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Yeah. Candace was --
15 Candace should have been a cop. She was on them all the
16 time. She -- she wanted to know where her sister was
17 because she knew that something wasn't right. Like I said
18 that Candace talked to her sister every day, and when
19 she -- she would try to text her. She would call.

20 She even went as far to see if like, Shelly
21 was using her bank card, or if her status card had been
22 used or you know, she was doing everything to figure out
23 like, what happened to her sister, even Facebook. Like,
24 she reached out to Shelly's friends to see if Shelly maybe
25 went back to B.C.

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 Like, she was just trying to figure out
2 where it did -- what -- like, what happened to her sister.
3 And Candace said that the last time that she -- she texted
4 Shelly, and she asked her if everything was okay. And the
5 -- the response back was, "No." And then when she tried to
6 call, the phone was disconnected, so (indiscernible)
7 Candace. That's when she knew like, something -- something
8 was seriously wrong. That (indiscernible) help.

9 But it's like I said that the police, they,
10 in my -- in my own opinion, they -- they waited too long.
11 Like, three months is -- that's a long time to -- that they
12 could have been out looking. You know, posters could have
13 been up. They could have put it out on, out on the news.
14 They could have put it on social media. You know, try to
15 help the family, take the family serious. And when they
16 report somebody that they love is gone missing --

17 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you know if Candace
18 tried contacting the RCMP in British Columbia?

19 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Yeah. She contacted the
20 police in B.C. She talked to the police in the Yukon. She
21 -- I even believe she was sending the missing person
22 posters up (indiscernible) different detachments. Like, she
23 was -- like I said, she was (indiscernible) the police --
24 (indiscernible) she couldn't have been. It should have
25 been the police doing their job, basically.

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you know if she got
2 any better response from the RCMP in B.C. than Yukon?

3 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** From what I can remember,
4 Candace said that they had questioned, but you can't quote
5 me on that, but that would be, have to come from Candace.

6 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** So what has the family
7 done on its own to try to raise awareness?

8 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** We've had walks. We put
9 out posters. We've created Facebook pages. We spoke to
10 media multiple times. I even put up a ceremony last fall
11 for her. And not just for her, but for all murdered and
12 missing women. I've been praying. I don't know, like,
13 what does the family do?

14 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Can you tell us why
15 Candace is unable to be here today?

16 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Like Shelly, Candace too
17 was heavily into addictions. And then when her sister went
18 missing she sobered up, and she sobered up fast. She
19 was -- she was the strength behind all of this. This was
20 her big sister.

21 And if she didn't do it, Shelly probably
22 would have been forgotten. So Candace got sober, and this
23 was -- this was her -- this was her mission being a mom
24 herself, and she was trying to go to school also. She
25 lived in Fort McKay at the time. And she -- she just, I

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 don't know, she just got engaged. Like, her sister --
2 finding her sister was like, her work, her every day work.

3 She got in contact with some of the
4 grassroots movements. You know, like, Stolen Sisters,
5 Murdered Missing Indigenous Women, she just reached out,
6 and on June 21st, the following year after Shelly had been
7 reported missing, she held a walk here in Edmonton for
8 Shelly.

9 And then from there, you know, she held a
10 walk in Peace River. She -- she did everything. She
11 talked to CBC. She talked to all the media. Probably half
12 the reporters that might be in here, Candace probably
13 talked to them. She did everything that she possibly
14 could, and we had a fire back in Fort McMurray a little
15 over a year ago. And from there, you know, a lot of us
16 moved.

17 Candace moved back to B.C. She was
18 expecting to go back to Fort McKay, because she -- she was
19 going to school. And I think it just -- this place a toll
20 on you, you know? And it's not something very easy to
21 carry. Every day you wake up, you know, your loved one is
22 the first thing you think about.

23 So Candace currently is in recovery, because
24 she had fallen off. She's -- but she's working on herself,
25 and you know, I -- I don't look down on her. I don't judge

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 her, because what she did for a young person herself, like,
2 she's in her early 20's, and to do what she was doing on
3 behalf of her sister, that to me shows me love, you know?

4 And I talk with her every now and then, and
5 like, today I -- I talked to her this morning, and I told
6 her I was coming here. And all she could say was, "Thank
7 you and I love you." She said, I'm -- because she's not in
8 a place right now where she can do this. Can't carry this.

9 And I think it's important that, you know,
10 and I told her that that, "It's important that I continue
11 what you were doing," and that I don't want Shelly to ever
12 be forgotten. I want her to be found. That's the only
13 thing my family has ever -- ever wanted, has ever asked
14 for, was for her to come home.

15 In some way, we just -- we want her home.
16 We want to know what happened to her. I can't fathom in my
17 mind how someone goes missing. I just, I can't fathom it.
18 It doesn't make any sense to me. How does somebody go
19 missing and like, four years, this is the fourth winter.
20 And I just -- it's not easy, it's not something that you
21 know, they say, "Oh, in time." No. It's not like that.

22 And when you -- when you read on the news or
23 you hear on the news about another farm that they have
24 found in B.C. with human remains, that makes your heart
25 stop, because you wonder if your loved one is there. And

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 in a way, you kind of pray that maybe she is, so that at
2 least you have some sort of answer.

3 Or if they find another victim, you know,
4 that's what my -- me and my family live through when
5 reports like that are -- are being broadcasted. I don't
6 think anybody should have to live like that.

7 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** What were Shelly's
8 gifts and strengths?

9 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Shelly was -- she was
10 very determined. She had her own dreams. I think her
11 strength was her son, Ivan. She was kind. She -- she was
12 beautiful. When her father was sick, she had drove all the
13 way from B.C. and she came, and she sat by his side until
14 he had passed.

15 She -- she wanted whatever any young mother
16 wanted, you know? A young woman. When you're a young
17 lady, like, in your 20's, 'cause I've been there, you know,
18 that's when you're -- you're discovering who you are as an
19 individual. And you're trying to figure out your -- your
20 own dreams and what it is that you want to do in -- in
21 life.

22 And when you have children you know, it
23 makes it that much more that you -- you want to better
24 yourself. And I believe that's what she -- she was
25 attempting to do. Like, she -- she -- that's why she had

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 moved here, to Edmonton of all places.

2 I wish she would have come and lived in Fort
3 McMurray, or Fort McKay, because she -- maybe she would
4 still be here today.

5 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** What do you hope will
6 happen as a result of your testimony today?

7 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I hope that Shelly's case
8 is re-opened. When we reported her missing, when they
9 finally filed her missing in November of 2013, it was a
10 year later, December that the police basically said that
11 they exhausted everything that they could do. I'm not sure
12 what that means, 'exhausted'. It makes me question like,
13 what they were actually doing, because if Candace was doing
14 their job, you know, what were they actually doing as law
15 enforcement?

16 But I want to see her case re-opened, and I
17 want to see it active. And I -- I would love for the
18 police to be in contact with us, her family, on a daily
19 basis, even a weekly basis to tell us what it is, you know?
20 I -- I -- I just, I don't feel like -- and I you know,
21 yeah, I know that they're overworked, and they have million
22 other cases and things to do as police officers, but
23 perhaps develop a special task force that just deals with
24 cases like this; where they can actually do their jobs
25 properly, and they can spend that time efficiently and

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 effectively on each of these cases, because I'm so tired
2 of, not just Shelly, but other cases too like, being
3 disregarded, forgotten about, or exhausted. So --

4 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** And to be clear, this
5 special task force, you -- you would want to deal
6 exclusively with Indigenous missing and murdered cases?

7 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I think that's a high
8 priority right now. Yeah. I think it needs to be like
9 that across this whole country, not just here in Edmonton.
10 But you know, they -- they say that they have projects,
11 special KARE here in Edmonton, but even what is that doing?
12 You know, still young women are going missing or being
13 murdered, so how effective is this Project KARE?

14 I would like to -- to see an independent
15 task force that works specifically just with Indigenous
16 peoples that go missing or who have been murdered.

17 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** We've talked
18 previously, and you had mentioned something about safety in
19 cities. Do you want to talk about that?

20 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** This is when we met back
21 in October or September when I came and met with you. I
22 talked about my safety. I talked about -- yeah, I think I
23 -- I -- since Shelly has been gone missing, it's been my
24 reality now as an Indigenous woman, I don't feel safe. I
25 don't go anywhere. I go to school, and I stay home, and I

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 do what I need to do during the day.

2 I have daughters you know? And I fear for
3 their safety. I don't even like them playing outside
4 because I have in my mind what if somebody comes and takes
5 them?

6 I -- I don't like that feeling. Even being
7 on campus, you know? Being a -- walking on campus, or
8 walking anywhere really, even traveling. When I travel to
9 Saskatchewan, I travel during the day and I always have to
10 ensure whoever on the other end where I am -- like, I text
11 along the way just to let them know where I am, because
12 what if something happens to me?

13 Is that normal? Is that a normal way to
14 behave? You know, I've never done that before. And I feel
15 like I shouldn't have to live my life that way, in fear.
16 And I feel like I'm not the only Indigenous woman that
17 feels that way.

18 It's not a nice feeling. I'm angry all the
19 time. I've been angry. Racism, colonial violence. Like
20 even as Indigenous women like, when you -- you read about
21 these stories, the -- the murdered victims like, the way
22 that they're murdered is, it's like out of rage? Hate? I
23 don't know.

24 Like, it's not where somebody just got shot,
25 or you know, got hit by a car, or I don't know. I'm not

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 saying there's a proper way to kill somebody, but I'm just
2 saying that when it comes to being an Indigenous person,
3 why is it more violent and disgusting, the way that they're
4 killed?

5 And -- their crimes aren't even being
6 solved. They're lucky if they can even convict somebody of
7 their crime. Look at the wave -- the victims of Robert
8 Pickton, you know? Or Cindy Gladue. You know, like, why
9 are women being murdered in that way and people just seem
10 to be okay with it. Like, why is that? Like, why are
11 Canadians okay with the way that these women are being
12 treated? If they were of another colour would it been,
13 have, be different? Would there be more outrage in the
14 public?

15 Why is it just Indigenous people that come
16 together and raise these issues and try to bring it to the
17 light, to the forefront to help the rest of Canada
18 understand what it is that we are facing? This is not just
19 -- this is not just a, you know, like a passing of time.
20 This has been going on for a very, very long time. So
21 that's how I feel.

22 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you believe then
23 that's it's important for safe spaces to be created in
24 cities across this country?

25 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Yeah. I would like to

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 see more safe spaces for Indigenous people, not just women
2 and girls, but even for our men, our boys. You know, a lot
3 of these people that come to the urban centres, they're
4 escaping from something. And they come here, and they
5 don't have places to go.

6 And -- and I'm not saying that you know,
7 they're all like that, but even for myself being here in
8 Edmonton, I would like to have a safe space if I chose to
9 go. You know, like, even a place to go for a ceremony.
10 Like, I would like to have places like that set up for here
11 in the urban centres.

12 I think that, you know, yeah, they have
13 women shelters, and you know, they're so quick to always
14 point the fingers to those types of places, but beds are
15 limited. They don't have access to Elders. Resources, you
16 know, like a lot of people don't know where to go for
17 certain things.

18 So I think if you can be able to create
19 spaces like that specifically for Indigenous people, then
20 you know, I think that would -- that would help, in a way.

21 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you believe there's
22 a power imbalance or a lack of fairness in the struggle of
23 Indigenous mothers and parents against Child and Family
24 Services?

25 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Oh, Breen. Yeah. Of

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 course there's a power imbalance. It's always been about
2 power, and who holds that power. You see it. Like, I'm
3 learning about it in University. It's in our history.
4 It's you know, Elders talk about it. We've seen it with
5 residential school. We've seen it with the Indian Act, and
6 still see it with the Indian Act.

7 We see it within the reserve systems. And
8 child welfare system like, who gave them that much power
9 just to -- to come in? Like, I -- I recall watching a
10 documentary on APTN, and it's, I think it was in Winnipeg.
11 And it was a young mom who was also a product of the child
12 welfare system. When she became a mother, her baby was
13 taken away from her. Why? Because she -- she grew up in
14 the system, so automatically that like, strikes her as like
15 she's not like, a mother? Like, she can't be a mom?

16 So yeah, it's -- to me it's just another act
17 of dispossession. You know, continue to keep us in a
18 certain situation to keep us in poverty, to keep us down.
19 To keep us still struggling, to keep us within our
20 addictions. You know, that it's always going to be that
21 way, unless like, for myself I -- I used to be an
22 alcoholic. And did that make me a bad mom? No, because I
23 still went to work and you know, I still managed to make
24 sure that my kids had the things that they -- they needed,
25 but I knew I had a problem.

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 But it took me a long time to realize that
2 and you know, I -- I found my place, and I -- I found
3 myself in ceremony. That's what I returned back to. And
4 that's what has been helping me these past three and a half
5 years. And without returning back to that, I think I -- I
6 could have been Shelly. I could have been another one of
7 the -- the victims, but yeah. I don't know.

8 This is -- this is a struggle that we -- we
9 face. And Indigenous women seem to be targeted because
10 it's not just mothers with their children being taken away
11 and apprehended at birth, it's also women that are getting
12 sterilized without their consent. There's a lot of things
13 that are happening, and you know, I wish people would
14 educate themselves, and make the connections of to what is
15 actually happening.

16 Like, why is there such an increase in prison
17 systems when there should be more increase in programs and
18 services to help families, to help Indigenous people?
19 Yeah. I could go on, but --

20 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you think some of
21 that help should be in the form of somebody that can help
22 Indigenous parents stand up against child welfare so that
23 they're not just at the mercy of that system?

24 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I think that's where it's
25 important to have community. And it's important to have

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 Elders. And like Cindy Blackstock, you know, she -- she's
2 a true advocate. And she wasn't just speaking on behalf of
3 just one province. She was speaking on behalf of all of
4 the children that have been taken away, and that are
5 continuously being taken away.

6 She's talking for our, all of our children.
7 All of the Indigenous children that are being impacted.
8 Something like women like her, people like her, you know?
9 Those are the people that you want in your corner to -- to
10 help you fight this battle that it is that Indigenous
11 people are fighting. Listen, man, we've been fighting for
12 a really, really, really, really long time. And it's not
13 just within child welfare system, it's in all systems.

14 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** What are your hopes
15 for Ivan?

16 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** My hopes for Ivan? I
17 hope that he knows that he's loved. I hope that he knows
18 that he's not forgotten by his family. I hope that he
19 remembers who his mom is. I hope that he -- he hears --
20 when he hears about her that he hears the good things about
21 his mom, and the things that she did for him.

22 I hope that he's loved. I hope that he has
23 a connection to -- to Creator, you know? To -- to our
24 Indigenous way of life. I hope he has that, so that he
25 doesn't ever forget who he is. I hope he's doing good in

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 school. I hope he's happy. I hope, you know, like, he's a
2 little boy. And I hope one day that his mom can be found
3 so that he's not sitting where I'm sitting in the future.

4 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** I will now ask the
5 Chief Commissioner if she has any questions for Melanie.

6 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** It's
7 okay. Take your time.

8 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Thank you.

9 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** First of
10 all, I'd like to know the story about each of the pictures
11 that you have here today about, of Melanie. Oh, sorry.

12 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Shelly.

13 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Shelly.
14 I'm sorry. Melanie, please tell me about Shelly's
15 pictures.

16 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** This picture here is her
17 graduation photo. So that's when she had graduated from
18 upgrading. This photo here, I stole this one from Candace.
19 But Candace said this was a trip that they had taken in
20 B.C. I think this one might have been in Vernon. And so
21 Candace was the one that took that picture.

22 And the picture I'm wearing is -- this was
23 the last time Candace spent a day with her sister. It was
24 for Candace's daughter, Matea (ph) her birthday. And
25 Candace took this picture of Shelly. And so this is a

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 picture I use when I purchase a (indiscernible) in the
2 walks or just raising awareness.

3 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank
4 you. I have a few questions about your experiences in
5 trying to adopt Ivan. What do you remember about the
6 process of paperwork, of telephone calls, that sort of
7 thing?

8 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** So this is when I was
9 still living in Fort McMurray. From what -- so my family,
10 there was Candace, my mom, my uncle, my uncle, I mean my
11 aunt, my Auntie Jean (ph) and her sister were the ones that
12 were more so involved. They were meeting with Athabasca
13 Tribal Council. They were utilizing the child support
14 system that ATC offers, because they -- this was before the
15 finalisation of adoption for Ivan. And so the family were
16 wanting to be able to give -- be given the opportunity to
17 adopt Ivan.

18 So they were working with the support of ATC
19 and that they were having like, meetings over the phone
20 with the B.C. child welfare system, and with the family
21 that had -- had Ivan at the time. And so it like, there
22 was a process, and my auntie, she -- she was the one that
23 had put her name forward, and like, she had a home in Fort
24 McKay. She had a job. You know, she had all of the means
25 in order to take care of Ivan.

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 And just like I said, I don't know what the
2 dynamic is between the provinces like, the whole
3 relationship there between child welfare system. Very
4 different it seems. B.C. seems to be impossible to work
5 with. But I -- I can recall when me and Candace were
6 talking on the phone, and she was telling me about all of
7 this, and I was like, well, what if I put my name forward?
8 You know, because I had a good job, I was sober. I had a
9 vehicle. I had a home. You know, like, I have two kids of
10 my own. I thought why not? Like I could do this, you
11 know? Then at least he's here. And he's close to all of
12 us.

13 And so she was like, "Well, come to -- come
14 to a meeting then." And so I went. I went to one of the
15 meetings that we had at ATC. And I couldn't believe the
16 conversation like, how the conversation went about. It
17 just seemed like the lady that represented the woman in
18 B.C. like, she was fighting us. Like, the family, you
19 know? In order for Ivan to stay with her.

20 And as a child of welfare worker you would
21 think that you would be fighting for the family. Like,
22 wanting to keep the child with his biological family. But
23 it wasn't like that at all. It was a very frustrating
24 conversation. It got very heated. It seemed like they
25 were controlling everything. And you know, the family that

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 he's with is a non-Indigenous family. So he's been placed
2 in the home of, sorry, white people.

3 And so it just, like, what? You know, like,
4 does that make them better parents because of the colour of
5 their skin? Or because they -- they raised Ivan for what,
6 three years? That makes them more eligible? Like, we're
7 his biological family, and he's all we have left of Shelly.
8 And to me I would think that both like, Alberta and B.C.
9 would try to work with our family in order to get Ivan back
10 where he can be -- be with us.

11 And you know, like, we didn't just lose
12 Shelly, we lost him too. And that's hard. Like, at least
13 we know where he is, but we shouldn't have to lose both of
14 them.

15 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** How did
16 that meeting end? Do you remember?

17 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Well, he's not with us.
18 So I think to me like, from thinking back, I don't have a
19 very good memory right now. I'm pregnant so bear with me.
20 But I think like, but it seemed like it was like a stalling
21 tactic, you know? Like, dragging out the process so that
22 the family could be the ones to successfully win in the
23 adoption.

24 Like, I don't even know if they even put my
25 application forward. Like, I have no idea. And you know,

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 no follow up. It was just basically he's there. Like, he
2 -- they won. They got him. And I know that when Candace
3 moved back to B.C. after the fire, like, she would call,
4 and she would make visits and go visit -- visit with him.

5 And my grandmother like, she used to always
6 have phone calls with him too. I don't even know if that's
7 still going on. I -- I don't -- I don't know. But yeah,
8 like, we used to get pictures of him. Like, I have a
9 picture of him at home, but that's not enough, you know?
10 It would be nice if we could have him for Christmas or --
11 and I understand like, you know, they always say, "Well, we
12 look out for the best interest of the child." Like, if he
13 doesn't know who we are, but who's fault is that?

14 Like, if you're not opening the door for
15 him to be able to be learning about who we are, making that
16 time, putting that effort in for him to come and visit,
17 then of course you know, he's going to like, not know who
18 we are. And he's going to be scared. But I feel that,
19 that's what they do. So --

20 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank
21 you. I have no other questions.

22 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Melanie, is there
23 anything else you'd like to share with the Chief
24 Commissioner today?

25 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I -- I think that for me

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 during this -- this whole four years going down this road,
2 you know, with the rallies, the marches, the -- the
3 interviews, we've come to a place now like, where it's been
4 pushed for an Inquiry. And we're here. And I -- I respect
5 you know, that what the Government is doing, but my biggest
6 question is what is the Government planning to do after
7 this Inquiry? Like, what is the action plan?

8 Because I hope it's not like another R Cap
9 report. I hope it's not 94 calls to action, where we have
10 roundabout circle talks about reconciliation. Like, what
11 is the action plan? And I want to see the courts, I want
12 to see the police system, I want to see the enforcement you
13 know, be examined, and looked at, because there is so much
14 racism against Indigenous people within just that one
15 system, but it's within all the systems, that I'm just
16 trying to really understand like, what is the Inquiry going
17 to do?

18 And I'm not just placing that all on to the
19 Government, but I'm like, what is Canada, all of Canada
20 going to do? Canadians, you know. I feel like the -- it's
21 the Indigenous people that are always having to push and
22 push and push and we're vocal, and you know, like, look at
23 Idle No More. And look at Standing Rock, and look at now
24 in B.C. with Kinder Morgan. It's -- and with the Murdered
25 Missing Indigenous Women.

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 Like, why -- why does it always have to
2 like, come to that point where we have to be in the face,
3 and demand to get to this point? Like, I -- I want a world
4 where my daughters can be safe. I -- I want them to have
5 the same as, just like anybody else. I want them to have a
6 future. I don't want my -- my daughters to feel that
7 they're looked at differently just because of who they are.

8 I want them to be proud to be able to be --
9 say, "I am an Indigenous woman. I'm (indiscernible)." You
10 know, I want them to have that sense of security. I don't
11 want them to be looked at any less than. And I'm trying to
12 understand like, how do we get there? You know, so I know
13 that's a very loaded question and -- but that's what goes
14 on in my mind.

15 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Well,
16 thank you. I'm having much of the same questioning in my
17 head too and I'm hoping you'll give me the answers. Thank
18 you so much for coming today and telling us about Shelly
19 and Ivan, and the rest of your family.

20 We look upon what you've told us, and what
21 other families and survivors tell us, and it's really
22 giving us sacred gifts, the memories and the stories and -

23 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** M'hm.

24 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** -- and
25 the truths. The matriarchs on Haida Gwaii in British

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 Columbia sometime ago heard about what we are going to be
2 doing all across Canada. And they wanted a way to
3 recognize and honour families and survivors who come
4 forward, because they know the grief that -- the pain that
5 families are going through, and survivors are going
6 through.

7 So they ordered, as only matriarchs can,
8 that eagle feathers be harvested and -- and that happened.
9 And they've asked us to give families and survivors who
10 come forward an eagle feather on their behalf, to lift you
11 up, to give you strength and -- and to honour you.

12 So we have an eagle feather for you. My
13 Elder assistant Kathy is going to help me here. Just one,
14 thanks. Yeah. We have one also for your friend who --

15 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Oh, she went to pick up
16 my daughter.

17 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Oh, she
18 did? Okay. Well, we have one for you and also one for
19 your friend, because we know family includes family of the
20 heart.

21 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Oh, okay.

22 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Oh,
23 we're not done yet. Also, we have -- oh, you have them?
24 Oh, thank you so much. Oops, I'm sorry, I (indiscernible).
25 Because we believe in ceremony and the importance of

Melanie Dene
In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

1 tradition, we have tobacco ties for you and your friend,
2 and also, and exchange for the sacred gift you gave us, we
3 wanted to give you and your friends seeds to plant.

4 Seeds we know have a lot of significance in
5 a lot of different ways all across Canada. So would you
6 please plant them --

7 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** M'hm.

8 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** -- take a
9 picture of what happens and send it to us?

10 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Okay.

11 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** And thank
12 you again.

13 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Thank you.

14 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** It's been
15 a real honour to hear from you.

16 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Thank you.

17 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** And good
18 luck.

19 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Thank you.

20 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Chief Commissioner --
21 Chief Commissioner, I request that you adjourn this hearing
22 at your pleasure.

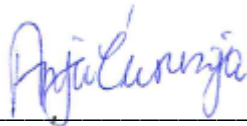
23 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Yes,
24 we'll take about a 15-minute break, please.

25 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Thank you.

1 --- Upon adjourning at 3:00 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Anja Curuvija, 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.



Anja Curuvija

February 11, 2018