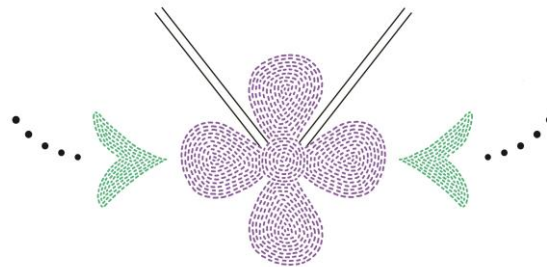


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Hotel Bonaventure
Montreal, Quebec**



PUBLIC

Monday March 12, 2018

**Public Volume 59
Cheryl McDonald,
In relation to her sister Carleen Marie McDonald**

**Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller &
Commissioners Qajaq Robinson & Michèle Audette**

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

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APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Jeremy Kolodziej (Legal counsel)
Assembly of First Nations Quebec- Labrador	No Appearance
Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle	No Appearance
Conseil des Anicinabek de Kitcisakik	No Appearance
Directeur des poursuites pénales et criminelles	Anny Bernier (Legal counsel)
Government of Canada	Anne Turley (Legal counsel) Sarah Churchill-Joly (Legal counsel)
Government of Quebec	André Fauteux (Legal counsel)
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami	No Appearance
Innu Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani- Utenam	Jean-Félix Teasdale (articling student)
Naskapi Nation of Kawawachi- kamach	Jean-Félix Teasdale (articling student)
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre	Beth Symes (Legal counsel)
Quebec Native Women Association	Rainbow Miller (Legal counsel)
Regroupement Mamit Innuat Inc.	Jean-Félix Teasdale (articling student)
Les Résidences oblates du Québec	No Appearance

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Chief Commissioner: Marion Buller and Commissioners: Qajaq
Robinson and Michèle Audette

Commission Counsel: Fanny Wylde

Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge-keepers: Melanie Morrison,
National Family Advisory Council (NFAC), Sarah Nowrakudluk
(NFAC), Laurie Odjick (NFAC), Sedalia Fazio, Louise Haulli,
Audrey Siegl, Pénélope Guay, Kathy Louis, Oscar Kistabish,
Évelyne St. Onge, Bernie Poitras Williams, Laureen "Blu" Waters-
Gaudio, Martha Greig, Patricia Kaniente Stacey, Michael Standup,
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1	Five folders of digital images displayed during the public testimony of Cheryl McDonald; Folder 0 "Family" - eight images; Folder 1 "Sister" - nine images; Folder 2 "Healing" - 28 images; Folder 3 "Advocacy" - five images; Folder 4 "Cheryl" - 17 images.	74

1 Montreal, Quebec

2 --- Upon commencing on Monday, March 12, 2018 at 10:12

3 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Okay, good morning,
4 Commissioners. I would like to introduce you to our first
5 witness of this week of hearings in Montreal. On my left
6 side, there is Cheryl McDonald, who is here to share her
7 own story as a survivor and also the story of her sister,
8 Carleen Marie McDonald, who died on September 4th, 1988,
9 after she went missing for several weeks.

10 So before I let her share her story, I'm
11 going to ask Mr. Zandberg, the Registrar, to swear in the
12 witness. And the witness would like to provide oath with
13 her eagle feathers.

14 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Good morning, Cheryl.
15 Cheryl, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you will
16 give today will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing
17 but the truth?

18 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Yes, I do.

19 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Thank you.

20 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So, Cheryl, I will ask you
21 to introduce yourself; where you're from and also details
22 about your sister's story.

23 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** [Speaks in Mohawk].
24 My name is Cheryl McDonald. I'm a Mohawk from Kanesatake
25 and Akwesasne Mohawk communities; I'm a Wolf Clan of the

1 Mohawk Nation. My sister and I were both born in Malone,
2 New York.

3 Our parents -- there were four daughters
4 born to our Kanesatake mother and Kanesatake father, who
5 were living in Akwesasne at the time. And they left
6 Akwesasne when I was one year old and Carleen was 14 months
7 older than me; so we come from Mohawks who knew the land,
8 they knew the rivers; they knew the Catholic religion.

9 I look back at photos now and I know that
10 many of them were traditionalist, too. And they raised us
11 in the Onondaga Nation, which is the heart of the Iroquois
12 Confederacy; it's the Grand Council, south of Syracuse. We
13 grew up with the Onondaga and Oneida children and Mohawk
14 children that lived there.

15 We lived there all together; we went to the
16 longhouse ceremonies. I grew up watching my peers and
17 cousins dance. It was something that we didn't do as
18 sisters, but we were always welcome to go in and I never
19 knew what they were saying, because they were speaking
20 Onondaga and Oneida.

21 Our parents, they left Akwesasne and
22 Kanesatake because, like many other people who leave
23 reserves -- there's no work. There's dysfunction between
24 families. The more older I get, the more I start to learn
25 about the dark side of our history and things make sense

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 now. But when you're a kid and you grow up, you're
2 confused a lot of times because the people that you love --
3 they don't give you affection or they're firm with you.
4 They want to keep you safe, but you grow up sometimes very
5 confused and how you see yourself is affected by that.

6 We didn't go to school on reserve, me and
7 Carleen; we went to a public school in Lafayette, New York.
8 And then our peers joined us at Grade 7.

9 That's a picture of my mom in Kanesatake;
10 she went to day school, in English; when she grew up in
11 Oka, in the Village of Oka, she was born and her 10
12 siblings were born, like two houses next to the Oka ferry.
13 So she spoke French when she played in the Village; she
14 spoke Mohawk in the house; and she spoke English at school.
15 And those are her first-cousins.

16 Carleen, she was -- she was a rambunctious
17 little spirit; oh, God, she used to drive my parents crazy.
18 She was defiant; you'd tell her to get off the table and
19 she wouldn't; and she got a fly-sticker got caught in her
20 long hair, she just had this thick, thick hair -- and she
21 was rough. She'd get rough with me.

22 I mean, when I look back, I think, well, I
23 was the baby that cut her little baby-stint short, so she
24 made me tough. I had to hide my dolls from her, because
25 she was a rough tomboy, and boy, she'd tell me, "If I find

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 your doll, you know, I'm going to cut her hair off," and I
2 knew she'd do it. So I still have that doll; I kept her
3 really protected.

4 So she didn't graduate; she got pregnant at
5 age 16. She fell in love and I graduated; she became a
6 young mother with an older man. He had just come out of
7 the army; we both fell in love with army men who were
8 mixed. One had a Mohawk mother, one had a non-native
9 mother; and one grew up on the reserve there at Onondaga,
10 that was Carleen's love of her life.

11 And my husband, he grew up in the City of
12 Syracuse, so we kind of married our fathers, in a sense.
13 Our father went to Korea in the US army when he was 17; he
14 grew up in Akwesasne. His great-grandfather owned a 200-
15 acre farm, and so I have pictures of that. They had
16 cattle, they had fowl, they had fields of plants and
17 animals and geese and turkeys, and they were well-off.

18 We have pictures, and you know, this is my
19 great-grandfather, Peter John McDonald, and his daughters
20 and sons. So my great-grandfather is in there; his
21 sisters; so 'Old McDonald', I used to say at school when
22 they'd sing 'Old McDonald', "Yeah, he had a farm and he was
23 a Mohawk from Akwesasne." So I look back at him and I
24 think, you know, as I hold my great-granddaughter: she's
25 his seventh generation.

1 And so, you know a lot can happen in seven
2 generations. A lot can change for the good, too. And I
3 really believe that one day all this will be worth it, to
4 talk about my truth in losing a sister to violence;
5 physical, emotional -- it played out everywhere. It met us
6 at home; we probably heard it when we were in our mother's
7 womb; my parents were young.

8 They came from dysfunction; we know that
9 that's the residential-school experience. Because they
10 could live off the land, they could survive better than
11 some of our brothers and sisters across this country that
12 were put into reserves and had no freedom and nowhere to go
13 and depended fully --

14 This is my father's grandmother. And his
15 mother is the -- she's the third one from the right, inward
16 -- and these were all sisters, nine sisters. So my dad, he
17 comes from a line of long women; the last one to survive
18 was 102 years old. She died about five years ago, and she
19 was a nurse. She left Akwesasne, had a child at 40 and
20 became a nurse in Rochester.

21 And so, I was blessed to have many women,
22 whether they were related to me or not, they were aunties.
23 They showed us a way of life: to be independent, to be
24 strong, and to have a voice. I was born on my dad's
25 mother's birthday, February 5th; I didn't get to know her,

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 she died at age 35. She wouldn't go to the doctor; she had
2 pain and she wouldn't go to the doctor. So I picture her
3 taking care of everybody and working the farm with her
4 husband, my grandfather; and her appendix ruptured and she
5 was gone. She left my dad and his three brothers orphans
6 at age 15.

7 I remember my dad talking about his dad
8 being so heartbroken and he turned to alcohol and women to
9 try to heal. And he beat his sons, they had to run the
10 farm with their grandfather, who was in his 70s by then.
11 Eventually the farm fell and it stayed empty through most
12 of my childhood. And I did know my dad's dad, he was the
13 only grandparent that I ever knew. My mom's parents died
14 before I was born, again to illness and probably lack of --
15 just poverty, living in poverty.

16 But my grandfather, I remember him. And I
17 see him in my -- when he's with our grandchildren. My
18 grandchildren, I have three grandchildren and I have one
19 who will be born at the end of this summer. So I hope the
20 baby arrives before we have our Pow Wow in Kanesatake,
21 because it will be a good time to hold my fourth
22 grandchild; they mean the world to me.

23 And this is why I have been doing this, to
24 heal. My healing journey began when I started to go to
25 pre-consultation meetings, and I started to just show up at

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 places. I had left 23 years of working with First Nations
2 and human resource development at the local, regional,
3 national levels and I'd be sitting behind a desk and it
4 just seemed like the same thing: meeting after meeting,
5 after meeting. Why, why aren't we making a change?

6 And I would look out the window at Kahnawake
7 and march, you know; Kahnawake and I'd go home to
8 Kanesatake and there's two different Mohawk communities.
9 You know, different levels of advancement; but they all
10 share the same struggle. You know, I lived in four First
11 Nation communities in my life and there's a lot of pain,
12 there's a lot of trauma, there's a lot of violence
13 everywhere.

14 So when I started to go to the Inquiry pre-
15 consultations, I started to meet other families. And they
16 shared; and it found its way into my heart, and I would
17 just be so moved, and say, "Wow, like we experienced that,
18 too." Losing a sister, not knowing where she is, what
19 happened to her; finding her body by chance and then
20 grieving and not knowing for sure what happened to her. So
21 we didn't grieve.

22 So when they announced the Inquiry, the
23 National Inquiry, the first thing I did was -- I beaded the
24 dress, the logo. And I didn't know where I was going to
25 put it, but I kept busy and I re-taught myself to bead. I

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 did beadwork as a child, I did it as a young woman, to buy
2 bread and butter, whatever I needed; you know, money was
3 always tight.

4 And so then I made the crown; and every time
5 I made something, I would start to wear it. And then, I
6 saw a friend from Kahnawake, Queenie McCumber (phon) and
7 she showed this red dress, and I went, "It's mine!" And I
8 went over and I bought it from her and it fit like it was
9 made for me.

10 And I had this shawl from Tammie Bova (phon)
11 from Kahnawake, too, and I started to just bead more
12 dresses. And then I said, "Well, I need a belt. Now I
13 need leggings; now I need cuffs; now I need a yoke; now I
14 need a purse." And the last piece I did was the feather.
15 And I started to wear this and go; I would be, my friends -
16 - I would start making friends and they're dancing
17 everywhere, and I said, "This dress makes me want to
18 dance." This is the first regalia I've ever worn in my
19 whole life.

20 My good friend Tess, who came into my life
21 in Kanasatake, she helped add all the ribbons; she sewed
22 all the cuffs; she's just a wizard with the sewing machine.
23 And I've been blessed by so many people that came into my
24 life in the last three years, that really, it's like I was
25 meant to end one life and begin another. And this one is

1 on my terms.

2 And so this dress has taken me to places; I
3 opened at the MSO in Montreal with Nagano. He gave me
4 tobacco, he had tears in his eyes; I addressed an audience;
5 I knew they were tourists coming into Montreal, and I said,
6 "Look, we have to remember our sisters who are murdered and
7 missing." And a lot of them don't know, and I'm surprised
8 that a lot of people don't know about this Inquiry.

9 Even yesterday: "What, you're testifying?"
10 You're on my Facebook, you don't know? Everybody knows; if
11 I was to streak through Montreal, everybody would know
12 before I finished. So we have to talk about this; I know
13 it's painful to hear about, you know, what's happening to
14 our sisters. But we have to; we have to feel to heal, and
15 I tell you: I cried, a lot.

16 As a kid, I was a crybaby; I could feel and
17 sense when people were holding emotions, and I would cry,
18 to the point where I was told, "Stop crying, what are you
19 crying for? Crybaby, I'll give you something to cry
20 about." And so, this is the world I grew up with. And it
21 wasn't just at home, it was everywhere; this toughness,
22 that Mohawk women are so tough. "Well, we don't take shit
23 from everybody."

24 Well, that's true to a point and I would
25 tell people sometimes, who would be rough with me, I said,

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 "You know, if you kick a puppy long enough, it's going to
2 come out and bite you. So, just check yourself." And I
3 don't do that in an egotistical way; sometimes we need to
4 be tough. But most times, I believe that being gentle and
5 kind and loving is the greatest gift and strength we have,
6 and to show our emotions.

7 So this is the parents of those sisters in
8 Snye, Quebec; they refer to it as 'Sugarbush'. My aunt,
9 the nurse, told me in her last years that Sugarbush was
10 called Sugarbush because they used to make maple syrup; but
11 they also used to make moonshine from the sap. So the
12 French would come in from Saint-Anicet and boy, they were
13 making money. Smuggling ain't new and all that stuff, call
14 it what you will, people made money and they provided for
15 their families.

16 And so you can see my dad's first-cousins
17 and I'm not sure if my dad's in there, but there's a boy in
18 there that kind of looks like my dad, so -- I see the
19 regalia, I see the headdress and I know that there were
20 traditionals in there. And they blended their lives
21 together.

22 And I grew up, you know, watching my sisters
23 all take Communion and go to church and I didn't go; I
24 didn't go to church. I was taken to the Methodist Church,
25 and I used to wonder, "Why am I different than all you

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 guys?" My dad liked it because he didn't have to go to
2 church when his aunties came down, he'd say, "I'll stay
3 home with Cheryl." So it worked.

4 So I would take my sisters' gloves from
5 Communion and I would see the Bible laying around and I
6 would kind of mimic what I was seeing the aunties doing,
7 and I would always go outside and talk to God. You know,
8 when I started to find out that he was called *Sakweodesuk*,
9 (phon) or the Creator -- I still looked up at the clouds.
10 Whenever I felt sad or didn't know what to do, He was
11 always there. And He's still there and I won't deny being
12 able to have both faiths with me.

13 Because I look back at my family and I go,
14 "Those women, they believed in something they couldn't
15 see." We all believe in something, you know, it's stronger
16 than us. And you know, no matter what you call it -- I
17 don't have time to argue with what word best describes that
18 power, that energy, that love that ignites us all together.
19 And I've seen many times, you know, in hopeless situations,
20 that prayer was my greatest tool to grab, to comfort me
21 when nothing else could. No human or thing on earth.

22 So, my healing journey started three years
23 ago. I started to think maybe there's something else in my
24 life. I've come to an end; I hit the ceiling, the glass
25 ceiling in management, human resources management; it took

Cheryl McDonald

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1 me across the country, took me to Parliament, took me to
2 government and all trying to get more money. More money,
3 we need more money, we got a lot of people that aren't
4 working we've got to them the work.

5 So that was my life, until I got to the
6 point when I walked away and I said, "If I have 20 years
7 left in my life," I don't know if something happens when
8 you turn 50, but I said, "I want to live the next 20 years
9 on my terms and be close to my children and get to be a
10 grandmother, whatever form that takes."

11 So I found myself -- the Quebec Native Women
12 had a family gathering, the first one; they just launched a
13 report on violence against women, Indigenous women. They
14 invited me to a press conference, and like I always do,
15 "Sure, I'll talk." So I did, and I went to the healing,
16 and -- they cracked this hard Mohawk nut wide open.

17 And I cried. And I think to the dismay of
18 my family, it was surprising to them, to see me cry,
19 because I'm a strong woman and I'm tough and I'm determined
20 and I'm successful.

21 And so, this picture right here is me laying
22 in the grass in my backyard and I was just trying to figure
23 out why my sister left in the middle of the night and was
24 found on the forest floor. What was she thinking? Why did
25 she leave us all? Why did she leave her children? Why did

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 she leave my parents? She snuck out when they were
2 sleeping on the early morning of September 4th.

3 And so when I laid in that cold grass on a
4 hot July day, it felt so good. Ohhh -- I could have never
5 got up myself, that's how much energy Mother Earth has, and
6 how comforting She is. And so I took that picture, it's
7 the first time I showed it publicly; it reminds me of my
8 sister, so I try to think of her as going out there in the
9 middle of the night, knowing that she didn't want to be
10 found. That she'd committed suicide. And I'm the only one
11 that publicly talks about that as suicide.

12 Even though I would think that, "Well, maybe
13 somebody took her out there, maybe she was involved in
14 something and she was afraid and running." And these are
15 the early days of all kinds of, I call it 'fast-money
16 opportunities.' I looked at her common-law husband, they'd
17 just broke up; I looked at him with suspicion. She was the
18 last one to talk to him that night, they had broken up and
19 he wasn't coming around to see her and the kids.

20 She'd moved in with the last child into my
21 parents' home in Snye, Quebec. It was a house at the end
22 of the road that bordered a field and the woods where they
23 found her. So for 27 years I would go from suicide to --
24 someone did this. Or it was the only way out, she was in
25 trouble; or he did it; or he knew about it; then suicide.

1 And so I went through this constant
2 churning, just set it aside and kept busy with work. I
3 started working in '92 --

4 This is part of my healing too, the
5 Kahnawake Church; the Xavier-Francois Church, where Kateri
6 Tekakwitha, the Mohawk-Algonquin saint lies. My mom came
7 with me and we smudged and went on a vigil. My mom, she's
8 quiet about it; she said that she mourned and she did that
9 with God, and she's doing her best to carry on, but -- she
10 doesn't hold me. She doesn't hold me when I cry. She
11 doesn't know what to do.

12 She can yell at me; she can tell me to stop
13 crying. And I had to accept that that is where she's at
14 and love her from a distance. But she doesn't come around.
15 And when she does, it's not to see how I'm doing; it's just
16 to tell me what's going on in the community. I guess
17 that's her way of getting by; I would love my family to be
18 here, but they aren't, and that's okay.

19 When I started my healing journey, it took
20 me back to my sister's grave. I did an interview with the
21 Gazette; I told them, "I'll get you across the border,
22 don't worry about it," and they filmed me all over the
23 place. I said, "Cheryl gets to wherever she wants to go;
24 she's charming."

25 And I took them to her grave and the name

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 that we once painted on it was faded, I wasn't even sure I
2 was at the right cross; that's how painful it was: we don't
3 go to her grave; we don't talk about her.

4 And so, I got the strength to go there; I
5 laid tobacco; I cried; I looked around and it was so
6 peaceful there. So if I'm in Akwesasne, I'll stop by, just
7 to acknowledge her there, we've never bought a tombstone
8 for her. I want to, but now, I don't have a job, so I
9 don't have a lot of money now. But I know we'll get her
10 one, and I would love for her children to design it. I
11 would love to do that this summer.

12 In September it will be 30 years since she's
13 been gone, so it's time; it's time. There's been all kinds
14 of monuments for the murdered Indigenous women and stuff
15 like that, but my communities don't ask me to speak. Maybe
16 they're afraid that I'm not ready. But it hurts when
17 you're not asked; I have so much to give. And I like to
18 share.

19 This is walking with our sisters in
20 Kahnawake; they came to Akwesasne first and I picked out
21 those vamps for my sister. It says 'Mohawk', it's got the
22 Confederacy, Hiawatha Bell on there. And I said, "These
23 are hers." She was proud, she was proud to be Mohawk; we
24 all were. We knew we were Mohawks before we knew probably
25 our names, because the Onondaga kids would tell us, "Oh,

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 you're Mohawk," and we would say, "Yeah, sure, right on!"

2 We were proud, so; we're still proud like that.

3 And so I placed those there and I brought my
4 red-dress regalia there. And I said, "I want to put it on
5 a mannequin and I want it to be displayed." And so, when I
6 went there to the opening, I took it to the Kateri chapel
7 too, I put it over the crypt of Kateri Tekakwitha, and even
8 her -- she's played such an important role in my life.

9 You know, when Carleen was missing, we
10 couldn't go on, it was seven weeks, and I know that there's
11 so many families that are still waiting years and decades.
12 But we couldn't go on; my sisters were losing their jobs
13 because they'd miss so much time; our husbands were taking
14 care of the kids. I was a little bit more freer, so I'd
15 spend many weeks in between staying with my parents -- from
16 Kanesatake to be with my parents in Snye and look out the
17 window at night and just wonder: Where is she? Is she
18 coming back? Why aren't they looking for her? Why are
19 those cars, trucks going in the woods? What's in the
20 woods, what's in the woods? And my suspicions would grow.

21 So I'll talk a little bit about her
22 disappearance. In around July of 1988, she broke up with
23 her common-law husband, the father of their three children.
24 At the time they were four and seven and eight; she had her
25 oldest boy and two daughters. By the time she moved up to

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 my parents, because the house they were renting, they
2 probably stopped renting it. I don't know the
3 circumstances but they had to move out.

4 So she came back to Akwesasne and he stayed
5 behind. And then in those weeks leading up, he told her he
6 had fell in love with someone else. So she was sad. And
7 she cried, and she came to her sisters. And she said, "I
8 feel like killing myself. I'm broken-hearted." He was her
9 first love.

10 I think she loved him more than her kids,
11 because one by one, my parents took them, to make it easier
12 for them; but also to make sure that the kids were safe.
13 But her and Wesley, they -- they lived the fast-money,
14 quick-money lifestyle, to the extent I don't know. But now
15 she's back at my parents' house with all three of her
16 children and she's sleeping in the basement and she spends
17 her last day, Labour Day Weekend Saturday, insisting that
18 my mom -- you know, after they bought groceries, she bought
19 a bottle of rum.

20 And she asked my mom to take her out on the
21 river in Snye, in the channels, and she wanted to go on the
22 river like we always did with our family. And no one ever
23 thought of that, that day; my other sister was going to go
24 over there and stop in to my parents. I was home, I had
25 company, so I was home; and she called me and I was

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 surprised that she called me, because we weren't speaking.
2 Because she would go hot and cold with me, and I got to the
3 point where I just stayed quiet around her.

4 I didn't know if she was going to be
5 laughing with me or laughing at me, and it would hurt me.
6 So she called me, and I kind of -- she asked me how I was,
7 and how my husband was and how the kids were, and I was
8 listening to her, thinking, like, "What do you care? What
9 are you going to do now, you know, what are you going to
10 say?" And that's the last time I heard her voice.

11 I didn't know that she looked at me with
12 envy; because it seemed that my husband loved and treated
13 me better than hers; I don't know. Because I had an
14 apartment, because I left Kanasatake; my husband and I, we
15 had two babies when we left Syracuse and I was eight
16 months' pregnant when I left Akwesasne, temporarily staying
17 at my parents' and my sister said, "Hey, there's an
18 apartment in Oka, why don't you guys just move up here?"
19 And I did, and one month later I gave birth to our son.

20 So I think that she envied me. You know,
21 jealousy is like, "Hey, I like your shoes, I bought the
22 same pair." But envy is, "How dare you have what I don't
23 have? How dare you be happy when I'm miserable?"

24 And there's that, "Be tough, be tough all
25 the time; don't show that you're hurting like hell." And

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 so, when she told us she felt like killing herself, we
2 said, "Ahh, be rid of him, you're not a doormat. The hell
3 with him, you should be glad he's gone, he's abusive to you
4 anyway." But she loved him.

5 And I really believe that her last
6 conversation with him that night was begging him to come
7 back, or telling him, "If you don't come back, you'll find
8 me there." But we'll never know, because he never said a
9 thing. He wouldn't answer my questions. And the more I
10 asked him, the more I was being silenced.

11 His mother and my mother didn't like that,
12 because I was saying -- my mom called us on Monday morning
13 and she said, "She's not back, I'm getting worried." Like,
14 "What do you mean, she's not back?" "Well, she went out
15 and she's been gone, and we woke up and she was gone and
16 now it's Sunday and I'm afraid."

17 My mom was afraid that he would call and she
18 wouldn't be able to say where she was. And we were
19 thinking, "Oh good, she's got a boyfriend, so she'll be all
20 right." You know, we grew up with that; when women and men
21 break up with infidelity -- get another man, get another
22 woman, get over it. And you know, so we thought that --
23 maybe we hoped that.

24 So when my mother called on Monday and she
25 said, "She's not back." We knew, "Oh my God, she killed

Cheryl McDonald

(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 herself; she's out there somewhere." And we left
2 Kanesatake together on the Oka ferry and I could just tell
3 by the clouds how dark and heavy they were. "Oh my God,
4 she did it."

5 We got to my parents' house, it took about
6 an hour and forty-five minutes to cross through the border
7 and make that trip. And the helicopter from the QPF was
8 there and they'd just flown over those woods. And landed.
9 And when they did, the Akwesasne Mohawk Police took over
10 jurisdiction and the QPF went away.

11 And so, we don't know the results of that
12 helicopter sweep; they said they went over that area and
13 there was nothing there. They found a body, it was dressed
14 in a white shirt; it was September, early September. They
15 should have saw something -- I don't know.

16 So at the time, the Akwesasne Mohawk Police
17 were just, I believe, nine officers and the chief of
18 police. And so they were conducting the missing-person's
19 investigation; my dad was talking to them as the head of
20 the family. We were all waiting and getting information
21 through my dad. And then they interviewed -- then Wesley
22 shows up out of the blue, in the morning; he wasn't
23 supposed to be here, so why does he show up all of a
24 sudden, and she's missing?

25 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** I'm sorry, Wesley is?

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Wesley is the common-
2 law, and father of Carleen's children, so.... He shows up
3 before we do and I'm suspicious: "Why are you here? You
4 guys are broken up; you work in a restaurant. Why are you
5 here?"

6 And he said something like, "Well, they
7 didn't have any eggs in stock so I left." So I go, "Well,
8 don't you start working like at five in the morning? So if
9 it's seven o'clock, how did you know at four o'clock?"
10 Three o'clock, you know to leave from Syracuse to
11 Akwesasne, to me it didn't jive, that he would know that;
12 and does the cook order the food ahead of time? It was a
13 popular restaurant, so I didn't believe his story.

14 And so he kind of stayed away from me. My
15 mom said he arrived with a lot of clothes in the car; bags
16 of clothes. So I don't know whose clothes those were. So
17 the police talked to Wesley, and he said that, "Oh, she
18 always parties. She took off before, she takes off, she
19 drinks; she always drinks. Not uncommon for her to drink a
20 bottle." I'm like, yeah, a bottle of rum; she'd have a rum
21 and Coke, like everyone else she'd go out and socialize,
22 but she wasn't drinking straight rum.

23 They believed him and he wasn't a suspect.
24 And I suspected him; he started to change, the way he
25 looked; the way he dressed; he didn't go out looking for

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 her with us; he stayed in the house. He was finding
2 letters in places that we looked and looked and looked.
3 And I just kept getting more and more suspicious of him.

4 And his mother was very outspoken, and she
5 was a presence in that house. And she made my mother get
6 quiet; and we got quiet; and slowly, everyone wasn't
7 allowed to come into the house anymore. My mother didn't
8 trust anyone. We had gone through a lot of, like seers and
9 fortune-tellers and card-readers, and they just messed us
10 all up. "She's going to come back. She's over here;
11 someone's holding her. If you don't find her she's going
12 to be dead."

13 And it was like, we got so scared, that we
14 just stopped looking and we stayed in the house. And I
15 would be doing the dishes for my parents and looking out at
16 that field at night, in the same direction where they found
17 her. And I would walk around along the swamps; I even
18 walked along the reeds. Like I could have fell right in,
19 and I was just bending them with my feet and walking.

20 And walking the roads by myself and looking
21 for like -- trails, if someone walked in, I know what it
22 looks like. My dad didn't have any sons but I went hunting
23 with him and I knew how to track and hunt and stuff like
24 that, and fire a gun. So I went in there like a detective,
25 because I was always watching 'Quincy' and all these shows

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 with my dad, so I'm checking it out, I'm watching, and
2 "He's changing his appearance."

3 And I had little babies and I'm trying to
4 watch them and be there for my parents. It was a hard time
5 to do all that. And then we came to the point where we
6 just couldn't go on anymore. There were no calls, no
7 leads, nobody coming over, nobody searching. And I
8 thought, like when someone close to you is dead -- I
9 thought I would feel that.

10 The night she went missing, I remember
11 looking out the window at the stars and the cold air, and
12 I'm listening -- everybody went to bed and I'm like, "I
13 hear her crying, if I hear dogs barking, if I hear
14 something, I'm going to know." And there was nothing. And
15 you know, I would go to sleep and I would say, "Her
16 spirit's going to come into my dream, I'm going to know
17 where she is." And nothing, like just flat-lined nothing.

18 So we came to the Kateri Chapel two days
19 before a deer hunter just accidentally came across her
20 skeletal remains, two kilometres out there, next to my
21 parents' house.

22 That's Carleen and me and my husband; and I
23 cut everybody else out, just because they're -- I want to
24 keep their privacy. Yeah, that was us, at a sister's
25 wedding in Kanساتake. So that was the first time, I

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 think, Carleen wore a dress. So that's why I remember
2 that, because she wasn't a dressy kind of girl. And we had
3 fun at the wedding. It was a good wedding. And she
4 danced; it makes me laugh when she danced, because she was
5 usually jumping all over the place.

6 So those were the good days. And we had
7 many fun days, you know; it wasn't all dark. Wesley was a
8 wonderful man; you know, he was a good brother-in-law, he
9 was knowledgeable, we would talk, we would -- like he'd
10 start the crossword puzzle, I'd finish it. He was smart,
11 he was smart, I'll give him that.

12 He was wounded, too; he came from a very
13 abusive childhood. Being an Onondaga with a white mother
14 in a traditional community, he was one of the families that
15 got evicted. It was in the early '70s; the longhouse
16 people said, "Okay, we've got some white people living
17 here. You have to leave, your family can stay." So I saw
18 white men moving out and their women and children trying to
19 stay in the home. And in Wesley's case, they had to leave
20 and they were packing up all their belongings, and their
21 father's brother was pulling in, to move in.

22 And that's how deep evictions cut; and I
23 remember his mother taking the board out of a doorway that
24 had all her childrens' height markings. And that strong
25 white woman, boy, I respected her; she was a nurse, too.

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 And she said, "Nobody's going to live in my house," and she
2 burned it to the ground right in front of her. That was a
3 woman, wow. I respect her for that strength that was in
4 her.

5 And the evictions were horrible on many
6 people that I knew, and children who had to leave because
7 staying in there, they were beat by their peers; their
8 cousins. As they became teenagers they would come back to
9 the reserve and be drinking and be hanging out with their
10 peers, and they would get beat. So evictions is -- I'll
11 never agree to that.

12 You know, I come from Kanesatake, and -- my
13 son's funny; he said, "Mom, in Kanesatake, status is just
14 an option." Because everybody lives there; and that's
15 Kanesatake, we have status, non-Native women living there;
16 part of families; I knew a lot of non-Natives who spoke
17 Mohawk. I don't speak Mohawk. But some of them learned,
18 and the history of Kanesatake was, if you came to
19 Kanesatake, you spoke Mohawk. It didn't matter if you just
20 landed from Mars, you're going to learn Mohawk, you're
21 going to speak.

22 So, the language was very strong there, and
23 it was so strong that there's some Elders there that still
24 don't speak English or French. So that tells me it's an
25 old language. So there's a resurgence there, in

1 Kanesatake, to go back to a....

2 That was the last picture of Carleen in
3 1988, in May; she went back to the orthodontist to get
4 braces, again, for the second time. She had that Mohawk
5 Nation shirt on and smiling and it was the orthodontist's
6 dental records that they used to identify her skeletal
7 remains.

8 Oh, that's how I remember her; she loved Rod
9 Stewart and she tried to spike that hair up, and she was
10 really, like -- she could make you laugh. She was
11 something else, she had a lot of friends. She opened up
12 her house to everybody to, you know, hang out and cook and
13 we had really a lot of good times together. More than bad.

14 But when she started dating Wesley, I mean -
15 - he was like, I think 10 or 11 years older than her. He
16 moved in with us and -- I got up early for school and he
17 was getting up early for work and I was in the shower
18 getting dressed and I felt like, "Hey, I heard a noise at
19 the door as I'm getting dressed." I moved back from where
20 the door handle was, there was a slight crack and I backed
21 over it, like I'm always on the defence all the time. And
22 I looked around at the door hole and I saw an eye. And so
23 I grabbed the lock -- and I opened it, and he was on his
24 knees, he had been watching me dress.

25 And I woke the whole house up; and he denied

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 it. And Carleen got mad and my parents stood there, not
2 knowing who to believe or what to do. So, nothing was
3 done, and my sister said, "He's leaving, it's your fault."
4 And there she was, 17, with her first child, and this is
5 the side of him that I saw.

6 I remember running across the empty drive-in
7 -- we lived next to a drive-in theatre -- so I ran across
8 to my friend's house and I cried and told her, "He watched
9 me. And he didn't even show any remorse. He laughed at
10 me; he looked me in the eye and had no shame for what he
11 did." And I think that's where my sister put that hate on
12 me.

13 And so, in and out of our relationships, we
14 were the best friends or I would avoid her, because she
15 would, she would go there; without saying it, she would
16 mistreat me. And so when I was in 16, I fell in love with
17 a guy who was in the army, too. And he went to Korea; and
18 no, he didn't find me there.

19 But when I met him, I felt safe for the
20 first time. I felt perfect for the first time. He was so
21 gentle with me and I felt so protected. He was big and
22 beefy and handsome, too, but more beefy and my protector.
23 And so I didn't hold that against -- I think because when
24 that happened with Wesley and I stood up and I told
25 everybody, I think I established myself as somebody who

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 will tell, and tell; and I think him and all his friends,
2 they knew that. I think I've always had my voice in that
3 kind of sense.

4 So you know, we were growing up together,
5 having kids together; my parents moved out of the family
6 home and Wesley and Carleen continued to live there for at
7 least three or four years. And I lived in the city with my
8 boyfriend, who then, we married and we had our first
9 daughter. It's when you become a mother and a wife that
10 you start to realize, "Wow, you're in this by yourself, as
11 a woman."

12 And you're trying to cling on to the
13 teachings of your parents, the good teachings. And you're
14 trying to not continue the ones that you saw as a child, as
15 a little girl, you know, my parents were -- they worked
16 hard, they had a 6th and 8th grade education; my mom cleaned
17 homes. My dad was an ironworker, when he worked, when he
18 could get in a union. Because he was in the Montreal
19 Union, so if he wasn't in the Utica Union or the Oswego
20 Union of ironworkers, he had to wait.

21 So he didn't wait, he'd come home; he
22 cleaned the house, he cooked, he hunted, he fished; he
23 repaired things, he was a mechanic; he was a jack-of-all-
24 trades; and there were me and Carleen always with him,
25 because we were the youngest ones. And we learned all that

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 stuff. And I remember Carleen, one time he was fixing a
2 car, and he asked her to hand him a wrench. And she handed
3 him a screwdriver; and she was doing it on purpose, and I'm
4 watching, and he's sweating underneath the car. And he's
5 like, "It's a screwdriver!" and she giggled and ran away.

6 And I handed him a pliers, and he yelled at
7 me; and he said, "That's not a wrench, that's a plier!"
8 And I said, "Just tell me what it looks like then, and I'll
9 do it." And I always could give it back to my dad. Like
10 they would say that, "Cheryl, you're the son he never had,"
11 and I think I had a lot of patience.

12 But I know that from my older sisters, my
13 dad, he would lose it if they played too hard, or if things
14 got too hard or something was bothering him. You know, and
15 I watched my sisters get whipped with a belt. We all would
16 get quiet when he raised his voice, that's the household;
17 you know my mother would say, "Wait till your father gets
18 home," and we'd behave.

19 So that's the kind of upbringing we had.
20 They wanted us to have an education, we got an education;
21 they went to work, we went to school; there was no not
22 going to school. They wanted us to have a better life.
23 They didn't want us dependent on the government or anyone.

24 My dad would always tell us, "You work for
25 your things in life, no one can ever take that from you."

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 And he would also say, "Don't be a kiss-ass, or a brown-
2 noser." And I try not to be.

3 But yeah, that's when I graduated high
4 school. I was 18 and my aunt came over and she was always
5 taking pictures all the time. And she said, "Cheryl, go
6 put your cap and gown on, I didn't take your graduation
7 picture." So, they weren't dressed; so we posed and some
8 people say, "Well, Cheryl, you really look like your
9 mother." And then they go, "Wow, you look like your
10 father." So I'm somewhere in the middle.

11 But I know they were proud that I went to
12 school. They wouldn't tell me outright, but when they
13 talked to their friends, they would say like, "Oh, Cheryl's
14 doing this and Cheryl's doing that," and it's not to be
15 boastful or bragging, my mother would always say, "Don't
16 brag and don't be boastful," but -- not saying something
17 also is bad. You know? I grew up wondering, like, "Does
18 anybody notice me?" But I know they did, I know they're
19 proud of me.

20 And this me in my kindergarten class; I'm in
21 the second row from the floor, second one in, on the left
22 side. That's me, smiling. My teacher was a model and my
23 dad saw her picture in the paper, he's like, "Hey, I think
24 this is your teacher." And so he showed his brother. And
25 so next parent-teacher, guess who's taking me to parent-

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 teachers' conference? My dad and his brother. So, they
2 had the McDonald charm, so.

3 She was a beautiful teacher and I, when I
4 walked into the school, it was like a whole world opened up
5 to me. There were all kinds of things to do and books; ah,
6 the kids; like I'm still friends with my high school peers.
7 You know, and they're all over the country; I went to my
8 30th year high school reunion. It's been probably like 35
9 years now and they're like, "Cheryl, I thought you were
10 Onondaga." And they're like, "What are you doing in
11 Canada?" And I would tell them like, "This is how I got
12 into my career." And we would laugh, because it was....

13 This is with the Human Resources Commission,
14 the representatives of 29 First Nation communities and the
15 regional staff. I was in the world of employment and
16 training. And I probably can't go anywhere without running
17 into somebody that knows me, so now I feel like I'm in the
18 health sector now. I'm starting to meet people in the
19 health sector and connect in to those.

20 I mean, I'm gifted and blessed to have known
21 so many people and travel to some of these communities in
22 Quebec and across the country, and just meeting a lot of
23 women and men, who all want to make a difference. You
24 know, we all want to make a difference for our people. And
25 it's apparent that we want to leave this world better than

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 the way we found it sometimes.

2 So, ask me questions, because I can go on,
3 I'm a story-teller.

4 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Okay, I just want to take
5 a few steps back. You had mentioned that Carleen was in an
6 abusive relationship with her common-law spouse, Wesley.
7 Did she ever file a complaint regarding the violence she
8 was living?

9 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Not to my knowledge,
10 she didn't. But when I was living in the city after my
11 parents left the house and she was living with Wesley now
12 with their children, alone -- I would go and like, she'd
13 pick me up and I'd spend the day at her house, babysit
14 while they go to the grocery store or something like that.

15 I was in the house and all of a sudden the
16 door flew open and the two kids, they were probably five or
17 six, six or seven, they come running in the house and I was
18 startled. And I see these kids running in the house, my
19 niece and nephew; and he's chasing them. And I'm like,
20 "What?"

21 So he chased one of them into the closet,
22 and I ran right after him, and I swear, if I wasn't there
23 he would have beat that kid. He would have kicked that
24 kid. And I remember saying, "What the hell do you think
25 you're doing?", and he stopped and he walked right out of

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 the house and he got into the truck; and Carleen was
2 sitting in the passenger side; she never chased after him.

3 And I remember going out the door, yelling
4 at her, "How can you let him do this to you? What the hell
5 is the matter with you?", because I'm the tough one. In
6 those circumstances, I can get real tough. And she just
7 didn't say anything and they drove away. And so, I stopped
8 seeing her, less and less, because their household was
9 changing. And that's probably why my mother started to
10 take the kids.

11 And it was only probably in the few weeks
12 before she died that she was starting to talk and tell me
13 stuff. And I was always on my guard with her. Like, she's
14 confiding in me and she did tell me, "Remember that time I
15 had that big hospital bill in Syracuse, I went to the
16 hospital and now they're after me for it," \$40,000 in
17 medical services, she had no health coverage. She said,
18 "He beat me." And so I've asked the lawyer to go and
19 subpoena the hospital because he probably beat her badly.
20 Because she told me, "He beat me so badly I went to the
21 hospital." And I know that often when women go to the
22 hospital, the police will ask them and they may or may not
23 press charges, and they walk back in to those situations.

24 So, she was a victim of abuse, you know, and
25 she kept it hidden. And I could tell with those kids that

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 they just -- were quiet, they were quiet babies, they were
2 shy. And you'd kind of hold them and they're just like --
3 they were quiet. So they saw stuff; how much, I don't
4 know.

5 But when I look at the pictures, you know it
6 pains me to see these kids that aren't smiling. You know?
7 It's really painful. And it pains me because I practically
8 raised them. Because I lived in the house, so I would
9 take the baby and I would love the baby and I would wash
10 the baby and change the baby and feed the baby. And it's
11 their baby and they're in bed. You know?

12 I remember one time the baby was crying and
13 they wouldn't go to it, and I went right into the bedroom
14 and took the baby out of the crib. And defiantly. And the
15 next morning, Carleen told me, she said, "He was holding
16 me, he wouldn't let me go get the baby. He said, 'She's
17 spoiled, let her cry'." So he controlled her, emotionally
18 and physically.

19 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So the children, as you
20 mentioned, were living with your parents. Was Child
21 Protection Services involved or was it your parents that
22 took the children?

23 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** My parents took the
24 first girl, the middle child, first. Carleen and Wesley
25 were always -- he had an affair on her, he cheated on her,

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 she got mad, she retaliated. And one time she said that,
2 "That girl's not yours." And from that moment, that baby
3 was pushed aside.

4 And so my mom took that baby when they moved
5 to Akwesasne. She took her, she was a three-year-old, put
6 her in Head Start. And then maybe three years later, they
7 took the oldest boy, because he was going to school but the
8 house was changing. It just became a flophouse, that's an
9 expression for a flophouse, where people can come and go
10 into your house and drink and sleep and -- you know, it's a
11 party-place house. And I started to see that and that's
12 why I stopped visiting so much.

13 But you never think that those kids would
14 have been in danger, you know? Sexual abuse wasn't talked
15 about back then like it is now. And so when I look back, I
16 go, "God, that house was full of predators." The same ones
17 that would try to get me as a young girl. You know? But I
18 had a mouth, but a lot of kids don't have that spirit, to
19 say, "Hey, I'm telling." And to tell. It's two steps in
20 that. So yeah, I'd like to explore that.

21 That's why I always suspected him, I think,
22 because I saw that side of him that nobody else saw. The
23 side he kept hidden, you know? And it confused me, because
24 then he'd just have a nice side to him. "Hey, everybody
25 know I'm a good guy." He had a big mouth, sometimes it got

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 him a punch in the face from somebody to shut him up; but
2 it didn't stop him from being him.

3 And so, one thing too, is when -- I also got
4 silent too, was after she was missing was -- that's the
5 only parent those kids have. And I'm not going to put him
6 down in front of them. Whether he's a good dad or not,
7 that's their father. And when Carleen passed and they got
8 older, he started to, they started to go on their own to
9 visit him. And they needed to have their father. And they
10 had their father for maybe 10 years before he passed,
11 suddenly.

12 He died of an aneurysm and I was always
13 waiting to see if I could ask him point blank, "Did you
14 kill her? Tell us." Because there was one time when she
15 was missing where he asked me and another sister, he pulled
16 us aside and he was going to tell us something. And then a
17 third sister came and opened the car door, and he didn't
18 tell us.

19 I really think that he may have known that
20 she was out there; that by telling us where she was, we
21 probably would have -- he could have been charged with it,
22 whether or not he did it or not. But I think he had some
23 kind of fear or guilt, that, "She told me she was going to
24 do it, and she actually did." And was going to come
25 forward. So, I had to leave that in the hands of the

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(Carleen Marie McDonald)

1 Creator. She's gone, nothing will bring her back. And I
2 have no evidence.

3 I knew that; remember, I'm a detective in my
4 head, I knew that: no evidence, no witness, no body, no
5 charges. So unfortunately that's still the case for many
6 families out there, struggling with the law. Because the
7 law is the law.

8 So that's me testifying in Parliament; that
9 was my second time being a witness. So yeah, I would just
10 be so like, surreal when I would go to AFN things and
11 technical working groups. And I'd be with people with PhDs
12 and Masters, and they'd be like, "Okay, we're going to
13 Parliament; who wants to go and speak?" And nobody wants
14 to do it, and I'd be like, "I'll do it." And I would be
15 just so amazed at where my ability to speak from the heart
16 would take me. It's been amazing.

17 I had the opportunity to speak with Jack
18 Layton. I had gone to the Parliament with the AFN QL
19 chiefs, and there's Jack Layton, and I said, "Hey, Jack!
20 You're from Hudson, I'm from Oka, like, we're neighbours!"
21 And he looked me and he said, "Cheryl, your people have to
22 partner; they have to partner with Oka, they have to
23 partner with the surrounding areas. You guys could have so
24 much if you would partner together." And that always
25 stayed in my mind.

1 When he passed away and I saw all the
2 tributes to this man, I thought, wow, I looked him right in
3 the eye; and partnering is something we have to do. We
4 have to partner with Canadians; we have to partner with
5 police, health providers; leaders have to partner with each
6 other; we have to start to really partner. And to me
7 partnering is -- you have something, I have something and
8 we put it together -- we really have something.

9 And it's not this, 'mine is mine and yours
10 is yours', that's -- I've lived more than 50 years saying,
11 "When are First Nations going to be who they say they are?
12 Strong, proud, independent." Our parents lived half --
13 most of their life -- as non-status Indians because they
14 didn't know about the *Indian Act*. They left when they were
15 young. They lived as Americans in a sovereign First Nation
16 in New York State. And the ones that left the reserve
17 every day and worked, their lives were a little bit better.
18 And the ones who didn't, were dependent on their
19 circumstances.

20 And poverty; you know, we grew up -- I say
21 we grew up poor -- because you know, we didn't have the
22 luxury of going shopping and stuff like this, or having the
23 best furniture or the newest car or the best house. I
24 said, "And we had running water, but we had to go and run
25 and get it outside and bring it in and heat it up, and you

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1 know, do everything like that." So, we grew up off the
2 land and my father was resourceful.

3 He was like the first person I saw that was
4 already recycling and he would even take cans and press
5 them down so they'd take less space; and using things until
6 you really couldn't use them anymore. And I find those
7 traits, too -- like my kitchen table, none of the chairs
8 match, but I'm not going to get a new set; those chairs
9 still are good. So I see the world changed from so much in
10 the last 50 years, because I do have a good memory.

11 I remember being little in Onondaga, you
12 know, before I went to school. I remember all the trips we
13 took to Kanesatake and Akwesasne and the fishing that we
14 did, the gardening, the family gatherings, the weddings,
15 the funerals.

16 So you know, I want to pay tribute to Wanda
17 Gabriel, who is not here today; she lost her husband and I
18 just want to honour her for being a sister to me -- helping
19 me to heal, helping others in Quebec to heal. You know,
20 she -- one thing she said was, "When we go through
21 traumatic situations, we do two things: we either re-enact
22 that trauma on others and ourselves, or we detach."

23 And so, when I look at my life, and I look
24 at pictures of me outside all the time, I was detaching as
25 an early child and going outside and going into the woods,

1 and having this connection with God and the Creator and the
2 animals; and walking along creeks and hugging trees, and I
3 still hug trees. My friends call out, my cousins go, "Hey,
4 you still hugging trees?", so every chance I get. And I
5 just found so much peace and solitude away from people.
6 And I can find so much energy with people, but I choose
7 when. And so I'm a loner, but I'm also, like, "But you
8 were just on the stage!" Yeah, sometimes I need to be
9 around people. I even like to come into Montreal sometimes
10 and just walk, like from one end of the city to another.

11 There's me and Ghislain Picard: this is
12 before I left my job and I said, "Take a picture of this
13 picture that's in front of my office," because one day,
14 Ghislain Picard will have a picture of me, next to his
15 office. So it was funny, he's very humble, and so I have
16 like a big family of technicians and leaders that I got to
17 meet, and had opportunities to talk at Chiefs' tables; and
18 Ghislain would be chairing and I would just be there
19 replacing my boss. And he'd say, "Does anybody have
20 anything to say?", and I'd be like, "Anybody? Because I'm
21 not a Chief, but, hey!", and I would be able to speak to
22 the Chiefs. And sometimes....

23 And there I was in Hochelaga -- I started to
24 do some acting, another thing I wanted to do. I said,
25 "When I stopped acting in real life, I started to act in

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1 life." And I've been -- this is my fourth film I'm in.
2 And I'm just an extra, background; and I love it, I love
3 the fact that we are now able to tell our stories more and
4 more. We are getting an audience, I really could see some
5 of these stories of families coming to the big picture-
6 screen, and screenwriting and getting Canadians and
7 Americans to really understand what has happened to our
8 people.

9 I did a blanket ceremony at McGill
10 University and I learned about the multi-generational
11 abuses and the *Indian Act* and the moving us away and the
12 generational trauma. And that's when everything clicked;
13 and that's when I looked back and saw my upbringing and my
14 parents, the way they were: It wasn't me, it wasn't me:
15 they were just -- it was coming out of them, the way they
16 behaved in those situations.

17 It was the alcoholism that our people
18 struggle with. You know, my sister walked out with only
19 taking a bottle of rum. I have to talk about alcohol and
20 how it affects our people, how it's robbing our families of
21 loved ones. How people use alcohol to forget painful
22 experiences, or to celebrate wonderful accomplishments.
23 But alcohol, your body starts to want it and need it and
24 it's hard to let go of it. And it puts people in
25 vulnerable situations.

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1 I just, I'm so grateful that alcoholism in
2 my life -- when Carleen, when we buried her, her life ended
3 and then mine continued. And I look at it, and I go, wow;
4 you know, my marriage had its own struggles too and alcohol
5 was in it. And my loving husband would change into a guy
6 who was hurting, and you always hurt the ones you love.
7 And Carleen helped me to say, "No more, I won't bring this
8 into our relationship. I'm ready to walk this path alone
9 if you don't do something about your drinking."

10 And he stopped; my husband went to
11 treatment. He's been sober, for like -- I always have to
12 think about it, because it's been so long, but I think 25
13 years. And sobriety doesn't bring overnight success; we
14 had to learn to peel away all those behaviours and
15 attitudes and opinions that we brought into our marriage
16 from our own parents.

17 You know, that men and women -- the man's
18 the lead and the woman's not, but in my case, the women
19 lead. But I think I led too much, and we had to learn to
20 balance and stand side by side. And I think that's what
21 it's about. I went to the longhouse recently and I learned
22 about the roles of the men and women. And I see that
23 that's the root of it in many cases, that men don't know
24 how to be men anymore and women are being like men and
25 women, in the sense of being the providers and the

1 protectors, and the balance is out of shift. So, if the
2 men and women don't know their roles, then they don't know
3 their roles for how to help their families and communities
4 and nations.

5 This modern-day life, we're all trying to
6 figure out what that means to be *ougwahoway* (phon) and we
7 can't just say that anymore. There was a time where we all
8 lived our original way of life, but this is 2017 -- oh
9 yeah, 2018, I went back. You know, we have modern
10 technology, we have all these temptations of the modern
11 world; and men and women now both work out of the home, so
12 who's watching the kids? The Elders are in nursing homes
13 now, if they're lucky to have lived to go to a nursing
14 home.

15 So caring for our people has now become
16 jobs; it shifted. I grew up in a time where the old auntie
17 came and moved in and she babysat and she cooked and
18 cleaned, and she helped the parents. Aunties and uncles,
19 they had roles, they helped parents; teenagers, they helped
20 the mothers. Now, teenagers, they want to run out the door
21 at 13 and there's a lot of danger out there waiting for
22 them.

23 We have to teach our youth about the
24 vulnerabilities and risks out there in the world. And they
25 enter the home now through a computer pad, through an

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1 iPhone; they're looking for love, they're looking for
2 attachment, they're looking for belonging. And they can
3 easily be stolen and no one knowing where they went. I
4 think we really have to look at who we are as a people and
5 try to help and heal. Go ahead.

6 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** If we go back to the
7 circumstances of her disappearance, Carleen's disappearance
8 -- did she leave any note before she went out?

9 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Yes, when we were out
10 searching we got called into the house with my sisters and
11 my parents and Wesley, and he said, "There's a letter."
12 And my mother did verify that in the day before, she was
13 writing and filling envelopes; but there was just one that
14 was read to us. It was in her handwriting, but they both
15 liked to write like each other.

16 And she said that, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry,
17 mom and dad, that I'm doing this, but I have to go away."
18 She said something to the effect of, "You know, things are
19 coming up and I'm going to -- I can't be in the spotlight,"
20 and I just -- what's the 'spotlight'? What spotlight?
21 What was going to be put on her that she couldn't handle?
22 And so all those suspicions start to swirl.

23 She also said that, you know, "I'm sorry,
24 don't have a funeral for me, just put me in a pine box,"
25 basically because we didn't have money. A funeral is

1 expensive, and she wrote that in there.

2 Then she wrote that she wanted her kids to
3 go to Wesley's sister and her husband, which was like --
4 that does not make sense; these people were not in her
5 life. Why did she write that? They -- my mother already
6 had two; and so what they did was, Wesley signed the kids
7 over to my parents. So there was no Family Service
8 involvement, they came over and it was just a matter of
9 signing custody to my parents.

10 And my parents, you know, I had a sister who
11 didn't have children, and my parents weren't going to give
12 them to her. They could have raised them. But my parents,
13 that's all they had of Carleen, and they kept them and they
14 did their best to raise them, but they were in their 50s
15 and my dad was mourning my sister.

16 And so during those seven weeks, we'd be
17 outside with his brothers and uncles and nephews and
18 waiting and searching for Carleen, and my dad would be over
19 there crying and I'd catch him. And I wouldn't even go
20 over to him and comfort him, we weren't close like that; we
21 were close like, "Hey, you know...", but not physically for
22 support. We didn't do that.

23 Anyway, I'm going off-subject, but Carleen,
24 after seven weeks' of looking, the deer hunter found her
25 skeletal remains and when my mom called me and said, "Hey,

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1 they found -- there's an ambulance in the woods; the cops
2 are going there." And I said, "They found something, I
3 heard they found a body, it's her, it's got to be her." So
4 I called the chief of police.

5 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** And you said there was an
6 investigation: what was the result of that investigation?

7 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** The police, to my
8 knowledge -- we would call them and say, "Hey, we got a
9 tip: somebody heard a girl crying down the road," and the
10 cops came one time and we saw a footprint in the mud and
11 some kid had told the children on the school bus, "Yeah,
12 last night there was a woman screaming," and so we had the
13 police go there and they wouldn't even get out of their
14 truck. They said, "It's our lunch time and we're not
15 getting our feet muddy." And you should have heard us, the
16 way we treated those police. Like, we said, "How dare you.
17 How dare you say that?"

18 They didn't go in the woods, to my
19 knowledge; they didn't man patrols; it was my father and
20 close family that did that. One woman came with hunting
21 dogs during the seven weeks; and they didn't find anything.
22 So all of a sudden, a couple of days later I look out the
23 window at the kitchen sink, and there's the conservation
24 officer's car flying by my parents' house and into that
25 field.

1 And again I called the police chief. And I
2 said, "Hey, what is that car doing? What's going on?"
3 "Oh, someone lost their dog." I said, "Someone lost their
4 dog and you're sending a car to look for them, and my
5 sister could be laying out in those woods?" Without
6 knowing it, I was frustrated with the police. And the
7 police chief would get my calls, I called him again for the
8 third time when the ambulances were there.

9 I said, "I'm in Kanessatake and I will be
10 there in about an hour and forty-five minutes, do not move
11 that body, because I want to see it. I want to see it, to
12 know it's her, with the braces, and I want to see what's
13 around her." And by the time I got there, they had pulled
14 her remains out and put a rotting, skeletal corpse with no
15 flesh into an ambulance. And sent it off to Valleyfield.

16 And we, me and my sisters and a brother-in-
17 law had to go to Valleyfield and try to trace that body;
18 and we traced it to Parthenais and we couldn't -- I wanted
19 to see it. I want to see with my eyes, my detective eyes.

20 And so just recently I got all the articles
21 that were done and it talks about the police chief saying
22 that, "Yeah, a group of teenagers on four-wheelers helped
23 us recover the body." Teenagers on four-wheelers? The
24 four-wheelers that were riding back there at night when I
25 was staying with my parents? They didn't smell a rotting

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1 corpse? Because a week after she went missing, the
2 buzzards were flying in those woods, right over it. And I
3 said, "Look, the birds, look," I know how birds are, I know
4 how they act.

5 And they still wouldn't go in those woods.
6 "Oh, we looked everywhere, we looked back there, don't go
7 back there." We could look around all of Akwesasne, and we
8 did, asking people: Have you seen her? Asking her
9 friends: Who is she with? Who is her friends? You know,
10 we had suspicions that she was dealing with, I call it
11 'fast-money people'. And nobody saw her, so we were going
12 on foot through woods, through marshes, through cornfields;
13 we'd start in Canada, end up in the US; start in the US,
14 end up in Canada. We looked everywhere but that area,
15 because they told us, "Nothing back there." There was
16 something back there.

17 So you know, for the longest time, some of
18 my family don't believe that that's where she died. I've
19 had to come to this conclusion, I had to follow my heart; I
20 could be wrong. There's no body. The Parthenais told us,
21 moments before they were going to let us see her, "Oh,
22 sorry, you can't see her, her bones are soaking in some
23 kind of solution, we couldn't get enough flesh."

24 So we waited 10 days before they brought her
25 body back to bury. And in that 10 days, we went out to

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1 that place where they found her body. And we found a
2 blanket that she was laying on; and on it was her whole
3 scalp. They left her hair; we went with a priest; we went
4 with a faith-keeper, one of my dad's aunts on a buggy, and
5 the kids; we walked back there and watched my dad's nephew
6 dig a hole and pick that blanket up with a pitchfork and
7 drop it in there.

8 They left the crime scene; they left us to
9 find her; to watch him pick up her hair like it was a dirty
10 wig and just drop it in the ground. Her hair could have
11 been tested. I know police don't get a lot of funding, but
12 why didn't they call another police agency? To at least
13 take some pictures? That still haunts me.

14 The smell; you never forget the smell of
15 death. Now when I walk, if I smell something dead, I'll
16 pull over or I'll go off-road and I will make sure it's an
17 animal. Because it could be a human. It's horrible, it's
18 horrible. Where's the bottle? Why didn't they dust it for
19 fingerprints? Did they take it with them?

20 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** When you say 'the bottle',
21 you mean?

22 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** A bottle of rum,
23 that's the only thing she took; she didn't take any
24 personal belongings, she didn't take any makeup, any
25 jewellery; she took nothing. All she took was the bottle

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1 of rum that she had a couple of drinks with the night
2 before. And a note on the paper, "Be back tomorrow at
3 noon." That would have been Sunday morning, the 4th, she
4 would have been back.

5 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** That's what I, the
6 information I was looking for, so the Commissioners could
7 know: she had left a note saying that she was going to
8 come back. Can you explain in detail?

9 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** My mom, when my mom
10 woke up on September 4th, the littlest one, the littlest
11 granddaughter, Carleen's youngest, she was four; she was
12 sleeping in the basement with her mom. The other two had
13 bedrooms upstairs with my parents. And my dad had opened
14 the door and said, "Goodnight," and she said, "Love you,
15 dad." And he went to bed.

16 And when they woke up, my mom said -- she
17 was cooking breakfast for the kids -- and she said, "Hey,
18 go downstairs and go tell your mother to come up for
19 breakfast." And the little one said, "Mommy's not here,
20 mommy's gone. Mommy's gone." She said, "What do you mean,
21 gone?" And she went downstairs, she was gone.

22 And then when she cleaned up the table, she
23 saw a note on the Indian Times paper, in her handwriting,
24 Carleen's handwriting, said "Gone, be back at noon." So we
25 thought, oh, she went out with cousins, friends, she left,

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1 she went to go out, she's going to get over him somehow.

2 And she didn't come back.

3 And the little girl kept saying, "Daddy came
4 for mommy. Mommy with daddy, mommy with daddy." That's
5 what she was saying. And that's all we had, that's why I
6 was suspicious. Why did you come here? Maybe she
7 threatened him: "If you don't come up here, I'm telling."
8 Telling what? I don't know, these questions will always be
9 with me. As much as I am at peace with my healing journey,
10 sometimes I'll hear another story and it will take me back
11 there. So only the Creator knows; but I know she's not
12 hurting anymore.

13 I know she's at peace. I know when I put on
14 that regalia, she dances with me. And I have to honour
15 her, honour her for showing me how life ends or life
16 begins; and she was my greatest teacher. And in our way,
17 when someone dies, they say, "They came in our lives for a
18 reason, to teach us." And so, she was my teacher; she
19 showed me how to be strong; how to communicate if someone's
20 mistreating me. How to love my kids when I didn't feel
21 like it because I was grieving or I was angry.

22 She taught me to love them, and I did the
23 best I could. And they're all adults now and my
24 grandchildren are the greatest joy in my life. To see a
25 fresh spirit, unbroken; these are our babies, this is what

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1 we have to do, parents and grandparents, is keep those
2 babies safe. Because kids hurt kids, too; abused kids grow
3 into teenagers that are curious and injured, and they can
4 hurt your babies. Trust me -- they can hurt your babies
5 and you won't even know it. That's what happens; I found
6 out my babies were hurt, sexually, and here I was at the
7 top of the world and my babies never showed any sign.

8 And that's what me and my husband had to
9 deal with, is helping those teenagers who are suicidal and
10 drinking and drugging, and not telling us that they were
11 hurt. And it took all our love and strength to get them to
12 professional services, because they weren't going to go on
13 their own. You know, I just thank the Creator that when we
14 found out, we found out much later; but we were at a place
15 when we could deal with it. Finally, as adults, our
16 children made us become real parents. Because before that,
17 we were just broken kids, with kids, trying to get a leg-up
18 in the world, trying to get what other people have; and
19 trying to hang on to the love that we had.

20 So you know, I dedicate this to my kids, who
21 are also parents now. And I know, as a mother, I tell
22 them, "Yes, it's hard, but just don't worry about the
23 world; just love your kids. Just play with your kids."
24 That's all life is about, teach them; I take my
25 granddaughter with me, and she's singing now and -- oh,

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1 that makes me feel good and proud.

2 And the baby, she takes a rattle, and she
3 just goes, "Shuck-shuck-shookshookshook," because she's
4 watching me and that's what it's all about. They need to
5 be proud of who they are. And I tell people, "Stop trying
6 to fit in, because -- just take your place, there's room
7 enough for everybody."

8 I tried all my life to fit in and I felt
9 rejection all the time and that I was never good enough, or
10 didn't speak my language; my parents wouldn't share the
11 language with us, because they learned not to speak it and
12 not to share it. And they were punished for it, and they
13 thought that, you know, by having our language we wouldn't
14 get educated in English, or the Americans.

15 And so my mother still holds on to the
16 language, and so I know I have to find someone else to
17 teach me the language so I can pass it on. My parents use
18 the language for their own private conversations, and with
19 their siblings; you know, adult topics. So when we started
20 to speak English at school, we stopped asking.

21 But I know a few words and they seem to be -
22 - the most very important words is, how to say my name; and
23 how to say 'I love you' and how to say 'thank you' and 'are
24 you at peace' and 'welcome' and, that's the only words I
25 ever learn or say; that's good enough for me. And I see my

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1 grandchildren learning it, too. One time I said something
2 in Mohawk and my grandson said, "Grandma, you speak
3 Indian?" I said, *isoyo-keha* (phon), 'Yes, I do.' And he
4 was -- and then they're shy, they're learning it in school.
5 And they'll say, "Moms, speak to the kids," and it doesn't
6 come out. So we really have to make our communities really
7 nurturing and loving and have activities where we can get
8 together and part of like a group of people; like go Pow
9 Wow and get together, and we laugh, and it's my new family.

10 In the communities: it's all about money.
11 It's all about power, it's all exclusion; it's all about
12 privilege; one's privileged to work, others, black-listed,
13 will never work. It's about protecting the land and then
14 watching it being destroyed at the hands of our own people.

15 You know, it's a confusing time right now.
16 I walk all over the place, and it hurts me to walk through
17 our sacred pines and see it littered with cigarette stores
18 and beer cans and drug bags, and burned garbage and junk.
19 And people say, "Well, why don't you fight with Oka?" I
20 live in Oka, I live in the Village of Oka on one of the
21 last pieces of Mohawk land; you know, it's all Mohawk land,
22 but all around me is people from Oka. I moved down and
23 built a house from the Territory, main Territory, in '92.
24 This face, in the Village of Oka; this skin colour in the
25 Village of Oka; sure they looked at me. Sure they

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1 started being a manager when my kindergarten teacher had me
2 go to the other kindergarten class and show them the book I
3 wrote about this little -- it was a boy hunting with his
4 father. I didn't even write that it was a girl hunting
5 with her father, because that was the real story, but I
6 made myself a boy, and illustrated it and went to the other
7 class. I think that's when other kids started to get
8 envious.

9 And that's when I started to go in to the
10 library and read books; and I read a lot of books. Part of
11 my healing was reading a lot of books from a lot of
12 psychologists. A lot of Indigenous and Canadian and
13 American thinkers and movers and shakers; and all that went
14 in me. I think it's coming out now.

15 And I worry about the recommendations for
16 our people. How do we reach them, when I know that
17 literacy for Indigenous people is really out there; that
18 access to internet and computers to even watch this
19 webcast; how do you get someone to walk in their community
20 health centre to see the mental health worker when that
21 door is the heaviest door you'll ever open? When the
22 person behind the desks don't walk the talk, everybody in
23 the community knows that.

24 Are you going to see a doctor that has a
25 record of, you know, like nobody survived his surgeries?

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1 Are you going to go to him? I want our people who work for
2 our people to know that it is a privilege and it's an
3 honour, to say I work for my people. I don't care if
4 you're the janitor or the CEO, it is a privilege and an
5 honour, and we need to change our own systems to make sure
6 that violence does not exist in there.

7 There are labour laws, there are policies;
8 and nobody follows them. You take any organizational chart
9 and look at all the authority lines and departmental
10 breakdowns, and just picture if you flipped that page, and
11 you see: Oh, those two are friends; Oh, those two are
12 enemies; Oh, those two are family; Oh, those two, oh those
13 two. And then you wonder why systems don't work.

14 When people are abused in the workplace,
15 they go and tell -- and nothing is done. Or, they're
16 ganged up on; now you're sitting in front of a panel of
17 people, all saying you were the one that started it. This
18 has to change. We lose good people because they can't
19 fight back like some of us can, with the knowledge or the
20 emotional integrity to see what nobody wants to see. And
21 to say what nobody is strong enough to say.

22 Violence is there, and it leaves a trail;
23 look at organizations that have high turnovers; where
24 people leave jobs, and the same job is posted; the signs
25 are all there. Nothing is happening. The more and more

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1 money is spent on management, there is less money for the
2 people they serve. Look, it's all there, the evidence is
3 there; the footprints, follow the footprints.

4 We need the money at the grassroots level.
5 In some communities, one person is handling: social
6 assistance; post-education; education; employment and
7 training. One person. And they probably make \$15 an hour.
8 And they're all going everywhere; I've got a meet over
9 here, there's a regional meeting, there's a meeting here
10 there's a meeting here, I've got to go here I've got to go
11 here. A client knocks on the door, "Sorry, I'm leaving for
12 a meeting."

13 This is the reality of First Nations'
14 structures because the government doesn't fund them,
15 doesn't give them operational and maintenance. They'll
16 build you a pretty building, and give you no means to keep
17 it running. This has to change, it does. And so, who pays
18 for that? The ones who need those services; the ones who
19 are turned away.

20 When I look back at my career at Employment
21 and Training, you know, we weren't seeing people entering
22 the labour and Canadian labour-markets. They would go --
23 go back to high school; go to vocation; get certified; find
24 a job. And then they're back at your door: "I want to go
25 back to this training." And I kept saying, "Why aren't

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1 they succeeding out there?"

2 It's only now when I take a step back -- and
3 I've always told them -- they're not healed; we're
4 investing in people that are not healed; they're dealing
5 with trauma, alcoholism, sexual abuse. We all know this,
6 I've heard testimonies. They're not ready to go back to
7 school; they're not ready to take a trade certification;
8 they're not ready to integrate into the labour market. And
9 we're supposed to partner with our health and social and
10 our economic development; we're all supposed to work
11 together with education. And that's not happening; that
12 should be the first level of partnership.

13 When someone walks in the office, there
14 should be somebody trained as an orientation counsellor
15 that can do all kinds of testing on them, and refer them to
16 where they need to go. Because some of them, yeah, you're
17 ready to go back to school, but you just -- you need
18 health, you need police, you need -- you need all kinds.
19 Don't just think that going to school and getting a job is
20 going to save you. Your trauma, you need to address it.
21 You need to address it and we have to stop this stigma of
22 people confiding their traumas and then nobody able to help
23 them.

24 Many people have gone to those doors, poured
25 out their heart -- and the person behind the desk isn't

1 able to, for many reasons, help them -- and that person
2 goes back out in the world, alone. Even more hearted; and
3 we have to all work together, to make sure that our systems
4 operate.

5 I used to say, I work for a commission where
6 they said that we were helping others find meaningful
7 employment. But 'meaningful employment' is knowing what
8 gifts you have. Some of our people are academics; some are
9 artists; some are musicians, some are helpers, caregivers,
10 teachers. We all have skills. Those are really gifts, and
11 when you put someone in to a position to use those gifts --
12 that's not work, that's meaningful employment.

13 So this concept of thinking everybody's got
14 to go back to school, everybody's got to get a degree,
15 everybody's got to enter the labour markets of Quebec and
16 Canada -- no. We need to invest in our labour markets. By
17 helping, working with education and post-secondary and
18 adult education, and the government funding these fairly --
19 because they don't.

20 Schools in Quebec and schools in First
21 Nations are still at a great financial deficit; they can't
22 hire the teachers they need to get. They can't have the
23 buildings to foster education; and so we're not going to
24 get the results. We need to start working together so that
25 the supports that we all talk about in this Inquiry -- the

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1 professional health supports of psychologists,
2 psychiatrists, all kinds of therapists, faith-healers: We
3 should have those jobs as our main; not working for a
4 mining company. Not working for a pipeline. Not tearing
5 up Mother Earth.

6 Our kids should be going into the sciences,
7 and saying, "You're good at math. What if you could turn
8 the tar sands back to pure drinking water?" This is the
9 change in employment and training that we need to see. In
10 health; you know, when I go into a health centre, I want to
11 look and see healthy people: emotionally, spiritually,
12 physically, mentally; that's health. Not something on a
13 tag that says, "I'm healthy." You know? We need to change
14 the way we think and the way we act with each other.

15 I walk around and I'm a happy person; you
16 say hi to people, and they just -- they don't even say 'hi'
17 back. And you think, part of your job is to be friendly;
18 what's wrong? And you start to think, like, "What did I do
19 wrong? Was I too rough?" That just tells me people are
20 hurting.

21 I've walked many miles in these moccasins
22 and they've taken me to many places; and I look for people
23 that come toward me, and I also see the ones that don't
24 come towards me. It tells me a lot. I'm still watching,
25 I'm still that little girl, just watching. And seeing if

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1 what people say and what they do match; that's integrity,
2 that's morality, that's ethic.

3 This is my message. It should be all our
4 mission statement. Organizations shouldn't have different
5 ones, they should all be the same: Helping teach our
6 people to care for themselves, to value themselves; to keep
7 themselves safe. I want to see daycare staff, like kids
8 running to them in the community when they're not at work.
9 I want to see teachers surrounded by youth; I want to see
10 leaders that involve the youth.

11 Right now the situation is so drastic, I
12 don't even go to Band meetings. Twelve people can decide
13 the fate of my community, because people like me don't want
14 to go in to those environments. Because I feel the
15 negative energy, I feel the silence; I hear the jabs. But
16 now, today, I know that everybody is hurting. And this is
17 our environment, this is our culture. This is our culture.

18 We talk about our traditional cultural ways,
19 but this is our culture, and you find it everywhere;
20 whether it's in the urban, on reserve, off reserve. It's
21 everywhere, it's this way of being that we became. And if
22 we're human beings -- how are we being human -- with each
23 other? That's what I ask myself: what can we do?

24 And so, my healing journey was all about me
25 going inside and looking for the answers in here, nobody

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1 could give that to me. Nobody could heal me; there have
2 been many helpers and many teachers who let me cry. I saw
3 traditional people cry and continue talking, and that was
4 the first time I saw that in my life. Because I come from
5 a world where Clan Mothers and Chiefs: "You've got 10
6 days, you don't cry no more." That's our way, but that's
7 not our reality.

8 We need to cry. "I'll cry if I want to."
9 And I don't take any shame in crying. We have to; and I
10 laugh -- I even noticed that my laugh changed. It was a
11 phony laugh before. I would make people laugh so they'd
12 like me, or I wouldn't feel uncomfortable; "Oh, they're
13 teasing me, but it's funny," you know?

14 People used to always come up to me and go,
15 "What are you?" I'm like, "Human." "No, what are you?
16 Where are you from?" I'm like, "Montreal." "No, no, no,
17 before." "United States." "Nooo." They want to know what
18 country I'm from; they think I'm Asian.

19 And it wasn't until this wonderful,
20 beautiful woman from Kahnawake, Anootsk (phon) back there,
21 she knows who she is. She said, "Cheryl, why don't you
22 wear something Native so people know when they look at
23 you?" And she was one of the first people that woke
24 something up in me that said -- and this is like the final
25 product -- to be proud to be an Indigenous woman; to carry

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1 yourself with dignity; to know when situations are risky,
2 and to not put yourself in them. Too many of our young
3 women, they see like, Hollywood-lifestyle, so they want to
4 go to the club, and go in to the clubs in Montreal. I've
5 been in them; I've seen the men just watching them. They
6 can disappear at any time. I've seen older women in there
7 with younger women, rolling up their shirts in the
8 bathroom.

9 If you open your eyes, you will see how far
10 our people have lost their way, for money. Recently
11 there's men missing in Akwesasne; one was found, but
12 there's still three men missing in Akwesasne. We're losing
13 our men, our sons, too. And there's people asking the
14 police, the Akwesasne Police, "Why aren't you doing
15 anything? Why aren't you asking their friends where they
16 are," because they know. Everybody knows what everybody
17 does on the reserve.

18 I don't care if you're selling cookies or
19 cocaine: people know, it's apparent. The signs are there.
20 Nobody works and people live in mansions. And the kids --
21 who's watching the kids, when everybody's living like Miami
22 Vice? I want my people to wake up. I want my women to
23 stand up and fight for their kids' future. Because I can
24 only fight for mine; and then my line will be gone. And if
25 nobody else stands next to me, I can't pull them out of

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1 their houses; I can't lift them out of their grief and
2 their shame and bring them to healing.

3 All I can be is a face and a voice, and
4 somebody that's a grandmother, trying to make a difference.
5 It's never been more important to me than now, at this time
6 in my life, to be an example for others. Because even when
7 you think someone's not watching, they're watching. You
8 know? They're watching; "Want to see Cheryl trip over
9 there on that rug?"

10 Oh, there's me and Justin Trudeau; yeah, I
11 remember when he came to the Inquiry and everybody was
12 like, "Oh, that picture with Justin Trudeau." And I said,
13 "Well, I have one at home." It's my son, he's a Justin.
14 But I just watched him, before he came over to me; and all
15 I saw was a young man with a wife and a family, in one of
16 the top positions in the country. He can't change it;
17 politicians can't change it; no one person can change this.
18 It's us, standing together, as men and women -- to change
19 Canada and make it what it is. By birth, I'm an American;
20 I see that president, and trust me, I would love to go down
21 and talk to Mr. Trump; and I would. As a woman.

22 So, I knew I was going to meet him, before I
23 met him; I just felt that. All the things I've done, I've
24 seen that I would do them. And you hear talk about
25 manifest destiny and stuff like that, and visioning -- and

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1 I just put it to the Creator. I just say, "Use me to speak
2 to people; guide my steps, give me the strength to go
3 through that storm, to face that conflict, to have a voice;
4 to sit in this chair; to be calm. Because You put me here,
5 You created this path, and I'm just going to take Your
6 cues."

7 You know, something happens and, "Oh, it
8 didn't happen, Cheryl." "It's all right, it wasn't meant
9 to happen," and I go on. That's how we need to live our
10 life. We need to stop over-thinking, and start listening
11 to our heart. In our traditional way, fire is symbolic to
12 love and light and energy that we need. And when we have
13 death, it's like our ashes are scattered, so that's what
14 happened when I lost my sister. That's what happened to my
15 family. I had to gather my ashes and the embers that were
16 in it, and the fire is glowing again.

17 And everybody has that ability. I was at
18 McGill and one of the faith-keepers from Kahnawake said,
19 "We have the ability to go inside our heart and call our
20 spirit back." And so, when I think of myself as that
21 little girl, getting out of the house because there was
22 arguing and sisters bossing -- when I just got away from
23 them, it was my spirit talking to me. And I found peace in
24 the forest. And when Carleen's remains were taken away, I
25 couldn't go in the woods anymore. When Labour Day came and

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1 everything started to change and dry up, and I would get
2 depressed; and when I healed, I go in the woods now. I
3 love it; I love it, I love it, and her spirit is there.

4 We were always in the woods, me and her.
5 One time she took my dad's gun, thought she was going to go
6 hunting. She brought a rabbit that she had missed, grazed
7 -- and she wanted me to finish him off. But my dad told
8 her, "See, you want to hunt? You've got to be able to kill
9 it and clean it." You know? He taught us that; I think I
10 was about eight years old when I used to take his 22 and
11 check his muskrat traps, and open them and take them, and
12 have a gun. Because he taught us gun safety.

13 Respect fire, respect water, respect
14 yourself, respect others. I had a great father; now I see
15 he had traumatic stress from the army. He was grieving his
16 mother, he was married, he had kids, he had pressures; he
17 drank, he shouldn't have drank. You know, when I was a
18 kid, I saw everybody drink and I saw people that would
19 behave in different ways -- either sad, mad or passed out.

20 And I didn't know what alcoholism was; I
21 didn't know. Until my husband went to recovery, to
22 treatment; and then I started to realize: "Ahhh -- it's a
23 disease; you can't stop if you don't have supports; and you
24 won't stop till you hit bottom." And so we have to stop
25 enabling and making it easier. You know, I look at my mom

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1 and dad, I mean -- they saw their grandchildren suffering;
2 who wouldn't want to take them out of that? But it taught
3 me to talk to my children. And say, Hey - they're
4 important; that behaviour, that's not going to work.
5 Alcohol should have no role in our life. It's caused more
6 destruction than anything. It's at the root of all the
7 trauma of people hurting people; and blackouts; and rages.

8 I don't celebrate with alcohol anymore; it's
9 just not part of our way. Neither is drugs. I pray for
10 our youth when they legalize marijuana; when the ones who
11 were arresting others for selling it are now going to
12 operate some big plants. What are our youth going to
13 think? They're going to tune out? Are we going to see
14 more dropouts?

15 We have to pray for our people. We have to
16 pray for them all the time; sometime it's the only thing we
17 can do. I pray for things and then it appears, and I go,
18 "Never doubt the power of prayer, no matter what faith you
19 say your prayers in; no matter what language, no matter how
20 you do it. Just do it." It's our greatest strength.

21 That's it for me, that's a -- I told you I
22 could talk. So the next time, I'll have more to say, but I
23 want to thank you so much. I've been waiting for this time
24 and I really believe in all of you and what you do, you
25 have my utmost respect. Because I knew when I went to the

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1 Winnipeg Roundtable and I received this blanket; and Jeff
2 Kelly was there, he put it on me. And I remember crying at
3 one point; that pain came out of me, because I heard
4 families talking about digging with their hands, looking
5 for clues; and it just touched me and out came this wail of
6 a cry. It was like, it just bent me over; and after I did
7 that, I was fine, I felt good.

8 And I snuck in to this picture; this is at
9 the National Inquiry; they told the families, there's a
10 picture of all the leaders, but families can't be in it.
11 And when you tell Cheryl that she can't be in something?
12 She's on the far right. And I want to thank our Chief
13 Perry Bellegarde for walking in late, and when he did, I
14 was already inside and next to two secret service, but
15 standing there quietly so then I wasn't at risk, and they
16 walked away.

17 And then I went to the technicians, and I'm
18 like, "Oh, you work for the ministers; oh, this is history.
19 Can you take a selfie?" And then Chief Bellegarde came in
20 and I said, "Yo, brother, can I get in the picture with
21 you?" And he's like, "Follow me," and he took off way to
22 the back. And I was standing at the end, and I'm like, "Oh
23 no, I just blew my cover." And they put a chair down, and
24 there I sit.

25 And when I joined the families, they went.

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1 "You got in?", because they were loud so they shut the door
2 on them. And I got in, and I said, "I told you I would get
3 in that picture." And so I represent the Iroquois
4 Confederacy, the Quebec First Nations, all the Canadian
5 ones, Indigenous; American Indians; Americans and
6 Canadians; when I put that hat on, I said I'm going to
7 represent you all: I'm the sum of my parts, and I won't
8 part with any one of them.

9 So thank you so much. Someone said, "Why
10 don't you be a Commissioner, Cheryl, please." And I said,
11 "I just left a career; I need to heal and I saw how hard it
12 was going to be." And I've watched, and nothing -- the
13 right thing will never be easy. So I commend you for being
14 here. Know that you have my respect and my love. And that
15 all you are doing is creating a space and an opportunity
16 for people to come and tell their truth.

17 And the ones who have testified -- I have
18 heard many, I've watched it form home on my computer and I
19 cried and I rejoiced. We're going to do this together; we
20 need everybody. So I thank you all for this opportunity.
21 And I'll see you in Ottawa -- no.

22 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you, Cheryl,
23 *migwetch*. I will now leave the space to the Commissioners,
24 if they have questions or comments. Thank you.

25 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I don't

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1 have a question: I just want to commend you for your
2 courage and your strength and all that you have given to
3 our people. And all you will give to our people, because I
4 know you're not giving up. So thank you, Cheryl.

5 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Merci
6 beaucoup. Merci, when you came to Montreal on February 15,
7 the following day of the important march across Canada --
8 where it started in B.C. -- oh, my grandmother is here.

9 And it was important that you, for us, to
10 have you there in Montreal when we met with groups. It was
11 powerful, and we saw your dedication -- I mean, way before
12 the Inquiry, of course. And you have an impact not only in
13 Quebec or this beautiful side of the country that they call
14 Canada; there's a woman who said to me, "Can you say hello
15 on my behalf." Mary Graham -- yes.

16 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Oh, Mary -- where's
17 the camera? Mary, thank you, Mary. You make me stronger
18 too, sister. I have many sisters across this land; and I
19 lost one sister and I gained so many. That's amazing; my
20 heart is in Winnipeg. I know they healed me there, they
21 were so kind to me there. And I also know, to be part of a
22 family when they're hurting -- we always hurt the ones we
23 love.

24 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Thank you,
25 thank you for coming in Ste. Eustache last August -- to

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1 guide us, to remind us why we're here, why we're part of
2 this journey, to give us the love from your people. And
3 most of all, to find your blanket.

4 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** I know, my blankie --

5 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** I worried so
6 much, the hotel said they have it, so merci beaucoup. And
7 I know our path will not end here. And yes, if we have
8 another beautiful, important day in Ottawa, I don't know
9 why you said Ottawa -- but I'm okay. We need you. Merci
10 beaucoup, beaucoup, beaucoup.

11 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Thank you.

12 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** I don't want
13 to repeat what has been said. I just want to express my
14 gratitude for all that you have taught us here today and
15 shared with us, about your sister and about you. And about
16 your journey. I was going to say 'your work', but that's
17 not the right word. And thank you for the guidance that
18 you have given us in our small encounters at rallies or in
19 meeting spaces, and now here. Thank you, thank you so
20 much.

21 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** My honour; thank you.

22 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So I will ask the
23 Commissioners to close this session.

24 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Cheryl, est-*
25 *ce que tu accepterais un cadeau de notre part?*

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1 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** *Oui, avec Plaisir.*

2 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Moi je suis*
3 *chanceuse, j'ai deux grand-mères. Une grand-mère qui parle*
4 *français puis une grand-mère qui parle anglais. Je suis la*
5 *seule qui a deux grand-mères. C'est comme ça, et Bernie*
6 *dans son territoire ils ont été très très touchés par*
7 *toutes les femmes autochtones qui osent venir ici*
8 *rencontrer leurs vérités, partager leurs vérités. Alors,*
9 *les femmes de Haida Gwaii ont décidé de donner des plumes*
10 *d'aigle a toutes les familles qui viennent ici. Oui, et*
11 *évidemment nous t'offrons ces plumes-là, une plume qui*
12 *viens d'un autre territoire à Sechelt au B.C., ou l'a*
13 *encore des femmes ont acceptées de nous offrir ces plumes.*
14 *À travers le Canada, beaucoup de nations on répondu à cet*
15 *appel. Donc, nous sommes fiers, nous allons vous donner*
16 *du thé du Labrador, des petites graines pour faire pousser*
17 *une plante.*

18 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** *Oui.*

19 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Oui, puis*
20 *envoyez-nous des photos de la plante, mais c'est une*
21 *renaissance. Alors c'est ma grand-mère Penelope qui va*
22 *vous l'offrir. Alors les gens dans la salle, si vous*
23 *voulez donner de l'amour de et l'espoir, vous êtes la*
24 *bienvenue. Merci beaucoup.*

25 **MS. MOREEN KONWATSITSAWI MELOCHE:** *Okay,*

1 *Niá:wen*, Cheryl. For the others, lunch is ready in the
2 room next door. Drink lots of water, please, we're going
3 to come to our next testimony at 1:45. *Migwetch*, thank
4 you.

5

6 --- Exhibits (code: P01P13P0101)

7 **Exhibit 1:** Five folders of digital images displayed
8 during the public testimony of Cheryl
9 McDonald; Folder 0 "Family" - eight images;
10 Folder 1 "Sister" - nine images; Folder 2
11 "Healing" - 28 images; Folder 3 "Advocacy" -
12 five images; Folder 4 "Cheryl" - 17 images.

13 --- Upon adjourning at 12:24

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Shirley Chang, 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.



Shirley Chang

March 16, 2018