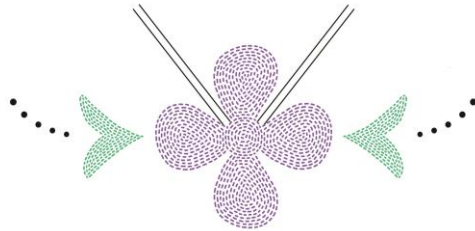


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Sheraton Cavalier Hotel, South Ballroom
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan**



PUBLIC

Thursday November 23, 2017

Public Volume 30

**Marilyn Wapass,
In relation to Maxine Grace Wapass**

Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette

Commission Counsel: Jennifer Cox

Royal Reporting Services Ltd.

II
APPEARANCES

Advocate for Children and Youth Saskatchewan

Non-appearance

Assembly of First Nations

Non-appearance

Government of Canada

Sarah Churchill-Joly (Legal Counsel)

Government of Saskatchewan

Colleen Matthews (Legal Counsel)

Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik (Women Walking Together)

Non-appearance

Kawacatoose First Nation

Non-appearance

Native Women's Association of Canada

Neegann Aaswaakshin (Legal Counsel)

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, AnânuKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women's Association Inc., Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, Manitoba Inuit Association

Non-appearance

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation

Non-appearance

Women of Metis Nation/Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak

Non-appearance

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INDEX OF EXHIBITS

Exhibit No.

(Code P01P06P0303)

- 1 Electronic folder of images displayed on
 monitors during the public hearing.

WITNESS: MARILYN WAPASS
(IN RELATION TO MAXINE GRACE WAPASS)
HEARD BY: COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE
COMMISSION COUNSEL: JENNIFER COX
GRANDMOTHER: BERNIE POITRAS
COURT REPORTER: SHAWN HURD
REGISTRAR: BRYAN ZANDBERG

5 (Commenced at 11:42 a.m.)

6 MS. JENNIFER COX: Good morning, Madam
7 Commissioner. I wish to present to you
8 Marilyn Wapass, and before we begin, Marilyn
9 would like to do a promise to tell the truth
10 with the feather.

11 **MARILYN WAPASS, promise to tell the truth in a good**
12 **way on eagle feather:**

13 MS. JENNIFER COX: Thank you. So, Madam
14 Commissioner, Marilyn has brought a drum with
15 her this morning, and she'd like to do her
16 own introduction. Thank you.

17 COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Mmhmm.

18 (DRUM PLAYED)

19 MS. JENNIFER COX: So, Marilyn, if you want
20 like to start perhaps by telling the
21 commissioner a little bit about who you are.

22 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: My name is Marilyn
23 Wapass, and I'm from the Thunderchild First
24 Nation. I -- I travelled today to be the
25 voice for my sister, to be the voice for my

1 sister Maxine, and to be the voice for all of
2 those women who -- who are missing and
3 murdered and to be the voice for my children.

4 MS. JENNIFER COX: And today we have your
5 children beside you. So on this side of you
6 we have Tearen, and on the other side of you
7 we have Brody. So, Marilyn, you're here to
8 talk about your sister Maxine. Perhaps you
9 can tell the commissioner a little bit about
10 Maxine.

11 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: Maxine was my little --
12 my little sister. She -- she was -- she was
13 actually my -- my late auntie's daughter, and
14 my auntie passed away when we were very
15 young, and my mom -- my mom took care of her
16 and my grandpa. My grandpa also took care of
17 all of us.

18 And so we grew up in
19 Thunderchild, and like so many other
20 Indigenous people, we -- we lived in poverty,
21 and there was definitely a lot of addiction
22 within our community, and we -- we saw that.
23 We lived through that, but we also lived in a
24 time where my grandfather taught us and
25 showed us the importance of living off the

1 land, and so we had an extended family
2 system, and I have so many other family
3 members who couldn't be here today, so --

4 But Maxine -- Maxine was
5 a beautiful person. She was a light, and I
6 am the oldest of -- of ten of us, and so I
7 had a responsibility to take care of her and
8 my siblings, and so -- and Maxine was very
9 close to me growing up, and she struggled.
10 She struggled with her own addiction and life
11 was not easy, and I didn't understand it, and
12 it was through this entire experience, my
13 life experience and my -- my -- my life, this
14 path that I walk on, I'm trying to be her
15 voice, and it -- it -- it's opened my eyes to
16 a lot of issues that we face as Indigenous
17 people, and so sorry I'm rambling, but --

18 MS. JENNIFER COX: So when you say it opened
19 your eyes to a lot of things, perhaps you
20 could talk a little bit about that.

21 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: Well, I'm going to talk
22 about what happened, and then I'll go
23 through -- through all of that. So in 2001 I
24 was working here in the city of Saskatoon,
25 and I received a phone call one day from my

1 little sister, and she was asking me to take
2 her back home to our community in
3 Thunderchild, and so I said that day that I
4 would because I knew that -- that she was
5 struggling -- struggling with things and she
6 needed to be at home with our family, so
7 later that day after I spoke with her and I
8 was -- I was going to drive her back home,
9 after I spoke with her, I went home, and she
10 wasn't there, and I never saw her again.

11 And so for -- for a
12 little bit, a little while I didn't hear from
13 her and I was getting very worried, and just
14 over a week -- and my mom was already very
15 very frantic, and she was calling me, and --
16 and so after about a week, I -- I went to the
17 police station to try and file a missing
18 person's report, and I was in distress at
19 this time, just as I am now. I was crying,
20 and I went there and asked for help, and they
21 treated me so horrible.

22 I was under the -- I was
23 under the understanding that when a person
24 loses their loved one and they're missing
25 that they need to report them within 24

1 hours, and it was over a week, and they
2 didn't even care, and they didn't want to
3 take her -- they didn't want to take her
4 missing person's report, but there was one --
5 one police officer who walked by, who
6 happened to walk by, and he heard my -- he
7 heard the distress in my voice and he saw me,
8 and he went out of his way to come and see
9 what was going on, and I don't know who that
10 man was, but I'll never forget him, and he
11 took my report, and he told them, Take her
12 report and put it on the evening news and we
13 need to look for this woman, and so we began
14 our search.

15 We began our search, and
16 we started hanging posters, and we started
17 looking everywhere, and we started trying to
18 get help, and my family came together, and
19 there was a police officer -- there was a
20 police officer who was assigned to the case,
21 and he was just -- he didn't care, and we
22 argued, and I was frantic and I was drowning
23 in despair, and I don't even know if he was
24 even trying to look, and I -- I was looking
25 and looking, and then months later after

1 calling and calling and trying to find her
2 and putting myself at risk in going out there
3 and looking for her myself and hanging
4 posters and travelling, and finally he
5 went -- he went on vacation, and he didn't
6 even tell me. He didn't tell me where things
7 were. There was -- we had no communication.

8 And so there were two
9 other police officers who stepped in while he
10 was away on vacation, and I'm so thankful for
11 those two police officers because for that
12 short time, that short period of time that
13 they -- they came and took over that case,
14 they -- they found so much information. They
15 supported me, they listened to me, and they
16 cared, and then -- and then eventually the
17 other police officer came back, and -- and I
18 was right back to having no communication and
19 back to being mistreated.

20 And so I decided to move
21 back to my community of Thunderchild to be
22 closer with my family and to have the
23 supports that I needed because it was just --
24 it was too much. It was so difficult to even
25 just focus on simple tasks, so I travelled.

1 I went home.

2 And then -- and then the
3 following year, February 6th of 2002, just
4 before I was leaving for work, there was a
5 knock at my door and it was the police, and I
6 knew that -- they didn't even have to say
7 anything, and I knew that they -- I knew that
8 they had found her, and they -- they had
9 found her that fall buried in a shallow
10 grave, and she was naked. A farmer found her
11 while he was out -- out hunting, and her
12 skull was sticking out of the grave.

13 And so we -- and so we --
14 we had a funeral, and the investigation
15 turned into a murder investigation, and only
16 then did -- did things start really moving,
17 but by then I had help. I had the Native
18 Women's Association of Canada that came and
19 helped me. I had -- I had met with other
20 family members who were looking for their
21 loved ones, and they helped me too. They
22 stood with me, and I got my strength from
23 them.

24 And so a few months later
25 when the snow melted and the police told me

1 again that we had to have a second burial
2 because they found more parts, but not only
3 that, that they had to exhume her mother's
4 grave to get DNA and all of these -- these --
5 these horrible things that were -- that we
6 had to do when -- and -- and I had to consult
7 with elders about exhuming the grave and
8 about what to do about the body parts because
9 I wanted to follow the cultural protocols,
10 and so -- and so the investigation continued.

11 The investigation
12 continued, and then the police came to me
13 months later and told me that -- that they
14 had somebody. They had somebody, and he
15 confessed to killing my sister, and then so
16 we had to go through the entire court
17 process. All the while I'm -- I'm -- I'm not
18 sure what -- I wasn't sure what to expect,
19 and it was so drawn out, and all the while it
20 seemed like the -- the justice system was
21 protecting him and his rights.

22 So eventually after
23 numerous court proceedings, we went -- we
24 went to court. We went to trial just down
25 the block from here, and day after day I had

1 to sit in the courtroom with the man who
2 killed my sister. Day after day I had to sit
3 in that courtroom with the media, who all the
4 while they were writing things dehumanizing
5 my sister, re-victimizing me and my family,
6 so I waited. I waited, and my son here, my
7 son -- I was pregnant with him, and I thank
8 the Creator for bringing him to me because it
9 carried me through all of this knowing that I
10 was going to have a little boy baby.

11 And so I sat and I waited
12 every day, and I listened to the court
13 proceedings, and all of this -- all of this
14 was taking place after all of the -- after
15 everything that happened to Neil Stonechild
16 was coming to light within this city, all of
17 the things that the police did to him which
18 created such a turmoil within the justice
19 system, and I sat in that courtroom, and I
20 saw how the prosecutor was trying to argue my
21 sister's case, and I saw how that judge kept
22 defending the person who killed her, and I
23 knew -- I knew the judge already -- before
24 the outcome, I knew that the judge already --
25 already was going to side with the man who

1 killed my sister. I knew it.

2 And so I listened to the
3 man who confessed to killing her. I listened
4 to the recording in the courtroom. I saw him
5 break down. I saw him cry and say, yes, that
6 he killed her and he took her life, and then
7 the judge threw out -- threw out -- threw out
8 his confession, and then he let him go free.

9 How does that happen?

10 How does somebody who confessed to taking a
11 human life, how do they get away with that?
12 And that day, that day that that judge made
13 that decision, he sent a very strong and
14 powerful message. He sent a message to the
15 rest of society that it was okay to kill
16 Indigenous women, and who's going to be
17 accountable for that? Where's my justice?

18 And then my eyes were
19 being opened. Slowly through my pain I was
20 seeing things for what it truly -- truly is.
21 So in my pain -- in my pain and everything
22 that I was feeling, my little boy came into
23 this world, and in my pain, I turned to the
24 ceremonies, and I crawled into the sweat
25 lodge a broken person, and I asked the

1 Creator to help me, and the Creator -- the
2 Creator pitied me and heard my prayers, and
3 slowly over time I became stronger and I
4 began to heal, all the while taking part in
5 vigils and walks. I protested on Parliament
6 Hill. I went to the Robert Pickton trial.

7 I gave up an
8 opportunity -- I gave up -- I gave up my
9 hopes and my dreams that one day that I would
10 be a lawyer and that I -- that when she went
11 missing, I was in university and I changed my
12 career, and I went and I -- I found a job
13 where I could work on the streets with
14 people -- with people who were suffering with
15 addiction, with people who went missing, with
16 women homeless, with people who I have been
17 so honoured and so humbled to meet.

18 And so I started -- I
19 started trying to learn as much as I can, and
20 I started healing and going to more and more
21 ceremonies, and I became stronger and moved
22 back to the city, and -- and I started
23 picking up the pieces of my life, started
24 working. I got my degree, and then I decided
25 to move for work, and I moved back home years

1 later.

2 And then I had another
3 relative who went missing, and then in my
4 mind, my uncle -- in my mind I'm thinking --
5 and my family was getting very worried after
6 a few days, and in my mind I'm thinking this
7 doesn't happen to a person twice, and so
8 we -- we rallied ourselves and we got
9 together because I knew what to do.

10 I was prepared now, and I
11 phoned the police and I said, My uncle -- my
12 uncle Anthony Wapass was reported missing,
13 please tell me what you're doing about this,
14 and the lady said, Well, we've sent emails
15 out, and I said, My name is Marilyn Wapass.
16 I'm from the Thunderchild First Nations, and
17 I had a family who went missing and murdered.
18 I'm a part of the Native Women's Association
19 of Canada, and I lodged a formal complaint
20 against the police officer who mistreated me
21 in my sister's case, and I want to know what
22 you're going to do to find my uncle, and
23 within minutes they had me talking to the
24 sergeant and they had people out there
25 looking for him. Well, what about all those

1 people that don't have that power, who don't
2 know what to say?

3 And so -- and so we had a
4 search for him, and we went and we looked and
5 we found his body. We found his body. He
6 was beaten to death not even a thousand
7 meters from my house, and we had to go
8 through it all over again, but this time --
9 this time I knew -- I knew what to say and I
10 knew what to look for and I knew how to deal
11 with these things, and this time things were
12 going to be done properly, but, again, my
13 family had to be re-victimized when they
14 weren't even done healing and dealing with
15 the loss of my sister, and so we went to
16 court again, but this time there were two men
17 who were found guilty, and they were
18 sentenced to life.

19 So, again, having to --
20 to go through all of the pain and that
21 trauma, again I turned to the Creator and I
22 crawled into that lodge, and, again, the
23 Creator took me and healed me, and so I
24 started praying and I started going to
25 ceremonies and started working and again

1 trying to pick up the pieces of my life, and
2 then something else happened.

3 I decided to take some
4 time off of work, and I got a phone call one
5 day. I got a phone call from another woman
6 within my community, and she said to me,
7 Marilyn, they're trying to blow up our sun
8 dance grounds, and I didn't understand what
9 was going on. I didn't understand what she
10 was trying to -- to say to me because she was
11 so frantic, and I saw. I went there. I went
12 there right away.

13 Our sun dance being the
14 highest ceremony that we have as Cree people,
15 and I went there, and I saw. I saw seismic
16 testing being done on this -- on our
17 ceremonial grounds. I saw our ceremonial
18 cloth ripped and tattered on the ground and
19 trees, and there were explosives in the
20 ground, and in my mind and in my heart, I saw
21 that the very thing that kept me going, that
22 healed me was being threatened, and so I
23 started a protest with many other women and
24 people from my community, people who stood in
25 front of the trucks, people who tried to

1 stop -- stop the testing, and then I saw -- I
2 saw people come from all over to come and
3 support us, but there was a day -- because
4 there were already explosives laying in the
5 ground, and we couldn't stop them all, only
6 the ones closest to the lodges, and I saw
7 that there were too many of them, that we
8 couldn't do anything about it, so they came
9 and did their seismic testing around the area
10 because we wouldn't allow them on the
11 grounds, and that day that they came and they
12 detonated -- detonated them, the ground shook
13 like an earthquake. Our ceremonial ground
14 shook, and I was so traumatized, and then I
15 was filed -- I was served with court papers
16 because by then they had filed an injunction
17 to remove me from that ground, and so after
18 refusing to leave, they arrested me and again
19 I was in court, and I was in the very same
20 courtroom where my sister's trial was being
21 held, and again I had to face all of that,
22 and eventually I lost, but I saw in my eyes
23 and I know this. I saw -- I saw that our
24 women -- I saw that our women were being
25 murdered because of what's in the ground,

1 because of the resources that the people
2 are -- that the government and the companies
3 want.

4 At the end of the day --
5 and you cannot tell me any different because
6 I know and I've seen it. I've lived through
7 it. You cannot tell me that these women are
8 not being killed and murdered, and the
9 government is allowing it to happen while
10 they try and take our connection away from
11 the land, our mother. You cannot tell me any
12 different, and it's all for money. It's all
13 for oil while they corrupt even our own
14 government systems, oppressing our women, and
15 the women in our communities don't even have
16 the platform to speak about their concerns,
17 our women who are often blamed and -- for
18 their own oppression and their own pain, our
19 women who have to come into this world to
20 suffer at the hands of men but, not only
21 that, our men who are stripped of their
22 power.

23 These issues are about
24 racism. They're about discrimination, and
25 it's entrenched in our systems. You cannot

1 tell me any different. I know and I see it,
2 and this is my life. I've seen people dying
3 on the streets. I've seen our people in
4 the -- in this province, in this province
5 where there's so much hate, our people are
6 suffering with so much. The rates of HIV and
7 AIDS in this province are through the roof,
8 and it's our people who are becoming
9 infected. It's the system that continuously
10 tries to oppress us to try and silence us and
11 cut our ties to the land.

12 Our women, we get our
13 strength from the land, from Mother Earth.
14 She gives us strength, and she's sick and
15 she's dying, and our people are sick and
16 they're dying. We're protectors of this
17 earth, and so many of our people have
18 forgotten that because they're suffering, and
19 that's because of the system.

20 I have issues with how I
21 was treated by the City Police. I have
22 issues with -- with the judges. I've seen
23 and I witnessed firsthand and I've been
24 treated so horribly, but so have others, and
25 they don't even have that voice themselves.

1 I'm here -- honestly I'm
2 here because I have no faith in this Inquiry.
3 I have no faith in this Inquiry because it --
4 it represents the system that has oppressed
5 me, that is killing our people, but I'm here.
6 I'm here because -- because of these boys,
7 because of the children. I'm here because of
8 my friends who have lost loved ones and are
9 still looking because they need that voice,
10 and we need to keep going. We need to try,
11 and I'm not blaming -- I'm not blaming the
12 men. I'm not pointing fingers because it
13 boils down to racism, it boils down to hate,
14 and each and every one of us as individual
15 people, every morning that we wake up, we
16 have a choice that we could bring light into
17 this world or we can feed that -- that
18 darkness that we have to live with every day,
19 and I'm trying, and it's real hard not to sit
20 here and be angry. It's really hard not to
21 have hate in my heart because my culture is
22 about equality and love. This is about the
23 genocide of our people. This just isn't
24 about Indigenous women. This is a spiritual
25 battle.

1 seeing that because our people have been used
2 as political scapegoats from the government
3 for so long. Our -- the rest of society does
4 not see the beauty of our culture.

5 I know that I'm talking
6 about things that may not seem relevant to my
7 sister's death, but they are very much
8 connected, these issues, very much connected.

9 My reality is that I have
10 to wake up every morning and I have to go out
11 and step in and walk in society, and I'm
12 going to get mistreated. I'm going to face
13 racism. I'm going to face discrimination,
14 and so do these boys. That's their reality,
15 and they're here today because they need to
16 see that so that I can prepare them and
17 hopefully teach them and show them compassion
18 because that's what this world needs is
19 compassion, but how do you integrate that
20 into a system that is built on the oppression
21 of our people? I don't know what the answer
22 is, but we have to try.

23 MS. JENNIFER COX: So, Marilyn, you
24 mentioned that the police -- that when your
25 sister was murdered what police force was it

1 that you were dealing with?

2 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: This was the Saskatoon
3 City Police.

4 MS. JENNIFER COX: And you also mentioned
5 that you had made a complaint to -- was it
6 the Saskatoon City Police that you made the
7 complaint?

8 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: I made -- at that time
9 the FSIN had started their own investigation
10 unit because of what happened with Neil
11 Stonechild and his death, his murder, and so
12 our people -- there was a pattern that was
13 developing that our people didn't have a
14 place in which to come forward with -- with
15 all of these things that were taking place,
16 and FSIN created a justice investigation
17 unit, and so I reached out to them, and
18 they -- they helped me to lodge a complaint.

19 MS. JENNIFER COX: And perhaps for the
20 benefit of the commissioner and some of the
21 people in the audience, can you tell
22 everybody about your experience with the FSIN
23 Special Investigation Unit?

24 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: So I went and I -- I went
25 and I met with the investigation person at

1 that time, and from the very beginning, he --
2 he showed me kindness. He was a former
3 police officer. He was First Nations, and
4 he -- he came from B.C. to work, and he
5 listened to my story. He understood and he
6 walked with me, and he -- he gave me options
7 and he cared, and so together we started
8 lodging this complaint. We wrote letters.
9 FSIN wrote letters to the police department
10 in my sister's case, and they demanded that
11 something be done about it, and so they
12 started an investigation.

13 They started an internal
14 investigation in the city here, and the
15 police officer went into early retirement
16 before anything could become of it, but after
17 all of these years looking back and looking
18 back at all of those other police officers
19 who tried, and what I remember most is their
20 kindness and their compassion, even though I
21 was angry and I -- I couldn't understand. I
22 had to maneuver around -- it was -- it seemed
23 like there was constant obstacles that I had
24 to face, but it -- it's those that actually
25 cared that really helped me through all of

1 that, so FSIN and that investigation unit
2 helped me during that time.

3 MS. JENNIFER COX: Do you think it would
4 have been possible to get help like that if
5 they didn't exist?

6 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: No, no.

7 MS. JENNIFER COX: And just -- just so that
8 other people also understand, FSIN stands
9 for?

10 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: The Federation of
11 Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

12 MS. JENNIFER COX: And I think you said it,
13 but just so it's clear, you did -- that
14 came -- the Special Investigation Unit, can
15 you tell the commissioner how that came to
16 be?

17 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: When -- to my
18 understanding, to my understanding when
19 Neil -- Neil Stonechild's body was found
20 frozen outside of -- in the outskirts of the
21 city, and there were other First Nations men
22 who these things were happening, and they had
23 stories and -- and so -- and these stories
24 were making it to the media, and so FSIN,
25 that's -- if I'm not mistaken, that's when

1 FSIN actually opened that department to take
2 in these stories so that they could have --
3 so that they could have a place to go because
4 it was the police that were dumping these men
5 outside of the city, and it was the police
6 who -- who took Neil Stonechild out there.
7 It is the police who took his life, and I
8 believe it. I know it. They murdered him.
9 They're allowing our people to be murdered.

10 There are people within
11 these systems that are perpetrators, and
12 they're so protected, and that's the truth,
13 and there are people, our Indigenous people
14 who are -- have to live with the trauma of
15 residential schools who don't have the voice
16 to speak about all of this injustice that's
17 taking place because at the end of the day,
18 these missing and murdered women, everybody
19 knows someone. Everyone's related to them,
20 to someone. This issue is so deep.

21 And we as Indigenous
22 people, we are a collective. We are all one.
23 We are all affected by this. We are being
24 targeted. We are being targeted, and it all
25 boils down to money. It all boils down to

1 the land. The government is still trying to
2 kill the Indian in the child. It's never
3 stopped. They are still at war with our
4 people, and I know this. I've seen it, and
5 this is my life. This is not something I
6 just read out of a book or I had to learn in
7 university. I seen it, I lived it, and
8 they've used our people as scapegoats, and
9 they've created such a hate towards
10 Aboriginal people and created such a division
11 amongst Indigenous people and non-Indigenous
12 people. There is no education out there on
13 the importance of our people and our culture.
14 Sorry. I went off a little bit.

15 MS. JENNIFER COX: That's okay. So based on
16 your experience, do you think there's a few
17 things that you would recommend that should
18 be changed?

19 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: Well, definitely. There
20 are changes that need to be made within the
21 police system, within the judicial system,
22 within the education system, within the
23 health-care system, within -- like I said,
24 within every sector of society.

25 There needs to be serious

1 policy changes that integrate our culture.
2 There needs to be policies and laws made
3 that -- that -- where people are held
4 accountable for their mistreatment of -- of
5 our people, of anybody, anybody. Nobody
6 should be discriminated because of their sex
7 or their colour.

8 People need to start
9 going -- people need to start being charged
10 for hating, for hating, for bringing hate
11 into this world. There needs to be serious
12 laws made against racism. I think that the
13 government, there needs to be an
14 investigation that's done in the government
15 system itself including Indian Affairs, but
16 who's going to do that?

17 And, as I said earlier,
18 there also needs to be laws in place that
19 protect the land because we -- we need the
20 land. We -- it's a part of our ceremonies.
21 It's -- it's a part of -- we have everything
22 that we have. We have this water to drink.
23 We have the clothes that we're wearing.
24 Everything that we have throughout the day,
25 throughout our life is because of the land.

1 We need to protect the land.

2 We need -- there also
3 needs to be -- there also needs to be more
4 funding available to -- to the agencies that
5 are helping people on the grassroots level,
6 public service agencies.

7 There needs to be an
8 education that takes place that all of these
9 issues that we face as Indigenous people, the
10 issue of missing and murdered women, the high
11 rates of HIV and AIDS, the -- the high rates
12 of Aboriginal people who -- who are being
13 taken, these children taken from their homes,
14 the overrepresentation of -- of Indigenous
15 people in the prison systems. All of these
16 issues, they're all connected, and our men,
17 our men need a space to heal and to grow so
18 that they can protect us. Our men need their
19 power back too. There needs to be a system
20 in place where our grass -- our grassroots
21 people are -- have access to -- to healing.

22 The universities -- for
23 most programs at the university level, most
24 programs to take a native studies course,
25 it's usually optional, but when you have

1 people who are studying to become -- to work
2 in -- in -- work with Indigenous people,
3 maybe -- maybe they'll be lucky if they -- if
4 they take one class. Well, one class isn't
5 enough, and even there in the universities,
6 the professors, those that -- that are
7 teaching and educating people, what about
8 their privilege? What about their bias?
9 What are they teaching about Indigenous
10 people?

11 I don't know how to say
12 this and I don't know how to -- how it needs
13 to be done, and -- and I don't want to say it
14 where I'm offending anybody, but the white
15 people need to look at their own privilege,
16 and not everything is about money. People
17 need to understand that First Nations people
18 have -- we have our own world view that does
19 not focus around money.

20 So there is a lot of
21 education that needs to -- that needs to take
22 place. There are policies that need to be
23 made in every system that directly look at
24 racism and discrimination, and the people
25 that work within these systems, they need to

1 be accountable for that racism and that
2 discrimination because it's killing our
3 people. It's killing Indigenous women.
4 Okay.

5 MS. JENNIFER COX: So the one thing -- the
6 last thing that I would ask maybe, Marilyn,
7 is there's been pictures that have been
8 coming up on the screen, and maybe you could
9 talk a little bit about what's in those
10 pictures.

11 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: So that's my sister
12 Maxine, and she was always smiling and
13 laughing, and -- and she was really good at
14 laughing at herself too. That's me putting
15 up a poster when she was missing, and that's
16 her just not long before she passed away, and
17 she was very close to our grandmother, so
18 close to her.

19 My grandparents passed
20 away before Maxine went missing, and I am so
21 glad that they didn't have to go through what
22 we were all going through when we looked for
23 her.

24 I know at the end of the
25 day that she's still with me. She's here

1 right now with me. I know that. I know that
2 we come from a place of light, and I know
3 that I'll see her again. I'll see that smile
4 and hear those jokes. I know that this isn't
5 our home. I know that. I believe that, and
6 I know that I'm going to go back home to a
7 place where all of us -- it doesn't matter
8 what skin colour we are, that we're all going
9 to be in this place where we all love each
10 other. I know that, and I know I need to
11 forgive and I need to let go, but -- and that
12 I have important -- all of us have important
13 lessons to learn here while we're here. I
14 know that, and I know every single one of us,
15 regardless if we're Indigenous or not, we
16 have this opportunity to make this world a
17 better place, to speak out for a greater
18 humanity. I know that, but it's -- it's so
19 hard when you're mistreated and you have to
20 face and be the subject of hate.

21 It's hard. It's hard and
22 it hurts, and we need to open our eyes. We
23 need to remember. We need to remember that
24 we all have to be accountable for the things
25 that we do while we're here, and we're all

1 going to be standing before the Creator,
2 every single one of us, and we have to answer
3 for how we treat each other here. I know
4 that.

5 And I want to say to all
6 of those people who are trying to take a
7 stand, who are trying to speak out for the
8 issues that we face as Indigenous people, I
9 want to tell them to try and remember that,
10 to rise above the hate, to rise above the
11 discrimination and the oppression, to speak
12 for our Creator and our Mother Earth in a
13 good way with peace and love and light and
14 forgiveness. That's what my sister has
15 taught me.

16 MS. JENNIFER COX: Madam Commissioner, I
17 don't have any more questions.

18 COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Merci beaucoup, Maitre
19 Cox. Merci beaucoup, Marilyn, and two
20 beautiful young men to be here and to remind
21 that our men have a role for us, the
22 grandmother, the mothers and the daughters
23 and granddaughters. We need our son to
24 protect us when they'll be grown up. It's
25 all the wish of mothers.

1 So thank you. If I can
2 say something, there's many women that we've
3 heard across Canada who said what you said
4 about the relevant -- how do we say in
5 English -- between Mother Earth and what's
6 happening to us, so it was relevant. We --

7 MS. JENNIFER COX: Connection?

8 COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Connection? That she was
9 saying that -- okay, but she -- I'm using her
10 word, connection. Thank you. And it is, and
11 it was very strong in memory too that women
12 that fought for the water, for the protection
13 of the water and the land, and they talked
14 about you and your fight against the oil
15 industry, so your work resonates across
16 Canada, so thank you for what you're doing
17 for our Mother Earth. Thank you so much.

18 And Saskatchewan -- when
19 we do provinces or territory, I'll name it
20 with how we call it here in Saskatchewan.
21 All the families share about what was their
22 definition or reality about the racism and
23 discrimination and how the system responded
24 or didn't responded to them. So I say thank
25 you for you for sharing to us, to Canada for

1 those who are listening, for people in this
2 room, also how it felt, how it didn't support
3 you in your journey, and we will try to
4 honour that when we will present the report,
5 and I'll have some question -- question I
6 need to know and I need to understand. I'm
7 not a lawyer. I used to be involved with
8 NWAC. That's my school, that's my world, and
9 we all want to understand why a judge will
10 make that decision, so I turn around with
11 Indigenous women who are lawyers and we're --
12 how do we say? We are blessed that we have
13 Indigenous women working in this Inquiry and
14 will explain to me why. I need to know why
15 and understand and to see if it's -- how do
16 we say -- a trend, something that we --

17 MS. JENNIFER COX: Right, trend.

18 COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Merci beaucoup. Yeah.

19 So all your recommendation, we took good
20 note. I know we have our registrar who
21 making sure that everything you said, it's
22 well registered and it -- it follows what
23 we've been hearing. It's adding of what
24 we've been hearing, so merci beaucoup, and
25 that was -- it's going to be something you'll

1 have to explain to me.

2 MS. JENNIFER COX: Oui.

3 COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Merci. Thank you, and
4 thank you for your story.

5 MS. MARILYN WAPASS: I also want to say thank
6 you to -- I want to say thank you to the
7 Creator. I want to say thank you to the
8 grandfathers and the grandmothers 'cause
9 they're hearing me, and they hear me and
10 they've helped me and helped me carry --
11 carried me, but I have people here that came
12 and supported me. There are families who
13 I've known for many years that are here
14 that -- that are speaking here. I want to
15 say thank you to them, and when they share
16 their stories, they're speaking for my
17 sister, and I want to say thank you for that.

18 I want to say thank you
19 to the agencies that are working so hard to
20 bring these issues to light. I want to say
21 thank you to those that have given me the
22 opportunity to -- to help me to learn and to
23 grow and to see things as they are for the
24 women's group here in Saskatchewan. (Speaks
25 in native language). Thank you, thank you

1 for all the work that you do.

2 I want to say thank you
3 to the Saskatoon Tribal Council because when
4 I walked into this place, they came right to
5 me, and these men, my friends, they came to
6 protect me, my husband. Thank you so much.
7 (Speaks in native language).

8 MS. JENNIFER COX: So before you go,
9 Marilyn, we have some gifts that the
10 commissioner is going to provide to you, so
11 one of the gifts we have is feathers, eagle
12 feathers that are from the grandmothers in
13 Hadai Gwaii, and we are providing you with a
14 feather for each of you, and, in addition,
15 we're also providing you with some seeds to
16 plant when the weather gets a little bit
17 better, and we would ask a favour of you, and
18 that is if you grow something with the seeds
19 that you take a picture and send it to us.
20 That will give us -- it's a hope, the growth
21 that we're hoping that will come of this
22 Inquiry. Thank you. If we could conclude or
23 adjourn this matter. Thank you.

24 (Adjourned at 12:58 p.m.)

25

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I, Shawn Hurd, CSR, Certified Court Reporter, hereby certify that the foregoing pages contain a true and correct transcription of my stenograph notes taken herein to the best of my knowledge, skill and ability.



Shawn Hurd, CSR

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