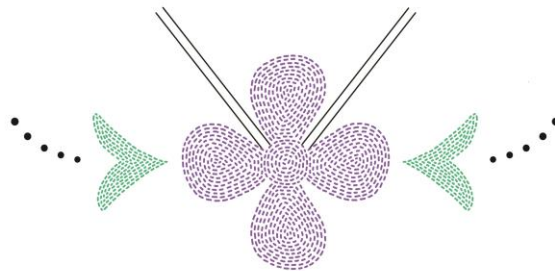


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Riverlodge Place
Thompson, Manitoba**



PUBLIC

Wednesday March 21, 2018

**Public Volume 75
Fred Stevens, In Relation to Connie Stevens**

**Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette
Commission Counsel: Shelby Thomas**

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Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs	Non-appearance
Government of Canada	Lucy Bell (Legal counsel)
Government of Manitoba	Samuel Thomson (Legal counsel)
Manitoba Moon Voices Inc.	Non-appearance
MMIWG Coalition (Manitoba)	Non-appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada & Manitoba Inuit Association	Non-appearance
Winnipeg Police Service	Non-appearance
Women of the Metis Nation	Non-appearance

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1 Thompson, Manitoba

2 --- Upon commencing on Wednesday, March 21, 2018 at 9:43
3 a.m.

4 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Good morning,
5 Commissioner Audette. This morning we'll be hearing from
6 Fred Stevens.

7 Good morning, Commissioner Audette. This
8 morning we'll be hearing from Fred Stevens, who will be
9 sharing his sister's story, Connie Stevens.

10 Mr. Registrar, Fred would like to affirm on
11 an Eagle Feather.

12 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Good morning, Fred.

13 **MR. FRED STEVENS:** Good morning.

14 **FRED STEVENS, Affirmed:**

15 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Fred, if you could just
16 start by introducing yourself to Commissioner Audette and
17 giving us a little background about your family.

18 **MR. FRED STEVENS:** Good morning. My name is
19 Fred Stevens; that's my Christian name. My spirit name is
20 (Speaking Cree language), Red Hawk Man (ph). I come from a
21 community of Sapotaweyak Cree Nation, approximately an
22 hour-and-a-half from The Pas.

23 For me I come and share my story here. I
24 want to go back from where I come from, but first of all I
25 want to acknowledge yesterday the Elders that smoke the

1 pipe and the firekeeper that's out there, that young man
2 (Speaking Cree language), he's doing -- that's part of his
3 job as a young person, you know, I have -- I have to go and
4 acknowledge him. Because can't forget about the young
5 people. Because we were young once and we have to try and
6 pass on what we're learning, you know. And I want to
7 acknowledge that young man in the -- in the teepee. He has
8 a lot of pain, but you know I said, "You're a young person,
9 you know through those struggles. I went through them
10 struggles you're talking about," I said, "Each and every
11 one of us has."

12 And we can only relate what -- I can't talk
13 about anybody else, but myself. I can only relate to what
14 I went through and I know the -- the -- in my own
15 experience. So I want to acknowledge those people before
16 me that were here yesterday opening up this hearing -- this
17 Inquiry. You know, I know those people, Andy Daniels and
18 Mervin McKay (ph). Meet in our travels. We meet in a good
19 way, because we're all brothers and sisters here. We're
20 all related. Those are my (speaking Cree language).

21 And -- and -- oh, yeah, I forgot to turn the
22 light on -- that candle, hey. That candle, you know,
23 represents life (speaking Cree language). You know, at the
24 end of the day we turned it off, and I noticed -- forgot
25 about -- to light that candle up for the day.

1 And also, you know, this morning, the water
2 ceremony (speaking Cree language) they showed us that life,
3 you know.

4 And I wanted to share my smudge -- well, this
5 is my adoptive brother here, I asked him to sit with me,
6 and I didn't know that was his daughter, Jade (ph), so I
7 said, "I'm your uncle so I can tell you what to do now."

8 But that's such a beautiful ceremony, that --
9 that water ceremony, to remind us where we come from --
10 where I come from. You know, my own mother kept in that
11 water for nine months (Speaking Cree language).

12 So, for me -- like I say, where I come from,
13 my home community growing up there, I know a little bit of
14 my child (sic). You know, I was raised by my grandparents
15 most of the time. You know, my grandparents, and
16 especially my grandmother was a strong influence in my
17 life. She was a kind woman. That's her picture there. My
18 grandfather. And she taught me values, I guess, respect,
19 to be kind to other people -- most of all respect.

20 And I took -- I took my shoes off over here,
21 coming in here, you know, that's one of the things that I
22 was taught, when you go into somebody's home you take your
23 shoes off, you know, that's out of respect, and put them on
24 the side because there's other people coming behind you.

25 So those are the kind of values that -- that

1 I try and live by you know, the teachings. (Speaking Cree
2 language), to respect the person.

3 My brother -- my brother here, he has the
4 gift of ceremonies and he tells me I have gift of
5 medicines. I guess it balances things out. Now, I'm still
6 learning. You know, I have to look after myself that way.
7 You know, the grandfathers and the grandmothers, I have
8 behind me I have to carry on their teachings.

9 So, growing up in that little -- in the
10 little community -- we left our community -- you know, my
11 parents got married in 1959, '58 or '59. I was born in
12 1957, so I'm 60 years old. I come from a family -- there
13 was ten of us all together. There's still eight of us
14 alive. Me and my brother are the oldest in the family. I
15 have a twin brother and he's ten minutes older than I am,
16 so I have an old -- a little older brother. That's our
17 family up there. That was taken a couple of years ago. I
18 was sitting around and my -- my mother in the middle, and
19 six brothers in the back and two of our sisters, one is the
20 wheelchair. She was in a vehicle accident. And the next
21 on the other side is the -- yeah, the baby sister.

22 And for me -- you know, and I thank my mother
23 for being here. I didn't bring any family with me, hey,
24 but the chairs that are empty, they're not really empty to
25 me. My relatives are sitting there, hey. My sister is

1 sitting there, my grandparents, so to me those are -- those
2 are not empty. You know, that's the way I look at it, hey.
3 The chairs that are empty -- we see them empty, but they're
4 not really. You know, our -- our relatives are there.
5 Because we just acknowledged them this morning. The
6 grandmothers. (Speaking Cree language), you know, they
7 have to come here, hey, they come here when we smudge.
8 When we offer that prayer.

9 So, growing up, you know, good -- good times.
10 As a young boy you know, my best times were travelling
11 around with my grandparents, out there, especially --
12 especially getting around this time of year where we start
13 to go to harvesting areas. We stop in one area and camp
14 there and we'd harvest medicines, then later on in the
15 summer months we've move again to another harvesting area
16 where we would -- we would harvest berries, and then move
17 around. The last place we would stop would be in a fish
18 camp area where the men commercial fished.

19 And that's where I live today. I've been
20 living there now 30 years. My mom's been living there
21 longer -- it's over 47, 48 years now, she's lived there.

22 Growing up as a child, like I say, you know,
23 being around family, that nurturing was there, that love
24 was there, especially from a -- our grandmother, and the
25 community as a whole. You know, the community took care of

1 each other. An example would be when -- you know, in our
2 communities a long time ago -- my community, people would
3 call their -- their children to come home. Especially
4 getting on dark, hey, "*Pe kiwe*," you could hear that in the
5 community, "Come home." And if you're at the other end of
6 the community and somebody -- somebody was walking by, "I
7 heard your *Kokum* calling you, or your mom calling you to go
8 home." So they would tell you to go home, so that's how
9 they looked -- care -- cared for each other, hey, looked
10 after each other. You know, that was the difference them
11 days, the community as a whole looked after their own
12 children. We don't see that today, you know, but that's
13 the way it was.

14 Getting on in life, we moved away from the
15 community in the 70s, you know, we -- where I'm living now
16 -- that's where we moved to, and it was mostly a family you
17 know, my grandparents moved there, my -- my parents, my
18 uncles, my aunts, so we were all kind of in a family
19 setting. There used to be cabins there that were just for
20 summer, kind of tar paper shacks, I guess, and no hydro,
21 hey. That's where we moved to.

22 You know, before we moved away from the --
23 our reserve, there also -- grow up in an alcoholic family,
24 I guess, you know, didn't realize that there was alcoholism
25 there. You know, I guess, the abuse happened after the

1 drinking, you know, where we, as the older siblings, would
2 have to pick up on our chores, which we didn't when nobody
3 was around.

4 I remember we had a house -- you know, that's
5 when they started building houses in the community. I got
6 the short end of stick, so to speak, when my parents came
7 home after they were drinking. I was told to go and get
8 wood -- cut wood and all that, and I accidently burnt our
9 house down. The house was right behind me, hey. I had to
10 go make a fire because that's all we had was wood stoves in
11 there -- a wood heater, and a wood stove, so I filled both
12 of them up to warm up the house. My little siblings were
13 in there. And I was trying to finish what I was doing, so
14 I went and started a fire and I come back out to cut some
15 more wood, not realizing that I was burning the house.

16 By the time I found out I looked -- turned
17 around smoke was coming through the -- through the windows.
18 I tried to run in and all I saw was just like a little
19 candle when I learned the light on. Calling my -- calling
20 my sisters -- I couldn't get to them. And I went running
21 across to my -- my grandma -- grandmother's house, my uncle
22 come running across, and thank God he -- he got my -- my
23 sisters out of the house, but they were already holding
24 each other on the bed, he said. He had to go break to the
25 window, hey. So, you know, that was a close call at that

1 time, hey.

2 You know, and that's -- eventually we moved
3 away, and me and my brother were starting to run around
4 with the wrong crowd, being the oldest whenever there was
5 drinking going on we would run around with other -- with
6 other boys our age, hey, we were starting to get into
7 mischief, and I guess one of our -- our dad, I guess, kind
8 of saw that we were getting in trouble and moved us away,
9 across the lake to where we live today. And the roots are
10 there, you know, I never -- I -- like I say, I haven't
11 moved from there. I went back there to live and that's
12 where I live today. So, you know, we -- we got raised over
13 there, and had to go to school.

14 That picture of my grandparents with that --
15 that vehicle in the back, that's actually my grandfather
16 started a -- a little bus service so they can transport us
17 to the next community where the school was, so he was
18 actually a school bus driver, you know, through the
19 Department. Department paid him so much a -- a day, I
20 guess, and -- to transport us.

21 There was no hydro there or nothing, but, you
22 know, we lived by coal or [sic] lamp -- gas lamps, which
23 again wood -- wood heat. But we still enjoyed what we did
24 there even though it was -- I still had time to go and
25 check my snares after the end of the day.

1 So, me and my brother were a little older so
2 we went to the next town, so we had to move to the -- to
3 that first town to catch a bus to the next town because we
4 were in an older grade already. We did that for that year,
5 that one year we moved to that community -- where we are.

6 And we were given a choice at that time to
7 either go to a residential school, so me and my brother --
8 me and my twin brother went to residential school in -- in
9 Dauphin. So, the first -- that was the first time we --
10 we've actually left home. And that -- that was an
11 experience by itself at that time, you know.

12 We were given a choice to either come back
13 home and go to school close to home, be put in a home there
14 close -- live with people in their homes to attend school,
15 so that we could get home on weekends, hey. And I decided
16 to stay in the -- in the residential school -- to go back.
17 So that's where me and my brother separated on -- when we
18 were both 15 years old. He came back to go to school, but
19 he quit shortly after that. For me I continued my
20 education, but the loneliness was there.

21 You know, I used to hitchhike home -- to get
22 home in late fall. And I don't know you know, it's --
23 getting home -- coming home to that -- that kind -- that
24 kind of lifestyle, you know -- you know, "You -- you just
25 missed your parents here. They were -- they were in the

1 local hotel. They just left." One of my uncles on my
2 dad's side now, lived in -- in that community, but he said,
3 "You're welcome to go and -- go to the house warm up and
4 feed yourself, hey." You know, but I wanted to get home,
5 hey.

6 And you know, sometimes getting home there
7 was nobody home, just my siblings, they were younger. And
8 again, you know, still living in tar paper shacks, I guess
9 you'd call it, insulated with cardboard inside.

10 You know, one time -- one time I come home
11 and that's what I found, my siblings are cold and hungry.
12 You know, I started cleaning up the place as best I could
13 -- warming up the house and cleaning up and cleaning them
14 up. Trying to -- trying to feed them. And angry and a
15 vehicle pulled outside, you know, it's got them -- so I got
16 my siblings settled down, it was my parents.

17 And I was so angry that I went out, and of
18 course, they're happy to see me in their drunken state,
19 "You know, you got home," you know, and all that, hey. And
20 you know, they didn't realize that I was -- I was really
21 angry, and that was the first and only time that I came
22 close to hitting my mother with a -- a board. I don't know
23 happened. I just dropped it and the old man jumped in the
24 vehicle and ran away and took off because I was going after
25 him next.

1 Maybe that's when I -- I came to the
2 realization that for me I can't do this. I made a
3 commitment at that time for myself, I want to go -- I'm
4 going to back to school and continue and finish. And
5 already in the back of my mind that seed was planted, I'm
6 not going to live like this when I grow up with my own
7 family, if I ever start a family. I'm not saying that it
8 was wrong, but later on in life I started to realize you
9 know, why -- why it was the way it was.

10 So, I went back to school. I went and I
11 left, I hitchhiked back to residential school. And I made
12 that commitment I'll finish this, complete my education,
13 but you know, it was a struggle.

14 You know, growing up there, like I say, our
15 roots our -- they're strong, hey, you know, it was the -- I
16 think it was the teachings of my grandmother that made that
17 strong.

18 So after -- I went and finished residential
19 school, took -- the school -- the residential school for
20 five years, hey, all -- all together. And my brother
21 already -- like I say, we separated at that time. He
22 started working -- working in labour jobs. So, you know, I
23 completed my education, he didn't, but he got schooled in
24 life while I got schooled in -- in schooling -- education-
25 wise.

1 And later on in -- later on in life I said --
2 like I say, I started working after I finished high school.
3 I went to work in my home community in education. There
4 was a program that got started where the Department --
5 Department provided funds for somebody to work in the
6 education program and I just came from -- came from
7 schooling. I fit into that bill, I guess. Our former
8 Chief tracked me down in the City of Winnipeg and he asked
9 me to come back and work in the education program as a --
10 what they called then a home school coordinator, looking
11 after students that were planning to leave, hey, or the
12 school -- and the school as a whole.

13 And I started a family at that time. You
14 know, I started a family. I got married shortly after
15 that. I've been married now 38, going on 39 years. Me and
16 my wife have six grown children. We're gifted with 17
17 grandchildren, and so throughout that -- that work life --
18 at the beginning my parents were still living where --
19 where they are -- like my mother is still alive and I used
20 to go and visit -- we used to go and visit there, hey,
21 visit my siblings.

22 I remember one time going there to visit in
23 the summer month, hey. "Let's go for a ride," I told my
24 wife and my sister-in-law, my in-laws, hey, we go for a
25 ride, hey," so we stopped there and mom was home. I walked

1 in and of course, you know, your mom -- tea -- "Have some
2 tea, hey." I said, "Where's the kids?" "Oh, they're down
3 the lake swimming." "Well, I don't hear nobody," I says,
4 so we came back out, I went down just to the lake. Usually
5 when you hear kids, you can hear them when they're out on
6 the lake, hey, but you know, one of my -- my brothers
7 there, I guess made a homemade raft -- you know, a homemade
8 raft and they drifted away. One of them was my sister
9 there and my brother and two of our cousins, they were
10 already about three-quarters of a mile or a mile.

11 Without even thinking you know, I just
12 started taking my clothes off and I started to swim for
13 them. Our dad was out in the lake; you could see the boat.
14 He was setting -- setting nets. Couldn't yell at him. He
15 was too far away, hey. You know, and I started swimming
16 towards them, you know, it was windy, but the wind was
17 coming from behind me so I kind of rolled with the waves.
18 You know, and -- I don't know, must been about three-
19 quarters, maybe a mile, hey. It would have been easier for
20 me to drive around to the -- come from the point to the --
21 they were drifting towards a point where the harbor was,
22 hey, and my in-law, here, I said, "I think you better go
23 back." I said, "You know, don't follow me." "Well, I got
24 to keep an eye on you," he said. "No," I said, "You know,
25 you're a big guy," I said, "I don't think you'll make

1 this." You know, we used to swim like a fish when we were
2 younger, hey. I said, "I -- I think I can do this," I
3 said, "You know, I have to," I said, so I started swimming.

4 And already they were hanging on to each
5 other on that raft you know, they were getting to that
6 stage of either bailing out or whatever; they were crying.
7 I eventually made it up to them and I had to rest on the --
8 my arms on the -- on the raft, lay and just -- you know
9 calm them down. Tell them, "Take easy, you're -- you're
10 okay. I'm here." You know, they were holding each other
11 already there, hey, you know, they would -- the next step
12 would have been panic and jump out of that -- that raft,
13 hey, just a little homemade raft. It was keeping them
14 afloat.

15 So once I got them settled down and I told
16 them, "You can get on -- get off on each side, start
17 pushing that raft toward the shore. You know, I'll help
18 you." And so my sister and my brother -- my younger
19 brother and my -- our two cousins. So we started dog
20 paddling to the shoreline, I said, "I can touch bottom," I
21 said. "You know, how are you guys? You know, that's the
22 shoreline there." As soon as they start touching bottom
23 they -- they ditched me right there. You know, they --
24 they run away, they came home and I had to come back, hey.
25 But that was a close call at that time. You know, without

1 even thinking, when I got off the shore -- just like I was
2 dragging my arms on the ground. That's how heavy they
3 were, hey.

4 You know, and I saved my sister then you
5 know, the second time. I guess the first time was that --
6 that house fire, you know, where I just about burnt them,
7 hey -- her and my other sister. But my uncle came -- I
8 went running for help, my uncle come and saved them that
9 time.

10 You know, these are the kind of things, you
11 know, I didn't want to get mad at them, there was no use of
12 me getting mad at them, hey. But already I told them, you
13 know, "That's not safe, hey, you have to watch what you're
14 doing out -- out there. I know you're having fun."

15 Already I think my grandmother teachers were
16 starting to be part of that, hey. Yes, be stern, but you
17 know, talk to -- talk to your children, hey.

18 So anyway, there was one -- one little thing
19 there, like I said, they started to grow up, my sister --
20 like I say, you know, when we got older -- they started
21 getting older they had to go away from home because there
22 was no school there where we are, hey. The closest one was
23 20 miles away, and they were only up to a certain grade and
24 then you moved to the next community, which had the
25 elementary and junior -- junior high, I guess, they call

1 it, and then high school, hey. And me, starting my own
2 family, and they were starting to grow up and -- so that's
3 the way it was.

4 And you know, like my -- my dad I think was a
5 hard worker. You know, later on in life after I finished
6 my high schooling and started to work and started my own
7 family. Most of our children are named after somebody in
8 the family, you know, and I thought about that you know,
9 when we started to raise a family. And I had to go and
10 ask, or get permission from family members you know, "Me --
11 me and my -- me and my wife are going to have a child, if
12 we have a boy or a girl we would like to name him or her
13 after so and so, hey." And I had to think about that too
14 because I know my children when they start to -- when they
15 start growing up they're going to be asking me, "Well,
16 where did -- where did my name come from?" And I had to
17 plan ahead.

18 And -- and you know, also when we were
19 raising our children -- this is my family here, there's one
20 missing here, one of the -- second oldest is missing in --
21 that's me and my and wife there. I only have one son, who
22 is at the end. I kind of made a deal with my wife when we
23 got married, I said, "You look after the girls I'll look
24 after the boys." But, you know, I started to teach my --
25 my girls values, how to be respectful, and all that.

1 You know, I taught my wife how to -- to be a
2 mother because she lived a different life. You know, I
3 showed her how to make a baby swing (indiscernible) in the
4 room. You know, I put this string up in the corner and I
5 said, "Well, (speaking Cree language). Make a swing," I
6 said, you know -- you know, that -- that teachings behind
7 it, hey. "You put your -- your -- your baby on a swing,
8 wrap -- wrapped up in there -- you know, wrap -- wrap --
9 wrap it around with the baby blanket," I said, "You know,
10 to secure." And she didn't know -- she didn't know how.
11 I'd come home at lunchtime you know, the string is still
12 there, and she told me, "I don't know how." I asked them,
13 "Come here," I said, "I want to show you how -- I want to
14 teach you this," I said, "And don't forget this because," I
15 said, "You know, we're going to have other children," I
16 said, "We're going to grandchildren." So I taught her
17 that, hey, you know. I'm not saying that -- because it was
18 -- it was taught to me because of my younger siblings.

19 But you know, those teachings, you don't
20 forget them teachings, you carry them on and pass them on
21 with explanations, you know, "Why -- why do I have to do
22 that?" Even my own children, when they come in the house,
23 like I did here, I take my shoes off at the door, I -- even
24 to this day I try and pass that on and I try and get them
25 to pass it onto their children. You know, I told my wife,

1 I said, "You know, you -- you have that gift to teach our
2 girls -- the girl -- the woman teachings, go and learn
3 those."

4 You know, I used to give my children -- my --
5 my -- my daughters, "Don't walk over those men shoes --
6 don't -- walk around them." You know, that's a -- that's
7 an old teaching from way back, and we have to go back to
8 those kind of teachings (speaking Cree language), go back
9 to those teachings, hey. But you know I -- I kind of put
10 them aside when I started to grow up. I had a rough -- you
11 know, I can't say I had a rough life, but I went through
12 it, me and my wife.

13 Like I say, I grew up in an alcoholic -- when
14 there was alcohol in -- in the family. And I ended up
15 drinking at the -- through residential school -- before I
16 even went to residential school I was already
17 experimenting, hey. I think I started when I was about 12,
18 13 years old at home -- because the alcohol was there. And
19 like I say, we were home alone and we had our own time when
20 the parents were out drinking.

21 So you know, at 13 years of age, and then 20
22 years later, you know, I have a grown family. My -- my
23 baby daughter was maybe six -- five, six years old --
24 starting to go to school. And I was sitting there drinking
25 -- drunk, and I still remember her telling me -- she said,

1 "Quit drinking now, Dad." And it took a long time, hey.
2 Just didn't happen overnight to quit. But I remember that
3 -- her coming up to me at the table -- saying that to me.
4 I guess, I just needed that boost, I guess. She was
5 already getting into elementary. That struggle, hey.

6 But going back, I guess you know, the main
7 focus of my story here, I wanted to share a little bit of
8 my family history, hey, to kind of let you know where I
9 came from. I started to find out more of my family has
10 extended into Saskatchewan. My great grandmother comes
11 from Keys reserve, and one of my great grandfathers comes
12 from Yellow Quill, which is north of Keys, hey, and we have
13 families all over the place. Grand Rapids -- I have family
14 there. So you know, there's a lot of family -- because
15 people were nomadic, hey. They travelled.

16 And that's when I started to realize you
17 know, like -- and I asked my -- my mother a lot of
18 questions, and she still remembers when she was a child,
19 you know, and she shares those stories and I try and keep
20 them with me, hey. I don't write them down. I don't put
21 them in writing. I have to try and keep them in my mind,
22 so I can hopefully pass on the -- pass on those teachings.

23 Because you know -- like I say, I already
24 started a family, and eventually I moved to where my --
25 where we're living now. Already my sister -- my sister

1 started a family herself. My late sister, her name was
2 Connie. You know, and my parents are still alive; my mom
3 and dad.

4 Then my -- my sister was into her second
5 relationship with a -- with a man, hey. She had a child
6 from the previous relationship. And -- and the second
7 relationship she had a -- she had a -- another child who
8 was born premature. He had to be hospitalized for quite a
9 long -- quite a while before they brought him home. Before
10 they send him home -- closer to home. I think he only
11 weighed about two pounds, like he was born -- my nephew was
12 born premature. And at the time -- my -- my niece was over
13 a year old, my nephew was getting on half a year, I guess
14 six months or seven.

15 You know. I -- I saw my sister one day full
16 of life. She said she was going to a birthday party
17 -- she was going to a birthday party, and I told her, "Take
18 it easy, but have fun, hey." Next day -- next day when we
19 were at home, hey, next day I got a -- I a got a knock on
20 the door. It was RCMP that came to our door and told --
21 told me -- me and my wife, "Something happened to your
22 sister. I need you to come and identify her in Swan River,
23 hey." Which is an hour away from where we lived. And my
24 brother -- my brother and my wife, we went -- we travelled
25 -- travelled there, hey. When we got to Swan River --

1 like, the hospital they had a basement down there where
2 they -- they had a morgue, I guess, where they kept bodies.

3 I'm getting ready to go downstairs there and
4 the RCMP were waiting there, and -- going down the steps
5 they stopped me -- and this RCMP stopped me, he said -- the
6 RCMP guy says, "We have to ask you something." And I
7 stopped and looked at him, and there was two of them, hey.
8 He said, "There anyway that you can -- any other way that
9 you can identify -- identify your sister?" I looked at
10 him, I said, "What do you mean? You know, what do you
11 mean," I says. And I'm standing there you know, and that's
12 -- "I don't know if I can do this," I said. "I don't know
13 if I can do this," I said, "What are you talking about?
14 How come you guys didn't tell me this right off the --
15 right at the door at my place?"

16 But all -- also keep it -- keep it mind that
17 I had to think of my parents. You know, what of my parents
18 -- our dad had -- our dad though was sick already hey, with
19 a heart condition at that time, hey.

20 And then I'm standing there and getting angry
21 at these cops -- these RCMP, swore at them actually you
22 know, and tell them, "You guys got no heart, man. How come
23 you guys got -- how come you guys do this to people? Don't
24 even give them a warning." You know, that -- I was really
25 kind of angry at them right there. But I said, "I'm going

1 to do this," I said.

2 I did it out of anger to go and identify my
3 sister. And the way -- the way I identify her was she had
4 tattoos on her arm, hey, and I said, "I want to see her," I
5 said, "I want to see her. You guys brought me this far."
6 So I saw my sister, hey, or what -- what was left of her,
7 hey. I left. I told them that was her, I said, "You can
8 tell by her arm there," her name is on her arm, hey. "You
9 want know what happened?" I said, "No." I said, "You know
10 what, you guys haven't told me nothing anyway. Don't tell
11 me what happened. I see -- I see what happened." "And we
12 have to tell you that guy killed himself." "Well, I don't
13 give a flying -- about him," I says. "My sister is gone."
14 That happened March 31st, 1989, it will be coming -- be
15 going on 29 years this -- end of this month.

16 My -- my sister left two children behind. I
17 cried to my mom after I got home. And I said, "Dad can't
18 see her," I said. My dad wanted to see her -- see -- "My
19 dad won't be able to take that," I says. I knew. And he
20 was trying to -- he was trying to go and see the body, hey,
21 trying to see my sister. "No," I said, "No. You can't," I
22 said. "You can't see her. I lost one already," I said, "I
23 don't want lose another one." So I had to be strong that
24 way, hey, had to be strong for the family, you know, my
25 other -- my other siblings.

1 The first reaction is you know, I'm going to
2 go get drunk because that's -- that's the reaction that --
3 a way out, I guess. But no, started thinking of my
4 parents, hey, and also the -- my parents -- the children --
5 the children -- my -- my niece and my nephew. You know, it
6 was a hard time, hey, you know, when you go through that.

7 What made me more angry was the other family
8 came up with this, "We'll bury them together," just
9 escalated my anger more. I said, "I don't want nobody
10 coming to see me. And come and tell me -- and say that to
11 me. Better not," I said. "They better not come here and
12 say that. That man killed my sister," I said, and I didn't
13 know that man. I never met him, hey. That angered me
14 more. "No way," I said, "You can throw him in the ditch
15 for all I care," I said. But you know, whole thing is like
16 that, I told them, "No, you better not come here," I said.
17 "I'll -- I'll do something," I said. "I'll do something,"
18 I said, "To somebody if they come here."

19 You know, my -- my sister had a nickname,
20 hey, we always called her Coffee (ph). I saw you bringing
21 coffee, no, I'm not a coffee drinker. But that was her
22 nickname, hey. I don't know, I think it was the
23 grandparents that named her that. All kids growing up had
24 nicknames, hey, you know, we all had nicknames, and some of
25 them stick to us.

1 But you know, after that those people tried
2 to reach out, and I kept telling them, "Leave -- leave well
3 enough alone. Don't bother me. Don't bother me," I told
4 them. "Leave well enough alone." At that time I didn't
5 realize that they were just trying to help, you know. I
6 got invited to vigils you know, vigils started at that time
7 already for women -- for murders like that, I guess. "No,
8 leave me alone." You suffer in silence and bottled up.
9 And the worst, and -- and the worst thing was I took it out
10 on my own family. They're the ones that suffer, you know.

11 And I think that's when those residential
12 school issues started coming out. You know, it started to
13 get talked about, hey. My -- my dad is a -- a residential
14 school product. He went to two residential schools, one
15 out of province, and I didn't know he went to another one
16 in Manitoba -- not 'til later on.

17 You know, for me coming out of high school
18 and completing my -- like I say, I started to work.
19 Started to carry on. A family. Where I started making
20 money, and I started the same thing that I lived through.
21 I got money -- I got money to burn. I got money to drink
22 up. And -- but in the back of my mind all the time, you
23 know, children -- my -- my -- our children. I could not
24 leave them alone -- could not leave them alone at home. I
25 had to have somebody there because I saw my -- my siblings

1 being home alone. I made sure -- for me, I made sure that
2 there was somebody looking after my -- our -- our children.
3 And the best person that I could trust was my own brother-
4 in-law. He looked after our children while we were
5 drinking, carrying on. I would -- I would trust him with
6 my own children. He -- he fed them and looked after them.
7 I could trust him as a babysitter and as a family member.

8 You know, that carrying on, like I say, after
9 I moved off the reserve, I lived -- I worked on the reserve
10 for ten years, me and my wife worked there, then I -- I got
11 burnt out. I asked for help, "Can I take time off work?"
12 And the way they did it was they fired me, even though I
13 cried for that help, and asked for that help. I've been in
14 this job ten years, "Can I take a -- can I take time off?
15 I'll even help somebody that you put in there. I -- I'm
16 having --" I was crying out already. I have personal
17 problem, hey. I have family problem. My drinking is
18 getting the best of me. You know, ten years, that's a long
19 time out of your life. So how they helped -- the
20 leadership, they -- they gave me a letter saying, "You're
21 fired." And then I got angry again. I went right up to
22 them, I said, "You know what I'm going take you guys to
23 court." I said, "I'll get -- I'll get one month for every
24 year I worked for you, that's it. That's all I'm asking."
25 And I got that, but I had to fight. And you got

1 blackballed after that, hey. You know you -- you sue your
2 own Band. You know, you stand up for your own rights.
3 That's how dysfunctional we are in the communities.

4 I couldn't live there anymore. I -- I said
5 -- I told them, I was ready to pack it in myself. I ready
6 to throw my family away too. I said, "I'm moving back to
7 where I was raised, across the lake. I don't know about
8 you," I said. "Well, you can't leave us here." Okay,
9 then, so I re-located. You know, we had a little cabin
10 there. I built a little camp there where we used to go on
11 weekends. Get away -- get away from it I guess, so to
12 speak. So I had to go and add on to it, so I could -- our
13 children could have their room in there, so I moved --
14 that's when we moved out of there. That was 1988.

15 And -- but before I moved out -- out of spite
16 I went to the Band office and walked into the welfare
17 office, I said, "You guys fired me. You guys help me. I'm
18 not leaving," I said. I stood, I -- I closed that door
19 behind me, I said, "I'm not leaving here 'til you help me."
20 That was out of spite. "Your wife is working." "I'm not
21 asking for my wife. I'm asking for me and my -- my
22 children." So what do they do to keep me -- to shut me up?
23 "Here -- here's your cheque."

24 Twice in my lifetime I've collected a welfare
25 cheque for my children and me, and that was it, but that

1 was out of spite. I can tell you today that I've never
2 been on welfare, and I don't want to be. My parents were.
3 But I think my dad was a proud man. He worked. He worked
4 as a commercial fisherman. He made us work in the bush
5 when we weren't in school, you know, "You're not going to
6 sit at home. You're going be working -- you come in the
7 bush." I'm going to -- he was logging. We had to pile
8 those -- those wood up. And that's -- that's when I
9 decided I'm going to go to school. None of this for me.

10 But you know -- but like I say, after I got
11 educated and I started a job. I was lucky there to -- to
12 work as a home school coordinator. I went into schooling
13 for it, and I got a counselling certificate, even though I
14 was in -- supposed to be a carpenter by trade, you know,
15 they -- but I gave them -- gave back seven years of -- to
16 them after the three years I went on and off and school.
17 And I've -- I've worked ever since that time, hey, worked
18 on and off here and there. Further my education.

19 But going back to my sister, like I say,
20 growing up after that -- telling my parents, "Don't fight
21 -- don't fight over the grandchildren." "Yes," I said,
22 "Our nephew -- my nephew, we're going to take for sure," I
23 says, you know, my -- one of my parents said, "No," they
24 said, "You know, that grandson of mine is going to live
25 with us." The granddaughter went to live with her dad,

1 hey, my niece, in that other family.

2 A year after -- a year after my sister died
3 my dad died of -- of his heart condition. You know, but
4 before that, you know, before that you know, I started to
5 talk -- I started to visit my dad. Visit him where --
6 where we were living. I started to ask him about
7 residential school.

8 I asked him -- I had an opportunity to travel
9 with my dad before that -- west, and we stopped in one of
10 these resident -- Prince Albert where he -- where he
11 attended, that I knew he attended. I had an opportunity to
12 take him out west and we -- me and him to travel. When we
13 were going through Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, there, I
14 said, "Where's the residential school here, Dad?" You
15 know, the town has grown ever since he was there. He used
16 to go by train that way, hey. They were bused -- there was
17 no buses or anything but train. They were put on a train.
18 He didn't recognize the place. He said, -- he said, "That
19 -- that residential school was across from the hospital."
20 So, for me, travelling through Prince Albert, I followed a
21 sign said the hospital, hey, and sure enough -- "It's on
22 top of a hill," he said. Drove in -- drove to that
23 residential school ground, driving into the driveway he
24 made me stop there. There's still buildings standing there
25 today, hey, some of those buildings.

1 I think one of the First Nations of north
2 there own -- owned that -- that land now. That Peter
3 Ballantyne, I think, they own that land there. They build
4 offices there, but -- but some of the buildings are still
5 standing up there from -- from the residential school era.

6 He made me stop in the driveway, and I
7 stopped there and we sat there for the longest time. "Oh,"
8 he said, "That building is still standing." "What was
9 that, Dad?" "Oh, that was the mess hall," he called it.
10 To us it's a gym I guess. "And those are cottages over
11 there," he called them cottages I guess, the dorms. So he
12 said, "Drive in." So I drove in, went around, parallel
13 with that mess hall -- he made be stop right there. On the
14 east wall, "Stop right here," he said, made me stop right
15 there in that drive -- in that road. "Yeah," he said,
16 "This was our boundary. This was our boundary here. Could
17 not go past that boundary." "Well, there's no boundary.
18 There's no -- there's no wall here," I told him. "That
19 road goes right through." "No," he said, "That -- that was
20 where -- that was as far as -- as boys got to. Girls were
21 on that side, and boys on this side." You know what, they
22 were segregated already at that time. I wasn't even born
23 yet when he was going to school there, hey, but that's it.
24 He made me stop there. Why? That's -- I started to
25 understand why. "No," he said, "We couldn't go past that,

1 otherwise we'd get in trouble."

2 I said, "Auntie went to school here, hey?"
3 "Yeah," he said, "We come on the train together." My late
4 aunt or his sister, hey. "No," I said, "Well, did you talk
5 to each other here?" "No. We didn't talk to each other
6 here." You weren't allowed to talk to your siblings. You
7 know, I started to -- for me in my own mind, who does that?
8 Who does that to children?

9 You know, I can reflect back to when me and
10 my brothers went -- went to residential -- when we first
11 went to residential school we had long hair when we went
12 there, like we had long hair, and nobody -- nobody could
13 tell us apart. He got in trouble -- I got in trouble. But
14 we were identical twins, hey. Anyway, a month into -- into
15 the residential school we were told, "You got to cut your
16 hair." "Cut our hair?" I said, "You know, we wash our
17 hair here. We were taught to wash our hair back home."

18 Whether it's -- it's with snow water or lake
19 water or what, hey, you know, growing up in the bush that
20 there's no running water, we had to make do with what, you
21 know -- we used to go get snow to melt to make water and
22 they used to watch what -- they used to watch us what kind
23 of snow we got. We just don't pick it up from the top. We
24 had to dig down, hey, to get to that sugary one, which
25 makes better water.

1 Anyway, didn't want to cut our hair. "No --
2 no, I don't want to cut my hair." And we got sent down to
3 the main office, me and him standing there. Me and him
4 standing -- there's a little old lady on the other side
5 this big desk, hey. Got to -- her cane sitting on top, and
6 she, I think she had a little mustache. Anyway, she's
7 looking at us, you know, we're standing there together,
8 saying our last name, "Stevens, Stevens." "Yeah." "Which
9 one's Fred and which one is Rod (ph)?" And then she
10 started naming names, hey, of our -- of our relatives in
11 Prince Albert, well, that -- that was my auntie, that was
12 my uncle. Called -- named our dad. I said, "That's our
13 dad." "Well, you boys when you go home you ask your dad
14 how I cut hair in Prince Albert." Of course, me, I'm kind
15 of the vocal one hey, and I say, "How?" She said, "I'll
16 put a bowl over your head." I looked -- I looked at my
17 brother here and I said to him, (Speaking Cree language),
18 so we cut our hair. In Cree, hey, and I'm looking at that
19 old lady, honest to God, it's like somebody was shooting a
20 rifle when she banged her -- her cane on the -- on the --
21 on that big desk. I think both me and him both jump about
22 a foot high. I looked at her, and "You don't -- you don't
23 talk like that in front of me. You talk English." And I
24 -- you know, but it's -- I looked at my brother again -- I
25 was just about saying -- going to say something in Cree

1 again, hey, and "No," she said, "I don't allow that, you're
2 --" you know, I remember that.

3 And I've -- when I got home during the
4 Christmas break -- eventually we got our hair cut, hey. I
5 wasn't going to get a bowl over my head. I'll go see the
6 barber, because they used to call in a barber into -- into
7 the residential school from the town. And he used to cut
8 the -- our hair downstairs in the shower room, they called
9 it, hey.

10 So we're going back slowly -- back to the
11 dorm and, "You go first, bro." (Speaking Cree language).
12 I persuaded my big brother to go first, even though he was
13 a little older, so I'm waiting in the back stairs, and I'm
14 sitting in the back stairs. I hear him coming up, "Well,
15 you don't look too bad," I say. "Your turn, go down
16 there." I went down there, and the barber's sweeping up
17 there. "Just sit down there young man. I'll be with you
18 in a minute." So I sat there in the barber's chair, or
19 whatever, he slowly turned around and he looked at me,
20 "Holy smokes," he says, "Your hair grows fast. I just
21 finished cutting your hair." You know, and -- "No -- no,"
22 I said, "That was my brother." Already at that time when I
23 went to residential school they made us pay for our own
24 haircuts from our little -- our little allowance they gave
25 us, hey. You know, I asked my dad that when we got home.

1 And the first thing too, our grandmother was
2 still alive, "You cut your hair?" "Kokum, they made us cut
3 our hair over there." "Why? I told you guys to look after
4 your hair when you're there." "No, they said we have to
5 cut our hair. That old lady was going to put a bowl over
6 our head," I said, "You know, and cut our hair that way."
7 And you know I asked my dad that too. "Yeah," he said,
8 "That's what they did in Prince Albert." So we shared that
9 at that time, you know.

10 My dad was a quiet man and he didn't say
11 much, but the anger came out after drinking and he kind of
12 took it out on us -- the older siblings. Didn't tell us he
13 loved us. No -- you know, none of that. In a way, I guess
14 we're kind of afraid of him because you know, no -- no
15 emotion, I guess.

16 And I started to grow up the same way. I
17 became the same way with my own children. I had to have
18 that liquid courage to talk to them. And again, you know,
19 one of my children said, "You know, you're just like my
20 grandpa," he said, "You know, grandpa never talked to you,"
21 hey. You know, it kind of hit home when they told me that,
22 hey.

23 So that -- that effect of that -- that
24 residential school, me being second generation, maybe I'm
25 third generation, I don't know, hey. Don't even know if my

1 grand -- any of my grandparents even went there, hey. But
2 I think that -- that effect on residential school affected
3 us as siblings, you know, the drinking, that was going on.
4 I kind of broke it when I went to finish, but at the same
5 time it was in me. I didn't really break it. It just that
6 it festered I guess, inside.

7 You know, asking my -- asking my dad about
8 residential school life he would put his head down and look
9 at me five -- five minutes or so later and ask -- tell me,
10 "Don't ask me those kind of questions."

11 And I guess, the healing journey started at
12 that time for me you know, with the loss of my sister, it
13 lingered there, and I didn't want that help. You know, my
14 -- my -- my daughter said, "You know, you should quit
15 drinking now." At six, you know -- when she was six years
16 of age. It was a -- it was a struggle because alcohol is a
17 way of life after a while. And it just -- couldn't turn it
18 off.

19 And I had to -- started really looking at
20 myself, reaching out, I guess. Had other grandparents who
21 live close by to where we live. I went and seen them one
22 day and had a -- a good talk. And my grandfather said, you
23 know, "(Speaking Cree language), I've been waiting for you
24 for a long time to come and see me. I watch you," he said,
25 "I watch what you're doing. Look after yourself before

1 it's too late." People are watching what you're doing.

2 I also talked a lot with my late uncle. My
3 other uncles you know, my aunties. I even taught my
4 children, I said, "My uncles and my aunties," I said,
5 "Those are your *Kokums* and *Mushums*. To you those are your
6 *Kokums* and *Mushums*, supposed to be great uncle," I said,
7 but "(Speaking Cree language), *Kokum*, *Mushums* and *kokum*," I
8 said. "And anybody that says to you (speaking Cree
9 language) they're adopting you right now." You know. "If
10 somebody says (speaking Cree language), they're adopting
11 you right now." And I know they were going to ask me that
12 question one day when they started to think, and sure
13 enough, "How come I got so many (Speaking Cree language)?
14 "How come I got so many *Kokums*?" So I had to explain it
15 that way. "When somebody older than you comes up and
16 (speaking Cree language)," you know, that's the way --
17 that's the way I had to explain to my own children. I had
18 to make sure I had an answer for them. Not say, "Don't ask
19 me things like that." So that's how I raised my children.
20 And now I'm starting to raise our grandchildren that way,
21 you know.

22 My late uncle was a community constable. He
23 was a big man, taught me how to hunt. I don't know -- he
24 used to share stories. I can't even remember half of them
25 stories. I fall asleep on him when he shared them stories

1 in his camp. I don't know, I must have been sleeping all
2 night. That's my late uncle there, and he was a community
3 constable. I didn't even know his real name was Alex (ph),
4 I just called him Sandy (ph), and it was -- you know, that
5 was his nickname. I don't know where he got Sandy from,
6 but he taught me how to live on the land too -- respect
7 that land, and he was a good storyteller. Some of them
8 stories I remember, like I say, one time I went camped with
9 him. "Lay here," he said. And I'm laying there, and I'm
10 -- I'm -- I'm sleeping, I guess I'm saying, "M'hm -- m'hm."
11 I woke up it was five o'clock in the morning, he's still
12 sitting there sharing a story, "Are you listening to me?"
13 "Yeah, I am." I -- I just woke up. I said, "What time
14 it?" "Five o'clock." "Oh," he said, "I think I better
15 have a little -- couple hours sleep." But you know, those
16 are -- he was a kind man, you know, he took after my
17 grandmother, his mom. He was a gentle giant, and he loved
18 all -- all his -- all of us, hey. He didn't have any
19 children of his own. But he -- you know, he -- he adopted
20 two young men that we grew up with. So I still have his --
21 his hunting knife from when he passed on.

22 He passed on two years after my sister. It's
23 just like I was losing loved ones left and right. You know
24 that three years I lost my sister, my dad, and my uncle, so
25 it was -- it was painful. Again, when lost my uncle I was

1 lost, hey. And later on, you know, one of my -- one of my
2 step-uncles that was raised with my mom -- he was raised by
3 my grandparents, and he used to share a -- share stories
4 when we were small, and he said, you know, "I raised you
5 up," you said, "I babysat you when you were small. You and
6 your brother." He said, "I had to make two swings, one on
7 each wall," swing us back and forth. And I guess we were
8 double trouble, I guess to him. But -- but him, he used to
9 share stories too, hey, and he struggled himself. You
10 know, he was an alcoholic. But I started to look up to him
11 later on in life. He started to help me on -- on this
12 road, hey. He had the gift of music. And he said, "I want
13 you to come start helping here in the --" he said,
14 "-- when there's a -- when there's tough times needed, hey,
15 during wake services and funerals."

16 Yes, I used to go to those and go pay my
17 respects, walk out the door, because for me I didn't want
18 to show my emotions. I suppressed them. You know, growing
19 up, like I say, you know, "Don't cry, boy, you're a man --
20 be a man. Don't cry." You got hit anyway if you cried.
21 You know, so we had -- you know, eventually you suppressed
22 them. You didn't want to show that, hey. "Be a man.
23 Don't cry. Yeah, I'm going to give you something -- give
24 you something to cry about." So you know, you're growing
25 up. You start to suppress those feelings. And that's --

1 that's sad.

2 When I eventually let go, it was in front of
3 people because I told them, I said, "You know, I don't want
4 to live like this anymore." I come here out of respect,
5 but I'm not even respectful, I said, you know I walk out
6 the door, I go and show my emotions behind -- behind --
7 behind the house. Even sharing the story, I know it's --
8 it -- it's still -- still hurtful because I can't
9 -- can't forget about my sister.

10 Every time I see my nephew -- I lost my niece
11 last year -- her daughter. She died in a house fire. This
12 is my sister here. Her name was Connie Francis (ph) and I
13 think my mother -- mother named her after a singer. I've
14 never asked her where she got the name, hey.

15 And my -- my nephew he's all grown up -- my
16 nephew he's all grown up. My mother raised him up, you
17 know, he -- he -- she raised him up, and he's a young man,
18 and he calls all of us brothers, dad, hey. So that's my
19 nephew there. He lives in Brandon, hey.

20 And my niece, she passed away last -- last
21 year, last July, in a house fire, in a party. She was 29
22 years old. She left two children behind. They're in a
23 foster home. I stop in and visit them when I have an
24 opportunity. I just -- I just stop by, I don't need an
25 appointment because they're my relatives. Why should I go

1 and see a worker? I want to go and visit my -- my great
2 niece, and my great nephew, hey -- my -- my grandchildren.
3 By rights they're supposed to call -- I'm supposed to call
4 them grandchildren, not -- not great niece, hey. (Speaking
5 Cree language), but these are the ones here. She's getting
6 to be a -- getting on to be a teenager.

7 The girl -- the -- the foster home they're in
8 -- they're not too far from home. And you know, the foster
9 parents I think look after them properly, get them
10 schooling. And they said you know, "And we appreciate you
11 stopping by," they said, "You know, any time."

12 You know, and that cycle, it's hard to break
13 from my -- from my dad to my sister to my -- my niece.
14 Now, that's four generations there. The sad part is they
15 don't know -- they, you know, they won't know their great
16 grandparents, hey. They know their great grandma, they're
17 great-grandfather, they don't know. That was the thing
18 that angered me too when my dad left us, got angry all over
19 again. "How come you leave us so early in life?" He was
20 only 52 years old, hey. That's why I told my children,
21 "Whoever calls you *nôsisê* call them *Kokum* or *Mushum*." And
22 that's just the way it is.

23 My residential school journey for me -- I
24 started attending when it started to come out, you know, it
25 spread like wildfire, I guess, you know, when it came out,

1 and I started to -- like I say, I would come to The Pas,
2 it's only an hour for me to drive, sometimes I would ask
3 for assistance from my community, see if they could fund me
4 to go to this workshop or conference, and I said, "I'm
5 willing to take other people, if there's other people that
6 want to go." One of them was my late uncle on mom's side,
7 hey, he went to a residential school in Pine Creek. One of
8 the old residential -- older residential schools. And I --
9 I used phone him or go and see him, and I said, "You know,
10 I'm going to ask if they can provide funding, there's a
11 residential school conference or workshop in The Pas, would
12 you be willing to go, Uncle?" "Yeah, I -- yeah -- yeah,"
13 he said. "All right," I said, "I'll see what they say," I
14 say, "And once they let me know," I said, "I'll let you
15 know. I'll come and pick you up."

16 So you know, the odd time, like I say you
17 know, they would allow that, so I would come and pick him
18 up. And he would meet former students there -- former, you
19 know, students that -- ones that he went to school with.
20 Already some of these older people were starting to share
21 their stories. You know, this -- this is my way of
22 supporting him and encouraging him, I guess, you know, to
23 go through that process himself, and at the same time
24 myself.

25 There was a video that I watched of a man --

1 an old man that shared his story, he shared that story and
2 he made it public, hey. He talked about those two
3 residential schools that my dad went. Even just watching
4 that video of that old man sharing his story of those two
5 residential, I'm picturing my dad in the same situation. I
6 bet you this old man knew my dad, and I'm getting angry,
7 "Why did you leave us? Why did you leave us so early?"

8 So you know, that for me that's that healing
9 part of it, I guess. I know it's -- it hurts. It still
10 hurts, and I don't think it's over going to -- but sharing
11 it -- sharing it for me making me feel better. I don't
12 have to suppress it anymore. Don't have to carry it in my
13 shoulder. I became a helper after I went through that
14 process myself and I could only relate to my own experience
15 and how I dealt it.

16 Like I say, I just turn 60. I do my own
17 thing. I'm not going to worry about a job anymore. I came
18 into this world with nothing, I guess I'll leave with
19 nothing. Don't have to take anything with me. But what I
20 can leave here is -- is what I've lived through.

21 And my other part of my healing journey is
22 that I -- I -- I harvest medicines. I even start to teach
23 about them. What I know about them. The way I got started
24 was with young people in a camp -- a youth camp for youth
25 in care, hey, foster care. They asked me to -- to come

1 there as a resource person. Yes, I went to school and all
2 that, hey. I went to school. I learnt from behind a desk.
3 I told myself, I could probably get a lot of written
4 information and pass this around to these young people,
5 "Here, read this. Learn from it." But you know, I
6 approached my grandparents that -- that were living close
7 to me at the time, "I'm -- I'm asked to go to a youth
8 conference, kids are in care, foster care, hey. But I
9 don't know what -- I say that could probably give them
10 written information, but if I do that I might as well just
11 end that to them and they can copy it themselves."

12 You know, I was out in the field harvesting
13 sweet grass and it was just like a light come on, right
14 there. There's a teaching. I started harvesting that
15 sweet grass, preparing it -- and the cedar, the sage, these
16 are the teachings I -- these are three medicines I started
17 off with. I shared that with the young people. I -- I
18 actually tied them -- tied them at the end and then they
19 just braided it themselves. You know, just like hands-on,
20 hey. And I talked about that sweet grass, what it
21 represents to me, hey. What it represents to me
22 *kitimakeyichikewin*, kindness, that's what it represents to
23 me (speaking Cree language), respect.

24 And to me that sage (speaking Cree language),
25 teaches you to be a humble person; that's what it teaches.

1 Might have different teachings to somebody else. I'm not
2 saying mine is the only teachings. No. So that's how I
3 taught that, hey.

4 And that sage, to me is mostly a woman's
5 medicine, hey, (speaking Cree language) you know, (speaking
6 Cree language), that water.

7 So that's how I started to teach. You know,
8 it helped me along the way get stronger. Made me feel good
9 when I shared that with someone, so whatever I shared,
10 "That's it, this is no longer mine. It's yours too. Where
11 you take it, it's up to you."

12 And like I say, the sweet grass there's a lot
13 of teachings behind it. One Elder taught me -- I was in a
14 camp, there was Australians there -- people from Australia.
15 They wanted to braid. They come and ask, "Can we braid?"
16 "Of course, come on." "We were listening to you from over
17 there." And they were sitting on the outside, kind of.
18 "Yeah, come -- come on. Come and braid." "Can we take it
19 back home?" "Well, you can. You just say that you got
20 that from an Elder, hey, gifted to you." (Speaking Cree
21 language) that sweet is grass, hey, if you first harvest
22 it, later in the late -- summer has a real dark
23 reddish/purple stem on it, hey. Only from the roots. Like
24 all the -- all the good medicines. You look at those good
25 medicines, hey. They have a -- a really purplish/reddish

1 stem, hey.

2 (Speaking Cree language) that old man taught
3 me (speaking Cree language), The Creator's blood. He was
4 talking the Bible sense and the spiritual sense. He was
5 gifting me that teaching. You know, to me it made sense,
6 hey, (speaking Cree language) that's the way he taught me,
7 so I use those teachings, and I don't write nothing down.

8 I asked -- I asked my niece, like I said,
9 this is my adopted brother, and I didn't know that was his
10 daughter, Jade, who is my niece how, hey, I said, "I want
11 you to put those chairs in semicircle out there."

12 (Speaking Cree language), we sit in the circle, us
13 Aboriginal people, and Inuk. I -- I was -- I was observing
14 that yesterday. I was sitting over there, hey, it makes
15 me, it makes it easier for me to share. Plus, we're all
16 equal in the circle (speaking Cree language). We're no
17 better than the -- the other person. And we have the four
18 doorways, the four openings, you know, the east, and the
19 south, the west, north.

20 That's how I try and doing things. I -- I try
21 and be careful that way. So I asked her to put those
22 chairs out there in a semicircle to complete the circle up
23 here this -- it was a half circle here, and today it's
24 complete back there. And it it's kind of easier for me to
25 share.

1 So that's what I wanted to share, you know,
2 how I grew up, and then what affected my life in between.
3 You know, and the losses -- my -- my sister died a violent
4 death. Who died violently, and I had to be the one to
5 strong for my family, for my parents and the other
6 siblings. And then how I looked after myself.

7 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Fred, I just have a few
8 questions. You mentioned how you felt the need to suppress
9 your emotions. Do you have a message for other males and
10 boys about how to deal with these emotions?

11 **MR. FRED STEVENS:** Yeah, now for me, like I
12 say, you know, one of my late uncles, you know, (speaking
13 Cree language) "You need to show your emotion. Don't
14 suppress it. Don't hide it. You'll feel better if you let
15 go. Let it go." And when I finally had the courage to do
16 that in front of people I let those tears flow. I didn't
17 want to hide anymore. Just like this room here. We're
18 very respectful -- respectful of each other. We listen.
19 That's one of our gifts that we have as Inuk (speaking Cree
20 language) we don't interrupt each other.

21 That's how it was when I first shared the
22 room just went quiet. I didn't have to use a microphone
23 (speaking Cree language) everybody heard. And I told them
24 why I'm doing this. I said, "You know, I used to run away
25 with my feelings, go and hide, maybe behind that bottle.

1 Yes. I could share with you any time when I was under that
2 bottle." But I didn't need that anymore. That liquid
3 courage wasn't cutting it anymore, just made it worse.
4 Just made it worse for me. And it hurt a lot of people,
5 especially my family. My own children. My own wife.
6 Didn't know I was hurting my mom. So for people, you know,
7 don't suppress them (speaking Cree language). You start
8 getting sick. You start getting sicknesses from there.

9 You know, I've been lucky so far. I've never
10 in been the hospital. I've never been hospitalized since I
11 was -- the day I was born. When I turned 21 my grandmother
12 called us over, told me -- told us (speaking Cree language)
13 didn't realize what she was talking about. "(Speaking
14 Cree language) since you were born in that hospital you
15 haven't been back there to be hospitalized."

16 I see young -- I see young people my -- my
17 own relatives in the hospital already injecting themselves
18 -- slow death. But I still have that -- I have that
19 responsibility to talk to them and tell them, "(Speaking
20 Cree language) don't do that." I cry when I talk to them.
21 Because I want to show them I love them, "(Speaking Cree
22 language). Your life is precious. Don't throw it away."

23 So (speaking Cree language) don't be afraid
24 to show your emotions. Don't suppress them. (Speaking
25 Cree language) you start getting sick. You start to get

1 sick.

2 When I first let go, you know, 15, 16 years
3 ago now, hey, I felt light. Yes, people will call you
4 down, but that's okay. That's their own BS that they're
5 not dealing with. I have to be humble about it. I have to
6 bite my tongue at times when somebody says something wrong
7 to me, but I pray for that person.

8 I prayed lots here yesterday for those
9 families when I was sitting (speaking Cree language), and
10 prayer is powerful. And pray in your own way. There's no
11 right way and no wrong way. (Speaking Cree language) give
12 it to that person you prayed over with or the way you know
13 how. It don't have to be heard as long, as long as
14 somebody else hears it. And I strongly believe that prayer
15 is powerful. Things start to change if you pray from here.
16 (Speaking Cree language). Just speak from the heart, it
17 helps. And I don't have to read the Bible -- the Good
18 Book, it's there, hey. What's written in that book was
19 being practiced before it got here.

20 In the Bible it talks about seven deadly sins
21 in there, hey. Did we have deadly sins? I don't know.
22 But we have teachings -- seven teachings, hey. You know,
23 they talk about seven deadly sins in there, and we talk
24 about seven -- seven teachings that we have to live by.
25 Not only our -- not only in our mind, but in our spirit and

1 in our physical wellbeing. We have to have those
2 teachings. We have to love your mind. You have to love
3 your body. You have to love your spirit. I don't love my
4 brother because he's a nice guy. Because he has things,
5 that he teaches me. You know, so that's the message for
6 you -- for men, (speaking Cree language).

7 You know I'm -- I'm very protective of my
8 children. If there's something that happened to my
9 children I would go there in the school. I would go right
10 in there and scare the hell out of that teacher. My
11 daughter -- one of my daughters come home, didn't want to
12 go to school. "My teacher grabbed my hair." You know, I'm
13 mad. Okay. "I don't want to go to school." "I'll take
14 you. I'll take you myself." I went right in there. I
15 went right up to that teacher, right at her desk, "Stand
16 up, stand up, right now," I says. "My daughter right here,
17 I heard you grabbed her by the hair, stand up. I want to
18 you grab mine. I don't want you to ever touch my child," I
19 said. "That happened when I was younger myself," I says.
20 I'm very protect of my children. "No," I said, "You stand
21 up. I'll show you who's going to grab." I just about got
22 charged. But that's okay. "I'll -- I'll report you," he
23 said. "You know what, I should report you myself." That's
24 wrong.

25 You know, at the residential school, you know

1 those -- our parents -- my parents suppressed that -- one
2 of my parents. When I was going to school in the community
3 -- in the reserve we were taught my nuns -- sisters, we
4 called them, Grey Nuns, and I never -- I never put it
5 together 'til later on when I went through my residential
6 school experience -- that process. Why with were some of
7 these parents -- our parents angry at these nuns?

8 One of them was my wife's late aunt. I did
9 not realize that nun came from that residential school she
10 was in. And to come to our community and to start teaching
11 us -- our -- our -- their children? That anger -- she died
12 with that anger. She got sick. She took it out on -- she
13 came and took it out on me. She used to come to my house
14 and boss me around in front of my wife. And I told my wife
15 -- I said, "You have to -- you have to talk to your
16 auntie." She would come there with that liquid courage,
17 call me down. And I said, "You handle your side of the
18 family, I'll handle mine." And she couldn't do that. She
19 didn't want to disrespect her -- her auntie.

20 So one day I had enough. She -- she some
21 across you know, and she was under the weather, I guess. I
22 sat her down made some tea. "I want to talk to you," I
23 said. And I said, "This -- I said this your niece," I
24 said, you know. "And I -- and I have no disrespect -- no
25 disrespect," I said, "But I don't like what you're doing to

1 me when you come here. You come and call me down when
2 you're drunk. No more. Don't come and do that," I said,
3 "I don't go and do that in your house." You know, I didn't
4 want to be disrespectful to her, but it was in my home and
5 I don't do that -- I don't go and do that over there.
6 "You're welcome -- you're more than welcome here," I said,
7 "You come here in a good way, you're welcome," but I said,
8 "Don't come here like that," I said, you know, "When you're
9 drinking." She got mad. Stormed out.

10 But I felt better. You know, I didn't have
11 to carry that anymore. My wife tried to get mad at me.
12 "Well, I had to tell her," I said, "Somebody had to tell
13 her, it's just going get worse," I told her. "I don't mean
14 no disrespect to your auntie," hey, in fact, I said, "We'll
15 go there after. She might tell me to get the hell out," I
16 said, but I don't know. But you know, that's what it is.

17 So that's a message (speaking Cree language).
18 The ones that shared yesterday, it's powerful. I started
19 talking to them, it was like I met a long time ago
20 (speaking Cree language). We're together here. I really
21 like that, but it was hard, I know, yeah. I prayed for you
22 from over there. And I -- and that prayer was answered
23 because you have a clear message.

24 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Fred, do you have any
25 recommendations to make to the Commission?

1 **MR. FRED STEVENS:** Well, you know, I know the
2 RCMP have come a long way. But you know, they take their
3 training, you know -- I guess if I was a younger man maybe
4 I could go for training for six months and become a -- a
5 person of authority. Because that's all they have is six
6 months training, hey. And how can they get trained in --
7 in six months, you know. They become -- they become
8 policeman, hey. Is that how long it takes them, six
9 months? The police academy? And I know that Canada, where
10 we live in is a diverse country, you know, there a lot of
11 nationalities here. I think they have to have lot of --
12 become a -- become an RCMP you got to have a -- have more
13 than the physical ability or whatnot, hey. You got to have
14 that cultural sensitivity to be, you know -- to fit into
15 the bigger picture. I'm not saying that they're all bad.
16 I know that they just do their job, you know, but it seems
17 like they don't have no compassion at times, or they just
18 come and, "Hey, your -- your sister just died over there.
19 Come -- we just want you to come and identify her." You
20 know. You got to have that in there.

21 These four colours, that's what they stand
22 for, those RCMP. Where did they get those colours from?
23 Where did they get those four colours in their police
24 vehicles, hey? Where did they -- where did they get their
25 colours from? When they were first established hey, they

1 were supposed to patrol us Inuk, Northwest Mounted police.
2 Then they changed to Royal Canadian Mounted Police, hey.
3 But where did they get those colours from?

4 There's stories behind that. I don't know,
5 my brother knows them. Hey, on the colours, hey, I heard
6 different stories. I want to learn more, hey. When they
7 became RCMP they were gifted those colours from our
8 ancestors. I think that's -- it's not written in the
9 books, or maybe, I don't know. Maybe it's in England, I
10 don't know. Maybe (speaking Cree language), you know, our
11 Queen Mother took it, took it with her, I don't know. But
12 you know, I listen to -- just listening -- listening to
13 some of legends, or -- I don't want to call them legends
14 (speaking Cree language), the true stories, they're not
15 written, you know.

16 I have a cop friend, hey, he's a friend of
17 mine (speaking Cree language) he has a good heart. He
18 could probably squish me like a bug, but I said, "You know,
19 what do those colours represent on your vehicle there, my
20 friend? That buffalo head there. What are those colours
21 -- what are those -- what does that represent?" "Well," he
22 said, "I don't know." I said, "Those are my colours."
23 Those are my four colours that's why I wear them.

24 I wear this red ribbon shirt in honour of all
25 woman, especially my sister, hey. Because it's one of my

1 colours, first time I wear this shirt, but I wanted to
2 acknowledge that, you know, (speaking Cree language) for my
3 late sister and all -- all the other women -- the missing
4 and murdered women and girls that are being -- that are
5 missing and being exploited.

6 And one story I want to share, you know,
7 growing up my girls -- my daughters, you know, we -- we --
8 we kind of raised them up to be kind of independent and --
9 and no schooling there where we are, so we let them go and
10 stay in -- in the town, hey, with people, hey, house
11 parents, we call them. Wasn't too far from home. Because
12 you know, I don't want to -- I don't want that chain to be
13 too long. That's -- like I say, I'm protective, hey, but
14 for them to get an education, and then to be involved in --
15 in the education system, being active in sports, but not
16 too -- too far away. Anyway, we give them that space, the
17 oldest one started to run around. And my wife -- you know,
18 we made sure the house parents, or the -- the ones that are
19 taking over our job as parents, "You give them curfew. You
20 give them rules, and guidelines. Us --" I say, "When
21 they're at home you go to bed nine o'clock."

22 They want to fool around -- sometimes I used
23 to let them fool around late, hey, but next morning I get
24 them -- I get them up an hour early and on the next -- next
25 night I'm sure they're going to go to bed early because

1 they're tired, but that's the way I taught them, hey. I
2 didn't, you know, all right, let them run around next --
3 next day I get up extra early, (indiscernible) it's only --
4 "No -- no, you have to get up. You have to get ready for
5 school." And they get home from school, you know, they go
6 to bed early without even being asked. That's how I taught
7 them, hey, you know.

8 Anyway, like I say, we started giving them
9 that little bit of freedom to go out there, just to be
10 involved in sports, and all that. You know, give them that
11 opportunity I never had, hey, at that time. So -- so the
12 oldest one wanted to run around with -- with her -- her
13 friends. And the house parent would phone, "She's not home
14 yet." "Well, you're the house parent. You're supposed to
15 be responsible." "Well, I'm not -- we're not at home."
16 And I finally told the wife, I said, "What's going --
17 what's going on with her," I said, you know. Well, she
18 wanted to run around -- run around the streets. She got no
19 business 11 o'clock at night out in the street, I said,
20 "You're there to have an education. And the people that
21 are looking after you they mean well." "I have my friends,
22 you know." So I finally told my wife, "Go and get her.
23 She'll come home. The buses -- she can go on the bus." I
24 sat her down. I sat all our children down, hey. All my --
25 like this, starting talking to them, and I told her, I

1 said, "You know what, you're going to stay home" I said,
2 "You're going to school from here. You're getting on to
3 that age where you know everything," I said. "Sixteen
4 years old already and you know everything? I said, "You
5 know, I'm going to tell you a story." I said, "What if," I
6 said, "You're running around that street," I said,
7 "Somebody's going to pick you up. You might end up in the
8 -- in the ditch somewhere or maybe I won't find you." I
9 said. You know, I was always worried that way.

10 Anyways, we tried that, and she still did the
11 same thing, hey. So I called her back in -- we called her
12 back home, and I said, "You want to be on your own?"
13 "Yeah." "Okay." I got up, I opened the door. "There's
14 the door. There's the door. Come on. Go out." "What
15 about my things?" "Well, you're smart, you'll get them," I
16 said, "You got no things here." I was basically practicing
17 what they call, I guess, teaching her tough love, I guess
18 they call it. "What about my things?" And she started
19 crying by the door. "No," I said, "No, go. You want --
20 you want to live on your own." I said, "Your friends mean
21 so much to you."

22 Two weeks later she come home. One of her
23 friends was lost. One of her friends -- they end -- they
24 ended up -- they found her in Winnipeg three weeks after.
25 Kind of scared her, hey, you know. "What happened? How

1 come you're coming home?" "My friend is gone," she said.
2 She run away, I guess, whatever, I don't know what
3 happened. I said, "This is what I was talking about." I
4 said, "You know this is what I was telling you."

5 And I was crying when I talked to my
6 children, hey, (speaking Cree language). And I'm angry and
7 I'm -- I'm crying, telling them. The reason I did that to
8 my oldest is if I let her get away with it, the -- the
9 younger ones are going to start doing -- copying her.
10 "(Speaking Cree language) this is no -- this is what
11 happened my girl, your friend -- thank God she's home
12 again," I said. "That's what I was telling you."

13 And this is what's happening today, hey.
14 Younger girls are getting missing. You know. And she has
15 children of her own now, hey. You know, so you know, I
16 tried to tell her that when she was that young, hey. Not
17 to do that.

18 And that's one of the things that I used to
19 do with my children is sit -- sit them down. You know, out
20 of anger, but in the end, it was me that was showing that
21 emotion. "How come my dad is crying?" I guess, they tell
22 -- they asked their mom. "Because your dad love said you
23 guys," she said, hey. "Telling you things like that,
24 listen." So I don't know. Like I say, my children are all
25 grown up. They have their own kids, their family, they

1 work -- most of them working.

2 One daughter -- one of our daughters is in
3 the treatment centre right now. And I have to -- for me
4 personally I have to let her go through that process, but
5 you know, she -- she's got four kids -- four of our
6 grandchildren, one is an older girl, she's getting on to be
7 a teenager, so I -- we support her in any way we can. In
8 fact, in the next week or so she's going to Europe. She's
9 going there under a cadet program. You know, I wish her
10 the best there, and I told her that you know, "You're --
11 you know, we strong for your -- your younger brothers."

12 I have a grandson there, I don't know if that
13 picture is there. Do they have that picture?

14 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** What picture?

15 **MR. FRED STEVENS:** That picture of my grand
16 -- we carrying my grandson. I don't know if they have it
17 on there. No. I'm carrying my grandson there -- my,
18 little boy. This one here -- this is my youngest, this is
19 our youngest grandchild. I kind of got mad at him because
20 he was born a day before my birthday. He couldn't wait a
21 day. "You couldn't wait," I say, "What?" He's two years
22 old and pointing at me there. That's the one that his mom
23 is having a hard time, but like I say, she's in the
24 treatment centre. So this one here comes and visits now
25 and then. I take him outside you know, and he wants to run

1 around outside, so I take him outside. Spend time with him
2 out there in the yard, and let him have that space, hey,
3 that fresh air.

4 And my daughter that I'm talking about, you
5 know, a few years ago, me and my wife were in Saskatoon,
6 she went there for education or something. She was working
7 in education, and I think she was going to a grad and,
8 "Well, I'll go -- well, I'll go for a ride with you," I
9 said. We got a call from Winnipeg and they had her in the
10 hospital. Basically, what happened was she was going
11 through a traumatic event.

12 There's one picture here of our Grand Chief
13 here of the north, this was two years ago. These were when
14 I went and shared this story there in -- in Swan River,
15 where my sister was killed, hey, I went and shared my story
16 about my sister there at a women's gathering there and --
17 and I told them, I said, "I want to go there," so my --
18 that's my youngest daughter there and my wife, they come
19 with -- we went there. And I went and shared that story
20 there in front of people and I said, "You know, it's hard
21 to come here, where your own sibling passed away. Where
22 she was -- her life was taken."

23 So anyway, my daughter there, like I say, we
24 got a call from Winnipeg you know, she was under care there
25 with people looking after her during the day, but at night

1 -- as soon as five o'clock rolled around you know, the
2 support people would disappear. And they go and left her
3 alone and she took her own medication to try and OD on it,
4 hey. Which you know, we travel -- I told my wife, I said,
5 "We have to go." I said, "We have to travel all night from
6 Saskatoon to Winnipeg." I stopped in Long Plains, and that
7 old man was waiting for me already. But travelling -- I
8 knew what I was going to do. Told them, "Don't do nothing,
9 just keep an eye on her there." They wanted to put her in
10 the psych ward. Already I knew I got to bring her home,
11 (speaking Cree language) so I stopped in Long Plains and my
12 wife right went through to be her with daughter, and I
13 visit that old man there in Long Plain, and I went -- and I
14 went after I was done. And he said, "You know what you're
15 doing," he said, "You know, you don't have to tell me, I
16 know what you're going to do anyway. Do that -- do that,"
17 but I'm going to smoke to pipe here. And I went and got my
18 daughter out of that hospital, myself, talked to the head
19 psychiatrist there, (indiscernible) I don't want her in
20 there. "The healing is going to take place at home. If
21 she wants to share her traumatic event with us it's up to
22 her." You know, the way you deal with it is push this
23 medication on her to make her sleep so you guys can think
24 too much, and that's what she took," I said. "Your own
25 medication," I said. You know that psychiatrist looked at

1 me. I want to take her out of this concrete jungle and
2 take her out to Pinaymootang get that fresh air out there,
3 hey, and to be with my mom, Kokum, hey. She'll share --
4 share with her granny if she wants to, and she'll share
5 with her mom.

6 She has struggles today yet, but you know, I
7 took her out of there. You know, I got her out of there.
8 I left that day. That -- that psychiatrist said, "You know
9 -- you know, that would be the best medicine." "You're
10 going to put her in her room and lock her up?" "No.
11 (Speaking Cree language) no."

12 (TECHNICAL DIFFICUTIES)

13 COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: *S'il vous*
14 *plait*, please. Shelby.

15 MS. SHELBY THOMAS: Commissioner Audette, we
16 can recommence.

17 Fred, I just have a question about if there
18 was any services or organizations available to males in
19 their grieving process, and if you have any recommendations
20 about what is needed to help males in those situations.

21 MR. FRED STEVENS: Cheque -- cheque is in the
22 mail. How's that?

23 COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: What did he
24 say?

25 MR. FRED STEVENS: Cheque is in the mail.

1 Yeah. I don't know if there's any treatment centres, per
2 se, for -- or -- or healing lodges, I guess, you could call
3 them you know, I don't want to call them treatment centres,
4 but for men specifically when they're going through a
5 grieving process I guess we suffer alone. You know, we
6 have to reach out to other -- to others, not only to men
7 you know, but it has to encompass the whole family you
8 know, how they want to heal.

9 And I know it's a long process, like I say,
10 I'm second generation residential school. I don't want to
11 call it survivor because I want to call myself a warrior,
12 hey, you know, because that is our role, and some people
13 call themselves survivors, I guess. I'm relating my own
14 story about that, hey, but to me having healing lodges,
15 where they can feel safe and be themselves. I think it all
16 goes back to our own -- our own ways of teaching. The
17 circle we have here is one -- it's a powerful one. You
18 know, if you start using that medicine wheel concept, we
19 kept talking about it, quit talking about it, let's start
20 living it (speaking Cree language) a good life. I think
21 that's what it boils down to, hey.

22 You know, my community -- I look at it from
23 across the lake, I can see the lights. I sit on my table
24 and I pray and I smudge -- I have my smudge and I'll sit
25 there and look across -- across the lake. I asked that

1 higher power, the Creator (speaking Cree language). There
2 are people suffering. They walk around like they're
3 zombies. You know, for myself as an individual -- like I
4 say, I still have that -- that kinship -- just like my
5 *osimimaw*, hey, my younger brother. So I can't order him
6 around, but I can tell him, "(Speaking Cree language) can
7 you do this?" If I say, "Move it, better go and do this
8 (speaking Cree language)," or I'll ask him in a different
9 way, "Can you do this for me a little bit?" Which one is
10 he going to listen to? Which one is he going to be more
11 inclined to do? The order or the asking in a good way?

12 You know, a lot of these young souls that are
13 lost -- the young women, hey, they get themselves mixed up
14 in those things and it's hard for them to get out of there.
15 Not only the women, the young -- the young girls -- young
16 men.

17 I have opportunity to travel with some of
18 these young people, especially young men. And you know,
19 they talk about they were in gangs, one young man in
20 particular he was -- he lived here in Thompson, "Oh yeah,"
21 he said, "I drove a big black truck." And a gang colour I
22 guess, that's what it is, with a roll of bills, hey.
23 Walking around. "Oh," I said, "How did you get there?
24 What did you have to do to get to that stage?" I just ask
25 him, I said, "You know, you don't have to tell me if you

1 want." He's sitting there, hey, beside me, we're driving.
2 And I said, "Did you have to rob somebody or did you have
3 to break into somebody's home," you know, that's the steps
4 hey. "Yeah," he said, "Yeah -- yeah," a few minutes later
5 or so he answers my question, hey. "Let me ask you another
6 question," I said, "How do you sleep?" "What do you mean?"
7 "Well, how to you sleep?" And I said, "Do you sleep --
8 sleep with one eye open like an animal?" "Well, what do
9 you mean?" "Well," I said, "That's how animals sleep, hey.
10 You sleep like a goose," I said, "With one eye open."
11 "Yeah." And I said, "What do you carry when you sleep?
12 What do you got in your hand? Or what do you sleep with,"
13 I said. "Maybe a gun? A bat? Or a machete?" I'm
14 driving, and he's -- you know, he's contemplating these
15 questions I'm asking him. And he says, "Yeah -- yeah."
16 "What?" I say. "Yeah," he said, "I have to carry a
17 knife." "Well, it must -- must be a good feeling, man." I
18 said, "To be a warrior, hey. That's a warrior, hey." Then
19 I asked him a question down the road, "So how do you get
20 out of that life -- how do you get out of there?" "A
21 family." "A family?" "Yeah, if I start a family, they --
22 they won't bother me." "Really?" I said, "How long 'til
23 they're ready to cash in their chip. They call you in."
24 And I kind of made him think, hey. You know, I said, "A
25 warrior in the community protects that community. Protects

1 everybody. Your *Kokum*, your *Mushum*, your children, the
2 children in that community, you protect what you -- what
3 you own in that community." I said, "That's what a warrior
4 is. And this is what I'm trying to teach you," I said.
5 "You go to these -- yeah, I bring you to these teaching
6 lodges," I said, "Right away you want to go and pierce."
7 "No," I said, "I'll go and hang you in the bush myself," I
8 said, "Upside down." He kind of looks at -- "Really?"
9 "No, I'm just kidding," I says. "No," I said, "You know
10 you want to follow that," I said, "You make sure why you
11 want to follow." I haven't pierced, but I go there and
12 support people. I go up there, you know, I go and support
13 people.

14 But you know, these are the kind of -- those
15 are healing lodges. And we don't even recognize them. But
16 the government don't support those. Because you got to
17 have a piece of paper, hey, pieces of paper, you got to
18 write things down. That's why I said there's no desk here
19 for me. I can go and sit over there on that table, hey,
20 and I can start writing down what I'm saying. Are you
21 going to be listening? No. You're going to be too busy
22 trying to see what I'm writing. Or I'm sitting here and
23 talking to you -- talking to the other people. So
24 government has to start recognizing what it is -- what is
25 -- what is the true healing lodge -- the healing lodge is

1 out there. And we do our best to accommodate those young
2 people.

3 I share one teaching with them, hey. You
4 know some of them are young men now, hey, I started working
5 with young boys, taking them to kids camps here in Grand
6 Rapids for the last ten years or so. They're young men
7 now; they got family. They still come up to me. They
8 still think of me, you know, they don't forget that. They
9 still are that respect. "Hey, my -- my boy's getting big,"
10 they say, "You know, are you going to take them over
11 there?" "No, it's your turn to take him over there.
12 That's your responsibility." "No, but you know how to work
13 with them. You worked with us." Now, I have to work with
14 (speaking Cree language), that's like grandchildren, hey.
15 "Yes, I said, "It's your responsibility."

16 That medicine wheel -- that circle of life,
17 from the east -- that's where we're born from, hey, we're
18 children, *otawâsimisiw*, who are we connected to, to the
19 west? Across, who's at the west? Adults, hey, (speaking
20 Cree language), adults, adults are the parents. We start
21 moving to the south. What do we become? The youth. The
22 young person, hey. We start losing that connection to our
23 parents, but who do we start connecting to in the north?
24 Who's in the north? *Kêhcê-ayiwîw*, the Elders, but that
25 circle is getting -- oh, it's starting to break.

1 So with these youth, that are becoming youth
2 over our young people. They're having children already.
3 They don't even have time to become that adult. Hey, I saw
4 in the center somewhere it's broken. They don't even have
5 time to become a parent, they're already -- they're just a
6 child, only 14, 15-year-old, hey. That -- that -- that
7 thing is broken. They don't even -- by the time they --
8 they become an adult they're already a grand --
9 grandmother, grandfather. They don't even have time to --
10 they don't even have time to get old.

11 So that -- that -- that circle, we have to
12 strengthen that circle. And the best way to do that is go
13 back -- go back out there and we start recognizing our own
14 people that have those gifts, let's go through (speaking
15 Cree language) -- these women, my brother here. (Speaking
16 Cree language).

17 You know, I used to go and see my
18 grandparents, go offer my tobacco. Go and ask a question.
19 I wasn't listening when I was given that answer. And my
20 *Mushum* said, "(Speaking Cree language) I'm just a child my
21 grandson. I'm learning." I go -- I go away confused, hey,
22 I -- yeah, I even say, "What the hell?" I said, "I went
23 and offered him my tobacco and that's what he tells me,
24 that he's a kid." I wasn't listening. Now I know and now
25 I understand. We're always learning. We learn right 'til

1 when we leave. Those riddles -- one of the things that he
2 -- that my grandmother told me, (speaking Cree language)
3 your sense of your -- you can see things, you can listen
4 (speaking Cree language), your senses I guess, yeah. I
5 have four of these I can take two off and I can't see you.
6 Use those tools you were given. You know. And (speaking
7 Cree language), that circle of life.

8 So that's -- the government has to recognize
9 that and one you know, there was talk here just the other
10 day, cultural approach to child -- child -- child welfare.
11 What have -- what have we been talking about? You know.
12 You know. So is that's about it I guess, unless you have a
13 question.

14 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Grandmothers and
15 Commissioner Audette, do you have any comments or
16 questions?

17 **MS. DARLENE OSBORNE:** (Speaking Cree
18 language).

19 **MS. FLORENCE CATCHEWAY:** (Speaking Cree
20 language).

21 **MS. AGNES SPENCE:** (Speaking Cree language).

22 **MS. ISABELLE MORRIS:** (Speaking Cree
23 language). It's an honour for you to share your oral
24 stories and -- and what you carry because many -- many of
25 the old stories -- that's the way of our people. They had

1 carried that, and now they had left us, they had left you
2 behind, and left us behind to carry the -- their ways.
3 You're teaching the young ones. It's an honour.

4 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Merci*
5 *beaucoup.* We're asking if you would like to accept from us
6 a gift -- an Eagle Feather, on behalf of family members,
7 survivors that are dedicated to this important cause, and
8 of course, from the National Inquiry and the staff and I'll
9 ask my friend here, Madam Osborne.

10 **MR. FRED STEVENS:** Just, just want to get my
11 brother here to have a little smudge because I started with
12 a smudge and (Speaking Cree language) just so close in a
13 good way, hey.

14 **MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Commissioner Audette, can
15 we adjourn the session for ten -- 15 minutes. Yeah.

16 --- **Exhibits (code: P01P14P0201)**

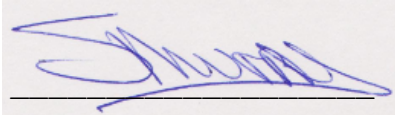
17 **Exhibit 1:** Folder of 20 digital images displayed during
18 the public testimony of Fred Stevens.

19 **Exhibit 2:** Funeral document.

20 --- Upon adjourning at 12:15 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Shannon Munro, 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.



Shannon Munro

May 8, 2018