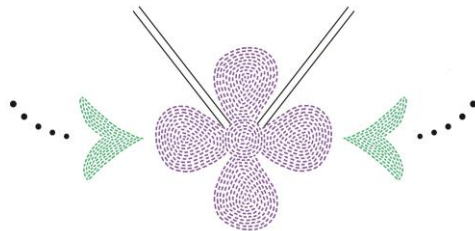


National Inquiry into  
Missing and Murdered  
Indigenous Women and Girls



Enquête nationale  
sur les femmes et les filles  
autochtones disparues et assassinées

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered  
Indigenous Women and Girls  
Truth-Gathering Process  
Part 1 Public Hearings  
Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel  
Minoru Room C  
Metro Vancouver, British Columbia**



**PUBLIC**

**Sunday April 8, 2018**

**Public Volume 118**

**Grace Tait**

**Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette  
Commission Counsel: Breen Ouellette**

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## II

### APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations		Non-appearance
Government of British Columbia	Jean Walters (Legal Counsel)	
Government of Canada	Lucy Bell (Legal Counsel)	
Heiltsuk First Nation		Non-appearance
Northwest Indigenous Council Society		Non-appearance
Our Place - Ray Cam Co-Operative Centre		Non-appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada		Non-appearance
Vancouver Sex Workers' Rights Collective		Non-appearance
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Metis Nation		Non-appearance

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Commissioner: Michèle Audette

Commission Counsel: Breen Ouellette

Clerk: Christian Rock

Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

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LIST OF EXHIBITS

NO.	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
No exhibits marked.		

1 Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Sunday, April 8, 2018, at 12:47 p.m.

3 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Mr. Registrar, okay,  
4 and Commissioner. Thank you, Commissioner.

5 For the record, my name is Breen Ouellette,  
6 and I am a lawyer with the National Inquiry. It is my very  
7 great honour to introduce Grace Tait who resides in  
8 Vancouver. She has brought people in support who I will  
9 ask her to introduce.

10 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** This is Penny Kerrigan, my  
11 very best friend in the whole wide world and my sister from  
12 another probably lifetime. That's what my family told me  
13 when they first met her, and we've been joined at the hip  
14 since as my family.

15 One of my other best friends, Mark Handley,  
16 who I cherish for his kind words and his gentleness and his  
17 humanity.

18 Rodney Brown (ph) is my adopted nephew who's  
19 always there for me.

20 Kim Kerrigan (ph), who has been an amazing  
21 young person in my life is my family. I'm her aunty.

22 Annita McPhee, fearless warrior.

23 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Mr. Registrar, Grace  
24 has requested to affirm using an eagle feather.

25 **GRACE TAIT, Sworn:**

1                   **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Grace, would you start  
2                   by telling the Commissioner about your mother and her life  
3                   growing up?

4                   **MS. GRACE TAIT:** I'm doing this for her.  
5                   She was supposed to be here today. She's also a fearless  
6                   warrior and my matriarch who is a beautiful human being to  
7                   so many people in East Vancouver. Her name is Barbara Anne  
8                   Tait. Her maiden name is Nelson.

9                   We come from a lineage of strong Chiefs. I  
10                  am Tsimshian. I am Eagle Clan. I have two other sisters  
11                  and a younger brother. My mother comes from a family where  
12                  our late grandfather, her dad, Medrick Nelson (ph), had two  
13                  high-esteemed Chieftain names from Kitkatla. One of them  
14                  is kept in the records of the University of Washington.  
15                  His name is Jibisa (ph).

16                  He never told us -- us kids, but I always  
17                  wondered why people would stop him in the streets of  
18                  Prince Rupert where I was born and grew up for the first  
19                  seven years of my life and then I went back every year as a  
20                  young person. That was one of the reasons, because he was  
21                  a Chief, a high-ranking Chief, and I am his family, and  
22                  I've always taken pride in that even though I didn't know  
23                  that he was a high-ranking Chief. He just raised us with  
24                  that -- the strength and the ability to be who we were and  
25                  to be kind, to be generous, to be humble, and that's my

1 mom, and I wish she could have been here today, but I  
2 understand completely why she wasn't able to do this. I've  
3 always admired her, and I've always been her warrior. I  
4 try to protect her as best I can, all my life, but I  
5 understand why she couldn't do it today and that she trusts  
6 me to share our story to make sure that it doesn't -- it  
7 doesn't happen in our family again and it doesn't happen to  
8 other young Aboriginal, Indigenous, beautiful women and  
9 girls.

10 **MR. BREEN:** And would you tell us about  
11 yourself, your occupation and your achievements?

12 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** I'm a daughter. I'm a  
13 sister. I'm a mother. I'm a grandmother. Barbara Anne  
14 (ph) is my mom. Melford Emsley (ph) is my dad. Medrick  
15 Nelson is my grandfather, Jibisa. I have two children,  
16 beautiful children. I have two grand -- two grandkids,  
17 beautiful grandkids, and I adore them immensely, and this  
18 is why I'm doing this, for the child in me and to protect  
19 them.

20 I worked really hard in my life. I thought  
21 I was going to be an interior designer. I graduated high  
22 school, which was a rare thing for kids from the Downtown  
23 Eastside where I grew up. We moved here in 1973 so my dad  
24 could attend UBC; intelligent, articulate, smart man, and  
25 he entered into -- to be a teacher, and my mom was going to

1 be the stay-at-home mom to raise us because she was an  
2 awesome mom and caregiver and life-giver.

3 I have since entered into the nonprofit  
4 world for the last 25 years to work with women and  
5 children. Currently, I'm the associate director of the  
6 YWCA, Crabtree Corner, which I oversee. It's taken me a  
7 long time to get here, but that's out of the pride, my mom,  
8 who was a chambermaid in the '80s and worked really hard to  
9 provide as a single parent for us four kids just like her  
10 father did raising his six kids when they -- they tried to  
11 take my mom's family away from him as the meal-provider.  
12 The -- the church and his family thought a man couldn't  
13 raise kids after my late grandmother Grace, who I'm named  
14 after, passed away from tuberculosis, but he proved them  
15 wrong. He brought a house. He was a carpenter by trade.  
16 He raised six beautiful children. Three are alive today,  
17 including my mom, my Uncle John, and my Aunty Lorna. The  
18 other three died too young. Alcoholism, bad health. It  
19 affected our family, and I didn't know why.

20 My grandfather Medrick never talked about  
21 his experience in the residential school. He only talked  
22 about the positive things for us. He was an accomplished  
23 musician. He played -- he was a pianist. He was an  
24 athlete. He had trophies all over his house. He raised  
25 six kids on his own and bought a house when it was unheard



1 of in Prince Rupert for a First Nations, an Aboriginal, an  
2 Indian to buy a house. He instilled love in our family.  
3 He instilled pride. He instilled a great sense of self,  
4 and that's what I carry forward in my mom.

5 My dad's side, unfortunately, was much more  
6 dark, and I don't really have a connection to the Tait side  
7 at all because of that darkness, but I carry this name  
8 proudly and my accomplishments, my survival of being here  
9 as a young girl in the Downtown Eastside, as a graduate  
10 from Britannia Secondary, as a hard-working mother and then  
11 single parent, and a community member because I love my  
12 community in the Downtown Eastside, and I'm so grateful  
13 that I work there. I've met a lot of wonderful people in  
14 my life, and that's why I'm here, to help those that I've  
15 known in the past. Like Bernie Williams said, those  
16 sisters were my sisters, too, and I'm doing this for the  
17 children, so that we can help those children at the  
18 earliest we can so that they don't go through what someone  
19 like me has gone through, but if they do, there's good  
20 things. There's good things, and I have to remember that  
21 every day.

22 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Would you tell us  
23 about your father's life growing up?

24 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** My father, Melford Emsley  
25 Tait, was from the Fort Simpson band, the (indiscernible

1 band name), just outside of Prince Rupert. He came  
2 from -- he had another brother and two sisters, which I  
3 learned later in life. We only thought there was one  
4 sister until I was told a story by my late Uncle Don Smith  
5 about the truth of my family.

6 My late grandfather died young, but  
7 apparently there -- the relationship was over, and she had  
8 a boyfriend. My late grandmother, who I never met, I was  
9 only shown pictures and told stories of, was murdered on  
10 Christmas Eve when the kids were little. She was taken on  
11 her boyfriend's boat, clubbed with a stove pipe from the  
12 boat and thrown overboard. I think her perpetrator was  
13 charged and sentenced. I don't know for sure. The family  
14 doesn't know.

15 My dad and his siblings were sent to our  
16 other grandfather, great grandfather on the Tait side who I  
17 can't even remember his name because it's so horrid what  
18 happened to those kids. They were kept in the attic. My  
19 late Uncle Don told me. Those kids, innocent, beautiful  
20 kids, my family, were kept up there. They were starved.  
21 They were tortured. He apparently would pour a  
22 hot -- super hot bath and stare down the empty stove pipe  
23 hole in the floor and watch them scream and cry out for  
24 help, and no one heard them.

25 I was always told by my late dad, Mel, that

1 I was named after his sister who perished in that room. He  
2 said her name was Grace Elizabeth. That's my name,  
3 Grace Elizabeth Tait. I found out at his funeral that his  
4 late baby sister, who was an infant at the time, was named  
5 Rosabell (ph). It wasn't Grace Elizabeth, so I don't know  
6 where that story came from, but I got the name. I always  
7 assumed it was because my grandmother and why my mom agreed  
8 to it because that was her mom's name. It's a family name.  
9 My Aunty Lorna is Lorna Grace. I have a little Grace  
10 cousin in Lorna's family because Grace is a family name.

11 Once the kids -- because it was  
12 apparent -- apparently that my great grandfather was  
13 mentally ill. He was abusive. He was horrid. The kids  
14 got taken away and placed in my late great aunty and  
15 uncle's house, which I understand and I -- I remember my  
16 grandparents, Rose and Robert. Rose died when I was a kid,  
17 and I remember attending her funeral and how sad I was  
18 because she was so kind. She raised those kids as if they  
19 were her own. My Grandpa Robert also did his best in  
20 raising those kids as his own with all his other children.

21 When he died, there was family fights, and  
22 they weren't -- they weren't considered siblings. They  
23 were told they were foster kids and they were only cousins,  
24 but they were raised as brother and sisters, and they  
25 stayed there until they were forced to go into residential

1 school, and they attended the worst one, Port Alberni,  
2 where -- they all received settlements from that -- I don't  
3 know the details, but because of what they suffered there,  
4 they were given quite a bit, as I understand. Us kids, his  
5 children, didn't receive a cent. My mother never received  
6 a cent.

7 What I understand and some of the testimony  
8 that was given by my family -- my late dad, Mel -- was  
9 horrific, and it helped me determine in my mind that the  
10 monster in my life -- my dad, my birth father, was the  
11 monster -- became a human being when I understood our  
12 truth.

13 He died in 2009. We hadn't had any -- any  
14 conversation with him or any pictures or gifts  
15 or -- nothing for about 17 years, and my grandfather  
16 predicted when he died that he would die alone, and that  
17 prediction came true. My dad was left in his apartment for  
18 50 days before someone contacted me on Facebook to say and  
19 ask me if I knew where my dad was because no one had seen  
20 him since before Christmas, and I said, of course not, I  
21 would not -- I hadn't expected to see him or know any  
22 details about what his -- where he was or how he was, but I  
23 said someone needs to go check his apartment. Where is he  
24 living? Go. Send someone now.

25 And then my cousin Christine (ph) who I was

1 working with at the time came down to my office and told me  
2 that it was him and he was passed away, and it was horrific  
3 because he was there for 50 days. He was decomposed, and  
4 it -- the smell was overwhelming, and everything in his  
5 apartment was contaminated by dead body, and I -- I was  
6 cold. I didn't cry. Didn't think about the humanity in  
7 him. I was just, like, the monster is dead, but he wasn't  
8 a monster. He was a small child that deserved more and was  
9 loved. He was strong. He was educated. He was -- he was  
10 artistic. That -- that man was -- he was so -- so many  
11 wonderful things that in my lifetime I got to experience  
12 because I'm the eldest, and I try and remember those good  
13 days all the time because I'm trying not to hate him for  
14 what he did to us and our mother, his wife.

15 So I remember -- I always think in my mind  
16 the child Mel, and that's why I work with children and  
17 families today, so that my little friends, my  
18 children -- the children who I consider my extended family  
19 are protected, and if these things happen, I can help. I  
20 can be there, and that's why I'm in the helping field.

21 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** When did your parents  
22 meet and marry?

23 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** They met in Prince Rupert  
24 when they were in high school. My mom's very beautiful,  
25 raised and protected by her dad, always -- always looked

1           amazing, her hair, her make-up, and they had to wear skirts  
2           in those days, so she dressed up every day and wore  
3           lipstick, which was not so cool in her -- her father's  
4           eyes, but she snuck it on in high school, and she told me  
5           about it.

6                                She met my dad. He was an -- he was an  
7           athlete. He was slim, tall, dark, handsome, charismatic.  
8           She fell in love, and it quickly happened, and she became  
9           pregnant, and in 1996 [sic], I was born on March 9th, and  
10          they were married on the 24th, so I was at -- attended my  
11          parents' wedding. It was actually what they term shotgun  
12          wedding because my grandfather said, no -- no woman of that  
13          day could be a single mom and couldn't raise a baby on your  
14          own. It was just unheard of, and you had to show -- save  
15          face, and you had to be married. You had to. There was no  
16          other thing. So they were married.

17                               What she shared with me later was that she  
18          never, ever wanted to get married, never, but she did it  
19          for her dad, to save face. She did love my dad, but at the  
20          same time, it was quick, too quick, and she didn't really  
21          know him, and her heart melted because she knew he came  
22          from a tough background, too, and they live with my  
23          grandfather. We all lived in my grandfather's house  
24          because they -- they had to find a house, so I -- I  
25          cherished that time that I had as a baby because he

1           protected all of us, and he had love to share.

2                       The moment my parents finally got their  
3           first apartment, the violence began, and I know that from a  
4           young age. They say kids can't remember. I know. I  
5           sense -- I have flashbacks, and then he moved her away to  
6           come to UBC to get his education to be a teacher, and  
7           that's when everything escalated, the violence in the home.  
8           My grandfather, I could tell he didn't want to let her go  
9           when we moved because we were traveling down by train, and  
10          he kept hugging my mom. He hugged her so long, and she  
11          hugged him back so long that the train started moving, and  
12          he traveled to Terrace with us and had to pay for the  
13          ticket and got off in Terrace finally and let her go.

14                      They talked all the time because she was  
15          close to her daddy, and Mel knew that. Mel took us away  
16          from that safety. He knew. Any love or the happiness that  
17          my grandfather instilled in his family and us was taken  
18          away from us because he moved us here to abuse my mother,  
19          to abuse us with his hatred and his violence and sexual  
20          abuse, the things that were instilled in him from his  
21          family, from the secrets no one was supposed to talk about,  
22          and from the residential school. The monster was born, and  
23          the monster thrived.

24                      **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** What is your first  
25          memory of violence perpetrated by him?

1                   **MS. GRACE TAIT:** I remember it was our  
2                   apartment. We had a couch and a chair. My mom was always  
3                   busy. She was cooking, and my dad worked at the pulp mill,  
4                   and he made really good money, and we had stuff -- we  
5                   had -- I had -- always -- my mom dressed me up all the  
6                   time, and I would trip and fall and ruin everything because  
7                   I'm a klutz, and -- but we had pretty dresses, and she  
8                   walked me around with the pram, the stroller in  
9                   Prince Rupert like ladies do because our father made good  
10                  money. He made really good money.

11                  But with that came the alcohol because he  
12                  had the money. He could do whatever he wanted and  
13                  be -- and spend it however he wanted, and one of his  
14                  choices was alcohol, and so he -- he did that, and what I  
15                  remember waking up to, my little baby sister, Cheryl Anne  
16                  (ph), was sleeping, and I remember hearing loud voices, and  
17                  I remember peeking out of our bedroom and seeing  
18                  her -- seeing my mom in my dad's hands being shaken. She  
19                  was bleeding, and what I recall from that is he hit her  
20                  with a rock on her forehead, and she called her brother, my  
21                  late uncle Al Nelson who came to make sure she was okay and  
22                  to warn my father to never touch her again or he would be  
23                  dealt with by my uncle.

24                  From that day forward, I believe everything  
25                  was done in secret, the abuse to her became secret, because



1 he didn't want to have to deal with my Uncle Al or anybody  
2 in our family on the Nelson side, so he moved us down here.

3 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** When did the family  
4 move from Prince Rupert to Vancouver?

5 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** I think 1970 -- '73, '72.  
6 Yeah. So we stayed with -- there was a place that the  
7 First United Church had a house on West 16th for  
8 First Nations families that arrived out of town to settle  
9 before they could seek permanent housing, hopefully. My  
10 late great Uncle William Robinson and my late great  
11 Auntie Doreen Robinson -- Nelson family -- ran, and it was  
12 amazing because I got to meet more of my Nelson side, and  
13 it was a big beautiful house, and I would play  
14 hide-and-seek with my big cousins, and it was -- we ate  
15 meals together, and we had conversations and laughter, and  
16 I didn't want to leave that place because that's how it  
17 felt, like, in Prince Rupert.

18 So when we found our first apartment, it was  
19 then when the abuse -- verbal abuse started to happen to us  
20 kids: You're stupid, you're worthless, you're dumb, you're  
21 ugly. And we believed it, and I believe my mom believed it  
22 in herself. She -- she stopped dressing up. He didn't  
23 want her to wear makeup. He didn't want her to dress  
24 pretty. He didn't want her to have her hair done anymore,  
25 and he controlled everything in our home with the violence

1 and with verbal abuse, and later on, I learned sexual  
2 abuse.

3 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** You said earlier that  
4 your father worked at a pulp mill. There aren't any pulp  
5 mills in Vancouver. What did he do when you moved to  
6 Vancouver?

7 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** He was a student. He had  
8 applied and received some funding to attend UBC, so he  
9 received -- our family received a living allowance and paid  
10 for our rent, but rarely any -- any extra beyond  
11 those -- the basics of the rent and the food and the  
12 utilities and the phone or the cable, we never saw anything  
13 because he drank it all. Any chance he would, he would buy  
14 whatever he wanted to buy for himself, and we went hungry a  
15 lot of the time, and we had the very basics, and I always  
16 commend my mom because I've never, ever tasted a fried rice  
17 like hers. It was wiener fried rice, and it was the best,  
18 and baloney ketchup stew was the best, and I crave those  
19 things as an adult because it's comfort to me because she  
20 made it with love, and she was a really good cook, so she  
21 always -- her best intentions were always to make sure our  
22 childhood was like her childhood: Happy, fed, loved.

23 So -- and my late dad was involved -- he got  
24 involved in Indian politics, so all they did was drink and  
25 drug and spend money and have sex outside their marriage,

1 have affairs. There was fights all the time. The politics  
2 were brilliant because they were fighting for our rights,  
3 but at the same time, it was torture for the families left  
4 behind. We were -- we were abused, and as I understand,  
5 hearing from other people, it's not changed, and I'm  
6 saddened by that. I'm trying to be a different leader, and  
7 the people I consider my friends and colleagues, the  
8 leadership, don't do that, but in that day, it was  
9 accepted, and it was supposed to be tolerated by the wives  
10 and the families, and the police did nothing to stop that.  
11 We were left to deal with the fallout if he ran out of  
12 money, and my mom suffered in silence, the abuse, because  
13 he hid it.

14 I happened to come home one day from school  
15 for lunch because I forgot to pack a lunch, and I brought  
16 my friend along, and I walked in. My dad and my mom were  
17 on the stairwell. We had a two-level townhouse in the  
18 projects, B.C. Housing, and they were rolling around. She  
19 later told me that she -- was the first time she actually  
20 hit back and kicked back and hit him. I was so  
21 embarrassed. I shut the door right away because I didn't  
22 want my friend to see that. I was a child. I never said  
23 anything about it. The police weren't called because I was  
24 embarrassed.

25 I think from that, that moment, my mom also

1       seeing me, it spurred something for the first time: I want  
2       out of this marriage. I don't want -- I don't deserve  
3       this. I think that's what's happened when I saw her, even  
4       though it was horrific for me, but I think that's -- she  
5       didn't want this for her children, never.

6                   **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Did the violence  
7       escalate as time passed?

8                   **MS. GRACE TAIT:** It did in secrecy because  
9       he knew. He sensed, so she would have even more bruises  
10      and never say anything. She would have cuts. The police  
11      would be there, and us kids, you know, would know, but  
12      not -- we -- we had no one to turn to. We went to our  
13      community centre, and thankfully, they helped us. We had  
14      sports. We had arts. We had photography. We had snacks.  
15      That was Ray Cam Community Centre. It saved our lives.  
16      The people there to this day who worked in that -- that  
17      centre for decades are my friends, my colleagues still. My  
18      little brother, when they built Ray Cam -- before Ray Cam,  
19      there was a place called the Sugar Shack where kids hung  
20      out, and someone burnt it down, so it spurred on the moms  
21      in the neighbourhood who stopped. The militant mom  
22      (indiscernible), shout out, amazing women in my  
23      neighbourhood who -- who along -- a lot of them since have  
24      passed, but their children are so proud, and I'm so proud  
25      of what they did. They helped create Ray Cam Cooperative

1 Centre because the Sugar Shack was gone, and my little  
2 brother, who was just tiny, had his picture taken in -- in  
3 the newspaper, and they celebrated their 40th anniversary a  
4 couple of years ago. He was the one that -- it was an  
5 empty lot, and he was the one that was shoveling the first  
6 construction on the empty lot that was -- he's the cutest.  
7 Everybody loved him. Chuck. Everybody knows Chuck.

8 (LAUGHTER)

9 MS. GRACE TAIT: His name -- his real name  
10 is Aaron Dale (ph). Still amazing man who's on the board  
11 of Ray Cam for several years. He was a youth adviser, did  
12 amazing things, helped create amazing things for other  
13 youth in the neighbourhood and for children and families.  
14 This is our family out of -- out of this abuse, hidden  
15 secrets, police, violence. Amazing people emerged out of  
16 this. My sister, Cheryl Anne, worked for INAK (ph) for  
17 several years. Brilliant mind. Highest security. Dealt  
18 with lots of dollars, and my sister Geri Lynne (ph),  
19 amazing mom, helped my niece when she had -- was diagnosed  
20 with leukemia when my niece was 2 and became a medical  
21 expert herself because of the teachings of our mom. Her  
22 eldest child, Nicole Tait (ph), amazing young lady who did  
23 the Walk4Justice with Gladys Radek and Bernie Williams  
24 because she knew a bit about her grandma's history and our  
25 sisters who were going missing and murdered in our

1 neighbourhood; just like myself, compassion and caring and  
2 loving, wanted to give something back to her community and  
3 to our family.

4 But this all cost us. Our family, our  
5 amazing mother is a two-time cancer survivor and a recent  
6 heart attack survivor. Her body is traumatized. She lives  
7 in constant pain every day from head to toe. She has to  
8 take heavy medications to even make it through the day, and  
9 I believe that is because of her body taking all that abuse  
10 through the years. She had broken bones; she had broken  
11 noses; she had scrapes, cuts, not only from my late dad,  
12 her late -- her ex-husband, from a subsequent boyfriend of  
13 hers years later who abused her in secret.

14 But we were fed. She worked hard as a  
15 chambermaid for my organization, the YWCA hotel in the  
16 '80s, and I'm so proud that I made her proud to become  
17 their associate director of that organization and managing  
18 and working for our community in a managerial position with  
19 high esteem and respect. She helped that, and she was so  
20 proud. She -- she created me, and this is the person that  
21 I am because of her -- articulate, beautiful, smart,  
22 educated, fearless -- is because of her.

23 The violence -- because he knew she was  
24 trying to walk away, didn't want him in her life, of  
25 course -- it escalated in secrecy. It became more -- more

1 bruises on her body, more police at our house.

2 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Were the police  
3 helpful?

4 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** Most of all, no. We were  
5 kids. Who's protecting us? Who was there to ever, ever  
6 support us kids? Who was there to ever support my mom?  
7 And the police, because my dad could talk his way out of  
8 it, would let him go. You know, how many times did they  
9 need to be at our house? Our -- our family joke is, hello,  
10 Mrs. Tait, how are you today, from a police officer of  
11 several, and of course, she would say, fine. No one asked,  
12 and no one checked to make sure she was actually fine. No  
13 one asked, no one checked to make sure us children, us  
14 four, were fine. Never happened.

15 Through the -- through the years, the only  
16 person that ever made a difference from the police force  
17 when we were younger was Dave Dixon (ph). He became a  
18 human of the -- the human face of the police. Even though  
19 people have different opinions of him, he was our champion.  
20 He would actually listen to my mother Barbara and make sure  
21 that the perpetrator was arrested and taken to jail, and  
22 even though he would get out the same day, he did  
23 that -- he did his job, and he became a familiar face for  
24 my children when they were at day care at Ray Cam Centre  
25 because he became the human face of police and not having





1 and I thought the same thing when I called her and talked  
2 to her about it, and she said, yeah, that guy wasn't a good  
3 guy. And we didn't have that relationship with the police  
4 who -- who never asked us except when Dave Dixon was there,  
5 he made sure us kids -- because that's how I got to know  
6 him in my teens. He'd ask me, how are you, Grace? And to  
7 this day, he's my friend and my colleague in the  
8 neighbourhood. He has pictures of the missing and murdered  
9 women and family members in his wallet -- he carries with  
10 him because he wants to find them and he wants to -- his  
11 heart is with the families, just like my heart's with the  
12 families. He knew what we went through, and he tried.  
13 It's not perfect, but he tried.

14 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Would you agree with  
15 the statement that Dave Dixon is a good man?

16 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** He's the best man.

17 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Did the law empower  
18 this best man to protect you as much as you needed it?

19 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** No. I knew he got flack.  
20 I knew that the -- the mentality of the police back then,  
21 always has been, to this day, because I witness it in my  
22 job, as I was preparing for my testimony the day of, sent a  
23 woman who was abused, who was injured, didn't  
24 think -- didn't ask if she wanted to press charges, didn't  
25 ask if she needed medical attention, let -- let her abuser

1 go with the car, the phone, the money, and told her, go see  
2 Sheway. Sheway is our partner. They have specific  
3 criteria. They're in our building at YWCA Crabtree Corner.  
4 Their -- particular criteria -- because their work is  
5 intensive with moms, babies, infants, and pregnant moms.  
6 She didn't fit the criteria and was left in our reception  
7 area in hysterics, and I helped her, and it infuriated me  
8 that to this day, as that child back then who needed help  
9 to now, 2018, and still no help and just sending and  
10 dismissing her; I helped her, I asked her, what can I do?  
11 What would you like to do? Are you okay? Can I see your  
12 injury? And stayed with her, and she was so appreciative  
13 and happy, and that's -- the people I work with made that  
14 happen, and the people who groomed me to be here made that  
15 happen. My mom made that happen.

16 The police aren't our friends. Had an  
17 incident with the RCMP. They're not our friends. That  
18 needs to be looked into, and it needs to be rectified for  
19 the kids, for the youth. It needs to happen yesterday.  
20 We're failing them like you failed me as a child. It's  
21 still happening, and I expected better, and I thought that  
22 things would be better, and it's not.

23 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** How did your father  
24 abuse you and your siblings?

25 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** When we moved here to

1 Vancouver, not only was our mom abused in secrecy, but he  
2 would call us names every single day: You're stupid,  
3 you're a dumbhead, idiot. He'd whack me on the top of the  
4 head: Stupid, do the dishes. We were like little slaves  
5 for him, probably what he learned from his abusers in  
6 residential school. He would be fake in front of people,  
7 so when our family came, he'd be the doting dad because he  
8 could talk his way around anything. The person who got the  
9 brunt of it all -- we thought when -- because he always  
10 talked about having a son, so my mom, of course, you know,  
11 was going to birth babies until she had his son. We  
12 thought that that would end. He would be proud. He had  
13 his son, our little brother. He ended up treating our  
14 little brother the worst. We just found out about it in  
15 our adult years, and my mom just found out about it a  
16 couple years ago and was heartbroken because she was  
17 working so hard, she didn't see this.

18 My brother is the most amazing man who takes  
19 care of Elders in the Downtown Eastside. He feeds them.  
20 He sits with them. He makes sure that someone is connected  
21 to them, I think, because of the abuse he suffered because  
22 he suffered the worst and never told us.

23 My sister says she suffered sexual abuse  
24 from him, but it hasn't been proven because she's never  
25 laid charges.

1 I know that I just felt less than, always in  
2 his presence, every day, but I was so in awe of his  
3 artistic talent and his incredible knowledge and the kind  
4 person he could be when he let kindness in, which was not  
5 very often, but I saw that in him, and that was my mom's  
6 family, again, the teachings, the grandfather who instilled  
7 in me that you have to be kind to everyone, even if they're  
8 mean to you. I saw that in my father once in a -- once in  
9 a while.

10 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** You told me about  
11 another incident where your mother fought back on the  
12 stairs. Would you share that with the Commissioner,  
13 please?

14 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** It was the first time I  
15 witnessed the violence that was in secret for numerous  
16 years, but I saw her, and for the first time, I realized,  
17 she's actually fighting back, she's kicking him, and that's  
18 when I realized, and she told me that she was. She was  
19 tired of it, and she actually hit him, and he didn't know  
20 what to do. He stopped. He realized that this -- this was  
21 a different set of rules for him, and she was actually  
22 going to fight him back. That was a proud moment for her.  
23 That's what she had worked up all her life to -- to respect  
24 herself, to know that the strength in her and her courage  
25 was there all along, and she finally utilized it. It came

1 out.

2 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** And so you said that  
3 she tired of the violence. What did she do?

4 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** She kicked him out. She  
5 told him, no more. She was paying the bills already. We  
6 weren't rich, and he never contributed to the household.  
7 He often came at times when she (indiscernible) after he  
8 moved out to eat our food and watch TV and lay on our couch  
9 when he wasn't supposed to be there because she didn't want  
10 him there, but he didn't listen, and no one was there to  
11 enforce anything. He even charged up his food tab at the  
12 cooperative store at Ray Cam without her approval. They  
13 let him because they didn't realize they were separated,  
14 but he racked up hundreds of dollars. My mom paid back and  
15 told them, don't do this again, so he couldn't, but he came  
16 down to our house anyway and ate our food. He'd walk in  
17 any time he wanted to, and she would tell him that and then  
18 go to a friend's because she knew she was safe there, but  
19 us kids were there, and we got the brunt of it. She didn't  
20 mean that to happen. She was seeking safety for herself,  
21 so us kids would always play out or go to the community  
22 centre to get away from him. That was our house, our food.

23 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** After he was kicked  
24 out, did he attack your mother again?

25 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** Yes, he did. We don't

1 remember the details. I remember as a child, I woke up,  
2 and I could hear yelling, and I thought, oh, there's a  
3 party, they're dancing or something. I got up, and I heard  
4 crying, and I went to my door, and it was dark in our  
5 upstairs hallway, in our bedrooms, but I remember listening  
6 and thinking, something's wrong here. I hear -- like,  
7 it's -- it's too quiet from just the yelling that happened  
8 seconds ago.

9 So I crept down to the stairs to peek and  
10 to see what the adults are doing. My father was standing  
11 over my sobbing, bleeding mother, holding a knife. I ran  
12 back to my bedroom, and I told -- because the younger  
13 siblings got up. I told them, go in your room, hide  
14 yourselves, don't let anyone in. Go now. And they -- they  
15 were half-asleep, but they knew, so they hid in their  
16 rooms, and I hid in my closet, and I remember that. I have  
17 to protect my mother. What am I doing in this closet?

18 I got out of there, probably within seconds  
19 after I sat in there and got up, and I went down those  
20 stairs, and in my best adult voice and my strength that I  
21 could muster, I behaved like an adult. I became a  
22 negotiator for our lives because when he screamed up at the  
23 kids upstairs -- us upstairs, he said, you watch out, I'm  
24 going to kill you too. I came down the stairs and acted  
25 like there was nothing wrong and pleaded to my dad, what

1 was he doing? I needed to call the ambulance because my  
2 mom was bleeding. I looked over and I didn't realize my  
3 late Uncle Butch, because he was trying to defend her, was  
4 cut on his hand and he was in shock. They were drinking  
5 together. They were just having quiet drinks. Her  
6 boyfriend at the time took out the back door and took off.  
7 Left her. That relationship didn't last. Coward, he is.

8 So I pleaded to not hurt us, to let me call  
9 the ambulance, which he did. I was shocked. So I calmly  
10 went to the phone and dialed 911, and the kindest most  
11 amazing staff member of 911 at that time answered and  
12 treated me so amazingly well on the phone because I was  
13 calling for the ambulance and she could hear my sobs. She  
14 knew something was wrong and immediately said, stay on the  
15 phone, I'm calling -- the police will be there, because his  
16 rule was, you're not calling the police, you're just  
17 calling the ambulance.

18 I then, while I was on the phone, pleaded  
19 with my dad to please put down the knife because I feared  
20 for my life. I thought I was going to die that night, but  
21 I needed to protect my mom, my amazing mom, and all the  
22 courage in me for my siblings, for my mom, came out that  
23 night, and I've been that person since. I never dealt with  
24 it even at my father's funeral. It wasn't until this  
25 Inquiry that I asked my mom if I had her permission to

1 share our story, to help those other women that are  
2 suffering through this and those children, to never happen  
3 again, to make the best world possible, for that child I  
4 left behind in that room at that moment. I was the most  
5 serious child after that: Shy, introverted, but smart and  
6 kind, but I didn't enjoy a lot of it. I was scared every  
7 single day for the longest time, and no one offered me or  
8 my siblings or my mom counseling or anything to help us  
9 through that. It was our family's strength, the love that  
10 our family shared with us knowing we went through hell with  
11 that monster.

12 The ambulance drivers who came: Amazing.  
13 The police officers came and actually arrested him. I was  
14 shocked. When I pleaded with him to put down the knife, he  
15 put it down and I kicked it under the sofa so he couldn't  
16 reach it, and then he went to look for his glasses and the  
17 police came and arrested him -- he -- my mom had to remind  
18 me because I blocked it out. The police came to the door,  
19 and she answered it or I answered it, I can't remember, and  
20 they asked us if everything was okay, and he was standing  
21 right there, and he said, everything's okay. I thought for  
22 that moment, he's going get away with that again and he's  
23 going to kill us, and thank goodness the police did their  
24 job that night and realized nothing was okay because the  
25 ambulance was there for wounds, and they arrested him,



1 finally.

2 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** What was the outcome  
3 on the assault charge?

4 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** We went to court, but  
5 before that, we had to meet with Crown counsel. Nobody  
6 explained to us. I was a child. Nobody explained to us  
7 what the process was. Nobody asked us what we wanted. We  
8 were told, you have to meet with Crown counsel. We thought  
9 we'd do it because we had to. To put that monster away, we  
10 had to. I was a child. It scared the living hell out of  
11 me to be at that table answering questions from a complete  
12 stranger who's the lawyer who didn't have an ounce of  
13 humanity at that moment, was dealing with a child who I  
14 could tell he utterly hated, without my mom being permitted  
15 there. I don't want any other child to experience that  
16 again. I answered his questions because my strength came  
17 out again. I was shaking in my chair because I didn't know  
18 if they were going to put me in jail. My mom felt the same  
19 way. It causes her anxiety. That's why she couldn't  
20 testify today.

21 We went to court. We weren't permitted in  
22 there for most of it because we were the witnesses, and I  
23 remember sitting up there when they brought me in after my  
24 mom testified, and she felt -- he was looking at her. He  
25 waved at her, and he asked her, how are the kids doing?

1 She was terrified, the process, and how dare he ask her how  
2 the kids are doing, trying to make it look like he's caring  
3 dad?

4 So when they brought me in and that mean  
5 Crown counsel started asking me the questions and I sat up  
6 there, and I could see the humanity in the judge. I could  
7 see -- I could sense, I could tell, he knew a kid was  
8 on -- on that witness stand, and the moment that my power  
9 came out again was on that witness stand because I was  
10 going to tell my truth to save my mom and us from the  
11 monster, and I was powerful. I knew that at that moment.  
12 I was strong, I was articulate, but I was a kid, and he  
13 stared at me, and I stared at him back, and then I looked  
14 down, and it took everything in my being to be able to be  
15 strong and to stand up to that monster, to put him away,  
16 and he knew that. He knew he was defeated.

17 So after a couple of questions, his lawyer  
18 asked for an adjournment, which I didn't know at the time.  
19 Nobody explained anything to me. We were having a time  
20 out. That's what I thought. He came back, and my -- my  
21 father pleaded guilty to the assault charges; not attempted  
22 murder, not threats to us kids because us kids didn't  
23 matter. Nobody asked us. I was a negotiator. We  
24 were -- we were being held and threatened, and nobody  
25 intervened.

1                   My mom thought she would get justice. There  
2                   was no justice in that. He got sentenced ten months. Our  
3                   recollection is he only served three months.

4                   **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Did you have any  
5                   further encounter with your father after he was released  
6                   from jail?

7                   **MS. GRACE TAIT:** Because my mom was a  
8                   hard-working chambermaid, she worked weekends, and we spent  
9                   time with an amazing Robertson family who did respite to  
10                  help her out, and so they would take us to things like  
11                  camping and fishing in Chilliwack and around Hope where we  
12                  got to be kids; amazing family that helped my mom out.  
13                  They were her best friends in the neighbourhood. They just  
14                  lived four doors away from us.

15                  And for some reason, my mom can't recall,  
16                  there was a visit arranged because for some reason our  
17                  father was residing in Chilliwack. I don't know if it was  
18                  a halfway house or that was the terms of his condition or  
19                  anything, we don't recall, but somehow a visit -- because  
20                  he requested a visit with his children, apparently it  
21                  happened, and so the family brought us over to see him.

22                  My younger two siblings don't recall very  
23                  much of our father. My sister and I, that was her -- her  
24                  perpetrator of sexual abuse among -- upon her, physical  
25                  abuse upon us. I didn't want to be there. I think my mom

1       agreed just to stop him from harassing her, too, but she  
2       thought maybe these kids want to see their dad, and she  
3       didn't want to keep us away from our dad. I can understand  
4       the thinking and -- as a parent myself, but none of us kids  
5       were asked, and we went through it. It was the most  
6       awkward -- there was not very much said. We just wanted to  
7       get out of there quick and fast as we could, and we -- and  
8       the family saw that, and we went back to our camp. It  
9       wasn't long after that he moved back up to Prince Rupert  
10      area.

11                   **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** And what did he start  
12      doing when he moved up to Prince Rupert?

13                   **MS. GRACE TAIT:** He had received his  
14      teaching degree from UBC and was apparently looking for  
15      work. I didn't know it at the time. It must have been  
16      when he was in Chilliwack. He gave one last phone call to  
17      my mother, and she never told me this until I was an adult,  
18      that he threatened her over the phone yet again, and he  
19      said, I need to move away from here, out of Vancouver area,  
20      because if I stay here, I'm going to kill you.

21                   And again, it triggered her and set her off,  
22      hurt her immensely, scared her. She didn't share that with  
23      us. She suffered that alone. She wouldn't tell her family  
24      to protect them because her family would have been there if  
25      she -- she told them. That's a strength in her, but that's

1           why her body is suffering today. We have all sorts of  
2           chronic health conditions in our family. It's because of  
3           the trauma. I understand that now.

4                        So in order to take care of the trauma, I've  
5           done my own healing. This Inquiry is healing for me. This  
6           is allowing me to let go of that monster and find humanity  
7           in him again.

8                                **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** So in the aftermath of  
9           everything that you experienced, what impact has it had on  
10          you?

11                               **MS. GRACE TAIT:** I'm thankful because you  
12          can't go back and change time. It's made me the kind and  
13          compassionate person that I am. It's made me the  
14          intelligent hard-working person that I am because I  
15          embraced, like my grandfather did, the best of residential  
16          school for him. Music, hard work, kindness, protecting  
17          others. People would come and up shake his hand, and I  
18          never knew why. I thought it was, again, as I learned as  
19          an adult, that it was his two Chief's names, but he  
20          protected kids, girls, in residential school from the abuse  
21          they were suffering. He stood guard. Medrick Nelson stood  
22          guard for those girls with other young men who were taught  
23          to protect our matriarchs, our life-givers, our mothers,  
24          our sisters, our aunties, our daughters, our nieces, and  
25          that's instilled in me. That was instilled in my mom. The

1 courage to go beyond that and to find laughter and the  
2 beauty in life is what I've discovered.

3 After a long time of being angry, suffering  
4 abuse of my ex-partner with his mental illness because I  
5 thought that was the best thing to do for our children, not  
6 seeing my worth and finally discovering it and finally  
7 becoming who I am today, was a long journey. My healing  
8 happened because of our culture. My healing happened  
9 because of the amazing people in our culture and our -- our  
10 neighbourhood, in -- in our circles that we work in, and a  
11 lot of us who have been abused and suffered are in the  
12 helping field. Kids from my neighbourhood who -- who  
13 suffered the same things in secrecy are the most amazing  
14 workers and have come back and are doing amazing things  
15 with other families, and I loved them. I love my  
16 neighbourhood. That's why I'm still working there. That's  
17 why I'm committed until the day I die to give back because  
18 that neighbourhood gave me the strength to be who I was  
19 today -- who I am today. A lot of mentorship from other  
20 women in the community because I was -- I delivered Meals  
21 on Wheels to the seniors' building starting at 11 years ago  
22 old, twice a week, until I graduated, until I was 18, and  
23 those were the most amazing stories I ever heard in my  
24 life; the militant moms, the Ray Cam Cooperative, lots of  
25 programs in the community that I still want to continue and

1 want the grass roots to be the leaders of that. That's why  
2 I'm back in my community to make that happen because it  
3 meant so much to those women. It means so much to me, the  
4 Aboriginal mother's centre and the founder, Penny Kerrigan,  
5 gave me that because the strength in women. Doing the  
6 research on the Indian Homemakers Association of B.C. gave  
7 me the courage to strive to be more than myself but to  
8 reach and reach and reach.

9 People like Viola Thomas, Jamie Lee Hamilton  
10 (ph), Violet Smith (ph), Babs Cane (ph), people at the  
11 community centre, Ray Cam; and my family, my children, and  
12 now my grandchildren have even inspired me more, being a  
13 nana. Proudest thing that's ever happened to me is being a  
14 nana. They're amazing, and my daughter's doing so amazing.

15 What I have to do more is for my son.  
16 Because of our history and traumas, my son is incarcerated,  
17 and I fear for him on a daily basis, and it hurt me and it  
18 -- said my hatred hearing that a nonIndigenous man was  
19 being given Elder support when my son can't even access  
20 that -- can't even access that on a regular basis. He has  
21 to work and make sure -- and please the highers-up in his  
22 prison to get the services that should be there for him  
23 anyway to help him to exit, to support him, to make sure he  
24 never ends up there again because of his trauma. He's a  
25 warrior. He helped protect his mother: Me. He loves his

1 granny. He didn't mean for this to happen. It's our  
2 trauma. He has a healing path that has to happen, but he's  
3 not going to get that in prison. We need to do more. We  
4 have to do more for our brothers and sisters incarcerated,  
5 []and we have to now because they're dying. They're  
6 killing each other. It needs to happen now.

7 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** For the benefit of the  
8 Commissioner, I think I might know who you're speaking  
9 about, but you said there's a nonIndigenous offender who  
10 had access to Elder support. Would you tell the  
11 Commissioner who you're talking about?

12 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** The killer of Cheryl Ann  
13 Joe, who was my sister's friend, who every day I pass by  
14 the spot where she was left mutilated and pray every day  
15 for her on my way to work. We weren't allowed to talk  
16 about her, her story, out of respect to the family, so  
17 yesterday was the most empowering moment from that amazing  
18 family I've ever heard, and that strength and courage and  
19 intelligence and diligence inspired me to hear what they  
20 have gone through and what Cheryl Ann suffered, and to know  
21 the Women's Memorial March stemmed because we had -- we  
22 weren't -- it was enough. I was -- there were so many  
23 memorials in the '90s. We were devastated. If it wasn't  
24 an overdose of bad heroin and the introduction of crack to  
25 our neighbourhood, people were going missing, people were



1 being murdered, women, and Rhonda McDonald (ph) was found  
2 at Crab Park, and they said to us -- she was our  
3 neighbour -- and to our family, that it was an overdose,  
4 and I still to this day don't believe that that was the  
5 case. She was a loving mother, a good neighbour. She was  
6 trying her hardest, and to this day, I don't believe that  
7 for a second, and that's what inspired me to come back and  
8 be strong for my neighbourhood, to help our women get to  
9 the place where they want to be, on their terms, with their  
10 strength and their gifts, because everyone has gifts. We  
11 need to remember that and help them find those gifts back  
12 and help them thrive in our communities.

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

14 Commissioner, I'm going to make a unique  
15 request. I would ask for a minute or two break so that I  
16 may consult with Grace about a question that I choose -- I  
17 want to ask, but I want to ensure that I maintain a  
18 trauma-informed process.

19 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Sure. So we  
20 have a little break.

21 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Just one, two minutes.

22 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Thank you.

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

24 --- Upon recessing 2:08 p.m.

25 --- Upon resuming at 2:18 p.m.



1 institution, a sentence of seven years, eight months, due  
2 for early parole this year.

3 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Grace, what do you  
4 hope will happen as a result of your testimony today?

5 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** I share my truth for the  
6 kids, for the children, I always have, to not have this  
7 happen to any other child that I welcome into my extended  
8 family in my neighbourhood and my home community, in my  
9 home city, Prince Rupert, my village (indiscernible) where  
10 Mel wasn't born a monster. It was created in him through  
11 several things.

12 We need better supports now for kids. We  
13 need to stop removing them from their homes and their  
14 mothers and support them better because there's too many of  
15 us. 63 percent of children in care in this province are  
16 Indigenous, and that's unacceptable and shameful.

17 **(APPLAUSE)**

18 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** I work at Crabtree Corner  
19 with our partner Sheway to ensure that mothers stay with  
20 their children.

21 **(APPLAUSE)**

22 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** Our youth who are  
23 considered aged out, we don't have aged out in our culture.  
24 They're your family for life, and that needs to change, not  
25 just to 24, not just to 29; commitment for your family for

1 life.

2 (APPLAUSE)

3 MS. GRACE TAIT: In my neighbourhood, when a  
4 sister goes missing, I am out there looking. We need a  
5 better system. The Moccasin Mafia is getting tired of  
6 doing this on our own, going in to search in alleyways, in  
7 bars, being threatened lateral violence at us. That needs  
8 to stop. That's not our way. We need a better system to  
9 ensure those families are supported if they're looking for  
10 a loved one, in all our communities but specifically  
11 Vancouver, and I've just recently joined a board of  
12 directors of a policing office to ensure that happens.

13 (APPLAUSE)

14 MS. GRACE TAIT: We need options for  
15 families who are going through trauma because of all the  
16 trauma-informed work we're trying to do and being educated  
17 on to not cause any further distress on any child or  
18 family. That needs to be supported. There needs to be  
19 safe homes in communities all over Canada for our  
20 Indigenous families that are geared towards what they're  
21 working on.

22 I sat in testimony in support this week of  
23 numerous communities who are going through so much trauma.  
24 There's nothing there for them. Housing's an issue in  
25 every community. We need more housing, not concentrated in

1 one neighbourhood but spread out, that has us mixing with  
2 every other neighbourhood and supported there to include  
3 our Coast Salish hosts and their -- their history and  
4 unseated territory here.

5 (APPLAUSE)

6 MS. GRACE TAIT: We need to be inclusive of  
7 the newcomers to make sure they understand their history so  
8 that they're not judging us; there's no assumptions. We're  
9 not panIndian. We all have different stories, and that  
10 needs to be shared throughout the country in every  
11 community, through everyday care, through every preschool,  
12 through every school, through every secondary school,  
13 through every institution, mandatory, to learn our history  
14 until we move beyond that, until we're healed, until the  
15 healing work happens in our communities; and as the Elders  
16 have said for decades, healing and wellness in our  
17 community, that needs to happen today.

18 Every day in my centre, I see the amazing  
19 strength, but I see broken, traumatized, retraumatized, and  
20 their humanity comes alive with respect and dignity, and  
21 that's not going to happen. As I shared with my journey,  
22 healing and culture have to be in every community, and  
23 there needs to be different options for those communities.  
24 Places like the original Aboriginal Mothers' Centre  
25 Society, Penny Kerrigan, the founder, of the first

1 Canadian, North American, Indigenous, needs to be in every  
2 community. The women, like the Indian Homemakers who  
3 birthed the Mother Centre, were all over this country and  
4 North America. Their history is rich in success in  
5 advocating and helping our communities heal, and that needs  
6 to be supported and not taken over by nonIndigenous. We  
7 need to create our own and leave it at that and respect our  
8 traditions and culture and our support of one another.

9 Therapies of all sorts need to happen for  
10 the kids who are suffering out there, who are in foster  
11 homes and are being traumatized all over again, being taken  
12 away from their families. These kids need options. They  
13 need to be paid for. They need to be asked. Those kids  
14 need to be asked. Anything traumatic like apprehension or  
15 police involvement in your home, or court, those kids need  
16 to be asked, no matter how young they are. Some way we  
17 need to figure out to make sure those kids are okay and  
18 they're getting the support they need, not like we suffered  
19 through when I was a child.

20 (APPLAUSE)

21 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** Our jails, overabundance of  
22 our population represented incarcerated without services or  
23 supports. How is anyone going to succeed after they're  
24 released, or do they end up dying in there, killing each  
25 other, on parole or serve their sentence? Who -- who is

1 responsible to do that, to make sure that they're tracked  
2 and followed and supported to be successful citizens of  
3 this world, without us and the culture and traditions that  
4 they so desperately need and may not be ever offered  
5 incarcerated? And supporting families. My family was the  
6 first one in nine years of doing a community parole  
7 hearing, requested it, never knew until I asked questions.  
8 That should be every opportunity for any of our Indigenous  
9 families, Métis, Inuit, to ensure they understand their  
10 options, all options. Explain to them, walk through them,  
11 support them, fund them. Us as a family, the first one in  
12 nine years, the -- the staff were amazed. It was like  
13 this. Families don't know that's an option. People  
14 don't -- are incarcerated don't know that's an option, and  
15 this is going to help them. Needs to be more of those.

16 And accountability, as we've heard other  
17 survivors talk about their story, I'm in -- I'm so angry at  
18 the fact that our B.C. Government has given this Inquiry a  
19 condition into which coming into this community to not be  
20 held accountable, and that's shameful. That's shameful.  
21 All of you out there: Write. Phone. Ask. They need to  
22 be held accountable. I, the child in me, needs to know --

23 (APPLAUSE)

24 MS. GRACE TAIT: -- in our family's case,  
25 what happened. Why did you fail these children? Why did

1       you fail our mother? Shameful. If it wasn't for our  
2       communities bringing us forward and supporting us with all  
3       of this love, culture, tradition, kindness -- that's the  
4       only way we're going to get better. That's the only  
5       way -- I did this because I want to be better. I want to  
6       leave the monster behind. I don't want anyone else have to  
7       monsters, especially our children and youth. They are too  
8       important to us. That's why I'm being the best nana I can  
9       be. Thank you.

10                                   **(APPLAUSE)**

11                   **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** One more question.  
12       What would you ask all Canadians, nonIndigenous Canadians  
13       to do after listening to all the families and survivors who  
14       have come to share their experiences with the National  
15       Inquiry?

16                   **MS. GRACE TAIT:** We're your neighbours. We  
17       are not less than. We are important. We are worth. We  
18       are valuable. We are here. You need to help us to get to  
19       here. Every child and every youth in our community need to  
20       be where they need to be, and it's up to Canada to help  
21       that happen, all of us together. This isn't only about  
22       our -- our women. We care for everyone. We want everyone  
23       to be safe.

24                                   **(APPLAUSE)**

25                   **MS. GRACE TAIT:** And that's why systems need



1 to be accountable. We need to challenge that in every  
2 avenue, and we can't do it without our Canadian neighbours,  
3 all of you.

4 (APPLAUSE)

5 MR. BREEN OUELLETTE: Thank you.

6 Those are all the questions I have,  
7 Commissioner. I will now ask if you have any questions for  
8 Grace.

9 COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Wow. I don't  
10 know if you see me, but my face is glowing. To see -- what  
11 people don't know, we -- I always do the same thing. I  
12 give tobacco, or I give a little gift for -- for families  
13 that come and wants to share their truth, so I was able to  
14 find the last, last little pouch of tobacco, who didn't  
15 really want to leave me, but it went, and I didn't have to  
16 say much. She told me how beautiful she was, how proud she  
17 was of herself and how -- so ready, I guess, and this is  
18 exactly what we want to hear. Women that stand. Women  
19 that are capable to say yes, this is my past, it made me  
20 who I am today, and -- role models.

21 I didn't know you. I've heard about you,  
22 True Bernie (ph), and I'm glad that we share, the four of  
23 us, the four commissioners, and I don't ask who will sit  
24 with me or who -- who will be with me, and it's a gift that  
25 I was the one. I see this as a gift. I am so blessed.

1           We started this journey a year and a half  
2 ago, and I won't lie to you. I am exhausted, very much,  
3 physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. But  
4 when I hear women, women like you, women like many other  
5 who spoke their truth, I feel so relieved, so relieved that  
6 the Government have no choice to change the way they do  
7 things with or without an Inquiry. I know we have  
8 warriors. I saw them, and I still see them, but because of  
9 the Inquiry, Canada see it. They see it, and even the  
10 world see it, and that -- for me as a mom, I used to say  
11 militant and activist, but I heard something beautiful this  
12 morning: Advocate. Makes me feel good that our mentors  
13 who said, we're tired, now it's your time to take the lead,  
14 and B.C., there's something special.

15           Yes, people know I have a son here,  
16 (indiscernible) son, with a beautiful daughter, but when I  
17 started with Quebec Native women, the first I -- the first  
18 women who extended their hand to my Franglais -- I didn't  
19 speak English those days. They were women from your  
20 territory. We connected right away, (snaps fingers) like  
21 this, that became my mentors, that said, hey, stand up,  
22 young Frenchie girl.

23           **(LAUGHTER)**

24           **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Your bonjour.

25           **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yeah, your



1 fight for this. We have to advocate. We have a momentum  
2 with this Inquiry.

3 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Yes.

4 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** We don't know  
5 if we have an extension, but we'll be loud to make sure it  
6 happens.

7 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Yes. We will.

8 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** There's  
9 thousands of women that deserve to be heard.

10 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Yes.

11 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Yes.

12 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Some people  
13 says, enough, we hear -- we heard enough. You look like  
14 Truth and Reconciliation. Thank God 7,000 people spoke at  
15 the Truth and Reconciliation. Maybe people -- more people  
16 should have done it also. It's not the number for me.  
17 It's to make sure that everybody's able to speak like you  
18 did. I feel so "yes" because of your message --

19 **(LAUGHTER)**

20 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** -- refreshed  
21 and, like, woo-hoo, yes, we can do it. So thank you so  
22 much.

23 Because of that, I would like to ask you,  
24 would you accept a gift for you and your mom?

25 **MS. GRACE TAIT:** Yes.

1                   **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yes. A gift  
2           for you and your mom, and if you feel that the  
3           Inquiry -- it's human being that make this Inquiry  
4           alive -- that we're going to do wrong way or too slow or  
5           too quiet or too harsh, don't be afraid to teach us, to  
6           bring us back where we're supposed to. Bring your voice,  
7           your love and passion.

8                   **MS. GRACE TAIT:** And I will do so  
9           respectfully.

10                  **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Of course.  
11           That's what I love, even for some who are hardered, I love  
12           that, too, but ouch, but no, I know, I -- I felt it right  
13           away. I felt it right away, and next time I come, they  
14           know, the women, when I come here, I go -- have supper with  
15           them.

16                  **MS. GRACE TAIT:** M-hm.

17                  **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** And I wish to  
18           see you again. I wish that our path and that I'm able to  
19           meet your mom. Yeah, I wish -- I wish that --

20                  **MS. GRACE TAIT:** We'll make that happen.

21                  **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Parfait.  
22           Yoo-hoo. Another reason to come back to Vancouver.

23                                   **(LAUGHTER)**

24                  **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** And thank you  
25           so much, and I will ask the two beautiful women who started

1 the journey with me here in Vancouver -- everywhere I go, I  
2 ask women from the land, would you come with me and sit  
3 with me and support the women to reassure them that they  
4 are in their own culture, and they said yes. Since the  
5 beginning, they said yes. They didn't have lunch or didn't  
6 have break. I said, let's go, we have to go, and they were  
7 a little bit behind, but they were there.

8 (LAUGHTER)

9 COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: They were  
10 there, never complaining, ever. So it's normal for me that  
11 I ask them to give you the feather. Merci. And to your  
12 mama, (indiscernible). Oh, that's a cute one.

13 MS. GRACE TAIT: That's a cute one. Thank  
14 you.

15 COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: And of  
16 course, of course, of course, of course, the community is  
17 welcome to hug her.

18 (LAUGHTER)

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) all  
21 the words you spoke today. It's very special and very  
22 powerful, and for all that you've lived through and all  
23 that you've transcended. I think you've got some  
24 (indiscernible) your grandkids, hey?

25 MS. GRACE TAIT: Thank you.

1                                   **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Thank you so much for

2           all --

3                                   **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Commissioner Audette,

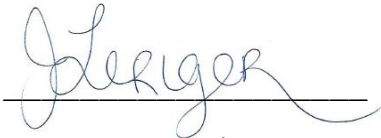
4           may we adjourn this hearing?

5                                   **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yes.

6           --- Upon adjourning at 2:42 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Jenessa Leriger, 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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jenessa Leriger", written in blue ink. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Jenessa Leriger

April 12, 2018