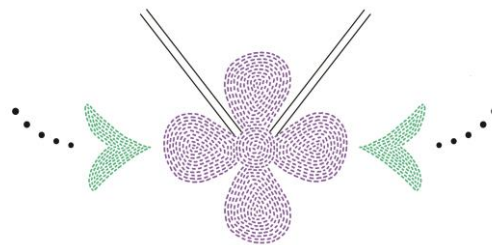


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Radisson Hotel, Ambassador A Room
Winnipeg, Manitoba**



PUBLIC

Monday October 16, 2017

Public Volume 9

**Joan Winning, Isabel Winning & Stephanie Daniels,
In relation to Nicole Ashley Daniels;**

**Betty Rourke, Mike Rourke, Lorna Sinclair, Elora
Sinclair, Kim McPherson, Corley McPherson, Gerri
Pangman & Lorie Anderson, In relation to Jennifer
Glenna Johnston, Jennifer McPherson & Myrna Letandre
(Part 1 of 2);**

Rachel & Matthew Willan

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.

41-5450 Canotek Road, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 9G2

E-mail: info@irri.net – Phone: 613-748-6043 – Fax: 613-748-8246

II

APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Stuart Wuttke (Legal counsel)
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Metis Nation	No Appearance
Government of Canada	Anne Turley (Legal counsel) Amber Elliot (Legal counsel) Christine Ashcroft (Legal counsel)
Government of Manitoba	Kendra Jarvinen (Legal counsel) Coral Lang (Legal counsel) Heather Leonoff (Legal counsel) Samuel Thomson (Legal counsel)
Manitoba MMIWG2S	Angie Hutchinson (Representative) Leslie Spillett (Representative)
Manitoba Moon Voices	Myra Sinclair (Elder)
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada & Manitoba Inuit Association	Beth Symes (Legal counsel)
Winnipeg Police Service	Shannon Hanlin (Legal counsel)

Note: For the purpose of establishing this record of attendance, counsel are considered present whether they attended one or all of the public hearings held over the course of the day at the Radisson Hotel, Ambassador A (i.e. the main public hearing space).

III

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Opening Remarks	1
Hearing # 1	31
Witnesses: Joan Winning, Isabel Winning and Stephanie Daniels	
In Relation to Nicole Ashley Daniels Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe Registrar: Bryan Zandberg	
Hearing # 2	65
Witnesses: Betty Rourke, Mike Rourke, Lorna Sinclair, Elora Sinclair, Kim McPherson, Corley McPherson, Gerri Pangman and Lorie Anderson	
In Relation to Jennifer Glenna Johnston, Jennifer McPherson and Myrna Letandre Part 1 of 2 Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe Registrar: Bryan Zandberg	
Hearing # 3	106
Witnesses: Rachel and Matthew Willan	
Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette and Commissioner Brian Eyolfson Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe Registrar: Bryan Zandberg	

IV

LIST OF EXHIBITS

NO.	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
Witnesses: Joan Winning, Isabel Winning and Stephanie Daniels Exhibits (code: P1P03P0101)		
1	Digital Powerpoint presentation filename "Daniels family" comprising 17 colour photos (11 family photos and six line drawings).	64
2	** SEALED ** Manitoba Report of Medical Examiner / Autopsy Report Form for Nicole Daniels (six pages) & Toxicology report (two pages)	64
Witnesses: Betty Rourke, Mike Rourke, Lorna Sinclair, Elora Sinclair, Kim McPherson, Corley McPherson, Gerri Pangman and Lorie Anderson Exhibits (code: P1P03P0102)		
1	Video "In Memory of Jennifer Dawn McPherson October 14, 1971- May 5, 2013" set to Abba's "Dancing Queen"; duration 12 minutes 20 seconds. (Note: see October 17, 2017 transcript for subsequent testimony and exhibits).	106
Witnesses: Rachel and Matthew Willan Exhibits (code: P1P03P0103)		
1	Unnumbered and unmarked set of seven black-and-white photocopies of photos of Rachel Willan at various points of her life as a young woman.	166
2	Digital image of tattoo over self-harm photograph.	166
3	Single small-format digital image of Willan family.	166

1 Winnipeg, Manitoba

2 --- Upon commencing on Monday, October 16, 2017 at 10:17

3 **MS. TERRELLYN FEARN:** My name is Terrellyn
4 Fearn, and I am the Director of Health and Community
5 Relations with the National Inquiry. I am very honoured
6 and grateful to be here today. I am a visitor to this
7 beautiful Treaty 1 and Métis territory. And, thank you for
8 inviting me so graciously to be here.

9 I am from Glooscap First Nation in Mi'kmaq.
10 Does anybody know where that is? Not you, you don't count.
11 Anyone? That's in what we would -- probably be known today
12 as Nova Scotia. So, I am from the east coast. I currently
13 live on the unceded territory of the Mississaugas of New
14 Credit in Ontario, and again, very humbled to be here as a
15 guest.

16 While we're just waiting for a few to get
17 settled, I just wanted to do a few quick announcements.
18 First of all, I want to honour and acknowledge all the
19 families and survivors that are going to be sharing their
20 story today. And, their stories may contain information
21 that's painful; it will contain information that's
22 inspiring and contains resilience. I want to honour their
23 courage and their bravery today in coming forward and
24 sharing their story with all of us here and with all of you
25 that may be watching.

1 Along the chairs, we have plastic bags --
2 sorry, paper bags and they have "tears" written on them.
3 What we would like to ask you, if you're comfortable with
4 taking your tears -- your tissues with your tears and
5 putting those into those bags. The tears are healing and
6 part of our gifts that we were given to emote or feel what
7 we're feeling as we walk on this earth, on this journey,
8 and our tears can be healing of our pain; they can be there
9 to help celebrate us, joy and laughter. But, they are
10 medicine, those tears are medicine. And, we have spoken
11 with the fire keepers who have agreed to take those tears
12 at the end of every day and offer them into the beautiful
13 sacred fire that was lit this morning and that's burning.
14 So, we have them in this main public hearing room, the
15 other public hearing room and all the other venues where
16 families and survivors are going to be sharing their story.

17 I also want to put a reminder that as we
18 listen to these stories, they can impact us and resonate
19 within us as well. And so, it's important that we all take
20 good care of ourselves throughout the next four, five days
21 as we are gathered here together, and after. And, that
22 beautiful opening that happened this morning at sunrise,
23 that beautiful fire that was lit, the beautiful water and
24 pipe ceremonies that will be happening every day is there
25 to help all of you and support us through this journey.

1 So, please, just to let you know, we have
2 shuttle services that are going from the Radisson to the
3 Oodena Circle, and you can take a free shuttle to move
4 freely back and forth from those spaces. So, please use
5 those medicines that are available.

6 Across the hall, we have an Elders Room with
7 medicines as well. We have beautiful Elders, traditional
8 knowledge keepers, spiritual, faith based Elders who have
9 agreed and wanted so passionately to come and to support
10 the families and survivors and all of you. And, they will
11 be in that space to be there, if you would like to sit, if
12 you would like to talk, if you would just like to have some
13 tea or a little bite to eat. So, please access that Elders
14 Room just across the hall as well.

15 If you look around the room, you will see
16 many purple shirts. Raise your hands. We have many
17 wonderful supports that are here to support all of you and
18 the families and survivors over the next five days. And,
19 if you turn around, you'll see on the back of their shirt,
20 it says quite clearly, "Health Support". So, please, if
21 you feel you would like to sit with someone, if you have a
22 question, if you have any information that you would like,
23 please reach out to one of these individuals in the purple
24 shirts. They would be happy to assist you in the needs
25 that you have. We will also be reciprocating that and

1 reaching out to you and checking in with you, just to make
2 sure that you -- any needs that you may have, we're here to
3 support that.

4 We also have a registered nurse onsite as
5 well -- oh, there she is down at the back, Gillian. She
6 will be at the main registration desk. She's going to be
7 setting up her nursing station there. The main
8 registration desk is when you came off the elevator of this
9 floor. She will be walking and circulating through both of
10 these public hearing rooms as well, but please, if you have
11 something or an urgent matter, please let the purple shirts
12 know, go to her directly or come to myself.

13 Just a couple of things about meals. So,
14 all of the snacks, morning and afternoon snacks, will be in
15 this room, as well as lunch. So, if you look in the back,
16 the lunch will be set up here for those of you that are
17 coming to witness the testimony that will be happening
18 today. The families and their supports, your meals will be
19 in the Family Room that's located as well for you; okay?
20 If you have any questions, again, don't hesitate to reach
21 out to one of the wonderful staff of the Inquiry, they have
22 the green staff lanyard, or one of the health supports.

23 And, I've just been graciously reminded that
24 over to the left here, we have water in the copper vessels
25 and the paper cups, and the grandmothers blessed that water

1 this morning. That is sacred healing water as well.
2 Please help yourself to that water and we will be
3 distributing that water to you as well. So, also, that
4 water, that cleansing that we spoke about those tears, that
5 water is that medicine for us as well. So, thank you,
6 Thelma, for that beautiful reminder.

7 Okay. So, I'm going to hand it over to
8 Debbie Reid, our Executive Director. And, thank you so
9 much.

10 **MS. DEBBIE REID:** *Bonjour*, Debbie Reid,
11 (speaking in Native language), I'm a member of the Skownan
12 First Nation. I'm a direct descendent of a signatory to
13 Treaty 2. I am from the Wolf Clan and my traditional name
14 is Dancing Shawl Woman. I'm from this territory and I
15 would like to welcome you all.

16 I'd like to recognize Chief Meeches as part
17 of the drum group; Grand Chief Dumas who is here; President
18 Ford who is here. Each of them will be speaking to you
19 this morning. And, we're going to start with a prayer, an
20 opening prayer from our Elder, Velma.

21 **ELDER VELMA ORMIS:** Thank you. (Speaking in
22 Native language). Migwetch Manitou for this day, for all
23 the people in this room. We ask Mishomis and Nokomis to be
24 here with us, to guide us, to watch over us, to comfort the
25 families, and we ask that in a good way from our hearts.

1 We give thanks for those four directions,
2 the four colours of people, the four sacred animals and
3 plants around that medicine wheel. We also thank Creator
4 for our family, our friends, our loved ones, and we ask for
5 that sharing and caring to come into each and every one of
6 us, to be kind to each other, to be respectful, to love
7 each other equally the way Creator would want us to, to be
8 honest and truthful, and have the humility and courage to
9 do that, and we ask that in a good way.

10 We ask for and give thanks for the support
11 workers so that they can watch over the families, for they
12 -- each and every one of them. We are thinking of their
13 loved ones, their daughters who were once their little
14 babies and grew up to be beautiful women, and we ask that
15 at some point, we ask that they come home in a good way.

16 *Migwetch.*

17 **MS. DEBBIE REID:** Thank you, Velma. I'd
18 like now to ask Annie to come up and light the *Qu'liq*.

19 **MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** Good morning. It's good
20 to be part in this Missing Woman and to be back to light
21 the *Qu'liq* to remember for those missing persons. In my
22 traditional way, we have to use our *amauti*, like our
23 ancestors only used their *amauti*, and lighting their *Qu'liq*
24 and in front of their *Qu'liq*, they were always sitting in
25 the -- around the *Qu'liq* area, excuse me. So, I'll be

1 lighting the *Qu'liq* very shortly.

2 Let us remember the people who are missing
3 through our prayer. And, sometimes we often would say a
4 lot of people committed suicide, maybe not, maybe they have
5 been murdered, and partly to do with our -- my own people
6 and your own people, and across Canada and everywhere
7 around the world. And, it's so sad. It is sad for their
8 loved ones, for their little children. And, their babies,
9 they'll be growing up not knowing to learn about their
10 parents. The only way we can do is pray to the Creator,
11 and pray for everybody, and pray for all of us.

12 And, thank you so much. And, I'm very
13 honoured to be part of this -- to light the *Qu'liq* and to
14 remember my people and your people, and everyone here.
15 And, thank you.

16 My own dialect, I lost my own dialect when I
17 was so small. It's so hard for me to get it back over the
18 years, but I will say a prayer in my own dialect, if we can
19 stand up to remember for all of us and everyone here?
20 (Speaking in Native language). Thank you.

21 I don't know how to use matches. One of my
22 kids or my grandchildren have marked it as my (speaking in
23 Native language). It's called (speaking in Native
24 language) to light the *Qu'liq*, and they put a marker on it.
25 (Speaking in Native language). It takes a while. Our moms

1 used to be so patient, our people, lighting the *Qu'liq*.
2 (Speaking in Native language).

3 I was in Iqaluit not too long ago and we
4 usually go pick the wicks from the land. This is the kind
5 of wick that we use, and this is the moss that we have to
6 cut up with -- I brought my little *ulu* to cut it. It's
7 very sharp and made by men, and we have to cut this moss in
8 order to go with the -- to go with the wick. And, I had a
9 hard time looking for it and I had to ask one of my aunts
10 when we were picking berries, where can I find this moss
11 that you mix with the wick? We call it (speaking in Native
12 language). And, as we were having tea, she showed me where
13 it was and it was way under the ground that you -- it's so
14 hard to find.

15 It's very traditional and you can't really
16 use the cotton wick by itself, you have to add it with the
17 moss. And, I was so happy how she showed me where it was
18 under the ground. They hide. So, my people long time ago
19 used to go and pick those up, I remember, but I couldn't
20 remember which one was picked from inside the ground. So,
21 I was very fortunate to bring it back to my hometown here,
22 community. And so, I brought it with me. If anybody wants
23 to ask or see it, you are more welcome.

24 The *Qu'liq* that I just lit, it kept us warm
25 in igloo and our sod house, and the oil is usually be from

1 seal fat, but because I don't have any, I had to use store
2 bought and it's almost the same. And, *Qu'liq* means living
3 in a cold igloo or sod house all through the winter, all
4 through the summer. Our parents kept us warm, and they
5 would cook in it, and at night, they would turn it off and
6 have one little tiny light on in the corner. And, they
7 were so -- I thank you today that I survived. My mother
8 taught me how to use the *Qu'liq* anywhere I go, anywhere I
9 would live, or up to today, that she taught me how to light
10 it. It's not easy today to -- how to light it, but I thank
11 you and thank you to all of you.

12 **MS. DEBBIE REID:** Thank you, Annie. I
13 always love watching it get lit. I'm going to ask
14 Commissioner Audette and Commissioner Eyolfson -- Annie, do
15 you want to come back just for a sec? We're going to give
16 you something to recognize -- and Velma, if you would like
17 to come up? Offering gifts of thanks to both of you. Go
18 ahead. Thank you so much.

19 At this point, we would like to invite the
20 North Eagle drum group to do two songs for us, an honour
21 song, and I would like you all, please, to stand.

22 **(MUSICAL PRESENTATION)**

23 **MR. MIKE MEECHES:** We'll sing a song. The
24 next song is -- my grandmother used to hum to me when I was
25 a baby, a young boy. I want to share that with you.

1 (MUSICAL PRESENTATION)

2 MS. DEBBIE REID: *Chi migwetch.* I also want
3 to recognize Chaney. I met Chaney this morning when we
4 were going to get some Fruit Loops. Chaney is in
5 kindergarten and he got out of school to come here today.
6 Chante, sorry. Now I got your name wrong. Now, he's mad
7 at me. Chante. All right. Thank you very much for the --
8 to the North Eagle drummers from Long Plain First Nation.
9 And, Chante, have a good day at school.

10 Now, I would like to invite some of our
11 dignitaries who are here to open and provide comments from
12 Manitoba. So, first, I would like to invite Grand Chief
13 Arlen Dumas to come and speak and open the ceremony. I
14 just want to recognize that we have CBC Indigenous, CPAC,
15 CTV Winnipeg and APTN who are live streaming this -- the
16 hearings for this week. And, I also want to recognize that
17 we actually do have a toll free support line. So, if you
18 are watching this and you start to feel like you need to
19 talk to somebody, we have the toll-free line. It's 1-844-
20 413-6649, and there are people who will speak in English,
21 French, Cree, Ojibwe and Inuktitut. So, if you feel the
22 need to call, if something you see here really upsets you,
23 if you're out there in TV land, please call, they're there
24 24/7, okay? Grand Chief.

25 GRAND CHIEF ARLEN DUMAS: Thank you. I feel

1 like I'm on a late-night talk show host or something.
2 (Speaking in Native language). I'd like to welcome the
3 families and survivors, and the members of the National
4 Inquiry to Treaty 1. I'm Arlen Dumas, Grand Chief of the
5 Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. The AMC represents 63 First
6 Nations in Manitoba. I would like to acknowledge the lands
7 that we are on as the ancestral and sovereign lands of the
8 Anishinaabe, Cree, Dakota and Oji-Cree nations.

9 Thank you for inviting me to provide some
10 opening remarks at this stage of the National Inquiry into
11 the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Since
12 the last time I've made remarks to -- during the expert
13 hearing on Indigenous laws and decolonization perspectives,
14 you will have no doubt heard that the Assembly of Manitoba
15 Chiefs, the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, the Southern
16 Chiefs Organization, the Assembly of First Nations,
17 Manitoba Regional Chiefs Office and the Province of
18 Manitoba are all united and have the same position
19 regarding the National Inquiry, that we all want to ensure
20 that the families and survivors are the first priority in
21 the inquiry process.

22 This was represented in the September 17th,
23 2017 joint statement that was sent to all the
24 commissioners. While we have not received a response, we
25 look forward to having one in the near future. The

1 Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs does not speak for the families
2 or the survivors, and that is why we do not have standing
3 today in front of the inquiry. But, we do know that it's
4 going to be a very difficult time here. I hope that we
5 have all the proper supports for the difficult work that's
6 about to begin.

7 You may have heard of all of the stories
8 that have come out recently, out of Hollywood, around the
9 movie mogul, Harvey Weinstein. It's alleged that he has
10 spent his whole career sexually harassing and assaulting
11 young women. It has dominated the weekend's news cycles.
12 And, on Twitter, men have started to hashtag
13 "#ibelieveyou". Well, I believe you.

14 I believe the stories that are going to be
15 shared here this week from the families and survivors, and
16 it is my hope that together we can change what is happening
17 in Canada to our sisters, mothers, daughters, aunties,
18 grandmothers, nieces, cousins and friends. It's up to all
19 of us to stand together and protect our women and girls, so
20 we won't have another inquiry like this one. And, that we
21 have to ensure that, you know, the police are properly
22 investigated and that sexualized crimes against our women
23 are looked at, and we also have to take a look at the
24 abuses at the extractive industries due to our people and
25 our women. (Speaking in Native language).

1 **MS. DEBBIE REID:** *Chi migwetch.* I'm just
2 going to -- I'd like to now ask Hilda Anderson-Pyrz to come
3 up on behalf of MKO and Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson.

4 **MS. HILDA ANDERSON-PYRZ:** Good morning,
5 everybody. I just wanted to send a message on behalf of
6 Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson who was unable to be here
7 today because she had a loss in her family; her father
8 passed away this weekend.

9 And, I just wanted to welcome everyone to
10 Treaty 1 territory, in the homeland of the Métis. And,
11 first and foremost, I wanted to welcome the families and
12 the survivors, and the two-spirited who are here today with
13 us in this room and who are watching across the country.
14 Please know that Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson holds this
15 issue very near and dear to her heart, and she has been
16 really instrumental in creating a lot of awareness through
17 the times that she was a journalist in the media, and she
18 continues to champion the issue at various political
19 levels, and she wants you to know that her support is
20 behind each and every one of you 100 percent. And, if
21 there is anything that she could do to assist families and
22 survivors, she welcomes everybody to reach out to her.

23 My name is Hilda Anderson-Pyrz obviously,
24 and I'm from the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation from Northern
25 Manitoba, and I also wanted to share that I feel it's

1 important for the National Inquiry to travel up to
2 Thompson, Manitoba, which is the hub of the north, because
3 MKO represents 30 different First Nations in Northern
4 Manitoba, which many of them are remote, isolated First
5 Nations. So, I feel it's important for those families and
6 survivors to have that opportunity to speak at a hearing
7 such as this with -- you know, in conjunction with
8 statement takers.

9 And, I also wanted to say thank you for the
10 beautiful ceremony this morning, and I know the days ahead
11 for the survivors, and the families and our two-spirited
12 sisters are going to be very difficult. And, you know,
13 it's my hope that -- you know, you're the voice of your
14 loved one, and as survivors, you're here to share your
15 story to create that change, you know? Because as
16 Indigenous women and girls, we have the right to live and
17 we have the right to feel safe as well. So, it's my hope
18 amidst all the chaos, you know, that's happened with the
19 inquiry that this creates meaningful change for all of us.
20 Thank you.

21 **MS. DEBBIE REID:** *Migwetch*, Hilda. Thank
22 you, everyone. Now, I'd like to invite Regional Chief
23 Kevin Hart from the Assembly of First Nations.

24 **REGIONAL CHIEF KEVIN HART:** (Speaking in
25 Native language). My relatives, first, what I want to do

1 is acknowledge the prayers and the ceremony that was done
2 this morning with the pipe. We had our drums there, as
3 well as our Elders, and we had a water ceremony. I want to
4 welcome everybody to Treaty 1 territory, as well as to
5 thank the drum group, and Chief Dennis Meeches and the
6 brothers that are around that drum. It's always good to
7 see you all. You know, Brother Dennis, we've been many,
8 many trails together, as well as the brothers around this
9 drum.

10 My friends and relatives this morning, my
11 hearts go out to you this morning. We're here for a very
12 important week that we have ahead of us here, and I ask for
13 everybody that's out there, and for the ones that could see
14 us on social media and various links, please send your
15 prayers for the families, as they need them so dearly this
16 week to find the courage to share their stories, and for
17 the survivors as well to come forward and share their
18 stories, and for the two-spirited to come forward as well
19 to share their stories of such a national tragedy that has
20 affected so many.

21 And, when I left my home community this
22 morning, on my way, I thought of those families that have
23 been affected, and there's 14 families and 12 cold cases
24 from my wife's community of Sagkeeng, and my hearts go out
25 to those families. And, I have so many people that I know

1 that I could see in this room, that -- you know, our
2 communities are so small. There's more than two degrees of
3 separation here when I look into the crowd, you know, and
4 my heart goes out to you all because I know that you're --
5 I'm here to stand with you as one of the leaders to just be
6 here with you, to listen and to try and understand.

7 But, for a lot of us also as leaders, you
8 know, we're affected by this too, and yet, we still have
9 this job that we have to do. And, for myself right now,
10 and a lot of people don't know this, that our Grand Chief
11 Arlen Dumas comes from the community Pukatawagan, and his
12 community has been affected. And, most importantly right
13 now, one of our relatives is missing right now that they're
14 looking for back home in the community of Pukatawagan.
15 And, by extension, that's one of my relatives from the Hart
16 family that's missing right now that they're searching for.

17 So, my prayers go out to them. But, most
18 importantly, my prayers go out to all those other families
19 that are out there searching for their missing loved ones
20 because they still haven't given up hope. You know, I've
21 seen one of my colleagues, one of my brothers, Paul Daniels
22 from Sagkeeng here. We worked together in Addictions for
23 many, many years, and I know that his family is here as
24 well, because they have been affected by this national
25 tragedy. And, my hearts go out to the Daniels and the

1 Winning family, as I know that they're here as well to
2 share their stories. And, I could see everybody here, the
3 Abraham family, the McPherson family, and others. I'm here
4 to stand with you, not as the Regional Chief of the
5 Assembly of First Nations. I'm here to stand with you as
6 your brother first and foremost. That's the way I see it.

7 You know, titles aside, we're all here as
8 family to support one another, and that's where it is first
9 and foremost that we put all our differences aside because
10 this is all bigger than all of us. We have to be here for
11 these families. We have to hug them. We have to love
12 them. We have to give them our prayers, and by that, you
13 know, Commissioners, we welcome you into our territory. We
14 know it hasn't been an easy job for you, and you know for
15 me, as the Regional Chief, I've asked you those tough
16 questions at the national table because I have a job to do
17 as well for these families and for the leaders. And, I
18 thank you and I welcome you into the territory, and I ask
19 you from the bottom of my heart, please help the families
20 and the survivors, and the two-spirited because they need
21 us more than ever right now.

22 And for everybody else, the Elders and
23 everybody in the room, I thank you for being here. I lift
24 you all up. And for everybody else that's at home that's
25 watching, please send your love and your prayers to these

1 people as they need them more than ever right now. Let's
2 not forget those spirits that are still missing, that are
3 trying to make their way home, that we make sure we light
4 those fires so that they can find their way home, and that
5 the families find some closure and some peace in their
6 hearts. So, we have to remember that our ceremonies and
7 our prayers are so strong. We have to keep doing that so
8 that these families can find some closure and some healing.

9 So, with that, I send my love out to all of
10 you. I lift you all out and I honour you all for having
11 the courage to be here today. And, I thank everybody else,
12 as well as the staff and the Elders, and everybody around
13 that's here today. I thank my colleagues and the
14 leadership that are in the room as well for being here.
15 So, with that, (speaking in Native language). Thank you.

16 **MS. DEBBIE REID:** Thank you again. I'd now
17 like to invite President Fred Ford from the Manitoba Inuit
18 Association. President Ford, welcome.

19 **PRESIDENT FRED FORD:** Thank you very much.
20 On behalf of the Manitoba Inuit Association, we would like
21 to acknowledge that we're here on Treaty 1 land, the
22 traditional lands of the Anishinaabe and the Oji-Cree, and
23 the homeland of the Manitoba Métis, and to also acknowledge
24 that it's becoming a growing community of Inuit who have
25 chosen to make Manitoba their home.

1 (Speaking in Native language). Good morning
2 and welcome. My name is Fred Ford. And, again, I welcome,
3 the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Women and
4 Indigenous Girls here to Winnipeg to undertake this
5 important work at the Commission. To all of the
6 commissioners and to all of the community leaders, the
7 Chiefs, Elders, to the family counsellors, advisors, and
8 especially to all of the families, those with us today and
9 those who are unable to be with us, Manitoba Inuit
10 Association wish you well going forward with this important
11 work.

12 We would also like to acknowledge and thank
13 those helpers who lit and cared for the sacred fire this
14 morning at the Oodena Circle, and continue to watch it, and
15 to Annie for lighting our beautiful *Qu'liq* and tending it
16 so carefully today. And, we acknowledge and thank all of
17 you who have offered prayers today, and these beautiful
18 songs and honour songs today and throughout the week.
19 Thank you very much. We wish the Commission all of the
20 best going forward. Thank you for allowing us to be here
21 today.

22 **MS. DEBBIE REID:** So, I'd now like to invite
23 Commissioner Brian Eyolfson to do some opening comments on
24 behalf of the Commission.

25 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you,

1 Debbie. My name is Brian Eyolfson and I'm one of the
2 commissioners with the National Inquiry into Missing and
3 Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I'm very pleased to
4 introduce my fellow commissioner, Commissioner Audette, who
5 is here with me this morning.

6 And, I want to start by acknowledging the
7 spirits of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and
8 girls, and transgendered, and two-spirited persons. It's
9 their memories that guides our work every day.

10 We're gathered here on Treaty 1 territory,
11 and as a visitor here, I need to acknowledge the original
12 inhabitants of the land, Anishinaabe, and the homeland of
13 the Métis. We started this week in a good way, early this
14 morning, with the sunrise ceremony and the lighting of the
15 sacred fire. I want to give a special thanks to those fire
16 keepers who will be at the sacred fire throughout the week
17 and at the Oodena Circle.

18 And, I also want to say it's so encouraging
19 to see so many families and survivors here today. I want
20 to thank you for the trust that you've put into the
21 National Inquiry. It's your truths that carry this process
22 forward.

23 I wanted to mention that Chief Commissioner
24 Marion Buller will join us this Wednesday. She had a
25 previous commitment where she was invited to the Tribal

1 Chief Child and Family Services to speak at a women's
2 conference. Commissioner Qajaq Robinson is preparing for
3 upcoming community hearings and wants each of you here
4 today to know her thoughts are with you.

5 I also want to recognize the Manitoba
6 leaders and the families who have been strong advocates for
7 Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited people. Thank
8 you.

9 We remain committed to the families,
10 survivors and loved ones of the heart, and we're going to
11 listen carefully to the truths that each of you bring to
12 share with us this week.

13 And, we've also heard the advice that's been
14 given to, us which is why you have a choice on how you want
15 to share your stories with us this week, whether that's
16 here in a public community hearing, or with a statement
17 gatherer, or perhaps in one of our sharing circles, or in a
18 private setting for those who may continue to fear
19 violence, or through one of the artistic expression panels.

20 So, finally, to those of you watching on the
21 live feed or on our Facebook page, or on any of the other
22 major media websites, thank you for joining us. And, to
23 all Canadians, I want to acknowledge your place as we move
24 forward together in a good way. Together we will hear how
25 to make life better and safer for all Indigenous women,

1 girls and two-spirited people. Thank you. *Migwetch*.

2 **MS. DEBBIE REID:** *Migwetch*, Commissioner. I
3 would now like to invite Commissioner Audette to come up
4 and make some opening comments.

5 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Thank you
6 very much, Madam Director General. (Speaking in Native
7 language). Thank you very much. And, a special thank you
8 for everybody who is here today and for being here today.
9 And, I would also like to pay a special homage to people
10 who are listening to us throughout Canada. This is an
11 extremely important week. It's a very emotional week.
12 It's a very important week and a very emotional week, so we
13 have to listen to each family who will share their truths
14 with us. And, now in English.

15 Good morning, everyone. I am Michèle
16 Audette. I'm from the Innu Nation and Quebecois, my dad is
17 Quebecois, and a proud mother of five beautiful children.
18 And, in those five children, there are two girls. And,
19 like many of us here in this room, as a parent, we want to
20 make sure that our daughters are not a stolen sister or
21 somebody that we lost. So, we all have this in our heart
22 every day, every day.

23 But, before I say my opening remarks, I have
24 to say thank you for the people of this land that are
25 welcoming us and very honoured to be welcomed by the people

1 of Rosen First Nation River this weekend, where they fed
2 us, they make us dance and sang, that -- I didn't do it,
3 and ate for all of you. I'm full. It was very, very
4 beautiful. It was a ceremony that, for me as an Innu
5 woman, I never saw before, so my heart, my spirit was very,
6 very open and glad to witness this.

7 We have ways to do things, and every time I
8 go to a hearing, it's always important for me that I have
9 an Elder, a woman from this land, so I asked this morning
10 with tobacco, of course, if Thelma would do the honour to
11 sit with me when we're listening the truth of the families
12 and survivors, and I'm so honoured that she said yes.
13 *Merci beaucoup.* And, she will be also helping other
14 families in another room, so you will see other Elders all
15 week sitting beside us. Elders from this land. Very, very
16 important. And, I want to acknowledge my grandmother,
17 because I speak French and English, I have two
18 grandmothers.

19 So, my BC, who speaks English, grandmother,
20 Bernie Williams, thank you for being here and reminding me
21 why we're doing this when I'm going off the road or the
22 path. It doesn't happen often, because I take this very,
23 very, very seriously because it's important. Very
24 important. And, I want to acknowledge and say thank you to
25 the Grand Chief who spoken, and of course, Grand Chief

1 Sheila, our heart is with you. We found out yesterday that
2 you lost your dad, so our heart is with you.

3 And, my dream this week is that we put
4 politics aside, that we put all the mistakes or the great
5 stuff that we did on this side, or choose your side about
6 where we should put it, that while we're here today as
7 human beings, with titles maybe, okay, on paper, but as
8 human beings, there's never nothing for nothing.

9 There are families who took the courage, the
10 passion or the stress or -- I don't know how they feel, but
11 they're here today and they'll be here all week. But, we
12 have to remember that there's thousands of thousands of
13 other families who don't have that courage to come in
14 public, to come and share their truth. So, every day we
15 have to pray for them, we have to lift them, we have to
16 walk beside them and this is what we do as human beings.

17 And, if it's possible for you, family
18 members and survivors, only if you want, if you can stand
19 up, I know you're in the room, so I can acknowledge you, we
20 can acknowledge your presence here and your courage and
21 resilience. If you can stand up? *Merci*.

22 For those who are listening at home, you
23 have all our love. If a hearing is too much for you, if to
24 speak in public is too much for you, we have ways to reach
25 you and to be with you in your kitchen, living room or in a

1 place where you think it's safe, where we will listen to
2 your truth. Your truth. And, our dream, the
3 Commissioners, but the human being like I said first, is to
4 honour that truth, to respect that truth, and of course, to
5 give life to that truth. And, we will be travelling across
6 Canada, they call it Canada. We will be travelling, and
7 each time that we will leave a place, your spirit is in our
8 heart. Believe me, I'm sincere. I love you all, thank you
9 so much for being here.

10 **MS. DEBBIE REID:** *Migwetch.* (indiscernible)
11 and pick up the headsets and hear simultaneous translation.
12 Simultaneous. Hard for me to say this in French. And, if
13 at any time Commissioner Audette or others speak French and
14 you would like a translation, in that box right by the
15 translation services are headsets, 1 for English -- okay.
16 2 for English. So, if you need translation services, you
17 can grab those headsets at the back. It just reminded me
18 when Michèle was speaking en Français.

19 I'd like now to invite our Director of
20 Research, who is going to be leaving us soon to go to her
21 cool new job at the University of Ottawa. Aimee Craft is
22 coming to talk to you about some of the cultural symbols
23 that we have and that will be here for the remainder of the
24 hearings, because part of what we believe is very
25 important. There's also education and educating on

1 cultural symbols and others for those who may not be
2 necessarily aware. So, Aimee, please.

3 **MS. AIMEE CRAFT:** Thanks, Debbie. (Speaking
4 in Native language). I don't want to stand in front of
5 anyone and it's hard in this room, so I'm going to walk --
6 I'll walk around a little bit because I'm going to share a
7 few things. Many of you don't need explanation of these
8 items, and they're not just cultural symbols, but also some
9 of our sacred items. So, I want to acknowledge what's
10 already been said about this drum, the *Qu'liq* that was lit,
11 the water that's there, and the pipes that were lifted this
12 morning in the sunrise and opening ceremony.

13 There are four things that I'd like to share
14 today and that's part of making everybody comfortable in
15 this space, and knowing that everybody has their place and
16 that they're represented and what's in front of you, and
17 that these things are here to help you.

18 So, I'll start with these blankets that are
19 behind me, and they're in each of the rooms that we'll be
20 in over the next week. And, these blankets were made by
21 family members and survivors and women in institutions in
22 Saskatchewan. And, in every hearing that we attend, more
23 of these squares are made by family members and children.
24 Anyone who wants to participate and create a square with a
25 message, or an intention or to express themselves through

1 that, there are squares in the Family Room that you can
2 make. They'll be then put together in these blankets and
3 gifted to families at the end of the Inquiry's work. And,
4 these travel with the Commissioners as they do their work.
5 So, that's an opportunity that you have while you're here.
6 If you need to put your intentions into those squares,
7 please do that.

8 We also have an opportunity to provide
9 artistic expression. So, whatever that might be for you,
10 if it's a song, or a poem, or a painting or anything that
11 you would like to share with the Inquiry. Even if you're
12 not coming to sit up here and speaking to a Commissioner
13 directly, that you have that opportunity to share some of
14 your work, some of your thought and intention through those
15 things that you'll be gifting to the Inquiry in that way.
16 And, those are going to be held in what's called a legacy
17 archive, but making sure that people have access to that,
18 so that people can see what it is that you're putting
19 forward in your art and your expression in that way.

20 There are a couple of other things that I
21 would like to share, and they're -- on these banners, and
22 you'll see some of these banners a little bit all over the
23 place, including at registration downstairs and up in the
24 room here, and they explain some of the objects that travel
25 with the Inquiry.

1 So, here right beside me is the
2 Miskwaabimaag Basket. It's a red willow basket that's
3 actually from here, this area, and women from our territory
4 have made it. We harvested this red willow near Bannock
5 Point, many of you will be familiar with that area, and
6 created this basket as a symbol of gathering truth. Not
7 telling truth or finding truth, but the opportunity to
8 gather. And, we know that many Indigenous people around
9 the world, and here, are really important gatherers of many
10 things, and that this inquiry has this important task of
11 helping to gather that truth as it travels.

12 So, this is a basket that was gifted to the
13 Inquiry by Anishinaabekwe from this region. And, beside
14 it, it's a cup of -- a copper cup with water, and the
15 lining of red cloth is to protect that work. So, if you do
16 have something at some point that you want to put in this
17 basket, we had amazing young people in Smithers come and
18 share their intentions and place their thoughts and
19 aspirations into that basket to share with the National
20 Inquiry, and that's really important to the work that's
21 being done. There's an explanation of that in French here,
22 but there's another banner downstairs that has the
23 explanation in English, if anyone is interested in more
24 detail.

25 The last -- the fourth thing that I wanted

1 to speak on is the seed packets. And, for those of you who
2 will be coming to provide testimony, to share stories with
3 the Commissioners, you'll be gifted a packet of seeds.
4 And, these are seeds that grow in our region, and we do
5 this wherever we travel in Canada, is seeds that will grow
6 and they're appropriate to that particular region. So,
7 here, this is wild strawberry and that is a really good
8 heart medicine, but also good for us as we can plant these
9 seeds and harvest them and continue the relationship.

10 So, the invitation is extended to anyone who
11 wants to continue the relationship, to plant these seeds,
12 and to continue to share their stories with the National
13 Inquiry and with each other about how that work of planting
14 these seeds, of harvesting and being in connection, and
15 also commemorating loved ones through the act of growing
16 and giving life through these very important medicine
17 plants.

18 You'll also, as family members that are
19 testifying, be gifted these eagle feathers, and these are
20 harvested on Haida Gwaii, and were brought to the gathering
21 in Smithers. And, what's happened -- people have heard
22 about this and been adding feathers and giving feathers, so
23 that they can be shared with the family members that are
24 coming to share their stories with the National Inquiry.
25 So, it's a really beautiful way of honouring that truth

1 that's being shared and each person that's coming to share
2 their story in the National Inquiry. So, I want to
3 acknowledge those who started this and those who are
4 contributing to it, and the important work that these will
5 do in helping to share that truth.

6 So, there are also some other items that are
7 here, that have been gifted to the Inquiry, and this is
8 your space. So, if anyone wants to, on a break, come and
9 acknowledge the drum, to see what is here, to add to it,
10 there's ways of doing that, and we wanted to share a bit of
11 that as we start so that everyone is comfortable with
12 what's in this space. So, with that, I say *migwetch*.

13 **MS. DEBBIE REID:** *Migwetch*. So, we're going
14 to start with our closing song from the drum group, the
15 North Eagle drum group. Just before we do, I would like to
16 announce that after the song is finished, we're going to
17 take about a 10 minute break to get organized for the first
18 family to come and sit with the Commissioners. There's
19 refreshments available at the back.

20 When the families are providing their
21 stories, we ask that cell phones be turned off or put on
22 silent, please, so that there is no interruptions when the
23 families are speaking. Okay. So, after the drum is
24 finished, we'll take a 10 minute break to prepare for the
25 first family.

1 (MUSICAL PRESENTATION)

2 --- Upon recessing at 11:34

3 --- Upon resuming at 11:53

4 **Hearing # 1**

5 **Witnesses: Joan Winning, Isabel Winning and Stephanie**
6 **Daniels**

7 **In Relation to Nicole Ashley Daniels**

8 **Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette**

9 **Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe**

10 **Registrar: Bryan Zandberg**

11 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Hello. Hi.

12 Commissioner Audette, I would like to call the next family,
13 Joan Winning, Isabel Winning and Stephanie Daniels. Today,
14 Joan, Isabel and Stephanie will be sharing their story of
15 their granddaughter and niece, Nicole Ashley Daniels. The
16 family has asked Paul Daniels to start with a prayer, and
17 so I would like to take the microphone to Mr. Daniels.

18 **MR. PAUL DANIELS:** (Speaking in Native
19 language). She's strong, but this needs more than
20 strength, the things that we go through. I, as an
21 addictions counsellor, as Kevin mentioned this morning,
22 I've had a lot of experience with this type of tragedies
23 that we're talking about today, that is why we need special
24 help and that is why I'm asking. (Speaking in Native
25 language).

1 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** *Migwetch.* Mr.
2 Registrar, I'd ask that you take the Statement of Truth
3 from our witnesses.

4 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Good morning to all
5 three of you. Do you promise to share your truth this
6 morning with the Commissioner and with everybody here?

7 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** Yes, I do.

8 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Okay. Thanks so much.

9 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Commissioner
10 Audette, I'm actually asking the family that's sitting in
11 support in front of our three participants here just to
12 introduce themselves briefly and tell you how they're
13 related to Nicole Daniels.

14 **MS. DAPHNE:** My name is Daphne and she's my
15 cousin.

16 **MS. ANGIE:** Good morning, I'm Angie, and I'm
17 here as a support for the family.

18 **MS. ALESHA:** I'm Alesha and I'm the sister
19 of Nicole.

20 **MR. PAUL DANIELS:** My name is Paul, Paul
21 Daniels. I guess I'm the elder of the family. I'm the
22 oldest of the family. And, I'm here, as I said before, to
23 offer support, whatever I can in prayer. I go to sweats
24 almost every night hoping to help my siblings to deal with
25 this. And, I realize, you know, that it's just not us that

1 are dealing with this; it's all of us across Canada that
2 are dealing with strife like this. And, I hope and pray
3 that out of this, good will come for women, where sisters
4 or moms -- my mom passed away long time ago. She was a
5 very strong woman, and I remember her all the time,
6 especially with the way things are going right now. We
7 need her strength, all of us, and her courage. She was a
8 very courageous woman. *Migwetch*.

9 **MR. ROB DANIELS:** My name is Rob Daniels,
10 Nicole was my cousin.

11 **MS. CHERYL BLACKSMITH:** Good morning. My
12 name is Cheryl Blacksmith. Nicole was my cousin. And, my
13 father was the oldest of the family, and he passed away not
14 ever seeing what's to come of the inquiry. And so, I'm my
15 father's oldest. And so, I'm here representing my family,
16 which is the Daniels family as well. And I say *migwetch*.

17 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Commissioner
18 Audette, the family has also asked to have cousin Robert
19 perform a song, and I welcome Robert to share, if he'd like
20 to, what he's singing about, and it's in honour of Nicole.

21 **MR. ROBERT:** Hello. My mom asked me to
22 write this song for this occasion. So, this song is for or
23 about or inspired by my cousin, Nicole, and I hope it helps
24 you find some healing with what you may be going through as
25 well.

1 (MUSICAL PRESENTATION)

2 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you, Robert.

3 So, Joan, can I ask you a couple of questions in relation
4 to Nicole's mom and why you felt that you had to share
5 Nicole's story today?

6 MS. JOAN WINNING: The way Nicole was found
7 was -- she was found frozen behind a dark -- like, there
8 was no light switch that was found. It was dark. And,
9 circumstances leading to her death were, I believe, the
10 actions of this one person. The autopsy said that she
11 froze to death, but there was (indiscernible) that led to
12 her freezing.

13 I'm just going to make this a little shorter
14 and say that her mother -- I'll go on later on to what I'm
15 going to say. Her mom fought -- she was phoning the police
16 all the time to get answers, and they told her it was
17 closed because she froze to death. But, we believe that
18 she didn't just freeze to death; there was circumstances
19 leading to that.

20 Her mom went into a deep depression -- I'm
21 sorry, my mouth is dry -- after that and she never got over
22 it. But, the reason I am sitting here today is because I
23 want to pick up the fight where my sister left off. I
24 don't want Nicole to -- Nicole's death to be in vain. I
25 don't want it to be just swept under the rug, which is what

1 they were trying to do since 2009 and I'm hoping to get to
2 tell Nicole's story so people know -- are aware that she
3 wasn't just a statistic. She came from a good family. She
4 was loved by everybody. I guess that's it for now. Thank
5 you.

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Isabel, can you
7 share some of Nicole's strengths and contributions to the
8 family with the Commissioner?

9 **MS. ISABEL WINNING:** (Speaking in Native
10 language). I just wanted to touch on some of Nicole's
11 talents. She had a great knack for it. She was a
12 storyteller. She was always making short stories, and she
13 had a love for music. She was very artistic, as her sister
14 will explain later in her testimony. She will explain some
15 of her drawings and -- oh, there's someone there. Just
16 some of her early talents when she was younger.

17 I would like to emphasize that if she was
18 still on this earth and if she was still with us, then her
19 talents could have flourished into something else and she
20 could have been, you know, an artist today. So, I believe
21 that she obviously was cut short of her life, but also her
22 talents were cut short. She was never able to reach her
23 full potential as -- in terms of her talents because of the
24 actions of this person.

25 She had a love for all of her siblings. She

1 was the oldest of six, so I think in that light she was her
2 mom's first born daughter. She had a love for music as
3 well. Ever since she was a baby, I don't even know, I
4 think she was walking at nine months. Sorry, I was going
5 to say 11, but that was my daughter. But, she was walking
6 when she was around nine months old. She was talking. She
7 was already singing the alphabet and the whole Barney song
8 before she was 1, so she was incredibly smart. That's all
9 I have to say for now.

10 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And so, if we can
11 just take a step back and maybe talk about -- if you could
12 share the events that led to Nicole freezing? And, I know
13 that this is difficult and please take your time.

14 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** She had been talking to
15 this person on a chat line. I guess it was 2009, so they
16 didn't have -- I don't know if she was on Facebook or not.
17 Was she? Telephone hotline. Where she met this person,
18 this older person I guess, who took advantage of a young
19 girl who was living in poverty and anyway. She went to
20 meet him that night.

21 So, this is, like, 10:00 at night, and they
22 found her at 8:00 in the morning. So, it was only a few
23 hours since the time that she had left home. As I said
24 earlier, they found her face down with her clothes undone.
25 The autopsy says that she tried to -- it was viewed

1 paradoxal, undressing due to freezing. But, that's an
2 assumption. They don't know because they weren't there.

3 I believe that the person that took her that
4 night supplied her with so much alcohol in her system that
5 she was barely able to walk. She lived, like, two short
6 blocks away from where she was found and she would have
7 made her way home had she not been supplied with so much
8 alcohol that she couldn't walk. I believe that when he was
9 finished with her, that he just -- sorry, I want to start
10 again.

11 I think that when he finished with her, he
12 tossed her out of his truck or pulled her out of his truck
13 and just left her there because she had bruises on her arms
14 that we seen when she was in her casket, and she didn't
15 have those bruises before. She had bruises on her legs,
16 like she had been assaulted. She had bruises on her face,
17 which they said was because she was laying face down, but
18 she wasn't -- like I said, from 10:00 to 8:00 in the
19 morning, that's not even 12 hours.

20 The police closed the file because the
21 autopsy report said that she froze to death. I think it
22 was just easier for them to close it rather than
23 investigate further. They went and spoke to a couple of
24 family members the first couple of days of her death, but
25 that's the only investigating that they did.

1 The person that was involved in this, they
2 had the name, this person. He wasn't charged with
3 anything. She was 16 years old, barely out of 15. Her
4 birthday was in February and this was April the 1st. She
5 had just turned 16 years old. This guy supplied her with
6 so much alcohol and maybe supplied her with pills as well,
7 because she had some kind of pill in her system, maybe to
8 make her get drunk faster, I'm not sure. But, at the very
9 least, why wasn't he charged with contributing to a minor?

10 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, I just want to
11 get this right. You keep referring to an older gentleman
12 who actually picked Nicole up in the evening after 10:00.
13 And, you don't know anything about this individual? You've
14 said "they know", and when you say "they", do you mean the
15 police knew, but you don't know who he is?

16 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** Yes, the police knew who
17 this person was. They did talk to him. I don't know what
18 the results were of that conversation. They told my sister
19 that they spoke to this person. My sister believed that he
20 lived in Transcona, an older gentleman in his 40s. So, he
21 has gone on to live his life. He's probably a grandpa by
22 now. My niece -- I forgot. She was also my godchild and
23 she -- she didn't have a chance to live. She didn't have a
24 chance at life. She might have had a -- she might have
25 been finished school, she might have had a baby by now, but

Joan Winning, Isabel Winning
& Stephanie Daniels
(Nicole Ashley Daniels)

1 she was robbed of that life by this person, because of his
2 selfish act. My sister also lost her life. So, because of
3 this one person, there's two family members missing in our
4 family.

5 My sister's children have no mother. The
6 youngest is 8 years old and the oldest is 23. All because
7 of this one person. Why isn't there any -- like, why --
8 why didn't they go any further? I'm sitting here because I
9 want the police to at least reopen the case and go further
10 into what happened that night, because she did not just
11 freeze to death. There was other circumstances that led to
12 it.

13 And, it's not that he only got her drunk,
14 but he -- he -- there may have been no evidence in the
15 autopsy about her -- about the sexual assault, but maybe
16 because she was so drunk and her body was relaxed that
17 there was no bruises on her body regarding the sexual act
18 itself. But, he should be charged with that as well,
19 because that was his sole purpose that night of meeting a
20 16-year-old girl, was to get her drunk and have his way
21 with her, then dispose of her, you know?

22 Because that's what he did. He just -- he
23 flung her out of his truck and just left her there to fend
24 for herself in the condition that she was in, knowing that
25 she couldn't stand up and make her way home.

1 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Isabel, we've heard
2 Joan explain one of her theories. One of the questions we
3 were talking about at one point was -- you know, is it
4 possible that she was trying to refuse his advances and
5 just got out of the car? But, what do you think or how do
6 you feel about the fact that an adult took your 16-year-old
7 cousin and -- sorry, 16-year-old niece and didn't make sure
8 she got back home?

9 **MS. ISABEL WINNING:** I'd like to say, first
10 of all, that I think that it goes without saying, when you
11 hear about cases like this, that it goes to show what
12 society thinks of our women. It goes to show the magnitude
13 of how they think that our lives don't matter, that when
14 you pick up a 16-year-old at 10:00 at night, and you're in
15 your mid 40s, probably leaving your wife at home.

16 I think that when he picked her up -- and I
17 think she had a stamp on her hand as well, so they did go
18 to a club. I think that either maybe he didn't get what he
19 wanted or maybe she did refuse his services, to which point
20 when he did dispose of her body, I think that he knew full
21 well that she probably wasn't going to make it home. I
22 think that he knew that when he drove away. Did he even
23 look back to see if she was still walking? Did he even
24 look back to see if she -- if she had fallen? Did he look
25 back to see if she had gotten up?

1 So, it was a complete disregard of her life
2 and I think that his actions directly correlated with her
3 death. He had to have known when she got out of that
4 truck, or when he threw her out, or when he pushed her out
5 that she wasn't getting up from where she was. From
6 details in the autopsy report, it looks like she literally
7 just didn't get back up from the first initial -- from
8 getting out of his car.

9 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** May I ask you --
10 actually, you keep referring to a document. You're
11 referring to the autopsy report. So, the family did have
12 the opportunity to receive an autopsy report form. Yes.

13 Commissioner Audette, I'm going to ask that
14 a document be entered, parties withstanding will receive a
15 copy, but because of the nature of the document, to protect
16 the integrity and dignity of Nicole, we're going to ask
17 that it be sealed. So, I ask Commissioner Audette that you
18 order the document be sealed.

19 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yes, we do
20 have this document and we will make sure that it will be
21 sealed.

22 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, Michèle has
23 ordered the document. I am going to just ask that you look
24 at the summary. And, this is the portion that I'm going to
25 ask be read in. So, if you just want to read the first

1 paragraph. And, it's on page 6.

2 **MS. ISABEL WINNING:** "This was the case of a
3 16-year-old girl who was found laying down, face down,
4 outdoors in the snow. Her jacket was off and her blouse is
5 undone. She had a history of drug and alcohol abuse, and a
6 previous suicide attempt." Again, those are assumptions
7 made by the Winnipeg Police and the coroner.

8 "When last seen, she was apparently going
9 drinking and may have been under the influence of
10 benzodiazepines, which she would have taken from her
11 mother." Again, another assumption; how do they know that?

12 "Autopsy showed minor abrasions and
13 contusions to the body and superficial gastric erosion.
14 Her jacket had been removed and her blouse was undone,
15 suggesting paradoxal undressing due to hypothermia."
16 Again, they don't -- another assumption. They don't know
17 that he didn't tear her clothes off.

18 "Toxicology and alcohol testing showed an
19 acute alcohol intoxication and the presence of
20 benzodiazepine in her system."

21 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And, I just wanted
22 to ask a question, because I know the family feels very
23 strongly and you actually already, as you were reading it
24 in, pointed out that there's a number of assumptions
25 happening here, particularly that she had a history of

1 alcohol.

2 She was 16. Did she have a history of
3 alcohol that you're aware of, and if so, can you explain a
4 little more?

5 **MS. ISABEL WINNING:** I don't know how
6 anybody at 16 has a history of drug and alcohol abuse. As
7 we talked earlier, we talked about the alcohol content that
8 was in her body, and for someone who was addicted to
9 alcohol or benzodiazepines, the alcohol limit that was in
10 her system wouldn't have been enough to incapacitate her to
11 the point where she couldn't get up from where she stood,
12 which to us suggests that she wasn't an experienced drinker
13 or someone who had alcohol issues.

14 I think that it was easy just for them to
15 chop it up as an Aboriginal girl that lived in, you know,
16 Manitoba Housing, and was the result of her own demise,
17 which was not the case. That's another reason why we have
18 all these questions.

19 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And, in terms of --
20 like, she was 16. Had she experimented or tried alcohol
21 like a lot of teenagers, regardless of their racial
22 background, would have?

23 **MS. STEPHANIE DANIELS:** For a 16-year-old
24 girl, I would -- I would say that she stayed home a lot,
25 she -- she was very closed off and sheltered and -- she

1 just stuck to her family most of the time. Like, for a 16-
2 year-old, they're usually out partying, you know? She
3 wasn't like that.

4 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. And,
5 they make a reference to a previous suicide attempt. Do
6 any of you want to speak to that?

7 **MS. STEPHANIE DANIELS:** She wasn't suicidal.

8 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** There was an incident
9 when she flew through this window. I don't know if she was
10 fooling around or not, but the police were called and they
11 assumed that she was trying to commit suicide. She had a
12 little bit of scars on her arms. If she was intent on
13 committing suicide, she would have found a way to commit
14 suicide.

15 So, if -- maybe she had the ideation for
16 committing suicide, but she didn't -- she wasn't suicidal.
17 There's a difference. I should know because I was a cutter
18 myself when I was that age. It's looking for attention and
19 -- you know? Most -- I think there's a lot of teenagers
20 that do that when they want attention.

21 But, that again is another assumption based
22 on what they think about Indigenous people or poor people
23 living in poverty and stuff like that, they're all
24 alcoholics and suicidal. It's not true of -- it wasn't
25 true of Nicole. Nicole came from a very good family. I'm

Joan Winning, Isabel Winning
& Stephanie Daniels
(Nicole Ashley Daniels)

1 sure there was a few setbacks with her mother with problems
2 with stuff like that, but she did come from a good family.
3 Otherwise, we wouldn't be sitting here right now.

4 She wasn't an alcoholic and she wasn't
5 suicidal. Those are all assumptions that were made, and I
6 think this is a big problem with the system, as it is with
7 the police system, and even the toxicologist or pathologist
8 that made that autopsy report. They seem to be all
9 assumptions that are written in the autopsy report.

10 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. You had
11 said something and I just -- I want to specify. You had
12 said, you know, sometimes Nicole's mother wasn't in a good
13 way. And, earlier, I think Isabel had said that one of the
14 things Nicole was, was this really good big sister -- like
15 a sister mom. Like, she helped take care of all the other
16 kids?

17 **MS. ISABEL WINNING:** Yes, she would. She
18 was always helping her mom out that way when she was the
19 oldest of six; right? So, this is a picture of the three
20 oldest, Alesha on the left, Stephanie in the middle and
21 Nicole is on the right in the pink shirt. I believe this
22 is in their house on Price. So, this is the house that
23 they lived in, in East Kildonan. The three of them, I
24 think -- I believe were so close. They were so close in
25 age, all three of them. And, another thing that he took is

1 he broke that bond between the three oldest siblings.

2 I'd just like to mention that even though
3 we're talking about that -- the assumptions of her alcohol
4 use and her -- you know, about this assumption that she
5 was, you know -- had issues with addiction and suicidal
6 ideations, let's not forget the fact that this person that
7 took her out, picked her up from her home, he supplied her
8 and made sure that she was in a state that she was
9 incapacitated and wasn't able to fend him off.

10 Regardless if she had issues with addition,
11 regardless if she was suicidal, it doesn't matter. The
12 fact is that this guy took advantage of her. He took
13 advantage of the fact that she was an Aboriginal girl. He
14 took advantage of the fact that he was able to provide the
15 means for her to not be able to fend off his actions.

16 And, I just -- sorry, I didn't want to spend
17 too much time focusing on the assumptions. I think that it
18 gets clouded and I think people -- even people that are
19 watching will also lead them to believe that maybe she was,
20 you know, the result of her own demise and that's not the
21 case. The case is that this man picked her up, took her
22 from his home -- her home, took her out to a club, and then
23 took her in the back of an auto body shop where there was
24 no lights, where there was no one to help her and disposed
25 of her like she was garbage. Those facts still remain.

1 Those aren't assumptions. Those are facts. Those are
2 things that happened at night; those are things that
3 happened to her.

4 And, I think a lot of ways that we get lost
5 in media and stuff like that is by focusing on the troubles
6 that we have as Aboriginal people, that are not just for
7 Aboriginal people. Those problems exist worldwide. The
8 problem is that we suffer as addicts -- I'm also a survivor
9 as well. But, the problems that we suffer as addicts do
10 not mean that -- warrant an early death sentence because of
11 those actions or because we have faults and because we had
12 made mistakes. This -- my niece -- my cousin, my niece was
13 robbed of her life because this man knew of ways to take
14 advantage. Who knows if he hasn't done that already? Who
15 knows if he still doesn't prey on that same complex in
16 Transcona because he's gotten away with it? Who knows how
17 many more victims that this guy may have?

18 But, to the Winnipeg Police, he is
19 considered an upstanding citizen in our community and,
20 well, what the hell was she? What was she to society?
21 Nothing? Like the 1,200 other Aboriginal women that are
22 murdered and missing? I think that's bullshit. Sorry for
23 my use of language. But, we need to get past these
24 theories that -- and start focusing more on why these
25 predators are picking our women. Why are we seen as such

Joan Winning, Isabel Winning
& Stephanie Daniels
(Nicole Ashley Daniels)

1 disposable beings in our society? It doesn't matter what
2 class we sit in, it doesn't matter if we're living in
3 poverty, and it doesn't matter if we're sitting on
4 Parliament Hill. We're still seen as disposable people in
5 our society and I think that's the real thing that needs to
6 change here. Otherwise, there will be more cases like
7 Nicole. Thank you.

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. Thank
9 you. Can I ask a question stemmed out of that? So, in
10 terms of accountability, how do we start -- or what's a
11 recommendation to making people like this be more
12 accountable for some of their actions? And, I'm putting
13 this in the context of, you know, maybe somebody would say,
14 well, you can't really prove he did anything, but what do
15 you think he should be responsible or accountable for in
16 this circumstance?

17 **MS. ISABEL WINNING:** I think that he should
18 be held accountable for a disregard of life. I don't know
19 what the legal term for that charge would be. I think he
20 should be charged with supplying alcohol to a minor causing
21 death. I think that he should be charged with sexual
22 assault. I think that -- I don't know what the legal term
23 would be for -- other than reckless endangerment of a life,
24 reckless endangerment of a child, child abuse. They said
25 that they didn't charge or, you know -- and plus, she was

1 the legal age to consent. Even if you were 45, if you were
2 in that state of mind, how can any woman consent to any
3 kind of advance made by anybody, let alone a man twice your
4 age?

5 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And, on that last
6 point, and I just want to make sure that it's the family's
7 position -- that it's clear it's the family's position,
8 particularly is it right -- and forget about legal terms,
9 let's just talk about people's actions. People's actions,
10 is it fair to say the family believes that anyone who has
11 this kind of behaviour towards a young person, that it
12 should actually be looked at as child abuse when someone's
13 under 18, that it should look like it's predatorial or
14 someone intentionally trying to get a young person?

15 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** It is. He did -- he set
16 out to -- he preyed on her, he preyed on because of the
17 fact that she was -- she was living in poverty, so that was
18 how he was able to entice her out of her home. He --
19 sorry, I'm getting lost here. Can you ask the question
20 again?

21 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, what is your
22 position on any circumstance like this? And, as Isabel put
23 it, whether or not she had any issues, what is your
24 position on an adult picking up a young Indigenous woman
25 who is 16 years old?

1 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** Well, he was -- he knew
2 she was vulnerable, so he preyed on her. I think he should
3 be charged with -- yes, that was child abuse. Like I said,
4 she was barely out of 15 years old, two months after her
5 birthday. Did he know that she was that young? No, she
6 had no ID on her. And, yet he took her to a bar. Now, I'm
7 thinking, was that bar for certain members who did the same
8 thing, you know, where they all preyed on young girls like
9 this and had this exclusive club to take them there? She
10 didn't look old enough to go to the bar, you know?

11 Like, it's -- like, the residential school
12 system on the -- they abused these -- the students. It's
13 -- I could say maybe it's the same thing, because he knew
14 she was a -- yes, he needs to be charged with child abuse,
15 that's what I would say, because she was a child. Would he
16 want that same thing to happen to his children? His
17 children at the time were probably older than her, and yet,
18 he could go and pick up a 15-year-old girl and -- supplied
19 her with alcohol and pills, and dispose of her.

20 Why wasn't he charged with that? That's
21 what I can't understand. Does he know that he destroyed a
22 whole family? He devastated a whole family? We're still
23 feeling the pain today because of the actions of this one
24 person, a selfish act to satisfy his -- himself.

25 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** We're going to go

Joan Winning, Isabel Winning
& Stephanie Daniels
(Nicole Ashley Daniels)

1 through some pictures and have the family just give some
2 descriptions, but before that, I want to ask the family if
3 they have any recommendations or ideas that they want to
4 share with the Commission? I think we've actually heard
5 the family say pretty strong and loud that there are
6 certain things that have to stop being tolerated, that
7 women need to -- Indigenous women need to be seen as
8 victims and not disposable, but I want to ask the family if
9 they had any other ideas or recommendations that they
10 wanted to share with the Commission?

11 **MS. ISABEL WINNING:** Other than seeing
12 actions in terms of -- or things that we would like to see
13 change with this predator, I think that we need to change
14 in how we engage with Winnipeg Police. It's obviously
15 apparent that there's a complete disconnect between law
16 enforcement and Aboriginal people. There's a complete
17 distrust in terms of Aboriginal people not trusting
18 Winnipeg Police, in terms of the way that they conduct
19 themselves and the language that they use when they're
20 addressing families of murdered and missing women.

21 I think that their assumptions in terms of
22 the outcome of these cases is horrendous. For example, my
23 -- I had to call in, my daughter went missing, but the way
24 that I was treated when I called the police is that it was
25 my fault and that if I wasn't -- if I was a better parent,

Joan Winning, Isabel Winning
& Stephanie Daniels
(Nicole Ashley Daniels)

1 if I knew every single nook and cranny that my daughter was
2 in when she left the house, then I wouldn't be in the
3 situation that I was in, that I wouldn't be sitting here
4 crying to the Winnipeg Police about the location of my
5 daughter.

6 And, what kind of approach is that when
7 you're -- you know, I was lucky that my daughter came home,
8 but in cases like Nicole and the 1,200 cases where these
9 girls didn't come home, you walk into any -- you walk and
10 barge your way into the homes of these people who are
11 obviously broken, and you treat them like they're dirt, and
12 that simply being, you know, an Aboriginal person is -- you
13 know, well, there you go right there, you know, it's those
14 Aboriginal people. And, you know, there you go right
15 there, they're Manitoba Housing or on EIA or -- just the
16 way that the Winnipeg Police and law enforcement take a
17 look at Aboriginal people, I think that needs to change.

18 I don't know how they're going to do it at
19 the level of law enforcement. Maybe we need to bring these
20 people to ceremony. Maybe we need to take them out of
21 their uniforms and bring them to ceremony to see what we as
22 Aboriginal women are. We're not -- you know, whatever they
23 have in their mind about Aboriginal women. But, maybe we
24 need to bring them to ceremony and give them another view
25 of us as people, instead of always, you know, the

1 interaction that they have with us in terms of them doing
2 their job and us trying to get advocacy for our loved ones.

3 And, we'll never be on the same page until
4 we come to a common ground and maybe that common ground is
5 at ceremony. I don't know. But, I think that if we don't
6 change the mindset of Winnipeg Police, then a lot of these
7 cases will again fall on deaf ears.

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can I ask that the
9 pictures, starting with the artwork, come up onto the
10 screen, please? Stephanie, can you tell me a little bit
11 about how important artwork was for Nicole and what she did
12 exactly? Because I know we've only got a few pictures up
13 here, but if you could explain that, that would be helpful.

14 **MS. STEPHANIE DANIELS:** I think that she
15 expressed some of her feeling in her art. She would --
16 well, me and my sister, when we were younger, she -- her
17 room is right beside our room, so her door would be shut
18 and we would hear her talking and telling stories. So,
19 with her art -- she never wrote them down, but she told
20 stories with her art, that's why there's, like, scenarios
21 in some of her pictures. Yes. Sometimes when we were,
22 like, young, young, me and my sister, she -- she would make
23 us sit in a particular position and pose, and she would
24 sketch us out and it would take at least an hour. I was
25 always satisfied with the results of them.

1 I don't know. It's too bad that she never
2 got the chance to see her true potential with it, because
3 again, she was only 16 with these drawings and younger
4 even.

5 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. Can I
6 ask that the pictures be brought up as well? And, any of
7 the family members just -- I know that Isabel already
8 explained at least one picture, but if we can get the
9 pictures up and someone in the family can tell us a little
10 bit about what we're looking at or the timeframe we're
11 looking at after the Pikachu?

12 **MS. STEPHANIE DANIELS:** I remember when the
13 whole Pokémon thing was popular in my neighbourhood, and I
14 guess I requested that she drew them -- all the Pokémon
15 for me. I didn't take pictures, but we have a few more. I
16 think we have Squirtle too, but I remember being so proud
17 and going around the neighbourhood and showing them off to
18 other kids. We don't have much of her art, but that's a
19 few of what we have and we're lucky to even have them
20 still.

21 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I bet they're very
22 treasured in your household. And, if we could just get the
23 photos up as well? I don't know if someone wants to tell
24 us a little bit about the pictures as we're seeing them?

25 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** She had just turned a

Joan Winning, Isabel Winning
& Stephanie Daniels
(Nicole Ashley Daniels)

1 year old here. She was already walking and singing. Like
2 I said, she was really smart. Nicole was born to the
3 youngest of our family, Fran -- Frances. So, we didn't
4 think that Fran was going to have any babies and when she
5 had Nicole, the whole family was so happy that our baby
6 sister had a baby. So, she was loved by everybody. She
7 was treasured by the whole family, which is why it was such
8 a devastating loss for the whole family when she passed.

9 This is -- here, she's looking at my little
10 grandson that was born that time. He was only a couple of
11 days old and she was wanting to hold him. And, here,
12 they're having breakfast. And, I lived with them off and
13 on through the years, so I was very close to all the kids
14 and I'm raising -- they're all living with me right now.

15 This is at her baptismal. That's my son,
16 Philip, and we're the godparents of Nicole. This is her --
17 she's putting her shoes on, waiting for my grandma to come
18 and -- I mean, my mom to come and give her a little ice
19 cream. She used to drop by and give her a little treat of
20 -- those little Dixie cup ice creams, which is her
21 favourite, but they were so small. There was never quite
22 enough there for her. Her parents are here at a baptism.

23 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. Well, I
24 just want to let the family, if they have anything else
25 they wanted to add before Commissioner Audette may have a

1 couple of questions.

2 **MR. PAUL DANIELS:** Can you ask for the
3 picture there, where she's looking up?

4 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can we put -- stop
5 and hold the picture where she's looking up, please?
6 Sorry, not this one, but where she was kind of looking at a
7 baby, another baby, but all you could see was her face
8 looking up. There we go.

9 **MR. PAUL DANIELS:** See, this is a picture of
10 a girl that was really loved -- loved by everybody in our
11 family, and you can see it in her eyes there. You know, as
12 I listen here today and I feel that she's on trial, why is
13 that? Why do I feel that? Is she on trial?

14 And, the other thing I have to say, you
15 asked if we have any suggestions. Well, I do have a
16 suggestion. You know, society has to look at us as the
17 same way that they look at themselves. I mean, the way the
18 white people look at themselves, you know? That's all we
19 ask for, and to be treated the same, you know, in terms of
20 justice.

21 These young women, you know, that's what
22 they are. They deserve life. They deserve the same
23 opportunity as anybody else. They're intelligent and they
24 can succeed in life.

25 When I talked about my mom earlier, you

Joan Winning, Isabel Winning
& Stephanie Daniels
(Nicole Ashley Daniels)

1 know, and Angie talks about our family being a good family,
2 well, it's true, you know? My sons all have university
3 degrees, they all work, you know? And, that's something
4 that we try to give to our family members, inspire the way
5 our mom was. My mom raised 15 children. And, when she was
6 finished raising those children, she went back to school
7 and became a nurse. In her 40s, she became a nurse. Those
8 are the inspirations that Nicole had from a grandma that
9 really loved her and all of us that really love her.
10 *Migwetch.*

11 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** *Migwetch.* And,
12 again, I just wanted to offer, if the family had anything
13 to add before I ask? So, Commissioner Audette, if you had
14 any questions for the family?

15 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Thank you
16 very much. Thank you, Christa. Thank you very much for
17 sharing your truth. And, before I ask my question, I just
18 want to say that Isabel, you don't need to apologize at
19 all. If your heart says, if your mind and spirit says that
20 there's so many assumptions, this is the place to say it.
21 This is the place to say it, so you don't need to
22 apologize. And, I have to say, I commend you. Thank you
23 for showing Canada or sharing how you see it, how you live
24 it, how you feel it. So, thank you. And, same for the
25 family who are here and the supporters.

1 Joan, I understand you're the godmother?
2 Yes? So, there's an important spiritual relationship with
3 your goddaughter. And, if I understand well, the
4 translation is very, very low, so I had to listen in
5 English, and if I misunderstood, your sister was fighting
6 to do what with this case? Make sure that there's answers?

7 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** Yes.

8 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Can you
9 explain to me her fight? What she did, so we can hear it?

10 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** From the start, she was
11 phoning the police all the time to get more information and
12 asking them to -- why weren't they charging this person.
13 If they knew who the person was, they did talk to him, they
14 knew who -- his name. She wanted them to charge him. Why
15 didn't they charge him? I have the same questions. And,
16 each time she spoke to them, they said, "Well, the autopsy
17 report said she froze to death. There's nothing more we
18 can do. It's conclusive. It's all over with, you know?"
19 But, it wasn't enough.

20 To this day, they still refuse to reopen it.
21 Why, when the circumstances are there? They know that he
22 supplied her with alcohol, they know that she was a minor,
23 they know that she had bruises on her body. Those bruises
24 weren't put there just from -- you know? She didn't give
25 herself those bruises. Those bruises were consistent with

1 being assaulted. This man assaulted her, then he disposed
2 of her, and still they didn't charge him. That was my
3 sister's fight and that's what we're trying to do here
4 today; we're continuing till we get some answers.

5 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** So, is -- did
6 they do a real -- an investigation on this?

7 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** No, they didn't
8 investigate anything. Like I said earlier, they asked a
9 couple of questions to the family and that was it. They
10 spoke to the guy; they closed right away, yes.

11 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** So, no
12 investigation?

13 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** Nothing.

14 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Did the
15 police meet with you, with the families?

16 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** No.

17 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Any support
18 from any organization, the system that is there for
19 families who lost a member or a loved one?

20 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** Well, we just started
21 reaching out to these organizations not too long ago.

22 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Sorry, if --
23 I'll repeat my question. When that happened, did any,
24 like, social ---

25 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** No. No.

1 COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: --- services

2 ---

3 MS. JOAN WINNING: No.

4 COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: --- from the
5 province ---

6 MS. JOAN WINNING: Nothing. Nothing at all.

7 COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Even from the
8 City of Winnipeg?

9 MS. JOAN WINNING: Nothing. There was
10 nothing. It's just like we were invisible. And, it was
11 forgotten in, you know, a month, and she's forgotten, you
12 know? And, here we are, 2017, and still no answers and
13 still -- you know, they don't acknowledge what happened.
14 This is why we're here.

15 COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: *Merci.* And,
16 for all of you who is here knowing that no investigation,
17 no support after hearing what happened to the person you
18 really love, what impact it had on you?

19 MS. JOAN WINNING: It's very traumatic, to
20 say the least. It makes us feel like no one cares about
21 us, about our family member that was taken. No one seems
22 to care that my sister passed away as a direct result of
23 this. No one seems to care that she has kids that have no
24 parents. I'm raising her younger sons and I have the two
25 older girls living with me as well. But, for outside

1 supports, I don't see anything. I can say I don't see
2 anything because I live it day-to-day.

3 Again, I feel -- I still feel to this day
4 that nobody cares. I don't know why we're -- it's like
5 we're non-entities and nobody sees us. We're sitting here
6 in a room full of people and nobody really gives a shit.
7 That's how I feel.

8 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** How can we
9 change that?

10 **MS. JOAN WINNING:** Well, for me, I want the
11 police to reopen that case and charge this person. I want
12 this person to realize -- I hope he's watching -- whoever
13 you are, that he's devastated a family, he's left kids
14 motherless as a direct result of his actions that night. I
15 want him to know that. I want him to know the pain that he
16 inflicted into our family and hope that he has some kind of
17 remorse for what he did.

18 Nicole was a human being. She was taken
19 from us for a selfish reason. She wasn't just a poor
20 little Aboriginal girl living in the projects who could be
21 used and abused and just disposed of. She was part of a
22 loving family who loved her. A good family like my brother
23 said. I want him to realize what he did, this person from
24 Transcona. They knew where he lived, they didn't tell us.
25 They protected his identity, they protected him. Where was

Joan Winning, Isabel Winning
& Stephanie Daniels
(Nicole Ashley Daniels)

1 the protection for my niece?

2 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Merci*, Joan.

3 *Merci*. And, the sisters, if you have something to share so
4 we, the Inquiry, can remember Nicole, can remember who she
5 was and who she is, a good memory or -- she's an artist,
6 yes, but ---

7 **MS. STEPHANIE DANIELS:** She was -- us three
8 sisters at the time were like the Three Musketeers, so we
9 would even walk from tall to smallest. And, she was very
10 protective over my family, my mom, all of us. She wouldn't
11 let anybody, you know, like, bully us. She was the
12 funniest out of us. She had a really, really good sense of
13 humour and she was very funny.

14 Whenever I was, like, trying to be mad at
15 her, she -- she would do little things to make me laugh,
16 just so I wouldn't be mad at her. Like, I would look at
17 her and she would be making this face to make me laugh.
18 She was just the leader of us three. And, she was a very
19 good make up artist. She was very talented.

20 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Merci*.

21 **MS. ISABEL WINNING:** I just wanted to point
22 out these little pins that we're wearing on our shirts
23 today are something that the sisters of Nicole made last
24 night in their hotel rooms in remembrance. We were all
25 going to put on red dresses, but we all don't have red

1 dresses, so we thought we would come up with these little
2 pins that we made in honour of all murdered and missing
3 women and girls.

4 So, I just wanted to touch base on that
5 because I'm -- they took the time to buy the supplies and
6 make them and make enough. They handed it out to other
7 family members when we were having breakfast this morning,
8 and I think that also goes to show the kindness that has
9 resulted from this tragedy as well. I think that it's
10 opened up our hearts to the understanding of what everybody
11 else is going through. So, I just wanted to say thank you
12 to the girls for sharing their little dresses with us.

13 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Merci*
14 *beaucoup.* To conclude, Maitre Big Canoe, we have this
15 basket, because in this mandate, we have to commemorate
16 also our sisters in spirit and if there's more red dresses
17 that could go in that basket on behalf of Nicole? And, I
18 saw you -- your -- the song, if -- for me, I think it's --
19 that makes us, when I say "us" it's all of us, unique, that
20 the artistic expression is so powerful, so -- and it stays
21 alive forever. So, if we can have some of your words in
22 this basket, so everywhere we go, we honour the spirit of
23 your loved one, I would be very honoured. *Merci beaucoup.*

24 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Commissioner
25 Audette, that concludes. I do believe the Commissioner has

1 something for you.

2 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Can you
3 explain? Your English is better.

4 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, Elder Thelma is
5 actually handing the family an eagle feather that's wrapped
6 in red and it's good medicine. And then Elder Bernie is
7 offering tobacco ties, as well as seeds. So, there's some
8 more information about the seeds up in the foyer there, but
9 essentially, the seeds are gifts of reciprocity. We just
10 wanted to acknowledge, so the Commissioners, and the
11 Commission wanted to acknowledge the family for sharing
12 their story, and the seeds are -- you can -- they're for
13 this region, so you can plant them here. And so, some
14 people refer to them as seeds of hope and it's just a way
15 to thank the family for their strength for sharing the
16 story.

17 I ask that we adjourn so that we can have
18 lunch. And, I understand that lunch is available for
19 anyone in attendance at the back here, so *merci*.

20 **--- Exhibits (code: P1P03P0101)**

21 **Exhibit 1:** Digital PowerPoint presentation filename
22 "Daniels family" comprising 17 colour photos
23 (11 family photos and six line drawings).

24 **Exhibit 2:** **** SEALED **** Manitoba Report of Medical
25 Examiner / Autopsy Report Form for Nicole

1 Daniels Hospital autopsy number 2009-M0256
2 (six pages); with Toxicology report (two
3 pages) reference number: 2009-M-0805.

4 --- Upon recessing at 13:19

5 --- Upon resuming at 14:27

6 **Hearing # 2**

7 **Witness: Betty Rourke, Mike Rourke, Lorna Sinclair, Elora**
8 **Sinclair, Kim McPherson, Gerri Pangman**

9 **In relation to (Jennifer Glenna Johnston, Jennifer**
10 **McPherson and Myrna Letandre) part 1 of 2**

11 **Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette**

12 **Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe**

13 **Registrar: Bryan Zandberg**

14 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Commissioner Audette,
15 I would like to ask that the next participants be
16 introduced, and I am simply going to introduce them by name
17 first, those that will be sharing their story. And so,
18 right beside me is Betty Rourke; and beside her, her husband
19 Mike. Then we have Lorna Sinclair and Elora Anderson. Then
20 we have Kim McPherson, and beside her is Gerri Pangman, and
21 these are the individuals that will be testifying today. I
22 will actually provide their supports and their family the
23 opportunity to also introduce themselves, and I just wanted
24 to state a couple of notes on this particular group of
25 families that are testifying before you.

1 So, these families are going to be sharing,
2 actually, the stories of three murders, and two of the
3 murders are interconnected and involve two different
4 families that aren't related themselves. And, the reason
5 for the explanation, for this upfront, is because the
6 families have agreed to work together, and instead of having
7 one hearing where one family goes, and then a separate
8 hearing where another family goes, they've decided that they
9 want to share together, because their stories -- the lives,
10 the way they've been impacted, is too interconnected to
11 separate into two separate hearings.

12 And so, today, we will start this hearing,
13 and we'll start it, and both families will have an
14 opportunity to talk about and share about their loved ones,
15 their strengths, their contributions, and we'll get to hear
16 the stories of what happened to their loved ones. And then
17 tomorrow afternoon, the hearing will actually continue at
18 3:15 in this same place, and the reason it will continue is
19 they will then have the opportunity to discuss the impacts
20 and recommendations.

21 And, I just wanted to start with that as an
22 explanation, and also because I think the families have been
23 really amazing working together and generous with each other
24 to understand and to share their story in a good way, and it
25 reminds us that sometimes things don't just fit in perfect

1 boxes. Sometimes, people need to come together to make this
2 happen, so I just wanted to say thanks and provide the
3 explanation, and I'm going to ask Mr. Registrar to ask for a
4 statement of truth.

5 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Good afternoon,
6 everybody. I'll just ask one question of all the family
7 together. Do you promise to tell your truth this afternoon
8 to Commissioner Audette? Thank you very much.

9 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** At this time, I'm
10 going to actually ask any of the family members and supports
11 to also introduce themselves, just so you know who is
12 sitting in support with this family. I'll start with you,
13 Pierre.

14 **MR. PIERRE DUCHARME:** Hi, everybody. My name
15 is Pierre Ducharme, and my sister, her name is Jennifer
16 McPherson, and I'm here to support my mom and dad, and my
17 sisters here, and I also want to say more than my sisters,
18 like my second mom.

19 **MS. BRENDA DUCHARME:** Hi, I'm Brenda
20 Ducharme, and I'm here to support my husband, Pierre, and my
21 family as well. Thank you.

22 **MS. BRENDA BEAR:** Good afternoon. My name is
23 Brenda Bear, and I'm here to support the family and continue
24 on with their healing journey.

25 **MS. MARY CRATE:** Hi, I'm Mary Crate. I'm

1 here to support my granddaughters and the family, and for
2 all of you. *Migwetch.*

3 **MS. NAHANNI FONTAINE:** *Migwetch.* I'm Nahanni
4 Fontaine, and I'm here just to support all of the families
5 that are here today. *Migwetch.*

6 **MS. ANGIE HUTCHINSON:** I'm Angie, and I'm
7 also here as a support for the families.

8 **MS. PATTY:** Hi, my name is Patty. I'm here
9 to support my cousin. Myrna Letandre was my first cousin,
10 and I'm also here for the McPherson family.

11 **REGIONAL CHIEF KEVIN HART:** My name is Kevin,
12 and I'm here to support the families here. They are an
13 extension of our ceremony and our sun dance family, so
14 that's why I'm here.

15 **MS. CORALEE MCPHERSON:** Hello. My name is
16 Coralee McPherson, and I'm just here to support my family,
17 my mom beside me here, my auntie, my grandparents, my uncle,
18 and this is my Auntie Jenn who we are going to share our
19 story on. *Migwetch.*

20 **MS THELMA MORRISSEAU:** Bonjour. Thelma
21 Morrissette. I'm here to support Gerri and her family.
22 *Migwetch.*

23 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. So, for
24 the purpose of proceeding today, and normally I don't like
25 to talk too much. I'd rather just let the families share

1 their stories, but in working with the families, it was
2 decided the approach they want to take in order to share
3 their stories. And so, I'm just going to give you a really
4 brief overview on what that looks like.

5 And so, starting will be Betty, and she is
6 going to be talking about the murder of her sister, Jennifer
7 Johnston, Jennifer Glenna Johnston. And then we're actually
8 going to talk to Elora and Lorna about the murder of Myrna
9 Letandre. And then we're going to be having Kim and Gerri
10 and Betty as well speak a little bit about the murder of
11 Jennifer McPherson.

12 And so, with that, I would actually just like
13 to hand the mic to Betty, because I understand she's
14 prepared some comments on her sister.

15 **MS. BETTY ROURKE:** My sister was murdered in
16 1980. So, being 37 years ago, it took me three weeks to
17 prepare and to re-live my sister's life right from when she
18 was born, and I want to read it, because I won't remember
19 anything. So, I'm sad today. This is my sister's story.

20 My little sister Jennifer. My little
21 sisters, Jennifer and Jeannette, were twins. They were born
22 when I was nine years old. Jennifer's twin sister,
23 Jeannette, died from pneumonia at nine months. Jennifer
24 also became ill with pneumonia after Jeannette died. She
25 spent a year in the hospital. Our mom was working, so my

1 elder sister Violet and I helped care for her. Violet
2 remembers -- I just spoke to my sister Violet a couple of
3 days ago. She asked me to make sure that I tell this. So,
4 my sister Violet remembers taking our little sister to the
5 park. My little sister would sometimes look up in the sky
6 and say, "Look, my sister is an angel. I can see her flying
7 around."

8 Through the years, our relationship grew
9 stronger. We had such fun together. She was not only my
10 little sister but my best friend, and she became like my
11 first child, my daughter. We shared many things together.
12 She shared a lot of things with me, including her loneliness
13 for her twin. She had a desire to always buy the same kind
14 of top but in a different colour.

15 About six months before she died, I heard her
16 crying uncontrollably. I tried to console her, but she said
17 that I wouldn't understand because she didn't understand
18 either. This is our young life. We lived in a Métis
19 community. As far back as I can remember, we lived in fear
20 of our oldest brother. When he drank, he would come home
21 and abuse our dad. My mother would take us out in the
22 bushes to hide and protect us.

23 One night, before mom could get us out of the
24 house, my brother came by. He went towards the bed. Our
25 mom and dad and the twins were laying. He threw a punch,

1 and dad moved out of the way. My brother almost hit baby
2 Jeannette. She was already ill, but mom bundled her up, and
3 Jennifer as well, and all of us. She took us out in the
4 colder winter night. My sister and I, we were talking on
5 the phone, I told you a couple of days ago, and we both
6 agreed. We think this is when our sister Jeannette caught a
7 chill. She died shortly after.

8 Both my sister and I never forgave our
9 brother until I was 30 years old, because we believed that
10 he caused much pain, not only to my family, but had caused
11 my little sister Jennifer to carry an emptiness nothing
12 could heal. My sister was a beautiful soul. She was so
13 good to everyone.

14 I knew she was a Christian lady, a young
15 lady. She kept it to herself. It was her secret. It was
16 between her and God, but it showed on her beautiful,
17 glowing, smiling face. I was always told to take care of my
18 little sister, and I did, until the night that she was
19 murdered. Until this day, I feel responsible for her
20 horrible death, because it was me who asked her to come to
21 the bar with my best friend, because he was a diamond
22 jeweller and he came home for the weekend. I didn't want to
23 go out alone, so I asked my little sister to come with me.
24 And, even though she didn't feel like going out, she agreed
25 to come with me.

1 Everything happened so fast. I can't get
2 myself to remember. I only remember her kissing me
3 goodnight and telling me that she loved me, and that she was
4 going to come and move in with me and help me take care of
5 my little kids, as I was a single parent. After that, I
6 woke to the sound of my children screaming. I immediately
7 got out of bed and asked what was wrong. My little girls
8 were hysterical. I think it was Jennifer, my daughter, my
9 Jennifer, that tried to stop me from going up the stairs to
10 see if my sister was okay.

11 I just found out a few days ago that I asked
12 my daughter Kim to go, and I'm so sorry. I didn't know what
13 I did. I didn't know what was wrong with Jennifer, my
14 sister. Had I known, had I known what my daughter would
15 have seen, I wouldn't have ever asked her to go.

16 I think my daughter Jennifer tried to stop me
17 from going up the stairs to see if my sister was okay. I
18 think Jennifer clutched my back and said -- she yelled, "No,
19 mommy. Don't go up there. He'll hurt you too." But, I got
20 away and I went upstairs. I got to the second step from the
21 top and I turned the hallway light on to catch a glimpse of
22 my sister lying on the floor beside the bed. I didn't want
23 to see. I quickly came back downstairs to calm myself down,
24 and I told my children that auntie went to heaven and she
25 was an angel now. I then called the police and my friend

1 that we went out with. We were all taken to the police
2 station and stayed there for hours. Later, my friend picked
3 us up and took us to his place where we stayed until I could
4 face my parents. I think a day or two.

5 There was nowhere else to go. We were all
6 traumatized and my main concern was for my children. I
7 tried to keep myself together, but I know that now I was
8 mess. I had to send my daughter Jennifer to stay with her
9 father, as she was the most traumatized and looked as if she
10 was getting worse by the hour.

11 After the funeral, my sister and I had to
12 clean our sister Jennifer's room. When we were gathering
13 her belongings, we heard her voice as clear as I'm speaking
14 to you now. She said, "Vi." My sister and I were both
15 startled. We looked at each other. I could see the fear on
16 my elder sister's face and I tried to calm her down. I
17 reminded her that Jennifer loved us, that she wouldn't want
18 us to be afraid.

19 That day, we found many things our sister
20 left behind. In a tiny closet space, she had written,
21 "Peace to whomever reads this and may God be with you
22 always." Violet found her personal diary. In it, Jennifer
23 had left the entire family messages. I quickly copied a few
24 pages before mother, with instructions from my father, had
25 to lock and bury it. On the front page, my sister Jennifer

1 wrote her twin sister's name, Jeannette Johnston, May the
2 13th, 1960 to February 14th, 1961. Below that, she wrote
3 "Vi, Betty and kids, I love you all dearly. For all of the
4 dumb things I did, please forgive me. All of you. This
5 goes for all my brothers and sisters. I love you all."

6 She continued writing, "A rose will bloom.
7 Mom and dad, if I should suddenly die, I want you to know
8 that I always had a deep love that no one could ever take
9 away. I loved you both with all my heart and soul, and
10 there is no one in this world to take your place. Love your
11 darling, Jenn."

12 Shortly after the funeral, my father called
13 all the family together. He asked us all to forgive the man
14 that murdered our sister in order that we may have peace and
15 love in our lives, and not to hold his family responsible.

16 My mother must have felt like her heart was
17 ripped from her. She became even more cold towards me than
18 she usually was. One day, I asked her how she felt about
19 me. She quickly responded, "I hate you." Of course that
20 hurt, but the truth was I hated myself as well. I was also
21 told by nephew just a few years ago, "I wish it was you that
22 died, that was killed, auntie, not Auntie Jenn."

23 I often wonder why it wasn't me. I was much
24 closer for the man to kill. He just had to open the door.
25 But, instead, he killed my little sister. I re-live this

1 ordeal over and over. I've always been a light sleeper, but
2 I didn't hear anything except my children.

3 I suffered a breakdown when I was 23 years
4 old. For two years, I was hopeless. After the murder of my
5 sister, I started feeling the same symptoms I had five years
6 earlier. There was no one or nowhere to go for support or
7 any kind of help, especially not my parents. I tried to see
8 a psychiatrist, but he only fed me pills, which made me feel
9 worse. I did what I did with the first breakdown. I
10 prayed, went to church and concentrated on my children.

11 Today, I still struggle with my mental
12 health. I keep close to home as I suffer from anxiety. As
13 for my poor abused father, he died two years after his baby
14 was murdered. He never recovered from her death. She was
15 his pride and joy. My little sister worked at the CNIB
16 factory for four years. She joyfully helped my parents
17 financially. Dad would go outside and watch for his girl
18 every day at 5:00 Monday to Friday, and I do believe he died
19 from a broken heart.

20 My recommendations and how I feel. The man
21 that murdered my sister was previously incarcerated for an
22 assault on a woman. Had I known that, I would never, ever
23 let him in my home. He was released to a halfway house. I
24 don't understand why people that murder and assault others
25 get off with a slap on the wrist, but if anyone gets

1 arrested for drugs or theft, they get years in prison. As I
2 see, an Indigenous life taken means nothing to the justice
3 system. I always remember there's a child, and I still hear
4 it, the saying, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian."

5 I believe if the system had kept Jeffrey
6 Murdoch (phon), a man that murdered my sister, locked up
7 where he belonged, my sister would still be alive and be
8 with us here today.

9 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you, Betty, for
10 sharing that. I just wanted to check in with Kim or Gerri
11 to see if you wanted to add anything, if you wanted to talk
12 about the strengths and contributions of your aunt, or your
13 fond memories, or share anything with us?

14 **MS. KIM MCPHERSON:** I'll say something about
15 my auntie, because I was the oldest and I have a pretty good
16 memory of the wonderful, beautiful woman she was. I just
17 wanted to share a happy memory that because of her, this is
18 what I do.

19 She used to love Avon. So, every time we go
20 to her bedroom, we would see all the collection that she had
21 from Avon. So, I buy Avon because and I think of her every
22 time I buy it. She was beautiful. She was kind, loving.
23 She didn't deserve what happened to her. She was creative.
24 She inspired us when we were younger to draw. I remember
25 the Grease movie. I love the Grease movie because of my

1 auntie.

2 But, that night when she was killed, I just
3 -- now that I'm older, I think of something was protecting
4 us girls and Pierre, because he could have killed us too,
5 you know? Gerri and Jennifer were sleeping with my auntie.
6 He could have killed them. Me and my brother were in the
7 next room right across the hallway, and I just remember my
8 auntie's screams. It was so scary. And, I remember my
9 little brother sleeping with me, and I held him close. I
10 held him close to me, and I held our ears together so he
11 wouldn't be scared.

12 And then we all ran downstairs, and my auntie
13 was laying there. And, mom, I was mad at you, but after
14 Friday, it's all good. It was really hard being nine years
15 old, seeing your auntie laying there moaning and saying,
16 "Auntie, are you okay?" And, she wouldn't get up. And, she
17 was bloody and it was horrible.

18 It impacted me as an adult not trusting men,
19 being scared. I try not to be bitter. I try to laugh a lot
20 and smile, but that's how she was, so I try to be like her,
21 even though she left at such a young age. She was my
22 favourite auntie. That's all I want to share.

23 **MS. GERRI PANGMAN:** I was just like maybe
24 five or six, and this man who took my auntie, he left me
25 forever a scar I'll never forget. I always remember my

1 auntie looking over the bed, and I see her all bloody on the
2 floor. And, I look around, and I look and I see him, his
3 image standing at the door, and I looked away and he was
4 gone. And then I looked back and my sister Jennifer is
5 screaming. This man, he left this mark on me. I see it
6 every day, and I was only like six, seven. I don't think
7 I'll ever, ever get rid of that.

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. I'm
9 actually going to ask Elora now some questions. Elora, can
10 you tell me about the strengths and the contributions of
11 Myrna, and can you tell us a little bit about Myrna, and
12 what you recall about Myrna?

13 **MS. ELORA SINCLAIR:** My Auntie Myrna was --
14 she was a humble, beautiful woman, and she loved each and
15 every single one of us. I was so small. Whenever I'd see
16 her, she'd always shoot me a couple of bucks and be, like,
17 "Here you go. Go buy yourself something."

18 She was always so generous with us, and I
19 wish my mother was here with me, because she can do more
20 justice to describe what kind of woman she was. My Auntie
21 Patty is here with me too, and I want her to say a couple of
22 things regarding my auntie.

23 **LORNA'S AUNTIE PATTY:** Hi. My cousin Myrna,
24 we grew up as sisters. We both lost our fathers in the same
25 month and same year and because of that, we were raised by

1 my grandparents. I was just sharing upstairs with the
2 statement taker how we used to spend a lot of time together.
3 Myrna used to dream of being a nurse. She left home at a
4 young age and that was what she aspired to be, was a nurse.

5 I was telling my son the other day about her
6 smile. You know, she had perfect teeth. She had perfect
7 teeth and when she smiled, you could see almost all of them.
8 Her nickname was Chick or Chicken. She got that name when
9 she was young, because somebody had bought -- somebody at
10 home bought chicken, and they didn't save her a piece, and
11 she got mad. And, she came and she looked in the bucket.
12 She threw it. "What? There's no more chicken?"

13 And, you know, little things like that even
14 now, my granny used to tease her. She used to call her Aunt
15 Jenima, because Myrna was all happy that we were going to
16 eat pancakes. And, we didn't have syrup before and we were
17 using jam, and Myrna got mad again. And, she said, "What?
18 No Aunt Jenima?" She was trying to say Aunt Jemima, you
19 know, but she read it wrong.

20 The little things like that. Even Myrna was
21 in an accident. She slipped and fell. At first, I guess
22 she had intended to take her life, but she changed her mind
23 and she decided she wanted to live, and she slipped and she
24 fell off the Slaw Rebchuk Bridge or Salter Bridge, and she
25 ended up shattering the bones in her feet, and the doctors

1 told her she would never walk again. But, we weren't having
2 any of that. You know, as she healed, she came home. I
3 remembered her, myself, and I remember my other cousins. It
4 was a large family of mostly girls in my family. And, she
5 would -- we placed her in a corner and just like a little
6 child learning to walk. We'd make her take steps towards us
7 and we told her, you're not staying in that chair. And, she
8 would, even two or three little steps. And, she walked.
9 She amazed the doctors. So, that says a lot about her
10 strength and her determination.

11 As my niece mentioned, she was a small, small
12 woman, a very frail woman, but you know, the looks, too,
13 would be deceiving, because she -- you know, if you got her
14 mad, you'd better be careful. She had a cane. I miss her.

15 My cousin Lorna, when Myrna went missing, she
16 approached the Winnipeg Police Service to search the room,
17 to search the house where Myrna last resided on Lorne
18 Avenue. But, her pleas fell on deaf ears, and she --
19 Winnipeg Police did go there, but they didn't do a thorough
20 search, and nothing was really done. And, it was mentioned
21 in the court when we faced the man that took our sister, had
22 Winnipeg Police Service did the follow through with the
23 concerns that we had, I'm sure Jennifer would have been
24 spared and would still be here. That's something that
25 really needs to be taken seriously, is when family members

1 come and voice their concerns, you know, that Winnipeg
2 Police Service or other governing agencies take those
3 concerns seriously.

4 I'll also make my recommendations, too.
5 People with mental health issues ought to be monitored. The
6 man that took my sister was on medications for
7 schizophrenia, but he wasn't taking them. It made him
8 violent. You know, also more supports for people with
9 mental health issues. We've got people battling depression.
10 You know, supports ought to be offered for them.

11 Now, my cousin Myrna was a really very gentle
12 soul with a fighter spirit. We miss her every day,
13 especially this time of year, because this is around the
14 time that she went missing. It's hard for us when the
15 leaves start to fall, because these memories come flooding
16 back. I don't think we'll ever heal, but it eases every
17 year. You know, thank you for taking time to listen to us,
18 and I encourage all of you that pray, you know, pray for
19 peace and justice for the families.

20 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Lorna, did you want
21 to add -- yes. Yes, okay.

22 **MS. LORNA SINCLAIR:** Hi, I'm Lorna Sinclair,
23 and Myrna Letandre was my sister. She was the oldest of
24 three of us. I had a middle sister named Carla. She passed
25 away. Like, it was 17. I felt me and Myrna were very

1 close, and she told me and talked to me every day. Not a
2 day would go by when she wouldn't call me, and she called me
3 a week before missing. I reported her missing. It was
4 October 7th, because that was (indiscernible).

5 When my sister said she was coming to visit
6 me within that week -- I had just moved and she said she
7 would come and visit me. And, she didn't show up, and I had
8 phoned where she last called me from, and she had given me
9 the address where she was at on Lorne Avenue. And, I had
10 phoned. I had phoned there and I had talked to Traigo on
11 the phone, and he told me that my sister had gone to B.C. or
12 Calgary, and that the last time he had seen her was that
13 Thursday, and I talked to her that last week Saturday.

14 And, I phoned my mom, and my mom never heard
15 from her, and I knew there was something wrong, because she
16 phoned my mom all the time, or my Uncle Gerald. And, when I
17 knew she didn't phone anyone in our family, I knew something
18 was really wrong, because she would never, ever go anywhere
19 and not tell me where she'd be.

20 And, what bothers me most is I contacted the
21 Winnipeg Police, and they did not even go and check in on
22 her at the address. They had told me they had contacted
23 Traigo, talked to him, but they didn't bring him in or
24 anything for questioning. And then they came to me two
25 years later and had told me that they couldn't find him --

1 couldn't find my sister, and on three different occasions, I
2 say to you all that I went to that house. I went to look
3 for my sister. I went with my cousin, Desmond Anderson. He
4 can vouch for me. My friend, Clayton Carrier, they both
5 came with me. And, Traigo had said to us that he wouldn't
6 let us in. He said, "No, she's not here. She went to B.C.,
7 Calgary. I don't know where she is." And, I told him, "I
8 know you're lying, because my sister would never leave
9 without telling us or anybody in our family."

10 So, I know that the cops should have done
11 more. They should have took him in for questioning. I
12 stated this when we went to trial that more needs to be done
13 when our people go missing, our women go missing, that you
14 really have to try to investigate the people they were with,
15 because I know that Jennifer would have been spared her
16 life, and that bothers me a lot, and I hold a lot of guilt
17 inside of me because I didn't do more. I didn't. I tried
18 the best I could to contact the police, and they came to see
19 me two years after Myrna went missing. They had told me
20 that they couldn't find him and that he changed his name.

21 I just told them you have to do something.
22 You've got to find her. And, they said they searched all
23 over Canada. I know there was something wrong when she
24 didn't contact any of us, and I just want to be here in
25 support for the McPherson family, because I know that a lot

1 could have been done. That's all I've got to share.

2 **MS. MARY CRATE:** These girls that sit here
3 and talk about their beautiful sister, I took care of these
4 girls when they were small. I babysat them. I partially
5 raised this one here. I babysat these girls and watched
6 them grow up. Myrna, too. She was my baby, my baby girl,
7 and I didn't even know that she just disappeared into thin
8 air until one of the -- until Laurie, her sister, came and
9 told me that they couldn't find Myrna. And, it's really
10 hard not knowing where your child is, your cousin, you know?
11 It's hard when you don't know where our people are, when
12 they go missing.

13 I'm here to support my girls, try to be
14 strong for them, too. I thank you for listening to them
15 tell their story. And, the McPherson family, we support you
16 also. *Migwetch.*

17 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Elora, can I ask a
18 couple more questions? The family has been talking about
19 Traigo. Can you tell me who Traigo was?

20 **MS. ELORA SINCLAIR:** Traigo Andretti was the
21 man that brutally murdered my Auntie Myrna, so much so that
22 I had to go into ceremony to -- I had to go into ceremony to
23 -- I had to go into ceremony to cherish whatever little
24 memory I had of her, because that's not how I wanted to
25 remember. The way the media presented my auntie's murder

1 was in such gruesome detail. I'm sorry. That's not
2 something I wanted to remember her by. But, this man was a
3 vile, evil being, and had he been investigated thoroughly,
4 then he wouldn't have taken just from my family but from
5 theirs as well. I don't want to talk about him.

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** That's okay. Patty,
7 you had mentioned the trial. Can you tell us -- and you
8 don't have to go into great detail, but can you tell us a
9 little bit about what you recalled from the trial, if
10 anything?

11 **LORNA'S AUNTIE PATTY:** Traigo Andretti was
12 charged and tried originally in Vancouver with Jennifer
13 McPherson's murder. And then it was through that
14 investigation that he also confessed to murdering my cousin
15 Myrna.

16 During the trial process, he would basically
17 mock us. He'd come into the courtroom smirking, sneering.
18 He would plead guilty. Like, he would tell us he would
19 plead guilty, and then we get the court, and then the court
20 would tell us, "Well, he changed his testimony." Or, "He
21 changed his mind. He's not going to plead guilty." And,
22 we'd go back again, this time to a higher court. And,
23 again, the same thing.

24 Three different times we were told he was
25 going to plead guilty, and three different times when we got

1 there, we were told he changed his mind and that he's
2 pleading not guilty.

3 He chose to represent himself. He did not
4 have a lawyer present, although he was encouraged by the
5 prosecuting officer to take a lawyer. But, even us, you
6 know, as we went to court each time, there was no support
7 for us. There was -- you know, like I mentioned, there's a
8 large family of nieces and nephews, sisters. There's mostly
9 girls in our family, and every time we went to court, it was
10 just the cousins, like the female cousins in our family.

11 We went to court alone. There were no male
12 supports for us. I even mentioned that to AMC, when AMC
13 first contacted me asking if I would make recommendations,
14 and I did, and that was the first thing I said was, like,
15 you know, a representative, a male representative from the
16 Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs ought to be accompanying the
17 families so that we don't have to go through these things
18 alone. You know, no families that have to face this court
19 system should have to be alone. There should be supports
20 there for them. For me, that was one of the biggest things,
21 is having to do that with no male supports for us.

22 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can I ask just a
23 couple more questions? And, actually, anyone in the family
24 can answer it. For example, Lorna, you had mentioned the
25 last time that you had seen Myrna was October 5th, 2006.

1 **MS LORNA SINCLAIR:** Yes, my sister phoned me
2 October 7th, 2006. She phoned me, because I remember that
3 day, and she said that she was coming to visit me, because I
4 had just moved there. And, she had told me she was seeing
5 this guy Traigo now. At the time when I hear from the
6 police now that two years after she went missing, I find out
7 that his name was changed. So, he was already using this
8 name. And, from my understanding, when I talked to the
9 police, his real name was Dylan Grubb. I remember that.
10 And, my sister said she would come and see me within that
11 week.

12 So, when she didn't show up and then I phoned
13 him back and he answered and told me that she had just gone
14 to Calgary or B.C. and had left just like that, and he never
15 heard from her again, I knew that was very wrong. I knew
16 right away. And, I phoned my mom right away, and my mom was
17 a school teacher back home, and my mom passed in 2008. She
18 didn't even get to find out what happened to my sister.

19 She would phone me all the time, "Do you hear
20 from your sister? Did she call you?" And, I went through
21 this until 2013 when they contacted me in May. And, I held
22 a lot of anger towards the Winnipeg Police for not trying
23 harder because like I said, a lot of things could have been
24 done. You know, they didn't even seem to try, and they come
25 to see me two years after?

1 So, that's what I mean. They didn't listen
2 to me when I told them that was wrong. My sister wouldn't
3 do that, just go off somewhere and not contact any of us.

4 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And we heard Patty
5 say that the police only -- the discovery of Myrna's body
6 only occurred on the conviction of the murder for Jennifer
7 McPherson. And, that happened in what year, do you recall,
8 the trial and ---

9 **MS. LORNA SINCLAIR:** We went to trial in --
10 they told me in May 2013 they had discovered my sister's
11 body, and we went to trial a year later. That was in 2014.

12 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And, Elora can
13 mention this. The family had said, "We waited seven years.
14 We knew nothing for seven years. We thought she was missing
15 for seven years." It's in your heart that you knew she
16 wasn't, but...

17 **MS. LORNA SINCLAIR:** Yes. I even made plans
18 to go out and check out other places. I remember talking
19 with my cousin, Red Anderson, one time and she said, "Let's
20 go look for Myrna." Like, this was a few years after she
21 had gone missing. "Let's go to B.C. and look for Myrna."
22 And, I said, "Sure, let's go." Like, she was saying if
23 she's really out there, you know, we can find her.

24 And, I had really strong high hopes that I
25 would find her. I really thought, but I knew in my heart,

1 deep in my heart because we were so close and kept in
2 contact every day almost, that I knew in my heart, you know.
3 But, there was still hope there for me and my family. So, I
4 really stress that they should have done more. They should
5 have went and brought him in for questioning. They could
6 have gotten warrants. They could have done a lot more, and
7 it just fell on deaf ears.

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you for
9 sharing. We're going to have an opportunity on Tuesday as
10 well, when the families come back together, to really talk
11 about the impacts and the connections. But, what I'd like
12 to ask now is if I can ask both Kim and Gerri some questions
13 about Jennifer, and the tie between Jennifer and Traigo and
14 Myrna and Traigo, if that's okay? So, would either one of
15 you like to start with sharing a little bit about Jennifer's
16 strengths and contributions?

17 **MS. KIM MCPHERSON:** Our sister Jennifer was
18 named after our Auntie Jennifer, and she was just like my
19 Auntie Jennifer. She was beautiful, kind, gentle. She
20 would help you whenever she could. She was creative. She
21 loved the fine arts. She loved ballet. She loved nature;
22 nature loved her. We have a picture of her when she was out
23 in B.C. with a beautiful bird that was perched on her hand,
24 just like she was Snow White.

25 That was our beautiful sister. She was so

1 kind. She was very bossy. I don't want to speak for my
2 brother, but she was like his second mother. We were all
3 close to Jennifer in our way. She was my best friend
4 growing up. She was only a year younger than me, so she was
5 my shadow, always with me, probably until the teens when her
6 and Gerri started hanging out more. But, I did everything
7 with her, so I don't like to be alone when I go out, because
8 she was always there, you know, walking to school, going for
9 lunch. So, I don't like being alone. I always like being
10 around people when I do things.

11 She worked at Ka Ni Kanichihk with Lesley. I
12 was sad when she moved to B.C. I didn't want her to go. I
13 missed her a lot, and she'd come and visit us every now and
14 then. She helped us arrange pictures for the family. My
15 sons, they love her. It broke their heart when their auntie
16 was killed. My older son has a letter from her and I don't
17 even think he opened it yet. She would always send you
18 little notes on Facebook, and write you letters, always
19 blinged them up with sparkle and glitter.

20 And, Jennifer had a mental health illness all
21 her life, and supports for kids back then with mental health
22 and trauma, dealing with trauma, because of what happened
23 with our auntie. We were all traumatized from that,
24 including Jennifer. We had no supports growing up as kids,
25 so we functioned the best we could. But, I think Jennifer

1 was hit hardest the most.

2 I don't know. I think I wrote down some
3 notes. It's right here. Sorry.

4 My sister loved to help us decorate. She
5 loved doing little event planning. We always called her
6 when we needed help for family parties. She was fun. She
7 loved gymnastics. She was very athletic. She was amazing
8 at gymnastics, very athletic. Lots of friends. Oh, and
9 because we were so close, people always thought we were
10 twins, and they used to wonder who was the oldest, and I
11 would always say, "Oh, she's the oldest." But, yeah, she
12 was -- we did Cadets together. I miss her. I miss those
13 days. She loved Madonna, Bon Jovi, Lady Gaga. Oh, yeah,
14 she loved Lady Gaga. I played Bad Romance to her at one of
15 her visits, and she just played it on a loop over and over
16 and over again.

17 So, that's all she was. She was just -- she
18 met me in Vancouver when I was there for a conference so I
19 wouldn't be alone. I said, "Come meet me. I'll pay for
20 your ferry." And, she travelled all the way to come and see
21 me. I didn't know how far she travelled and when she told
22 me, I just -- wow, I was so honoured that she came all that
23 way to see me, and that was the last time I saw my sister.
24 I didn't know that was going to be the last time I was going
25 to say goodbye to her. But, it was a good goodbye. We

1 hugged each other. I just -- we fought like sisters do, but
2 I just loved her, and I know she loved me.

3 I don't know. Do you want to say anything,
4 Gerri?

5 **MS. GERRI PANGMAN:** My sister Jenn, she
6 always kept in touch with everybody. Even though she was
7 away in B.C., she shared her love like she was right beside
8 you. I know just weeks before she left us, she left us all
9 a song to listen to, and she insisted that we would listen
10 to it, and it was from Ellie Goulding, Anything Can Happen.
11 I mean, she sent that to everybody. And then the girl
12 singing looked like her daughter, and she was just
13 developing a relationship with her two kids, her two
14 daughters, and they were -- they were just so close to
15 spending time with her on the island, and it was just taken
16 from them. He just took her away, and they never got the
17 chance to spend time with their mom and bond like mothers
18 and daughters do.

19 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Do you mind if I ask
20 just a couple of questions, or did you want to add something
21 else? Okay. So, can you guys tell me a little bit about
22 why your sister moved out west and who she went out west
23 with?

24 **MS. KIM MCPHERSON:** Well, she met -- I don't
25 even know what his name was at the time. I think he went by

1 Dylan. And, they met really quickly. She practically moved
2 in with him and within a couple of months they were married;
3 right? They met online, and then all of a sudden -- she was
4 actually living with me for a while, because I was going
5 through a separation. No, I don't even know.

6 Anyway, she was with me for a while, and then
7 she met him, and then I barely seen her after that. Yes,
8 within a week she moved in with him, and then after they got
9 married, they moved to B.C. And, the island that they moved
10 to, actually, I have a sister-in-law that lives out there,
11 and they found each other there. And, Jennifer found some
12 odd jobs there and then they moved on to that fishing
13 resort.

14 And, before she left, that's when she was
15 working at Ka Ni Kanichihk, and she had a really good job
16 there. So, I was -- I didn't understand why she left. But,
17 you know, Jenn would do what she wanted to do, so we just
18 said okay. So, that's how they met, and that's how she
19 ended up in B.C.

20 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Yes. And so, just so
21 -- I know it should be clear, but just so it is clear, the
22 two names, the two male names, that's still the same
23 individual; right? Traigo is ---

24 **MS. KIM MCPHERSON:** Yes. Well, we found out
25 -- well, he changed -- actually, later in his relationship,

1 he changed his name back to Traigo. So, I was just -- kind
2 of thought that was weird. He was weird. Like, when we met
3 him, I felt this energy around him, and I didn't like him.
4 I thought he was creepy, and my sister could have, you know,
5 in my mind I'm, like, she could have did better, but that's
6 her decision; right? But, he just had this energy around
7 him that was creepy, you know? But, that's how my sister
8 was. She loved and was kind and people took advantage of
9 that because of her, the way she was. She was very
10 trusting, very loving.

11 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** If I may, can I ask
12 some questions? And, only go into the details you're
13 comfortable with. Can you please tell us a little bit about
14 when you -- you said her children were coming to see her,
15 and that's when you knew something was wrong. Can you give
16 us a little bit about how you found out what happened? And,
17 only with what you're comfortable.

18 **MS. KIM MCPHERSON:** Mom, did you want to do
19 that, or do you want us? Okay. So, Victoria and Jessica
20 are Jennifer's daughters. They were actually en route to go
21 and visit Jennifer, and they took the bus, the Greyhound or
22 took the bus out there. So, they were receiving texts, and
23 it was a really chaotic time, so I'll try and remember what
24 I can.

25 And then one day I get a call from my mother

1 frantic saying Jennifer is missing, and I'm like, what do
2 you mean? I was in denial thinking, no, because she
3 wouldn't leave her daughters stranded when she arrived
4 there. So, the girls got there and it was Traigo that met
5 them saying, "Your mom left. She went on a hike." Yeah, he
6 was giving different stories to my nieces. So, then,
7 Jessica's the oldest one, she goes, "You killed her, didn't
8 you? You killed her. You killed my mother." And, he said,
9 "No." And then she goes, "Well, where is she?" "Oh, well,
10 she went to Las Vegas."

11 And then he started telling all these really
12 inconsistent stories. So, they said, "We're not getting on
13 that boat." So, thank God they didn't, because who knows
14 what he would have did to them. I guess Jennifer's spirit
15 was there or something, but Jessica knew that something
16 terrible had happened to Jennifer, and it was just chaos
17 after that. We were in Winnipeg, and I mentioned my sister-
18 in-law, because she helped -- she was there, so she took
19 care of my nieces when she was out there, and she was
20 wonderful, and we felt horrible, because they went to B.C.
21 only to find out their mother was missing. And, we were
22 helpless because what do we do?

23 I called the RCMP, and I said who's in
24 charge? What's the district that would -- where my sister
25 is? And so, they hooked me up, and I said, "You better

1 investigate my sister, because I know the Pickton Report
2 just came out. I know that you guys, the RCMP, doesn't
3 investigate missing Aboriginal women. So, I'm going to
4 watch you. You better. You better investigate her, you
5 know?

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Gerri, you can share
7 too.

8 **MS. KIM MCPHERSON:** Yeah, it was such a crazy
9 time. There were so many things going on. There was --
10 because we -- how long did we know she was missing for, Mom,
11 a week? Two weeks? I don't even remember.

12 **MS. BETTY ROURKE:** I lost contact with my
13 daughter on April the 29th, and I immediately found Traigo's
14 mother, because she would comment -- she wasn't a friend of
15 mine on Facebook, but she would comment on my daughter
16 Jennifer's Facebook. So, I clicked on her name and I
17 messaged her. I think it was the next day, and I asked her
18 -- I have it all. It's all on my messenger. I said,
19 "Jude," I said, "Jennifer's missing. Help me find her."

20 So, she messaged me back within a few hours
21 or the next day. I can't remember. It's hard. She said,
22 "I'll go to the island." She said, "My son Jeff will pick
23 me up. We'll both go there, because Jennifer's not -- I
24 love Jennifer. Jennifer is not going to go another missing
25 woman." So, she went to the island and the RCMP didn't call

1 me. Jude called me. We were at my daughter Gerri's place,
2 and yes, Jude told me everything, what happened. And then
3 the RCMP started calling me after she did.

4 **MS. KIM MCPHERSON:** I do want to say, though,
5 once the -- the community loved Jennifer. Like, they loved
6 her. They helped with the search efforts with the RCMP.
7 They had boats out in the ocean looking for her.

8 Oh, yes. When she first went missing, we --
9 I work in government, and I was ironically working on ending
10 violence against Aboriginal women and girls, and when she
11 went missing, my mind went blank. And then I remembered a
12 toolkit, and I remember working on a submission at work to
13 fund it. So, I used it. To work in that area and then find
14 out your sister has gone missing, it's horrible.

15 Anyways, I used that toolkit, and then I told
16 the police, you know, do a poster for my sister to help find
17 her. And, when they did, they described her as Caucasian.
18 So, I called my mom and I said, "Mom, they might not look
19 for her if we said she was Aboriginal." So, we made a
20 decision to just leave it as Caucasian, because we thought
21 nobody would help in the search efforts and take it
22 seriously, because we know how society doesn't respond to
23 Aboriginal women that go missing. So, we made a conscious
24 decision to just leave it and not correct them.

25 One good thing that came out of it, though,

1 is that at the time, the Chief of the Assembly of First
2 Nations was Shawn Atleo. So, that was his traditional
3 territory, and he actually got the Regional Chief in B.C. to
4 help our family with the court system, with so much stuff,
5 right, Mom? I can't remember her name, but she worked very
6 closely with my mother to make sure -- Charlene Boleo
7 (phon).

8 So, she worked with my mother very closely to
9 help, just to make sure that my mother wasn't mistreated,
10 that they did the investigations properly. And, she hooked
11 us up with Victim Services to make sure that we got the
12 girls home, and that we got the supports that we were
13 needed.

14 But, we weren't in B.C. so we sought -- I
15 called Manitoba Victim Services and I said I'd like some
16 cultural trauma or culturally appropriate trauma
17 counselling, and they gave me one name, and that was
18 Medicine Bear. And, at the time, they had a trauma
19 counsellor, and to me, she saved my life during that time.
20 Colleen, she's so beautiful. And, all families, where their
21 loved ones go missing or when they find out what happened to
22 their loved ones, they need that, because it saved us, to
23 try and make sense of it all, just to function day-to-day.

24 But, I remember when my mom called to tell me
25 what happened to Jennifer and that they found her, and we

1 were trying to figure out why they kept asking us, "Did she
2 break her ankle? Did she" -- you know, all these things,
3 and I'm, like, "Why are they asking that? What did he do to
4 her?" Why are they asking, you know, if she broke her
5 ankle?

6 He is a horrible person, and he did to us
7 what he did to Myrna's family. He said, "I'll plead
8 guilty." "No, I'm not going to plead guilty." "I'm going
9 to plead guilty." He did that to us, too. So, he has a
10 pattern. He told us that Jennifer went to Las Vegas.
11 Jennifer went here. He said that to us, too. He did the
12 same thing to us.

13 The only good thing out of this is that
14 Myrna, you guys got closure, and I'm so sorry you had to
15 wait so long, because it's horrible. We only had to wait
16 two, three weeks to find out that our sister was murdered,
17 and you had to wait so long. I'm so sorry. And, that
18 shouldn't have happened.

19 And, it wasn't even the police that told us
20 that there was a connection to Myrna. It was a reporter who
21 phoned me asking does Dylan have a place on this street?
22 And, I'm like, "I don't know. Why are you asking me that?"
23 And, like, "Why did he kill somebody?" And, she said, "He's
24 connected to a Project Devote case." And, the Winnipeg
25 Police had the audacity to say that they cracked Myrna's

1 investigation, and it wasn't them; it was B.C. who did, in
2 my opinion. I was so hurt by that when they tried to take
3 credit for it.

4 This is so wrong on so many fronts and it's
5 -- I think we have enough love and strength in our family
6 that it hasn't destroyed us. I mean, no family is perfect;
7 right? But, me and Gerri were never that close before this,
8 but now we're quite close. I just feel sick in my stomach,
9 you know? And, to think that this could have been
10 prevented, because had the Winnipeg Police done a better
11 investigation, I believe in my heart that my sister would be
12 alive.

13 I don't know. I sometimes wonder if he hurt
14 any other woman too that nobody just knows about, because he
15 was -- he was crazy, you know? And, I'm sorry you had to
16 wait for justice as long as you had to in the courts.
17 There's just so much. Even getting our sister's remains, we
18 had to wait until July to finally have a service for her
19 because of forensics and transporting her back. And, my
20 poor mom had to go pick up my sister's remains at the
21 airport. It was just crazy. Post office, eh? Post office.
22 My mom had to pick up my sister's remains at the post
23 office. You know? At the post office. Special delivery.
24 Like, that's horrible.

25 So, there's so many different levels that our

1 family -- we could tell you many stories. I can tell -- my
2 mother can share how the RCMP didn't communicate things with
3 her, like when Traigo, he was sentenced to 25 years for my
4 sister, plus three years for indignity to remains, you know?
5 They didn't even tell her they transported him to a psych
6 ward, or psychiatric facility, and we found out in the news
7 that he hung himself. When I heard that, I was, like, "Oh,
8 that's good." But, then it's, like, wait, well, that
9 doesn't bring my sister back.

10 So, it's just messed up, and there's so many
11 things that can be done better. There's so many things that
12 can be done to prevent this. It doesn't need to be this
13 way. And, as somebody -- I remember the family before us
14 saying that it doesn't matter if you're a parliamentarian,
15 it doesn't matter if you're just an average person. If
16 you're Indigenous, you're treated like you're Indigenous.
17 It doesn't matter what education you have.

18 But, for supports in Manitoba, when our
19 sister first went missing, we had Ka Ni Kanichihk, Medicine
20 Bear, thank God. But, I was trying to get help from other
21 organizations like Leaf (phon). At the time, they were
22 called Leaf. Nobody phoned me back. I called Assembly of
23 Manitoba Chiefs twice; nobody phoned me back. I mean, it's
24 much better now but at the time, we were really alone. We
25 were so alone, and when you're going through that chaotic,

1 traumatic time, it doesn't matter how smart you are. Your
2 brain doesn't work. You're in crisis. You can't think.

3 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, one of the things
4 that the families have agreed to is to spend another hearing
5 time actually unpacking and talking about some of the
6 impacts and interactions with the various agencies. And so,
7 for today, I was going to see if it's possible to put up the
8 memorial video of Jennifer McPherson? And, if it's okay
9 with the families, I think, you know, we watch the memorial
10 video, we come back Tuesday. I know this is very difficult
11 for you to share.

12 Yes, and tomorrow we'll focus on those
13 recommendations, because I know between you all, you have
14 many good recommendations, and I'm sure the Commissioner
15 will also make this comment, but just a sincere level of
16 thanks and gratitude for sharing your story, because it's
17 really important to understand the inter-connectedness.

18 And so, for today, I figured if we could
19 watch the memorial video? Because one of the things the
20 families would like to share tomorrow in their hearing is
21 the different ways we can commemorate. But, I did want to
22 ask Gerri or her daughter if they wanted to -- in terms of
23 making the contribution, if you wanted to say something
24 about that? Do you want to add to the basket?

25 **MS. KIM MCPHERSON:** We want to share this

1 Christmas ornament in memory of our sister, because while we
2 were waiting for our sister to come home and to say our
3 goodbye, me and Gerri were making collages of our sister's
4 pictures to prepare for the funeral. And, after it was
5 done, after the funeral was done, I'd go visit Gerri again,
6 and we'd be looking at each other, like, what do we do now?
7 Like, what do we do now? So, I was going to buy earrings
8 for my cousin, and then Gerri said, "Why are you buying
9 them? I can make them for you." And, I was, like, that's
10 right. You know how to bead.

11 So, she made me -- we bought a bunch of
12 supplies, and earrings, and we started making earrings, and
13 then our sister Jenn, because she was so creative, she did
14 lots and lots of -- lots of things. She made mandalas. She
15 blinged up everything. She sent us gifts she made of her
16 own. She made a Christmas tree made of tree branches. So,
17 I said to her one day, I said, "Why don't we make Christmas"
18 -- oh, she made this. That was her newest project just
19 before she passed, and I remember her asking me, "Kim, do
20 you want it?" And, I said, "You know what? Why don't you
21 give it to Mom? I think Mom would love it." And, that was
22 the last thing she made. That was the last thing she made.
23 So, I'm glad I suggested that.

24 But, in her memory, what me and Gerri do is
25 we make these Christmas ornaments, because that's what she

1 made when -- 12 years ago, 13 years ago. So, we make this
2 to honour our sister, and we made a little card just to --
3 so whenever anybody buys that, they know who she is. So, we
4 spread her memory around, because that reflected our sister,
5 and that's how we honour her.

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And so, if it's
7 possible, if we could get the memorial slide show? And,
8 that will conclude for today, unless you had any further
9 questions, as we will be meeting tomorrow as well.

10 We're good? I thought we were going to have
11 to ask for a technical break, but it may -- this is not it,
12 actually. Sorry, these are other pictures that we're going
13 to look at tomorrow. And so, if I could kindly ask just for
14 a 10-minute break so that we can -- the magic of technology,
15 even with really great technology guys, sometimes things
16 just don't jive. And, the AV team here has been wonderful,
17 but we just need a few minutes. So, if we could take just a
18 few minutes' break so we can get it up properly? And then
19 we can actually do that. So, Commissioner Audette, may I
20 actually ask for a 10-minute adjournment?

21 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yes.

22 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Okay, thank you. So,
23 if you can bear with us for 10 minutes, and when we return,
24 we'll watch the commemorative slide.

25 --- Upon recessing at 15:50

1 --- Upon resuming at 16:03

2 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** We're going to get
3 started again, so I'm going to give everyone a moment just
4 to sit down. And, actually, what's going to happen is this
5 slide presentation, it's going to be on the large screen
6 only. It's going to be on the large screen, is where we're
7 going to be able to watch it from. And, it's about 12, 13
8 minutes long, and it's prepared by the McPherson family in
9 commemoration and memory of Jennifer. And, that will
10 conclude this family's testimony for today, and they will be
11 testifying again tomorrow afternoon.

12 As I had mentioned earlier, because they
13 decided to join their hearings, the continuance of this
14 hearing will be tomorrow afternoon here at 3:15. So,
15 immediately following the video, we will be taking another
16 break, and it will be a 15-minute break. So, once the video
17 concludes, we will have a 15-minute break, so that we can
18 get ready for the second -- sorry, the last hearing of the
19 afternoon. And, the family is just taking a moment so they
20 can also watch the video, the memorial.

21 I'm going to ask Gerri one quick question.
22 Gerri, can you just please tell us about the music briefly
23 in this video, in this memorial?

24 **MS. GERRI PANGMAN:** Yes. You can see the
25 date, October 14th, 1971 to May 5th. May 5th is when they

1 found her, but her actual date was April 29. The last song
2 is the song that she went to everybody. The two beginning
3 songs, we just picked as a family, and then made sure that
4 the last song was shared, because that was the one she
5 shared to all of us before she left. Enjoy.

6 --- In Memory of Jennifer Dawn McPherson October video

7 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** We'll now be taking
8 -- my microphone dropped. We'll be taking a 15-minute
9 break, and we'll be setting up for the next hearing. Thank
10 you.

11 --- **Exhibits (code: P1P03P0102)**

12 **Exhibit 1:** Video "In Memory of Jennifer Dawn McPherson
13 October 14, 1971 - May 5, 2013" set to
14 Abba's "Dancing Queen"; duration 12 minutes
15 20 seconds. (Note: see October 17, 2017
16 transcript for subsequent testimony and
17 exhibits).

18 --- Upon recessing at 16:18

19 --- Upon resuming at 16:41

20 **Hearing # 3**

21 **Witness: Rachel Willan, Matthew Willan (Survivors)**

22 **Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette and Commissioner**

23 **Brian Eyolfson**

24 **Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe**

25 **Registrar: Bryan Zandberg**

1 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Commissioners, I
2 would like to introduce you to our next participants. And,
3 if I could just get everyone's attention, we're getting
4 started again. We're just about to begin.

5 So, Commissioners, if I may actually
6 introduce our next two individuals that will be sharing
7 their life story with us? And, if I could just give you a
8 little background? Their life story includes surviving
9 violence. Both of them have survived an immense amount of
10 violence, and as you will hear them talk, they're going to
11 talk about their relationship and how it was originally
12 volatile and included violence, and the type of work it's
13 taken for both of them to recover, to begin to heal, and to
14 work together so that they can actually find themselves in a
15 place where every day -- there are still days they struggle,
16 but every day, they have an opportunity to continue to grow
17 and learn.

18 And so, right beside me is Rachel Willan, and
19 her husband, Matthew Willan. I'm just going to ask Mr.
20 Registrar, Mr. Registrar, could you just give the truth
21 statement?

22 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Welcome this afternoon,
23 and good to meet you in the elevator. Do you both promise
24 to tell the truth of your story this afternoon to
25 Commissioners Eyolfson and Audette? Thank you very much.

1 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. So, what
2 we're going to do is we're actually going to start with
3 Rachel sharing a little bit about her story, and then we're
4 actually going to have Matthew share a little bit about his,
5 and then we're going to turn our attention to their
6 relationship, and then we're going to turn to
7 recommendations that they have and what they've learned from
8 their life experience. Would you like to introduce yourself
9 and talk a little?

10 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** My name is Rachel. I'm a
11 42-year-old mother of seven, and my home community is
12 originally from Duck Bay. I was raised throughout many
13 different homes, about 53 different placements; lock up
14 facilities, group homes, foster homes, pretty much just 53
15 different placements from an early age. I was apprehended
16 about 1978, roughly, 1977, given back. Back then it was
17 Children's Aid. I finally became a permanent ward around
18 1980, '79/'80 that I could remember.

19 During those early years, it was really
20 difficult. I witnessed some severe, severe violence from my
21 dad, and my biological dad also was a sexual offender. I
22 was the first daughter, I have an older brother, and my mom
23 had eight children, four boys and four girls, and six of
24 those are my biological dad's. Six of us are. And, he -- I
25 tended to be the one that got left behind quite often when

1 my mom would run from him, and he would always say, "You're
2 not taking Rachel. You're not taking my daughter."

3 So, back in the seventies, it took me to
4 become sober to understand why I had such hatred for my
5 mother, because I blamed her, and it wasn't until later on,
6 you know, over the course of the last 10, 11 years that I
7 actually realized that my mom didn't have many opportunities
8 or resources back in the seventies. So, that changed a lot
9 for me once I learned that.

10 All of us became permanent wards in 1980.
11 Actually, I should go back. My dad, between the age of two
12 and approximately maybe six years old, roughly, it could
13 have started earlier, but I started to remember at about age
14 two of the real graphic -- like, there was graphic content
15 of the abuse. And, it never actually -- I never made
16 mention to anybody until I was about 15, and I actually
17 mentioned it, and I confronted him over the phone during an
18 adult sentence and he hung up on me. It was kind of my
19 starting point doing a long sentence in 1999. And, I
20 thought, well, whatever. There's nothing I can do.

21 But, he did show up at our house in 2002, I
22 believe, and he spent about \$4,000. At that time, we had
23 two children, Matt and I, and he showed up to rectify, I
24 guess, his way of rectifying the situation. And, I never
25 really seen him again. I continued on really reckless. I

1 had a kid at 15. The person I had a kid with is -- my son
2 will be 27 on November 18th, and the person I had a kid with
3 was an actual sexual offender.

4 And, it was around this time when I had him,
5 I was given the ultimatum from my worker at the time. I had
6 many different workers, but I particularly remember one who
7 said, "If you want to have the baby in your life, you have
8 to take responsibility for Rachel and your child." So,
9 therefore, he did.

10 But, at that time, my son was about a month
11 old, and I left when he was about three months because I was
12 just a kid. I had just turned 16. And, I left the child
13 with him, and he -- I already had known -- I found out when
14 I was pregnant he was a sexual offender, and convicted, and
15 did spend time in prison. And, I found that right there, as
16 I sobered up, that I was failed as a child as well.

17 So, I knew that I had a lot of anger, and I
18 knew that I had a lot of hatred, and I know that that's a
19 really deep word, but that's the only word that I can
20 describe the way I was feeling throughout my early teen
21 years.

22 At the age of 10, 11, 12, I would run away
23 and I would actually go into the bars that are not sitting
24 on Main Street at any time. Like, right now, there are a
25 lot of the bars that are not there, and I would actually get

1 into the bars. And, at that time, I don't think I looked at
2 it as exploitation; I looked at it as partying. But,
3 essentially, I was being exploited. And, I noticed that
4 every man that I -- like, I have three previous kids other
5 than the four with Matt. They're much older men, and I
6 think I seeked out that for a reason, and when I think about
7 it, it was like something that I never had was a father.

8 So, my dad chose to stay away by his choice.
9 I always had my biological mother in my life, and she ended
10 up passing away in 2009, but she got to see the beginning of
11 my recovery. My recovery started April 23rd, 2007. That's
12 my sobriety date. And, before that, I had met Matt in 2002,
13 and -- 2001. Sorry. And, we actually met in a drug house,
14 and his first questions to me were, "Why are you here?"
15 And, I looked at him really dumbfounded and I said, "Well,
16 why are you here?" Because he was the seller and I was the
17 buyer, like, for drugs.

18 So, I sat and we sat and talked for a long
19 time, and I guess for him, being forced to sell drugs for
20 his dad, being a young man and having no money, was a way to
21 make money. So, we got to talking, not ever thinking that
22 anything would happen, and I would always ask, "When is this
23 guy coming on shift?" Because he actually treated -- there
24 was a different treating. It wasn't, "Get out. Go out. Go
25 make some money." It wasn't like that. It was, like,

1 "Here, are you hungry? I can buy some pizza", even though
2 it was a half-half situation, wrong but right, I looked at
3 it two different ways. If you needed to sleep, he would
4 actually let you sleep, although they were shacks, and made
5 sure that you had a rest so nobody bothered you. And then
6 when you got up, you were safe.

7 And, that was more than -- so we ended up
8 talking more, and I guess I never thought I would -- you
9 know, as he says today, "I never thought I would be with a
10 woman that was out there," but he can share his part of the
11 story once it comes to him.

12 We started off really volatile, and it was
13 like from day one. There was fighting, lots of fighting.
14 We are both pretty much the same. We fought because I got
15 pregnant with my oldest son, well, my fourth son, and our
16 first child together, Elijah, and the assaults were really,
17 really, like, bad. I fought back too, though. I was not --
18 I wasn't just one girl picked on. I was in there like you
19 couldn't imagine, too, because that's the only thing that I
20 knew, was to fight. And, when I did commit my crimes, as
21 I'm going to bring up on my criminal record, I thought it
22 was important because going back on my recovery, when I
23 sobered up, I always call it my second chance.

24 I went in front of Judge Umbervel (phon), and
25 I knew I was looking at possibly a 10-year sentence/time,

1 and it scared the shit out of me. Everybody always says,
2 "Oh, just plead out. Just plead out." And, I have this
3 different thinking of this is serious now. This is real.
4 I'm going to miss my kids. I don't know, and I had to
5 reflect on my life. I learned throughout the -- I did end
6 up taking accountability and I always have for my
7 convictions, and throughout that, I met with a probation
8 officer that's actually been part of my life for about 25
9 years. And, I requested from the Justice that I have nobody
10 but her, because I'm not going to listen to anybody else.

11 So, they always gave me her, and she breached
12 me. One time she breached me. Nine times in one month,
13 because I had the stipulation of not drinking or doing
14 drugs, and I said, "Well, when I get out, I'm going to go do
15 them anyways, so goodbye." And, I needed to learn that.

16 But, what saved me most often was the jail
17 sentences. I didn't learn much in jail, but what I did
18 learn is to live another day. And, right here, this picture
19 was me when I sobered up. This was like my turning point.
20 And, when I look at myself, I sometimes joke, because I need
21 to have humour in my life. Otherwise -- but that was where
22 I finally realized that my children are going to have a dead
23 mother. And, I said I had enough, enough fighting with
24 Welfare. It was just something to get on. Every one of
25 these were mug shots, and I -- those were given to me by my

1 probation officer before she retired.

2 And, this last time was my opportunity to
3 think about where I wanted to be in my life, and I thought
4 of everything I had been through, and seen people die beside
5 me, overdose beside me. I did some violent crimes, and it
6 wasn't until this last time that while I was in the *Gladue*
7 decision I met about 8 to 10 times, and it was kind of like
8 a mini-book, a bio on my life, and it wasn't until then that
9 we actually realized every single conviction that I have to
10 this day is against a male.

11 And, it was interesting, because I was, like,
12 oh, wow. And, it opened up my eyes to the anger that I
13 harboured, the feelings that I had towards men. And, I deal
14 with that today. When a man treats me with respect and
15 they're nice to me, I always think, like, what do you want?
16 I struggle with that a lot today, even in the front line
17 working. I think that somebody is trying to hit on me or is
18 looking at me inappropriately, and I struggle with that in
19 my heart, and I'm learning every day.

20 But, I'm grateful that I'm here. We share
21 four beautiful children. Our children were apprehended
22 September 6th, 2006. And, again, there was violence
23 involved, and I was let out on bail. I was arrested that
24 day that happened. We were both arrested. I was arrested
25 for having a gun on my property; he was arrested for beating

1 me up. So, both of us, and we both shared the house, but
2 because the children were under his name, I was told I could
3 not go back to that property. But, yet, he remained
4 incarcerated. So, that left me nowhere to go.

5 So, I broke the windows. They locked the
6 house up and I broke the windows, and I lived pretty
7 transient for a while, for about six months. Then when I
8 finally sobered up, I was 90 pounds when I got arrested,
9 because I did get out on bail, and a nurse signed me out.
10 She was a friend of mine at the time. I did everything in
11 my life to deny. I did anything that I could just to not
12 live or not feel.

13 And, when I finally was arrested, I had
14 racked up 23 charges, and the most -- the most serious
15 charge was tying up a man and I gave him 42 staples across
16 the top of his head. I didn't tie him up, but my part, I
17 hit him over the head with a bat, and I couldn't explain why
18 I did that, but I think it was -- to me, I feel that I was
19 so angry, and he was only giving me a ride.

20 The person I was going to get high with, and
21 that was just a ride, he was supposed to be giving me a
22 ride, but that's how that happened. And, I took
23 accountability for it, and I could never, ever express the
24 magnitude of the violence that I had. It was not small
25 violence coming from a woman. I was looking at murdering

1 somebody if I didn't get the help I did, and I give thanks
2 every day and gratitude for being where I am, despite how
3 much I fight. When I'm in an angry state, I say, you know,
4 I could just go back and do this and do that, but it's been
5 -- you know, I can count on the hours and the days right
6 now, and literally, that's the number one thing in my life,
7 is my recovery and my sobriety. The most important.

8 And, some people might look at me and think,
9 "Well, I thought your kids are." And, I said, "Oh, no,
10 because to me, if I don't have that, I don't have my kids.
11 I don't have my family. I don't have myself. I don't have
12 my life." So, each day I encounter, silently I am thankful,
13 and it's just a work in progress. It's constant. Constant.

14 You know what? As I was laying in bed last
15 night upstairs, I was thinking of my mom, and I was thinking
16 before she passed, I had her first-born grandson, and I had
17 her last daughter, and I remember praying, "Mom. Mom. Just
18 live. Just live," because we knew that she was going to
19 pass. She wanted to die at home, and I was praying that she
20 would be able to meet my little girl.

21 I called her Serenity, and she's not really
22 Serenity. She's eight years old, but I have, like, five
23 older boys and the two little daughters are last, and you'll
24 see them up there. She's a real little package deal. She
25 bosses all of her siblings around. And, I also had to

1 learn, you know, we gained custody of them, and it was
2 during that time when they were taken in September, I hadn't
3 seen them for a year. September 6th. I had not seen them
4 until the following December 2008, and that was the really
5 hard part because I fought Child Welfare.

6 I fought for a visit for 18 months in a
7 treatment facility. I resided in a Native Women's
8 Transition Centre and I got to see my children one hour.
9 One hour for 18 months -- one hour a month for 18 months.
10 And, I went to the agency, and I said, "You know what? I'm
11 tired. I'm tired of you guys not moving forward anymore."
12 And then they kept trying to send me away, and I said,
13 "Well, I'm not moving from this seat." And, they thought I
14 had a mental illness. And, I said, "I'm not moving until I
15 know that I can take one step forward. Give me another hour
16 a month." That's all I wanted. And, that is where I found
17 my voice, because I had to fight rigorously for my children.

18 It was during that time their dad visited
19 them 52 consecutive times, every single week, and that's
20 what held our children together and our family together, was
21 that while I was doing treatment, Matt visited them. I
22 can't thank him enough, because our children would have been
23 gone. And, we hear stories of neglect of them and not
24 eating, which is all too common in the child welfare system.

25 But, with that, we have our kids now. We're

1 teaching them the cultural. My little girl just went to her
2 first lodge -- she's eight -- two weeks ago and she came out
3 backwards. So, you know where she is; right? She came out
4 backwards, and she goes, "Finally. Freedom." And so, I
5 told her, I said, "You didn't say that when you were in my
6 belly."

7 But, she's -- teaching my children that
8 identity that I had lost, I didn't even know how to be a
9 woman. I acted like a man. That's what I acted like
10 because of the parties I've seen. I used to sleep under the
11 bed while strangers were giving her up in our own bed as
12 children. There would be complete strangers having sex, and
13 five of us were huddled under the bed, and it was awful.
14 And, I try now in my recovery to focus on a positive.

15 You know, I have my days where I'm up and
16 down and all around, and I'm really -- I get really
17 political to the vulnerable people and us women, because
18 when we talk about reconciliation, I never heard the word of
19 that. You know, and colonization. Those two words I never
20 heard until I sobered up.

21 And, the very first person I heard it from
22 was from Belinda. I was sitting in an AA meeting and I
23 thought, oh my God, this is not even for me. But, I thought
24 that way because I rebelled. That was the only thing I
25 knew. But, her story touched my heart and it talked about

1 violence. And, I cannot believe she's been sober for 40 --
2 older than me. So, I was just stunned. I was just looking
3 there and I couldn't imagine that, that somebody is sober
4 for that long; right? Because that's all I've known.

5 So, I was really floored at that and I
6 thought, wow. And, as I heard her more and got out into the
7 community, it gave me the strength to say, hey, you know
8 what? I can do this. And, it just kept happening and
9 happening.

10 I tried to shut a lot of my trauma to the
11 past, even though I had been sober for about two, three
12 years, and finally, it comes to a point that I needed to
13 deal with it. And, my way of dealing with it is running
14 around giving myself to others, and I started to burn out a
15 bit. A lot, actually. And, come home, and instead of
16 saying hi to my son, "What the hell are you doing?"

17 So, I needed to realize that I had to undo a
18 lot of behaviours, actions, and just change myself as a
19 human being. And, even today I'm learning that. I'm
20 learning a lot. We just -- Child Welfare, I can honestly
21 say that, unfortunately, I do some work with Child Welfare,
22 but I can honestly say that I love what I do. Some of it is
23 action therapy, and I have a day job. I work with the
24 vulnerable people in the community, men and women.

25 Prior to that, I was working with displaced

1 women, and I had a problem with upper management. I have a
2 problem with that. I don't know what it is. Colonialism, I
3 guess. I'll be honest. And, things didn't sit well. And,
4 I'm a very honest, truthful woman. I was able to do some
5 work with Child Welfare, although I can admittedly say that
6 I do carry a healthy distaste, just because we're not where
7 we want to be when it comes to child welfare. And, I
8 contribute a lot of my pain to that system.

9 And, when we talk about that system, I think
10 that I had to fight to have my niece. When you look at my
11 criminal records, it's horrendous, and it's actually, like,
12 they're V01 charges. That will never give me the
13 opportunity to perhaps -- you know, that will go into the
14 recommendations, but when you look at that, you literally
15 get scared away. But, when you meet me, I have a heart of
16 gold. I really do. And, I think it's unfair that our child
17 welfare system takes that away from families, grandmothers,
18 uncles, nieces. This was my niece.

19 Over the last 10 years, some of that is
20 changing. There's a lot of work to be done. But, at the
21 same time, I feel that just recently, there's a family I've
22 been working with, 9.5 years. Her kids were taken in my
23 first three months of my recovery -- no, about the seventh,
24 eighth month of recovery, and I've stuck by this woman all
25 the way until now. Just Tuesday they rescinded her order.

1 What happened was she had a family visit,
2 March 24th. It was during that visit the little boy exposed
3 to his mom -- no, it was the prior visit, actually,
4 February. Over the phone, I heard a disclosure, and I was
5 like -- so as a public person of the community, I went into
6 the agency and I said, "Look, this little boy, this is what
7 he said", and I did it in an email and I also went in. That
8 was disregarded. So, then, I said okay.

9 On her family visit, they wanted to take them
10 back into the home. Because it's in Winnipeg jurisdiction,
11 and I did go back and grab -- like, I took some child
12 welfare courses. It was during that time, April 1st, they
13 wanted to take the children back to the home and the
14 children were in crises in a hotel, and I said, "Well, you
15 can't do that."

16 They brought in an investigator from The Pas,
17 which happens to be their cousin, and I said, "No. This is
18 unacceptable." I said, "You cannot do this." Under
19 jurisdiction, ANCR needs to be the investigators, not
20 somebody from The Pas." I said no. And, I got served with
21 a Section 52 and I said, "Well, whatever. It's a paper.
22 I'm not going to let this go away." A Section 52 is where
23 I'm interfering with a family, I'm not following through
24 with the plans, and to me, that wasn't the case.

25 During the hotel visit, Winnipeg Police were

1 called. I was employed at the time at the (indiscernible)
2 Clinic, and even then, they didn't know that it's a public
3 duty and obligation as a public person in this country to
4 report child abuse, whether you're at work or at home.
5 Anywhere you are, that's our duty. So, they didn't know
6 that.

7 So, I got called into HR and I'm, like, no.
8 So, then, he was busy texting me from the online, "Look it.
9 Show them this. Show them this." So, they were shocked.
10 So, I was in hot water all over the place and I thought,
11 okay, I'm not going to shut up here. No way. No way. And
12 so, I kept going. And so, I went to the authority. They
13 kind of disregarded some of it, you know, and they were
14 under administration again, too.

15 During the hotel visit, I had the worker come
16 up and the supervisor, and she yelled in my face in the
17 lobby because I was sitting in the public lobby. She goes,
18 you cannot be here, and I said, "I'm sitting right here.
19 This is a public space. You're not telling me to go." And,
20 the kids were crying. It was really frantic in his hotel.
21 It was really sad, and my point for being there was that
22 they could not put those children back in that home. There
23 were two sibling groups, four and four. They were split up.
24 Two were here, two were here, but it was a daughter and a
25 mother, and the mother was actually best friends with the

1 social worker. So, I said, "That's a conflict. She cannot
2 be a foster parent working for this agency." I said,
3 "That's unacceptable."

4 So, when they came in, they said, "Well,
5 where's your degree? Where's your degree?" And, I said to
6 her, "Well, I don't need a degree to know what child abuse
7 is. Get out of here," I said. And then I talked to the
8 Winnipeg Police. And, by chance he knew me, and I was like,
9 oh, well, this is -- you know? He knew me from good work,
10 though. He knew me from good work, not the other stuff.

11 So, I explained to him, and I was not
12 yelling, I said, "Look it, this is what's happening." So,
13 mom had a warrant for her arrest. She took off running
14 across the highway. She phoned him and then phoned me, and
15 I said, "No, no, no. You get back here and deal with this.
16 This is for your children." She came back, turned herself
17 in on one shoplifting charge. They released her. She took
18 a statement. She gave a statement of what her child said.

19 That was April 1st. October now, her
20 children are returned after 9.5 years. And, you know what?
21 They want to wash their hands clean. They're giving her all
22 the money she wants. No more supervisor. Nothing. Here's
23 your kids. Bang.

24 So, then, my question was, "Well, why were
25 they in care for 8.5 years anyway?" 9.5 years. I said,

1 "What was the purpose?" They switched workers, and I'm
2 going to be honest, I'm not -- I'm a very diverse woman and
3 I love the world we live in, even though sometimes it's
4 violent and mean, and it's getting evil with the drugs. I
5 got an Indigenous -- she got a new worker. So, I looked at
6 the worker and I kind of got really -- brutally questioned
7 her, like, "So, what do you do? How long have you been
8 here?" And, blah, blah, blah. And, I was asking her, and I
9 wanted to know, and I told her about myself. And, I'm sure
10 she Googled me or figured me out or something. I don't
11 know.

12 And, pretty much every step of the way, "Look
13 it, how about we plan this? How about we plan that? How
14 about we do this?" And, I said, "No, you can't do this.
15 This is how you do it." And, now, we just recently moved
16 into a 9-bedroom house, mentoring this family the way things
17 should be, and it's thrown our children off a bit, because
18 now this is their territory; right? You know, like, their
19 home. So, now they have -- we have two families.

20 But, we explained to our children we're
21 helpers. We need to love this family, too. They never had
22 what we have. So, that's what we're doing as a family,
23 working with this family. So, that's a part of Child
24 Welfare that -- I love how they turned it around, but
25 there's women and there's families, and there's men. Most

1 often, our women are responsible for holding that family
2 unit. Well, you know what? I think our men's roles have
3 been stolen, and we have -- we didn't make our kids by
4 ourselves, so when we talk about that, most often, Child
5 Welfare excludes our men from that, and that's what's really
6 disturbing.

7 In this case, Matt got the three back while I
8 continued to stay in treatment. I worked on myself. We
9 lived in -- you know, it was so funny, because we got
10 married -- actually officially got married April 21st, 2010.
11 I tried to get my sobriety but I couldn't get it, and when
12 we got married, he went home with the other three kids and I
13 went home with our little daughter as per Child Welfare, and
14 I thought to myself, hmm. So, we went through living hell
15 with income tax. Well, they said you're married, why are
16 you living -- so we had to go through -- like, get audited.
17 It was just a nightmare, because we had to shame ourselves
18 and tell them, "Look, we're dealing with CFS. I have to
19 live here and he has to live there."

20 So, we went through all that, and finally I
21 got fed up and I said, okay, I threw out all my furniture,
22 and I said, okay. I phoned the worker. "I'm now moved in
23 now with my husband and I'm not moving back out now." And,
24 she didn't say nothing. So, that was the end of that, and
25 things just -- you know, I worked for five years. Leslie

1 knows where I worked. And, I know I needed to keep myself
2 busy, and I give a lot of my time to other women, and that's
3 what I did for five years. And then I faced some -- I just
4 faced something that I felt my heart was telling me to move
5 on, and I moved on.

6 And then I took a two-year course. I had
7 about a week to find out what I was going to do. I just
8 knew I was not supposed to be in this place anymore, so I
9 moved on. And, I took a two-year course in child welfare in
10 a First Nation CFS worker diploma and I thought, hmm, it was
11 pretty intense, and it brought out a lot of healing. I
12 didn't even know what double space meant. I was, like, huh?

13 So, when they're asking for 10 pages and I
14 was, like, holy man, I don't even know what to do there.
15 But, I learned. It's opened up my heart. In the next year
16 or so, I don't want to be a poor student, so I want to do my
17 PSW part-time, and that's where I want to see and show my
18 children the importance of education, but also, I know I
19 need to work. I know I need to give back to the community
20 that helped me, and I choose to stay in the core area.

21 And, my introvert husband here likes to stay
22 home, and more recently, he's opened up his wings and been
23 out in the community for the last few years, other than me
24 dragging him around. Now, he sees the realities of our
25 world and our vulnerable people.

1 He phoned me last week and said, "Oh my God,
2 my dear. There's a guy wearing a bikini on Main Street and
3 Higgins", and I said, "Oh really? Well, I see that every
4 day," and I hung up the phone. But, you know, there's lots
5 going on with mental health, drugs, and it's a real -- it
6 should not be happening. People are being turned away for
7 help. It shouldn't be happening.

8 But, I'm happy to be where I am today. I
9 won't take up too much more time. I'm just going to be
10 hitting my 11 years in recovery, and I can't even believe
11 that. And, I'm just going to turn it over to Matt.

12 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, Matthew, you're
13 going to get a word in edgewise now.

14 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** Sorry.

15 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** No, actually, it's
16 funny because when we met, they've been finishing each
17 other's sentences, so I was actually surprised at how quiet
18 you are. So, I want to ask you a couple of questions, but I
19 want you, much like Rachel, just to tell me a little bit
20 about your background, what you're comfortable sharing. If
21 you could share that with the Commissioners about your life,
22 and your life experience, and what's led you to where you
23 guys are at now?

24 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Okay. I'm a little bit
25 nervous because I've never spoken on quite this scale.

1 Like, I've spoken to schools, but the importance of this is
2 way different, you know, but the same.

3 Where do I start? You know, I'm going to
4 start when I was young. I grew up in central Winnipeg, the
5 core of the city, and half my life I grew up in Brokenhead,
6 Scanterbury, on the reserve. My time in the city wasn't
7 that great. I mean, I was -- from my earliest memories, it
8 was all abuse, you know? I would get beaten as a child,
9 slapped in the head, forced to kneel with my hands in the
10 air. My dad made me eat a bowl of dog shit, literally eat,
11 or "I'll beat you". I'd get locked in the cellar. Pitch
12 black. I'd be holding my little sister trying to ease her
13 pain. Or, if she was in trouble, I would say it was me so
14 that she wouldn't get hit.

15 But, it was all violence except my granny,
16 Arlene Spence, rest her soul, she would try -- she wanted to
17 adopt me. She just -- "Come out here. You come live with
18 me and my boy", you know? And, my Uncle John would teach me
19 how to hunt, fish, snare rabbits. He's somebody I still
20 look up to. I just -- I visited him the other day because
21 he lost his son, and we just went out hunting together.

22 He taught me discipline. I don't think I'd
23 be the same person I am today if I didn't have somebody to
24 look up to. So, anyways, that's where I came from when I
25 met Rachel. So, I felt like an outcast, like a caged

1 animal, you know what I mean? By the time I was 12, I was
2 already in MYC. As soon as I turned 12, boom, MYC
3 institution, and it just kept going: Headingley, Remand,
4 Milner Ridge, everywhere. Brandon.

5 And, when I had children with Rachel, it
6 changed me. It made me realize, you know, especially with
7 CFS and everything that was going on that I had to put my
8 kids first. I couldn't think of myself anymore. I had to
9 put her first, too. I wasn't very good at it. I'm not
10 going to say I was perfect off the bat. We went through so
11 many trials, tribulations. We were mean to each other, and
12 now we work together. We both work in the community service
13 field. We both work with young people. We both work with
14 adults, and we both work with our kids, too.

15 Like, it scares me when my little Métis
16 daughters, it scares me, man. Just last week, some clown
17 was -- in his forties -- added my daughter and was trying to
18 -- she's 12 years old and he's trying to video chat with my
19 daughter. I freaked out. I was so angry at that. What the
20 hell does some 40-something-year-old need to be talking to
21 my 12-year-old kid for on video?

22 So, it worries me. What is their future, you
23 know? I don't know.

24 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, I want to ask you
25 a question, because you guys have both been really honest

1 about the violence towards each other. And, we talked about
2 this, and I told you I was probably going to ask you a tough
3 question, and the tough question was, like, how did you
4 learn to stop, and why were you doing it in the first place?
5 The violence towards each other or the violence against her.

6 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Because it was all I
7 knew. It was all I grew up seeing. So, anytime there was a
8 problem, it was automatic. You go to violence, you know
9 what I mean? You don't discuss things. You don't think
10 things through. You just react. And, my children going
11 into care honestly scared the crap out of me, because I
12 didn't know who's watching my kids, how are they. I'd be
13 arguing with the foster parents about my kids' eating,
14 because they'd always be hungry every time I'd see them.
15 And, I'd always bring them big boxes of pizza or donuts or
16 anything, and I'd pull up in a big -- because I was working
17 driving truck. I somehow managed to get a Class 1 licence
18 in all of the chaos, and I'd be pulling up with a semi to
19 the CFS, you know? Thank God I don't drive truck anymore.
20 That was a boring job.

21 But, I would work for my kids and, you know,
22 I'd show up on -- I showed up on Christmas with my whole
23 minivan, right from the back seats all the way to the thing
24 right to the roof, seats out, full of presents. And, we
25 celebrated Christmas at Burger King. But, I was just glad

1 to do that for them, you know? And, all the while we stuck
2 together. We would always talk, even if she was in jail.
3 We just -- we had a common goal, you know? It just -- we
4 knew we had to change.

5 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And so, the reason to
6 change was important, but can you share some of the steps or
7 things you really had to learn or do to achieve change?

8 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** I had to listen to my
9 wife. I had to listen to the females in my life. I had
10 been sexually abused. I had been -- you know, and I just
11 didn't care. Self-reflection as well, just being able to
12 look at myself and say, "Well, why am I doing it this way?
13 Why am I doing it that way?" You know? Where did I go
14 wrong? And, just reflect. And, I think that -- and being
15 honest with myself, you know what I mean? Being honest with
16 myself was key.

17 I mean, I look back at who I was and I hate
18 that person, but I also love them. It's weird.

19 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, I heard Rachel
20 say a couple of times in her testimony to the Commissioners
21 how grateful she was that you stepped up to the plate, when
22 she was in custody or when she was in treatment, with the
23 kids. And, you both have said that, you know, you still --
24 you're not always each other's best friends, but what are
25 some of the things that you guys do to make sure that you

1 stay on a good path or that you're working in a good way?
2 Because I know she has 10 years' sobriety, but what are you
3 doing that makes it work? And, I know you probably have
4 some tough days, but ---

5 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Giving back.

6 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Giving back? Is that
7 what works for you too?

8 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** You know, I work with
9 this amazing man, Mitch Barbineau (phon). He's just such an
10 amazing person. We give back. We go do community things,
11 like got bannock and give to the community, help prepare
12 food for homeless people, and ceremony. We do that.
13 Belinda was so kind. She let us use her property for some
14 sweat lodge ceremonies, and we got to bring all the little
15 kids and have a little kid teaching day, and it was awesome.
16 All the kids were just so happy. Yes, just things like
17 that. Giving back, I would say, is most important.

18 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** That's great. What
19 are you guys doing this Wednesday?

20 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Oh, we're going to go
21 speak to a school, a whole school in Sioux Valley; right?

22 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** I believe so.

23 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Sioux Valley.

24 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** In Brandon, Sioux Valley,
25 yes. It's a three-person group here. I'm not going to

1 mention the other one. He's going to talk about the gangs
2 and childhood sexual abuse pertaining to boys, because it
3 does happen to boys and men. Abuse happens in all walks of
4 life, colours and race, whatever. It's there, and it's
5 really not talked about. So, that's what he's going to
6 share.

7 I'm going to go in and share about my life
8 and how drugs just nearly killed me, you know, and by the
9 grace of God and Creator, I was able to walk away not
10 infected with any disease. And, I believe that was for a
11 reason, because I've lost many friends from sickness. I've
12 lost many friends from murder, overdose, suicide. It can go
13 on, and I can almost -- you know, when I do see a picture of
14 women, and if there's 20 of them on there, I'll probably
15 know 15 of them.

16 Like, when I'm out in the community, I'm,
17 like, "Oh my God, I know this one, this one, this one," and
18 I'm like -- and I've lost this friend, this friend, this
19 friend. So, that's what I want to talk about as vulnerable
20 kids that are hitting high school, going from one reserve to
21 the city, because we know Brandon right now is under attack
22 with meth, and everybody knows that. So, is Selkirk,
23 Manitoba. Per capita, we look at the rates, the meth is
24 flying off the -- it's so accessible, and the children are
25 getting younger and younger. It's so common, and it's

1 everywhere. So, that's what I want to share. And, we have
2 another person that's going to go and talk about the human
3 trafficking and all that.

4 I don't know. There's something that I
5 didn't mention in my story in the beginning. If I could
6 just go back? He's deceased now, but I share -- not my
7 oldest son. I had another relationship. He is now
8 deceased, but I share two sons with him. They're 21 and 18,
9 and it was about a nine-year relationship, and most of it
10 was -- that's where I was trafficked, where I actually
11 learned and knew. I couldn't understand why he would wait
12 right here behind a tree and I have to stand right here.

13 I had one of my kids. I went into labour
14 when my water broke right on the corner of Pritchard and
15 (indiscernible), and he said, "Okay, I'm going to go get my
16 sister. Come on." Go to the hospital. I had my baby.
17 Within two hours, I was out of the hospital back on the
18 street corner. And, when I think about that -- that was the
19 first child I had with him in 1996.

20 My second one, thank God, he was born -- I
21 had him while I was incarcerated, and that's who trafficked
22 -- that's where I came in, was being trafficked constantly.
23 I would get beatings, sexual violence. He would do things
24 to me that I didn't want. I never really knew or heard of
25 the word trafficked or exploited at that time, so I didn't

1 really look at it as that. But, you know, God rest his
2 soul, I've seen him a few times when I was in treatment, and
3 my nickname for him was Ugly. And, I'd always say, "Hi
4 Ugly", and he would laugh. But, you know, we shared two
5 kids.

6 He ended up catching HIV when I left. I left
7 him in 2000. I left him during the remainder of my two-year
8 sentence and I said to myself, holy. I was seeing Dr.
9 Gluberman (phon), and he was a psychologist in the jail, and
10 I just wanted to fall asleep faster and didn't want to deal
11 with things. So, I went to talk to him, and it was a way to
12 get out of my cell. So, I'd go talk to this doctor and tell
13 him whatever he -- you know.

14 And, I talked to my mom, too, and I said, you
15 know, I was seriously -- this is me sober. I was thinking
16 of ways to kill him while I was sitting in prison, and I
17 thought, hmm, this is not normal. So, I would talk to who's
18 now the -- she runs the correction, Margo Lee. At that
19 time, she was my case worker. I would talk to Margo and I
20 said, "You know, I feel like when I get out I'm going to
21 kill this guy." And, that's how I felt. And, I told her
22 that.

23 So, I talked to my mom, and my mom said, "You
24 know, you shouldn't go back to him. He's not good." And,
25 that's what my mom said to me. "You shouldn't go back."

1 And, I was so tired of everything. I couldn't understand
2 that I was supposed to be loved. I bore two children, but
3 why am I being sent out there and literally forced to do
4 things? And, if I didn't come back, I would get a wicked
5 beating.

6 I ended up stabbing him three times and
7 being charged three times, because he was sending me out.
8 So, it just manifested. And, I finally -- just when I got
9 -- finished my two-year sentence, I never went back to him
10 and that's when I met Matt by chance. And, Matt's never
11 been a drug user ---

12 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** He wouldn't come around
13 when...

14 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** So ---

15 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** For that.

16 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** --- he's never been
17 exposed to, like, hard drugs, you know, or other than maybe
18 a puff of pot, but Matt liked to drink at that time, and I
19 was the one that was exposed to all that and -- so that's
20 where the change started to come, the volatile behaviours,
21 because that's all I knew, was what this one -- you know?
22 Yes, he ended up getting sick. Right after I left him, he
23 caught HIV and then liver disease, and then he was gone
24 within about 10 years.

25 So, you know, I'm thankful that I went

1 through what I went through, but I have to say it's just a
2 living hell and -- it truly was. And, if I had to walk
3 through that storm, then I'm glad that I'm alive. That's
4 one thing. Sorry for hogging the mic.

5 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** That's okay.

6 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** I have to mention him,
7 that's why. I forgot. Sorry, I (indiscernible).

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, can I ask you
9 guys a couple of questions about some of the
10 recommendations or ideas you have, that you want to share
11 with the Commissioners? I mean, I know you've already been
12 talking about the child welfare system generally, but do
13 you guys have ideas that you would like to share
14 specifically about ways to improve, or issues that you have
15 with kids in care that the Commission should be looking at
16 or thinking about?

17 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** I'm just going to move
18 from that right now, but I do have a recommendation. One
19 of them is, more recently, we know that -- we are aware
20 that we have -- there's lots of racism. Nobody needs to --
21 you know? And, we know that. And, more recently, we had a
22 Winnipeg police officer hit a young man. And, late at home
23 -- I used to be in a lock up facility with his mom when we
24 were 10 and 11 because we were chronic runaways. His mom
25 was one of my friends.

1 And, more recently, after that happened, I
2 was laying in bed and I said -- and I was thinking of the
3 people that actually witnessed that and I was like, oh, my
4 God. Because apparently, he flew 15 feet in the air and
5 then he landed upside down on his head. And, I couldn't
6 imagine witnessing that, not to mention everything I've
7 witnessed. And, you know, there would be one person out of
8 100, just as an example, that has the ability to fight, and
9 to move and to be where I am.

10 Not everybody is strong, not everybody has a
11 voice, not everybody is in the same spot. And, I see it
12 every day. I'm the 1 percent that, like -- that actually
13 succeeded treatment centre. Like, it took me 25 treatment
14 centres to succeed, to be able to be where I am today. I
15 wouldn't call it succeed, but to be where I am.

16 And, one of the recommendations I think is
17 that it's unfair that if you have criminal offenses, you're
18 not entitled to victim services. Those people, what they
19 seen that night, are never going to ever be the same.
20 Never. And, when they have to go to a welfare office
21 because they're so mental health and they get turned away
22 from -- you know, there should be social workers attached
23 to each welfare worker, and they should be sitting in there
24 and saying, "What kind of life did you have? How was your
25 life? Why is it that you're applying for" -- and I

1 literally told them, I said, "Hey, I didn't come here to
2 argue with a bunch of bitches here", I said, "for \$200.00."
3 I said, "I don't give a shit." I said, "I'm not here for
4 that." I said, "I'm here to feed my family."

5 When I was going to school -- I'm sorry for
6 the swearing, but that's not what we want. We don't want
7 to argue for 200 stinking dollars while I was putting
8 myself through school. I wanted to overcome those
9 barriers. I paid my hydro bill and our -- we paid our
10 bills; right? All I asked -- but no, all ---

11 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** No, we didn't.

12 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** What I'm trying to get
13 to is that -- well, I asked EIA, "Okay, while I'm going
14 through school, I'm getting this much money, but can you
15 pay my hydro and my water? Because this is lots." They
16 said no.

17 It wasn't till we moved to the Gimli area,
18 we had this Indigenous worker, and she works for West
19 region now. She says to me, "Why wouldn't they pay your
20 utilities when you were going to school?" And, I said,
21 "Because they told me no." She reimbursed us \$5,000 for
22 the one year that we overpaid. And then she went to go get
23 all the water bills now. She reimbursed everything. She
24 said it was so unfair that we had to struggle like that
25 while we were putting our self through -- and mine's only a

1 two-year college degree. I couldn't imagine university.

2 So, it's unfair when -- you know, my point
3 -- my recommendation is that when you have criminal record,
4 you shouldn't -- you should be able to access victim
5 services, because we're actually -- I wouldn't call it a
6 victim our self, but that shouldn't even be in there.
7 That's a human rights complaint, because those people that
8 witness that and they witness everything else are never
9 going to be the same again. Never.

10 And, you know what makes it even more
11 demanding? Because it's a Winnipeg police officer that
12 just four hours ago -- he's very privileged to get off of
13 work and get paid now to sit at home and drink his sorrows
14 away while this family, these people are running around
15 Main Street trying to cope and doing whatever they can to
16 not think about what they've seen that day and that's just
17 one of them. And, I can go on and on about many tragedies
18 that I see, because my employment is right in that radius
19 of the core. That's unfair. That's one of them.

20 Another one of them was that ---

21 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** How do you feel
22 about kids in care being kept in hotels?

23 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** Well, it's still
24 happening. I mean, they're saying it's not happening.
25 They just moved to the outskirts of the city. That's all

1 they did. We know that's happening. When it comes to the
2 child welfare. I feel that -- it's one thing -- just
3 because I know of the -- a lot of families are not healthy.
4 And, you know what? There needs to be more direct contact
5 with families, and instead, we're threatened to get our
6 hair pulled out or our pee taken. Now, if we go in with
7 that approach, we're never going to get anywhere because
8 you know damn well that it's going to be full of whatever
9 anyway. So, that needs to stop.

10 They can't be pulling on my hair. If they
11 try to pull out my hair, uh-uh, not happening. That is a
12 -- they cannot do that. If somebody can come forward and
13 say, you know what, yes, I used. Yes, I've been using
14 this. Child welfare should be taking a different approach.
15 Say, okay, what can we do to help you? They always talk
16 about prevention.

17 It's so easy for the Pallister government to
18 talk about prevention, but what kind of prevention is he
19 talking about? What does it look like to him? Holy, I
20 couldn't even imagine. He hasn't consulted with Indigenous
21 people. I've never seen him sit at the table and talk to
22 any Indigenous groups about that he could say that.

23 You know what? The real people who he
24 should be contacting with, God forbid he would step on Main
25 Street and talk to those people that are out there right

1 now, that don't have their children, that are out there
2 because they don't have their children. Those women are on
3 the corners because they don't have their children, not
4 given the opportunities. And, you know, when they do get a
5 visit, they go high, they get -- they get told, don't --
6 your visits are gone for 90 days. So, then, there's
7 another 90 days. We know suicide, overdoses, it's just
8 going to keep happening.

9 And, I have one more -- oh, another -- what?

10 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** As I say, poverty too.
11 Like, poverty breed -- like, if you live in poverty -- this
12 is my experience. If you live in poverty, you try to self-
13 medicate, you're trying to escape reality, so then the --
14 the thing is, is that it wasn't until I started to become
15 more successful that I was able to get education, you know
16 what I mean? To better myself. When I was young, there
17 was not even a hope of that. Not even a hope. If it
18 wasn't for her, I don't think that would have been possible
19 -- I don't know. It's hard to say.

20 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** A recommendation I
21 brought forward too, I think that -- for me, okay, I can
22 sit back as a woman and -- you know, Matt and I, we can
23 have employment, fine, you know, we'll survive. We can
24 keep doing what we're doing, or we can advance. When I
25 think of advancing, I'm thinking, oh, yes, you know, all

1 the hard work. I don't just think of just advancing, I
2 think of, oh, my God, no, it's going to take this, this and
3 this. I've thought about my future, I've thought about
4 where I want to go. We both have and we've talked about
5 it.

6 When it comes to criminal records, I feel
7 that, you know, Service Canada employs most people. Most
8 people. They're the biggest employers in Canada. But, do
9 you think there's going to be as many Indigenous people in
10 Service Canada? Probably not. Because of our criminal
11 records.

12 I think that -- you know, I hope that, you
13 know, at some point in my life, I get to go and have a nice
14 -- sit on some beach somewhere if the world is still
15 running, you know? I really hope I do. But, I can't go
16 anywhere as it stands because I have a criminal record.
17 And, under the new V01 charges, I feel that there should be
18 some sort of -- something put in place that gives people --
19 if they've demonstrated they've been out of trouble for,
20 you know, 10, 15 years or something, that they can have the
21 ability to get that wiped off.

22 And, you know what? That will push people
23 to move forward, because you know what? Then maybe I could
24 say, hey, I'm going to get a MSW, forget this, because it
25 gives you more opportunity to move forward. But, if we're

1 sitting and we're having no opportunities, it's just like
2 having no choices. You know, they say, oh, life's a
3 choice. And, I said, well, if you don't have -- not given
4 any choices, it's not a choice, so get out of here with
5 that.

6 But, that's how I feel about advancing and
7 education. And, education is so important. And, I show my
8 little ones and they fight with me. Oh, they'll do
9 anything to stay home. And, I tell them, no, no, you're
10 going, you're going, you know? And then I'm off to work
11 and I phone Matt, oh, my God, was the morning ever crazy.
12 And, we do that on a daily basis because we know we have
13 to. But, with this, I would probably already have applied
14 to school -- to go to university. I am going to. I'm not
15 going to say just because this hasn't happened I'm not
16 going to go, but I'm going to, but I just say that we need
17 to give people purpose.

18 We need purpose to move forward.
19 Education, there's not enough incentives for education
20 because, you know, I sure hope that my children, you know,
21 are looking after me well when I'm old. I said, if you
22 ever put me in a nursing home, they'll be sorry. Don't you
23 dare. I tell them all that. I'm pretty -- so -- you know,
24 I had a few more recommendations, but those two stuck out
25 to me, that I felt were really unfair.

1 And, I have one more thing I want to say,
2 that it's probably being streamed -- this is being
3 streamed. I worked for an employment -- exploited women
4 are a community in itself because we either get high
5 together, or we share together, or we survive together.
6 The same thing as the homeless community; they do the same
7 thing. So, however you want to shape us out to be in these
8 groups, that's what society has done.

9 But, more so recently, I worked for an
10 organization and it's the only one organization in
11 Manitoba, excuse me, that provides frontline services to
12 Indigenous -- like, to missing and murdered women -- like,
13 you know, frontline services for exploited women.

14 So, I worked there for a year, and I always
15 will hold my truth. I always will. And so, then I
16 thought, okay, I -- everything is a conflict. Constant
17 conflict. And, I said, everything is going to be a
18 conflict because I either did something with them, or did
19 this or did that. More so recently with my new job -- I
20 ended up resigning from there, with my new job. And, I
21 really love it. I thought I was stopping there for lunch
22 about maybe three weeks ago, four weeks ago.

23 And so, I went there and I was told, "You
24 have to leave." And, I said, "What?" The minute I walked
25 in, I had about 15 nice big hugs from the women. I was

1 like, oh, my god, blah, blah, blah, blah, you know? So, it
2 was nice. And, within 5 to 10 minutes, I was told I had to
3 leave, and I said, "Well, why?" And, they said, "You're
4 barred from here." And, I said, "Oh, in the 25 years of
5 this organization, I'm barred?" I said, "I've never once
6 been violent in a program that I looked up to for many,
7 many years, when I was in my dark times." I would never
8 show disrespect in the home as a participant nor as an
9 employee. I was never violent.

10 So, I could not understand what the barring
11 is for. So, you know -- and apparently, it's for the
12 safety of the home. And, I said, "Okay. You've got the
13 ambulance coming here every single drop-in day, you've got
14 people shooting up in the bathroom, and this is unsafe?
15 You've got chairs flying around, but you're worried about
16 me being safe", I said.

17 So, I'm contesting that. And, I told them I
18 was going to make mention of this at the Inquiry because
19 that's the only service -- what if one day I decide to fall
20 off the wagon -- which we don't decide, but God forbid
21 something happens in my life where something goes wrong and
22 I'm denied a frontline service? What we need here is more
23 than that one service. We need more -- we need a centre
24 that's open 24 hours that we can have access to.

25 I went through that thing -- I actually went

1 through -- I was telling my husband, I went there because I
2 just wanted to say hi because that's -- those girls were
3 part of my life for 25 years, so that's why I stopped in.
4 And, when I was told I couldn't be there, I found that
5 really wrong. So, I went to HR and I went up to the top,
6 and I said, "I'm not going away", I said, "I want to know
7 why." And, I think that Manitoba needs to ensure that
8 there's adequate service for our women 24 hours.

9 And, you know what? They need to start,
10 like, putting up more cameras, more safe spots. You know,
11 we're investing -- I mean, if I was to commit a robbery
12 right now, a federal offence, you can -- you can bet
13 they're going to throw me in the slammer and spend
14 thousands of dollars paying for that. Or if I open up
15 somebody's mail and I sign a fraud cheque, I'm going to be
16 doing a federal offence, so they're going to spend
17 thousands of dollars.

18 When it's coming to our women, that -- they
19 -- we need a facility in Manitoba. We do. We need one out
20 in the Interlake and one in the city other than the one
21 that's running right now, because their capacity is less
22 than 20, that's including the staff. It's a house; it's
23 not a centre. It's a house that only holds -- the capacity
24 is so much. It was just reopened because it was shut down
25 for many years. Now, if you've got five or eight staff

1 running it, that gives you 12 participants to come in.

2 Now, we do know we have more and more every
3 day and we need a huge facility that can accommodate our
4 women out there. And, you know what? Our men are going
5 through the same thing, trans, two spirit. Our men are
6 going through the exact same thing; their needs are not
7 been met. And, they always say, "Well, we can't mix youth
8 with -- we can't mix youth with adults." And, I said,
9 "Well, there's got to be something that they could do."
10 Like, it always has to be something, but something needs to
11 be done for the city here, because I'm sure if you were to
12 take a stroll with me in my car, you would be pretty
13 shocked. I could take you to some back lanes, you would be
14 horrified. Well, I'm sure -- you know? So...

15 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Or houses.

16 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** Where -- yes.

17 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Or houses, I said.

18 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** And, Indigenous survivor
19 led. Survivor led. You know what? There's no higher
20 degree than to know exactly what systems you have. You
21 know, when people ask me what I have, I said, "It don't
22 matter what I have, I have a heart of gold." I said, "You
23 don't even know, you know?" I take that to the heart and
24 -- everywhere I've been. I don't want to sit here and talk
25 in a negative way, but I know that there needs to be truth

1 -- always be truthful and I'm truthful.

2 When I turn into a monster in the morning,
3 he'll say, "You know, you shouldn't be like that." "Okay.
4 I know." But, I have to face everything here while I'm on
5 this earth, Mother Earth, because you know what? I don't
6 want to pay for nothing later. Heck no. So, I make sure I
7 have to take accountability while I'm here.

8 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** That's another thing
9 that we always do, is we keep open communication. Like, if
10 she sees I'm doing something wrong, she'll tell me right
11 away, and I do the same for her. And, we don't look at it
12 as, oh, you're just trying to pull out all of my flaws. We
13 look at it like -- like, we're trying to better each other,
14 you know? To edify. To edify each other. I think that's
15 the word I'm looking for.

16 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Okay. So, I've got
17 one more question. First of all, I want to say thank you
18 both for being so honest in sharing your lived experience.
19 I promised Rachel I was going to ask her about her tattoo,
20 so I would like to ask her to share about her tattoo, and
21 then the Commissioners may have some questions for you.

22 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** Yes. There's a picture
23 of my tattoo. Underneath the flower is just a scar that's
24 probably about that big. You can't really see it, but it
25 was opened this wide, it hit the insides of my muscle

1 tissue. And, I did this while I was in my first year of
2 recovery. I didn't even have to be on drugs or alcohol.

3 And, I was ashamed. When I went to the
4 hospital, I told them that I fell and I didn't want to be
5 looked at as some crazy woman, and I was already dealing
6 with CFS so -- but I covered it up with, "I've suffered,
7 I've learned, I've changed". I just know that I felt shame
8 every time I seen it, so I tried to fix it up and I -- if I
9 could think back now, I think, well, you know, I still
10 wouldn't have, but I would have.

11 So, I did that. And, when I think about
12 that day, I think of the beginning of my recovery, I didn't
13 know how to cope, I didn't know how to live sober other
14 than being institutionalized because I had spent so much
15 time inside that I would end up in a psych ward, I knew
16 that, if they took me from the jail. So, I was like, okay,
17 I'm not hurting myself here.

18 Out in the community is a whole entire
19 different -- it's different. So, I never realized the
20 severity of it until then and I did it over and over. So,
21 that's what I did, was by covering it up, and he was part
22 of that. He was sitting in the next room and I was having
23 a bad moment, and it just goes so fast, and my arm was
24 about that big, cut wide open, and it didn't even hurt,
25 that's the thing. I felt no pain.

1 And, my mom's response before she died, when
2 she seen this was, oh, my God, why are you doing that,
3 making your arms look ugly? But, I don't think my mom ever
4 healed from all the abuse that she took from my dad because
5 she was more worried about how my arm was going to look
6 than how I felt.

7 So, I know my mom didn't do a lot of healing
8 and I know that if we don't do a lot of forgiving, we're
9 going to turn dark right here. So, I thought about my mom
10 being at the age of 50 and I thought, okay, I don't want to
11 be there. So, I try and forgive, and sometimes it's
12 really, really hard and -- I don't want to die of
13 something, a sickness. But, I know one thing is that all
14 the marks I have and the stab wounds -- I have so many stab
15 wounds from men on my legs, and just scars. Each one
16 represents something and I really like this one because I
17 made it myself. I didn't do it myself because it hurt,
18 like, really bad, but that was symbolic for me that I
19 changed, you know? So...

20 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** You sure have. I
21 remember.

22 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** He's such a great man.
23 You know, he -- most often, I know that -- just the other
24 day I had a talk with him, and we were talking about men's
25 roles in society, and once in a while I'll say, like,

1 "Okay, well, I'll go pay this bill, this bill, this bill",
2 and then we'll sometimes have the spat about the dishes,
3 eh? I said, "What do you think you don't have to do the
4 dishes?" I said, "Ah-ha, do the dishes."

5 But, you know, we generally go back and
6 forth, but we've learned a lot over the years and, most
7 importantly, I think that -- I believe that we were sent to
8 each other. Like, you know, we can talk about abuse and
9 talk about it and talk about it, and we know what it is, we
10 can go into the detail, but I think most importantly is
11 that we overcame it and we're -- we're there together.

12 At the end of the day, we have two -- you
13 know, two vehicles that we both earned and paid for and ---
14 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** They're brand spanking
15 new.

16 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** And, you know, it's
17 something to be proud of, because from the streets and, you
18 know, buying things that we want -- like, he always wanted
19 that as a little boy. So, he wanted his gold chain and, of
20 course the wife, you don't have to spend \$2,500, holy moly,
21 on that. But, our next goal is to hopefully buy a house
22 and -- you know, it's possible.

23 We're trying to fix our credit, so this will
24 give us that opportunity. And, like I said, advance in
25 your education. You know, if you guys could fix that, I'll

1 tell you, I'll be a doctor one day. That -- I'm serious.

2 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Me too.

3 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** I could advance.

4 Because that's where you push and you give options to go,
5 because I won't stop school. I'll do part-time, but get
6 rid of -- give us a pardon. Not a free ticket, but a
7 pardon.

8 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Commissioners, do
9 either of you have any questions or comments?

10 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Well, *merci*
11 *beaucoup*, Rachel. I was going to say you have something to
12 do now. You have to work. There is a recommendation here
13 very clear. Matthew, *merci beaucoup, beaucoup*. It's --
14 how can we say? It's -- we're having hope, eh? This is
15 hope in capital letters.

16 It's possible that two human beings, with
17 all -- what happened in our past or previous life, that
18 this is who we are today, and we have dreams, and we'll
19 make sure that we reach those dreams. And, that you're
20 using this space to share that hope for many of us. Even
21 me as a mother, you're giving me hope. Five kids now, it's
22 not easy. And, there is little Michèle at home now, too.

23 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** I should have named the
24 little one Rachel.

25 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** So, I just --

1 for me, so I can go home or I can tonight, I will pray for
2 you and think about of the two of you, the names of your
3 children, if it's possible, and their age? Or if it's
4 possible. Yes.

5 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** My children came --
6 their names came from the Bible.

7 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Okay.

8 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** Growing up, I had met
9 (indiscernible) Catholic is what I -- mostly what I was
10 taught, you know? And, I couldn't understand, well, why am
11 I following Catholic when these people hurt the ones I
12 loved? So, I was really conflicted. So, then, I knew the
13 difference between Catholic and Christian, so then I was a
14 Christian; right?

15 So, him and I would battle in the early --
16 in the beginning of our marriage. I said, oh, no, there's
17 a difference. Religion is culture. We went back and
18 forth. So, nevertheless, our oldest son, his name is
19 Elijah and he's 15. And then we have Matthew, he's 14. We
20 have Trinity, she's 13. And, we have Serenity, she'll be
21 9.

22 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** The three older kids,
23 you guys won't believe this, they were born October 25th,
24 26th and 27th, '02, '03, '04. One year, one day apart.
25 So, each year we had one special day.

1 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** I didn't want
2 to say because it's public, just so you know.

3 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** But, the doctors were
4 shocked, they couldn't believe it. They were, like, are
5 you coming back next year? No, no.

6 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** And, you did.

7 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** No.

8 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Oh, okay.

9 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** No, no. The three was
10 enough. The fourth one we waited.

11 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** She's a little blessing
12 in our (indiscernible), you know? She's never been exposed
13 to -- you know? And, the shame you deal with as a mother
14 when you're exposed to that because you don't know any
15 other way, that was a barrier itself. Having to tell the
16 psychologist, the doctor, their doctor, their occupational
17 -- this is what I did. As a mother, that's a lot of shame.
18 And then it wasn't until I was sober and I said, you know
19 what? I'm done. In order to get -- receive services, I
20 need to be truthful and I need to tell them, look it, I
21 used this, this and this, and that's what I did. And, you
22 know what? Today, we cope with them.

23 We have one special little boy, Matthew,
24 he's very autistic. And, most often are -- pharmaceuticals
25 that are the billionaires want to give, give, give and I

1 said, oh, no, no, no, never mind. I just know that he
2 needs an hour with his dad every single day or he's going
3 to bounce off the wall. That one hour of time, rather than
4 medication, will soothe his little soul. So, that's ---

5 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** We do. I spend -- each
6 day I spend time with both of my sons.

7 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** Never mind the
8 medications.

9 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** --- about, you know ---

10 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** He needs love.

11 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** --- make sure it's at
12 minimum of an hour, so...

13 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** And, he needs him by
14 himself. He's a little hog with his dad. Well, he's 14.
15 He stands, like, 6'2".

16 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Yes, he's a big kid,
17 but he ---

18 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** So ---

19 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** But, all of our kids,
20 because we've instilled that school in them, they -- they
21 go every single day, they try their heart out and they just
22 keep passing. So, it's good. Hopefully -- hopefully
23 they'll keep going.

24 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** Oh, they -- not
25 hopefully. They will keep going. Trust me on that.

1 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** You know what I mean.

2 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** With me around, I said,
3 oh, you'll be going.

4 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Yes, she's our
5 household bouncer. "Get out. Go to school."

6 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** I have two
7 more things, Maitre Big Canoe. Everywhere we go, our own
8 families, our communities across Canada, we're still
9 facing, Indigenous women and girls, the violence, and we
10 have here two amazing people who decided that instead of
11 being violent, we'll change that to love or forgiveness.
12 But, when that moment, that anger or that frustration,
13 instead of being violent, how do you -- what is the magic
14 that make you -- that those days are over between you and
15 your wife or the family? It's just so people can learn ---

16 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** I just keep chalking it
17 up to getting old, but I'm probably wrong. I think it's
18 just -- I think we have different coping mechanisms now.
19 Like, me, I spend more time outside and that helps me.
20 Like, I'll bring my sons outside. We'll have a fire, or
21 you know, I even set up a punching bag outside for them so
22 they could let out aggression and -- I just -- I think that
23 our -- we cope differently. Like, when we argue, I'll say,
24 "Okay, I'm going out." "Okay. Leave."

25 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** And (indiscernible) is

1 part of the door. I'm just kidding.

2 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** No. No. I hope that
3 doesn't happen. No, it ---

4 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** I'm only kidding.

5 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** No, she doesn't stop
6 me. It's...

7 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** Yes, we need to be
8 clear. I believe that ---

9 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** And then I bring back a
10 coffee and she's good. Steeped tea.

11 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** I think that we've
12 learned to -- to wind down. You need an hour a day at
13 least to wind down. And, you know -- and I always tell the
14 kids when I walk in, okay, mom just needs an hour. Or when
15 they come in my space, my kids because they're excited,
16 right, at the end of the day, I'm just hearing all of them
17 and I'm just like -- and then I say, "Okay, just wait. You
18 got me, guys." And, I'll go like this to them, "Okay, one
19 at a time." And then I'll listen to each of their little
20 thing, you know, give them a few minutes, and then, "Okay.
21 Mom's tired. I'm going to go in my room and have a rest.
22 I'll come out in a while." They know.

23 So, diverting yourself back to quietness
24 just to re-gather yourself, whether it's a little nap
25 usually -- I must be getting old because I go for a nap all

1 the time after work. So, that's kind of how we do it. Or
2 he -- like, we're just set up that way, designed to
3 separate ourselves whenever we get heated. And, usually, I
4 become dramatic, I just race in my car, I squeal out, and
5 go calm down in a parking lot somewhere ---

6 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Yes.

7 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** --- because I need to.
8 Because I'm not perfect, I need to wind down because I know
9 what I'm capable of and it's not good. So, I leave
10 sometimes and it could be the most -- the situation could
11 not even be the biggest issue, it could be just about who
12 didn't clean their room and I can blow it out of
13 proportion, so then I know I leave. And, when I come back,
14 hey, he did his room.

15 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Yes.

16 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** So, we double the
17 parenting ---

18 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Well, because I can
19 understand too, like -- so I try to -- I try to get on the
20 kids too. Like, if she asks -- but that's -- I think
21 that's normal. I don't even know what normal is anymore,
22 but I think -- you know, just trying to become whatever
23 vision in my head is normal, that's -- that's the goal.

24 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** My last --
25 *merci beaucoup*. My last -- it's a gift. You're sharing --

1 giving us gift. What would you say to mothers or fathers
2 that are struggling today and they're listening to you?
3 They're in the same path that you were before. What would
4 you say to them? And, for me, I want to ---

5 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** You have a gift, find
6 out what it is and bring it out. Show the world. That's
7 what I would say.

8 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** What I do is -- I was
9 going to retreat. I'm not going to take long here.
10 Sitting in class one day, I was told in our class -- and I
11 know it's under the child welfare legislation. But, if
12 your children become permanent wards, apparently, as a
13 worker, you're told to tell that -- you know, your -- that
14 your children are with us till they're 18. And, this was
15 told by a person with a Master's degree -- I'm not going to
16 mention them, but -- and I looked and I was, like -- and in
17 my class I had -- it was very diverse. I had one woman who
18 moved here from Sudan. She left -- very war torn; right?
19 And, we were all Indigenous women and we had her -- we were
20 teaching her our language -- oh, it was awesome.

21 But, anyway, she said that we're to tell our
22 families -- this is what she said, you're to tell your
23 families that you don't get your kids back till they're 18?
24 So, I raised my hand and I said, "Oh, no, no, no, nobody
25 here tell their families that if you become a worker ever."

1 I said you don't ever tell your families that they're with
2 the government till they're 18. That's wrong. And, you
3 know, I got a 66 in my mark and I was so -- I was so angry.
4 And, I thought, well, you know what -- I said, "Well, did I
5 pass?" She says yes. "Oh, well that's all that matters",
6 I said. I didn't want to battle it out.

7 But, I thought, that is so wrong on a level
8 to tell somebody that. Where do you give that family hope?
9 Because that's what I was told from Métis Child and Family
10 Services, that I'm not going to get my kids. Oh, no. And,
11 I said, "Oh, you watch. You watch. You know, I'm going to
12 have my kids. You're not having my kids. No." And, I was
13 a little bull. I said no. So, when this person said that,
14 it hurt me, because we've got a lot of -- a long way to go.
15 Never tell a family that.

16 After the one year, you know what? Brace
17 yourself. Do your programs. Do what you've got to do, you
18 know? And, it's hard -- it's hard being lonely. It's even
19 hard trying to be on welfare while you're doing treatment.
20 You either have to be in a treatment facility or wait eight
21 to ten months to get into one, but there's no transitional
22 housing for our women to get well, to live while they're
23 waiting that year to get their children.

24 We need, like, buildings that can
25 accommodate 50 women until they get their children back and

1 not micro-manage them if they have a slip and call them,
2 well, you know what, you're kicked out. We don't need
3 that. We need to work really close with our women and our
4 men. A man's house, a woman's house, because there are
5 men, given the opportunity, that will take their children
6 out of child welfare.

7 So, I know that my way is I always say no,
8 you can do it. I know you're going to do it. You know
9 what? And, I guide them. And, I use a lot of my energy
10 sometimes where I drain myself. But, like, this family was
11 the biggest fight of all, this family that's in my home
12 right now. When I went to the minister, I e-mailed --
13 there was this new field in there, I said it -- and they
14 weren't replying to me, so I got really bull-headed.
15 Always some -- I phoned there, "You didn't reply back to
16 me. What's happening?" And then they got on the agency.
17 That's why the order was rescinded so fast.

18 So, me, I always give them hope. I held
19 onto hope. So...

20 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** And, for me, for any
21 dads, I went to this -- I went to -- like, it was a FASD --
22 like, to learn. It was a big event to learn about FASD and
23 there was a lot of CFS workers there. And, this one
24 supervisor I was talking to, and she -- I told her what had
25 -- like, that I won the kids back off -- my children back

1 off of a permanent order, and she said, "That is -- you
2 know, in 14 years as a CFS worker, that's the first time I
3 ever seen a man win his kids back off a permanent order.
4 14 years." I said, "That is terrible." I said, "That's so
5 terrible, what you just said to me." 14 years. So -- but
6 I would just like to say that it is possible because I did
7 it. I was stubborn, just like my wife. I wouldn't give
8 up. So...

9 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** And, you know, they try
10 -- the way Manitoba Child Welfare works, anybody can have
11 animosity or -- you know, like a little bit of this or that
12 towards you, and make that phone call. Their duty and
13 obligation is to come and do a check up. So, when they
14 come to my house, I say, "Oh, stand outside. You know
15 what? Better yet, go stand over there and I'll talk to you
16 over there. You're not stepping in my house." I do that,
17 because people won't like that -- the truth and they'll
18 phone on you and say any little thing; right? Anything.
19 And, that's wrong. That's wrong when people can just do
20 that, phone on somebody and say anything, and then you have
21 these CFS workers and -- because of your history. It's
22 always going to follow you. Always.

23 So, when they come to my house and try and
24 even be snoopy, they don't even get past the door. "Go
25 stand outside and I'll talk to you outside", and nothing's

1 happening. Slam. I do that because I have a distaste.
2 And, that's okay to have one because I'm in my protection
3 mode of my children and I never want to feel the pain again
4 of losing my children. That's why I become that way. And,
5 to them I might look aggressive, but oh, I will be if it
6 comes to my children.

7 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Yes, we'll -- we have
8 different thoughts on that. I'm like ---

9 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** He tells me to be nice.
10 And, I said, "Oh, I'm not being nice ---

11 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Yes, I'm like, "Yes,
12 come on in."

13 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** --- to them."

14 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** "Come on in, you know?
15 Come look. Do you want to see my kids or" ---

16 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** I won't. No. That's my
17 territory. I said, "You go stand over there. This is my
18 territory right here. Go."

19 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, this part, where
20 they were finishing each other's sentences and talking when
21 I was meeting them. So, in the beginning ---

22 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Here we go.

23 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** This is why I said
24 to Matthew. I was surprised that ---

25 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Well, I think when she

1 was telling her story, it was important for me to be quiet.

2 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And, that was very
3 lovely and very respectful. Do the Commissioners have any
4 further questions? So, actually, if I could just grab that
5 mic from you? The Commissioners would like to gift you
6 with something. So, I'm just going to take your other
7 feathers.

8 **MS. RACHEL WILLAN:** Can I just give this to
9 my *kookoo* (phon) just for one second? She's been a part of
10 my journey this entire time. And, I just want to thank
11 many people here that know me and have been a part of my
12 journey when I was in my recovery, and they all know who
13 they are. I thank you for crossing my journey and for the
14 ones that are -- I'm about to make friendships with. And,
15 most importantly, I want to thank my mother, but she's not
16 here, she's sick, Charlene Gladue, as well as my *kookoo*,
17 Belinda, and all the supports. And, Matt has some people
18 to thank, I guess.

19 **MR. MATTHEW WILLAN:** Mitch Barbineau,
20 Belinda Vandembroeck, Dr. Marlon Bennett (phon). Those are
21 really influential people. And, Alaya McIvor. Good
22 friend. And, that's it.

23 **MS. BELINDA VANDENBROECK:** I just want to
24 say very quickly that I really believe that these two have
25 a PhD already, eh? Personal history dossier, you could

1 never ever learn any of that in a university and I love
2 them both and their kids are just wonderful. That little
3 -- what's her name? Oh, my gosh. Like, "Mama." But,
4 she's cute.

5 --- Exhibits (code: P1P03P0103)

6 **Exhibit 1:** Unnumbered and unmarked set of seven black-
7 and-white photocopies of photos of Rachel
8 Willan at various points of her life as a
9 young woman.

10 **Exhibit 2:** Digital image of tattoo over self-harm
11 photograph.

12 **Exhibit 3:** Single small-format digital image of Willan
13 family.

14 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Excellent.

15 Commissioner Eyolfson and Commissioner Audette, I would
16 like -- I would ask that we conclude the hearing for today
17 and adjourn it to tomorrow morning when I believe, based on
18 the schedule, it begins at 9:00 a.m. in the same location.
19 So, if we could please close? And, I thank everyone for
20 coming.

21 Hello. Sorry, I actually just wanted to let
22 you know that although the hearing commences -- there will
23 be a hearing at 9:00 a.m., there will be announcements and
24 an opening prayer tomorrow at 8:30. Beginning here at 8:30
25 is the opening prayer. 8:30 a.m. in this room. And -- oh,

1 my apologies. It will be you, Thelma? Thelma is actually
2 going to do a closing prayer for us.

3 **MS. THELMA MORRISSEAU:** Can we just -- can
4 you just stop where you are right now, please? Thank you.
5 I'd like us to finish this day with a prayer, but I want to
6 say *migwetch* to Rachel and her husband. Man, you guys are
7 so inspirational. You give me hope, you really do.

8 And, I would like -- I have asked my sister,
9 Mary, to close us off with a prayer in her language.

10 **MS. MARY CRATE:** (Speaking in Native
11 language).

12 --- Upon adjourning at 18:22

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Shirley Chang, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this matter.



Shirley Chang

January 18, 2018