National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Public Hearings
Radisson Hotel, Ambassador A
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Friday October 20, 2017

Public Volume 15
Bernice Catcheway, Wilfred Catcheway, Tamara Sanderson, Mary Starr & Willie Starr,
In relation to Jennifer Catcheway;

Sharing Circle: Marie Annharte Baker, Vernon Mann, Melissa Cook, Sue Caribou & Forest Funmaker

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

Assembly of First Nations
Les Femmes Michif
Otipemisiwak/Women of the Metis Nation
Government of Canada
Anne Turley (Legal counsel)
Amber Elliot (Legal counsel)
Christine Ashcroft (Legal counsel)
Government of Manitoba
Samuel Thomson (Legal counsel)
Manitoba MMIWG2S
Angie Hutchinson (Representative)
Leslie Spillett (Representative)
Manitoba Moon Voices
Tanis Wheeler (Representative)
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 Rooms A & B (i.e. the two main public hearing spaces).
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Witness: Bernice Catcheway, Wilfred Catcheway, Tamara Sanderson, Mary Starr and Willie Starr, In relation to Jennifer Catcheway
Exhibits (code: P1P03P0501)

Witnesses:
Marie Annharte Baker, Vernon Mann, Melissa Cook, Sue Caribou, Forest Funmaker
Exhibits: none entered
MS. TERRELLYN FEARN: Good morning, everyone. My name is Terrellyn Fearn, I’m the Director of Health and Community Relations. I wanted to welcome you here, welcome you back those that are returning and those that are just attending today.

We are on our final day of the hearing and we have heard so many stories -- so many stories of sharing of families and survivors. And, I want to share my continued gratitude and sentiment to all the families and survivors that have shared. We have heard well over 75 stories, stories of lost loved ones and survivor stories in the past four days, and very grateful for those stories and that sharing. I want to honour the courage of the families and survivors in sharing their story, in sharing the truth to ensure that some change happens for our women, for our people and for those yet to come.

I’ll start off with a few -- just announcements and reminders. Lunch is going to be served at 12:00 in the back as -- same as the other days, as well as for the families and survivors up in the Family Room on Floor T. A reminder that the fire is burning strong at Oodena and if you need to go and speak to that fire, there is a shuttle that leaves every 15 minutes from the Radisson
Hotel to Oodena and from Oodena back to the Radisson Hotel as well.

I just wanted to mention, we had really exciting youth workshops that was happening on Wednesday and will continue to happen today. Jaime Black is working with the young people over at the Oodena Circle on an artistic expression project and they’re coming back today at 12:30 to finish up that project. They will be meeting at 3:30 over at Oodena to have a dialogue with the Commissioners on not only the importance of artistic expression in this work with the Inquiry, but also its role. So, we welcome you all at 3:30 to make your way over to Oodena, they’ll be having this dialogue with the Commissioners prior to the closing ceremony around 4:00-ish.

So, I just want to acknowledge -- acknowledge those amazing young people. If you haven’t had a chance to wander over there, they’re pretty strong and -- and pretty powerful and have a lot to say, a lot of wonderful things to say that we need to listen, so I just want to share that with you as well.

I want to acknowledge -- every morning, we’ve had our beautiful circle of grandmothers and our Elders and our men grounding us with pipe ceremony and water ceremony before we begin, and today we were honoured
with the presence of the little boy water drum, and I just want -- a reminder to everyone that there are many, many strong medicines and people holding us in good space as we all do this work for all of us, for those beautiful families and survivors, but also for all of you. For all of you cameramen, for all of you translators, and -- and the mic -- everyone. Everyone that is part of the circle and doing the work. So, I want to just put a reminder out there that as we hear these stories, you know, to -- to be conscious and mindful of ourselves and to take good care of ourselves as well.

So, we do have our Elders Room, we have many beautiful grandmothers and Elders that will sit with us, sit with you. If you want to sit in a more intimate private setting, we have one on one, we have some counsellors, Indigenous counsellors onsite, we have spiritual, faith based individuals that are here to support in many different ways. So, if you would like to know a little more, just reach out to myself or one of the health supports in purple shirts.

One of the things I just wanted to mention is we have had so many families and survivors come and gather over the past four days and we’ve had about 40 families and survivors register over the past four days to share their story, and I just want to acknowledge the work
that everyone is doing.

In speaking with those families and survivors, they shared with me, you know, that they were hesitant about the process and they didn’t know about it, so they came, they sat, they witnessed, they observed very closely to everyone that’s involved and what’s happening in the process, and they shared with me that they felt comfortable, that they wanted to tell their story. And, I want to acknowledge them as well, because they’re such an important part of relationship and trust, and we have to be mindful of this work that we’re doing and the importance and the time that it takes to engage in relationship and to build trust, and the importance of coming together in person, the importance of the community outreach to enable people to sit together to better understand this process of the Inquiry, the process of how to have their story told, and the supports that are going to be available and the supports needed for them to feel comforted and safe.

So, I just want to acknowledge those families that came over the past four days, and survivors, and decided to engage in this process because their stories are so important to hear, and if we hadn’t been present here on this beautiful land, this Treaty 1 land, this Métis homeland land, that those are stories that may not have been heard. So, I want to acknowledge that as well.
As of yesterday, there’s about 850 families and survivors that have registered with the Inquiry to share their story. And, over the past couple of months, we’ve put a more focus because we’ve heard from families and survivors, they said come -- come to us. You know, come to us, and we’ve increased our outreach efforts to come, and now they’re feeling more comfortable to -- to register in this process. So, I want to acknowledge them and I want to say that we will continue our efforts to come to you. So, thank you for -- for letting us know and thank you for being courageous to share your story.

Okay. So, at this time, I would like to -- we’re going to do an opening of the day. I would like to invite Jade Harper and Chrissy Slater to come up and sing us a song to open the day, and then we’ll get started.

(MUSICAL PRESENTATION)

MS. DEBBIE REID: Wow. I feel all tingly all over after that. Oh, what a great way to start a Friday. I’m going to ask Barbara now to do the Inuit prayer. So, Barbara, if you would like to come forward.

MS. BARBARA SEVIGNY: (Speaking in Native language). Good morning. Barbara Sevigny. (Speaking in Native language). I’ll be saying the opening prayer in Inuktitut. (Speaking in Native language).

MS. DEBBIE REID: Commissioner Audette, the
family will be walked in. So, we will wait for them to be
brought in.

Hearing # 1
Witnesses: Bernice Catcheway, Wilfred Catcheway, Tamara
Sanderson, Mary Starr and Willie Starr, In relation to
Jennifer Catcheway
Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette
Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe
Grandmothers, Elders, Knowledge Keepers: Thelma Morriseau,
Bernie Skundaal Williams
Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Commissioner
Audette, I would like to welcome the next family that will
be participating and sharing their story. I ask that the
Catcheway family now please come in.

MS. BERNICE CATCHEWAY: Remain standing if
-- if you can. I'd like to say a prayer and acknowledge my
Saviour. I know it's been a long journey. It's been a
long time. We waited nine years for this day.

So, I want to thank the Lord. I want to
thank Him and give him time and give him reverence because
he's the one who made it possible for us to be here today.

So, I'd ask -- I know there's different
faiths and different ways of worship, but this is the way I
pray. So, I just ask you to -- just to pray for us,
because this is not an easy task we're taking on today.

Thank you, Lord Father in heaven. We thank you, Lord, for this day that you've made. We thank you, Father, for opening the door that no man can shut. We thank you, Father God in heaven, we acknowledge you this hour, this day. We ask you, Father God, for wisdom, knowledge and understanding, Father.

We pray for those that are listening out there, those across -- across Winnipeg, across Canada and across the world today. We ask you, God, to just have your way and that your will be done in this place. And, Father God, we ask for change. We ask for change, Lord. We thank you, Father. We ask for words of wisdom this morning and that all would be done accordingly, Lord, decently and in order.

We thank you, Father. Bless this -- this time that we're going to be speaking. And, Lord, we ask the blood covering upon each and every one of us. We give you praise. We give you thanks in Jesus' name. Amen.

You may be seated. I'm not sure how we get started. Is this my time to speak?

First of all, I want to thank -- like I said, I thank my heavenly Father in heaven for all that He's done and all that He's going to do, that's going to take place here.
And, I want to thank the supporters of my family that are here, that are sitting up here and those that are in the back. I want to thank them for taking the time to be with us today.

And, those of you that are out here in the public here, I want to thank you for taking the time and also for Commissioner Michèle Audette taking the time to hear our story and our grievances today.

It's been a long, long journey. It's been nine years to get here and to share Jennifer's story in a public way. And, I know we've spoken about Jennifer throughout the years, but this is a special day. Everything is documented. Everything is going to be documented, every word that we say and everything that we do, so I'm glad for that.

And, like I said, it's been a long, long journey, but it's not over yet, because Jennifer is still not home with us. That's when it's over. It's not over yet.

My name is Bernice Catcheway, B-E-R-N-I-C-E, Catcheway, C-A-T-C-H-E-W-A-Y. Jennifer Catcheway is our daughter. This is my husband, Wilfred. I'll pass down the mic. Just your name -- you don't have to spell it, just your name and who you are.

MR. WILFRED CATCHEWAY: I'm Wilfred
Catcheway. I’m Jennifer’s father.

**MS. TAMARA SANDERSON:** My name is Tamara Sanderson and I’m Jennifer’s oldest sister.

**MS. MARY STARR:** I’m Mary Starr. I’m Jennifer’s older sister.

**MS. ALICIA TRAVERS ROBERTS:** Alicia Travers Roberts. I’m friends with Bernice, Wilfred, Tammy, Mary and the whole family. They’re just like family to me.

**MS. RHIANNA ACoby-CATCHEWAY:** My name is Rhianna Acoby Catcheway. I was friends with Jennifer.

**MS. NATASHA ACoby:** Hi, my name is Natasha Acoby. I’m friends with Jennifer.

**MS. NAHANNI FONTAINE:** Good morning. I’m Nahanni Fontaine and I’m a supporter for the Catcheway family.

**MS. LESLIE SPILETT:** Wachay (ph). I’m Leslie Spillett. I’m also a supporter for the family.

**MS. BARB ESAU:** Barb Esau. I’m a friend and supporter of the family.

**MS. HANNAH SANDERSON:** I’m Hannah Sanderson and I was her niece.

**MS. MERCEDES STARR:** I’m Mercedes Starr and I’m her niece.

**MS. CHARITY:** I’m Charity and I was her niece.
MR. ISAIAH: Hi. I’m Isaiah, I was her nephew.

REGIONAL CHIEF KEVIN HART: Good morning. I’m Kevin, and I’m here to support the Catcheway family.

MS. SHEILA YELLOWQUILL: I’m Pastor Sheila Yellowquill, and I’m part of the family and here to support them spiritually.

MS. BERNICE CATCHEWAY: Thank you. I just -- I was up 4:00 this morning. You know, I’m not one for writing notes and everything like that, because I’m a -- I’m a reverend of our church, Harvest Call Ministries, and -- and every time I try to write down notes and date, it just doesn’t work for me.

What I do naturally is I speak from my heart, but I -- I have some notes that I -- if I have to refer to them, I’ll do so. But, I just want to speak from my heart today, and I always have, and I’m not here to sugar-coat nothing.

This is a real tragedy that’s happening across Canada for the murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls. This is a real tragedy that -- that’s ongoing. So, I’m not here to sugar-coat anything.

Our nightmare is not over. Our nightmare -- the day Jennifer went missing, our nightmare started, and it still -- we’re still living that nightmare, and I just
want somebody to wake us up.

Jennifer Catcheway was our daughter.

Jennifer was a beautiful -- as you’re going to see, we have a slide after, that I want you to -- to listen to the words of the song and listen that Jennifer was a real person.

We loved Jennifer. Her family loved her. Her friends loved her. And, as you’ll see in the slideshow that, you know, we loved her. We loved all our -- we love all our children, and I know you do, too. You love your children. I wouldn’t wish this upon anyone, the pain and the grief and what we live with every single day, not knowing where Jennifer is. I wouldn’t wish it upon anybody.

I don’t have no enemies -- I don’t think I have enemies, but I wouldn’t want to wish upon anybody what we’re going through, what we live. We go to bed at night wondering where Jennifer is. We wake up in the morning wondering where Jennifer is.

My husband here -- well, we’re going to get into that, but I want to just lay the foundation as to what happened, what -- the question is, what happened to Jennifer Catcheway? Where is Jennifer Catcheway?

We raised her. We raised her. I raised her in the church. I raised her. Jennifer went to school and, you know, just like any child, enjoyed her -- you know, her
childhood and just -- she was a good -- a good child, you know.

And, I know us mothers will say, “My -- you know, I have a good daughter, too.” I know we all do. You do, too. But, I’m a mom speaking for my Jen, you know. And, I’ve also said, “Jennifer was silenced by someone,” and now I speak for Jennifer. We speak for Jennifer, my husband and I.

And, Jennifer, you know, was looking forward to her birthday. Jennifer was excited about her birthday. She’s, you know, like every young lady or young man that’s, you know, going to celebrate their 18th birthday. She -- thank you so much. Jennifer was anxious. She was -- you know, she’s happy because her birthday is coming up June 19th.

And, you know what, my husband and I, we do that to our children. We give them money, you know. Money is money, whatever, $20.00 or whatever. We just give them money. They don’t even have to ask for it. We’re not rich, but the little that we have, we give it to them. We just give to the kids.

So, Jennifer says, “Don’t give me any more money, Mom.” She said, “Don’t give me” -- she said, “Put it all and give it to me all at once on my birthday,” she said. She thinks she’s going to have a lot of money then.
So, I said okay.

So, I stopped giving her money, because I’m going to put it away, you know, for her birthday. And, I said to her -- I said to Jennifer, “What do you want for your birthday, my girl?” I said, “What do you want? You know, this is your 18th birthday. What do you want?”

See, she had a boyfriend. She had a boyfriend who loved her, and she said she loved him. I didn’t, you know, think too much of that but, you know, she would get upset at me if I would -- if I would -- I don’t know. I’m sorry. Do I look at you? Do I look at you? I’m sorry. I don’t want to be rude.

And so, anyway, she says, “Mom, you know what I want for my birthday?” She said, “I want you to meet him.” I said, “Mm.” She wanted me to meet him prior. And, I said, “No, no, no.”

You know, like every mother, they want their daughter to marry a police officer, or a lawyer or somebody, (indiscernible), you know, like that. So, that’s what I wanted for my daughter and my children to, you know, to -- someone that’s going to look after her. So, that’s what I wanted for her. But, she fell in love with a young man, and she wanted me to meet him. And, I always said, “No, no, no, no, no.”

So, for her birthday, she said -- I said,

And, I said, “Okay, we’re going to do all of that.” I said, “What do you want?” She said, “I want steaks.” I said, “Well, we’re going to get steaks, you know?” For her 18th birthday, that’s her day, we’re going to do whatever she wants.

So, we got -- I bought steaks and preparing for her birthday that’s coming up in June. June 19, 2008. And, we got ready. I got ready for her -- for her birthday. And, you know, it was on a Thursday. June 19th was a Thursday.

I seen her Tuesday. Tuesday, you know. She’d come and go. She’d come and go to the house. She stayed with her friend down -- I don’t know if I want to make names, but with her friend here. She stayed with her in -- in Winnipeg. She -- at home, Winnipeg, you know, like that.

Anyway, Jennifer, she’s -- my husband always told us. He trained us that way. We’ve been married 34 years now -- 33 years, my husband and I, and we have three children together. And, he always trained us. “When you
go somewhere,” he said, “write down where you’re going and
the time you’re going to be back.” Always. We always did
that. We’d write a note that say, “I’m going to be here
and I’ll be back here.” And, I still do that today, “I’ll
be back at 6:00 or...” I still do that. He trained us
that way.

So, Tuesday -- Tuesday, June -- so Jen’s
birthday was on the 19th. 16th, that was a Tuesday. I
seen Jennifer and she asked me, she said, “Mom, buy ice
I said, “Okay. I’m going to the store and I’ll come back.”

So, when I came back, she was walking away
and she said -- but that’s the last I seen her, I laid eyes
on her. I’m just laying a foundation. And then I said --
she was going. She said, “Just leave my -- just leave my
ice cream in the fridge, Mom, I’ll be back.” That’s what
she said. I laid eyes on her. I said, “Okay.” I said --
and I went -- I went -- I went home.

I went inside the house -- if you find that
-- right here. This is the -- this is the note that she
left. I told you, my husband trained us to write where
we’re going. And, it says, “My beautiful mother. I wanted
to let you know that I went for a walk. I’ll probably be
-- I’ll probably go to Vernon’s (ph). Can you please put
my ice cream in the fridge in the basement? I love you so,
so much. X’s and O’s, Jennifer Catche -- Jennifer Leanne,” she put, “Catcheway.” So, that -- that was Tuesday. And, that’s how our husband trained us to write where we’re going and when we’re coming back, always. So, that’s Tuesday. That’s when I last seen her.

So, I’m preparing for her birthday. I bought the steaks and we’re getting ready. I haven’t seen her again, to lay eyes on her, but I knew she was around, and I thought, okay, she’s celebrating her birthday. You know, she didn’t come home.

So, Thursday -- I already had the steaks marinating Wednesday night, you know, for -- to cook for Thursday. She still didn’t come home, but the phone rang. The phone rang Thursday -- June 19th, Thursday morning, between 9:00 and 10:00. I thought it was 11:00 until the police, the RCMP, traced the call, that the call came in at 9:00. So, I thought it was 11:00, but it was at 9:00.

And then Jennifer -- the phone rang, and I said, “Hello.” And, she said, “Hi, Mom.” She said, “It’s my birthday.” And, I said, “I know it’s your birthday, Jen.” I said, “I know.” I said, “I’m getting ready here.” I said, “Where are you?” And, I can hear her head -- I could hear her voice turned -- like I’m moving the microphone (indiscernible) you can’t really hear me, but you can hear me now. That’s how it went on the phone. She
said, “Where are we? Where are we?” She was talking to somebody. “Where are we?” she said.

And, I said -- suddenly, I felt a pain in the pit of my stomach with fear, unspeakable fear. I’ve never, ever in my life experienced that pain and that fear that I felt that day talking to her, and even after. I’ve never experienced that pain, that fear that had gripped me.

And, I said to her, “Jennifer. Where are you, Jennifer?” because I felt that fear. And, she said, “Where are we?” she said to somebody. And, she said -- I said, “Jennifer,” but I was screaming. I panicked. That’s how I -- I react to fear. I’m not a calm person. I get -- I get -- I don’t know why I get angry, but I get angry.

And, I said, “Jennifer, where are you? Where are you?” I said to her. She said, “I’m in Skownan.” I said, “What are you doing in Skownan? What are you doing there?” And, I said, “Jen.” I said, “Jen, get home. Get home right now, Jen. Get home.” And, I slammed the phone down. And, that’s the last time. That’s the last time I spoke with her.

And, I, for years and years, I regretted that. I regretted hanging up on her, but that was my fear that took over. I said, “Where are you? Come home. Get home, do you hear me? Do you understand?” I said, “Get home,” and I hung up and I never heard from her again. No
matter how many times I tell this story, it’s like I live that moment. It’s real. It’s real pain.

So, she never came home. That was Thursday. And then Sunday -- Sunday, I’m getting ready for church because I minister. I’m a reverend, an ordained reverend. So, I was getting ready for church and I get a phone call from a brother-in-law by marriage, one of the people of interest that took Jennifer. I didn’t know that then.

I got a call from his wife and said that Jennifer was with him, and she started saying things that I won’t get into. And, I said, “No.” I said, “No, it’s not true.” I said, “Because if I would listen to everything, every bad thing somebody would say about my family, I would go insane,” I said, “So, no.”

So, that was 7:00 Sunday, because I knew the time I had to be at church, so I knew what date -- what time and day it was. That was Sunday. Thursday -- Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, I find out where Jen is -- or who she’s with, pardon me.

And then Monday, which was the 23rd; right? Was it the 23rd? Monday the 23rd. I work -- I work for the government. I’ve been working for the government for 20 years, and I’m still working today. So, I had to -- Monday, there was a knock -- I went to work and I -- still, Jen wasn’t home.
And, I came home at lunchtime. I was scared, but yet, I -- you know, Jen is -- she’ll come home, you know. It never occurred to me that, okay, she’s -- something -- well, you know what? She’ll come home. That was in my mind and in my heart. She’s going to come home. It’s her birthday. She’s going to come home. You know, when she’s done doing her thing, she’ll come home. That’s what I thought.

So, Monday, I went to work. I came home at lunchtime. It must have been just after 12:00 when I got a knock at the door. And, I always keep my door locked at home. It’s always locked, you know. So, I look out the window and then there’s a red vehicle out there, with the two people that were -- I find out later that were with her.

And so, I -- he said, “Can I” -- he’s looking up at me because I live in a bi-level. And so, he’s looking up at me and he’s saying, “Can we talk?” This was Monday, just shortly after 12:00 because I was home for lunch. Thank you. I was home for lunch. And, he said, “Can we talk?”

And, I’m looking down and I said, “What do you want?” “Can we talk?” he said. I said, “Yes, okay,” but he was standing there by himself. The other individual was in the truck. And so, I said, “Yes, okay.” So, I went
downstairs, and I was already feeling nervous, my stomach was turning. I don’t know why I was feeling like that. I just was feeling that way.

And, I opened the door. I said -- the first thing I said to him was, “Where’s Jennifer?” I said, “Where’s Jennifer?” And, he said, “Well, we dropped her off.” “Dropped her off? Where did you -- what do you mean?”

Just when we were talking, the other individual, just like moments, was standing right there. Can you move -- move over? There’s my son, Willie, I asked, and my daughter-in-law. Just for the record, this is my son, Willie, Willie Starr and his wife, Lindsay (ph). I’m sorry for the interruption.

So then I said -- I began to -- to get upset there. And, I said to -- he’s standing there. I don’t know if it’s right to mention names, but I’m trying to avoid that. I don’t want to mention no names, because you already know in the papers and stuff like that, but I don’t want to mention any names here.

But -- so, I said to him, “Where’s Jennifer?” I didn’t say that I was already panicking. I said, “Where’s Jennifer?” And, he said, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry.” The one man was saying, “I’m sorry.” And, he wouldn’t look at me, but he was looking -- “I’m sorry, I’m
sorry.”

I said, “For what? What are you sorry for?”

I said, “Where’s Jennifer?” I said, “What are you doing with her?” I said, “She’s just a kid.” I said, “Where is she?” And then I said, “What are you doing with her anyway?” I said, “You have a wife. What are you doing with her?” I said, “She’s just a kid.”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” he said. “Where is she?” “I dropped her off.” “Where did you drop her off?” “No. 6 Highway.” “Where?” “Gypsumville Road.” “Why?” I said, “Why? She’s a kid.” I said, “That’s all forest over there. That’s all forest. She doesn’t know that place. Why did you drop her off?” I said to him. “Because she wanted to get off.”

I said, “You know what?” I said, “Your wife phoned here yesterday,” I said, “and telling me you’re with her.” I said, “I’m going to the RCMP.” I said, “I’m going to report you.” I said, “You took her. You didn’t bring her back.”

Just like a light switch, a light off and on, his personality just changed. His -- everything about him changed. When he was just saying, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” then all of a sudden, he was just changed and said, “Go ahead. We have the same story.” He said, “Go ahead.” Just changed just like that. And, that was it. They got
in their red truck and they left.

So, because I’m working and I’m only on my lunch hour, I phoned work, and I said, “I’m not coming back.” I said, “Something’s going on.” I said, “I don’t know what’s going on.” I said, “My daughter is not home. Somebody took her.” I said, “I need to know what’s going on.”

And, they said, “Oh, you know, take all the time that you need.” And, you know, I have a very good employer, employer that are -- they’re very understanding and have been throughout my employment and, you know, the last nine years. And so, I said, “Okay, you know, I’ll be back. I’ll call,” I said. She said, “You do that.”

So, at the time, I didn’t know what to do. I was distraught. I was panicking. I didn’t know what to do. Where is Jen? My husband wasn’t home at that time. So, I went to the police. I went to the RCMP. That was June 23rd. I went to the police, to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Portage la Prairie detachment. That’s where I went.

I said, “I want to report my daughter missing,” I said to this constable. I forget his name. I know I had his name, you know. And, I said, “I want to report my daughter missing.” I said, “She didn’t come home.” I said, “Her birthday was on Thursday.” This was
Monday, I went.

And, he said, “Oh, what’s her name?” I said, “Jennifer. Jennifer Catcheway.” “Oh, how old is she?” Like that. That’s how he spoke to me. “How -- how old is she?” I said, “She just turned 18 Thursday, her birthday.” “Oh, give her a week. She’s on a drunk.” I said, “You don’t even know her to talk to her [sic] like that -- about her like that. You don’t know her.” He said, “Oh, give her a week. Give her a week.”

I left. I didn’t know what to do. I just left, no statement, no nothing. I was in shock. I didn’t know what to do. My daughter, right there when I lost it, my brain, I don’t know what happened. I don’t know. Maybe it was just my way of coping, but I lost my memory for three months.

I had people coming up to me and said, “Remember talking to me? Remember?” I said, “I don’t remember.” I said -- I couldn’t eat. I couldn’t sleep because Jennifer -- I said, “I don’t know if Jennifer is eating. I don’t know if she’s drinking. I can’t.” I felt so guilty because I felt it was unfair for me to eat or drink, because I didn’t know what -- if she was eating. I said, “I can’t eat.”

So, I didn’t know what to do. Nobody was listening, because we went -- we went to the -- back to the
detachment Monday, Tuesday, and I think it was Wednesday we went. No RCMP came out to hear me or to take a statement. The woman behind the desk said, “I’ll give them your message.” Nobody came out, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. I didn’t know what to do. I don’t know where -- what do I call? What do I do? I don’t know. So, I have my -- I went through my -- we started documenting, not right away, but a little bit here and there.

June -- when -- when Jen went missing, that was the 23rd I went to report her missing. June 25th, I think it was Wednesday. June 25th, I went. My son-in-law, Darryl Sanderson and I, we -- we made posters and we went all over. We went to Dauphin, Swan River, all those areas. We went to the bars posting posters. “Where’s Jennifer?” I didn’t know -- I just didn’t know what to do.

I think it was on June 26th when I came home, there was still nothing done. I went -- Darryl and I, we went to Yellowquill Road, our highway, all the way to the west of Swan River, Easterville -- not Easterville. We didn’t go that far. We went through Skownan, Rock Ridge, posting posters and asking -- I’ve been asking, pounding on doors on people that I knew, “Do you -- have you seen Jen? Did you see her around here?” I said, “I haven’t seen -- she’s missing,” I said. “No, we haven’t seen her. We haven’t seen her.”
So, we went through No. 6, because he said he dropped her off on No. 6, so we went down No. 6. And, the very last road, the very last -- at the end of the road, there was a house there. So, I went to that house and I said, “Here’s a poster.” I said, “My daughter is missing.” I said, “If you hear anything, the individual said that they dropped her off here on the road, on the highway, right -- right here.” I said, “If you hear anything, or notice or see anything,” I said, “Call me, please.” I said, “My number is on the poster.” She said, “I will.”

So, that was Wednesday. On the -- I don’t want to get my dates wrong. I have it here on the -- because June 26, 2008, I spoke with -- I phoned -- because I didn’t know what to do, I phoned -- nobody was listening. So, I phoned Southeast -- Southeast -- I don’t even know what it’s called. It was Southern Chiefs, I think it was called. I don’t know why them. I don’t know. That was just a num -- that’s who I thought of.

I picked up the phone there and a lady answered the phone. And, I said, “I don’t know who I -- who I’m talking to. I don’t know what to do. My daughter is missing. The police are not doing anything. They’re not taking my statements. What do I do?”

I learned later on, her name was Nahanni
Fontaine. I had no -- didn’t know where this was taking us, just that I spoke with her that day. She said she was upset on the phone. I said, “Nobody -- I don’t know what to do,” I said. “I’ll call you back,” she said. I don’t know what was said on the phone and she was so upset.

She said, “Bernice, this thing I want you to do.” She said, “Start to journalize everything, the people you talk to, their names, the places, phone numbers. If you talk to the RCMP, get their badge number. Start journalizing everything.” And, that’s what we did right up until today.

As you see, my husband was walking in with a camera, because that’s what he does. He sleeps with that. I’m not kidding, because we get -- we got calls over the nine years, 1:00, 2:00, 3:00, 4:00 in the morning. Right away, the camera, every time we speak to somebody. We’ve got tons of footage, of video footage. We have statements. We have -- every time we spoke to somebody in authority, we have it documented, because that’s what we were told to do. And so -- and so this -- that was Wednesday.

Time went on. Just within a week or a week or two, a lady called, the same lady at the little house in the corner. She said, “I want you to know,” she said, “My son-in-law lives with this girl in -- in this little town here, and they’re -- those two individuals were there
burning clothes.”

And, I said, “Okay,” I said, “I’m going to call the RCMP. Do you mind?” “No,” she said. I called the RCMP in Gypsumville. I think I have his name here. I don’t even know if I should say his name, but I called a detachment there. And, you know what he said? “Oh, I know her, Mrs. so-and-so. I know her. She’s a drunk. Don’t believe her. You can’t believe anything she says because she’s a drunk. I wouldn’t listen to her.” That’s what he told me.

I was shocked because this is a -- this is a little ray of hope that -- you know, a little ray of sunshine through this woman telling me that these two individuals are burning their clothes not too far away from that -- that junction where they said they dropped her off. And, it just -- I said, “What?” “Oh, don’t, don’t, don’t, don’t pay attention to her. She -- half the time, she doesn’t know what she’s talking about.” That was a week or so later.

And then she said, “They were there on Sunday, burning clothes.” My husband wasn’t home. He was out. So, I -- I got in my vehicle when I -- I knew the house. I knew who they were talking about. I got in my vehicle. I drove over there. I said, “Were they here?” “Yes.” “Were they burning?” “Yes.” “Where? “In the
back.” I said, “Can I go and see it?” “Yes.” They took me to the back. There’s burnt material in the back there. And, I said, “Have the police been here?” “No.” I said, “Did they come here at all?” “No.”

And, I have a video-camera and I’m taking pictures. I’m taking -- “No,” she said. And, it was three weeks or was it three -- three weeks to a month or -- if not longer, then the Forensic team came and took the dirt from there, that long. I took pictures weeks before they got there.

When we -- when we -- we started our own investigation right away with my husband. We got -- we got it all together. Okay, we’ve got to -- we’ve got to, you know, backtrack, “Where was Jennifer? Who was with Jennifer?” We did all that. I said, “There’s got to be -- there’s got to be gas -- gas -- gas receipts where they had to have gassed up. There’s got to be gas” -- we did our own investigation because I didn’t -- I didn’t know what the RCMP were doing. I’ve never heard from them, so we went on our own.

I said, “There’s got to be gas receipts. There’s got to be signatures somewhere.” There’s got to be -- there’s video-cameras along the businesses on No. 6 Highway. There’s gas stations. There’s -- there’s Pinaymootang Gas Bar. There’s Powderhorn and there’s
Ashern. There’s Nosehorn. There’s -- up the St. Laurent, there’s cameras all along the way. I said, “Did they not...”

Three months later, Powderhorn Gas Bar, the individuals called us, “We have some footage here if you want to come and see it.” I said, “What?” “Yes, with -- of those individuals gassing up.” Three months later. I said, “Okay, I’ll” -- we got in our vehicle right away. We went over there. And, they’re showing us on the computer, a video of them gassing up there and the time.

Well, we won’t get into that. I’m not here to lay down a case or -- you know, I’m not trying to lay down a case. I want you to understand, and I want the public and Canada and the world to know how we were failed, how Jennifer was failed. The RCMP failed her. How? You say, “How?” They didn’t take my statement. They didn’t take me seriously. (Indiscernible) I know I’m being turned down there.

Time is of the essence when somebody goes missing and reported somebody missing. Time is crucial. There’s no time to say, “Oh, give her -- give her time. She’s on a drunk. She’ll be back.” Who is he to make an opinion like that?

We went to Powderhorn. Here, we see the individuals gassing up. Why am I saying that? Because
that’s crucial information that was still on the computer, that was still the RCMP that didn’t pick it up yet. I took video footage. I said, “Did they come here yet?” “No. It’s still here.” I could go on and on and on of reports of what they haven’t done.

We went through -- we excavated three or four dumps? Four dumps. We went to the lakes because of rumours. We excavated four dumps. We went to the mountains, to the valleys, to the rivers. We went to the cemeteries to look for Jennifer. Then, we went to Grand Rapids. Thirty days, we -- there was a story that came out that Jennifer got murdered in Dakota Tipi. That was information that was brought to us from the local leaders -- or I should say leader. So, we stayed there 30 days searching for Jen.

We left -- we left Portage. When we couldn’t find nothing, we left there. We went -- we walked from No. 6 all the way to Grand Rapids. It took us 30 days. We walked every site, on every -- on every road. We did -- we just took our time. We put bottles when we were done. (indiscernible) water bottles on a branch, just to let the people know that are coming, we’ve -- we’ve already searched this area.

We took 30 days to get over there. When we got over there, we found out where Jennifer was with these
individuals, and there was partying there. I went to the
individuals -- well, first, we got to Grand Rapids. RCMP
come and met us. He was in a truck. I introduced myself,
who I was, and my husband, and our searcher search party.

I said, “Did you take a statement?” “No.” I said, “You never took a statement?” “No.” I said, “Thirty days ago, my daughter went missing from here, Grand
Rapids. She was last seen here in Grand Rapids and you
never took a statement?” “No.” I said, “Why not?” “I
never got word. I never got permission” -- or I don’t know
what the word he said -- I don’t know what word he used
that -- “I never got confirmation to take a statement” or
“permission”, whatever you want to -- I said, “Thirty days
passed and you never took a statement?” “No.”

We went to where the party was and we talked
to the individual, the owner or caretaker or whatever he
was there. And, he said, “Yes, they were here. I seen
her,” he said. “She was sitting right there, a beautiful
girl.” I said, “Yes, she was beautiful. What was she
wearing?” And then he described what she was wearing.

And, he said, “She was just sitting there. She didn’t look like she was in trouble or nothing,” he
said. “She was happy.” I said, “That’s Jennifer,” because
that’s how Jennifer was.

So, we -- we searched there. We -- we
searched there. We went to the people. We -- we took statements. I’ve got the statements. I’ve got footage of every individual that I spoke with, that the police never spoke with.

I want to speed it up. I want to speed up a bit to what’s important to me, what’s important to my children and my husband, is that the RCMP failed her. We started digging into who was who and what were they doing, what time. We got a time frame. We got all of that. I went to -- we spoke with them.

We weren’t -- we weren’t going to say -- you know, we got tired of she said, he said, three other people, but the fourth person said -- no, we went straight to the individual. Now, we got tired of going between two, three, four people. We’re going to go and speak to whoever said what. That’s what -- that’s what we started doing.

I was so -- we went -- we were going through -- I’m going to speed it up to seven years. We had -- according to the RCMP, because I had somewhat of a conversation with a certain detective that was on our case, and nothing moved, nothing. I talked to the RCMP. We gave them information. We gave them whatever bones that we found.

And, you know what? I’m not a pathologist. I don’t know what -- what’s a human bone and what’s not.
What we -- I do now. We work with one now. But, I didn’t know what bones we were finding and, you know, the searches that we were -- were taking.

So, I said to the corporal that was on our case. It went on and on. And, you know, there was no communication at all whatsoever between us unless I called, unless I phoned. This was years later.

In the beginning -- I’ve got it documented that, yes, there was communication, there was when -- when they finally -- on June 28th, that’s when the investigation started. There was -- I have the name of the head officer that took Jen -- finally took Jen’s case. I have it documented here. These are mine from nine years ago. I finally got -- he finally took our case June 28, 2008.

So, anyway, nothing flowed. Nothing, no -- according to when we give information, whether we’re in Grand Rapids, it has to go to Winnipeg D Division. Whether we’re in Swan River and we find something, it has to go to “D” -- to the office. Every -- nothing -- nothing moved, nothing flowed, only had to go through this one individual, this one corporal. I don’t want to name his name.

And then people will say, “Well, you should have named his name”; right? But, I’m here to share. I’m not mean. I’m not vindictive. I’m not like that. I just want the world to know that they failed my Jen.
So, I was -- we never gave up. We never rested. I work. I work. When I’m working here in Portage, right after work, my husband has the shovels. He has the truck loaded. We’re going. We go up -- nobody knows that. Even up until today, we’ll get to that, we’re out searching every day.

We spent one whole summer, last summer. One whole summer in the back of Dakota Tipi. One whole summer. Nobody knew that. We found bones. Anyway, seven years later, we had -- the RCMP gave me -- these are the three people that are -- or five people, or I should -- maybe. Maybe ten people at the most, people of interest.

And, we spoke to them, every one of them, and they all said, “Oh, we didn’t have nothing to do with it. I never met her,” and things like that. And, you know, that’s -- that’s their story and they’re sticking to it.

So, I was frustrated one day. I was bug eaten. I don’t know how many times I got poison ivy. I was bitten by bugs, walking in swamps. Fall, we went -- we would search right till the snow falls.

One day in Ashern, we were searching a field because of tips and rumours. We went to this field in Ashern. It was cold. I was cold. I was going in a ditch. And, we had hip waders on, me and my husband. And, I fell
in the water, and he was across, going on the other --
doing the other ditch, and I was on this ditch. And, I
fell in the water, and the water went in my hip waders.
And, I said, “Will.” I said, “I fell. Come and help me
because I” -- that thing got heavy and it was cold. I was
frustrated.

Summertime comes, the heat -- the heat and
the bugs, and the mosquitoes, and going through the swamps
and these bugs, and there’s water snakes. There’s mice.
There’s all kinds of things in the nature out there that I
-- you know, I tried to be strong. I see a snake. I’m
going to go anyway. I was hot and I was tired.

And then the phone rings. And, I said,
“Hello.” And, he said, “This is so-and-so.” And, I said,
“Hello.” And, he says, “Can you, Bernice” -- he said, “If
you can, can you set up a time for -- I want to take a lie
detector test,” seven years later. “I want to take a lie
detector test.” He said, “I’m tired of being pointed at or
looked down at, in my community.”

And, I -- but I’ve been talking to him
prior. That wasn’t our first conversation. We’d been
talking through the years, this individual. And, he said,
“Can you make arrangements? I want to take a lie detector
test.” I said, “Really?” “Yes,” he said. “I’m going to
prove it to you. I’m going to -- I had nothing to do with
it. I’m going to” -- I said, “Okay, fine.”

I phoned the corporal -- oh, no. Not right away. And, I said -- he said, “If I’m such a suspect, how come no RCMP talked to me in seven years?” I said, “What?” He said, “No RCMP come and knock on my door to come and question me.” I said, “Seven years?” “Seven years.” I said, “I’ll call you back,” I said.

I called the corporal. I called him right away. I said, “What are you doing? What are you doing?” I said, “I just got a call.” I said, “And, this -- you -- your suspect called me and asked for a lie detector test that you haven’t so much as spoken to him in seven years.” And, he said, “Well -- well, not -- not officially.”

That’s his words to me. And, yet, for seven years, he had him as a -- he said, “Oh, I wouldn’t give up on him yet.” He said, “Don’t let it go yet. Just keep, you know, doing what you’re doing,” and all that. He said, “I’ve spoken to them and I talked with them and they’re a little fishy. They’re a little” -- when, in fact, they never even spoke to them. They never approached him in seven years, none of them.

That’s I -- right from -- my husband, right from Day One, when I went to go and report Jennifer missing, he lost all faith in the RCMP and up until today. That was such a blow to me.
When, you know, you work, you’re trying to trust these people that are in authority. They’re there to protect and to serve and, you know, to be on your side, because these are criminals or whoever they are. And, he says, “They never talked to me in seven years. Can you do that for me?”

Last April, April 4th -- April 4th. This past April 4th here. He said, “Oh, they called” -- he called me again. He said, “Oh, we’re set up for a lie detector test,” he said. I said, “Well, good for you.” “I’m going to do this for you,” he said. I said, “No, you don’t do nothing for me. Do it for yourself.”

So, he -- he went. And, “I’ll call you back.” He was so arrogant. “I’ll call you back.” He said, “I want to show you I had nothing to do with this. I’ll call you back. I’ll call you back,” he kept saying. No call. April, May, June, July, August, September, October, seven months. He’s never called me since when we had contact. So, I phoned the corporal. I said, “Tell me the results.” I said, “I heard that he told me -- he phoned me and said that he took the lie detector test.” I said, “Tell me the result.” “Oh, I can’t. I’m bound.”

I said, “But you told me the results of those two females. You told me that they -- they passed those.” I said, “What’s the difference? Tell me,” I said.
And, he said, “Find out from them.” And, I will find out from them. That was a few years ago.

This last dump that we did in Dakota Tipi First Nation -- we did a dump again. Twice, we went back there and twice we did -- excavated the dumps. I’m telling you, that’s the worst. We did one, and the first one was in Grand Rapids. The second one was in Portage la Prairie, the city dump. A huge city dump. You’ll never find anything in there, unless it’s, you know, laid out by a map as to time -- the dates were dumped there. And then we did Dakota twice.

And, this last time, I was so sure we found her. On the slide show, you’ll see a helmet with my children and my family, and our -- there were -- it’s the worst thing a parent or anybody can go through to find your -- to try to find your child in a garbage dump where it stinks, because there’s rawhides and everything. It’s a garbage dump.

At one point that the bucket went in and I thought it was her head. I went to stop them, and I screamed, and I said, “Stop.” I went -- I went running and told them to stop because I thought that was her head. And, I went running, and it was a helmet that was covered in black, whatever it was under, but I thought it was her head. And, I would have took that. I would take anything.
I’d take anything from Jennifer.
Throughout the years, we found bones.
That’s hard. At one time, we found, kind of, a piece of a pelvic bone out in Swan River on the highways there, because that was one of the routes they said they took. It was, kind of, a piece of a hip bone or the pelvic bone.
And, I took it.

And, we searched. My husband and I, we searched. We just -- it’s just non-stop. If I’m not working, then we’re out searching. And, I had that pelvic bone. And, we got a room, I said, “I’m exhausted. I’m tired,” I said. So, he said, “Let’s go to Swan River.” He said, “We’ll rest for tonight. We’ll start again in the morning.”

So, we did, and I took that hip bone and I put it on the dresser. I said, “I don’t know if that’s you, Jen. At least, we get to sleep with you one more time,” I said. So, maybe -- they may think that’s crazy, but that is my little girl. I kept it until they said it wasn’t.

We have so much -- like, so much of what -- where we’ve been, and what we’ve done and how we’ve been just let down by the authorities so many times. And, I can prove the times that we spoke to them, but time does -- it prevents us today. But, I’ve got the proof when we spoke
to them, the time and the conversations.

And, October 5th was the last call that I got from Jennifer’s detective that was on our case. My husband said he wanted him removed at one point because we thought he wasn’t doing enough. We had no idea if they were doing anything at all. Like I said, we lost hope in the RCMP already.

October 5th, just a few weeks ago, he called. We were in Winnipeg. He called me to tell me that he was being moved to Project Devote (ph) and that somebody else was taking our case. But, I said, “The only reason why you’re calling me is because the Inquiry is coming, and I know that I’m going to” -- I said, “When I get over there, I’m going to mention all of this.” I said, “I’m going to talk about the times you said you were doing something and you didn’t, because these guys came to me seven years later and you didn’t do a thing.”

Any information -- the same corporal would ask me and my husband, “Can you find out the names of so-and-so? Can you find out where they’re living?” Asking us to go and investigate and find so-and-so. “Can you -- we got -- we have the proof.” He said, “Can you go and ask or can you find so-and-so? We need to talk to him.” That’s his job.

We did. We found them. We could find
anybody. This world is a small world and you can find anybody because we -- and we never heard of these people or these names. Whoever we needed to speak with, we found them. We found them and we spoke to them. Whether they knew something about Jen’s case or not, we still spoke to them.

I’m just about done. This is -- to you, this is a book. To me, this is worth gold. This is gold. It’s because it has times, dates, names when Jennifer first went missing and how she was let down by the RCMP. It documents the time that they finally got -- officially took her case. They didn’t take it right away.

And, you know what? Through the years of all of this, it cost us my children. It cost my husband and I. There was a -- where they need us, we can’t be there, because we’re in the bush. Family times, birthdays, family events, Christmastime, stuff like that. Birthdays there’s some -- we don’t -- we’re not there because we’re in the bush.

And, they said to me, “Mom, you died. You died nine years ago. When Jen died, you died. You never have time for us.” I said, “Because we’re looking. We’re searching.” And, I don’t blame them.

This last search, this last summer, this last -- every June 19th, we have a fundraiser to keep our
search going. June 19th. My children pulled out. They said, “Mom, it’s too hard. It’s too hard for us. We’re not doing this anymore.” I said, “Don’t ever ask me to quit. Don’t ever ask me to quit looking.” I said, “Don’t ever ask me to quit. I’ll never quit looking for your sister.” And, that’s just the way it is.

Nine years later, we’re getting older. My husband had two heart attacks, anxiety attacks, stress, looking for our daughter. He’s not the same man before Jen went away, before she was stolen. Night and day, he’s on Jen’s case.

Three months -- at one point, three months, he got I don’t know how many hours of sleep, steady. We totally changed my home around, everything -- it was like an office. He put the couches there, blocked us off. We’re not allowed there. He had cameras like this, cameras, papers. He had everything with Jen’s case. And, he wouldn’t let us in the living room for three months.

I’d wake up for work. He’s sleeping. He’ll get up and start again. Three months steady, steady, doing the RCMP’s job. I say that because I don’t know what they’re doing, if they did anything at all. After three months, he was exhausted, tired. And, I said, “Will, that’s enough. That’s enough now,” I said.

“Just for a while” -- I said, “Just put it
away, just, you know, I want my home back,” I said. “This is too much now.” With a fight -- we had actually, you know, not the physical fight, but disagreement was that, “Okay now, out. You know, that’s it now. You’ve got to make yourself an office. I want my living room back.”

But, these are the things that we went through. And, I’m probably going to say when I go home or -- I wish I should have said -- I should have said this, now I remember this, because it’s not easy. I’m doing my best to speak for Jennifer. It’s not over.

I believe, and that’s my belief, somebody out there knows where Jennifer is lying. Somebody last laid their eyes on her. And, I believe -- until you show me, until the RCMP show me otherwise, I believe they didn’t do nothing and that they failed Jennifer Catcheway, our daughter.

How? Firstly, because they didn’t take the statement when time was of the essence. Time was crucial, because those individuals just left there, that RCMP said -- I said, “I’m here to report my daughter missing.” “Oh, he just left here.” He said, “He just left here a couple of minutes ago,” he said. I said, “What?” “Yes, he just left here. He just said that he dropped her off on No. 6.”

My question is, did RCMP -- if this individual went to report Jennifer that he dropped her off,
did he take a statement from him? Did he say why he
dropped her off, when he dropped her off? Was there any
statement taken or did he just let him walk out the door?
What was done that day that he went? Why did he go to the
RCMP? Why did he feel he had to go and report her? He got
there before me. What was done? Was there a statement
taken? Was there records? I -- I doubt it. And, if there
was, I’d like to see.

They tell me it’s an ongoing investigation.
Well, as parents, I think we have a right to know what’s
going on. It’s been nine years. It’s not a -- it’s not a
highly sophisticated case where -- where you can’t --
nobody can solve it. I believe we solved it. We just have
to find Jennifer. She’s our proof. She’s our baby.

And, I said it once and I’ll say it again,
this inquiry is not going to bring Jennifer home. We’ll
bring her. But, you can move forward with recommendations
that are left here from families. The recommendations,
they -- they need to be put forward, not just put on paper
and on a shelf. They need to be implemented.

If I sound angry, I am angry. I am. I’m
angry and I’m hurt. I’m disappointed. I want my baby
home, that’s all. That’s all I want. I just want my girl.
I just want to bring her home. That’s all. And, we will
bring her home. I know we will bring her home. We started
and we’ll finish by bringing her home. I said, “As long as there’s breath in me, as long as there’s breath in us, we’ll go on searching and we’re going to bring our baby home because she’s out there. She’s out there somewhere.”

I told my husband when they were sitting in the living room. I said, “Do you feel that Jen -- do you feel Jen?” I said, “I feel Jennifer.” I said, “I could just touch her. I smell her. I could just feel her.” I said, “She’s here. She’s close by.”

I know -- I know people die every day. People die. Our loved ones die, but they have an opportunity to go and lay their loved ones down. They put them down in a grave and they have their closure and in time will heal, but not for us. Not for us. Our Jennifer is still out there. And, every time we come to things like this, it’s reopened again. The wound is reopened again. It will always be open. People say, “Move on.” You can’t move on. You can’t move on because she -- she’s there. Jennifer is there somewhere.

I want to thank Chief Hart for supporting us today. He’s been supporting us and inviting us to different -- we went to Regina to -- for Jennifer. And, I really feel a connection with him, because I have -- I feel he has the heart and the compassion for the issue, for the murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls. He has
the heart and that’s what it’s going to take to get things moving, it’s somebody -- it makes a difference when somebody cares with what you’re going through. It makes a difference when somebody is listening.

You know those that you can talk to and it’s just a pay cheque. It’s just a pay cheque, “Yes, okay. Well, you know.” But, you know those who have a heart for this issue and Chief Hart to me is one of them. He probably doesn’t even know I’m going to say that statement. I just asked him to be here. I invited him to be here because I felt that from him. I felt that from Nahanni, and Barb, and my friends and family that are here.

I could -- I wish I could have had them all here, but I thank them for supporting us, and for my children, and for you that help us to get out there with prayer, and financially, we can keep on going, because where do I go for help? What organization do I go to? Who do I -- what door do I knock on?

We had to leave an area to be here. If we weren’t here, we’d be searching. There’s a -- one of the stories was they threw Jennifer in a -- in a well. We heard hundreds of horrific stories about what they did to Jennifer and how they dismembered her and how they decapitated -- they did so much to her. And, we have to listen to that. Whether it’s a tip or whether it’s rumour,
we still have to listen to it.

We got a call 1:30 in the morning. This person said, “We found a grave. You’ve got to get over here.” We left right away, went to Grand Rapids, got over there. And, this is what we have to listen to. He said, “Well, there it is.” I said, “Where? What?” “Right here.” “Right where?” “Well, this is” -- I said, “You called us 1:30 in the morning to come out how many hours away, ten miles north of Grand Rapids yet -- to come and see this?” But, we have to. We have to. We can’t just let anything go, any tip or rumour that comes. We got to -- we have to check up on it.

We left a site to be here. We found a well in the middle of nowhere, a well close to where we’re searching. And, I said, “Oh my gosh.” I said -- my husband -- he’s not strong anymore, not the way he used to. Not in a disrespectful way because he’s strong. He’s -- he’s my strong tower.

And, why I’m saying that is, that well is 10 feet down. We opened the lid and there’s muskrats there, there’s beaver carcasses and it stinks. It’s a well. It’s contaminated. My husband jumped in it. We put a 10-foot ladder, went in there. And, he takes the shovel and he’s digging these carcasses out of there that smells. And, I know it’s hard. He’s got to lift it over his head. So,
he’s cleaning it all, all that garbage in there, because we’re thinking our daughter is in that -- in that well. He dug two feet, and then he pushed a pole in there, and it’s another two feet to go. And, he’s tired.

I said, “We -- we need to get a well,” because he’s got my -- I put my shirt around his mouth and his nose because of the smell. I tried to tie it the best I could for him. I said, “We need a backhoe.” I said, “That’s a tiny backhoe.” And then we had to stop to come here. We still need a backhoe, just a small one, just to get in there. That’s too much work for him.

But, like that -- that’s just an example, we have to -- we’ll go on searching. We’ll go on because that’s our daughter. And, I’m sure every parent feels -- would feel that way, but I wouldn’t wish any parent to go through what we’re going through.

But, sadly, unfortunately, it’s continuing to happen. They’re continuing to go missing, our girls, our women, our men, our boys. Why? Why? I said I wasn’t going to spend all day about Jen, because we’ve got to get to the root cause, why.

I could sit here and I could cry all day for my daughter, but I want change. I know -- I know and I believe in my heart, and you can’t change me, and I believe that the RCMP failed Jennifer that day.
Had he taken a statement, had he questioned him -- I don’t know if he did, because he no longer -- he’s been murdered, so you can’t ask him questions. That day -- this is the question the -- the person that was murdered, that took my daughter -- when I asked him that day, that Monday. I said, “Why?” I was screaming at him, “Why?”

And, he looked at me and he pointed at me, and he said, “Do you believe in God?” I don’t want to point at anybody because that’s rude. And, he said, “Do you believe in God?” I said, “Yes. Yes, I do.” And, he said, “Then, you’ll find her.” Now, what kind of comment is that? That’s how he left me. He walked away. “Do you believe in God?” I said, “Yes.” “Then, you’ll find her.

From that, we took -- we tried to analyze. We’re not experts. We’re not psychologists. We -- we try to analyze. Why did he say that? Yes, I believe in God. Yes, he knows that. I’m a minister of our church. He knows that. So, I thought, “Why is he saying that?”

Let’s go to the cemeteries. Let’s go check. You know, let’s go to the graveyards. Maybe he put her in there. Let’s go look at the fresh, fresh -- all over. We went all over, not just Portage area. We went to Grand Rapids, Swan River, all over, every -- there’s little churches, abandoned churches with graveyards. We went there. We went all over. Wherever there was a church, we
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looked -- because of his statement, because “Do you believe in God?” Then, we moved over to, okay, maybe he thinks I’m traditional maybe or -- or let’s -- let’s go -- so we went to areas like that.

I never wanted him to be hurt or to die. Whatever happened there, I don’t think has any revelance [sic] -- what’s the word for that? To this case. So, I don’t know what happened there. I know that he was murdered and I know that he’ll never answer questions. He’ll never answer me.

He was a loudmouth person. That was his way of intimidating people. But, he’s no longer in the land of the living, so I can’t go to him. And we just rely on people calling us, telling us to check here, go there, and we do. And, it costs money. It costs time. As a government worker, you’re only -- you’re only allowed so much for vacation, vacation time. And, I use it up, my whole summer. So, I go without vacation time for the fall and the winter without, you know, no break. I’ve got to work because I already used up my time searching.

I just -- I’m going to end here because I feel in my spirit that it’s time for me to stop, but I’m going to give an opportunity to my loved ones, my children, because they love Jennifer. They love Jennifer. And, I want it recorded and documented this day because we
suffered a great loss, and it’s our baby.

Somebody stole her, had no right to her, had no right to take her. She could have had a baby. She could have got married, but that was taken from her. Somebody decided she didn’t have a right to live, but she had every right to live.

**MS. TAMARA SANDERSON:** I’m really thankful for today. My mom was able to share and to let everyone know who Jennifer was, who she is. Jennifer is a person. She’s our loved one, she’s my sister, and it breaks my heart to have to be here today.

Years ago, I used to see pictures in the stores of children that were missing and I would just see them as a picture until one day when I got that phone call that my sister was missing and the shock. It’s just a terrible shock and you think it’s not real. And then when she didn’t come home, you know reality is setting in and it’s just really hard.

It’s really heartbreaking to see that this is happening over and over. It’s not just our family. After Jen, you hear of so many other stories of other -- other women. It’s just so -- it’s just too -- it’s becoming more and more of an evident problem that’s out there. This is not just a random act. This is an actual epidemic. This is an actual genocide. Another form of
genocide against women.

And, I’m so thankful today that there is this opportunity to create change because something has to be done now, because this is just unbelievable. And, just hearing on -- just reading people’s posts on -- about this Inquiry, I was blown away, reading how unbelievably ignorant people are to the fact that these girls are missing.

There’s no -- there’s no actual -- for life, to care for human life. A lot of these people may have come from different backgrounds, they might have had, you know, addictions. A lot of them had addictions. It doesn’t matter. They still had life. And, everyone has a right to live and that just -- it’s just very upsetting to see that there’s no one speaking up for them.

And, I’m thankful to see my mom -- as strong as she is, I know it has taken a toll. As she said, I know it has. It affected me personally. It affected my -- my children, my siblings, my brother, my baby brother. He’s not here today. I would have loved to see him sit with us here, but he has been affected. My brother has problems to deal with this whole thing. He can’t take it. He’s been in trouble. And, we need to help the families. My brother is in trouble and it breaks my heart.

But, I’m here today for my sister, to show
that Jennifer was loved. I’m happy her friends are here.
Jennifer loved her friends so much, and her family, her
nieces and nephews. She loved all of them.

And, you know, I’m just -- I’m just happy
that with Jennifer’s case, that something good will come
out of it. It’s not for nothing. It’s not just another
name, not just another story, but something will come out
of it in the end, and that’s what I’m believing for. Thank
you.

MR. WILLIE STARR: Good morning, everyone.
My -- my name is Willie Starr. I’m the brother of
Jennifer. It’s never easy to speak and explain how my
loved one went missing and -- or when I see my family
hurting, how much that hurts me inside. Like my parents
said, we’re all affected and impacted.

Our lives have changed. It’s -- I don’t
know how to describe it. It’s just unreal what we have to
live with every day. I never asked my parents to stop
searching. I know me and my mom were like this. I know
her heart, and I know how she is, and how strong she is,
and -- and she’ll never give up. My dad will never give
up.

So, all I can do is just be there to support
them and love them. And, my siblings, the ones that are
here, we try our best for Jennifer. We love her.
(indiscernible). I usually don’t cry like this. Usually
when I talk, I could talk, but today, I don’t know,
emotions.

Like, when we were -- when we were searching
-- when we were searching for Jennifer in Dakota Tipi, when
Jennifer went missing, it was just our loved ones, our
close family and our friends that went out searching for
her. And, well, we didn’t have much money to provide for
food or provide water, but we did what we could.

A month later, I don’t know if they
explained it already, but there’s a young girl that went
missing here. Her name is Amber McFarland in the picture.
Do you want to show her? It’s -- okay, bring it. This
young girl here too has a family, now went missing from
Portage la Prairie. She went missing a month after my
sister went missing.

You know, and what we seen in the
inequalities that were visibly shown and demonstrated,
there’s something wrong in society. Because we had no
help. Nobody came and helped us. Nobody from the
community come and help us, you know. We -- look it, we
have a -- there was a massive search. It was called their
search because -- I mean, I don’t know if it’s because
she’s Caucasian or what, but the whole community got
involved. They had over 1,500 people show up there,
horses, cops. Everybody was there with food and buses and transportation to and from, you know?

What’s wrong? What’s -- what’s the matter here? What’s the difference between my sister and their loved one? Where’s the equality in society? That needs to change. We’re all the same. There ain’t nobody better than anybody here. We’re all human beings. That was hard to witness. It was hard, because our people, we’re not like that, you know? It’s pretty harsh, man.

When we were out searching too, we were out searching No. 6 Highway. I found skeletal remains in the bushes, laying -- laying upright, and it freaked me out; right? It’s, kind of, traumatic, you know, because my sister, I was thinking and all these things happening.

So, we found these remains of these bones and we took them -- well, we went to the RCMP detachment. I said, “Come over here. We found something. We found these bones, what seems to be a body.” That cop didn’t even believe us then. He didn’t even want to come.

So, I went back, went back to that area, and I took a piece of the knee because it had a bit of cartilage inside of it; right? So, maybe there’s DNA in there or whatever. So, I took it, I put it in a bag and I brought it to them. And then only after I physically shown them that, then they -- then they moved, you know, it was
Another time when we were -- like my mom said, when we were searching from Dakota Tipi to Grand Rapids, it took 30-some days. And, when we arrived there, we asked the cops. I said, “What -- in the 30 days, what did you do for my sister?” He said he didn’t even know. He didn’t even know she went missing. So, there was -- there was no communication between those jurisdictions, you know? So, there has to be a change there too, with how they communicate, the RCMP, and how information is shared.

So, it’s been nine years now and we’re still going. We’re not going to give up. All we want is to bring Jennifer home. We can’t rest. Every day, every day we think about her. There’s not one day that goes by.

Yes, still have -- I know my sister is just one girl of many, many, many, far too many women out there missing. Everybody has their story and wants to share their loved one. And, I feel them when they -- it’s hard to listen to others too, if you know. Like, you feel -- you feel their pain, too.

I don’t know. My hope when I -- when we went to Regina recently, there was a gathering. My family -- well, we were shocked to find out that the RCMP weren’t going to be looked at or wasn’t -- their conduct wasn’t going to be implemented into that -- their mandate. That
was an insult, a slap on the face, because that impacts my family from Day One, you know? We need to follow up on that. Somebody has to be held accountable, you know?

Like my mom said too, we never wished for the man that took my sister -- he has passed away now. We never wished harm on him. We don’t wish that on anybody. It’s just that he could have said something, you know, and now he’s not here to talk.

I just hope somebody knows and somebody will talk. Somebody has to. There’s, like, a culture of silence that needs to be broken of fear, of saying what’s right and protecting those, because it’s unpopular to speak. That’s a lie, man. That’s not being true to yourself, you know? Let’s look out for each other now, you know? Let’s -- men have to -- we have to -- it’s our duty to protect our women.

I just -- I don’t know. Anyways, I just want to wish everybody, you know, the best. You know, keep us in prayer. Keep my family in prayer. We’re not going to give up. We’re going to keep going, you know? It’s not over. It’s not over just yet.

MS. BERNICE CATCHEWAY: I just want to say one thing and have it documented. There’s a newspaper clipping here, the Daily Graphic. I know you’ll say, “Oh, that’s just news. They’ll report anything they want.” It
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1 says, “RCMP deem case a homicide,” Jennifer’s case.

2 But, you know how I found out? I was at
3 home watching TV and they deemed it a homicide over -- and
4 they didn’t talk to us. They didn’t tell us it was a
5 homicide. I was watching the news and Corporal -- I won’t
6 mention her name. The spokesperson for the RCMP said, “Her
7 body could be anywhere from Grand Rapids to Winnipeg. It’s
8 a vast area. It could be anywhere.” That they deemed it a
9 homicide that day.

10 And, I’m looking, and I’m watching TV, what?
11 Could they not have spoken to us first? Could they not
12 have come and knock on my door and say, “You know what,
13 this is what we’re suspecting. You know, we’re looking
14 into this, but we deem -- we have reason to believe, that
15 we’re deeming it a homicide case”? But, no, I found out
16 through the news.

17 That’s lack of communication, lack of
18 respect, lack of compassion for a family. That’s one of
19 the changes that need to be made.

20 MR. WILFRED CATCHEWAY: I just want to thank
21 everybody for -- for being here. You know, we worked hard
22 to have this happening. And, I spoke to Carol Bennett last
23 time about where I’m originally from and what had happened.
24 And, I told her that I want Canada to know what happened to
25 my daughter.
And so, I asked Nahanni, she was there that time, “How much time do I have at the roundtable here in Winnipeg?” And, she just went like this. She opened her arms. And so, I spoke out about where I’m from. And, originally, I’m from Waterhen. It’s about four hours north from here. And, what had happened in Waterhen -- and I know -- I asked my wife to be silent when I’m speaking, because I have to let Canada know, First Nations and -- changes have to be made here in Canada about our First Nations.

But, when I was living in Waterhen, I had a nice home. I had a football field for a yard. I had it fenced until, you know, there -- of course there was alcohol and drugs involved. And, I went into treatment. I had a problem with alcohol. But, when I came out, a lady that worked at (indiscernible) office said, “Do you want to work as a NADAP worker?” And, I said, “What’s that?” “Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program Co-ordinator.” I said, “Okay, I’ll try that.

And, sure enough, I took -- I went to training and I became a counsellor, and I helped the people at Waterhen dealing with their alcohol and drug problems. I used to take them to treatment centres, you know, teaching them about alcohol, what I had learned.

But, as time flew, when I worked at the
office, I’ve seen poverty, I’ve seen lack of housing, lack of, you know, pretty much everything, and money wasn’t flowing as it should. Our elders were sleeping in their jackets just to keep warm. I mean, these are old people. And, stuff like that I did not -- I didn’t like seeing stuff like that, and I thought, well, what’s going on? You know -- there was no bad meetings happening, there was no reports as to where the monies were going. But, just to make things -- I want to clarify what really took place back in 1996. And, I need glasses here. I need Canada to listen. You know, there’s two sides of the story.

At the last election of November 15, 1993, four new councillors were elected. Shortly after that, the four new councillors discovered major discrepancies in a band financial records and evidence of mismanagement. There was a lot of misappropriation of funds.

A decision was made on March 18, 1994, by majority of council of the quorum to have the chief signing authority revoked. This decision was enforced by the legitimate band council resolution of the Indian Affairs on March 23rd, 1994. In accordance with this decision, band financial records were to be seized by a quorum for an independent audit.

On March 25th, 1994, the chief incited his
supporters to break into the band office and destroy band financial records before they were -- could be seized.

Since March 25th, 1994, the following incidents have occurred: break and enter at the band office; burning of documents; barricade of the band office; assault on quorum members; unlawful confinement of quorum members; threatening and terrorizing quorum residents. All of the above was committed by the chief supporters.

The chief lied to the public, Indian Affairs and band members. He has misled the people into believing that he has support of the majority of band members when in actuality, the majority were undecided because the lack of information.

Due to all these overwhelming factors, the supporters of the quorum members want to separate and form their new band. They know from experience that there will never be any hope for equality for them as long as they remain part of the existing band. Up to date, there is considerable number who have signed for separation. And, this happened back in 1996.

We protested. We put it in front of Waterhen band as you come in, and we allowed traffic to go in and out. It was the police that did the barricade. 10 miles from there, there’s a community of Waterhen. They’re the ones that barricaded from -- people from entering in
and out.

    And, this is the Indian Act, and we’re supposed to live by it. Because -- just be patient. This is a band council resolution. This was signed by the quorum of council, removing the former chief because he forfeited his office. He missed three consecutive meetings.

    And, according to the Indian Act, if you had missed those meetings, you’ll forfeit your position as chief. This is a legal -- as legal as it gets. The Commissioner signed it. And, this was in 1995, before the police barricaded the road in 1996. So, Harvey was no longer chief and that’s by law according to the Indian Act. And, from that point on, he became an imposter.

    Why I’m talking about -- about this is because my little girl, Jennifer, was taken by Child and Family Services because we stood up against corruption and abuse, what was happening in the reserve. We stood up against that.

    And, I went to jail for that. My family went to jail. And, they took my little girl. CFS took my little girl. My wife went to jail. And, we were taken and we were painted as gang members. How is that? Like, I’m a NADAP worker. My sister is CFS. And, councillors, like they’re farmers and they’re fisherman and -- you know? How
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is that we are gang members? But, my little girl was taken, like I said, with CFS.

There is an article here I want to read here, back in 1999. It’s an article from Obituary Arrest. There’s a history of Manitoba judges being biased against Indians as reported in the findings of the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Report.

And, I believe that because the judge that sentenced me, I stood up in front of the court, I said, “You have no right to sentence me or anybody here because you’re in conflict. You were a Legal Aid lawyer and you had prior dealings with band members on both sides.”

And so, he can -- you know, this is racism. Racism is evidence in our case. We were guilty before we walked in there. And, I want to read another word here, because our elected officials, our councillors, went to jail, they were assaulted. The chief that was appointed, Gordon Catcheway, was -- there was a hammer. They removed him physically from the office with a hammer.

You know, this is an elected official. This is Canada. And, the police didn’t lay charges. They didn’t -- they just stood by and allowed anarchy in our reserve, and they called us displaced.

As of today, we never went back to Waterhen. We never moved -- nobody moved back since 1996. And,
they’re still protesting. They’re not paying rent because legally it was wrong.

I want to read an article here, and these are the words. It’s not only in Canada this is happening, but this is words from a South African, Nelson Mandela. This is what he said. “Provides a powerful echo to Indigenous viewers of the Canadian legal system. As Mandela stood awaiting the sentence that would see him in jail for 27 years, he said to South African court, ‘The white man makes all the laws. He drags us before the courts and accuses us and he sits in judgment over us. In this courtroom, I face a white magistrate. I am confronted by a white prosecutor. I am escorted into the dock by a white orderly. The atmosphere of white dominion lurks all around in this courtroom. It reminds me that I am voteless, because there is a parliament in this country that is white-controlled. I am without land because of white minority has taken the lion’s share of my country and forced my people to occupy poverty-stricken reserves, over-populated and over-stocked, in which we are ravaged by starvation and disease.’”

But, this is — reminds me, you know, how -- what happened when we went to jail. Our elected officials, our chief, our real chief isn’t in Portage right now. He’s -- you know, he’s labelled as displaced. How can that
happen here in Canada? What good is the Indian Act? What
good is this?

You know, changes have to be made. Which
courtroom -- you know, if we hire a lawyer, they’re going
to lose their licence for two years. Lawyers even have
fear in siding with us. Canada has to listen.

As for myself, I’d like to see, if we have
to, to make changes. We might have to go to Ottawa,
Supreme Court of Canada, whatever it takes. But, Waterhen
has to be looked at. And, there’s facts. There’s footage
to back up what I’m saying.

But, my daughter, CFS -- you know, when CFS
took them -- when -- we went to Court and we appealed it --
we were going to the Supreme Court of Canada and they
dropped the charges because why? Because they knew they
were in the wrong what they did with us. They knew they
were in the wrong.

But, I just don’t want to get off track
here, I know we’re here for the missing, and our laws have
to change. That’s why the reserves, First Nations, you
know, you look at them, poverty. And, when we try to stand
up, where do I end up? I’m displaced. Somebody is getting
rich off our people.

But, I want to stay focused on the missing.
You know, I love my little girl and I’ll never stop
searching for her, you know, there’s not a day that goes by, and it won’t be over until I bring her home. And, it won’t be the RCMP. I guarantee you that. Thank you.

MS. BERNICE CATCHEWAY: Maybe you don’t understand why he got onto all of that. He had a point. He did have a point. Had it not happened, what -- in ’96 and -- when we were removed, we went to Portage. Had we been at home, maybe this didn’t take place. That’s why he brought that out. And, it’s still happening.

We were banned from our reserve and still today, it’s like that. And, my husband is hurt. He’s frustrated. Had it not happened in ’96, maybe our Jennifer would be alive today. So, again, there’s -- we feel that, you know, there’s mistreatment and bias, and all of that.

But, at this time, I want to change the -- I would -- we have a slide show and I want to have a moment. And, if we can ask the technicians to get it ready, please. I want to introduce you -- some of you may not know Jennifer. I want you to introduce you to our daughter, Jennifer Catcheway through this video.

I don’t know if you can see it with the lights. I’m not sure if we can turn the lights down or -- this is important. That’s our baby.

(MUSICAL PRESENTATION)

That’s our Jennifer. Thank you for
Hearing – Public
Bernice Catcheway et al
(Jennifer Catcheway)

watching. She was -- she’s not just a picture on a wall
somewhere or a newspaper clipping. She’s not just a
statistic with the 1,000 or more missing. She was our
daughter.

When is it going to stop? When is it going
to stop for our women that go missing and murdered? When?
What is it going to take? How many more of our young women
have to go missing? How many before there’s a change? The
change has to happen now, because when this Inquiry leaves
Winnipeg, it’s going to another area and another area after
that to hear the same story of their loved ones. How many
more inquiries have to take place before something is done?

Phoenix Sinclair, how much millions of
dollars? $5 million or $7 million to that Inquiry? And, I
don’t know if those recommendations were all put in place.
This is $53 million. This Inquiry that’s costing $53
million. And, at the end of the day, will there be change,
more recommendations that are going to sit on the shelf?

By the time this is all said and done, they
have a report in November, I think it is. How many more
missing will go before -- before this Inquiry is done? We
have to say enough is enough. Enough. There’s one too
many sisters murdered, one too many.

My cousin, Chris, is one that’s missing in
Winnipeg. He’s still missing. How many more? It has to
stop. The laws have to change. Something has to change. The laws are protecting the criminals, and they’re getting away with it because they know the system. What -- at the cost of what? My daughter? Your daughter? Who next?

We’re not safe. Our women are not safe anymore. Nobody is safe. Thank you so much. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: From the Cashton Community, where I’m from. And, I’ll speak English. And, if Canada had implemented all the recommendation, there’s over 1,200 recommendations for the past four years -- for the past 20 years, we wouldn’t be sitting here. We would be celebrating instead.

So, it’s something that we’ve been failed for a long, long time, for too long, that I’m not ashamed to say it where I’m today. And, I have to say that no family should go through what you went, with all of you sitting here. After listening and receiving your truth, this is your truth for me, and I honour this sincerely.

And, still today going through that pain with no answer, no help and no support, I don’t think — it’s not only the RCMP who failed you; it’s the country, it’s Canada where I think all your family deserve health support, the way you believe in your God, the spirituality, the physical and mental support seem to be missing, because we’ve heard stories that they had one day of health, some
none, and you don’t deserve that. And, for me, I have to be frank and honest, I have that same concern.

Like I said yesterday, that I don’t want to see those recommendations, I want them to be alive. And, when I’ll be free moccasin after this mandate, I will be pushing, pushing, pushing as a mother and as a new grandmother.

And, people were saying for many, many months that the Inquiry won’t be able to look what the cops or the police did or didn’t do. I have -- I have to say, if you agree with your family, of course, that we do not reopen cases and become the police. First of all, I don’t have that expertise at all. But, we have the capacity to examine, to look what they didn’t do. But, in order to do that, we need to have the files. We need to have information. We need to have the facts. It was so powerful, the image that you shared to Canada, how a Caucasian, a non-Native, get the support, the help, the exposure and all of it, including the police, when our own sisters, daughters, mother are missing don’t get that at all or little bit.

So, if you can, we could meet again. The people from the Inquiry could come back here and meet with your family and exchange what we could gather with you and to ask the hard question when we come back here to the
institution.

**MS. BERNICE CATCHEWAY:** I’m not a -- I appreciate -- appreciate that, and yes, but I’m not a lawyer.

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Me, too.

**MS. BERNICE CATCHEWAY:** I’m not a lawyer and I’d like to get legal counsel as to -- because I know -- I know you can change records. You can -- you can do anything. My book is 2008, but it’s easily -- I could have changed and said -- but those are the originals. So, I’m not a lawyer, but I appreciate your offer, and I’ll speak with my family and -- but I also need legal representation.

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** That’s so true and so normal. I open my heart and the door to help me, to help the other Commissioner to ask the right question when we’re sitting with the RCMP and the other institution.

**MS. BERNICE CATCHEWAY:** And, I just want to say one more thing before we move on. Mrs. McFarland, I know she’s not Native, but we grew to be close friends. We stopped our search in order to help -- in our search at the time. So, she’s a beautiful, beautiful family who lost a beautiful daughter, who wants answers as well.

And, I always encourage her to come to these things. She just said, “No.” She got hurt and
disappointed by RCMP, and she said, “I will not, no more.” This is -- this is her daughter, Amber. And, she’s -- they’re a beautiful family. They’re a beautiful family who suffers just like the rest of us.

**COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:** You’re right, and it happened in Highway of Tears where a Canadian family lost a beautiful daughter. And, since that day, they’ve been walking with the women who lost their loved one on the Highway of Tears. And, when we’re working together, the stronger we are. So, yes, you’re right, totally right.

Thank you so much. (Indiscernible).

**MR. WILFRED CATCHEWAY:** I just want to add something here before -- the Indian Act has to be resolved with our Aboriginals. It’s time that we did. This is a journalist that -- that wrote this, and she’s been a journalist for 40, 50 years. But, this is what she wrote, “Especially Aboriginal issues, we have to make changes in the future. There is no question about that. But, we have to know what we had in the past and how it worked. The dark side of Canada, the lack of kind of understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians and the damage that it has caused over the years, and it’s still evident in parts of the country. Frustration still lingers on both sides of the divide. The government is a failure politically. I think it’s not complicated. Look at the
Indian Act, and the most shocking thing I ever saw is a
document Natives had to sign when they had a child. It
basically makes their child a ward of the state, a ward of
Canada, rather than their child, you know, that kind of
still Colonial attitude where it’s the government that’s
going to say, we will look at the Indian Act. We will see
what that means. We will have a real discussion about
that. We will see if we need that anymore.”

But, that’s what she said. You know,
some changes have to be made, because look what happened to
Waterhen, you know? I have family there. I have cousins
there -- still living there. And, I have nothing against
them, you know. You know, I still say “Hi” to them and
stuff. But, there has to be a change.

And, I’m asking the people of Canada, the
Aboriginals, you know, to get together, to work together
and to make changes happen, especially for our missing. My
daughter, it hurts -- every day it hurts, you know? And,
it hurts to see my wife cry when I’m out searching.

You know, one time, she was in a bush and I
heard her cry, I thought she found Jen, and I went running
and running, but she just broke down. All I could do is
hug her and tell her we will find her, you know?

And, I could relate to other murdered and
missing people. You know, one of the men, his daughter is
missing and he said, “I have no clue what happened.” Like, she came to the city, she was outside on the street, and that’s the last time she was seen.

But, at least, I told my wife, we have like, you know, something to go by. We have tips. But, he doesn’t have -- he didn’t even have a clue. He has no tip, you know? And, I just felt bad for him. So, it’s heartbreaking, very heartbreaking.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Thank you.

Merci beaucoup. Alors -- sorry, in English. Thank you ---

MS. BERNICE CATCHEWAY: You’re welcome.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: --- from the bottom of my heart. And, my English is getting better. Thank you so much. And, we have gift for you. And, our Elders and myself will -- to all your family here, we’ll share something for you. Thank you very much.

MS. BERNICE CATCHEWAY: Thank you. Thank you.

Sorry. We’re -- I’m not done. Sorry, sorry. Sorry, can I get your attention, please? I want to introduce to you somebody that’s very important in our lives and our family’s, who grew to be like a sister to us -- for me. We’re probably the same age. Maybe I’m -- to me, she’s just like my sister and a family friend who supported us and took care of us and helped us along the
way, that gave us direction in who to talk to and -- you
know, really took care of us and begin to love us and our
Jen, where she’s part of our home and our family.

And, I want to introduce you to her, and I
asked her if she could say a few words on our behalf,
because I’m not a politician, I’m just a mom who wants to
find her daughter. So, I’m not a psychiatrist,
psychologist, I’m not a politician, I’m a mother who wants
her daughter home.

But, at this time, I’m going to ask if we
can give a few minutes to Nahanni Fontaine. If you could
just come, please? I’m sorry, I -- I forgot. I -- I asked
her to -- to come.

MS. NAHANNI FONTAINE: So, I mean, everyone,
I am -- my name is Nahanni Fontaine and I am presently the
MLA -- the NDP MLA for St. John’s. Prior to that, I was
the special adviser on Indigenous Women’s issues. And,
prior to that, I was the Director of Justice for the
Southern Chiefs’ Organization which is where I first met
Bernice and Wilfred.

They’ve just asked me to say a couple of
words, and not from a -- not as a family member obviously.
I mean, we are family, but not -- I’m not in any way, shape
or form speaking on behalf of MMIWG, but there has been a
request to say a couple of words, and actually from some
other families as well.

I say this with the utmost respect and love for everybody in this room, for everybody that’s doing this work. This is very difficult work. It is very critical work. It’s very important work. And so, I lift each and every one of those folks that are doing that work.

I also just want to first and foremost acknowledge every single family member that’s in this room that is across Manitoba, and certainly our family members that are across Canada right now from coast to coast to coast.

I also just want to acknowledge all of the Elders that have been doing really, really important work this week. And, I know that our Elders all around have been doing really critical spiritual work and supportive work, and I -- I lift you up and acknowledge each and every one of you for your work that you’ve been doing in love and in kindness and in respect.

You know, just prior to coming here this morning, I was actually at a breakfast fundraiser, Women in Support of Equality, and actually we had two speakers. One was Loretta Ross, she had just been appointed the Treaty Commissioner, and Kim Pate.

And, Loretta Ross spoke about reconciliation. She spoke about the treaties. And, she said, “For
treaties, we always have to understand the intent behind it, the truth behind it. In reconciliation, we have to speak about the truth.”

And so, it is in that spirit that I come and I say that, you know, there have been some families certainly this week that have felt that they haven’t been supported in maybe a thorough way, in the best way that we can do.

And, you know, I was reminded by my sister, Sandra Delaurent (ph) who said -- you know, often I’ll say, well, we’ve been working on this for 30 years, if you look at the Highway of Tears. But, she gently reminded me that actually we have collectively been working on this for 50 years.

If you look at Helen Betty Osborne, if you look at some of the first cases of missing women on the Highway of Tears, those go back actually the late ’50s; right? So, over 50 years, MMIWG families have been quietly, loudly, courageously, resiliently, have been from coast to coast to coast demanding action on MMIWG.

It is only because of MMIWG families that we are here today, along with Indigenous women who have stood with families, and have been those lobbying, and that voice in support of families. And, in that, as Michèle knows, when we began the discussion on the National Inquiry, it was to be able to give families that opportunity to share
the stories of their loved ones; right? Because across the
country, everywhere you go, there has been pockets of
opportunities for families to share, certainly here in
Manitoba, certainly in other places and in other places,
not at all.

So, one of the things about the National
Inquiry was to give that opportunity, to give MMIWG
families the opportunity to get their loved one as a part
of the Canadian historical record.

The other piece of it, as you know for a
National Inquiry, is to unpack, deconstruct why we are
where we are today. And, you know, a necessary point or
part of that is allowing families the time, all the time
that they need, to be able to do that unpacking.

You know, I -- I was speaking with a family
member that came public here to do her hearing. And, she
was saying to me afterwards, “You know, I wasn’t asked the
right questions. I didn’t get to share what I wanted to
share because, of course, families are in the midst of that
trauma; right?” And so, to help them, kind of, navigate
through all of those interconnected and intersecting issues
in respect of why we are where we are today, she felt it
wasn’t done, and we heard that a couple of times from
family members.

Now, I know, and I think everybody in this
room knows, and I think everybody across Canada knows, to be brutally honest, the time frame that was instituted in respect of the call for the National Inquiry for two years is completely unreasonable.

It is unreasonable that in this country, we would look at an Inquiry in respect of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls from coast to coast to coast, which spans generations and generations and generations, to think that we could establish the infrastructure, right, all of the terms of reference, the offices, the staffs, the Commissioners, all of these things, execute the hearings in a good way that families have as much time as they need, each and every one of the families that want to participate, write the reports, do the trauma-informed work, so that each and every family member, after they’ve given their presentation or their hearing are taken care of. To imagine that we could do that in two years is so beyond unreasonable and so beyond disrespectful.

And so, I think from the families that I’ve spoken to, there is a call on this government and this prime minister who I believe wants to work in a good way with Indigenous peoples. There is a call to do this in a good way. This is the only chance families will have. This is it. This is it. People across Canada need to know that this is it. It’s taken us 50 years to get here and
this is it.

And, people will say, “Oh, $53 million. Those are my taxpayer dollars.” If we need to pay more, then we pay more. If that means that we give families who attend travel, support money, bus tickets, if they want to come in wherever they want to come in, let them come in. If they want to stay at the hotel, let them stay in. If they need money, if they need cigarettes, if they need diapers, if they need child care, that’s my taxpayer money. Give them the money, because this is it. This is all we have.

And so, respectfully to everybody, we call on this government to do this in a good way. And, I say Migwetch for the opportunity.

**MS. BERNICE CATCHEWAY:** Thank you, Nahanni.

Thank you.

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Merci beaucoup, Nahanni. Very, very, very powerful words, and I agree. I agree with you. You’re right. Merci.

--- **Exhibits (code P1P03P0501)**

**Exhibit 1:** Catcheway family video commemorating Jennifer, presented to the Commission October 20, 2017 in MP4 video format at 918 MB, duration 9 minutes 35 seconds.

**MS. DEBBIE REID:** Hello. Sorry. We just wanted to advise everyone that the lunch is actually out
now. As you can tell, we’re a little behind schedule, but that’s because we’re trying to afford the families the opportunity to actually speak. And so, lunch will be out here now and available. So, we’re going to break for at least the 30 minutes so that people can eat, before we come back here and reconvene. And, although we’re behind schedule, that’s where we’ll continue to -- and also for the families, in the Family Room, lunch is also available.

---  Upon recessing at 11:53
---  Upon resuming at 13:09

Public Sharing Circle: Marie Annharte Baker, Vernon Mann,
Melissa Cook, Sue Caribou, Forest Funmaker

Heard by: Commissioner Michèle Audette
Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe

Grandmothers, Knowledge-keepers, Elders: Florence Catcheway,
Thelma Morriseau, Belinda Vandenbroke, Leslie Spillett

Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

MS. THELMA MORRISSEAU: We’re going to get started, so we’d like to just ask people to get settled and -- so we can give our attention to the families that are up here now to share their story.

I understand, sir, you’re going to offer a prayer. I’d like to ask you to come up. Migwetch.

MR. FOREST FUNMAKER: (Speaks in Native language). I greet all of you on this grateful day that we
get to share these stories of the murdered and the missing. And, I want to say on behalf of the people of this territory, Anishinaabe, Dakota, the Cree, we understand there are many, many stories that have had success, that have had despair. There have been tears. There’s been blood in this territory.

And, I want to acknowledge that long history of our people here and the spirits that are on this land the way that we all used to talk about those stories. The mythologies that are here, I want those to be acknowledged by you to understand that this land is vibrant with life and love, and that with all of us together connected through our minds, through our hearts, that we can grow with strength and heal ourselves, our communities, our young people, looking to the past, to the present, to the future. Please, Creator, bless us.

**MS. THELMA MORRISSEAU:** Migwetch. Thank you for that beautiful prayer. Pat.

**MS. PATRICIA CARIBOU:** I’m also going to say a prayer for us today. (Speaks in Native language). I ask that you hold us and care for us as we share today for Marie and for Forest, and for their -- and the grandchildren. I ask for help today. I ask that you surround this place with loving hearts, that we listen in a good way the witnesses, and also to hear this powerful woman as she shares and gives us wisdom to help, so that we don’t have to have any more of
these kinds of meetings. Tumontu, I thank you for all that is life and for all of us here. Chi-migwetch.

**MS. THELMAMORRISSEAU:** Migwetch for those beautiful words. It’s always a good way to start our afternoon, so I thank you very much.

**MS. CHRISTABIGCANOE:** Commissioner Audette, this afternoon, we have a number of families and survivors before you. And, I would just like to give them the opportunity to introduce themselves to you.

I’m just going to start here with Vernon. If you could pass the microphone along when you’re done?

**MR. VERNONMANN:** Hi. My name is Vernon Mann. I’m here on behalf of Tanya Nepinak who was my partner and the mother of my kids.

**MS. MELISSACOOK:** Good afternoon. My name is Melissa Cook. I also go by Mel Cook Crate. It’s my writing name. And, I am here as a living witness as a woman who survived Winnipeg. And, also, on behalf of my cousin, Ashton Cook, who was missing last year and did pass away.

**MS. SUECARIBOU:** Good afternoon. Sue Caribou. I’m here to speak about my niece, Tanya Nepinak, and both my parents that were murdered. And, I have men that were murdered. And, my nephew was missing, but he’s found. And, I’m going to go home to Pugnawana (phon) for his funeral.
I’ve had a lot of family members in my life. I’ve been going through this since 1970-ish and it’s now 2017. And, again, I’m going home to a funeral. This one at least has -- the family has a closure, but we still don’t have a lot of closures in our family. Thank you.

MS. MYRNA WHITEHAWK: Good afternoon. My name is Myrna Whitehawk, and I’m here to provide support to Marie Baker.

MS. PATRICIA CARIBOU: Patricia Caribou, and I’m here as a spiritual support for Marie.

MR. FOREST FUNMAKER: My name is Forest Funmaker, and I’m the son of Marie Baker and grandson of Sophie Shorty.

MS. MARIE BAKER: My name is Marie Baker, and I’m speaking on behalf of my mother, my missing mother. Her name is Sophia Harriet Shorty from the Little Saskatchewan First Nation.

MS. BELINDA VANDERBROOK: My name is Belinda Vandenbroek. I’m a health support, and I’m here to support Sue Caribou.

MS. KAREN HARPER: My name is Karen Harper. I’m a support to Sue Caribou.

MS. PAULA GAGNON: My name is Paula Gagnon and I’m here to support my mom, Sue Caribou.

MS. SASHA OLSHEN: My name is Sasha Olsen, and
I’m here to support my mom, Sue Caribou.

MS. LESLIE SPILLETT: Tân’sí. I’m Leslie Spillett. I’m here to support Vernon and Sue and Marie.

MS. ANGIE HUTCHINSON: Hi, I’m Angie, and I’m here as a support for families.

MS. BELINDA VANDERBROOK: And, I also want to mention Sue’s sister, the mother of Tanya Nepinak, Joyce Nepinak. Sorry.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So, this afternoon, we are just going to offer the opportunities for the families to share with you, Commissioner, what they would like to and so, please.

MS. MARIE BAKER: The last time I saw my mother, I was nine years old. So, it’s been about 60 years over that time, so it’s about 1951-52. She’s an Anishinaabekwe. My mother (indiscernible) Ojibwe, and she was married to my dad who was of Irish-Scot ancestry. He is now deceased.

I always thought my mother was coming back after I last saw her. Like, there was never a formal search made. I’m thinking I was about 18 maybe, when I kind of thought maybe she wasn’t going to come back, but I’m not sure.

And, I didn’t know at that time. They didn’t use that word, “abandonment,” so I never thought of that as a
Hearing - Public
Sharing Circle: Annharte
Baker, Mann, Cook, Caribou & Funmaker

way to describe maybe what happened to me. And, I never even
used that concept until recently of being motherless for a
long time.

I think back to when I actually met one of my
other relatives who had lost her mother. Her mother was
killed and her body was thrown in the river. And, that was
the first time I was able to speak with another person in a
way that I knew would understand, because she had lost her
mother, too.

As I learned over the years now that many of
my urban relatives have become either murdered or missing.
That cousin I told you about, her sister was part of that
horrible murder called the “broomstick murder.”

I want to say a little bit too, why they’re
not here to say anything. Like, my cousin is now, of course,
deceased, but the other ones, my other cousins. Most of them
say that all of this is just talk, that no action, nothing
will, you know, occur, so they just don’t want to be part of
it.

The reason I’m here, it’s not because I
believe in this inquiry in any way. I’m here more or less to
speak on behalf of my mother’s spirit. So, my mother was --
you know, had gone to the Elkhorn Residential School. So, if
I’m going to attribute anything about, you know, who
destroyed my mother, definitely they did, and while supported
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Caribou & Funmaker

by the Anglican Church.

The Zulu people in South Africa, they call that time or what happened to them as “soul murder”. They don’t say that here very much, but that’s what I felt. My mother, you know, really experienced violence at that time from this governmental -- you know, where the government, you know, wanted -- what did they say? They wanted to kill the Indian in the child. And, they, you know, tried to do it by that soul murder.

The loss of my mother severely affected my life and also that of my son and grandchildren, and I’m really grateful that I was able to raise my son here, Forest Funmaker, and a lot of it was through the kindness of others. He has three children. And, while our family in a way is very small, I have a larger extended Indigenous inter-tribal family, you know, through my life.

I have kind of spouted off the last few days. It’s not that people weren’t trying to help me, because I ended up falling down and hurting my ribs, and so on. I have to use my walker, and it just hurts when I try to lift myself up, and then ended up another terrible thing to happen.

I lost my tooth and then so that part where the tooth was started getting infected, so it’s -- I’ve got an infection going on in my mouth here. And, I was just hoping that it wouldn’t affect my way of speaking. So, I’m
not doing too bad. I was able to go to the doctor yesterday.

So, maybe I’m only partially, let’s say, sorry for how I spoke to some people today or in the past year. The reason for that is because just my own tension, you know, increasing. I’ve tried very hard to, you know, prepare for this time.

I took, you know, some type of -- I went to some helping sessions to learn more about mindfulness, which helps you have a balance. But then, I don’t know. About two weeks later, I took another workshop on how to be fearless. So, I think I’m practising a bit when I’m not quite sure when I may need to do that. But, all I can say is be careful.

But, that’s another aspect of this spirituality, and I’m so glad my son and Pat could open this up for me, because I’m such a disbeliever in spirituality. I think that’s one of the ways in which I suffered, because when you grow up and people around you are either keeping too silent or they’re not telling you what you need to know, you do learn to disrespect, you know, this, you know, so-called honesty that people will say they’re doing, especially in their spiritual practices. So, when I went to Sunday school and did all that kind of usual thing because, again, my mother did ask me, I felt that I have had experiences, but -- like, helpful spiritual experiences. But, I -- actually one time, I went out and made myself a button. It said,
“Medicine Woman - Not.” I know, why? But, it seemed that the kind of work I was doing when I was speaking, some people like “Oh, you’ve got to be a helper. You’ve got to be a healer.” So, I felt that I had to notify them that no, I wasn’t doing that. I was just a writer, and I wanted to find a way to express the loss of my mother and the way Indigenous women, Indigenous mothers are treated in society.

In some way, I think, gee, they’ve got a nerve calling themselves a society, a government and that, because to me, the settler organizations like that, they’re based on so much lies in their history about not just who we are, but themselves. I don’t know how many of you went out there to celebrate 150 of that, 150 years of that covering up the history, but I certainly didn’t.

So, I think that I am in a way grateful, that maybe that was a good thing that I became a sceptic because of what happened to my mother, and I saw nobody doing very much about that or others, other native women that had been killed or lost.

And then I became an advocate too in the child welfare system, you know, to deal with it. I worked in that system only to find now that those when -- while we were trying to have a native approach to it, to save the children, you know, from the institutions they were being put in or foster care, adoption, that our very own people collaborated
with government and social workers and that. So, it was very
difficult facing that lateral violence that’s -- that happens
in our community. If you don’t go along with, you know, some
of the people, then they make sure that you don’t get work,
you don’t have a voice.

I’m very lucky to have become a writer and
have an access to, you know, being able to express myself.
There is a whole thing about, like, why I don’t believe in
these things, like, I guess it’s called forgiveness, you
know, reconciliation, because I don’t want to sound greedy or
windigo, but I want to see money. I want to see our cash
here, you know, compensation, redress.

And, there are several Indigenous -- other
Indigenous writers that do not want to go along with this,
you know, idea of reconciliation or accommodation. I guess
they believe, as I do, it’s just another setup to take more
land and to, well, kill more of our people.

I especially like it when people say, “Oh,
they have hope that things are going to get better.” And,
the kind of information, knowledge I’ve gained is there’s
still more land they want. There’s still more resources they
need. This is all around the world, and they’re not going to
stop with an inquiry. So, I guess I’m urging people to
resist and fight back as much as they can.

When they had the Truth and Reconciliation
announcement here in Winnipeg, it was in this hotel. I think it was this one actually. It had a different name. They were passing out these Kleenexes and all the stuff. And, I said, “No, I’m going to fight. I’m going to fight for my mother.”

So, now, when you come to this thing, they’ve even got bags that are labelled “Tears.” So, I guess we’re moving right along with that idea of, you know, that maybe we shouldn’t be fighting so much over there if there’s not changes that we need.

I’m still somewhat involved, because I’m disabled, and so, I have other -- you know, somewhat working on that. And, I just started working with some youth, because we didn’t have organizations at the time where the youth and the seniors would speak and share an inter-generational, you know, idea.

Actually, I feel sad that none of them are here. But, again, who wants them here? Nobody asked them. I see them here the other day at one of the sessions. They came briefly to check in. But, nobody makes a space for them. They’re our youth. And, these particular ones, I found, are very -- I would say they’re just right into finding out what’s going on in society.

And, while we formed a youth council when I was younger, in my early 20’s, many native people didn’t want
us to speak out or to learn anything. They thought they were doing everything. So, I’m kind of glad we bypassed their advice.

And so, I said -- and, I feel now I am part of this circle in my life now. I can participate with other youth who want to know what is going on, and how do we work together to get the social justice and compensation, what we need to reunite our families and rebuild our communities. That’s what I’m about and not here to put it under this carpet that they’re showing in front of us, that that’s what we’re supposed to put our, you know, concerns or our tears. Maybe they’re going to take those packages of tears.

I know I did not say much about the circumstances of my mother’s disappearance or being missing. That had to with -- as I attended this, I lost trust, lost belief in the credibility. So, I am -- what I want to do for my mother is speak to her, because I feel her spirit is here. And, you know, and that I’m grateful for being part of what I call the “mother line” of my ancestry. I claim my Anishinaabe -- being Anishinaabekwe to my mother, and I’m very grateful that I have that, and to my other women relatives. I guess I would start with this piece I wrote, because I included my mother in my work. I’m a writer, poet.

“My child memory convinces me that I spoke my mother language, Ojibwe, with my mother. I remember always
hearing the sing-song speak of my aunties and cousins as they worked in a house. My father spoke English, and so, I no doubt experienced a bilingual upbringing until my mother disappeared. Then, I learned silence. That loss must be close to what Lindquist referred to as the end of mother tongue fluency in a person, especially a child. Did I feel numbness? Did my breath stop as it does in near drowning?”

Actually, I think the legacy for my mother would have been that I could have been a bush lady. My mother knew how to trap, you know, how to, you know, take care of, you know, like plants and, you know, make some medicines. I could have learned that from her. So, that is, you know, explaining part of my motherlessness.

And then I have this other thing that I just could briefly mention here in this one piece of writing where some guy was following me around to the Winnipeg Square, and I went through that trauma of re-experiencing that stalking.

Anyways, I kind of saw myself as a person that had been like -- you know how they have with magicians where they saw a person in half? That’s what I felt; someone had sawed me in half and I could not reconnect at times. And, I had to acknowledge at time I was a sole survivor when no one was around to defend me. I guess that idea of being split became a larger inspiration for my writing, because I saw the person that was getting hurt wasn’t always me, and I
wrote it like this.

“I keep forgetting, so I compact it all. She is not that proud, so she bears my wounds. She reaches for the trauma, but manages to mould how the scab didn’t quite do her in. She’s so lucky for that gift. She’s a buddy to my body. She was the one that wore the black eye. She coughed for me at work when I almost passed out from a broken rib injury. She will convince me that I am angry for nothing. She accepted abuse for me. I’ve got nothing to talk about. She does it all to keep it straight. She does not always write it down like a police investigation,” which of course they don’t do, we know. “I must have to be ready for her to break the awful news to me that many people attribute her anger to me and confuse me to hell,” because they say, you know, how it is not really allowed to be angry about, you know, what is what you’ve lost or that.

Like in the case of my mother, nobody -- I don’t think I’ve heard anybody here mention that, you know, how my mother lost her identity through that, you know, that Indian Act, and that I only became entitled to become part of my community in 1985 through the Bill C-31. And now, my son is applying for Bill C-3 and, of course, we’re waiting and waiting.

I also wrote about, you know, how when my mother’s memory would come into my work. Like, I would like
to read you this.

“I would also remember the next-to-last time I saw my mother. She was supposed to visit me that time she got out of jail. The Mother’s Day card I bought with satiny-feel floral teapot, I pressed the sponge-padded sponge up and down, milking the belly teapot for a mother-daughter feel. I, just for the fun of it, dust off her memory, brush her bones, ever tickly, make her fancy laugh again and again. I set up archaeology expeditions, but digging up mom takes work, news of where did she go. My birth mother, I find stuck in a heart-shaped pin cushion she made. I talk straight to the very needles. She left memories in me, deep hurts, stabbed my heart, velvet soft and worn.” So, I have that precious, you know, pin cushion she made. It’s part of my alter, my shrine for my mother.

I feel that I have been able to express, as much as I could, the pain of other women, young women. And, in this one, I ended it off with, you know, this kind of sensitivity I developed when I heard these social workers talking about this young girl they had found on the edge of the city, and they wouldn’t acknowledge that she was a native woman, probably Saulteaux. As I found out later, she was from a reserve next to us.

So, I had to sit with them in that activity we had. But, as I wrote here, “I found the dead girl in me.
She wasn’t killed by my words.”

So, I’m not sure when to work in the recommendations, but I would like to ask my son and friends, support people here, just to say something if they would like or else -- I don’t know how we’re going to do that, if we would have a time for recommendations separate from what I would like to say?

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** If you’re okay with it, then we can let each of the family members do what you just did, and then we can come back and ask for recommendations.

**MS. MARIE BAKER:** Okay.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Is that good?

**MS. MARIE BAKER:** Yes.

**MR. FOREST FUNMAKER:** Thank you. I was thinking about this moment, supporting my mom. And, she emailed me the notes. And, as I looked at the computer screen and I was reading, it was like, I guess, looking at a whole history that I never really got to know.

The image that I have of my grandma is from a few photos that are etched in my mind. And, I’ve been to the reserve of Little Saskatchewan, and I’ve forged connections with my cousins and all of that, and it’s been good. I mean, I have that as a part of who I am.

There’s a part where when I was 12, they all
Hearing – Public
Sharing Circle: Annharte
Baker, Mann, Cook, Caribou & Funmaker

1. speak Anishinaabe, and it’s such a beautiful language, and
they speak it just like nobody’s business, you know. And,
I’ve been brought up in the city, probably mostly in
Minneapolis, and there’s place names there. And, one of the
lakes is called Nokomis, Lake Nokomis.

And so, I remember one time I was going to
college. And, we were driving around in this old Chevy
Nova. And, we had gotten some beer, and we were just
sitting out there, and it was just like so peaceful to be
there. And, my mom, being who she is as a writer, inspired
me to write poetry myself.

So, I went back in time when I got a little
bit older. I remember that time of writing that poem while
being on that beach of Lake Nokomis. And, this is probably
the only connection that I would have with this woman, was
right then and there.

And, after the experience that I wrote of
this poem, basically saying that her living in an urban
experience was similar to mine, and that I didn’t really
realize I was retracing some of the steps that she probably
had done throughout her life.

Living in the urban experience is tough.
And, I know for families, you know, you want to be close
together. You want to have that kinship. I didn’t have
that kinship, so I had to, like, make it up. And, I think
that’s the worst part about it, is not having, you know,
that person to give you those gifts, that language, to show
you, you know, to share with you the laughter, the stories,
you know.

You know, I think for all these women that
are missing and all of the kids that have to suffer as a
result of that loss, or these families that have to not have
that piece, the part of what we do to continue on, I want
there to be something for my kids to understand.

But, then, it seems like there’s already a
piece missing for them as well, that I can’t fill that void
for them because they won’t be able to experience that
person for their influence on their lives. And, I think
that through that void, I’m not having that in my heart.

It’s tough, because you’re always wanting to
have that kind of experience with that person, good or bad,
you know. It’s like I take dysfunctional at this point, you
know, to have that kind of experience with somebody. And
so, even to have a little bit of a relationship would be
good, you know. But, just not to have it makes it hard,
harder to really go through.

And, you know, through all these things that
I’ve gone through, I had to stick to my own kids who are
distant. A couple are in British Columbia. One is in
Saskatchewan. And, I don’t know. I don’t know if they are
victims of this. I don’t know if I filled them with enough
love. I don’t know. That comes from the void. I can only
trust.

And, as you heard my mom talk about, like to
fight, that’s probably the biggest part that I take with all
of this, is to carry on and to move forward. And now, I
work with kids. And, every day, you know, it’s like I want
to hype them up to be looking forward to their futures, to
treat people nice, to appreciate what they have around them
in this life, to know that, you know, they have a religion,
a spiritual practice connection with the land, the spirits.
Our gods are all around, you know. And, I feel that, you
know, I really like what you guys got, you know, here for
this kind of procedure, to help people to understand that
there can be something done.

So, I just wanted to let you know that, and
my kids know that, you know, I think our Indian people, you
know, need to go forward. And, that’s what I wrote to them
in this, whatever it is, Chat Room or Snapchat or something
like that. I’m not real sure about it. Getting older now,
so it’s all starting to get foggy, what the names are for
all these things.

But, I did try to relate, you know, like, you
know, as if every moment is my last or I don’t see them
tomorrow. Try to be as truthful as possible with them today
to say “I love you. I love you.”

And for them, you know, I think the biggest part, and the biggest part is to experience the joy, the pain of our lives. And, you know, we will survive these moments and grow stronger from them. So, I guess, that’s what I was trying to write to them. And so, I basically said that to them.

It’s, like, “I want you to understand that your grandma is going through a thing with this inquiry, to talk about your grandmother.” And, they’re going to need to know that, you know, you never had that experience. I never had that experience with her. And, all I knew was that she had possibly committed suicide and jumped off a bridge.

The only thing I kind of thought was, you know, that maybe she had partied too hard, and just then somebody had done something to her and threw her off of that bridge into the water. I don’t know if it was by the railroad tracks.

And then when you travel around, you feel, like, is this where she was at? Those kinds of things. You wonder about these stories. And, I guess just trying to find a connection, you know, has been part of the hardest part for me as a young man. And, even growing and knowing what my mom has searched for all this life, you know, to get to that connection with her mom. But, you know, she even
saw her, you know.

And, I didn’t even have that chance to be with her, to sip tea or to, you know, have her make, I don’t know, moose meat soup or, you know, to have those things. I never had that kind of warmth with her. I can only imagine it now. And, that’s what I wanted to make sure that my kids understood that, you know, we can’t go back, but hopefully, they’ll go forward with strength.

So, I think I’ll end it there, but yes, I love my grandma.

**MS. MYRNA WHITEHAWK:** My name is Myrna. Marie is my dear friend. I think we’ve been friends for probably nearly 35 years. And, I tell you Marie is one exceptional person. Despite her talk here today, we’ve journeyed a lot through our discussions on the loss of her mother and the searching for her mother. I’ve helped her in ceremony, in looking for her mother. We’ve travelled, like, to Ontario where her mother used to go pick berries. We’ve journeyed with some of her relatives to Little Sask.

And, she really developed a good relationship with my mother, because my mother was probably the same age as her mother. And, my mother was very close and very fond of Marie. And, Marie also really, really taught us a lot, because I was raised on the reservation and Marie was raised in the urban area. And I went to residential school; she
didn’t.

So, we were a good pair in terms of my telling her probably what her mother experienced in residential school, and also through the stories from my mother. So, she was kind of able to gather some of that knowledge of likely what her mother experienced, and also told her, you know, “I think your mother was probably very, very smart because of what -- where you’re at today.”

Marie is a very, very smart woman, very intellectual. She taught me a lot about reading, being a rebel, being sceptical. And, that’s really helped me in my work politically, in my writing. You need people like Marie, you know. She’s helped a lot of my family. She’s helped a lot of women in Winnipeg.

She’s dragged me to Oklahoma, to a writer’s conference, to North Dakota where we were cooks for the Sun Dance lodge-keeper, so all those journeys. She tends to think less of herself, but really, she’s an incredible woman and I’m really, really proud of her.

And, some of the recommendations I’d like to make are -- I came from Saskatchewan last night, and I was -- because Marie and I were talking about her presentation. And, I said to her, you know, “As we speak,” I said, “our women are being murdered right now, and our women are being exploited sexually by drug dealers, by johns and by our own
people."

And, also, when you look historically at the murder of our women, our women have been murdered since the White Man came here, because there’s records of the murders of our women, and it goes back to the 18 -- 1700’s that I found records where no action was taken against the people that murdered the women.

And, I would really like this Commission to look at some kind of a telephone line where people can phone in to talk about and report about their missing and murdered women and men, because right now, people are dying in our communities in high numbers. It’s genocide going on with drugs, and nobody is saying anything. Health Canada has no concern. A lot of mental health issues, no concern. There’s no action today as we speak here, and our people are dying.

I’m sure that if you set up a confidential line, you would get a lot of reports. It’s just that I think we need to take action, rather than having -- rather than just sitting here and talking about some of the missing, murdered women. Right now, it’s happening in our own communities and probably in the urban areas. Thank you very much.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** We’re going to afford each family to say their first part and then come back; is
that okay? Yes, if we could give it back to -- oh, sorry.

**MS. PATRICIA CARIBOU:** So, then, I’ll speak

now just to finish off my part then. And then it’ll go on
to Sue?

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Yes.

**MS. PATRICIA CARIBOU:** Okay. So, yes. So,
it’s been my privilege and honour to know Marie. And, she
gave me one of the greatest gifts yesterday because her and
I met on a professional basis where I am a clinical social
worker, and an Indigenous healer, I call myself. And, we
met many, many times, and it’s always been a privilege to
learn from you, Marie.

She worked for hard to grieve and to honour
her mother. And, I’ve seen the way she can use her words is
just -- it’s amazing. I would recommend -- the gift that
she gave me was that she said there’s people that came into
her life that have nurtured her, and she counts me as one of
those people.

And so, that is what I would recommend. I
would recommend that there would be helpers out there that
would really love our people, love each other, love our
people, not for a dollar, but to really care for them and
believe in them. And, that’s what she said to me yesterday.
She said, “You always accepted me,” and I did, and I do.
And, a lot of times, we don’t have that kind of care, that
kind of -- for our own people.

And so, that’s my recommendation is that we have whatever it takes, the clinical counselling, the ceremonies. And, for myself, I do Reiki and I do Hawaiian Healing Arts that our people deserve to have everything to heal and to love and to be whole once again. Chi-migwetch.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, if we could come to the other families, so they can share too, please?

**MS. SUE CARIBOU:** Hi. For me, the justice have failed me right from the start. My mom gave me up because of residential school, and I’m grateful. I was angry for a long time, but I’m grateful because I had two families, two moms. They denied my real mother education, because she had some kind of disease. But, they took me anyways to residential school.

So, I experienced a sober, wonderful life with my auntie and that my real mother gave me up, too. I had a beautiful home in High Rock where my mom had eight gardens and one with all vegetables. We built our own log cabin as a family, my brothers and sisters.

And then they took my brother, my real brothers and sisters, to residential school. So, my real mother turned to be an alcoholic. She was very abused, abused relationship. And, both my real mom, my dad, were murdered in 1979.
My mom took me back when my late brother, Ovik (phon), was born. I ended up being a young mom at age eight, because my parents were alcoholics. Sometimes, my mom was used as a target with a gun, and I wouldn’t let my baby late brother see that. I would always take my baby brother for a picnic or camp out, blueberry picking. He was my first child, my late bro, and I still haven’t begun to heal for him, because the justice system failed him also.

His baby, my eight-year-old niece, was murdered because they failed my baby brother. They kept taking my nephew to the nursing station. My brother knew there was something wrong with him, but they just kept sending him home. My baby brother died five months after my eight-year-old niece was murdered.

Then my niece, Tanya Istil (phon), the justice system failed her. We had a lot of broken promises on her disappearance. While I was searching for my niece, Tanya, I lost my home. I gave all my residential money to my kids. I didn’t spend a penny in any negative way. I thought that residential money was a slap on the face, because I’m still affected.

I have arthritis. I have broken bones. I have got scars all over my head. And, I’ve asked for so much help from governments, from organizations. I got receipts, original receipts, where I bought my home for my
children and my grandchildren, because they never
experienced what a beautiful life you can have when you just
live off the Mother Earth. I wanted that for my kids.

I complained to the RCMP to help me. I
complained to the Legislative Building. I turned to a lot
of people. Nobody bothered to ask me for my receipts,
bothered to want to help me, because I’m going against a
white man that took my home, my children’s home, my
grandchildren’s home.

I still have my original receipts here. And,
my kids, they got robbed of everything that I suffered for
in residential school. I wanted my kids to have something
that I suffered. White man has it still to this day. I’m
not allowed to go to Lekabon (phon).

That white man molested his granddaughter.
Now, if it was a native man doing that, they would be locked
up. No, he’s still out. He tried to kill me three times
for items; my cottage, my vehicles. I was left with the
clothes I had on, and that was it. He tried to kill me
three times, and he’s still living comfortable in my kids’
cottage. His daughters have all my kids’ furniture, all my
kids’ vehicles.

They say that no Indian can ever afford
things like that. Well, I did something positive with my
residential school. I didn’t want it. I wanted my children
to have a better life than what I did. My children never
got to meet their grandparents. My baby brother died of a
heartache. My brother-in-law, Bert, died of stress, cancer,
health problems, because my niece, of all the broken
promises.

I never grew up with a grandfather, because
he was murdered. A lot of my family, men, my nephews, my
late sister, they’re all sweeping my family under the rug,
giving the white man my home, my kids’ home, their vehicles.

And, again, different organizations are
fighting for this money. They’re ripping our families apart
that are going through heartache after heartache. This is
missing and murdered. This is not about blood money. These
different organizations are ripping our family.

We’re family. The families that have a loved
one missing or husband murdered, we are family now. We’re
going through the same thing, but different organizations
pick and choose which family they want to help, which they
don’t want, and I’m sick of that. I’m so sick of my loved
ones being used for blood money. I call that blood money.

And, the white man still has my children’s
home. I can show you all the receipts, every proof I have
that what I did with my residential money. He’s still
living comfortable. He’ll still be able to spend time with
his grandchildren that he sexually molested. Now, if it was
a native doing that, he’d be put in jail for years.

I want my children to have a better life than what I had. I’ve been going through this since 1970-ish. It’s 2017, and I’m only still talking about my parents, Tanya. I don’t have -- I’m not given enough time to talk about my other loved ones that were murdered. This concerns the men and the boys. They’re human beings.

I just had a nephew missing last week. Thank God that my family, the Hart family, are going to have a closure. But, I’m going to go home to a funeral again. It’s tragedy after tragedy. And, we’re still going through tragedies, us families, missing and murdered families here, because these organizations are tearing us apart. They’re using us. They’re using our loved ones like blood money.

Some families that used to come up to me and talk to me, now they’re just brushing me off, because this organization is helping them better than this organization that I’m dealing with. You know, that’s called blood money you guys are taking. It’s sad that my loved ones still have to go through this tragedy.

All the families in here, all the ones that are missing their families, no closure, and their families that have been murdered, they’re still going through tragedy after tragedy, because they’re being ripped apart.

We’re all humans. We should all come
together and work as one, one as whole, work together. How else are we going to ever get anything done to find our loved ones, to solve these unsolved murders, if we keep being ripped apart by different organizations, by different leaders, broken promises that we get? We get these promises to make us happy, to shut up for a while, just like the residential money. It was thrown, like, to us, to shut up, a slap in the face.

But, I’m still suffering every day with my health, and my loved ones that were murdered, and still no closure today. I have health issues. I have to have a heart spray. I have high blood pressure. I have restless nights, not knowing where my loved one is.

I’m scared of that white guy to come and finish me off one day, because I’m fighting him for the cottage. I’ve got no money to fight. How can I fight him when he has everything? But, meanwhile, I’ve got receipts here, written document that no white person will even bother to look at, take that time to look at my -- what I did with my residential money. I wanted a better life, something for my children and my grandchildren. That got stolen from them, too, like our stolen sisters and our stolen brothers still happening.

I want justice. I want the next generation to have a better future than what I had in my whole life.
I’m 52, and I was a young mom at eight years old. And, I’ve lost a lot of loved ones because of what we’re going through, murdered loved ones, nobody charged for my loved ones. Nobody cares. They can just keep doing this to us all the time.

They think it’s okay that they get so much money to -- for what? Where is that money going to go? It sure ain’t going to go to any of my loved ones. I’ve got to beg to go home to another loved one that was missing. I’ve got to always beg to go home to a funeral when a loved one is murdered or missing. Meanwhile, you guys are given a lot of money.

And, my kids have no grandparents. Their dad, my late husband, the family, how come they weren’t charged for body snatching? They stole my late husband’s body and took off with my husband’s body while my kids were running after their dad.

Nobody charged those people. Nobody ever charged my ex for trying to kill me three times. Nobody is looking for my niece. My God, I’m just so tired, tired of fighting for justice. My kids and my grandchildren and the next generation, they deserve a better life, a better generation than what we went through.

I was in ’60s, foster home to foster home, residential school to residential school, now missing and
murdered and a victim, and I’m still a victim, and all the
broken promises the government has given my family.

My sister Joyce is so angry. She don’t even
want to be here because of the broken promises that the
government gives my family. Thirty-one days, they were
supposed to dig out the Brady landfill. They quit on the
day of my beautiful niece’s birthday. Ten days. That’s not
thirty-one days.

The white guy charged me for assault.

Meanwhile, he assaulted me. And then the police told me if
I sign these papers, he’s not going to charge me. They’ll
let me go. I can’t even ask the police for help. I’m
terrified of the police, the way they treat -- they’ve been
treating me and my family. I don’t trust. I don’t trust
our law enforcement.

I always tell my kids, if anything happens to
mom, “You damn look into it, in the law enforcement. Don’t
give up.” They’re always hiding. But, when it comes to a
white man doing harm to a native, oh, shit, they celebrate.
They’re letting him enjoy my children’s home, my children’s
struggle.

I made damn sure my kids graduated. I
volunteered at their schools. They taught me how to read
and write. Residential school never taught me anything but
abuse. I wasn’t in a classroom long enough to learn
anything. I told my kids to bring homework, teach mom how
to read and write. They became A+ students. And, I
volunteered to make soup and bannock in their schools. The
students were always looking forward to that.

I tried to turn my life the best way I can
for my kids, have a sober life, do something with that
residential slap in the money for my children. It got
stolen again, got taken away again.

My friend, my supporter, Belinda, she’s the
only one that had helped me with a lawyer, to get a cab to
go to my appointments. She’s been there for me 100 per
cent. And, any organization, she’s not even in any
organization. She does it from her own heart. She has a
big heart. She’s not after blood money.

I want my kids’ home back. I want that man
charged for trying to kill me three times. I want my niece,
Tanya, to be searched. I want all those promises that they
promised us. I want a better future for the next
generation. I want the men and boys to start counting in
this missing and murdered, because they are humans.

Thank you, and one day, one day I tell my
kids, when I die, I’ll find my loved ones. I’ll show
whoever is still alive; I’ll come to their dream. I want
some justice for our people. Now, let’s start working
together as one, and quit tearing the families apart, and
put that money into good use, please.

MS. MELISSA COOK: I hope you guys can bear

with me. I’m just going to read what I wrote. I put some
time and effort into this, and I understand that we’re
running late and there’s more people to speak. In my
writing also, it’s a very safe place for me.

My name is Melissa Cook. I’m from Fisher
River Cree Nation and Grand Rapids. My father is a
residential school survivor, and my mom attended the
Missionary School in Grand Rapids.

In April of 2007, I lived in the north end of
Winnipeg. By my own resolve, I was a patient at the Aikins
Street Clinic. I had gone there to ask for help with
compulsive coping behaviours that I had: drug abuse, self-
harming, night terrors, all resulting from sexual abuse from
my stepfather from the ages of eight to eleven, and physical
abuse from my biological father starting at the age of one.

At the age of 24, I had tried to press
charges against my stepfather, but the Crown prosecutor
refused to bring him back to Manitoba, because they didn’t
want to pay. I was devastated.

Today, he walks free and he works for the
federal government as a systems engineer. He has the
highest security clearance that there is in the government
of Canada. And, I was not allowed to warn the two children
that he lived with or the women that he had taken on as a wife.

In May and June of 2007, I was diagnosed by three doctors, including the medical director of the Health Science Centre, Dr. J. Simm, with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and an anxiety disorder as a result of the physical and sexual abuse that I went through as a child.

On August 5, 2011, I had already left my abuser at that time, because there were more than one boyfriends and partners that I had. He was also a product of the residential school system.

I was visiting a cousin in the northwest area of the city. There was just the two of us, and we were watching a hockey game. A woman showed up and she provided me with marijuana that had been laced with something, and I didn’t know. I overdosed. I stopped breathing. I had a grand mal seizure, and I was transported to the Seven Oaks Hospital.

Despite the fact that I had no jacket, no shoes, no money, I was asked to leave at 6:30 a.m. on that cold fall night -- morning. It was dark and it was cold and I was alone. Nobody knew where I was. And, I lingered in the entrance because when I went outside, I was so cold, and I had no shoes, and I didn’t know what I was supposed to do or where I was supposed to go.
So, I went back and I begged them to help me. And, the worker at that time only got annoyed with me, but I was persistent, because I didn’t want to go walking by myself. I still had the heart monitor stickers attached to me. After a lot of begging and asking, I was granted a taxi slip.

Two months ago, I received my reports from that time that I asked for, and I determined that they had my mother’s name and number. They had my medical history, including my doctor’s reports saying that I had PTSD and anxiety, and that I had been asking for help for many years. And, they only thing they wrote, they chose to write on my medical history was that I had a history of crack abuse, did not ask if I was okay, and then they sent me walking. And, those are their words; they sent me walking.

Fonassa Bruyere, Roxanne Fernando, Aurora Finch, Terena Silva (phon), Carolyn Sinclair, Lorna Blacksmith, Tanya Nepinak, Hillary Wilson, Penny Osborne, were names of women that had been found within hundreds of metres or had gone missing within miles of that place at that time. The next month, they found a body right where I was, where I was supposed to walk by. Sean Lamb was active at that time. And, they told me that I had to walk with no shoes and no money.

In the spring of 2012, I was involved in an
altercation with my same abuser, my ex-boyfriend, who had
stolen my purse, and it was at his residence and they called
the police on me. The police took me away, and I was sent
to the Martha Street, on Main Street.

The police beat me up. I had no jacket. I
had no purse because my ex had it, and they would not help
me. This is one numerous times that I suffered abuse at the
hands of the Winnipeg city police, berating me, abusing me,
sprained my wrist that night.

They took me away and after spraining my
wrist and roughing me up, which was so normal for us women
at that time and it still is, they told me that I had to
leave Martha Street with no charges at 4:00 a.m. It was
March. It was freezing. I had no jacket. I had no phone.
I had no money, and nobody knew where I was.

They made me walk from Main Street to North
Main, and I walked within 200 metres of Sean Lamb’s front
door that night, and nobody cared, and nobody knew. And, I
later found out that’s where they arrested him and that’s
where he lived, and he was active. And, they were finding
bodies before and after that. But, I was nothing that night
to them. I knew not to go to the hospital. I knew not to
go to the police. I was alone.

“Were Known or Believe to Have Been Known
Prostitutes.” “No Serial Killer.” “Body Found in Winnipeg
Identified as a Prostitute.” “No Link. No Connection.”

These are all headlines from the newspapers and statements from the Winnipeg city police at that time.

Tina Fontaine had also had run-ins with the police days before she died, and they too disregarded her, and she did end up dead. They failed her.

Cameron Greyeyes, this last summer, is the girl that I work with. She was in the news because she was missing. High risk for sexual exploitation is in the social media and on the news, posters everywhere. The police attended her residence while she was missing with seven police cars and 14 officers, and not one of them recognized her, said anything, and they left her there. Were they really looking for her? I don’t think so.

I survived, but barely. And since then, I’ve had a son. And, I think of the women, my fallen sisters who did not make it. And, I am them and they are me, and I’m that girl, and I’m that woman. And, I’m here to fight the silence, and I’m here to fight the status quo and the stigma attached to what we do to cope with the unwanted and uncalled-for abuse.

We cannot depend on the system, the health system, the CFS system, the justice system, to help us. I’m living proof and I’m here to tell you that today. They are not designed to help us. While awaiting the inquiry, I had
a recent brush with the justice system. It has reminded me
that I am still at risk, and that I may always be. And, I
will always have to treat myself with kindness and
understanding when they won’t. And, I need to treat myself
with empathy. And, this is what is missing in my journey
with these systems and my abusers. To me, it is one and the
same.

We need to teach the youth what has happened
and about dependency on these sick systems, these sick
systems, these power-and-control systems. We, as First
Nation people, need to take our power back. And, that’s the
message that I’m here today -- here for today, and that’s
the message that I repeat to our women and girls that still
feel alone and still struggle. And, one-by-one, we can
begin to change the status quo, and all of the loss and
death will never be in vain.

And, I’d also like to say thank you for
finally treating me with dignity and respect by allowing me
to come here and giving me a safe place for me and my
children, because that’s honestly something that I’m not
used to from the government.

And, when I was 24, I wrote my father a
letter, putting his abuse of me back onto him, handing it to
him. And, that’s what I’m doing right now, and I’m handing
this abuse back, because I refuse to carry it any longer.
And, the women and the girls that I deal
with, I repeat this to them over and over. And, I really
acknowledge the message from this lovely lady sitting over
here and the one sitting next to me that lateral violent is
rampant in our organizations, in the government and the
prison system, and that until we address it openly and
honestly, that it’s not going to go away. Thank you very
much.

MR. VERNON MANN: Hello. I’m Vernon Mann.

Tanya and I had a relationship on and off for 15 years. We
have two children together. My son is now 20 and my
daughter is 16. And, on September 13, 2011, she went
missing from the west end in Winnipeg. About eight months
later, Sean Lamb was arrested, and he admitted guilt to
murdering Tanya, along with two other girls.

And then afterwards, when going to court,
they stayed the charges against him because, apparently,
they stayed -- they paid him for a statement, so a statement
couldn’t be used in court. And, they started, I guess,
denying the charges. So, they just stayed the charges, and
there’s nothing ever since that’s come from it.

They were supposed to search the Brady
landfill, and that was just -- it seemed like it was just to
shut us up, and they did just a quick search that didn’t
really turn up anything. And even when we were going there
before the search happened, one of the detectives even told me, and he said right to me, he said, you know, “Once we do a search, that’s it. We’re not searching no more. We’re not going to search any other places. This is it.” So, we were totally failed by our justice system, not only with the search, but with Sean Lamb as well. Now my kids have to grow up without a mother.

It’s just, I don’t know. I feel like we’ve just been failed by all of it. And, we still have nowhere we can go to pay our respects to her, because it’s a landfill. It’s a garbage dump. Nobody wants to have to go and visit their loved one at a garbage dump. I just feel like something needs to be done. Nobody should have to go through this.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So, I just want to thank everyone for sharing your story, but I would also like to pass the microphone back now to the family members for their recommendations. And, can I start with you, Marie? If they have any additional ones they’d like to make, please feel free to do so.

MS. MARIE BAKER: Migwetch for asking for the recommendations. And, although I said I didn’t like this inquiry, I do feel like I -- like, I feel honoured that I can say something on behalf of our missing relatives.

I want to recommend that there be an actual,
whatever they call it, research, investigation into the term, “trauma.” In a way, it’s just been thrown around, and it’s not clear to people what that might mean. And, I also feel that, you know, that whole issue has to be addressed in terms of what people might need for their health care.

And, as far as the Commission, even though I said I don’t believe in it, I would -- like I said, I wouldn’t mind seeing some cash, you know. My friend told me at a residential school, the residential school survivors received, I think it was -- the way she mentioned, it was $10,000.00 right out, for them to pay for healing.

And, I said, “I didn’t know that. I thought they were just getting, you know, another type of compensation but that, you know, they would get extra for healing.” And, I actually got something for that, too, like as a survivor. I was a child of a survivor. That’s why I got a year of help from Pat. And, I would say, you know, in a specific recommendation that at least a year or how many sessions that would be, would be available. And, I know others have said other kinds of help need to happen.

Right now, I’m a member of a group called Medicine Bear Beadwork Group. And, how it has helped me is it’s been part of a family experience for me. We don’t talk that much about things that happened to our families. But, as it turns out, many times we just -- we’d have a dinner
together, and we work on different kinds of beadwork and other kinds of crafts, like making skirts, and we could help going to certain ceremonies.

I can say I’m very appreciative, because I don’t always have the money to pay for transportation to go to sometimes the ceremonies. But, it’s just the idea that we’re together, that we’re building family among ourselves.

So, I would like to see more activities like that, funded and encouraged. I know there is one that I thought is part of a larger, you know, concern for me. I would like Winnipeg to have a senior centre, an Indigenous senior centre. I might not even be around long enough to enjoy it, so you better hurry on that one.

I feel that through this centre, we could do some work that I said was intergenerational, especially for me, like, because I have done this myself, the story telling. I know some people would say, “Ah, it’s just entertainment,” you know, whatever. But, no, to me it’s like helping our people have a vision, because these are -- you know, there were stories that helped me survive, and I was so glad that I heard these different stories.

They didn’t all come from -- you know how some people think, oh, it has to be a super Indigenous, you know, traditional,” and they go on and on. But, I found especially other Indigenous writers had stories that they
could share. And, I had several that helped me. I have a vision of my mother and, I guess, how I could, you know, have this vision of her coming home or being brought home. 

One of them is from the women in the southwest. There are stories there they call -- it’s about a yellow woman society, and that if someone does leave the community, and there are stories of them leaving and coming back. That is how they -- there are stories that honour women like that.

And, I actually found out accidentally that they do even have a clan that honours black sheep, because I remember when I was there, and they said my mother was a black sheep. After I said that, a bunch of them ran up to me and said, “That’s our clan.”

So, I just -- I’m telling this, because there are ways in which our people can bring teachings like this to more people. But, that idea of grieving, like I said, with the beadwork, we need a lot more activities like that, like to commemorate our loss.

There was one. I still think it’s, you know, kind of far-fetched, but I want it anyway, is I want some kind of acknowledgment at each band council of some of the people that have gone missing or that have been murdered.

I also want, you know, some other ways in which to commemorate our losses. One of my favourite ideas
is that there be a garden somewhere in Winnipeg where families could go. And then mother prevention tactic. Again, people say, “Well, what’s that got to do with anything?” But, to me, I think it’s so important.

What I want in a lot of reserves is to have a Grandma Safe House, that’s what I would call it, where there would be a place there. If somebody was experiencing, you know, either violence or the threat of it, they might be able to get to it. I’m not saying, you know, that it would be maybe that easy to get there, but at least there could be a place like that.

And, again, of course, the whole concept of mediation in our community, not just because of the lateral violence that’s so common, but that some of these programs, before they get funding, they should have a plan on how they’re going to mediate among the people that are using their services.

We had a situation before that where it seemed everybody was more equal, like, in terms of their income. It’s not that way anymore. If you don’t have a certain income, in many Indigenous communities, you’re just considered a bum, even maybe a welfare bum. And then, of course, when you get older, you get a pension, so that’s, I guess, another kind of bum to them, you know, that you have this limited income. There’s very few supports for that.
So, they have to -- we have to look at our attitudes towards each other and how to be more inclusive. So, I would call that community or family building. We need to support all these kinds of efforts, although it may seem, well, what's a story got to do with helping anybody? But, I am, you know, aware because I know the education system well. There is nothing in there like that.

Even you go to these Indigenous Studies programs, they don't even help our people get those skills anymore. They say, “Oh, people died off that do that.” They don't realize that we can bring back, you know, those skills and use them again, especially now we need, you know, to see a vision for ourselves.

I guess there’s all kinds of things can be said about the police. I don’t know why, even though I don’t like police, I would like to see more Indigenous women working. Even if they weren’t the cops on the beat, what if they were just working in the offices?

I know I had to work at City Hall once, a summer job, and I had a ride in the elevator with the police. It was very difficult, because they use so much cologne. I guess they’re pigs, right, for some reason or other. But, anyways, I used to suffocate or going up the floor. Maybe there is something of -- take it easy on the cologne, boys, you know? But, anyways, I -- well, I guess
that would be a recommendation. We have to find ways so they have more humour, you know, some kind of humour.

I’m so glad I was with my son and my friend here, because we were able to share some ideas and that, that really help our, you know, ways of being in a group like this when the tension is so high, and there’s a lot of intensity and it’s anxiety-provoking. Well, me, I’d like to see more T3’s around. See my street influence here?

But, yes, I would like to say this way to have these meetings, like people look at it and make recommendations on how to, you know, handle these kinds of meetings because, of course, there would be, as I said, hopefully more meetings to look at grieving and just information that we need about -- that follows from this kind of community sharing.

I would like, again, just like as I go to Medicine Bear, I would like to see, you know, where we can meet together and make some of these commemorative things like -- well, for me, I would like shrines that we might have in our own home, pictures, you know, of our people. We’d be encouraged and helped maybe to do that. So, I’d like to see that improvement, because we’ve had so much silence about all this. There has to be a way for us to grieve more in public and to get that support that we need.

So, as I said, as I am a writer, of course I
want other people to write. I want all kinds of stories
that are there, so our young people can read what happened.
Okay, I know Canadians want to fiddle around with their
history, but our people need more stories about our history
and culture. And, this is not just for recreation. This is
because we don’t have a school or educational system that is
giving them that.

Even when they had their residential school
thing, I thought, oh, we’ll have stories from the people
that went to residential school. Not very much came out of
that. And then they’re hiding it in places. They’re
archiving it, they call it.

No, we need to recommend that our people are
getting, you know, help or, you know, building this
knowledge base on what we’ve experienced here, how our
people are healing, how they’re, you know, being able to
rebuild their communities after this. And, I’ve learned
something from being here from the families. Some of them
have been able to share that.

So, again, that’s what I’d like to see, is
recommending that there be some support systems after this,
you know, inquiry. I know they had that thing after Helen
Betty Osborne. Nothing happened hardly there. And then
when J.J. Harper got killed, the guy that killed him was a
police officer. All we hear, “Oh, he’s drinking somewhere
in a bar in the southwest, you know, and seeing ghosts,” you know? So, whatever happened there? Like, did the police ever do anything to change their attitudes, you know, towards our people, be more respectful? No.

So, there’s still like that unfinished work there after all these inquiries and commissions that has to happen, you know, follow -- make some of those -- put some money into that. Maybe that is a good idea for Amazon to come here as a book distributor. Maybe we can get them to set up a special department for just Indigenous knowledge. Maybe I could support then that idea of all those millions of dollars going into something like that.

Winnipeg has so many native people. I feel so embarrassed at times to say to the people, you know, “Welcome to the worst city for native people,” you know? You know, it’s so evident to me that there are, you know, this apartheid going on. But, again, nobody really talks about it.

So, I think we need to open up Winnipeg as a better city, instead of just trying to act like, “Oh, there’s not that much racism here. You know, the magazine was wrong, you know,” and, you know, Maclean’s Magazine. Better the time spent to do even small little projects to help, you know, to help build unity between people, especially in these public institutions.
So, I think I’ve been, I think -- I hope I haven’t missed anything that was important in how we talked. Of course, we need the programs upped, you know, like treatment programs and, you know, all that and, of course, decrease other ones, like child welfare, because they’re putting the girls on the street after they have been apprehended and that.

So, there’s a cycle there and some of it has been identified. There’s a way to change those institutions. So, as I said, I don’t know, ask -- I hope that I didn’t miss anything too important or that others can add to whatever I am now recommending. So, Forest, would you like to add a recommendation?

MR. FOREST FUNMAKER: I only get one?

MS. MARIE BAKER: Or two.

MR. FOREST FUNMAKER: Yes. When I come to Winnipeg, I guess I’d like to see something more iconic or symbolic throughout the city, celebrating Indian woman, maybe outside of the city coming in from the south, maybe a huge statue like they have in North Dakota or I think it’s South Dakota, where it’s just monumental.

I think walking downtown on the sidewalks and remember being in Vancouver, they have all of these bronze structures of cows. Why can’t we have bronze statues of Indian women all around the City of Winnipeg?
I know we talked about earlier having something in the Holocaust Museum in terms of -- I don’t know if it’s an exhibit or a wing of a place to talk about some of these stories on how does it work with Canadian history and how that has been influenced?

I know that there needs to be some sort of education project to elevate the plight of the Indian woman in Canada, in the curriculum throughout Canada, schools, whether they’re run by the Department of Indian Affairs or through any of these public schools. I mean, I think you need to appreciate what we have here, instead of this downgraded system of what Hitler used in the actual Holocaust.

So, I think those things are a start. I think there needs to be a taxing system economically to pay for all of these programs. And, I would see major corporations of possibly $10 million above paying 4 cents on the dollar.

I imagine that going back into a program to help fund projects that would be important for women organizations to proliferate in the inner cities, and then to also help with reserves or bands to do an education project there, if possible. But, I know that the funding needs to come from those corporations that are making a lot of money off of our water, land and resources, mineral or
otherwise.

I know there was one more. Designs all across the city celebrating the symbology of our people, what we’ve given in terms of blood for this territory alone. And, I’m not sure about other cities across Canada, but I know a lot of these companies need to pay for what they’ve done to our people, to consider them even below third-class citizens.

We’re not dogs. We need to be elevated to a new standard even to -- you know, I don’t know what that status is where, you know, you’re an extinct animal almost, but an extinct animal kind of status. I don’t know. Like, you’re so up there that you can’t touch them, you know? And, I mean, that’s the protection it needs. You can’t touch an Indian woman, and that should be standard throughout all of Canadian law. Thank you. No claps for that?

**MS. MARIE BAKER:** I already said my recommendations, so I’m good.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you.

**MS. MELISSA COOK:** I have a couple of recommendations and trust me, I’ve spent a lot of time sitting at home thinking about this, and this was before I knew that I was going to be speaking here at the inquiry.

I spent some time at a group home that’s
located outside of the city, and it’s a Level 5 group home for First Nation girls at risk, and I didn’t last very long there, I’ll tell you that. The girls that I knew there, we are all still in contact, and they love me and I love them. But, it was problems with policy, procedure and management why I didn’t last.

I think that if you’re going to have a First Nation-geared group home, you know, for girls at risk, that the policies and the status quo there needs to be in line with their hearing needs. There were sweats that sat idle, and they had been idle for six years or so. There was a sauna that could have been used to help them detox that we weren’t allowed to touch.

When I met with the licensing, head of licensing, and I voiced my concerns about the in-house drug use and how I was told more than once that I shouldn’t — that the management and house manager didn’t like the smudging in the house that the girls wanted, and that it “smelled like piss,” for example, was one comment that I heard, that when I chose to speak up, basically I got bullied out of there, and the girls got left behind. And, when I tried to remain in contact with them, I had a letter sent to me from the local RCMP that if I did choose to try and save them, that legal action will be taken against me.

Being the rebel that I am, I didn’t listen,
and nothing happened after that. But, I didn’t agree with
that at all. I felt really horrible leaving them there.
And, I think that there are group homes that exist that are
like that, maybe there needs to be a review.

I think that all the people, the directors, you know, of licensing, should be put in one room and be
reminded that that status quo is not acceptable. And, I
think that the girls who have gone missing and are murdered,
you need to cross-check them with those said places. And,
we need to see where the connections are that are missing,
because I know that, in fact -- I know that there are
connections there.

And, when I did speak my mind and say, “How
can we drive them and give them money, knowing that they’re
going to purchase crystal meth and other things, and how can
we just sit here and let them do that?” And he -- and when
I tried to put a sign up, I was reprimanded. When I tried
to talk to them and ask them to try and take better care of
themselves and say, “No, this is not allowed on my shift,” I
was reprimanded.

And, they didn’t want to do the work, not all
of them but a majority of them. And, I -- when he sat
across for me and said, “You’re not going to like this very
much because your hands are tied, and there’s nothing that
you can do,” I said, “Try me.” And, that’s why I’m here
today talking to you, because I will not just be silent. All of their lives matter, and they don’t have anybody that is willing to stick their neck out and do that for them. And so, that would be me. I really do think that you need to look into that. I thoroughly believe with my heart that you will find those connections there. And, we can’t afford to lose any more. If they want to get that pay cheque every two weeks, then they need to do the work. That’s my main recommendation.

My second recommendation is that the Winnipeg city police and the RCMP, they’re not all bad cops. I have met some good, but many of them are not where they should be ethically. And, I think that they do need to be reminded that they are not in charge of the world, that they have a responsibility to the people.

And, if you’re looking for extra funding, don’t pay them when they get charges and get sent home, because I don’t -- I never -- you know, I don’t hear about that as much as I do with the cop that, for example, killed somebody while he’s driving drunk on Main Street two weeks ago or something, and gets sent home to sit and wait for a pay cheque, who fled the scene, for example. And, that’s not the first time that happened, not even on that one street.

But, I really care about my girls. I have a
17-year-old daughter. I fight for her life every day. I’m like a mother bear. And, I feel that way about all the girls that I have taken care of as a foster mother, place of safety, worked within a group home or even just outreach on my own time for suicide prevention. I was that girl, and I understand what it’s like.

So, I think we need to set a new tone that, you know, they deserve a chance. They deserve a chance just like, you know, we really need to rally around them. And, I hope that something happens as a result of all of this money and all of these meetings and all of this time that, you know, with the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, Truth and Reconciliation and now this. Why are the numbers not changing? That’s the PTO’s, too. That’s what our communities, too. Why are the numbers not changing?

And, I get frowned upon sometimes because of my mouth and, you know, but I can get up in the morning, and I could say that at least I’m trying and I’m fighting. So, just thank you for having me again.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: As far as recommendations, I would say in the justice system, there needs to be stiffer penalties. People shouldn’t be getting away with light sentences for murdering these girls, and more sensitivity training for police officers dealing with family, because I know when we dealt with them, there wasn’t
-- it wasn’t a very good experience at all. And then more support for the children, of boys, girls. Thank you.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Commissioner Audette, would you like to make any comments or have any questions?

COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: Merci beaucoup. Thank you very much. And, we have heard, we recorded, and I asked one of our Elders here to close this in a good way. And, lots of recommendations are for the City of Winnipeg. We’re allowed. And, some are for Manitoba. Some are for Canada, what I’ve been hearing in this circle.

And, there’s also recommendations that will resonate with what we’ve heard in Whitehorse and Smithers, and next week, we are in Membertou, so we’re showing more and more and more that trend. So, thank you very much. And, I hope we stay in touch through our health support, legal or with me. I’m accessible. So, a lot of families get in touch through Messenger. So, I am accessible, if you have any questions, concerns or comments. And, me too, I would like to stay in touch because there’s things I’ve heard today that how can we make sure that they’re not forgotten? Merci beaucoup. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you want to say a few words to close it off? Did you want to close it off?

MR. FOREST FUNMAKER: All right. (Speaking
in Native language) for this experience to be a part of this
and to have all of you witness this important process for
all of these families that were present here today. I know
this is meaningful.

And, I know that you’re going to go back to
your communities, whether here in the city or wherever
you’re from, and you’re going talk about these particular
issues, and you’re going to educate your people, your young
people, and give them ideas about how to celebrate our
people, our relationships and especially our women.

And, I just wanted to make sure that we pray
in a good way for those things to happen in our communities,
and that only happens through a communication, and it
happens through our connection to our environment and to the
ceremonies that we use in a good way, using the tools that
we have, the stories we’ve been given, the language that is
still with us today.

And so, I want to say a few words in regards
to that, praising all of our spirits that we do have. And,
I just want to say to all of you out here, bless you, bless
you, bless you.

**MS. THELMA MORRISSEAU:** Could someone come
up?

**MS. DEBBIE REID:** To the families who are
here, who have shared your gift, there have been gifts that
Commissioner Audètte is now handing out eagle feathers and cedar. The eagle feathers, the grandmothers, the matriarchs of the Haida Gwaii, had harvested eagle feathers for the Smithers gathering. And, they decided that they were going to send out a call to harvest eagle feathers for all the families who came in front of the inquiry. So, that is what Michèlè is handing out.

As well, from us, from the staff, from the Commission, we are giving you little packets of seeds, and we hope that you will plant those seeds and that you will take pictures of growth as a new beginning, and share those pictures with us when they do start to grow. So, I’m going to let Commissioner Audètte finish that.

We’re going to do the closing prayers, and I’m going to invite a family, a group from Sagkeeng, to come up and show a blanket that they have been doing. And, while they’re doing that, no disrespect, but we’re going to be setting up the drum group for the final drum song.

So, we’ll let the family move when they’re done, and then I’ll ask Dolly to do a prayer. And, we’ll move some of the room around, so we can bring the drum group in while you’re talking about what you’ve done. And, of course, by Annie.

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** I just want to add on I
enjoyed the prayer of the Elder brother that’s shared
already, so I acknowledge his prayer. But, I just want to
close it a little thought that this is, Lord, as we finish
off, these days, Lord, of sitting in this room, Lord, and
we just pray God that we seen, Lord, and we know that this
is just the beginning of new beginnings, that this is the
season of new beginnings, Lord. And, as we venture out
from here today, Lord, we pray God that your hand, Lord,
the good hand of God would be upon everyone and every
person that got to speak and testify in his place, that
your hand would be upon them, Lord, upon their families in
a good way.

And, Father, we thank you for this day and
everything that has been said and done over these last few
days. And, we ask all your blessings in the name of Jesus.
Amen.

**MS. THELMA MORRISSEAU:** Okay. Thank you all
very much. So, we’re going to have the drum group move
over and set up over here where they were on -- oh, my God,
was it Monday? And then we’re going to have now the family
come up. Oh, Annie, oh, my wonderful Annie, I’ve been so
good to you all week and yet I’m -- ah, okay, Annie.
Sorry, come on over here Annie. My poor little Annie, my
new BFF. So, Annie is going to do the prayer in Inuktitut.

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** Before I say my prayers,
I want to say that the Qu’liq is -- the flame is off while I was in my own hearing. I don’t know when it turned off by itself or -- but, anyway, thank you to all of you for welcoming the Qu’liq. Thank you to all of you and thank you to the people who have -- who were my supporters in my hearing.

So, I’ll say a prayer and I’ll pass this to Barbara, if she wants to say something. (Speaking in Native language.)

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Thank you, Annie. I thought it was very symbolic. I just wanted to share with Annie that the Qu’liq went out by itself after she shared. So, it was like a closure for Annie that the Qu’liq said, “You’re done; I’m done,” because it is her personal Qu’liq, so it kind of follows her, so I thought it was very symbolic.

And, I wanted to thank all the family members. As hard as it is, you came forward. We need your voice. So, thank you very much for each and every survivor and family that came forward. So, I will be saying that. (Speaks in Native language).

**MS. DEBBIE REID:** Thank you all. Thank you all. So, I’m sorry, Commissioner Audètte had to just step out for a minute. She’s been in the room for a long time, if you know what I’m saying. So, she should be back very
quickly.

I just wanted to announce that after the closing, the closing song, honour song, at the Oodena Circle, at the Forks where the sacred fire was lit on Monday at sunrise, the fire will be put out before sunset. There will be shuttles going all the time.

We had had a group of students come in, youth come in on Wednesday. And, what they did is they did an artistic expression. So, everywhere we go, a youth group is brought together to give an artistic expression to the Commission. The blankets were the beginning of that artistic expression in the NWT -- no, I’m sorry, Whitehorse, Yukon.

So, the youth are no waiting for the Commissioners to come at the Oodena Circle, so that the youth can present their artistic expression to the Commissioners, prior to the closing and the retiring of the sacred fire. So, if you would like to join the Commissioners and the youth at the Oodena Circle, please feel free. There is shuttles downstairs that will take you directly to the Forks and bring you either -- and bring you back here, if here’s where you’re going to go home.

So, okay. So, if you wouldn’t mind excusing me for one minute? She’s been -- people just love her. So, now, I have to go and she can’t say “I have to do
something else." So, I’m going to go say it for her. I will be right back.

Who is going to speak? Who wants to speak?

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** This is -- the ladies here, this is their star blanket from Sagkeeng First Nation, which has a population of close to 8,000 people. So, the project was done within months, which has many of our family, our girls on the blanket, the star blanket that was hand-stitched by one of our community members, so she’s a kookoo herself.

The star blanket was hanging at Turtle Lodge, in our community, so we’ll be making another duplicate as this will be hanging at the Catholic Church and will be hanging at one of the Anglican Church. I think the families also, with Jeannette here as one of the mothers that lost her daughter, Fonassa, which is on the blanket itself.

The lady -- one lady did an artistic -- had a dream about the skirt, so she made 13 skirts which represent, of course, the things on top of the turtle, the shell. So, 13 skirts were made along with two men’s ribbon shirts and I think another -- I think three ribbon shirts in total, but we -- I guess because we’re -- you know, there’s a lot more, there’ll be more pictures added again to this star blanket.
So, I think our recommendation in Sagkeeng is that, yes, we need tons of health supports, and we do have that. We are very fortunate to have a lot of resources. But, the thing is -- the next thing is the monument for Sagkeeng that they’ve selected already, that they have selected. And, we will send a letter forward to Canada, to the Commissioners, that we’re looking forward to having that monument paid for, you know, and the band, of course, will cost share the price of it, but most of it should be paid, we’re hoping, by the Commission.

So, that letter will come into the hands of us as Chief and council and all the families to sign that letter and give to the Commissioner as soon as possible, that we could start the work as the monument itself is already built.

And, in our community, they’ve built like a beautification area in the bush where this monument will sit, whatever direction the family say, if they want a monument in the middle there, so that they have a place to go to and do their grieving, do their mourning.

You know, these women come a long way in the last three years, and I’ve seen them grow and then heal and stuff like that, but there’s a lot more work to be done. And, I’m just hoping that, you know, we take -- our women that are going through these things are going back to
the land, and that the land is helping them heal.

But, at this time, I’m so happy that you gave us the time here. I didn’t want to be rude. But, you know, just this afternoon, Jeannette Bruyere here, our sister, grandmother, just lost her granddaughter just this afternoon. So, we didn’t know how to handle this, but we’re trying to take her to the family ASAP.

But, I’ll give the microphone over to Agnes who is one of the -- her sister is on here -- not -- no, Fonassa. And, I had a message as well for Tina Fontaine from my note from Thelma. Thelma Fable (phon) wanted to be here so badly, but her case is coming up in January, and she was -- it was recommended that she not attend the hearings, because they’re dealing with Tina Fontaine’s issue in January and February.

So, Crown attorney asked that she not attend these sessions. But, she said, “I so wish I could be there, Marilyn. I so wish we could be there.” But, anyway, her blessings are with all of the families here as well. And, she says, “I hope we find a place, a safe haven in Winnipeg for our women to run to at night.” That was her message for all of you today.

So, I’ll give this thing over to Agnes, to say a few words on behalf of all the families. Migwetch.

**MS. AGNES ABRAHAM:** Hi. My name is Agnes
Abraham. I’m from the Sagkeeng First Nations. We’ve been trying to get noticed, I guess, for the women that are missing. We’re trying to get some kind of resolution where the police will actually listen to us when we’re reporting them missing.

I reported my sister, Sharon, missing in 2001, and they found her DNA in 2004. And, we’re just getting them to acknowledge that we are human beings. When we have people missing, we want them to listen and want them to do the search.

I had a cousin one time that had -- went missing with a little white boy in Saskatchewan. That’s where they found them, because they were abducted from Winnipeg. But, all the publicity went onto that little white boy. And, the little cousin didn’t even get hardly any recognition for him being there, and he’s the one who got the little boy to escape with him from the abductor.

But, yes, I just want to say that we have to keep on fighting for these missing women. They died very tragic deaths. Sharon was on the Pickton farm and my cries weren’t heard. I kept begging them to search for her. We had some traditional men, I know a lot of traditional men in B.C., and they’re the ones who helped to try to find her.

And, they had three inspections to go check
on that farm. A woman was stabbed, another one was raped, and they wouldn’t go check it, not until the third one. And, when they were walking down by the trailer, and the police officer looked down and he seen part of -- half of that lady’s skull in that pail, and that’s when they did the investigations. They started searching on the farm.

And, right now, we have another girl in the same. It’s hard. It’s really hard, knowing that these women are suffering so hard. And, a lot of them went very, very violent deaths. And, we can’t stop fighting for them.

And, this is the coat that was made. It was hand-stitched. It was hand-stitched by one of our people on reserve, and this is our gift to the missing and murdered women. Thank you very much.

**MS. DEBBIE REID:** Thank you very much. It’s beautiful. Okay. Thank you very much. So, I’d ask if you’d like it to be held up while the drum song goes on or whether -- yes? Okay, perfect. Take Us Home.

(MUSICAL PRESENTATION)

--- Upon adjourning at 15:38 p.m.
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 19, 2018