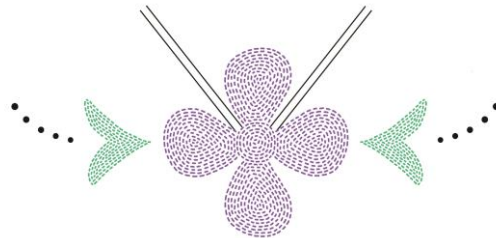


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Public Hearings
Edmonton Inn, Wildrose Ballroom
Edmonton, Alberta**



PUBLIC

Tuesday November 7, 2017

Public Volume 21

**Gayle Graham & Elaine Dreaver,
In Relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver;**

Melanie Dene, In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene

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APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	No Appearance
Government of Alberta	Nicole Pfeifer (Counsel)
Government of Canada	Anne McConville (Counsel) Christine Ashcroft (Counsel) Tania Tooke (Paralegal)
Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women	No Appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, AnânuKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women's Association Inc., Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, Manitoba Inuit Association	No Appearance
Women of Metis Nation / Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak	Melanie Omeniho (Representative)

Note: For the purpose of establishing this record of attendance, counsel and representatives are considered present whether they attended one or all of the public hearings held over the course of the day at the Edmonton Inn and Convention Centre - Wildrose Ballroom (Public #2)

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1	Digital folder of three images displayed on monitors during public hearing.	27
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Hearing - Public
Gayle Graham & Elaine Dreaver
(Catherine Linda Dreaver)

1

Edmonton, Alberta

--- Upon commencing on Tuesday, November 7, 2017 at 10:20
a.m.

Hearing # 1

Witness: Gayle Graham and Elaine Dreaver

In relation to Catherine Linda Dreaver

Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson

Commission Counsel: Joseph Murdoch-Flowers

Elders, Grandmothers, Knowledge-Keepers: Laureen "Blu"

Waters

MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Commissioner Eyolfson, today, I have the honour -- the honour of -- of working with Gayle Graham, who is the sister-in-law to Elaine Dreaver, and who is the sister of Linda Dreaver who died in 1983. And as we're -- and we were preparing for this I -- I went over the -- the oath or affirmation, and both told me they wanted to swear an oath on the Bible, so I would ask that that be administered now.

GAYLE GRAHAM, Sworn:

ELAINE DREAVAR, Sworn:

MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: So -- so as we were talking about, we'll need to have the -- the microphone, so if -- are you okay holding the microphone, or would you?

MS. ELAINE DREAVAR: Yes.

1 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Yeah? Okay.
2 Great. And we -- you know, we'll have to pass it back and
3 forth as you take turns talking. So yeah, we -- we had a
4 great meeting yesterday. And it was so wonderful to meet
5 both of you and -- and talk. Thank you for that. And I
6 just wanted to continue that conversation today, and maybe
7 we'll talk about some of the same things that we talked
8 about yesterday, I'm sure. Or maybe we'll talk about some
9 new things. But why don't we start by hearing from you
10 about why you wanted to be here and what do you want to
11 tell the Inquiry?

12 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Thank you very much for
13 the opportunity to speak here. For many years, I've
14 suffered watching my mother, the pain and anguish of losing
15 three, four of her children before she passed on, but the
16 loss of my sister, Catherine Linda Dreaver was overwhelming
17 because she went missing.

18 She was missing for nine months, and it was
19 just out of the hopelessness that hit my mother that there
20 was nothing that was being done. And the not knowing what
21 happened to her. And at the resolution of, actually my
22 sister's body being discovered, there was still a sense of
23 hopelessness that nothing, no accountability, no real
24 feeling that anything, no accountability would happen in
25 regards to what happened to her.

1 And it is actually took so much life out of
2 her, that when she passed away we all felt so -- I don't
3 know, like a sense of uselessness that there was nothing
4 that we could do to comfort her. And I decided that I
5 wanted to come forward, even though this is so incredibly
6 hard for me. But I -- I did want her name added into this
7 list, and I want just, I don't know, to feel better that
8 we're doing something that might change how people perceive
9 how Indigenous people are treated in this country.

10 And I would personally would really love to
11 be able to see that it's -- like for me I look at it and I
12 always feel like it's always open season for Indigenous
13 people. And I'd like to see that end. And I'd like to see
14 some people actually being punished -- caught, punished --
15 caught, and then punished, and held accountable for it.
16 And I want to see that end. And even though how terrifying
17 this is for me, it's very important.

18 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** You -- you
19 mentioned the word hopelessness, even that hopelessness was
20 something that you and your family felt when your sister
21 was found?

22 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Yes.

23 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Why -- where
24 does that hopelessness come from?

25 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** It came from experience

1 of other tragedies that happened earlier in our family.
2 And the police would come, and they take the information,
3 but that would be kind of it. And there was never anything
4 ever done. It was just like, well it's just another
5 typical Saturday night. And -- the stereotypes of being
6 First Nations in Canada is a sense of hopelessness.

7 And it's just been years and years and years
8 and I'm -- I'm an old person now. And since I was a little
9 girl growing up, I have never felt worthy. And that came
10 passed down from my mother. And that must have come from
11 her mother. So we're talking generations and generations,
12 and now at my age a sense of hopelessness I hope is going
13 to come to an end.

14 But it's hard to change the inside of me,
15 because I've known better. Or I've seen the opposite to be
16 true. So I don't know if you can actually change that part
17 of me, but I hope by being here that that will come to an
18 end. And that maybe with my stories, and other stories
19 that are to come here, that we will start to get some pride
20 back into our nation. And maybe some reconciliation, and
21 some accountability.

22 And from here we can start growing forward
23 instead of backwards. Every time we take one step forward,
24 we seem to take two steps back. And I'm hoping between
25 this and the Truth and Reconciliation, that'll happen; and

1 I remain hopeful. It's the first time I've been optimistic
2 in a long time. So, that's it.

3 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** You -- you
4 mentioned also accountability, and you talked about police
5 coming and taking information, and treating it like it's
6 just another Saturday night.

7 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** M'hm.

8 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Do you want to
9 talk about your experience with the police during the --
10 the time that your sister disappeared, and when she was
11 found? Is that something that you want to talk about?

12 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Unfortunately, I don't
13 have that much experience, because I was out of country at
14 the time when she went and disappeared. I had a very close
15 relationship with my sister, and I had seen her about two
16 weeks before she went missing.

17 I lived in Vancouver, she was living in
18 Edmonton. And we had a very close relationship, and we had
19 the most beautiful meeting. And we managed to talk about
20 things that normally we never get to talk about. And for
21 some reason it was the most beautiful goodbye that I've
22 ever had with another human being.

23 And I went back to Vancouver, and two weeks
24 later she went missing. And I knew in my heart that she
25 would not have left me without saying goodbye. Everybody

1 else in my family remained hopeful that -- that she'd just
2 went off and went on a walk about, but I knew that that was
3 not true.

4 So I didn't actually have that much
5 experience in regards to -- because it took nine months.
6 And at that point, I was out of the country. But my
7 stories are literally just from listening to my mother.
8 Her tearful experiences with dealing with the police
9 officers.

10 And then again when they found her body, it
11 wasn't like -- they didn't even want to think of it as a
12 murder. And that hurt immensely because there's no way
13 that my sister would have walked to the outside of the city
14 and thrown herself into a slough. And that's how they
15 found her.

16 And even to this day, they still don't want
17 to admit that that was wrongdoing. And it just seems
18 impossible that that could be the case.

19 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** At the time of
20 her disappearance, where did she live?

21 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** She had just moved to
22 Edmonton. She used to live with us. I used to live with
23 her and her husband in Vancouver. After a long
24 relationship, they broke up. No, they -- I'm sorry. They
25 moved to Kelowna to try to reconcile their relationship,

1 but it couldn't happen. So she moved to Edmonton with the
2 idea of a new start.

3 He moved back down to Boulder, Colorado, and
4 I remained in Vancouver.

5 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Hmmm.

6 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** And, but she had just
7 moved here.

8 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** And whereabouts
9 in the city was she living?

10 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** She was living around a
11 102nd Street. I'm sorry, I -- I -- I can't really
12 remember. It was close to the Senate city, but not in a
13 downtown core.

14 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Hmmm. And what
15 was she up to around that time?

16 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** She was a key punch
17 operator. But in the 80's times were tough. And they more
18 or less just kept giving her part time jobs, so it wasn't
19 that she didn't want to work; she was working usually six
20 months, dance everywhere, but continually working.

21 But I think at that -- at that precise time
22 that she was probably unemployed, but only temporary.

23 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** M'hm. And you
24 mentioned that she was -- she disappeared, and she was
25 found outside of town.

1 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** That's right. Near
2 Sherwood Park.

3 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** And how far is
4 Sherwood Park from downtown about?

5 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** That's a good question.
6 I don't really live in Edmonton anymore, 15, 12. Yeah.
7 And my sister didn't drive at the time, so there's no way
8 in the world that she would have got to such a remote area
9 on her own.

10 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Right. Oh.
11 Yesterday you spoke quite you know, with -- with such
12 fun -- fun memories of -- of your loving relationship with
13 Linda.

14 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Yes.

15 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Did you want to
16 talk about that?

17 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** My sister -- my sister
18 was six years older than I am. Very protective. So
19 loving. It is a big sister that everybody would love to
20 have. But she moved to Vancouver, I was living in
21 Edmonton. And she welcomed me into her life, into her
22 relationship with her husband. They took me into their
23 home and made me feel so comfortable and a part of their
24 life.

25 She was always the kind of woman that would

1 bring home the dog with one leg, two legs. Any sort of
2 person that didn't fit in well or felt uncomfortable she
3 always brought into the fold. She loved the Moody Blues,
4 she just felt a kinship with them.

5 Even today, I can almost feel her presence
6 here. It's -- she is so warm, she was so loving, and yet,
7 kind of tragic at the same time. You know, she always
8 struggled with being accepted herself. She liked very
9 traditionally Native, and in Edmonton in a few cities
10 through Canada it's not always an easy role.

11 Yeah, but we all loved her so much in our
12 family. It took -- she was the special one in the family,
13 and when she disappeared it -- it ripped a hole in each and
14 every one of us in her hearts. And I'm just hoping that
15 she's here today. I bet she's happy that somebody is
16 standing up for her for a change.

17 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Hmmm.

18 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** I'd just like to thank
19 her for being (indiscernible). You'd love her.

20 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** I'll just pass
21 the mic to you. So, Gayle, what's your relationship to
22 Linda?

23 **MS. GAYLE GRAHAM:** I was married to Linda's
24 brother, so sister-in-law to Elaine and to Linda. I was
25 living in Edmonton when Linda disappeared. And when Jesse

Gayle Graham & Elaine Dreaver
(Catherine Linda Dreaver)

1 (ph) their -- their mother called me to let me know that
2 Linda had disappeared, the -- the stories that -- that she
3 told me with -- actually the -- the family kind of used to
4 laugh about Linda, because Linda, every -- everything in
5 Linda's place was spotless all the time. And I'm not like
6 that.

7 I -- so when Jesse went over to check
8 Linda's place, there was a teapot, and two cups on the
9 table, but one of the cups had fallen on the floor, and
10 Linda was gone. And knowing Linda, she never would have
11 left a cup on the floor.

12 Besides that, because like Elaine said,
13 times were really difficult in the early 80's, and so Linda
14 was working temporary jobs and at the time she disappeared,
15 she was on unemployment insurance. And her UI cheque was
16 sitting on -- on the night table beside the bed. And she
17 never would have left you know, without having any money.

18 So the cheque -- the cheque was there, the
19 coffee cup was on the floor, Jesse went to the police, and
20 the police said she's 33. She's an adult. There's nothing
21 we can do. And then the land lady told Jesse that she had
22 to clean the place out by the end of the month so that the
23 land lady could re-rent the basement suite.

24 And the basement suite was on about 89th
25 Street and a 114th Avenue, which like Elaine says it's --

1 it's fairly close to downtown, but it's not right in the
2 downtown core. Sherwood Park where -- where the remains
3 were found is like -- like I said, 11 or 12 miles out.

4 But just nobody believed that Linda would
5 have walked out to the middle of nowhere, to a field. The
6 -- the police didn't follow up. Even when Linda didn't
7 show up, Jesse called me at Christmas time and said that
8 she was pretty sure that Linda was dead, because there was
9 no way that Linda would have not called her on Christmas.

10 But they didn't find her body until the
11 following May. She had disappeared in September. And
12 that's -- you know, after the remains were found the -- the
13 investigation changed to the RCMP, because it was outside
14 the city. I don't know if the RCMP ever talked to the city
15 police, or any follow up was done.

16 They interviewed everybody that had known
17 Linda, but nobody knew anything about why she had
18 disappeared or -- or what had happened. They couldn't find
19 a -- a cause of death from the remains, because they had
20 deteriorated.

21 But I remember the -- the funeral. And that
22 Jesse couldn't stand up. They -- her -- her sons were --
23 were carrying her to follow the coffin. She -- I don't
24 know what else to say. I mean Linda -- thank you. Linda
25 was a bridesmaid at my wedding to her brother.

1 I was telling a story before about Linda was
2 a bridesmaid, and my sister was a bridesmaid. And both of
3 them were really shy. And -- and but my sister was a
4 school teacher, and I think Linda expected her to be more
5 outgoing than she was.

6 And my -- my sister kind of sat in the
7 corner at the wedding, because she was afraid to talk to
8 anybody, and Linda -- Linda who was really shy too, pushed
9 herself and went around and greeted all the guests at the
10 wedding. And even though it wasn't at all comfortable for
11 her, she thought -- she told me she thought that's what a
12 bridesmaid was supposed to do; make everybody feel welcome.
13 And I was just so grateful.

14 She was the -- she was the only one of
15 Jesse's kids that went to University. And Jesse was so
16 proud of her, just so proud. And she was really into
17 science, and she was just an amazing person. And I don't
18 know what else to say.

19 She -- she's -- she's missed. She's still
20 missed. And when I first heard about this Inquiry, the
21 first person I thought of was Linda. Like, why -- how can
22 she just be forgotten? 'Cause the people that -- that know
23 her never forgot her. But she didn't have a big circle of
24 friends or family. And I just didn't want her to be left
25 out.

1 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** I'm good.

2 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Okay.

3 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** I was just saying that
4 I feel good being here. It actually feels good to talk
5 about her. It's been years. I mean, it happened back in
6 the 80's. A lot of time has lapsed. I feel her presence
7 like I said it before. I feel a certain kind of strength
8 that comes with talking about her.

9 And I'd like to thank everybody here for the
10 opportunity that presents itself here today. And I hope
11 everybody else who presents themselves here today feels the
12 same thing as I do right now. I feel a sense of calmness
13 that I wasn't expecting to happen so quickly. So thank
14 you. Oh.

15 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Yesterday our
16 conversation kind of -- of course we spoke about Linda, but
17 we also spoke about your own experience growing up.

18 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** M'hm.

19 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Did you want to
20 talk about that today too?

21 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** I hadn't expected to
22 speak about myself, but I guess it is part of the picture
23 about being First Nations in this country.

24 My experience was that my mother moved me
25 out of the reservation. We're Cree. We are from the

1 Mistawasis Tribe, just -- you too? My father -- my father
2 Henry Dreaver (ph) and my mother Jesse Margaret (ph) came
3 from John Smith Reserve, but we were all registered in
4 Mistawasis. But my mother felt that the life on the
5 reservation was hard, so she moved me out of the
6 reservation two weeks before I was born.

7 She wanted me to be raised differently than
8 the rest of the family. I -- but when I was younger I
9 looked very Native. I don't know why, as I get older I
10 seem to mellowed out of it in my features, so I've been
11 told. But in my experience in school was as soon as I
12 started to attend school, they labeled me dyslexic without
13 ever teaching me or testing me.

14 So put me into a seven-year program, which
15 meant that on the sixth year or seventh year of my
16 schooling -- I got held back one year, and my whole
17 experience during elementary to -- to grades, grade 9, I
18 sat at a table in the back of the classroom by myself. I
19 was totally isolated.

20 And in the first six years, it wasn't so bad
21 because you got used to being in the same classroom with
22 everybody else even though I -- I was in the back. But
23 come the seventh year, I get held back and now I'm with a
24 bunch of strangers again.

25 And only until I hit grade 10 did I have the

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(Catherine Linda Dreaver)

1 opportunity to actually mingle and go to classrooms that
2 were separate. I went to Victoria Composite High School.
3 It was an adult training school at that point. And for the
4 first time in my life I had the opportunity to sit where I
5 wanted to sit in a classroom. And I had the opportunity to
6 talk and meet other people.

7 And I hated school. I absolutely hated
8 school. And came grade 10 I found out that there was
9 teachers out there that knew how to talk to me, or wanted
10 to talk to me, and the last three years were brilliant. I
11 found out that I wasn't dyslexic. I actually did know all
12 the stuff that I was learning. I had no idea. And for the
13 first time in my life I started going to school willingly.

14 But my experience for the first nine years
15 was hellish. It was really hellish. And I -- I'm -- I
16 considered my [sic] still fortunate, because I wasn't in a
17 residential school. And the stories from my family, I'm
18 still very grateful. So to a certain degree I don't really
19 want to say that my life was rough, because it wasn't
20 rough.

21 The only thing that I regret so much is that
22 because my mother's life was so difficult is that she
23 really wanted to raise me being non-Aboriginal. And I've
24 lost so much because of that. And as I grow old, I start
25 realizing how important it is to be proud to be First

1 Nations.

2 And as I was saying a little bit earlier is
3 that deep down I always knew I was First Nations, and I was
4 always proud to be First Nations, but when I looked around
5 the room yesterday, and this morning I felt like -- I feel
6 so un, not First Nations. So -- and it was -- it was
7 terrifying for me.

8 But as I said a little bit earlier, I'm
9 starting to feel like I am -- I am First Nations, and I am
10 proud to be First Nations. And I want everybody to be
11 feeling like this. I hated the fact that we always felt
12 like second class citizens in our own country.

13 And again, thank you for allowing me to be
14 proud. And I wish my mother was here to feel it too, you
15 know? Because she tried so hard to make me not be First
16 Nations, and it would be great for her to see that we're
17 actually taking some of our identity back. You know, my
18 mom, I'm sure she'd be here and strong and happy for all of
19 us.

20 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Do you want to
21 tell us more about your mother?

22 **MS. GAYLE GRAHAM:** My mama -- my mama, she
23 was the best thing that ever happened to everybody she met.
24 She -- like I said, she had a hard life. The first man
25 that she married, wanted to -- the first man that fell in

1 love with was non-Native, and it was the most horrific
2 thing that ever happened to her because the other family
3 did not want to have a First Nations as a -- marrying their
4 son. And at that point, it hit a low for her and she
5 decided that she was no longer proud to be First Nations.

6 So she packed up all the kids and well, this
7 is years later; she packed up all the kids and moved to
8 Edmonton with hope that she could change and become, how
9 was the word, assimilated into white man's society, with
10 the great hope that we would have a better chance than what
11 we would have had on the reserve.

12 And for that I actually thank her, because
13 it did allow me chances and opportunities that I probably
14 would not have had on the reservation. With the
15 consequences of course I've lost my -- my ability to be
16 First Nations.

17 But on the other hand she -- she was the
18 strength in our whole family. We all lived in different
19 places throughout Canada, and every year she'd go on a walk
20 about and visit everybody. And we all got used to seeing
21 her. Everybody back in the res, her sisters, didn't matter
22 where we lived. She'd just hop on the Greyhound bus or she
23 would hitchhike.

24 Because we never had the money hitchhiking
25 was the way to do it back then. Back then when it was a

1 little more safer to do that than it is nowadays.
2 Especially in BC where I come from. She always had a smile
3 on her face. She was always happy. She never wanted
4 anything, she just wanted it all for her kids, which is
5 part of being a mother I'm sure.

6 But she always had a smile on her face, and
7 she was always willing to feed people who came in the door.
8 But the, the disappearance of my sister took that all out
9 of her. And she had lost three of her other children
10 before that too.

11 So the last part of her life, she was tired.
12 And all she wanted was the Lord to come and take her. And
13 eventually he did. But I still choose to remember her with
14 a big smile on her face. She always had the face that
15 didn't have the frown. The frown lines were never there.
16 Frown lines didn't exist on this woman's face.

17 And I still love her. She's been gone 25
18 years now, but that's all I can say about her right now.

19 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Yesterday you
20 spoke about Jesse, about a visit that your parents had.
21 Did you want to talk about that? I -- I found it a very
22 powerful story.

23 **MS. GAYLE GRAHAM:** Okay. Well, this -- this
24 story was when -- when I first met Ray (ph), Elaine's
25 brother and Linda's brother. And we -- we started dating.

1 And we were talking about getting married, and I wanted my
2 parents to come and meet Jesse. And it was just easier for
3 them to come to her place, because she didn't drive, and
4 they lived in Sherwood Park.

5 And so they came -- they came to the door.
6 I was already there. And Jesse invited them in. And we
7 sat around, and we had tea or coffee. Usually tea I'm
8 thinking, because Jesse always drank tea. And then -- so
9 my parents stayed, and we talked for a while. And we
10 talked about a wedding and -- and everything. And then
11 they left. And Jesse came to me and she said, "Your
12 parents are absolutely wonderful people because they didn't
13 look around my place. They -- they walked in, they sat
14 down, and they acted like it was just normal."

15 And you know like I was saying to Joe (ph)
16 yesterday, Jesse thought that because -- I don't know
17 whether it was because they were white, that -- or that she
18 was uncomfortable about her house. Or whether she was
19 uncomfortable because she was Native. I -- and I -- you
20 know, she -- she was saying that they -- they were really
21 kind.

22 That -- I don't -- I kind of got the
23 impression that maybe she expected that they would just
24 look and say, "No, we're not coming in." I -- I don't
25 know. I mean, my parents weren't like that, but she was --

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(Catherine Linda Dreaver)

1 I -- I was happy that they came over, because Jesse's place
2 was beautiful.

3 Like, it was so welcoming, so comfortable.
4 And I was you know, telling Joe about my parents' place. I
5 mean, they were like, at various times, you know, my
6 parents had six children. The house was too small, the
7 kitchen was big enough for maybe three, two, three people.
8 So if everybody sat down for supper, the table went out
9 into the living room, because that was the only way
10 everybody could sit around the table.

11 My mother was not much of a house keeper, so
12 usually it looked like a truck drove through it. And I
13 thought Jesse's place was just wonderful. And her -- she,
14 like I say, she was just welcoming and smiling and -- and
15 she was you know, all the time I was married to Ray, I mean
16 she was like my best friend.

17 If -- even when she lived in Vancouver, when
18 my youngest daughter was three, I think three, I had to
19 have surgery. I had to have a hysterectomy, and Jesse flew
20 out from Vancouver and stayed at my place for six weeks.
21 And my house had never been so clean.

22 But she made the kids happy. She did things
23 with the kids. She just loved them to pieces. And she
24 wouldn't let me lift anything. You know, she was like
25 my -- when I got home from the hospital, my little daughter

1 came running up and tried to jump on me, and she was going,
2 “(indiscernible) don’t do that.” She says, “Your mom can’t
3 lift anything.”

4 And then she would tell me, “Just sit down.”
5 But she was -- she was that kind of person. And Linda was
6 very much like her, you know? Elaine looks like her, like
7 Jesse; when I look at Elaine. Her face is just like
8 Jesse’s.

9 And I -- I am so happy to have been married
10 into the Dreaver family and so accepted by them since 1970.
11 It’s been amazing. Hell of a ride, but --

12 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** I think -- I
13 think we had some photos set up. So there are some, pardon
14 me, some pictures that we have. Did you want to talk about
15 these photographs then? Either of you?

16 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Yes.

17 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Go ahead.
18 Sure.

19 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** The one thing I forgot
20 to say about my mother was that when my mother took us off
21 the reservation, she did it by herself. She took her and
22 her seven children and raised them by being a cleaning
23 lady. All of the kids, by herself. So we usually lived in
24 poorer neighbourhoods, but when we got older, we all
25 decided that we would go to Hawaii together.

Gayle Graham & Elaine Dreaver
(Catherine Linda Dreaver)

1 think I ever, ever saw her do it again.

2 She was never happy to be any focal point in
3 a room, but that day she was. She was absolutely amazing,
4 and my mother, I've never seen her happier. It was a very
5 happy time. And unfortunately, I don't have an awful lot
6 of pictures of my sister because like I said before, she
7 was not comfortable with her beauty. And there she's so
8 beautiful.

9 And this was our trip. Also in Hawaii, she
10 had a parrot on her shoulder. Took the picture, she
11 smiled, and then the bird pooped all over her.

12 (LAUGHTER)

13 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: That's my memory of
14 that day. But it was very fun. It was in Hawaii, again,
15 like I say. Very happy times, and, like I say, you can
16 look at her. She's -- this was her natural, her look. Her
17 look was just soft and -- and loving. She was a gentle
18 person, a gentle soul. I miss her so much. And that's how
19 I choose to remember her. She deserved better than what
20 she got. She deserved so much more.

21 On the upside, my mother and my sister and
22 buried together in the same plot here in Edmonton. My
23 sister went first obviously. My mother went just back in
24 1992. But that's the one thing she insisted on, was to be
25 buried with my sister.

1 And actually, the most poignant thing I can
2 see when I put on the little stone on her grave was if it
3 has no sorrow that heaven can not cure. And I am very
4 grateful the two of them are together now.

5 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** I don't know what to
6 say.

7 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** You and me both. Like
8 I say, I'm very happy to be here, and to talk about her.
9 And I'd like to thank everybody. Like I say, so much time
10 has elapsed. And many years has gone by without me trying
11 to think about it. And I just hope that other people get
12 to talk about people that have come and gone in their
13 lives. And to rekindle the memories that made them so
14 special.

15 Because time has such terrible habit of
16 removing or easing that pain. And to deny the pain is
17 tragic. I think you really have to talk about it, and I've
18 never been that kind of a person. And I can see now after
19 all the years of people telling me that I should talk about
20 it, that they are probably right. So yeah. Thank you and
21 thank you mother for having my sister. And thank you for
22 allowing me to be here. And thank you, Mr. Commissioner,
23 for listening to me.

24 **MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS:** Would you like
25 to say any words about...

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible)

2 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Okay.

3 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: Ditto.

4 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Well,
5 Commissioner, I -- I -- I leave it in your hands at this
6 point. I -- thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: So I don't
8 have any additional question. I just want to tank you both
9 very much for coming here today and telling us about Linda,
10 and sharing with everybody, you know, what happened. And
11 the bit about your family.

12 And I want to thank you for -- for showing
13 your strength as well in coming to talk about -- about
14 Linda and your family, so thank you very much.

15 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: Thank you.

16 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Remember I said
17 we have surprises?

18 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: M'hm.

19 MS. GAYLE GRAHAM: This isn't a trial run?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So we're going to ask
21 the Commissioner if he'll offer you this tobacco here. And
22 this is for you to -- to pray with after here. And to
23 thank you for sharing your words and your truths. We also
24 have another small gift for you. And I know that before we
25 started, we gave you each an eagle feather to -- to hold on

1 to that bird that flies the closest, to the one that makes
2 us, and we'd like to give you your own eagle feather.

3 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Oh, thank you.

4 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** And some seeds which
5 are wild sage, one of our medicine's, so that you can plant
6 these in memory of your families, and that you can have
7 this feather to help you with the rest of your journey. To
8 help you with your healing.

9 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** Thank you. Thank you.

10 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** This will comfort
11 you. These came from the grandmother's in British
12 Columbia, who on their journeys and their walks, they
13 collected these eagle feathers for the people who would be
14 telling their stories so that it can help give you
15 strength. Because you've shown that you have strength, but
16 this will continue to help you.

17 **MS. ELAINE DREAYER:** M'hm.

18 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** And to help you with
19 your healing, because our loved ones are always going to be
20 here for us. And they want you to know with these feathers
21 that whenever you need them, you just bring out your
22 feather and talk to them and they'll come and be with you
23 to help you with your journey. So hai'hai (ph).

24 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Okay. And so
25 if there's nothing further, we can adjourn.

1 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Yeah. And --

2 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: Thank you.

3 MR. JOSEPH MURDOCH-FLOWERS: Yeah.

4 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: Thank you very much.

5 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Okay.

6 MS. ELAINE DREAYER: Thank you for the
7 opportunity.

8 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you.

9 --- Exhibits (code: P1P05P0104)

10 **Exhibit 1:** Digital folder of three images displayed on
11 monitors during public hearing.

12 **Exhibit 2:** News article "Body in slough still a
13 mystery: Woman disappeared in 1983" by Ian
14 Williams; no publication data, one-page
15 copy.

16 --- Upon adjourning at 11:07 a.m.

17 **Hearing # 2**

18 **Witness: Melanie Dene**

19 **In relation to Shelly Tannis Dene**

20 **Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller**

21 **Commission Counsel: Breen Ouellette**

22 **Elders, Grandmothers, Knowledge-Keepers: Rick Lightening,**
23 **Laureen "Blu" Waters**

24 --- Upon resuming at 1:45 p.m.

25 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Thank you, Chief

1 Commissioner. For the record, my name is Breen OUELLETTE,
2 and I am a lawyer with the National Inquiry. It is my
3 honour to introduce Melanie Dene, who resides in Edmonton.

4 Melanie has brought someone in support who
5 will I -- who I will ask Melanie to introduce.

6 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** So Honey, I have brought
7 with me a dear friend of mine. I consider her to be a
8 sister. Her name is Honey Desjarlais (ph). She's from the
9 Fort McMurray, First Nation, and I am from the Mikisew Cree
10 First Nation and the Treaty 8 Territory.

11 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Thank you. Ms.
12 Registrar, Melanie has requested to affirm using an eagle
13 feather.

14 **MELANIE DENE, Affirmed:**

15 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Melanie --

16 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Go ahead
17 (indiscernible).

18 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** -- would you please
19 tell us the full name of the person you are here to speak
20 about today?

21 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I am here representing my
22 cousin, Shelly Tannis Dene.

23 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** And are you here today
24 because Shelly is missing, or she's been murdered?

25 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** She's been missing since

1 August 2013.

2 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you know how old
3 she was when she went missing?

4 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** She would have been 20 --
5 26. She would have been turning 26 that year.

6 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Did Shelly have a
7 difficult life growing up?

8 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Yeah. We -- we're
9 originally from Fort McMurray, my family. Well, most of us
10 grew up in Fort McMurray. My family comes from Fort
11 Chipewyan area. So Shelly's father was my uncle, and we
12 all grew up in a place called Water Ways (ph) and Shelly,
13 Candace (ph) and her brother lived there with her mom and
14 her dad. And when, growing up for Shelly was a good
15 upbringing because her dad at that time and my auntie were
16 cultural, and they followed traditional values and ways.

17 And then the family had split up, and then
18 after that, that's when the -- the kids had moved with
19 their mom to B.C. and from there a lot of dysfunction I
20 guess you could say happened within the family. So, mainly
21 to do with addictions, alcohol to be more specific, and
22 then eventually drugs.

23 We moved away, me and my mom had moved away
24 from Fort McMurray when I was about nine. So that was
25 like, the last time that I had seen Shelly as a kid. And

1 it wasn't until her father had passed away in 2012 is when
2 I had seen Shelly again. And at that time she -- she was
3 grown up, and she was a mother of her own.

4 And we connected like, through Facebook, and
5 that's how you know, like, most of us stay connected;
6 through social media. And so that was my relationship with
7 my cousins that I hadn't seen since we were all children.

8 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** And so I understand
9 that Shelly had a son?

10 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Yeah. She had -- she --
11 his name is Ivan (ph). He just turned ten in August. He
12 is in a foster home. He's been adopted in B.C. Through
13 this whole process, as our family, we try to -- to adopt
14 him. And because that was the only thing that we had of
15 her left. But between the provincial -- I don't know how
16 it works in the Provinces between B.C. and Alberta;
17 numerous of us that tried to gain custody of Ivan were
18 unable to. And so the family that he was placed with won
19 custody and so now he's in this home. And we -- we don't
20 see him. Go ahead, Breen.

21 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Were you given reasons
22 for why your family's applications were not accepted?

23 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I don't know what the
24 reasons are, you know? When you -- when you can be able to
25 provide a home for a child, especially when it's a -- a

1 member of your family, you would think that the courts
2 would be more open to placing that child into their family
3 circle, as opposed to outside of that.

4 I'm not sure why Ivan was not placed with
5 you know, Shelly's auntie who had applied, myself who had
6 applied, Candace, which is Shelly's sister. I don't know
7 what it is that you need to do or to be recommended, or to
8 be looked at as a safe home.

9 Like, I am -- I'm a mother. I have two
10 daughters myself, and I have another one on the way. You
11 know I -- I don't have much, but I have a home, and I have
12 a lot of love. And I thought that that was enough to be
13 able to take on Ivan, you know?

14 I wanted him to -- I know for myself that I
15 wanted him to be still within our family, and to grow up --
16 to grow up knowing who we were. And to not ever forget who
17 his mom was. And I'm not sure if the home that he's in
18 does that. I don't know if they talk to him about who his
19 mother was. Thank you. Go ahead.

20 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Okay. Do you believe
21 that Child and Family Services is taking care of the best
22 interests of Indigenous children and families in British
23 Columbia and Alberta?

24 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Is that a trick question?
25 No, I don't. I don't believe that the child welfare system

1 is looking out for the best interests of the Indigenous
2 children that are being apprehended daily from their homes,
3 from their communities.

4 I feel that that system has replaced
5 residential school system. To remove a child, not just
6 from the home, but from the community is devastating. It's
7 -- it's impact, and it just speaks to the volume of
8 colonialism that we are still faced with as Indigenous
9 people.

10 And you know, because of the conditions that
11 we might not live up to, you know, we may be looked at as
12 in poverty, but just because you live in a run down house
13 or you know, you're not able to -- I don't know what it is
14 that they look at, but as long as you're able to provide a
15 loving, caring home, and you are able to give that child
16 everything that they need, with a roof over their head,
17 food in their belly, to keep them safe from addictions and
18 stuff like that, then you know, does that make you any less
19 of a parent?

20 I think, I think children need to be, to be
21 in their homes, and they need to be within their family,
22 within their family circle. And especially within their
23 community.

24 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** You mentioned poverty
25 as a potential factor for denying families the right to

1 care for their -- their children. All things being equal
2 between the extended family of a child, or a stranger in
3 foster care, except for perhaps the poverty issue; do you
4 believe it makes sense to pay that stranger thousands of
5 dollars rather than to support the family to allow them to
6 continue to raise that child?

7 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Do I think that makes
8 sense? No. It doesn't make sense. I would be considered
9 poverty. I am a University student. I -- I go to school
10 full time. I'm living off of student loan, and the child
11 tax benefit that the govern [sic] gives to me. I would be
12 considered poverty, and I have two children, and another
13 one on the way. Does that make me less of a person to
14 raise my own children that way?

15 No, because I'm still doing everything I
16 possibly can every damn day to ensure that my kids needs
17 are being met. I ensure that the -- the rent is paid. I
18 struggle to pay utilities, but I do it. You know, I -- I
19 reach out to -- to my friends and to support to help me to
20 -- whenever I need that help.

21 I don't -- I don't rely on -- I don't rely
22 the -- my Band or you know? Like, I always try to find a
23 way to make ends meet, and I've been doing it. And I'm, I
24 feel that a lot of families, a lot of mothers and a lot of
25 fathers, they do that. They -- they struggle. Yeah, sure

1 we struggle, but as long as those needs are being met then
2 that doesn't make you any less of a parent, and it doesn't
3 make you any less worthy to raise your own children.

4 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Can you tell us what
5 Shelly's life was like leading up to her disappearance?

6 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** So like I said, Shelly
7 and her siblings and her mom had moved to -- to B.C. where
8 she grew up most of her teenage life. Shelly had -- she
9 had dropped out of high school, and then when she became
10 pregnant with her son, that gave her the drive to go back
11 to school and to finish, which she did. As you can see,
12 she graduated.

13 She -- she had her own place, she had her
14 own vehicle. You know, she did everything and it's like I
15 said, as a mother you do everything for your children. And
16 that's what Shelly was doing. She -- she put aside you
17 know, her -- her addictions. Like, she was drinking and
18 doing drugs beforehand, but when she had Ivan she -- that
19 was her focus, was her son.

20 And so she had graduated, and then when
21 Shelly's father had passed away, that was the first time I
22 -- I remember meeting little Ivan. And he was -- he was
23 super cute. He was so cute. And she said that she wanted
24 to further, like, further on into school. Looking for work
25 and stuff like that. She was just trying to you know, plan

1 her life on what she wanted to do to ensure that she could
2 make a life for him.

3 And then the last I heard of like, Shelly
4 was that she had -- she had relapsed, and that was the
5 first time that Ivan was taken away. And so if anything
6 that -- that kind of woke her up. And so she, you know,
7 she cleaned herself up again and she -- she worked hard,
8 and she always made sure that she made her appointments to
9 -- to visit with him.

10 She was doing what she could do in order to
11 get her son back. And she stayed sober for -- for three
12 years. And, but I don't know; child welfare system I
13 guess, you know, they -- they get to determine when you're
14 okay, and when they feel that your child should be returned
15 to you. And for Shelly, that was really hard for her.

16 And so during that time she decided to get
17 away from B.C. because that's where a lot of the temptation
18 I guess, was, the influence. So she had moved here to
19 Edmonton. And she came to live here with our -- our
20 grandmother. And she moved here in May of that year.

21 And she wanted to clean up her life. And
22 she wants to figure out what she had to do in order to get
23 her son back. And she figured that being around family
24 would help her. And that year, that summer, I had come
25 down In July from -- at that time I was living in Fort

1 McMurray. And I had come to Edmonton, and I stopped at my
2 grandmother's place. And I didn't even know Shelly was
3 here.

4 And I was sitting there visiting with my
5 grandma, and all of a sudden Shelly came out and I was
6 like, "What the heck?" You know, like, "What are you doing
7 here?" And I just couldn't believe like, how tall she was
8 'cause like, the last time I had seen her was in 2001. And
9 yeah, she -- she was really tall. She was beautiful. And
10 I gave her a big hug, and you know, and asked her what she
11 was doing here. She said, "I'm -- I'm living here now. I'm
12 just trying to get my life together."

13 And so we kind of chit chatted, but I could
14 tell that Shelly was very, kind of distracted. She was on
15 her phone. And that was the last time that I had seen her
16 myself. And it was in August the next month that my mom
17 had called me, and she told me that Shelly was missing.
18 And I was like, "What do you mean she's missing?" And she
19 said, "I don't know." She's like, "We haven't seen her.
20 We haven't heard from her. She's gone."

21 And so I asked like, "Did you go to the
22 police? Did anybody go to the police?" And at that time,
23 Candace, her sister was the one that went to go file the --
24 the complaint with the Edmonton Police, but they didn't
25 file it. They basically said that she's probably just out

1 doing what any young girl's doing. Or that maybe because
2 Shelly was at that time talking about going to the Yukon,
3 and so they assumed that maybe she had just took off to the
4 Yukon.

5 So they didn't you know, they didn't take it
6 seriously. And Candace knew something was wrong because
7 she talked to her sister like, almost every day. And when
8 she doesn't talk to her, that's what worried her.

9 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** So when you say that
10 they wouldn't file a report, are you referring to the
11 Edmonton Police Service?

12 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Edmonton Police Services,
13 yes. They didn't file the report. It wasn't until
14 November of 2013 that they finally filed her as a missing
15 person.

16 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Why do you think it
17 took them so long to file that report?

18 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** 'Cause she's Indigenous.
19 Because they labeled her as high risk. I don't know. Why
20 wouldn't the police file her? Why do they not file them
21 right away? Why do they wait, take their time? Like,
22 three months is too long.

23 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you know if
24 Candace, tried reporting Shelly missing to Edmonton Police?

25 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Yeah. Candace was --

1 Candace should have been a cop. She was on them all the
2 time. She -- she wanted to know where her sister was
3 because she knew that something wasn't right. Like I said
4 that Candace talked to her sister every day, and when
5 she -- she would try to text her. She would call.

6 She even went as far to see if like, Shelly
7 was using her bank card, or if her status card had been
8 used or you know, she was doing everything to figure out
9 like, what happened to her sister, even Facebook. Like,
10 she reached out to Shelly's friends to see if Shelly maybe
11 went back to B.C.

12 Like, she was just trying to figure out
13 where it did -- what -- like, what happened to her sister.
14 And Candace said that the last time that she -- she texted
15 Shelly, and she asked her if everything was okay. And the
16 -- the response back was, "No." And then when she tried to
17 call, the phone was disconnected, so (indiscernible)
18 Candace. That's when she knew like, something -- something
19 was seriously wrong. That (indiscernible) help.

20 But it's like I said that the police, they,
21 in my -- in my own opinion, they -- they waited too long.
22 Like, three months is -- that's a long time to -- that they
23 could have been out looking. You know, posters could have
24 been up. They could have put it out on, out on the news.
25 They could have put it on social media. You know, try to

1 help the family, take the family serious. And when they
2 report somebody that they love is gone missing --

3 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you know if Candace
4 tried contacting the RCMP in British Columbia?

5 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Yeah. She contacted the
6 police in B.C. She talked to the police in the Yukon. She
7 -- I even believe she was sending the missing person
8 posters up (indiscernible) different detachments. Like, she
9 was -- like I said, she was (indiscernible) the police --
10 (indiscernible) she couldn't have been. It should have
11 been the police doing their job, basically.

12 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you know if she got
13 any better response from the RCMP in B.C. than Yukon?

14 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** From what I can remember,
15 Candace said that they had questioned, but you can't quote
16 me on that, but that would be, have to come from Candace.

17 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** So what has the family
18 done on its own to try to raise awareness?

19 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** We've had walks. We put
20 out posters. We've created Facebook pages. We spoke to
21 media multiple times. I even put up a ceremony last fall
22 for her. And not just for her, but for all murdered and
23 missing women. I've been praying. I don't know, like,
24 what does the family do?

25 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Can you tell us why

1 Candace is unable to be here today?

2 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Like Shelly, Candace too
3 was heavily into addictions. And then when her sister went
4 missing she sobered up, and she sobered up fast. She
5 was -- she was the strength behind all of this. This was
6 her big sister.

7 And if she didn't do it, Shelly probably
8 would have been forgotten. So Candace got sober, and this
9 was -- this was her -- this was her mission being a mom
10 herself, and she was trying to go to school also. She
11 lived in Fort McKay at the time. And she -- she just, I
12 don't know, she just got engaged. Like, her sister --
13 finding her sister was like, her work, her every day work.

14 She got in contact with some of the
15 grassroots movements. You know, like, Stolen Sisters,
16 Murdered Missing Indigenous Women, she just reached out,
17 and on June 21st, the following year after Shelly had been
18 reported missing, she held a walk here in Edmonton for
19 Shelly.

20 And then from there, you know, she held a
21 walk in Peace River. She -- she did everything. She
22 talked to CBC. She talked to all the media. Probably half
23 the reporters that might be in here, Candace probably
24 talked to them. She did everything that she possibly
25 could, and we had a fire back in Fort McMurray a little

1 over a year ago. And from there, you know, a lot of us
2 moved.

3 Candace moved back to B.C. She was
4 expecting to go back to Fort McKay, because she -- she was
5 going to school. And I think it just -- this place a toll
6 on you, you know? And it's not something very easy to
7 carry. Every day you wake up, you know, your loved one is
8 the first thing you think about.

9 So Candace currently is in recovery, because
10 she had fallen off. She's -- but she's working on herself,
11 and you know, I -- I don't look down on her. I don't judge
12 her, because what she did for a young person herself, like,
13 she's in her early 20's, and to do what she was doing on
14 behalf of her sister, that to me shows me love, you know?

15 And I talk with her every now and then, and
16 like, today I -- I talked to her this morning, and I told
17 her I was coming here. And all she could say was, "Thank
18 you and I love you." She said, I'm -- because she's not in
19 a place right now where she can do this. Can't carry this.

20 And I think it's important that, you know,
21 and I told her that that, "It's important that I continue
22 what you were doing," and that I don't want Shelly to ever
23 be forgotten. I want her to be found. That's the only
24 thing my family has ever -- ever wanted, has ever asked
25 for, was for her to come home.

1 In some way, we just -- we want her home.
2 We want to know what happened to her. I can't fathom in my
3 mind how someone goes missing. I just, I can't fathom it.
4 It doesn't make any sense to me. How does somebody go
5 missing and like, four years, this is the fourth winter.
6 And I just -- it's not easy, it's not something that you
7 know, they say, "Oh, in time." No. It's not like that.

8 And when you -- when you read on the news or
9 you hear on the news about another farm that they have
10 found in B.C. with human remains, that makes your heart
11 stop, because you wonder if your loved one is there. And
12 in a way, you kind of pray that maybe she is, so that at
13 least you have some sort of answer.

14 Or if they find another victim, you know,
15 that's what my -- me and my family live through when
16 reports like that are -- are being broadcasted. I don't
17 think anybody should have to live like that.

18 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** What were Shelly's
19 gifts and strengths?

20 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Shelly was -- she was
21 very determined. She had her own dreams. I think her
22 strength was her son, Ivan. She was kind. She -- she was
23 beautiful. When her father was sick, she had drove all the
24 way from B.C. and she came, and she sat by his side until
25 he had passed.

1 She -- she wanted whatever any young mother
2 wanted, you know? A young woman. When you're a young
3 lady, like, in your 20's, 'cause I've been there, you know,
4 that's when you're -- you're discovering who you are as an
5 individual. And you're trying to figure out your -- your
6 own dreams and what it is that you want to do in -- in
7 life.

8 And when you have children you know, it
9 makes it that much more that you -- you want to better
10 yourself. And I believe that's what she -- she was
11 attempting to do. Like, she -- she -- that's why she had
12 moved here, to Edmonton of all places.

13 I wish she would have came and lived in Fort
14 McMurray, or Fort McKay, because she -- maybe she would
15 still be here today.

16 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** What do you hope will
17 happen as a result of your testimony today?

18 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I hope that Shelly's case
19 is re-opened. When we reported her missing, when they
20 finally filed her missing in November of 2013, it was a
21 year later, December that the police basically said that
22 they exhausted everything that they could do. I'm not sure
23 what that means, 'exhausted'. It makes me question like,
24 what they were actually doing, because if Candace was doing
25 their job, you know, what were they actually doing as law

1 enforcement?

2 But I want to see her case re-opened, and I
3 want to see it active. And I -- I would love for the
4 police to be in contact with us, her family, on a daily
5 basis, even a weekly basis to tell us what it is, you know?
6 I -- I -- I just, I don't feel like -- and I you know,
7 yeah, I know that they're overworked, and they have million
8 other cases and things to do as police officers, but
9 perhaps develop a special task force that just deals with
10 cases like this; where they can actually do their jobs
11 properly, and they can spend that time efficiently and
12 effectively on each of these cases, because I'm so tired
13 of, not just Shelly, but other cases too like, being
14 disregarded, forgotten about, or exhausted. So --

15 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** And to be clear, this
16 special task force, you -- you would want to deal
17 exclusively with Indigenous missing and murdered cases?

18 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I think that's a high
19 priority right now. Yeah. I think it needs to be like
20 that across this whole country, not just here in Edmonton.
21 But you know, they -- they say that they have projects,
22 special KARE here in Edmonton, but even what is that doing?
23 You know, still young women are going missing or being
24 murdered, so how effective is this Project KARE?

25 I would like to -- to see an independent

1 task force that works specifically just with Indigenous
2 peoples that go missing or who have been murdered.

3 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** We've talked
4 previously, and you had mentioned something about safety in
5 cities. Do you want to talk about that?

6 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** This is when we met back
7 in October or September when I came and met with you. I
8 talked about my safety. I talked about -- yeah, I think I
9 -- I -- since Shelly has been gone missing, it's been my
10 reality now as an Indigenous woman, I don't feel safe. I
11 don't go anywhere. I go to school, and I stay home, and I
12 do what I need to do during the day.

13 I have daughters you know? And I fear for
14 their safety. I don't even like them playing outside
15 because I have in my mind what if somebody comes and takes
16 them?

17 I -- I don't like that feeling. Even being
18 on campus, you know? Being a -- walking on campus, or
19 walking anywhere really, even traveling. When I travel to
20 Saskatchewan, I travel during the day and I always have to
21 ensure whoever on the other end where I am -- like, I text
22 along the way just to let them know where I am, because
23 what if something happens to me?

24 Is that normal? Is that a normal way to
25 behave? You know, I've never done that before. And I feel

1 like I shouldn't have to live my life that way, in fear.
2 And I feel like I'm not the only Indigenous woman that
3 feels that way.

4 It's not a nice feeling. I'm angry all the
5 time. I've been angry. Racism, colonial violence. Like
6 even as Indigenous women like, when you -- you read about
7 these stories, the -- the murdered victims like, the way
8 that they're murdered is, it's like out of rage? Hate? I
9 don't know.

10 Like, it's not where somebody just got shot,
11 or you know, got hit by a car, or I don't know. I'm not
12 saying there's a proper way to kill somebody, but I'm just
13 saying that when it comes to being an Indigenous person,
14 why is it more violent and disgusting, the way that they're
15 killed?

16 And -- their crimes aren't even being
17 solved. They're lucky if they can even convict somebody of
18 their crime. Look at the wave -- the victims of Robert
19 Pickton, you know? Or Cindy Gladue. You know, like, why
20 are women being murdered in that way and people just seem
21 to be okay with it. Like, why is that? Like, why are
22 Canadians okay with the way that these women are being
23 treated? If they were of another colour would it been,
24 have, be different? Would there be more outrage in the
25 public?

1 Why is it just Indigenous people that come
2 together and raise these issues and try to bring it to the
3 light, to the forefront to help the rest of Canada
4 understand what it is that we are facing? This is not just
5 -- this is not just a, you know, like a passing of time.
6 This has been going on for a very, very long time. So
7 that's how I feel.

8 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you believe then
9 that's it's important for safe spaces to be created in
10 cities across this country?

11 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Yeah. I would like to
12 see more safe spaces for Indigenous people, not just women
13 and girls, but even for our men, our boys. You know, a lot
14 of these people that come to the urban centres, they're
15 escaping from something. And they come here, and they
16 don't have places to go.

17 And -- and I'm not saying that you know,
18 they're all like that, but even for myself being here in
19 Edmonton, I would like to have a safe space if I chose to
20 go. You know, like, even a place to go for a ceremony.
21 Like, I would like to have places like that set up for here
22 in the urban centres.

23 I think that, you know, yeah, they have
24 women shelters, and you know, they're so quick to always
25 point the fingers to those types of places, but beds are

1 limited. They don't have access to Elders. Resources, you
2 know, like a lot of people don't know where to go for
3 certain things.

4 So I think if you can be able to create
5 spaces like that specifically for Indigenous people, then
6 you know, I think that would -- that would help, in a way.

7 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you believe there's
8 a power imbalance or a lack of fairness in the struggle of
9 Indigenous mothers and parents against Child and Family
10 Services?

11 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Oh, Breen. Yeah. Of
12 course there's a power imbalance. It's always been about
13 power, and who holds that power. You see it. Like, I'm
14 learning about it in University. It's in our history.
15 It's you know, Elders talk about it. We've seen it with
16 residential school. We've seen it with the Indian Act, and
17 still see it with the Indian Act.

18 We see it within the reserve systems. And
19 child welfare system like, who gave them that much power
20 just to -- to come in? Like, I -- I recall watching a
21 documentary on APTN, and it's, I think it was in Winnipeg.
22 And it was a young mom who was also a product of the child
23 welfare system. When she became a mother, her baby was
24 taken away from her. Why? Because she -- she grew up in
25 the system, so automatically that like, strikes her as like

1 she's not like, a mother? Like, she can't be a mom?

2 So yeah, it's -- to me it's just another act
3 of dispossession. You know, continue to keep us in a
4 certain situation to keep us in poverty, to keep us down.
5 To keep us still struggling, to keep us within our
6 addictions. You know, that it's always going to be that
7 way, unless like, for myself I -- I used to be an
8 alcoholic. And did that make me a bad mom? No, because I
9 still went to work and you know, I still managed to make
10 sure that my kids had the things that they -- they needed,
11 but I knew I had a problem.

12 But it took me a long time to realize that
13 and you know, I -- I found my place, and I -- I found
14 myself in ceremony. That's what I returned back to. And
15 that's what has been helping me these past three and a half
16 years. And without returning back to that, I think I -- I
17 could have been Shelly. I could have been another one of
18 the -- the victims, but yeah. I don't know.

19 This is -- this is a struggle that we -- we
20 face. And Indigenous women seen to be targeted because
21 it's not just mothers with their children being taken away
22 and apprehended at birth, it's also women that are getting
23 sterilized without their consent. There's a lot of things
24 that are happening, and you know, I wish people would
25 educate themselves, and make the connections of to what is

1 actually happening.

2 Like, why is there such a increase in prison
3 systems when there should be more increase in programs and
4 services to help families, to help Indigenous people?

5 Yeah. I could go on, but --

6 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Do you think some of
7 that help should be in the form of somebody that can help
8 Indigenous parents stand up against child welfare so that
9 they're not just at the mercy of that system?

10 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I think that's where it's
11 important to have community. And it's important to have
12 Elders. And like Cindy Blackstock, you know, she -- she's
13 a true advocate. And she wasn't just speaking on behalf of
14 just one province. She was speaking on behalf of all of
15 the children that have been taken away, and that are
16 continuously being taken away.

17 She's talking for our, all of our children.
18 All of the Indigenous children that are being impacted.
19 Something like women like her, people like her, you know?
20 Those are the people that you want in your corner to -- to
21 help you fight this battle that it is that Indigenous
22 people are fighting. Listen, man, we've been fighting for
23 a really, really, really, really long time. And it's not
24 just within child welfare system, it's in all systems.

25 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** What are your hopes

1 for Ivan?

2 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** My hopes for Ivan? I
3 hope that he knows that he's loved. I hope that he knows
4 that he's not forgotten by his family. I hope that he
5 remembers who his mom is. I hope that he -- he hears --
6 when he hears about her that he hears the good things about
7 his mom, and the things that she did for him.

8 I hope that he's loved. I hope that he has
9 a connection to -- to Creator, you know? To -- to our
10 Indigenous way of life. I hope he has that, so that he
11 doesn't ever forget who he is. I hope he's doing good in
12 school. I hope he's happy. I hope, you know, like, he's a
13 little boy. And I hope one day that his mom can be found
14 so that he's not sitting where I'm sitting in the future.

15 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** I will now ask the
16 Chief Commissioner if she has any questions for Melanie.

17 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** It's
18 okay. Take your time.

19 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Thank you.

20 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** First of
21 all, I'd like to know the story about each of the pictures
22 that you have here today about, of Melanie. Oh, sorry.

23 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Shelly.

24 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Shelly.
25 I'm sorry. Melanie, please tell me about Shelly's

1 pictures.

2 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** This picture here is her
3 graduation photo. So that's when she had graduated from
4 upgrading. This photo here, I stole this one from Candace.
5 But Candace said this was a trip that they had taken in
6 B.C. I think this one might have been in Vernon. And so
7 Candace was the one that took that picture.

8 And the picture I'm wearing is -- this was
9 the last time Candace spent a day with her sister. It was
10 for Candace's daughter, Matea (ph) her birthday. And
11 Candace took this picture of Shelly. And so this is a
12 picture I use when I purchase a (indiscernible) in the
13 walks or just raising awareness.

14 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank
15 you. I have a few questions about your experiences in
16 trying to adopt Ivan. What do you remember about the
17 process of paperwork, of telephone calls, that sort of
18 thing?

19 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** So this is when I was
20 still living in Fort McMurray. From what -- so my family,
21 there was Candace, my mom, my uncle, my uncle, I mean my
22 aunt, my Auntie Jean (ph) and her sister were the ones that
23 were more so involved. They were meeting with Athabasca
24 Tribal Council. They were utilizing the child support
25 system that ATC offers, because they -- this was before the

1 finalisation of adoption for Ivan. And so the family were
2 wanting to be able to give -- be given the opportunity to
3 adopt Ivan.

4 So they were working with the support of ATC
5 and that they were having like, meetings over the phone
6 with the B.C. child welfare system, and with the family
7 that had -- had Ivan at the time. And so it like, there
8 was a process, and my auntie, she -- she was the one that
9 had put her name forward, and like, she had a home in Fort
10 McKay. She had a job. You know, she had all of the means
11 in order to take care of Ivan.

12 And just like I said, I don't know what the
13 dynamic is between the provinces like, the whole
14 relationship there between child welfare system. Very
15 different it seems. B.C. seems to be impossible to work
16 with. But I -- I can recall when me and Candace were
17 talking on the phone, and she was telling me about all of
18 this, and I was like, well, what if I put my name forward?
19 You know, because I had a good job, I was sober. I had a
20 vehicle. I had a home. You know, like, I have two kids of
21 my own. I thought why not? Like I could do this, you
22 know? Then at least he's here. And he's close to all of
23 us.

24 And so she was like, "Well, come to -- come
25 to a meeting then." And so I went. I went to one of the

1 meetings that we had at ATC. And I couldn't believe the
2 conversation like, how the conversation went about. It
3 just seemed like the lady that represented the woman in
4 B.C. like, she was fighting us. Like, the family, you
5 know? In order for Ivan to stay with her.

6 And as a child of welfare worker you would
7 think that you would be fighting for the family. Like,
8 wanting to keep the child with his biological family. But
9 it wasn't like that at all. It was a very frustrating
10 conversation. It got very heated. It seemed like they
11 were controlling everything. And you know, the family that
12 he's with is a non-Indigenous family. So he's been placed
13 in the home of, sorry, white people.

14 And so it just, like, what? You know, like,
15 does that make them better parents because of the colour of
16 their skin? Or because they -- they raised Ivan for what,
17 three years? That makes them more eligible? Like, we're
18 his biological family, and he's all we have left of Shelly.
19 And to me I would think that both like, Alberta and B.C.
20 would try to work with our family in order to get Ivan back
21 where he can be -- be with us.

22 And you know, like, we didn't just lose
23 Shelly, we lost him too. And that's hard. Like, at least
24 we know where he is, but we shouldn't have to lose both of
25 them.

1 him to be able to be learning about who we are, making that
2 time, putting that effort in for him to come and visit,
3 then of course you know, he's going to like, not know who
4 we are. And he's going to be scared. But I feel that,
5 that's what they do. So --

6 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank
7 you. I have no other questions.

8 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Melanie, is there
9 anything else you'd like to share with the Chief
10 Commissioner today?

11 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** I -- I think that for me
12 during this -- this whole four years going down this road,
13 you know, with the rallies, the marches, the -- the
14 interviews, we've come to a place now like, where it's been
15 pushed for an Inquiry. And we're here. And I -- I respect
16 you know, that what the Government is doing, but my biggest
17 question is what is the Government planning to do after
18 this Inquiry? Like, what is the action plan?

19 Because I hope it's not like another R Cap
20 report. I hope it's not 94 calls to action, where we have
21 roundabout circle talks about reconciliation. Like, what
22 is the action plan? And I want to see the courts, I want
23 to see the police system, I want to see the enforcement you
24 know, be examined, and looked at, because there is so much
25 racism against Indigenous people within just that one

1 system, but it's within all the systems, that I'm just
2 trying to really understand like, what is the Inquiry going
3 to do?

4 And I'm not just placing that all on to the
5 Government, but I'm like, what is Canada, all of Canada
6 going to do? Canadians, you know. I feel like the -- it's
7 the Indigenous people that are always having to push and
8 push and push and we're vocal, and you know, like, look at
9 Idle No More. And look at Standing Rock, and look at now
10 in B.C. with Kinder Morgan. It's -- and with the Murdered
11 Missing Indigenous Women.

12 Like, why -- why does it always have to
13 like, come to that point where we have to be in the face,
14 and demand to get to this point? Like, I -- I want a world
15 where my daughters can be safe. I -- I want them to have
16 the same as, just like anybody else. I want them to have a
17 future. I don't want my -- my daughters to feel that
18 they're looked at differently just because of who they are.

19 I want them to be proud to be able to be --
20 say, "I am an Indigenous woman. I'm (indiscernible)." You
21 know, I want them to have that sense of security. I don't
22 want them to be looked at any less than. And I'm trying to
23 understand like, how do we get there? You know, so I know
24 that's a very loaded question and -- but that's what goes
25 on in my mind.

1 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Well,
2 thank you. I'm having much of the same questioning in my
3 head too and I'm hoping you'll give me the answers. Thank
4 you so much for coming today and telling us about Shelly
5 and Ivan, and the rest of your family.

6 We look upon what you've told us, and what
7 other families and survivors tell us, and it's really
8 giving us sacred gifts, the memories and the stories and -

9 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** M'hm.

10 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** -- and
11 the truths. The matriarchs on Haida Gwaii in British
12 Columbia sometime ago heard about what we are going to be
13 doing all across Canada. And they wanted a way to
14 recognize and honour families and survivors who come
15 forward, because they know the grief that -- the pain that
16 families are going through, and survivors are going
17 through.

18 So they ordered, as only matriarchs can,
19 that eagle feathers be harvested and -- and that happened.
20 And they've asked us to give families and survivors who
21 come forward an eagle feather on their behalf, to lift you
22 up, to give you strength and -- and to honour you.

23 So we have an eagle feather for you. My
24 Elder assistant Kathy is going to help me here. Just one,
25 thanks. Yeah. We have one also for your friend who --

1 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Oh, she went to pick up
2 my daughter.

3 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Oh, she
4 did? Okay. Well, we have one for you and also one for
5 your friend, because we know family includes family of the
6 heart.

7 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Oh, okay.

8 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Oh,
9 we're not done yet. Also, we have -- oh, you have them?
10 Oh, thank you so much. Oops, I'm sorry, I (indiscernible).
11 Because we believe in ceremony and the importance of
12 tradition, we have tobacco ties for you and your friend,
13 and also, and exchange for the sacred gift you gave us, we
14 wanted to give you and your friends seeds to plant.

15 Seeds we know have a lot of significance in
16 a lot of different ways all across Canada. So would you
17 please plant them --

18 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** M'hm.

19 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** -- take a
20 picture of what happens and send it to us?

21 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Okay.

22 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** And thank
23 you again.

24 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Thank you.

25 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** It's been

1 a real honour to hear from you.

2 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Thank you.

3 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** And good
4 luck.

5 **MS. MELANIE DENE:** Thank you.

6 **MR. BREEN OUELLETTE:** Chief Commissioner --
7 Chief Commissioner, I request that you adjourn this hearing
8 at your pleasure.

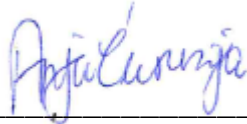
9 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Yes,
10 we'll take about a 15-minute break, please.

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

12 --- Upon adjourning at 3:00 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Anja Curuvija, 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.



Anja Curuvija

February 11, 2018