National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Public Hearings
Sheraton Cavalier Hotel, South Ballroom
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

PUBLIC

Wednesday November 22, 2017

Public Volume 28
Myrna LaPlante, Lynda Johnny-Silverfox,
Mary LaPlante & Crystal Fafard,
In relation to Emily Osmond LaPlante;

Barbara Badger & Sheila Ledoux,
In relation to Shelley Napope;

Brenda Forseth, In relation to Geraldine Hanna

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APPEARANCES

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<td>Assembly of First Nations</td>
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<td>Advocate for Children and Youth Saskatchewan</td>
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<td>Government of Canada</td>
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<td>Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women’s Circle Corporation</td>
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<td>Women of Métis Nation/Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak</td>
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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 Sheraton Cavalier Hotel - Central Ballroom (i.e. public hearing space # 1).
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Forthcoming submission: Myrna LaPlante will share search-and-rescue materials she developed with the National Inquiry.

Witnesses: Barbara Badger and Sheila Ledoux
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MR. MILTON GAMBLE: Good morning. I’m glad everybody’s awake. (Speaks in Native language). I’m going to greet each and every one of you in a good way, in a humble way. I want to acknowledge Elder William Doucette and Elder Cheryl Little Tent (phon) for lifting pipes for us this morning. I want to acknowledge (indiscernible) for being there, for helping our ceremonies.

Tomorrow morning, again, we have pipe ceremony at 7:30. This afternoon we’ll have lunch here in the main area, also with dinner, will be happening with the families at 6:00 p.m. All the families that are involved with the process, you’re all invited to come and have dinner here with the Commissioners at 6:00 p.m., just right outside the main area.

We want to also acknowledge the health support that is also available here. You see all the ladies in purple shirts, and the gentlemen that are wearing purple shirts, you’re all asked to make yourselves available for the families that are here. Please take advantage of our support team. They have a loving ear, and patience, and understanding to take the time to sit with you. And, we thank our support team for coming up helping with their services.
This afternoon, or maybe this morning, I’m not sure, I don’t have the time on this, we have a meet and greet with Jaime Black. It’s a Red Dress Project in the Elders lounge. There’s going to be activities there available for the children to come up and get a little history of the Red Dress Project, the story of the Red Dress Project, how that whole process came about.

I was just sitting with my brother Sandford Strongarm this morning and shared a little history of how they came to recognize the Red Dress for our ceremonies in recognition of murdered and missing Indigenous women was there was a young woman who was found wearing her red dress. So, that’s a part of the story. There’s more to the story that goes along with that.

This evening, we have a round dance scheduled, who is being sponsored by RTSIS FSIN Pow Wow Provincial Woman Association, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women’s Circle Council. They are sponsoring the round dance that’s going to be available at the TCU, which used to be the former Centennial Auditorium right downtown. The round dance is scheduled from 6:00 till 12:00. I do believe they will have shuttle service available for that. That’s still being worked on, but we do have shuttle service available for the activity that’s happening at the Friendship Centre this afternoon and all day for children
and for youth.

Out in front in the foyer we have the United Church of Canada Anglican Diocese. They have care packages for available for families. You’re all asked to go and just help yourself, make yourself available to those -- to the organizations. We want to also acknowledge our (indiscernible). As you see, we have Roland Kay, who’s helping us here with the families. In the other room, we have Rick Fable who is helping our families with the smudge ceremonies, and it helps them carry through the day, gives them strength to share their stories in a humble way, in a respectful way.

I want to, again, acknowledge the health support from all caregivers, families during these four days. It’s, I guess, so grateful that you take the time out of your lives to come and support the families who are sharing their stories, who are sharing their testimonies with the media, with the general public, because it’s being televised. It’s being recorded. Some families have asked for in-camera sessions, and others have given the opportunity to share in this way.

The organizations that, I guess, want to be acknowledged or we need to acknowledge, they don’t want to be, we need to acknowledge these individuals, the RTSIS, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Prince Albert Grand Council,
Women’s Commission, Health Canada, any residential school workers, the Elders Council.

We also want to acknowledge our Fire Keeper, Ralph Arkan (phon), who is helping us keeping that fire going throughout the four day process. The fire that’s available for us is in the teepee just down the street. You’re all welcome to make your way over to the fire to maybe go and share your stories, go and burn your offerings, and we have fire keepers there available for you. I’m going to ask in a humble way for Elder John Stonechild (phon) to please make your way up here, John, for opening prayer. And, after John has concluded the opening prayer, we’re going to ask Dancing Horse to provide us with another blessing, another honour song for this morning.

So, I’ll ask those of you who can to please rise, remove your headgear as we do an opening prayer.

ELDER JOHN STONECHILD: (Opens with prayer in Native language).

DANCING HORSE DRUMMER: Good morning. We are part of the Dancing Horse Dance Troop. We always respect the young lady. She was asked a month ago to come down here yesterday, not to offend anybody, but we wanted to have the families to tell their stories. That’s why she didn’t come yesterday. But, this morning, she woke up
early this morning. She said, “I’ve got to do this. I’ve got to do this,” she said, “Because when I make a promise, a promise is a really big thing for our First Nation people. I have to come here this morning to do this.”

“Tomorrow,” she said, “I’m going to dance with my mother and my friend from Toronto.” The three of them are going to be blessing.

This is a ceremony dance. Long time ago, our people really respected our ways and still try to carry on. Long time ago, we didn’t have jingles. We had deer hooves and it took many deer to kill just to make that dress for the healing dance. That’s what I was told from the Elders. I thought I’d pass that message on. Some of those history stories are getting lost. Without a -- there’s a young girl who will bless the families this morning. Mm-hmm, dancing horse.

(MUSICAL PRESENTATION)

MR. MILTON GAMBLE: Hay-hay. We will now take a few minutes to just set up some more chairs before we start the first session of our testimonies this morning.

COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: That was me.
Good morning, everybody. (Speaks in Native language). We will start pretty soon. The technology is sending us some of the evidence for our beautiful friend here. So, we’ll see what will be her decision, and just so you know, it’s
an important day for the families, I know you know, and we have to respect the process and I’m glad you’re here.

I will not speak on behalf of Myrna LaPlante, but in those moments, this is where we need the support. This is where we need to be lifted up, and your presence does it. And, there’s some family members also in this room, so I want to acknowledge your presence, your courage and your dedication for justice.

So, I’m glad to see families who left their home to be here, left their respective territory. We say en français, their province. They say province. Like you, you left Manitoba to be here; I left Québec to be here, you can tell with my strong accent. So, do we wait, or...? You’re the boss. Okay. Alors, merci beaucoup, Myrna. So, we will start and Madam -- Maître Jennifer Cox.

Hearing # 1
Witnesses: Myrna LaPlante, Lynda Johnny-Silverfox, Mary LaPlante, Crystal Fafard
In Relation to Emily Osmond LaPlante
Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette
Commission Counsel: Jennifer Cox
Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

MS. JENNIFER COX: So, before we -- yeah, we’re going to have to have an oath. Mr. Registrar is the one that’s helping us with the technology. So, Myrna,
Mary, Lynda and Crystal, do you promise to tell your truth in a good way today?

**ALL:** Yes.

**MS. JENNIFER COX:** Thank you. So, Madam Commissioner, I would like to begin with Myrna LaPlante, Mary. Crystal is here on my right, Lynda, and behind us we have Gloria, Roxanne and Berna of the LaPlante family. And Myrna, we are here to talk about your Aunt Emily, and perhaps you can tell the Commissioner a little bit about who you are and where you grew up?

**MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE:** Okay, we have some AV slides coming. Good morning, Commissioners, Elders. Thank you for those that lifted the pipes and prayed for us this morning. My name is Myrna LaPlante, and I am from Saskatoon, and our family grew up and our homeland is in the Wynyard, Kandahar, Dafoe, Reymore, Quinton, Punnichy area, and within that area is the Kawacatoose First Nation and the Day Star First Nation.

So, our -- the territory that we grew up is that area, and our family has been in that area for hundreds of years, I would say. That’s where we originate from. But, we live here, and Mary is from Regina. Lynda is from the Yukon and has recently moved to Calgary, and Crystal is also from the eastern part of the province. Well, she can explain further where -- her connection, and
it’s a more recent connection to our family as well, we have learned, and our support people from -- Gloria from Kandahar, and Roxanne from Whitehorse and Alberta from Saskatchewan.

I’ll just describe how we are going to deliver our presentation. Our aunt went missing in 2007. Her name is Emily Genevieve Osmond, and her maiden name is LaPlante. She went missing from the north, the property that resides north of the Kawacatoose, and Mary will talk a little bit about this. And, we want to talk about her early years. We want to talk about her younger years when she worked and married, and then living in the Yukon and then coming back to Saskatchewan and her disappearance, her impact -- the impact of that disappearance on our family, and then we have some recommendations for the Commission.

So, with that, we’ll proceed. So, Mary’s our first speaker. Lynda will be our second speaker. I will come in and talk a bit more about what happened around -- surrounding her disappearance, and then Crystal will provide the recommendations.

**MS. MARY LAPLANTE:** I’m Mary LaPlante from Regina, Saskatchewan. So, I’m going to be talking about her early years. Our Aunt Emily is the daughter of Michael LaPlante and Hazel Capakwan (phon). Those are our grandparents. She was the fifth child of a family of
seven, and she was from the Kawacatoose First Nation. The family then moved to a Métis settlement on the border of Kawacatoose First Nation.

As a child, she received her schooling in a little country schoolhouse called Edgebrook.

Our aunt had many interests. She was an excellent seamstress and loved gardening. She loved and enjoyed all types of music. She played in a band formed by all her siblings. She was able to play all types of instruments such as the guitar, fiddle, banjos and accordion by ear. They were taught by ear.

She was a very agile and flexible horse woman. She was an expert to ride horses and was able to ride the horses without -- with saddles and bridles and without saddles and bridles, just by using her knees and hanging on to the horse’s mane.

As teenagers, our Aunt Emily and her sister, sisters Evey (phon) and Helen, were awesome to watch as children when there were roundups, horse roundups, cattle roundups. I was always impressed as a child when I had to stand outside a fence and watch my aunts do their thing.

In her early 20s, she moved to Brenin, Manitoba, and worked as a nurse aid. Met her husband, Gerry Osmond, fell in love and married shortly after. She loved to travel. She loved nature and she loved the
outdoors.

She eventually moved to Edmonton, Alberta, received her education as a red seal chef and worked as an instructor at Siase (phon). She loved people. She adopted many nieces and nephews from an immediate family of ours, including other children.

When she was in her mid 20s, her and her husband moved to the Yukon where she continued her career as a cook. She was a hard worker; always tested her limits on her own endeavours. Along the way, she passed her knowledge down to family, friends and co-workers. Thank you.

**MS. LYNDA JOHNNY-SILVERFOX:** Good morning. My name is Lynda Silverfox. I’m the adopted daughter of Emily, so she was my foster mother. I came into Emily’s care in -- before I was four years old, so somewhere in late ’67 I went into her care and into her home. I don’t remember -- there’s a lot of gaps in my memory as to I don’t remember the first day I went there, and certain times throughout the time that I lived with her. But, today, for me, is about shining the light on Emily and the person that she was, and how I want her to be remembered and how I remember her, and just some of my experiences and memories of her.

She was very strong, smart, very
independent, hardworking First Nation Cree woman, and she was one of the mentor’s in my life that always encouraged me to live a -- to live a good life. And, I just remember a very busy household because she had adopted all of her seven nieces and nephews. And so, it was a busy household and there was oftentimes that she worked two jobs.

She was a red seal chef and she worked in some very high-end restaurants throughout Yukon and B.C., and likely Alberta as well, and she was a natural caregiver, a very nurturing person, and she really invested in her family. Family was very important to her. She always told us that we needed our education and that we needed to get that little piece of paper, that’s how she talked about getting a degree or a certificate, that we needed that paper because one day you aren’t going to be able to get a job without that certification.

And so, I really hung on to that and I did. I went and got my bachelor’s degree in social work, and I think she was really the person in my life that really pushed me and kept -- and when I wanted to give up I always thought about her and what she had said, and that I needed to do that to make a better life for myself and for my -- for my family.

Emily really loved travelling. She loved being out on the land. There was oftentimes we went for
drives and we’d go pick driftwood along the Yukon River and -- or not -- we’d pick driftwood from around Marsh Lake, and she always liked to go along the Yukon River to pick up the lava rocks that are along the riverbank for her flower bed.

Her husband, Gerry Osmond, was also an important part of our lives and he always took us out hunting. He liked to hunt ducks and go fishing and things like that, so we spent a lot of time on the land that way.

There were different times throughout our life, like I said, she worked two jobs. She worked for -- in Whitehorse in what they call the Edgewater Restaurant and the Airport Chalet, and she also ran a concession at the Jim Light Memorial Arena, which is no longer there, and she also ran a concession in the Qwanlin Mall, which I believe was called the Malt Bar.

So, I just remember that she was very hardworking. We had a busy household. Mealtimes were really -- I remember mealtimes for me because she was a really good cook and everyone -- we had this great big, big green table, because there were so many of us. There was seven -- I don’t know. There were quite a few of us anyway, because Emily had also taken in, at some point, along with me, I don’t know if they -- my two siblings, three siblings actually. My sister that’s next -- three
years to me, and then my brother and my other brother had
also come into Emily’s home, but I don’t know if they came
in at the same time I did. So, they were also in the home
for a while, and she also took in other foster children who
were a couple of my other relatives. So, she really had a
big heart, and she was a person that was always giving of
herself. I think she made a lot of connections in the
Yukon.

I remember Christmas and New Year’s, there
was always a really good spread of food, and all these
snacks, and different musicians would come and play music
in the home. I always remember music, and I didn’t know
until Myrna and Mary and other family members shared some
of the history, because I don’t some of the early years
about her. I only know from what I remember of her being
in the Yukon. So, this is a really good way for everybody
to come together and kind of really shine the light on
Emily and who she was, and the loving person that she was.

Throughout the years, even though -- after I
left her home, I don’t remember. I know when she divorced
Jerry, when her and her husband were going through a
divorce, I think at that point I actually went to live with
my older sister for a while, I think, and I never did see
her -- interestingly, I never seen her depressed or crying
or angry. If she was, she never showed that. I’m sure she
was going through something because at that point I went to
live with my sister for a while, and I ended up coming back
to her.

And, even throughout my adult years, I kept
in touch with her, she met all my -- she -- well, my two
children, and she met my granddaughter as well. And,
through the years, we kept in contact by letter, and she
often sent gifts. And, one time, she sent three crazy
quilts. I couldn’t believe it. Those things just take a
lot of time to make, and it’s a lot of just random pieces
of cloth that are sewn together. So, she had made one for
myself and for my kids. And, she just continued throughout
the years to send care packages because that’s who she was.
That was her way of letting you know that she loved you,
and she was thinking about you.

There were also times that I came back here
to visit with her, and there was times -- I remember we
came down here together. Her and I drove down to
Saskatchewan because she wanted to visit her family. And,
when she left the Yukon, she came down to Saskatchewan to
look after her mother, which she -- her mother, Hazel,
which she did until her mother’s passing.

MS. JENNIFER COX: Lynda, thank you. Lynda,
I’m wondering if you could perhaps share with the
Commissioner a little bit about some of the famous people
that your -- that Emily cooked for that you’re aware of?

MS. LYNDA JOHNNY-SILVERFOX: It’s not actually me that’s -- I heard through Mary, so I’ll let Mary share actually.

MS. MARY LAPLANTE: We went and visited her on a weekend, and we were sitting outside, my mom was still alive, and she started talking to me and she said, “You know what?” I think she lived in Edmonton at that time, but she told me that she used to cook for Prime Minister Trudeau, and they would come and they’d go and get a chauffeur and take her to the airport and put her on a -- on a jet and fly her to Ottawa. And then she never had to -- she had all the equipment there and all the staff there. All she had to do was cook, and the staff would serve all the different courses.

And then she never had to clean up. Real. And, she told me when she was done all that, she said, red carpet people and black tie affairs, she was always -- she told me, “You would never believe all the dignitaries I had to -- I came and fed,” because she was that well known. And then they would take her back, take her back to -- in the chauffeur, take her to the airport and bring her back in that same night and take her home.

And I always remembered that. She said country singers, princess, prince from all over the
country. She said, “You’ll never believe how many people I had to serve,” you know, for her big meals, prepare that big meals, and I was so, just totally amazed with her. That was one of her stories that she shared with me and I was really impressed. Thank you.

**MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE:** Some wonderful memories. It’s interesting, as we put our stories together that some people, our family in Saskatchewan, I’m just -- I’m sorry, I’m just watching for a photo that’s coming in, the poster. Our family in Saskatchewan maybe did not know her life in the Yukon. Similarly, some of the family in the Yukon didn’t know her life in Saskatchewan. So, this is a real coming together of our family to get to know our aunt.

Some of the children that she adopted, and uncle, our Uncle Mike -- just excuse me for a moment. This is our photo of our aunt. I hope we can see that. Yeah, that’s good. That was provided to us by the Native Women’s Association of Canada.

So, we’re piecing the story of auntie’s incredible life together and, you know, we do have some gaps because, you know, we do have family who do have some information. And, you know, we’re trying to get this story together. So, we have more truth to the story, perhaps, that’ll be shared by some of the other family members at a
later date, and maybe some of the hearings in B.C. or, you know, that might be scheduled in the future.

So, I want to talk about the coming home, residing in her original home area and then what happened with her disappearance and the impacts of that disappearance.

So, at the -- when auntie’s marriage ended, and her children were then growing -- grown up and, you know, starting their own families, she started her journey home, back to Saskatchewan and back to the Kandahar and the property north of the Kawacatoose First Nation. Do we have the slide with the location available? There were two slides that showed...

**MS. JENNIFER COX:** There’s pictures of the -- there’s a map.

**MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE:** Yes.

**MS. JENNIFER COX:** That’s part of the collection of pictures.

**MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE:** Yeah. So, if we can pull that up? We can refer to that. So, as Lynda said, one of the reasons that she returned home was to care for her mother, our *kokum*, Hazel, and they resided at my parents’ family farm, which is just north of Kawacatoose and is now owned by my mom, Ann LaPlante. My mom is -- has come to the city to attend the language keepers conference.
And so, she was a neighbour of aunt when she disappeared.
So, this is where the area that aunt came to and resided for a while.

So, we have a map here. I’m not sure if we can zoom in at all on that, but you’ll see the Kawacatoose First Nation is the shaded area, and if you can zoom into the red dot there, okay, yeah, there we go, the red dot is north -- just immediately north of the Kawacatoose First Nation, and that property is owned by our cousins Mary and her brother Francis LaPlante, and that’s where auntie resided. Just north of that red dot there is our family farm, and our mom’s family farm and my dad has had, who has since passed on, has had that farm for probably 60, going on 70 years. 70 years.

So, that area is right in the middle of Dafoe to the north. I’m not sure how -- what, what that map -- how far north that map goes. Dafoe, Kandahar, Wynyard and then to the south is Reymore, Quinton, Punnichy, all this stuff in my brain here. So, that’s the area that we have. That’s our territory. That’s the LaPlante territory. And, further to the -- I don’t know if you can see on that map there, further to the east is the Day Star First Nation, and that’s where our mom’s roots are. So, our roots are Day Star and Kawacatoose First Nation.
In that general area is where our Uncle Mike and his wife, Pearl, had resided, and that is where auntie -- the marriage was ending, and the children needed to be cared for, and that’s when auntie and Jerry, Uncle Jerry, took the children and then -- the seven children, and cared for them.

So, we must have been like eight, seven years of age when that happened, us older children, and two children remained in the care of -- kokum raised our cousin, Celeste, and Mary’s family raised Alan. So, there was -- the children that she took were Wayne, Karen, Lloyd, Brian, Loretta, that was five, right? Five. Glen. So, yeah.

Okay. So, she’s returned -- returning to Saskatchewan, and for about the next 10 years, her activity was that she purchased a home and resided in Regina, and then she moved to Kandahar and lived in several surrounding rural areas.

During this time, she travelled back to Prince George and Prince Rupert and worked as a chef at various restaurants and camps. She finally settled on our cousin’s property, which is on the map, to accommodate her animals and her love of nature. She told her family that she wanted to continue to be physically active. She didn’t want to live in an old folks’ home, which would have been
easy, you know, running water and everything, all the amenities. She wanted to be free and she wanted to maintain her independence.

On September 20, 2007, I received a call at my desk. I worked here in Saskatoon. And, one of our -- my sibling said, “Auntie Emily’s missing.” I said, “What do you mean Auntie Emily’s missing? She can’t be too far away. She must have walked somewhere. Maybe she fell.” And I left to go, and a lot of us gathered within the next couple of days to help search for auntie, who was 78 years of age at the time of her disappearance.

The RCMP were called, I think it was that late morning of September 20th, and they conducted a thorough search of the property. The search was September 20th to September 22nd. A search by the RCMP of the property, her van was still there, yielded no clue as to her disappearance.

Now, auntie walked with a cane. She had arthritis in her hip. She could not have walked very far. They examined a lot of potential, like, bones and -- she had dogs and the dogs, of course, would bring, you know, whatever they would eat and there would be, you know, some bones that were on the property, and there was no evidence that she was on the property. There was no DNA found on her, you know, on the land that would indicate that she
might be somewhere in that, you know, on her land.

So, on the third day of the search, the RCMP were done. There were a significant number of people that wanted to help from the local area that wanted to help with the search. They came as soon as they heard auntie was missing, and they were kept away and kept, I guess, at bay by the RCMP. Well, I guess I can understand that the RCMP want to preserve, you know, any evidence that may be on the property, but these are also people that really know the area. They know the land well and they were basically turned off, I think, by the RCMP response to their offer of help.

So, on the third day, the RCMP were driving away. They were leaving her property. I saw them driving away. I had to go stop them, and they said they were done. They would continue to search. If any clues or evidence came in, they would -- they would get back to us.

So, I became in a panic, like, okay, what do we do now? Where do we go? Who do we see? Who do we talk to? Who will help us? Who’s out there? We just knew that we had to continue the search. There were lots of people, of course Gloria and her family, and all of our cousins and relatives that were, you know, what do we do now?

So, we were thrown into a situation totally unfamiliar with having a missing person and a missing elder
and an urgency to get out there and find her, because maybe
she did wander away from her property. Maybe she was out
there and we must, we must find her, and I’m totally
convinced that we’re going to find her in, you know, a
fairly short length of time.

The following week, oh, this would take us
to about the beginning of October, we organized -- we
decided, okay, we’re going to search on October 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th},
and a family search was organized. So, I’m thinking, you
know, well, we can get this information out. We can make
it public. We can call out for searchers, and people will
come and contact me. And so, we have a week to get this
search organized and, you know, so I’m like hyperactive,
you know, we got, we got to find her, we have to, we have
to. She’s got to be out there and we must find her. Not
very many people responded to my callout.

So, I’m sitting on Wednesday, and it is
Friday October 4\textsuperscript{th} that we’re going to start that search,
and I’m not a search manager. I don’t know what to do.
I’m not -- I don’t know what we’re supposed to, you know,
what is the process here? I don’t know.

In my foggy memory, I remembered a person by
the name of Darryl Naytowhow from the Montreal Lake Cree
Nation who was a professionally trained search manager. I
called Darryl and I said, “Darryl, I need your help.” He
said, “What do you need?” I said, “We need searchers. We’re searching for our aunt.” “Yes, I heard something in the news about that.” And he says, “Give me half an hour.” Within a half an hour he called me back, he says, “We’ll be there on Friday, and I’ve got 13 searchers coming with me.” And from there we -- we were able to, to have the first, I guess, official search.

We had support from the Kawacatoose First Nation who allowed us to use their hall as our command centre. See, I know these terms after the fact. To use as a command centre, and Darryl is also a search and rescue trainer. So, he just went into action and he knew what he had to do. We knew what we had to set up. We knew that we had to have a, you know, a secluded area for, you know, if we found any information.

Interestingly enough -- okay, when I was -- that week when we were preparing for that search, I knew this organization, the Saskatchewan Association of Volunteer Search and Rescue Personnel. I phoned them. I phoned several of those chapters. They’re on the website, and they will not participate and help us with a family search unless they’re activated by the RCMP.

So, here we have this resource, this wonderful resource, but it was not an RCMP search that I organized, it was a family search, so they would not help
us, and people professionally trained searchers in the area
would not, would not help us because they were not
activated by the RCMP. Fortunately, Darryl and the
Montreal Lake Cree Nation search and rescue team were on
reserve and they were the group that responded. That --
during that weekend, Carry the Kettle First Nation, which
is in southern Saskatchewan, also came out. I didn’t know
who they were. They came out with their search team that
weekend and joined us. When the RCMP knew that these
search and rescue teams were coming out, they decided to
join us that weekend and they activated Regina Search and
Rescue.

So, these other people joined us, including
the RCMP. So, yeah, it was because we had Darryl Naytowhow
and that professional search and rescue team is when the
RCMP decided, okay, we’re going to help, we’re going to
support this search this weekend. So, it was because of
Sherry, Sherry Runsfound (phon) and her team from Carry the
Kettle, and Darryl Naytowhow from Montreal Lake Cree
Nation, that we had a really incredible search that
weekend. Unfortunately, the search results were negative.

This search, and I -- as I’ve been doing a
lot of the coordination for the search for Aunt Emily over
the years, and it was one, like a real learning, huge
learning curve for us to be able to conduct searches going
So, of course, it’s the fall, it’s October. I remember that weekend, it started to snow, and it started to freeze. And, during that time our family members and our cousin Francis, they walked, they searched, they -- hunters were out, quads, horses. They continued to search in that area, and we were not able to find any information that would bring us to where she is, and that remains the same today. We don’t know where she is.

So, as I said, the medical records did not reveal any medical conditions. Of course, they want to know about Alzheimer’s, dementia, all this kind of stuff, and we don’t know -- I shouldn’t say medical records. People in our family and that would have known her medical history, would know that she was, you know, of sound mind and that she was capable of making her own decisions and so on.

She was on medication for her arthritis and had her arthritic hip and I said would walk with a cane. So, she could not have walked any distance. Her cane was at her house. She couldn’t have walked very far. So, over the next -- that was the first year, winter came. Spring came, we started doing some searching again. For the next three years, it was the same, maybe not quite as formally organized as that first search, but people that would come
out, would, you know, would be able to come out. I believe Sherry Runs came out. I’m not sure if Darryl -- I can’t remember. I don’t think Darryl came, but he certainly provided us ground work in terms of how to conduct the search. And, over the years, the searchers have walked, rode horses, quads. Hunters are out, always on the lookout. Our family just in that territory always out on the land. The kids are always out, hunters, real dedicated to their hunting, and so on.

In the last couple of years, there was a tip where a vehicle was found in a slough on a property owned by a new owner north of our farm and south of Kandahar. The RCMP were activated and it turned out that that was -- it was not connected to auntie’s disappearance. That was one of the more recent contacts.

So, the file continues to remain open at the -- with the historical case unit with the RCMP. One of the things that we had to establish was a communication process, because we have family living -- auntie’s family, immediate family, is all out of province. They’re in -- well, now in Alberta, they’re in B.C., the Yukon, and the older sister, Karen, lives in Ottawa with her family.

So, we had family all over and I wanted to make sure that we all received the same information. So, I set up a -- the email and included as many family members
just to keep an update of the progress of the search for auntie, and of course, over the years, it’s kind of dwindled, you know, because we had nothing, nothing more to share. But, I also had to establish a communication process with the RCMP. So, we agreed that he would email or we would email on a regular basis, and for the first maybe year and a half it was regular, and then I guess we had nothing more to share. You know, the emails became less and less.

Now, we hadn’t heard from the RCMP in the last -- for about the last seven years on this case. I did receive a call about the week after the Whitehorse National Inquiry hearings. I had a call from an RCMP member, “Hello Myrna, just checking in, how are you doing?” I said, “I’m fine.” He said, “We’re calling just to let you know that the file is still open and we want to let you know that, you know, if any new evidence comes we will share that with you.” Fine. Thank you. That’s lovely. Good. Have a good day. So, the communication with the RCMP has basically been nil for the last seven years.

Approximately four years after her disappearance, our family had another disappearance in our family. My brother’s 17-year-old son, Cody Ridge Wolfe, 17 years of age, went missing at the Kawacatoose -- I mean -- I’m sorry, at the Muskowekwan First Nation, which is
further to the east, east of Punnichy, or in the Lestock area. Again, we went into crisis mode. Cody’s missing and at that time, we shifted our energies and resources from missing Auntie Emily to search for our nephew, Cody.

The response to Cody’s disappearance was massive at the community level from the First Nation. We had excellent resources. Chief and Council provided excellent resources. The RCMP were very much involved. But Cody is a child, 17 years of age, and there was quite a lot of energy, resources, put into the search for Cody. Again, it was -- it was mostly the First Nations community that responded.

Cody was in grade 11 at that time. That was a really hard time. It was really hard with auntie; it was hard with Cody as well. So, we’ve had intense searches for the last -- 2007, and then again 2011, and then up until about a year ago, we have intensely searched for Cody and both remain missing. Again, we have no information as to -- to bring us to where these people are. We don’t know where they are.

Auntie’s case, I believe that there could be foul play because she couldn’t walk very far. Cody’s disappearance, I believe, is undetermined because we just don’t know. We don’t know. He was close to a slough, which is not a big body of water, at the time that
pinpoints us to the last time that he had contact with a
friend of his. He was at a slough and it was very, very
cold, so we don’t know if he ended up in that body of
water. They’ve searched that water numerous times. Or, is
he the victim of foul play? We don’t know.

The cases are not connected. They’re two
separate cases. They’re not connected. Some people say
that, oh, you know, somebody’s out there taking people
away. Well, that may very well be, but the cases are not
related.

Going back to auntie’s disappearance and our
panic, because we’re all of a sudden thrown into the
situation of having a missing person in our family, and who
do we talk to? Our friend Gwenda Yuzicappi, who is in the
audience, was one of the first people to reach out to me to
-- because her daughter was missing at that time. And then
either I made contact with our missing women’s support
group here in, in Saskatoon, Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik,
Women Walking Together, and we have some -- we welcome some
of them, are members here this morning.

So, it’s been 10 years with Iskwewuk. Ten
years with our friendship with Gwenda and other family
members. We have a huge family, don’t we Gwenda, across
Canada? It’s not the way that you want to develop a huge
network and friendship, but the issue of missing and
murdered Indigenous women and girls has brought us together. And, so many people in this room supported us, and walked with us, and joined us in our, in our life. This is our life now. This is the life that we live. We try to have a happy family. We try to -- we try to be, you know, live a somewhat normal life, and it’s really, really hard. We -- our family has been forever changed by this -- these events.

So, thank you Gwenda, Iskwewuk, Angie Bear sitting in the room, our victim services people. We have done -- it’s been a long road of raising the awareness, calling out for information for both auntie and Cody, and many others that are missing in, you know, in our circle. We have had -- we’re fortunate that we’ve had, well, Darryl Naytowhow; we’ve had Sherry and Carry the Kettle, and they’ve walked with us for the last -- also with the last 10 years.

Another person I want to talk about is Lloyd Goodwill. He’s a 30-year RCMP member who has retired, and he has volunteered his services to help coordinate the search for Cody. He wasn’t -- he knew about Aunt Emily, but was unable to join us at that time, and Lloyd is now the head of the Regina Volunteer Search and Rescue. So, when they do come out to search they cover up their Regina SARR badges because they’re not representing Regina SARR;
they’re representing -- bringing their skills and their expertise, profession -- professionalism to help us search. So, Lloyd has also been on our -- with our family for -- more so when Cody went missing.

So, there is no blueprint, no resources, nobody to go to at that time on September 20, 2007. When the RCMP were driving away, they didn’t say, “Here’s your next steps; here’s what your family might do.” Victim Services were not really a resource for us. They’re based in Fort Qu’Appelle for that area. That’s where they are. The resources were more of our family, our friends, people that lived in that area talking about what was happening, being together and so on. I know that Victim Services plays a really, really important role in many cases, but for our family, they weren’t really key. I know that they played very, very important roles in some of the other cases of our friends who are in the same situation as us.

So, a little old lady, 78 years of age, not many people respond. There are no resources, no resources for a reward, no resources even to -- for search and rescue. My employer, as soon as we discovered that she was missing, they made a donation, or my employer did, and I really want to acknowledge the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies where I worked for years, who helped us and provided time for me to be away. My manager
at that time was very caring, as well as the president at that time was very supportive of me having to take time away and so on.

So, there was no resources, and same with Cody. I mean, we did have some donations, more donations for Cody, and that was excellent. But, I think of a young white male child who was a teenager down east, had a fight with his parents. He ran away. There was a huge, huge response, huge media, great big media trucks, search, RCMP or the police, many people out there with a $10,000 reward for information from Microsoft.

The issue with the parents and this child was that he was spending so much time as a gamer, and that was the issue and he ran away. Microsoft stepped forward and gave $10,000 to that case, which is wonderful, that’s great, you know, it’s great that these organizations will step forward. What about the Auntie Emily’s of the world? What about the Amber Redman’s? What about Danita Faith Bigeagle? Some of our other families are still in this situation.

Nobody has stepped forward to -- some of the families have given up their residential school money to offer these rewards. We didn’t have that. What do we do with our Cody case? You know, we’ve talked about maybe we’re going to be doing a reward but, you know, where do we
get funding? I’ll have to offer, perhaps, some of our own funds.

At that time -- since then, there have been several well-developed resources in terms of response to search and rescue. Now, people can hand out the package. You know, here’s a process. There’s one that was developed in Manitoba, really, really well developed, and there’s other ones that are around. I developed my own plain language search and rescue document, and I’ve shared it with other families, and some other organizations and agencies that are developing resources for search and rescue.

The media, it has been reported erroneously that she lived on the Kawacatoose First Nation. She lived on the north edge of the Kawacatoose First Nation. I’ve had to correct that several times with the media. It’s always and continues to still be confused. However, the Kawacatoose First Nation has played a key role in the support of, you know, our search for auntie. You know, we’ve used the -- like I said before, we’ve used the community hall, and their personnel and individuals that have come forward to support us and our friends and our relatives and the Day Star First Nation have also contributed, because I am a member of the Day Star First Nation. Some of our -- my siblings are members of
Kawacatoose First Nation.

Before I go into some comments, Gloria, do you want to share any of that time? Okay. Do you want to talk during that time of the search and whether -- do you want to add?

So, I guess the -- one of the challenging parts was, of course, auntie and her -- the places that she lived, and the family being in different parts of Canada, and being able to, you know, bring people together and, you know, getting information. We had to go back out in the early part of her search to get some information from the family members and so on. So, it was a huge undertaking, a huge task to be able to find out all that, you know, some of auntie’s background, and so on, and we’re still -- we’re still learning.

MS. MARY LAPLANTE: I just wanted to say I phoned a psychic in Edmonton for the Auntie Emily search, and my cousin came down from B.C., Glen LaPlante, one of the children that she raised. And, he was telling me he was coming down. And then the psychic -- we went down to the land there and then psychic told me, “You’ve got to find three items.”

So, when my cousin came down, we went back to the land where she was gone missing, and we found her white running shoe, and her glasses, and a lucky rabbit
foot. A lot of people back then used lucky rabbit feet. And, these were the three items she -- that the psychic had told me to look for. But, I didn’t tell cousin Glen and he was -- and we where there. Some of the family members went out and looked for these things. And then that psychic told me, “Tell the family I’m not far. You find those three items and I’m not far from where you’re going to find them.” And she also said, “You’re going to find these three items.”

So, we gave these to Glen and I think he handed them over to Punnichy RCMP. I don’t know what happened to those three items, but this is what that psychic told us we are going to find. And, she also said she was not far from there, kind of in a little water trickling stream under the -- there’s lots on that land, lots of little streams that -- and we still can’t find her. That was one of my ways to try and help.

We also went to Berna’s brother. Dennis and I went to Little Black Bear. We went traditionally on that one and we went down -- they followed back to the land there and that Elder said, “I feel that spirit here.”

Yeah. So, we had a little feast for her. So, I still -- my own thoughts are she’s there. Like, what’s going -- like Myrna said, she can’t walk very far. She was using the cane. So, I -- in spite of the psychic and the
traditional Elder we got, they more or less told us the same thing, like, she’s there. That was another way of my trying to find her, but they also -- the Elder also told us people that go missing are hard to find. So, that was my -- like a lot of our energy went walking that land, a lot of money went walking that land, going there and walking and walking.

I remember my brother had blisters on his feet because he was walking and walking and walking. A lot of my nephews came out, and when we’d go back to Regina, they’d be just -- their feet would be just sore from walking, like walking and walking and my daughter and -- so we spent a lot of time searching for her on foot, and still, nothing with all the rescue teams and still nothing. The Elders, the psychic, and it’s really still in the air. Like, I personally believe she’s still someplace on that land. Thank you.

MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE: So, as I said, our family has been changed, the way we interact. We don’t have a lot of the laughter that we had. Our mom, of course, was the neighbour of missing Auntie Emily. She would be -- lived by herself, you know, for short periods of time. And so, we were always concerned about her safety.

My mom still lives on the -- out there, in
the same area. Huge impact on her and has always worried about what happened to her sister-in-law. We know that it’s taken the disappearance of auntie and, of course, her grandchild has taken an immense toll on her and all of our family.

Last night, we were saying how -- I was talking with our niece, Jessica, who has joined us here, how do we come back to a happier place? What does our family need to bring us to this new way of being with the missing family members? We need, you know -- we should, you know, be having, you know, a therapist or a facilitator come bring our family and talk and share about the -- because how do -- how does our brother cope, you know? Being our family, you know, we don’t share deep feelings with each other. You know, how does our family cope? I mean how does the mom and dad with a child that’s missing, how do they survive? How do they go on? I’m just so amazed at our network out there of families. They go on somehow. They go on. How do we care for ourselves as families?

You know, huge. I’m just -- I just jotted down, I guesstimated the financial tally would be well over $100,000 for the Cody search. You know, all the resources, if we tallied up all the resources, the RCMP, including the RCMP, the resources that came in, the contributions to the
community was great, you know, the gas, the travelling back and forth, people travelling back and forth, the food, anything we had to buy, would be well over $100,000 for that search.

The cost is huge. There’s no fund to turn to, to say, hey, you know, we need $15,000 or $1,000 this weekend because we’re going to do a search. It’s our family; it’s impacted on people’s credit. It’s impacted on people even having their utilities having to be disconnected because the money has to go towards the search. We’re not going to pay -- we can’t pay this bill right now.

People have lost their valuables because of, you know, having to direct that money that they were paying on these. These possessions were taken by the -- whoever company that they’re buying them from. It is huge. I want to say to the people who might know or have any information on where Auntie Emily is to do the right thing, to step forward, to own up and say I have some information on where she is. You can call Crime Stoppers, you don’t need to be identified.

Please help Lynda find her mom. Please help us find our aunt, and if Cody’s disappearance involves foul play, please step forward. Do the right thing. Help families that are suffering, and that applies to all of our
missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. You have information? Step forward. We need your help. We need your love. We need your prayers. We need, we need your involvement. We need to come together as a country to end this, these disappearances. I’m pleading to the people out there that may have information to please step forward and help us.

There’s many ways that people can help with the National Inquiry that, you know, contact as well, you know, the National Inquiry. I want to say thank you to the National Inquiry as well to give us this opportunity to tell our truth about our missing aunt and Cody, and we do have some other family members that are murdered and not -- well, we do have a cousin that’s missing, and I hope that our other families will tell their truth as well in some way, the ones that have other missing Indigenous relatives here, and we thank you for this opportunity.

We might never be able to tell our story to a court, so this is our court. We’re telling you, and if the perpetrators, if there are perpetrators, we want justice. We want justice for our family members.

**MS. JENNIFER COX:** Anything else?

**MS. GLORIA:** I just want to thank everybody here, thank the dancers that did the healing dance. We need that. We need that healing dance for us to start
healing. I want to thank the Elder for praying. I just want justice for Auntie Emily, for Cody. I see my family suffering. We are crying for help. It’s too long, 10 years to bring justice for Auntie Emily. This is not easy here standing here and begging for that. The family has searched and searched for both family members. We can’t find them. Yeah, it is very scary because my mother-in-law lives just a mile from where Auntie Emily went missing.

Auntie Emily was a strong woman. Whatever happened to her, she put a good fight. She lived out there in the country by herself. She chopped her wood, hauled her water in the wintertime. Hauled snow. She loved her pets. It’s not easy for me driving by her house. Everyday I go to work, I pass by there. I miss that smoke of her wood stove. I can’t think no more, but please help bring justice. RCMP got to get more involved. They can’t overlook us Natives. I can’t think anymore, thanks. I’m sorry.

**MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE:** Jessica?

**MS. GLORIA:** I was here to talk and I’m -- I cry so -- I’m so emotional.

**MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE:** Jessica, do you want to -- no? Okay. So, we’re going to go over to Crystal, our cousin, who in this -- during this time, we’ve found Crystal, our cousin as well. There’s so much historical
stuff on reserve, off reserve, Bill C31. There’s much, much historical stuff, and Crystal will speak to some of those points as well, so Crystal.

**MS. CRYSTAL FAFARD:** Thank you, Myrna. I also want to thank the Elders and the support people here, the dancers, all the protocol folks who brought everything together for the families here today.

I am from Saskatoon, I’m from Yellow Quill First Nations. My Nation, I’m Treaty 4. I’m a lawyer here in Saskatoon, I’ve been practicing for approximately 18 years. I got to know Myrna many years ago, and I’m just amazed by Auntie Emily’s story. She’s an amazing woman. Some of my comments are specific to Aunt Emily, some of them are more of a wish list, and some of them are specific to Indigenous women and girls. So, I’m just going to go through this, and these recommendations are primarily aimed at the Government of Canada and those who have the ability to make a difference in that regard.

With respect to Aunt Emily, the family wishes that the RCMP would engage a little more with the family, to renew the efforts to find Aunt Emily, and to ensure justice is served. To take serious the evidence provided by the family, such as the fact that she would not leave her purse or her animals or her cane behind. She couldn’t walk far. There was no evidence she had dementia
and did not just wander off.

They would like them to consider programs to ensure safety for elders who are vulnerable; Myrna’s mom, elderly men and women who are living alone on an acreage, for example. Support-based community search and rescue programs as the communities intimately know the land and are willing to help. The resources are there, and we need to do more to be able to access those resources. That was somewhat ignored and overlooked in this case with Aunt Emily.

The wish list for Aunt Emily is that the funds are provided to memorialize and honour her special acreage, the area that she lived that meant so much to her. They would like some consideration for the legal status of Aunt Emily and the family, and the fact that she was going through the process to get her Treaty status. We don’t know whatever happened, if she actually got that status or not.

They would like funds dedicated for a family genealogy research because the family has lost an important matriarch, the holder of stories, valuable information and family pride. The family has lost important linkages to the family character and identity.

Some of the systemic recommendations that I am going to talk about are Canada needs to make
considerable efforts in publicly educating Canadians on this country’s role in subjugating the First People of Canada, and how this in turn has led to the devaluation of our Indigenous women systemically, socially, politically in our own communities, economically and culturally.

Indigenous people, and in particular women, battle social misconceptions, stigma, stereotypes, violence, in Canada, just for being an Indigenous woman. Indigenous women and girls are -- Indigenous women are the carriers of life and teachings meant to be passed on to the next generation, and this pivotal role has been nearly destroyed by the colonial actions of Canada through the Indigenous -- Indian residential schools; the Sixties Scoop, which was a direct attack on Indigenous women, parents and their children; the current Indigenous welfare system regimes; and the continued “active disengagement” of this country at many levels.

Women are the backbone of our communities and if they are destroyed, the community is ultimately destroyed, and the families are destroyed.

Canada needs to support Indigenous women at all levels of their life, from cradle to grave.

Blame has been put on the victims and Canada has done very little to correct this at the social level. For instance, the court systems have been a venue to see
Indigenous women further victimized, and there are many examples of that. The RCMP have failed Indigenous people, Indigenous women, as detailed in the Robert Pickton inquiry, the Manitoba Truth, or sorry, Justice Inquiry, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and now the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Commission and Inquiry.

We need to see Criminal Code of Canada amendments for greater punishments for those charged with violence against women and children, and to see that it makes it a criminal offence to those who actively use social media to perpetuate hatred against Indigenous people and women.

We would like to see Canada fund socio-economic policy research on the betterment of Indigenous women so that this might inform future policy development that will build inclusiveness for Indigenous women into society so that women like Aunt Emily do not become a statistic.

We need funds immediately set aside for the empowerment of Indigenous women and children for health and safety, so they can thrive and have social support. Funding should be for Indigenous women and girls empowerment fund, for example, that’s just an example, for
education and entrepreneurship, family connections and
development, social and family development, employment
opportunities for marginalized Indigenous women, for
example, those who live in remote and isolated communities.
There’s lots that happen in the city, but what about those
living in communities that are not anywhere near a city?

We need engagement in “change making”
positions in our society, such as judges, Supreme Court
Justices, academia, political institutions and public
policy institutions.

There must be more community-based justice
programs across the country, decentralized, meaning within
the communities. Not something run out of Ottawa, not
something run out of the cities.

We need to provide more protection and
preventative measures to vulnerable Indigenous women and
girls, protection for women and support for women leaving
relationships so they can do so in a safe way. The police
will not respond unless there’s an incident; we know that.

Protection for, and support for women and
girls who are forced into prostitution or are otherwise
sexually exploited because of poverty, social conditions,
human trafficking, mental status and addictions.

Protection and support for women and girls
who are addicts, victims of violence and various abuses who
need treatment and reintegration into their communities, so
the cycle can stop. Again, this has to be at the community
level.

Funding to address sexual abuse in
communities. Funding and tools to provide and address
suicide crises nationally.

Healing programs to support Indigenous
families impacted by the loss of their family member, and
memorial funds to honour their family member in a
meaningful way.

Support for Indigenous art, writing, which
are key ways of expressing who we are, garnering social
empathy, which is lacking in Canada, through common shared
human experiences as well as unique experiences of
Indigenous women. I personally love the work done by
Connie Walker and those at Aboriginal CBC, the programming
done by APTN that gives a dedicated voice to Indigenous
people, and who highlighted Aunt Emily’s case, in fact.

Development of a key memorial at the
community as mentioned, and then, finally, programming and
funds to address civic and police development, to educate
our civic and community leaders on real issues faced by
Indigenous women, and how they can help rather than hinder
the process on the basis of personal bias or opinion.

Regarding any funding programs, I would
recommend the delivery of such a program be run through not for profits or charities rather than, you know, just money thrown at the community. It has to be set up in a really good governance way so there’s accountability at that level. So -- and that’s everything I have to say.

Migwetch, hay-hay, and all my relations.

MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE: When we were meeting last night, it was the first time that the four of us were able to sit together, coming from different parts of, you know, Canada and getting input from our cousin Hazel in the Yukon. So, it’s been a real team effort, but we only came together last night.

We wanted, because of auntie’s love for music, we weren’t able to connect our link, because we wanted to play a fiddle tune and as we -- for a start and a close. So, just, you know, just think of a fiddle tune in your mind and you’ll think of Aunt Emily. And, one of the things that I came across as well when we were packing up some of her stuff, I came across her writings. She actually started writing a story, her story. And so, we found the start of her story. And, also, there was a specific writing that -- about young Indigenous women, right, and Indigenous women.

She wrote here, “Only young ones wear bright colours,” wear bright colours, and, you know, she talked
about this red suit that she wore as a young woman, and how everybody loved it, because we were really raised in our traditional way, cover up, don’t wear -- don’t draw attention to yourself. You know, don’t wear anything that’s going to, you know, be too short or revealing or anything like that.

Then when you saw some of the pictures of her in her shorts, like, she was really very much ahead of her time, you know, just in some of the clothing. She was always well dressed. I mean, she -- her presentation of herself was just immaculate and -- so anyway, we’ll end on the note that, you know, wear bright colours, celebrate who you are, get your education, all these wonderful things that she taught her children, and just honour and just, I guess, just keep Aunt Emily in your memory and, yeah, and we thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Merci beaucoup. Thank you so much. You said in your presentation you share the truth, you share something not easy but very powerful and amazing, and I have to say, I’m blessed to be the one sitting here. I know Qajaq, I know Brian, I know Marion, they’re here with their spirit, but we’re sharing. They’re in other rooms and I’m very humble to be here.

Also, because Myrna is one of our mentors
for many, many years, but I’ve learned so much just today, things that I didn’t hear before when I was listening to you and thank you. Thank you all of you. Thank you for the family that are here and people in the room with you and for you.

We all know that it’s difficult to heal when we don’t have the answers. It’s hard to -- for the closure, if we can have closure when a loved one disappears or is killed or we don’t know where they are. So, it is hard for the healing process, but you gave me hope when I was listening and receiving your truth, and to see how the support is huge and important in those moments, that Canada heard today, the people who are listening, they heard that the support is fundamental. It’s a must. We need that and I have to say thank you for the communities who supported you. I have to say thank you for the former RCMP, Lloyd Goodlord I think? Lloyd?

MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE: Lloyd, Lloyd Goodwill.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Goodwill, okay. Goodlord I was calling him. Thank God.

MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE: I hope he’s watching online.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: I hope. He just became a lord for us. You better help them; that’s what it means. Thank you and if we have people like him in
communities to do that across Canada, this is the hope, you know, that we all have. But, also, the moment that you had here, I hope that it was also heard by the institutions, by the governments across Canada, and the federal also, government.

You showed us, again, because we’ve heard it when we were with NWAC or in another capacity, but in this inquiry, how our Canadian brothers and sisters, when they lose a loved one, how the social response, institutional response, is way different to our reality. So, you brought this proof, so thank you. Thank you, because they need to hear. They need to see because when we don’t see, do I bother? Maybe not. But, you gave us that. You gave it to the country. So, that is huge and amazing, and we have to make sure that it’s well shown in the report how things are treated differently. But, we don’t deserve to be treated differently.

Also, the importance of the role that, yes, communities do their best. They’re always in crisis mode so it’s not easy to ask them, you know, everything. But the institutions, the municipality, the research for rescue and search, they all have a role to play, to collaborate with us family members and Métis, Inuit and First Nation, Indigenous people.

So, I hope they’re following this. I hope
they will implement what we already propose, like your recommendation also, and when we present the official report. Again, thank you for showing the differences because this is also the role of this inquiry, to prove that there is a huge gap or a huge difference between how it’s treated with Canadian and Indigenous people.

Also, for the closure and the healing, the ceremony is very important, so thank you. Gloria, you mentioned it’s very important that we have it here during this process. It’s our protocol that we respect everywhere we go, but we go home after when we finish a hearing. So, I hope the community also will make sure that -- and the system, that we have the proper -- you mentioned therapists. Some will be a traditional healer, some will be a psychologist, some will be another family member, and we don’t hear a lot when family members come here that the importance of that new family we have when we become a family member. That is huge.

When we lose a loved one, we don’t know where to call. You mentioned that. It is huge. So, if it was possible for you to give us your document that you reorganized or put it in your language and other provinces, you mentioned Manitoba, if we can get those documents so we make sure that it’s available, it’s there, we have a -- I hope soon, a better website, I’ll be frank with you, but --
so we can put it there, because when it happened to people
that we know we didn’t know where to go, we didn’t know who
to call. So, thank you.

And about this -- I’ll finish with that
question to you and to your family. When that Canadian
family, and we all -- it doesn’t matter where we come from.
When we lose a loved one, we want answers, and they deserve
answers, even my Canadian brothers and sisters. But, why
do you think they had so much covered with the media,
support, dogs, helicopters? Everything was there. And, I
even hear it -- heard it in Quebec. So, the media in
French covered that story, but never about Cody or other
people from our community. Why you think it’s like this?
You.

**MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE:** Well, I think there’s,
again, the gap between traditionally how little has been
paid to any story of the, you know, of Indigenous
happenings. It’s changing, you know, with the -- like
coverage, like, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network,
but that’s really recent and I -- you know, there have been
programs that, you know, smaller programs like Indigenous
Circle here in Saskatchewan that have dedicated a half an
hour once a week to stories in Saskatchewan. So, it’s
slowly changing and evolving again and, you know, but I,
you know, there are -- actually, Cody’s story was covered
more and, again, because I think he’s a child and a youth, and I think, again, for Auntie Emily, she’s, again, an elderly lady and it’s not going to make, you know, the top news. There was coverage. I was actually more impressed with the media with the Cody story than with the Aunt Emily story, yeah.

I think it is changing but it had to come, again, from, you know, the Indigenous people that would -- Indigenous journalists, Indigenous programming, Indigenous TV. You know, it’s not the mainstream that’s going to make those changes.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Okay. Okay, merci beaucoup. When you talk about the APTN, are you referring to Taken? Okay, they do an amazing ---

MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE: Yes, (indiscernible) great story.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Great story.

MS. MYRNA LAPLANTE: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: And thank God, not Mr. Goodlord, but thank God for -- or thank Creator for those who make sure that we indicate Canadians and the rest of the people across Canada. Thank you again, and merci beaucoup. We have gift and you can explain.

MS. DEBBIE REID: I will.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Oh, she will.
MS. DEBBIE REID: Myrna, thank you very much. There are two types of gifts. The first gift is the matriarchs of the Haida Gwaii, when the hearings were happening in Smithers, had called out in the Haida Gwaii for the harvesting of eagle feathers, so that each family would be given an eagle feather for their strength and for their story once they had told their stories. So, there are feathers wrapped in red cloth that signifies the Red Dress Project and that.

There is also a gift from the Inquiry, from the Commissioners and the staff, and those are little seeds and what the Commissioners have asked other families is if they can plant those seeds and send us pictures of what grows? Because the seeds are significant of new life and new growth. So, we hope that, as the Inquiry, that there will be new life, new growth for you after you have come and told your truth. So, please, send us pictures if you do have anything that grows from those seeds.

MS. JENNIFER COX: Mr. Registrar, if we could adjourn or conclude this matter, and we’ll take a 15 or 20-minute break and the next matter will resume around 11:30. Thank you.

Exhibits (code: P01P06P0201)

Exhibit 1: Digital folder of 54 images displayed on monitors during public hearing.

Forthcoming submission: Myrna LaPlante will share search-and-rescue materials she developed with the National Inquiry.

--- Upon recessing at 11:11

--- Upon resuming at 11:47

Hearing # 2

Witness: Barbara Badger and Sheila Ledoux

In Relation to Shelley Napope

Heard by Commissioner: Brian Eyolfson

Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe

Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good morning. Commissioner Eyolfson, I’d like to introduce to the next family members that will be sharing their story. Right beside me is Barb Badger, and beside her is Sheila Ledoux. Both Barb and Sheila would like to make a promise with an eagle feather.

MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Good morning Barbara, do you promise to tell your truth in a good way today?
MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Okay, thank you, and good morning, Sheila, do you promise to tell your truth in a good way today?

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Yes, I do.

MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Okay, thank you.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So, Commissioner, Barb and Sheila will be sharing with us today the story of Shelley Napope and Shelley’s murder. And so, I would like to actually start with Sheila, and one of the questions I would like to ask is if you can start with either a fond memory or sharing some of Shelley’s strengths with the Commissioner? So, sorry, I’ll ask that again. If maybe you can share some of Shelley’s strengths?

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: My late niece, Shelley, was born July 31, 1976. We don’t know the particular day Shelley had passed, but she passed in 1992. Shelley’s remains were found in 1994. The relationship I had with my late niece was an open-door policy between the two of us. Shelley was a child that could not be controlled. She was very strong minded. If she was going to do something, she would just do it, but the relationship I had with my late niece was memorable.

I remember coming in, in 1989, from Edmonton, Alberta, and my two late nieces came to see me at
the bus depot and it was six o’clock in the morning. And
that morning, I could feel the love because both of my late
nieces came and hugged me, and I was eight and a half
months pregnant with a big belly, and to feel that love and
knowing that I was missed.

Shelley would come and stay with me off and
on at my apartment on Confederation Drive. In 1991,
Shelley was a very -- she liked to laugh. She had a very
caring heart and she would do things and say things that
sometimes would just ease the moment, but I know that she
carried a lot of hardship.

Shelley was a joy to be around and she was
loved. She was loved by her family. She was loved by her
extended family. In our family it’s not just your
immediate family where you have a husband and a wife and a
son and a daughter; in our family, we have an extended
family and we parent each others’ children. So, our
extended kinship is greater than just a version of an
immediate family.

When Shelley lived with me, she was in and
out of solvent abuse. She was in and out of drugs,
partying, but I never ever judged her. I always took her
into my home because that’s the relationship I had with my
nieces and nephews, that open door, that they could come
and talk to me whenever they needed.
There’s one time when I had this old couch, because I was a single parent moving back from a broken relationship, and my late -- my late niece had come back, and she was having a shower, and I told her, “Feed yourself”, and the boys were playing on the floor with their toys. And, we had went to bed and I had this old couch, it was a green couch that you had to fold it up and click it and then push it and it would become a couch, and that’s where Shelley -- that was her bed.

And, I got up that morning and I couldn’t believe it that my son, Evan, and my son, Jonathan, and Shelley actually fit on that little couch, and she said that Evan got up and he went and woke her up and he said he was scared. So, she lifted up the blanket and she let him sleep with her on this little couch.

And then my other son got up, John got up and he went and slept with her on that couch, and when I got up that morning, I was -- I went to go check on my boys. I went and looked and I was thinking, oh my goodness, how all three of them fit on this little narrow couch, and I told her if she was tired that she could go sleep on my bed.

Shelley had a very kind heart, and she had this smile on her face. When they found her remains in 1994, they had contacted Ernie Walker and he had -- he had
photographed the place where my late niece was laid, and he had the job of removing Shelley’s remains, and we didn’t see those pictures until the court proceedings.

The other one was the sketching that they did, the sketches from the -- the skulls from the women, from my niece. They did sketches of them and they were put into the paper. And, at this time, there was no communication between the families and the police at that time because it was in the 1990s. There was no communication at all. We had no -- we had no support back then. There was nothing. There was no -- there was no liaison, there was no caseworker, there was nobody there to help us or even let us know what was going on with their investigation or to even communicate to the family what was happening. So, like I said, it was through media that we would find things as we would go along.

We come from a family of 10. There’s 10 siblings in our family, and Marilyn is the second oldest in our family. When these sketches came out, I remember looking at them and not really making a connection to them, and not even knowing because we had no communication. There was a lack of communication with the ongoing investigation between the Saskatoon City Police, the RCMP. So, there was no communication between those two -- like ourselves and the police services.
It was later on in, in the years that we figured out that Victoria Crawford ran a care home, and that was after the fact. After the fact when we were in the court proceedings and everything like that. We had learned after the fact that it wasn’t brought to our family’s attention that Victoria Crawford lived a block away from my parents’ home, and that John Crawford resided at that residence, and we did not have any knowledge of that.

With the ongoing investigation, there was a lot of times where we would have to rely on each other. We would have to comfort each other and console each other because we didn’t have that support. We didn’t have any counsellors. We didn’t have any health support that they do now. Back then there was basically nothing. It was our family going through this system alone, and the best way to describe it is being in a room, being entered into a room that’s pitch black, and they tell you to try and find your own way out, there’s another door on the other side of the room, and that’s my best way of explaining how our family went through this process, was going through blindly and not knowing what the next day was going to bring.

The other part that was hard was having to ask for her remains and not getting them right away. That was a big struggle for our family, was trying to get that,
her remains, so that we could have a burial, a funeral, some closure. But for me, I think there’ll never be closure on this because this man took three people that were loved. They were somebody’s daughter, somebody’s niece, somebody’s granddaughter, somebody’s cousin.

I feel that with everything that has gone on in the 1990s, there were so many things that were lacking that we had to somehow come together as a family to get through this tragedy that happened to us. And, our matriarch, our mother, was the one who was able to, through her faith, pull us through this and be able to -- always telling us that revenge, hurting another person would not bring Shelley back and her strong faith. She used to say the Rosary everyday. Even when we were at the courthouse she would say Rosary. She was the one that pulled us through that court proceedings, the trial, because like I said, we had zero support when it came to the court and it came to the lack of sources and support for us at that time.

We were able to finally have Shelley’s funeral, but with the media hounding us, that was one of the toughest things I think a family has to go through, when it’s this -- being so sensitive and having the media being on the contrary, the opposite, wanting a story, wanting to know how we’re feeling, what we’re feeling.
At that particular time with everything that was going on and the chaos that was happening with the court and the police and our family, with the lack of communication, it was so chaotic because there was no supports. But, then we always had the media wanting to know how we were feeling, or in regards to the person that had taken the life of my niece, what we were feeling, and I don’t think at that particular time we could put words to how we were feeling.

The other thing that I wanted to touch on was I took care of my parents. I didn’t live too far away from my parents, and when we were in the trial, when we were going to court, there was a particular time my mom had phoned me and I had just dropped them off from court, and I had went home and mom had phoned me and was talking about the court proceedings. And, she was speaking English, she wasn’t speaking Cree because normally she would speak Cree and English, and she was asking me a question on what the lawyers were talking about because she didn’t quite understand what was happening.

So, I was trying my best to help my mom to understand that part in the court proceedings because my parents were having a hard time with the court and proceedings that happened in court, they way the lawyers speak back and forth to the judge, the way the lawyers
speak back and forth to each other. For the longest time, Mark Brayford and Hugh Harradence would call my colleague, and back then I didn’t understand what that meant. I was assuming that they meant John Crawford. I finally figured it out that they were calling the Crown prosecutor their colleague. I was able to figure that out.

So, some of that was trial and error on our family because, like I said, we had no supports in the court system. And, when we were talking on the phone, my mother and I, somebody came on the phone and stopped our conversation and told us that we could not talk about this on the phone, and said to us that it is in a court proceeding and that we had to stop talking about it and to talk about something else and not that, and they got out of our conversation on the phone. So, that was another thing that happened to us that I was, like, questioning. Why would they come on the phone when my mom was asking me a question about the court?

That happened twice to us, and the second time it happened to us I just told my mom (speaking in Native language). I told her to speak Cree. I said they won’t understand what you’re saying anyway because you’re speaking in Cree. They won’t understand what you’re saying. After she had talked to me in Cree, I said I’m coming over and I ended the conversation and I drove over
And the other thing in 1996 that really was very disturbing was the way the courtroom and the hallway were set up at the courthouse here in Saskatoon. Back then, when the judge would say “recess”, we would come out of the courtroom, and there was a bench along the wall. And, on the other side of the corridor, the hallway, the corridor there, there was another bench there that had a metal thing on it and that’s where Crawford sat.

So, Crawford was able to see us, and we were able to see him throughout the court proceedings, because -- I found that very disturbing because when we would come out sometimes we would be very emotional with what was just said in court, and there was no area for our family to have privacy. There was no area for us to go at that time, and John Crawford’s mom sat with him at this bench and he had two guards that would stand with him.

The other thing, too, is the informant had two guards, and he was in the same hallway as us, and sometimes it was really difficult because we had to endure this during the court proceedings. So, during that time, we would sit -- we would sit in the hallway and he could see us, and we could see him. And, sometimes I used to stand in front of my mom and dad because I was trying to shield them from him because he could see us. So, at that
time, every day during court, he would be there, and so would the informant would be there too. So, that was a really hard thing to go through and trying to console each other during that time was very difficult.

The other thing that was the -- the informant, I did not understand about Corrigan’s deal with the police. So, that was another area that was very, very harsh and very hard to take, was the deal that he had made with the police in their investigation, finding out about the monetary that was given to him for his testimony and his lengthy past also that was brought up in the trial.

That was really very questionable coming from a family that wanted questions answered but didn’t get anything and trying to -- trying to understand the whole term of what his part was, and not being -- that not being brought to our attention until later on. So, that was the -- that was bittersweet. That was really hard to absorb that and digest that. I still have problems with that today.

The other thing was the interaction between the lawyers during the court proceedings. That was another part where I think we had to try to understand with the terminology. Back then, like I said, there was no supports in the court system. We had to try our best to get through the court system and try to understand conversations
sometimes between the lawyers, between what was being brought forth and what was being -- when the witnesses were coming up, because they had -- they had Ernie Walker, the anthropologist, from the time he had recovered the remains and the graph -- the graphic pictures, the tape recordings were really hard to do, hard where we had to collect ourselves.

Sometimes we had to leave the courtroom and go out of the court and just collect ourselves emotionally, physically and mentally because when you see something that you’re unprepared for it -- you kind of keep that image here and it stays here, and it doesn’t go away.

Also having her -- the way they handled the releasing of her remains. That was -- it took our family a hard time to get her remains. It seemed like we had to struggle with the police, with the investigators to try and get Shelley home, and that was one of the biggest hurdles for us.

When we went to court, we went to court with our late parents, my mom, my dad, my sister Barb, Charlotte, Marilyn, and we always went together. My late mom was in a wheelchair, so I used to push her into the courtroom. I feel that our mother was the one who helped us get through the process of the court. She was a very strong woman and was able to tell us and talk to us in a
gentle way by telling us that revenge and saying something hurtful to John was not going to bring our -- my niece back. That wouldn’t fix it. That wouldn’t make it better. So, having her there with us through this process was her way of leading her children in a respectful way, in a humbling way, in a caring way because that’s the lady she was.

Also, the Crown prosecutor, Terry Hines, tried his best to help us with some of the court proceedings that were happening. He would kind of prepare us and say tomorrow is going to be a difficult day, and to also try to answer some of our questions, like what was being said between them. He would help us in that situation and that capacity when the court was -- when the trial was going on.

As a family, we had no knowledge of what was ahead of us when it came to the media, when it came to the interaction with the police, with the RCMP, when it came to the court system, and I think that that lack of communication, that lack of compassion, that lack of empathy for a family that was going through something like this was not there at that time.

There were times where I would question the justice system because of their lack of informing us or preparing us, and when I say that, I say that there was no
guidance. There was nothing. And later on, knowing that
they went all the way to the Supreme Court with this,
Victoria Crawford really trying to get her son freed from
what he had did. It -- I still -- I still think about it.
It’s still there, the “what if”, the “I should have”, the
grief that goes along with that.

I have my recommendations. I hope that with
this Inquiry that families have a better relationship with
the RCMP and the city police, and that they show more of a
gentler compassionate side to families that come forward
for their loved ones that are missing, that they don’t make
allegations of, oh, they’re shacked up. Oh, they’re
partying. Oh, they’ll come back in a couple of days. And,
taking our missing people seriously because back then we
didn’t have anything, we didn’t have people to help us
through this.

The other thing is -- the other
recommendation that I hold very dear to my heart and that
you take into context is a liaison in the courtroom,
language interpreters, because there’s a language barrier
there that was overseen in our case, that was overlooked.
The other one is an interpreter. To have an
interpreter for our older people, like my parents, to have
somebody there in their -- in their Cree language, their
Saulteaux language, their Dakota language, their Dene
language, to interpret for them what is going on because that is their loved one that is going through this court proceedings, that is their family, and I think they need to know exactly what’s going on because there was nothing there when we went through this. There was nothing. A person to help and assist families through the court and I don’t mean just the linguistics of the court, I’m talking about emotionally, spiritually, physically, mentally.

By the grace of our upraising through our parents, we were able to console each other. We were able to comfort each other. Listening through the recordings, the graphic pictures, we were able to help each other. But, there was times when, when it was unbearable and it was difficult.

To keep the family -- when they’re doing an investigation, to keep the family included, not to be able to hear bits and pieces of it through the media, or through what the police are saying, or what is being leaked through social media. To keep the families involved because that is their loved one. They need to have that empathy. They need to have that compassion, and to be able to support those families, because what we went through there was nothing. We had nobody.

There were days when, when I was numb. I felt numb. I felt sick because I didn’t know how to
release some of that, what was being said in the court. I had to try and interpret and understand and digest what was said in a court proceedings for one day and know that tomorrow there was going to be another court day, and another day of getting through the media, and just knowing that I was going to be sitting in that hallway and I know that the person that killed my niece would be sitting across looking at us.

There was no shelter for us in the court proceedings from him. There was nothing and that was the one thing that really -- that really -- I hated that. I really truly hated that because I had to see him every day, sitting across from us.

I hope that with these recommendations that I’ve made to you that no other family will experience what we experienced in the 1990s, in 1996 when we went to court, because when we went to court, it was us going alone. And, I hope that -- back then it was a family going to court alone. It was a family trying to get through this system alone, and there are many times when I would look at it and think, really, you’re not taking into context what a family is saying to you. You’re not taking into context what we’re saying is valid. You’re not taking into context our feelings.

So, there was a lot of barriers, there was a
lot of red tape I felt like our family had to get through
just to be heard, just to be listened to, and it seemed
like -- it seemed like we were just shuffled from one thing
to another thing and not having that understanding between
what was going on and what was happening. Some days it
felt like I was there but really not there. And, the
language barrier, that was really difficult for not just
myself but for our family going through the court systems
and not understanding some of the things that were being
said.

So, those are the things that I’m bringing
forward, and I thank you for listening to me, and I thank
the grandma for sitting there.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Sheila, can I ask
you just a couple of questions to clarify some points?

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Okay.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Now, when you shared
with the Commissioner, you were talking about a couple of
things during the -- the fact that you learned during the
trial Corrigan’s relationship to being an informant. And
so, if I can just take a step back and talk briefly about
John Crawford? I understand that the family doesn’t want
to spend any time publicizing his name more than is
necessary, but you had mentioned to the Commissioner that
he was convicted of three murders.
MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Yes.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Yes. And are you familiar with the, the other two who he also murdered, the names of the other two who he murdered?

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Yes.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And so, it was Eva Taysup and Calinda Waterhen that he also murdered.

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Yes.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Were the trials for them separate from the trials for Shelley?

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: When we went to trial, it was just for my late niece. It was just for Shelley.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: When John Crawford was convicted, did they do the sentencing of the three together or separately, do you know?

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: I just know that with the court proceedings that they had with the jury, they had each of the jury members stand up and make their guilty plea and they had the one person talking.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And, at the time, the jury found him guilty?

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Yes.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Okay. Do, do you have any familiarity -- I know that you’re familiar with, with a book...
MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Yeah.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: ...and an author, Warren Goulding.

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Yeah.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And, has he talked with the family or worked with the family as he was writing the book “Just Another Indian: A Serial Killer and Canada’s Indifference”?

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: He, he was at -- during the court proceedings, during the trial, he was there. He was another person that kind of helped us in areas through the court when we had questions or wasn’t sure about things. He was there, and yes, he did have a relationship with our family.

He was there when everything was in turmoil. He was able to help us in bits and pieces of the trial. He was able to talk with us. Like I said, at that time, there was -- there was no supports. We had nobody and he did have a relationship with us.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I understand you might have his book on your lap there.

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Yeah.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Can I just ask you to hold it up for one minute? “Just Another Indian”. So, he actually wrote the story ---
MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Yeah.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: --- of the three women who were murdered. Did the family have any familiarity or any knowledge that while the trials were waiting to happen that -- while John Crawford was out on bail that he was assaulting other women?

MS. SHEILA LEDOUX: Like I said, with the lack of communication with the police, we had no knowledge. Nothing. There was no communication with him in regards to that. There was -- it was, like I said, bits and pieces, us putting together bits and pieces because we had no knowledge or recollection of what was happening or what their investigation detailed.

Most of that came out when we were in the court proceedings. Like I said with the informant, he had a lengthy criminal past and that was later brought to our knowledge. That was later brought to our attention and it wasn’t until those court proceedings that we were able to see this informant and the type of person he was, and the background that he had, and knowing that he -- that he was there when my niece was killed. That he was there. He witnessed this.

So, that was later brought on in the court proceedings. That was our communication back and forth, and things were unravelling for us in the court that there
was no information given to us. So, as the court proceeded, that’s how we got our information and were able to put it together. Like, we had to figure this out together as a family. We had to figure this out and digest the hard parts of what was happening.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, essentially, like, while participating every day in court, by attending

**MS. SHEILA LEDOUX:** Yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** --- is when you, you find out connections and you hear about Bill Corrigan’s role, he’s an informant, but he was also, as you had just mentioned, there when Shelley was murdered. And so, you learning these details through the court process and when you were talking about being shocked ---

**MS. SHEILA LEDOUX:** Yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** --- I’m assuming you’ve also read the book. Was there things that you learned in just reading the book that you weren’t aware of?

**MS. SHEILA LEDOUX:** This book took me a while to read. Like I said, when you’re going through something this traumatic, you have to take it in chunks. You have to digest it in chunks. Being able to read this book, it took -- it took me a little over a year to read this book because of the overwhelming emotions that I would
feel as I was reading the book. And, it would take me
right back to the court proceedings and remembering the
recordings that John Crawford and Bill, Bill Corrigan’s
taped recordings that were played in the courtroom.

So, it took me a fair time to read this book
because it would take me right back, and it has taken me a
long time to be able to speak. Darlene, my cousin, knows
that I’m not a -- I’m not the type of person to go and
speak to the media or speak out about this. I’m the person
that stands in a background, that I -- I tend to do things
quietly and it’s really taken me physically, spiritually,
emotionally and physically to come here today.

I thought I was doing an in-camera and it
got switched to where I am right now, and the feelings and
the emotions that I carry, I just wish back then that -- I
wish back then we had those supports that they have now
because back then, we had nothing and that was the hardest
thing for me.

So, it did take me a year to read his book
and it’s something that I hold dearly because this book
wasn’t given to me. This book was given to my late
parents. Warren had given this book to my late parents and
it was one of the things that I had asked my dad when my
mom had passed, if I could have her book, their book I
should say, not her book, their book, and it took me a
while but -- and talking today, this is something that, that’s out of my element. This is something that’s -- something I wouldn’t normally do because I’m the type of person that’s in the background, that’s where I chose to be, that’s where I want to be, but I feel that Shelley’s presence is with me.

I feel that I’m able to say what really actually happened to us as a family in the 1990s when this case, and these remains, and our loved ones were found under the circumstances with a lot of empty spaces that -- where our family was left out, where our family wasn’t included in the investigation, in the trial, in the court proceedings, I felt that we were left out in many areas of the justice system and that they need to bridge that gap. They need to make a solid foundation for those families. They need to have something in place for them. I just hope that it never -- a family never has to experience what we experienced in the 1990s. I hope that they get a more -- more support in the justice system, the criminal system, that they have a better communication with the police service, the investigating services and that they have that care, that care that we didn’t have.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you for providing those clarifications. One of the things that, more recently, and this is already before the Commissioner
in his binder, Mr. Goulding actually wrote an opinion, an op-ed, talking a little bit about the case and the book, and he’s been a good advocate for raising these issues, and characterizes a lot of the treatment the family went through, tactics that in his opinion reeked of racism and brutality, and I’m assuming that with your comments today you agreed, but you found a very eloquent and gentle way to put it.

**MS. SHEILA LEDOUX:** At the same time as the court proceedings were happening, there was the Paul Bernardo case that was happening at the same time, and those were non-native women that he killed. It seemed like there was also -- my sister brought to my attention too that there was, at that same time in the media, there was some show dogs that were killed that overshadowed that this man had killed three First Nations women.

Shelley was the youngest. She was 16, and it just -- when I think about it and I look back on it, it has left a bitter taste because this person took something that’s irreplaceable. He took something that we won’t get back, and it makes me question the justice system.

Not knowing where he’s at is another thing. Our family has no -- doesn’t know where he is, and for me, I would like to know. I want to know where he is. The last I know of him is that he’s here in Saskatoon. Of all
places, here, and I still don’t know because that wasn’t confirmed yet for me. That wasn’t confirmed for me that if he’s being held here.

I want to know. I think it’s important to know, and I have no recollection or knowledge if he’s being held here in Saskatoon, and for me, it’s bittersweet because his mom lives here. I bump into his mom once in a while, and all of the memories flood back when I see her. And, I think that if he is here, I’d like him moved, because his mom probably has -- his mom probably visits him, and for our family, we go visit the graveyard. And, I will always want to know where he is. If he goes up for parole, I want to be there to make sure that he never is released and that he never harms another human being. That’s what I’d like to know.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And just one more question in regard to this. In regard to the article I’m referring to that Mr. Goulding writes, he talks about the sentence and the fact that three Indigenous murders, three women murdered resulted in Mr. Crawford getting 25 years concurrently, that means sentenced together. And, in the article on page 5 of 7, he writes and he says, “The John Martin Crawford case was not particularly unique in terms of public response from media attention. There simply wasn’t much interest on the part of mainstream media or
society in those days. It certainly wasn’t a Paul Bernardo moment, but then again his victims were pretty white girls.” And in that case, there was a different, a different outcome in terms of sentencing. So, he’s using that analogy, and you had just said to the Commissioner that that Paul Bernardo case was going on at the same time.

**MS. SHEILA LEDOUX:** Yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And so, when the family -- the family felt like it wasn’t fair treatment that three Indigenous women’s lives didn’t seem to equal the value of three non-indigenous women’s lives?

**MS. SHEILA LEDOUX:** From my opinion and how I’m feeling, he took three people. He took three people’s lives, and the sentence doesn’t fit what he did. Like I said, when you’re going through the justice system and you have zero supports, this is what happens. People like John Crawford get 25 years, and it’s three people’s lives that were gone. It’s three people’s lives that he took from his own hands, and I feel that he should have got more than what was given to him, and that the justice system failed us there in that time, in that time in the 1990s.

They failed our family, and not just ours, but the two other girls also. They failed us. They need to look at stiffer penalties. They need to realize that when a person harms another person -- and it just wasn’t
one person; it was three people. It was three women. It was three daughters. It was somebody’s daughter. It was somebody’s niece. It was somebody’s granddaughters. It was somebody’s cousin. It was somebody’s friend and that’s all he got. I feel like we were failed. They failed us there and I hope that with these recommendations that the justice system doesn’t fail anymore families, families don’t fall through the cracks with the court system, that their loved ones are looked at and recognized.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you so much. Barb, I understand that you also want to share with us. Before we completely finish, I’ll just check in to make sure we haven’t missed anything or if you have any other comments, Sheila, but I just want to afford Barb the opportunity to share what she wanted to share as well.

MS. BARBARA BADGER: Well, it’s afternoon now. Good afternoon, and I’d like to first acknowledge my niece. I want to say Shelley was there and they’re going to know that you were loved. They’re going to know that you weren’t just another Native girl. I still recall this -- Shelley grew up in a very harsh family like ourselves. You know, everybody has their little ups and downs in families and Shelley was no different. But, like my sister said she was a very strong, independent willed young girl, but she loved to laugh.
The picture I brought today, I wanted to --
she’s probably looking down on me and saying, “Jeez auntie, 
I’m going to get you back for this.” I remember that year
I took that -- that picture was taken. It was picture day
at the school at the residence, and she wanted me to perm
her hair. So, I did, and the results weren’t what they
looked right there, because after everything was said and
done, she went and looked in the mirror and she goes,
“Auntie, what did you do to me?” So, it took a lot of
rinsing and trying to straighten her hair out and finally
able to tame it down to how that picture is now. But the
smile she’s got on there, that’s the Shelley I remember.

I happened to be in Duck Lake, before
 anything started in March of 1992. It was the last time I
spoke to my niece. I didn’t realize that would be the last
time I’d ever see her. I ran into her and smiled at her
and she said, “Auntie, did you find what I gave you?” And
I said, “Yeah.” I said, “When did you come over?” And she
said, oh, she said, “I just wanted to surprise you.”

And what she had did was she had left a
birthday card and a picture of herself that she had taken
out of a Polaroid, and she had fish lips and -- a real
funny picture anyways, and she said, “I told you I wouldn’t
forget your birthday.” And that was the last time I and
her talked and shared.
We had made our first missing report in May, and like my sister said, I remember when my dad took my sister Marilyn, and I remember Marilyn being so mad, and she said, “Well if they don’t do anything, we will.” And, and what angers me was throughout that first couple of years before they found her remains, there was never anything reported back to us. My dad would -- kept -- or one of us would phone and see if there was any information that they would have recovered or if they did anything at all to try and find her and it was always the same thing, “Oh, we’re working on it.” “Well, she’s 16 years old.” “Well, she’s going to turn 17. We can’t make her come home if she doesn’t want to come home,” and that was pretty well our interactions. And then we started hearing stories of, “Oh, I saw Shelley in the mall.” “Oh, did you know Shelley moved to Edmonton and she’s staying with this guy? She’s doing really well,” you know?

As a family, we fed on those, thinking, yeah, well, she’s going to be okay. She’s going to come back. When she’s ready, she’ll come back to us. I think deep down inside we -- you don’t want to go to that dark place. And, I remember that night they told my sister. I just happened to be in Duck Lake, and I got a call at the house that I was in, and my auntie told me, she said Barb, she said I’m at your -- I’m at Meryl (phon) and Dobie’s
(phon) she said, “You better come over.” And I said, “Why?” I said, “What’s going on?” She said I think you better come. She said I -- I said, yo, I said something happen to Meryl? And she said no Barb, she said they found Shelley. She said, “She’s gone.” I remember I just dropped the phone. I just fell to my knees. It took a while. My husband finally was able to comfort me and give me the -- he kept telling me, “Your sister Meryl needs you.” He said, “You got to go.”

So, we went, and my sister was inconsolable. I’ll always remember her cries. So, I had to step in and try and find out what happened. My auntie gave me the card that the police officer had left. So, I phoned the police officer, told her who I was and how I was related to Shelley and he gave me -- he said that -- he asked me if I had heard anything about three bodies that were recovered in the Moon Lake area and Saskatoon area, and I said yes, I told him.

And, he said one of -- one of the remains, he said, “We made a positive ID as being Shelley,” and I said, “What?” I told him, “How?” And he said what -- he said, “Did you see the pictures?” And, I said, “Yes.” I said, “I saw them when they first put them out on the news,” and the picture they had of Shelley it didn’t resemble her at all. And, I don’t know, maybe I just
didn’t want to believe.

And, the officer told us that one of Shelley’s friends remembered her smile and how her teeth were so jagged and that because Shelley used to always say, my million-dollar smile, she used to call it then. But her friend remembered that when she was looking, and she was the one that phoned into the police and she said, “There’s a friend of mine that I haven’t heard from in a long time. I haven’t seen her and she kind of reminds me of her,” and she gave the cops her name, and from there, that’s where they got her dental records, and that’s how they found out that she was one of the girls. Little did I know that’s where our roller coaster ride was going to start.

Throughout the investigation, like my sister said, there was no -- no interactions and it was about six months after that they really started doing the investigating and that, that they finally started asking us questions about Shelley, like who -- where did she live most of the time? Who were her friends? What did she do? Where did she hang out? Where did -- all these that they never even bothered asking us when we -- when we had those missing reports on her.

They never took that time to ask us any of those questions, and then all of a sudden, now they were asking us, and I remember being so angry and -- but like my
mom -- our mom, like, was the one that kept us -- kept us strong, and kept us not to go into the dark places that a lot of times you can end up. And, the trial started.

Like my sister said, I remember walking in there, sitting there, and sitting right across from us is John Martin Crawford, handcuffed to the railings of the bench he was sitting on. And, this is what you are to see everyday. And, I always remember when he’d be sitting there, he’d glance up at us, and he’d have that smirk on his face. Man, it took a lot to not allow me to get up and go and smack his face. And, I kept thinking, why do they have him here? You know, couldn’t they have him in another room? Or couldn’t we go some -- you know, that -- it seemed like Shelley was not that important. And, during the court proceedings, I’ve heard stuff and seen stuff that will never be erased from my memory.

Terry Hines, the prosecutor, tried his best to help us try and understand whatever court proceedings was going on, or try and prepare us for the next day.

My title in my family is little mother. Any time something happens within our family it’s, “Go to Barb. Barb will help you. Barb will put things together,” and I became the spokesperson for the family. I spoke to the media, along with my sister, Sheila, and I remember that one incident, how they were talking about when they found
the remains up in the Moon Lake area, and I remember
getting so angry at Brayford when he was talking about --
they were -- they showed up on a screen, they showed the
area where the bodies were found, and they had outlined
where each body was located. And then along that area
there was also some sweat lodges that were around the same
area.

And, I remember getting so angry when he
said, you know, he said, “How do we know that those huts
that where we found near the bodies weren’t some sort of --
weren’t some sort of cult people that were doing -- he said
-- they made it sound like Shelley, Calinda and Eva were --
were worshipped and were killed and -- like, they really
shredded our sweat lodge, and what it meant, and it just
happened to be there. And, I’m always grateful to Ernie
Walker for -- when he finally was able to talk after
Brayford just shredded our culture.

Ernie Walker explained to Brayford, “I know
the sweat lodge you’re talking about,” he said, “because I
helped build it. I work in Wanuskewin,” he said, “and I
come and sweat out here with First Nation people because
that’s where I’m -- I’m interested in their culture and
those aren’t -- that’s not a hut,” he said, “and those
girls weren’t” -- he said those girls weren’t there for
what he had said.
And I thought my God, are you that naïve about -- for a man that’s educated, you sure don’t educate yourself too much on First Nations people, because you didn’t -- you never even took the time to find out what the sweat lodge meant. You just made it sound like -- he made it sound like these girls were sacrificed, and that they were part of devil worshippers, and those were the words that he used. And, you know, you’re sitting there and you’re thinking, you know, like you want so much to want to correct them, but you know that you couldn’t.

But I was so grateful. Like I said, Ernie Walker was able to clear that up, and I just felt like telling Brayford, “There you go. Maybe you should get a little bit of teaching yourself from Ernie Walker about this.” But, like I said, you know, my mother always, throughout the whole proceedings kept telling us don’t get angry, don’t ask -- don’t revenge she said. She always said, “Leave it to the Creator (speaking in Native language),” she said and, and she was telling us that leave it to the Creator that he’ll take care of us and everything.

Throughout that whole proceedings, you know, we’re sitting there, and then all of a sudden, they tell us that the -- he said the first body that they had found was -- it had been removed because it wasn’t buried low enough.
He didn’t bury her low enough that probably the wolves and whatever animals out there were able to dig her up, and the first body that was located was Shelley’s.

And, I remember that screen and then all of a sudden you could see what was left of her. We had to endure stuff like that right through the whole trial. Nobody prepared us. Nobody told us what was going to happen, and that’s what angers me.

I thank God now today, there’s a little bit of changes starting to happen, and in those -- in 1992 to 1995, like my sister said, there was no help from anybody. We had to go through the trial, the investigation, everything on our own. And, to top it off, if it wasn’t bad enough that we were dealing with the trial of Shelley, and it seemed like they were downgraded as if they didn’t mean anything, because at that time Paul Bernardo and that case where he killed his girlfriend’s sister, Shelley ended up during the trial that nothing -- the only time anything was ever reported was at the beginning when they first found the remains, and then when they finally made the identity.

But in regards -- because they categorized Paul Bernardo also as a serial killer, so was John Martin Crawford. He wasn’t any different. But, because they were Native girls, I guess they weren’t that important. That’s
the way I looked at it. And, here this was a young white
girl that was killed, and they kept saying she came from a
good family, she came -- and they just really, really shone
-- really brought her out as somebody very special and
that. But, so were Shelley, Eva and Calinda. They were
special also. They had people that loved them. The only
difference was we were Native and that was a downfall.

That just angers me. I just wish -- when is
this going to stop? When is -- when is this, as First
Nation people, when their loved ones go missing, we’re
always categorized as, “Oh, they come from a dysfunctional
family.” They kept saying in the media Shelley was a
working girl. They kept saying Shelley was a party girl.
They were giving her all these different images of her and
nobody took the time to find out who the real Shelley was.

The media concentrated only on the negative
stuff. They never took the time to come and ask our family
how Shelley was growing up, who the real Shelley was. They
never took that time. They just took it for granted and
kind of made their own decision of what they were going to
say about them, and they didn’t know who they were.

And if -- I give a lot of credit to, and
thanks to Warren Goulding. He was the individual, a non-
Native person that took the time to come and sit with each
and every one of the family members, not only with Shelley,
but with the Waterhen and the Taysup family. And, what he wrote in that book about each of the girls came from our families. He took the time to find out who the true Shelley, Eva and Calinda were, and I am so grateful that he was able to put that in writing. But, the sad thing about it, you know, when it first got released, maybe a day or two you’d hear something about, yeah, this new book called “Just Another Indian” written by Warren Goulding, and then after that, nothing.

I was -- I always said how sad it was that our own Province of Saskatchewan wouldn’t even recognize him for trying to find a true identity and find a true -- of what happened to these three girls. Instead we had to go to Edmonton, I and my sisters, and they awarded Warren Goulding the Human ---

**MS. SHEILA LEDOUX:** Justice Award.

**MS. BARBARA BADGER:** The Human Justice Award. And myself and my sister, along with the Taysup family, we gave him the award. It took Alberta to do that and our own home province wouldn’t even -- wouldn’t even take a handshake to him or anything, and that’s the sad part of it.

Like I said, as First Nation people, it shows that they don’t see the good side, because we are good. I think I am. I’ve had my problems, but I think I’m
a good person. And, also, at the same time, the guy that killed those dogs was more important than -- than the three girls that were found.

You know, it was a hard struggle and it still is. 1995 was very difficult because we were finally able to know where Shelley was. September, when we finally was able to put her to rest, we didn’t even have time as a family to start grieving for her because three months down the line, I lost all of my kids in a car accident. That particular year, ’95, I saw my parents age so drastically because they had to bury four of their grandchildren.

I get comfort knowing now that Shelley is with my children. Her and my daughter, Leora (phon), were close. They used to always go and hang out with Auntie Sheila and, God, the things they used to do to my poor sister. But, that’s the Shelley I want people to remember; not the one that was depicted in the media as being a working girl or a party girl; not the person they said that she came from a dysfunctional family. They made it sound like nobody cared for her, but we did.

And like my sister Sheila, I had an open-door policy with Shelley because I knew if I tried to hold her down or I knew if I tried to lecture her she would shut down and that’s not what she needed. What she needed was somebody to hear her and to listen to her, and someone to
not judge her. And, she had a rough life, but I promised her and I will hold that till the day that I’m gone, I promised her I would never reveal some of the stuff she told me.

I just want to remember her for the happy times, and there was a lot of them. I just wish people knew that. And, before coming to the hearing here, I was sitting with my husband, and he asked me how I felt. You know, I said, “I’m looking forward to this. I’m looking forward to being able to share a little bit about Shelley and what we went through.”

The sad part about it, I said, is look at the media today. I said every time you listen to the six o’clock news or the national news, rather than talking about the families that are hurting like us, and wanting to be the voices for our children, for our nieces or our sisters, they’re not even concentrating on that. They’re concentrating on, oh, did you hear another -- another member quit? Somebody else got let go. And, they were talking about the negative side of internal stuff that didn’t concern us. They forgot -- they forgot about us.

The whole idea -- I was looking forward to these hearings because I thought we will finally have that opportunity to share the real Shelley and what we went through as a family. Man, when I crossed my fingers, my
toes and even my eyes hoping this would become reality, and
people -- like I said, it, it just angered me when all I --
when I kept hearing all this negative stuff about the
Inquiry, and the hearings, and the Commissioners, and I
thought, my God you guys, what about the families? It’s
there for us. We have that right to finally share
something that nobody wanted to even talk about.

We as the families here have that right to
tell people what we went through, and like my sister said,
we never had that support. And, God forbid, I will -- for
the rest of my life, I will always be there for families
that are going through the loss of a loved one because
every time we hear something on the media or the paper or
the news, another person has gone missing, that retriggers
everything for us because then it takes us right back to
when we went through that with Shelley. But with us, we
had some -- a little bit of closure which was the
individual that took their lives was found. I don’t agree
with the sentence he got. It’s just like a slap to the
family. 25 years for three girls lives he took. 25 years.

It’s going to be 22 years since my kids left
and since we buried Shelley. Three more years, John Martin
Crawford is going to, what, be released? That’s just --
where’s the justice in that? That’s what I want you guys
to think about.
Any time a loved one is gone missing, I want you to remember the families that are hurting. I will never stop talking about Shelley. I’ll always advocate for her. I’ll always advocate for the murdered and missing women, but I ask, remember, these hearings are for us. These hearings are for our loved ones. That’s what you should be looking at. And, the recommendations that are, that are being given out, for me, what I would like to see is have that liaison in the courtroom. What I’d like to see is the RCMP and city police take some kind of cultural training when it comes to First Nation people because we all have our different ways.

I’m from the Cree family, and if you would have heard of how they tore our culture apart in that courtroom, and how they were saying we were devil worshippers, and that these girls were being -- man, this is our culture you’re talking about. That’s what I say, you know, like -- very important that any type of individuals that are dealing with anything in particular like us or through the courts that they should have that sensitivity to at least try and find out a little bit about -- take some kind of cultural training.

I know that we had offered to help a couple of times and they said, yep, we’ll doing it. We had offered our services to go and help with the city police
and do some cross culture training. They said, yeah, we’ll take that into consideration. That was 10 years ago. They never called us. As far as I know, they never did.

Just recently in the last little while I know that they have a First Nation person working there, but to me, it seemed like whoever was there wasn’t really working with the families but the one that was talking to the media, trying to smooth things out and that’s not what the families need.

What the families need is a liaison person to help with the investigating so at least to try and make the families understand where the case is at and where it’s going and where they’re having difficulties, because as we -- we were not given that, nothing. Nobody said anything to us and Terry Hines, the prosecutor, tried his best to try and smooth things out for us. And that was it. That’s all we had was him. And, you know, you need that. You need that because there’s so many barriers, and you need those people in there that -- to help the families.

My God, I know that if I had somebody there to explain the terminology of a lot of the court stuff that was happening, maybe I’d have a better understanding of why what happens in court happens that way. Nobody told us that. And, you know, it’s so important and I think a lot of those barriers would be broken if we had that
communication starting right from the beginning of after
you first report your loved one missing.

You know, at least make an effort of trying
to -- try and do what’s asked of you and that. And, like I
said with us, it seemed like we were a bother every time we
would go and see and ask if they heard anything. And,
towards the end that’s all they’d say to us, “Oh well,
she’s 16 years old, we can’t make her come home. She’s 17
years old, we can’t” -- and here they weren’t even looking
for her. I don’t think they were because they never asked
about her anywhere.

And then the media, man, if anybody needs
any kind of cross cultural training or human training, it’s
them. Sorry to say that, but it’s how I’m feeling because,
man, we were hounded. And, I remembered when we were able
to finally lay Shelley to rest, I went and talked to the
media and I asked them, please, for the next few days, can
you just let us grieve and say goodbye to Shelley the way
that we need to? And I -- and I told them, “We promise you
after all of this is said and done, we will come back, and
we will talk to you guys.” Pretty well everybody agreed,
we thought.

So, the day we brought Shelley home, brought
her into the hall, they brought my sister in, Meryl, and
because Shelley’s casket had to be closed, I remember my
sister coming, getting there, and she just threw herself on
the casket, and I remember just yelling and crying and we
were trying our best to console her.

Little did we know, one of my aunties --
well, my uncle, my mom’s brother, came to that wake and he
was mad. I asked, “What’s wrong uncle?” “I was listening
on the news,” he said. “And?” He said “How come you guys
let those reporters videotape everything?” And I said,
“What? There was no reporters there.” I said, “Nobody was
there,” we thought. And, one of -- I guess there was a
reporter there, but we didn’t know who he was and he didn’t
have the camera so I don’t know how in the hell he took
that picture. And, what they did was on the six o’clock
news, they had showed the picture of my sister throwing
herself on the casket.

I remember being so angry because after the
wake and the funeral, I approached that particular
individual that did that, and I told him, “From this day
forward,” I said, “I don’t want you near me, I don’t want
you talking to me.” I said, “I will answer the other
media.” I said, “You stay away from us,” I told him,
because I -- we asked you and begged you to let us grieve,
and what do you do? What if that was your sister? I said
is this what you want your mother to see on the six o’clock
news, her throwing herself on a casket?
He couldn’t look at me. He just had his head lowered. And I said, “That’s what I thought,” I said but -- I told him, “From this day forward,” I said, “I have no use for this particular TV station,” and I said, “and especially you.” I said, “Just stay away from us,” I told him, and he did. I think he knew he did something wrong, but that’s what I mean, you know? That’s what happened to us.

We didn’t have any of the supports that should have been there and I’m glad today now that they’re starting to help the families, but I sure wish we had that. But, I know in my heart, Shelley is happy. I know she’s with the Creator. I know she’s with my children. There’s not a day that goes by I don’t think about them, and I will never stop advocating. I will never stop talking about her because I don’t want anybody to ever forget what John Michael Crawford did to these families, not only to us but to the Taysup and Waterhen families. I don’t want -- I don’t want people to ever forget this is what happens when your loved one is taken away from you in such a horrific way.

This is what happens when your life -- your loved one’s life is not -- is not important to them, and this is what happens to the First Nation people. And, like I said, I will continue to advocate. I will not keep
quiet. I will continue talking about my niece. I’ll continue supporting all the other families because things need to change; we need that change. There’s too many of our loved ones that have not even yet been found. Like I said, we have a little bit of closure to know that the individual that took my niece’s life was found and convicted, and I really hurt for those families that are still waiting, those families that still don’t know where there loved ones are.

I just ask each and every one of you here today, remember these hearings. Remember the families that are sitting here and sharing. That’s what this is all about. This is what the Inquiry is about. This is why they put this together; us, the families that are hurting and we want to be the voice of our loved ones. Not the negative stuff or whatever internal conflict or misunderstanding is happening. That’s what they’re putting out there.

They’re not even talking about the families that are hurting. Instead they’re talking about who got -- who left or who got let go. That’s not what the Inquiry and the hearings are about. It’s about us, the family members and our loved ones. That’s what it’s all about. That’s why we wanted this to happen.

I just ask each and every one of you,
remember my niece, that she was loved, and remember us, the
family, that continue to hurt, that continue to be re-
traumatized over and over and because another family has
just lost or reported another loved one missing. And, it’s
not just here. When you look at it all across Canada, my
God, what more needs to happen before they finally realize
that we matter and our lives matter, that our loved ones
matter? It does matter. Because we’re First Nation,
doesn’t mean we’re that less important.

So, I’d like to thank each and every one of
you for allowing us to grieve, allowing us to release some
of those tears because we’re still taking those baby steps
of walking down that path, and if anything -- anything --
just really listen to the families and take the
recommendations that they give to you because we’re the
ones that went through this. We’re the ones that are
experiencing this. And, I don’t want another family to go
through what we went through during the court, the
investigation, because we were alone. And I know there’s a
little bit of change happening, but we need a lot more than
just a little change, and I think this is going to help
other families and I hope it does. And that’s what I want
people to take from these hearings, is what the families
are needing. (Speaking in Native language).

Go on, my niece. Shelley, I did it. We did
it, Shelley, and we’re not going to stop. (Speaking in Native language). Hay-hay.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Hay-hay. This is the point where I just want to make sure that we haven’t missed anything, or if you want to add anything else before the Commissioner asks questions or makes comments?

**COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** So, I just -- I just want to thank you both so much for coming here, Barb and Sheila, and sharing with us about Shelley, telling us a bit about who she was and her strengths, but also for you having the strength and the courage to come here and share what you went through. And, I also want to thank you so much for your thoughtful recommendations, and your reflections, and we have -- before we wrap up, we have a couple of small gifts of reciprocity to thank you for coming here and sharing that we’ll share with you before we close.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, the Commissioners and the Elder are going to just be gifting you with feathers. These are eagle feathers. The matriarchs of Haida Gwaii, the grandmother circle, had directed that each person who shares a sacred story of their loved one be gifted a feather for strength and gratitude, and there are also some seeds.

**COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** We can adjourn
this session.

Exhibits (code: P01P06P0202)


--- Upon adjourning at 13:38

--- Upon resuming at 14:37

Hearing # 3

Witness: Brenda Forseth

In Relation to Geraldine Hanna

Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson

Commission Counsel: Wendy van Tongeren

Grandmothers, Elders, Knowledge-keepers: Sylvia Popowich,

Florence Catcheway

Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Mr. Commissioner, my name is Wendy van Tongeren, V-A-N, T-O-N-G-E-R-E-N, and now at this time, November 22nd, 2017, this is the first session after lunch at the Sheraton here in Saskatoon. And so, as with all the families, I’m honoured to introduce the next family who will be speaking. We’re anticipating there will be one speaker, and that will be Brenda Forseth. This
is an in-public hearing.

So, I’d like to start by actually passing the mic now to Brenda, to just introduce herself in terms of her name for the record. And then it will go to her sister, Karen. And then there’s a support person who is also going to help us, who is with the Health Unit. Let’s start with the introductions.

**MS. BRENDA FORSETH:** My name is Brenda Forseth.

**MS. KAREN LONGMUIR:** And, my name is Karen Longmuir.

**MS. DAWN MENTUCK:** My name is Dawn Mentuck (phon).

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Thank you. And, Ms. Forseth has asked that she affirm before she makes her presentation.

**MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Good afternoon. Ms. Forseth, did you want to affirm with an eagle feather? Or, we can do it without an eagle feather, too. Eagle feather? Okay. There’s one right beside you there. Do you solemnly affirm to tell your truth in a good way today? Okay, thank you.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** So, it’s been some time since we met back in Regina, and it’s lovely to see you again today. Thank you for coming. So, since we met,
you’ve done a lot of preparation to be able to come and speak to the Commissioner and others today; is that correct? And so, I think the design here is best that I hand the microphone to you, and you tell the Commissioner what you’d like to say. And, if at any time you need any assistance of any nature, or you feel you need a break, just let us know. Okay, thank you.

**MS. BRENDA FORSETH:** Good afternoon, everyone, Elders, Commissioner, dear friends, Wendy. It’s nice to see you again. I’m here to talk about my mother, Geraldine Prest, who is a missing woman. I’ll talk about the circumstances leading up to her disappearance, the impact on our family, and the 2001 re-opening of her file.

I have a couple of pictures. Yes, this first picture up here is of my mother taken when she was attending the St. Mary’s Indian Residential School in Mission, British Columbia. She would have been 11, 12 years old, in grade 6, 7. And, that particular picture was taken with a group, and it was a dance group. In addition to dancing at school, she was also in the choir. The only other picture I have of her from when she was an adult, she’s -- we believe she was 21, 22 years old at that time, included in that picture that isn’t shown, but she was with my dad.

Geraldine was born on June 18th, 1935. She
met my dad, Terry. Together, they had five children; my brother Craig, Karen, Terry Jr., Doug and myself. I’ll also note right now before I forget that Geraldine is from the Stó:lo Nation on her father’s side. She was -- he’s from Canackabar (phon) Band in the Fraser Canyon, and on her mother’s side, from the Cheam First Nation, the Sts’ailes nation in the Fraser Valley. We grew up in B.C. I’ve been in Regina for 20-some years. I met my husband in B.C. and came out here with him. I was shocked by this very, very cold winter. I thought minus 10 was cold.

A couple of years after Terry and Geraldine met, they started having children. They had five children together, and Terry was 18 when our oldest brother, Craig, was born. And, five years later, they had me, and I can say quite confidently that they were not prepared to have children. When she was carrying me, she had been incarcerated during that pregnancy for child abuse, or child neglect, perhaps.

It’s not clear to us what was going on at that time to cause that breakdown in the family and the family care. We understand it was a very long time ago, 1961. I was born in August 1961, and by December of that year, 1961, I was in the hospital, and I was so malnourished that the doctors finally went to my parents and asked them if they could provide me with last rites,
because they did not think I was going to survive.

In addition to my circumstances, my four brothers and sister were also apprehended. My sister and brother were found walking along the road, and some neighbours -- a lady found them walking along the road, and they were cold and pretty dishevelled and ragged. And, she took them in and warmed them up and fed them. Once they got warmed up and settled in, the oldest brother, Craig, explained to her that there were more kids at the house.

So, he led her back to our house when it was quite a considerable distance. Once she arrived there, she found my other two brothers, and one of them was laying on the couch trying to drink some water out of a beer bottle, and the other boy was on the floor laying beside some raw oatmeal, and that’s all that they had in the house to eat, and they had been left there for a few days.

I’m in awe of the bravery of my young 5-year-old brother who had the foresight to take his sister out and go and look for help, and to be able to tell her that there were more kids there, and to be able to show her the way back. He remembers. He has some memories. He’s blocked a lot out, but he suffers to this day. He has a good life now, but it’s been a long road. He’s still present here with me. I carry him in my heart. But, it was too difficult for him to come, and that’s okay.
So, on December 3rd, 1961, those four children were apprehended and taken into the care of Social Services, and put in foster homes. And, I was still at the hospital at that time, and I was taken into care the next day. And, we know from some records that we’ve read of ours, our child and care files, that our mother did make attempts to come and see us. She was up at the hospital to try and see me, and she did make attempts to try and see the children again, her other children. But, none of us were ever returned to our biological parents.

As it turned out, five children was just too many for one home to take in. So, the oldest, who were Craig and Karen, were put into foster care together. And, for the first 10 months, they moved around. They were finally placed with a family where they remained until they came of age, and the two other boys were placed together.

Terry Jr., our brother, was lost to us in the late ’70s, and our brother Doug. We’ve never met, and we would welcome any contact from him, if he wants to contact us.

I was in the hospital for a considerable amount of time once I was apprehended, and then I was placed in care on my own. We also know that Terry and Geraldine were never willing to let us be adopted. Some of the foster families expressed that wish, but they would not
I grew up in Ryder Lake, B.C. It is, to me, one of the most beautiful places on earth. And, I never knew my mother, but as a young girl, I think 11, 12 years old, I started questioning who my mother was and I wasn’t getting answers. I wasn’t even aware that I had brothers or sisters. By the time I turned 14, I ran away, and I ended up in Vancouver, and I was in Vancouver for a couple of years with a woman who -- I was hitchhiking on the No. 1, and she picked me up, and she was a First Nations woman, very well known in her community. And, amazingly, she came from Chilliwack, and she knew my dad and my mother, and she’s the one who eventually introduced me to my dad.

She eventually moved me out to Abbotsford, to one of her -- she had many kids, 21 kids, believe it or not, and she moved me out to one of her daughters, and I lived with her for a few years. And, when I first moved out there, she was -- her daughter, Mrs. C. I’ll call her Mrs. C. She was in hairdressing school, and she came home one day, and she said, “Brenda, you’re not going to believe this. I was talking to one of the students at school and telling her about you, and she said” -- this woman, other student that she was going to school with was telling her, “Well, I’ve got a sister, too, and she’s been missing.” And, she said, “What’s her name?” And, Mrs. C. told her,
“Brenda. Brenda Prest.” And, that student is sitting right beside me. It was my sister. And so, that’s how I met my sister.

It was through meeting my dad that I started to learn more about my family and my mom, and I met some of her family as well. That would have been the late ‘70s, ’76, ’77. And, even back then, there were confusing stories about what had happened to her. Some family members believed that she had not only disappeared but that she was deceased. Other family members believed that she may be in Seattle with one of her sisters. It was one of my aunties, one of her half-sisters, who would talk to me about that. But, she would also caveat that statement by saying she couldn’t believe -- she said, “I can’t believe that Geraldine would still be alive in Seattle and not come and see us. She wouldn’t just leave us like that.”

My dad is also aware that after she went missing, her grandfather, he was the last hereditary chief at the Cheam Reserve. His name is Harry Edwards. They went to the RCMP, and nothing came of it. So, he did hire a private investigator way back then, all those years ago, and there were no results. Nothing came of it.

We also know that in our child and care file, social services had a couple of notations indicating that they believed that she was deceased, though they also
caveat that with the fact that it was not confirmed. They believe -- they received that information from a family member, is how it was written, but that there was no confirmation that she was deceased. But, I think it’s safe to say that us children grew up with no indication that she was alive or that she was around.

For so many years, I used to have the fantasy that she might show up at my doorstep one day. Once I met my auntie and she held onto that belief that she might still be out there, it was easy to fantasize that she might come back to me, that she might come out and look for me, that I’d have a knock on the door and she would be there. And, I would at once feel so angry that she didn’t come sooner. But, then she would say, “I was looking for you. I was looking for you and I found you. I’m so glad I found you.”

In the early 2000’s, I received a phone call from my dad, and he had been talking to some of her family members, and they explained to him that the RCMP had contacted some of them and were looking for family members to obtain DNA sampling resulting from the Pickton case. They had also heard rumours that she may have been a victim of the Green River Killer, and even the fact that her remains had been located somewhere in Seattle.

My dad and I talked about the last scenario,
about her being found in Seattle. That seemed like the most plausible one. We wondered how in the world would they have even known it was her? And, we also talked about how would we be able to get her remains across the border, and where would we lay her to rest?

For a couple of weeks, my dad and I talked back and forth. He was -- of course, lives in B.C., and I was here in Saskatchewan. I initially tried to get through the United States bureaucracy, and I could not get very far. And so, things were just left hanging.

After the initial two weeks of talks between me and my dad, things really started to hit home. Thinking back now, I think I was in shock, and any lingering thoughts of anger were gone, and all I can have now is deep compassion with the realization that she may have come to a violent end.

Recently, and I mean very recent, within the last number of months, we’re learning more information, and it’s possible that she may have still been alive in the 1980’s. It seems hard to believe. There have been recent searches done in Washington State and California, and I’m actually not sure what the searches involved or how extensive it was, but there were no results. But, there remains no body, no record of death.

I think in the mid-2000’s, my dad and I were
talking on the phone, and he told me that he had a dream about her. My dad was a visionary. He had visions, and sometimes they would come to pass. And, he said that she came to him and she was cold and naked and asking for help. So, he had a ceremony for her.

I think that it’s likely that we will never know what happened. I understand that it’s been a long time. But, for us as a family, I think we’re just starting to process and acknowledge her loss. I think, for myself spiritually, there are times when I feel like her loss haunts me. But, I have a spiritual practice now that is helping me work through that, and I believe that my mother, Geraldine Prest, would have been 82 years old next month -- no, sorry. Next year. Eighty-two. That she lives on through -- not just through our children, now through this process.

For the other families of the missing and murdered women, I acknowledge you, and I honour you, and I hope that you find peace and know that your lived one lives on through you. Sometimes it’s been a bit confusing, trying to figure out what this process is going to do for my mom, and maybe even the other families. But, I understand that we may not get everything we need, or we may not get everything we want, but I want this Inquiry to succeed. We have to have hope that it succeeds, that it
brings awareness to this very serious, very devastating issue.

For recommendations, I don’t have very many, but I think for families of missing women and girls, it might be that the only way we’re ever going to know what happened is through the DNA testing, and therefore, I think it’s vitally important that the RCMP and any other police force work diligently to ensure that DNA testing for our loved ones is kept current and up to date. It’s my understanding that DNA testing is an evolving science, ever changing. And, it will be important for me that it be kept up to date. It’s going to be our only hope.

We were recently in touch with the FILU initiative. I’m not sure what that acronym means. F-I-L-U. I think you guys know. And, I just want to say that their assistance for our family has been enormously invaluable. I can’t overstate that enough. I really mean that. And, I hope that their funding will continue.

It is important as well that if there isn’t already, and there may be, but I will bring it up, if there isn’t already, that there be some policies and procedures, and possibly some streamlining of contacts with Canada and the U.S. I know my mother is not the only one who may have gone missing in the U.S., and I know the U.S. is a big, complex country, but let’s give it a try. Thank you.
MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So, I understand there’s something else that you’d like to read?

MS. BRENDA FORSETH: I’ll just read some notes that my sister wrote about her feelings about the loss of her mother.

When you are born, you have a mother. I’d like to share the emotional stress I lived with and still do to this day. First, I was abandoned by my parents, physically, emotionally. I grew up with fear and confusion. I learned at a young age to protect myself from pain. My inner-child was my safety net. My sister talked about being put in different foster homes. All of us kids experienced different emotions that affected us forever. It’s been hard, psychologically, to not remember the empty void.

We all grew up not knowing our mother. It’s an empty feeling that is in my mind, my heart and my soul. I have to say, of course, that I went through the stages of grief, but deep down, always wondering. I knew something was missing, and no one could fill that void. Day after day it was on my mind, guessing will I see my mom?

I’d like you all to imagine no mom; no mom to tuck you in at night; no mom to read you a bedtime story; no mom to bandage you up; no mom to check for monsters under the bed; no mom to teach you; no mom to love
you unconditionally. Mothers play an invaluable role in our lives because they so naturally emulate a loving spirit, empathy, concern, compassion, open discipline, display of affection and love.

Our mother is a nurturer, and we’ve never had that experience. Imagine that for one minute, and remember, this is a lifetime I have experienced this, not knowing whether my mom was dead or alive. Did she have long hair? Was she pretty? Did she have gifts she could have passed down to me? My brothers and sisters will never know the fate of our mother. It affects us all to this day. I try and imagine what my mom looks like. We don’t talk much about our missing mother. It hurts us all in different ways. All I ask is that each and every mother, sister, auntie, grandmother, be honoured and remembered, all my relations.

I’ll just read a little poem I wrote as well. In 2008, I travelled to India on a pilgrimage, and I wanted to be open to the experience. And, what kept coming back to me was my mother, but the image of the mother that we have as well, whether it’s the Mother Land, the Mother Earth.

To my family, my ancestors, and all my relations, let us be at peace. Let us rest now. May we find strength together. Love and light to all beings, love
and gratitude. Thank you.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** I have no questions for either of these family members. I thank them very much for the presentation, and I pass it to you, Mr. Commissioner.

**COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you. Brenda and Karen, I want to thank you both very much for coming here and telling us and sharing with us about your mother, Geraldine, and what you’ve experienced. It’s your sharing your truths that supports the work of the Inquiry and moves this Inquiry forward. So, I really want to thank you for coming. And, before we close, we just have a small token of appreciation for you coming and sharing that we’ll share with you.

--- Presentation of eagle feathers

**COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** So, we can adjourn this session. Thank you.

**Exhibits (code: P01P06P0203)**

Exhibit 1: Folder of two black-and-white images displayed on monitors during the public hearing.

--- Upon adjourning at 15:32
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
February 15, 2018