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

Thursday November 23, 2017

Public Volume 31
Eva Potts & Percy Potts,
In relation to Misty Faith Potts;
Carol Wolfe, Josephine Longneck, Brenda O’Neill
& Dorthea Swiftwolfe,
In relation to Karina Bethania Wolfe;
Danielle Ewenin, Lillian Piapot, Mona Woodward &
Debbie Green,
In relation to Eleanor “Laney” Theresa Ewenin

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II

APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations
Julie McGregor (Legal counsel)

Advocate for Children and Youth Saskatchewan
No Appearance

Government of Canada
Christine Ashcroft (Legal counsel)

Government of Saskatchewan
Betty Ann Pottruff (Legal counsel)
Trish Greyeyes (Legal counsel)

Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik (Women Walking Together)
Darlene R. Okemaysim-Sicotte (Representative)

Kawacatoose First Nation
No Appearance

Native Women’s Association of Canada
Neegann Aaswaakshin (Legal counsel)

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturviit Inuit Women’s Association of Nunavik, AnânauKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women’s Association Inc., Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre, Manitoba Inuit Association
No Appearance

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women’s Circle Corporation
Viriginia Lomax (Legal counsel)

Women of Métis Nation/Les Femmes MichifOtipemisiwak
No Appearance

Note: For the purpose of establishing this record of attendance, counsel are considered present whether they attended one or all of the public hearings held over the course of the day at the Sheraton Cavalier Hotel - Central Ballroom (i.e. the public hearing space # 1).
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**Witnesses: Witnesses: Danielle Ewenin, Lillian Piapot, Mona Woodward, Debbie Green**

**Exhibits: None entered.**
--- Upon commencing on Thursday, November 23, 2017 at 9:43

MR. MILTON GAMBLE: Good morning. (Speaks in Indigenous language). We give thanks and praise again to our Creator our grandfather, Mother Earth, for giving us another beautiful day to celebrate life. I want to acknowledge our pipe carriers this morning, Elder Doucette and Elder Little Tent, for lifting their pipes for us this morning, asking us to go and speak to our Creator on our behalf during pipe ceremony.

I want to thank the organizations last night for hosting a beautiful round dance at TCU. We heard nothing but good comments.

This morning, I’m going to ask a kookoo in our ceremonies, and a man who has helped us emcee a lot of round dances and Pow Wows and is also a ceremonial man himself, Mrs. Veronica Doucette and Howard Walker, if you can please make your way up here for opening prayer? I’ll ask those of you to bear with us and give us your undivided attention.

--- Opening prayer

ELDER HOWARD WALKER: It’s a difficult day, my relatives, the things that we talk about, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. It’s difficult for the families, and we have heard some pretty heavy stuff,
and we’re still going to hear them. The Creator has a purpose for each and every one of us to be here, to sing, to dance, to speak, and also share the strength of our kokum and our women.

We’ll render a prayer in Cree language.
I’ll render the prayer in my Mother language, the Stó:lo language. Help us, the way you feel comfortable in communicating with the Creator, help us at this time.

ELDER VERONICA DOUCETTE: (Speaking in Indigenous language). You feel it. That’s your dad (indiscernible) women that are lost and murdered. My dad was alone. We were six little kids. I was eight years old, and a baby a year old (indiscernible), and I’m 84 now.

My mom passed away. My dad, he was alone. He had no (indiscernible). What we had were aunties and (indiscernible). That’s your life. When you don’t have a mother, you’re nothing. That’s how I talk about things. (Indiscernible). You’re lucky to say that, because I didn’t have that. I didn’t have my mom. I had a mom, but (indiscernible). Even some guys, they don’t have a mom, but they have a wife, always respect your wife or partner.

But, that doesn’t happen to all men. I know that. That’s your mom now that you married when you have no mom (indiscernible). When you have kids, love your (indiscernible). But, we have our first baby was born two
months before we got married. So, something happened in that few months there. June 9th. Sixty-six years. A little more than that, huh?

(Indiscernible) both of them. He went (indiscernible), always talk about when parents separated. Sometimes a young couple (indiscernible) and from there, but my prayers were (indiscernible). But, I stayed. We used to drink (indiscernible). We used to fight. I used to beat him up (indiscernible). I’m getting old now (indiscernible).

I want to say this. We have 14 kids; eight girls and six boys (indiscernible).

--- Indigenous prayers are said

**MR. MILTON GAMBLE:** We have a couple of gifts for our Elders. I want to thank our Elders for their beautiful prayers, for blessing us. I want to take this opportunity to invite Chief Bobby Cameron to come up and share greetings on behalf of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, the Chief of the organization, Chief Bobby Cameron.

**CHIEF BOBBY CAMERON:** Thank you, Milton. (Speaks in Indigenous language). For everybody, we thank Creator for our beautiful day today, and for all the kokum and mushum, and all the women, and all the men that are here sharing their stories. You know, an Elder once said
when you’re having a hard time, when you’re depressed -- and we get depressed. We get stressed out for various reasons, in our families, in our home, in our relationships, out there in society, and the Elder said, when you’re thinking like this and you’re having difficulties, he says, “Look at your hand.” I said, “Okay, I’m looking at my hand. What does that mean?” And, he says, “Because the colour of your skin says your ancestors died signing inherent treaty rights.”

Your ancestors, our ancestors, survived all those hard, enduring times all those many, many years of residential schools, of the racism we face throughout the justice system in Canada, from the RCMP to the lawyers to the judges to the prosecutors. The racism still exists. It exists in the federal and provincial governments, but there are still some good people there.

Now, this Inquiry that’s been happening, and all the stories of survival, and hardship, and horrific experiences, the healing journey, we acknowledge all the survivors and the families. The family from Piapot, Mr. Rinelle, we were hearing him the other day tell the ladies that have went through some hard times in your years of living, we acknowledge and we pray for you.

To all those that are still on that healing journey -- and this is going to continue. It’s going to
continue -- we look forward to hearing the stories from
Crystal from Piapot, and Tracy Desirlee (phon), and on the
horrific experiences they faced with the police services in
southern Saskatchewan. To the Inquiry, to the
Commissioners, Michèle and Marion and others, thank you for
coming here. This is why we supported it, because families
need to tell their stories. Families need to heal.
Families need to continue.

But, when this is done, when this is done
and the Inquiry sums everything together, that the healing
continues and the stories be told, because these stories
need to be recorded, and our people, our ancestors, in the
next hundred years are going to understand all the families
and all the hardships that we went through, but we still
survived. We still survived, and we’ll continue to
survive, because all our people that are coming, all those
unborn, will hear these stories. They’ll say kokum and
mushum were survivors. My mom was a survivor, and it’s
that warrior spirit in each and every one of us, and all
the women and men, that warrior spirit.

Our ancestors didn’t sign inherent treaty
rights for no reason. They signed it to continue this way
of life, that survival instinct, and it’s in every one of
us. It’s in every one of us to speak loudly and proudly of
who we are, what we are, and where we come from. These are
the messages we continue to gather.

For all those people, thank you for sharing your stories. It takes a lot of courage. In the summary of the report, we ask the Commissioners -- we ask the Commissioners and all those involved that the justice system of Canada needs a serious overhaul. It needs a serious overhaul when it comes to First Nations' protocol and traditions. They need to understand and recognize that we, as First Nations people, deserve to be treated with equal dignity and respect; the same opportunities be fully inclusive of our First Nations people.

You know, we as an FSIN executive are here to support the families in anything we can do. We’re here to help. We’re here to support and be the voice, if the families decide us to be the voice. A lot of good recommendations and directions come from all the families here today; the after care, the ongoing sessions that have to happen after this Inquiry leaves Saskatoon. But, also, that we don’t forget.

And, I put the request in to Marion Buller that, you know, should this extension happen that we go to the northern and remote communities, because there are so many people that can’t come here and share their stories, because they don’t have transportation, they don’t have a means to get here. So, that’s the request going into this
Inquiry, because they have to get an extension from the federal government.

So, perhaps, to each and every one of you, how we can ensure that this extension happens, maybe a template letter or a template BCRT Chief and Council saying this extension has to continue, because stories need to be told, survivors need to heal, families need to heal. It’s not going to just end. It’s just not going to end in one or two years; it’s got to continue. So, we are advocating for the northern and rural communities, those voices to be heard.

Thank you all for listening to me, and once again, to our Elders with the pipe ceremony. To our drum group and to the dancers, thank you for healing us because that’s a method of healing as well. Commissioners, to our Elders, Florence, kokum from Yorkton, thank you. And, to all the staff, the voices here are important. They’re much more important than the FSIN event; the survivors are more important. I can say that whole-heartedly.

I can say this on behalf of the FSIN executive, in a respectful way, of course, that we love each and every one of you. Tell your stories, share your stories, and continue that warrior spirit, because we’re here together to teach our children and grandchildren that way of life; that way of life to build a good quality of
life, to understand that our children have inherent treaty
ing rights. That’s what distinguishes us from many, many
nations, inherent treaty rights. (Speaking in Indigenous

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Merci. Merci beaucoup. I know you witnessed I put the necklace on Chief
Cameron. I didn’t do it for the Elders. He was cute. Not
true. (Speaking in Indigenous language). Merci beaucoup.
Every day, every one of us starts the day the way we start
the day. Do we control it? I don’t know. Do we want to
control? Maybe. But, everywhere we go, we respect the
protocol. We respect the culture. We respect your beauty.
But, also, we respect the pain, this collective pain, and
to do what we do.

We’re also human beings, parents, husbands
to be, very virtual lately since I started this journey.
We’re mothers, brothers, but what helps me to be with you,
it’s the simple things, the spirituality. And, this
morning, like we do every morning, I went to the sacred
fire, put some tobacco for us survivors, family members,
men and women, grandmothers, grandfathers, our children and
grandchildren, because we know when you come here, it’s
tough. It’s opening wounds, or reopening, or still there
very fresh.

But, we know also that you have courage.
Courage is the best teaching you’re giving me everyday, the
courage, the strength, the resilience, the love. We feel
it. I do. And, what is beautiful also is your respect.
My culture, my way, who we are, and you welcome us in your
circle.

Many people said the Inquiry will solve
everything. It is sad when we say that to a survivor or to
a family member. We have to say that it’s all of our
responsibilities. We only have two years to do this, and
one more year left.

You talk about the extension, Chief Cameron,
handsome chief. He’s listening. I was wondering if he
was. It’s a joke. We have to bring in that circle also
the Inuit. They deserve to have their truth to be told, to
be shared. Same for the Métis people. And, of course, for
the nation who speaks French as a second language. So, the
country called Canada is so big. So, two years wasn’t
enough. It wasn’t enough to do it in a right way.

So, yes, I welcome your support, Chief
Cameron, for all the First Nations, Métis, Inuit across
Canada. The healing process is an everyday process. This
Inquiry is one of the solutions. And, for the first time
in our history in this country, it’s led by Indigenous
people, mostly by women. We need your support. We need
the support in order to do it right for the families; for
my family, for your families, for all of us. We need to
tell our leadership, every province, every territory, the
federal government, this is not only one person’s
responsibility; it’s a collective responsibility.

We will fight until the end. We will put
love until the end, and that end is when we stop breathing,
and then we become spirits, and then we will continue. So,
today, I wish all of you the time you need to take when you
share your truth. I wish that you have that feeling that
you’re in a safe space. As a mother, this is what I wish
for you today. We will receive your truth. We will listen
to it. But, most of all, we will do the best we can to
honour it. I know we will.

We have survivors and family members who
work inside of this Inquiry. They remind us every day. We
have Elders who work with us, guide us. They remind us
every day, “Don’t forget why you’re doing this and for
whom.” So, today, again, we will create that chapter where
Canada needs to go, and you are doing it. So, I say thank
you. Merci.

MR. MILTON GAMBLE: Thank you, Commissioner.

At this time, I’m going to call upon Dancing Horse to come
up and share another blessing through dance and song. I’ll
ask him to share a few words with us.

DANCING HORSE: (Speaking in Indigenous
language). Thank you, Creator. It’s a new day today. We always respect each other, and we always talk about the woman’s life, a woman’s spirit, all the things we were left, we always -- a man and a woman always shared. We always tried to look after each other.

I was approached last night and told to talk about our drum, about the woman. Long time ago, a woman, she had the drum, but ladies, at the time of wartime, they were too powerful. The men looked after the drum now to this day, and I told him that’s true, because I’m a singer, I’m a dancer. I see the women, they do look at us and make sure we watch over that drum in a good way out of respect.

We’re going to have the women dance on the one side, and the men on this side, out of respect. This is a healing dance. We have a friend from Toronto. She’s going to come dance with us. A good people from up south, Treaty 4, the Touchwood Hills area, that’s where I come from, Kawacatoose, and my dancers are from Gordon, Muskowekwan and Day Star. We really always try to stick together over there, and try to learn from each other.

Our language, Cree and Nackowin (phon), we try to keep that language, too, in our four bands, but sometimes it’s hard to keep that. But, I thought I’d pass those good messages on to you people and the families. Really, it was hard for us to -- you know, our hearts are
for you. It won’t stop here. Keep on going, we told the Elders. You tell your stories and make them listen to you, because they’ve got to listen.

You know, we love our children. I’ll do anything for my children. Don’t stop here. I thought I’d pass that message to you. I’m kind of getting a little choked up, because kids are number one to us.

(DRUMMING AND DANCING PRESENTATION)

MR. MILTON GAMBLE: We do have some gifts for the singers and dancers, if you could please stick around? Dancers, we have some gifts the Commissioner is going to be presenting to you.

We want to thank the drum group and the singers for providing us with those blessings of songs. In our way of life, the way as a dancer and a singer, that drum is life, that everything that we do in this way of life has meaning; the feathers that we carry, the handles that we use, the bustles on our backs, the drum that we use, it all has life. The drum is a spirit. The hide that comes off the drum came off a living animal. So, the spirit of that animal is in that drum.

The wood that’s surrounding that drum came from a living tree. So, the tree and the connection to Mother Earth is in that drum. I just wanted to share a little bit of that history and knowledge that we have as
singers and dancers to our ceremonies.

Just a few announcements, we have a masseuse in the house. She was with us during pipe ceremony. We found out that she is a masseuse by trade. Her name is Kim Ocheewehow (phon). There’s a sign-up sheet in the main entrance right through these doors here. She’s setting up her table next year, and it’s $20 for a 15-minute session. Her services are available for anybody who wants to take advantage of that. You’re more than welcome. Lunch will be, again, out in the main area right through these doors. Lunch will be served.

We want to thank all those who helped and participated with the opening ceremonies throughout the days of the hearing; the singers, the Elders, the pipe carriers, all those who helped bring that positive spirit to our territories. Here in Treaty 6 territory, we’re always welcoming people. We always give thanks and praise to our Creator in the most humble way and the most respectful way we can, and it’s always through that pipe that we carry.

Apparently, I was cuter than Chief Cameron. I hope he doesn’t hear that. I just got told that.

We’re going to take a few minutes to set up the room here for the next family. So, I’d ask that you bear with us. Give us a few minutes. It will give you
Opening Remarks

--- Upon recessing at 9:33
--- Upon resuming at 9:43

Hearing # 1

Witnesses: Eva Potts and Percy Potts

In Relation to Misty Faith Potts

Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette

Orders: none.

Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe

Grandmothers, Elders, Knowledge-keepers: Sylvia Popovich, Florence Catcheway

Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good morning. Good morning, Commissioner Audètte. I would like to introduce the next family that will be sharing a story with you. And, we have both Percy and Eva Potts will be speaking, and they have supports. But, the family would like to begin with a song.

(MUSICAL PRESENTATION)

MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Good morning. Do you promise to tell your truth in a good way today? Thank you.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So, Commissioner Audètte, both Percy and Eva will be talking today and sharing the story of Misty Potts. They’re going to start
by sharing a number of things. And, as you can see by a
lot of what they’ve brought today, that there’s a lot of
strengths Misty had. And so, to begin, I’m going to ask
the family to share some of Misty’s strengths, or tell us a
little bit about who Misty was.

MR. PERCY POTTS: (Speaks in Indigenous
language). Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It’s a
pleasure to be here. The Creator has given us many
languages on this land, and it’s up to us to maintain those
languages and speak them as much as possible.

So, today, we arrive here, and it’s really
some place that we did want to be. And, the reason why I
say that is the way we raised Misty, she was raised around
the drum, songs, ceremony, traditional living off the land.
We did not allow her to attend Native school, because of
what my father had told us. My father said, “These people
that are here aren’t going to go home. So, you have to
integrate with them as quickly as possible. Keep what you
have, but learn what they’ve brought.”

And so, Misty walked that road. She was a
pipe holder, Sundance pipe holder. She danced Pow-Wow.
She was a good daughter, sister. She was a decent human
being. And, over the years, we watched her struggle
through life, and she always maintained herself, and she
went back to her beliefs when she had a problem. Wherever
she was at, she found people.

She tells me some stories about some guy by
the name of Orville Looking Glass, or I don’t even know who
that is, but she hooked up with him in Manitoba. So, she
knew how to reach out. It wasn’t like she was a dead-end
person. She had a lot of promise. She brought us to the
Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards, and we won the top hand
drum for the year, and it was quite an honour for us. And,
she was the one that was orchestrating all of that.
Nothing like that has happened since she’s been gone. Our
organizer is gone; taken away.

To this day, we don’t know where she’s at.
All of the information the RCMP have, they resort to
protocol. We have to respect the rights of the suspects.
They have more rights than my dead daughter, missing
daughter.

Back in Alberta, there’s a family by the
name of McCann. The old man and his wife went missing.
Today, there’s a gentleman, criminal in jail by the name of
Travis Vader, and he’s in prison without those bodies ever
having been found. So, they did everything that they
possibly could to bring that case to a conclusion.

Every time we ask them about my daughter
Misty, they have an excuse. Not enough boots on the
ground. Not enough backup. I don’t know if they know
anything about forensics. There’s been many things that
have come forward that they haven’t followed up on, and
it’s at a standstill today, her case. We haven’t had any
family meetings, community meetings with the team to let us
know what has happened to Misty.

So, in looking back, the race-based
decisions, the discriminatory decisions that are being made
because of who we are has to stop. And, I think one of the
ways that that has to stop is we ourselves have to stop
being victims. We are not victims.

Last night, just before I went to bed here,
some -- maybe somebody sent that spirit. I don’t know.
Come into my room making noises in there and trying to
sleep. All of a sudden, they just pushed me, like, really
hard and in my own language, he said, “(Speaks in
Indigenous language). Try to help yourselves. They’re not
going to help you.”

And so, when we look at the kind of monies
that are being put into this area, a question always comes
up in mind. Why wasn’t that money allocated towards
developing an elite force within the RCMP that would
strictly look into this area? This is all they would do.

We need boots on the ground, because we
don’t have any. We don’t have anybody out there. Unless
we ourselves as families are searching, no one is going to
go out there and start searching. The police say they do, but we have no proof.

So, I’ve gone through all kinds of emotions. I even -- I’m a hunter. I can hit a moose at 200 yards through the heart. I could just as easily do that to a drug dealer, and my thinking has gone there. These people that have caused these problems, why don’t we kill them all? And, we have talked about it. Native people, white people, it’s not just us that they’re targeting.

Right now, it’s just at the talking stage. What happens when somebody actually starts to organize that? A vigilante, and then we’ll be going to jail. For what? For work that the justice system is supposed to be doing on our behalf? So, I’m glad it’s just been a thought. I haven’t gone there.

So, losing someone that you love makes you think all kinds of crazy thoughts. All of a sudden, you get up in the middle of the night, in the morning, and you go look some place where you think she might be. And, sooner or later, it starts to dawn on us that we can’t find this person because we have no evidence, we have no starting point to look for this individual, because all of the stories are mixed up by the people that she was associated with.

So, it’s been a tough time for us. Myself
personally, I’ve sat in the bush with a rifle in my mouth twice. And, the only thing that took that barrel out of my mouth is my grandchildren. I thought about my grandchildren. I thought about my children. I thought about, you know, if I do this, this is the easy way out. It’s harder to come back and face the reality of what’s going on. It’s really straining on the mind, on the heart, on the emotions. It weakens your body.

Sometimes you don’t even want to do anything. The things that you enjoy doing, you find no enjoyment out of because the whole family was there. Now, they’re not there through alcohol and drugs, and the things that our young people go to for comfort, because they put themselves in a dead-end space. We can’t help them.

So, it’s difficult for us. I feel for all of you parents, all of you brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, for the missing or murdered Indigenous men and women, because there are men missing, too. It’s been going on for a long time. Somehow, this country of Canada has to wake up to that fact that we are not victims, we’re not animals; we’re human beings, just like them. Well, I don’t know if I want to be like them. I want to help.

But, there’s a lot that needs to be said. But, as a father, I know that feeling of what it’s like to lose your loved one. It’s something that I don’t wish on

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anybody. It’s horrible. At least if you had closure, to see the person, to find the person, whether the person has been dead or murdered, bring that body home and put it away. At least if we had that, that would take a lot of it away. But, we don’t even have that. So, there’s many of us like that in this country. It’s not just only us two.

One of the things that I would encourage this Inquiry is to incorporate into it that there are missing women from all races, not just Indigenous people. We cannot be marginalized as, you know, victims. We’re not victims. We are a people, a strong people, strong race of people that were given a tract of land that we shared with others, and they have taken advantage of that through genocide.

Now, today, we’re into suicide and homicide. That’s not what was supposed to happen. It was supposed to be a peace treaty where people are supposed to get along, learn each other’s culture, respect each other, and work together. That has not happened at all. That’s why these things keep happening and our politicians refuse to wake up. The judicial system refuses to wake up.

Our children are still being taken off the reserves. Something is wrong and it’s not us. The system has to correct itself, because this is not the end. I think this is the tip of the iceberg of what’s out there.
So, thank you very much.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, Eva, can you also share with us about Misty and some of her strengths and what your relationship was like, please?

**MS. EVA POTTS:** (Speaks in Indigenous language). Hello. My name is Eva Potts. I’m Misty Potts’ little sister. We’re 10 years apart, and I guess I’m just going to speak about the items here that I brought today.

Back home -- we’re from Alberta. We’re from Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation. Misty -- sorry, I lost my train of thought.

The media was -- like, they were helpful with us in Misty’s case. We tried to participate with them and tried to get our story out, but one thing that I really didn’t like was they really emphasized on substance abuse, and I don’t think that that’s right, because that was just a -- that was just a short-lived lifestyle that Misty went through, and we all go through ups and downs, and I don’t think that that’s right that they always point that out. And, it seems like they point it out to make it seem like it was her fault, or it was -- or to justify why she went missing, and that’s not even -- that’s not the issue. That shouldn’t be the issue. The issue is that it’s lack of priority, lack of care on the RCMP part. The issue isn’t substance. The issue is them.

Misty got -- she went -- when she was 19
years old, she left the reserve. She went to school in Edmonton, and in Edmonton, there’s a college there called the Yellowhead Tribal College. She went there, and then from there, she found out about a problem, and it was in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It was called CIER, Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources. And, it was a diploma program, and she applied and -- her and her friend applied, and they were going together. They both got in. Her friend decided that she wasn’t going to go last minute, so Misty went by herself at 19.

She didn’t have nothing when she showed up in Winnipeg. She just had her sleeping bag and her suitcase. And, she built a life over there. She met a professor named Stefan McLellan. I think that’s how you say it. But, he encouraged her to further her studies in environment, because she was very -- like my dad said, she was raised on the land. She knew a lot about culture, and the hunting lifestyle, and she had a lot of things to say.

So, she had that voice, so he recognized that in her and he encouraged her to go on further, and she went to University of Manitoba and got a degree in Bachelor of Arts. Then she came home and she just talked to the Elders, and they told her she’s not done. They sent her back. She went back and she got her Master’s of Environment. So, she spent 10 years in Winnipeg.
Then she came home and she started a department back home, Environmental Resource, and she did a study on wildlife contamination. I think Saskatchewan has that -- they follow her template now. She’s recognized -- her work is recognized at the United Nations level.

So, I guess you can kind of see, I’m not trying to brag about my sister, but this is my story and this is my time to talk about her, and I’ve been going through ups and downs of grief, and I want to tell it right. And, I don’t like how they always talk about that substance abuse. She was much more than that. Misty was an amazing person. She was the organizer of our family, but she was also a leader back home in Alberta. She did a lot of great things. Like, the plaques there are from our community, and our community was really proud of her. They would always give her these -- she was the first one in Treaty 6 to obtain the highest level of education.

She beaded that jingle dress. It’s a medicine pouch. She beaded that. That picture of her is when she graduated at CIER, and she was 21. This picture of her up here is when she got her Master’s. So, I just wanted to share that about Misty. Misty did a lot more things. And, Misty is also a mother. She has an 8-year-old son. He lives in Winnipeg. She was married, and yeah, just life happens.
Misty did a lot. She was a teacher at the college, Yellowhead Tribal College. She was going part-time for her PhD, and we just -- it was just supposed to be, like, a rough time in her life, and we were all -- she came back, and she was heading to rehab, and she just left the house. The last time we saw her, she said she was going to the store, and we never saw her again. She was supposed to be going to rehab, and I was really excited, because I was going to get my sister back.

I’m so angry. It took the RCMP a couple of days to even consider her missing, and they wouldn’t take us serious. It wasn’t until a year later they started doing things. A year later. Like -- and then today, they used to check up on us, and they don’t even do that anymore. It’s not even -- they don’t talk to us. They don’t follow up with us. And, there’s only so much we could do. We tried to do the best with what we have and the resources that we have, but we really rely on the justice system for this. We can’t do it ourselves.

If I was going to make a recommendation, I was thinking about, you know, we have -- like, our communities, we have reserves across Canada. There’s a big drug problem on the reserves. Let’s address that. What does that look like? Let’s, you know, I don’t know, create our own policing on our reserves or something. I don’t
I don’t know what happened to my sister. I can go all kinds of different ways. I have ideas and -- it’s just we don’t know. But, one of the biggest issues was the meth came onto the reserve, and there’s a lot of different people on our reserve. They’re not from our reserve, you know? They’re drug dealers. They’re not even Native. You see other races. Let’s address that.

Like I said, Misty has been missing for over 2.5 years now and it’s been hard. I just -- I just wish they would have took it more serious. It wasn’t taken serious, and I had to -- what do you say? Play nice with the RCMP. I was doing a lot of -- I don’t know how to say it. I’m just going to say it the way I know. Like, kissing ass. They said things that were rude and stuff, and I just had to take it because these people, I’m relying on them to find me answers.

And, one thing that I want to point out is that there is a videotape, and we asked them to go see it, and they -- I don’t remember the name of the RCMP at that time, but he was the first one that was on Misty’s case, and he was not a nice guy. He’s, like, “We don’t” -- I told him there’s a surveillance -- there’s a witness that said they saw Misty at the store. Can you go there, check their surveillance tape? Because we tried to go there and
do it and they said the RCMP has to come do it -- request that information.

So, we phoned him, and we were sitting outside the convenience store, and they just -- so, when we phoned him, we told him and he says, “Oh, we can’t just go around doing stuff like that.” And then my brother, my brother, Percy Jr., he just flipped out on him, and he was, like, “Well, what the F are you there for? Isn’t that your job?” And, I had to calm down my brother, because like I said, I was trying to be -- play the nice -- be nice to him so that he can do this, and I’m, like, “Well, isn’t there something that you can do?” And, he’s, like, “No, we can’t just go around doing stuff like that. Sorry.”

So, when they decided to go do that, it was probably, like, two weeks, almost a month after, and it was recorded over. So, they could never make that connection. And, the person that said that saw her get into the vehicle, the vehicle matches the description of the people that I think are involved with her missing. And, when I talked to the lead investigator, he says, “Oh, their story checks out. Their story checks out.” “What do you mean their story checks out?” “Oh, we can’t tell you that. It’s under investigation.” “Okay. Well, what do you think happened to Misty?” “Well, we just think she ran away.”

I’m just, like, no, she didn’t. She didn’t
run away. Like, they’re not listening, and it seems like
when they say she ran away, it’s like an easy -- it’s an
easy scape for them. Like, they don’t have to do anything,
and they didn’t even really do anything in the first place.

Like, what my dad said, the McCanns, they’re
Caucasian. Somebody went to jail for that. They made a
connection there. Where’s the connection with my sister?
Oh, their story checks out? Well, what about Travis?
Like, it just -- it’s frustrating. So, there’s no closure.
There’s no support from them. People tell us, “Oh, take
care of yourself.”

You know, I’ve been going to counselling for
the past 2 years. I’ve been seeing two different
therapists. I go through my ups and downs. I isolated
myself for six months after Misty went missing. I almost
-- I almost died. It’s tough. And, I can’t even imagine,
like, this is a world -- this is a country, Canada-wide
issue, and there’s more people. Like, there’s a lot of
people in my situation.

I know that my dad was speaking about it’s
not only Indigenous women but, you know, the justice system
makes it easy for Indigenous women to go missing. Like,
it’s easy to go murder an Aboriginal woman, because there
will be no -- there will be no consequences. Or, maybe
they’ll just get a slap on the hand. If you did that to a
white woman, you go to jail for maybe life. I don’t know.

I grew up in the city. I was 14, and I used
to get chased lots. Like, I’m really -- I could have been
missing. But, I was smart. I had to go to school in
Edmonton. And, my sister, she was my role model, what she
achieved. I was trying to do the same thing, and I was
getting chased in the city.

But, yeah, I don’t know. I’m just rambling
now, but yeah, that’s what I have to -- yeah.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Earlier, you were
saying, you know, Misty was a mom. And, despite her
obstacles or what was happening in her life, that tough
time in her life, you were convinced that she would not
have disappeared willingly because of her son and because
of her good upbringing, and teachings, and she would want
to be with family; is that fair? Can you tell me a little
bit more about -- because I also understand she was working
towards a PhD. Do you want to tell us just a little bit
more about some of her strengths and her connection to her
son?

MS. EVA POTTS: So, the reason why I don’t
think she ran away was because Misty’s son, you know, she
had a hard time, and her and her husband, they separated.
They were having marriage problems, and she had a hard
time. Like, it started from when my brother, he passed
away in 2011, and my brother was really -- we looked up to
him, and it was really hard for our whole family, and
that’s where it started.

So, when he passed away, it was December 8th, 2011, and then at the end of December, my sister found out, you know, that’s when her marriage problems started happening. So, it was just like in the same month, and they separated. She still tried. She tried her best, and she became a single mother, and she just -- her life just fell apart.

She wasn’t looking after herself the way she was taught, and she kind of just -- I think she had a nervous breakdown. And, you know, we’re not perfect and whatever, but she allowed her husband to take Gabriel because she wasn’t doing well. And so -- but Lee, her husband, wasn’t supposed to move back to Winnipeg or Manitoba, and he made that move. And then after that move, she kind of -- like, she fell off the rails, basically.

But, every week, she would call Gabriel. She would call him. She would take contracts here and there and send him money. We talked about getting him back, and she went to Manitoba because they were going to work it out. The year she went missing, she went back over there, and then she wasn’t going to work. There was just too much.
So, she talked to me on the phone, and we talked for hours, made a plan. She came home. The leadership was going to send her to a rehab in B.C., and we were going to get a lawyer and we were going to get Gabriel back, and we were going to do it. We’re looking up. Good things were going to happen, and when she came back, she just -- she was back for about four days. And then after, she just said she was going to go to the store, and she never came back.

We knew where she was. That whole week she was on the reserve, we knew what she was doing. But, yeah, no matter what she did or what she was doing, she would always call Gabriel. She would always check up on him. She loved him. Like, that’s her son. And, when the police say that she just -- maybe she just took off and went to go start a new life, I don’t -- all the time, Misty went to Winnipeg to go to school, and she always came home. She loved her family, no matter what. Whatever she did, she always had to make that connection back with us. You know, every family fights, and even little fights couldn’t stay -- we couldn’t stay mad at each other too long. It was that love. There’s no way.

And, I tell them that. I say, okay, yeah, maybe she did go away, but it’s, like, she would call her son. She wouldn’t just leave her boy like that, and
that’s, like — yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, you know, you’ve already shared with the Commissioner that the police weren’t taking it serious. How do you feel? Do you feel if they had -- now they’re circulating photos and stuff, but do you feel if they had done that earlier, it would have made a difference?

**MS. EVA POTTS:** Yes. I feel like it definitely would have made a huge difference, because we would have had people out there looking for her. We could have caught something earlier on. What if we got that video surveillance? We could have made a connection there. There’s a lot of things that they didn’t do.

They should have -- and like I said, a year after, that’s when they started, and they only did that because I got my face into the media and I started calling around and started getting the issue out there, trying to push them to do that. And then it didn’t happen until a year, and I had to do that. Not a lot of families can go out and do that. They don’t have that. Some people are -- they don’t. They don’t know what to -- and I even tried to contact Edmonton Sun to ask them to do a story. They said no, an RCMP has to do it. I’m, like, what the hell is that?

So, I got Global, who helped me, and APTN,
and Vice News. And then when they helped me, all of a sudden, the RCMP started doing things. All of a sudden, they were doing a dive, and they told me about it, and told me how much money it costs. And then they said they did a ground search, which I found out by the farmers when I was out there doing a documentary that they didn’t even search his land. They searched the ditches. What the hell is -- like, we searched the -- I don’t know. When we first did our ground searches, we were walking through muskegs, we were walking in a line. We were walking right through deep bush. Like, where were they walking? I don’t know.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Well, you’ve shared about some of the advocacy work you’ve had to do, and that you’ve kind of had to raise some of these issues yourself. Can you tell me about some of the other stuff the family has done? I mean, I see the poster, the banner there, but I understand you also did a round dance to raise some awareness. And, you just said something a minute ago, not everyone can do that. So, maybe you sharing some of the tips of how you were able to do some advocacy might help other families. Can you share some of what you guys have done?

**MS. EVA POTTS:** Well, some of the things that I’ve done, it’s not only me. It’s been a group effort. I guess one of the tips is, like, communities
really need to support their members. Like, for me, my community really supported me. They support everything that me and my family do with Misty. It was one of the ladies that said, “We should do something for Misty.” You know, Misty believed in song. She believed in prayer and ceremony, and Misty used to always talk about song being a way of prayer.

She said that we should have a round dance, you know, get us all together and sing, and maybe Misty’s spirit will hear us, you know, bring her home, get us some answers or something. So, that’s how we started the round dance the first year. So, 2016, we started it. But, yeah, we do the round dance for prayers, or strength for us, so that mainly so that she can hear us. You know how we opened up with song? We’re a singing family. I truly believe every time I sing, she hears me and, you know, even when we were singing there, I was asking her to come be with me and help me say the right things, and have the right words to help us and to help her case.

Yeah, so mainly just a lot of the communities, they really need to support their families, the ones that are going through it. Like, I didn’t just do that on my own. Lots of people helped. We had help from all over, but it really does help. I made this dress. Misty used to sew. She used to bead. Misty used to do a
lot of things. And, me and her, we used to backup sing
together, and I couldn’t -- we used to Sundance together,
and she -- I couldn’t go back to the Sundance. I finally
went back two -- not last summer, but the summer before I
went back, and it felt really good. I get my strength.

The first time I went to a round dance was
last fall. I went up to sing behind my dad, and I just
started bawling, because all these memories started
flooding. When one of us was out of tune, we would joke
around and push each other and laugh, and that’s -- I lost
my sister. It took me a long time to even make these
things. I kept crying every time I finished something.

She was my partner. It’s not easy. It’s
hard. I try, but it’s not the same. But, I’m going to
keep trying.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Well, we know that
Misty got a Master’s in Environmental Studies, and we know
she was working on a PhD. But, she also created a
documentary film about the land, Awakening Spirit. Can you
tell me a little bit about that?

**MS. EVA POTTS:** That was the contamination
wildlife study that I told you she did. I think my dad
could probably answer that better. He was her advisor
through that whole process. I was just an assistant.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Before you pass it
to your dad, though, I think one of the important things, the connection between the harm that’s happening to the land and the harm that’s happening to Indigenous women, did you want to say anything about that before your dad talks about Awakening Spirit?

MS. EVA POTTS: The harm that’s happening to the land and women?

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: The connection between the harm that’s happening to land and to the environment, and the harm that’s happening to Indigenous women?

MS. EVA POTTS: Well, like, what do I think about it? Well, I don’t know. My dad, I’ve been hunting with my dad since I was about eight, nine. We used to go hunting beavers and stuff, and the land would be -- the land isn’t the way it used to be when you go out there. There’s lots of oil and gas development, and a lot of the animals migrated. We have to now -- we used to just be able to go not too far to go get a moose.

But, now we have to travel, spend, like, two full tanks of gas to even go get a moose. The land is pretty -- it’s pretty destroyed. We’ve lost a lot of medicines that aren’t even there anymore, berries. They’re both being destroyed, I guess. I don’t know if it’s going to stop. I don’t think it is. You know, oil and gas are
the money makers in Alberta. Pretty soon, we’re going to look like a desert probably. I don’t know.

But, my dad has more to talk about. Like,
he can answer those questions really good.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thanks. Percy,
could you help us with Awakening Spirit and some of those environmental issues your daughter was so passionate about?

**MR. PERCY POTTS:** Okay. When Misty was going to go to Manitoba, she came and seen me. So, I took her to this spring by Whitecourt, and I sat down with her there, and I told her, “Look, no one speaks for this water. All the animals that come to this water rely on this spring to stay the way it is, and if the spring is not protected, then the animals are going to lose that resource. And, if the animals lose that resource, we’re going to lose the animals. Nobody talks for the animals. So, when you go to Manitoba, I think that’s one of the areas that you should look at.”

And, Misty was kind of like a comic in a lot of ways. She said, “Okay, Dad. You want me to be Bugs Bunny? This means war.” You know, Bugs Bunny does that stuff, eh? She watched that. But, that’s where she went. And, she had a lot of background. I wasn’t the only one that she worked with. There was a gentleman in our tribe of Stoneys by the name of Mel Paul. And, Mel Paul told us
a story that was gotten from the east, and it was related to the environment.

When the newcomers first came, he said they brought two little snakes with them. One was gold, the other one was silver, and they were small, so they would feed them. They would eat. They started growing, so they fed them more. Over time, from this little one, it filled this room. From filling this room, they filled more area. They started getting bigger and bigger. One day when they went out hunting to continue feeding them, now it’s a full-time job feeding those snakes.

When they had gone out hunting, those snakes broke out of the pen and they consumed all of the villagers, everything that they could get, they could eat, and they took off this way, except one little boy escaped and he was watching it. He went to see the hunters and he told them what happened. They all went back there. Just complete devastation. Complete devastation.

And, those two snakes came west, and I guess the old man that had initially told them to destroy those, told them that now they’re loose. They’re going to go west. They’re going to contaminate the rivers. They’re going to consume the land, resources, everything.

To us, it was just a story of two snakes. I thought, wow, what a nice story. And then I started
looking at the meaning behind it, like gold and silver, timber being cut down, rivers being polluted, natural resources being extracted. We can’t even drink water the way we used to, berry patches being destroyed, animals migrating. It’s still out there.

But, the story goes, according to Mel, that there was a bull that was given, and there were seven arrows that were to be assigned to seven nations. And, when the time is right, that bull will be fired. Those seven arrows will be fired. That’s when we start fighting back.

And, that’s a story that Mel told -- was telling me, and Misty was sitting beside me when that story was being told. She heard every word that was said, and in her thesis, and also in that DVD, that CD that she made she included that part in that to show how industry is -- what it’s doing to the environment.

Like, if you go out there on the land, our springs are not protected. There’s no buffer zones around there. Where medicines grow in the meadows, there’s no buffer zones. They’re just cleared off. And, if you clear it off, it’s going to all dry out. And so, there’s no respect for traditional knowledge to include in government policy, and we’re the ones that are uncivilized? And, here, civilization comes and destroys everything that’s
So, she seen that, and I think the few times that I talked to Misty, she said, “You know, dad, the problem that we’re going to have as Aboriginal people,” she used the word, and I’ve been trying to figure out what that is. She said, “How are you going to quantify traditional knowledge so that the system can understand it?”

She said, “Right now, it can’t be done. That’s why they’re not listening to the concerns that we have. The concerns that we have are for their benefit and they’re not seeing that. We’re not just saying stuff to try and get money off industry. We’re seeing something that’s going to address the state of the environment of the earth, and we’re not being taken serious because they don’t see us as influential people. We’re not to be listened to.”

But, the proof is there, she said. I don’t know how she knows that, but she said the polar ice cap is melting. There’s things happening up there that’s affecting what’s going on, on Earth. I don’t know that. Me, I hunt, I do ceremonies, and I listen to people.

But, Misty’s legacy is not going to go away. I know that. She was very influential. Sometimes, I think that maybe the Creator allowed her to be with us just for this time, and when I think that, the pain kind of goes
But, I would still like to see a resolution to what happened to Misty, and if we have, in this country, a judicial system that takes everybody as equal, we will know. But, if race-based decisions, discriminatory decisions, are going to be at the forefront of the judicial system, we’re not going to know.

I’ve tried -- I’ve talked to some people that are supposed to be psychics, Natives and white people. Nothing. They lie. They just take your money, your rifles, your blankets, and they talk to you like they have more information and they don’t. I think that’s why that thing came last night (speaks in Indigenous language). “Help yourselves. No one is going to help you.” I think that’s a call for all of us to stand up and not look to somebody else to provide answers for us. If anything, this Inquiry should be directed to do, is to bring the judicial system to the table as quickly as possible, because as we speak, there are still more girls going missing. There are still more women getting killed on both sides, not just Indigenous women.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: We actually have the trailer for Awakening Spirit, and I wanted to ask the family if this is a good time to show it? Yes? Could we please get the trailer for Awakening Spirit, and can you
say the name for me? Because I don’t speak your language.

**MS. EVA POTTS:** Wanorazi Yumnezi. It means Awakening Spirit.

--- Whereupon the Trailer for Awakening Spirit was played

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, that was just a trailer. The documentary is actually much, much longer, and has more people explaining, sort of, connections of the land, and I know that’s an important part of Misty’s legacy, but it also kind of talks about what you just talked about, Percy, how important she thought the connections between traditional knowledge and land were.

I want to make sure that you guys have an opportunity to share anything else that you wanted with us, or if you had anymore recommendations for the Commissioner?

So, actually, we’re just going to ask the family members that have joined that are supporting also introduce themselves, and just tell their relationship to Misty.

**MS. DAISY POTTS:** My name is Daisy Potts, and I’m Misty’s mom, and I love her really lots. I can’t talk about her because I just cry.

**MS. ROXANNE SUSAN:** Good morning. My name is Roxanne Susan. Misty is actually my husband’s relative, but all the years we’ve been together, I had become close to Misty. We adopted each other culturally as sisters. We
bead together, we sew together. She always loved making my
daughters stuff, and I will still continue to pray and have
hope for our sister to come home.

**MS. COURTNEY ALEXIS:** Hi everyone. I’m
Courtney Alexis. I’m actually Misty’s niece.

**MISTY’S COUSIN:** (Speaks Indigenous
language). Misty is my first cousin, but -- and she’s
younger than I am, but the relationship I have with her is
there’s a -- you look up at the front there, and there’s
some things, as Eva was talking about earlier on, regarding
her and some of the stories that surround her.

But, what a lot of the -- one thing that
wasn’t mentioned here is -- it was mentioned just a little
bit, but there is an importance to it. She drove us
singers to sing. She was very instrumental in creating the
Eagle River Singers. And, as the old man mentioned
earlier, she submitted -- she knew what to do with the
album that we made, and we ended up winning that Canadian
Aboriginal Music Award, and that literally was all her.
When we were in the studio, she would tell us what to do.
And, although that might seem like it was a commercial
thing, she always led everything with ceremony. She always
smudged. She always insisted on behaving certain ways.

With us, it’s a little different. The
females in our tribe call the shots. I don’t see that
anywhere else. I’m not judging anybody, but that’s the way it works for us. So, when she would walk in the room, even though she was younger, because she had two things; first off, she’s female, and secondly, she carried that pipe. So, there was nothing we could do to trump that, and we didn’t feel that we had to, because she would always tell us, “You’re going to do it like this, and this is the reason why.” Instead of, “Do it like this because I’m telling you.” She never took that superior attitude. She took that leadership role in all of us.

So, we started singing with her gathering all of us together, and for me, I just wanted that story out that she was very instrumental in the creation of the Eagle River Singers as the founder. Even though there’s a lot of us members, you can’t say that she’s not the founder. Plus, the old man here with all the ceremonial aspects that they would do, one of the requirements wasn’t just you show up and go round dance or you show up and go to Pow-Wow.

She would always tell the singers, if you’re going to sing with us, you better come to the lodges too. You better come to the Sundances. You better come to the sweats. You better come to the (indiscernible). There’s lots of songs that make up our people than just the commercial aspect of going to sing at a round dance.
And so, that’s what Misty’s singing was to me, and still is. Sometimes I can’t even listen to that record no more because her voice was very -- it’s one of the dominant female voices on the album, and if you knew her, you would know what her voice sounds like. And so, when you hear the album, you hear her for the last time, and you get -- I’m sorry.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you for sharing. That was a beautiful story, beautiful words. So, at this point, Percy and Eva, I just want to make sure we haven’t missed anything, or if there’s anymore recommendations or comments that you want to make before the Commissioner might ask questions or comments?

MR. PERCY POTTS: I think you should come to Alexis Indian Reservation territory, on the land; not the Sheraton.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And, that would be a recommendation, that we should be on the land or in community, and not the Sheraton.

MR. PERCY POTTS: If we’re done, we need to sing a song.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Merci.

Merci, Maître Big Canoe, Daisy, Eva, Percy, and the family. Thank you so much. And, I agree. We should be on the land. And, tonight, we will be given the ashes from the

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sacred fire. Every time we travel, we bring ashes to the
next place we go, and we will be in a First Nation
community way up north in Quebec, my First Nation
community, eating caribou.

But, mostly thinking about you in the sweat
Sunday. We will be in a sweat to bring the blankets, to
bring the eagle feathers, and the sacred gift that we were
given for the families and the work we do. And, I’ll think
a lot about what you shared to us a lot. And, I hope you
are with us, but I would like to go hunting with you also.
I don’t hunt, but I’m a good person beside the hunter. I
eat. This is where I’m good. I have so much to learn. I
have to be frank with you.

You mentioned about the National Inquiry
should bring together or bring the judicial system -- can
you explain to me the English? The French, I missed that
part, when it was the recommendation part. You talked
about we should bring the Inquiry the judicial system?

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Bring the judicial
system.

**COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:** Explain to
me, please.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So, Percy is
suggesting that the judicial system should be brought into
here or questioned, potentially, as part of an
institutional or other hearing, just to come and talk to
the Inquiry and address some of the issues. Is that fair?

MR. PERCY POTTS: The reason why I say that
is because that’s where we’re having the problem. Like, if
we had the resources, if we had trained people, we would be
working on these cases. But, we don’t have trained
personnel, and we don’t have resources. So, they have the
resources, and while we’re out here talking, they’re still
happening, and whatever they have in place is still there.
It’s not changing. So, the sooner they come here and you
ask them questions...

COMMISSIONER MICHELÉ AUDETTE: This Inquiry,
where we are right now, it’s the community hearings with
the families and the survivors and the strong people. The
second phase or another phase will be in 2018, in the
winter, spring, summer, but we’re getting there,
institutions. You want to be there? Make sure he’s there.
Where we’re asking the hard questions, where we’re
expecting the truth.

You shared the truth to us, I honour it, I
hope they’ll do the same, and that is in our prayers, but
also in our -- we have something very unique that no -- any
Inquiry had the power to say to an institution, “We’re
subpoena” -- is that what we say in English? “You have to
come, and if you don’t come, what’s the result?”
MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: A motion to bring them in court.

COMMISSIONER MICHELÉ AUDETTE: Voila. So, we’ll use that system, but I hope we don’t get there. I hope they come. So, merci.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Prior to what you would normally do in giving the family gifts, the family would like to close with ceremony.

COMMISSIONER MICHELÉ AUDETTE: Okay.

MR. PERCY POTTS: We want to do a song. This song is called Treaty Song, as well as in the old days when a family approaches another family that was camping, they sang this song to let them know that they don’t have any negative intentions toward them, that they’re coming in peace, so that when they hear that song, they go and greet them and bring them in.

So, we want to sing this song for not only Misty, but for all of the ones that are out there, to let them know that we’re coming to look for them, and we’re doing whatever we can on Earth to try and bring them home to their families.

(MUSICAL PRESENTATION)

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: The Commissioner is actually -- wants to provide the family a gift for sharing their sacred story. The grandmother here will be bringing
it for you as well.

--- Gifting of eagle feathers

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** The Commissioner is actually -- and the grandmothers are providing the family with gifts for sharing their sacred stories. The grandmothers in Haida Gwaii had asked that feathers be prepared for all the families that are sharing their stories to respect the sacredness of the story being shared, and she’s also handing them seeds, a gift of reciprocity, so that they can grow new life, grow something new. And, it’s just a way to say thank you so much.

At this point, I’m also going to actually just ask for a 15-minute break. So, there will be another hearingcommencing here in about 15 minutes, if we can all keep on time? Thanks.

**Exhibits (code: P01P06P0301)**

**Exhibit 1:** Trailer of Awakening Spirit, which was played on monitors during public hearing.

**Exhibit 2:** Electronic folder of two images shown in public testimony.

--- Upon recessing at 11:13
--- Upon resuming at 11:35

**Hearing # 2**

**Witnesses:** Carol Wolfe, Josephine Longneck, Brenda O’Neill and Dorthea Swiftwolfe

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.
In Relation to Karina Beth Ann Wolfe

Heard by Chief Commissioner Brian Eyolfson

Commission Counsel: Wendy van Tongeren

Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Good morning, everybody. My name is Wendy van Tongeren. I am one of the Commission counsel, and I am here to help with the talk that comes from the family, the next family on the list. This is a family that -- this situation was actually scheduled for quarter after, and it’s taken a little while for us to get ready. But, nevertheless, we’re ready now.

And, the family is -- the main speaker is Carol Wolfe speaking of her daughter, Karina Wolfe, and we will start with a prayer.

--- Opening prayer

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: To start, I shall pass the microphone to my right, to have each member of the family members here and the supports and the interpreters to identify themselves for the record. Please give your first name and your last name. So, for me, it was Wendy van Tongeren, that’s my name, and I’m counsel.

MS. JOSEPHINE LONGNECK: Good morning, everyone. My name is Josephine Longneck. I’m Carol’s aunt. I’m from the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation.

MS. BRENDA O’NEILL: Good morning. My name
is Brenda O’Neill, I’m also Carol’s aunt, and I’m also from Muskeg Lake.

**MS. CAROL WOLFE:** Carol Wolfe. My daughter is Karina Wolfe, missing.

**MS. DORTHEA SWIFTWOLFE:** Good morning. Dorthea Swiftwolfe. I’m Carol’s support from Victim Services with the Saskatoon Police Department.

**MR. TYLER BURGESS:** Tyler Burgess and Dean Weeps (phon), language interpreters, Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Now, there is an agenda, so we have lots to do this morning. And, I anticipate that all of these women will speak, and the chosen ritual before they start to speak is an affirmation using the eagle feather as the symbol of good speech.

**MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Great. Wendy, if you could pass the sacred feather, then, to the first witness. Okay. Good morning, Carol. I believe Carol will start? Okay. Okay. Good. Carol, do you promise to tell your truth in a good way today?

**MS. CAROL WOLFE:** Yes.

**MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Okay. Thank you. Okay. And, I think, Carol, if you can pass the feather to Dorthea. And, good morning, Dorthea. Do you promise to tell your truth in a good way today? Okay. Thank you.
And, we’ll pass the feather down to the
other end. Okay. Brenda, good morning. Do you promise to
tell your truth in a good way today? Thank you.
And, Josephine, good morning. Do you
promise to tell your truth in a good way today? Okay.
Thank you.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Carol, would you
like to hold the feather when you’re speaking?

Good morning, Carol. I know that you have
worked long and hard for many years for this day and this
opportunity to speak to the Commissioner, and you spent
tremendous effort, even in the last week, getting ready to
do so, with your family and with Dorthea, with your
interpreter friends. And so, at this point, I’m just
communicating to you that it’s time to start. You are the
lead. Please start when you’re ready.

MS. CAROL WOLFE: My name is Carol Wolfe.
My daughter, Karina Beth Ann Wolfe, was missing for five
years -- five and a half. She was located deceased. The
picture I have brought with me today is all I have left of
my daughter, Karina. My daughter Karina was stolen. My
daughter Karina was missing and murdered.

My daughter Karina was a talented writer and
artist. She had dreams and goals. From the moment she was
born, she was strong. At three days old, she was holding
her head up and looking around. She would look up at me and I just knew that she was looking at me, knowing I was her mother, and she was loved.

Karina, from an early age, loved to read and write. She would sit for hours reading and writing in her journal. To read for hours, she would write poems, stories just about her day. When she was not writing or reading, she would create beautiful pieces of art. She would paint or create art with little pieces of paper. Karina was gifted and very creative. She was self-taught.

I remember how proud she was to learn how to bead. She was -- she made beautiful earrings, lanyards, bracelets and dream catchers. I remember how much she loved her little brother, Desmond. At first, she was not sure as she was the only -- she only wanted me to hold -- to carry her, but the love she had for her brother can’t be put into words. I remember one time I went to check on them and I thought Karina would be sleeping on the bed and Desmond would be on the floor, but it was the other way around; Karina was on the floor and Desmond was on the bed.

Karina had a passion for reading and writing. I can picture her sitting on the couch reading. Karina had a smile that would light up a room, would light up the hearts of people with her.

Karina grew into a beautiful woman. Just
like a butterfly, Karina is and always will be my butterfly. Karina was full of love and always brought a smile to people’s faces, just like a beautiful butterfly does when people see one.

Being deaf with two hearing children, my son Desmond always said they were lucky as they had a secret language, as they could be across the room from each other and still be able to communicate. I remember the first words that she signed to me and they were, “I love you, mom.”

As a young woman, Karina struggled with addictions, but sought out help. Karina completed treatment and was getting back on track. Karina always knew that she would bring change through her art, whether that being written word or painting.

Karina had goals, she wanted to graduate, she wanted to go to university, fall in love and have children. She would say, “Mom, when I have children, I’m going to teach them to paint and draw.”

Karina was the type of person who always tried to do what was right, and to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. She was a light, a light of change, a light of hope. Karina was a fighter. She would always stand up for her brother as young children and as a young woman. If she felt anything was wrong, she was ready to
fight to make it right. Karina loved her family and was very proud of her family.

Karina went missing July 2nd, 2010, that was the last day I saw her. My last words to her were, “Are you coming home tonight” and “I love you.” Karina did not come home, and I was a little worried as she never came home or called. After three days, I was so scared as I had no idea where she was.

I went out each day and each night searching for her. I just could not rest or sleep as I was so scared and needed to find her. I walked and walked and stopped anyone who would stop and read my note. I had a note and a picture of her that I carried to show to anyone. Some people stopped, not at all, and I wanted -- all I wanted to yell, “Please stop and listen. Look at the picture of my beautiful daughter. She is missing and I need to find her. I need to bring her home.”

I just walked and continued to walk all over, looking for her. Her brother, Desmond, walked all over, searching, asking friends and anyone who would help. I searched her Facebook, seeing if anything new was posted. Putting messages for her to call me, to come home, just in case she might see them.

Karina had a pink cell phone, as pink was her favourite colour. I called it over and over, until the
battery died on her phone. I searched and looked for 18
days and I just could not find her. No matter where I
looked, I could not find her. My birthday is a day that
she never missed. She would always be with me to
celebrate. My birthday came and passed. That evening, I
just sat and waited. I don’t know if I fell asleep. I was
worried, filled with panic.

July 20th, 2010 is the day I went to the
police station by myself without an interpreter. I knew I
needed help to locate my daughter. When I arrived, I took
a picture and a note to give to the police. I handed my
note to the officer. He just looked and acted like it was
not important. He ignored me. I was so angry as he was
not helping me. I banged my hand hard on the counter, that
is when he looked at me and handed me a witness statement.

I had no idea what I was to do with that
paper. No one explained what I needed to write on that
green paper. I looked for the officer to help me, but he
was busy on his computer, acting like I was not important
or what I needed was not important. Once again, I slammed
my hand hard on the desk. Finally, a big man in a white
shirt came and tried to help me. Once I was done with the
paper, I gave it to the big man in the white shirt and I
left.

I left the police station very angry and
upset. The next day, I went back to the police station
with an interpreter and filled out and completed my
statement. Without an interpreter, communication was
difficult. As I went alone, I felt unheard and dismissed
simply because they chose not to hear me, help me to locate
my daughter.

For two weeks, I had no idea what was
happening, or if the police were even looking for my
daughter, as no one came to see me or call me. All I
wanted and needed was to be notified that, yes, they have
my report, and yes, they are out there looking for my only
daughter.

Roughly two weeks later, I think it was
August 4th, 2010, three people came to the house, Sergeant
Bruce Gordon, Constable Rebecca Parenteau (phon) and
Dorthea Swiftwolfe from Victim Services. They wrote out to
me that they came to ask me a few questions regarding my
daughter’s case.

I was so afraid of what they were going to
tell me, and for some reason, I felt guilty, like I did
something wrong, even though I knew I had no reason to feel
like that. This meeting was difficult and some things were
miscommunicated as they did not bring an interpreter with
them. They came to let me know that they were searching
for my daughter and wanted to make sure they had the right
At first, I really did not trust the police or Dorthea from Victim Services. I did not understand everything they were telling me as everything was written down, but they wrote that they would keep searching for my daughter, Karina.

I did not know or trust Dorthea, but she just kept showing up, sometimes three times a week, to give me updates and just to see how I was doing. Communication was slow as most of the time there was no interpreter, but -- when we would sit and talk or when I would receive an update from the police. Like I said, I did not trust her, but she just kept showing up. Slowly I began to trust her and realized she was there to help me.

My auntie, Josephine Longneck, came to help me look for my daughter and to hand out posters. Every time she would travel, she would carry her poster to hand out. Josephine would talk to the Chief to help me to help him understand that Karina needed help as she was missing.

My auntie, Josephine, has done so much for me. I would have been lost without her help.

I started to make a binder with every new paper clipping that had a story about my daughter, Karina. The first report was in August. I was a little upset as the news kept reporting that my daughter had an addiction.
to drugs, to meth. They never wrote that she had just
completed treatment before she went missing. They never
wrote that she had decided to go into treatment on her own.

The next release was done on the 12th of
August, 2010, with a picture of my daughter and her
description. It explained who I saw her with last and how
she was making progress -- progress in her addiction.

At least once a month, my daughter’s story
was in the news, asking for help to find her. The police
and Crime Stoppers would release her story monthly, and
with all that, there was no news. February 17th, 2011, they
released a story how one girl was located and then how many
others were still missing. When I saw the caption, Missing
Girl Located, I was excited that it might be my girl, my
daughter, but I knew it was not her as Dorthea told me
earlier that day about the news release. Dorthea promised
that she would tell me first, before the news, when they
found her or had any new information regarding my daughter.

With the one-year mark coming, we planned to
have a walk to bring attention that we were still looking
and we will never stop looking. July 2nd, 2011 was the
first candlelight vigil and walk. With the help of my
family, Child Find and Women Walking Together, Victim
Services and Saskatoon Police Service, we walked holding
signs and pictures. Many people don’t realize that there
is a cost for posters, water for the walkers, candles, so
we held bake sales, steak nights, auctions, and asked for
donations from the organizations in the City of Saskatoon.

Josephine and Dorthea helped me set up
interviews with the media, so that I could always have her
story in the media. My Aunt Josephine made t-shirts for
everyone to wear, as well as a big banner that we would
carry while we were walking. My Aunt Josephine would
travel out of town to different cities, when she could, to
hand out flyers and to search for Karina.

One year, I attended a family gathering up
in Muskeg that was set up by Angie Bear. I had never went
camping before. I thought I was prepared, and I was not.
I was so cold the first night there. I texted my auntie on
the same day I saw her driving in the campsite with her
camper for me to stay in. Josephine introduced me to her
network of friends and co-workers to assist with
fundraising. That is when I met Lorna Arcand (phon). Lorna
and my aunt, Josephine, held fundraising events to help
with the cost of the search for my daughter.

With the help of a friend, Pam, we even made
a Facebook page, “Where is Karina Beth Ann Wolfe?” My
friend would keep it updated and add pictures from the
walks. And, when the media would do a story, it was added.
Pam helped me set up a bank account for all the monies we
raised for the searching of my daughter.

With friends from the SDHHS and my friends who are hearing impaired community, I was never alone in regards to my walks or fundraising. They were always there with me. My friend Janet was a strong support, for she always tried to make sure I was okay. When I was living in Prince Albert before my daughter went missing, I met two wonderful people, Gordon and Sue Hine (phon). Each time I needed support, they would come. Even after each ceremony I held, they came. When I did the documentary, My Only Daughter, it was Sue who was my voice. Sue is also an interpreter for the Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, and I am so lucky to have my support like the SDHHS, as they have been my voice through this ordeal.

October 4th, 2011, I spoke at the Annual Sisters in Spirit Walk. This was the first time I spoke in front of people who understood what it meant to have a missing loved one. Darlene Okemaysim and Myrna LaPlante from Women Walking Together asked if I would speak, as they were a support for my family and I. With the help of Myrna and Darlene, I finally understood what it meant, the concept of what murdered and missing was as, you see, for the first few years, I had no idea what that meant.

I was asked in 2013 if the Saskatoon Police could do a YouTube video for Missing Persons Week, which is
in May. I said yes. Sergeant Randy Huisman, Dorthea and the RCMP created a seven-minute video of Karina’s case. This video was shown at the launch of Missing Persons Week in May of 2013.

During the launch, I spoke about my daughter, Karina, and asked if anyone saw her, to let her know I was looking for her and needed her to come home.

That same week, we held a birthday week for Karina on May 7th at the Indian Métis Friendship, and we invited the media community and all who loved her to come and attend.

That first week in May, we had a billboard put up on 20th Street and Idylwyld Drive. This was made possible through fundraising and with the help of Indian and Métis Friendship Community Centre of Saskatchewan. Dorthea Swiftwolfe, Jennifer Strongarm (phon) and Curtis Puche (phon) from Victim Services designed the billboard.

When we were working on the billboard, we did not want it to just be another missing persons’ billboard. We wanted people to realize it was my daughter and not just another missing person or another statistic. We wanted to make a connection with the general public. Karina’s billboard had the caption, “Talented artist and writer,” with all the police numbers. Karina’s billboard remained for the whole month of May 2013.

If Dorthea could not be there to help the
other members from Victim Services -- if Dorthea could not be there, the other members of Victim Services would come to help and would also come to visit with Dorthea from time to time. Every walk and vigil, Jennifer Strongarm and Dorthea were there. Throughout the years, their team changed and I met two other wonderful ladies, Loretta Johnston and Ashley Jestan (phon).

During this time, I was also going to family meeting to help create a monument for the murdered and missing. Saskatoon Tribal Council held many family meetings with other families, including myself, to come up with an idea of what it should look like. I was not sure what I wanted to see, but I knew that I wanted butterflies. I wanted butterflies as my daughter was a butterfly. On May 5th, 2017, the unveiling of the statue was held in front of the police station.

Through the years, when my daughter was missing, her file was handled by many different investigators. I am sure only four, Sergeant Bruce Gordon, Randy Huisman, Sergeant Tony Benouche (phon) and Kevin Montgomery. Each time they would change, they came out to my house to introduce the new investigator that would be working on my daughter’s file. Even though they would no longer be working on her file, all the investigators stayed in contact with me, even the Chief of Police, Clive
Weighill, always made time for me to have meetings or to bring attention to my daughter’s case. He would always make mention of it when he was talking to the media.

For five and a half years, almost six years, I searched -- they searched for my daughter, Karina. In November of 2015, a man by the name of Jerry Constant turned himself into the police station and led them to Karina’s body. The team of Dorthea; Kevin Montgomery, lead investigator; Tony Benouche, second investigator; Deputy Chief Bernie Pannell; Linda Perrett, Coordinator of Victim Services, came over to let me know that they had found Karina’s body and that she was dead. Saskatoon Deaf and Hard of Hearing came shortly after as they wanted to let me know before the news release. Desmond was contacted and arrangements were made for him to be brought home by taxi so that he could be told that Karina was gone.

It was extremely emotional. I was overcome with great sadness and anger. It was a good team and they were able to work with Desmond as he was so shocked and upset, he was ready to punch a hole in the wall. The team was so supportive with him, they helped settle him down, to get to a place where he was not angry -- not so angry. At that time, all I really wanted to know is where they found Karina. Within hours, we were driven out to the site, the site is by the airport, she was so close and we never knew.
My Aunt Josephine, was called and notified that they found
her remains and the rest of the family came in from Muskeg.

Most of the team left, except for Dorthea.

After we returned to home to wait for the rest of the
family, Dorthea stayed with me the rest of the day, into
the night. She wanted to console me as I wept throughout
the night. Those first few days, people were coming and
going to support me, the support from Saskatoon Tribal
Council, Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: At this juncture,
this is as far as Carol got because she found it so
upsetting and -- to be writing this out. So, the next plan
here is that she has a victim impact statement, because the
matter moved on and this fellow was actually charged and
pled guilty to murder and was sentenced. And so, in the
court process, there is the opportunity for a victim impact
statement, and so Carol is going to read hers.

MS. CAROL WOLFE: My name is Carol Wolfe and
my only daughter was Karina Beth Ann Wolfe. This is the
most difficult thing I have ever been asked to write, to
put into words the loss of my daughter, to put into words
the heartache that I live with daily, to put into words the
pain, heartache and suffering that you caused my family and
me with your unspeakable actions, to put into words the
emptiness I am left with as Karina was my only daughter.
A bond between mother and daughter is a very special bond. The bond is filled with love and happiness, just to be close together, to hug each other and to simply say, I love you. These are things that I can no longer do with my daughter, Karina. From the first time I held her in my arms, I knew Karina was special. I was surprised how strong and alert she was. She was lifting her head already at three days and only to look at me to smile at me, her mother.

It was not easy at first, as I cannot speak or hear. I would hold her close to me and sign to her. I had to teach her so we could communicate. The first word she signed to me was mom, mother, quickly followed with, I love you. As Karina grew, she learned to sign and she helped me to teach her brother to sign, how she loved her little brother.

Karina had a passion for reading and writing, painting and drawing, and journaling. It was clear as a child, always writing or painting. She could sit for hours reading, and then writing, and then back to reading. Karina was very intelligent as she received awards through her years in school.

Karina grew into a beautiful young woman. People would say that her smile would light up the room. I would say she lit up my world, my heart and my spirit.
Karina was my butterfly. Karina was full of love and the -- and the way a beautiful butterfly makes people smile, that she was and will always be to me. As Karina grew into a beautiful young lady, she struggled, she had issues, but she was working on them.

Karina completed treatment and was planning to finish school as she strongly believed that she could change in the world through her writing and artwork. As a parent, I supported her with her dreams and goals she had set out for herself. She wanted to finish school, go on to university, fall in love and have children. These things will never happen as you decided that she did not deserve to live out her dreams.

I have been asked how this affected my life, there are a few things I need you to try to understand. For five and a half years, I waited. I waited for her to walk through my door. I waited to see her. I waited to see -- I waited for any news regarding my daughter. For five and a half years, I prayed that she would find her way home. I prayed for five and a half years, I prayed that she was not suffering. I prayed no one was hurting her and I prayed she would find her way home.

For five and a half years, I searched all over for my girl. For five and a half years, I walked and walked to look for her. For five and a half years, during
rain, snow, heat to search for my daughter, for my only
daughter. For five and a half years, I longed for her,
longed to see her face, longed to touch her, longed to tell
her I love you. For five and a half years, I would call
out her name. For five and a half years, I held onto hope,
hope for a sign. For five and a half years, I would tell
her story, hoping someone would tell where she was. For
five and a half years, I carried her picture, showing it to
anyone who would look.

I fundraised and asked people for donations
to help me keep her story in the media. I asked for help
from everyone to be able to pay for posters and a
billboard. I remember when I was baking cookies for a
sale, I wished I was baking for Karina to eat and not for
monies to help me find her. Anything I could do or ask to
help me find my daughter, I did.

Without the help of Saskatoon Police
Service, Chief Clive Weighill, Sergeant Kevin Montgomery,
Inspector Randy Huisman, retired member Bruce Gordon,
Detective Constable Rebecca Parenteau, Victim Services,
Dorthea Swiftwolfe, Ashley Jestan, Loretta Johnston, Women
Walking Together, Myrna LaPlante, Darlene Okemaysim-
Sicotte, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Chief Felix Thomas,
Crystal Laplante, Marge Wichillen (phon), Federation of
Sovereign Indigenous Nation, Vice-Chief Kimberly Jonathan,
Third Chief Dutch Lerat, Saskatoon Deaf and Hard of
Hearing, the journey would have been more difficult as they
were there to be my voice when I could not speak. They
were the voice for my daughter.

Jerry, what you did shattered my family,
shattered me, my heart, my spirit, my soul. You took my
only daughter, and then left her like she was garbage,
garbage you threw in the ditch. Karina was not garbage,
she was my only daughter. Each day that goes by is still a
struggle. I struggle now, anxiety, panic attacks, unknown
fears, I am always in a state of worry. Each time my son
goes out, the fear and the panic sets in. I am so worried
that someone will take him away, hurt him and kill him. I
sit at home and cry until he comes home as I fear I will
lose him as I did Karina. My life is completely upside
down. I burst out into an uncontrollable cry as I cannot
make sense of why you did this to my beautiful daughter, my
beautiful butterfly.

Jerry, I will never be able to understand
why you stole my daughter. I will never be able to
understand why you murdered my daughter. I will never be
able to understand why you thought you had the right to
murder my daughter. Jerry, the pain and suffering you
caused my family is something I pray that never happens to
another family. My family is broken. My heart is broken.
We are just broken. Broken by actions.

Let’s make it clear, maybe Karina did not mean anything to you, but to me and to my family, she was our everything. Karina was my daughter, a sister, an auntie, a cousin, a niece, a grandchild, and she was loved.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Carol is going to read now, a poem that was one that was presented at Karina’s memorial.

MS. CAROL WOLFE: My angel up in heaven, I wanted you to know I feel you watching over me everywhere I go. I wish you were with me, but that can never be. Memories of you in my heart that only I can see. My angel up in heaven, I hope you understand that I would give anything if I could hold your hand. I’d hold you oh so tightly and never let you go, and all the love inside me to you I would show. My angel up in heaven, for now we are apart, you’ll always live inside me, deep within my heart.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And, you have two pictures. They’re the same picture, but one is in a frame here? And, the same picture is on a binder. And, the binder that Dorthea is picking up now, is that where you put all the many, many reports and things to be said about Karina for many years?

MS. CAROL WOLFE: Yes.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And, we thank you
very much, because Dorthea, with your permission, made a
copy of that entire binder that you’re going to leave with
the Commission; is that correct? Thank you very much.

**MS. CAROL WOLFE:** Yes.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** So, if the camera
could just zoom in on the photograph? Do you want to hold
this photograph? Carol, is there anything else you’d like
to say before we move this onto Dorthea?

**MS. CAROL WOLFE:** It’s been two years since
we found -- sometimes I’m very emotional. I don’t go out
much, I stay home and I have to keep going to meetings, I
have to keep being positive and I have to keep being
surrounded with support. I miss my daughter so much. It’s
been a long two years. I’m doing okay, but it’s hard for
me. That’s all.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Thank you. And, to
your right, there is a woman -- to your right, there is a
woman, Dorthea, who has helped you through these
challenges. So, Dorthea, would you like to tell us some of
the challenges that you faced and I provided some questions
to you that perhaps you could address, including you
brought a couple of binders with your materials that have
been developed to assist people who are in this situation
that Carol has been in. Go ahead.

**MS. DORTHEA SWIFTWOLFE:** A question that I
was asked is, what is your job and how did it start? So, what I’m going to do is give you a little history, and then I’ll go into how I met Carol. Before my job was created, Sask Justice and the Partnership of Missing Persons held meetings, and out of these meetings were recommendations. And, one of the recommendations was a need for a Missing Persons liaison to support the families. The final report was done in 2007. The partnership held meetings with the families as well in regards to the recommendation.

In my current position, I was hired in February of 2012. The first year and a half consisted of research and development with the other two Missing Persons liaisons who are Rhonda Fiddler, who is located in Regina, and Chezanne Turner out of Prince Albert, who is no longer there. Currently, there are only three Missing Persons positions in the Province of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert. Once we completed our research, the development of the Family Toolkit and the support guide was created. The support guide is to assist other Victim Services units throughout the Province of Saskatchewan when a Missing Persons report is made.

Within the toolkit, there are sections to assist the families with making a police report, what to do within the first 24 hours, 48 and beyond. The toolkit explains how to navigate through a police investigation,
the policies and procedures in regards to a Missing Persons report and finally how to work with the police. The Missing Persons liaison is supposed to be and to assist between families and police.

Just to highlight a few sections in the toolkit, which can be found in the Sask Justice website. Community organizations that will assist with such things as respite. And, when I’m talking about respite, I am talking about places where families can go just to have a quiet moment. Community organizations that will help with printing posters, telephone access, computer access. A place where the children can go, because sometimes if a family with missing persons has little ones that are left behind. A communications log, a contact list, working with the media and how to set up a page for the internet.

Within this support guide that is used by other Victim Services units throughout the province, there are sections that have been developed to assist the worker to meet the needs of the family. Just to highlight a few, the federal grant for murdered and missing children, to presume death act, how to connect with search and safety, how to support hope and how to set up vigils.

I first met Carol Wolfe in 2010 as I was asked to come and offer support as the investigators were heading over to her home to do some follow-up questions. I
attended the meeting and I can honestly say we struggled as we did not have an interpreter to assist, so there was a lot of writing. When I first met Carol, I was in a different role within Victim Services, and Carol was a little hesitant as she did not know or have any idea why I was there, or how I could help or what I could offer.

Together, we forged a relationship and planned on what we needed to do in regards to searching for Karina. Together, we made posters that we could hang up in stores and hand out. Our first vigil was held with the help of community organizations such as Child Find, Women Walking Together and the Saskatoon Police Service.

The first few years were very difficult as communication between myself and Carol was a learning process as our meetings and home visits, we did not always have an interpreter. There was a lot of writing. And, Carol would try to teach me sign language during the time we spent together.

Throughout the journey of searching for Karina, there were struggles, communications, proper support, monies for posters, using the TTY program and how communication was still and always a hurdle, even counselling was difficult to locate. First of all, for someone who is hearing impaired and dealing with the love of a lost one, and then to locate a therapist who is
trained, who can sign and has a level of understanding of what ambiguous loss is. There are two types of ambiguous loss. One is where there’s a physical absence and a psychological presence. Type two is where there’s a physical loss and a psychological presence.

So, I just want you to imagine when a family has a missing loved one, they’re dealing with type one. So, you have to imagine every day for families who are left behind are walking around with a large part of their heart missing. But, with the help through Sask Justice and Greystone Bereavement Centre, they saw the need for some of our families and they have on staff a trained ambiguous loss therapist. The counselling service is also free of cost. As many people may not be aware that going missing is not a criminal offence. It turns into a criminal offence when it’s suspicious.

Throughout the five-and-a-half-year journey, Carol and myself learned how to work with the media. We always kept Karina’s story in the public eye by using the media, posters, Facebook and through the vigils. Carol was approached by a film producer, Marcel Petit, who made a very short film that’s posted on YouTube. A few years later, she was approached again by a film producer, Grace Smith, and she created, “My Only Daughter”, which is a 22-minute documentary that depicts Karina’s story and Carol’s
journey from start to finish.

There were struggles throughout the years, one is the cost for interpreters, where the funds will come from. Majority of the time, our meetings and home visits, we did not have one. But, when there were meetings with investigators and media, or when Carol would share her story, we always made sure we had an interpreter.

After the arrest of Jerry Constant and Karina was located deceased, it was very difficult to see the pain and heartache that no family should go through. I stayed with Carol for many days and many hours. The Chief of Police was out of town when the family was notified, so that weekend once his plane landed, he came directly from the airport to see Carol and Desmond to offer their condolences and to make sure they were okay.

During the court process, it was difficult again to see, and the battle continued who would pay for an interpreter arose, but with the help of the Saskatoon Deaf and Hard of Hearing, this need was met. With the assistance through Saskatoon Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Saskatoon throughout the journey, they are and still an amazing support.

The day of sentencing and reading the victim impact statements was very difficult, an emotional day as I read Desmond’s into record. Throughout the journey with
Carol and Desmond, there are many supporting organizations such as Saskatoon Tribal Council, Saskatoon Tribal Chief Felix Thomas and Crystal Laplante and many staff who made sure our voice was heard during the creation of the -- and the family meetings for the MMIW monument that is currently in front of the Saskatoon Police Headquarters; the Federation of Sovereign Nations, Vice-Chief Kim Jonathan, Heather Bear, Vice-Chief Dutch Lerat, and Kim -- I mean Kay Lerat (phon) who assisted with travels to the roundtable discussions and rallies that were had out of town; Women Walking Together, Darlene Okemaysim-Sicotte, Myrna LaPlante who assisted with funds, walks, vigils and many other tasks; Child Find who assisted with putting Karina’s story in a Child Find magazine, candles for the vigil, and printing posters; the staff of Exploited Children out of Winnipeg, Manitoba who helped get Karina’s story in the newspaper out in Manitoba, and with placements of pictures throughout Manitoba.

I’m still involved with Carol and the family, and we’ve held a few ceremonies these past years. Family and friends’ feasts were held this past summer. When Karina’s headstone was put in place, Carol, Desmond, Inspector Huisman, Chief Clive Weighill, Gordon and Sue Hine, Josephine and myself unveiled it together followed by our wonderful lunch at Carol’s aunt’s home.
Working so closely with the families of the missing, being consistent is important as the files may change hands of the people who are investigating, but the support should remain the same. The reason being that they have enough trauma in their lives and to continue forge relationships and to start over each time is a struggle. I promised Carol that I would be here, I wouldn’t leave her, and I kept my word. Carol, thank you.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** And, thank you. I understand that you’ve brought these toolkits and you are prepared that we keep them as part of our exhibits so that we can learn from them ---

**MS. DORTHEA SWIFTWOLFE:** Yes.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** --- to move forward? Thank you. Dorthea, and this may be a better question for Carol, but perhaps both of you can consider it, what is the reason why a butterfly is held as the creature as a symbol for what we’re talking about today?

**MS. DORTHEA SWIFTWOLFE:** When you think of a butterfly and when a butterfly comes and lands on you, it makes you feel blessed and happy because it’s so beautiful. The other thing about butterflies is their death, I don’t know if many know that. So, each time you think of a butterfly and how it starts from a little worm and it goes into a cocoon and arrives in the world beautiful, that’s...
what we think of when we think of Karina, as a beautiful, free butterfly. She’s fluttering free now. She’s not suffering, she’s not hurting, she’s laid to rest in a good way.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Thank you, Carol [sic]. Now, on your left, there are two women who have also been of tremendous assistance to you, and it’s Brenda’s turn. Brenda is going to speak and hopefully Josephine will as well, but -- so thank you.

MS. BRENDA O’NEILL: Okay. Good afternoon, Elders, families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and Commission. My name is Brenda O’Neill and I’m one of the great aunts of the late Karina.

I’m humbled to be speaking on behalf of my family, but it is also with great sadness and regret that I find myself speaking at an event such as this. No family ever thinks that they would lose a loved one in such -- of this sort of heinous act of violence. Karina was struggling with addiction and had her struggles, but it is not what defined her as a person.

Karina was a happy-go-lucky young lady with a bright future, like any other 20-year-old. She had hopes, dreams, talents she was only beginning to discover. This was taken from her and from us. We never had the opportunity to realize what Karina would become, whether
she would be a wife, a mother or an artist she aspired to be. She loved her family and was loved in return by her 
family, her mom, her siblings and the extended family.

Karina learned from a very young age to communicate with 
her mom through sign, she helped translate for her mom at 
functions, at doctor’s appointments, social visits and 
helping family communicate with Carol as well.

When we heard from Carol that Karina was 
missing, it sent a lot of questions running through our 
minds, was she really missing, was she just visiting a 
friend or was she taken? Nobody really knew at that time 
and authorities did not have any answers to our questions.

Within the five and a half years of Karina’s 
disappearance, we relentlessly kept the fact that Karina 
was missing in the media. We hosted vigils, had t-shirts 
made, hung posters, used all forms of social media and even 
consulted with a medium to give us some insight as to where 
she might be. As time went on, we knew the likelihood of 
Karina returning was starting to diminish, but we never 
stopped hoping and praying that Karina would come home. It 
was a very emotional five and a half years of not knowing 
what happened to Karina to just simply disappear.

This unfortunate loss has brought awareness 
of the vulnerable lifestyle and its consequences, and has 
given us as parents a new determination to educate and talk
to our children and grandchildren about the dangers of a vulnerable lifestyle. This can happen to anyone and no one is immune to this sort of thing, unless we fight for our children and grandchildren, it will continue to occur. I have personally heard many times, what do you expect when you lead a lifestyle like that? This does not give the right to anyone to take a life of another human being. We can continue to be angry and blame, or we can choose to be proactive and help the many Indigenous women that may be in danger of this sort of thing happening to them.

Creating awareness is key and healing our spirits as Indigenous women is imperative. The underlying causes need to be addressed in order to assist the people suffering from any addiction and self-harm.

We were finally able to help Karina on her journey and lay her to rest with the family that has gone before her. We, as a family, now have a small measure of comfort knowing she is with her family. We will never forget Karina, but use this as a reminder to always keep our children close in our hearts.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And, Josephine, is there anything you’d like to say?

MS. JOSEPHINE LONGNECK: I just want to thank Carol for showing me the kind of strength that she showed throughout this process. Even though she had
barriers, she overcome those and it was because of her
strength that kept me beside her every step of the way,
thinking of ways to get Karina’s name out there, looking
for her, asking questions, never losing that hope, never
giving up.

Karina was a beautiful, young lady, my
niece, my great niece. She was taken from us, she was
taken from her light at a young age, so senseless and hard
to understand how there’s people out there that think they
can take someone else’s life. She had so much to live for.
She hadn’t even begun her life yet. She had so many people
that love her and I know she’s here with us today. She’s
listening to us, giving us that strength.

And, I pray every day, every day not just
for Karina, but for all these young people out there to
take care -- take care of yourself out there. There’s
people out there, there’s predators out there. Jerry
Constant took our -- took my niece and one day he will meet
his maker, and I leave that in the Creator’s hands.

We have to continue promoting that awareness
at home, at schools, talking to our children, talking to
them about keeping themselves safe. I just want to say
thank you to everybody that was here today, all the
support, everyone that was here for Carol, her family.
Thank you.
MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Thank you, Josephine. And Mr. Commissioner, if it’s okay, we were not going to show the whole video, but we’d like to show 5 minutes of it at least as the last word from the family.

--- Whereupon a clip of “My Only Daughter” was played

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Thank you. Thank you very much. So, people are aware that that video is available and we saw about -- what percentage of it? About 10 or 15 percent. And, is it available online?

MS. DORTHEA SWIFTWOLFE: It’s available on CTV’s website, that -- sorry, just trying to yell. The movie was done by CTV News and that’s who released it as well. So, if you go on their website, you Google or search “My Only Daughter”, it’s there, it’s available, it’s free. Thank you.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Thank you very much for bringing it to us so that we could see it, and I understand that that copy is available to us as an exhibit as well. So, Mr. Commissioner, the family has made their submissions, there’s so much more to say, but this is what we have for today and are there any questions that you have?

COMMISSIONER BRYAN EYOLFSON: Just before we wrap up, I know Carol, you spoke about some of the needs that you had, some of the services that were available,
maybe where some of the services were lacking. Are there any, perhaps, recommendations you have for the Inquiry in addition to what you’ve already talked about or are there any needs or services that you -- that may exist that you would like to mention before we close?

MS. DORTHEA SWIFTWOLFE: I know one of the recommendations Carol had -- we’ve always talked about is the availability of interpreters, the cost of interpreters, to make sure the funds are there when they’re requested. I mean, without the help of Saskatoon Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Carol being able to teach me sign language to the extent that I do know how, we would have never gotten as far as we did.

MS. CAROL WOLFE: Oh. Yes, I understand the question now. Thank you. Yes, certainly more interpreting, and then the -- you know, interpreter’s time is limited and expensive, and sometimes you need an interpreter for two and four hours, and all day, not just -- you know, so certainly more interpretation would be better and less discussion about who is going to pay for it, but just get an interpreter there and -- so that was a huge difficulty for us.

COMMISSIONER BRYAN EYOLFSON: Thank you very much. Carol, I want to really thank you for coming and sharing with us today and I want to thank the rest of you.
as well for telling -- sharing your truths with us. And, before we wrap up, I just want to -- I have a small token of appreciation to share with all of you before we close. So, what we have here is, just as a small token of reciprocity, are some seeds that we share with people after they share their truths with us here at the Inquiry, so I’m just going to give each of you a package, and it has a little written explanation with it as well.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** I’d just like to say that the session -- the formal session is now over and we will be coming back to the room in about half an hour, at quarter after 2:00; okay? Thank you.

--- **Exhibits (code: P01P06P0302)**

**Exhibit 1:** Photocopy of memorial photo album for Karina Beth Ann Wolfe, 109 pages.

**Exhibit 2:** Victims services two-inch binder “Family Toolkit: Information for Families of Missing Persons,” ten tabs.

**Exhibit 3:** Victims services two-inch binder “Supporting Families of Missing Persons: A guide for police-based victims services support workers, includes tabs 1-10, appendices A-F.

**Exhibit 4:** DVD marked “My Only Daughter”, presented in hearing.

**Exhibit 5:** Statement of Carol Wolfe, five pages.
Exhibit 6: Dorthea Swiftwolfe’s statement (First line: “What is your job and how did it start”), three pages.

--- Upon recessing at 13:43

--- Upon resuming at 14:20

Hearing # 3

Witness: Danielle Ewenin, Lillian Piapot, Mona Woodward and Debbie Green

In Relation to Eleanor “Laney” Theresa Ewenin

Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller

Commission Counsel: Jennifer Cox

Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Are you ready to start? Everyone’s here? Okay. Okay. There are a few formalities we have to go through first. We need microphones when you’re speaking, please, so everyone in the room can hear because everyone wants to hear what you have to say. Also, if we could start with the people who are going to be speaking today about Laney, if you could introduce yourselves, please?

MS. LILLIAN PIAPOT: (Speaks in Indigenous language).

MS. DANIELLE EWENIN: My sister was 13 months older than I was, and I have -- I can say that my siblings and I, we were born in a time and condition that
we couldn’t be raised by our parents, and that the policy
of residential schools, my father was a World War II
veteran, the Sixties Scoop, all impacted our family. When
I was about 9 and Laney was 10, they were separating us
from our home. Mona was -- Mona, Laney and I were placed
together, and they were separating Laney from us, and they
were going to take her to another home.

In our backyard at that foster home, we had
this couch, and we used to use it as a playhouse. And,
Eleanor and I were on there, and we promised each other
that no matter what, when we grew up, we would find -- we
would find each other. And, we did. And, in -- what she
was able to share with me about those intervening years,
she lost a finger in a foster home, there was one point
where she had run away, she said she must have been no more
than 13, and it took social services or the authorities
three weeks to find out who she was because she wouldn’t
tell them their -- her name.

I don’t believe that my sister in her entire
life ever felt safe, that the only safety that she had was
what she could create when she was able to get out of care.
She had two sons, and we had made every effort to try to
bring them here today. I have to say that I’m not -- not
pleased with how that turned out, Commissioner Buller. We
had been -- in our pre-interview that we attended on August
4th in Regina, my sister and I, that was one of the things we had asked for, is that the boys be brought -- be able to be brought here to talk about the murder of their mother. We had difficulty locating them, and your staff just flat out just said, “No, we don’t have time to do it. We have three lawyers here we have families who are working with, we just -- no, can’t do it.” My First Nation was good enough to assist and they got a hold of the band lawyer, and the Band lawyer was working very hard on getting them here.

But, I think it’s important that statement takers go to them, the cultural liaison officer at the institutions want, you know, some notice. They said that family could be with them, plus they would also have an Elder and other supports so that that occur and that they would have a plan in the institution to help them with after care so that they don’t become -- you know, they don’t have a hard time.

We had asked in August for the autopsy report and the police report. We never saw either ever. And, in the whole time in preparing to lead up today, only one spoke to a lawyer in the family here. The lawyer contacted one person, and -- but that’s not the lawyer assigned to the family. We never saw that person, and I only heard from that person that was assigned from your
legal department to our family at 10:15 this morning. She wanted some time to help us prepare. I said, “If you don’t have the autopsy report and the police report, then I don’t know.”

The federal government set up the FILU units, the family liaison units, whatever they, you know, called -- you know, ours wasn’t set up until the end of October, didn’t have a person there until the end of October, called her, she couldn’t help get the autopsy report or the police report. She said we had to contact Alberta, and she would contact the FILU unit in Alberta, and she did. And, the FILU unit said she couldn’t get the autopsy report or the police report for us, that it would have to come from one of the Commissioner’s lawyers, that they had the power to subpoena those. And, I believe it was two, three weeks ago, they had spoken to my one sister, and I -- the request had went. So, there’s none of that here today ready.

I want to also talk about the time she was killed. I think it’s also important to know that my family was already grief-stricken. We had just buried a sister who had perished in a house fire from smoke inhalation. And, it was two weeks to the day that my sister got the call from the -- the police showed up and -- to inform her of what happened to Laney.
I sat with my parents when the police came to give the family the information on what happened. And, my parents were very old school, and I sat with them because I wanted to make sure that they weren’t going to be taken advantage of, and that questions were -- would be asked, so I sat with them. And, what we do know, and like I said, we’ve never seen the police report or, you know, the autopsy report, is that they said she died of exposure, and that she was found in a field, and that they believed that she was in this field because there were lights on a building and she was trying to make it there.

And, it was about February 4th, because we buried her February 8th, that -- and it was bitterly, bitterly cold. And, the police informed my parents -- the police officer that attended, because this was occurring in Regina and he was getting the information from Calgary that somebody had taken her outside of the city and left her there. It had snowed, and you could see the tracks in the snow where -- on the grid road where he -- the car came in and the car left. And, you could see the footprints and smudged footprints of where she was taken out of the car. And, he said, “You could see where she would walk. She was trying to go to that building where she fell. She would get up, and she fell again. She would get up, and then she fell again and died.” It was one of -- like I said, one of
those bitter, bitter cold spells we have. And, he said
that they probably would never -- they -- last she had been
seen was two nights before that and they didn’t know what
had happened to her when she had left that one
establishment or who she had went with.

My sister struggled with all of those
issues, as in many of our family, but she would go into
recovery and she would try really hard to try to bring
herself up and be able to be in a place to raise her sons.
Before -- and our family was poor, very poor at the time.
She couldn’t come to our sister’s funeral, nor could my
brother, and he said they sat in Calgary together knowing
that we were burying one sister and they weren’t able to
come.

When CBC in 2014 were putting together their
database on cold cases, they had called, and their -- on
their return call, they said they weren’t able to find --
the Calgary police were not able to find a police file on
my sister. So, it was fairly important to me that the
Commission, the Inquiry be able to get that information for
us.

I’ve -- you know, we live in a time now that
we can look back over that -- those periods, you know, the
last 150 years, and we have an analysis of what colonialism
is, what that legislation -- the direct impact of
legislation and policy has on life. Well, my parents didn’t have that. My parents died with guilt and shame. My mother blamed herself because she didn’t have the benefit of that analysis.

And, the way the systems work is that they took her boys and they put them in care in British Columbia. And, again, we know what the statistics are of Aboriginal children placed in care, that they stand a 5 times more chance of dying in care than they do in their impoverished communities, and that our children not just suffer isolation and alienation, but they also suffer abuse and neglect. By the time the boys made it home to us, we weren’t equipped to deal with the emotional issues that our -- those two young boys had, those two young men, they were in their teenage, and none of the systems really tried to help the families do that.

I remember one time when we were dealing something with the boys and my other sisters’ kids, and I had my other -- my own kids that they asked -- one agency or women’s group asked, “Well, what can we do that would help you?” I said, “I need money. I need money to feed them and I need money to pay the bills. That’s what I need.” And, of course, they couldn’t help me, but that would have helped a lot.

And, I want to say that when we decided to
come forward here is that -- it’s that, you know, we
understand what happened to us, that our mother wasn’t a
bad person, and that in different conditions, in different
-- you know, we would have been with her, we would have
been raised by her, and maybe Laney wouldn’t have ended up
in that field. But, we want to tell her story and story of
our family because we want it to add to everybody’s story
that out of this come some fundamental changes and systemic
changes that will not only reduce the violence of Indian --
First Nations women, but also the resources to lift them
up.

I know -- just a minute. I just wanted
permission to share that in -- last night at 3:00, I get a
message from my daughter that the security has shown up to
her door demanding to know who is in -- who all is in her
room. There was a mix up at their desk about their guest
list and there was some confusion, but that was 3:00 a.m.
that they did that. I got dressed and I went down, and I
demanded an explanation and told them I didn’t appreciate
security showing up like that. How does that look?
Security showing up at an Indian woman’s door at 3:00 a.m.
and demanding who is in this room?

And, it’s just indicative of the attitudes
of how they see us. They don’t see us as, you know, that
-- for someone to go and do that while the National Inquiry
into murdered and missing women is host -- they’re hosting it in their hotel? That just is -- it just shows how engrained those prejudice and that discrimination is, and they were flabbergasted that they -- someone would ask that -- you know, that’s not acceptable behaviour, that’s wrong. And, they blamed you guys, but I mean I thought it was unfortunate they woke up your staff to try to provide an explanation when it wasn’t your staff that sent the security banging on my daughter’s door.

I have some other recommendations, but I’m going to let my other sisters talk, and then maybe when we get to that part we can...

**MS. DEBBIE GREEN:** Hi, my name is Debbie Green. I’m the last born of seven sisters, and I just wanted to acknowledge my niece making these skirts for us. They represent seven sisters of which four of us are still here in this world, and I know that they mean a lot to all of us, so I want to acknowledge her for doing that.

So, being the last born in the family, I didn’t know I had siblings until I was about 10-years-old. I lived a different life than my sisters did. I did grow up with my mother. It wasn’t peaches and cream though; you know? But, I did have her and my father.

When I met my sisters, I remember being very happy that I had, you know, another brother and I had other
sisters and this big whole family that I didn’t know about. And, since then, you know, we’ve made every effort to become close and, you know, they’re my heroes. They have mom’s blood running through them. When we speak of warrior women, I think of my sisters and our mother.

And, I didn’t get a chance to really know three of those sisters, and Laney being one of them, so I only have one memory of her when she came to visit us when I was a young girl sitting on the steps. And, I just remember seeing her like I see my sisters now, just very strong. Strong, strong girl, and it makes me very sad that I didn’t get to know her. But, through the stories that my sisters tell me, I’m, you know, able to know her a little bit.

So, we talked about, you know, Indigenous women being at risk in this country. It’s so true; you know? I think, you know, every Native woman knows somebody if it’s not in their immediate family, it’s in their immediate circle of friends or somebody that’s been assaulted or murdered or missing or -- you know? And, to compare that to, you know, white society. I don’t think, you know, every woman can say that; you know? So, what does that say; you know?

I know myself when I was a child, I was almost abducted on a country road and I had to run away. I
went through a relationship where, you know, I had to -- you know, had a shot gun; right? So, it has to change; you know? And, how could we do that? Like, it took 150 years like my sister said; you know? Of colonization and how long is it going to take to heal; you know? What do we need to do to make sure that that happens; right? So that our daughters and our grandchildren don’t face that same world; you know? That we can be equal to the white women in the room; you know? Not have to worry if, you know, our rooms get mixed up that somebody’s going to come knock on our door; right? You think they would have went and did that with a white lady? Really? Honestly, do you think so; you know? I think I’m just going to stop there for now.

**MS. MONA WOODWARD:** Thank you my sisters for sharing that, sharing your experience and strength and hope. Good afternoon, my name is Mona Woodward, and that’s my adopted name. My colonial name -- my Indian name is Sparkling Past, Rising River Woman, and I’m very honoured to be sitting here and it’s been a long time coming. We had asked for an Inquiry many years ago, and I never thought it would -- I would be sitting here today being one of the, you know, organizer of the Missing and Murdered Women’s Memorial March.

And, I just learned at a very early age
that, you know, Aboriginal women were disposable, and I learned that at 18 when my sister, Eleanor Theresa Marie Ewenin, was murdered. And, I kept asking my uncle, “Well, how come nobody’s looking after -- like why aren’t the police doing anything about it? Like, what’s going on?” And, I was told that’s just the way it is. It was just accepted, a way of life that our sisters and family, especially women, at the hands of violence. I couldn’t -- it was hard -- hard for me to, you know, accept that.

I was adopted at an early age. I know that, you know, anybody in the ‘60s -- and, you know, we examine that and looking at Eleanor’s situation too, and I was talking to my daughter earlier today and, you know, asked her -- you know, because her too, you know, she was in foster care, and one of the things she brought to our generation is the intergenerational trauma because in our DNA, you know, just like healing is, you know, like the songs and the language, you know, we seem to pick up on, it’s just there. And, you know, she was talking about just having this really, really deep sadness inside of her and crying, and not knowing why she’s crying about it. But, learning more about her culture has given her some strength, and I just wish that Eleanor had it -- had that opportunity.

When we talk about some of the reasons why
Aboriginal women go missing and murdered at alarming rate, we have to look at the, you know, the institutional biases that happen within those systems they interact with, and that’s starting with the child welfare system. The way that they came into our community and demanded our parents, our caregivers to give us up or they go to jail.

When we were in foster care, I remember looking at this newspaper and I can see my picture in it. And, the foster father covered the writing, or whatever, so I wouldn’t read it but, you know, it was just a catalogue of Aboriginal children; you know? And, I know that now, but I didn’t know what I was looking at that day. Like, a catalogue; you know? Cute puppies; you know? It was -- today, that’s appalling, that’s totally appalling.

And, I moved away from Saskatchewan because I wanted, you know, a better life for my children and my grandchildren. I thought if I did the geographical change then, you know, it wouldn’t happen. I realized I was wrong because it was happening right within the community that I had chose to be my community in the downtown east side. And, I tell you, you know, there was a lot of powerful women that, you know, took me in and mentored me, and it was -- I learned that, you know, I can be empowered by that pain to be able to start, you know, community mobilization and start to bring those issues to attention even if it was
-- fell on deaf ears. You know, it was for our own personal healing because, you know, if we can heal as a community, then the healing is really more impactful.

And, I can tell you right now that, you know, racism is alive and well in our communities and so is, you know, violence because I’m sitting here with an injury due to the fact that, you know, I was -- had to get out of a car that was -- you know, the person was going to hurt me if I didn’t get out, so I jumped out of a car and I was -- you know, it was still moving and I broke my pelvis in three places. This is still happening.

I think about my sister, Eleanor. I think about, you know, potential life that was lost like so many other Aboriginal women that we’ve lost to horrendous violence. All those women had potential, they had gifts, and that was taken away from them. And, I think that, you know, we, as a society, have to make those changes and those changes start within the governmental bodies; you know? So, it has to be starting from the national, and also, like, within those communities.

If we don’t start changing those bylaws and the laws that allow these people to keep going through a revolving door of the system, you know, because they’re white -- and when -- a lot of Aboriginal women don’t want to go to the police; you know? And, I know that from my
own personal experience; you know? And, I stand here as a survivor too and I know that, you know, I never wanted to go to the police either. It was like, what’s the point? Like -- you know? Some of those police that are sworn to protect us, those are the ones that are the perpetrators upon our women. Those are the ones that are, you know, perpetrating horrendous violence on our Aboriginal women today.

One of my cousins was thrown from the window, and this was after, you know, the -- Doug LePard had, you know, made a public apology to the -- to Picton families, and I was wondering -- like, the headline splashed on the newspaper, you know, drug addict, you know, all of these things that they portray Aboriginal women. You know, some of the language has to be changed; you know? And, what a shoddy job of policing they did, and just like they did with my sister. You know, like, right now, you know, the case -- even if it was reopened they’ll never find, you know, the person that’s responsible for that. And, it was the same with my other family member.

And, I remember there was some sled dogs that were, you know, being butchered up in Whistler, and they had, like, a trauma team, and they had, like, a special police task force for these dogs. And, I thought, what the hell? They have all of this -- you know,
resources for dogs and nothing for this one little Native
girl; right? And, that just kept spinning around my head
and I just thought, well, we have to do something about
this; right? Because nothing’s going to change unless we
do something.

And, you know, I think that, you know,
there’s a lot of women lawyers out there that have, you
know, worked very hard to bring these issues to point and
-- I was part of the memorial march, but also for the
coalition on the missing and murdered women as well, which
was developed because of -- we were shut out of the Opal
Inquiry; you know? And, I was happy that we had an
Inquiry, but at the same time, you know, there’s -- when I
look at the Inquiry to date, right now, and the assessment,
I know the coalition had -- did a media release and gave
them, like, a very, very low mark on expectations; you
know? And, I hope, I really pray -- that’s the only thing
-- reason why I’m here is because I hope that something
will become of this Inquiry, that we can make those
changes, that, you know, it will be people first and
families first. I need some water.

One of the things that brings to mind, and
that was the recommendation of the national police for --
that it should be developed in response to missing and
murdered Aboriginal women. And, there’s nothing around,
you know, a plan or around policing, because those are the people that we go to, to ask for help, those are the people that are responsible for the safety of the community. And, at the same time, you know, if they're found doing crime, then they should be susceptible to the same incarceration and same treatment as a criminal and they're not. All they do is transfer them to another community, and that’s horrendous so they can, you know, repeat the same perpetration on our people.

One of the other recommendations, when I look at -- I worked in the downtown east side for over 20 years and worked as a support worker in different hats that I did, and I know that homelessness is a national crisis in our country. There are so many people homeless out there. And, when we look at any supports of -- that women need, you know, like with housing, also with, you know, health care. Health care is a big issue. I know in B.C., like, there’s waiting list after waiting list for -- just to get in there to see a doctor, to get an operation that they really need.

And, some of the treatment that they get in their health care is horrible, and I know that for a fact that it’s a crisis. I mean, you know, like, I was -- after I was in the hospital, I know that they were so short staffed. You know, like, I sat in my own feces for, like,
five hours before any nurse came in to see me, and I never ate for, like, over, like, two days, and they just left me in a room like that. And, I thought, how awful. And, I could see how a woman could lose her will to live, just sitting there thinking that nobody gives a fuck about her. And, the treatment is even worse. When the nurses came in there, you know, they were rude and they were just -- the way that they treated you was less than human.

But, luckily, you know, I have a voice today and I never had that many years ago, and I, you know, got a hold of a friend, a family friend, and she came in there and she, you know, asked them, you know, “What is happening with this patient?” You know, “Give her her medicine now,” and very quickly they worked very diligently to make sure I was comfortable and cleaned up. But, I thought about what about all those other women, you know, that are just -- don’t have a voice?

And, there’s got to be more, you know, resources and services. There’s got to be -- you know, like, I know working in a non-profit society that, you know, even though I work hard every year to, you know, put out those proposals -- you know, out of, you know, 28 proposals I put out, maybe four would be successful, and it would be only year to year. When a person gets, you know, dependent on a resource that’s helpful, and then, you know,
the funding runs out, where does she go? I mean, those
organizations that are helping those people, there has to
be, you know, more stability in the funding so that those
-- those, you know, tools that they learn to help keep them
motivated and empower women because that’s what helped me
when I was down and out, you know, of those resources.

I know the child welfare system, and we know
this is -- needs to be a complete overhaul, you know,
because it’s just picked up where the residential schools
left off. We need to have more supports for those mothers.

When we look at the mayhem and the
destruction that has happened to our women and our families
at the hands of the government, and I think about my mother
and I felt, you know, like, she wasn’t really a mother to
me. Just -- like, I never felt that connection; you know?
And, that -- you know, for me, it was just like some kind
of attachment disorder that I had that, like, I couldn’t
feel close to her, and it’s still like that today for me.

I know that Eleanor had such a strong
spirit. I loved her very much. I think about her, I think
about what she would be doing, you know, if she was here
today, and she is. She’s here in spirit, and I know that,
you know, there’s one thing I take from her is her strength
and courage that she always had. She was always straight
up and honest. You were never just second guessing because
she always would tell you exactly what she was thinking or feeling. But, because of the circumstances that surrounded her, she never got that chance because somebody took that away from her. And, I hope that you hear the voices of the family members and the survivors and take that to heart, and to look at all those reoccurring themes that come up with all the inquiries and the research has been done on Aboriginal women. You could even research to death and the same things come up.

    Enough talk, let’s put the money into action by providing those resources, making those changes, at least have a plan. There’s no secure work plan that’s going to tell us that we’re going to be safe, that’s going to tell us that, you know, things are changing, and I sure as hell hope that from this Inquiry that we can start implementing those recommendations and they’re not just a wish list.

    I know that for me right now, like, I was burnt out from the work, the overwhelming work in the downtown east side; right? And, I’m tired of wiping away the tears and the blood off our people. It just seems so hopeless. I was really jaded. And, you know, I’m on medical leave right now, and I was really apprehensive coming in here because I -- you know, my experience at the other Inquiry, and I’m here because I have that hope and I
know that you have to recreate that hope sometimes within
our people within myself to keep motivated, to keep moving.
And, I know as long as I do that, you know, things will be
heard and won’t fall on deaf ears.

I don’t know, Canada needs to wake up. You
know, like the whole world is watching. When we look at
all of the reports for the United Nations and amnesty and
the human rights, why does not Canada see that? Wake up.
So, I say with one heart, one nation that we stand together
and we make those changes. (Speaks in Indigenous
language).

MS. THERESA: I don’t know what to say. I
just want to say that I’m really honoured to be here, and I
really feel honoured to be named after my auntie Eleanor,
Theresa. I remember when I was a kid, well, younger, my
mom would tell me about the story of my aunt, but she never
really got into detail. She just said that she passed away
in the snow, that -- what she was talking about earlier is
that intergenerational trauma that does get passed on, and
I do feel the pain, but I also do feel the strength. And,
I’m just learning to connect with culture and about --
like, learning that she’s still here in spirit, like she’s
providing all of us with a load of strength to come
together. We came from all over, from the States, from
B.C., from Alberta to be here today together as a family.
Our family’s pretty scattered due to foster care and just
everything, so it’s just -- to be together today is such a
beautiful thing and all my relations.

**MS. DANIELLE EWENIN:** I guess there are some
specific recommendations. You know, we’re still not very
good about emotions. I don’t know what coping mechanisms I
had all of my life but, you know, when Mona talks about
some of the things on healing, I guess my healing was my
education. And, I always encouraged people if they say, “I
want to get a job or go to school,” I say, “Go to school,”
you know? Because I know what it did for me and how it
empowered me.

I have to put this on record. I feel that
it must be put on record some of these things, is that the
Inquiry’s definition of family first, it doesn’t feel like
family first. I can tell you with just the four sisters
here, getting just the travel organized just seemed -- I
don’t believe it was that complicated as it was to get the
travel arrangements done.

So, as we’re all getting anxious about
coming here, not having a confirmed date, not having
confirmed travel, not having return phone calls, I already
spoke earlier about the process with the legal system, your
legal department, was not good. A value of ours is that we
look after each other and we help each other.
On Friday, our Band put something together, and the people from my Band that are -- were coming to the hearings to testify, and it was very nice when I ran into one of -- you know, and I said, “Okay, so when do you testify?” And, the one person said, “I don’t know. They never contacted me.” And, I know for a fact I helped this individual write their letter in April when the Inquiry said they wouldn’t reach out to families, families had to reach out by email or letter. And, as a result, that individual was not public. We got a call Saturday night on some other things and it came out another family had not been contacted. And then just before my arrival here, another family hadn’t got contacted.

And, I think it’s important to say that when we’re talking about Indigenous women, they are in the -- you know, for the most part, in the lowest social economic group in the country. The way you handle your travel and reimbursement to families, it has put some families in Saskatoon at this gathering to feel shame that they had to ask, and they -- for their travel.

Before we were coming out here, it had come -- we were told that we were going to get our travel reimbursed by cheque, and there were families, because we have chats on social media, were saying, “Well, I can’t come. I can’t come if that’s the case.” And, I think your
-- the Inquiry’s definition of families first is not that kind of perspective. It has to come from our perspective. To me, putting families first, it would mean that when they walk in here, someone greets them and makes sure they’re going to get their hotel, they’re getting registered, “Here is what you’re entitled to,” and “Is there anything else you need?”

After the -- you know, and I don’t know what the point of the community hearings were because everything we told there, none of it -- you know, your -- the legal, the -- any of -- you know, the mental health, none of that was followed up on. I never got a call from one mental health person after the community visits. I never got one before either, but you had a case manager call me twice, but I’ve never heard from her ever again since June. And, in June, you said there was going -- they had said there was going to be a lawyer contacting myself, and it wasn’t even the lawyer this morning at 10:15 that called me. It was one of the assistants.

So, I don’t -- you know, and really, frankly, Commissioner Buller, a letter was written, a meeting was held, letters were sent to people in authority, the Prime Minister, the Ministers about these issues saying families first -- how families first is how it acts out on the ground. We had families here that were crying -- I
know you saw lots of mental health staff, but I know some
of the families I talked to said, “Well, they don’t know
how to approach a stranger and say, ‘I’m in crisis. Can I
talk to you?’” That’s not -- you know, if you were born
and raised on the reserve, that’s not something you’re
comfortable doing.

You know, and, again, back to the community
meetings, you know, like, I don’t know -- after they were
done, I mean, I understand the Inquiry -- you know, and
then just so I understood it, you know, I thought -- I went
through it again, I went through the mandate, I went
through the order and council, read it again, and -- to
understand the role that families had in this process, of
informing the process, of informing the future changes.

And so, I understand you focus on each of us
as individuals, you know, and then you call us a family,
but -- and while we’re here, you try to put in, you know,
the supports and those things, but you’re not involving the
community. And, what happened to my sister and how it
affected our family, it also affects our community, and
that I found our community very help -- wanting to help,
the desire to help, you know, the -- to help us through
this. They were there.

They helped provide -- to make sure we had,
you know, transportation to get here, you know, they helped
front some gas money for that, they -- in my case, they
directed the Band lawyer to work on trying to get my
nephews here from the institutions, the community of
Saskatoon. And, it really renews your faith in humanity
when people give up their time so easily and they want to
create a safe space and give because this affects
everybody.

When we went to a national conference a few
years ago in Winnipeg, we were -- you know, the families
were there, were able to go to the Aboriginal Achievement
Awards, and it was held in a big arena where the Jets play.
And, that place was packed. But, at one point, they wanted
to acknowledge the families that were there, and they had
them stand up and a song was sung. And, you could see and
I could feel it from everybody there that, you know, it
was, like, there but the grace of God Gawai (phon) that
they weren’t standing with us.

So, I really believe the Inquiry needs to
involve the community, and I mean -- and having a committee
of people is not a community. That’s not community
liaison, that’s not community outreach. I wanted to say
that in Saskatchewan, it -- you know, it’s unfortunate, but
it’s also become a very political issue and that it’s also
where the resources go for that. And, a provincial working
group established by the provincial government was set up,
and there is no family representation on there. You can look at it, it’s this tribal council, it’s this Métis local, it’s this woman’s organization, it’s this treaty organization, it’s FSIN, and families asked specifically more than once that they wanted representation on that working group. And, because it’s such a political board, it was denied.

Families in this province have asked for over four years for a family gathering, and that being together in an environment provides us solace, it provides a level of healing. And, if you can say it, you can understand it. If you can feel it, you can heal it. That has never been acted upon.

When the resources were given out pre-Inquiry and during the Inquiry, we had families trying to make it to information meetings, but they were not given any access to -- and, again, you’re dealing with a porous group. And, there is one -- there were a couple of women that were -- said they were going to take in their cans and bottles to get gas money because this affects their life, this is their story, but that money and those resources went to all of those groups. There are -- I’m just trying to gather my thoughts.

So, I think if you’re -- if in any of the kinds of changes that might be looked up that it not -- now
I’m just having difficulty with -- that the families have a say of where those resources go, where it helps them, because what some of them feel is that people are getting jobs based on -- you know, and they’re not getting the services that they need. There was -- I know there was counselling centre in Saskatchewan who got a grant to help families, and I can tell you I tried three times to set up an appointment and meet with them. And, it never came through, so I was -- I don’t know what -- you know? It was supposed to be at no cost to me, and I never got those services.

And, I want to reiterate what my sister had said here. You know, my sister is an expert in this field. I mean, when this -- before this issue gained international recognition and the pressure was put on the Canadian government for us to be doing this here, it started with three or four women holding signs on the corner of Hastings and Main saying, “What happened to these women?” She was one of them. She was one of those organizers. She’s helped write policy that -- for law enforcement that is able -- what should happen, A, B, C and D. So, she’s helped -- you know, she is an expert in that.

What I wanted to talk about too is that there’s a saying that I took when I went to university -- or not a saying, it was in a class, and it said, “Do laws
influence values or do values influence laws?” And, that the legislation and the policy, while we have the Canadian Bill of Rights and Freedoms, it doesn’t necessarily translate that into our lives. That -- there has to be some equity mechanisms in there to ensure that the people that don’t have access, that don’t have the means to be able to -- because we know if we live in this society, if you are a certain income, you’re going to have opportunities. If you don’t come from that level of income, you don’t have to have -- you don’t have those opportunities.

The other thing that I want to say is that in some of my work experience, and I worked in -- I lived in the States for quite a number of years, and I was able to -- in one position, I worked with the Department of Justice on -- in lands, and they had appointed a new Assistant Deputy Director of Justice, and her attitude to work was different, and land claims there moved glacially slow, like glacially slow. We think we’re slow here? It’s way worse there. And, people from -- sometimes 15 years pass from the time a person puts -- you know, a Band try -- puts in an application before it even begins and it’s a complicated process.

So, what this Assistant Deputy Director did is that she said she would give a file to a staff, and if
it hadn’t moved in three days, she’d take it away and give it to someone else so that the work would get done. And, I say that because people in position of authority, positions in power, positions -- they have a choice. They have a choice of what they’re going to do and how they can make that work.

And, you know, I don’t want to sound like I’m beating you over the head with this but, I mean, with families first, you’ve been told. You know, the Commission has been told, and -- but you’re the one with the authority and the power to make sure that that happens in a way that’s conducive with our traditions and our values and that makes us feel cared for and respected, and that our dignity isn’t compromised when we’re asking -- when people are asking for their travel, and that when people have followed your process, that you would honour your word and follow-up on them.

And, I have to put this also in record is that on my First Nation, where I come from, Kawacatoose First Nation, is that they have, historically, as far as they’ve been able to do on their research, is 15 murdered and missing. In April, they applied for a hearing, they also applied for standing. All they ever got was an acknowledgment -- email acknowledgment of their application for standing. Phone calls to the 1-800 number have gone...
unanswered, emails to the executive director have gone unanswered.

Initially, there was some discussion that Kawacatoose would have an afternoon here to be able to provide all of that. Within a week before the hearings, we realized that there was no way anyone was going to be ready for that, but even with on that side, Kawacatoose side realizing they probably don’t have enough time to prepare properly, there’s still no word with the initial.

And, I know people say that’s Band government, that’s Indian Act, but those are our people and those are our leaders, and those are -- to me, those are our heads of state and they should be afforded that kind of respect as you would give any Members of Parliament and the Prime Minister, and that has not happened with -- and I know this is not -- this is the third time I’m telling one of the Commissioners that Kawacatoose has requested. So, before I’m taking up too much time, I wonder if -- do you want to...

**MS. LILLIAN EWENIN:** My name’s Lillian Ewenin. These four ladies in front here, they’re my sisters. If you know the way our traditions work, our fathers are brothers, they’re my sisters. I’m proud of them today to be able to stand -- to sit here and tell their story. Danielle had asked me to come and support
them, and I said yes, and I’ve been here for the last three
days helping with support other families.

But, I want to say this about my sister,
Eleanor, is that when Danielle had asked me initially to
come and support her, I didn’t have any memory of her. And
then on my drive between Saskatoon and my home, that time I
was alone, and I was getting these vivid memories of being
small and playing with them when I was small and we were in
diapers, and how we were happy, and that how when they were
taken from their parents, we lost that connection. And
then as we got older -- as we got older, we began to
reconnect, to get to know each other, to get to know each
other’s kids.

I remember in 1982 when they came to tell my
dad about his niece, Eleanor, and how they had found her,
and how him and my mom sat there crying silently for a
little while, and then they got going because there were
things they had to do. But, those years from when we were
small in diapers running around at my kokum’s house and we
were happy until we were -- until when we were adults and I
found out about Eleanor.

Those were -- those years were taken from
us, all of us by the institutions that the government has
put in place. I, myself didn’t have -- don’t -- didn’t
have much faith in the Inquiry. I mean, I honestly believe
in one. I would have liked to have seen a family member
sitting on the Commission because then the families know
what we’re -- what it’s like to sit up here and to talk
here, and all these years that have gone from when their
loved one has passed or gone missing, what they go through.

But, I have -- I’m like Mona, I have hope.
I have hope that something good will come out of this, that
as an Indigenous woman, I don’t have to walk on the street
and be afraid because, today, when I go somewhere, I’m
afraid, and it’s a fear that we all carry every day and you
get so used to it that it’s like it’s a part of you, and it
shouldn’t have to be because not everybody in society today
has to walk around and be afraid the way Indigenous women
are and girls. I have seven daughters and lots of
granddaughters that I worry about constantly all day. I
don’t want them to become a statistic.

Right from the start, the Inquiry was
adversary. I looked at it as adversarial to myself because
it pitted us Indigenous women against our Indigenous men,
and we should be here together because we have missing and
murdered Indigenous men also, but they split us and they
pit us against each other, who’s more important?

I’ve always had my voice, I’ve always been
able to stand up and talk and speak against inequalities or
injustices that happen that I see. I got that from my dad.
My dad raised me, constantly telling me that -- not to be a second-class citizen because I’m a woman. I really hope that there’s fundamental changes to our social systems in our communities, that there’s fundamental changes to the social system in society at large, that along with these changes comes an increase and sustainable source of revenues.

I just want to mention here that Eleanor’s sons, where they are, the life they’ve led are direct correlation to the fact that she was killed, the way she was killed, how she was found, that that’s impacted -- negatively impacted their lives and that their stories are important and need to be heard. I know all of us sitting here know that something needs to change so that our -- the violence that happens to our women will stop, that there needs to be fundamental changes in the justice structure, in the social system, child welfare, health care. And, I just want to end with -- again, with saying that I’m proud of my four sisters in front here. Thank you.

MS. DANIELLE EWENIN: Marie, did you want to say something?

MS. LILLIAN PIAPOT: (Speaks in Indigenous language).

MS. DANIELLE EWENIN: I’d like to explain that painting. Can we hold it up?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: This painting was done by my husband, Rowe Inbul (phon), and the reason he created it is because I had made these skirts for my mom and my aunts, and I talk a lot about, you know, the pain, you know, that is in our family and it’s just really hard. And, sometimes, like, it just feels like you have to do something, and in that moment, my way of expressing, you know, my love and passion for my family and my people was to create a skirt, and to tell the story, you know, to -- and I know that my husband wanted to do the same, so he did with the painting, and he also feels that men -- that our men also need to, you know, guide and protect our women.

And so, in the front, it shows two silhouettes of warriors that he made and, you know, they’re protecting our women, that -- those are the men that are still here and they’re protecting our women. The woman in the red ribbon dress obviously represents all our missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and the silhouettes on the top are our ancestors, you know, watching over us and, you know, welcoming them home. And, I’m just really grateful that my husband was able to create that. You know, I know it was really meaningful to a lot of people and, yes, that’s it.

MS. DANIELLE EWENIN: She needs a break.

MS. JENNIFER COX: We’ll take, what, a 5-
MS. DANIELLE EWENIN: Yes.

MS. JENNIFER COX: Okay, sure.

(SHORT PAUSE)

MS. DANIELLE EWENIN: I think there are only a couple more statements. I know that the process is usually just four witnesses, but again it’s not just us, it’s -- you can see we have a lot of family here today, and they’re here, you know, because they love us and they -- we love each other. I think it’s important that the information about my nephews, Laney’s boys, there would be more, and I have -- yes, and I have another cousin that wants to talk just a bit about the impact on the whole family. And then we’ll close with a presentation from Mona and Kyla (phon); right? Yes, women warrior song. So, Chris.

MR. CHRISTOPHER WOODWARD: Hello, I’m Christopher Woodward. I’m a nephew. I just wanted to say as I can go back in memory to whenever the boys would come over, I would -- it was always -- you would always be reminded that -- not to talk about their mother because she’s gone and not to make it any harder on them. But, from what we understood was, well, we have a lot of moms here, so we can share our moms and we’re children.

But, as we got older, you can tell the
institutions that the boys had went through, we lost touch for a long period of time and I had not -- no one -- nobody has known them being in institutions that they were growing up in. And then I hit an age where I wasn’t the greatest young man myself and I ended up in these institutions as well, and only being in those institutions do I know my two brothers, and I know them best out of all my family here being that I’ve lived with them for periods of time. And, they are the most respectful men that I know compared to many. They have the biggest hearts. They are not these monsters that I see were made. They are great young men, but they didn’t know nothing else other than behind those walls.

I’ve managed to make it out of there and have children, and I’m trying hard to stop this from any further, and I figured this is helping by speaking. I just wanted to share that with -- that my brothers never had a chance due to this.

**MS. LANA KLENYIK:** Hello, everyone. My name is Lana Klenyik (phon), and I’d like to share something with you about my life. Today, I’m finally meeting more of my biological family which is awesome. I’ve looked forward to this day for a long time. I’m extremely excited and happy. To start off with, I hear that I’m a part of the Sixties Scoop. I didn’t really understand what that meant.
As far as I know is that I was adopted at 3 weeks old into the Klenyik family. Growing up, I was denied my roots, who I was and how I got there.

I specifically remember as a child I found a black and white picture, and it said Lana Ewenin. And, I looked in the phonebook and I found the last name, and I had phone up this number and said, “Are you my mommy?” And, she would say no; right? And, they wouldn’t tell me -- I’d ask and they kept it a secret like it was a bad thing, you know, don’t tell me about my real family or where you’re from, you know, what’s your heritage and everything.

And, today, I found that -- like I’m just really pissed about it because how can another human do that to a child? You know, to not tell them about who the child is, their culture, their roots; you know? Like, and then you find out 48 years later and you’re meeting your real family, and you’re like, wow, you know, I was just -- how could they do that; you know? But, I was naïve, I didn’t know that the system did that or were they allowed, or they just did it anyways.

So, anyways, as I was growing up in this white family, the abuse started at a young age, and the stepfather did sexual things, being raped, run out of towns because I’m Native, losing my kids because I’m Native and,
you know, start to -- you react on this like a rebound, like, you know, because of my family life and growing up, now I’m -- now losing my kids. I vented out in a way, I found drugs, and I thought that was the answer. So, I ended up going down, but to me, it was numbing the pain and I was okay with it.

As years went by, I realized that, you know, I needed help and that -- then I finally met Mona for the first time out in B.C. She’s my real aunt and I was, you know, thrilled. I was like, holy shit, this is my real aunt. I met Tracey, my half-sister, her daughter, Winona. I think that was it. And, you know, just those three or four people, I was like, holy shit; you know? This is my biological family. You know, wow, this is real family. And, as the years went by, I’ve met today -- I was looking really forward to meeting more of my family. You know, this is family to me because the connection is there, we love each other, she’s my inspiration, we have a strength; right? All of us combined. We learn from each other, like Mona said, a community where we become really strong, that’s what I do believe.

Today, I’ve also met -- what’s her name again? Debbie. Debbie, twice now, Danielle and the lady in the back there. I forgot your name. Pardon? Tracey. So, yes, that’s like two people more that I’ve met for the
first time and, you know, I’m just so excited about it. I
-- you know, I love them all even though I haven’t met them
because growing up, like I said, in an abusive, adopted
home and having your real heritage hidden for all those
years, and all the abuse and bullshit you went through, and
then you reunite with your real family, and -- you can’t
imagine what that feels like. It just -- you know, you
melt because here’s somebody that’s going to love you,
these people, because, you know, that’s me. They’re --
we’re connected, we’re family.

So, yes, today, I’m extremely happy. I just
wanted to say a little bit about my life, about my name,
stepdad and all the shit that goes along with it. I’ve
been clean for three years now since Hastings, and I got
out of there. I am a survivor also. Mona always told me,
“You’re a survivor,” and I do believe that because a lot of
people don’t get out of that street. They never do. They
die, and I was lucky enough to get through the bullshit,
the bad days, the knives, the shootings, all that and, you
know, I’m here and I’m okay, I’m alive. And, what better
yet, I’m with my real family that loves me.

And, the way I see it, is that the Klenyiks,
the white family that’s adopted me, okay, they raised me,
but as far as I see it, they weren’t a family, but this is
my family today and there’s nothing like family. And, I
told them all I loved them, and from here on in, I want to stay connected, see them more, you know, just do the -- what families do because as far as I know, today, I don’t have anybody.

I live here, and at Christmas, everybody goes with their family. I don’t have anybody. So -- but this year it’s going to be different, I hope, and even calling them and sending stuff; you know? That means a lot to me because they love you and you know that; you know? And, to have that is phenomenal for me because I went almost 20 years without having connected with these -- my family, real family. The adopted family has disowned me.

So, yes, I was pretty lost after that, after my adopted mom died, the five brothers and sisters, I haven’t talked to them over 20 years. So, you know, it’s been -- that really hurts a person because, you know, this family, the real family that loves me, they’re in B.C. but, you know, you can’t see them -- or you can phone them, and I thought, well, there’s not connection there, so you feel kind of alone like nobody gives a shit about you. But, now I know that, you know, they do and I love them so much. I just want to express how happy I am to be here and to speak my -- share my story with you and, yes, that’s about it. Thank you very much.

MS. CAROL: My name is Carol. I am sister
to Lillian and Danielle and Mona. Those are all my
sisters. I just wanted to say that when we were young, we
all knew each other. We knew -- our grandmother used to
bring us all together and we’d have Sunday supper, and we
-- everybody in the family knew each other. But, with
residential schools, the Scoop, we lost track of each
other, and some of them I still haven’t met yet, and I’m
starting to meet them now.

And, another point I wanted to make was, I
don’t think it’s fair that, as an Indian woman, that we
should have to live in fear every time we go out and worry
about our granddaughters, our grandchildren. And, like
everyone else, there has to be some real change happening.
Thank you.

MS. WINONA: (Speaks in Indigenous
language), my name is Winona. I am the daughter, the
oldest daughter of Mona. And, I just wanted to say to my
mom and my aunties, like, for the first time today, I kind
of understood what intergenerational survival meant because
we hear about trauma all the time, but we don’t hear about
the qualities that allow us to survive. And, despite the
stories of separation and stuff, like, your bond is strong,
you know, as siblings, and your connection is deep in its
roots and it had to be. It had to be in order for you guys
to continue to live in this world and be in this world.
And, it’s like that with me and my siblings too, growing up in foster care; you know? And, I know my family -- I’m a survivor too, and I come from a very strong -- from very strong educated women who are deep in their roots, and I am so proud of them. And, you know, there’s been many different topics and discussions about this Inquiry and whether or not we believe in it or staying hopeful. You know, I’m sitting here because this Inquiry happened because we continue to tell our stories and that is powerful.

But, today, I also know that I don’t have to rely on an Inquiry, but I also know that defamation laws protect individuals that continue to perpetuate violence; you know? And, I know the laws in a different way than -- but then other people do now because you continue to tell your stories. And, I just -- what I was wishing for through the Inquiry was healing and connection, and being able to honour each other’s stories, and I don’t see that happen -- happening here at all. I’m not able to connect with another family because I’m having a hard time and time limited to connect with my own family.

And, to tell my story, I don’t even know if I want to rely on the Inquiry; you know? I -- the -- I have a Small Claims that’s got potential to go to Supreme and, you know what? Once I serve them, and then I have a
media person from CBC that’s been following me, and this is going to be completely different because I know you could be found not guilty in criminal court, but have to pay up in claims. That’s how fucked up the laws are -- the system is.

All those inconclusive investigations, there are other ways of dealing with it. You just have to know how to deal with it and have the education to go before a courtroom and plead your case. But, Inquiries are meant to tell a part of history that was stolen from a bunch of people and it was meant to heal each other through each other’s stories and, you know, I’m happy I’m sitting here with my family and I’m happy to get to know my family through how the history has impacted them and the strength they had to share.

But, I’m only limited to -- and like Auntie Danielle said, you know, I really wished that there was more community involvement. You know, I wish it was really more community-based; you know? And, I don’t see any of the local communities here welcoming us. I didn’t even -- I wasn’t even welcomed here. I just rushed off to bed and got up, and rushed up and got ready. Like, there’s no ceremony in this.

When Eggy (phon) told the story behind the creation of the dress, it was so beautiful, and I didn’t
even know that, you know, it was snowing or anything like that. And, I had finally decided to speak out publicly about, you know, what had happened to me, and it was at the Vancouver Art Gallery at a Me Too event. And, when I started talking, it started to snow.

My mom thinks that, you know, what happens to me happens more often than we think to a lot of Indigenous women in this country, and that my story is really important because -- you know, because of her sister. You know, that happened in 1984. What I experienced happened in 2015 and 2016, and somebody needs to stop the RCMP from closing our files, not investigating our files or hiding our files because they are guilty. And, I don’t know if anybody can change that or who can change that, but the amount of power that they have to not do nothing is scary.

And, I’ve been through so much even discrediting -- like been told about a head case, head (indiscernible), like everything. I have to remind myself that I was -- I’m a mother of five children, two whom I’ve adopted and I’m a third-year university student; you know?

One of my friends who is in psychology told me about gas lighting, and it’s a technique that a lot of people use. And, when I educate myself, I heal myself, and I start to see the things that people are doing to me to
try to hurt me and play a game on my emotions. And, when I
learned that, I learned how to better, like, hide my
emotions and become stronger to talk and be -- talk in a
way that people understand me. And, when people do try to
discredit my feelings or emotions, I can put them in their
place.

My daughter loves kokum. My daughter’s name
is Justice, and she was given -- her spirit name was given,
Red Sweet Grass Girl. And, she used to be at the front of
the marches with mom, she used to wear her cousin’s shirt,
she used to be butterflies in spirits. But, now she’s in
foster care, and she wants to go back into this dance
group, and she wants to do the marches again and, you know,
she sees me becoming healthier.

I said, “Justice, like, how come you like
this so much? How come you’re such an advocate for it?”
And, she goes, “Because I asked kokum why she does it and
she said she doesn’t want it to ever happen to one of her
kids.” And, I said, “Oh, like, mommy?” And, she goes,
“Yes.” And, Justice goes, “And, I didn’t want that
happening to you either and I still don’t want that
happening to you either.” And, I was just like, oh, my
God, that was the first time I said, you know, that could
happen to my daughter.

And, I said, “Justice, do you think this is
ever going to happen to you?” And, she goes, “Nope.” I said, “Why?” And, she goes, “Because you’re still here.”

But, she’s in foster care. I lost them, and that’s institutional violence that’s perpetuated through these racist policies that I don’t know who has the power to change or stop. You know, these policies are not going to change themselves overnight, you know, these laws that divide us.

I’m just sad that, you know, I took an aunt that I have never even met to be sitting here today with all of my family and that some of us don’t even get this opportunity, and this is an opportunity for some of our family members to finally meet each other, and we’re being rushed through it. We don’t get the time to connect. And, I really feel that this Inquiry needs to be looking at that deeply and thoroughly, and how healing should be a big part of this and family reunification and connection should be a big part of this because tragedies and traumas separate us just like it did to me and my kids.

So, tomorrow, we’ve got to be at the airport early in the morning, and after this, I’m probably just going to head to bed. I don’t think I’m going to be meeting anybody else or seeing anybody else or hearing anybody else’s story because I don’t have that time to recover or that -- given that space to, and that’s not how
we honour each other’s stories in our traditions. If it
was up to the communities to do Inquiries, it would be
different.

I mean, I remember in Vancouver at the Haida
House, when they were making the statement for the dates,
the Haida House has spirits that are displaced. There’s no
smoke hole. The spirits are trapped just like the totem
poles at Stanley Park, and that -- this represents that.
(Speaks in Indigenous language).

**MS. MONA WOODWARD:** I just wanted to kind of
summarize some of the things that I learned today and some
of the things that have been said today, and that’s to do
with the Inquiry. You know, like, are we really doing good
or are we doing harm? Are we creating more harm? Are we
victimizing the victims? That’s something to think about
because, you know, when we talk about these things, we
bring back to light that pain and that hurt that’s been
covered up for many years and sometimes hasn’t even been
talked about. And, I just wonder -- you know, I worry
about the ones that are going to go away here with a heavy
heart and have no way or -- to grieve and to be able to
have that chance to recover. And then we wonder why, you
know, where the -- when our people, you know, turn to drugs
and alcohol to mask the pain.

And, I just wanted to put it out there that,
you know, we are all good people, and the Creator is here with us, as well as our ancestors that have gone before us and the people that have fought so hard and have given their life and blood so that we can have a better life. And, I know that -- you know, an Elder shared this teaching with me, you know, when I was really struggling, really struggling, and I was just like, you know, why do so many people have to die? Why does it have to be death before the government or anybody takes action? Why do tragedies have to happen before we realize that, you know, something needs to change, that these laws have to change?

And, I said, you know, I just feel like, you know, giving up, but I don’t know why. And, they said, “Well, you know, there’s always that spark that lives within everyone of us. When we feel like we can’t go on, then that spark gets ignited and it comes -- and it creates a flame that comes through our total being where that strength can carry us through those times that we need the extra help.”

And, I hope that everybody has a safe journey home wherever they’re going and to remember the good things that we had today or after, the friendship and the unconditional love that we have for each other because that will carry us through. And, as long as keep talking about it and, you know, this issue’s not going to go away,
as long as we keep bring it up to light and never let it --
anyone forget what happened and that -- so that it never
happens again. All my relations.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is it on? Okay.
(Speaks in Indigenous language) for having us here. This
song is about -- it’s a west coast warrior’s woman song and
it’s dedicated to all the missing and murdered Indigenous
women, and it was written by a woman from Mount Curry;
right? Okay. So, this -- we’ll just do it for you. And,
if you know the song, please join in.

(MUSICAL PRESENTATION)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Thank you
all very much. It’s been -- thank you all very much.
Thank you all very much for being here today. It’s a
pleasure to meet all of you. What you’ve said to day is
very important, very important to our work, very important
to other families and people who have been witnessing what
you have said today. So, we’re very grateful that you all
came, we’re very grateful for what you did say. You’ve
made a big difference in what you’ve said today and by
being here, so I’m very grateful. Thank you.
--- Upon adjourning at 17:24
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 16, 2018