National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Public Hearings
Riverlodge Place
Thompson, Manitoba

PUBLIC

Tuesday March 20, 2018

Public Volume 72
Hilda Anderson Pyrz, Dennis Anderson, Keith Anderson, Carol Wood, Lianna Anderson, Melvin Anderson, Minnie Anderson & Arla Tait, In relation to Dawn Anderson

Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette
Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe

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

APPEARANCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Representative</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assembly of First Nations</td>
<td>Stuart Wuttke</td>
<td>(Legal counsel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julie McGregor</td>
<td>(Legal counsel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Canada</td>
<td>Lucy Bell</td>
<td>(Legal Counsel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Manitoba</td>
<td>Samuel Thomson</td>
<td>(Legal Counsel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba Moon Voices Inc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMIWG Coalition (Manitoba)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada &amp; Manitoba Inuit Association</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg Police Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women of the Metis Nation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimony of <strong>Hilda Anderson Pyrz, et al.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporter’s certification</td>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### IV

**LIST OF EXHIBITS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Folder of 20 images displayed during the public testimony of the family.</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P01P14P0101_Anderson_et_al_(Anderson)_Exh_1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family video of Dawn Anderson, 11.1 MB MP4 file, 3 minutes 36 seconds.</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[P01P14P0101_Anderson_family_video_Exh_2]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>APTN report on Dawn Anderson, 34 MB MP4 file, 6 minutes 57 seconds.</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[P01P14P0101_Anderson_APTN_video_Exh_3]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em><strong>SEALED</strong></em> Autopsy report for Dawn Anderson</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Three letters i) Letter of Ms. Hilda Anderson to the Honourable Jennifer</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Howard dated December 5, 2011 (two pages); ii) Letter of RCMP Sergeant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dave Porter to Ms. Hilda Anderson and the Anderson family dated January</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25, 2012 (four pages); iii) Letter of Dennis Eidet, RCMP Inspector to Ms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hilda Anderson dated August 9, 2012 (three pages).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upon commencing on Tuesday, March 20, 2018 at 10:07 a.m.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good morning. Good morning, Commissioner Audette. This morning, it's my pleasure to introduce you to the Anderson family. First, I'd like to start by introducing -- it's Arla, and right beside me is Keith, and here on the other side of me is Dennis, and then we have Melvin, and then we have Hilda; we have Minnie, Lianna, and Carol. They have asked to please be promised in each on the feather, so if we could promise them in individually, that would be appreciated.

MR. REGISTRAR: Hi, everyone. My name's Christian Rock. I will be your registrar for today.

ARLA TAIT, Affirmed:
KEITH ANDERSON, Affirmed:
DENNIS ANDERSON, Affirmed:
MELVIN ANDERSON, Affirmed:
HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ, Affirmed:
MINNIE ANDERSON, Affirmed:
LIANNA ANDERSON, Affirmed:
CAROL WOOD, Affirmed:

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Commissioner Audette, today the family will be sharing the story of their sister, Dawn Anderson. What the family would like to
do is introduce themselves, and we'd like to start with
Hilda.

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: My name is

Hilda Anderson Pyrz. I'm the sister of -- of Dawn. I'm
the second-youngest in the family. My sister Dawn was the
youngest, and I just wanted to share a little bit of, like,
who I am. I'm a very strong Indigenous woman, and I work
hard at trying to change the pathway for us. I come from a
very strong family who is deeply rooted in their culture
and their language. It's very difficult for us to share
our truth, but it's also important for us to share our
truth. We come from a family of 11, and now we have 10
after losing my sister. We're very protective of one
another in our family, and we're also very supportive, and
we grew up a lot -- we grew up most of our childhoods
living off the land. My father was a commercial fisherman
and a trapper, and I feel, you know, this has really
grounded us in who we are as Indigenous people and as a
family, and it has taught us survival, and I feel, you
know, when we're gathered here today, we're gathered here
in strength for one another, and also, you know, to create
a pathway for change for Indigenous women and girls across
this country who are experiencing high levels of violence,
and I'm just going to share the mic with my mom now.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Hilda, can you also
introduce your support person to us?

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: Pardon? Oh,
sorry.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Can you introduce
your support to us?

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: I have here today
with me a grandmother who's very -- been very supportive of
me and my journey and as well as many other MMIWG family
members and survivors in Manitoba, and she continues to
support me and give me strength to go forward in the
important work that I do because I also -- in my role, I'm
the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls liaison
for the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, and I'm also the
cochair of the Manitoba Missing and Murdered Indigenous
Women and Girls Coalition, so usually I'm on the other side
supporting, but it just -- you know, it's important for us
to share our truth today, so it's difficult when -- for me
to be sharing today, and I'm glad that Thelma's here.

MS. THELMA MORRISSEAU: Bonjour. (Speaking
in Native language). I'm just really pleased and honoured
to be here to support Hilda and her family to tell their
story about their loved one. Miigwetch.

MS. MINNIE ANDERSON: Oh, this is very hard
for me. I'm Dawn's mom, and I miss my daughter so much. I
think of her every day and just wish that wouldn't happen
to so many -- so many young girls and women that are needed by their families, and it -- it's really hard especially when they have kids to look after and -- and then have to be left behind on account of somebody hurting their mother. It's so hard. I -- I can't say no more. I can't say no more.

**MS. LIANNA ANDERSON:** Tansi. Dawn was my (indiscernible). She was my little sister. I'm the third-youngest of 11. My heart is broken. It aches. My baby sister's gone. I just want the ache to go away, but it doesn't. We need -- we want closure. I know nothing will bring back -- bring back Dawn. Without that closure, this will continue to happen to other families, other babies at 4 and 7 years old and younger who will lose their mothers. That closure has to come so it stops. These babies need their mothers. My mom needs her -- needed her baby. The heartache has to stop somewhere, sometime. (Speaking in Native language).

**MS. CAROL WOOD:** I'm the fourth-youngest daughter of the family out of 11, and losing my little sister was really hard. It still is hard today for our family because a part of each one of us is gone because she was a part of every one of us, and that's the hardest thing, and my mom, I pray all the time -- because my mom's not getting any younger or anything like that. I pray to
Hearing - Public
Anderson Pyrz, Anderson et al (Dawn Anderson)

God that we find as to what happened to my little sister before anything happens to her, and I -- like, I pray for strength for my family always, and I really think this process that is happening now -- because people weren't able to speak before, and now they're able to. Somebody's listening. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here, and it -- like, it does give the family hope because they're able to tell their story, and it's just not amongst family anymore. You're telling other people, and I thank -- I thank you people for doing that. Thank you. (Speaking in Native language). Thank you.

MS. ARLA TAIT: Tansi. My name is Arla. I -- Dawn was my cousin, but I considered her my sister as well as I consider Keith and Melvin, Dennis, Lianna, Hilda, the family, my brothers and sisters, and Minnie, like a mom to me.

I was pretty close to Dawn when she moved back home to Leaf Rapids. You know, she'd often come over to my house with her girls, and, you know, we did a lot of things together, and I'm -- I'm thankful that I'm here and able to share some of the -- some of the things that happened, and hopefully, we find some closure. I'm happy to be part of this family; very supportive, and they made me feel very loved and supported, and that's all I'm going to say for now. (Speaking in Native language).
MR. KEITH ANDERSON: I have my wife and my
daughter here with me. I have Randy (ph) Anderson and
Brit (ph) Anderson, and -- my name's Keith Anderson, and my
spirit name's (indiscernible), White Wolf.

First and foremost, I'd like to sit there
and acknowledge all of you people that sat there and, you
know, brought what's happening today to this point and
that, and -- and, you know, the hard work that's been put
into it and that. I mean, now you've given us the
opportunity to sit there and voice ourself and everything
else, and -- and, you know, the wheels are turning, it's
moving and everything else and that; so I'd like to sit
there and say thank you to everybody for their support and
everything else, and that, and then -- I mean, to me,
acknowledgment is a -- is a great thing, and, you know, for
all the people, you know, with their hard work and
everything that's been put into this and that. You know,
you've been across Canada and everything else.

But I'd like to sit there and go back.
Like, with us, we're land people, our family, and then even
with the RTLs, like, registered trap line, our -- our
territorial use and that, we're going on five generations
on -- on the land that we used and that. We teach our
children and then our grandchildren, you know, the
grass roots and the -- and the way of life of our people
and that, and then -- like, with -- with my sister and everybody, you know, we used to move from camp to camp, everything and that, and, you know, we've shared a lot of good times everything else, and with my late sister Dawn and that -- you know, me and my wife, we've been together, what, 38 years?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Almost 35.

MR. KEITH ANDERSON: Okay, 35 years. I can only count to -- anyways, one of the greatest gifts that my sister gave us, and that, is that my wife couldn't have babies, so when she was 17, she approached me and my wife, she was pregnant, and asked us if we would take her baby, and that, so me and Brit accepted and that, and she came to the hospital here in Thomson with her, and went into that -- when she was in labour, went into that labour room, and that's where we ended up with Randy, and that's 26 years ago. Randy just turned 26 on March 1st, and that, but -- I mean, you know, that's a blessing, as well, you know? Like, we endure hardships and everything else and that, but, I mean, at the same time, you know, she gave us one of the precious things in life was that gift of life. Thank you very much.

MR. DENNIS ANDERSON: Good morning. I, also, would like to start by thanking everybody that's come here to show support and share their truth as well. My
name is Dennis Anderson. Dawn Anderson was my sister. Like Keith -- Keith was mentioning, we all grew up, like, on the land, fishing, trapping, not so much the girls, but they were always around and they did come out, you know, to -- to the camp and stuff like that, and I think -- I think growing up in that fashion and just being Indigenous and anybody that is or is close to Indigenous people knows what family means.

And my sister Dawn, she was quite a girl, I'll tell you. She'd -- you know, like, she was one that cared about everybody and everything and shared -- you know, if she had something, if it was her last little bit, she was willing to share it. She would take in kids. There was always a ton of kids around her, and like, you know, she definitely danced to the beat of her own drum, you know, by the way she dressed and the people she knew. You know, like, she never -- she was one that had an open mind and an open soul.

And I also would like to give thanks to this Inquiry because I do believe that there's going to be good and positive things come of it. In the very least, we're going to -- you know, we're -- we're not alone. We know that. There's many people with many, many stories that hurt every day like we do, and it's -- you know, like, it's really hard, and I understand other families, what they
must go through because we go through it daily. You know, I watch my mother hurt, I watch my sisters hurt, and I watch my nieces hurt, but through all, that we've always -- like Keith says, we've always been a very strong family, and we do support each other, and I think through it all, we have stuck together, like, through thick and thin. I mean, like, we're -- we're pretty -- we're pretty powerful individuals, and we're more powerful as a unit, and we do get strength from each other, always. Like, we never turn our backs on each other, we support each other, and you know, like, that's important, and I think through this process, too, like, just supporting each other and hearing other people's stories and sharing our truth, you know, like, I -- I really believe that positive things is going to come of this, and, you know, like, I thank you all for giving us the voice and a place to voice our -- you know, our truths, and I -- you know, like, it's been a long road, and maybe, you know, this is the light at the end of the tunnel where some people including myself and other families are going to gain some closure of some sort from this process.

So -- and I'd also like to introduce my support person here. That's my partner Lisa. And yeah, I thank you all for, you know, providing us, you know, like, not a -- only our -- our -- our own -- like, to share our
story but to listen to others, as well, that go through
this -- you know, that's been through the same thing, you
know, and -- like Ms. Osborne. I mean, that's powerful,
powerful thing you -- you've had to deal with, and
listening to you, you know, like, you gain strength from
stuff like that. I appreciate it. Yeah, so that's about
it, guys. I'll pass the mic on here to my brother Melvin.

MR. MELVIN ANDERSON: Hi, my name is Melvin
Anderson, and behind me is my honey, my support person,
Myrna Spence (ph), and I was just telling my sister Hilda
here, jeez, you know, everything you think of to say, seems
like everybody that picks up the mic seems to take the
words right out of your mouth, but -- and we can repeat it
and -- like they said, like, we are glad we get this
opportunity and the support that we have from the people
that do come here and listen, and my sister Dawn, she's
quite the person. Like, we -- we loved her with all our
hearts, even though a lot of times when she was a little
younger and a little wilder, we liked to kick her butt
sometimes, but, you know, like -- and I imagine it goes
with pretty well, like, all the mission Indigenous women.

When this tragedy happened to us,
we've -- we got so much support from other people that we
barely knew, but my sister had touched their hearts, and
they still -- they have a Facebook of my sister, and every
day or something, there's always something new written that they used to do with each other, and -- and it's just the way she touched people's lives.

I'm her third -- her third-oldest brother. She used to really rattle my cage sometimes, just the way she was, but -- you know, she was her. She lived her own life the way she wanted to, you know, and we didn't criticize for her. Sure, we'd give her heck a lot of times, but, you know, she'd laugh and straighten out for a week and then back at her again, but -- and we do miss her. Every time we sit down, like, myself, Dennis, Keith, any one of my family members, there's not one set we don't sit down that her name doesn't touch our lips. Even just talking about some events that happen through life, it just still brings tears to your eyes because you can just picture her doing that stuff, and that's the hardest part because, you know, those days are gone. If she was around, she'd probably still be pulling those pranks, but -- and we do miss you, my sister. We love you, and we always think about you.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So the family would like to share a video of Dawn. Maybe, Hilda, you can just explain a little bit about the video.

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** So this video was created at Myra's (ph) wedding and Kevin's wedding, who
are -- I guess they're adopted into our family. It's a video of my sister Dawn, and Dawn really liked to cater and cook. She was always cooking up a storm and, like, feeding everybody in the neighbourhood, and you could always guarantee, like, to -- if you went to her house, she'd cook you a gourmet meal, and every -- she was really well known for her creativity as well as, you know, preparing all kinds of meals, and she was continuously hired on contracts to do catering and stuff like that, so before we lead into talking about, like, who she was, we wanted to share a video.

(VIDEO PLAYED)

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: So I'll start by sharing on who my sister was because I don't want people to only remember her because she's gone. I want people to remember her because she lived. I always called her the Indigenous Lady Gaga because she was really open. Like, she had an open mind, an open heart, and an open spirit, and it didn't matter what walk of life you came from; she welcomed you, and she never judged you, and she loved you who you were.

And she was also very creative and very artistic, and she was an amazing mother. She really loved her children, and it's really important, you know, for us -- one of the biggest reasons is when her daughters get
older, they're going to ask what happened to her, you know, and maybe someday we can tell her what really happened to her, but for now, we continue to search for that truth.

She was -- you know, I just wanted to share, like, even when she passed away, at her funeral, there was probably, like, 600 people who attended her funeral, and it was huge. It was probably one of the biggest funerals that I've ever been to, and that shows, you know, how many people's lives that she touched, and even though sometimes, like, she struggled in her own life, you know, financially, but that didn't matter to her. Whatever little that she had, she always shared with everybody. You know, it was her kind heart, and she was also very strong. Like, she would, you know, challenge anybody to protect her family as well as her children and her friends. Everybody knew her, and she was very outspoken and -- but also kind. Like, she had -- you know, she was well rounded in her personality, and I feel that, you know, even with the LGBT -- like, the community, I felt that she raised a lot of awareness in the north because of all her friends who were, you know, struggling to come out for that acceptance, and she would just, like, say, just be who you are, you know, and really encourage and support them and, you know, build these circles of support for them in the north because it's very difficult, you know -- you know, when you're struggling in
the north and to come out of who you really are, but I felt
that she built a -- like, a -- a bridge for a lot of her
friends who are 2-spirited to, you know, be proud and be
who they really are and be comfortable with who they are,
and I know a lot of her friends, like, are watching today
and supporting who are 2-spirited, as well, and I know,
like, with me, when I first moved to Winnipeg, I was, like,
you know, just a northern girl from a small community, and
I probably only went to the city maybe about four times
prior to me moving there, and she was living there first.
It was -- although she was my little sister, in many ways
she was like my big sister. Like, she seemed to know more,
like, about life and just what it had to offer. You know,
I was -- I found that maybe she was, you know -- it was
like she was -- she guided me in a lot of ways, and she
introduced me to a lot of really awesome people, you know,
and -- and I continue to be friends with those people
today, and -- and I value those friendships that she's left
behind because they were a part of her, and even sometimes
they say to me, it's really hard to see you because you
remind me so much of your sister, and I feel that, you
know, life is unfair to her to take her away so suddenly,
and she had so much left to do, and she had children to
raise, and she'll never get to see them grow up, to
graduate, to get married, to experience, meet your
grandmother. She'll never have those opportunities because they were taken away from her, and I know that she would have loved every part of that journey with her children and her life, and before she passed away suddenly, she was talking to me about relocating because she wanted to go into nursing. Now she can't do that, either, because that opportunity's been taken away from her, and you could always -- like, if there was -- she really loved the elderly community, too, and she would do anything and everything she could to help them out. Like, she would clean for them, cook for them. She did -- she was just -- her heart was made of gold, and she had an amazing smile that would light up a room.

And she's left a big hole in our family, and it really difficult to heal when you don't have closure, but I know that her spirit continues to live on through her children, especially her youngest daughter, who's so much like her, Tamika (ph). She smiles like her mom. Her personality's like her mom. Every time I see my nieces, I still have a hard time, but I always maintain my composure because I don't want them to see my sadness and how much I miss their mom.

And she -- Dawn was always, like, game to try anything and everything too. Like, she just wanted to live her life to the fullest with no regrets, you know, and
I think when -- if she was allowed to live her life, she
would have lived her life like an old hippy.

I'm just going to pass the mic on to my mom.

**MS. MINNIE ANDERSON:** I want to thank
everybody that has been -- that came down to this -- this
thing going for the missing and murdered girls because it's
very hard for everybody that has lost a daughter or a
mother or sister, the way they go missing and nobody knows
what happened to them. It's very hard, and I want to thank
everybody that has come.

I went to one in Winnipeg, and -- the one
they had here for a week. I came to it, and it helps, you
know, to let things out and talk about the person that
you're lost. It's so hard, but I want to thank you people,
all that have been -- come -- that has been here. I just
thank you.

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Just say something
about Dawn, about who she was, Mom, about her --

**MS. MINNIE ANDERSON:** Okay.

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** -- about her spirit,
(indiscernible)

**MS. MINNIE ANDERSON:** Yeah. My -- my
daughter Dawn, the things she used to do sometimes when she
was small is so -- I have to tell you this one. It was
really funny. Her oldest sister Sandra and her were
sitting by this eagle that the boys had brought home at the fish camp, and they were sitting there, her and Dawn -- Sandra and Dawn, and then that eagle, I guess, put his tail up, hey, and he squirted, and she got it on the side of her face and in her ear.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. MINNIE ANDERSON: There was a lot of silly things that happened to her, and then one time, too, when she was small, Sandra took her uptown to the town centre, and then they came home, and Dawn had a big black eye, and I said to Sandra, I said, what happened to your sister? She said, she fell down, she -- I wasn't watching her. She said she was running around, and her dad got upset with Sandra, eh?

(LAUGHTER)

MS. MINNIE ANDERSON: But didn't phase on Dawn. She was quite a lady, and she -- my daughter was such a kind person too. Like, there was always kids playing outside her place, and she'd cook up a big meal, and she'd call them in, and she'd feed those kids, and the kids would all go in, and after they finished eating and that, she'd turn on the TV, and she used have to this thing that played music, and she'd dance with the kids inside the house, just having fun with them. The kids used to love her so much.
Yeah, she was quite a girl, and I miss my daughter so much every day. I think about -- and I phone her little girls, there, with their dad in Winnipeg, and I talk to them and that all the time, and they're coming down for the spring break to visit, so -- see how things will turn out. Just hope -- I know they'll be happy to see everybody.

And -- I don't know. My daughter, we all miss her so much, and it'll be so close -- good when we find out some things that we don't really know, and sometimes my family keeps a lot of things away from me. They don't let me know things, but I find out in the end.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. MINNIE ANDERSON: Yeah, it's -- I just want to thank you people again. Thank you very much.

MS. LIANNA ANDERSON: My baby sister Dawn, it's always -- they say -- they always say it's the youngest ones and the quiet ones that you always have to watch out for. She was -- the only way that I can describe her is the eternal light of our family. She was just an absolutely amazing individual. Everybody's already said it so far with people that have talked about my sister. She took anyone and everything in -- in, into her home. Stray animals, cats, dogs, wounded birds, mice, everything. Everything that she could find and -- you know, that she
figured needed nurturing, she was there.

I always had her beside me as a little girl because we spent so much time out in the bush, out on the trap line and on the river and that for commercial fishing and trapping. She was seven years younger than me. She was almost like my real live baby, type of thing. I did a lot with her, and I remember spending so much time with her by the water. I loved to swim, and so did she. She loved camping, canoeing, walking. She loved her nature walks, taking her kids and just going for hours in the bush. She found beauty in the simplest of little things and great things.

You know, what I wouldn’t give to hear my baby sister say to me again: Hey, Li. That’s what she used to always call me. Hearing her voice on that video that was shared, (speaking in Native language). Her laughter, just the things that she did because she just did them. The people she used to bring home from the city, it was always priceless to watch my mom's reaction depending on who Dawn brought home. Dawn brought home one of her girlfriends one time, one of her buddies, and the girl had her hair dyed fire-engine red. My mom when she -- when Dawn wasn’t around: (Speaking in Native language), she says. Like, oh my God, do you see this person?

(LAUGHTER)
MS. LIANNA ANDERSON: But that's how Dawn was. She didn't do it intentionally. She just seen that person for the spirit that they had in them. Didn't matter how they looked, who they were, what they did.

I think when you -- when you talk about, you know, homosexuality, I think she's the one who really brought my mom out of her shell with that, as well, because of all of her friends that she always bring home: Oh, come home, my mom will -- my mom -- doesn't matter to my mom. That stuff doesn't matter. Just come. And my mom would be (speaking in Native language) again.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LIANNA ANDERSON: Like, oh, my God, again, eh? She opened my mom's heart and mine to a lot of things that my mom -- you just don't see up north. We were out in the bush by ourselves with our family. Dawn introduced my mom, as young as she was, to a lot of beauty and a lot of people despite what they been through, the choices that they made, because that's the way Dawn was. I just think about all the things that she did with my mom and -- you know, and my mom is (speaking in Native language), like, you know, all the time with everything that Dawn did. The animals, my mom would -- Dawn would take in, my mom would say (speaking in Native language), Dawn, that's enough, like, you know? The cats, the dogs,
everything, the kids.

But I look at Dawn, and she's so much a part of my mom, so much a part of my dad. She was the way that she was because of them. She taught my mom. She taught us. She taught our siblings, our nieces, our nephews. My dad called her (speaking in Native language), "Dawn" in Cree. My oldest daughter, I named her after my sister, my baby sister. Dawn was my first baby, and my oldest daughter was my second.

We were raised very, very close. Together, our family stands strong. There's 11 of us kids, and now one's gone. We still stand strong, but sometimes we falter. We feel weak. We feel broken. We get angry because one of us is not there. That's all we can do is ask why? Why Dawn? You know, when you look at -- when you try and justify people out there and what their purpose is in life, and you look at one of the greatest gems in our family and our community, and it was her that was taken. It -- sometimes, it just doesn't make sense.

I keep asking Creator why this happened. I keep praying for answers before Mom goes so she can rest in peace. I've had people tell us and tell me, Lianna, this is happening to the Andersons for a reason. Your family's so strong. You stand together. You are a force to be reckoned with. If anybody's going to bring out the truth,
it'll be your family. It happened to you guys for that reason. I hold on to that. I hold on to that strength of my family, of who we are, of the way my mom raised us, my dad raised us, of how they kept us together. I know it's going to be that strength. I know it's going to be our ability to be able to speak, to be able to still love despite what has happened, to know that love will guide us and not hate.

It's just so wrong. I look at my sister, her babies, her beautiful daughters. Her beauty lives on in them, but it doesn't take away the hurt. It doesn't take away the pain of losing her. I look at all the beautiful things that Dawn made, things she drew, the things that she put together with the simplest of things that other people would have thought of as maybe as garbage or not worthy as keeping because she was that type of person to find beauty in everything. She was our family gem. She's going to be our purpose, to find closure, to find truth, to ensure that there's processes put in place so other families don't have to go through this. That is Dawn's purpose. She has the strength in our family to get us through this.

I just look at her smile. All I see is her smile, her bright eyes. I sure miss that "hey, Li." It's hard when you have the rock of your family, my mom, the
strength that she has, the things that she's endured, we go
through life growing up, and she takes away all our hurts.
This one time, all I pray for is that I can take away her
hurt of losing my baby sister because that's what my mom
did for us. She looked after us. She cared for us,
provided for us, and always took away the hurts. I want to
be a part of taking away her hurt.

What do you tell kids when they ask where
their mother is, when they wake up from dreams that are so vivid, expecting to go back where they were with their mom, knowing that their mom was there because their dreams are so real? How do you explain that? How do you explain death to a 4-year-old, to a 7-year-old, when all they've known is the life and the beauty of it through their mother?

We need answers. We need closure. We need to put processes in place so this doesn't happen to anybody else. My sister was a beautiful force of life. She was taken from us, I believe, way too soon, and I don't want that purpose to be in vain. It will not be in vain. I will find the strength in my mom, my brothers, my sisters, my family. We will stand together. This has to stop happening to people. A life is a life, regardless of what they've been through, where it's been, where it comes from. It's all sacred. My baby sister was sacred; her life was
sacred; her purpose was sacred, and she's gone. It will not be in vain. I will not give up. My family will not give up.

The gem in our family is gone. Her spirit remains strong in all of us, in her children. Her memory will live on, but I just miss her smile so much. I miss her cooking. I miss her laughter. I miss how she was able to bring everybody together, how she was able to open my mother's eyes to the most beautiful of things that were so foreign to my mom at one time. It was -- I miss being able to sit on the sidelines when Dawn would bring somebody else into the house that would shock my mother. It was always so cool to watch that because that's how Dawn was. She shocked everybody with her beauty, her spirit, her gift of life, her love of life. My heart just aches so much. I really want it to heal. (Speaking in Native language).

MS. CAROL WOOD: My sister -- my little sister Dawn, she was so unique. She was just so different from anybody, even growing up as a child. Like, all of us, we catered to her, like, to her every need, took her everywhere we went and everything like that, and one thing I have to say is as if she -- like, when we started having kids, as if she watched and catered our kids, and they looked -- like, my nieces, my nephews, they looked up to my -- even my kids, they looked up to Dawn, and every time
there was a problem, it was Aunty Dawn that was able to fix it, and I know at times, like, we have -- like, there are things that a parent can't do, that somebody else could do, and she was always the one that was able to do it. Like, the kids, they always went to her, and I think that's why -- even -- not -- like, with our family, that's why everybody came to her because she was approachable. She had a gentle touch for everyone, and, like, she knew how to talk. She knew how to listen. She knew what to say. At the times -- like, if -- like, what Lianna was saying, like, 2-spirited people, like, they didn't know who to talk to. Dawn was able to talk to people, like -- people, and with her, she just welcomed everybody with open arms, but with Dawn, too, she had an ear to listen to Elders and everybody -- like, she didn't turn away. Anybody'd say, no, I don't have time to listen to you, I don't have time to -- or just walk past them when they were trying to get to her attention. No. She took that time. Even if she was just -- like, she had to go right back home, no, she'd spend a little bit of time to talk to this person. She would never walk past anybody. She'd have to stop and talk to you, and even me, like, I live in South Indian, and at times when I used to go into the town centre, I see her. Man, she'd be coming out the Co-Op doors with her arms open, and she's so big -- like, she was my big little
sister, I called her, and then she just wrapped me up in
her arms, and -- oh, it's -- miss that.

And -- yeah, in -- even with our girls and
that, like, we see Dawn in -- like, in every one of them,
they have a trait of Dawn, a look of Dawn, when you look at
all of them, and it's just so hard sometimes, but I thank
God, like, they're given that gift, my nieces, my nephews.
Just -- thank you. Yeah.

And like I had said, again, thank you guys
for listening. Thank you for listening to what we have to
say when others did not listen. They just put it aside,
but I think it's time for people to start listening to what
people have to say because the people that we've lost means
something to us. They didn't -- they're not just a piece
of garbage or dirt that you sweep under something. No.
You know what? They had the same blood that flows through
their veins like we do, and everything. They had a heart,
and that heart loved the people that miss them now, and I
thank you guys again. Thank you very much.

**Ms. ARLA TAIT:** I'm a very sensitive person,
I guess you could say, and I knew Dawn as that also. I saw
a very sensitive, kind, loving soul in -- in Dawn. I also
saw some of the struggles that she had. She -- she
shared -- you know, she shared a lot of things with me, and
I was honoured, I guess, to be able to be there to listen
to, you know, some of the things that -- that she was struggling with and even a lot of things that she was happy about and looking forward to. Like, she was looking forward to going to school, and one thing that really sticks in my mind is her asking me if she was a -- like, she'd look at me, and I remember that moment, and she said, I'm a good mother, right? You know? You know, she was kind of looking for that acknowledgment, and I did tell her, yes, you're -- you're a good mother. You know, you're doing a great job with your girls.

She was very sharing. You know, anything she had, she'd -- she'd give. You know, it didn't matter, you know, how much she was struggling. She would always lend a helping hand whether it be, you know, something she had to eat or a piece of clothing, you know, even a listening ear, you know? Even cooking meals for people, you know? She loves -- she loved to cook, and she often came over to my place, you know, to cook a meal and share it with us, you know, whether it be at her place or at my place or Mom's, you know?

You know, I grew up with Dawn, also, you know, around -- in our community and at fish camps and trap line, we'd often see each other, and yes, she did always have a smile on her face. You know, she could light up -- light up a room or wherever she was. You know, she
was so special.

It is very hard on me, also, and I -- you know, I miss her dearly. I often think of her daughters. I'll cherish all the memories that I have of Dawn, and hopefully, we will find the truth that we need to be able to make it a little bit easier as time goes on. I hope and pray we find the answers that we need. (Speaking in Native language).

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Sorry. When you're working with so many family members, you've got to check in with people just to make sure the order's good. I'm just going to actually ask a couple questions of Keith because Keith lived in the same community as Dawn when -- in November 18th, 2011, and so I was just going to ask Keith if you could just share a little bit of background with us, you know, about where you guys in Leaf Rapids, and before you get into full details of the incident, though, we will be showing the video, so what I'm really asking is if you could share with the Commissioner, you know, where Dawn was living and what it was like in Leaf Rapids leading up to the event, the circumstances of her death.

**MR. KEITH ANDERSON:** Okay. My sister was living in the Kias Bay (ph) on Bay 6 and that, and she was there with her two little ones, and there were -- and -- in the community, so that following morning on my sister's
passing, like -- you know, Leaf Rapids is not very big and that, and I tried to help with community involvement and everything else, and I'm usually involved with the youth and that. I usually put my name into the RCMP just in case somebody goes missing, anything like that, so they -- they know where I am.

So that morning, we got up, and then I took my wife to work. She works at the Co-Op and that, and then -- I'm usually in and out, in and out and that, and I have a lot of people that usually sit there and try and contact me and that, so I checked my voicemail, and this was after 9:30 and that, there. Dropped my wife off and that.

So I get a voicemail, and it's the RCMP, and they sat there and they said, well, Keith, could you come and see us at the cop shop, it's urgent and that, so okay. I go up there and that, and then they -- they take me into the room, and then with one breath, he sits there and they tell me they found my sister deceased and that, and then I didn't even get a chance to swallow that. The next minute, they sit there and they tell me, your nieces are home alone, you know, we can get a babysitter.

So, I mean, I don't get a chance to absorb one thing, and -- and that, and it's bang, bang, bang. Okay, well, right away, like -- and that, my main concern's
my nieces, right? So, you know, at no point in
time -- and, like, I'm sharing my feelings and my thoughts
and everything with the whole -- the way the whole process
went and everything else and that.

So right away, I sit there and I take off,
you know, to my sister's house. My nieces are there alone,
you know, the house is kind of a mess, the phone's ripped
off the hook, the TV's got a big crack in the side, and you
know, my nieces sit there and said, you know, this person
or whatever punched the TV or whatever and -- and -- and
that, and -- you know, and then -- I'm the only one there,
so, like, my head's full. I've got to find my mom in
Winnipeg. I've got to find all my brothers and sisters. I
mean, there's 11 of us and that, and then I have to sit
there and, you know, go -- go home, phoning and everything
else and all that.

So Arla lived on the same bay -- you know,
Arla's my second cousin, but to me, you know, we spent to
much time together, it was basically a sister to me and
that, so I went and seeked her help to come and sit there
and help me with my nieces because, you know -- because I
had to sit there and contact all family members and, you
know, tell them what happened and everything else, and then
I knew it was going to hit my mom and the girls and that,
and it did all of us pretty heavy, but I know most of the
impact was going to hit my mom and the girls, you know, so I wanted to sit there and, you know, get people in places, things in -- you know, for them when they're told and that. And -- you know, my wife works at the Co-Op. I go see her and that, and you know, to me, I'm just thinking about families, the girls, everything else. I go tell my wife, you know, that my -- they found my sister deceased and that, and I didn't even wait for her. I just left her and that, and, like, she couldn't even go tell her boss, and she had to catch up to me because I was gone and that.

And that -- you know, I got Arla to help, and then as each one of us speak and that, you'll -- you'll sit there, and we all have parts of the story of where we're engaged and -- and that, but, like, with myself, you know, the after-thought of what happened and everything else and that, and it's just like -- you know, it didn't hit me until later on: Okay, where was my sister? You know, did they have her in the garage or anything like that? It just seemed like to me -- everything was taken away from me. It almost seemed like, you know, that RCMP had total control of everything. You know, they had -- they identified her and everything else, and yet, you know, I'm a family member that's there. Where was my opportunity? You know? And then they sit there and -- you
know, like I said, you know, I walk in the room and bang, bang, bang, bang. You know, they didn't sit there and say, you know, your sister's deceased and -- you know, could you identify her, we have her here. I don't know. Like, even with me, like, did the ambulance pick her up who identified her and all that and to find out that, you know, they were the ones that identified her, you know, and then, you know, who pronounced her dead, you know, and everything else?

But to me, it seemed like a family member with that happening and that -- like, I went outside, and I looked at where my sister was supposed to have -- you know, like I said, they -- they said frozen or whatever and that, but, like, you know, I used to drink and that. I used to watch people pass out. You didn't just go straight down, you know what I mean? Like, indentation on the snow. You know, there was no kicking around, no -- nothing, no movement and that. It just -- bang, and the -- the body heat and that melts in the snow, and I've trapped all my life. You know, I sit there, I watch tracks, everything else and all that, you know what I mean, and that, but to me, you know, it's -- you know, it wasn't ribboned off, nothing. You know? The phone's off the hook, ripped off the hook, you know, the TV's got a crack in it. Well, I mean, you know, doesn't that say something?

But the -- one other thing that really
impacted me and kind of hurt me was, you know, is
how -- you know, me as a family member with my sister being
found like that, deceased and that, that opportunity was
taken away from me, even to sit there and identify my
sister and that. You know what I mean? They didn't even
tell me, like, whether they had her in the garage. I -- to
this day, I still don't know what happened, you know what I
mean, and that.

And -- like, you know, I'm just going to sit
there, like -- you know, and the emotional aspect and that,
just to sit there and kind of fill that in, to sit there
and kind of let you know that -- you know, from my
perspective, where I'm sitting at and how I feel. I mean,
there'll be other parts of the story as we sit there where
each one of our family members played a role in and that
that -- you know, that you'll get the full story of, you
know, what happened, and I'm just the starting point
because I was the only one at home.

But see, this is my fourth time in the ring,
and what I mean by that is, you know, my sister's passing,
we helped do a documentary with APTN, and then there was a
young lady that sat there and was deceased a month ago at
home, and she had an 8-year-old daughter and that, and she
come to me, Uncle Keith, to sit there and help her go up
when that viewing of her mother that they had and that, and
when I stood there and that, you know, I was there for her and that, but I -- you know, at the same time, standing there and that, I got angry, you know, with this detachment. They sat there. They gave her the opportunity. You know, we done a drum song. You know, we were smoking in the garage, you know, and everything else, but where was my opportunity, you know, to sit there and be able to identify my sister?

And then today, the fourth time around for me and that. I guess fourth time in the ring, but it -- I mean, it mustn't be bad because, you know, with this traditioning (ph) and that, number 4's a good number and that, and -- you know, I sit there -- I try to let go and that. I'm a traditional and -- and spiritual person, and then, you know, I listen to gut feeling everything else. You know, I listen to the energy and being able to accept it and being able to interpret it.

But from -- since day one when my sister was -- you know, when I was there and found deceased and that, nothing sits right with me on that. My gut feeling tells me, you know, there's nothing -- there's nothing that sits right, you know? The same night they found her -- like, the same day we found her, her garage burnt and that, and then from -- you know, I'll vocalize my emotions and that, because, I mean, a lot of times to me,
it's a learning process, and it also helps other people to sit there and -- you know, understand emotion or whatever because a lot of times, it's a feeling, but sometimes when you can sit there and take that energy and interpret it into a -- a voice, you know what I mean? It helps and that, but to me, you know, I've always sat there and, you know, acknowledged things and that, and then with acknowledgment, there's acceptance, and then with acceptance, there's understanding. But see, I have acknowledge and I have acceptance, but I don't have no understanding of what happened. So at the same time, you know, I can't even cry to let go because to me, you know, I'm honest with myself, and I feel like with me, you know, as a traditional and spiritual person, to me, it seems like -- you know, I like to finish something, but at the same time, I don't even have a starting point to complete it, and then, see, I have to take it, and I have to put it in that little box and put it beside my heart and keep it there, but at the same time, you know, what point in time and opportunity do I sit there and I have to sit there and let her go?

And then I think of all the other people that's going through the same thing. Maybe some of them don't understand their emotion or what they're -- what it is that they're going through. I don't know. I can only
Anderson Pyrz, Anderson et al (Dawn Anderson)

interpret mine, you know, and the impact that's sitting there and -- you know, that a lot of people face that are going through the same thing and that.

You know, I went through a lot of things, different things, even with my father, losing my father and that, but this one, like, you know, I don't have no closure to it or nothing and that, and then the way I feel with myself and that, you know, I don't even have a starting point. And then, you know, with what's happening today and that and what we're doing here, maybe that is my starting point. I don't know. But, I mean, a lot of times, we don't sit there and vocalize or communicate and that, and it's not just one person. It's all of us. You know? We all got to get in that same boat and all go the same way for the same goals and that.

And then a lot of times, like -- you know? We have family gatherings. You know, I learned a long time ago, like, you know, I went to ceremonies, I went to different things and that, and then I -- you know, I've learned about, you know, our different brothers and sisters, but to me, it always came to one thing. It was about family. Everything's family and that. You know, we have our -- our -- you know, our main family, but look how many people we adopt in that, you know, and our circle keeps on getting bigger, and us as Indigenous people, we're
always adopting. We don't need a piece of paper.

And then, like, with me, that's -- that's what's happening, and that's how it's impacted me and everything else. At the same time, you know, how long do I carry it or whatever? And then, you know, at this point in time, I'd like to sit there and share a dream with you and that. I always knew I was going to be the one that was going to take my sister home, into the spirit world. I always knew that, and then, you know, when a year come or whatever and that, I sat there, you know, and I dreamt -- you know, I had her, she was all wrapped up in a pink sleeping bag, and I was taking her home. We stopped by. My nieces sat there and visited her mother for a while, and then their grandfather came and he said, I'll help you, and then I sat there, and I took her home. (Indiscernible) with us as Indigenous people. You know, I sit there and I share that dream with -- with you's. It means a lot to me, and at the end of the day, you know, between us, you know, it doesn't matter to me who believes me or not, but it matters to me as an individual, and I can only speak for myself.

And I thank all of you. You know, you're beautiful people, and it's like this that we have to sit there and stick together and that. You know, you can't knock us down if we all get together. You can push one of
us over and that, and -- it's such an impact, though, and that, and then to me, you know, given this opportunity, I would have never backed down or whatever and said no, you know, and I appreciate it that my family got this opportunity and that, and I'm not scared to be here or whatever and that to sit there and tell my story because to me, I think, you know, at the end of the day, we have to voice these things and that, and I'm not scared to be a warrior to sit here and tell my story, to support other people so that -- you know, a lot of these things have to stop. Thank you.

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

Hilda, can I just ask a couple questions. I know Keith shared the -- the sort of beginning part of the story when he was called to the RCMP office and how he learned of Dawn's death, but I understand that the family believes that there might have been someone involved in harming Dawn. I understand the family doesn't want to name that person. Part of that is because it's the family's belief there was really no investigation done, right? We just heard from Keith that he got called to the RCMP office and then went straight to the house, and when he went to the house, there was no police tape. Is that true?

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** Yes, there was no police tape because Keith was the first one on the scene,
like, out of our family. We didn't arrive until -- because we had to travel from Winnipeg, but when Keith went there and other family members, like, that are related to us and my sister from South Indian Lake, as well, arrived there shortly, like, within hours after she was found, and there was no police tape securing the scene.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And there was nothing on the door sealing it?

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** No. It was open. Like, anybody could come in and out of there because they were able to go in, you know, to get, like, clothing for her children and stuff like that. There was nobody securing the scene at all.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And we heard Keith say that Dawn's body was found outside in the snow.

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** Yes, that's correct.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And so the family was informed that she had died from exposure or something.

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** Yes.

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

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** And that's what I found so odd, like, because I've been an advocate for many years, and I understand investigations, and I also understand the court process, and I found it so odd that it
was so cut and dry when it came to how my sister died, how she was found, because at the time that she was found, they didn't know how she died. They didn't secure the scene, and they didn't even, you know, give her the quality or quantity of an investigation, you know, that she deserved, and now we sit here today with so many unanswered questions, you know, wondering what really happened to her the night she died because a lot of the circumstances surrounding her death, like my brother Keith mentioned, like, you know, her phone was ripped off the wall, her TV was smashed, her house was in a -- like, in complete disarray, and all those telltale signs to me say that something went wrong, you know, and I feel like when it comes to -- you know, I'm not going to get into full details yet, but, like, when it comes to policing, the RCMP in the north, that's a huge institutional failure on us as Indigenous people. You know, that has to improve, and it just boggles my mind.

We continuously hear stories of how policing is failing, not only us as missing and murdered Indigenous family members but as survivors, as other individuals who require that service in the north, that it's continuously failing, and we keep telling our stories, and we keep asking for that change, and it seems to be falling on deaf ears. It's like they would rather believe this institution
that has failed miserably rather than several people from different communities, different families, different nations telling their stories, not only to this Inquiry, but other experiences like I mentioned previously. Like, something has to change. Our voices have to be heard when it comes to different institutions and service providers for us as -- as Indigenous people.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So I understand that there's a video. There was an actual documentary done on your sister in relation to, like, all the flags you're talking about. Can you tell us just a little bit about this video before we watch it?

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** So my family was asked to participate in a video that was done nationally by the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, and it was a video that was done with -- like, in different -- in Nova Scotia -- I'm sorry, I can't remember exactly the locations -- the other locations -- and in Manitoba, but the reality is we all have the same story to tell about questioning the police practices and how they investigate the death of Indigenous women and girls, so I just think it's kind of ironic regardless of your geographical location that we're experiencing the same things, and that should be sending a strong message to Canadian governments, that change has to happen and change has to happen now.
So it's just -- this video will show, like, kind of a summary of, you know, some of the key points that we're going to be speaking to in more context.

(VIDEO PLAYED)

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: Can you turn it up, please? You can't hear it.

(VIDEO PLAYED)

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Maybe we can pause it to do a volume check.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And actually -- can we (indiscernible). Yeah. Can we -- we're actually just going to take a 5-minute break. That will give everyone an opportunity to stretch and stand up, as well, and we'll see if we can figure out the volume issue.

--- Upon recessing at 11:45 a.m.

--- Upon resuming at 12:00 p.m.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you for taking the break. Commissioner Audette, we're going to try playing the video again. Hilda will share some few words, and then we can have -- yeah. So go ahead.

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: So we're going to be showing a video that was done by the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, and I just wanted to give, you know, a special thank you to Holly and Jared here who are, you
know, really respectful and gentle when they did the
documentary as well. The documentary shows, like,
regardless of your geographical location on the policing
efforts when it comes to missing or murdered Indigenous
women and girls, and I think that it makes a powerful
statement because we don't even live in the same provinces
and we're experience the same things, and it will highlight
key points that we're going to be discussing in further
context after we break for lunch and we come back. Thank
you.

(VIDEO PLAYED)

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Did you want to add
anything else, Hilda?

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: I just think, you
know, to call children, basically, liars, you know, when
the children themselves emotionally shared that they
witnessed, you know, basically my sister being removed in a
body bag, to say that that didn't happen, just really
demonstrates on how police protect their own. As well, you
know, not linking the fire -- my sister was found 19 hours
prior to that fire being deliberately set, and not linking
the two together and she had been partying in the garage
the night before clearly demonstrates, again, failure on
how the RCMP investigated my sister's death. You know,
it's just like saying -- and not calling the ambulance, it
Hearing - Public  
Anderson Pyrz, Anderson et al (Dawn Anderson)

shows -- it clearly demonstrates that there's a two-tier system within policing when it comes to Indigenous people, you know, to basically put my sister in a body bag and throw her in the back of a truck, not give my family the dignity or honour of identifying her; allowing a police officer who was her neighbour and who was the one who found her to identify her shows how broken the system is, and I'll just end there because we're breaking for lunch.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Commissioner Audette, if we could take a 30-minute lunch break, we will be recommencing with this family following the lunch break. Thank you.

--- Upon recessing at 12:10 p.m.
--- Upon resuming at 12:58 p.m.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Okay. So thank you, Commissioner Audette. The family would like to continue sort of where they left off, particularly now that we've seen the video and understand a bit more of the context of Dawn's death. Hilda will be sharing with you a document, and she'll be asking you questions, and she'll be -- sorry, she'll be sharing some questions the family asked.

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: So I'm just going to share a letter that I received from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on December -- or sorry.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: August 9th.
MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: August 9th, 2012 -- I don't know why I said December, sorry -- and (indiscernible) the public complaint I filed against the members of the RCMP. I won't share the entire letter, but I just wanted to highlight on two key areas on the nature of the complaint.

So the allegation, it's alleged that -- I'm not going to name the officers -- that the two officers of Leaf Rapids Detachment did not properly conduct the investigation with respect to the death of Miss Dawn Anderson, which occurred on November 18th, 2011, and the category is neglect of duty.

So I'm just going to share the overall findings, the last paragraph of this 3-page letter that I received from the Public Complaints Commission. It says:

The overall findings of the review did not reveal any evidence suggesting neglect of duty was a contributing factor. The review revealed the investigation conducted by police officers at Leaf Rapids Detachment was within the scope of their duties in accordance to policies governing their actions with these investigations. Therefore, I am unable to support your
allegation that the two officers of the Leaf Rapids Detachment did not properly conduct the investigation with a respect to the death of Miss Dawn Anderson which occurred on November 18th, 2011.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So you're talking about the response of a complaint, but the first step of that was to make a complaint.

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** Yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Right? So when did you make the complaint?

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** I honestly can't remember the exact date off the top of my head, but it was shortly after my sister passed away because I felt that, you know, we had to do something because we couldn't just stand by and allow things just to go away because they wouldn't go away for us, so we had to, you know, access the mechanisms that were there for us to, you know, raise this issue to a higher level.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Before the complaint, did you -- did you write any concerns or other letters to the RCMP detachment commander in Manitoba?

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** I actually -- not, like, myself, with my siblings, we compiled a whole bunch of questions, and we sent them to the Leaf Rapids
Detachment directly, to the sergeant who was responsible for the RCMP detachment in Leaf Rapids at the time.

So I'm just going -- I'm not going to share all the questions, but just a few key questions that I feel that really demonstrates institutional failures when it comes to, you know, the -- everything surrounding my late sister's passing. It says -- one of the questions we asked was why was the local doctor or the ambulance -- why wasn't the local doctor or the ambulance called to the scene upon the discovery of Dawn? Ambulance assistance was not -- was deemed not necessary, as Dawn was clearly deceased.

And I just also wanted to further mention that my sister was officially pronounced dead over the phone by the Medical Examiner's office in Winnipeg, and they were not on the scene. The police officers were on the scene. However, it was the Medical Examiner's office in Winnipeg who officially declared my sister dead and that the scene could be cleared, just so people understand that context as well.

And I feel that this is important to add into. When you take the core body temperature of somebody who's deceased, based on our research and what others have shared with us, it can determine at approximately what time that they died, so we asked, was Dawn's core body temperature taken; if not, why? And it says -- like, we
know that the officers are not the ones who do this, and
that's evident, but just even the way that they answer the
question, it says core body temperatures -- core body
temperature was not taken by the officers on the scene, as
this was not a common procedure for officers so undertake.
We understand that, but even answering it in that context,
like, we understand that it's somebody who's medically
trained who -- who would have done this, if it was
available.

And then another question we asked, which is
kind of contradicting here, like, to what actually happened
in their response, it says, why was the area not
immediately taped off and secured where Dawn was found, as
the cause of death was not determined upon her discovery?
The security of the scene was maintained by the presence of
the officers.

In this instance, the Medical
Examiner's -- Medical Examiner's office authorized the
release of the body and the scene. Therefore, further
security of the area was not required.

So that was done, like, would you says,
Keith, within, like, an hour.


MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: Okay. I wasn't
there, but I -- Keith was the first one on the scene, and
it's -- we asked, why was Dawn's home not secured or taped off? Why was Dawn's home not secured or taped off or secured where Dawn was found, as the cause of death was not determined upon her discovery.

The Medical Examiner's office authorized the release of the scene. Therefore, the further security of the area was not required.

And then I -- I asked the -- we asked the question too: Why was the forensic unit not called in? It says:

Calling in a forensic unit is not automatic in a fatality investigation.

In this case, the officer's examination of the scene determined there was no need for forensic exam.

And we also asked the question, was there any fingerprints taken at the scene or in Dawn's home? No fingerprint exam was conducted.

And we asked, the scene -- was Dawn's hands bagged to preserve any evidence from under her fingernails? It says:

The investigators examined Dawn Anderson's hands at the scene and saw nothing of note, as a result, saw no need to bag her hands.
And we also asked, was there any castings or photographs taken of the footprints around Dawn? No footprint castings were taken. The only footprints observed near the body appeared to be those of Dawn Anderson, not including the footprints of the officers.

And we asked -- because at the time, like, they didn't know who was around. We said, why wasn't Child and Family Services called to remove the children from the scene immediately upon discovering they were alone? The officers believed it would be better if the children were in the care of family members at that time. The officers located Keith Anderson, who took over the care of the children. But we know, like -- and it really bothers me, too, watching the video prior to our lunch break when the officer basically calls my nieces a liar, you know, and saying that the children were not alone, and 4- and 7 years-old don't lie. You know, they said they were alone, and they shared with my sister Lianna observing my sister being removed in a body bag in an RCMP truck.

And we just asked, who signed off the necessary proof of death documentation? It says:

This is not a police responsibility.

The Medical Examiner's office should be able to provide this information.

And this is key, too, because I feel it's
taken a lot of dignity away from my sister and has been
really, like, shameful and disrespectful to my family. It
says:

Who provided the positive identification
to confirm the deceased individual was
indeed Dawn?

It was her neighbour who discovered her
body. It says:

One of the investigating officers
identified Dawn Anderson at the scene.
He was known to her for nearly three
years.

Who cares if he was known to her? You know,
what about the family? We're the ones who lost a loved
one, and I think that's so shameful of the RCMP to do that.

And how was Dawn's body transported from the
scene? In a truck or in the back of a truck. It says:

Dawn Anderson's body was placed into a
body bag and carried into the box of the
marked RCMP patrol truck.

So she was basically bagged and put into the
RCMP truck with no dignity where they could have called the
ambulance and the local doctor to the scene. He was never
called, and he was actually shocked that he was never
called to the scene, and he didn't find out till later that
afternoon that my sister was deceased, and he had called, like, higher levels of authority to express his concern that he wasn't called to the scene.

And we also heard from several different people who have tried to share different things that they've heard or that they know firsthand with respect to the police investigation into my sister's death, and many of them told us that they weren't even given the opportunity to share their -- what they knew about Dawn, or it wasn't even officially recorded. It was so nonchalant, they said, when they went to try to share information.

**MR. KEITH ANDERSON:** And what did they say, Hilda, when you tried to set up that Crime Stoppers thing?

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** That wasn't me.

We'll do that later.

And I asked -- because there was the fire 19 hours after my sister was found deceased, I asked the following question: Was there photographs taken of the interior of Dawn's garage; if not, why? It says:

Photographs of the interior of the garage were not taken. The garage had been searched by two officers, and they found nothing of any evidentiary value to be seized or to be photographed.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So you keep talking
about the detachment, so is the Rapid Leafs
detachment -- is the Rapid Leafs detachment --

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** Leaf Rapids.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** -- Leaf Rapids

Detachment, the officers that are stationed there, are they
full RCMP officers? Are they special constables, or --

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** No. They're full
RCMP officers. And then I also -- one of the things that I
asked in my complaint to the RCMP with the Public
Complaints Commission, they asked me what are the outcomes
that I would like, and I asked if the individual who was in
the home the night my sister died, who has a very violent
history, if he could be subjected to a polygraph, and then
they came back to me and said that they asked him if he
would do a polygraph, and he refused because he has that
right.

And I also asked, has the RCMP released any
public written communications to announce the death of
Dawn; if not, why? And I said, if so, can all copies of
communications be provided to the next of kin on or
before -- and I gave a specific timeline, because at the
time -- well, even still today, I was leading a lot of the
stuff that we were doing with respect to my sister's
passing and informing my family because we felt that that
was an easier process rather than trying to communicate
with everybody because we have such a large family, and it said:

A media release to local or provincial news outlets announcing a fatality in a community is not automatically completed in each case. If a news media outlet was to inquire about a fatality, the detachment may issue a brief media release but limit the information. Names would not be released without next of kin consent. Detachments can issue a media release requesting public assistance. The purpose of this type of release is to canvas the general public for anyone with information relating to a specific event. In this case, the detachment determined a request for public assistance has not been required at this time.

And again, that just shows, like, you know, there was a fire, you know, and the disarray in her home, and to basically not even ask for any public assistance as to what happened that night, even leading up to her passing, you know, that clearly demonstrates another failure within the detachment by not requesting the
public's assistance.

And I also -- because I felt it -- you know, why didn't the Fire Commissioner not come to Leaf Rapids? Because there was the fire, you know, 19 hours after somebody was found deceased, that was directly attached to her home, and it boggles my mind that -- you know, that there was no Fire Commissioner that came out to do an inspection, so at the time I wrote a letter on December 5th, 2011, to the Honourable Jennifer Howard, who was the minister responsible for the Office of the Fire Commissioner, and basically, I don't have the response here today because I just -- you know, it's a difficult process, and I couldn't pull everything together, but basically, the letter just offered their condolences and said it was a very difficult time for the family, and it was the RCMP who deemed it was not necessary for the Fire Commissioner to come out.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So it seems like, you know, you're -- when you're asking the RCMP questions, they're turning to the Medical Examiner; when you're asking the Fire Commissioner questions, they're turning to the RCMP. It seems like a lot of people are happy to say it's someone else's responsibility.

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: And -- and that's what I felt. I felt like it was -- you know, every time we
went to somebody, it was always somebody else's responsibility. It was like a big -- you know, it's almost like a game: Let's blame this -- this institution, let's blame that institution. It's like, well, what about us as family? You know, we -- we're looking for answers, you know, and all you're doing is creating this, like, circle that's continuously going, and we have no real answers, you know, and nobody's being accountable. It's, like, just shifting the blame. I think it's time for institutions to be accountable, you know, and to admit when they do wrong, and by doing that, they go forward in a different way, you know, in fixing their processes, you know, so in -- in -- ultimately, there's a better outcome for families as well as for the institutions, you know, if we go forward together and admit wrongs and fix these wrongs.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Now, I understand that you asked for and received a copy of the Chief Medical Examiner's autopsy report form.

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** Yes, I did.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I'm going to pass this up to the Commissioner, but before I do, as I often do with any coroner's report, I request that it be sealed, and the purpose I'm making the request for it to be sealed is to maintain the dignity of Dawn because it does describe personal attributes and information about her death.
So may I have the sealing order?

COMMISSIONER MICHELLE AUDETTE: Oui. Yes.

Merci.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I know that you're the one who received the -- the post-mortem. Essentially, it states that she died from exposure?

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: Yeah.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Yes?

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: Yeah, and even like, when, my sister was in her casket, like, she had this weird indentation above her -- her right eye, I believe, and she had, like, bruising on her chin, and even, like, on her arm like this that she had, like, finger markings on her arms, but none of that is noted in the autopsy. They just talk about, like, an injury on her nose and her hip.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So it's obvious the family took a number of steps that you guys have been advocating --

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: Yes.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: -- quite a bit. I have a couple questions that maybe one of your brothers might want to answer simply because they were also in Leaf Rapids -- is that okay -- to Dennis or Melvin?

Okay. So the question I have, because we've heard, and I know we're not speaking about the individual
the family suspects because there was never charges laid
against him because there was no investigation, but can you
just tell a little bit -- share a little bit with the
commissioner sort of, like, a bit of background about him
without naming him in terms of -- the family has said a
couple times he was violent. It's known that he's violent
in the community?

MR. MELVIN ANDERSON: Yes, and -- like, many
times even after my sister's passing that his name has been
thrown around as the one doing harm to other people and
nobody doing anything about it.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Do I understand that
he -- he has been charged subsequently for abusing other
people?

MR. MELVIN ANDERSON: I don't really know,
but I know he's -- like, he's not around in Leaf Rapids
right now. I presume he's incarcerated right now.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I also understand
that from -- there's at least a couple stories where people
have explained that this individual has actually talked
about unintentionally killing your sister.

MR. MELVIN ANDERSON: Yes, and we've talked
to the individuals, and we've asked them to go to the RCMP
and make statements and stuff like that, and they have gone
there, but I -- I don't know if any investigation -- of any
investigations that have gone any further from there, and it's -- there is a lot of people that -- that hear -- that hear him say these stories, and a lot of them are too frightened to go and make statements or just clam right up when you come up to them and confront them about what they -- what we've heard that they've heard, and they just don't say anything. They're just too, I guess, afraid of him.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And has the family continued to go back to the RCMP or touch base with the local detachment on any time they hear these things as well?

MR. MELVIN ANDERSON: Yes, we have -- like, myself and my brother Dennis heard just recently, we've heard and we've gone to them, and then we've asked the person to come forward and go to the RCMP and make a statement, and I'm not quite sure of what the response was. I think -- I'll give Dennis the mic here. He -- he's the one that really talked to the person.

MR. DENNIS ANDERSON: Yeah. On that point, I'll just go back to the beginning, Mel, if you don't mind --

MR. MELVIN ANDERSON: Yeah.

MR. DENNIS ANDERSON: -- as to how the information came about. I was walking uptown one day to go
grab something from the grocery store, and I ran into a
lady who -- who confront -- well, didn't confront me,
but -- you know, like, I was joking around with her just
like you do everybody else that you meet, like, from a
small community, right? And then she -- she had a -- you
know, like, a look about her like she was sad or something
like that, right? And then I said, you okay? And she
said, you know what? She said, Dennis, I'm really glad
that I ran into you, and I said, well, yeah, okay,
what -- what's bothering you? She said, actually, I was
going to try to get a hold of all you guys because I got
some -- some disturbing information -- or I find it
disturbing, and it's been really bothering me, she said,
that my daughter had come home and told me something about
what may have happened to your sister.

So I -- you know, like, it's -- it's like
everything else. You're waiting for that certain little
something, you know, to maybe -- okay, this is it. It's
going to be -- you know, like, something's going to come of
it, right? So my brother Melvin and I, we -- we went and
we contacted the RCMP. We went down there, and we said,
you know, like, this lady's got some information that might
be vital to, you know, like, my -- my sister's death, so on
and so forth. And they said, well, if she comes up, we'll
definitely be, you know, talking to her.
So her mother and her had gone up, and during a party, he had admittedly said to a couple of people that were there that he -- he had a hand in my sister' demise, but he didn't really mean to, right? Now, whatever that means, it's irrelevant. I mean, like, his statement's irrelevant, and I -- you know.

And so the RCMP -- or she went and she talked to the RCMP and told them what she had heard and -- you know, like with the -- with her mother's help, you know, and there again, we were just stone-walled because the other people that were there were not going to say nothing, so even though she had made this report or statement, then it's a he-said-she-said kind of thing, right, yet the other people that were there, they will not -- you know, like, if we just had a couple of people against him, you know, just the one time, if somebody would have said like, yeah, yeah, you know, like two or three of them, you know, that could have opened up something, right?

And -- but basically, that's what I was told, when the R -- and I -- and I had phoned the RCMP, and I said, you know, like, guys, I really want to hear back from you on this. You know, like, it's -- you know, like, I feel that it's vital information, and they -- they promised that they would get back to me, and they did. They actually come back to my house. I
think -- they -- they had a call to go to South Indian that
prior day, so the following day they had come to my house,
and they -- what I had just shared with you about -- you
know, like, the he-said-she-said kind of thing stopped.
Like, that was it, you know?

And the one guy, actually, the one RCMP
officer, he looked at me, and he said, you know what,
Dennis -- like, after I explained to him, I said, I'm not
going to stop that. You know, like, this is not the end of
it. You know, like, this is -- this is not where this
ends, you know? And I told him, I said, I'm going to
continue fighting. And he looked at me, he says, you know
what, Dennis, if it were my sister, he says, there's not a
chance that I'd be giving up either. You know? And
through -- through it all, that was probably the only kind
word or positive reaction that I personally have gotten
from the RCMP of any sort.

And, you know, like, it's just -- like, the
whole investigation is just all shot full of holes.
Everything. Like, it's just -- like, they just -- like,
let's get this done and over with, you know, like -- and,
you know, like, just rush through it, it's all done. I
mean, look at the questions that Hilda had asked them. You
know, like, the investigating officer, the investigating
officer, the investigating officer. You know, like, jeez.
You're talking to a guy that's supposed to be, you know, their boss or their superior, and he can't answer questions on behalf of them, and he's just passing the buck back to the guy that was there, and I mean -- like, that doesn't excuse them, as well, but I mean, like, it's just -- like Hilda says, it's pass the buck, pass the buck, you know? And it's -- it's -- it's written, you know? Like, that's their answer. That's their answer to all our questions. We'll just pass the buck. You know? It's over with. Deal with it. Well, it's not over with, and yeah, we're still dealing with it, you know?

And one thing I'd like to mention, you know, about the officer that did give me that little bit of positive feedback was he was not one of the original investigating officers; and back to the individual who, you know, may have had a hand in this, like Mel says, you know, like, he walks around, people are frightened of him, yet people come -- I bet you weekly, I hear it from somebody in that community, and there's only 500, 600 of us that live there. I bet you once a week, at least, once a week, I hear somebody come tell me something, and I tell them, you know, like, don't tell me because then -- it's just hearsay if I go there. Go -- go to the police. Make a statement. That's where it stops. You know, like, it's almost, like, oh, I'll feel better if I go tell him. At least they know.
You know? Like, it's almost -- people look for excuses within themselves to -- you know, somehow they feel that they've done something right if they go and tell you, but what are you going to do about it? You're just an individual looking for answers, you know, looking for a bit of justice, looking for a little relief, looking for some closure, you know, and I appreciate that they tell me, but it does me no good. It does nobody no good. Maybe it does them some good to know that they're telling somebody, but they're telling the wrong people, and I -- honest to God, Commissioner, I bet you at least once a week, if not twice a month, I hear something. Somebody comes, tells me something pertaining to the death of my sister, and yet to this day, you know, it's never been investigated properly, and it continues, you know?

You know -- you know, like, and you hear about it all the time. You know, people are afraid of these people, or they're afraid of maybe the parent or where he stands in the community. You know, like, you hear all kinds of horror stories, you know, little -- you know, like Betty Osborne (ph). Perfect, you know, example. You know, like, everybody knew in that community or most people knew or have heard the stories, and for how many years did them sinning people walk the same ground that that poor girl did, and her family?
And in essence, what I'm saying is, pretty much, that's how we feel. Why do -- does he get to walk and enjoy the same things that I do, and then when he's under the influence of something, he's bragging? You know, I'm not afraid of this person at all or his family or any repercussions that may come my way because of what I'm saying here today. I'm not afraid, and I will continue to fight. Yeah, "we," and we're a strong unit, and -- you know, like, it's -- it's a very hurtful thing to have to see and live through it, like, on a daily basis, and I kid you not, Commissioner, at least twice a month, I hear something out of people's mouths directly to me about what happened that night, and yet I -- my hands are tied. I can't do anything, and I can't get them to do anything because they're all afraid, and you know, like, this individual, I feel, he's got a very violent past, and I feel that he probably should have been incarcerated long ago as a dangerous offender, and it's my belief that that's where he belongs.

You know, and it's sad. You know, like, I'm sure -- I'm sure these investigating officers, whoever did this, I'm sure every time they hear about us or see us doing something, they're cringing, and they're -- I bet you they're -- in their minds, they're going, jeez, I should have, I should have, you know, but their superiors protect
them too. You know?

And, yeah, like, you can see on the tape,
you know, they blatantly lied, and they said my nieces lied. They got no reason to lie. Their mother was taken out of their yard in a bag, and they were alone, and they watched. Now, how is that proper investigation any of kind? How is that proper treatment of Indigenous people or anybody by people in authority? How could they have let that happen? You know, it borderlines on disgusting is what it does.

And like I say, hopefully through voicing our opinions and telling our stories, like, everybody that's here, I pray to God that we all find some kind of answer in the end because that's what this is all about, you know, not only for our stories but each individual here that's going to testify or do their testimony, you know, they feel the way we do. They've been done wrong. They have not been handed a proper solution or an answer. They've been quite -- quite the opposite. They've been skirted around so they don't have to be provided with an answer, and it's time that this stuff ends, and, you know, like, it's just -- and it's Indigenous people, you know, that take the brunt of it. We have no trust with the RCMP. None of us do. Indigenous people -- you know, like, it's crazy. Like, you don't want to talk to police because
we're -- you know, like, we're branded, man. You know, like, and it's a sad, sad thing to have to say in 2018, you know, like, and all this stuff, you know, like, that goes on in this -- in this country, and two cases in particular we've seen as of recent. Everybody's seen it on television, right? You know, like -- and it's the same thing. It just keeps happening. Why is that? And it's not -- like my sister said, it -- it's a geographical problem. Like, it's across the country. Doesn't matter where in this country. It's happening everywhere. Why is that? You know, and that's what we're here to change or hopefully bring light to, find answers, you know, find closure. That's what this is about. For me, that's what it's about. This is not the end of my fight either. I will continue. I promise you, I'll -- thank you.

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** I also wanted to share, my brother Dennis and Melvin and my brother Brunel (ph), and Dawn's -- the father of her children, we went to meet with the RCMP when this happened in Leaf Rapids, and one of the things -- I found it really kind of bizarre because at the time you're in shock, you know, because you just lost your loved one and you're not really thinking about everything and maybe not asking the right questions, but one thing I found interesting is, why was the officer who found my sister, who was her neighbour
doing the investigation -- you know, because when we went there, they said, oh, he's on holidays for a couple of days, he has a couple of days off, and then the officer who was talking to us, he said to us, he said, oh, when we -- when the individual who was in your sister's home the night that she died was interviewed, he was visibly distraught; and I'm thinking, like, who cares if he was distraught? What about us, you know? And then they said, oh, he even told us that he walked around her house looking for her, and I said to that officer, I said, that's a lie. I said, if he walked around the house looking for her, he would have saw where she was lying because, you know, in the wintertime, there's, like -- there was a bush there, but it was all bare. There was no leaves or anything on it. It was just, like, twigs sticking out, and they weren't very high, and you would be able to see clearly where she was lying, so I said to that officer, I said, he's lying.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Also, about footprints.

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** Oh, yeah. And, like, even, you know, not -- basically saying that there was no footprints and no castings and stuff like that. Like, to me, that doesn't make sense. If you find somebody, you don't know what happened to them, you would
think you would go into investigative mode, you know, but I think -- like, to me, I know so many families in northern Manitoba who have told me their same story, you know, that they believe that foul play was suspected in the -- in their loved one, but the RCMP and the Medical Examiner's office continuously ruled their deaths as exposure due to intoxication where -- you know, even if they died of exposure due to intoxication, what about all those events that lead up to their death? You know, what about those individuals that were involved? You know, I feel -- I don't know. Like, it -- it really needs to change. We need to change. You know, there's a lot of good police officers. I'm not, like, saying they're all horrible. There's a lot of good people who are working in institutions who are really trying to create meaningful change, but we need to do better.

And I was actually going to pass the mic to my sister Lianna because she has some really key things, like, with my two little nieces that shared.

**MS. LIANNA ANDERSON:** I guess this horror started for me just shortly after my brother Keith got the news and he -- and he went home because I had taken my mom with me to Winnipeg that time. We were going there -- we were going there for meetings, and I remember that morning when we were leaving, Dawn was outside the town centre.
She was just -- she had one of her friends coming to the town centre there where it's the main street in Leaf Rapids to buy groceries, and she -- and my mom seen her, and my mom went and gave her a hug and told her to be good, and that was the last time my mom seen her alive. It was few days after that, that's when we lost her.

But my brother Keith called me. He kept calling me. I was driving in Winnipeg, and I told -- and then my daughters said -- you know -- like, I was right in the heart of traffic, rush-hour, during lunch on a Friday afternoon, Winnipeg, and Keith says -- like, told him, phone me as soon as you pull over, and I did, and I -- and I phoned him, and then he says, Dawn's gone. I says, Dawn who? He says, our sister. I said, well, where did she go? He says, she's dead, and he hangs up on me, and I'm just, like, what? I phone him back, and the phone was busy, and then I phoned him back again, and I said, what happened? He says, they're telling me they found her outside her home this morning and that she froze to death, and I'm thinking, this is crazy. This can't be. I phoned the RCMP, and I asked them, like, what is going on? And I talked to one of the officers that was in the RCMP detachment, and he tells me that Dawn's neighbour, who is an RCMP officer, was leaving for work shortly -- 9 o'clock that morning, and he seen Dawn in between his house and her house, about
30 -- 30 to 40 feet from her front door, they found her. I said, well, what happened to her? He says, Lianna, he says, we're pretty -- he says, we're pretty sure that -- you know, that she was drinking and she froze to death outside, and I'm thinking, no, that's not Dawn. That's not my sister. My sister, doesn't matter what it is that she's doing or where she is, she always dressed for the weather, and if anything, she would bring a wagon full of extra clothes and always, always prepared for anything and everything. That's just the way that my mom made sure we were, and it just didn't make sense to me.

And -- and then I called the RCMP back, and I says, like, you know, what's happening, like, you know, and then -- and then I asked, is there going to be an investigation, and then they said, like, well, right now, Lianna, he says -- he says, I think you guys need to get a hold of all of your family, and then -- and then called my brother-in-law, and he called -- and I guess I asked him, are you with Hilda, and I told him what happened, and I told him -- because we need -- I -- I was just trying to get to my mother before my mother got the phone call from somebody up north to tell her, and I trying to intervene so that she wouldn't get that call over the phone, so I had to get a hold of my sister Hilda.

And -- but -- you know, when -- in -- in
those moments when this happened, and I'm thinking, Dawn's
death outside her home; my God, what happened to her? Who
did this? We need to find out. You know, there's going to
be a big massive investigation, and my brother Melvin said,
like, you know, Lianna, he said, like, Dawn's house is a
wreck, he says, and -- and I says, well, don't touch
anything. Get everybody out of there. You guys are
contaminating the scene. There's going to be a big
investigation. We're going to find out what happened to
Dawn because something happened to her, and I says, get
everybody to stop cleaning up, and just get everybody out
of there. Don't let anybody in the house.

And that investigation never came. It
didn't come. The RCMP never investigated anything. I was
told through my conversations with them, when I asked them,
I says, why didn't you guys call the ambulance? Why didn't
you call the doctor? There's a doctor in Leaf Rapids
that's there 24/7. The ambulance lives right across the
street from where my sister lives. Why didn't you guys
call the ambulance? Why didn't you call the doctor to the
scene? And they said, well, Lianna, the Chief Medical
Examiner pronounced her dead over the phone. Like, how the
hell do you pronounce somebody dead over a phone? How can
you as a person, as an RCMP officer, know what kind of
vital signs that you have to look for, even that simple
thing of holding a mirror to my sister's face, this close, he could have seen if she was gasping for that last breath. Those RCMP officers didn't know anything about doing that. They pronounced her dead over the phone by the Chief Medical Examiner.

Right away, we started hearing, oh, she was partying the night before, she was drunk, she went outside. She passed out; and I'm thinking, wow, that's -- you know, this is -- like, it was almost a state of disbelief, and you almost have to kind of think, like, really?

Later on that day, the -- the doctor in the community, like, you know, he -- like, you know, when I got back home, he came to me, and he was really, really upset and disturbed, and he said, Lianna, he says, I'm so sorry. He says, you know -- he says, I'm the doctor in the community. I didn't even hear from the RCMP that there was a death in the community, that somebody froze to death outside. He says, I was in the clinic, and I seen how visibly upset the staff were, and I asked, like, you know, what is going on? He said, my staff told me because of how close they were to your sister, of the relationships they had with her, that she had passed away. He said, that's how I found out as a doctor in our community of not even 5, 600 people that there was a death in the community, that the RCMP had picked up somebody deceased outside, and
that's how the doctor found out. The ambulance wasn't called.

And I'm thinking, like, how does this stuff happen? My brother, they call my brother to the RCMP station, Keith. He gets a message on his phone: Oh, can you call -- come by the RCMP detachment? We have a -- it's kind of urgent. So he goes there. Two minutes later, they tell him, we found your sister dead outside her place. Oh, by the way, your nieces, your 4-year-old and 7-year-old, are alone in the house. We have to go there and pick them up. Meanwhile, my sister's in the garage, in the back of a truck, in a body bag. My brother wasn't given the honour to be able to go and look at my baby sister's face once more and say, yes, that is our baby sister, that is our sister; to be able to touch her, to be able to call family, to be able to say prayers for her, to be able to see her before they took her away, but instead, she was just put in a body bag in the back of a truck, waiting for the Boardman's Funeral Home in Thompson to come pick her up.

When they came and -- when they picked up my sister, my nieces, they're 4 and 7 years old, they stayed with my mom for the first three months after my sister passed, and then they came and stayed with me. The tidbits that they started talking about and -- and the stuff that they were saying, it's just -- it just haunts me because
it's just not right, and the way that we are as a family,
we censor what the kids watch on TV. Like, you know, we
don't -- you know, they wouldn't have picked up this stuff
from anywhere, and when my niece tells me, like, you know,
that they were alone in the house, like, you know, that the
police had come, they came inside, and the radio was really
loud, and -- you know, then they left, and they went
outside, and they said they seen the truck because -- and
they said they noticed it because it -- it came and drove
up on their yard, and they seen the cops put something --
like, a long bag in the back of the truck, and they were
alone in the house watching this. Then they left, and I
said, well, who stayed with you, and they said nobody.
They were alone in the house. The -- the cops came and
picked up my sister and left. They came in the house.
They seen my 4- and 7-year-old nieces alone in the house,
left them alone, went outside, bagged up my sister like
whatever, threw her in the back of a truck and then took
off. She was not worthy of a call to the local doctor,
the -- the local ambulance. My nieces were not worthy to
immediately call somebody at CFS or something to console
these children with what they just found outside. They are
human beings. I look at these pictures. Look at them.
They're so beautiful, and what they seen, what they were
left alone, we didn't -- like, we -- Hilda talks about, you
know, like, the -- the -- the public -- the complaint that we made to the Public Complaints Commission about what they did, even with the sheer fact that they left my nieces alone in the house, 4 and 7 years old, the Commission didn't find any wrongdoing in that. Like, how is that possible?

You know, my niece, my 7-year-old niece, one day, she's -- I had gotten her ready for bed, and -- you know, like -- and, like, they had mentioned that when my sister Dawn, at her funeral, like, she had a bruise on her chin. She had bruises here. She had bruises on her arms like this, and it's not our way to take pictures, but I wish that one time we would have, but we didn't, but everybody remembers that. Everybody remembers those bruises on her because she was so fair, and -- and you could see every little mark and everything on her.

And my niece said one evening -- it was a couple of months after my sister's death. I put her to bed, and I was laying, and I was watching TV, and she came out. She says, Aunty, she says, I have a question, she says, and she was very articulate, very smart, brilliant young lady, and -- and then I said, what's up, my girl? And I was laying on the couch, and she comes over, she said, how did they fix my mom's neck? And I says, what do you mean, my girl? And she said, well, her neck was going
like this. It was, like -- and I says, where did you see that? And then she just kind of had this look come over her eyes, and she says, oh, she says; never mind, she says; I'm going bed.

And I was forever haunted with that conversation. I didn't have the means to know how to talk to her. I wanted to shake her: Tell me exactly what you seen. What happened? Where did you see this? Like, you know -- like, how -- how do you know this? But I didn't have the means to be able to do that without traumatizing her, and I couldn't, and it's been haunting me. It's been eating me up inside, that conversation I had with her.

And my -- my other niece, like, the 4-year-old, she was in nursery, Kindergarten, and the Town Centre Mall in Leaf Rapids is our main street, and everybody goes there. That's where you go to school. That's where you get the groceries, the gas, the mail, and -- you know, that's where the final liquor store opens at 12 o'clock noon, and you have everybody lining up outside waiting for it to open, and I had to go and get my niece from school because she got out a half-hour before lunch, and I went to get her, and we were walking, and then -- and I remember there was this group of people outside the pharmacy, and I was walking with her, and she just started crying, and she was just kind of pulling back,
and I said, (speaking in Native language), like, you know, what's the matter? And then she just started crying, and she just -- digging my body into my legs, and she said, Aunty, she said, that's a bad man, and I said, where, I said? And all I could see was these -- group of guys standing outside the pharmacy, and -- and then she just started crying, and I picked her up, and she was just shaking and shivering: That's a bad man, Aunty, that's a bad man. And then, like, you know, as I walked in between where the pharmacy was and these guys standing, I had to walk past them to get to my office, she just started, like, crying out loud, and she was just -- terror, she was fearful, like, and I was just -- and I couldn't figure out what the hell was happening.

And -- but the one thing that intrigued me, as the stories started coming out, is the story of that one man, that man -- and I don't care if his family sees this. I'm not scared of him. I'm not scared of him and his family and what they've done to terrorize people in our community. I'm just so sick of it. I want it to stop. I want to it stop in our community and other communities where you have those people terrorizing innocent people. I'm -- I'm done with it, and -- but, you know, like, that man that was standing there, that's the one, that's the name that keeps coming up. The one story that's consistent
is that my sister was partying with these guys in her
garage. Sometime during the night, she [sic] got into an
argument with her. He punched her. He knocked her out.
He put her outside. She froze to death. That's the one
consistent thing that we're hearing all the time. We
cannot get people to come forward and make those statements
because they're scared of him and his family and what they
do. They know the system all too well. The system is so
messed. That man has done so much to people in our
community, and nobody will stand up to him and make a
statement and say the wrongdoing that he's done to them
because when they make statements, they get terrorized by
his family. Their -- his family will even make statements
to say that he wasn't there, and the way our system is,
well, if you've got ten statements saying an individual
wasn't there, but the victim knows that that
person -- exactly what it was that they did to them, who's
the judges going to believe? That's how messed up our
system is, and that's where my sister's caught in between.

There was no investigation. There was
nothing. We hear the stories about how one of the guards
mentions that they had picked up this man later on the day
that my sister was found. He was freaking out in the cell
wanting to talk to one of his sisters, so they get his
sisters there. They start talking Cree. After she leaves,
the guy just totally calms down. He's reported as having all these scratches all over his chest, all over the -- his upper torso of his body. She leaves. Few hours later, you hear all these other rumors. She's running around town trying to get somebody to burn down my sister's garage. We hear that it was one of her brothers that eventually did it.

Now, you know, it's -- it just seems like it's a story that's come together for us because -- like what my brothers have said, what my sister said. People are coming to us and telling us all these things all the time. Throughout that, this is what we've been able to put together, and I -- and in my brilliance, always wanting to believe in the good and that there's always a way and -- you know what, we're going to get to the end of this, we're going to find out what's going on, and when we went to the RCMP, no, we need those people to come and make statements. Lianna, we know your family's going through a really hard time. I'm thinking, like, no, don't give me that. Don't do that to me. Don't do that to us.

And then so I called Crime Stoppers, you know, and I said, hey, you know what, if nobody wants to give statements, they can phone and give these tips and our family will give money, and, you know, somebody is going to eventually come clean and go -- they can -- they can give
these statements and the tips and everything, and they
don't ever have to give up their names so they're safe.
It's going be okay. So I phoned Crime Stoppers, and I tell
them what happened to my sister, and they said, well, you
know, we don't really take that information from the
public. We have to call the local police detachment and
get the specifics to be able to print as a part of the
Crime Stoppers report. I says, okay, great. I says, you
know what, I says, and you let them know, I says, you know,
our family's going put money towards, like, you know,
trying to get to any kind of information forward on this.

They call me back. Well, you know what,
Lianna, we're sorry, we can't do this because we talked to
the RCMP detachment in Leaf Rapids. They don't suspect
foul play. They know that your sister was partying and
that she died of exposure, so there's no need to do a
Crime Stoppers report, and I'm just like, what? Are you
kidding me? Really? And I'm thinking, like, well, what
about her garage? Not even a few hours after they found
her, her garage -- like, Leaf Rapids is known for violence,
bootlegging, drug-dealing, all the domestic and sexual
assaults that gone there. Like, that's the norm in our
community. That's the norm in all of our communities
because we don't have the programs and services. It's not
known for arson. We worry about forest fires, but not
arson. And you know what? When my sister's garage, they deemed it was arson, no investigation. I went to the deputy fire chief. I said, I want to know why you didn't call in the Fire Commissioner. He said, Lianna, he said the RCMP called it off. They deemed that it was arson, there was no need for the Fire Commissioner to come in. The RCMP over a telephone conversation with the Chief Medical Examiner's office when they had my sister laying on the ground told the Chief Medical Examiner's office that -- you know, the basic conversation that she likely froze to death. In those moments when they made that initial contact with the Chief Medical Examiner's office, they determined how the potential autopsy was going to go.

When Crime Stoppers contacted them, you know, to -- to get posters up, to get people -- to give them the freedom to be able to get out the information that they knew about what happened with my sister, the RCMP stopped Crime Stoppers from getting involved. When the Fire Commissioner's office should have come in, the RCMP told them, no, we know it's arson. They didn't come in. The RCMP, when they found my 4- and 7-year-old nieces alone in that house, they could have called CFS. They could have called some kind of support. They did nothing. Who the hell gives the RCMP that much power? Who allows them to get away with what it is that they're doing? Who -- who
Hearing - Public
Anderson Pyrz, Anderson et al (Dawn Anderson)

... gave them the -- the power to be the judge, the jury, the
investigators or -- or lack of?

Now I'm angry. I didn't want to be angry
doing this, but it angers me because there's something
wrong with the system in the way that it works and what's
not being done.

I look at my nieces, you know, and the
long-term care for them, and -- you know, and how we
approach it. How do we talk to them about what they seen
that night, about what happened, about how we can draw that
information out of them because to me, they are probably
the prime witnesses of what potentially happened. Like,
where did my niece see that her mother's neck was broken
and it was going like this, and when she seen her mother in
the coffin, that it appeared that her neck was fixed? My
nieces tell me that the man that everybody talks about,
that he knocked my sister out and put her outside and she
froze to death. My nieces tell me that earlier that
morning, he cooked them breakfast, and then he left, and
then the RCMP came.

My aunt who lives next door to my sister
tells me, like, the night before my sister's passing that
Dawn came over there twice because -- well, we find out now
that her phone was ripped out of her wall, but she came
over to their -- she came over to her place twice to use
the phone to phone the police to -- she said that there was
the devil. She wanted that man out of her house, and she
said the police never came. It's a small town, you know.
We're talking about 5, 600 people. Everybody watches what
happens to -- as soon as you see lights at night, everybody
jumps up at the window and looks out. Like, you know,
it's -- that's how we are in small community, and my aunt
said the police never came.

When you look at -- you know, even where
we -- where we said about, you know -- it's always in the
north. Like, you know, you always see those RCMP
communications. Like, you know -- you know, man found
deceased, frozen to death, like, you know, and this age or
that age and everything else. You see those communications
coming out all the time in the north. Nothing, absolutely
nothing came out about my sister Dawn. The only thing that
ended up coming out after I believe some time after we had
the report from the Commissioner's office is they said that
there was a fire. They put that as an RCMP thing that they
put out.

We put up posters, everything. We went all
over social media asking anybody and everybody, like, to
stop calling my mom, to come to me, to come to my sister,
to my brothers and give us the information but not to go to
my mom, and a lot of the stuff that we heard, we kept it
from my mom, but my mom's very resourceful. She ended up finding out a lot of stuff on her own.

Like, the system is so, so, so broken. When I have the doctor that was in our community, and he tells me that he was so disturbed that he never heard from the RCMP that somebody was found outside supposedly froze to death, you know, that they didn't contact him, they didn't tell him anything, that he was so disturbed with that that he ended up getting a hold of the Burntwood Regional Health Authority at the time -- that's what it was called, but now it's the Northern Regional Health Authority -- getting hold of the supervisor there, and -- like, you know, and telling him what happened in the community because he was so disturbed with it that it was not normal, that it wasn't right what happened.

And, you know, I see that family. They cannot look me in the eye. You know, I see that man daily, like, you know, when I'm at home, and I'm thinking, like, what gives you that right, you know? The system gives him that right. That man has a track record like you wouldn't believe. He's very well known for always wearing steel-toed boots. Like, how the hell does our system allow for somebody like that who's so violent in knowing how they are towards other people to continuously wear steel-toed boots? We always have people who come forward and tell us,
oh, did you hear he beat up this person? Oh, did you hear what he did to this person? Oh, did you hear what he did over here in threatening somebody else? And I'm thinking, yeah, I've heard it all. I've been through it. My family's been through it. My mom lives it because the system allows for it.

You know, recently, my -- one of my cousins passed away in Leaf Rapids. When they found my sister Dawn, within the hour after finding her, they bagged her up, put her in the back of the truck, put her in the garage, called Boardman Funeral Home, they came and picked her and up called my brother to the RCMP station, told him that she had passed, didn't give him the opportunity to go and honour her, to see her.

A month ago, my sister passed away in Leaf -- my cousin passed away in Leaf Rapids, and I was so touched and so, you know, in awe with the respect that my late cousin was given. When they found her, immediately the RCMP went and picked up her oldest daughter and brought her to the scene and got her to identify her mom. You know, the ambulance was called, and she was taken, and from what I understand, they took -- they eventually took her to the RCMP station because they don't have a morgue or a cold room or anything like that at the clinic in Leaf, and the family was called. They had prayers. They had song. They
smudged my cousin. They were able to see her, to touch
her. They were able to see her go. This is the same
detachment that I just described that treated my sister the
same way, although there's different officers there now and
stuff like that. This is an institution, for God's sakes.
Do they not have rules, regulations, processes that they
all follow? Apparently not.

Like, you know, I -- I look at the -- the
RCMP officer who found my sister. You know, he
eventually -- from the time that they found her, he ended
up taking some time off, stress leave. He ended up taking
vacation leave and within months was transferred outside
the community. Hm. I wonder why? Could it be when he
found her, he boggled up the whole situation and should
have did something differently? Could it be from that
point that they messed up royally by not calling the
ambulance, the doctor, and by doing some of the stuff that
they did, that they ended up a major cover-up in acting
like it was nothing and that it was going to go away?
Well, they obviously do not know my family. They do not
know the children that my mother raised. We're not going
to give up. We're not letting this go. There is major,
major red flags going up all around with this. This is the
story that we've been able to put up with -- put together
with the information that we've received from people coming
to us in the community, and all I have to ask myself is how
in this day and age does stuff like this happen?

My sister was partying with somebody. She
has a big heart. She lets anybody in. That night,
unfortunately, she let the wrong person into her home. As
story would have it, he knocked her out, put her outside,
and she froze to death, but as the system would have it,
she was drunk, she passed out, and she froze to death. How
does that happen? And how is it that nobody else seems to
think that the way the RCMP shut down the investigation
from the very moments that they found my sister,
influencing the Chief Medical Examiner to be able to make a
decision on the phone, influencing the -- the -- what do
you call it -- Fire Commissioner's office, Crime Stoppers?
The RCMP did all that. Who -- who gave them that much
power? I'd like to know. It's wrong, and it has to stop.

You know, I look at this, and I look at what
happened with my sister. I said it before, and I'll say it
again. I know this happened to my family for a reason. We
are strong. We work together. We stick together. And as
you can see, we pulled out all stops. When the RCMP
wouldn't do their investigation, we started our own. We
started collecting information from people, the stories, to
be able to put together the story the way that we have it
because nothing else is telling us that anything else
happened. When the RCMP wouldn't do their job, we tried holding them accountable. We went to the Public Complaints Commission. They stood up for them. They backed them up. No wrongdoing. I went to Crime Stoppers to try and engage a different process. The RCMP shut that down.

   We tried. We've pulled out a lot of stops, and even up to a couple months ago, you heard my brother -- Melvin and Dennis talk about an individual even still coming forward to this day about stories about what happened to my sister that night, and still, nothing. No investigation, nothing.

   Like, what does it take? I don't understand. I need to understand. When you're hearing these stories -- we're not making them up. This is not Hollywood. We're not doing any kind of major film production here. This is real life. This is what we face in the north in our communities.

   I look at my two nieces. They were 4 and 7 at the time, you know, and what they were able to put together and how they look at this and -- you know, and all they remember is -- and what I remember is the dreams and the memories that they had of their mother; you know, how they would wake up, like I said, you know, and I'd hear them crying, and I'd go to their bed, and they would start fighting me, like, why are you here? I want to go back
know mom's. I just seen her. She's at home. I don't want to be here. I want to go home to my mom. That's what their dreams tell them because they don't understand death at that time, and our system just doesn't seem to care about 4- and 7-year-old little girls.

Like, even in the sheer moments that my nieces were found alone in that house, the RCMP -- you would think such a mega corporation in this country would somehow find the resources to say, you know what, those little girls, something must -- they must have seen something, they were traumatized, you know, whatever might have happened, and say, you know what, here, Anderson family, look, we -- there's these services, here's these outlets, you know, you guys, you -- you can use all of these to help with your family to get through this. Absolutely nothing. Nothing like that at all. It's wrong. It's wrong. Thank you.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Hilda.

MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ: I just --

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Hilda. Sorry.

MR. KEITH ANDERSON: I just want to add something there to Lianna's talking about, like, with my nieces. Okay, they're getting up in age and everything else. What's going to happen when the light bulb goes on with these little girls and they recall what happened? You
know, it might not right now, but what happens in the
future when that light bulb goes on? And then -- and if
they want to sit there and say something or whatever it is,
pertaining to my sister's death, what are they going to
tell her? It's not legit? You were a little kid? What?
I just wanted to add that. Something to think about.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Hilda, I believe
you're going to turn to some recommendations?

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** But one -- okay.

One thing I just wanted to share is there's major impacts
to us as family members, as well, on what happened the
night my sister died. Like, a prime example, my mom's
health has really deteriorated since losing my sister, you
know, dealing with all the stress, and my older sister who
couldn't be here, she suffered a breakdown as a result of
my sister dying, but she's recovering now, and she's doing
a lot better; and my two nieces, I was the one who told
them that their mom was gone, and I see my oldest niece.
She's socially awkward. She suffers from depression.
She's trying to find her way because she remembers the most
about her mother. We've gotten my nieces a lot of
counseling and therapy, but nothing will ever replace their
mother.

      And I find, like, far too often -- like, I'm
going to go into some recommendations as well -- when it
comes to our missing and murdered Indigenous women and
girls that children are often left behind. They're
forgotten. There's no real resources in place for them.

And I also wanted to share one important thing. The night that -- I can't remember exactly if it
was the night before or the day of, my younger sister
called my oldest sister, and I think that was a big
contributing factor to her breakdown. She told her, if
anything ever happens to me, don't ever let it go. She
says, look to that family, and my sister always felt so
responsible because she couldn't reach anybody to check on
my sister because everybody was out of town or -- and my
brother was out on the lake or the river during the
wintertime doing his trapping.

It's -- there's devastating impacts to each
and every one of us. I suffered a long time from anxiety
after my sister died. I still do sometimes.

And I feel that's why it's so important that
we go into recommendations as to what can be done better
for Indigenous women and girls and Indigenous people in
general, so I feel that, you know, one of the key things,
as soon as something happens, there needs to be mental
health supports for MMIWG family members and survivors who
are traumatized and that are in crisis that is culturally
appropriate, safe, and includes both short-term and
long-term care.

Wrap-around support services such as mental health education and mentoring for children of MMIWG families that is culturally appropriate, safe, and includes both short-term and long-term care.

Create opportunities for Indigenous men to reclaim the roles and responsibilities as protectors of the family. Start the teachings when children are young in their home and at school. This will provide them with the opportunity to understand their roles as men and as life-givers.

Create healing circles for men and boys that includes healthy masculinity.

Create 24/7 safe spaces for Indigenous women and girls in urban and rural and in First Nation communities.

Strengthening and empowering programs for Indigenous women and girls in our First Nation rural and urban centres.

Reclaiming Indigenous languages and identity; knowing who you are, your culture, and your language.

Healing centres in all First Nation communities, healing from intergenerational trauma and addictions.
Parent parenting programs that are culturally appropriate.

Awareness campaigns on sexual abuse and sexual violence.

Awareness campaigns on domestic violence.

Antiracism campaigns specific Indigenous women and girls.

Safety training and school curriculum for First Nations in rural areas and areas such as internet safety in an urban area, safe relationships, predator behaviors, gang awareness, drug awareness, human-trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Access to affordable safe housing in First Nation in urban areas and rural areas.

Opportunities for employment and training for Indigenous women and girls.

Access to quality education in our First Nation communities for Grades K to 12; also opportunities in our First Nation communities for post-secondary education.

Access to child care.

Culturally appropriate training for media, and I just wanted to elaborate more on media. Media can be really instrumental in changing the views on how Canada views Indigenous women and girls. They could show, you
know, how gifted we are, how loved we are, that we're mother, daughter, sisters, aunties. You know, I feel that they can create a lot of social change on how we're perceived because we are worthy. You know, we're loved, we're valued, we're respected, and I feel that media can play a big part in that instead of, you know, headlines that label us and that makes society say it's okay, you know, to kill us or to kidnap us.

Family resource centres in all First Nation communities.

Women shelters and second-stage housing available in First Nation communes, because we know in Manitoba that there's only four shelters in the 63 First Nations here, and there's no second-stage housing, so that really needs to be addressed because a lot of our women and girls are experiencing violence.

Tool kits for Indigenous women and girls on various subjects that impact Indigenous women and girls.

And this is key too: Changing government policies and legislation that discriminates against Indigenous women and girls, and creating and enacting legislation that protects Indigenous women and girls against discrimination and violence.

National public awareness campaigns that showcase the strengths, gifts, and the beauty of Indigenous
women and girls.

Reclaiming balance in our communities, bringing birthing back to our communities, educating on the sacredness of pregnancy and celebrating the gift of life.

Mentorship programs between Indigenous women for Indigenous girls.

Review of police practices and the justice system and the impacts both have had on MMIWG families and survivors.

Culturally appropriate victim service programs for First Nations.

Access to legal representation for Indigenous women and girls and families, as well, because I find it's hard to, you know, go against a system if you're living in extreme poverty yourself. How are you going to find the means to fight such a huge machine?

And funding and resources dedicated to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and especially with our women who have gone missing. You know, families are struggling to find the resources to search for that missing loved one. I see it, and I know families personally who are impacted by this, and I see their struggles, and my heart breaks for them. You know, we need to have -- sadly, because it's so common that we have so many missing Indigenous girls here in Canada. Why has
there been no mechanism developed specifically, you know, to address this, to ensure that those resources are immediately on the ground for those family members and for those searches? Because time is critical, you know, when we have a missing Indigenous woman or girl. You know, that could potentially find her and save her life.

And I also wanted to share, like, you know, it just boggles my mind that we live in this country called Canada, even my own relatives who live in South Indian Lake in Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, my own family members, they're living in third-world conditions. They're struggling to survive. They're not even having their basic human rights met. You know, I'm ashamed of Canada. You know, like, why is this happening? But yet, we're on an international stage showcasing that we're such a good country? If we're such a good country, then governments need to step up to the plate and ensure that those basic means of survival are provided to our First Nation communities.

And I also wanted to say that, you know, it's important for -- like one of the grandmothers said, and she's actually sitting right behind me, she said, you know, this National Inquiry is our one opportunity to tell our stories and to create that change, and many of us in the Indigenous community or even our non-Indigenous friends
feel that we'll never have another opportunity like this again, so it needs to be done right, and it needs to be meaningful to families and survivors, you know, and I commend Commissioner Audette for the work that she's doing, and -- like, the process has been a struggle, but it's very difficult, you know, to make a machine this huge, you know, flourish with a 2-year mandate, to ensure that people who matter the most are included and their voices are heard, so I think if an extension is granted, it has to be granted on the basis of, like, hearing the voices of MMIWG family members and survivors on what the process should look like, and then acting on those recommendations as well.

I don't think I have any other things to add.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can I ask one question?

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** Sure.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I -- I notice you're reading this off of something -- I notice that you're reading off of a paper, but it's something you prepared for something else. Is it possible for you -- to send us the --

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** Yes, yes.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** -- the written one?

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON PYRZ:** Definitely. Like,
sharing all these recommendations -- these are not my
recommendations. I work with MMIWG families and survivors.
These are things I've heard them say repeatedly to
governments, you know, to different circles that they're
in, that these are changes that they want to see, but what
I think is so sad is we don't see a lot of these things
being implemented, even though they're -- they've been
repeatedly shared by MMIWG family members and survivors.
It doesn't take, like, you know, a lot to implement some of
these things. Some of them are very basic, and it just
boggles my mind as to why, you know, provincial and federal
governments have not acted on this, these recommendations,
that have been shared repeatedly, not only by me but by,
like, several other MMIWG family members and survivors
across the country.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** It's -- thank you,
everyone in the family, for sharing today, and -- I mean,
you just exemplify what a strong family unit is, the way
you comfort each other, the way you're finishing each
other's sentences. I wanted to offer Commissioner Audette
an opportunity to ask questions or make comments.

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** (Speaking in
native language). This is where I wish my English would be
very, very at the same as your second language, I guess,
English, where everything was there. Everything in your
message, your words. It was very obvious that Canada
failed on your family and your sister, the system, starting
when your sister called for help, and to the -- it's sad
you have to be here. You have to be here.

So -- and I'll do my best. You know, my
English, Hilda, so it'll come from the heart, and we have
so many --

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I'll translate for
her.

(.LAUGHTER)

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Merci. I
have to say thank you for all of you. I didn't know you.
I had the privilege to meet your sister in another
capacity, in another life, but always because we lost a
loved one or we have a survivor in our family, and not long
ago, she was in New York. Your voice resonate at the U.N.
about what's going on here in 2018 here in Canada, so you
have quite a leader in your family, but I see that you're
not alone. Very articulate, very passionate, very
dedicated, very -- something needs to change, and
Lillian -- you talk -- Lillian?

**MS. LIANNA ANDERSON:** Lianna.

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Lianna.

Lianna, sorry, you talk about I didn't want to come here
with anger or I didn't want to -- well, I don't think you
need -- I don't know how you can come here without that
anger. After all what you explained to us, describe and
teach us, us here in this room but also across Canada;
people are watching, people are listening, not only our
families and survivors or friends, but we have some allies,
you know that, but also we have government people following
the work of this Inquiry, watching or listening. It depend
how we want to see it. So we cannot say everywhere we go
that it -- it's not happening or it was an isolated case.
You're right. It's -- this -- there's something wrong.
The system is wrong. You mention it, and all your
recommendation, it's something we need to honour. This
Inquiry, we will receive that. I will fight, and I know my
colleagues will support this, that very clear, very -- very
specific and targeted for real good reason or sad reason,
but your recommendation are based on, you said it, too many
meetings that you attend, circle, event, or gathering, so
there it is, for me, it's powerful, very, very powerful,
and I will do everything to make sure that in our report,
our report, we like it or not, there's a possibility here
to create that chapter that needs to happen where Manitoba
government is also accountable, where a municipality is
also accountable, our own Indigenous government is also
accountable, our people, but citizen of Canada, huh, you
mention about this country, they have the power to change,
also.

So I hope your voice was heard in those kitchen, houses, offices, people that are listening right now, your message, that they cannot deny anymore. They can't. They can be part, though, of that change that we need to have, we need to see and witness. So this is what I -- I -- me, for me, now, I will do to make sure that those recommendation are part of that report, calls for action.

I am shocked to hear that in your territory here up north -- I'm from the north. I don't know. My trees are smaller than yours, but it's the same cold.

(LAUGHTER)

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Where there's only three shelter -- four, sorry -- to protect the women and the children.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And all three of them (indiscernible) Manitoba.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Yeah.

All -- all Manitoba?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. In Quebec, we have 14 on 58 First Nations -- Indigenous communities, and it's not enough.
Four, it's unacceptable. It's -- I mean, I am shocked to hear that, so I hope I'm not the only one shocked to hear that, but it hope it doesn't stay there.

I still, again, going to repeat what I said this morning: Any government who is listening right now, we don't need to have the report of this important Inquiry to do some action that you mentioned now, so I hope they listen.

The other thing, also, I did receive all your evidence. For me, this is evidence, and this is truth; this is fact. I will carefully read it. I know my colleagues will do it because we have to read all the testimonies that families share to us or give us, and if we have question, and I'm sure we'll do, we have an opportunity in this journey, also, to show -- comment on dit en anglais -- what Wendy is doing, the work of Wendy, forensic review -- see, English -- and what went wrong and why. Canada needs to know what went wrong and why. They need to know, also, did we do the same thing to a Canadian woman? Did we treat her family the same way that we treated our Indigenous women? Canada needs to know that, so we have that responsibility. That's how I see my role as a Commissioner, so merci beaucoup, beaucoup, beaucoup, and I'm learning from you how the resilience and the strength but how you cope with that anger, and you're so
united, and you have a strong sister, but I see you're not alone.

And your mom, to have all your children supporting you, being there with you, it's -- so many moms don't have that, or too many mothers and fathers don't have that, so I hope that people see that it's important to be surrounded by love and by families, and, also, you mentioned how important that people are there to support the families, and this is what saved us. We got lost when we lost somebody. Who was the best person to support it -- us was the family or a survivor. I want to say thank you. (speaking in native language).

Oui. There is something we do everywhere we go across Canada. We ask the family first if you would accept on behalf of the National Inquiry a gift, a gift, and this gift, there is a history, where it came and why it came, and it became a beautiful tradition.

We follow protocols everywhere we go. I even learn each time I go to a place, some went to a lodge, a sweat lodge, or they were (indiscernible) with sage, and we have our grandmother Bernie, usually, who explain this beautiful gift, and I'll ask --

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** She asked me to, if it's okay.

**COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:** She asked you
to do it? Okay. Can you do it?

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you. The matriarchs from Haida Gwaii, so one of the grandmothers, Bernie, is from Haida Gwaii, and the matriarchs from her region -- oh, actually, she is coming out.

COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: Thank you, Maître Big Canoe.

MS. BERNIE WILLIAMS POITRAS: Sorry. I'm busy tying eagle feathers in there.

I just want to -- first, we were listening to you and to your family, just my, you know, heartfelt -- you know, for your family. I don't know what it feels like. I fully agree with you, though, that -- that the system has to change, and it's very one-sided.

I want to also share about the feathers, that these feathers started its journey from my home in Haida Gwaii, and the families across -- across this beautiful land of ours here, and the people in this territory, the spiritual people who have so kindly donated these eagle feathers for the families. Families have also donated all across Canada, and we're just really honoured to give this to you as a gift on behalf of the Commissioners, the Grandmothers, the Elders. I want to say haw'aa to you again. Haw'aa.
COMMISSIONER MICHELLE AUDETTE: Merci.

Another thing I forgot to say, Hilda, about having more voices from families and survivors in this journey, you're right. You're right, and everywhere I go, it is important that the people from your land welcome us and help me in this journey, but, also, the families. You know, some people will say "expert." For me, you're the expert, so yes, from inside, you have an allies who says we have to have more families that help us and guide us in this important and unique journey, so you have my support for that. I forgot to mention that. Thank you.

So I would to ask our sister if she has few words for you. Darlene.

MS. DARLENE OSBORNE: (Speaking in Native language). I thank you, the Anderson family, and I admire your mom. She's so lucky to still have her daughters and her sons, and that was missing in our -- in our family circle. I come from a big family, my husband's family, the Osborne family, and that was missing, and it had to be me and my husband to lead the circle, and we had to take care of our grandchildren.

As one of you mention, what's going to happen with the -- when they grow up, and that was our first question when -- when Felicia -- when we lost Felicia. You know, Renata is going to be a teenager, you
know. They were just small kids when we lost Felicia.

Today, we are struggling. Still, we are struggling because they turn to heavy drugs, and that's what's controlling their lives, but we're not going to give up. We are a strong family, and from my family to yours, we'll continue supporting our families and our -- and our loved ones, our children, especially our grandkids. Those are the ones that we have to take care of. You just mentioned, they were 4 and 7. Ours were about the same age, 2 and 3, and today we see them wasting their lives with drugs and alcohol, and most -- most of our adults are my brothers and my sisters and my sister-in-law, brother-in-laws, they -- they live a sober life, but they don't live a happy life because they're still struggling because we haven't had any closure, but we will. I'm so happy that we had this Inquiry in the north because we all felt that we were the forgotten people of the north, so let's stick together and support each other. (Speaking in Native language).

COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: Merci. Thank you. Merci.

(GIVING OF GIFTS)

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I think it's on, yeah. Can we get the witness mic on, please?

MS. MINNIE ANDERSON: Hello?

(LAUGHTER)
MS. MINNIE ANDERSON: I want to -- I want to thank everybody for this meeting that we've had, and it's a good thing that it -- that we had it because it'll help out a lot of people with the missing women and girls and for the children that have lost their mothers. I want to thank you all. Thank you very much.

MS. SHEILA NORTH: Tansi. Sheila North, (speaking in Native language).

Thank you for -- for coming here and, you know, being with our families here in the north. My name is Sheila North. I'm the Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, and I'm also from the Bunibonibee Cree Nation just over there.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. SHEILA NORTH: Not that far. It's an honour and a privilege for me to be here this morning, and I know it's a -- a very sacred but also sad time to be with the families. I wanted to bring you greetings on behalf of all of our Chiefs and councils that we work with in the north, the 30 communities that I represent, and about 72,000 people in this region. It's a beautiful area, and I'm always happy and glad to be coming home when I come this way. I don't come home enough, but when I do, it's a peaceful place, and I'm -- I'm glad that you're here to experience the beauty and the love that we have, despite
the challenges that -- that we carry and -- and have
to -- to deal with. You can see the strength and the
resilience of our families who just carry the pain, and
you'll hear more of them from different stories, and it's
too bad that we have to bring them out this way.

I -- I'm very grateful, though, that the
Inquiry has made it up here. I -- I don't want to get too
political because this is a time and place for families to
share their stories and a time for some of the -- you know,
the concerns that I hear from families will be dealt with
in a different way, but I thank you for coming.

I -- I do have a sense -- you know, we hear
a lot about closure, closure, people want closure, and I
hear all the time from families, too, and I can understand
that more now in my -- my father, Gilbert North, Gilbert
Street North, he's from Cross Lake, but he raised us in
Oxford House, and I was telling Counsellor Osborne about
it, and her sister, about my -- my grandmother, my dad's
mom. She was taken to a TB asylum when my dad was a
teenager because she had TB, and so they took her away
to -- to OC -- or The Pas, and then my -- my dad and his
grandparents lost track of her, and the family never knew
where she was, and what happened was she was taken to
Birtle, just near Brandon, and then after that, she was
taken to Brandon where she died, but she delivered a baby
at that time, and that baby was taken by a family in Minnedosa.

But my dad was 75 this past fall. All those years when he was a teenager -- think he said he was 15 -- to 75 years old, he never heard or found out what happened to his mother. He never knew where she was. Nobody knew where she was. The Government knew because they put her in a grave in Brandon, but we had no idea, and my cousins and my aunties who are very relentless, like this family, they -- they kept digging, and they kept asking questions, and they put it on Facebook, and someone finally -- a volunteer researcher from near Brandon found records of -- of grave sites, and they found my grandmother, and they just found her this fall -- this past fall, so in September, October, around then. That's when we knew where she was, and we went to have -- my parents and my family went to have a little ceremony at the grave site, and somebody donated a headstone, and that was the first time my dad said he had any sense of closure, all those years, not knowing where his mother was, and yet he hid that pain from his family and raised a good family and always treated my mom with respect.

And that's the beauty and resilience, but also, that's the pain and reality our people face. They carry a lot of pain, and it -- it's not right in this
country that it happens because we -- we have a persona
that Canada's so wonderful and peaceful and -- and kind,
and yet we hear about these stories, and we hear about what
happened to others.

I had a chance to -- to reflect on that when
we went to New York to talk about this issue just last
week, and I was encouraged to know that we are leaders in
this topic in the world, and that's one thing I took away
and I feel encouraged by, but it doesn't take away the
pain.

And when you talk about closure, my
dad -- he passed away in October, and I think when we talk
about it now, my sisters and my mom and I and our family,
we think that he was waiting for that closure. He wanted
to find out where his mother was, and all -- a lot of times
he carried the pain and also talked about how angry he was,
but he never told us. It was my mom who told us later, and
he didn't -- it doesn't seem like he was ready -- ready to
leave this world until he had some closure, and when he
finally got it, he felt at peace to go, and he -- he left
in October, and when I say that, it doesn't sound real
because I feel like I could still call him, but -- but I'm
grateful that we're having this opportunity because it's
important. It's all the families ever wanted was to be
validated, to be heard and to be listened to, but we have
to go beyond that. We know the stories, we know the struggles, and it's upon all of us and the Inquiry to start identifying the reasons why this thing -- these things keep happening; the systems, all of the systems, policing, CFS, health, government systems, policies and all that are hurting and hindering the lives of our people, and that has to stop, and I hope, that -- you know, that -- that the leadership at the Inquiry will -- will see -- will have a really clear picture so you can relay it to -- relay it to Canada and the world of where the problems are and then, you know, talk about the solutions that you're hearing from the families because we know the solutions. We want to take care of ourselves. We have the right to take care of ourselves, and we -- we want to do that, and it's high time.

So that's where I'll leave it. I want to encourage everyone that's here to be brave. I know you are already. I'm hearing that there's different people here from different parts of Canada that are here to tell their stories, too, so I'm really surprised and -- you know, it's very -- it's encouraging to see so many people coming together to -- to share their grief, but I wish the rest of the Inquiry well and the rest of the families well, and thank you, and -- and Hilda for sharing your story, as well, and the whole story and Minnie. Thank you. It was
very nice to meet you.

Yeah, and that's it. Thank you very much to all of your staff that are here and all the support staff from the region, as well, and all the Elders.

(Speaking in Native language). Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Merci.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Commissioner Audette, before we actually have an adjournment, before the -- before the next family -- or survivors before us, I notice that some of the health support staff and others are standing there with drums, and usually what that means is they want to circle the family with love and drum, and so if the family could sit here. I don't know if Jade (ph) or someone wants to -- Bernie? Sorry. Warrior Women. Warrior Women. Did you have a microphone? I'm actually going to join them, guys, too, so -- I'm going to grab my drum there (indiscernible).

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right. This is a song that we sing for strength. It's a song to remind us that especially as Indigenous women that we are warriors. It's a song that came to Martina Pierre from the Lilooet Nation in B.C. in a sweat about 30 years ago. It's never to be sung in anger, and we sing it to cleanse you. We sing it not just to shower you with love and strength but with comfort and peace because you've done some good
hard work here today, and we choose to honour you with one
of -- with one of our treasures, with one of our songs, to
raise our hands and to say hiatsha (ph) for leading the
way for so many other families to be brave.

(SINGING AND DRUMMING)

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I just ask that we
have a 10-minute break before the -- 10 or 15? What's your
preference? Ten or 15?

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: No, I don't
make that call.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Ten. So a 10-minute
break before we have the next witness up.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Merci.
--- Exhibits (code: P01P14P0101)

Exhibit 1: Folder of 20 images displayed during the
public testimony of the family.

[Exhibit 1]

Exhibit 2: Family video of Dawn Anderson, 11.1 MB MP4
file, 3 minutes 36 seconds.

[Exhibit 2]

Exhibit 3: Folder of 20 images displayed during the
public testimony of the family.

[Exhibit 3]
Hearing - Public
Hilda Anderson Pyrz, Dennis Anderson, Keith Anderson, Carol Wood, Lianna Anderson, Melvin Anderson, Minnie Anderson & Arla Taia (Dawn Anderson)

Exhibit 4: Family video of Dawn Anderson, 11.1 MB MP4 file, 3 minutes 36 seconds.

--- Upon adjourning at 2:53 p.m.
I, Jenessa Leriger, 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.

Jenessa Leriger

May 10, 2018