Public Volume 86

Minnie Kenoras, Johanne Buffalo
& Chief Judy Wilson,
In relation to Julia Kenoras

Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson
Commission Counsel: Thomas Barnett
II

APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations

Government of British Columbia

Sara Pye (Legal counsel)

Government of Canada

Donna Keats (Legal counsel)

Heiltsuk First Nation

No Appearance

Northwest Indigenous Council Society

No Appearance

Our Place - Ray Cam Co-operative Centre

No Appearance

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

Beth Symes (Legal Counsel)

Vancouver Sex Workers’ Rights Collective

No Appearance

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation

No Appearance
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MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Good morning, Commissioner. My name is Thomas Barnett. I'm from the Lac La Ronge, Cree Nation. My community is Sucker River. It’s just north of -- or, sorry, just west of La Ronge. I'm a lawyer with the National Inquiry, and we are here today to hear the story of Minnie Kenoras.

Before we get started, I'm just going to introduce everyone from left to right. To my left, we have Jody Leon. She is here as a support for Minnie. To my right, we have the daughter of Minnie, Johanne Buffalo. And then to her right, we have Minnie Kenoras. And then directly beside her is Chief Judy Wilson who is Secwépemc Nation, also the daughter of Minnie. She is here to share some recommendations and also provide support for her mother. To her right, we have Doreen Manuel -- sorry, Emily Manuel, my apologies. She is here to support Minnie. And then to her right, we have Doreen Manuel. She is here in support of Minnie as well.

So, who we will be hearing from today, of course, is Minnie Kenoras in the middle, Red Star. I understand that she would like to swear on both the Bible and the eagle feather. Johanne Buffalo, who is seated to my right, Red Star, I understand would like to swear on a
Bible and the eagle feather on top as well. And, Red Star, Chief Judy Wilson, would like to swear on an eagle feather.

MR. CHRISTIAN ROCK: Johanne, do you promise to tell the truth of your story in a good way today?

MS. JOHANNE BUFFALO: Yes, I do.

MR. CHRISTIAN ROCK: Thank you.

Minnie, do you promise to tell the truth of your story in a good way today?

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Yes, I do.

MR. CHRISTIAN ROCK: Thank you. Judy, do you promise to tell the truth of your story ---

CHIEF JUDY WILSON: Yes, I do.

MR. CHRISTIAN ROCK: --- in a good way today? Thank you.

MR. THOMAS BENNETT: Commissioner, I understand that Chief Judy Wilson has some recommendations for the Commission. She does have a flight that she needs to be on. (Technical difficulties) Commissioner, I understand that Chief Judy Wilson has some recommendations for the inquiry. I understand that you have a flight that you need to catch at 10:30. And so, we're actually going to begin by Chief Judy Wilson reading those recommendations into the record.

CHIEF JUDY WILSON: Thank you so much for being on the traditional territories of our coastal
nations, Dawson, Commish, relatives in Commish. And, we're very honoured to be here today to talk to the National Inquiry about my sister, Julia Manuel, our younger sister of six sisters and two brothers. And, my mother is Monique Norris, and my father is Joe Manuel, Sr. We're from the Secwepemc Nation in the interior of B.C. And, our mother is the main speaker here today, but I'm permitted to speak on some of the recommendations from our family.

Our family, like many other families across Canada and the nations were removed from our territorial lands and forced onto reserves that equal no more than 0.02 per cent of our territorial lands. The government or the Crown illegally assumes title for 99.8 per cent of our lands.

This was the start of the genocidal policy and legislation against our people in Canada. This is colonialism. Our children were removed and forced into residential schools. This broke down our families and our governing systems. It was replaced by Indian Affairs Act and resulting programs and services that made our people dependent on the government.

The statistics speak for themselves, the high rates of apprehensions of our children in the state welfare system, poor health and education and incarceration of our men, women and youth, especially the missing
murdered women and girls, including our men and boys.

The statement from our family today and our experience of how our sister was murdered at a young age is one of many thousands and thousands of stories across Canada. The National Inquiry is a hearing, is only a fraction of these survivor and family stories. There are many voices that will remain unheard, sadly.

Our family will continue to advocate and support the many issues our women and girls continue to experience. Regrettably, change will only come by lifting the veil of colonialism and our recognition of our people's title and rights, so that we can reaffirm our identities and our way of life.

Our key recommendations to the Commissioners for the National Inquiry of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls are we need more than just programs and services. What is needed is systemic change for violence against our women and girls from the level right from the police to the high levels of government.

We don't believe the National Inquiry alone will change what's happening to the lives of our Indigenous women and girls. The hope is that at least more awareness to what is happening is gained and for the recommendations not -- to be implemented, not to sit on a shelf in Ottawa.

Each day, our women and girls are preyed
upon across Canada. They live in fear and they cannot walk alone. Women and girls can continually go missing and murdered each day. Safe places within our families and the community is needed.

   Our children should not grow up being afraid. Grief and loss impacts to survivors and families are important and on-the-ground healing in community is needed in our communities. And, my cousin Doreen added that we needed healthy boundaries and also self-worth is really important and training on the ground.

   Women's shelters and support Downtown Eastside resulted through direct action. Many programs are shut down or cut back. These funds need to be reinstated and must involve these frontline organizations to work on solutions.

   Sister Watch in Vancouver meets regularly with RCMP for safety of our women and girls about racial profiling, but they need more support. The National Inquiry needs to network or connect more effectively with these Vancouver Downtown Eastside organizations.

   What can we do about the gaps on the ground? Some organizations and frontline workers are being told to scale back, that they couldn't even come to the Inquiry for all of the full days. This impacts our survivors and families. They need to be participating more fully.
The National Inquiry is an opportunity to be heard, but what key recommendations are expected at the outcome of the Inquiry? Recommendations from the Oppal Inquiry, many were made, but not implemented. The implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, especially Article 3 about self-determination, needs to be implemented, including the recognition of our title and rights.

Post-residential school recommendations, Indian residential school recommendations has not been fully implemented and needs to ensure resulting programs and resources as residential survivors are impacted for many generations.

Indian residential school services, a society needs to be recognized to become its own entity to properly serve our people. Right now, they're under a First Nations Health Authority and even though they have their own board, they're not able to be fully operating, which is a detriment to us.

More support for caregivers supporting those on the front line, many experiencing internal racism. This creates divisions and hardship for many and resulting to our families. Poverty and affordable housing solutions for urban and rural communities is critical. We need to involve the communities for solutions. Advocacy for our
people on front line at various levels of government needs
to raise awareness about issues to find solutions.

The concerns and frustrations about those
participating in the Inquiry will be re-traumatized, and
they'll go home and will be concerned about their safety.
Support for communities for survivors and families are
needed right in the community.

Part 1 of the hearing is about survivors and
families. Part 2 is about organizations and 3 is
institutions. How will the statements and stories of our
survivors and families be given adequate review time and
assessment for key recommendations put forward? Those are
the concerns because it’s a fragmented process.

Recommendations to reconnect our people to
their identity, the culture, language, way of life and
their traditional territories, is critical. This needs to
be done to be fully accepted by government and to be
providing resources to our survivors, families and our
communities.

Those are just some of the recommendations
our family had heard over the time we've been supporting
the Walk for Justice, the Missing and Murdered Women. Any
events my mom goes to and she brings us with her, and we
also attend, and Jody is always with her, too, and my
cousins.
Whenever we have to go out on the front lines, we are there, because we need to raise that awareness about protecting our women and girls and ending the violence, and the systemic change that's needed not only within the government, but all of Canada, because the colonial notions have to stop, because that's where the violence starts from. *(Speaks in Secwepemctsin language).*

Thank you.

**MR. THOMAS BARNETT:** Thank you, Judy. So, Minnie, we are here today to listen to your story and from what you have to share. With that, where does the story begin for you?

**MS. MINNIE KENORAS:** Actually, the story begins, I guess, I was born in Ashcroft BC Hospital. And, I lived out in Big Bar where it's really isolated. And, my dad was Dutch. My mom was Native. He had a ranch, and we lived by the Fraser.

Growing up as a child, we were never short of nothing. We helped people. My dad taught himself how to read and write. My mom couldn't speak full English, so she was learning from us. My dad was very quiet and a helpful man all the time. He was always watching what we did. He helped my mom with a lot of things. I was watching the things that happened as a child.

He had a big family. I had nine brothers,
three sisters. And as today I sit here, they're all gone, and I'm the only one in the Grander (ph) family holding up the fort right now. But, I think, life has to go on. And, that's where I learned all my -- I have to be proud of who I am. My dad said I have to -- "I gave you one body, girl. You have to respect that body. You've got to look after it, because there's going to be a time when I can't help you. You're going to be on our own."

And, from that time on, I have to be -- like, if I don't understand, I have to ask questions. If I don't understand, I have to ask somebody. And, this is my dad taught me respect, "If you hurt your body, if you make a fool of yourself and hurt yourself, you're going to carry that the rest of your life."

And so, I respected that because my dad, he read the Bible. He went to the Bible. We prayed a lot. My mother prayed in her Native ways. We were a strong family. We had a home that we grew every kind of things. We had banana apples, and that is rare. We made our own sugar. We had our own flour. We had everything.

We supplied the town, Clinton. We gave people things when they came to our home. I remember part of the hunger thirties. I remember the stamps, and we gave the stamps away. And so, nothing bothered us. So, that's the kind of life I lived, and then it made me stronger. I
know that's why I can be here today.

But, the thing is, when I was 17, there was a big ranch way up in Treo where you had to go via cars for days or airplane. So, my dad and my mom let me go to work there, and my brothers were already working there. That's why I could go to work there.

And then I was a nanny, but already I knew how to look after babies and wash clothes and make bread. And, I knew all the things they do already. So, I looked after three children there. Now, the whole thing is now, I had my own room. I never had a room to myself before.

So, now, the boss and his wife watched me doing what I was doing and they saw me. I said, "I don't..." They had sent food from the cook house. So, I just fixed a table and served it to the children and I.

And so, one day, I said, "Why are you sending food from the cook house, when I can cook it myself?" They had a store. They had everything there. So, they said, "Are you sure?" and I said, "Yes." So, they gave me keys to the store. They gave me the keys to the meat house. They gave me -- and also, I cooked for the kids, and pretty soon the boss and his wife started eating with us.

So, from there on, I just went, left them there years later. And, I went to work again from
different places. Ended up working in a café. I never
took training. I worked in big cafés. I was a cook there.
And, I never went to school. I had hardly
any schooling at all, and it never -- it was never a burden
to me, never, because I remember my dad. He said, "What
you want, you will work for. What you see and what you can
change, you have to speak up. And, what you think you can
do and cannot do, you have to ask questions."

So, this is what got me a long way. Now, I
have a cookbook, which is called Living Off the Land, and
I'm doing a movie this summer called Living Off the Land.
It documentary movie. And so, I'm not, like, hesitating
one bit. I know I can do it. It's a thing that I had a
vision. It's needed. It's needed to for our children and
our grandparents and people to come to the camps, to show
them we still are survivors. We still are going to live
off this land.

And so, this is why I have to do this
documentary movie, and it starts on around the end of May
and June. It'll go right through until the end of October,
November, then we have our feasts. Then, after the book
will be written, the movie will be done. Then it's going
to be put in our Native language.

So, this is why I'm here today. I'm
reaching out to each of the families, the grandmothers, the
grandfathers, the ones that are at home, wherever they are, to start thinking about how your life is at your home and what can you do, because you cannot blame the government all for what's happening. You cannot blame the system, what is happening. You cannot blame your social workers or your band offices.

You, yourself, at your home, which is your castle, have to stand up. You have to take that control, and you have to look at yourself and love yourself and then start reaching out to loving your children. "These are part of my body. I’ll love them." So, I don't want nothing to happen to my children, my grandchildren. That is your responsibility. This is why I'm here today. And, I hope this will reach some of them.

And, my daughter, Julia, my youngest baby -- actually, my last two children weren't supposed to be born. My doctor said I shouldn't -- I wasn't supposed to have them. But, it so happened, I had them. But, they're all from the same father.

And so, there's a boy a little bit older than her, a year older. And so, Julia, my baby, was like growing up as my right arm or right -- or whatever. She was with me from day one all the time. She stayed with me until the last, in my home, where she went with me when the accident happened. She was with me at the time.
And, she had a boyfriend, which they grew up together at the school. They had all come to the house. They grew up together. The boyfriend was a friend of my -- her brother, her next brother, Joey, and they would all be at the house. I had children come at the house. Like, I'd have to get up, the parents would be phoning me, "Is my son there? Is my daughter there?" I always had a houseful.

And, I fed them all. I cooked for them all. And, when they went on a party or somewhere, I talked to them before they went. And, sometimes they would phone me, "Come and get us, Mom," wherever they were.

So, that's how close I was to my family and my children and the community. And, the thing was, is just like saying, like, "When you're hurting, I'll be there for you." I was really close to her.

And so, like, now, it's been 23 years since she's left, she's gone. And, her boy with her there is 27 now, so he was just turning four. And, at the time, they were getting along so good.

And, with coming in May, Mother's Day, and she was going to go to Vancouver. She was going to take training down in Vancouver for child care work. She went down there with my daughter Joan, and they found a place. And, she had a program that she was going to start. She actually even got the money to go down there, a cheque from
the band office for her travel and for her room.

Now, she was home. Her and Joannie came home. And, I was going to keep the little boy until she got settled. Her and the boyfriend had an argument long before that, and he was supposed to be moving out of the house. He did pack his things, and he had them in a corner downstairs.

And then when Julia came home and Joannie, it was a few days before Mother's Day. And, they came on the bus, so I picked them up and came home. So, we were sitting in her bedroom. And, her boyfriend wasn't there yet, with Joannie and her.

And, it was near Mother's Day. And, Julia said, "Mom, I never brought you a flower this time. I usually buy a rose." And, I said, "I know." And, Joannie said, "Oh, we got this sweater though with a rose on it and we could give this to you."

And, Julia said, "No. I've got something more precious I'm giving to my mom. I'm giving my mom my son for Mother's Day." And, I said to her, "Julia, you're not supposed to be giving your son away." And, she said, "But, Mom, I have to. Who does he go to every time he's hurt? Where do I find him? He's in your room all the time. He's sleeping with you."

Joannie is a witness. There were tears shed
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(Julia Kenoras)

between us. The little boy was there with us at the time. He was standing right beside Grandma. From there on, even at the time, she said, "I have to -- when I go to Vancouver, he'll be staying with you." And, I said, "Fine." And, somehow another, I don't know, that was all taking place.

And, anyways, my daughter here, Johanne, came. And, I had to go to Alberta. Johanne can talk about a little bit when she has -- but, I had to go to Alberta with her, because one of her in-laws or her sister-in-law was having something. She had lost her mother a couple of years before, and she wanted me to stand up as a grandmother, so I said I'd go there.

And then, Julia says, "Well, we're having a party. It's a farewell party. My brothers are here. My two brothers are here." And, Darryl came, the boyfriend. And, I watched him outside.

And, my son, oldest son, brought some trees I called the weeping willow trees -- not weeping willow -- the hedges, pruning hedges. He bought six of them for his mother-in-law. He brought six for me. So, out on the lawn, Darryl and her were planting these trees. They were digging holes. I went out there, and they asked me where they wanted the trees. So, I showed them where they wanted to put the trees. I was watching them.
And then I came back in the house, and I was watching them out the picture window. They were playing around outside, and they were fighting with the water hose and getting soaking wet. And, Darryl was piggybacking her on his back. And, I'm watching and I'm saying to myself, “I thought you guys weren't going to be together anymore. I thought this was it. I thought you guys were...” -- had an argument. I thought this was gone, and I was watching them.

And then that so happened after that. They planted all the trees. Then Johanne comes to get me. We're ready to go. I always took food to Alberta when I -- so, I had all these blueberries and strawberries if there was milk cartons. We put them on the counter.

Julia and everybody was happy. My sons were happy. They were all happy at the time, but I had to leave. And, they're having a party. They were going out dancing. They were going to go play pool. They were going to -- and it's to me Julia’s farewell to her boyfriend. This is what she said. They were -- then she was going to get on the bus.

If I took her little boy with me to Alberta -- I didn't want to take him. She said, "No, Mom, you've got to take him with you." I said, "Well, on the condition that you come to Alberta with me." She said, "Okay, Mom,
I'll catch a bus in the morning. I'll come to Alberta."

So that was the conditions. I took the little boy.

And so, with that, we went down the road.

And, I said to Johanne, "Hey, I forgot my strawberries and my blueberries. I've got to go back and pick them up."

So, we turned around and went back to the house.

And, here comes Julia down the porch, the stairs, carrying both in her hands, coming down with a big smile. "I knew it. You guys had to come back and see me once more and give me a hug before you go." That was -- she brought the blueberries down to us. So, we hugged again and told her how much we loved her, and those were the last words to her, how much we loved her.

So, from there on, I was able to go to Alberta. And, it kind of bothered me that why the party was happening and why this was happening. But, somehow, I had to leave. And then before I walked out the door -- I never locked my door, because the little boy used to come in my room and go whenever.

And, I had my rifles, my hunting rifles. I said to them, "You boys have no permission to go in my room to touch my rifles at all." So, I'm closing the door. So, those -- I already told them that when I walked out.

So, anyways, like, when this happened, they did have the party. They went out. And then Julia was
supposed to phone me 9:00 in the morning. The next
morning, she was supposed to phone me. She told me she
would phone me, and I was waiting for that phone call.

Johanne here had to go to work. I was at
the house by myself, and I was looking for something to do.
So, I run downstairs, and I was doing the laundry. She's
got a lot of stairs down there where her home was.

And, the phone rang. Started running up, I
left Colby sitting on the couch. I gave him some food to
eat, and he was sitting on the couch. The phone rang. So,
I picked up the phone. There was nothing, nobody. And, I
thought, "Oh, God, I missed her call. I missed her call."

So, I thought, well, I'm going to make a cup
of tea and just wait around here and she'll call back in a
few seconds. So, I sat down with Colby and a cup of tea.
And, the phone rang. It was my daughter-in-law, telling me
the accident, what happened in the home, and she was
screaming and crying, my daughter-in-law.

She told me exactly what happened. And what
had happened there was he went into my room. He took my
hunting rifle, one of my best hunting rifles. And, this is
what he used on her and himself. And, he had a note in his
pocket saying, "If I can't have her, nobody else will."
And so, she must have been running out of the room, because
she got shot in the back.
And, I don't know why it is, but I still have a bullet hole in my door. And, I was thinking, well, this is why she told me to take the little boy and leave. I had to go. And, this is why Johanne came to me, I had to leave, because if we would have been there, we would have been victims, too, because I had told him off at the porch. I had told him that I had enough of him coming home drunk and on drugs and abusing my daughter. So, we might have been those victims, too, if I didn't -- if we didn't leave at the time.

And, my daughter being so close to me all the time, give me the courage, give me the strength to who I am today to stand up, not to be a weakling. I shed those tears already. They're gone. I already placed those tears, all of that love. I will always hurt, but I did those cries already. I put them away.

And, I'm ready to help the family and my other people. I'm ready to speak on behalf of all this hurting, all this violence against children and people in their homes, and to be watching each other, and carrying on that love of strength in each other, the strength every day. It's not just once in a while. It should be every day, "I love you."

My family and I keep a close call on each other by phone always. If it's not by phone, it's by
visiting each other, Christmas, holidays, whenever they're invited to come. And, this is how I keep my family strong.

I was abused really badly by the two husbands I had. I was victims, like, from the residential school. I used to never fight back. I would never stand up for myself. I had to learn it the hard way.

So, this is -- the thing is, when you have to teach your children, you have to teach them to be -- like, it's tough out there. You have to provide. You have to stand up. You have to ask somebody if you can't help yourself, ask somebody.

And, you know, I'm a grandma to a lot, a lot of people. I'm a mother to a lot, a lot of people. People come and ask me if they can -- be their grandma or their mother. I'm very proud.

And the court system in the Aboriginal Justice of Court, I work there in Kamloops now. We have our own court case there all the time. And, as an elder sitting there, I have a voice the same as a judge.

The system that we're working there is trying -- like, our own laws which we had before. Our own systems we had before are strictly as of our people. We had our own ways before. That's what I'm trying to put out there as to people. We were a strong people. We stood up. We're tolerant people, what was right and wrong. We
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1 hunted. We fished. We fed our people. We had our own
2 ceremonies which was our own laws.
3 And, this is what I told the judge, "You
4 took our laws, put them in big names. You put them in big
5 things, so we don't understand them anymore. And, our
6 people are suffering. And, you don't look at us as people.
7 You look at us as an un-people. Well, I'm sorry to say, I
8 want this changed. I want a big change. I want to change
9 that you understand us, where we come from and who we
10 really are. We are people just like you. We have our ways
11 of living, which is on our Mother Earth, our land, which
12 has been destroyed, but we're still survivors. We're still
13 here. I would like to see us go back to our ways, but I
14 know we can't always go back to all our ways, but we can go
15 back a long margin and be that healthy people again. So,
16 that's why, Your Honour, I'm sitting here today, the
17 righteous of my people."
18 And, young people are -- I am -- like, right
19 now, I have -- I'm looking after two people that I talk to
20 them and they sit down and I phone them, like, out of
21 court. I counsel them. And, I'm working another program
22 right now is young girls. I counsel these young girls to
23 become -- when they become mothers, when they become --
24 when they get their periods, when they become women, when
25 they become -- how to respect their body, how to look after
themselves. So, these kind of programs, I will go out and
I will help.

And, I do go out in the public and I public
speak. And, all of this just comes from my heart. It's
not written down. There's nobody asking me to do this.
It's natural. It's natural and it has to be heard, for
people to understand it. I'm not the only one. I'm sure
there's grandmothers that are out there, too, who stand up
to who they are and carry on.

And, Julia, my baby girl, I love you. I
love you, and you know that I'm taking care of your little
boy. He's my son. I'm looking after him. I talked to him
this morning, and I felt your presence there with me this
morning. I felt a presence. I said my prayers 5:00 this
morning. I felt the presence of my daughter Julia there,
too, this morning. And, I felt the presence of her son
being with me this morning, of my other grandsons that
passed on, my brother Hector that was close to me. And,
the room that I'm in was 127, but that was my brother's
birthday. I felt their presence with me this morning,
saying my prayers. I can see things. I can hear things.
And, I hear them giving me the love that -- why I'm
speaking today and how I speak today, they're with me at
the moment.

And, with my daughter, she used to play with
her little boy when she was only -- when she was only three, going on four, she would lay over the top of me. She would play with him. And, I could tell you what she was wearing. I put my arm over top of her. I could feel what kind of a jacket she's wearing, what she was wearing.

So, I wanted that house burned, the one where they -- my daughter was murdered in and the boy was murdered. I wanted it burned. I said to my little boy there who was sitting beside me, "Colby, we don't have to stay in this house anymore. Grandma doesn't like this house anymore. Grandma wants to burn the house. We can go. We can stay with Auntie Johanne. We can stay with Auntie Judy. We can stay with Uncle Jerry, any of them which you prefer. We can just go." And, he said, "No, Grandma. This is my mommy's house."

So, that was a burden, hard burden for me, because I had walked down that hallway where it happened every day. I had to be tough in my heart with all this, for that little boy.

So, I put him through school. Now, I had to be a mommy again. I put him through school, put him through hockey. He's a very good hockey player who was well loved by the teachers, by everybody. He had good manners. He has got good manners, very quiet, but he's a very nice person. He's a very special boy.
And so, I talked to him this morning, and Johanne talked to him this morning. He knows exactly why I'm here and what I'm doing. And, when I go back, I'll meet with him again and tell him exactly what we did and done.

I know it's -- like I said, I did my crying time. I put my tears away. Once in a while, I have tears. I talk to the water. I talk to the Creator. I talk to Mother Earth. I talk to them and they're with me always. I pray always.

And so, you know, with those tools I have, I say all that -- I feel good. I feel really good as a grandma. A great-grandma, I am also. I feel good. Because my daughter wouldn't want me to go this way, she would want me to go that way and do as many things as I can. So, that's what I'm doing today.

And, my life is so full of happiness and hope. I can sing. I can dance. I can do -- I could build a mountain. I'm building a cabin in a mountain actually at Harper Lake. I have a cabin. I'm living on the land again. It doesn't matter. I have a home in Salmon Arm. I'm giving that away to one of my daughters, and I'm building a home for Colby.

I make plans. I foresee things that has to be done, and I do it. And, these plans that I make are
usually -- I don't, like, talk to my family about should we do this, should we do this, no. It comes from here. It comes from the heart.

Then I ask them. Then I say, "Guess what? I'm building a cabin in mountains. It's going to be the home of a sasquatchette (ph). You know, I do my own hunting, my own fishing, that book I have that's called Living Off the Land, and I stand behind my book. That's why I'm doing that movie this time. So, I will stop at the moment here and if anybody has any question to ask me feel free.

(Dealing with technical difficulties)

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: So, you had mentioned that when the incident happened, there were some boys at the house. Do you know who they were?

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Yes. Actually, like I said, they had a party. And, the boys at the house, my two sons, and there was other people there, but I know my two sons were home at the time.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: And, do you know where they were? Did they know what was happening?

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Well, they went on their party, which was in Thomas Ameron (ph). And, they came back from the party, I guess, and they were playing pool, dancing and drinking. They came back to the house
and, yes, and son Jerry is the one who told me this.

Joey was downstairs, but Jerry was upstairs, and he was sleeping on the couch. I guess they all came home, and then they figured they'd go to sleep, so whatever. So, the party quieted down and the boys went to -- he went to sleep on the couch, and Joey went downstairs.

But then, I guess, and what happened was Darryl and Julia must have got in an argument, I guess. And, they were in their bedroom. And then she went to run out the door, but he must have went in my room and got that gun out. He must have loaded it and put it in his room before that, had to be.

And then she went to run out, and that's when he shot her behind the head. And so, that's why she was standing up, and that's why the bullet hole is in my door. And then she fell there. And then he turned around. Their door was opened, I guess. And, he turned around and he must have put that gun to himself.

And, that was the scene, but Jerry said he didn't hear nothing. The boys said they didn't hear anything. And, that rifle is a 32 special, and it's a loud rifle. So, the boys, Jerry said they -- he had to put something in their drinks. That's why they both went to sleep.

So, Jerry was the one who saw her laying
there. And then he just picked her up and hugged her, but then -- and then from there on, he just saw Darryl there with the gun, I guess, and then he started kicking him. But, that's what the scene that Jerry seen.

And, because his runners were all full of blood and stuff, and he didn't know what to do. They put them in a paper bag and he put them somewhere. I had to throw those runners into the furnace when I got home. But, you know, that was the scene.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: And, at that time, you mentioned that perhaps you might have been in Alberta. Were you in Alberta with Colby, Julia's son?

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Yes. At the time, I was in Alberta with Colby, waiting for that phone call the next morning at Joanne's. I was here.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: And, you mentioned that it was our daughter-in-law that contacted you?

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Yes. That was Jerry's wife. Dory was the one who called me and told me what happened at home.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Were you contacted by the police or anybody after that happened?

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Well, actually right then, and so it was kind of a blur for me, but I don't know -- even know how I got back to the house. But, I got back
right away somehow or another, yeah.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: You had mentioned that you knew the boyfriend while he was growing up, Darryl?

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Darryl, yes.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Yes.

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Well, Darryl, again, was -- he was a -- his family, they lived just down two or three miles, down the road. And, he was always there with the whole family, and my son Joey and him grew, like, together in school. So, Julia, that was her boyfriend then, yes.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Can you tell us any more perhaps about his background or have you had some thoughts as to how something like that could have happened?

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: From Darryl's family? Yes, yes. Him and his brother, Rick, used to always be at the house all the time, like. And, actually, his family, well, had real bad problems and they -- his uncle had taken these two boys to the mountains and abused them, Darryl and his brother.

And so, he spent a lot of time at our house. And then he still had a mother. His dad was somewhere in Vancouver, so he wasn't close to his dad. He was, I would say, almost like a lost boy. So, they're -- we accepted them in our family even then.
And so, when they were being abused that way, he was drinking and on drugs. And the time then, they had Colby. Then he still was drinking and being on drugs, which my daughter was trying to tell him that he had to quit. He had to, whatever. She was going to go out to work. She was going to do things with her life.

So, I remember him walking down the road, and I was watching him. I was watching him run down the road and, like, I could see him, and he just looked like a shell. He wasn't looking like Darryl at all. He was walking away from the house, walking down the road. And, I pitied him. I said, "Oh, my God, you look so lost. Where are you going?"

Anyways, like, yes, his family has done a lot of damage to other people, other children, and they're still walking around today. They're still living today. And, I feel so sorry for them, because they're hurting right now. I see them.

And in my dream, I had a dream that Darryl came to me and asked me to forgive him. He said, "I'm so sorry for what I did." And, my dreams are not all, like, real. I see things. I can see visions.

And, I just said, "Darryl, I will forgive you, because I know it wasn't all your fault. You were that little boy that somebody abused. You're that little
boy. You're lost. So, I forgive you, Darryl." And, he said, "I'm with her. I'm with Julia." And, I said, "Okay."

And, my sonny boy there, Colby, used to see black clouds and white clouds. He would look at the white clouds. He said, "That's my mommy up there. See, she's a feather. She's a white clouds. And look over there, those black clouds, that's my dad. He's a bad clouds."

And, I just told him, "Colby." I said, "That's fine, but your dad loved you, too." "How was my dad?" I said, "Your dad loved you, Colby. We have pictures. I'm going to show them pictures." "What was my dad like? What was my mom like?" I talked to him about those things. "They loved you, both of them."

And, I think that's what made him a strong boy today, too, because he drinks a little bit, but not very much, and he's working all the time. He's been in contact with me always, asking me how I am, what I'm doing, always.

And, with Darryl, he never -- his mother never ever will be Colby's grandmother. He doesn't have contact with them at all hardly, at all. They don't recognize him, the family. Darryl has got half-sisters. They don't recognize him. He cried about that one day.

And, I said, "Colby." I said, "You've got
Grandma. You've got the love. You've got your aunties. You've got your uncles. That's fine. Leave it be." So, that's how it stands today is they don't call him to their homes. They don't give him presents. They didn't give him presents when he was little or anything. They don't. So, that's fine. So, he grew up that way.

And, I have that picture of him, that I have some more beautiful pictures together with Colby at home. And, you know, he's a very smart boy, very intelligent, yes. And, he's a singer also. Grandma taught him how to sing. He knows how to sing. And, his favourite song is, "If you love me, let me know; if you don't, let me go; I can't stand another minute with your love with nothing in it." Colby, he can sing, because he is a happy boy.

And, I'm glad that I was there. I had to go back and raise him. I had lots of hate for the man that abused the boys, so much hate, I wanted to do away with him. I planned it.

And, one of my daughters and the other boy, they beat up the same man and put him in a hospital, hoping that he would come forward and say that he beat up -- that he got beat up by my daughter and this other boy. He wouldn't come forward, because they wanted him to come forward, because they would have told why they beat him up.

And, I planned on doing away with him. And,
I had my one daughter, Joannie, and another girl to help me, and they wouldn't do it at the end. They wouldn't help me. So, they cried, and we cried together and talked about it.

And, they said, "Look, who is going to look after Colby? Of course, they are going to charge you. If you do what you're going to do, they're going to charge you." Yes, so I couldn't do what I wanted to do. So, I said, "Okay, I'll have to let it go." I want to look at raising this little boy. I want him. He's my boy." So, that's why I had to step aside.

So, it hurts me today, he's still walking around. They still have bad things with their families happening. They're suffering today. I can see it. And, I have a hard time to talk too. I have a hard time to forgive him for what he has done to Darryl. I haven't really forgiven him yet. But, one day, I have to meet him on those grounds. I know I have to meet him on those grounds.

I met the grandmother, the grandmother on the grounds which he really -- I don't know why she didn't really care for me, and we had words. We had bad words. We had bad words against each other. And, she was getting up in age. And, one day -- and she was in a wheelchair. And, one day, I went right beside her, and I talked to her.
I said, "Mary, I've come to talk to you. I want to apologize to you. I want to say sorry to you if I hurt you in all kinds of ways. I'm sorry." So, I held her hand. She just put her head down and she cried.

So, that forgiveness has to be done for our people. We have to learn to forgive ourselves. We have to learn to open our heart. We have to learn. Life has to go on. And so, this is a chore I have to do yet when I get home and -- but, I know where and when the time will be ready for me to do this. Okay.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Thank you, Minnie. The Commissioner might have some questions for you after. But, I understand that at this time that Johanne wants to -- or, would like to read some poems that your daughter Julia wrote.

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Johanne here is my -- one of my oldest daughters, and she's a nurse, and I'm very proud of my whole family. My whole family, I reach out to my whole family. I have family like you wouldn't believe. And, this girl here is my hunter. She hunted with me. And, Darlene here is close to me, like a daughter. All of them are just like -- and Jody, sitting over there.

And, you know, I'm very blessed. I'm very blessed everywhere I go. And, I have a hard time to deal with this because, like, I like to do it myself, and they
pamper me too much. Okay, Johanne.

**MS. JOHANNE BUFFALO:** I'll just read the poem. I have a few things to say myself. But, she had written a lot of poems. She was a teenager. And, I didn't really read them until after she was gone. This one is called "Dying." It says: When you are falling, falling so hard, you hold on that last feeling, feeling of being loved. You see enemies digging, digging six feet deep, your friends crying, crying in deep sorrow. Then you see nothing, nothing but darkness. You suddenly realize you're dying. Dying is so scary. Hold on, you're slipping, slipping away from life. You're letting go leaving, leaving this world. You feel so cold, freezing, freezing your body. Your life, it's ended. No more thinking, thinking how you'll die someday. You just never thought today. By Julia Manuel.

When we read her poetry later on, she was always kind of a deep thinker girl, and she was strong, strong-willed. Being the oldest daughter, I've seen a lot in my life, which children shouldn't see. I was always my mom's fighter at the time, but she taught us to care no matter what.

My kids used to say, "Mom, we don't know if it's a gift or a curse what you taught us to feel." People come to us. There's a lot of hurting people out there. I
know my girl. I know my sons.

Anyways, I'm here. I always feel kind of like telepathic messages, you know, when my mom needs me by her side. I only came up for Easter holidays and here I am sitting here. It was not planned, but I guess it was planned. Time for healing for me, because I suppressed it for so long, also for my brothers and sisters that aren't here today, because they're the ones that Julia affected also. Because what I feel, you know, that sickness that carried on even way before residential school and, you know, the genocide.

And, now what we see is, you know, families aren't families. And, a lot or our people are to be on their own, and they're wandering lost souls. So, they come to the cities or they go somewhere that is not really them. And, they're searching for something. But, that sickness in our medicine wheel affects our emotions, our spiritual. Sometimes it kills it. Our physical, it turns into some kind of cancer that eats us up inside.

And, our people have got to look at themselves in that balance of life, because you'll see where, which part of it is affecting you most, maybe the whole circle. You have to reach out to somebody, tell that story. Tell your stories. Each one of us -- every one of us is precious beings. And, the ones we lost are what I
feel are fighting our spiritual warfare. I truly believe that.

I lost my oldest son to suicide. He was depressed. I lost my husband. I lost a half-brother. He killed himself right on my dad's land. My brother next to me cut him down. So, when I say that sickness, they call -- it has a name. It's a dark spirit. Sometimes it crawls up on people's shoulders and whispers in their ears.

This is where we've got to find our protection. We've got to find that shield that protects our hearts and our minds. That's why I'm here to speak. I've been suppressing my feelings for so long. I am a home care nurse. I proudly work for the Maskwacis Health Services, formerly known as Hobbema. We have 17,000 people there, and we fight this every day. There's so many people.

It has become where we can't even pay our own respects to the elders there. We're dealing with another one the next day or next week. Some people reach out and some don't, and that's the scary part. They still dwell in their darkness and figure they're all alone.

So, if this message gets out to anybody to reach the youth, to reach the lonely, to reach the hurting, please find somebody. There's somebody to connect to out there. I say this because, well, my son was a great young
man. He composed music, just like my sister, composed
poetry. He composed songs, and he would come sing by my
bedside and we would sing songs together. That was my
sister's story.

Now, I moved away when I was in my early
twenties, and I got married to a Cree. So, my children are
Sioux-Cree or Cree-Sioux. I don't know which one you want
to pick, but they're from both nations, very proud of their
nations.

My daughter moved back here to Chase. Me
and my youngest son, we still living in Alberta. And, I
have my chichum (ph) Tyrell, who is named after my son that
passed away. And, my grandson Calvin, he's named after my
late husband. My oldest granddaughter, Jelise (ph). So,
I'm a kokum kia (ph). I'm a grandmother. And mom is the
great-grandmother, great Mama Bear.

So, hence, though we hurt, though we have to
cry, we have to carry on in life, like my family said.
There are still so many people that need that help, need
that support, whether it be financially, whether it be just
listening to them, whether it be guiding them through their
spiritual path to find themselves again, because a lot of
it is lost identity of who they really are. They don't
know who they are or where they come from.

Some of the families I've met, they got lost
with gangs or whatever, so-called families that said they would look after them. But when things hit the fan, so to speak, they're not there for them.

With my sister, I picked up my mom. I had to hire some friends to bring us back to Hobbema. At the time, that's what it was called. So, there wasn't enough room for her to come to be at my home for a while. So, my mom called me and there was just enough room for her. And, she said, "Well, I'll catch the bus tomorrow, and I'll catch you guys up. I'll phone Mom at 9:00 and let you know that I'm coming." "Okay. You be safe. You take care tonight. Don't let nothing happen." "Yes, Annie, I'll be okay."

Anyway, so we made it back home. And, my mom always has to keep busy doing something. So, she was doing my laundry, and I went to work that morning. And, at the time, I was receptionist at the health centre. That's how I started out there.

And, I got this call, and I couldn't understand who was on the phone. All I could hear was that screaming. And then I kind of recognized the voice, and, "Mom?" And, she said, "Julia is dead." "Mom, why do you say that?" "I got a phone call. They said, 'She's dead.'" I said, "Mom, no, don't say that. Mom, I'll phone the police. I'll phone somebody. Please don't say that. I'll
be right there, Mom." And, she was sobbing, and she hung up the phone.

And, I started my phone calls, phoned the hospital and I phoned the police. And, they wouldn't give me answers right away. They wanted to know who I was and how I'm related and where my mom was. So, I gave them all the information. "I just need to know how my sister is. Where is she?" And, they just said, "I'm sorry, Mrs. Buffalo. She's not with us no longer." And, I just dropped the phone. I said, "Well, I've got to go up to my mom." And, I just told my co-workers. I said, "I have to go."

Anyways, my husband and my family, we packed up all our stuff. And, there wasn't a word said all the eight hours of travelling from there to back home. We were just all in shock.

And then what I found out is I guess he kind of had everything premeditated, and had the gun ready, and had the note ready, and had drugged my brothers so they couldn't wake up, put it in their drinks, because my other brother, he was a fighter. He would not let nothing happen to him, neither would Joey. Joey was soft-spoken, kind-hearted, would talk things out, but Jerry was the other way. You do him wrong, he'll let you know.

Anyways, they woke up and they said there
was stillness in the house, and they got up, said Julia was lying face down in the hallway, and he talked to me that it was like execution style, that her knees were imprinted where she was. Her face was blown off. So, he shot her in the back of the head.

And then he, himself, went back to their room. And, he was on his knees. It looked like as if he was sobbing or praying. But, the gun was up underneath his chin. He blew his brains out. His brains were on the ceiling. And then my brother didn't know that, and he was kicking him, "What the hell did you do to my sister?" Both gone.

And, it was just so hard to bring my mom back to her home, and she was almost collapsing, going back into that house. But it had been and it still is a house of love and family.

And, it took a while to, you know -- because they said something usually with people that do wrong, our so-called enemies, I was taught you have to pray for them, because something so devastating usually happened to them for them to be like that.

So, it took every ounce of being, too, for my brothers not to go after that man, too. They hated. They wanted to string him up. They wanted to take it out on somebody for losing our loved one, for taking that
little boy's parents, because, deep down, we knew Darryl was good, but he went to a place where he couldn't come back.

And then he thought -- because he only in confidence told my sister what he was going through. And, he thought if he let her go, she's going to tell the world and all those bad secrets would come out. So, we didn't learn a lot of this until after or else we would have done something before. But, in hence, we're doing something now. It's a long time coming.

And, my other sister, Joannie, she was, you know -- I mean, we're all big sisters, and she was trying to help Julia to get onto an educational path and to be a strong woman for herself and get her and her son a life. And, Darryl didn't like that because he figured Joannie was interfering and taking her away from him.

And, he put in that letter that, "Joannie, it's all your fault." Joannie, that's not your fault, not my brother's fault, not my fault, nobody's fault. And, she knew, like according -- like with some of her poetries here, she knew. She didn't know when.

Anyways, that's -- it's like I was told by an elder, like, "Sometimes the shortest distance is the hardest distance, and that's between our heart and our mind." Because sometimes you listen to your emotions and
you're not listening to the logic of life, so those two have to work in harmony to be in sync with life.

I just want to read one more poem. This one is called “Spring.” Listen to the birds singing. Watch the flowers blossom. The bees are buzzing, flying in the sunning sun. The grass is turning green. The trees changing colour. The spring makes such a beautiful scene, makes your stomach flutter. Can't you feel the warm breeze, the winds blowing through our hair, listening to it go through the trees, the trees no longer bare. Remember, spring only comes once a year. Enjoy as much as you can. But when it is gone, wipe that tear, just watch the changing land. By Julia Manuel.

And, that's how my sister was. That's her heart. That's her soul speaking to us. I think that's all I have for now. Thank you. All my relations.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Thank you. The Commissioner might have some questions for Minnie and Johanne.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Minnie, Johanne, thank you very much for telling us about Julia and for sharing. I have a couple of follow-up questions if you don't mind.

Okay, Minnie, you talked about being people with our own ways and about not able to go back to all the
ways, but you talked about the importance of that. I'm just wondering if you could comment a little bit further on if you had any recommendations about what people can do in that way.

**MS. MINNIE KENORAS:** Yes. Well, I did kind of look around at things like the families that are living in homes today. The homes they're living in today are not suitable for them. They're living in these homes that -- well, their homes are crowded. Their homes are built, and so many families are in homes today that there's no room. And, also, that they built places they shouldn't be built and in rock piles and things and whatever. There's no spaces for kids to play even or anything like that.

But, the thing is this is what I'm trying to say. We have room out in the -- acres and acres of land by the lakes and we have places. Well, this is why I've got the cabin coming up. My image is to bring the people out on the land and start living again on that land, start digging in that soil and start finding out who you really belong. Because once you start digging in that soil and start making your own home, that is your home and this is where you should be bringing your children.

Our people used to camp, have camps all the time, underground homes. And, actually, come in the spring, we're going to be building one of these underground
homes up in Tomtom (ph). And, we're going to put one of those homes on it somewhere and another lot, building later on.

We're trying to bring -- teach people what’s gone. We're teaching them, we have to move out on the land. We have to start looking that we can live again in spaces where we can take our children. And, we don't have to build a fancy home. We can have log buildings. We can have underground units to build there.

And, we still have Mother Earth. We still have the fruits and we have the things on the land that we can still use, and the medicines. We have people now that together with the medicine plants and things, we have all kinds. And, living off the land, my group, I have a working body.

Some of them do the business of medicines and some of them are doing the hunting, the fishing camps, and some of them are doing all kinds of different things of living on the land. And, young men are coming out to build a cabin and all kinds of things. So, I have a working body.

I don't have to go and advertise for a working body. I have a working body. So, we can get the people organized like that, the young people, again, like that. So, we can go back and live, maybe not all the way
we wanted to go back.

And, our languages are getting really strong. People are talking in that language. I can't talk it fully, but I can understand it. And so, they teach it in different schools now. And, my sons and my daughters are learning it. But, we never had it in our home. Their dad spoke it, but he didn't speak to them. Their grandmother spoke it, and she didn't speak to them, so they didn't learn it within the home.

So, now, they're reaching out where it can be taught, and even on the -- my son has a phone like this, and he's going down the road, and he's listening to his Indian language. And so, "Oh, Son, you don't need me now."

He said, "I need you, Mom, but it's just I'm listening to the -- you know, taking lessons today." He has a word, and he goes by me and he says the word. And then he'll tell me, like, (speaks Secwepemcitsin language) and things like that, that to me, he'll tell me words. And, he says, "Is that the way I'm supposed to say it?"

And then I tell him, "Yes, that is good, Joey. You're doing really good."

So, I mean, you can get those on the phone. It's operated now in the schools, so it is coming out in different in different kinds of phases. People are teaching them in our schools, and in the schools and by
this nowadays. So, things are coming back. To me, not
fast enough though. I like to move fast, and I would like
it back tomorrow. So, yes.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you. I
have one other question for you as well. So, one issue
that comes up in the National Inquiry is, what happens to
-- what about the children that are left when a mother is
lost? And, you talked about raising Colby.

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: So, I'm just
wondering if you had anything to comment on in terms of,
did you have the supports you needed? What were the things
that helped or were there things that could have helped or
anything like that?

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: Well, I really think
that depends on the unit where the child is. And, as in
courts right now, I do work with all clients right now.
But, I would rather be working with the children. But, I
can see, as a foster mother, I had children taken away from
one home and brought to my home. And then I was only
supposed to have her for a month, and they took her back to
replace her again to another home.

And, guess what? She ran away and came back
to my home. And, they took her again, and they took her to
another home. She ran back and come back to my home again.
It is where you put these children, and where the love is for these children, and how they treat it.

And, it's not about money. It's not about buying them treats. It's about the love and affection that you give them, the respect when they are little. And babies, even babies know when you are holding that baby, how you're holding that baby, how you talk to that baby. This is what I told my children when they have their baby, the baby inside them knows exactly. So, you have to talk to that baby.

And so that's the same with our children. They have feelings. They have feelings. And, those children that are lost, we have to look for their parents first, their grandparents first. If there's no grandparents or grandmother to look after them, we have to look at the aunties, the relatives, the uncles.

I don't want them seen off to other places, just taken away to another reserve or another town. They have to replace those families. And, we have to look into that thoroughly, because you're hurting that child. You're not -- like, you're not giving them the best by giving the best monies, the best care. You have to look into how you can look after the love of that child. The money can't buy love.

**MS. JOHANNE BUFFALO:** Another part of that
is, say, when a person is getting older to become into eldership, there's protocols and things to know. They enhance same parenthood, these foster parents, these grandparents, whoever has taken that precious child over needs that nurturing also, because if their heart and mind is not well, then they're not bring up that child well. So, they might have in goodwill that they want to do things right, but if their patterns aren't right in the beginning, that whole family needs to be blessed in protocols.

And, those teachings have been forgotten along the road somewhere, because you automatically think, oh, they were parents. They've got to know everything. But, if they were brought up, say, in the cities or somewhere that they had no traditional ways of teaching, then you're making more of an issue than helping, more of a problem than you're helping. So, those things have to be researched.

And, if that family is willing to go through the proper channels of being that foster parent in here, in here, then they will be the right ones. It's not automatic to think, oh, that person is right, because you can have a good face here and the heart could be not right or vice versa.

**MS. MINNIE KENORAS:** Yes, I'm sorry to say but money has been buying everything that they call love.
And, a lot of our kids are taken into homes where they
don't even get to wear the clothes that the money is
supposed to buy or the food they're supposed to buy. I saw
this happen.

I was -- '75 as a counsellor and kicked out
Indian Affairs (indiscernible). And, I was the first
social worker. So, I had to stand up -- closed down two
stores, because the men were picking up the cheques, and
the money wasn't getting home to the children.

And so, you know, that's the money, the
cheque, and I -- if they would have given food, it would
have got home. But, no, they choose to give them a cheque
and money, it never got home.

So, those are the shortcuts, like, of
people, well, you know, we've seen. A lot of times, people
today, they give cheques out to them. And, I'm saying you
put them to work, make them work for their, you know, for
their cheques or give them half and half money, like half
cheque money, half food. Things have to be worked out
because that cheque, sometimes it's gone within an hour.
And, here they are, they don't have nothing for their
children. I've saw this.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you.
I'm just wondering if I could just ask Johanne a follow-up
question about some of the things she referred to as well.
MS. JOHANNE BUFFALO: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Joanne, you talked about people who were not well. You referred to a dark spirit, the need to find a shield, and that some people reach out and some people don't. And, you also talked about having a lost identity. So I understand you're a nurse, and this could be a huge conversation. But, I just want to ask if you had any comments to add on of anything, things that you see that could be done -- that are being done that could be done to help Indigenous people in these situations, in our communities.

MS. JOHANNE BUFFALO: We have all kinds of, say, first responders. We have some grassroots people that, say, they have, like, mental health first aid, trauma informed care. Just I suppose you wouldn't say in -- back home there when the crisis of suicide happens, sometimes things can be volatile. The family could be really upset. And, a lot of it has to do with follow-up care, too. Just, say, like after a funeral, a lot of people are around, and they're there to help the families or the person that's in need. And then when everything is kind of settled, then they're alone.

There has to be some way, mechanism of being there for that person wholeheartedly, even if it's just to sit there in silence, to check in on that person. It's, I
Minnie Kenoras, Johann
Buffalo & Chief Judy Wilson
(Julia Kenoras)

1 guess, the same sort of speaking of you can take the horse
to water, but you can't force him to drink, but if they
know that things are -- you can offer, and he chooses, like
what you've done here.

You gave us a choice, and we'll choose on
our own, and sometimes in our own time. Native people
don't like to be rushed. I guess as we can see by this
morning, things don't go perfectly on the dime or on the
clock, but we get it done. And, I guess, it's done in the
time it's supposed to be done.

Lost souls, that's a big one, lost
identities. You first have to know that you are a soul,
that you do have an identity, that you are worthy, that you
are a person. There are some people, like even back there.
We call them regulators. They make it to town. They
hitchhike. They get their drinks every day. They have a
little village, almost like a tent village or whatever.
They look after each other. They fight each other. Of
course, townspeople don't like that, but this is how they
regulate; hence, regulators.

Some of them are very -- one was a
championship boxer. He won golden gloves, but got mixed up
with the wrong drugs, lost his family. So, you can't just
-- nobody can be judged. It's just for trying to see that
person as a person, because they are somebody's brother.
They are somebody's son, sister, mother. They are
somebody.

Each one of us came into this world as a
precious human being. Some of us fought tooth and nail to
be here, because there are preemies. Now, they're able to
survive. Before, there was not much success. And then
there are ones that are born that come with addictions
already, children that have addictions. So, they already
have something to fight before they even can walk.

And, just saying with my mom, I was carrying
my youngest son when she passed away. And, I was seeing
all the turmoils he went through. I think I was feeling
those feelings because when you're carrying a child, they
tell you to protect your thoughts, protect your feelings,
protect. Because you're not just protecting yourself,
you're protecting the precious being beside you.

So, I can kind of see, you know, why we're
going through the things we're going through. So, it even
starts way, way, way back. So, in saying that, it's a lot
of nurturing and love. And, I know some people think, "Oh,
my God, that's too much." But, it's just not enough. It's
not enough.

And, when I feel a dark place or I get
scared in my dreams, I have a real scary dream, something
is not right and I see darkness in the eyes, no light, I
pray to the Creator. And, I say, "Bless us all, everyone."
And, I come back. I wake up. And, that's what I say to
every one of us that are in darkness right now, "Bless us
all, everyone." Because we are fighting a great fight,
whether we know it or not. It may come in the form of
murdered and missing women right now, but there is that
evilness out there and, you know.

But, on the physical part of it, we're here
to do our duties and our tasks, whether it's right now to
give an injection to a psych patient, to give him his
medication, to monitor his health, making sure his
delusions -- where he can go on with life.

And same, enhance the ones that had hurt us.
We could have gone the other route but no, we're here.
We're fighters in a different way. So, whether you're a
nurse, whether you're a commissioner, whether you're a
filmmaker, whether you're an actor, actress, medicine
woman, that's in Mama Bear. We are all helpers. We are
all fighting for the same cause in a different way. And,
that's what keeps me going.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you. I
don't have any other questions. If there's no other
questions or comments, we could draw this session to a
close.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Thank you,
Commissioner. If we could adjourn this session?

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Okay. Before we adjourn, first of all, I want to thank you very much, Minnie and Johanne, for coming in and sharing. And, I just want to acknowledge your strength and resilience and, Minnie, your fierce independence.

And, we just have a couple of tokens of appreciation, small gifts of appreciation for you coming and sharing. And, I want to thank all your supports for being here as well. I'm going to ask Grandmother Blu to help with these small gifts that we have before you go. Thank you.

MS. JOHANNE BUFFALO: I just want to say my gratification for all of you, for listening to our story and invitation to be here. And, I hope our story at least touches one person out there to come forward and get the healing or find that right path they need to find. And, I'm very thankful my cousins made it here, and Jody is here. And, this circle that we have with us. Mom wants to say a couple of words.

MS. MINNIE KENORAS: I'm the Bear Clan. That's why they call me the bear. My mother was a bear, and she gave me all her strength. She even healed my body. I was in a car crash once. My whole back was broken at the back. And, she came to me as a bear and healed me.
Powerful. So, she comes around, and she's around right now.

And, anyways, I would really like to thank you for -- I didn't even know I was going to be here. I just got a call and they say, "Those are angels calling you to do my job." Those angels called me. You people are working out there, like my angels. You're paving a way to help some other people.

Thomas, he has called me a lot, so he's one of my angels. So, he talked to me quite a lot on the phone. And, I picture him, as I told him today, that Darryl was a good-looking boy, a handsome boy, and he so remind me of Darryl. I forgive Darryl, so now he's back with Julia and he's an angel again. So, I know that was really hard to do, but I did it, and I feel really great about it.

And, I just -- the more people I can help, the better I feel. And, the thing is being here is one of them. I watch APTN a lot. I've seen the people on APTN. I've seen you talking there. I've watched. And, my heart goes out to you. I've seen the good and the bad and the ugly, so I take it that way.

And, I say, "Oh, my God, I wish I was there sitting with them, talking right now. I wish I was there."

And now, my daughter Judy here, says, "Mom, you will be one
of these days." So maybe, yes.

But, anyways, thank you again from deeply
down in my heart from my whole family, and may meet you
again. Okay, thanks a lot.

GRANDMOTHER LAUREN BLU WATERS: So, these
gifts that we'd like to offer you, just a small token of
appreciation. Commissioner Brian will give each of you
there an eagle feather. And, these feathers have come from
this territory as well, from the matriarchs.

We put a call out and they gave us hundreds
and hundreds of feathers to give to each of the witnesses,
to help them with their journey, so that your prayers are
constantly heard, and you're acknowledged for the work that
you're doing. As well as some seeds, so that you can plant
them to see the beauty that is around us each and every day
amongst all the trauma and all of the things that are not
so good. But at least this way, you'll have something to
look forward to and to nourish and watch it flourish.

MS. JOHANNE BUFFALO: My mom wanted to also
give you a gift of sage from our territory, and she made
these pouches herself, so ---

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: So, at this
point, we'll adjourn this session. And, counsel, maybe --
do you have an idea as to when we should be back for the
next session?
MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Commissioner, perhaps we should adjourn for 15 minutes. I understand that we might have lunch coming up as well, but for now, if we could adjourn for 15 minutes?

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Okay, let's adjourn for 15 minutes for now. Thank you.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Thank you.

--- Upon adjourning at 12:03
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

I, Shirley Chang, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this matter.

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Shirley Chang

April 16, 2018