National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Public Hearings
Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel
Elmbridge Room
Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

Thursday April 5, 2018
Public Volume 94
Karen Cook & Rande Cook,
In relation to Patricia Wadhams & Rosalind Wadhams

Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson
Commission Counsel: Wendy van Tongeren

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>Appearance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assembly of First Nations</td>
<td>Julie McGregor (Legal counsel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of British Columbia</td>
<td>Sara Pye (Legal Counsel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Canada</td>
<td>Lucy Bell (Legal Counsel) Anne McConville (Legal Counsel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heiltsuk First Nation</td>
<td>Non-Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Indigenous Council Society</td>
<td>Non-Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Place - Ray Cam Co-operative Centre</td>
<td>Non-Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada</td>
<td>Non-Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Sex Workers’ Rights Collective</td>
<td>Non-Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation</td>
<td>Non-Appearance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Public Volume 94  
April 5, 2018  
Witnesses: Karen Cook and Rande Cook  
In relation to Patricia Wadhams and Rosalind Wadhams  
Commissioner: Brian Eyolfson  
Commission Counsel: Wendy van Tongeren  
Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge-keepers: Laureen "Blu" Waters-Gaudio  
Clerks: Maryiam Khoury and Bryana Bouchir  
Registrar: Bryan Zandberg  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testimony of Karen Cook and Rande Cook</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reporter’s certification</td>
<td>62</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></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Witnesses:** Karen Cook and Rande Cook

**Exhibits (code: P01P15P0206)**

1. Single digital image displayed during the public testimony of Karen and Rande Cook  61
--- Upon commencing on Thursday, April 5, 2018 at 18:56

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Okay. Oh yeah, there we go. So look at this. It's 5 minutes before 7:00 and today is April 5th, 2018. And we are at the Sheraton in Richmond, British Columbia.

And I'm very, very pleased to be able to present the next family members. It is the Cooks, Karen and Rande. And I'm particularly grateful to them for the patience that they've shown in the long wait because they were scheduled much earlier today and the scheduling doesn’t always work as precisely as we anticipate when you're dealing with human beings, we find. Stories are short or long and longer sometimes. So thank you very much for your patience. It's very good to see you.

So this is a public hearing. And both of these people will be speaking and both of them would like to affirm on an eagle feather please.

REGISTRAR BRYAN ZANDBERG: We'll start with you then, Karen. We're good to go? Yeah, we're good. Okay.

Karen, do you solemnly affirm that the truth you will share will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

MS. KAREN COOK: I do.
REGISTRAR BRYAN ZANDBERG: Okay. Thank you. And Rande, I'll ask you the same question. Rande, do you solemnly affirm that the truth you will share will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

MR. RANDE COOK: I do.

MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Thank you.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So let's just start with an introduction. My name is Wendy Van Tongeren. And would you like to just introduce yourself just by your name to begin with?

MS. KAREN COOK: I am Karen Cook.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And Rande?


MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Excellent. Now, are there other people here, sitting with you here as part of your support?

MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah. I have my sister Roxana Wilson, my two nieces Samantha and Chiquita (ph) and nephew is Isiah, and another niece over there I just adopted, Corrine, and Shaylene and Lillian.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Okay. Well, welcome.

MS. KAREN COOK: All family.
Karen & Rande Cook,
(Patricia & Rosalind Wadhams)

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And from where are they from, like, generally? Are they all from British Columbia?

MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah, they're all from British Columbia.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Okay. Welcome, everyone. Thank you very much. I recognize some of you. I've actually hugged some of you.

Okay. So I think we voted that you would start, right, Karen?

MS. KAREN COOK: M'hm.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And what are you going to be talking about?

MS. KAREN COOK: I'm going to talk about two of my older sisters that were murdered. One was murdered in Alert Bay, where we come from, and one was murdered on the Downtown Eastside.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And then I understand that Rande is going to speak after you've finished your part; is that right?

MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Okay. So that's good with you, Rande, is it? Okay. Excellent.

So how would you like to begin?

MS. KAREN COOK: I'm going to start with my
oldest sister. Her name was Rosalind, R-o-s-a-l-i-n-d, Wadhams, W-a-d-h-a-m-s. She was three years older than I was. She was chased by an orderly. She was adopted, not adopted out, lived out of our home with -- we called them (Kwak'wala word), White people.

And an orderly who was their friend tried to rape her and she ran. And she ran to the beach because they lived down at the White end and there was a road there, so she ran. But he caught up with her. He caught up with her and stabbed her numerous times.

I don’t really remember my sister because I was too young. She was only like, 11 to 12 years old when she was murdered. And so I'm three years younger than she was, so I don’t really remember her.

But he caught up with her and he stabbed her numerous times. I don't know she did it but she pulled herself up to the road and a taxi driver just about ran her over because she was laying on the road. And he's the one that called the ambulance and took her to the hospital. She survived a few days. They were pumping blood into her but it was coming out as fast as it was going in.

At this time, it really did -- my mom was already an alcoholic and it got worse after that. It was a really devastating time for us just because of all the trauma that happened in our lives at the time, lots of
Karen & Rande Cook,  
(Patricia & Rosalind Wadhams)

sexual abuse, lots of alcohol. And when this guy did this to my sister, he was an orderly from the hospital, the only hospital that we had in Alert Bay, St. George's Hospital.

He was arrested because my sister was able to talk for a few -- and I only know most of this from family sharing with each other, my mom and my aunties, and you know, and asking questions.

But I come from a huge family of 15. There was 15 siblings. There was 11 girls and 4 boys. Today, we have eight girls and three boys. So all of us were like, spread apart from aunties to -- that's what happened with my sister Rosalind. She ended up with a family -- friends from our family.

But she passed and I never knew her. I wish I did. You know, I wish I grew with her because she was a beautiful young girl that didn’t need to be taken at that time.

I look at my sister. Somebody showed me a picture of my sister and I asked, "Well, who is that?" because she was a little bit older. And I didn’t even recognize my sister because of how young I was when she passed.

But today, you know, I have our family that we support each other and we went through it together, supporting each other and supporting my mom the best way
that we could. My mom and my biological dad kind of separated after that.

And from there, I'm going to go into another older sister of mine who was named Patricia.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Can I just ask before you do that, do you know, what has your family told you about when this happened to Rosalind? I've got a note here of 1963 to '64.

**MS. KAREN COOK:** Oh, '63 to '64.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Okay.

**MS. KAREN COOK:** And those years, that's what I mean. I don’t recall the time because I was too young.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Right.

**MS. KAREN COOK:** She was three years older than I was so 11, so that made me 7, 8, 7 or 8. And that's what I recall is one of my older sisters, Bea -- Christine, is the one that talked to me quite a bit about her and you know, talked about being in the hospital and everything.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Yes. Okay. And I also have a note here that this Bob Morley, who was the assailant, he spent quite a bit of time in jail after that.

**MS. KAREN COOK:** He was arrested and he got 25 years. I don't know what else happened from there on, you know, if he's still alive or if he -- you know, when he
was released because it was such a long time ago.

I had uncles that were institutionalized, was always in and out of jail. You know, they told my mom, "We're going to take care of it." But they didn’t, and that's through the grace of God they didn’t. That's how I look at it today because it would have only caused more trauma in our family.

But you know, from then, like I said, I only knew my sister for a short time and not really knowing her at that time was huge because we're a close-knit family with my sisters and my remaining brothers today.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Do you know if anyone in the family has ever seen any records in connection to the investigation or the prosecution?

**MS. KAREN COOK:** No, I'm not aware, because like I said, my mom went to alcohol after that, after losing my sister and never -- hardly talked about it at all. Like I said, I have an older sister (Kwak’wala word) who is Beatrice. She's the oldest of the girls. She's the one that then talked to us about it with my other sister Christine. But other than that, my mom, she just went a different direction after that.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Now, Rosalind, she actually lived with a White couple; is that right?

**MS. KAREN COOK:** Yeah.
MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And Bob Morley was probably a White person too; do you know?

MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah, he was a White person who worked in St. George's Hospital. I kind of remember him even, bald head, tall, narrow face, slim built, because I remember being with my mom and them when they used to go to the hospital. And that's where we used to see him, is in the -- as being the orderly there.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Did any family members actually work at the hospital or are you talking about when you go -- went there as patients?

MS. KAREN COOK: No, my mom worked in the hospital.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Oh, she did? Okay.

MS. KAREN COOK: She worked in the hospital. She was a chamber -- what is it, chambermaid? She used to clean, laundry and everything there. So you know, that's how we seen most all the time.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And from what you’ve said, Rosalind is particularly young. She's a child ---

MS. KAREN COOK: She was a child, yeah.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: --- when this happened.

MS. KAREN COOK: Like, yeah, 11, 12 years
Karen & Rande Cook,  
(Patricia & Rosalind Wadhams)

old. Just a baby. A baby, you know, one of our baby
sisters.

I look at it today, you know, going to the
Prince George gathering when my son got the call, called us
and asked if we would go to Prince George for the Murdered
and Missing Women's gathering.

All these years, I thought it was forgotten
with both my sisters. It was just like, another bunch of -
- another two Indians just gone. And then when I got this
call from my son asking us to go, you know, I hummed and I
hawed and I just said, "Okay. I'm going to go."

And I travelled with my sister, one of my
younger sisters, Emma. We travelled and we met my sister
Bea because she lives in Fort Rupert. And we went.

I always thought we were standing alone, all
by ourselves, until I got to that gathering. I just
thought, wow, you know, I just -- it was so huge to see all
the women and all the pain that we carried and they
carried. And you know, it was a big eye opener for me and
my sisters to be there.

But I'm very grateful that I did go. And I
look at it today in a different -- I have a different
outlook of it because we're not alone any more. You know,
I always thought that we were. You know, not knowing my
sister Rosalind that much and such a young age to be taken
from us was painful for all of our whole family.

And you know, through the grace of God I was so happy that they arrested him, he went to jail. I don't know where he is or if he's even alive today.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And you live still in Alert Bay?

MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah, I still live in Alert Bay. Most of my family still does. I have sisters in Port Alberni; I have two sisters in Port Hardy.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And what type of changes have you seen in Alert Bay since the sixties?

MS. KAREN COOK: More drugs. You know, it's changed a bit. My family, our family alone has changed their lives. The majority of us are clean and sober today and it happened by, you know, following each other and changing the life that we wanted. We wanted a better life for our children and to be better teachers for them, and to (Kwak’wala word) them when things happened in -- when they do things wrong.

(Kwak’wala word) is, you know, it's up to me as a grandma to talk to my grandchildren. It's up to me to (Kwak’wala word) and teach them the right way and guide them in the right way and guide them in the right path. And I do that quite often with my grandchildren.

And like, you know, I think all of us, just
Karen & Rande Cook,
(Patricia & Rosalind Wadhams)

about, are clean and sober today. That's a choice we made, each one of us. It took time for all of us but you know, we made it.

And through the support of my mom, you know, she always prayed for this. My mom prayed all the time for our family to -- her biggest thing was love, love one another, love each other.

"Always pray, Karen," she used to say.
"Pray for good things. God answers our prayers," she used to tell us.

And I believe in that and you know, I'm a real believer in the church. And I do pray a lot, pray for my children, pray for my grandchildren, because my grandchildren are spread. They live in Victoria. My other son finally just moved home with his daughter. So yeah.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So teaching your grandchildren and love and ---

MS. KAREN COOK: Love and respecting themselves. Respecting themselves for who they are, especially our girls. Boys and the girls, it's about respecting themselves and having an understanding that this (indiscernible) look after it and be safe.

And the teachings comes within, you know? It's what I do, I portray to them. If I'm doing something wrong, they're going to follow. So I do what I need to do
so that I teach them good ways.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Thank you. So would you like to talk about your other sister now, Patricia?

**MS. KAREN COOK:** I had a sister. Her name was Patricia Wadhams. My son Rande, I adopted Rande, me and my husband. Patricia was his mom. Like I said, we come from a real hard family, dysfunctional family, I used to call ourselves because of all the sexual abuse, all the abuses we had, we've had. Whatever it was, we had it.

And like, we all separated. My sister, I grew up with, my sister was such a beautiful, loving, person. She would take the shirt off her back and give it to somebody. That's who she was. Somebody would say something bad to our family, she would stand up and protect our family with everything she had. She was such a beautiful girl, beautiful sister, and I got to know her. I got to know her, this one.

You know, she loved to dance. Her favourite colour was blue. You know, I just loved my sister. Well, she lived with me and my husband for a few years before she came back down here.

In October of 1977, like, I received a call. I don't know if I was the one that was on whatever for my sister, but I received that call that night in October,
that, “We think that we have -- your sister was murdered, Downtown Eastside behind the Brandiz Hotel.”

And I just -- you know, asked me if there was anybody there that could go and identify her. So we had a sister, another sister that was down there who is Charlene. She went and identified her. She phoned, screaming, hollering that it was her.

And then it was up to me to go and let my mom and my stepdad -- me and my sister had different dads. Her dad was my dad because he brought me up from a year and a half to two years old. So I went and told them. We all got together. Family fell apart. My mom was the worst because it was another second murder for my mom.

And when we came down, my sister Bea, myself, my dad, and my mom, to pick up my sister, do what we needed to do. We got to the police station. We waited for five to six hours in the police station, sitting there, waiting, waiting, watch the police officers go back and forth behind a desk.

My dad got up and banged on the table. "What the effing hell's happening here? Why can't you guys tell us what's going on?"

Officer looked at my dad and said, "Sir, if you don't sit back down, you're going to end up in a cell."

So me and my sister took my dad out, took
him out for a little bit and we went back and then checked in with the police again.

And they said, "Well, you guys can -- the coroner will release your daughter."

But you know, for me, being there and witnessing that, they need to have more respect for people. You know, we never got any answers, we never got anything.

My dad turned to alcohol, drank every day after that. He passed because of alcohol, you know, and passed without knowing any answers for my sister. She was the oldest of my dad's -- my stepdad.

But even when we went to -- we went and had a little service at Glenhaven Memorial Chapel here in Vancouver, and then another incident where they brought my sister in in one of those rolling things and again, my dad stood up -- and he was a big man, big broad man -- stood up and hollered at my mom, "Laurie, get her out of that box," because it was one, just one of those boxes from the Ministry. To me, it looked like a cardboard box.

And I watched my dad fall apart, to do the best that he could to take care of our sister for a big man and a strong man, because he was in residential school, he was very angry.

So we were in Glenhaven. We got a casket and put her in the casket. We had a little service in the
Glenhaven Chapel with all her friends from the Downtown Eastside.

Even from doing what we did, we never got any answers. You know, I looked at my mom and my dad when we went home where we couldn't -- where everything just went downhill from there.

The alcoholism really got to every -- but from the Glenhaven Chapel, there was another devastation where we were putting our sister on a plane and in our tradition, we don’t leave them alone. But my sister had to go home on a plane by herself. We dropped her off and we left from here and just gumbooted it. We didn’t stop. Went to Port Hardy and picked up my sister.

So all those little things that happened to us -- well, not little things, big things that happened to us. You know, there should be no need for any of that. They should have treated my sister with dignity, respect, but it didn’t happen like that.

She was a good person, a very good person.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** So really, from the time you got the body from the police or from the coroner, you were left on your own, were you?

**MS. KAREN COOK:** We were left on our own to do what we needed to do. I don't think that it would have changed any because that's what we do. We take care of it.
But just with no support, no nothing from here, no nothing from the police station.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And what police station was that? What police agency?

MS. KAREN COOK: It was right downtown. It was right across from Carnegie Hall there.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Okay.

MS. KAREN COOK: That's where it used to be, anyway.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So Vancouver Police Department?

MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Yeah.

MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And so your father eventually died as a result of his drinking; is that right?


MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And so what can you say about -- I'm sorry, what date?

MS. KAREN COOK: January of 1997 my dad.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So about 20 years later?

MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: What can you say about the incident itself, about Patricia and how she died?
MS. KAREN COOK: All we knew was that she was stabbed behind the Brandiz Hotel and it was two females and one male. And we never got any information on if they found them. The only thing that we got was one of my sisters read in the paper that they found the three and they were sent to jail for three months. But I heard that -- from that was they didn’t even get any time.

And I don't know if they're still alive. I don’t even know anything about them. But you know, there was no justice for my sister with that, three and you know, taking a life again. I don't know where they are or anything.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: What do you remember about Patricia being in Vancouver in the first place? Was she actually living there?

MS. KAREN COOK: My sister moved with -- she lived with my gran after while, lived with my Granny Pearlie in Alert Bay. And then my Granny Pearlie moved down to Vancouver, lived on Alberni Street. And my sister came with my granny and lived with her down here and got into the drinking and the drug scene.

But when my gran moved back to Alert Bay, my sister didn’t come back with her. She stayed down here.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So how long was she in Vancouver before this event where she died?
MS. KAREN COOK: For a lot of years. She went home when she found out she was pregnant with Rande. She went home and stayed home until she gave birth to Rande. She had another one before Rande and she lost that one. But she stayed down here for a number of years. And I think it was running from what happened to us in Alert Bay. She ran, you know, like, all the trauma and abuse we went through, she couldn't stay. She just left. And she wasn't the only one because we had other cousins that left with her. And not being able to handle it and -- but she was very close with my gran and my grandpa Robert so that's where she stayed until they went back home. And then she just stayed behind after that.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And so when she left again, where did Rande go?

MS. KAREN COOK: When my sister had Rande, she called me to the hospital and she says, "I'm going to go back to Vancouver, Sis."

And I says, "Well, what do you mean? What are you going to do?" And I said, "What about Rande?"

She said, "That's why I wanted -- called you. I want you to go talk to Willie."

My husband was a fisherman so he was -- just got in on the boat, worked all year round on the boat.

So she asked me and I said, "Well, I'll go
Karen & Rande Cook,
(Patricia & Rosalind Wadhams)

call Willie." That's my husband's name. And we both went up to the hospital and talked to my sister.

She says, "I want you guys to take him. I know you guys will look after him and look after him good."

So we did. Within a week, my sister left. Rande was five months old when my sister was killed, murdered. And she left and never came back.

And Rande, we adopted Rande. And he's been ours since.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So just in case Rande's kind of a humble guy, do you want to tell us about some of his accomplishments?

MS. KAREN COOK: My son is a very humble man. He took lots of traits from his mom. Family comes first to him. He's got so much love in him. He's a loving, caring, giving young man, beautiful artist. He's known world wide right now.

He's a chief, Chief Rande Cook, Makwala, from the House of the Hamatam, the House of the Seagull. And he holds that up high. We're going to be potlatching for my mom and another sister that I lost through alcohol in May, and he's doing everything that he has to to make it happen.

I was so blessed to have my son and to have my sister honour me with him, me and my husband. I only
Karen & Rande Cook,  
(Patricia & Rosalind Wadhams

wish that my sister could have been here and had the joys of raising our son because of all the accomplishments he's made and everything he's done in life. His mom and his grandpa would be very, very proud and I know that they are because of who he is today.

He has two beautiful daughters and one handsome son. His oldest daughter, Jasmine, just looks like her gran. You can see that all the time. She really, really looks like her Granny Patricia.

I am very, very proud of my son for who he is today.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Yes, he's strong. And can you tell us about your sister? What do you remember about her as an older sister and protecting the other children in the house?

MS. KAREN COOK: When things used to happen with the abuse in our house, when we're being abused we always think that we're looking after each other, the younger ones. And let alone do we know we don't.

So she would lock us in the room, lock us in the room and take the abuse herself. Like I said, she would take the shirt off her back and help whoever she needed to. She always protected us from any harm.

You know, we did things together. I was sharing with my son about things with my sisters. We share
How we get through things is we have circles, healing circles amongst ourselves and let go things, call each other and you know, we need to do it. We'll go in the water, spiritual baths. We're very cultural people. We're very strong in our big house with our dances, like I said, getting ready for the potlatch.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Just, you talked to me about the longhouse and how important that was to you in your own well being. Would you like to talk about that?

MS. KAREN COOK: Well, in my own well being, I got my -- you know, with the big house, I was (Kwak’wala word) in the big house by my mom and my dad. I did bad things back in eighties to 1999 and they (Kwak’wala word) with my whole family.

And with that, I became stronger and like I said, I've been clean and sober now for 21 years. And you know, without the culture and what we have today, it's very important to us. Our big house is our law. This is where we do everything, coming-of-age ceremonies for our girls, (Kwak’wala word) for our 10-month-old babies to give them Indian names, to do our traditional dances. That's where we do everything.

And one thing I forgot to mention is my son's a Hamatsa. Hamatsa is one of the biggest dances in
our big house today and his grandpa put that on him. You
know, just everything that we do in our big house is very
sacred and you know, it's really important to our family,
to a lot of families.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: You also provide
counselling to -- is it ---

MS. KAREN COOK: Right now, today, I always
wanted to be a counsellor when I sobered up and went into
sobriety. So I started working at a treatment centre in
2002. I was a cook then. They hired me on as a cook.
And then I ended up sitting with clients,
talking with them and everything, so my supervisor said,
"Hey, Karen. There's a training happening in the Justice
Institute in Vancouver. Think you'd want to do that?"
So I did. I took it. I am right now a
Child Youth Adult Clinical Counsellor. And I chose that.
I've always wanted to work with youth because of my
upbringing where that I can help youth and you know, give
them the guidance that they need and to walk beside them.
Never walk in front of them or behind them. I walk beside
them because it's about them. It's not about me, it's
about them.

So that's what I do today. And you know,
it's something I love, something that I look forward to
every day. Long as I can help one, I know I'm doing it
MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So when you were preparing for you to come, it was hustle and bustle, because ---

MS. KAREN COOK: Well, yeah.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Explain why.

MS. KAREN COOK: Well, I talked with Wendy and we were all ready to come, went to Victoria, waiting. And then it ended up being that it was too full. And then on Friday, we got the call saying, "Okay. You guys can come." And I thought, wow. So here we are.

But I think we were ready because when I came -- drove this way from Alert Bay, I did come prepared, you know, to pack what I needed and stayed with my son and travelled this way with him and shared stories together.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: That wasn’t the hustle bustle I was thinking of but that was a pretty good one too.

MS. KAREN COOK: What hustle bustle?

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Oh, because you were going away. You were going away.

MS. KAREN COOK: Oh, because of work.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And I find that really exciting, what you were doing.

MS. KAREN COOK: I work out of Gold River.
Is that what you're talking about?

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And there was no

phone or ---

MS. KAREN COOK: And I work out of ---

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: --- no way of

getting ---

MS. KAREN COOK: --- Gold River so there's

no cell phone service. There's only a land phone in our

office and that was the hustle and bustle that she's
talking about. She couldn't get ahold of me at any time to

say, "Karen, you guys can whatever." So I had to go

through messengers to everything or she would contact

Rande.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Yeah.

MS. KAREN COOK: But --

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Karen, I don't have

a satellite phone.

MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah, so there was no

communication between us at that time. But we're here.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: But I didn't tell

you you'd be speaking at ---

MS. KAREN COOK: No, she -- we were -- yeah.

But like, you know, it's the same thing in the big house.

We're patient. We're patient and we wait, you know, for

the next dancers to come out, you know? And it's all about
patience. And you know, even with what we have today with our children, it's about patience, patience for them, you know, give them the time, give them what they need, listen.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** And speaking of listening, I'm sure we could listen to you all day about what it is that it takes for a human being to take their place as a mature person in a community so that they bring health and well being, and you've seen that in your lifetime, haven't you, the difference?

**MS. KAREN COOK:** Yeah, seen a huge difference. You know, I can't speak for anybody else, just for our family. Like I said, we've changed from where we were a dysfunctional family to where we are today. The majority of us are helpers, you know, and that's who we are today.

**MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Exactly. I think that's a really important part of your essence. So I think you're highly qualified to give the Commissioner some recommendations.

**MS. KAREN COOK:** The recommendations is respect. You know, we had no respect. We didn't get anything from anyone. And to be -- yeah, we're Aboriginal, but we need to be respected at the same time, be humble for who we are. Like I said, it's about walking beside, it's not about who you are or who I am. It should be --
everyone should be treated equal.

And threatening isn't the way, like, the way my dad was threatened. You and I just -- like, I'm already doing the work that I need to do and you know, it's about respect and consistency for here, being here, being in Prince George, having consistency with these gatherings would be huge, not just for myself but for other families. Because you know, don't just open up the doors and just let us go. Don't just leave us hanging. It's about taking care of one another. And I see so much love since I've been here in this last two days, being taken care of by the health -- the helpers. It's about consistency. Keep it going. Keep it going and stand tall for who we are.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So you're beside that big young man that you’ve been describing. Do you want to hand him the mic?

Hi, Rande.

MR. RANDE COOK: Hello.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So your aunt is a good role model, so now it's your turn. So where do you want to start?

MR. RANDE COOK: I feel like (speaking in Kwak’wala language). I'm Rande Cook. My name I got when I was born from my grandparents is K’alapa. It's my --
excuse me, I'm going to be real emotional, probably -- but yeah, I got a traditional name when I was first born by my grandparents and it's K'alapa.

And I was adopted by Karen, my aunt, but she's my -- I've always known her as my mom. I grew up always knowing that I was adopted and I know in my family, it was always lots of secrets and lots of silence and never really allowed to talk about much or lots was really hidden from us.

And I'm really proud of my mom today for the work that she's done. She really has come far, like, a long way because we actually really had a really hard time growing up. It was really tough.

And my mom and them did drink a lot too. There was lots of alcoholism and there was lots of abuse in our family and lots of physical abuse. And I really felt that.

And I remember every time I was like, really beat up. There was just so many times I prayed for my mom, my real mom. I really felt alone a lot and I spent most of my time running to my grandparents because my grandpa was my hero.

He was a big man, as my mom was saying. And my gran, they really babied me because of my mom's passing, I believe. And I feel like they wanted to kind of protect
me a bit more. So I spent a lot of time with them.

And I think as I was growing up I was really curious. And my grandpa did, he drank a lot. And it was to the point where I was actually the one who would go get him beer. And I liked doing it because I got to sit with him. And I never wanted to leave his side. So I was happy to even hide beer from my gran so she wouldn't see that I was giving him beer so he would sit with me longer.

But all I would want to do is talk with him. And it would get into the evening at times where he would start talking about residential school and the abuse that he suffered and went through.

And he was a really big, big man, big physical, strong man because of the hard labour that he did growing up. He was a fisherman and he did everything. And I remember bragging to my friends in school, saying my grandpa was the biggest man in the world. He was the strongest.

And I never seen my grandpa cry until one time that he said, you know, he would wake up in the morning and they were forced to eat their porridge with maggots. And they were forced. And they were hit and they were whipped every day.

And he could hear his friends getting dragged out in the hallways at night and raped throughout
the evenings. And he said, you know, it was hard seeing
his friends in the morning all bruised and sitting there
trembling, crying. And they were trying to comfort each
other, to pull each other together because he knew that
they would just get whipped more.

And the thing that my mom didn’t say is that
we grew up in Alert Bay and that's where the residential
school was. And that's a really tiny island. And they
were still using the residential school for us when we were
young. So I remember going.

They blocked off the entire upstairs because
the building was getting so old and I remember running up
there and you could see all the old torn cots and stuff for
all the kids. And some of the rooms were just boarded up
and you can see -- and we were forced, like, to use certain
parts of the building still that was still, I guess,
salvageable, because the building was so old and getting
condemned.

And I remember my granny and gramp dropping
me off to school in the morning and my grandpa being so
mad, yelling at my gran, "Why are we bringing him here?"

And I think back and I just can't imagine
what he must have been feeling watching me go, letting me
go and walk into the school. He hated it. He really hated
it. He used to just swear and curse about residential
And there was lots, like I say, there was lots of dysfunction for us. We had a big family, as my mom was saying. And I used to just, you know, want to know everything about my family.

My grandmother had the opposite upbringing, actually. From her early childhood when the missionaries and the RCMP would come into the villages around Alert Bay because we're island people, they're all islands where we were from, so they would come in on boats. And her grandfather grabbed her and hid her as the RCMP boat and the missionaries were coming because they would walk right into the houses and grab the children and bring them down to the boats.

And the RCMP would stand there and if the parents fought them, they were dragged to jail. So the parents had to just watch their children get stripped away.

And my gran said her grandfather hid her though. And where they were, where she was hidden, she said she could see the boats leaving and all the parents on the beaches just whimpering and crying for their kids.

And then my gran said it was crazy. She said it was like, overnight, they filled their bags with what they needed and they left the next day and they all moved to Alert Bay.
And the interaction they had with their children was watching them through a fence when they would come out for recess. They weren't allowed to talk to them or anything. And they were so afraid to even talk to their kids because they didn’t want them to get punished, you know, their kids to like, get whipped and stuff.

And there is one of my old -- my uncles, he said when he was in residential school his dad moved because he was his only son. And he built a shack on a beach right beside the school. And he ended up dying in that shack because he just missed his son so much.

And that's like my best friend today's dad, you know? And we've shared these stories and I feel for him and I feel for my family. And that's just the stories we share when we're growing up. That's what we knew.

You know, we knew about all this abuse. It was just so normal, you know? And when your cousins are being sexually abused and you're getting physically beaten every day and you're getting hit, you know, you're trying to run away from everything, trying to make sense of everything. It's really hard.

So what my mom didn’t say was that she had two sons when she was young and she gave them up and my grandparents adopted one. And I spent so much time at my grandparents that we didn’t really -- he was older and he
didn’t, I guess, like the fact that I was there so much. And there was that, I think, hard feelings because she had to give him up, being so young, and then she adopted me.

And there was lots of struggles with that and I was always a target for him. He always wanted to attack me and everything. And I just wanted to be around my grandparents because that's as close as I could get to being to my mom, my real mom. And I missed her so much.

And I remember one night though, I woke up and I could hear this firing going off in the house. And it was him. And he grabbed the gun and he put it to the floor where I was sleeping and stared shooting it. And I rolled and it just missed me.

And I grabbed my cousin and I was protecting him. And I was curled up with him and I was trying to protect him so much because he was so young and I felt coldness on my head. And I looked up and there was a barrel on my forehead. And I was staring at him and he said, "You're the one that should be dead." And he just kept saying, "You should fucking die."

And I was just numb and I froze. And then I kept thinking as like, well, maybe I would be close with my mom then.

And my grandpa came out and he was so terrified. And he aimed the gun at my grandpa and he said,
"You're not my dad."

But my grandpa was my dad. He was the one who was there for me all the time and -- but I had to watch my grandfather drink so much. And like my mom said, when he died, I was the one that he called to bring him to the hospital.

And I brought him down there and he just kept telling me, "I'm tough, Son, I'm tough. You know me. You got to go. Just go."

And I didn’t want to leave his side. And I made him promise me that he was going to be okay. And I went back. And I was living in Victoria. And I got back to Victoria and then that's when my aunt told me he had passed away.

It's always just so hard for me because that was my real blood connection and I was like, babied by my grandpa. I know he had a special place for me because he really protected me and he gave me all the knowledge I have today with culture. And like I say, I'm a chief and stuff and it's because of him. I know he wanted a lot for me.

There's just so much I kept thinking about coming here. And I was trying to wrap my head around why. You know, to be honest, I kept asking myself, like, what is justice? And the only thing I keep coming back to is peace. Can I get peace from this?
And I think about the pain that everybody went through in my family and my gran and my grandpa with his residential school and the fact he couldn't be a father, and that there was a huge abuser, sexual abuser in our family that used to rape my mother. She -- like, my mom was saying, she would take it all so they wouldn't have to. And then my mom ended up running away.

And then I listen to stories from cousins who knew my mom and what her life was like in Vancouver and everything that she endured. And it was all just from running away from that brokenness.

And I think of a great man that my grandfather was and how he was stripped of everything. He couldn't be the full potential that he wanted to be. My mother couldn't be the full potential that, you know, she could have been.

And then I think of myself. And I made it a mission in my life to want to do better, you know? I have three beautiful children and I give them everything that I can. They mean the world to me.

And I work really hard. I work for my community and I work as a chief and I'm hosting a potlatch, as my mom was saying. And in hosting this potlatch, you know, I want to speak my truth. I want other people to know, you know, that we're not alone and that we are all
together and we can embrace each other.

And I want to use our traditional ceremonies that were taken away from us to help bring back, to help restore, to help with the healing. And I'm going to be introducing a ceremony within our potlatch, which has never been done, you know? And I'm going to stand up the people from the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and all the workers and acknowledge the work that they're doing.

And I just want to say to everybody that I'm grateful for you, for the people doing the work, you know? I'm really grateful for the steps that have been taken because when I hear stories about, you know, nobody ever wants to hear about your mother being shipped in a box or being treated in such a way, let alone being stabbed to death, you know? Nobody wants to grow up with that.

And that was my upbringing. I fought for my place to be where I am, to sit here today. I have fought every day as a child, getting over abuse.

I was sexually abused and raped and I ran away from home when I was 13. And I didn’t want to run away because I didn’t want to leave my grandparents. But a man told me if I didn’t leave, he would kill me.

And he said, "Leave and never come back or I'll kill you," he said.

And I didn’t know what to do. And I left.
And it was the only time I seen my grandpa cry. And he would call every day where I was staying to check on me.

And I wanted to go home. All I ever wanted was just to go home, because everybody I knew was running away from abuse. Everybody in my family, I heard, was running and hiding stories and keeping things quiet and not talking about stuff. And I felt like I was in it again. I just never heard my gran and gramp so sad.

And still today I live in Victoria. I've never moved back home. I tried once and I didn’t last that long. Even when I go home still, I'm still trying to find my place. It's my home. I love it. It's always going to be. And it's the hardest feeling that I honestly can say that you struggle with when you know a place is your home and you can't go there.

I grew up, like I say, with my grandparents and culture was my life. I used to perform play potlatches in the living room for my grandparents. And I would pretend I was a chief and I would speak and my grandpa would laugh. And he loved it. And then I would dress up my little cousins and make them dance. My Granny and Grandpa thought it was really funny. And those are the happy moments that I shared, and those were the things that I loved. And it was always around culture.

And when I heard about stories from my gran
and them when they were hiding because my gran was -- she travelled with her grandfather a lot and we call it "underground" because the RCMP were chasing the chiefs who were still potlatching. They didn't want to stop so they wouldn't give it up so they planned strategically and they potlatched in winters in high places where the rivers would freeze over and stuff and RCMP boats couldn't make it up there.

And then if they potlatched in the urban -- like, in Alert Bay, they would do it at Christmas time so they could gift up things and pretend they're having Christmas parties. And they were still taking care of business, they said.

But I think about the early stories from that time when my gran said chiefs dragged out of their homes and thrown on the ground and forced to shovel, like, pig shit and stuff like that and beat, and RCMPs and just like, standing around every day waiting for them to even just say one word in our language so they could beat them and throw them and haul them to jail or whatever.

You know, never allowed to leave the reserve, never allowed to shop in the same stores, never allowed to do anything. And my gran said that was her reality of her whole life growing up.

And my grandpa went to residential school
and that was his life. And the horrific stories. And then after they became old enough to become children they couldn't be parents themselves. And the abuse and everything that happened was so thick and so strong.

It's still happening today. We have cousins in our family. They're struggling to just stay with us because we were trying to remind them that they're worth it, that they belong here and that we love them and give them reassurance. But lots of addiction and lots of drugs. As my mom says, there's lots of drugs and it's awful.

But like, you know, like I was saying, I work hard. I work really hard. My whole life, like I say, I've searched for that. I feel like I was robbed of a lot of things in my life and now I have the opportunity to give back to my children.

But I really had to fight to be here. I had to really be one with my Creator and have faith. I had never prayed so hard from the day I was -- I can remember. It was like, please, like, asking for guidance. Something's got to be right here. I don't know, like, nobody gets hit this hard or beat or whatever or on and on. You know, the abuse or just everything. And I just remember thinking, like, God, like, Jesus, is this what admission is to this reality?

But I can honestly say that it has made me
who I am today. I'm learning now in my life how to receive love. I've been one to give and give and give and I just struggled because I could not understand what receiving love meant. And I'm finally at a place where I'm starting to understand what healthy boundaries are because I used to be just, "Yeah, I could do everything."

But now I'm like, "I don't want to do that."

That's me. That's my intro to this is, I came here as the son to a daughter of a beautiful, beautiful woman who was murdered. And the effects of that is, I don't know who my father is, never known.

And thank God that my family fought to keep me and that I didn’t end up outside of my family. And every day growing up, I was so grateful that I had grandparents, that I don't know what or where I'd be if I was adopted outside of our community because culture is my life. I love singing. I love dancing. I love sharing. I love the history.

You know, I work hard. I'm a traditional northwest coast carver, artist, painter. My art has taken me around the world now. And while I'm sharing around the world, I can share stories of who we are as Aboriginal people. I can share our origin stories, I can share the teachings, I can share everything that was once attempted to be stripped away from us for good.
I'm not fluent in my language but I know my language. I'm working on that. But I know everything about who I am as an Aboriginal person from the house I come from, from my origin story from the beginning of time. And I thank God every day that that has never been taken away from me. That's my greatest, greatest thing that I have in my life. That makes me who I am, gives me the strength that I have.

I raised a pole in the Netherlands and I had the Royal Family come and visit and hang out with me. And I adopted Princess Marguerite. I gave her a traditional name from my house.

And I thought no, it's our turn now as First Nations people to start sharing who we are and reaching out and bringing people in to understand who we are. We've done enough now in understanding who everybody else is. We've done enough now coming to a table in Canada to tell our stories.

Now it's time people can come to us. They can come and sit at our table now because the future is up to us as Aboriginal people. The future is up to us to start leading the way, to be strong and to pave a healthy foundation for our children.

And that's what I'm doing every single day. Everywhere that I go in the world, I'm doing that work to
know that my children are going to know that lineage and it's going to be in them.

When I have my potlatch coming up, I'm initiating my children into dances. They're getting names. I'm taking them to our traditional villages which has never happened before where our older people were stripped and none of them ever went back. And around Alert Bay they're all abandoned villages now. There's nothing there other than rundown houses and totems and overgrown.

And when my daughter who's 9, when she was 10 months we went back to our traditional village and we did a naming ceremony on the beach. And I took our elders with us who had never been back since they were five. And the tears and the stories too.

But when they got off the boat and they started talking about where their houses were and they started crying, and then they started laughing.

They said, "Oh, I remember when we were playing." And then they started feeling like they were children and free again.

They had never been back. And I got to do that for them. I got to create something like that and share it and hold a ceremony in our traditional territory.

And that really fulfilled me in a strong way because at that time, my gran was still there but my
grandpa had already passed away. And I was doing that for
my grandpa because he was stripped from our village and he
hadn't been back.

He talked about it often and that was his
wish. He always wanted to go back. And I got to do that.
And now I'm still doing it today.

And when we have our potlatch I'm going to
be doing it again in our traditional territory to give
another nephew of ours a name.

And we dip their feet in the river and it
solidifies them and places them in our traditional
territory, their home or where they come from from time
immemorial, that no matter where they are throughout life,
they know who they are and where they come from, and that's
their place that they can always call home.

And today in the political world, because
I'm a chief, I'm fighting to, you know, preserve what we
have left in terms of traditional territory and resources.

And everybody's heard about fish farms.
Well, that's in our territory and we're trying to get those
out because they're right in the mouths of or traditional
villages. And that's something that nobody's talking
about. We cannot move back to our traditional villages
until these fish farms are gone because our beaches are
being decimated, our wild stocks are like, at two percent
now or something. We're on the brink of extinction of
returns. We can't go and rebuild and be who we are until
we start cleaning all this up.

And those are the important things to me.
When I think about the future, when I think about my kids,
I want my kids to know they can go back to where their
ancestors came from and feel that they are authentically a
piece of that land. That's the most important thing to me.

We can rebuild everything from there. We
can rebuild and compose new songs. We can compose new
dances. We can have new ceremonies. But we need that
land. We need where we come from. That's what's most
important. Those are the teachings from my grandparents
and that's one thing I'm really proud of.

So in saying all that, I know my grandfather
would be proud. And in doing that work, I know my mother
would be proud too. And in doing all of this, I hope it
brings peace to my family and peace to everybody. And I
hope it gives strength back to our people as Aboriginal
people who are leaders to be able to keep going forward and
speaking what truth is and allowing ourselves to be
vulnerable, to be able to be honest and truthful.

I know I have never in my life exposed every
ounce of my being to the public before. And it's kind of
quite liberating because now it's like, there's nothing
else other than up and to build myself from here.

And like my mom says, you know, people
deserve respect. You know, people deserve closure.
Families deserve closure.

And when I think about everything, I think
about misplacement. For us as Aboriginal people, it's
about misplacement. We were stripped of everything that we
know. We've been misplaced this entire time. Urban
settings such as the Eastside where my mom ended up, it's
because she was misplaced, identity stripped away from her,
everything, the essence of who we are as Aboriginal people
taken.

And I say that for anybody in the world. If
I came into your house and took everything away from you
and took your children and everything, how would you feel?
What would your purpose of life be without your children?
And if I took everything else after that even, just to
reassure that you literally had nowhere else to go, what do
you do? How do you rebuild from that?

And then in a society within this country
today that we call Canada, where we're fighting tooth and
nail for everything that has been taken away from us, we're
at a time right now which we call Truth and Reconciliation.

And I ask myself every moment I go back to
our traditional villages, what is reconciliation if we're
still screaming as loud as we can, "We don’t want this. We want the things that matter to us. We just want our land back so we can go home. We want to go home so we can rebuild everything that was taken."

And I think about all the First Nations people on the streets who are misplaced, longing, no identity, you know, misplaced from families and families who are so broken they don’t even know how to bring them in any more because they can't love. I see it over and over.

Our tiny community of Alert Bay, the island itself is nine miles radius. It's tiny. And the St. Michael's Residential School that stood on the island was massive. You could see that school from anywhere and that was the purpose. They built the school on the tiniest island because there is no escape from it. There's nowhere to go as a child if you wanted to run away.

And still today, that is the hub of all of our traditional territory. Every reserve around the old reserve villages, most -- I mean, we have a few that are still, you know, people live there -- were all abandoned. You know, we have one village which would call (Kwak’wala word) which is Hopetown which was set on fire as the children and them were leaving and then they forced the chiefs off and then they set everything on fire to make sure they never went back.
I travel around the world. I do research. I work. I work with museums. I look at collections. I was teaching at the university in Victoria and I designed a course two years ago or last year -- it was for two years -- "The Effects Art Can Have in Bringing Awareness to Political Issues".

And I chose the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women for my mom and then I started working on a project where I'm still working on it right now and it's going to be a 15-foot totem of a woman sculpture which is going to stand in memorial for the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women. And I'm donating it to the City of Victoria and it will stand in the city as a reminder that nobody should ever be misplaced, that everybody has a place, all women have a place.

I have a five-year-old son and I'm always talking to him about being a protector of his sisters, even though he's the youngest, that we have a responsibility within the balance of gender. We're nothing without the women within who brought us into this world.

Our entire culture before the destruction was to honour the essence of female. Our entire big house is symbolic of the womb. It's the most sacred place. The ground in our big house is dirt because we're dancing on Mother Earth. We're not allowed to wear shoes. We have to
wear bare feet and we dance to the log which is the beat, the heartbeat. And the fire in that centre is the spirit of everything.

And when we want to release negative energy, we throw it in the fire and we give it back to our ancestors so we live pure.

We turn before we enter the floor and before we leave as a baby turns before it leaves the womb. Everything that we do, that we have, is connected to the female entity. Women are the chief makers. They stand behind the chiefs because they're the foundation of everything. The men speak.

I laughed with my gran one time and I said, "How come women don’t speak, Gran, in the big house?"

"Because we would never lower ourselves to do the things they do," she said.

And I just laughed. But my gran, she was quite awesome.

But everything that I do today as an artist, you know, I take these teachings with me everywhere that I go. This has been in the back of my mind. I actually didn’t plan for this, to come here. I've been doing a lot of work in my life, paving my own way, really thinking and working hard on what healing looks like and what unity looks like and trying to lend a helping hand anywhere that
I can to make sure that families feel secure if they need things.

I try and be as gentle as I can. I mean, I'm not perfect, of course, but I mean, I work hard. But everything that I do, like I say, is really to bring attention to the fundamentals of who we are as Aboriginal people; love, respect, unity, kindness, all those good virtues.

When I read all the old text of origin stories, I've never come across anything other than that. And when I think about us as Aboriginal people and the governance we had before contact, it was built on that system of respect and love and unity. And then that was destroyed. And now I'm just trying to get that back.

I want to bring those teachings back to our people. When we talk about what decolonization is, it means getting to the root of who we are as Aboriginal people in order to continue to move forward again and unite and pull ourselves back together.

So like I say, I didn’t plan for this. I was doing my work. I started teaching a course at the university. I remember there was a few marches that happened around the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and I kept it in the back of my mind. And I started actually doing more work around helping others instead of
actually bringing myself to a place of actually being like, wait a second. I actually didn’t even know if I was allowed to feel, to be honest. I didn’t know that I was allowed to even include my mom as a part of it. I felt so removed from all of it that I didn’t even know how to engage.

And I remember families talking about it and I wanted to be there and support them. And I couldn't bring myself to even tell my own story because I didn’t know. I didn’t feel worthy. I didn’t feel. I was like, oh no, everybody else is -- I mean, they're just, you know, they deserve so much love. They went through so much. And I never even thought about my own family.

And then when I started teaching at the university and I put this course together and I started to tell my truth, it wasn’t until the response that I got from my students -- and I didn’t have one First Nations student in my class -- all International students -- and it was amazing in a way because I got to focus on international trauma and seek all the parallels from different cultures and talk about the significance and the imbalance of gender on an international scale.

And then I pulled them to focus on the issues of Canada, and then they started to see what was happening within First Nations communities because they
didn’t know, recognize, or even understand or have a
glimpse because there is no other course in the entire
institution that would even talk about it.

So by the end of the year I had 100 percent
attendance which is awesome, amazing reports, and it was
great. But it allowed me and it gave me the opportunity to
start to share my own story because I started to strip
myself completely down to speak truth.

I wanted my students to know exactly
everything that I went through in my life, what a status
card is, what that means to us as Aboriginal people, where
we place ourselves within Canada, what the banning of our
culture was, illegal to be Indian, pretty much stripped,
residential schools, all of it. And I got to start
speaking about it.

And then that's when the conference
happened in Prince George and I couldn't make it because I
was teaching. But I called my mom and I said, "You guys
should go."

But we never really talked about much in our
family. And then my mom said she went and I was happy that
she did. And then she took her sister, my aunt.

My aunt called and she was like, "What the
eff did you set us up for?" She was like, "Jesus Christ."
Like, she wasn’t ready at all.
And I remember I kind of just giggled. I was like, "It's good for you, Auntie. It's good."

And she's like, "Christ, it better be."

She's like, "I'm dying," like.

But you know, and today, like my mom says, a lot of our family are sober. They are wanting to do the work. They do want to heal. And the ripple effects are starting to trickle down to our generation, you know, who are starting to look and say, "Hey, you know, what is our role and what is our purpose here within our community?"

You know, we can look around and focus on all the destruction that has happened to us within our community. And I see a lot of it. It's really, really thick and sometimes you feel like it's just -- it's helpless or you don’t even know where -- I don’t even know where to begin until I remind myself it's compassion and empathy and just to love them.

You know, I was telling my cousin, my auntie, I said, you know, because I'm planning for my potlatch and there's politics and there's still that crabs in the pot scenario and you know, people pull you down and everything and nobody wants to see people succeed. But I said, "Sometimes you just have to look over and remind them that we're family and that you love them."

And I've kind of learned that. And then my
greatest defence with anybody is when I look at them and say, "You know, I love you, and we're all in this together. I'm not doing this for me. I'm doing this for us." Never did I say "I".

And I think as we move forward with this Inquiry and the closure for, you know, my mom and my aunt and other families and everybody is when we start to talk about this and bring it into our traditional ceremonies.

And the whole reason I really wanted to talk about this whole idea of decolonization is because it's who we are as Aboriginal people. We need our ceremonies. We need our ways of life. We need our songs, our dances, our connection to Earth. That's what's going to give us our breath again. That's what's going to put the air into us to continue to breathe life into our children and to give them the teachings that they need.

So that's what I'm going -- the work that I'll be doing from this as I move forward, is continuing to love, most importantly, because I love all of you. Thanks.

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Thank you. Now, I'm thinking that the next stage should be, Mr. Commissioner, do you have any questions for Karen or Rande?

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Wow. You've shared so much that's so powerful, I'm still trying to digest so much of what you've shared. I don't even kind of
know where to begin with questions. I feel like I'll have a flood of questions two hours from now.

But I want to thank you for everything you've shared and I know it's getting late and I don’t want to keep you. But maybe if I could just ask you for any last recommendations or anything before we close off, or anything else you want to share.

What really comes through for me listening to you is your strength in sharing such adversity and the tragic things that happened in your family, but yet there's been so much healing, and that's so powerful.

And so one of the things we're tasked with doing in this Inquiry of course is at the end of the day, making recommendations to government about improving safety for Indigenous women and girls.

And I was also very struck by what you said about decolonization because we're trying to do this work from a -- with a decolonizing approach, and also everything you said about healing.

So I don't know if you have -- either of you have any last recommendations or comments that relate to any of those things about if we were to make recommendations to government, you know?

MR. RANDE COOK: Yeah, I definitely do. It's apples and oranges when we talk about the Canadian
government and us as First Nations people. It's a
different language, it's a different way of life, it's a
different philosophy, it's a different everything.

And I think if the Canadian government is
going to pursue reconciliation, they need to give space to
allow us as First Nations to move forward. We understand
each other as First Nations people and within the
ceremonies and the way we do things because we know our
language, because we know our culture and where we're from.

And when I think about all the different
obstacles First Nations people have to go through, all the
hurdles, it's always -- and I hear this over and over and I
can speak from experience even within the system -- there's
an expectation when somebody is talking to a female or
male, if they're dealing with their children of if they're
dealing with different things within and trying to find
their place in society, that it can come across as being
very harsh, that there's no time, just get over it, do what
you got to do, pick yourself up, whatever.

But the difference is when you're First
Nations and you're coming from somewhere where it's so
broken, you do need that time. You do need somebody just
to stop in the moment to understand and say, "Hey, wait a
second. Maybe I'm asking too much of you, because maybe
you're right. Maybe you are struggling with something.
Maybe you can't pay whatever right now or whatever," you
know?  "And no, I'm not going to take your children away
from you if you don’t make a payment," or, "No, something
harsh isn't going to happen to you."

The reassurance that we need as Aboriginal
people to move forward from the Canadian government and
from the systems, when we're talking about child care, when
we're talking about all aspects within dealing within
social, we have to remember that there is a fracture, a
major fracture within us as Aboriginal people, and if the
demands are so high for us to just get over it and place
ourselves somewhere is a huge leap.

Trauma stunts your growth emotionally. We
know that now. Science has proved it over and over and
over again. You strip a child away from his parents at
five years old and all they know is trauma and they grow up
and a system looks at them and talks to them in a very
specific way and they're demanding and they're very
aggressive, and you go to a place of fear, and you don’t
know how to respond and you don’t know how to interact and
you don’t know your place within it all, it is the scariest
thing ever and you're thinking about your own life. All
you're thinking about is like, am I safe? What's going to
happen to me? What's going to happen to me if I don’t do
this? I don’t want to lose my kids.
The number one thing Aboriginal people think is, I don’t want to lose my kids. I'm doing everything I can for my kids. Kids have already been taken away. I was taken away to live in a residential school, foster care, all these different things where we're forced and stripped.

And it's like, separation is going to solve all the issues when it's the biggest destruction ever, when what we should be doing is bringing them back together and finding solutions and how can I solidify this family? How can I give them the reassurance they need that they're safe?

How can I give the reassurance of a woman who's running around Vancouver, lost, because she feels threatened for her life in some sort of way that maybe somebody will stop and listen, even if it's the authority to say, "Hey, you know what? You're worth it. What you are saying is valid and worth it, and we need to stop and make sure that you are safe."

So my biggest thing always comes back to children because that's where we were broken. We need to go to a place to make sure that the children feel safe, parents feel safe, and allow room for them to find and blossom and grow and nurture that.

You know, there's so many metaphors in the world where we say, "You know, if you can just put a plant
on your table and add a little bit of water every day," and
it's that simple, why can a system be so destructive? How
can a system go home and continue to water that plant and
not show any mercy or any nurturing towards something so
simple where a family is screaming, "Just love me. Please
just let me know that I'm safe and that I'm going to be
okay and I'm going to be able to hang onto my children."

There's obstacles. Yes, rent's high. Yes,
there's all these things in our communities. And they're
so rural, I mean, we're so far up north we don't have --
you know, food is tough, housing is tough, everything is
tough. But what we know in those situations is that when
we come together, we're solid, you know? Break that, you
break everything.

We know that now. We come together. That's
what our ceremonies are about, coming together. Bring
everybody together. If you want to do, see some serious
work, you do it together as unity.

And then that's I think, the biggest thing
that I would -- as a recommendation, is I would really love
to see families feel that, is that safety and to know that
anybody, man, woman, at any moment with a background --
I've sat and I've talked with social -- you know, with the
system.

I myself have been threatened. Even when I
tried to even plead something that was happening, I said, "There's a really big concern in my life right now. I just need a moment."

No, there's no room. You know, even when a lady reads back to me, she goes, "Oh, I see here you're a chief."

At one time in our culture, that was royalty. Families today have no idea of how important that was at one time. I see chiefs who sit in big houses so broken who are still afraid to even speak, who are still afraid to even think about doing a ceremony to help families.

You know, there's so much that needs to happen and I think it comes back to that place is, are we safe? Do we feel valid? And it starts with the children though. It started with the children when they were taken away from us. It stated there with the destruction. It started, like I said -- and I told you the story of my grandfather and he lost everything because he was a child and he couldn't find his way back.

And the ripple effect was my mother who ended up in Vancouver and she got murdered. To get back is to put all the emphasis back on the children and their safety now to make sure they are safe. That's my recommendation. Thank you.
MS. KAREN COOK: Mine was, like I've already said, was the consistency and to listen and to be heard, hugely to be heard. You know, being here and listening to some of the ladies and not being heard, you know, witnessing things that happened with the police officers, it's about being heard.

And I don't -- I strongly believe in unity like what Rande is talking about because I look at our family that was hugely broken, hugely broken, and then the ripple effect started from my dad down from the alcoholism to where we all ended up. And you know, it was about listening.

Now, if that police officer would have said, "Sir, we'll be with you in a few minutes," you know, there was no listening.

Having a voice is huge. I used to be the little girl, me and my sister, whose mom used to sit in the back. Never had a voice because we were always told to be quiet. What happens in our house stays in our house.

Today and since I've came into recovery, I have a voice and I'm very loud and proud about it. And that's just who I am today. And you know, if I don't think it's right I'm going to let you know it. And I do. And I'm a real strong -- you know, I went to choices and I have a purpose. My purpose is I'm a strong Aboriginal woman.
sharing my wisdom. And that's what I do today. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you, Karen and Rande. If there's no other questions or comments, I think we can wrap up. But I just want to thank you so much on behalf of the National Inquiry for coming and sharing your truth with us and contributing to our work and giving us so much insight.

And before we go, we have some small gifts of reciprocity for you for sharing your gift of your truths with us. I'm going to ask Grandmother "Blu" to help speak to those.

GRANDMOTHER LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS-GAUDIO: So we just want to offer this small token of appreciation, which is some eagle feathers which have come from the matriarchs from here. And we want to gift you each with an eagle feather to help you with your continual healing and your journey that you're on and the work that you're doing, as well as some packages of seeds.

There's one with fireweed in it for that healing and the other one, wild strawberries. So that's strong women's medicine.

And I'd just like to raise my hands (indiscernible). Your family has done so well and you’ve come so far and it's been a pleasure to sit and listen to you and to listen to your stories and your resilience, so
Thank you.

--- DRUMMING AND SONG IN TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE BY FAMILY

MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: This meeting is adjourned and we will reconvene tomorrow morning.

--- Exhibits (code: P01P15P0206)

Exhibit 1: Single digital image displayed during the public testimony of Karen and Rande Cook

--- Upon adjourning at 20:49
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

I, Karen Noganosh, 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.

_______________________________
Karen Noganosh

Karen Noganosh
April 18, 2018