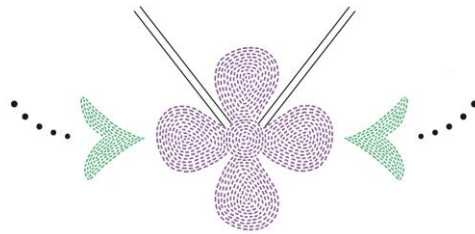


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



Enquête nationale
sur les femmes et les filles
autochtones disparues et assassinées

**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**



PUBLIC

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**

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II

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Heiltsuk First Nation	Non-Appearence
Northwest Indigenous Council Society	Non-Appearence
Our Place - Ray Cam Co-operative Centre	Non-Appearence
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada	Non-Appearence
Vancouver Sex Workers' Rights Collective	Non-Appearence
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation	Non-Appearence

III

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

PAGE

Testimony of **Karen Cook and Rande Cook** 1

Reporter's certification 62

IV
LIST OF EXHIBITS

NO.	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
Witnesses: Karen Cook and Rande Cook		
Exhibits (code: P01P15P0206)		
1	Single digital image displayed during the public testimony of Karen and Rande Cook	61

1 Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Thursday, April 5, 2018 at 18:56

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

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

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

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

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

25 **MS. KAREN COOK:** I do.

1 **REGISTRAR BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Okay. Thank you.

2 And Rande, I'll ask you the same question.

3 Rande, do you solemnly affirm that the truth
4 you will share will be the truth, the whole truth, and
5 nothing but the truth?

6 **MR. RANDE COOK:** I do.

7 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Thank you.

8 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** So let's just start
9 with an introduction. My name is Wendy Van Tongeren.

10 And would you like to just introduce
11 yourself just by your name to begin with?

12 **MS. KAREN COOK:** I am Karen Cook.

13 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** And Rande?

14 **MR. RANDE COOK:** I am Rande Cook. Karen's
15 my mom.

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

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

23 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Okay. Well,
24 welcome.

25 **MS. KAREN COOK:** All family.

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

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

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

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

11 **MS. KAREN COOK:** M'hm.

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

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

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

21 **MS. KAREN COOK:** Yeah.

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

24 So how would you like to begin?

25 **MS. KAREN COOK:** I'm going to start with my

1 oldest sister. Her name was Rosalind, R-o-s-a-l-i-n-d,
2 Wadhams, W-a-d-h-a-m-s. She was three years older than I
3 was. She was chased by an orderly. She was adopted, not
4 adopted out, lived out of our home with -- we called them
5 (Kwak'wala word), White people.

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

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

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

22 At this time, it really did -- my mom was
23 already an alcoholic and it got worse after that. It was a
24 really devastating time for us just because of all the
25 trauma that happened in our lives at the time, lots of

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

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

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

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

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

23 But today, you know, I have our family that
24 we support each other and we went through it together,
25 supporting each other and supporting my mom the best way

1 that we could. My mom and my biological dad kind of
2 separated after that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 **MS. KAREN COOK:** He was arrested and he got
24 25 years. I don't know what else happened from there on,
25 you know, if he's still alive or if he -- you know, when he

1 was released because it was such a long time ago.

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

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

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

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

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

25 **MS. KAREN COOK:** Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** And from what
20 you've said, Rosalind is particularly young. She's a child
21 ---

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

23 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** --- when this
24 happened.

25 **MS. KAREN COOK:** Like, yeah, 11, 12 years

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

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

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

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

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

21 But I'm very grateful that I did go. And I
22 look at it today in a different -- I have a different
23 outlook of it because we're not alone any more. You know,
24 I always thought that we were. You know, not knowing my
25 sister Rosalind that much and such a young age to be taken

1 from us was painful for all of our whole family.

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 And like, you know, I think all of us, just

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 And the teachings comes within, you know?
24 It's what I do, I portray to them. If I'm doing something
25 wrong, they're going to follow. So I do what I need to do

1 so that I teach them good ways.

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

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

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

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

23 In October of 1977, like, I received a call.
24 I don't know if I was the one that was on whatever for my
25 sister, but I received that call that night in October,

1 that, "We think that we have -- your sister was murdered,
2 Downtown Eastside behind the Brandiz Hotel."

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

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

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

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

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

25 So me and my sister took my dad out, took

1 him out for a little bit and we went back and then checked
2 in with the police again.

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

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

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

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

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

24 So we were in Glenhaven. We got a casket
25 and put her in the casket. We had a little service in the

1 Glenhaven Chapel with all her friends from the Downtown
2 Eastside.

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

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

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

19 She was a good person, a very good person.

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

23 **MS. KAREN COOK:** We were left on our own to
24 do what we needed to do. I don't think that it would have
25 changed any because that's what we do. We take care of it.

1 But just with no support, no nothing from here, no nothing
2 from the police station.

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

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

7 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Okay.

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

10 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So Vancouver Police
11 Department?

12 MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah.

13 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Yeah.

14 MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah.

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

17 MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah. He died in 1997.

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

20 MS. KAREN COOK: January of 1997 my dad.

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

23 MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah.

24 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: What can you say
25 about the incident itself, about Patricia and how she died?

1 **MS. KAREN COOK:** All we knew was that she
2 was stabbed behind the Brandiz Hotel and it was two females
3 and one male. And we never got any information on if they
4 found them. The only thing that we got was one of my
5 sisters read in the paper that they found the three and
6 they were sent to jail for three months. But I heard that
7 -- from that was they didn't even get any time.

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

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

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

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

24 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** So how long was she
25 in Vancouver before this event where she died?

1 **MS. KAREN COOK:** For a lot of years. She
2 went home when she found out she was pregnant with Rande.
3 She went home and stayed home until she gave birth to
4 Rande. She had another one before Rande and she lost that
5 one. But she stayed down here for a number of years.

6 And I think it was running from what
7 happened to us in Alert Bay. She ran, you know, like, all
8 the trauma and abuse we went through, she couldn't stay.
9 She just left. And she wasn't the only one because we had
10 other cousins that left with her. And not being able to
11 handle it and -- but she was very close with my gran and my
12 grandpa Robert so that's where she stayed until they went
13 back home. And then she just stayed behind after that.

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

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

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

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

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

25 So she asked me and I said, "Well, I'll go

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 I was so blessed to have my son and to have
25 my sister honour me with him, me and my husband. I only

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 You know, we did things together. I was
25 sharing with my son about things with my sisters. We share

1 so much.

2 How we get through things is we have
3 circles, healing circles amongst ourselves and let go
4 things, call each other and you know, we need to do it.
5 We'll go in the water, spiritual baths. We're very
6 cultural people. We're very strong in our big house with
7 our dances, like I said, getting ready for the potlatch.

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

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

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

24 And one thing I forgot to mention is my
25 son's a Hamatsa. Hamatsa is one of the biggest dances in

1 our big house today and his grandpa put that on him. You
2 know, just everything that we do in our big house is very
3 sacred and you know, it's really important to our family,
4 to a lot of families.

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

7 **MS. KAREN COOK:** Right now, today, I always
8 wanted to be a counsellor when I sobered up and went into
9 sobriety. So I started working at a treatment centre in
10 2002. I was a cook then. They hired me on as a cook.

11 And then I ended up sitting with clients,
12 talking with them and everything, so my supervisor said,
13 "Hey, Karen. There's a training happening in the Justice
14 Institute in Vancouver. Think you'd want to do that?"

15 So I did. I took it. I am right now a
16 Child Youth Adult Clinical Counsellor. And I chose that.
17 I've always wanted to work with youth because of my
18 upbringing where that I can help youth and you know, give
19 them the guidance that they need and to walk beside them.
20 Never walk in front of them or behind them. I walk beside
21 them because it's about them. It's not about me, it's
22 about them.

23 So that's what I do today. And you know,
24 it's something I love, something that I look forward to
25 every day. Long as I can help one, I know I'm doing it

1 right.

2 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So when you were
3 preparing for you to come, it was hustle and bustle,
4 because ---

5 MS. KAREN COOK: Well, yeah.

6 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Explain why.

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

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

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

19 MS. KAREN COOK: What hustle bustle?

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

22 MS. KAREN COOK: Oh, because of work.

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

25 MS. KAREN COOK: I work out of Gold River.

1 Is that what you're talking about?

2 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And there was no
3 phone or ---

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

5 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: --- no way of
6 getting ---

7 MS. KAREN COOK: --- Gold River so there's
8 no cell phone service. There's only a land phone in our
9 office and that was the hustle and bustle that she's
10 talking about. She couldn't get ahold of me at any time to
11 say, "Karen, you guys can whatever." So I had to go
12 through messengers to everything or she would contact
13 Rande.

14 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Yeah.

15 MS. KAREN COOK: But --

16 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Karen, I don't have
17 a satellite phone.

18 MS. KAREN COOK: Yeah, so there was no
19 communication between us at that time. But we're here.

20 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: But I didn't tell
21 you you'd be speaking at ---

22 MS. KAREN COOK: No, she -- we were -- yeah.
23 But like, you know, it's the same thing in the big house.
24 We're patient. We're patient and we wait, you know, for
25 the next dancers to come out, you know? And it's all about

1 patience. And you know, even with what we have today with
2 our children, it's about patience, patience for them, you
3 know, give them the time, give them what they need, listen.

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

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

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

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

1 everyone should be treated equal.

2 And threatening isn't the way, like, the way
3 my dad was threatened. You and I just -- like, I'm already
4 doing the work that I need to do and you know, it's about
5 respect and consistency for here, being here, being in
6 Prince George, having consistency with these gatherings
7 would be huge, not just for myself but for other families.

8 Because you know, don't just open up the
9 doors and just let us go. Don't just leave us hanging.
10 It's about taking care of one another. And I see so much
11 love since I've been here in this last two days, being
12 taken care of by the health -- the helpers. It's about
13 consistency. Keep it going. Keep it going and stand tall
14 for who we are.

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

18 Hi, Rande.

19 **MR. RANDE COOK:** Hello.

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

23 **MR. RANDE COOK:** I feel like (speaking in
24 Kwak'wala language). I'm Rande Cook. My name I got when I
25 was born from my grandparents is K'alapa. It's my --

1 excuse me, I'm going to be real emotional, probably -- but
2 yeah, I got a traditional name when I was first born by my
3 grandparents and it's K'alapa.

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

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

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

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

23 He was a big man, as my mom was saying. And
24 my gran, they really babied me because of my mom's passing,
25 I believe. And I feel like they wanted to kind of protect

1 me a bit more. So I spent a lot of time with them.

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

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

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

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

24 And he could hear his friends getting
25 dragged out in the hallways at night and raped throughout

1 the evenings. And he said, you know, it was hard seeing
2 his friends in the morning all bruised and sitting there
3 trembling, crying. And they were trying to comfort each
4 other, to pull each other together because he knew that
5 they would just get whipped more.

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

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

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

22 And I think back and I just can't imagine
23 what he must have been feeling watching me go, letting me
24 go and walk into the school. He hated it. He really hated
25 it. He used to just swear and curse about residential

1 school.

2 And there was lots, like I say, there was
3 lots of dysfunction for us. We had a big family, as my mom
4 was saying. And I used to just, you know, want to know
5 everything about my family.

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

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

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

22 And then my gran said it was crazy. She
23 said it was like, overnight, they filled their bags with
24 what they needed and they left the next day and they all
25 moved to Alert Bay.

1 And the interaction they had with their
2 children was watching them through a fence when they would
3 come out for recess. They weren't allowed to talk to them
4 or anything. And they were so afraid to even talk to their
5 kids because they didn't want them to get punished, you
6 know, their kids to like, get whipped and stuff.

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

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

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

22 So what my mom didn't say was that she had
23 two sons when she was young and she gave them up and my
24 grandparents adopted one. And I spent so much time at my
25 grandparents that we didn't really -- he was older and he

1 didn't, I guess, like the fact that I was there so much.
2 And there was that, I think, hard feelings because she had
3 to give him up, being so young, and then she adopted me.

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

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

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

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

24 And my grandpa came out and he was so
25 terrified. And he aimed the gun at my grandpa and he said,

1 "You're not my dad."

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

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

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

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

21 There's just so much I kept thinking about
22 coming here. And I was trying to wrap my head around why.
23 You know, to be honest, I kept asking myself, like, what is
24 justice? And the only thing I keep coming back to is
25 peace. Can I get peace from this?

1 And I think about the pain that everybody
2 went through in my family and my gran and my grandpa with
3 his residential school and the fact he couldn't be a
4 father, and that there was a huge abuser, sexual abuser in
5 our family that used to rape my mother. She -- like, my
6 mom was saying, she would take it all so they wouldn't have
7 to. And then my mom ended up running away.

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

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

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

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

1 together and we can embrace each other.

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

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

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

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

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

25 And I didn't know what to do. And I left.

1 And it was the only time I seen my grandpa cry. And he
2 would call every day where I was staying to check on me.

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

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

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

25 And when I heard about stories from my gran

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

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

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

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

25 And my grandpa went to residential school

1 and that was his life. And the horrific stories. And then
2 after they became old enough to become children they
3 couldn't be parents themselves. And the abuse and
4 everything that happened was so thick and so strong.

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

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

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

25 But I can honestly say that it has made me

1 who I am today. I'm learning now in my life how to receive
2 love. I've been one to give and give and give and I just
3 struggled because I could not understand what receiving
4 love meant. And I'm finally at a place where I'm starting
5 to understand what healthy boundaries are because I used to
6 be just, "Yeah, I could do everything."

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

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

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

19 You know, I work hard. I'm a traditional
20 northwest coast carver, artist, painter. My art has taken
21 me around the world now. And while I'm sharing around the
22 world, I can share stories of who we are as Aboriginal
23 people. I can share our origin stories, I can share the
24 teachings, I can share everything that was once attempted
25 to be stripped away from us for good.

1 I'm not fluent in my language but I know my
2 language. I'm working on that. But I know everything
3 about who I am as an Aboriginal person from the house I
4 come from, from my origin story from the beginning of time.
5 And I thank God every day that that has never been taken
6 away from me. That's my greatest, greatest thing that I
7 have in my life. That makes me who I am, gives me the
8 strength that I have.

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

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

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

24 And that's what I'm doing every single day.
25 Everywhere that I go in the world, I'm doing that work to

1 know that my children are going to know that lineage and
2 it's going to be in them.

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

10 And when my daughter who's 9, when she was
11 10 months we went back to our traditional village and we
12 did a naming ceremony on the beach. And I took our elders
13 with us who had never been back since they were five. And
14 the tears and the stories too.

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

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

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

24 And that really fulfilled me in a strong way
25 because at that time, my gran was still there but my

1 grandpa had already passed away. And I was doing that for
2 my grandpa because he was stripped from our village and he
3 hadn't been back.

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

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

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

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

19 And everybody's heard about fish farms.
20 Well, that's in our territory and we're trying to get those
21 out because they're right in the mouths of or traditional
22 villages. And that's something that nobody's talking
23 about. We cannot move back to our traditional villages
24 until these fish farms are gone because our beaches are
25 being decimated, our wild stocks are like, at two percent

1 now or something. We're on the brink of extinction of
2 returns. We can't go and rebuild and be who we are until
3 we start cleaning all this up.

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

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

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

23 I know I have never in my life exposed every
24 ounce of my being to the public before. And it's kind of
25 quite liberating because now it's like, there's nothing

1 else other than up and to build myself from here.

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

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

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

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

24 And I ask myself every moment I go back to
25 our traditional villages, what is reconciliation if we're

1 still screaming as loud as we can, "We don't want this. We
2 want the things that matter to us. We just want our land
3 back so we can go home. We want to go home so we can
4 rebuild everything that was taken."

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

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

17 And still today, that is the hub of all of
18 our traditional territory. Every reserve around the old
19 reserve villages, most -- I mean, we have a few that are
20 still, you know, people live there -- were all abandoned.
21 You know, we have one village which would call (Kwak'wala
22 word) which is Hopetown which was set on fire as the
23 children and them were leaving and then they forced the
24 chiefs off and then they set everything on fire to make
25 sure they never went back.

1 I travel around the world. I do research.
2 I work. I work with museums. I look at collections. I
3 was teaching at the university in Victoria and I designed a
4 course two years ago or last year -- it was for two years -
5 - "The Effects Art Can Have in Bringing Awareness to
6 Political Issues".

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

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

21 Our entire culture before the destruction
22 was to honour the essence of female. Our entire big house
23 is symbolic of the womb. It's the most sacred place. The
24 ground in our big house is dirt because we're dancing on
25 Mother Earth. We're not allowed to wear shoes. We have to

1 wear bare feet and we dance to the log which is the beat,
2 the heartbeat. And the fire in that centre is the spirit
3 of everything.

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

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

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

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

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

19 But everything that I do today as an artist,
20 you know, I take these teachings with me everywhere that I
21 go. This has been in the back of my mind. I actually
22 didn't plan for this, to come here. I've been doing a lot
23 of work in my life, paving my own way, really thinking and
24 working hard on what healing looks like and what unity
25 looks like and trying to lend a helping hand anywhere that

1 I can to make sure that families feel secure if they need
2 things.

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

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

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

20 So like I say, I didn't plan for this. I
21 was doing my work. I started teaching a course at the
22 university. I remember there was a few marches that
23 happened around the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women
24 and I kept it in the back of my mind. And I started
25 actually doing more work around helping others instead of

1 actually bringing myself to a place of actually being like,
2 wait a second. I actually didn't even know if I was
3 allowed to feel, to be honest. I didn't know that I was
4 allowed to even include my mom as a part of it. I felt so
5 removed from all of it that I didn't even know how to
6 engage.

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

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

23 And then I pulled them to focus on the
24 issues of Canada, and then they started to see what was
25 happening within First Nations communities because they

1 didn't know, recognize, or even understand or have a
2 glimpse because there is no other course in the entire
3 institution that would even talk about it.

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

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

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

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

23 My aunt called and she was like, "What the
24 eff did you set us up for?" She was like, "Jesus Christ."
25 Like, she wasn't ready at all.

1 And I remember I kind of just giggled. I
2 was like, "It's good for you, Auntie. It's good."

3 And she's like, "Christ, it better be."
4 She's like, "I'm dying," like.

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

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

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

25 And I've kind of learned that. And then my

1 greatest defence with anybody is when I look at them and
2 say, "You know, I love you, and we're all in this together.
3 I'm not doing this for me. I'm doing this for us." Never
4 did I say "I".

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

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

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

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

23 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Wow. You've
24 shared so much that's so powerful, I'm still trying to
25 digest so much of what you've shared. I don't even kind of

1 know where to begin with questions. I feel like I'll have
2 a flood of questions two hours from now.

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

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

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

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

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

24 **MR. RANDE COOK:** Yeah, I definitely do.
25 It's apples and oranges when we talk about the Canadian

1 government and us as First Nations people. It's a
2 different language, it's a different way of life, it's a
3 different philosophy, it's a different everything.

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

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

20 But the difference is when you're First
21 Nations and you're coming from somewhere where it's so
22 broken, you do need that time. You do need somebody just
23 to stop in the moment to understand and say, "Hey, wait a
24 second. Maybe I'm asking too much of you, because maybe
25 you're right. Maybe you are struggling with something.

1 Maybe you can't pay whatever right now or whatever," you
2 know? "And no, I'm not going to take your children away
3 from you if you don't make a payment," or, "No, something
4 harsh isn't going to happen to you."

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

13 Trauma stunts your growth emotionally. We
14 know that now. Science has proved it over and over and
15 over again. You strip a child away from his parents at
16 five years old and all they know is trauma and they grow up
17 and a system looks at them and talks to them in a very
18 specific way and they're demanding and they're very
19 aggressive, and you go to a place of fear, and you don't
20 know how to respond and you don't know how to interact and
21 you don't know your place within it all, it is the scariest
22 thing ever and you're thinking about your own life. All
23 you're thinking about is like, am I safe? What's going to
24 happen to me? What's going to happen to me if I don't do
25 this? I don't want to lose my kids.

1 The number one thing Aboriginal people think
2 is, I don't want to lose my kids. I'm doing everything I
3 can for my kids. Kids have already been taken away. I was
4 taken away to live in a residential school, foster care,
5 all these different things where we're forced and stripped.

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

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

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

24 You know, there's so many metaphors in the
25 world where we say, "You know, if you can just put a plant

1 on your table and add a little bit of water every day," and
2 it's that simple, why can a system be so destructive? How
3 can a system go home and continue to water that plant and
4 not show any mercy or any nurturing towards something so
5 simple where a family is screaming, "Just love me. Please
6 just let me know that I'm safe and that I'm going to be
7 okay and I'm going to be able to hang onto my children."

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

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

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

25 I myself have been threatened. Even when I

1 tried to even plead something that was happening, I said,
2 "There's a really big concern in my life right now. I just
3 need a moment."

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

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

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

21 And the ripple effect was my mother who
22 ended up in Vancouver and she got murdered. To get back is
23 to put all the emphasis back on the children and their
24 safety now to make sure they are safe. That's my
25 recommendation. Thank you.

1 MS. KAREN COOK: Mine was, like I've already
2 said, was the consistency and to listen and to be heard,
3 hugely to be heard. You know, being here and listening to
4 some of the ladies and not being heard, you know,
5 witnessing things that happened with the police officers,
6 it's about being heard.

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

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

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

20 Today and since I've come into recovery, I
21 have a voice and I'm very loud and proud about it. And
22 that's just who I am today. And you know, if I don't think
23 it's right I'm going to let you know it. And I do. And
24 I'm a real strong -- you know, I went to choices and I have
25 a purpose. My purpose is I'm a strong Aboriginal woman

1 sharing my wisdom. And that's what I do today. Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

1 thank you.

2 --- DRUMMING AND SONG IN TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE BY FAMILY

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

5 --- Exhibits (code: P01P15P0206)

6 **Exhibit 1:** Single digital image displayed during the
7 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

April 18, 2018