Candice Coral Stevenson, in relation to Roxanne Fleming

Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller
Commission Counsel: Meredith Porter

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**Witness:** Candice Coral Stevenson  
**Exhibits (code: P01P15P0405)**
MS. MEREDITH PORTER: Good morning, Chief Commissioner Buller. I’m Meredith Porter and I’m Commission counsel with the National Inquiry, and I’m here today with Candice Stevenson and Bonnie McDonald. And Candice is going to share the story about Roxanne Fleming, who was her mother. And I’m not going to go into details about Roxanne, because Candice has put down a timeline that she’s going to share as part of her story. So prior to hearing from Candice, I’m going to ask that she be promised in.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Good morning, Candice.

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Good morning.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Do you promise to tell your truth in a good way today?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Yes.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Thank you. I was just going to make a quick announcement that anybody coming and going from this room, please do so quietly. I know that door makes a loud noise, but it can be very distracting to people when they’re talking. So just a little quiet coming and going, please.

Go ahead.
MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: So as said, my name is Candice Stevenson. I’m from the Skatin Nation and I grew up in Lillooet, B.C. I’d like to kind of paint a picture of the family system breakdown that has happened within my family. So I will start with my grandmother.

In January 20th, 1962 my grandmother, Laura Copeland had five children. She wanted to go out one night to a party and she had asked somebody to check up on her children. There was five of them that night. And while she was gone the children had tried to light a fire. It was the middle of winter in Lillooet, it’s cold. And unfortunately, all five of the children had burnt in the fire. It was Normaline (phonetic) Joan, who was four years old; Felix Marshall, who was three years old; Geraldine Lois was four months old; Susan Kaye was a year old; and the oldest was Rosanne, she was five years old.

So when my grandmother became pregnant with my mother Roxanne, she -- I believe that she was apprehended right away. I don’t know the specific details, but she was born two years later. She was placed into a non-First Nations home at four months old, later adopted when she was two years old.

I was born in 1981 and my mother seemed to have the perfect family -- the family. And then my father was killed when I was five months old in a work-related
accident. I was then apprehended by the Ministry. They had decided that she was unfit to be a mother, 17 years old. Had just suffered serious trauma and grief.

My birthmother Roxanne and my amazing mother Bonnie had struck up a deal with the Ministry so that I wouldn’t get taken into random foster care. And their deal was that there would be a transfer of guardianship for me. So I am now second generation adopted into a non-First Nations family.

While I was growing up, I grew up next to — I lived a half a block away from my birthmother’s adopted mother Muriel and right next door to her sister Betty. I had absolutely no contact with them. They did not reach out to me at all. They were not interested in me at all. So I grew up. I had a daughter in 2006. My daughter is third generation First Nations child adopted into a non-First Nations family. So you can see that my whole family’s system is gone. Like, we don’t -- there’s no parenting skills there at all.

I did have contact with them for a while and it was just too difficult. I stepped back, went back and I had a discussion with my daughter’s mother about residential schools and colonization and the impacts. And basically, she cut contact from me and doesn’t want me to be in contact with my daughter at this point. And I feel
like this is a really common view with a lot of people, is they don’t want to acknowledge the impacts of colonization, residential schools, systemic racism that we still deal to -- with this day.

And so my daughter is there. I don’t have contact with her. I’m trying to follow a timeline, but I’m getting a little mixed up.

In 2003 I got a call from the Langley RCMP. They wanted to know if I had any information on my birthmother’s whereabouts. They wanted to come and collect DNA and such. They -- she had already been missing for 20 years by the time her sister had filed a missing persons report. It wasn’t even -- it wasn’t even her mother, it was her sister, 20 years after she had been gone, they had finally thought to file one.

And I believe it had something to do with her mother passed away a month later, so why would you -- unless it had something to do with a will or such. That also shows that there’s a complete disregard. I don’t know how your daughter can be missing for so long. I was also told that she got a call in the middle of the night one night and it was my mother asking her for help, and she -- as far as I know, she did nothing. She didn’t hang up the phone or contact the police or nothing. So my mother has been missing for 33 years.
I have been dealing with the RCMP in this case. Once I -- I was too young to really think about it before then, but once I had been contacted I’ve been actively pushing, and pushing, and pushing, and trying to find answers. I feel like there’s a complete lack of -- they don’t want to invest the time. They don’t want to invest the money or anything. I probably haven’t spoke to them for five years. They’ve told me they’ve exhausted pretty much all avenues, which I don’t believe is true. I’ve given them alias’ and never heard back.

I was told that her DNA was compared to DNA within B.C., but that there was only three unknown remains that it could be compared to. I don’t believe there’s only three unknown remains in B.C. And I don’t know why, if she was -- her DNA was compared to the unknown on Robert Pickton’s farm, why they can’t do it for the rest of Canada.

So I’ve been dealing with a lot of -- a lot of resistance with them in regards to that. I’m also -- it took them 10 years to do a media release. They had brought it up to me and then 10 years later, that’s 30 years after she had gone missing that they’re finally doing a media release. People’s memories are fading. Things are happening. It’s not acceptable that these things are taking so long. For all we know she could be sitting
somewhere in a basement, in an evidence box, and I’m trying
to continue on with my life, without answers.

So I think -- I wasn’t going to come here
today because I don’t believe in the inquiry. I decided to
come and kind of tell you why I don’t believe in it. And
the two major things is the amount of money that it’s going
to cost to do this, and the time. We don’t have time.
Every time I open up social media there’s another person
missing or murdered.

How many people, women and men, First
Nations men, have been murdered and gone missing in like
the two years that it’s taken? And now they want a two-
year extension. That’s four years. We don’t have time
anymore. We know what the problem is. It’s the impacts of
colonization, residential schools, family system
breakdowns, systemic racism.

Like, I don’t -- I don’t want other families
to have to go through what so many people I know and love
have. But we’re here. We need programs, and services, and
things to bring our communities back together and to build
up our women to not be vulnerable like they are. And it
can’t wait. It can’t wait any longer. It cannot wait for
another two years extension.

I also see a lot -- I’m a support worker in
the downtown east side. We are currently in the middle of
the fentanyl crisis. We are losing people all the time. People that we love and cherish. There’s trauma every day at work. We had a woman come in and this kind of ties into the ideals that the police have towards First Nations people. She had come in and she -- a couple of guys went to -- got in a vehicle with a few guys and they tried to slit her throat.

She needed to self medicate herself. She had just experienced this huge trauma and the police would not wait for her to do that. They wanted their statement then or they had no time or patience for her. She was First Nations. A First Nations woman. I have so many stories about incidences like this in the downtown east side.

It’s so -- it’s ridiculous the way First Nations people are treated, and these are all things that we know. We know what needs to happen. They just don’t want to put the money, or there’s too many policies around this, you can’t do it, you have to get exceptions to the law, or such and such. I don’t believe that Canada wants to end the way that First Nations are treated, because you can’t rise -- raise people up and still have exploitation of them and their lands for your benefit.

I -- I kind of ran through that really fast. Yeah. I think a huge thing is the policing and the way
police treat. I’ve seen so many bad stories about how they can -- they handle these cases. They don’t -- when it comes to a First Nations person, they don’t care. Families have to push, and push, and push, and it’s exhausting to keep dealing with wall, after wall, after wall. And it kind of -- like, in my situation, I feel like I just -- it’s so much that I don’t know if I want to even deal with them anymore. I mean, there’s so many stories that I can tell you, but ---

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thanks Candice. You had mentioned that, when you were speaking, that you were a third generation being raised outside of your culture. Can you speak a little bit about what kind of a toll that’s taken on your life, being -- feeling that disconnection from your culture? A little bit more about that?

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** My daughter is third generation.

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Okay, sorry. Your daughter is third generation.

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I didn’t really realize -- I know that when I was growing up I kind of denied being First Nations. I tried to be everything but. And then when I was working in the downtown east side, seeing how many -- the high percentage of First Nations people in that community that are struggling, it made me
really wonder why. Why these things are happening?

And that’s kind of when I think I went
through my own cultural identity crisis, which I’m still
kind of going through today, where I don’t feel comfortable
with who I am, and I don’t have a sense of self. So I’ve
been through a lot of things, a lot of things since I moved
to Vancouver. A lot of trauma, abuse, because I’m just --
I don’t know who I am. I’m just starting to finally get
back to that.

And I think that’s a fear that I have for my
daughter as well, is I don’t want her to have to experience
the same things that I went through. Not knowing who you
are. And especially the way things are going, like,
there’s such a divide and there’s -- when you see things
about First Nations issues on Facebook, all you have to do
is look at the comments. It's exactly what society thinks
of First Nations People. So I’m really -- I know that I’m
slowly getting better, but I do fear for my daughter and
where she’s going to -- how it's going to impact her.

**MS. MICHELLE PORTER:** And I speaking about
the work that you’re doing in the downtown east side,
you’ve said that really what’s needed are programs and
service now. What specifically do you see would be of
benefit, either in the immediate future, but also in the
short term? What kind of programs and service in addition
to the work that you’re doing and some of the work that
you’ve spoken to about being done by others? What else
could be done? How do you see that support?

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I think the main
thing right now is to keep people alive, and in order to
keep them alive people need clean, clean medication when
they self-medicate. Because when you don’t know what
you’re taking it’s a gamble every single time.

There needs to be more support for front-line workers because we’re the ones that are dealing with
people when -- like, life and death situations. We don’t
have support, we don’t have proper training, but we’re put
into this kind of an environment to do those things. And I
think for -- that’s the immediate issue I see right now, is
the fentanyl.

I think there needs to be more supports, not
only in the downtown east side, but in communities to bring
the culture back to bring the families back together.
Everybody had become so separated and so for themselves
that they don’t know how to work together anymore. And I
see it everywhere I go.

I’ll just add, I think we need long-term --
after detox we need -- or detox and short-term treatment,
we need longer -- longer solutions. We need access to
things when people want them, not call me every day for two
weeks to get into detox. We’ll see if there’s space. People -- sometimes people don’t have two weeks.

But I think the main thing is back home, in people’s communities they need money, support, programming, so that we can build the women, the children up, before -- before it’s too late.

MS. MEREDITH PORTER: Thanks. I know that you’ve spoken about the role that poverty has in the crisis that’s faced day to day. Do you want to speak a little bit about that? The effects of poverty.

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Poverty has an impact -- it impacts everything. Your mental health, your spiritual health, your physical health, your access to services. Housing, how can somebody help themselves when they don’t even have housing? But yet the government continues to give a ridiculously low amount of money for housing, especially in Vancouver, which is where a lot of people tend to gravitate towards.

It’s really -- it’s really, really sad. Especially when you see Elders. Why are Elders not having somewhere stable to live? Why do women, children -- there’s young children out there who are homeless. Every year we do the homeless count. It’s not -- it gets higher and higher despite the fact that they’re putting in housing. It’s not appropriate housing. There’s not enough
supportive housing for people. Mostly First Nations People.

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Do you have any ideas about reconnecting individuals who have grown up outside of their culture? Do you have any ideas about effectively -- effective steps that can be taken to help heal those -- the -- like reconnecting that feeling of loss and emptiness? Do you have any ideas about how support can be offered in that way? What would be meaningful, do you think?

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I think more -- in the city, more programs or more access to cultural activities. When you live in the city and they’re doing something back in your hometown you can’t always leave to go there. So more funding for these programs to happen here. Even things like teaching the language is a huge -- would have a huge impact on people.

And not necessarily for connecting people to their culture, but better access to counselling even. There’s just so many barriers for people to access something so simple like that, which is needed, which is there, there’s just no way to navigate the system to get there.

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Chief Commissioner Buller, do you have any questions or comments for the witness?
CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Yeah, I do. I have several, if you don’t mind?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: No.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Just starting with what you’ve said, that there are so many barriers to people. Can you tell me what you see those barriers to be?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Things so small as having transportation to get somewhere. Like I said, a home to be able to wake up that morning and be able to go. Access to -- when your mind is in, you need to self medicate yourself to feel better, to supress your trauma and everything, you’re not focussed on the things that you need to be to improve yourself, because you are so focussed on being better.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: I’ve heard people say -- and it may not be your experience, or it may be -- that things like having to have government issued ID can be a barrier to some people. Have you experienced that?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Yes. When you don’t have a home, you don’t have somewhere safe to have your ID. You need this piece of ID to get that piece of ID, you need photo ID to get a bank, you need photo ID to go to the clinic.
CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Have you thought of what might be options instead of government issued ID, so we can break down that barrier for people?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: There used to be an organization that would do ID, which their funding got cut so they can’t do it anymore. I think the thing is to get the ID, but you also need places to accept non-government ID.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Yeah. So getting away from the government issued ID for a moment, what do you see as other options for identification of an individual? And I’ll give you an example, because I think this was tried in the downtown east side and, correct me if I’m wrong, that it used to be that as an example, Bonnie could come with you to one -- to a clinic and say, “Yes, I can vouch for this person being who she says she is.” And that was good enough. Do you see that as being a way of breaking down these types of barriers?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: It is with certain things, but you can’t -- usually you can’t bring that kind of ID to a bank to open a bank account. So you can have this piece of ID, but you still need the organizations and services to be able to accept it as official.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: From your perspective, and your experience on the downtown east side
I don’t know how to ask this question, which is unusual. I know that service providers will say -- and banks, other ones -- but will say, we need government issue ID in order to get our services, or something like that, or to come here. But from your perspective, how important do you think that is, to have government issued ID?

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I think it’s pretty important when you’re not doing just your day to day activities. When you’re looking for housing you’d probably need something official. You need something official to say who you are. So outside of everyday living, when you’re trying to make steps forward, I think it’s pretty -- it’s pretty important. If I lost my ID ---

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Me too.

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** --- I’d be lost.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Me too.

Yeah.

Another thing that I’ve heard a lot about over the years is the issue of literacy and how that’s a barrier for people everywhere. But it seems also in the downtown east side of course, that there are people who either English isn’t their first language anyway, or for a variety of reasons they did not either go to school or stay in school for very long. And I’m not blaming anyone for that, it’s just for whatever reasons they’re not -- they’re
not able to read and write enough to access services. Or
like, to be able to advocate for themselves. From your
experience, what role if any does literacy play in creating
barriers for people to services?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: I’d never thought
about that, but now that you mention it, something so easy
as filling out a form, if you don’t -- if you can’t read
and write then you can’t fill out that form. And there’s
not always people around that can help to do that.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Or
sometimes there are people around, but they’re not
trustworthy.

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Yeah.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Yeah.

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: And then we have
people looking for housing, dealing with the Ministry.
Dealing with the Ministry of Children and Families. When
you’re trying to access your children, you can’t fill out a
form, that’s going to create a huge barrier for you.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: I have to
say, I’m just about ready to jump out of my chair because
I’m so excited about what you’re saying. So I’ll try to
calm down a little bit.

You’ve said there’s not enough supportive
housing, especially in the downtown east side. What do you
see for First Nations People as being the basics for
supportive housing in an urban setting?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Staffed
appropriately. There’s a lot of housing that’s not
properly staffed.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Now, can
I just interrupt you for a moment here? I’m getting really
excited. By staffed appropriately, do you mean like number
of staff, qualifications of staff?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: All of it.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: All of
the above?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Because when you
have staff who are not qualified doing things out of their
scope and you only have two staff rather than three, it
just -- it’s so hard on them and there’s a lot of people
that need to leave their jobs, which is no consistency for
the folks. Consistency is huge. Building those
relationships with people. It’s hard to build trust, and
when you have a high turnover of staff --

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Would you
see cultural programming, access to Elders, maybe language
training, advocacy, do you see that as something that would
be part of supportive housing?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Yes. From things as
small as making a dream catcher one day, to being able to access a sweat lodge outside of the community, because some people want to get out of the -- out of the downtown east side to access these things.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: And would you see supportive housing being multi-generational? In other words, housing that would include Elders, children, or should it be more focussed than that?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: I think we need different housing for the different demographic.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: M’hm. Can you -- from your experience, why would you see it that way?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Sometimes it’s really difficult on Elders when they have to live next to a young person who is noisy all night long, high traffic.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Yeah.

MS. CANICE STEVENSON: And it’s not very good for -- sometimes it can do more damage, the lack of sleep, the constant traffic, their mental health.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Okay. Next big area, I’m sorry if it sounds like I’m -- or you’re feeling as though I’m cross-examining you or something like that. I’m trying not to do that, but you’re such a wealth of information that I want to get as much as I can.
Mental health, huge issues. Not only in the
downtown east side, but our communities all ---

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Everywhere. Yeah.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** ---

across Canada. You mentioned about detox. I’ll just back
up for a moment. From my perspective I see mental health
and substance abuse as so closely entwined it’s really hard
to undo the two, separate the two. So you mentioned detox
beds being available right away. I’ve heard from addicts
over many years that when they decide they want to get
clean, they want to get clean now. Has that been your
experience too?

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** M’hm.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** So
waiting for a detox bed is just waiting for a fix to
happen?

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** Yeah. I mean you
have that small space of opportunity for that person to get
them from, “I want to do it,” to “I’m going there right
now.”

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Yeah.

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** And maybe it takes
several times, but eventually it will make a difference for
them. Whereas if you have to wait for two weeks, you --
you’re not in the moment anymore and you lose your drive,
CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Right.

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: You become disheartened by the experience.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: You mentioned longer-term options for treatment. My experience is that 30 days, 90 days, isn’t enough for most people.

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: No.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Do you find that as well?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Yes.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: By longer term or long term, what are you thinking of in terms of time?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: At least a few years, and somewhere were you can -- on the housing continuum, you go to a 90-day program, you go to another supportive one, housing for like, maybe a year, I don’t know dates specifically. But -- and then try to -- you go to another one where you gain life skills and learn how to live on your own, and -- because I can only speak for the people that I work with.

A lot of them have been homeless for years, years and years, and it’s hard to transition from being homeless into a housing project will all these rules and
policies. So we need a wide housing continuum.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: I’m interested in your experience about working with people in the downtown east side and mental health. From your experience, what do you see the impact of trauma on people? Be it intergenerational effects of residential school, trauma involved with women who lose their children to the foster care system, children who -- I’m sorry. Children and adults who have been sexually, physically, mentally, emotionally abused. Where does that trauma fit in the mental health picture, from your experience?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: I believe that trauma can amplify mental health issues. So many people I see now are struggling with anxiety, depression, bipolar, schizophrenia.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Yeah.

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: And so many of them have trauma. And I think when you -- like you were saying, addiction and mental health, you’re self-medicating. So once you get into the cycle you’re not able to properly deal with your trauma because it’s just -- it’s not important anymore. And then some things, when you self-medicate, also amplify the mental health.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Right. So again, from your experience, do you think that to
properly address addiction issues the trauma has to be addressed?

**MS. CANICE STEVENSON:** Yes. And we have so many programs that won’t deal with your mental health if you self-medicate, or won’t deal with your self-medication because you have mental health. But you can’t separate the two once you get to there.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Okay. The -- I could go on and ask you lots of questions about trauma and how you see it impacting people’s lives. But I think for me the most important question is, if there was one thing that we could recommend to help people address trauma, what would -- or maybe that’s an impossible question to answer, what would be the one thing.

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** I think, like I was saying, is get those programs in there when children are young. Get them in there to build stronger communities. Because so many people have trauma now, but if you can stop that cycle before it starts ---

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I’ve heard from people over the years who have lived on the downtown east side for a long time, that on the one hand it’s a very vibrant community, a real sense of community and belonging, and family. But there is sometimes the same people -- but other people will say in order to get clean
and stay clean, stay -- get healthy and stay healthy, you have to leave the downtown east side. What do you think about that?

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** It depends on what your other options of where to go are. If that’s your community and that’s your support system, how can you -- you can leave, but how can you stay healthy when you don’t have that support system anymore? And they are. They’re amazing people, everyone down there. They’re just struggling, they’re desperate. But they’re still -- and there’s a lot of families down there as well. There’s a huge, great community. I think if you -- if you want to stay healthy, it shouldn’t matter -- if you’re at that point it shouldn’t matter where you are.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank you.

**MS. CANDICE STEVENSON:** If you haven’t -- if you think that you’re going to have a hard time going back somewhere, then there hasn’t been enough support for you to come to a certain place.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I don’t want you to -- I don’t want you to be limited by a number of factors, but again, from your experience, what do you see are the most important factors that create lack of safety for indigenous women and girls?
MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Family system breakdowns and a sense of self. If you know who you are and you’re proud of who you are, people will have a harder time to take advantage of you.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Do you see addressing those two issues through programming of any type in particular, or just more programming of a variety of different types?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: The vision I see is to bring communities back to the way I’ve been told they were. Where hunting -- a traditional hunting trip, you go out, everybody works together. You learn how to work together again. You learn how important each person is within that community, to the system. Canning, just -- I think that simple things like that consistently, will start to bring families back together, communities back together.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: I’d like to hear more, if you don’t mind, about the -- as you described it, the deal, between your mum and Bonnie. How did that all come about, or what do you know about that?

MS. BONNIE McDONALD: We just got together. Candy had been apprehended. Candy’s dad was a very good family friend, and I had had Candy briefly before she was apprehended, babysitting for, you know, an extended period sort of deal. And then she was apprehended, and it seemed
to me that Roxanne was not going to be able to look after
her and that she was going to be gone and we would never
know her.

So I said to her, when I found out she’d
been apprehended. I said, “If you will go for you to get,
you know, regain your custody and then you make me her
guardian.” And she jumped on that. So we saw a lawyer and
he -- we went to Court, and the Judge was -- he told the
Judge that’s what the deal would be. If you give Candy
back to her mother, her mother will make me guardian and
then she’ll have a stable home. And that’s the way it
worked out.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Wow. And
here we are. Yeah, okay. Thank you. And then after that
point the Ministry is not involved at all?

MS. BONNIE McDONALD: No, absolutely not.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Okay.
Good. I don’t have any other questions. But Candice, is
there anything that’s come to mind as a result of -- I’m
sorry -- my 20 questions with you?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Mental health
services. We struggle every day to get people access to
mental health teams. There’s things like, you’re not in
their -- in catchment, or they don’t have enough space, or
you don’t fit the mandate because you’re too young, you’re
semi connected to this other team that doesn’t really connect with you, so we can’t work with you as well. There’s a lot of people that fall through the cracks.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: If anything else comes to mind that you think, I wish I had mentioned, whatever, please pass it along, okay?

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: I will.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: I would love to hear more from you and your experiences, very much so.


CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Well, I think from our traditions of course, we honour people with life experiences, they’re the experts. So that’s how I see you. I don’t have any more questions for you right now. In fact, I might have more questions later on as well.

But first of all, I want to say what you’ve told us this morning is really important to our work. So I’m very grateful for what you’ve been able to tell -- tell me today. And of course, the other commissioners will know this as well, so thank you. Very important and critical work, and you’re an amazing advocate by being here for all of the people on the downtown east side. But especially the indigenous women and girls.
I’m going to say three things, and I hope they don’t hurt you. First, I know some things happened to you that you didn’t deserve. They never -- second thing, they never should have happened to you. The third thing is, it wasn’t your fault. You’re -- so those -- sometimes that can be difficult for people. But most importantly, you are a beautiful, strong, resilient, smart, indigenous woman, and please don’t forget that. I see such strength, and beauty, and courage, and good things. I’m sorry to make you cry, but I have to tell you that.

I’m going to ask you to don’t stop your work. Continue your work because it’s really important to everyone. And I’m going to also ask you not only to stop your work, but to push yourself to do things you never thought you could. I want you to dream big, because you’re an amazing, awesome, strong indigenous woman.

Because what you said today is just so powerful and so important to our work. It’s a scared gift you’ve given to us, and so if you’ll accept them, we have gifts for you. The first one is an eagle feather. And traditions all across Canada say much the same thing. Eagle feathers will lift you up and hold you up in those moments when you need the strength. And on those days, those moments when you can go even higher than you dreamed you could, that eagle feather is going to take you to where
you didn’t think -- the heights you didn’t think you could
go to.

The second gift, and I hope you have more
luck with it than I did, seeds. Because when the
Commissioners and I started this work we wanted healing to
happen, and out of healing, new life and new growth to
come. And you know, we’re already hearing about that.
People are coming back to us and saying, as a result of
coming to this inquiry I’ve gone to the police and I’ve
charged my abuser, or I’ve gone back to school, or I’ve
gone for treatment. And that’s more than we can ask for.
It’s so beautiful. So we thought, let’s give people seeds
and see if new growth will literally happen in ground where
it should come from. So I tried some of these in my
backyard and it was -- so I hope you have better luck with
the seeds than I did.

So again, I want to thank you, personally
thank you, for putting up with my 20 questions on the spot
and I want to thank you for contributing to our work in a
critical, critical way today. Thank you very much.

MS. CANDICE STEVENSON: Thank you for having
me.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: And we’re
adjourned.
--- Exhibits (code: P01P15P0405)

Exhibit 1: Folder containing two digital images that were displayed during the public testimony of the witness.

--- Upon adjourning at 12:31
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

I, Nancy Ewing, 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.

Nancy Ewing
April 15, 2018