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

PUBLIC

Sunday April 8, 2018
Public Volume 116
Audrey Siegl, In relation to her Mother
Heard by Commissioner Qajaq Robinson

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

Assembly of First Nations  Non-appearance
Government of British Columbia  Non-appearance
Government of Canada  Anne Turley (Legal Counsel)
Heiltsuk First Nation  Non-appearance
Northwest Indigenous Council Society  Non-appearance
Our Place – Ray Cam Co-Operative Centre  Non-appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada  Beth Symes (Legal Counsel)
Vancouver Sex Workers’ Rights Collective  Non-appearance
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Metis Nation  Non-appearance
Public Volume 116
April 8, 2018
Witness: Audrey Siegl
In relation to her mother
Commissioner: Qajaq Robinson
Commission Counsel: None.
Clerk and Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

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**Witness:** Audrey Siegl  
**Exhibit:** (code: P01P15P0504)
NOTE

The use of square brackets [ ] in this transcript indicates that amendments have been made in order to include information deemed inaudible or indecipherable by the original transcriptionist. Amendments to this transcript were completed by listening to the source audio recording of the proceeding and were made by Bryan Zandberg, Registrar for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2S/LGBTQ, May 2nd 2018 at Vancouver, British Columbia.
Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

--- Upon commencing on Sunday, April 8, 2018, at 12:11 p.m.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- the Health Room B.

We are so gracious. We've had Elder Thelma Stogan from Musqueam offer to do private brushings that want to be cedar brushed off, and Kelly White will be assisting her, so if you do feel you want a private space to be brushed off, you can make your way to that health room. Thank you.

--- Upon recessing 12:00 p.m.

--- Upon resuming at 12:08 p.m.

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: There we go. So we're going to begin our second hearing of the day here in Hearing Room 1. Louise is just attending to the Qu’liq, so we'll have a moment to acknowledge that. This afternoon we're going to be hearing from Audrey Siegl, and I'm going to now start by passing the mic to you figuratively.

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: Thank you. I will start by introducing myself. [speaking in Musqueam], and considering the legal process that is in a lot of ways the guiding entity above, underneath, around the Inquiry, instead of an oath, the [Speaking in Musqueam] Musqueam people, we have a word: "Ma" (ph). It's a certainty marker. When I introduce myself, and I say [Speaking in Musqueam], that "ma" is -- is an indicator that not only is what I say true, but that it's unquestionable. It's like
the trees, it's like the water, it's just -- it's just how it is. So -- I don't affirm to the Canadian Government that what I say is true. I affirm to the ancestors and the women who came before me and to all the women who were here representing that -- that what I say is true.

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Hello. Hi. I want to acknowledge you, and that on this land, that law is the law we will follow today.

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: I -- I do a lot of public speaking and presenting, and I've never gotten nervous, and for -- for the weeks and months leading up today, I haven't even really been able to put down the specific points I'd like to connect. As we've heard many say, we're only going to get one kick at this can, and I want, I need for it to be the most effective use of this time possible.

My intentions are to connect the dots between my mom and her experiences, me and my experiences, and the bigger picture of what happens on Turtle Island. I know this Inquiry is specific to Canada, but to me, it's Turtle Island. To me, it's a global issue.

So we sit here today representing women around the world who are still being silenced and whose governments won't even grant their voices to be heard the way they -- I honour the women who came before me, like Bernie and Gladys and Rita and untold numbers and names who
pushed and sacrificed to make it possible not just for me
to exist but for me to sit here.

I would also like note that at this time,
the funding for this Inquiry, the 53 or $54 million that's
been made available, it's a drop in the bucket for Canada.
Canada makes as of 2015 over a billion dollars a day on our
stolen occupied lands. I don't forget that, ever. Like
Bernie said, crumbs; I'm coming after the whole cookie.

So to start, there are -- are -- I have
photos of my mom and my sister and I, and for anyone who is
sensitive, I will be -- there's a -- there's a short video
of an assault by a VPD officer at a rally and photos
of -- of an injury afterwards, so we don't want to catch
anyone off guard with that.

Some of the things I share, I was really
careful with the pictures I would include because I don't
want my mom to be judged, and I'm worried about people
thinking bad things of her, and I was given great advice to
do this work from where I feel powerful, and I'm learning
that emotions are powerful, so -- and I'm grateful to all
of the strong women who came when I called and who offered.

My mom was born in 1953, and the name, one
of my working names, the name she put on me is (ancestral
name given), is her name. It was my granny's great
grandfather's name, and he never had an English name.
There is no equivalent, and there is no translation, and my mom put that name on me because of the work that I do, and we were so disconnected that I didn't know that the work I do is a continuation of the work she does, and she was -- she was born to Celina and Steve August (ph). She was the last of nine babies. It was a blended family. Both grandparents were married before, and she was beautiful. She was, like the rest of the nine kids, taken for residential school. Both grandparents went to residential school, and I've heard some rumblings about both their parents went to residential school, so we're potentially three generations of residential school, and I was lucky I didn't have to go, but my cousin, who is only a year or two older, went to residential school. This is not far-off history, and it is by no means over and forgettable.

And my mom was only four when they came to get her, and she's like Bernie. She was tiny. There's my mom. And my grandpa fought for her because he saw what happened to his other kids when they came home. He saw how broken they were, and he was beat unconscious, and when he came to, she was gone.

And one other thing, if anyone needs a break or if you're feeling heavy, I'll ask you all to take care of yourself, too, because some of what I'm saying is going
to be triggering, and I don't want to hurt anybody.

So the sad thing is -- the sadder -- the sadder reality is that at 4 years old, she had already been messed with within her family and in the community. We know this is a truth that happens in our communities all across Canada, everywhere. Colonization has happened. In our languages, we have names for body parts, but we don't have swear words, we don't have cursing, and we can see now the -- the dominant culture, the invasion of the dominant culture enacted on us. It worked as it was supposed to. It has created some insidious behaviors that have carried on from generation to generation.

So my mom was in the residential school until she was 16 years old, and I will also say now that since I was little, I -- I sat at tables with -- with -- with old-timers born in the late 1800s, and my grandpa was born in -- in -- my granny was born in 1916, and my grandpa was born in 1906. That's the generation who raised me, and that's -- that's my mom as the baby in that picture, and my granny, my grandpa, little -- and -- and her siblings. That's the time. Like, the little one there on the lap, that's about how old my mom was when they took her, so -- so we can see.

And since I was little, my job was to sit
and watch and listen, so my mom, my granny, and my aunty all shared with me what happened in their lives, and the one theme that all had in common was it was dehumanizing, and it was cruel, and it was intended to break people, and they said, now it's yours. Now I don't talk about it anymore. You go and you tell them what happens to us. You tell them what they do to us.

So from the time that I was little, it was my job to sit and watch and listen, but it was also my job to speak, and it was also my job to remind people of the truths. I call it court stenographer in my head. I swear I'm not argumentative, but accuracy is a big thing, and you think, our cultures, we were oral cultures. We have -- we have certainty markers like "ma" for a reason. We have six sets of determiners for a reason. Accuracy is a big thing.

So the knowledge, the truth, the teachings that come through me have been here as long as we have since the first sunrise, so I -- I am here now in this body, but we stand with millions. We stand with our ancestors. That's who I work for. I am accountable only to them.

And when my mom was 16 and set free, she -- she shared -- she shared what happened to her, and I'm not going to go over the details of what happened to her in the schools. Priests, nuns, other students,
separated from her family, little things that stood out to me that -- for decades, she wanted to cut her hair. She had that really typical long Indian hair that came to the V at the bottom, so shiny, and it just flowed when she walked, not a split end, and she always wanted to cut her hair. She said, I want one of those fashionable little haircuts, and every time she would even trim her hair, she would go into sometimes month-long spirals because they took her hair when she was a baby.

She, like Bernie, spoke her ancestral language. She grew up hearing in her mama's womb Henkomenem. She spoke Henkomenem outside of English. She didn't -- she wasn't understood in the schools, and the impact that that had later was that when I took the language course on our reserve, because I decided I'm reclaiming who I am, and I'm not going to carry this shame that was never mine anyway -- I walked into my mom's house after the class, and I said [speaking in Musqueam]; how are you, Mom? She turned and she looked, and I thought maybe I had said something really wrong, and she threw the pint glass in her hand at me, and she chased me, and she told me to get out of her house, and she was crazy.

And my mom was always volatile because of what she'd been through. She was always in -- she always had to protect herself, so my boyfriend got up and left,
and we left, and she called I don't know how many days
later, and she explained, I can't speak the language, and I
can't hear it. I -- I can't. Like, don't -- don't speak
it around me, because of the triggers. This is how
invasive and insidious and ongoing that -- how many decades
later was that, my mom tried to sit in the Henkomenem
language course with me, and the same thing that she never
said out loud -- it's stupid, I'm stupid, I'm so stupid,
I'm just so stupid -- the same things I've said my whole
life.

My mom -- I said, will you please just try?
She was tiny, and she was beautiful, so I called her
"maman" because she was like a little French doll, and I
said, maman, please come try. Just sit with me. I promise
if you need to go, we'll go. And she said, why are they
handing us out papers? I don't want to fill anything, and
I don't understand this. What's on the paper?
Immediately, she was just panicky, and she got up and she
left, and she said, I'm too stupid for this. Why did you
bring me here? I told you I didn't want to do this. And I
felt awful because I thought it was a treasure, and for
her, all it was was a torment.

And when she left the residential school at
16, she went running. As she puts it, when they set me
free at 16, I was going to -- I was gone, and I was looking
for the man, and I was going to have my babies. No one was
going to touch them, and no one was going to take them.
And she was beautiful, and she was feisty, and she was
powerful, and she spotted my dad, and he had no hope in
hell. It was decided, and if you know the west coast, the
land of matriarchs, this -- it -- it -- like, [speaking in
Musqueam], the die was cast. That's it. We're not
stopping this.

So at almost 18, she had my sister, and at
almost 19, she had me, and our dad was -- our dad is about
three years older, so our dad was 21 and 22, and my dad is
a very kind man. He is strong and intelligent and
beautiful, and he comes from a horrific background of
trauma, as well, and he loves -- he still loves my mom, and
he noticed that there were certain reactions to things and
moods and behaviors, and he accommodated, and he did his
best to love her and to bring strength. That's the day I
came home from the hospital. That's my dad.

And -- and with my sister, everything -- my
sister was born jaundiced, and my mom was tiny, but she
was -- she would always get mad because people always
thought that we were sisters, and she -- she -- she
would -- she was scary, and she was, like, they're not
my -- these aren't my sisters, these are my daughters.
Like, she was just ready to throw down, and people
were -- thought that she was so much younger than she was, and everything seemed to be going okay, and the trauma, because she came from a mom who didn't know how to be a mom who came from a mom who didn't know how to be a mom, and we come from cultures where now they're called midwives, but our women knew how to take care of each other and themselves. These are the medicines that my granny worked with taking care of women, and -- with the pregnancy with me, she was already having huge emotional issues. We never really connected.

And when I was born, she had -- and this was 1973 at Burnaby General where the doctor who was my father's family doctor since they came to Vancouver, a white doctor, a white male doctor had taken care of my mom through the first pregnancy and was always kind to her and took good care of her, but she was really hemorrhaging, and without consulting her, and my dad says maybe they talked to him, he can't really remember. She didn't even get to hold me, and they took her, and they tied her tubes.

And you think the process the woman's body goes through to connect with her baby when she came to, she didn't even know what had happened, and that kind of set the tone for the rest of -- of our time here together that we struggled, and we felt disconnected, and at times the anger and rage that was enacted on her, she enacted on me,
and I'll qualify that by saying we did our work and we came to our peace. I am very clear that as much as we've heard people say, and I -- I understand it wasn't -- she didn't want to. She didn't even mean to.

So, like, my first memory is of her shaking me, and they were drinking, and she was mad -- we were playing hide-and-seek, and she was never looking for us, so I went and stood where she could see me. And I jumped out at her, and she just grabbed me and shook me until I blacked out, and my dad came home and found me in the crib. He would come home from work, and she was partying, and he didn't know what to do because he had taken her to the residential school she was at. He had taken her to the foster homes in Kelowna where she lived. He watched her claw at the buildings and throw rocks at them, and -- and he puts it, scream like a wild animal. He can only imagine what happened there, and he saw that what was happening with her was endangering us, so in 1975, '76, he had a job there with the City making almost 20 bucks an hour, and he quit to stay home because he was worried about what she would do to herself and us.

And things kind of stabilized, and he was able to go back to work, and one day he came home from work, and we were just gone. Our mom had organized and figured out and saved money, and she was renting a house on
the reserve, and she just took us and left, and his world fell apart. All he wanted was to have a family, and he wasn't perfect, but he was kind and he was good, and he did his best, and then -- after -- I don't -- I don't know how long we were there. I was maybe 2, 2 and a half. I don't know how long we stayed in that house, and -- and then one day -- and my mom's -- my mom's peer group, they -- the women she grew up with, they were around the same age. They all took care of each other, and they -- you know, when you don't have to explain experiences. They -- they took care of each other, so some of the women who loved me and take care of me now knew my mom before -- before -- before I lived in her.

And my mom was increasingly overwhelmed and angry, and I remember in the morning she would get up and open the curtains and open the windows and turn on the big -- like, those big consoles with the record player and the 8-track, and she would -- she would put on certain music, and she had her favorites, and we would all just get up and dance and sing. There was -- and, like -- it's like she was sunshine, and then one day, she just left. That -- the trauma and what was being triggered and what she never had a chance to heal was coming up. In her mind and in her heart, she knew what was best was to leave, and I ask again and again, what has to happen for a woman to go
and intentionally make these babies and create them and love them and nurture them from her body, for her to be able to shift to hurt those babies and then leave them? And she stayed gone for years.

Our dad raised us. There was a short time in between that some of the women in our community, my mom's peers came, and they took care of us because we all know what happens to kids to go to the Government, and we all know what happens when the Government finds out what happens to our kids and our communities. They'll blame us, but they'll do nothing to help us, and they'll still keep doing the damage and point the big finger at us that we're the bad guys.

And one day, my granny said to them, bring them up to the house, and they said, no, no, Aunty Celina, no. It's okay. She said, you have to go to school. They were just high school kids, so they brought them up -- they brought us up, and -- and during this time -- and I don't -- I don't share this to make my granny look bad, but again, the big -- the huge darkness that lives in people after they have been dehumanized and violated in the most unbelievable ways, that at my granny's house, I had to live in the basement, and it was dark, and I was scared, and there were the big black shadows, and I know lots of you know and understand the different realities and energies
that exist together, and there was a terrible energy that lived in the corner, and she would make me go stand in the corner, and she would put -- like what Bernie shared, she would put the food on the floor and make me eat it like a dog, and it was (indiscernible), and I don't -- I don't cry for me. What happened -- what had to happen to my granny that tiny little me -- that she was able to do that to tiny little me?

And there was -- you know, I wasn't allowed to cry. I had to be strong. My granny watched what happened to her kids, and she knew what happened because she was in those schools. Her family sent her because they wanted her to have a better chance. She went to the school in Penelakut, and if I cried, my granny would dig her nails in, she would scratch me, she -- she had that look. Like, we all know that granny look, and one day I did something she didn't like, and she cut my curls off, and she said, you don't deserve them.

And years later, after she passed -- this gives us insight into who raised my mom and how disconnected my mom was from her mom, and we see the intergenerational living. It's not a textbook. It's not a study. We aren't research. This is what it looks like, and I asked my granny after she passed -- because my granny is the same one who raised me and taught me and shared with
me what I know and how I work with the medicines, and I'm proud of her, and I love her. I asked her, I said, why were you so mean? She said, was I mean? She flash backed to the things she said, and she was -- she was -- she was devastated. She said, I didn't know how else to make you strong enough. I knew you were going to have to be strong. It's going to be a hard life, even harder than ours sometimes. I didn't know how else to make you strong. I never meant to hurt you, my love. Love you.

From the very beginning, they said, they knew that I was going to be the one to change things, to have a chance, to be able to make it out of where they were stuck for four, six generations. They couldn't get out. They weren't meant to get out. So the advantages that I have been given, the opportunities that have been shared with me, came at a high price to them, and in this work that I've been doing, I've learned a term called vicarious trauma. I didn't know that was a thing. The worst of my trauma comes from what I saw happening to other people.

And then after this, my dad raised us in East Van by himself. All the single dads, I love you. All the good -- all the good men who stand up, who do the right thing, I love you all. I was raised by a single man around men and with old-timers on the reserve. My sister and my cousins, they got to go play. They got to know people in
the community. Most of my community doesn't know who I am. They haven't known who I am my entire life. They don't know what -- they don't know what I know or what I don't know, and this is, again, part of the divide and the division that is externally enforced on us because of things like the Indian Act and residential schools and colonization, and I was lucky that those teachings that I received from -- from when I was in my mama's belly, that when I was working so hard to kill myself -- alcohol, drugs, men, you name it. I -- I still don't have a very clear understanding of danger. I don't say that to be funny, but it's lead to some very funny situations, and what saved me, where I met CeCe (ph) five, six years ago under a bridge at a place called Cesnem (ph), one of our sacred sites where our ancestors have had constant occupation. Science dates it for over 10,000 years, but we know, way longer than that, where our ancestors were being on earth, for more condos and more buildings and cemented over it. We had four ancestral remains intact, two adults and two babies that were unearthed, and they were going to be paved over or thrown out so a parking lot could go in, and up to this point, I was one of those people -- like, what are those people doing in the streets stopping traffic with their signs and -- like, get a job.

(LAUGHTER)
MS. AUDREY SIEGL: Do you have nothing better to do? There are -- there are real venues. Like, all the shit that people say to us now, I was one of the people who said that. I was ashamed of who I was, and I was ashamed of where I came from, and I was ashamed for every brown person I saw. Like Bernie, I'm Filipino, I'm Chinese, I'm not Filipino, and I'm Mexican, I'm Portuguese, I am Greek, I am not First Nations, and I was humiliated when people would recognize me as First Nations because I -- because I knew that they were going to treat me differently then.

And then five, six years ago when we -- our community, our women, especially our off-reserve women, we came and we stood, and we protected those ancestors, and I started to hear the teachings of the drum. I was raised with some teachings, and I was raised completely devoid, absent of other teachings, and I had never touched a drum. Even when our people sang our songs, it was this -- (unreportable sound), the wail, (indiscernible). It would come up. I couldn't stop it. I couldn't hear the songs. Don't sing. Don't sing. I have to go. I have to go. Like, panic.

And every day, we drummed and we sang, and we heard our stories, and our old-timers came and sat with us, and people came from all over. We had monks, and we had a rabbi, we had Japanese, Korean, Chinese First Nations
from everywhere. Gladys was there.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: M’hm.

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: I didn't even know you there. People that I know now and the work that I do were there with me then, and I am only learning this, and someone -- someone said, Audrey, come and drum and sing. No, no, no, no, no. And I've been in band, choir, show choir, drama, prelaw debating, anything public speaking there front of people that -- and it wasn't because I wanted to. It was where I was steered, and they -- I heard -- I heard people say because people would come -- like, non-Native people would come or people like me, Native people who were separate -- separated would come and they would ask, and -- and I heard, oh, the drum is the heartbeat of the earth, of the mother, and the song is the prayer, and I thought, I don't deserve it. I'll hurt it.

And I didn't want to tell anybody that because I don't want people feeling sorry for me. We get -- we get both extremes. You're hated on-site for what you can't control. I can't control the way I look, my features. I have nothing to do with that, or people feel pity: Oh, you poor thing. I can't stand either. I was raised to be articulate, decisive, to speak when someone needs to speak. If there's a chaos, two options: Make order or leave. You do not stay in chaos. That is not an
option. I didn't have a lot of the conditioning that a lot of women have to be silent. At 8 years old I could take a full-grown man down in two or three moves because my dad's friends knew that would be necessary. They said you're -- you're an Indian, you're a brown woman, and you're -- and you're going to be beautiful. You better know how to protect yourself. This is just how it was, and under the bridge, one of our -- another -- another beautiful powerhouse, Yuna Ann (ph), we were standing singing, because then I was comfortable to stand and say -- when I stood with Mary and CeCe, and I've always felt safe with them and loved, and that was a brand new experience, and Yuna Ann was called away, and she just shoved her drum at me, and said, here. It was either let the drum drop or pick it up, take it from her, and that first (unreportable sound) with the drum, (unreportable sound), (indiscernible) to wake oneself's up happened. All of a sudden -- I've had debilitating anxiety, PTSD, you name it. I'm on disability for six different diagnoses. Again, this is clinical. What it means is shit happened and there was no way to deal with because I was never meant to. I was supposed to kill myself. I was supposed to be a statistic. I'm not supposed to be here now, yet here I am with each of you.

And that first time playing that drum, I
didn't need a therapist. I didn't need the pills. I
didn't need any of that, and they were helpful at the time,
and I know that they do make a big difference for a lot of
people like they did for me, but what I needed, I needed my
culture. I needed my ancestors. I needed to acknowledge
that my ancestors were in this land, and that's where my
power comes from. My (indiscernible) power comes from,
whose cheek bones are these? These are my grandpa's hands.
How do I know how to knit? I watched my granny my whole
life. My job, Mary, you all know this, spinning the wool.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: My job was to take care
of those old-timers to get their tea, to set their curlers.
I brushed my granny's hair. I set her curlers. I bathed
her. I brought her her tea. She showed me how to stir the
tea properly with my pinky up so it made the right noise.
Some things so simple as to spill -- to spill it -- to stir
it so it overspilled, and people thought we were crazy, and
then you put the cup off of the plate and you drink from
the saucer. That's what we always did. And then in
language class, they shared -- Larry Grant (ph)
shared -- our old-timers before, even until not too long
ago, we drank out of shells. My granny drank out of a
shell, and the closest thing we had to a shell was those
saucers. She never used the cup. And I -- I'm not a fan
of English -- fine bone English china, but my granny sure was, and I have sets of it in my house. I have beautiful cups that I buy, and rarely use the cup. This is part of how we live now, new traditions are born, and we connect the dots between my mom's experience, the brutality that she lived through from birth.

Bernie said something when I first met her years ago. We're born into the struggle, she said. One of her -- one of her ladies shared it with her. One of her teachers shared it with her. I didn't choose this life. I was born into it. I thwarted the plan. I thwarted the genocide. How -- how -- how did that happen? That happened because I watched every woman before me struggle. I saw the pitfalls. I managed to get myself to a place where I was sober. No drugs for almost 20 years, no booze for 6 years. I'm learning how to have healthier relationships with men, and now I watch -- I look back, and I see my progress and my healing. Seventeen years ago, I had what the doctors would call a breakdown, but again, it was an awakening. My ancestors came and they claimed me and I -- and I woke myself up. I kicked myself in the ass. You either kill yourself and get it over with and stop with this bullshit or get up and go, so I got up and I went, and I found all the tools I didn't even know I'd amassed along the way all of a sudden were useful. At Cesnem, we were
always looking for people to do media, and one day they asked, will -- will you talk? Oh, well all of a sudden, we discovered, Audrey has a talent for talking.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: And in -- in front of the media, she's comfortable. She's not nervous. She makes good points. And then Elsipogtog happened, Idle No More happened, and we were called to speak and to sing. The women started rising, and we heard -- we learned with Idle No More, Sylvia: When sleeping women wake, mountains move. Mountains are moving. This Inquiry, which so many women died waiting for, were murdered waiting for, is an indicator of that.

I don't know what's going to come of this afterwards, so I'm making the best of it right now. I'm not counting on this Canadian Government to ever do anything in my benefit because that means that the Government will then have to give up the benefits that they accept and create that come at the expense of our women and our land. Connecting the dots between genocide and ecocide. It's cost me every woman in my family, my nieces. It's almost took my sister. It took my mom, my aunty. I watched the women around me suffer and die every day.

I was just a little kid outside those bars. My -- my grandpa, my mom, they would take us out for the
day, and my mom was gone for most of my life trying to heal herself. She spent time in the Yukon. She would send me letters and stones and pelts, and she would say she loved me, and I believed her, and then when she came back, she was damaged and she would tell me she hated me. I don't know how many times she's tried to kill me, and we made our peace with these things, and I only share them. I don't want anyone to judge her or look badly on her. Where did she learn these things? Where did it come from? How much did she hate herself that how she was living then was better than what she was hiding from? What's underneath it? I don't need placebo and Band-Aids. I need to heal, and I don't need to heal the surface. I need to heal the big wounds underneath, and I've had that time, I've had the opportunity, and that's why I do the work I do. None of the women before me have been able to do it. My granny fought hard, and she was able to pass the baton to me, and now I take it, and I run. I'll go through walls, and I do it all with love.

We hear about so often, and we've experienced here, lateral violence. I've learned to love people from a distance for my own safety, and I learned that from my mom, and when I went through my rage with her, because I was so mad and hurt at what I never got, what I needed. I needed love. I needed her to hold me. I have
memories of her brushing my hair and rubbing my back, and
other than that, it's ugly. And then I realized one day,
she stayed sober for three months, and she was, you know,
functioning alcoholic maybe since she was 12. She stayed
sober for three months and let me rail against her every
day, and she held me and she loved me, and she'd come and
go. As kids, she would bring me presents for the age that
I was when she last left. As a teenager, she brought me
shirts for an 8-year-old. Sometimes she was gone for
years, and we would hear nothing, and this is where it
comes in. Everybody here I'm sure knows, waiting for those
phone calls. You hear the phone ring at night, and you're
like, oh, no. I'm not answering it.

Every one of my granny's children -- little
Florence died of pneumatic fever because she was denied
proper health care. A little four-year-old baby was
allowed to die a miserable death because she wasn't worth
saving. Magna Carta, Manifest Destiny, Indian Act.
Connect the dots.

So my middle name, Florence, Audrey Florence
Siegl, I carry Florence's name. She only lived to be four.
She was my mom's -- I think she was younger than my mom,
and then learning what happened to my mom, I was sitting in
Grade 9, Templeton, and I was born in '73, so whoever wants
to do the math on what year that was, my mom -- I heard
about my family going to boarding schools, and the Canadian
Government's system of shielding the truth, misinformation,
propaganda and lies is so hyper-effective that me, someone
who carried the trauma of those residential schools,
boarding schools, didn't even know it. I believed I was
fine. I just thought it was normal for people to think and
feel how I felt, to watch the family pass out drunk all the
time and have to go in and out of SROs and shelters and
detoxes. Since I wasn't even 12 years old, I've been in
the Downtown Eastside looking for my family, sitting in
Oppenheimer Park my uncles while they drink their Ruby Red
and pass out watching so nobody touches them. Most of my
visits with my mom were in detoxes or SROs. I watched her
kill herself every day of her life. I watched her kill
herself with -- by choosing men who beat her mercilessly,
who raped her, who sold her. She left my dad to go back to
that because that's what she believed she deserved. That's
where she was comfortable.

I have trouble with people being nice to me.
Working -- doing the work in all the cities, people are
nice to me, and it messes me up. I don't know what to do
when people are nice. I don't know what to do when people
are mean, when people want things, when people lie and use.

And when I realized sitting in that class
when that -- this white teacher said, oh, no, here's
another little bit of Canadian history and da-da-da-da-da-da,
and the video and -- Indian residential schools on the
screen, the pictures, all those pictures we've seen since
TRC of the residential schools across Canada, and then he
said, also known as boarding schools, and I swear to God, I
thought I had passed out and fallen over. Everything went
black. What? Boarding schools? I thought that my mom and
her family got to go to Switzerland boarding school. I
thought that -- that the reason they had such impeccable
manners was because of that high level of education that
they received. To fall from there to knowing that what I
knew happened in the residential schools, knowing that that
was so close to me and that teacher bragged and boasted how
he found himself a Native woman who gave him 14 kids
and -- and was still happy to make more, bragged about how
his people from -- I think it might have been Australia,
but he didn't have the accent -- how they -- how -- how
they knew how to get a good wife, and you always picked a
brown one because she'd -- because she'd never leave you,
and you could do whatever you wanted, and they'd give you
lots of babies. Teachers were allowed to say this. That
wasn't that long ago.

And then I realized that that's what had
happened to my mom, and even decade -- over a decade later
when I -- when I railed against her and I was so awful, and
she stayed sober and never once did she offer even an
curse or a defence, but she just sat still and let me,
and -- not -- I don't know how many years after that I sat
with her, and I said, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry I hurt
you. I didn't know what happened. And then we started our
healing journey together, and that's when she shared a lot
of what happened to her.

Then TRC came up, and these prescribed ideas
and timelines and budgets, and, no, this is how it has to
happen. No, it doesn't. My people have been here for over
10,000 years, and this is not how we worked. As long as it
takes is as long as it takes. We don't dictate to each
other -- we don't even have a word or phrase for "thank
you." That was -- that was created to accommodate the
newcomers to the land. What -- when we say [speaking in
Musqueam], technically it means "we're done here."

(LAUGHTER)

**MS. AUDREY SIEGL:** And we say it with
sincerity now, but why did we have to create that?

Why -- what happened -- looking at the fact these -- in
our -- in our Chiefs and council on our reserve systems, in
my community, it was our First Nations who brought it in.
Families who still work and -- and promote the Indian Act,
that -- still in it. They brought it to our community.

Turn our own people against each other, and then we have to
fight for the crumbs.

And now we come to the part where -- where I'm waking up and I'm learning, and all the pieces of the puzzle are coming together of -- of what I saw happening, that all of a sudden, things made sense, and I started -- I started to not hate myself. I've -- I like myself now, but I'm still qualifying my existence. I'm still earning my keep. That's not right. I know I'm not the only one. I sit here and I share this, and I know it's resonating in other people, and ever since I was little, I stand up and I fight, for as much as I wanted to -- to die and as much as I would go -- walk into a bar and I would say, that man, that's a dangerous one. Any time anyone tried to kill me, I fought like hell to live. I have been kidnapped at gunpoint, I have been held hostage, I have had -- I don't even know how many times men have tried to rape me. I have three times -- and this is -- a lot of this during the drinking time, which people will say that makes it justifiable. I would leave the bar. Three times, I left the bar with a man who I thought was a normal guy. All of a sudden, I'm dropped in the middle of nowhere, and they pull out their weapons, and they say -- one time they gave me five minutes, another time they said no timeline, and one time they said a half an hour, and each time they would say something similar: Go. You don't want us to catch
you.

And I don't realize that this isn't normal. I don't realize that other people, hearing this, hurts them, and sometimes, that bugs me because why do other people get to live in bubbles and safety, and I'm not even allowed to walk down the street?

That -- this Indian Act system that the Canadian Government's policies, which are built on white supremacy and hatred, reign supreme in their courts. It's their laws and their reminders of who they are. At Oppenheimer Park, we set up a tent city. In our ancestors' times, we had no homelessness. We had natural cycles of drought and famine, but it wasn't like it is now. What's happening to our salmon? We are people of the river. We're salmon people. We know the history of what -- of what happens to the people who lost their buffalo, and how did they lose the buffalo? The moose are toxic. The water's toxic. The salmon are toxic, but fish farms are allowed to carry on. Right now, Burnaby Mountain. We have these industry entities that are backed by our government and hired henchmen to stop us from protecting what we are rightfully bound to be responsible for and to -- I can say this is my land because I belong to this land. I don't claim it by their systems of law and property. We saw it in Caledonia in the '90s; possession is nine-tenths of the
law. People will look at First Nations and
activists -- because now I'm labeled an activist. I've
been on the covers of -- of magazines and countless
articles naming me as a terrorist at the extreme opposite
end of Harper, yet somehow that's a bad reflection of me?
I don't accept it. I worked hard to get out of where I
was. I have been too white for one world and too brown for
another world my entire life. I've been called an apple, a
princess, a white woman who looks like an Indian, and it
doesn't stop. To my own people, I have to qualify and
justify that I have a right to be here and doing the work
I'm doing. I won't do that to another woman, especially
not a brown woman.

You don't have to like me. That's fine.
I'll give you all the space in the world, but don't you
dare try to hurt me. It's hard to push back the feelings
of rage and the pushback that wants to come out, but if I
want to work with the medicines, if I want to do the work
that saved me, I have to find good ways to go. My dad
always said, give people a good way to go, and I'm
understanding now why. I'm seeing all around me women who
are healing and rising. I say over and over, heal, unite,
rise. Heal, unite, rise. Heal, unite, rise. I don't just
mean us. I mean everybody. [Speaking in Musqueam]. We
are one.
But we have these dividing entities. We look at what happened to my mom and the horrible life that she lived, and she did her best. She fought hard, and she was -- I can't even remember how old. She was born in '53, and not this January but the January before that, I want to say she died, but she didn't die. She was murdered. Her whole life she struggled with alcohol and drugs, and why shouldn't she? It was less painful. There was never any real help for her, not in our own communities where our women and children are allowed to be preyed upon. There's excuses made for the rapists and pedophiles to keep carrying on their dirty work. Blame it on residential schools, no individual accountability. I don't accept that. If I am held accountable, as I should be, so will you. So I'm silenced in my own community. I'm shunned. CeCe, Mary, Melanie, a few women in my community stand with me. Other than that, no one stands with me. Maybe they support me quietly, but I don't need quiet support. I need you standing here with me.

The day that we buried my mom, I was stood up -- fifteen minutes before we buried my mom, a man who came here to do work -- good work of an apology stood me up and said that I had shamed my family by not following protocols. They didn't approach me and tell me I was doing things wrong. They didn't look at why things weren't done
right. Fifteen minutes before they started ceremony, they stood me up and shamed me. Everyone got in the line and gave them 50 cents for doing it. Where am I supposed to feel safe? That's not right.

Sometimes you just got to eat it. Like Bernie -- Bernie has said time and time again, choose your battles. That's not a battle I'm choosing to fight, not now. And I look at how lucky I have been that the work that I'm doing -- when I started working with the language, I didn't know my mom was at the groundwork of that at the foundation working with Arnold Garron (ph), putting together the lexicon. She tried. She tried every day. She was never able to work. She couldn't function without a drink. She had to have her -- she had have to her tokes. She popped pills. She used any and everything to escape, and when she was around us, she tried to do better. She tried to show us different, and she wanted different for us. She left because she thought that that's what was best, and in the end, she died of a Fentanyl overdose.

Five years ago when we set up Oppenheimer Tent City, we were saying, there's something going on. There's something in the drugs. Women in the back here, our Downtown Eastside women who live this every day, were screaming. Something's happening here. We're dropping. We're dropping. Every day. Five years later, the mayor
will stand and say, oh, we're going have a task force, and we'll do this, and we'll do that. Too fucking late. This Inquiry, too late. The first woman that paid the price for Canada to exist, one too many. The -- the Time's Up and Me Too? Too late. Not enough. I don't accept it. It's not what I need, it's not what I want, and it does not represent who I am, so I stand and I do the work.

I was doing Fentanyl-specific loss and grief workshops for almost nine months or a year because I don't know what to do all the time, so I come with the medicines. Maybe it'll help somebody. I'm -- at least I'm not sitting feeling helpless. Like the Buddhist -- like the Buddhists say, if you can't be helpful, be harmless. At the very least, I'm being harmless, but if I can, I want to share the medicine. I want -- I just want -- I want people to heal. I want them to stand. I want to see them -- I want to see them hold their head up, and I want to see pride in their eyes. I want to see their hearts grow. I want them to stand and claim who they are and where they come from.

And I was in a meeting with VPD, VFD, and ambulance because I was doing a specific workshop at Carnegie where they were invited despite the fact that we all know what the police, the RCMP do to our women still. Fire, no problem. Ambulance, no problem. The law enforcement, big problem. But still, I go to them, and I
say, I see this is hurting you. I'm going to lead the way. Let's set it up, and while I'm in that meeting, my phone won't stop ringing, and if you know Bernie at all, you know that the message is coming. My phone wouldn't stop ringing. My phone wouldn't stop ringing, and it was Bernie's ring tone, and it was it was "Coal Miner's Daughter."

(LAUGHTER)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: It kept ringing, and I'm trying to have this meeting, and then we finish the meeting and then go outside, and it's my -- Bernie telling me that our cousin Alex was -- was there with our mom; my sister happened to be with Bernie, and the ambulance was working on our mom trying to save her. She had just come home with a 5-day party downtown, and -- and she died. We don't know if the Fentanyl was in the crack or in the pot. They -- they took her off of her bed and put her on the floor to work on her and left her there, naked, with the tube in her mouth and let us come in and find her like that. I have people who loved me through it and took care of me, and if I had a fire in my belly before and a determination before -- I don't know what it was that happened in that moment.

My mom and I talked about my work when she died, and I think to comfort each other, we'd say, oh, and
if I go first, then you'll do this. And we were lucky. The police and the coroner waited for me to get there to do the work that my mom asked me to do, our work with our medicines and our ways. The house she lives in was across the street from the land, the original homes where my family grew up right beside the river, six -- six long houses for six families. My mom left her community early and never really felt welcome to come back. She waited her whole life to get a house at home, and when she finally got a home, it was so close -- a little bit of geography background. When I say [speaking in Musqueam], it's actually not geographically articulate. (Place name in Native language) was one place name like the drive. Where my people come from is Molly. It's about a 3- or 5-minute walk away, but to accommodate people and not have to explain and for them to not have to learn about the land that they're on, we say -- and I do say it with pride because it is part of the community that my people come from, but I'm a Molly person, and my mom was born there, and she died there. We watched them load her in a plastic bag and drag her out.

Bernie and Amy and Destiny (ph) and I, we've seen a lot. Bernie has seen so much, and we were all so mortified at how they handled her body. We -- it's been over a year and a half. We still don't even know how to
talk about it.

So even in death, the way they treated her, it's shameful. Why do I have to sit here and explain this and justify why she deserved to be treated like a human? Why did she deserve to not be raped, beaten, sodomized, and treated like a little animal as a baby and the rest of her life? I grew up hearing women talk about being raped, gang-raped and beaten so many times that they lost count of how many times. Women in my own generation don't know how many times they've been raped and gang-raped. Do you know why I've never been raped? Number one, I fought back; number two, I had women who stepped up and took it so that I wouldn't have to because they already knew what it was like, and they didn't want me to carry that.

I also didn't know the term "survivor's guilt." I'm loaded with guilt. Why am I here? Why do I have all these opportunities? Why do I have people to love me? It's my job. This is my work. I used to think I would have a life with my family, that I would have comfort, that I would have a person to love me and take care of me. Now I know this is my life. I don't want to be sitting here. I don't want to tell these truths ever again. How do we wake people up? We humanize it. We have been commodified. We have been dehumanized. We have been murdered and criminalized for simply being who we are on
the lands that we dare to still exist on. I'm never
sinking again. I'll never be on my fucking knees again. I
won't beg for anything. I deserve to be here.

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: M'hm.

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: I'm still figuring out
why, but at least I know that. Because I sit here, all
those women before me sit here. Because I'm healing,
they're healing. When I feel pain, we feel pain, it's for
500 years of genocide. This murdered, missing women's
inquiry is to touch on what's happened in the last few
decades. Well, we need to look at the entirety of Canada's
history. What is Canada built on? What is Canada founded
on? What is every other developed nation around the world
developed on? It's not okay for it to come at my expense
anymore. It's not okay for it to come at your expense
anymore. Again and again, we stand up and we say no more,
and what do they do? They pull out their military. They
pull out their police. They pull out their -- their new
paramilitarized police that have been set up and are being
trained by American military for over ten years along the
borders. They're setting up camps to bring us to, to
silence us, camps that are only accessible by train and
plane, on our lands. If you don't -- if your ancestors
aren't in this land, it's not your land. We have our laws.
We have our ways. You know how we dealt with -- we had
ceremonies to celebrate life and death. We had ceremonies to celebrate the phases of life. If someone stepped out of line, we had ways of working with them and healing them -- healing them, and if that wasn't possible, if what they had done was so heinous, and this is what mortifies a lot of people when I bring it up, we had ways of -- of actually achieving justice. I worked an hour -- Musqueam oral histories, collections of stories put together by James Pointe (ph) and others, and they speak openly of how we maintained balance and justice: Staked up at low tide or heads on stakes. People will say that that's violent talk. You know, no. You know what's violent? Violent is what we live with every day.

There's video that if -- if you don't mind to -- I won't watch it. This is what happened at a rally the day before the Valentine's Day March in Vancouver at an event called Shut Down Canada. We were standing in solidarity with what was happening in Australia to the Aboriginals who were being herded into tiny little areas or colonies in the middle of the dead heat. They were being cut off from food and water, and the women were being attacked. So here in Canada, we set up events across the country. We shut down Canada. We shut down the intersection leading to the port, get their attention. We can go to the art gallery, but how about we shut shit down
and cost you money? Will that get your attention? How about we start reclaiming in ways that actually is effective and doesn't come at such a big expense?

So in this video, it's a small clip, and please, if you don't want to see it, please, turn away, or you can -- you -- you don't have to watch it. It will be played here, though. I'm not going to watch it, and it -- it's probably not going to look like much, and then there's photos of the -- of the injury that I had after, and I play this because after what the police and the RCMP have done to the women in my family, that I have held them in the shower and sat in closets with them when they were working hard to not kill themselves because of what those men made them do as teenagers, I want the police to be seen for who they are. We have VPD Aboriginal liaisons. They never stood up for any of this. I called on the politicians who are -- the women -- the female politicians that I represented and I stood with. I called on them, stand with me; we need to call this out. It's going to cost us votes. I can't.

Women, a few women from my community came and stood with me. The VPD Aboriginal liaison in my community, Chief, council, community members, not one stood with me or said anything publicly about this that happened. So if you're -- you can play the video, then -- we'll just
play it once.

(VIDEO PLAYED)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: That was me standing quietly on the side while other women were singing and drumming. This was, as they call it, a peaceful protest, and we had -- they moved in. It was mothers, grandmothers, kids, women; and the police brought in 15 squad cars and unloaded -- last count was over 20, 25 individual huge cases of pepper spray. They had reopened the intersection at this point. That's Matthew McKinnon, Constable Matthew McKinnon, proud VPD member. He was targeting me all day. What the police were doing, they -- when we were at the intersection -- because we were going intersection -- we were going with the lights through the intersection, not disrupting traffic because Lord knows we don't want to inconvenience people. We're just dying every day, that's all. He kept trying to shove us -- they were all shoving us into traffic, trying to shove us into oncoming traffic.

One of the number one tactics police use at rallies is they kettle you in and they hamstring you. I played sports my whole life. They -- they -- they hit you in the back of your calf, in the back of -- of -- of your thigh. They kidney-shot us. They knock our drums out of our hands. They stomp on our fingers. They knock us to the ground, and it's all on their videos, which we don't
have access to, and they call us "squaw" and "princess"
and -- they say, how you going -- how's it going with all
your murdered and missing women? These are white officers,
and they have all colours of officers, and they all stand
by and allow this to happen.

So Constable McKinnon moved out from behind
the barrier, and this -- this is where the playing
sports -- he eyed me, he lined me up, and he made -- he
kept that eye contact. He dropped his shoulder, bam,
picked his shoulder up, shoved my drum into my mouth.
These are -- this is -- this happened on February 13th.
The day after was the memorial march for our murdered and
missing women in the Downtown Eastside. I had a cut lip.
I had a huge bruise. My lip was swollen, my gum was cut,
and I'm at the front of the march singing and drumming, and
I was embarrassed and humiliated to be there. Police are
invited to walk at the front, and everyone's so nice to
them, and I couldn't stop crying during the march.

I have extreme PTSD. I haven't been able to
leave my house for huge periods of time since I was a
little girl, and right after this happened, I -- I followed
him because -- who I am and who I was raised to be -- it
took ten days for this to heal completely. Who I am and
who I was raised to be is you don't let shit like that
happen. You go and you sort it out. I went up to him, and
I was like, what the hell? And three other offers stepped in behind him and said, you deserved that, shut up, this is what you deserve, this is what you get when you stand here.

Sergeant Harris (ph) -- this was the PSU public safety unit, safety. Sergeant Harris who was in charge, I said, what are you going to do? Look at what your cop just did. He said, I didn't see anything.

Constable McKinnon then, the one who did it, looked at me and said, you're making such a big deal about this. Do you want us to call an ambulance for you? Maybe you need some psychiatric care too.

They all watched and listened. This is nothing compared to what they did to the women that I love, the women that I have been forced to hold together while they couldn't hold themselves together, the women who still hurt themselves every day because of what they have been forced to live with, including my mom. My mom never actually cried or was angry about any of the things that happened to her. It's just the way it was.

So we went through internal investigations and went through OPCC. I was never granted access to my witnesses' statements, the video that was taken when I went in to give my statement. I wasn't granted access to any of the police statements or videos that were taken, and in the end, a year and a half, two years of the process, six times
they made me send my pictures in, and the video, we didn't get it, we didn't get it, we didn't get it.

I was found -- I was found -- it -- it was decided that Constable McKinnon -- and also, I didn't include the photo, but two times before this, Constable McKinnon was put on desk duty according -- the police have their own newsletter that they put out. The same officer who did this to me was put on desk duty because of abuse of authority and unnecessary violence, all Downtown Eastside stuff, so this man has a documented history of this, which was proven and undeniable according to their own methods. They had to put this out, and yet he's there on public safety. I ask, how do you pick these men? Oh, these are the ones who want to be here. Oh, I see. So these are the hunters. These are the predators. These are the justice-keepers for their side. And in the end, he was found not guilty of anything, and in fact, they had their own documented proof that even though I'd never seen this man before, and I've done a lot of rallies, almost any event that I would go to, I would have at least one with a camera and two other big ones with him follow me everywhere because apparently I'm a terrorist again, right?

And I was -- they -- they -- in their decision, and I couldn't find any of the e-mails to share here, but again, we come back to the "ma." I have no
interest in lying about this. I have no interest in portraying him to be anything other than what he is, and those who protect him and those who are silent, painted by the same brush, that I harassed him and I singled him out at rallies and events, and I tormented him until this was unavoidable, and it was an accident. It's -- it's plain to see it was an accident, and I overreacted. Nothing done about the other officers who made their comments, nothing done about Seargent Harris, who still is working -- all these people still have these same jobs. Where is accountability? This was nothing. I've had injuries worse than this I don't know how many times, but yet nothing is done.

I share this because we have some -- we finally have a video that shows a little bit of who the police are and what they do. We see evidence of this right now on Burnaby Mountain, the police and the RCMP, ten of them taking down one woman. The way our First Nations women are being treated up there right now is totally different from the way Elizabeth May is treated, Elizabeth May walking arm in arm with the RCMP while they arrest her, a symbolic arrest, which stops nothing.

I'm serious about defending, and I'll use every tool in my belt. I come from a place of peace. Well, why is violence always enacted on me? I've never
once enacted violence on another person to protect myself. I feel terrible that I've had to hurt other people. Why am I allowed to be hunted? Since I was 12 years old, I've been allowed to be hunted, and this is better than what my mom lived. This is better than the -- what my peers have lived.

So now here we are at the time of the Inquiry. I've had a lot of media attention for the work that I do. I have been called a media whore. I have been called out by people who will say that we're on the same side. I never wanted to be in front of the media. Never want to be the face or voice of anything. It just seems to be my work, and I take it seriously, and I do my best, and when I'm left on my own to do things, and we have people who work with dark medicines and bad medicine to try to stop the progress we're making. It's the same as the Canadian Government. Why would a system that benefits from maintaining the status quo ever stop? The Canadian Government exists because of the most insidious methods used to clear the land. It's all about resources. It's all about a dollar sign. This is what commodification is about. We want to know where -- where we're headed here on this coast? Look at California. You want to know where we're headed in general as Canada? Look at what -- look at Russia. South Africa. No water. No water. That's a real
thing. We're selling water and air. We're selling water and air, but we still have no value.

When I met Bernie and I saw all of her T-shirts, now -- now I think in T-shirts and hash tags, and Bernie said, we are the red women rising, and I was like, yes. We are the red women rising because I'm here, because I have a voice, because now -- because of the -- the little bit of public knowledge of who I am keeps me safe from the police. Doesn't mean they don't follow me. Doesn't mean they don't harass me. It doesn't mean that I don't have extreme PTSD and terror. I don't want to be anywhere near them. Everyone want -- so many people want to be cozy with them and say that they're good guys. No. Until they stand up publicly and call each other out and hold each other accountable and say what you did, not only is it not acceptable, but we're going to bring the justice, and you're going to be out of that uniform.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: Looking at the history of the police and the RCMP, the RCMP were created to quiet the Indian rebellions; again, access to land. The police were created to protect the colonial government's property. Yes, their job is to serve and protect, but nobody ever questions what or who. It's not me. It never will be me. My safety comes from these women. My safety comes from my
ancestors. My safety comes because I am loyal to the
teachings that the ones in the ground lived by, the -- the
proverb, they tried to bury us, but they didn't know we
were seeds. Well, guess what? The garden's growing now.
The seeds are sprouting. They can't stop us. There is no
stopping us. The natural -- I said this the other day.
Nature's balance for genocide, we're the fastest and
youngest growing population in Canada for how many decades?
Every little brown baby that's born isn't just hope. It's
the -- that little brown baby is the future. Our
teachings, having our medicine people, like, our cedar, the
fact that we -- and I hate that we have been granted space
to travel with our medicines. It's not their space to
give. It's our space. We had protocols. What are now
called protocols is simply just how we were, and they're
all bastardized. It's like the King James version of the
Bible. Look at the original ancient text the Bible comes
from. Put things into context.

I share these things about what happened to
me and what happened to my mom because in the big picture,
I am one drop in an ocean full of suffering and agony and
death, but we're still here. We're still here. My dad
says where there's a breath of life, there's a hope, and we
have a whole bunch of breath.

I've worked with Greenpeace campaigns around
the world to bring a focus to the interconnectedness between what happens here and what happens in Norway, what happens in South Africa, what happens in South America; and some days, it's just so hard because we're still dying. We're still being murdered. We're still being taken for drives. 14 years-old are being taken out and being forced to -- to have sex, give blow jobs to police officers. That panel of young women who sat up here, it broke my heart. I was a kid in care. My choice was -- I wanted to live on my own, and somebody reported me, and they said, go home or go into care. I'm like, hm, I don't really care. You can't make me anything. Yeah, they did. They put me in care. They moved me to Port Coquitlam, out of East Vancouver, out of my community, in a group home with girls -- with five other girls who were so messed up and broken, and then I realized how lucky I was, and then I worked in that group home, and then I aged out. When I aged out, there was no support. There was no help. If I wouldn't -- because our band had money set aside for each of us. When I was 19, I got what they called a trust fund. If I didn't have that, I would have been homeless. I was in a relationship for 12 years that when I finally looked at it in the end I realized was abusive, and a good part of that abuse in the middle of it, I played a part in. I was drunk and angry, and I acted in unbelievable ways, and I did my best to
apologize and to fix what I broke and hurt, and in the end, he was too broken. When I left that relationship, I left after being terrorized for six weeks, every day, because I couldn't afford to move. I couldn't move into my new home. He would sit in the dark waiting for me to come home. He unplugged all the lights. He put all my shit on the lawn and gave it away. He threatened to come and kill me and burn my house down. I had to have a police escort to come and go from my new home every day for weeks.

And then you put that together with what McKinnon did. Men have done really -- white men, I will specify. I wish -- I don't want to wish that. No. People say, well, you know, they -- we hear all -- we hear all the -- all the statistics that are thrown back at us that it's Native men who do this. It's not Native men alone. Any man who ever put his hand on me in a hurtful way was a white man, including McKinnon, including my ex, and I don't say his name because he has two daughters who I love and I helped raise for two years, and now I can't even have a relationship with them.

When I left that relationship, I had to -- I was at work, and I was talking to the social worker at the band office, and I said, this is what's happening, and I don't know what to do, and they said, holy shit. They called in the VPD liaison, and they went to talk to him, my
ex, and he did work in the Downtown Eastside, and he was protected by the police. They told me that I antagonized the situation by staying in the home. I said, why don't you make him control himself? He's a full-grown adult. And throughout the relationship, throwing keys at my head, shoving me, different things like that. Like, all of these little things that I overlooked because I loved him. I didn't -- until the last five years, I didn't know a love that didn't hurt, and what -- this is to mirror -- this is a smaller version of what my mom went through. I still had it better than she did.

And when I left that relationship, the day that I moved, I had to have a police escort, and he was told to leave the house. Well, as soon as the police escort left, he came back and he threw a 3-foot lead pipe at my head, and because it happened on St. Patty's Day weekend, there was never an investigation, and he was never charged. I documented because he's neighbours with my dad. My dad has a heart condition, and my little dog lived with my dad. I go and I visit my dad every day because I love him and I -- and I enjoy company with him, and it's my job to take care of him. I had to have friends come and go with me. The neighbours -- the entire community rallied against me. I was drunk, and I was angry, and I said and I did things that I shouldn't have, and I don't -- I don't
excuse it, but I did my best to try to make it right. I
didn't just apologize with words. I apologized with
actions, and I showed him, I saw -- I see the damage I did.
Please let me fix it. Please work with me.

And instead, I got punished, and when he
would chase me down the sidewalk or he would be drunk
waiting for me or he would stalk me -- and this went on for
years -- the police again told me that I antagonized the
situation and that I should stay away. One day, it
escalated into a big fight in the backyard with my best
friend, who was protecting me. The police were called, and
I had my ex's hand marks on my throat, on my arms, and he
kicked lawn furniture into my legs. The police wouldn't
even let me make a statement or look at the idea that maybe
there could be some charges laid here. They told me, don't
come back here because it's too hard for him. He's a
broken-hearted guy. He drinks, he misses you so much, and
then I would get messages saying, well, if you apologize,
he'll take you back. If I apologize, he'll take me back?
People in the community would say, oh, he's such a broken
guy now. Like, you really need to stop tormenting him.
He's -- he's an alcoholic, and he can't even hold a job
anymore. No one asked me how I was. The neighbours -- the
community rallied against me. This is my experience of
what justice looks like in Canada, that no matter what I
do, I am always to blame, no matter what happens to me.
That cop hit me; I'm to blame. My ex hit me, terrorized me. I still have nightmares. I hear -- I hear him coming
down the hall and coming into my room. How long until this shit's over? How long until we're safe?
I deliver a message right to Trudeau. I know nothing's going to change until your women live how
our women have, until it comes at your expense. The system that exists now in Canada can only feed on us for so long.
When it starts to cannibalize itself, that's when things are going to change, and guess what? We're still going to be here.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: And in the pictures that
I brought of my mom, I wanted people to see that she's beautiful and powerful, that she did her best -- that was just before she got pregnant with my sister -- that what was done to her, it will never be right. There is no way to make that right. I don't know what justice looks like for that. I -- we -- we have trauma all over the place. I can't -- my mom loved the Beatles. I've never liked the Beatles. I was raised by hippies, and I've never -- that's the first time I saw my mom's (indiscernible) and look proud in my whole life. There was a canoe journey coming, and I didn't know what a canoe journey was, and she was
Audrey Siegl (Mother)

standing there looking so proud and so tall, and she was sober.

That -- I have opportunities that other women have, and I'm going to make the best of them. That was on a Valentine's Day March. Years ago, my mom asked me, now that you're going to the march, come and sit with me, I want to talk to you, and she said, I can't go, I've lost too many friends. She was almost picked up by Pickton. I don't know how many times she's almost been murdered by men. She looked at the guy -- she -- her friend was working, and my mom looked at the guy, and he said, hey, come on, let's -- we're going to go party, we got a place and -- da-da-da. She looked at the guy, and she told her friend, don't go. That's the last time she saw her friend. She didn't get in the van, and my mom said, I can't go. I can't walk. I've lost too many. She said, I need more than all my fingers and toes four or five times to count how many women. I don't even know where some of them are. When you go, can you walk for me?

So that became my job, and that year, she surprised me. She came out of -- she came out of -- she came out of one of the bars, and I saw -- she always had -- that was taken not long before she died. That was with Amy, and my mom came out of the -- out of the bar, and I saw her, and I'm -- I'm good at being strong, but when I
saw her, I felt like a little girl, and I felt like she
came to take care of me, and you see the size difference
between us.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: And it didn't help that I
had on big shoes in my drum bag underneath, and she looked
at me, and she'd never seen me in regalia. That's my mom
walking down the street. That was, like, just a few months
before she died, too, and she came, and she said, oh, my
girl, look at you, and she cried, and she just looked at
me, and she was so proud, and as much as I believed her
when she said the ugly things, I also believed her when she
said the nice things and that I got to know that she was
proud of me.

She would say to me -- I took her to the
Oppenheimer Tent City. She said, okay, I need you to take
me and show me what's going on, and I'm like, oh, well, hm.
You know, the park was taken over by 300 tents. There was
a makeshift longhouse and a tepee, and it was a gong show,
and it was our gong show. We were fighting for houses, and
we weren't leaving, and I drove -- I drove down the street,
and as we neared the intersection, her eyes got huge, and
she looked at me and she said, what have you done?

(LAUGHTER)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: And all of a sudden, I
Hearing - Public

Audrey Siegl
(Mother)

1 had a second -- like, I second-guessed myself. I was like,
2 did I do the right thing putting the long house here, make
3 the big declaration? Because it was just after the -- that
4 Tsilhqot'in case, so we were like -- we were like, okay,
5 well, we're -- we're going to stand up, too, then.
6 And that I got know them, my mom was proud
7 of me, and that -- now, the saddest statement is
8 that -- because I was preparing for her to die since I was
9 8 or be murdered or just say we haven't heard from her for
10 a year or six months, I was crushed when the call came in,
11 and then I -- I thought, well, why -- I couldn't figure out
12 why -- why I was feeling anything. I thought I would be
13 fine. So when it landed, I -- I -- wow, it felt extra
14 heavy, and immediately, the very next thought was relief.
15 Finally, she's safe. The only place our women can go to be
16 safe is dead. That's huge.
17 We're sitting here now, doing this good
18 work, taking care of each other, loving each other,
19 supporting each other, speaking truth, and what's happening
20 out there? Serial killers have been -- it has been
21 documented on the Highway of Tears of finding how many men
22 driving up and down, pulled over by the police, with serial
23 killer kits. Where -- where are -- where is the footage on
24 the Highway of Tears from Transportation for the stops?
25 The Canadian entity is going to protect
itself. I am a determined beast. I am not stopping until my women are safe. I'm not stopping until there is justice, not just for my mom but for everyone's mother and baby and brother and son. We haven't even touched on the men yet. Imagine being held captive and having to watch all this happen to your women? What does that do? And then the fingers pointed at the men for saying, well, you shouldn't do that. Well, what about the priests and all the other men who did it to them? Where's the accountability there? I'm big on accountability and people owning the good and bad that's theirs.

I wish I could say there's something good that this Canadian Government did for me. I see the good that the Canadian Government does do for people who are coming here from other situations, and I want them to keep doing that good for those people, but not at the expense of my people. They make us fight over who gets a bigger dollar amount, a newcomer from a war-torn area or us? We're -- we're front lines. Third-world conditions, no water for -- for 30 years, starving to death, mould, Elders left on their own. By the time I was 12, I was taking care of my granny's prescriptions and -- and running my dad's house. Do you know how many times they almost killed my granny with -- by not cross-referencing? It didn't matter.

I have rheumatoid arthritis. You would
never really know unless you notice a few little things
like the way my pinky sits or how I move sometimes. My
grandparents had arthritis. They got no medical attention.
My grandpa carved until a couple months before he died, and
my grandmother knit until a couple months before they died
because their kids were unable to work and provide for
themselves. They watched every one of their kids die
before them. My grandparents lived to be in their 80s.
The oldest one -- my mom's siblings started dying when they
were 4, and my mom was the oldest one, and she made to it
her early 60s. What happened in that generation that the
oldest one was 20 years younger at death? What happened?
We know what happened. I'm not counting on this
Canadian -- it's why the Pope won't apologize because of
the legal and financial obligations that are then
pursuable.

I understand their systems. I've been a
smart enough monkey to move through them and still try to
challenge it. I ran for city council because my goal was
to take it down from the knees, to break it apart from the
inside, and then I realized, I'm shackled in there. My job
is not there. Like, Bernie -- Bernie says her job is the
front lines. My job is with the medicines. My job is
loving and caring for people, things that I never had. I
found my way, too, and they found me, and now I share it.
I share it with everyone. I don't want anyone to hurt. I have no ideas of revenge, of retribution. That's not what justice means. Safety, peace, justice for all. Simple. Win/win only. That's where I come from.

We need our medicines, for my recommendations. We've heard it time and time again. Our centres for our healing lead by our people with our medicines on our land.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: Not just accountability, but implementation. We hear about policies, the police, they've had sensitivity training and this and that. That means nothing to me. They're still killing us. Real account -- real accountability within the courts, within policing, law enforcement. We need the police to put their men in check. We need --

(APPLAUSE)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: We need -- and I will -- I will look at the men that are here, who are standing up and showing what good men are, and we need men to hold men accountable. It shouldn't be my job alone to keep me safe. The imbalance that has been allowed to exist again for the benefit and the bottom line and the dollars, got to go. There's no room for it. There's no space. I'm not planning on existing within the colonial structure. We
are working to set up our own structures. The land sovereignty is the beginning. Food sovereignty. Our medicines. Our women taking care of our women and our men taking care of our men according to our laws and our traditional ways on our land which proved successful until about 200 years ago on this coast. Two hundred years ago, we lived a very different life here. I know it's not possible to move back to, but surely we can look at it and learn and bring ideas forward. I have no interest in compromising or negotiating. I don't really want any conversations with the Canadian Government. Trudeau can go talk to the elite (indiscernible) class that he has as his "yes" men, and they can make whatever decisions they want, but we are, as Bernie said, the red women rising, and we will have what we need. We will be safe. We will take care of each other. We will lead the way once again to show, what do safety and justice look like? What does peace look like? I fought hard for the peace that I carry in me now. I ain't giving it up for nothing. It's mine, and I have it because of what countless generations before me sacrificed.

I put at the feet of Canada and those who choose to represent it everything I just put out. Like my mom and my aunty said, now it's theirs. It was never mine to carry for this long. The damage that I allowed it to do
to me: No more. I -- I heal every day. I struggle every
day, but I heal every day. It's my job to heal, and it's
my job to lead in the ways that I lead, and we have to
balance each other up. We have to hold each other up.
This lateral violence bullshit, it's going to stop. We
have to hold each other accountable. You love -- take
someone aside and love them the way that they need to be
loved until they come to balance and can come back and only
bring love that doesn't hurt. We don't -- we never had
exclusionary policies. If you got banished, you did
something really terrible, not just said something about
someone that, you know -- you know -- a lot of -- a lot of
the men in organizations are nervous to have me around.
They -- they won't bring me in to talk unless they have
dirty work that needs to be done, because I'll say what
needs to be said, and I don't ever say it to hurt anybody.
I don't ever say it -- I don't -- nothing -- nothing I ever
do, I'm mortified now, after all the work I've done over
the last 17 years, I don't want to hurt anyone ever. I'm
so careful with people. I'm leading by example. I'm
learning to love myself and take care of myself because
none of the women before me -- and even after me, my nieces
and their babies are still suffering and dying. We're
still watching it. We're still witness to it.

So what do we do? We go to the teachings.
We go to the land. We lead with our ways. If that -- if these drums hadn't woken me up, where would I be? I'd be another drunk in the bar functioning in my everyday life, making good money, but trading it for my soul. I -- I'm a big believer in reclaiming, and I am reclaiming, and we've talked about it, my space. I -- I have made myself tiny and invisible and silent my whole life to accommodate others because they get uncomfortable if I rise, if I talk, if I make order. No more. I take up whatever space I need, and I don't apologize for it, and in that space, you are all welcome and comfortable, you are safe, and in return, I ask you do the same thing.

I'm carrying on the work that my mother never got to do, not just because I carry her name, but because without her, I wouldn't be here. Everything I do now isn't just to honour my ancestors, but it's to honour her: The chances she never had, the life that was stolen from her, the love that was stolen from her, the comfort that was stolen from her. I'm not just focusing on the brutality that she lived with every day of her life. I'm focusing on the fact that she still rose every day and carried on. She still found ways to -- to provide better for us. She still found ways to try to pass on anything good. How many people don't hold themselves to those standards even when they are receiving the benefits that we
live without? I need everyone to step up.

(APPLAUSE)

**MS. AUDREY SIEGL:** I need you to not accept the benefits that come at my expense. I need you to hold Canada accountable. I need you to use your dollars to support what you believe in. I need you to be willing to be uncomfortable. I need you to be willing to stand beside me, behind me, in front of me. I need you to stand up when you see injustice. I need you to heal yourself. I need you to do your fucking work.

(LAUGHTER)

(APPLAUSE)

**MS. AUDREY SIEGL:** And I know it's hard. I can only ask because I'm doing my work. There are so few of us shouldering so much. Step up. Let us have a break. I'm tired, and if I'm this tired, how tired are the rest of you who've been doing this so much longer? I will step up and carry whatever I need to carry so they don't have to. They carried it long enough. What are you willing to do? What are you willing to stand up for? What are you willing to go without? How far are you willing to go to make sure that safety, justice, and peace for all is -- is a reality?

There are no limits to what I'll do. I'm following my ancestors' ways. They want to hurt this body, they want to take this body, fine. You set my spirit free.
I'm trapped in here. I'm limited in here. I barely fit in here now, and that's a beautiful thing. I am strong because I know what it's like to suffer and be weak. I've had to take off all my armor and put down all my weapons and be open and raw and vulnerable in a time when we're being hunted still to do this work, and I don't like that some days, but I do it. I have been uncomfortable every day of my life, and now, I start to see real hope and light on the horizon.

I have -- I do a group every Friday in the Downtown Eastside. A mother with a 3-week-old baby girl was crying when we were singing, and she said, I don't know how I'm going to keep her safe. How do you keep the light going in the midst of that? Stand up. Fight back. We'll stand around that little girl. We're not going to save them all. We can't. This has been proven for 500 years. The systems that are in place here are hyper-effective tools of destruction, but we have hyper-effective tools of medicine, and we have knowledges that enabled us to thrive for millennia.

We're not playing. We are done with conversations. We are reclaiming, and we are rising. I don't say this as a challenge or a warning. I let Canada know, we see you. We're coming. You can't stop us. This process provides me a space that I have worked my whole
life to achieve, and like Bernie said, we'd have doors shut
on us. We've had police put on us. I have had friends who
have made stands because I wasn't allowed in a space, and
they got arrested holding that space. I'm targeted. I'm
not allowed in. They sat down and they said, I'm not
leaving, and they get arrested. I can't be arrested
because I don't know what they'll do to me. I'm terrified.
I live in terror every day of my life. Why have I never
been able to not be afraid? That's where the fear comes
from. The opposite side of that fear, sometimes I just
don't care. It's fun, and I'm doing it. Fun, dangerous, I
don't know. It's a fine line.

So I'm learning, and I'm growing, and I
implore you all to do the same. I thank you beautiful
women for sitting with me. I thank all of you for sitting
here and listening. I thank all of who come here with your
open hearts and your open minds and your light and your
love, for sharing that, because you are the light posts in
the dark when I can't get up.

I want you to leave knowing that, despite
these heavy truths and ugliness, it's not just a matter
that we're still here, but we're healing, and we're
uniting. We have all colours and ages here. I don't like
these -- these terms that -- that have been put on people,
you know, straight or queer. We had people who -- we -- we
have First Nations cultures who have, what, five, six,  
seven terms for -- for gender. We have First Nations  
cultures who have none. It's not my job to judge another  
person for who and where they find their comfort. I won't  
be divided from my people. I won't be divided from women.  
I won't be divided from another person who's experienced  
suffering.

I work with immigrant and refugee  
committees. The therapist that I worked with, that the  
level of trauma that I'm working out of is at the same  
level as women coming from war-torn countries like Bosnia.  
I was devastated because I watched on the news what  
happened there, and I thought, what? If that's not an  
indication that this is a front line and we are under  
attack and the war has been called on us, I don't know what  
is.

So now we heal. Now we unite. Now we rise.  
Now we keep doing our work, and we keep bringing our love.  
We don't have weapons. We have medicine. You know,  
the -- the picture, we have peace pipes, not pipelines. I  
connect what happens to the land to what happens to the  
women to each of us.

I'm grateful and I'm humbled not just to be  
here today but to be here every day. I wasn't sure I would  
be able to do this today, and I thank you, each of you, for
taking your time and sharing your love and magic and energy, for supporting, for being a witness. I'm not looking at this as an inquiry. This is what witnessing looks like. You may be called on to clarify something that happened here in the future. You're now a witness. You've been a witness all along. Now we're just putting a label on it and defining expectations and needs, and I raise my hands, and I say [speaking in Musqueam] to each of you for being here, for sharing, and again, I remind you: Stand up. Share your love. Take off your armor and put down your weapons and pick up your medicines. [speaking in Musqueam].

(APPLAUSE)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: I think we need a song. If you know me at all.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: And really, like, [speaking in Musqueam] to each of you. You helped me heal.

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Whoa.

MS. CECELIA POINT: Our dear sister Audrey from Musqueam, I'm also from Musqueam, and Cecelia Point, (indiscernible) Musqueam. We -- we -- I just want to sing our Paddle Song because our -- our Paddle Song we sing to welcome people who have been coming to our territory, but we also sing it to send people on their journey, so I want
to -- I want to take Audrey's lifetime of trauma, memories, joy, family, community, our relationship, I want to -- I want to send all those memories on their journey now, hopefully sending all the pain -- I always tell people, go down and see the river while you're here. It's very close to this place. Put all your -- your trauma on the river and send it -- send it out into the ocean, so I'll sing our Paddle Song. If anyone knows it, please sing it with me. [speaking in Musqueam].

(SINGING)

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: We'll adjourn this hearing. We'll resume in 30 minutes. I encourage whatever needs to happen next to happen.

-- Exhibits (code: P01P15P0504)

Exhibit 1: Folder containing 19 digital images displayed during the public testimony of Audrey Siegl.

Exhibit 2: Video clip (11 seconds, 3.07 MB, MP4 format).

--- Upon adjourning at 2:12 p.m.
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

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

Jenessa Leriger
April 12, 2018