Laureen “Blu” Waters and Dawn Gaudio,
In Relation to Viola G. Melvin

Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller
Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe

Sunday April 8, 2018
Public Volume 117
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Witnesses: Laureen “Blu” Waters and Dawn Gaudio
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MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good afternoon, Chief Commissioner. (Speaking in Anishinaabe). I just want to start by acknowledging the host communities that allow us to be on their territory as a guest. It's with a great amount of pleasure that I get to introduce the next person who will be sharing their story and sharing the story of her grandmother, and Laureen "Blu" Waters, or Nokomis Blu, as she is often known as, and her daughter Dawn Gaudio -- Gaudio? Am I saying it right?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Gaudio.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Gaudio, thank you, will be sharing their story. Rather than have Blu promise in, she's actually going to speak about her truth in traditional way.

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Tan'si. (Speaking in Cree). I stand before you today, and I offer my words to my ancestors, to those that came before me, to my family who now watches over me, and to those little ones that are yet to come, that I will speak the words to my truth, to my experiences, and speak so everyone can hear those things that need to change.

These are my words to my ancestors. These
are my promises to them. My words are all I have. Everything else is on loan from the Creator, so I give to each and every one of you my word today that these will be my truths. Meegwetch.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So I'm going to refer to you as Blu as opposed to using -- I'm used to calling you Grandmother Blu, so I'm going to call you Blu today if that's okay, and --

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** (Indiscernible).

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** -- thank you very much for making that promise, and I just want to start with you telling us a little bit about you and introducing yourself and the type of work you do nowadays.

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** One of my primary jobs is to work for Seneca College as an Elder on campus, a job that I'm very thankful that I have because I get to sit with those students who have moved to post-education -- post-secondary education to find their way in this world, and -- and the good thing is they continue to teach me because I don't have all the answers. I can only teach them what was taught to me and then learn from them, so I'm very grateful for that work.

I work for the district school boards, Toronto, York, Peel, and here for the National Inquiry, I sit as Commissioner Brian Eyolfson's grandmother, his
spiritual adviser, to help him with his journey doing this work.

Those are my primary jobs that I have, but my work has been with community and always has been with community. Community was the one that named me. Community is the one that calls me when the needs are there, and they're the ones that -- that are my first and foremost work that I do.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And you mentioned in Toronto and the area, so you -- you currently are in Toronto, although you've been doing lots of traveling lately. Most of your work and the community you're talking about is actually in Toronto?

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** Yes. I live in Peterborough right now for about the last seven months, but I'm in Toronto at least three, four times a week, so I travel about, I don't know, 280 kilometers a day, back and forth, to do that work.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I also want to talk to you -- before we talk about your grandmother and how your grandmother was murdered, I want to talk to you a bit about your childhood and growing up, where -- you know, can you please tell the Commissioner about your youth and where the beginnings were?

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** Well, I kind of
Hearing - Public
Laureen "Blu" Waters &
Dawn Gaudio (Viola G. Melvin)

have ties to British Columbia because I was conceived in
Comox, so we'll go back to there.

(LAUGHTER)

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** My brother was
born in Comox, and my parents were carrying me and wanting
to visit my grandmother, and they figured they still had
a -- just over a month left to be able to get to Toronto
and back, but three or four days into them arriving in
Toronto, I guess I decided I wanted to come a little bit
early. Always in a hurry. That's me. My first name was
Fleetafoot (ph), which means "fast on your feet," and I
guess that was true, and that's probably why they named me
that, because I came early.

So I was born in Toronto, and -- my parents
were only 18 years old, and they already had my brother,
who was 2 years old, so they were very young, and my
grandparents had talked together and -- while my mother was
in the hospital with me, and my grandparents came when I
was seven days old, and they decided that two young parents
of 18 and still not living in a good way wouldn't be the
best choices for parents, so they took my brother and
myself, they took me from the hospital at eight days old,
and brought me to my first home, and that's where I lived
was with my grandmother.

We had a great childhood. We -- we were
taught all the things that we needed to -- to know. I -- I remember traveling on -- getting up early in the morning and going on a bus with my grandmother, who I'll refer to as Kohkom. Kohkom would say, come on, let's get going, and we would have to carry certain items, and my job was to carry a 2-man tent, and she took lots of bags, and my brother took some, and we'd get on the Greyhound bus and go to Peterborough, get off, then, in the middle of the road. There was nothing there at that time, and we would find a corn field and put our tent in a corn field so we wouldn't be seen, and we would go around collecting the medicines and the things she needed to make trades with, and we would stay overnight in that corn field, and I used to say, why -- why do we have to be here? And she would say, because we don't want people to know we're here because they'll come and take everything, and then they won't understand why we do this, so let's just do this and get to sleep.

So we'd get up the next morning and jump on the next bus and head back to Toronto, and she would do her medicines and prepare what she needed, and we would travel down to Regent Park, Moss Park, a place with where all the Indigenous people were because that was a time when no one had money and no one wanted to hire anybody if you were Indigenous. They'd just look at you and say, ah, you're a
dirty Indian, you're going to be drunk, and we're not hiring you.

So a lot of people lived in that area, which was low-income housing. It was called the projects, and we would go there on a Sunday -- on a Saturday morning because my grandmother would start making bannock the night before, as soon as she got off work, and we'd have a whole shopping cart of bannock to trade, and that's how we'd get a lot of our items would be to go there, and she would trade, and someone would give her ten pounds of flour, and someone a dozen eggs, and someone a pound of butter, and someone some good old Crisco or just plain lard, and we would have the things that we needed, those staple things that cost a lot of money to buy, and we didn't have a lot of money at that time.

When I was 4, just about 4 years old, my grandfather passed away, and my -- my Kohkom had to work two jobs to take care of my brother and myself. She had already raised all her children, and -- and most of her other grandchildren and -- sorry, nieces and nephews, she had raised them, but she knew that if my brother and I were to be the people we were meant to be, that she had to do that work and help teach us.

And while she was at work with her two jobs, we weren't the most obedient children, I guess, because we
would be hungry. We had an aunty who -- when she was going through menopause was probably one of the first or second times she ever was to a doctor, and she went there to see what she could do, and they gave her shock treatments, so she never was the same. So my grandmother, my Kohkom would ask her to come and watch us while she worked two jobs, but she would forget. She'd forget that she had to do that, so we would get up ourselves in the morning and go to school and come home at lunchtime because the school was close, and we would open up a can of whatever was there because we weren't allowed to touch the stove because that's one of the first lessons you learned: Don't touch the stove or you'll burn the house down, and then we'll be living in the corn field.

So we made sure we didn't do that, and there would be no supervision there for us, but we knew what we were supposed to do and what we were not supposed to do in that way, so we might eat a half a head of lettuce. That would be our lunch between the two of us, and we might just eat crackers. Whatever was there, we would have.

And then at dinnertime, we'd come home, and we would hope she'd be there, but sometimes she wasn't. Most of the time, she wasn't, and -- and that was hard. My brother a couple years older than me and very -- very brave at the time when I look back, he would take us to
High Park, and he'd say, don't worry, we're going to eat; it's my job to make sure we eat. And so he would jump over the duck pond at High Park, and I'd be on one side of the fence, and he'd be on the other, and he'd grab a goose, and he'd snap its neck. It made an awful sound in the beginning because it would be squawking, and he'd be yelling at it to be quiet, and -- so he'd snap its neck, and then he'd thank that goose, and he'd throw it over the fence, and he'd say, now pull the feathers out real quick, and I'd be, like, 5, 6, 7 years old doing this, and we'd pull the feathers out, and we'd save the feathers, and then we would cook it on a barbecue grill that we had taken from somebody's backyard because we knew we had to eat, so he'd make a fire, and we'd cook that goose, and we'd bring some home for my grandmother because we knew she'd come home at 11 o'clock because she was working two jobs.

And when she'd get home, she'd yell out, *astam*, which means "come here" in Cree, and we'd jump out of bed and we'd go in the kitchen, and we'd say, what, *Kohkom*? What's this? And -- and that's my grandmother up there with my mom. She was my mom, as well, as far as I know; and she would be a little bit angry, but not really that angry, but she'd say well, I know it's a goose, my brother would tell her, but why is it here? Who brought this here? And my brother would say, well, we did,
and -- why did you do that, and where did you get it from?
I said, we're hungry; aunty didn't come today again, but we
gave you some. We would be real happy, right? We cooked
it for you. And then she'd be, like, it looks good.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: But then she'd
add in, remember, them Children's Aid going to come
knocking, and if they catch you with this, they're going to
take you away. So we always had a fear of Children's Aid
coming because my grandmother and many other grandmothers
believed in kinship, that the family raises the children
when the parents can't do the job. The aunties, the
grandmothers, the uncles, the cousins, they're the ones
because that's the family linkage, but yet Children's Aid
would come and say, where's the papers for these children,
when we first went to school, and my grandmother, my Kohkom
would say, what do you want at my door? And they'd say,
where's the papers for these children? She said, we didn't
have papers. We didn't have paper. We never wrote on
paper. I'll go get you some sand from the backyard, and
I'll write for you. She said, that's how we used to work.
We used to write in sand when we had something to say, and
that's what we believe in, traditional law, and that's
written in the sand only, and then it's erased when you're
finished because we're not supposed to leave our marks like
that.

So they'd get angry, and they'd say, well, we're going to check into this because our laws state that you have to have signed custody of these children. Where are their parents? She said, in British Columbia. They'd say, where? She goes, go find them. And that was her answer, right? Because our law supersedes their law, and that's what I was always taught.

So we would be a little bit scared, but you know, a couple days would go by, and we would be hungry again, so back down to High Park. High Park was our rez. We called it High Park Rez; 273 hectares of land that was gifted to the city of Toronto on our land, but yet, we're not allowed to live on our land? Didn't seem right to us, even as kids.

So we'd go down there, and sure enough, I'd say, don't get another goose, Kohkum's going to kill us. He'd say, no, no, no, no, no, we're not getting geese, no, no, no. We'd get down there, and I'd hear (unreportable sound). We're having duck tonight, I guess.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: And I'd be the one pulling out the feathers from the duck. I'd always get that job. I -- I don't know why, but -- and we'd save the feathers because we'd reuse them, right? We never wasted
anything. We'd have two ducks cooked because we'd bring a whole one home for my -- my Kohkom so she wouldn't have to make anything for her lunch the next day, either, and of course, she'd come home at 11 o'clock at night, and we'd hear that word: Astam. And we'd come running out. What is this? My brother's being really smart now, eh? Kohkom, you don't know anything. It's a duck.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: He got the look.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: And then he'd get, I know it's a duck. Were you at the park? Yes.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: And, of course, Children's Aid's name would be in there, as well, but that's how we had to live, right, because we didn't have a lot of money, and being an adult, how unjust was that that the Government was paying non-Indigenous families to take care of Indigenous kids, but yet they wouldn't give a cent to my Kohkom, and she had to work two jobs? That's an injustice in itself, but if you give your kids away, we'll pay you. So it never seemed right to me.

The only hard time we ever had was my brother one time said, jump on the bikes, and we're going to High Park, and I thought, oh, I wonder what we're
getting today, and I thought, okay, maybe we're going go fishing. I like to fish. And now we had a broomstick and a roll of duct tape and a brand new hunting knife, a hunting knife that he got by going down Ronsonsvale (ph) Avenue asking people for 10 cents because he had to get back on the streetcar to go home, and he was real busy because he saved up 20 bucks because it cost him 16.99 for the knife, but he got it without having to steal it because he got the money, and he taped that broom pole up when we got to the park and stuck the knife on the end of it and get my Kohkum's roll of sinew out and tied it around the other end of the broomstick and wrapped it around his wrist and said, we're going hunting beaver.

And we sat there for hours, and the sun was just about going down, and he spotted the beaver coming out of the -- the beaver dam, the hut there, and first shot, he threw it, and he got that beaver, and he pulled it in, and it was, like, I bet you 25 pounds, and I think I might have weighed 40 or 45, and him probably 60, and we threw it in our burlap potato bag sack because that was our backpacks. We didn't have real cloth. We had burlap sacks. And then he tried to carry it home on his back, but it was too heavy. It was 25 pounds, so he duct-taped it to the handlebars on his bike, and off we went home, but we spent about a good hour slicing the heels of that beaver and then
trying to pull the skin off, but it wouldn't come off, right? The fur wouldn't come off, and we never had a beaver before, so we didn't even know how to skin it, and by that time, we were hungry enough that we just took it and put it on the old blue arborite table, those blue arborite tables with the silver legs that pulled apart and that you could put a leaf in. Well, we forgot that. We didn't put no -- nothing underneath the beaver on the kitchen table, and we ate something and went to bed.

By the time my Kohkom got home, that beaver had bled all through the table, down over the floor, and she called us out, and she was a little bit upset this time. And when we got there, she looked at us, and it took about two minutes for her to say something, so we knew we were in trouble this time, and then she looked at us and said, what is this? And she looked at my brother, because she knew he was going to be smart. She goes, I know it's a beaver. I'm assuming it come from the park. Why is it like this? We said we didn't know how to take the fur off, and we were hungry.

She hung her head, and she said, go back to your room and change and just come out in your underwear because I don't want to bleach too much. So she taught us how to skin that beaver at 11 o'clock at night, and she taught us how to season it, and she put it in the oven, and
she said, you'll be nice and full tomorrow morning because
we'll cook it real slow overnight, and don't worry, you
won't have to go to the park for the week because you got a
pretty big beaver there. So we were real happy, then,
right, because she taught us something new, but she always
taught us what we needed to know, all those things about
survival, living in a city, living away because our rights
were taken away because some of my family married non-
Indigenous people, so now our Indigenous families were no
longer Indigenous, right? I don't know how you go
overnight from being Indigenous to non-Indigenous, and who
gave the Government the right to say who we are, to say who
our blood line is.

But we did what we had to to survive, and it
was hard, but I remember all the fun I had with her, right?
I remember all the times when she went without for us
because that's what kohkums do, right? They take care of
their grandchildren to the best of their ability. She
didn't have a good life growing up. She had nothing. You
know, they had to scrape to get by as well.

I don't know if they were in residential
schools because it was never talked about, but I know my
one aunty, she would wash us with Javex so we wouldn't be
dirty Indians. She would wash all the hardwood floor with
Javex after we had just put the paste wax on and buffed it
with them old buffers, and she'd come along with a bottle of Javex and pour it down and get down on her hands and knees and scrub it with a brush because we didn't want to be dirty, so I think she was in residential school, but I never got to ask her.

So there was always those derogatory remarks being thrown at us kids because we were -- there was only two of us for a long time that lived in that area, and then a good friend of mine now, her name is Tanesha Oakram (ph), her family came, and her mother was Ojibway, so we had another -- third kid to play with, but -- and she was segregated, as well, because she was half-Jamaican and half-Ojibway, so she didn't fit in anywhere either.

But my grandmother knew that Children's Aid would be coming, and she always was aware that they were going to knock on our door at any time, and which they did. I mean, we had them come over and knock on the door at 4 o'clock on a Friday afternoon, and my brother would get the door, and he'd say, oh, my Kohkom went over to Loblaw's, she has to get us some more juice because we ran out of juice, and they said, well, how long will she be gone? And he said, I don't know, a half an hour. Where's your aunty? She's busy upstairs, and they'd say, okay, we'll be back. And he'd watch for them to leave, and he'd jump on his bike, and he'd drive from Dundas and Bloor on
his bicycle up to Dundas and Keele, and he'd get my aunty, and he'd say, aunty, come quick, the Children's Aid coming back, and they'd get on the streetcar and come back.

And by the time she was already in there, she'd sit three feet behind the door, and she'd sit there on a chair, and when they knocked on the door, we opened the door, and they'd ask her, you know, can we come in? No. They'd say, well, you know we have a right to come in. She said, you want to pay half the rent, you can come in.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: And she wouldn't let them in, and, you know, they'd ask her questions. You know, are the children fed? She said, do they look starving? Well, do the children have enough clothing and everything? Don't they clothes on? Don't they look clean? Can't you smell the bleach? So she wouldn't let them in, and then when she had enough of them, she'd say, I'm finished with you. I have no more -- I have no more answers for you because you shouldn't be answering me questions, and she'd slam the door, and off they'd go.

So that didn't really help out the situation, but it was a point of resistance, right, and a point of being interfered with that she didn't like. So my grandmother knew a time was coming that Children's Aid, you know, might actually take us away, and when my brother was
10, I was 8, he decided to go and live out here, actually, in Chemainus with my father. My father was living out in Chemainus, because he said he wasn't going to any Children's Aid, so he went and lived with my father in Chemainus, and my grandmother started talking to the family down the street, which was a white family from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, and they had five kids of their own, and she'd made arrangements with them that would they take me from Monday to Friday and make sure that Children's Aid would be satisfied, and then on the weekends I'd go and stay with her because she only would live up the street because she knew and she heard the stories when she was down in Regent Park of how many people lost their children, and they never got to see them again, and they couldn't find them, so she wanted me close.

So they agreed, so when I was 10, I went to live with the white family down the street, and that's where I found out about the injustice of the payments because they were being paid to keep me in their home. They were given a certificate for dental or prescriptions or for anything that I might need, and I had to convert to Catholicism because they were Catholics, so it was like I was a double agent living a double life because during the week, I would be a Catholic and go to church everything else, and then on the weekends I'd be with my Kohkom, and
we'd be singing songs and drumming and going out to the park and going -- learning about which medicine is what, so she prepared me.

I -- I just have one more thing to throw in. I just want to back it up a bit. In between that time, my brother and I had to go to a before-school and an after-school home or else we would be taken away by the Children's Aid, and there was no -- no family, I guess, that would take both of us, so I was in one home with a family called the McDonalds (ph) and my brother was in another home just around the corner from me with the Perrys (ph), and we were there with them for a few years, and when I first went there, it wasn't too bad because I just had to be there for about a half an hour, half an hour in the morning, and -- until 4:30 when my aunty would take care of us because my brother would jump on his bike and run up and tell her to be at home at 4:30, and -- but the bad part was that was when I was 7 years old, and -- I think we have a picture of me with one of my nephews. I don't know if we can find it to put up. Well, there, I was 9. Okay? I was 9 years old there, and my nephew was about 3 -- 2 and a half, 3 years old, so I was really small. I'm not that big now. I'm bigger this way but not bigger that way.

(LAUGHTER)
MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: So I was 9 years old there, and that was -- that was out in Delta, B.C., when I went to visit my -- my nephew. So I was two years younger than that, and I was at this care family's home, and this woman used to say to us when we came home after school, I'm going to make you dinner, go and do your -- go and do your stuff, because she had another couple kids there, and I would sit on the third floor, and she'd say -- and when I call you, say, yes, mother. And I'd sit on that third-floor landing, and she would call us, and I would sit there, and I would count, and I would say when I get to 10 I'll say, "yes, mother." And I'd get up to 8, 9, I couldn't get to 10 because she wasn't my mother, and she wasn't nice, so I would sit on that landing till it was time to go home so I wouldn't get dinner, but I refused to call someone "mother" when they weren't my mother and they didn't deserve to be called "mother."

And while I was there, at 7 years old was the first time I was sexually abused by another person who was there from care, and that's how the Government was taking care of us. That's how Children's Aid was taking care of us, by forcing us to go to somebody's house and be sexually abused at 7 years old by other foster kids that are in the system that had already been hardened and been abused, and a lot of the times abused people become
abusers, and that's exactly what this person was.

So that was hard, right, and I couldn't tell my grandmother because the threat was, I'll tell Children's Aid and they'll take you away for sure because they'll know you're lying, so you couldn't tell, so you just had to be fearful every time you came from school and hope that they weren't there because there was no option.

I don't know if you have anything to...

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** No. Thank you for sharing. So once you were living -- you were living down the street with a family, you still get the chance to see your grandmother on weekends and stuff, I'm assuming?

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** M’hm. Oh, yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Yeah.

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** It was the highlight of my week.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Hm. You had mentioned that you also had to go to the church a lot, attend the church almost daily?

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** Yeah. I guess you would call her my foster mother. I called them my adopted parents although I was never adopted. We had to go every night, especially the month of May, which was the Month of Mary -- things I can't forget -- and do the rosary and learn all the prayers and make sure the priest seen you
because if he didn't, he'd be telling your parents that he didn't see you, and then you'd be in trouble because he didn't see you.

So yeah, we had to go almost every night because she was a deacon in the church, and that was part of the things we did, six kids walking down the road, going to church every night. So it wasn't the most fun times, but on the weekends, it was -- it was good because I didn't have to go on Friday night, and I got to go and see my -- my Kohkom.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I understand you spent a number of years, actually, with that family, so from the time you were ten until how old were you when you were --

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: I was 19 when I left there, because I felt an obligation, and I felt a responsibility, and it wasn't entirely bad. They had good intentions, but they only knew what they knew. They would introduce us -- introduce me and if my brother came around, this is our little Indians that we adopted. So, you know, and they thought that was okay to say because that's what they learned. They didn't realize the racism and the discrimination that they were saying, and we weren't old enough or we didn't want to challenge them, and we just thought, well, yeah, that's who we are, so that's okay, but
it really wasn't, right? And a few times, you know, I got into arguments when I was older, and they would make a comment, like, well, we tried to beat the Indian out of you, and it didn't work; and no, and it never will, right?

So, I mean, these are comments that were common especially coming from the east coast because we know the history of the east coast, of the annihilation of a whole group of Indians. You know, we know that those were the British colonizers who came over on the ships. They were still under British rule. They were the last ones to join confederation. So they still had that British ruling in them and thinking that they were the original owners of this land and they were the ones that made the laws, so you couldn't challenge that as a kid.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And, actually, you still -- you're still connected with them. You still feel like you have responsibilities and obligations to them. Is that fair to say?

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** Yeah, it is. I -- I -- they moved up from Nova Scotia, and I even moved them into my house with me because that's part of the kindness that I learned. That's part of the reciprocal understanding of following those -- those teachings of respect and truth and honesty and humility, bravery and wisdom and love. Right? So, yeah, and I still -- I still
have contact with them. They called me today, and now that they're older, they're like, 80 -- 81 and 75. It's hard to walk away when you see someone who needs help, even though you may not have been the number one child on the list, but being raised in a way that this is my work, this is who I was raised to be, to do this work, and I -- I wouldn't do it any other way.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I want to step back, and I want to step back to the day that you actually discovered your grandmother murdered, and I know it's not going to be easy to tell, so take your time and share as much as you feel comfortable sharing.

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Yeah, I -- you see, my -- my Kohkom was like my mother. She was the first person who loved me. I was 16, and I had -- had a day off school, a professional development day, and I had decided to go with my foster mother to Dufferin Mall, and I -- we were walking up the street, and I said, hang on, let me go and see if my Kohkom needs anything, because I know she had just retired a year before, so I knew she was going to be there during the day now.

And I went and I knocked on her door, and there was no answer, and I thought, ah, I'm going to go around to the back and see if her coat's on the chair because that's what she did. She came in and put her
jacket or coat or her sweater or whatever on, and if she was home, there'd be a teacup on the table. If she was gone out, the teacup would be in the sink, and I looked in, and I seen the teacup on the table, but I seen two -- two teacups on the table and her sweater on the chair. So I knew she would be there, and I knocked on the back door and peeked in. I couldn't see her, and I went around to the side of the house, and I thought, I'll look in and see. They have a parrot, and if that parrot cage is open, I know for sure she's home because that parrot would tear apart her curtains. She wasn't very happy that parrot, and the parrot cage was open, so I knew she was home.

And when I got back to the front door, it was open, and I -- sorry. When I was going back to the front door, I seen this man named Lawrence Dorian (ph), who was a friend of -- I guess you would call him my step-grandfather. My grandmother had been married a few years before that to him. He was our neighbour, and I motioned to him to go to the door, but by the time I got there, I was 16 and quite capable of running then and got around to the door and tried door. It was open. And he came walking up the hallway towards me, and I asked him, hey, Larry, what are you doing here? And he said, oh, I just thought I'd stop in. I'm off today. And I noticed he had on an ugly, ugly colour rust shirt, and he had
a -- sorry -- a stain on his shirt and a pair of blue jeans
on and a pair of black dress shoes, and I looked at him and
I thought, oh, wow, my grandmother must have gave him some
ice cream with strawberry jam, because that's what she
would do when somebody came over, right? Give you
something a little bit sweet. And I asked him, where is
she? And she said, she's gone over to Loblaw's to get some
milk, the same thing that we used to say, so I figured it
must be true. So I said, okay, well, let her know I'm
going to Dufferin Mall, and I'll come and check on her
later. And he leaned up against the wall, just on the
other side of the bedroom where I couldn't see in the
bedroom. So I told him, okay, I'll be back later, and he
said, okay, and I left and went off to Dufferin Mall.

And I was coming up the street in the
afternoon, and I seen a fire truck there up -- up the
street, and I seen an ambulance, and I seen some police
cars, and I thought, oh, something must have happened at
the laundry right beside her house, and then as I got up
the road further, one of the neighbours came out and said,
you better go and see, I think the ambulance has got your
grandmother in there. And so as I was walking fast and
going to cross over, the ambulance drove by me, so I went
running up to the house, and I -- and I went running in,
and the police were in there, and my step-grandfather was
in there, and I said, what's going on? What's happening? What's happening? And the police said, well, they've taken your grandmother away. She's no longer with us. And I said, what happened? I said, I was here today, and I talked with Larry. Right? I said, Larry was here today, and I talked to him. She was fine then. She was at Loblaw's. What's going on? So the police took me and said, come with me to the kitchen.

And as they did that, my mother -- my birth mother had come down from Jane and Weston Road. It's where she lived. So she lived in Toronto for about 15 years, and we seen her once -- once a year at Christmastime, and she was only a 10-minute car ride away from us. But she came in, and she was drunk, so she had driven down there drunk, so I guess they phoned her, and she came in, and I was crying, and she looked at me, and she said, why are you crying? It's my mother. And I was very angry at that time because I thought, no, it's my mother, because she couldn't be, and -- so that was very hard, and she was acting up, and I think that's probably one of the first times I seen that -- how my Kohkom had protected me from what I would have grown up with, which was that alcoholism and that abusive language and things like that.

So while I was talking to the police and telling them what I seen there that day, I looked down, and
under the kitchen cabinets was an old-style cabinet that
had an indent underneath the bottom of the cupboards, and I
looked, and I seen partial -- one set of my grandmother's
teeth, and I started to cry harder because I knew something
must have happened for sure because why would her teeth be
laying there on the floor?

So the police took me into the living room,
and I think that time my mother was outside yelling at
whoever, and I have no idea who -- where my
step-grandfather was, but there was three or four police
officers there, and I sat down on the couch, and as I was
sitting there, continuing to tell him how I had gone around
from the front to the back, I looked down and underneath
the TV was the other set of her teeth, and I thought,
what -- what did he do between the kitchen and the living
room? And you say my grandfather found her in bed? He
thought she was sleeping? That's a -- a full length of the
house.

So it took a while for me to be able to tell
my story to them because I knew that something bad
happened, but I didn't know what, and I didn't know what
for a long time. I just knew that he had murdered her, but
that's all I was told.

I remember the name of the seargent named
Seargent Jack Press from homicide department. He came and
talked to me afterwards, as well, and -- I don't remember much from that time. I lost that school year. This happened on April 14th, 1977, so I lost that school year. I don't remember the days. I don't remember any events. I remember my brother coming from B.C. to Turner and Porter Funeral Home. That's where she was laid -- laid out for people to come and visit, and I remember my brother having a fight with my mother because he had come in an ugly three-piece rust suit. That colour rust, I don't like at all, and he -- she was angry with him because my brother and I are both two-spirited, and my grandmother raised us to be two-spirited people, allowed us to be two-spirited people, because she said we have gifts for the people, and my mother was angry and screamed and yelled at my brother saying, you're not a -- you're not a boy, you're not a man, you're a woman. And my brother, of course, was 18 at the time. He just said, I don't have to listen to you, and he turned around and left, and I started crying because my brother was leaving again, and that was at a time when I needed him.

And I don't remember anything else until I was in court, and that was quite a while later. I don't even know how long, September or something. I don't know. But while I was in court, I sat there for about three weeks inside the courtroom, and I -- I had no counsel. I had no
one to help me. I got on the streetcar. I put my -- I
think it was a quarter at the time and went down to the
courthouse and sat there listening to stuff I couldn't
understand, and I remember them calling my name to go up to
the stand. I'm sure I told them the story, the same thing,
because that was the truth, what happened. I don't
remember if they cross-examined me. I don't remember any
of that stuff because that whole year was lost.

I remember my aunty, my Aunty Val, which I
don't know if her picture was up there or not, but I have a
picture of my Aunt Val who just passed away two years ago
now, and she came with me the day of the sentencing, and
she was like a second mother to me because she lived on the
second floor with my cousins, and -- so she helped me. She
sat there with me, and that's when I heard what had
happened to my Kohkom. That's when I heard that he was
originally charged with second-degree murder and indignity
to a human body.

After he had strangled her, trying to get to
some money that was underneath their kitchen sink in a
small 12-inch-by-12-inch lock box that my Kohkom didn't
know the combination to because they were saving to go on a
honeymoon, and he had worked with my step-grandfather as a
shipper and receiver for Overland Express. He had to be
able to read and write because he was a shipper/receiver,
but yet he was telling the Court that he couldn't read or write and that he didn't know anything, he was a simple man.

So they pled him down to manslaughter and they dropped the charge from where after he strangled her, and he broke a bone in her neck, and she suffocated to death, and she scratched him. He was all scratched up, apparently, so she fought. She was only 5-foot tall and maybe a hundred pounds, if that.

And after he had strangled her, he had sex with her while she was dead, with my Kohkom, because she wasn't worth anything to him. She was my world. And this man could stand there and say he didn't mean it. How could you not mean it while you had your hands around somebody's neck? How could you have -- how could you not mean it when one part of their teeth ended up in one room and one in another? How could you not mean it when you picked them off of the floor and put them in a bed and had sex with them after they were dead? And I'm glad I didn't know about it before the trial because I would have had people go down there and take his life.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Excuse me, Blu. Could we take a short break?

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** Yes.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** We'll take a
5-minute break, please.

--- Upon recessing at 3:53 p.m.

--- Upon resuming at 4:06 p.m.

(DRUMMING)

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Meegwetch. Thank you. Thank you for the song.

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Haw'aa.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So I know the last point you were touching on is very difficult, and I don't want us to take you back there, but can I take you back to the courtroom?

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Yeah.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I think there's a little more in terms of you had just shared that it was over the money, but can you talk a little more about the relationship between Larry and your step-grandfather?

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Uh-huh. So Larry and my step-grandfather's name was Vic, they worked together at Overland Express, and they knew each other, and they knew each other well, and my -- my step-grandfather had for sure told him that there was money there in that safe, and that's what he had went there to get. He had called in sick that day, I found out later, and what I didn't say earlier is that my step-grandfather, I told you he lived beside us, but I only went there when he wasn't
there because he was another one of my abusers, and again, I couldn't tell because I had been placed down the street from the Children's Aid, and I knew that I would be taken away from down the street. That was a for-sure now. So I didn't trust him, and I still don't know to this day if he had anything to do with it because he never talked to me even after that. He destroyed all the pictures that I had or my Kohkom had of us. He threw everything of hers away, and seeing as they were legally married, he had the say on what happened to her, and he decided to have her cremated and put in common ground at Prospect Cemetery, which is -- "common ground" means that she's put in the -- put in the ground with numerous other people, with no name, no footstone, no headstone can go on there. It's a number on the ground, and she didn't deserve to be laid to rest there. I -- I would have taken her back to the east coast and put her in the Atlantic ocean like I did with my birth mother's ashes and sent her home because she'd get put in a hole in the ground where lots of other people were, but you know what? She probably would have liked that because she was for the people, and that's the way it gives me comfort knowing that, because she helped out people wherever she could and however she could. So that's probably the way it was meant to be.

But sitting in a courtroom there and not
having anybody to help you, as a 16-year-old kid, right?
It wasn't right. You know, I know it's, you know, 41 years ago, but there was no dignity for anybody who was -- or identified as an Indigenous person, and it's not much better today. It really isn't. You know, we can think of, you know, how -- how far we've come, and we have come a certain distance, but we haven't come far enough, nowhere near far enough, because we can't still be who we are. We can't still do our ceremonies like they should be. We -- we don't have access to lands to do them. Who wants to sweat inside the city? We're not meant to sweat in between concrete buildings. We're not meant to do our Yuwipi or our tie-up ceremonies or any of our ceremonies in the -- in the city, in the concrete, right?

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Can we talk a little bit about what happened to Larry after he was convicted of the manslaughter?

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** So that day that I heard those things in the courtroom and I finally seen who he -- who and how he really was, he got sentenced to 15 years, ten years to be served in Penetanguishene mental health centre, so he got to sit there and have fun, watch TV, not be behind bars like he should have been. He got to be institutionalized in a place where he would be given medication to make him feel good, and a man who knew how to
read and write but claimed that he didn't and got away with it because of our criminal system. That's not our system. The system we have is not our system. Our system, he would have been brought before the grandmothers, and he would have been sat down, and he would have been explained to of how he impacted not only the immediate family but the extended family, the community, and the whole nation, right? And he would have had to apologize in front of everyone, and he would have had to speak to me directly, and he would have had to apologize, and he would have had to do something to show that he had truly learned from what he did was wrong. I never got to tell him how I felt. I never got to tell him the impact that he had on my life or the rest of my family. What was already a fractured family, he became fragmented because I couldn't speak to a mother anymore and never came to visit me anymore because my Kohkom wasn't there. Yeah, I talked to her once a year and I didn't even know she was my mother until I was 6 or 7 years old, but she was still my mother, and I lost that contact until I was well into my 30s, and I never got to learn from her more because there's still a lot I don't know, and I'm 57 years old, and I could have still had a lot of time to learn from her, and maybe she could have taught me how to process anger because I still have a problem with that, especially when it comes to the
injustices, because I never seen her angry. Never.

But he got 15 years, serving 10, then parole for the next 5, and while I was sitting at a job -- I already had my -- my children. This is my daughter Dawn who's come here with me to -- to sit and -- and comfort me and help me. She didn't get to meet her -- her great grandmother. She didn't even know about these things that I'm speaking about today because I didn't want to tell her, but I need our -- our family's lineage and knowledge to be carried on, and she's strong. She's strong.

So while I was at work and already had my children, in walked Sergeant Jack Press from the homicide department. I have no idea how he found me to tell me that Lawrence Dorian will be getting out of -- out of jail. He's eligible -- eligible for parole, and he's been a model prisoner, so there should be no reason why he can't get out. I said, what does that mean? He said, well, he'll be getting out, and he'll be going to live in Burlington, which is why I have a problem crossing that bridge, that Burlington bridge, because I know he was walking around and my grandmother wasn't. He was able to be free and live his life then, and he said, he'll be there with his sister, but if you see him, give us a call. Well, I'm 26 years old now, right? 27 years old. Is he coming after me because I was the one that was there in the house that knew he was
there? Oh, we don't think so, they said. There should be no reason. He's been a model prisoner. I didn't hear anything about whether or not I could say I didn't want him to come out. They didn't say anything to me that I could appear before anything, and maybe there wasn't anything at that time. I don't know, but I certainly wasn't advised of anything; besides, he's been the least, and he's been a model prisoner, as if that cleared the sheets of everything.

He never once wrote a letter saying he was sorry for it. If he had all that time in a rehabilitation place, I never heard from him. I don't even know if he's alive today. Probably not, but -- and I don't want to look into it because if he was alive, I wouldn't want him to be, and that goes against my own teachings, and I'm -- and I'm an Elder in the community, but a man who disgraces a woman after she's passed away is not a man. Even our animals don't do things like that. He -- I can't even refer to him in a name because there is no word for it, but he's not human and he's not animal. He's below -- I can't even give a name to it, as I say, because our Creator didn't make something like that. That's the product of colonization and views that are non-Indigenous. Those are the ways of someone who's non-Indigenous and a colonizer.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Blu, I do want to
return to you to talk about some of the community work you have, but first, I'd like to ask Dawn a couple of questions if that's okay.

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: M’hm.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So -- can you turn the microphone on?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, sorry.

MS. DAWN GAUDIO: Sure.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you, Dawn.

I -- I know that you grew up with a mother who did a lot of work in the community and was often working late hours, who was often on call, helping people in need, and I know that today's the first time you've heard some of the stories, and so I'm -- the question I have for you is hard, and it might not come easy, but looking back, do you understand a little bit more about some of the work your mom's done?

MS. DAWN GAUDIO: I think my mom was always who she was supposed to be. She always did the work she was supposed to do, that she was called to do, and to be completely honest, I don't think that the paths she's chosen in life were dictated by the events that she endured. I believe that there was a lot of quirks, maybe, that she acquired along the way because of it. Like, the continuous canned food. So much canned food, always in the cupboard, and just, like, being really strict --
MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Hm.

MS. DAWN GAUDIO: -- and not being able to
go anywhere or stay overnight or -- like, really regimented
times to be in -- in the house, and -- like, overtly
protective. Like, a lot of safety precautions. Yeah, I
can see how that would -- would be. I mean, she always
said she didn't want anybody to hurt us, so we couldn't
really do much, at least me, especially. My brother could
play outside a little bit longer, but not me. So I just
thought she was super overprotective, but yeah.

Working with women, especially, and
children, like, she always did work like that. She always
did talk to everybody. I don't think that, myself, my own
belief, a personal event in your life or something that she
went through broke her. I think it scarred her, but I
don't think it broke her, and I don't think that we should
let those things break us.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: No, that's true.
You mentioned quirks and the canned food and sort of the
strict -- the protection.

MS. DAWN GAUDIO: Lots of cans. Lots of
cans.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And lots of
protection, not being able to go out. I imagine she made
you -- once there was the technology -- text you or touch
base with her or phone or...

**MS. DAWN GAUDIO:** And we had very limited computer time and very little time on the phone, specific time frames. Like, pretty army-like. Yeah.

(LAUGHTER)

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** But, you know, something your -- your mom just said is, you know, the lineage and the -- the culture and the teachings as -- and being able to pass that ancestry on, she's still been able to do that, hasn't she?

**MS. DAWN GAUDIO:** Yeah. More so, like, later on in life because we were raised Roman Catholic as well. I'm -- I was close with her -- we call them adopted parents -- my grammy and granddad. I didn't know any of my family members. I met my biological grandmother when I was in my teens, and I've only ever seen her twice before she passed, and my biological grandfather never responded to any of my letters. I remember when she told us that, you know, you're not really white, and I was like, oh, okay. And since then, yeah, it's -- it's been a lot of discovering it together, so -- yeah. It was something that she didn't really talk about very much.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Is there anything else you wanted to add, Dawn, because I think you've already said some powerful words, but now hearing what
you've heard from your mom, is there anything you want her to know?

MS. DAWN GAUDIO: There's never anything you can do. It's what's supposed to be. You saw what you were supposed to see. You did the work you were supposed to do. Your healing will never end because the suffering will never end, but that's how we know we're alive, but I'm always here for you.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So, Blu, I -- I am also from the Toronto community and well aware of the work that you do in the community for youth, for two-spirited, for women. I know that some of your work is driven by your life experience. You know, Dawn saying what was meant to be may have been part of what's put you on the path, but -- and you were pretty modest in the introduction about the type of work you do, so I want to talk to you a little bit about the work you do in the community and why you do that work.

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Well, I knew who I was meant to be from the time I was 4 years old because my -- my Kohkom told me, and then paths in my life have lead me to where I am now. One of those paths was on my way to Sundance, and I learned the buffalo dance, and I do that buffalo dance for our youth who commit suicide, and
we -- at Sundance, we hang a buffalo skull off our back, and we offer that up for those people who have committed suicide so that that buffalo, which is the biggest and the strongest animal we have -- Commissioner, as you know, being from Saskatchewan, it sustained us for our lives until they were almost run into extinction, for fun and games from the nonIndigenous people, so we would starve -- that buffalo's the only one big and strong enough to take those suicide spirits back to the Creator because they've interrupted their path. They've stopped that normal progression that they were supposed to walk and learn, and they did that because they were suffering. We failed them. We failed them as human beings because they were suffering, and we didn't see it, and much like I did to my daughter, I hid stuff from her because didn't want her to know about it, right? I didn't want her to have to bear that weight, but our children know, and those young ones, those young ones, they -- they know things that we think they don't know, and they become overburdened because we haven't taught them because we lost our ways. Our ways were taken away, so culture's very important for us, to regain our culture and our languages and our -- and our ceremonies because that's how our ancestors survived, and in that ceremony, the buffalo collects those spirits and takes them back to the Creator, and it's usually a
year-long process that happens because we have to mourn, right? Our tears are our healing, right? Those tears are washing away those things that we need to let go of.

I have a hard time crying because I see so much sadness, and I experienced a lot of sadness, and I see our youth experiencing those sadnesses, so I have to be strong for them, and we do that work for students because it needs to be done. Our youth are killing themselves left, right, and centre, right, because of the world we live in and the things that have happened in our world and the losses that we suffered through those that -- from residential school and '60s scoop.

It hasn't been an easy journey for Indigenous people since -- since those ships landed and our ways started diminish, so I do that work for them. I sit and I listen to them. I spend time with them. I cook for them. I cooked up some pickerel a couple of weeks ago while I was there because they're hungry, because we still can't afford to feed our children, and I know what hungry felt like, so I cook for them at Seneca College. We whip them up bannock. We bring in food ourselves to feed our students because even our institutions don't have enough funding in our resource centres to help out the need that's out there. I do sweats for our two-spirited people because
they've been driven away from our ceremonies from the colonial ideas of the gender binary.

When I was young, my grandmother told me, one day you'll -- you can be a hunter, you can be a gatherer, you can be a child-protector, you can be a builder, because we didn't have specific gender roles. We had responsibilities. So if you were good at hunting, you were a hunter. It didn't matter whether you were born with a male body or a female body. If you were a good hunter, you were a good hunter. If you weren't, you're a vegetarian nowadays, but that's a different story.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: If you knew where those medicines were, you were able to go and get them, and you were able to prepare them, and you were able to help the people, and those two-spirit people were always welcome in our communities. They were a vibrant part of our community. They brought the balance because they could do whatever responsibility was needed, and we have driven them out of our communities because we've accepted that gender binary, and our youth are suffering because of that, because our two-spirited people are not allowed to be who they are, they're not accepted in ceremonies, they're not accepted outside of ceremonies, they're not accepted in their own reserves, and they're not accepted in the city,
from those Elders in the city, because they've been
influenced through Christianity and through the colonial
effects, and it's time we bring them back into the circle
because they bring the balance, those two-spirited youth,
and I'll go anywhere --

(APPLAUSE)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: I'll go anywhere
to help them because I was fortunate enough to be who I am.
I tried living the other way. I married Dawn's father.
Beautiful man, best friend, but not a husband with me
because that's not who we were meant to be. I was meant to
have my beautiful children. My children have a good
relationship with him. He's happy living his lifestyle,
and I'm happy living mine, and that's the way it should be.
We should be allowed to be who we are and not have somebody
tell us who they are. Right? We shouldn't say, oh, you're
a woman, you're a man, you're a woman, you're a man. We
should say, who are you, and let them tell us who they are,
because we don't go up to anybody else and say to them, oh,
you're Asian, you can't stand on this side, you have to
wear a skirt; or you're African-American, you have to wear
a skirt. We don't -- we don't do those things to anybody
else. Why do we hurt our own people? Why do we keep this
lateral violence going amongst our own people? Because
when someone can't be who they are, that's lateral violence
when you tell them they're not that person. We don't have
that right. Our teachings are to be respectful, and you're
not being respectful if you're telling somebody who to be.
You're being respectful of you. Let them be who they are
and accept them for who they are. My children did it. I
was scared to tell them who I was. I was petrified, and
when I finally told them, they looked at me and said, it's
about time you knew, Mom. We all knew.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Our young ones
know. They have the answers for this time that we're in.
We have to start giving them those tools. Us that carry
these sacred items, it's time we give them to them. What's
the worst they can do? We can stand beside them and make
sure they do it correctly, or we can let them do it so they
learn and they carry on for us. Why have our ancestors
carried these drums, these medicines, all these tools,
these pipes but to teach others? Why are we holding them?
It's time for us to give them to our youth. It's time for
us to gift those gifts away. That's our way. We gift
things to people. We help them, we teach them, and then we
let them go with it. Right? Because if we don't let them
go, they're going to be taking their own lives because they
can't be who they are. We have to give them that
opportunity to be who they are. The same way our
ancestors, our relatives gave us that ability, we have to pass it on. It's not ours to keep. It's ours to hold onto and to teach to somebody else.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I know during your earlier testimony, you did touch on a couple of really important points, particularly the fact that the system -- the child welfare system often paid non-Indigenous families in foster care when they wouldn't help the kinship relationships, so I was curious if you had any specific -- because we see -- still see that happening in places, and -- across the country, and so I was wondering if you had any specific recommendations on what we need to do to strengthen kinship relationships and support those kinship relationships?

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** Give the money to the families.

(APPLAUSE)

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** How can we pay someone who doesn't know anything about us to teach us and raise us to be the people we're supposed to be? How can we pay someone who has no idea about us, but yet we make every -- the original family members of those children be made to feel like they're nothing? They know what's best for us, our aunties and our -- our grandmothers and our cousins and our brothers and sisters. Why are you paying
other people instead of giving that money to us? Right?
You don't pay us our treaties. You don't pay us for the
land you took. At least pay -- pay the families to raise
the children that you're trying to take.

(APPLAUSE)

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** One of the things
we've often heard, particularly with CFS or Child Welfare
Services, the reason that Indigenous children are often
apprehended is seen as neglect, and when you were telling
your story about the beaver on the table or the fact that
your grandmother would tell you, jeez, if they catch you
doing this -- I see the way that you guys were doing that
was actually whether you felt disconnected from the land or
not, you were doing something you inherently knew. Your
blood memory knew how to feed yourself and take care of.
How -- how do we recognize that lifestyle, that living off
country food, that the traditional ways is just as
important and as valued so that when we think of things
like children are neglected because they're in poverty,
what about those traditional tools?

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** You know what,
when -- when we hunted in High Park -- and we called it
hunted in High Park, right -- that's 50 years ago. The
waters were clean. The animals were clean. They weren't
polluted with mercury and -- and petroleum products. But
teaching a child to hunt and fish and use the gifts the
Creator gave us, the Creator created everything on this
earth so that we would be able to sustain ourselves, and we
have become dependent on a government system that cares
nothing for us. They make us not be able to grow things on
our own properties because it's against the law. You can't
go hunting because it's against the law unless you have
your status card or you pay the Government a fee for a
license, and then you have to pay the Government a fee to
go to a hunting course, and then you have to pay the
Government a fee to learn how to put bullets in a gun,
right? High Park is 20 -- 27 -- there's High Park
there -- 2,700 hectares of park land, right? Why can't we
hunt the geese there? They come and land, they take off
again. They're clean there. They're not as clean as what
they should be, but they're still at least cleaner, and it
feeds people's bellies, right? Why can't we go to our
provincial parks and hunt in our provincial parks that have
never been built on, that are not contaminated, and take
the lives of those animals, giving them thanks beforehand,
and feed our families, teach our children how to do that?
No. The Government won't do that because they want us
dependent on them. They cancelled the home economic
programs in school so our children wouldn't know how to
cook because both parents are having to go to work.
(APPLAUSE)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Right? Our children don't know how -- mine did because, you know, as you heard, I ran them like the army, but...

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: My son was baking cakes at 9 years old and waking us up because I had fallen asleep from working to eat cake, but we need to teach our children. We are in a -- in a world today where technology is the greatest resource we have, but if we don't remember our old ways of how to fish and hunt and skin and use that hide to make our regalies, to learn to dance again, to make the skin on our drums, to make our rattles so that we can regain our culture; if we don't teach that to our children, why did our ancestors suffer? Right? It's our responsibility. For those of us that have learned and been gifted those teachings from people who spent the time with us, we have to start doing those things again. We have to bring programs back into school that teach our young ones to cook because both their parents are out there working. By THE time they get home, pick up their children, you know, if they're sick, they attend to them, it's Kraft Dinner time again. We were raised on Kraft Dinner, but we know it's not balanced. We did it because we had to, but the parents are tired to cook. The children have
to wait till the parents come home. Right? It's no
different now. We have latchkey kids now. It's just that
we learned to hide it because the Government kept stealing
all our kids, right, and taking them away, but they need to
learn how to cook in schools. Bring back those programs.
Teach them how to sew, because then by the time they're in
Grade 7 and 8, they know how to sew their regalia, right?
They know how to cook food. They know how to make feast
foods. They know how to carry about their cultural ways.
We have to regain those things back, so we have to do that.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** What other
recommendations would you like to share with the
Commissioner?

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** Well, I want to
say, first of all, that Justin Trudeau was here. He was
here, not far from here, but did he come here? Did he show
up here to show his respect to the murdered and missing
Indigenous women? No. Our ancestors said that there will
be those people that come and they speak with a forked
tongue, and I'm starting with Justin Trudeau -- well,
actually, I'm starting with his father who made the
White Papers, who want to eliminate the Indigenous people,
and you can't tell me a child doesn't learn by its
environment, so you can't tell me he never heard his father
talking about the dirty Indians, because his father sure as
And he promised us Indigenous people that he would no longer put pipelines in, that he would take care of the problems with the water at Attawapiskat. Pipelines are going in not far from here. Our grandmothers are standing there right now defending that land because he said --

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** He's not welcome here.

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** Pardon?

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** He's not welcome here.

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** No, and I don't blame you, because what beautiful resources you have will be ruined, but he was here, and he promised he wouldn't put in those pipelines, and we believed him. We believed that snake with the forked tongue because not long afterwards, he started putting an okay in for pipelines, and Attawapiskat still has no fresh water, so how can we believe those in government that tell us one thing and do another? We have to get our own people in government. We have to start running.

*(APPLAUSE)*

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** We've been lied to too many times. It's time that we put our own people in
those places to look after our own people because they're not looking after us. So we need to stand up against government in a way that we take their places, that we become responsible because then we only have ourselves to blame, right?

We need to make sure that our children are taken care of and that we help each other to become healthy again. We become addicted to opiates, and we use the alcohol, the spirits, our -- our -- our ancestors named it right. They're spirits, but they're not spirits from our place. They're spirits to take us down, and we use them to hide the pain that we've endured over all these years, but all it does is block that pain for a little while. That root is still deep down inside of us, and unless we pull that root out, so we need our healers to come back to our centres. We need our medicine people to come back and show us how to remove those roots so that we don't keep falling back into alcohol and addictions, so we need our health centres to have traditional people in our hospitals, to have a traditional person in it, not have them so that when they come in, they've got to show the nurses and doctors everything that they're using, ask for permission for a space, and there's always none available. We need our own healers inside working in hospitals and health care centres.
MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: We need our people in the school systems. We have qualified people to go into school systems. We need to start protesting and saying, why are you passing over our Indigenous people that have applied for these jobs and hiring non-Indigenous people to teach Indigenous courses? Right? We need to say, stop, enough's enough. We have qualified people that can go in and teach. We need land-based programs because that covers the whole aspect of teaching our children the resources to go back to the land, to live off the land, to be taught by our own people who still have those ways and still have that knowledge, and these are basic things. We need to know that when somebody goes to a health care centre, they're not going to be left in a wheelchair or on a stretcher for ten hours after they've had a stroke so that by that time, they're going to become immobilized, and now they're going to need more extensive treatments. Just because they're Indigenous, they're put in the hallway because the first thought is, they're probably drunk. It's still happening today; and Canada, wake up. You think this doesn't happen? It's happening today. Right? Come to places like Winnipeg and here in Vancouver. My daughter said she'd never seen such racism in all her life -- and we've lived in Toronto -- is what she's seen here just
walking down a street. Okay? This is her first visit here, so Canada, I don't know why you can't see, and I don't know why you won't use your voices and stand up for the Indigenous people because it's our land you're here on. We welcomed you.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: So we need the school systems to know who the Indigenous people are. As was said earlier in the week, we need our Immigration to say who the Indigenous people were, to teach them. You know our 94 recommendations that were given to us by the TRC: People, wake up. They're recommendations. They hold no weight. We were so happy. Oh. They -- they re-tortured and traumatized our residential school survivors to get the information what was needed to make a recommendation. That's like me saying, yeah, okay, I'll look at it. How many of those recommendations are in case?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Shame, Canada.

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: We need laws. We need policies, so I would like to see policies put in place where it becomes law, because the only way we're going to fight them is by laws because they -- they set this up by law. Who we are and how we are today was developed by law, the Indian Act, set to get rid of us. Let's make policies and vote for those who will make policies and laws that
help support us, that have put requirements in that every person who attends a school has to be taking courses to learn about Indigenous people and land.

(APPLAUSE)

**MS. LAUREEN “BLU” WATERS:** And it's the law. It's not a recommendation. It's the law, because that's the only way we're going to win is by putting laws in place. I speak, and I -- I try to make, you know, reconciliation, but it's -- we're not here to reconcile people. Canada has to reconcile with us.

(APPLAUSE)

**MS. LAUREEN “BLU” WATERS:** "Reconcile" means to make right. We're not the ones that need to make things right. The rest of Canada has to know what damages have been done to our Indigenous people so they can make it right. Yes, it wasn't the current people that are walking here, most of them today, but what are you doing to make things right? How are you standing up for those people that don't have fresh water to drink, right? If -- if you're a -- a person who's immigrated to Canada or taken a Canadian citizenship oath, it is your responsibility because as a Canadian citizen, you are now obligated to our treaties because you are represented through the Government side. We're still here on our side. You're still not following the things to make it right, so start standing up
for the things that are wrong. Stand up beside us.

(APPLAUSE)

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** And most of all, take care of our kids. Put some child centres back in. There is no rec centres. The Government took out all the rec centres for the kids, for the youth. They don't have places to go to play sports or to hang out in or to, you know, learn how to play pool at, where they can get their first dates at. You know? They -- they need safe spaces to go to that feel like home, not prisons, because that's where we're sending them, right? They need safe spaces where they can go and have access to a gym; you know, physical education materials there; you know, floor hockey, basketball, baseball. How many -- how many items are thrown away from companies that have a slight defect in them? I'm calling on Cooper. I'm calling on all those baseball companies, all those hockey companies. Give our kids equipment that might have a word spelled wrong instead of throwing it in the garbage, right? Give back. Canada has made way too much money off of our backs.

(APPLAUSE)

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** It's true. Give our kids sports so they can play, but we can't give them sports as Indigenous people because nobody's going to hire us to get a job so that we can buy them sports equipment,
so our kids sit back, and they watch the game of lacrosse that we created. That's where it's wrong, right?

Fred Sasakamoose is one of my relatives. Played professional hockey, one of the very few because we couldn't afford to send our kids to play hockey. Right? We have the abilities. We have the skills. Give us the same opportunities as you give every other person who just lands inside of Canada. Right? We don't want anything more. We want a fair shot.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: So give us the same opportunities, so if they -- if the Inquiry can put requests out to have companies to help support our Indigenous communities that are suffering, right? Make donations to them. They get written off for it. Help out wherever anybody can, and put a recommendation in that the -- that the Canadian Government takes care of those promises that they haven't, such as clean water, because if we don't have any water, we're not going to keep living, and those people that do not have water deserve to have -- to be able to turn on their kitchen tap and have water come out of it. They shouldn't have to drive three miles down the road to a filling station and fill up containers that they've been using for the last ten years because they don't even have other containers, so how
healthy is it to put water in a container you've been 
refilling for ten years knowing that it's made out of 
plastic, and back ten years ago, that plastic wasn't 
supposed to be refilled.

So we need to really start helping our 
communities out that have been left out. Promises have 
been made, but they haven't been kept, so we need the 
Government to start keeping their promises by -- by the 
recommendations and the requests, and I think the 
word "recommendation" means just to make a recommendation. 
Doesn't mean it has to be followed. I think it should be. 
The families of the murdered and missing Indigenous women 
demand that these things happen, not recommend, because the 
Government will say, yeah, well, I recommend I get a pay 
raise, but you know what? They'll give it to themselves, 
but when we recommend it, it doesn't get heard, so it 
should be that we demand these things.

Huh?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Oh, you can say 
that.

MS. DAWN GAUDIO: I have -- I have a 
recommendation. Not every community, some that don't have, 
like, fresh water or -- have struggles with, like, the 
education systems, and everybody wants to be a part of this
across Canada. I know this. Everybody's losing people, and it's not a totem, which I think are awesome. You know, memorials, monuments, they're great, but maybe a flag that everybody should be having erected at every institution, educational, health care, doesn't matter what province you're in, a federal flag to represent Indigenous peoples, especially in memory of the murdered and missing Indigenous women.

**MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS:** We're only one family. We can only speak to the things that we experienced, and if we can see this many injustices, and we know that over a thousand people have come and testified for us. The number's probably way up there higher, but we know definitely over a thousand. Canada, doesn't a thousand families who have lost their loved ones matter? If it was your loved one who was missing or had been murdered, you'd want justice, so we're not asking for anything above and beyond. We're just asking to be treated fairly, to have coroners give reports. People have been waiting six years for a report not knowing how their loved one died. That's shameful on our coroner departments. People have been waiting to find out what happened to their loved ones, and there's still no answers, and there's people out there who know. You know, I heard -- I heard -- I heard the words, tell the truth and shame the
devil. Well, we need to start telling the truth. People who know things need to start saying. Those families are asking to find the bodies of their loved ones so they can put them to rest in a good way so that ceremony can be done. That's all we're asking for, and we're asking for the rest of Canada to realize that every woman, every child, every young boy that they kill, those women are the life-givers. You've now taken a mother, an aunty, a grandmother, or a boy away from their family. We're not here to kill each other. We're here to lift each other up and support each other and live peacefully. We need Canada to listen and to start respecting the -- the original people of this land, the Indigenous people. We're not the stereotype that you watched on TV, that -- you know, we're scalping people and going around with -- with bows and arrows and setting wagons on fire. That's Hollywood, people. That's not real life. We were the ones that had our children taken away. We were the ones that had our culture almost destroyed. We were the ones that had our ceremonies banned. We were the ones that were harmed. We didn't harm you. We made an agreement for you to share this land with us. All we're asking for is for you to hold up your part of the bargain. Share it with us peacefully. That's all we ever wanted, and equally, we need to get our halves back because you took more than just your half.
That's about it.

(APPLAUSE)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hai, hai.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Meegwetch, Nokomis Kohkom Blu.

Chief Commissioner, do you have any questions or comments for Grandmother Blu?

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Well, Blu, I have to share one of my grandmother's teachings with you, and my grandmother's teaching was, sometimes it's just better to shut up.

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Yeah.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: So I'm just simply going to say thank you with all my heart to you and Dawn for reminding us of our obligations, reminding us of the beauty and strength of our cultures and languages, our ceremonies. Thank you for reminding us that we're beautiful, strong, resilient people. You've given us a lot -- oh, you're going to tell me something, aren't you?

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Yes, I am. I have one more thing to say.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: I'm trying hard to hold my tongue. You know, this Commission was set up for a 2-year term, a just over 2-year term, and the
Government made a big deal about it. They were being so gracious to give us a -- you know, an inquiry that people have been fighting for, like Gladys and Bernie and all the rest of the people down here, you know, especially here in the Downtown Eastside: Oh, we're going to give you an inquiry, and it's going to be Indigenous-lead, and you can do what you need to do, and here's $53 million.

By the time the Commission got going and everything else and people were hired and things put into place, you know, that takes time, and they want the Commission to cover more than 500 reserves in Canada on a 2-year -- on a less than 2-year term with $53 million, but yet they're handing out 15 and 20 and $30 million for single initiatives. Right? Millions' worth of dollars for the single initiatives, and we've asked for an extension with the -- you know, us family members have asked for an extension to the Commissioners, and the Commissioners applied for an extension, and I only hope that they give us that extension.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Because I'd like to see them go to 500 reserves with $53 million in less than a 2-year turnover time to get all the stories from every community that there is inside of Canada, and it couldn't be done. So they think they set us up to fail,
and I know they do, but we're not going to fail because one way or another --

(APPLAUSE)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We're not going to fail.

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: No, we're not going to fail, and one way or another, even if they only give us a 6-month extension, we will give them a report. It won't be a thorough report like they'll be expecting because they're going to say they gave us all this money, but we don't have that much time to do it in, and we can't visit everywhere because there was -- there was specific things that they put in place -- I think they're called terms of reference or something that they had to -- the Commissioners had to follow. They couldn't go outside of those things. They can't approach communities and ask for us to come in because then they're not being impartial, so it was put out there for communities to contact us. Well, some communities don't even have telephones. They don't have Wi-Fi. They don't even have water, so how can we reach all those communities with the message, you've got to contact the Commission? Right? It's impossible. But we've tried the best that we can as family members and as the workers with the Commission, have tried the best that they can to put that out there that the people had to
contact the Commission and be invited to the communities, and we've had an overwhelming response. We can't even get to the numbers of the ones that -- that requested us to come in and do that in the 2-year term because there's over 500 of them.

So I -- I also ask that Carolyn Bennett, you know, stand up for the words that she used that she will support the Commission in the beginning. Don't be swayed by people who are angry because we can't please everybody. We're human beings, and we're going to have conflicts, we're going to have disagreements, and don't be swayed by -- by family members who feel that they haven't been heard. Well, you should be talking to Trudeau and to Carolyn Bennett about that, about only a 2-year term to be heard with. Don't be angry at the Commission because they can't get there.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Because they have a right to be angry that their story's not heard, but they don't have a right to be angry at the Commission, and I support them for wanting to have their story told because I struggled whether or not I was going to tell mine, and I applied just like everybody else, right? But I struggled whether or not I would tell my story, and I asked my -- my Kohkom, should I do this? And I offered my tobacco, and
when I opened my eyes and looked up, I had a red cardinal
sitting on my bird feeder, and I said, thank you, Kohkom, I
will do it for you.

But those people that are out there that are
making waves for the Commission, I hear you, and I feel
your frustration, and I feel your anger, but it's not the
Commission you should be angry with. It's the Federal
Government who only gave us a 2-year term to do this work
in. We've applied for an extension because we see the
amount of stories that need to be heard. We hear about it.
We see the anger from the people who want to be heard.

So I call upon Carolyn Bennett, and I call
upon Justin Trudeau. This is your opportunity again to
make things right with the Indigenous people. Let our
murdered and missing women's voices, children, girls,
two-spirit, and trans be heard.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. LAUREEN "BLU" WATERS: Sorry, Marion. I
got to talk for when I see injustice. I'm sorry for
interrupting you.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Well,
actually, thank you for interrupting.

Blu, you've given us so much today and every
day that you're with us, and, as you know, we have gifts
for you and Dawn. We have eagle feathers for you because,
as we know, the eagles will, with their feathers, lift us
up and hold us up when we need it, and when we feel we can
go to the next level, we can push ourselves and do even
more. Those eagle feathers will lift us up and carry us to
those new heights.

And we also have some seeds for you because
when the Commissioners -- I see some of them back
there -- and I started, we wanted healing and new growth to
happen as a result of our work, and so we decided to give
the people who participate seeds to plant. Hopefully,
something will grow. If it does, take a photograph and
send it to us for our archives, and actually, we're getting
photographs now of things that are growing across Canada,
and I hope you have better luck than I did in my garden,
but Dawn, Blu, thank you so much. You made a difference
today. Thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: We are adjourned. Thank
you.

-- Exhibits (code: P1P04P0101)

Exhibit 1: Folder containing six digital images shown
during the public testimony of the witnesses.

--- Upon adjourning at 5:04 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