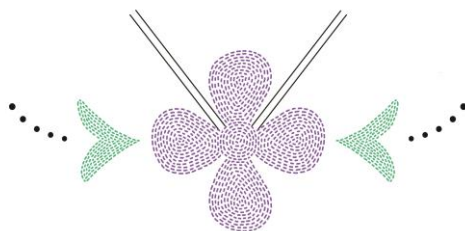


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process – Part 1 Public Hearings
Chateau Nova Hotel, Main Ballroom
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories**



PUBLIC

Tuesday January 23, 2018

**Public Volume 40:
Kathy Meyer, Dean Meyer & Candice Meyer,
In relation to Angela Meyer;**

**Les Semmler & Esther Semmler,
In relation to Joyce Semmler;**

**Noeline Villebrun, John Landry, Roxane Landry
& Cindi-Rae Harris, In relation to Stella Cardinal**

II
APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Julie McGregor (Legal counsel)
Government of Northwest Territories	Jana Shoemaker (Legal counsel)
Government of Canada	Anne McConville (Legal counsel)
	Donna Keats (Legal counsel)
	Jennifer Clarke (Paralegal)
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturvit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, AnânauKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women's Association Inc., Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, Manitoba Inuit Association	Beth Symes (Legal counsel)
Native Women's Association of The Northwest Territories	No appearances

Note: For the purpose of establishing this record of attendance, Counsel and Representatives are considered present whether they attended one or all of the hearings held over the course of the day at the Chateau Nova Hotel.

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The use of square brackets [] in this transcript indicates that amendments have been made to the certified transcript in order to replace information transcribed phonetically by the original transcriptionists. Amendments were completed by listening to the source audio recording of the proceedings and were made by Bryan Zandberg, Registrar for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls at Vancouver, British Columbia on May 1st, 2018.

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
2 --- Upon commencing on Tuesday, January 23, 2018,
3 at 9:21 a.m.

4 OPENING CEREMONIES

5 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Good morning.
6 Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Good morning.
7 Good to hear you. I woke up at a quarter to 6:00.
8 My wife checked for me, and at my age, she doesn't
9 check to see if I'm awake, she was checking to see
10 if I was still breathing. (Laughter) And I was.

11 So we are ready to charge the day.
12 I would like to say good morning to all our purple
13 shirt workers out there. And good morning to each
14 and every one of you. Minus 24 this morning. No
15 mosquitos. So I always look for the silver lining.

16 We like to start the day like we
17 did yesterday, and we will call upon Bobby Drygeese
18 to say a few words on behalf of Yellowknife's Dene
19 First Nation. And we will begin today with a
20 morning prayer. So ladies and gentlemen, put your
21 hands together and welcome Bobby Drygeese.

22 MR. BOBBY DRYGEESE: Good morning.
23 I want to welcome everybody this morning, and I
24 want to make sure that everybody has a good day and
25 good discussions and making sure that we find

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1 solutions and find the truth to how things will
2 work out. And we will make sure that everybody is
3 taken care of because we have lots of support here
4 and lots of support out there.

5 So you just need to talk. And
6 that's what our elders always say, our parents
7 always say, to make sure if something is bothering
8 you, something is nagging at you or anything, make
9 sure you tell the truth all the time, and things
10 will be okay. So we will say a prayer song so that
11 everybody will have good thoughts and make sure to
12 find what they are looking for. (Song was sung)

13 Thank you very much, Yellowknife
14 Dene First Nation drummers, to start our day in
15 song and the spoken word in a prayer. We are very
16 happy to have with us Mabel Brown, if she will come
17 forward at this time.

18 MS. MABEL BROWN: Please stand,
19 thank you. Thank you. Our Lord and heavenly
20 Father, we thank you for this day, a brand new day
21 to work in. I thank you for pouring out your
22 spirit upon us, Father. The spirit of love,
23 forgiveness, and healing. We thank you, Father,
24 God, as we go about our work today that great
25 change we expect to come for women, people that are

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 suffering.

2 Thank you for the hands of helping
3 hands here today. And all who provide, I thank you
4 for blessing them. Bless their homes, their
5 families, keep us safe, and deliver us, Lord, God
6 from anything that has been tormenting, harassing,
7 or trying to kill our joy. Father, we thank you.
8 In Jesus's name we ask. Amen. Amen.

9 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Thank you
10 very much, Mabel. Now we make way for the lighting
11 of the sacred qulliq. We call upon Rassi Nashalik
12 to perform that duty for us.

13 MS. RASSI NASHALIK: Good morning,
14 everyone. I would like to say a few words in my
15 language. (Different language spoken) Thank you
16 very much.

17 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Thank you
18 very much, Rassi Nashalik, and the lighting of the
19 sacred qulliq. And now I would like to turn the
20 microphone over to Marie Speakman, who has been in
21 charge of the beautiful display that we see here of
22 the hearts that have been prepared just for this
23 Yellowknife hearing and, Marie.

24 MS. MARIE SPEAKMAN: Thank you,
25 everyone, for coming. I just wanted to show, here,

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 the Northern Lights. And there has been lots of
2 labour of love and caring that went into the
3 tapestry. And the Northern Lights, in my language
4 it's called Nowka (ph). I remember when we were
5 kids and -- I sound so old. In those days, in the
6 small community, there are only a few lights. So
7 they come very close, and some elders used to say
8 that they can smell them. I remember we could hear
9 them. It goes (sound made) like that.

10 But today, they are way high
11 because of all the lights. So I just wanted to
12 touch base on the Northern Lights. We call it
13 Nowka. And it is so unique and so much part of the
14 North that it dances at night. And we call it
15 Dogweh (ph). So I just wanted to touch base on
16 that.

17 And there are many hands, there
18 are many women and even men had beaded the hearts
19 on this tapestry. And there are some young
20 students from Behchoko, they travel -- it is, like,
21 about an hour. They came here, and they sewed in
22 their hearts that they made. And there are quilts
23 in here, too.

24 Anyway, there is so much -- yes.
25 There is the quilt here. There are fish scales.

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 They are coloured. They are beautiful. And there
2 are some that came in from Yukon, people that have
3 sent some beaded hearts to the Dene National
4 Assembly. The bag is up here. So I just wanted to
5 show that they brought in a feather, so the feather
6 is hung in the middle. And also there is
7 porcupine. We call it cho (ph) in our language.
8 And then there is embroidery.

9 I just wanted to mention that
10 there is lots of suffering, silent suffering that
11 goes on. And that is one of the ways that they
12 express by beading and embroidering and sewing and
13 putting that into what we see, now, today. So I
14 just wanted -- and also, at the bottom, here, and
15 on this side, here, it's representing there is a
16 seal skin. Here is representing Inuit and the hide
17 is Dene and then the Metis sash that is
18 representing Metis.

19 So I just wanted to -- it's so
20 beautiful, and I really want to thank many, many
21 people even from India. She put lots of beadwork
22 in it and taking time to measure. And it's just
23 beautiful how many people can just come in and just
24 sew and sew and sew. Many laughter and sharing
25 food. There were tears. So the ones -- by the end

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 of the day, it's about the families, the missing
2 and murdered Aboriginal women. And there are so
3 many barriers and silent suffering that it is one
4 of the ways, the beadwork that they do. With that,
5 (different language spoken) thank you, thank you.

6 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Thank you
7 very much, Marie, for that beautiful explanation of
8 the beautiful tapestry that is in honour of the
9 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.
10 And we are very pleased to have with us three of
11 the Commissioners here with us today. We will call
12 on Qajaq to say a few words, Qajaq Robinson. Give
13 her a nice Yellowknife welcome.

14 --- OPENING REMARKS BY COMMISSIONERS

15 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:
16 (Different language spoken) It is such an honour to
17 be here in your community, in your territory, with
18 my friends and colleagues, Brian and Michele. I
19 send love and warm greetings from our Chief
20 Commissioner, Marion.

21 There is a lot of work to be done,
22 and we cannot always all be in a community. So I
23 have to tell you, it was quite a debate about who
24 gets to go. So being from Nunavut, I got to come,
25 of course. I was not up for debate. But those

1 three had some debates going on, and what did they
2 say, "Marion drew the short straw."

3 But there is so much work that we
4 are doing in this Inquiry, and Marion is in the
5 office working hard on the next phases of our work.

6 And as many of you may know, we will be asking for
7 some more time. We want to go to more places. We
8 want to hear from more people. We want to really
9 get into this issue at a national level and at a
10 regional level to get to the heart of things. So
11 Marion is always working on that request, but I
12 send her love.

13 I want to acknowledge that we are
14 on the traditional lands of the Yellowknives, Dene
15 First Nation, the Chief Drygeese's territory. It
16 is always a territory that is home to the Inuit,
17 Inuvialuit, Dene, Metis. And also many visitors
18 from other countries that have made this land home.

19 And I welcome everybody, and I am grateful to see
20 many faces here to learn and grow with us.

21 I want to talk a little bit about
22 our mandate. Just a little over two years ago, not
23 quite two years ago. A year and six months, I
24 guess, now, we woke up with a piece of paper and
25 each other. Our terms of references, it is called,

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 our mandate. The questions that the governments
2 wanted us to ask and answer. To look at what are
3 the root causes, the systemic causes of violence
4 against Indigenous women and girls and trans and
5 two-spirited. All forms of violence.

6 We are called the National Inquiry
7 into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, but it
8 is bigger than that. It is about violence. The
9 violence that took the lives of loved ones, the
10 violence that has resulted in disappearances. But
11 it is also the violence children experience at
12 home, women and children face with institutions.

13 Violence is also the denial of
14 rights. It does not always have to be fists. It
15 can be words. It can be denying of fundamental
16 rights and the necessities of life. So I want us
17 to think about that and always remember that. That
18 this is the place where we need to learn about all
19 these things. And that this is a space where we
20 want to hear from those who have lost loved ones,
21 those who have missing loved ones, and those that
22 have survived violence, continue to face violence.
23 Because this is the space.

24 We are doing our work in a number
25 of phases. The first phase is to hear from you, to

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 That is why, for us, it was so
2 important to start with you, to start with
3 families, to start with survivors, to start in the
4 community. Because these are the voices that have
5 guided us and that will continue to guide us, guide
6 this whole country, moving forward. I cannot
7 overemphasize how important your voice is. When it
8 comes to experts, to us, you are the experts. And
9 I want to thank you for that.

10 This week we are going to hear
11 from about 40 families in different ways: In the
12 public forum here, in some private spaces, and we
13 also have statement gatherers. So if you are
14 listening and you are in the area and you have
15 experiences, recommendations, and knowledge you
16 want to share with us, but you have not connected
17 with the Inquiry yet, come. Come. You are still
18 welcome. You are always welcome.

19 I want to thank Rassi (different
20 language spoken). Thank you, Rassi, for the
21 prayer. Your words and the qulliq. I shared a
22 little bit of this yesterday, the importance of
23 light and fire to our work and for Indigenous
24 people across the country in different ways has
25 been very profound. We have felt the importance of

1 the fire for providing us life and providing new
2 life. And I am so grateful for the gift from Inuit
3 women who have tended the qulliq and kept the light
4 going since time and memorial. And to have it in
5 this space and to shine light, keep us warm, and
6 shine light on these issues, I think, is beautiful.

7 (Different language spoken)

8 And I want to say a few words to
9 those listening on the cameras, watching from home.

10 So many times, issues facing Indigenous peoples
11 are seen as just -- what is the word we have heard?

12 An Indian problem. This is not a problem. It is
13 a reality. And it is all of our realities.

14 I want to call on those watching
15 to see your mother, to see your daughter, your
16 granddaughters, your sisters, your cousins, your
17 nieces in the families and in the women you are
18 going to hear from and hear about. What affects
19 your neighbour, affects you.

20 And I call on all those listening
21 to see your role in this situation, in these
22 issues, and to see your role in raising awareness,
23 calling upon your leaders to take this situation
24 seriously, to listen to those who have not been
25 listened to, to give them space. It is the

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 Indigenous women that need to be heard from, that
2 need to lead this issue forward with the solutions.

3 Be an ally. Create that space at
4 your table, and welcome Indigenous women to your
5 table. (Different language spoken)

6 Masi (ph) is thanks and cho (ph)
7 is big; right? So masi cho, cho, cho. (Different
8 language spoken) I will pass the mic on to one of
9 my beautiful colleagues. Michele tells me it will
10 be Brian.

11 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Good
12 morning. It is such an honour to be here with you
13 all in this community this week. I just want to
14 begin by acknowledging the spirits of the missing
15 and murdered Indigenous women and girls and trans
16 and two-spirited people.

17 We are here this week to hear from
18 survivors and family members who have lost loved
19 ones. And it is in memories and stories of your
20 lost loved ones or about yourselves that informs
21 the work that we are doing, informs the work of the
22 National Inquiry, and carries this work forward.
23 So I am grateful for all of your being here to
24 participate.

25 I also want to say it is an honour

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1 to be on the traditional territory of the
2 Yellowknives, Dene, and I want to say thank you for
3 the welcome we received yesterday at the beautiful
4 opening ceremonies that we had here. And it is
5 during this community hearing here this week that
6 the voices of people from you, from the North, will
7 be heard and shared with all of our relatives
8 across Canada.

9 I just want to say to the families
10 in this room, to those of you who may be listening
11 remotely, to all the survivors and families who
12 have registered, or who are contemplating, thinking
13 about registering to come and share, this is a time
14 this week for you all to be able to share in a way
15 that is safe and comfortable or in the best way
16 possible for you.

17 We met with families and survivors
18 across the country, with organizations, including
19 grassroots organizations, to talk about how should
20 these hearings take place. And what we have heard
21 is, it is important to have different ways for
22 people to participate. So whether you want to
23 participate in a public hearing room with
24 Commissioners here or in private, in camera, with a
25 Commissioner, or perhaps, with a statement gatherer

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 or through artistic expression, these are the
2 various ways that you can participate. Whatever
3 feels best for you.

4 We are here to listen and to hear
5 your stories. And I know it can be difficult, but
6 these stories, these truths, are very important.
7 So I admire your courage and resilience for being
8 here and participating. Thank you.

9 I just want to say, finally, to
10 all the Indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ2S
11 people, you are loved and valued. The other
12 Commissioners and I are committed to the mandate on
13 the Inquiry, and we are committed to you. Thank
14 you very much. (Different language spoken)

15 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:
16 (French spoken) And the drummers. Where are they?
17 They are still in my heart. When I was listening
18 the sound of the drum, it sound just like the
19 (indiscernible) drum. Like, there is something
20 behind the skin, I guess, that makes it like
21 thunder. And either we use caribou bones or goose,
22 the end of the feather. It was beautiful. I felt
23 home, like, just home.

24 And when I landed last night, I
25 said to my colleagues, "Oh, my God. It looks like

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 Schefferville. For those who know, it is my north.

2 A little bit of French before I switch to English.

3 (French spoken)

4 People who lost some loved ones,
5 these women told us their truth during the
6 community hearings. We still have a lot of
7 families -- access difficulty of having adapted
8 programs to their culture. And this week,
9 Commissioners and the team of the National Inquiry,
10 we will listen to your truth, we will honour it,
11 and we will make sure that this (indiscernible) and
12 this suffering is heard and that the message will
13 be in the recommendations that we will propose.

14 I can see your face doing this,
15 she is so right. (Laughter) So a little bit of
16 translation. I will do my best. I had too much
17 coffee. And when I take too much coffee, my mouth
18 goes like this, and my spirit is over there. I
19 will do my best. I was saying in French how
20 honoured I am to be here, and, of course, I said
21 thank you to the beautiful elders and the drummers.
22 But that part, you got it.

23 But also, eight months ago, when
24 we started the first hearing coming from the North,
25 her and I, it was important that we start with the

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 when we will present the final report, it will be
2 very alive, very alive.

3 Your voice will be in that
4 document, that report. And making sure that any
5 government, federal, provincial, territorial,
6 Indigenous government, municipalities, like my
7 colleague talked about, the responsibilities, will
8 be accountable, will be responsible to say, "This
9 is not only a women's issue or an Indigenous
10 women's issue, but it is all our issue, our
11 responsibilities."

12 So we are making history. And we
13 are still standing. Regardless the tsunami we had
14 in 2017, we are still standing. We are still
15 making this history all together. And I am
16 blessed. I have amazing colleagues, very good and
17 patient with me and teaching me English. But we
18 are also human beings, so we are not perfect. We
19 are here to learn.

20 And for me, an expert, it is you.
21 It is the elders. It is the people from the
22 community. It is the women who lost loved ones.
23 It is a mother who is looking for her daughter. It
24 is a person who made a change or many changes for a
25 better life. You, too, you are an expert for us

1 and, maybe, the best one.

2 So we are surrounded by love. I
3 can see, and I can feel it. I was yesterday on the
4 plane watching you, and I saw you on Facebook Live.

5 And I saw the love from where I was, so now I feel
6 it. (French spoken) And family, it is your time
7 now. Survivors, it is your time. (French spoken)

8 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Thank you
9 very much. Thank you, Commissioners. Just a few
10 notes, pretty much housekeeping. We just had
11 breakfast, but whenever you finish breakfast, you
12 are always thinking, when is the next meal? That
13 would be at 12:00 noon. It will be here in the
14 main ballroom and over at the Explorer Hotel
15 (indiscernible) A.

16 I hear a phone ringing, and it is
17 mine. Sorry. It is a good reminder that when the
18 sessions are on, we turn off our electronics. I
19 just didn't get a chance to check it. Other things
20 we wanted to mention to you today, as well, is that
21 health support is available, again, in the purple
22 shirts that you see around. And they will be here
23 throughout all the sessions each and every day and
24 in the evening.

25 There is also a registered nurse

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 that is on-site, and you can see the registration
2 desk if you need to see the registered nurse. We
3 also have people that are doing the health supports
4 and traditional and western-trained counselors,
5 elders, faith based, smudging, and the
6 (indiscernible) gown of the individual as well.

7 There is also one-to-one
8 counseling available, and the sign-up sheet is at
9 the registration desk. There is also a shuttle
10 service, bus that goes from this hotel over to the
11 Explorer Hotel. It goes from 8:00 in the morning
12 until 6:00 o'clock. So if you need to get to the
13 other hotel, you just contact the front desk, and
14 they will let you know when the bus is going to
15 move.

16 Lost items. You know, we
17 sometimes get very busy, and we are running around,
18 and we forget something, and something is lost. If
19 you see something that does not belong there, bring
20 it to the registration desk, because that is where
21 everybody is going to go to look for lost items
22 that may turn up in the next few days.

23 If anyone is wanting to donate an
24 artistic expression to the National Inquiry's
25 legacy archive, you can see the registration table

OPENING CEREMONIES

1 and there will be contact -- and the senior
2 archivist will come directly and speak with you.
3 And the next time you see me will be tonight at the
4 Dene cultural evening as part of the Inquiry. We
5 will be over at the Explorer Hotel in Room A and B.
6 It starts at 6:00 o'clock. And we will go until
7 probably later evening. It will be long days, so
8 it will probably be 9:00, 10:00 o'clock by the time
9 they finish the entertainment.

10 So that is all I have for you at
11 this time. It is my pleasure to wake you up this
12 morning and get you all going. And while I was at
13 home, again, I took time to write a little
14 something down that will, maybe, help you through
15 this day. Take the time you need to heal
16 emotionally. Moving on doesn't take a day. It
17 takes a lot of little steps to be able to break
18 free of your broken self. We are here to support
19 you with love and caring. Have yourself a great
20 day. Thank you very much. We have one
21 presentation to make. I will give this to Marie.

22 MS. MARIE SPEAKMAN: Yesterday we
23 gave the gift of a book with (indiscernible) on it
24 to the other two Commissioners. And you were not
25 here yesterday so we are going to present -- I

1 forgot to mention to give it to you from the Native
2 Women's Association of the NWT.

3 MR. GEORGE TUCCARO: Thank you
4 very much, Marie. And with that, we will take a
5 five-minute break, and we will get started with the
6 session this morning. Thank you very much. Take
7 care. God bless.

8 --- Upon recessing at 10:04 a.m.

9 --- Upon resuming at 10:25 a.m.

10 **Hearing #1**

11 **Witnesses: Kathy Meyer, Dean Meyer, and Candice**
12 **Meyer**

13 **In relation to Angela Meyer**

14 **Heard by Commissioners Qajaq Robinson, and Michèle**
15 **Audette**

16 **Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe and Lillian**
17 **Lundrigan**

18 **Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge-keepers: Anita**

19 **Pokiak, Ronalda Wilcox, Gail Cyr, Kathy Louis,**

20 **Bernie Poitras, Rassi Nashalik and Lillian Elias**

21 **Clerk: Trudy Mckinnon**

22 **Registrar: Bryan Zandberg**

23 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good
24 morning, Commissioners. I would like to introduce
25 you to the first family that will be presenting

1 their story. Immediately beside me is Kathy Meyer
2 and her husband Dean and their daughter Candice.
3 They have a number of support people with them
4 today, as well. They have Anita Pokiak, who is
5 Kathy's cousin; Ronalda Wilcox, who is Angela's
6 cousin; and a family friend support, Gail Cyr.

7 The Meyer family will be sharing
8 the story of Angela Meyer today. And it is,
9 actually, Kathy who will begin by sharing with you
10 some of Angela's stories in life. And before we
11 start, could we please have the clerk promise the
12 witnesses in.

13 MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Okay. We
14 will go one by one. Good morning. Kathy, do you
15 promise to tell your truth to the Commissioners in
16 a good way this morning?

17 MS. KATHY MEYER: I promise.

18 MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Thank you.
19 Dean. Good morning, Dean. Do you promise to tell
20 your truth to the Commissioners in a good way this
21 morning?

22 (Inaudible)

23 Thank you. And Candice, do you
24 promise to tell your truth to the Commissioners in
25 a good way this morning?

1 (Inaudible)

2 Okay. Thank you.

3 --- KATHY MEYER, PROMISED

4 --- DEAN MEYER, PROMISED

5 --- CANDICE MEYER, PROMISED

6 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And Kathy
7 would like to start sharing the story.

8 MS. KATHY MEYER: Good morning.
9 Thank you very much for having us. And I would,
10 actually, too, like to acknowledge the
11 Yellowknives, Dene. I know many people from here
12 as being -- our daughter Angela has been missing
13 since November 27, 2010. Eight Christmases without
14 her.

15 I didn't write anything, but I am
16 going to speak from our experience. Angela is the
17 third oldest, second youngest. She's got two older
18 siblings and one younger. She was the perfect,
19 perfect baby. I often call her our summer baby.
20 Her siblings were all born in the spring, but
21 Angela was born a week after solstice. And the
22 doctor was late, So our nurse, Clare (ph),
23 delivered her, but she assured us she was shaking.
24 Mosquitos were coming into the hospital room. I
25 hold that very dear.

1 She was never sick as a child,
2 never caught colds, no ear infections. Only once
3 did she get some ear thing from being at the beach
4 in the summertime. And she was always very quiet
5 and loving, and she never got in trouble. She had
6 many friends. Her and her sister shared many
7 friends.

8 She did good in school, not
9 excelling. Just your average student. She tried
10 soccer one year. She was not very athletic. She's
11 a girl. She likes makeup, nice clothes. She never
12 took drugs or drank alcohol. She might have tried
13 it once, but she did not. She never participated
14 in that way.

15 She was a very loving girl. I
16 don't like using "was." She is. We had many
17 birthday parties. And we always had many kids at
18 our house. Not just her friends, but her siblings'
19 friends. Everyone got along great. It was when
20 she was about 15 or 16 when she started developing
21 a mental illness. They couldn't quite figure out
22 what to diagnose her with. Bipolar, but
23 eventually, I think, she had schizophrenia.

24 It seemed to progress quite
25 quickly. And when that progressed quickly, she

1 lost many, many friends to the stigma, I suppose,
2 of having a mental illness. So she relied a lot on
3 her family for support. We come from a very large
4 extended family. She's got many cousins and many
5 aunts and uncles. She was proud -- well, she was
6 jut an average person. We are an average family.

7 She tried her hand at high school,
8 but due to her illness, she couldn't quite get it
9 or continue. Really, that was when her
10 schizophrenia, mental illness started. There was
11 not a lot of help for Angela when she was a
12 teenager, and I don't think there still is. We
13 know that. There are many in our community,
14 Yellowknife, that have this.

15 There was really nothing that
16 could be done for her according to them, the
17 health-care professionals. Well, limited
18 resources. It was only when she became 18 that she
19 was able to access programs in the community,
20 because she was an adult. And when she became an
21 adult, it seems, again, there were limited things
22 for her. And then we decided, okay. She will go
23 into independent living with other people in the
24 same situation. And that was good.

25 But her illness progressed so

1 quickly, it manifested. It is so hard to
2 understand. She had bouts of violence. And then
3 we tried to understand her illness. A lot of times
4 there were frustrations and anger, of course.

5 But I would like to talk about
6 Angela before -- even now. She was -- I miss her
7 very much. Every morning when I'm getting ready to
8 go to work, I think of Angela. She is always at
9 the back of my mind. And all we really wanted was
10 the help she needed. And, of course, with the
11 medications came the weight gain and getting
12 diabetes. We had to deal with that.

13 So then she lived with us up until
14 she was about 18 or 19 when she was able to access
15 some of the programs that are available here in
16 Yellowknife. And they are great programs. The
17 people are so wonderful, the grassroots people are
18 awesome. And they helped where they could. They
19 got her involved with -- what is it? Oh, the
20 Special Olympics. And she was nominated female
21 athlete of the year the summer she disappeared.

22 It is just a big hole in our
23 hearts that she's not here. It is very difficult
24 to move on, really, as a family. We do daily,
25 daily -- you know, go to work, and it's a chore in

1 itself for me, anyway. But like I said, she was
2 with me for nine months before she was born. And
3 we saw this beautiful, young girl. You know, we
4 thought she was going to do really good. She was
5 very happy to be going on to high school. And then
6 this mental illness got her.

7 Our kids are a year apart, the
8 three oldest. And there are two years apart
9 between Angela and her younger brother, Brett (ph).

10 When Brett was about four months old, he was
11 sitting in his chair, and Angela just walked by and
12 gave him a swat. But she grew to love him. He
13 loved her.

14 Everyone around her loved her very
15 much. She always had hugs for everybody. We had
16 many birthday parties. We had many fun Christmases
17 together. And when the kids were young, we drove
18 almost every fall to Alberta just for a road trip.

19 Go Ski-Dooing in the winter, go picnicking
20 anywhere, find a spot. Took a few trips North.
21 But we all know the cost of travel, so we couldn't
22 travel often to visit. I just wish we can find
23 her. She was really a good baby. Well, they all
24 were, I suppose, but she was not too much work.

25 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you

1 so much for sharing with us about Angela. You had
2 mentioned that the grassroots organizations here
3 that were supporting her were awesome and amazing.

4 Is it fair to say that you wish there were more
5 services or many more awesome people to help out?

6 MS. KATHY MEYER: I'm sorry?

7 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Is it fair
8 to say that you wish that there were more services
9 available and more programs she could have
10 accessed?

11 MS. KATHY MEYER: I think so. For
12 her age. And for her being a young Indigenous
13 woman, you know, I think there could have been a
14 bit more, but she was able to access -- they gave
15 her good help.

16 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Did you
17 want to share with us -- or maybe Dean will -- did
18 you want to share with us when Angela disappeared?

19 MS. KATHY MEYER: I will do the
20 initial. Angela, again, ended up on the third
21 floor at the hospital, the psychiatric ward. She
22 had spent some time there in and out but never,
23 like -- for a week or two weeks at a time. So the
24 previous night, which was a Friday night, we had
25 signed her out. Her siblings, Candice, Brett, and

1 I signed her out of the hospital.

2 We went to Diamante for pasta.

3 And while we were there, we started discussing,
4 well, maybe we should sign you out for tomorrow.

5 So we decided, yes. We will do that. So we went
6 home, and the next day, next morning, we were
7 getting ready to go back to the hospital to sign
8 her out. We were all checking our social media
9 accounts.

10 So Angela, after she did her
11 thing, she wanted to go out for a cigarette. She
12 went out to the porch, and we checked on her to
13 make sure she was there. She was still there. And
14 I was getting ready to go to the hospital, so I
15 just -- five minutes later, I looked out the door.
16 She was not there. We haven't seen her since.

17 That was about 1:15, November 27,
18 2010. I called the hospital immediately to the
19 psychiatric ward. And the nurse that was on duty
20 told me, "No. Wait."

21 I said, "Should I call the," -- I
22 was in a bit of a panic. I said, "Should I call
23 the police? What should I do? Could you help me
24 out?"

25 "Oh, just wait a few hours. Maybe

1 she will show up." And I live with that every day.

2 I should have followed my gut. But finally, she
3 told me to wait until 5:00. But I decided to -- I
4 drove down to the RCMP station, and I reported her
5 missing. And then Candice, Brett, and I, we drove
6 around. Dean was driving back from Hay River. He
7 hadn't known yet what had happened until he got
8 home. We tried to get ahold of him, but he had
9 left already.

10 So I went down to the RCMP,
11 reported her missing right away. And I told them,
12 you know she's -- they do know Angela, because a
13 couple of times the RCMP had to be called because
14 of some action she had done, her behaviour. So
15 they put the call out to look for Angela. We did
16 describe what she was wearing.

17 And we were driving around and
18 around. And I don't seem to remember Sunday or
19 Monday for some reason, but immediately, as soon as
20 we were able to make photocopies of her, like, what
21 do you call it? Not posters. Yes. Posters, I
22 guess. And we gave them -- we posted them around
23 town. Went to, there's a CD (ph) hotel or two of
24 them in town. And we took them there just in case.
25 But they were all very concerned. Everyone was

1 concerned when she went missing.

2 I'm going to let my husband speak
3 on the logistics of that, of the other part. If
4 you have any other questions, maybe I can answer.

5 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Actually,
6 maybe we can let Dean go into the logistics. And
7 we can come back to some other questions, if you
8 are okay with that.

9 MS. KATHY MEYER: I am.

10 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Perfect.

11 MR. DEAN MEYER: Good morning.
12 First of all, I would like to give you my thoughts.
13 When I first heard about this Inquiry being
14 started, I was wondering to myself, like, "Why are
15 they having this? Why? It's going to take so
16 long, and doesn't the federal government know what
17 we need up here?" Not just the federal government,
18 the territory government.

19 And the territory government does
20 know what we need, but we don't have the funding to
21 do anything up here. We need our social programs
22 looked after, addictions, mental health. But now
23 that I've been here and talking to you people these
24 last few days, I am so glad that you're here. I am
25 very glad that you're here. Let the victims say

1 their pieces.

2 First, I would like to talk about
3 Angie (ph) when she was up in the hospital.

4 Sometimes it was so heartbreaking to go visit her.

5 She went through so many doctors and
6 psychiatrists. And every time she saw a new one,
7 they would change her medications. And some days
8 she would be way out there. And then other days
9 she would be so doped up that you could hardly talk
10 to her. And she wouldn't remember you visiting the
11 next day.

12 It was very stressful for our
13 family. We even had one psychiatrist tell us that
14 she was faking it. When they told me that I said,
15 "Well, good. Then you can go back to wherever you
16 came from, and we won't have to talk anymore." And
17 I'm sorry, but that was the politest thing that I
18 could think of saying at the moment. I wanted to
19 share that.

20 In NWT we don't have any
21 addictions or long-term mental health facilities.
22 When a person with mental illness has a problem,
23 they put them in the hospital for a while, but they
24 can't stay there for long. The hospital is no fix.
25 So Angie bounced around from group home to group

1 home quite a few times. And our social service
2 programs are getting cut because of funding. And
3 there are a lot of programs that are
4 (indiscernible) could be sponsoring, training
5 Northern people to stay here, people that want to
6 stay here.

7 The people that want to take that
8 program, maybe they don't want to go down south to
9 learn it. They've got family, and they've got
10 children to look after. I would like to see them
11 stay up here and learn a profession. If Angie
12 wasn't -- if she hadn't gone missing, in one week
13 she was booked to go down south because they
14 couldn't look after her here anymore.

15 She was just in and out of the
16 hospital, group home to group home. When they told
17 me that, I just couldn't believe that we would have
18 to send her down south, that there was no place
19 here. I had to write everything out the last
20 couple of days. I'm sorry.

21 Another issue I would like to talk
22 about is the RCMP, when they did their search. I
23 know you guys have probably heard a lot of horror
24 stories about the RCMP's investigations, and that
25 is not our case. You won't hear any RCMP bashing.

1 We are proud of the way that they did that. The
2 RCMP went around. Not just the RCMP, but there was
3 off-duty officers, firemen, bylaw officers, and
4 just volunteers traveling. Volunteers went door-
5 to-door for blocks around us that night, looking
6 for her. They did a fantastic job, and I would
7 just like to thank them.

8 The community of Yellowknife also
9 put on a search, our own search. And when some
10 friends of ours started organizing it, we thought
11 there was going to be 50 or 60 people show up. And
12 it turned out. There was, like, 250 people. It
13 was just incredible. Our family is so proud of our
14 community.

15 The was two issues that I had,
16 though. One was that they never closed down the
17 highway and did a search. There is only one road
18 out of Yellowknife. And I was hoping that they
19 would close the road at the Mackenzie Ferry at that
20 time. But that didn't happen.

21 And the second was, they found a
22 coat in a bush area that they believed to be
23 Angie's. And on numerous occasions I had asked for
24 DNA sample of that coat, just to determine that it
25 was hers and to see if there was anybody else's DNA

1 on that coat. Today, that is still an outstanding
2 issue. There was a private lab that wanted to look
3 at it. And we kind of had our hopes up there, but
4 the RCMP didn't want to allow that, because any DNA
5 that was found on that coat would not be admissible
6 in court because it wasn't an RCMP lab that took
7 the result. This is what I've been told. That was
8 very frustrating. We thought something was going
9 to happen.

10 This is my last one. I just want
11 to acknowledge Kathy and Candice, our sons Byron
12 (ph) and Brett, for all the pain and suffering that
13 they have gone through. Times have been very hard
14 on us. I can see it in your eyes, and I can hear
15 it in your voices every day. I just want to let
16 them know I'm proud of them.

17 In closing, I would just like to
18 leave you with a story about Angie. Her name was
19 Pitchulak (ph). One day, I was visiting her up in
20 the third floor of the hospital. And we were
21 sitting on a couch, and she looks at me and says,
22 "Dad, I want you to buy me a ring."

23 And I said, "What kind of ring?"

24 And she said, "Here, I'll show
25 you." So she went and got this magazine. And she

1 brought it to me and showed me it.

2 And I was looking at it, and it
3 was a father and daughter ring. And I looked at
4 it, and I said, "Angie, that's \$269. Are you
5 crazy?"

6 And she, kind of, looked around
7 the room and says, "Well, a little." (Laughter)

8 We had a really good laugh. And
9 we were laughing so loud the nurse came in to see
10 if everything was all right. That is all I got to
11 say right now.

12 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Dean, can
13 I just ask you a couple of questions about some of
14 the things you shared with us?

15 MR. DEAN MEYER: Yes.

16 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: You were
17 talking about the community search and the fact
18 that so many people came. Was there more than one
19 search, or was it all just, sort of, immediately
20 after Angela disappeared?

21 MR. DEAN MEYER: Well, how that
22 developed was, every night I used to go out. It
23 was at the end of November, it was getting close to
24 dark season, but every night I used to go out. And
25 I would walk to the bush and through the snow and

1 to the ditches, trying to find her.

2 And a friend of mine spotted me
3 one time, and they talked to me the next day and
4 asked if they could start a community search. So
5 it was just friends of ours that started it.

6 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And you
7 were saying that the community -- not just the
8 community, but the police services and fire
9 services were all very helpful in assisting with
10 the search. Were there posters other than the ones
11 that you guys made? How did you guys use social
12 media? What were the ways that you were sharing
13 the message that you were looking for Angela?

14 MR. DEAN MEYER: Candice and they
15 made up posters and went around and put them all
16 over town. All the businesses supported us, and
17 Crime Stoppers was also involved in it.

18 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I only
19 have one more question. And then I am going to,
20 maybe, ask Candice some questions if she is up for
21 it.

22 I am just going to also just --
23 just a friendly reminder that while we are in
24 hearings, while families are sharing their truths,
25 if we could kindly put our ringers off, because it

1 does disrupt when families are trying to talk.

2 Thank you.

3 Sorry, Dean. When you went to
4 visit and something you had said about -- both of
5 you -- and either of you can answer this. When
6 Angela was in the hospital, and she was being moved
7 around, do you think that the knowledge of her
8 having to go down south upset her? Did she know
9 that she was, maybe, going to be going down south?

10 MR. DEAN MEYER: We talked about
11 that. She knew she was going. It didn't seem to
12 bother her, though. Like, not to the point where
13 she would just get up and run away. It was -- she,
14 actually, was looking forward to it, because going
15 down south was always a special thing for us. We
16 don't travel that much as a family, but she
17 probably remembered as younger, all seven of us --
18 there would be six or seven of us jump in a Ford
19 little van and take off down south.

20 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: You had
21 mentioned the idea of her having to go there,
22 though, because there was not support here, was
23 daunting. What kind of hardship would that have
24 been for you guys to go visit her if she had been
25 moved down south?

1 MR. DEAN MEYER: When we were
2 first -- when they were talking about sending her
3 south, me and Kathy were talking about it. She was
4 working for an airline at the time, so we did have
5 access to passes and stuff. But what really hurt
6 me was -- and I'm not going to tell you the exact
7 times -- but there was visitation rights. And we
8 were only allowed to go see her so many times a
9 year. But I don't remember the facts about that,
10 so I don't want to comment on that.

11 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: But just
12 the idea that, as a parent, you would have to
13 engage in how many times you would be allowed to
14 visit her, was frustrating. Is that fair to say?

15 MR. DEAN MEYER: Yes.

16 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And is it
17 okay, Candice? Can I ask you a couple of
18 questions, please?

19 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Absolutely.

20 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you
21 for coming today, Candice.

22 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Thank you.

23 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I
24 understand you guys -- your mom had shared with us
25 that both you and Angela had a lot of the same

1 friends growing up. I just wanted to ask you,
2 first, if you wanted to share any fond memories or
3 stories or anything about Angela before I ask you a
4 couple of questions about social media and how you
5 have helped looking for Angela.

6 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Yes.
7 Absolutely. Saturdays was sister Saturdays for her
8 and I. I would pick her up after work, and we went
9 for a drive and coffee kind of date every week.
10 And, not to mention, even throughout the week, she
11 would come stop by my work and visit me just to
12 stop in and say hi and called all the time.

13 You know, we go visiting family
14 and friends together a lot and just -- she was a
15 big presence. I wanted to be involved with her
16 especially after, like, being in and out of the
17 hospital and stuff. It was really important for me
18 to -- I don't know -- keep some common ground.
19 Family and close friends were very important to
20 her.

21 She just loved to brighten up your
22 day. Even when we were walking down the street,
23 she could go and make friends. It was incredible.
24 She would go up and say hi to a random person and
25 make them smile. It was so incredible.

1 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I
2 understand you are the older sister; right?

3 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Yes.

4 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So when
5 you were little, you shared a lot of friends. Can
6 you tell us a little bit about -- because your mom
7 was explaining, when mental illness hit her, it hit
8 her quick, and it developed really fast. Because
9 you were closer in age to her and you were close as
10 a sister, what did you see? What did you watch her
11 going through, and how were you able to help her or
12 be with her?

13 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Well, kind of,
14 like, her manners would change and, kind of, a
15 little more distant. She started to notice people
16 started to call less and stop by the house a little
17 less often. I think that really made her feel a
18 little down. I could see that was affecting her.

19 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: You talked
20 about the sister Saturdays. Just because you are
21 her sister and you love her, you wanted to spend
22 time with her, and that is obvious when you talk
23 about her. What were the other things that you
24 guys would try to do just to stay in touch? And
25 you said she would come visit you at work. What

1 was that like? Would she just walk and come stop
2 at where you were working?

3 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Yes. She
4 would just, kind of, walk right in. And the
5 security guard, kind of, knew who she was already.
6 And they would stop and chat a bit. And she would
7 come in and like, "Oh, I'm just in between my mail
8 runs and want to come say hi," and, "Can I call you
9 later? Can I come over?" And, "Oh, yes." This,
10 that.

11 It was always just quick
12 conversations, like, "Okay. Got to go. I'm busy."
13 Or it was just, like, "I'll call you on my break,
14 though, or I'll call you when I get off work." And
15 it was just, like -- it was so cute. It was so
16 adorable. I miss it so much.

17 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I imagine,
18 because you guys seemed to be in constant contact.

19 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Yes.
20 Absolutely.

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Your dad
22 was saying that when your sister went missing, it
23 was you and your mom that did most of the social
24 media and the posters. Can you tell us a little
25 bit about that? Like, what were some of the things

1 you did to let people know and what has happened
2 since? Like, do you guys still do things on social
3 media?

4 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Oh, yes. Even
5 now, I absolutely keep sharing and sharing and
6 reposting. And I talk about her as much as I
7 possibly can. Yes. I remember I went into work on
8 my day off, and my boss, Kelly (ph), she was like,
9 "What on Earth are you doing here this early?"

10 It was, like -- it was the Sunday
11 after everything happened, and I was just -- I can
12 just remember hitting up the printer and printing
13 off all these crazy posters of Angela. And just,
14 like, I got to put them as many places as I can
15 around the house.

16 And it was just total disbelief.
17 I can remember there being so much shock. Like,
18 everybody was like, "Angie. We can't find Angie,"
19 or "We haven't heard from Angie," or "She went
20 missing, and she left the house." And everyone was
21 just like, "What on Earth? How? How? How?" And
22 to this day, some people stop me on the street, and
23 they're like, "Angela?"

24 And I'm like, "No. I'm not Angie.
25 But thank you very much. Thank you for

1 recognizing." Some people I don't even know just
2 stop me and they're like, "Is there anything? Have
3 you heard anything?" And oh, man. That is one of
4 the hardest questions, I think, ever. It's, like,
5 I don't know how else to say we haven't heard
6 anything. To say that every time, it just brings
7 everything back so much.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Is there
9 anything else that you want to share or add?
10 Either about Angela or what happened when she went
11 missing or since then?

12 MS. CANDICE MEYER: Mom and dad
13 covered a lot. I just miss my sister so much. I
14 don't know what else to say.

15 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: That is
16 okay. Kathy, can I ask you a couple more
17 questions?

18 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes.

19 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: We heard
20 Dean, actually, make some really good
21 recommendations in relation to services and stuff,
22 in terms of what was available and what was not
23 available. And I want to talk to you a little bit
24 about ideas you may have or your experience as a
25 mother.

1 What is something you could share
2 with other parents that -- what you went through --
3 that would maybe be helpful or that they should be
4 aware of?

5 MS. KATHY MEYER: Just keep after
6 the doctors and the psychiatrists, I think. And
7 maybe to our politicians, perhaps. And take a good
8 look at the extent of the mental health issues we
9 have in the North or all across Canada, I think. I
10 don't know what else. And get respite help, if you
11 can, especially if they are under you're care.

12 That's another thing I should
13 mention, as well, is, I am her guardian, like,
14 through the public trustee, because she was not
15 capable of making decisions that a normal -- like,
16 any other person would. So I was her guardian. I
17 am her guardian. It was difficult for me, at
18 first, to have someone else care for Angela,
19 especially before she became an adult. Being a
20 mother, you know? But, sometimes, you have to let
21 that go. You need the rest. It is what I would
22 recommend, I think.

23 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: That is
24 helpful. In terms of other supports, can you share
25 with us -- I know the community was very helpful.

1 Police services were helpful. Have you guys been
2 able to access help, emotional help, spiritual
3 help, counseling since Angela disappeared? Have
4 you been able to tap into resources that would help
5 you as a family?

6 MS. KATHY MEYER: My family, I
7 know, they are not quite ready. It is a very
8 difficult decisions to make to render yourself
9 helpless, but I sought help not long after Angela
10 went missing. And it seemed to just -- I went for
11 about a year, year and a half, I think. But it
12 seemed like there was -- what else can we do? So,
13 you know?

14 Collectively, as a family, no. We
15 haven't. It's very difficult to make that
16 decision. But I think that it is important that a
17 family should.

18 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And in
19 terms of the resources up here, would it help or
20 what would help your family access that? Does
21 there need to be more resources? I understand the
22 family is not at all criticizing any of the
23 existing resources, but what other resources would,
24 maybe, help your family towards healing and also
25 towards finding out more answers about Angela's

1 disappearance?

2 MS. KATHY MEYER: I think so.

3 Yes, I do. As a mother, yes.

4 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Do you
5 have any ideas what would be helpful?

6 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes, I do. And
7 I think we are suffering from PTSD, our family is.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And it is
9 obvious by what Dean shared with you and how proud
10 he is that you guys have a lot of love, and you
11 support each other well. But just if there were
12 more supports available for each of you,
13 individually, or as a unit, that would be helpful?

14 And I noticed in some of the
15 pictures that were up, there were quite a few of
16 them camping and out-on-the-land pictures. And I
17 just had a quick question about any type of
18 services that could have been used with Angela for
19 out on the land. In some areas there are out-on-
20 the-land type programs that are designed for mental
21 health issues. Would that have helped her if it
22 had been available up here more regularly?

23 MS. KATHY MEYER: After Angela got
24 sick, we would go out berry picking and stuff. But
25 she could not stand to be out there. So it was

1 hard for her to do anything out on the land, out in
2 the bush. She didn't really enjoy it like she did.

3 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: That is
4 good to know.

5 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes. She
6 enjoyed it when she was younger. But it seemed
7 after the illness, she would rather not.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I only
9 have one more question in relation to when Angela
10 disappeared, and Dean brought up this point. They
11 would not shut down the road or put up a stop. For
12 people who are not from here or anyone who might be
13 listening across the country, can you explain to us
14 a little bit about the highway in and out and where
15 the Mackenzie area, at that time, was and what it
16 would have meant to put a roadblock up?

17 MR. DEAN MEYER: Well, the last
18 place that Angie was seen was at an intersection,
19 and it was, kind of, a truck route. So as soon as
20 I heard that, I thought, "Well, we should shut the
21 road down." There was only one road leaving
22 Yellowknife and there is about -- there was a ferry
23 at the Fort Providence Mackenzie River crossing.
24 There is a bridge there now, but there was a ferry.
25 And I thought it was running intermittent, the

1 ferry.

2 But the RCMP felt that she
3 wouldn't have been able to get out that way, like,
4 if she was taken or went out, because the ferry
5 wasn't constant. But it was running intermittent.
6 So it would have been easy to check the vehicles
7 at the ferry crossing.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: How far to
9 town is the ferry crossing? Like, how long does it
10 take to drive there from here?

11 MR. DEAN MEYER: It's about a
12 three-hour drive.

13 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I just
14 want to offer the family another opportunity if
15 there is anything else they want to share. If the
16 Commissioners -- if they have any more ideas or
17 recommendations before I ask the Commissioners if
18 they have questions for you.

19 And so I would like to offer the
20 Commissioners an opportunity to ask questions or
21 make comments to the Meyer family.

22 --- QUESTIONS BY THE COMMISSIONERS

23 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:
24 Thank you. I do have some questions, if you do not
25 mind me asking. Some for clarification, and some

1 to, sort of, gain more understanding. I am just
2 going to go through my notes because I always, sort
3 of, write questions as I am listening.

4 You talked a lot about the limited
5 resources when she started developing the symptoms,
6 and you started recognizing this. And she did not
7 have a lot of access to the services until she was
8 an adult. Why is that? Why when she was not yet
9 18? Was it because the services were not available
10 or, like, the do not exist here or --

11 MS. KATHY MEYER: There was really
12 -- I imagine they are available now, hopefully, for
13 our young people. But then it was really, really
14 quite difficult to access anything for Angela and
15 she -- there was very limited availability for her,
16 for her age I suppose. She was seeing one
17 psychiatrist, took her in. But, of course, the
18 psychiatrist retired and left town and it was after
19 that. We would see a lot of (indiscernible).
20 Nothing constant.

21 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: You
22 mentioned that it was that way a lot at the
23 hospital, too, even after she was 18. A lot of
24 change in the people that were caring for her and
25 helping her. Is that very common in the North?

1 MS. KATHY MEYER: I think so.

2 There is really no consistency with the care.

3 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: And
4 Dean, to your point, there is not a lot of training
5 of local people to provide those services. Is that
6 turnover and transition because it is mostly people
7 from out of the territory that come and fill those
8 roles?

9 MR. DEAN MEYER: Yes, it is. Most
10 of the psychiatrists -- I don't think she had any
11 of the psychiatrists that was actually from
12 Yellowknife or a northerner.

13 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I
14 understand you are originally from Nunavut; is that
15 correct, Kathy?

16 MS. KATHY MEYER: No. I'm from
17 the Northwest Territories.

18 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:
19 Okay.

20 MS. KATHY MEYER: I've been here
21 since before Nunavut.

22 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:
23 Okay.

24 MS. KATHY MEYER: Well, I do have
25 roots, there, in Taloyoak (ph). I have a sister in

1 Iqaluit who could not be here because of the
2 weather, but I hope she still comes because I miss
3 her. Yes. I come from quite a large family.

4 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Is
5 your family members of the land claim in the
6 Nunavut Territory?

7 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes, we are.

8 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: And
9 Angela is, as well?

10 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes, she is.

11 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Are
12 there any services that she and you could have
13 gotten? I know for some families, I have heard how
14 hard it is to get services when you are outside of
15 your land claim territory. Is that something that
16 you have experienced?

17 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes, it is. I
18 should mention, you know, not long after Angela
19 went missing, Victim Services, Marie (ph), and one
20 other lady came over. And she has been a constant
21 in our life. I'm going to be very honest here. I
22 thought I would hear from Pauktuutit, the Inuit
23 women's organization. But I never received a call
24 to this day from them. And I am a little
25 disappointed.

1 And I'm of mixed blood, so I don't
2 know if that has anything to do with it. I have
3 experienced that a lot in my life. Just because my
4 father is part white, my mom is Inuk, I've known
5 marginalization for a long time. Yes. That's
6 where I am.

7 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:
8 Thank you. And I just want to understand and be
9 clear for sure that they were sending her for
10 residential care to another facility or to a
11 hospital?

12 MS. KATHY MEYER: Yes. In
13 Edmonton. To independent living with other
14 members. I really don't think that was a good idea
15 because her illness really, really wasn't
16 manifesting. She would have been -- she was ready
17 to go, or it was in the works for her. I should
18 also mention that about a month before that, I took
19 a cash advance out at work to pay for an assessment
20 at a psychology centre in Edmonton. It was told to
21 about me, but the government would not cover the
22 cost. So I paid for the assessment.

23 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:
24 Right now, are there more services here? Or is it
25 still the case that to get more of these services,

1 you have to go to Edmonton?

2 MS. KATHY MEYER: I think I've
3 seen a few through work with the family -- the
4 employee assistance programs. I have gone to a few
5 of the psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors,
6 whatever. But there was never really one that fit
7 for me. And it was, like, it was, kind of, rushed
8 and to please, rate their work.

9 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I
10 think that sort of leads to my final question and
11 that is about the continued support you are getting
12 and your engagement with the police. I understand
13 that their work continues. How is the
14 communication? How are you getting information?
15 What is your relationship in an ongoing way?

16 MR. DEAN MEYER: Well, since
17 Pitchulak went missing, we've had about three
18 officers now, I think, taken over the case. The
19 fellow we've got that is assigned to the case now
20 is very good to us. He keeps in touch with me all
21 the time. He was the one that I was talking to
22 about getting the DNA from the private lab. And I
23 think he hinted that there was going to be a
24 recommendation coming from this Inquiry about that,
25 about using DNA. And I don't know if you know

1 anything about that.

2 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: We
3 have not heard from them, no.

4 MR. DEAN MEYER: But no. He's
5 been very good. I have had no problems with the
6 way the RCMP has been handling it since.

7 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:
8 Thank you. I think those are all my questions.
9 Michele may have some. I just want to thank you
10 for bringing the photos. And I have seen the
11 posters and the social media. And all that must
12 continue.

13 I also want to just say to those
14 listening, you have heard from this family. You
15 have heard from Kathy and Dean and Candice. And if
16 you know something, speak up. Speak out. You
17 deserve answers. And I just want to thank you for
18 sharing with us.

19 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:
20 (French spoken) Thank you. Before I ask some
21 questions, I want to say thank you. And I am very
22 humbled and honoured to be here. When I left home
23 and started this journey with you, I opened my
24 mind, my spirit, and my heart to absorb every word
25 that you shared to us. We are just tools so Canada

1 can hear your story and your struggle. But your
2 hope, also, and your visions. I thank you so much
3 for that.

4 And what really struck me or
5 touched me, it is Kathy, when you talk about, we
6 are suffering of PTSD. That concerns me and a
7 concern I'm sure my colleagues, they will read your
8 testimony, because it is a reality. But also, what
9 is very, I will say, shocking, coming from the
10 North, also, is the difficulty to have access for
11 proper services, or programs, and so on. And it is
12 important. We took good notes about the lack of
13 services.

14 For those who are here, the
15 services are good. But for those that are missing,
16 like you mentioned about the treatment or
17 addictions -- centre for addictions or mental
18 health. It must be hard for a family to let go of
19 a daughter or children to seek help far from that
20 circle, that family.

21 You mentioned, also, something
22 very important. The Inquiry listened. I received
23 a lot of information or facts or stories about the
24 relationship between the survivors and the families
25 and the police. And you mentioned that you had a

1 good relationship or a good interaction with the
2 RCMP. And I think we need to hear what went good
3 so we can propose those recommendations for other
4 places that did not go the way it should go. So
5 can you share or elaborate more about that good
6 relationship you had?

7 MR. DEAN MEYER: Well, when she
8 first went missing, I commented on the search that
9 they did. And they were in touch with us all the
10 time as it was going on. I mean, they went door to
11 door with pamphlets and asking if anybody had seen
12 her for blocks around us. And then they also got
13 their search dog. It took a long time to get the
14 search dog here. That was another thing that I had
15 a bit of an issue with. But they also had their
16 search dog here. They were always in contact with
17 us. That's what I liked about it.

18 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:
19 Okay. And you mentioned also about the DNA. It
20 is, of course, something we did not see coming from
21 the RCMP. They explained to you that they cannot
22 do the test? Or they will not do the test? What
23 did they say?

24 MR. DEAN MEYER: They said they
25 couldn't -- wouldn't do the test. I think when

1 they found the jacket, it was that time of year
2 when they just figured that she had just taken off
3 the jacket and walked away and died of hypothermia.

4 So I, personally, walked that area and a mile
5 around it every day all winter, all spring, and all
6 summer. And there was no sign of her there.

7 But I still, today, I don't know
8 why they won't do it. I think -- the last time I
9 talked with the RCMP they hinted that something was
10 coming out of this Inquiry that might be able to
11 help us.

12 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:
13 (French spoken) And just to finish, you mentioned
14 that you met some psychologists or people to help
15 you to go through this. What would fit for you?
16 What would be the best approach or the best thing
17 or a good fit, I guess, we say in English?

18 MS. KATHY MEYER: I think for
19 young people in the North to have well-trained
20 psychologists for the young people -- that are
21 aimed at young people, because there are so many
22 influences, as we know now. I wish I could do
23 something. I don't know. We do need more help for
24 our youngsters, yes. This is all I can say.

25 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: You

1 said a lot and very beautiful, your beautiful
2 family. (French spoken) And we will honour your
3 truth.

4 MS. KATHY MEYER: Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:
6 (French spoken)

7 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I believe
8 if there are no further questions and the family
9 has nothing else to add, I do understand that there
10 may be some gifts for the family?

11 MS. BERNIE POITRAS: I was asked
12 to explain these beautiful handmade scarves that
13 were made by the Native Women's Association of the
14 Northwest Territories for the family here that are
15 testifying and also to explain about the eagle
16 feathers. I wish my niece was here. These eagle
17 feathers started their journey from my home in
18 Hidiguay (ph). And then the matriarchs picked them
19 on the shorelines and that.

20 So over 400 were donated at the
21 beginning of the hearings, so now it's made it all
22 the way to seashell. And literally, the eagle
23 wings had been donated to where my niece is, the
24 one that does the work with them. And these are
25 the gifts that have been given from all across

1 Canada. Also from family members in the
2 communities, too. So these are the feathers and
3 that. I just wanted to explain that to you, the
4 family.

5 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I
6 believe there is also some Labrador tea as a gift.
7 We also just want to thank the support people for
8 being here for the family.

9 At this point I would just like to
10 request an adjournment until our next hearing at
11 1:00 p.m. There may be announcements, but if we
12 could just adjourn until 1:00, that would be great.
13 Thank you.

14 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:
15 Thank you. We will adjourn and take a break until
16 after lunch. So 1:00 o'clock, we will be back here
17 in this room. And lunch is served here out in the
18 hallway. And there are tables in the back to sit
19 and eat. Thank you.

20 --- Exhibits (code: P01P09P0101)

21 Exhibit 1: Folder
22 containing 93 digital images
23 provided by the family and
24 displayed during their public
25 hearing.

1 --- Lunch recess taken at 11:35 a.m.

2 --- Whereupon resuming at 1:00 p.m.

3 **Hearing #2**

4 **Witnesses: Lesla Semmler and Esther Semmler**

5 **In relation to Joyce Semmler**

6 **Heard by Commissioners Qajaq Robinson, Brian**

7 **Eyolfson and Michèle Audette**

8 **Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe**

9 **Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge-keepers: Lillian**

10 **Elias, Esther Semmler, Josef Carnojursky, Laureen**

11 **"Blu" Waters Gaudio, Bernie Poitras Williams and**

12 **Kathy Louis**

13 **Clerk: Trudy Mckinnon**

14 **Registrar: Bryan Zandberg**

15 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good
16 afternoon. Commissioners, I would like to
17 introduce you to the next family that will be
18 sharing a story with you. I am just going to
19 introduce each of them to you as they are sitting
20 with me. Only two are actually witnesses, and the
21 rest are support.

22 So today, here in support of Lesla
23 and Esther, right beside me, is Dorothy McLeren
24 (ph). And beside her is Esther Semmler who will be
25 sharing some of the stories about Joyce Semmler.

1 And the family calls her Joy. Her formal name is
2 Joyce, but the family refers to her as Joy.

3 And then we have Lesa Semmler, and
4 beside her is her husband Josef Carnojursky. And
5 also in support is Lillian Elias. So the witnesses
6 would like to swear on the Bible.

7 MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Esther, we
8 can start with you. Esther, do you swear that the
9 evidence you will give today will be the truth, the
10 whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you
11 God? Okay. Thank you. Hi, Lesa.

12 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Hi.

13 MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Do you swear
14 that the evidence you will give today will be the
15 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,
16 so help you God? Okay. Thank you.

17 --- ESTHER SEMMLER, SWORN

18 --- LESA SEMMLER, SWORN

19 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Today Lesa
20 and Esther are going to be sharing the story of
21 Joy. But before we, actually, get into any of
22 that, I want to ask Lesa if she could give a little
23 introduction of herself and her family members,
24 here, to the Commissioners.

25 MS. LESA SEMMLER: All right. So

1 beside me, I have my grandmother Esther. And this
2 is my mother's mom. Beside her is my grandmother
3 Esther's sister, Dorothy, and my husband, Joseph,
4 is here. And behind us is my grandma and Dorothy's
5 cousin and my elder. And we are all from Inuvik,
6 Northwest Territories.

7 My grandmother lives here, in
8 Yellowknife with her sister, Dorothy. But our
9 family is originally from the Delta. So we are
10 Delta people, and we have a huge family in the
11 Delta. So we have come from very large families,
12 and so we can't all be here. We didn't have enough
13 room in this room.

14 So some of the things that we are
15 going to talk about, and I am going to reference a
16 lot, is my great grandparents, too, as part of this
17 story, like, of our story is her in-laws. They are
18 my great grandparents, Agnes and Slim, who were the
19 lead caregivers of me. But I was cared for by lots
20 of my family, growing up, so I think I had lots of
21 parents, growing up.

22 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Can you
23 tell us a little bit about your family's background
24 in terms of -- you are in the Delta region, but
25 there are different people in the Delta region

1 there --

2 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Yes. So we are
3 ["Gwich'aluits"] We come from [Gwich'in]
4 background, so we have on my grandmother's side,
5 like, her mother is half [Gwich'in], half
6 Inuvialuit. And then on my grandfather's side, my
7 mom's father, his background is my granny was
8 [Vuntut Gwitchin] from Yukon. But everyone thought
9 she was Inuvialuit.

10 Even I did, until I was older,
11 because with her father and all that they grew up
12 around the coast and copper mine area and things
13 like that. He worked for Hudson's Bay and was a
14 trader. And her husband was also a fur trader, so
15 that's kind of how they met each other. A
16 [Gwich'in] woman and somebody from the U.S.A. met
17 each other in copper mine area.

18 So our family is [Gwich'in] and
19 Inuvialuit. And we have strong people in our
20 family. We have, like, one of the people, like, my
21 granny Agnes who raised me, she is a pioneer and
22 lots of different, like, Native women. And she was
23 one of the first presidents of COP, Committee of
24 Original Peoples (ph). And they were the group
25 that pushed forward. And now we have the

1 Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, is our land claim
2 and she was very -- if people know me, they always
3 say, "You are so much like your granny. You say
4 whatever you want, don't matter." It was bad to
5 swear. I watch old news clippings of her, and
6 sometimes there's beep, beep, beep. (Laughter)

7 So I think in us and from both
8 sides, we have strong voices and strong women. My
9 grandmother is a strong woman. She raised her kids
10 as a single mother and, you know, just -- and we're
11 all very vocal. Sometimes we don't realize we
12 might hurt your feelings because we are just so
13 blunt and straightforward. But we don't mean to
14 be. We just don't beat around the bush, kind of.
15 That's sometimes - but I think we all have big,
16 caring hearts and care for everybody.

17 And I think we hold in a lot of
18 that for everybody else's pain. Like I was telling
19 my husband, "Like, I need to be here afterwards for
20 the other families because I'm a helper." That's
21 the type of person I am. And in order for me to
22 heal, I need to help other people. So that's why
23 my 17 years as a nurse and now working for my own
24 people and just that's, kind of, how we were
25 raised. That's how -- just how we are, how we

1 survive.

2 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you
3 for sharing that background. It is helpful. It is
4 funny because we sit here today in Yellowknife, but
5 people are watching all over the country. So
6 knowing a little bit about the northern geography,
7 I think, is important. So for people to
8 understand, you have to fly down here to
9 participate. And that when you are up on the
10 Delta, you are literally on the coast of the
11 Northwest Territories of the Arctic Ocean, are some
12 key things. So thank you. I know that what you
13 really want to do today is you want to talk about
14 Joy.

15 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Yes.

16 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And so the
17 starting point that we wanted to cover was, if you
18 and Esther could share some of Joy's strengths and
19 tell us a bit about Joy.

20 MS. LESA SEMMLER: So Joy, like my
21 grandma says, legally when they had to register
22 them back in the day, and we all know how when the
23 government and she registered her, her name was
24 Joy. But they register her as Joyce. So anything
25 that says Joyce, my grandma and me always say, "Her

1 in the Delta, we have lots of muskrats. And that's
2 one of the things that I remember, is in the
3 springtime, being able to go out ratting. Because
4 even whether she was at school or she would come
5 home, we would always go ratting.

6 And my granny and her -- and if it
7 was my uncles that were coming out -- because my
8 mom was always in the boat, either skinning or
9 shooting when they would go hunting. And then we
10 would come home and so many muskrats. And we would
11 have to skin them and stretch them and she was just
12 -- that was her. She did everything.

13 But one thing that I always hear
14 is, you know, she was kind. She was beautiful.
15 She was -- everybody loved her. But she always
16 figured she could fix everybody. And, maybe, when
17 she died, that was her weakness, because she
18 thought she could talk to anybody and fix any
19 problems by just talking.

20 And so and I remember my grandma
21 saying, you know, she was always so close with her
22 siblings. She was the oldest of the five, but she
23 has an older sister which she also grew up close
24 with. They were very close. And I think when my
25 mom was murdered, I think a lot of her siblings,

1 you know, I was young so my grandma had to be there
2 for them to cope. And usually --

3 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: When this
4 happened, one of my boys was down in Edmonton,
5 going to school, and he started phoning me. "Mom,
6 what hospital is the guy in?"

7 He phoned me four or five times a
8 day and I kept saying, "No. I'm not telling you."
9 And finally I asked him when he phoned again, "Why
10 do you keep asking? Why do you want to know what
11 hospital he is in?"

12 "Mom, it would be so easy to pull
13 the plug."

14 I said, "No." I said, "I'm not
15 going to have this guy take another one of my
16 kids." So I talked to him, and I said, "You know,
17 I want this guy to live, get through what happened
18 to him, get well, and live to be an old man. And
19 this is going to be his torture for the rest of his
20 life." What he took away from us for nothing, just
21 out of being jealous.

22 Another thing, when he wrote me a
23 letter asking me for forgiveness. To me, to this
24 day, when I think about it, I try to find some way,
25 maybe. No. My answer is always how? I can't. It

1 just hurts too much. But I don't like to sound
2 like I'm a mean person, but she was my daughter and
3 the most beautiful -- thanks to her, she left me
4 Lesla. And Lesla -- now I can see Lesla as doing
5 exactly what her mom wanted to do. I love you.

6 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: I love you too.

7 Yes. So I think when we, you know, she was only
8 25 when she -- but she, you know, she was -- she
9 had me when she was 17 years old. And I was born
10 here in Yellowknife because my grandma was living
11 here. And then, you know, my dad and her were
12 young, so it didn't work out. And home for her was
13 Inuvik, so she packed me up and moved me back to
14 Inuvik. I think I was what -- three months?

15 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: Yes.

16 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: Three months
17 old and went home to Granny and Papa's, that's
18 Agnes and Slim. And she went back to school
19 because that's how my granny preached always, "You
20 need to go to school. You need to finish school.
21 You need to -- " So my mom, my grandma, everybody
22 is always about education, you know? So she went
23 back to school.

24 And I just stayed with my
25 grandparents in Inuvik while she was at school.

1 And then when she wasn't in school, she would come
2 back to Inuvik, and I would stay with her. But I
3 was so used to being with Granny and Papa that I
4 would always be like, "Okay. You can bring me home
5 now?"

6 And she would always say, "No.
7 You can stay with me."

8 And I would be, "I'm going to go
9 home now." But she was close with all -- like, my
10 aunt Dorothy, everybody. Like, even on her dad's
11 side, growing up, my granny used to always have,
12 like, she even sent her down while she was younger,
13 before she had me to her daughter who lived just
14 outside of Seattle in Gig Harbor. And she had a
15 farm with horses, so she used to ride horses. And
16 she had all these medals from riding horses.

17 And she figure skated. And my
18 granny in Inuvik had all these medals of her figure
19 skating awards. And I remember when I was probably
20 two or three, she would make me these stupid figure
21 skating dresses, at the time, and throw me on the
22 Dave Jones Arena (ph), freezing, trying to teach me
23 how to skate so I could be a figure skater.

24 Well, I didn't end up being the
25 figure skater. It's my daughter that's the figure

1 skater. So it skipped a generation. But that's
2 how she was. She was always sewing. Like, we
3 still have some of her sewing. And she loved to
4 sew. Like, some of her pictures, you'll see that
5 she has her homemade outfits back then that they
6 used to make. For being 25, she could do anything.

7 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Esther,
8 did you want to add anything about Joy or a fond
9 memory about Joy before we talk about what
10 happened?

11 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: Them days in
12 Inuvik, you had no place to go where you could buy
13 dresses, so Granny used to always make her figure
14 skating dresses. But this time, it was my turn
15 because, I don't know, she got picked to go down to
16 a competition, and she wanted two figure skating
17 dresses. And of all the material she could pick,
18 she picked that -- how do you say? Felt or --
19 Velvet.

20 Oh, my God. I was up until 5:00
21 o'clock in the morning making this dress, and here
22 she is just sound asleep. I finally got it done.
23 Oh, my God. My heart was just beating because she
24 was so fussy, too, about everything. When she
25 decided to try it on, both dresses fit perfect.

1 She was happy. So we sent her off, and she came
2 home with a medal, anyway.

3 Lesla said she liked going out.
4 She liked going out camping and stuff like that.
5 When her younger brother Larry (ph) got old enough,
6 when he got old enough to go out hunting, they used
7 to go out hunting. And I used to say, the boys
8 like her to go with them, because they don't have
9 to worry about skinning their muskrats when they
10 got home, because it was all done while they were
11 traveling and hunting at the same time. All they
12 had to do was stretch them.

13 So, you know, just stuff like
14 that. Just the way she always wanted to help
15 people. Even when Lesla was saying, when she first
16 was working in that group home. I guess her
17 supervisors, one day, start asking her, "Well, how
18 do you know so much about everything? Did you go
19 to school for this or take courses?"

20 And she said, "no. I learned it
21 from my mom and my grandma." Nana was my mother.
22 Granny was her dad's. So she said she learned it
23 from us. And her supervisor wanted to meet me. So
24 the next thing, she's phoning me. She says, "Mom,
25 can you cook supper, something for supper? I'm

1 going to bring my supervisor home to meet you."

2 You know, just stuff like that.

3 She was always wanting everybody
4 to just stick together and just be happy. She was
5 a happy person. Like her sewing. I remember one
6 time she made a pair of mukluks, and she was so
7 proud of them when she got them finished. She
8 said, "Come on, Mom. We have to go somewhere so I
9 can wear my mukluks and I can show them off."

10 So there was a meat draw going on
11 down at the (indiscernible). And we decided to go
12 down there. And everybody was looking at her and
13 she was like, "Don't look at my face. Look at my
14 legs. Look at my mukluks."

15 And everyone was going, "Okay."
16 (Laughter) Just stuff like that. This is what
17 keeps me going, you know, and the rest of my family
18 will always be here, my grandchildren.

19 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Lesa, can
20 I ask you some questions about when you were a kid
21 and when you and your mom were in Fort Smith?

22 MS. LESA SEMMLER: So when my mom
23 went to Fort Smith, she went there to take the
24 social work program at the college in Fort Smith.
25 And I think she was working at the women's jail at

1 the same time, while she was there, and going to
2 school.

3 And I was living in Inuvik. And I
4 think she felt that she was in a place where she
5 had a home, and she could take care of me, and I
6 would have my own room and that it would be okay
7 for me to go and live with her instead of living
8 with my grandparents, because that was, kind of,
9 always the plan.

10 My grandparents were there, but
11 they were my great grandparents, and they were
12 raising me young. And they were in their
13 seventies, so when you think about it, do you want
14 to be 80 taking care of a teenager and all that
15 kind of stuff? So I think her plan was to get her
16 schooling, get settled, and then be able to have a
17 place for me to come home to her. And so I was
18 there for about a year. I think it was almost a
19 year.

20 I left Inuvik, and I went to live
21 in Fort Smith with her. And you know, the first
22 day I was there, she had a party for me. And all
23 the kids in the neighbourhood were at my house when
24 I got home from the airport. And that's just how
25 she was. And the first little while was good, and

1 I had lots of friends. I was meeting lots of
2 people. I started school.

3 There was actually some kids there
4 that their families were from the Delta, as well,
5 like, so I knew some of them. And I always
6 remember my mom tried to have -- growing up with my
7 grandparents, my granny was sleeping during the day
8 and up at night. And my grandfather was always
9 home for breakfast, lunch, supper. He was like
10 that. And so when I went to live her, it was, I
11 had a cooked breakfast in the morning. When I got
12 home from school at lunch, there was always lunch
13 on the table ready to go, and supper. So
14 everything was just like how you would picture a
15 normal life.

16 And then the bad stuff started
17 happening. And, like I say, she was 25. I think
18 he was around the same age. And they go out and
19 then they come home. My babysitter would go home,
20 and the fighting would start. And in our house in
21 Forth Smith where we lived, was called Inran
22 Crescent (ph), I'm pretty sure that's -- like I
23 always say, I think I left that little eight-year-
24 old girl in Fort Smith. It was a long time ago.

25 So the past three years, like, all

1 So where we lived was, kind of,
2 outside of town. And most of the people that lived
3 out there, we were close. Like, all the kids
4 played together. And in our house, it was not
5 finished because it was a log house. So downstairs
6 was the living room and the kitchen and dining
7 room. And then upstairs were the two bedrooms and
8 the bathroom. We had no walls. We just had
9 framing.

10 So anything that went on in the
11 house, fighting, it wasn't that you could shut your
12 door and plug your ears and you know? So it was
13 just right there. And so being eight years old, it
14 just seemed like -- I can't remember if it was
15 every weekend or if it was every other weekend or
16 if it was once a month. But at that age, it was a
17 lot. There was lots of fighting. There was lots
18 of physical violence towards my mother. And I had
19 to watch it all and put my blankets over my head.

20 I always say, I was never hurt.
21 He never hurt me. But now that I'm an adult, I'm
22 thinking, just because he didn't touch me doesn't
23 mean he didn't hurt me. So the things that I had
24 seen and witnessed growing up and that's kind of
25 one of the things -- not even about this case.

1 Growing up in the North, growing
2 up in my community, it wasn't just in my house.
3 Like, we live in a small community. So when you
4 are in kindergarten, you're five, six years old.
5 You don't get walked to school. You walk to school
6 yourself. And when you are done after school, you
7 go play with your friends at their house. And
8 nobody is looking for you. You're not missing.
9 You're not lost. You just make sure you go home
10 for supper.

11 But even going into other friends'
12 houses, you see the violence, you see the drinking,
13 and you just start to think. At my home at my
14 grandparents, I didn't see it. But I would go into
15 other homes, and I saw it. So when I went to live
16 -- and sometimes, even when my mom was living in
17 Inuvik, I remember. And I remember I was in
18 kindergarten, because when she was living there,
19 she lived in Altan (ph). And she used to drive me
20 to school on her motorbike, and I thought I was the
21 coolest because my mom rode a motorbike.

22 And so I know that I was in
23 kindergarten, because she dropped me off at school
24 in kindergarten. And even then, the relationship
25 that she was in, I remember hearing fighting and

1 then coming into the porch, and her boyfriend is
2 beating her up. And I remember crying and saying,
3 "Stop."

4 And him turning around and looking
5 at me and telling me to shut up, "I'm not doing
6 anything to you. Get out of here. You are five
7 years old." And I remember the room. I remember
8 everything, like, I remember being told to get out
9 and shut up because I'm not hurting you.

10 So, you know, it's, like, five
11 years old. So it doesn't go away. And, you know,
12 we sometimes think, "Oh, they were kids. They're
13 not going to remember." But we remember. And so
14 that was my first time seeing my mom getting
15 assaulted in her relationship.

16 And then going to Fort Smith, it
17 was -- I remember him fighting with her and
18 dragging her around naked by her hair. And our
19 house was a log house, so, of course, the stairs
20 were logs, half logs. So dragging her down the
21 stairs and down at the bottom of the stairs was
22 where the gun rack was.

23 And you know, like, he would
24 always be fighting with her. And I was telling my
25 husband this. You know, you're a kid, and you

1 think you're just so smart. And I used to have
2 this little reflector thing that had really sharp
3 edges on one side. And after they would fight, I
4 would stick it under the sheet under his side of
5 the bed so that he could sit on it and get poked in
6 the ass. But that was, like, you know, I think I'm
7 just getting back at him for being mean to my mom.

8 And it's, kind of, what I had to do.

9 But I never told anybody, because
10 why would I? It happens in everybody's houses.
11 And as an eight-year-old kid, why would you tell
12 somebody something that is normal? It's, like, you
13 know, you just wake up the next day, and everything
14 is going to be good the next day and that you are
15 probably going to get treated way better. Even
16 myself, I remember.

17 And that's, kind of, some of the
18 things I say. Like, in my brain I always think I'm
19 mad at this person for taking my mother, but, you
20 know, he did treat me good other than the violence
21 that he had towards my mother. And I'll never
22 forget those nights where they were fighting. And
23 it's just the screams, her screams, and the blood
24 and trying to hide under my sheets because I have
25 no walls. And then sometimes trying to hide under

1 my bed, because I don't know if he's going to come
2 into my room and do something to me. That was how
3 it was the first few times, because I didn't know.
4 I didn't know.

5 But when I think about my
6 childhood other than that and the things that you
7 think about -- okay. Well, I did witness lots of
8 violence in different houses and in our community.
9 And when I went to Fort Smith, I saw it. Not in
10 my house, but some of my friends' houses too.
11 Women with their black eyes that were so common.
12 But we don't know any different as kids.

13 But there were lots of -- growing
14 up I think -- when I think about when I grew up,
15 what I always say is, I think my best times were
16 out ratting at the rat camp and being in the bush,
17 because I got to leave school for a month. But
18 even then, my granny used to make me do homework.

19 And then I remember going home for
20 Christmas. And I was just thinking about this the
21 other day, because she had died January 11. So I
22 had just gotten back there after, because for
23 Christmas, I got to go home to Granny and Papa.
24 And I remember being home and all my friends and
25 telling my mom, "I don't want to go back. I just

1 it would be done for that fight. But it always got
2 physical. And then I remember, I don't know how
3 many times after they fought, sometimes the
4 neighbours would hear the fighting, and they would
5 come over and try to intervene. And she would run
6 away with me to people's houses.

7 And sometimes we would just walk
8 around, because we had really nowhere to go. And
9 after so many times of running to your friends' you
10 just feel ashamed that you keep going back. I
11 don't know. But sometimes we would just not go
12 anywhere. We would just walk around. And it would
13 be in the middle of the night.

14 And, like, the night before she
15 died, we walked from where our house is to the
16 shelter -- to the Madonna House (ph) where the nuns
17 were. And they took us in -- it was like a women's
18 shelter, an emergency shelter, kind of. And we
19 walked there. I remember we walked there in the
20 middle of the night afterwards.

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Esther,
22 did you want to tell us about when Joy called you
23 that night?

24 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: Yes. She
25 called between 3:30 and 4:00 in the morning. That

1 to the airport and just come to Yellowknife,
2 because she was supposed to anyway, her and Lesa.

3 And, like we both say, she was the
4 person that thought she can always talk to people.

5 Talk to people and fix things. And this her life
6 ended, because after she dropped Lesa off at
7 school, apparently, she decided to -- because even
8 after I told her, if she needed to go home to pick
9 up some of her stuff and for Lesa, that she should
10 bring somebody with her, even if she has to call
11 the RCMP. Because the way she was talking to me, I
12 just felt that she shouldn't be.

13 And another thing I told her is,
14 not to even leave the shelter, that there is a
15 flight going from Yellowknife -- I mean there's
16 always anyway. I was planning on going down there
17 that evening. But that didn't happen. And I got
18 the news by 11:00 o'clock that morning. So that
19 was it. And I still wanted to go down there, but I
20 think that is when Denise (ph) brought you to
21 Yellowknife, later that day. That was the last
22 time I talked to my daughter.

23 MS. LESA SEMMLER: So that night,
24 I think, we got to the shelter, they just gave us a
25 room. I think I went to sleep. And that's why I

1 so I was able to sleep with those on. And the next
2 day when I got to Yellowknife, I had real nice
3 ringlets. But that's kind of what she said. We
4 just tried to be normal that night. And then the
5 next day Denise took me to Yellowknife. And then,
6 I think, my granny came and picked me up from there
7 and went back to Inuvik.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Can I ask
9 you a couple of questions before we turn our
10 attention to what happened at the trial in court
11 and stuff? You keep referring to him. Is it okay,
12 can you say his name?

13 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Peter Emile.

14 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Peter
15 Emile. So because you were so little, you did not
16 know, exactly, what had happened?

17 MS. LESA SEMMLER: No.

18 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So
19 everything you, kind of, learned about that
20 incident, kind of, came after the fact?

21 MS. LESA SEMMLER: It came after.

22 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Okay. But
23 you knew that Peter Emile was your mother's
24 boyfriend and that was the house you were living in
25 with him; right?

1 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Yes.

2 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And so we
3 have talked about this, briefly, because everything
4 in relation to the trial, the transcripts, are
5 available online. They are publicly available and
6 so, essentially, Lesa will be talking about her
7 experience of the justice system.

8 But I just want to put before the
9 Commissioners, and Lesa is aware of this, and it is
10 a very large pile of transcripts. And what it
11 includes is, first, the preliminary hearing. So it
12 went before the Territorial Court. And I am just
13 going to read the titles off of the documents for
14 you.

15 There is a transcript of
16 proceedings of preliminary inquiry held before His
17 Honour, Judge R. W. Halifax, sitting at Fort Smith
18 in the Northwest Territories on Wednesday, June 19,
19 1985. There is Volume I and Volume II. And so
20 preliminary in this jurisdiction, as in most
21 Canadian jurisdictions, a preliminary inquiry
22 occurs to establish that there is enough evidence
23 to take the matter before a jury when someone is
24 pleading not guilty.

25 And the transcript will

1 demonstrate that there was enough evidence. And
2 then it did go to the Supreme Court here. And the
3 charge was murder. And yes, the charge was second-
4 degree. So second-degree and it was pursuant to
5 218-1 of the criminal code in 1985. So the
6 provision has slightly changed since then. And so
7 the first things I am just passing to you include
8 the transcript. And it, actually, details quite a
9 bit of the event and the circumstances of the
10 murder.

11 The next document I am passing to
12 you is the transcript of the jury charge delivered
13 by the Honourable Mr. Justice M. M. Dewart, sitting
14 at Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories on
15 Tuesday, February 4, 1986. So there are not
16 transcripts available of the actual trial, but
17 there is the charge to the jury in which the judge
18 takes the time to explain all the legal obligations
19 to the jury but does go over the facts of the
20 situation into the circumstances of Joy's murder.

21 And finally, we also have the
22 transcript of sentencing comments delivered by the
23 Honourable Justice M. M. Dewart -- and I apologize
24 if I am saying that wrong for anyone in the North -
25 - sitting at Fort Smith in the Northwest

1 Territories on Tuesday, February 4. So the same
2 time frame of when the jury charge and when they
3 come back. And then he is immediately sentenced.

4 And the last single sheet of paper
5 that I will be passing to you is the warrant of
6 committal upon conviction.

7 Peter John Emile was convicted
8 upon a charge that he, on or about
9 the 11 day of January, 1985 at the
10 town of Fort Smith in the Northwest
11 Territories, did commit second-
12 degree murder on the person of
13 Joyce Susan Semmler contrary to
14 section 218-1 of the criminal code.

15 (As read)

16 And I am just going to turn to the
17 one page, again as part of the public record. And
18 we are going to hear from Esther about the court,
19 as well, but because this is part of the public
20 record, I am just going to read the part where he
21 is convicted right into the record, please.

22 As to the circumstances
23 surrounding the death that
24 the jury's verdict that they
25 found that you -- so they are

1 speaking to him -- that you fired
2 the first two shots against Joyce
3 Semmler and then turned the gun
4 upon yourself. The gun upon
5 himself wasn't a successful
6 attempt. As to the circumstances
7 surrounding that, these have been
8 made known to me through evidence.

9 And so I must consider those
10 things together with the jury's
11 recommendation that you be
12 eligible for parole after ten
13 years. Were it not for the
14 (indiscernible) I have heard from
15 your Counsel here today, in which
16 he points out that your attempt to
17 shoot yourself can be taken as a
18 sign of remorse on your part, and
19 I do take it in that light. And
20 were it not for that fact, that,
21 generally, you appear to have
22 been a person of good character
23 in spite of some difficulties
24 that you have faced in life, your
25 record of convictions being more

1 for what I can take to be mischief
2 than more serious crime, although
3 I do see you were convicted of
4 causing bodily harm in April of
5 1981, for which you were fined.
6 And as your Counsel pointed out,
7 your record indicates you may have
8 or had a potentially serious
9 problem with alcohol, which is
10 quite common and is something that
11 only you can do anything about.
12 The Court is fully conscious,
13 also, that you will have to live
14 with this and find a way to
15 reconcile yourself with it and
16 perhaps show that you can rise
17 above it. If you can take it up
18 to your relatives, and that may
19 not be easy, it may help to
20 lighten your burden. The sentence
21 of the court then is that you
22 shall be eligible for parole after
23 ten years. (As read)

24 So essentially, he was convicted of second-degree
25 murder which he got life for but with parole

1 eligibility in ten years. And so essentially, as
2 Lesla has just indicated, she was a child at this
3 point and does not recall the facts the same way.
4 But I do have one question just so the
5 Commissioners can understand. Have you actually
6 seen all of these documents?

7 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: No.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And why is
9 that?

10 MS. LESLA SEMMLER: Because I don't
11 want to. There was a time where I thought, maybe,
12 if I read them, I would be able to deal with it
13 better. I don't know. And just talking with
14 different people, with family, and my husband. And
15 I even contacted the Inquiry. And that was one of
16 the things. When I first talked with the lawyer, I
17 said, "Can you get all the documents? Can you get
18 all the court files? Because I don't know if I
19 want to go over them or I want to ask questions."

20 And I think when they called back
21 and said they had the ones that you have, I had
22 already had that discussion with different people.
23 And I kind of felt that I know she was murdered.
24 I know she was shot. I know from me asking a
25 hundred million questions when I was a kid. And

1 And here is my grandma, the strong
2 one, saying, "Don't do nothing to him." And that
3 was the thing. We didn't. Sitting here today, I
4 was having this conversation with my grandma. And
5 my husband and I said, when they had court, I was
6 supposed to testify. And I met with the lawyers,
7 and we went over all the things that I remember
8 that happened the night before and what we did and,
9 you know, just to be able to tell them what
10 happened that night, because I was the only one
11 there prior to her going back the next day.

12 And everything was fine when I am
13 sitting with the lawyer in whatever room or office
14 or whatever. And then once I walked into that
15 courtroom, it was a public court, so there were
16 people in there. And me being nine years old at
17 the time of the court case, I said to my grandma,
18 "I don't remember seeing him." I don't know if I
19 put my head up or looked at him.

20 Because I remember them telling
21 me, "This is where he'll be sitting. This is where
22 you'll go. This is where the judge is." And then
23 I remember the judge asking me questions, just
24 simple questions like what grade I was in, what's
25 my favourite subject in school.

1 And then he asked me, "Do you know
2 why you are here today?"

3 And then I remember just in my
4 head, being nine years old, I wanted to say -- and
5 I was, like, in my head I was thinking, "I'm here
6 because of my mother's death. I'm here because my
7 mother was murdered." And I kept going back and
8 forth in my head as to which one I was going to
9 say. And then I just broke down and started crying
10 because I just couldn't figure out which one to
11 say. And then I just left the courtroom. I wasn't
12 able to -- so I always felt that I failed my mom
13 because that was the only time I was able to fight
14 for her.

15 And after that day, I left that
16 kid there, in Fort Smith, and never looked back.
17 And I remember growing up and, like, yesterday and
18 the day before a lot of my childhood friends have
19 been texting me and giving me their support and
20 saying, "You know, we all knew what happened, but
21 we never talked about it. We never brought it up."
22 Like, I never talked about it. I never wanted
23 anyone to feel sorry for me. I wanted to do
24 everything because I did it. Like, when you grow
25 up, the way your brain thinks, I didn't want anyone

1 to give me anything because they felt sorry for me.
2 Or everything I got was because I worked hard for
3 it.

4 So growing up, I didn't talk about
5 it. Even up until the last few years. I've been
6 with my husband since we were in Grade 6, off and
7 on when you're young -- my first boyfriend in Grade
8 6. And you know, I didn't share with him any of
9 this up until the last couple of years, he's only
10 got to really know what really happened because
11 it's not something -- when we were talking we say
12 we all put it behind us, and we just left it there.

13 And none of us got counseling.
14 None of us got any followup. I don't ever remember
15 getting anything. I talked to my grandma and
16 nothing. She never got nothing. Just the family,
17 we were all there for each other. How we are
18 brought up is all the bad stuff, you just don't
19 talk about it. You put it away and just don't
20 acknowledge it and move on. You have to live. And
21 so that's what we did.

22 But, I think, I was saying when we
23 were talking yesterday, I was saying to my grandma
24 that this whole process that I've been worried I
25 don't want to hurt her. I don't want to bring up

1 memories that are going to hurt her. This is my
2 journey, but I feel like I don't want to push. And
3 she says to me, "I am so glad you finally get to
4 talk about it."

5 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: After all
6 these years, I'm glad you decided to open
7 everything up now and let everybody know who she
8 was and what happened to her.

9 MS. LESA SEMMLER: And so that's
10 how a lot of us are, especially where we come from.
11 We all know everybody's family stories. We all
12 know the things that the families have gone
13 through. And we all care for each other. And even
14 some of the people who are here at the Inquiry from
15 my home, like, they knew my mom. They knew me
16 growing up. We all know each other's lives, and we
17 don't talk about. We don't deal with it.

18 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: We just talk
19 about the good stuff.

20 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Yes. We talk
21 about the good stuff. As I say, we always sit
22 around and laugh about, remember this? Remember
23 that? And it's always the fun stuff. But we just
24 don't. And I think the thing is, we haven't dealt
25 with the bad stuff. So this is our way of dealing

1 with it now. And I was saying this is my way of
2 being that eight-year-old girl, that nine-year-old
3 and standing up for my mom and testifying.

4 And I'm able to do it now, because
5 I'm stronger even though I cry all the time. I cry
6 for everything. My daughter was showing me a clip
7 of a nine-year-old singing, and I start crying.
8 Yesterday when I started crying, she started
9 shaking her head at me, because that's what I do.
10 I cry. So I think that's just our way sometimes.
11 And now we're getting it out.

12 And I was saying yesterday to my
13 husband, like, even at the media and stuff,
14 sometimes when I'm talking, I'm emotional, and I'll
15 say things. And he's like, "Well, what do you mean
16 by, 'My mom didn't die for nothing'?" And I'm just
17 saying my mom died, but I am going to make sure
18 that I am going to do something good out of her
19 death.

20 And I'm going to speak, and I'm
21 going to show people it doesn't matter how much
22 shit you've been through in your life and the
23 things that you've seen and the things that -- use
24 it. And use it as, you're not going to bring me
25 down. And use it as power to do better things,

1 because we know we have so many of our people
2 struggling.

3 And you walk around on the streets
4 and we have a lot of our people in Yellowknife.
5 And they all have a story and they all have
6 something that has brought them to where they are.

7 When our people lived out on the land and lived in
8 the Delta, they didn't drink and party until it was
9 introduced to them. They were too busy getting
10 water and food and feeding their dogs because there
11 were dog teams. But now, it seems like it's easy
12 to turn to alcohol. It's easy to turn to drugs.

13 I've been lucky. And that's one
14 of the things I said. When I had the tragic thing
15 happen to me, I had a family and a community that
16 loved me and took care of me. And it didn't matter
17 where I went. If I was doing something bad, it
18 could be anybody, they would be like, "Don't do
19 that. I'm going to tell your granny." And you
20 know, everybody is watching out for everybody.

21 And as a teenager, when I just
22 started acting out, I went and lived with my
23 grandmother for a little while, and then I went
24 back home. And I think it was because I had a
25 strong, supportive family, I didn't end up in

1 case, she went to the RCMP. I'm pretty sure she
2 pressed charges the night before on the assault.
3 And at that time there was nothing provided to her.
4 It's like, "Okay. You go to the shelter now."
5 It's not, "Okay. Well, do you need anything from
6 the house? Let's go back to the house, and we'll
7 get whatever you need so that you don't have to go
8 back there again." Something like that, my mom
9 maybe could have been here, and I wouldn't be here,
10 because we would have left. But again, who's to
11 say, with her big heart, that she would have gone
12 back. That's the story of a lot of families is
13 that they just keep going back.

14 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So you now
15 know that, that little girl did not fail; right?
16 You know that; right? That a nine-year-old could
17 not hold the whole case against someone who
18 committed second-degree murder. But I think we are
19 all really happy that you had the courage to come
20 here today and share everything that you have.

21 At this point what I would to ask
22 is, if you guys have any other -- you have already
23 given some really great recommendations about what
24 needs to happen or the types of supports, but I
25 want to ask you, specifically, if you have

1 recommendations for the Commissioners about what
2 else could help, what could be done.

3 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Well, I know
4 one of the things that we had discussed was -- and
5 that's kind of one of the pictures I had, was my
6 granny when I had my son in 1996. So that would
7 have been Peter Emile's ten-year marker when he
8 would have been eligible for parole. I had my
9 first son, our first child. And he was born in
10 February of 1996, so it would have been ten years
11 after Peter Emile was convicted. My son was
12 probably about four or five days when we were in
13 the hospital. Then we got home. The first place I
14 went. Grandma was supposed to be there, but of
15 course, I had him early, so she wasn't able to be
16 there.

17 I went to Granny and Papa's to
18 share my son with my granny and papa. But I
19 couldn't share him with my mom. And at the same
20 time, this guys is eligible for parole to get out
21 and be free. It's not fair. And then I was 19.
22 And then I had the conversation with -- because I
23 didn't know. Like, I knew he did ten years. In my
24 head I always knew that. And then when I spoke
25 with the lawyer -- yes. He got 25, but he was

1 eligible for parole at ten years. But in my head,
2 it was always ten years because that was all I
3 remember him doing. But we were never given the
4 opportunity to give any impact statements or
5 anything at his parole hearing. Like, I said to my
6 grandma, I said --

7 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: None of the
8 family was given a voice or notice to say that we
9 wanted to be there and have our say. Nothing.
10 Same with when they had the court case. I wasn't
11 even allowed to go down to Fort Smith. I even
12 offered to pay my own way. But I was told, no. I
13 shouldn't be there. It's going to be too hard for
14 me. Well, what about my granddaughter and my
15 mother-in-law?

16 So you know, from there, it was
17 just like, "No. You don't do this. You don't do
18 that." Like, just shut out from everything. Like,
19 we weren't allowed to do anything for our daughter.
20 I don't know. This is something that should be
21 changed. I mean, the families should always be
22 involved in everything. Everything.

23 MS. LESA SEMMLER: And I was 19,
24 so don't you think that I should have been notified
25 to be able to know that he was going up for parole

1 so that I would have been able to make a victim
2 impact statement? Maybe I would have dealt with it
3 long ago. Maybe I would have went down this
4 journey long ago.

5 MS. ESTHER SEMMLER: A lot sooner.

6 MS. LESA SEMMLER: A lot sooner.
7 Maybe some things would have been different for our
8 family, you know? Because I always wondered
9 whatever happened to all of my mom's stuff? And I
10 asked my grandma and she said, when she inquired
11 about it, they told her they had no next of kin, so
12 it was destroyed. Like, her purse, any of her
13 personal belongings, and they sent her a box of old
14 clothes and things like that. Like, what are we
15 going to do with that?

16 She was thinking her jewelry, her
17 things that she could give to me when I was older.

18 And how could they not have a next of kin when
19 there is a court trial and she has a child? She
20 has a mother. It just seems like laziness, just
21 disregard for her as a person and us as a family.
22 And that's why one of the reasons, too, that I
23 asked for all of her court documents to be pulled,
24 because I always figured she got a fair trial, you
25 know, and he got what he got.

1 But sometimes, in my head, you
2 hear so much, especially in 1985. Was she given
3 everything? If you took her case and you put it
4 next to somebody who was in a non-Aboriginal
5 relationship who was murdered, maybe he wouldn't
6 have been eligible for parole so soon. Because ten
7 years, to me, is nothing. We talked about it
8 today.

9 You always think about
10 forgiveness. We always say, forgiveness. You need
11 to do that to move on. But how do you forgive when
12 somebody has murdered your daughter, your mother?
13 How do you forgive? It's not for me to forgive.
14 And that's, kind of, how I feel. And that's how I
15 move forward. I live with it. I deal with it. I
16 don't let myself get angry about it. I don't think
17 of ways that I'm going to get back at him.

18 But I want him to remember her,
19 the beautiful person, the beautiful mother,
20 beautiful daughter that he took away because he's
21 selfish. Because he wanted to control somebody.
22 Because he wanted, if he couldn't have her, none of
23 us could. Just selfish. And I want him to
24 remember that. Like, when I saw his name in the
25 paper on Monday flying here, and I know he raised

1 dogs. That's what they do in Fort Smith and out
2 wherever we lived. Everybody had dogs.

3 And we were flying in the plane,
4 and I'm reading the paper. And there's an article
5 they posted about a dog mushing thing that happened
6 in December. And his name is in there. And I just
7 kind of was like -- and halfway through the flight
8 I broke down. "You can't live a normal life.
9 You're not allowed to. You're not allowed to just
10 do what you did before and carry on." But we, as
11 people, are so forgiving. And maybe we don't
12 forget, but we just don't talk about it.

13 You know, we all know people in
14 our communities that have murdered people. And we
15 don't say anything. I think the way we're raised
16 is, it's not our problem. We're not getting
17 involved. We're too small of a community, and we
18 might hurt somebody's feelings. You know, we might
19 hurt the family's feelings. Because maybe we are
20 angry at this person, but we really do care about
21 their siblings. And we do care about their mother
22 or their father. And maybe, at one point, we cared
23 about them.

24 It's hard. I can't forgive. But
25 we can move on. And we can be strong. And one of

1 the things that I said from this is, even though
2 this has been my journey, kind of, in the last
3 three years, that I've finally been going down
4 this, the way I think of it is, by me telling my
5 story, and especially the people that know me, you
6 know, I try hard. I try to do good things. I try
7 to be kind. I try to be kind to my community. I
8 always try to help out. You can be strong after
9 these kinds of things. And that's why I wanted to
10 share my memories of when I was five, when I was
11 seven, eight years old and remembering the detail
12 of the violence that I lived in and watched.

13 And if somebody is living in that
14 right now and they look at their children and they
15 say, "Let's go. I don't want you to have these
16 memories," then this is all worth it. And this is
17 why I say, if my mom died, I'm going to do good
18 things in her name. And I'm going to speak about
19 how this happened and how it impacts people
20 differently.

21 And not everybody ends up
22 stronger. But we have a lot of people who don't
23 when they go through these things. And I'm not
24 saying that I'm the only one. There are people
25 that I know that are very strong. And they have

1 families that they might be the only strong one in
2 it, and the rest of them aren't doing well. But
3 our voices, together that are here, and that are
4 being able to share our stories and talk about this
5 because our kids.

6 Like I said, at eight years old,
7 at five years old, we don't talk about this. We
8 don't talk about this in school. We don't talk
9 about how we need -- we talk about not bullying and
10 all these things. But we don't talk to our kids
11 about relationships and if we are seeing these
12 types of things, what we can do about it? Because
13 every kid has a voice, and every kid has power.
14 And we need to give those kids that are living in
15 this, because sometimes the parents don't have any
16 power, and they're not strong enough.

17 But our kids are strong and we
18 need to teach them that. And that's, kind of, one
19 of the things that I try to do with my kids is. I
20 try to tell my daughter that -- talk to her about
21 unhealthy relationships and that they are not okay.
22 You don't need to stay in those types of
23 relationships. She is only 13, so hopefully we
24 don't have to worry too soon.

25 But our son, who is 21, and it's,

1 like, he's not in a relationship. We talk to him.

2 And I talk to him about respecting women. And if
3 a relationship is bad, and it's starting off bad,
4 do you really want to stay in it? Like, you just
5 move on. And if you find yourself always arguing
6 and jealousy, a lot of times it's not going to
7 change. So move on. There's lots of women out
8 there, and you'll find the right one.

9 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: One thing
10 that you told the Commissioners that triggered or
11 reminded something that you did want to touch on
12 is, now that Peter is out, what do you worry about?

13 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Well, in my
14 head, I don't remember what he looks like. So I
15 could be sitting next to him, and I don't know if I
16 would recognize him because it's been 33 years,
17 too. So even, like, this year for Arctic Winter
18 Games, I didn't even want my daughter to try out,
19 because I didn't want her to end up being in Fort
20 Smith for any part of the games, at all.

21 I think since my mother died, I've
22 been to Fort Smith twice. Once I went with an
23 aunt. We just went for a weekend to -- my little
24 cousin -- when I was in high school with Nadia (ph)
25 -- and at the time, because I knew he wasn't there.

1 So to me it was like -- and then once when I was
2 in nursing school, my husband's sister was living
3 there, and we had gone for Thanksgiving.

4 And I remembered driving and going
5 there. And I, kind of, felt uncomfortable. But we
6 went, and I, actually, ran into a couple of girls
7 that were my neighbours. It was just the weekend.

8 But after that, now, I just have no intentions of
9 ever wanting to go back there. And so when Arctic
10 Winter Games came, I was glad that she didn't try
11 out for anything, because I didn't want to have to
12 go there, even though she could have ended up in
13 Hay River. Just the possibility.

14 And if he's out and he's just
15 free, I don't know how it will trigger me if I ran
16 into him. And now we know he's here in the
17 territory, and he's back. And I don't know how
18 long he's been here, but it kind of worries me just
19 because I don't know how I'm going to react.

20 I think with what happened to us,
21 the only things that I have for the Commissioners
22 for recommendations is, you know, to take into
23 consideration my story. I was lucky. I had a
24 supportive family. We need to work with the
25 families when tragedies happen, because if we find

1 in the families that there are strong people in
2 families, that the kids don't go into care. We
3 don't need any more of our kids in care.

4 And if it's not a family member,
5 at least it's somebody within their own culture,
6 like, in their community, so they're not uprooted
7 from their community and their friends. But not
8 all the families have financial means to do this.
9 And so the hardest thing I think for families is, I
10 was lucky because there was no burden on my family
11 financially. I probably spent a lot of money.
12 (Laughter) I always wanted everything, and I
13 always wanted to do sewing. And it doesn't come
14 cheap.

15 But the families need to be
16 financially supported. And the families aren't
17 going to come forward if they're going to be
18 interrogated by all of the rules of criminal record
19 checks. Okay. You know what? Would you rather
20 have this kid with this family who you still will,
21 kind of, monitor and you can financially support
22 them -- I can see if you are giving them to a
23 stranger that you need to make sure of certain
24 things, but this is their family.

25 Who are we to judge their family

1 as a system, as a society? And that's what causes
2 barriers in our communities. And sometimes, when a
3 family knows that they are going to step up for
4 these kids, you know, they'll straighten out, even
5 if they do have struggles. They don't need social
6 services judging them. Because I think that's a
7 barrier. And that's why our kids end up in care.
8 And I think that's one of the things.

9 I know you're protecting the kids,
10 and I know you want the homes to be safe and all
11 this, but the homes that they're going into, and
12 you're taking them away from their culture and,
13 sometimes, even their community. And you're
14 separating the siblings and things like that.
15 You're not going to get a productive person in life
16 once they're older. They're going to be
17 struggling.

18 And that's why I feel that I was
19 always lucky that I had my family, and they kept
20 me, and nothing changed. Like, I just continued on
21 my life. And I think that's important. And I
22 think for women in these types of relationships, I
23 think we really need to look at how we're
24 protecting them, how our services are in place for
25 them. Because I know our systems are so Monday to

1 Friday, 9:00 to 5:00, 8:30 to 5:00, lunch is
2 closed, weekends there's no one.

3 Some of our shelters, you know,
4 they have to go by rules that are provided by the
5 government because that's how they are funded. And
6 you're not going to get the funding if you let this
7 person in and they don't meet X number of this.
8 Because you're not going to get the women who are
9 going to disclose anything. And so I think we
10 really need to look at how we provide that safe
11 security for our women and our girls and our family
12 units.

13 When a family is running away,
14 they need to be able to take all their kids. And I
15 was having this discussion with another family
16 member last night. Whether they are girls or boys
17 and be able to go into a shelter, because that is
18 not always the case. And then you have to split
19 them up. You're stronger as a group. But we need
20 to be able to provide that support for women when
21 they're the most ready to leave. Not two or three
22 days later or you need to meet this requirement in
23 order to stay here.

24 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you.
25 I just want to give the Commissioners an

1 opportunity to ask any questions or make any
2 comments, as well, please.

3 --- QUESTIONS BY THE COMMISSIONERS

4 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:

5 Thank you. Lesa, Esther, I just want to thank you
6 very much for coming and sharing with us and
7 telling us about Joy and what she went through and
8 for sharing your incredible strength with us.
9 Thank you.

10 I just had a couple of questions
11 of clarification, if you do not mind. So Lesa, I
12 think you said with respect to your mom that you
13 are pretty sure she pressed charges at one point?

14 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: I
16 did not quite understand when that was. Could you
17 maybe --

18 MS. LESA SEMMLER: That was one of
19 the questions that I had was the night before.
20 Like, I asked if she went to the cops and charged
21 him with assault. Because that was the night that
22 we left. And I think that was clarified that she
23 did. But then he was -- I don't know if he was
24 picked up or anything.

25 That's, kind of, the detail that

1 I, kind of, was wanting to see if it was part of
2 the file. But I just -- I didn't want to read it.

3 I want to remember my mom for the things that I do
4 remember, even though there were some bad things
5 that I saw and I remember. And I don't want to be
6 skewed by the details of her court case and the
7 details of her murder. Because from my
8 understanding, it's very, very extensive detail.
9 Two volumes of detail.

10 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: And
11 I know you were young at the time when you were
12 living with your mother, but do you recall any
13 police involvement in the home prior to then?

14 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Never. It was
15 usually neighbours coming over and usually -- I
16 don't ever remember seeing men. It was the women
17 neighbours that were coming. And I remember him
18 fighting with other neighbour women when he was
19 fighting with her because they were trying to stick
20 up for her.

21 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: And
22 I think this is just my last question. But you
23 explained how you had walked in the middle of the
24 night to the women's shelter. Was that the first
25 time?

1 MS. LESA SEMMLER: The first time
2 we stayed at the shelter, but it wasn't the first
3 time that we left the house in the middle of the
4 night.

5 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:
6 Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: You
8 know me. I write, and I write questions. And then
9 you answer them, so I have to go back. And that is
10 not a question I have anymore. But there are a few
11 questions that I just want to get your opinion on,
12 get your thoughts on.

13 You talked about how the violence,
14 like, as an eight-year-old, because you are seeing
15 it, you are hearing about it, you do not talk about
16 it with anybody because it is normalized. With
17 your great grandparents' generation, it was not
18 there in the same way. Have you thought about why
19 it was normalized?

20 MS. LESA SEMMLER: From when I
21 asked a lot of what happened in the bush -- when I
22 refer to the bush, we all lived in our camps on the
23 Delta and not everybody lived in town, way before
24 my time. But when I would ask, they would --
25 families were just too busy. You're preoccupied

1 because you're waking up early. You're getting
2 wood. Everybody has their jobs to do.

3 And then I always say, I never had
4 to go to residential school. I lived at home and
5 went to school. My grandma and her sister went to
6 residential school. My granny, great, great
7 grandmother went to residential school. And I hear
8 a lot of other families, their stories of
9 residential school. And by being taken out of the
10 home -- and this is, kind of, quoting one of my
11 people who I've talked to about it -- the way that
12 they explained it is that they were taken out of
13 their homes. They had to live in residential
14 school by these rules. They never were nurtured.

15 And then they get out of school,
16 have children. Because they're educated, they have
17 jobs. So then they have money. So what you do is,
18 you go out, and you have a good time. But
19 sometimes, I always say, we don't know how to
20 drink. We don't handle our alcohol well. Maybe
21 it's something with that.

22 And the violence started in the
23 homes because you don't know how to parent. You
24 don't know how to care. You don't know how to
25 cohabit other than rules. So then you just fight

1 because you're drinking. And a lot of the time
2 when you think of all these issues, you hear about
3 it as alcohol. But in my mom's case -- and that
4 was one of the things I asked the lawyer was --
5 they were both sober when she was murdered. He was
6 sober. So he was not drunk. They might have been
7 the night before but not during when he killed her.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: That was
9 the finding in the decision. That they were both
10 sober at the time of the incident.

11 MS. LESA SEMMLER: So growing up,
12 I think we just saw so much violence. And you see
13 it everywhere you go. You think it's just what
14 happens, even though I didn't have it in my house.
15 But I had seen it at my mom's, and I had seen it
16 at my friends' houses and the drinking.

17 And you know, my grandfather, he
18 was an alcoholic. And he drank a lot. And he was
19 mean. And until he stopped drinking was when I
20 started to have a relationship with him, until he
21 died. That was what we saw, you know. So we just
22 normalized it as, it just happens. And couples
23 fight. People drink. And it's just normal.

24 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: You
25 shared with us ideas about the importance of

1 teaching kids about healthy relationships, about
2 respect, about dealing with jealousy and things
3 like that. And that strikes me as being a really
4 important step in breaking this idea that violence
5 is normal. Do you have any other thoughts on how
6 the cycle of the normalization of violence -- what
7 we can do about that as a community, as a society?

8 MS. LESA SEMMLER: I always say, I
9 know we can always try and work with our older
10 families that are struggling. And we can always
11 provide them support. We can't force it on them.
12 They have to be ready. But kids, they're pure.
13 And when we teach them when they're young and we
14 continue to reinforce that as they're growing up,
15 it's just like the impacts of residential school.

16 You know, like we always say that
17 it's going to affect generations, until we can
18 break that cycle of parents that are struggling.
19 Because there are parents that are my age that
20 didn't go to residential school, but their parents
21 did, and they're struggling. And now they're
22 raising children, you know? And we still have to
23 support them and the family as a unit. We have to
24 quit tearing them apart.

25 But it's the kids that, I think,

1 will make the biggest impact. In educating the
2 kids, in respecting each other. And you know, as
3 young, you start with the basics and then as they
4 get older -- and we always think about, "Okay.
5 You're 15 we got to teach you about," -- like, I
6 was a health teacher.

7 But we have to do that earlier
8 because it's get it in their brains before they're
9 actually getting into relationships. So when they
10 are getting into them -- because we don't know what
11 age they're going start. I mean, my boyfriend in
12 Grade 6. So we have to talk to them. And you
13 know, I think we, as mothers and grandmothers and
14 fathers, and I think that's the break, a lot of
15 times. Sometimes it's easier for mothers to talk
16 with their daughters, but it's not so easy for
17 fathers to talk with their sons. Especially when
18 you are unhealthy to say, "Do as I say, not as I
19 do," because you feel bad because you know.

20 I always say, "I'm not perfect."
21 I always tell my daughter, "I'm not perfect, and I
22 have never lived a perfect life, and I have made
23 mistakes." But we need to talk to our kids, and we
24 need to be open. And we can't shy away from those
25 hard questions. And we just need to be there for

1 them and love them and respect them.

2 And that's where, I think -- all
3 our kids, we can engage them in schools and being
4 part of a curriculum that we teach this to our
5 kids. Like, not only at home. And have a
6 collaboration with the schools that we teach
7 healthy relationships right from the start.

8 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: You
9 talked about, like, with your great grandparents,
10 you grew up a lot in the bush. Are there teachings
11 you gained there that you think can also help break
12 the cycle?

13 MS. LESA SEMMLER: A lot of times
14 when I think about when we were in the bush, we
15 always had duties. And now we think of our kids,
16 and I'm guilty of it for my kids. I don't know
17 when the last time was our kids ever did dishes or
18 took the garbage out, you know?

19 But when we're in the bush, we all
20 have our duties that we have to take care of
21 whether it's -- I could be eight, nine years old
22 and that's my duty to go get water. And I have to
23 go get water, or I have to fill the water bowl.
24 Not necessarily go out to the lakes. That's
25 somebody else's job to get the water, but fill the

1 water bowls in the house. Or it's my job to burn
2 the garbage, or it's my job -- you know, we all
3 have those kinds of things, and we are not giving
4 those things.

5 I think this new generation -- and
6 I don't know what generation we're at now, X, Y, Z.
7 We're giving them everything, I think, because now
8 we have more educated families. We are trying to
9 give our kids everything that we think we should
10 have had or could have had. And we're not letting
11 them have rules. Twenty-one years old, and I'm
12 still waking up my son to go to college in the
13 morning, even though he's like, "I have my alarm,
14 Mom."

15 I think that's, kind of, one of
16 the things that we need to go back to, is making
17 sure our kids know that they need to do things.
18 Not all families are like that. I know I have some
19 friends that their kids are like -- I'm like, "Whoa
20 (ph), that's a lot of rules." But when I think
21 about the bush, though, we were always working
22 together, and we had to make it work.

23 Now, when we are in town, we don't
24 have to work together. Everybody is on their own
25 and doing their own thing. And I always say to my

1 kids, they could stay home a whole weekend, but
2 they're socializing, because it's on the phone.
3 They don't even leave the house sometimes. And
4 we're working ourselves into silos alone, so we're
5 not able to work on those relationships.

6 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I do
7 not have any more questions.

8 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Texting from
9 one room to the next. I'm getting bad. I got to
10 text my kids, "Come down for supper." (Laughter)

11 COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I
12 want to thank you all. And Esther, you and Lesa,
13 especially, for coming and sharing with us. Lesa,
14 you and I met a number of years ago, now, and this
15 is the first time I got to see pictures of your
16 mom. And thank you for sharing those and sharing
17 with us the impact she has had on your lives and
18 your community and continues to through you and
19 your kids.

20 I want to also acknowledge the
21 support you have given us. Bold and outspoken,
22 yes. But I am so grateful for it and so grateful
23 for the wisdom and the insight you have given us
24 and that has brought us here and, I hope, has
25 created a good space for us to be doing this.

1 what you shared to us, what we saw, the pictures.
2 She is beautiful, she looks like an actress. I
3 will not say the name, but I will tell you later.
4 She is gorgeous. How do we say in English? She
5 said you are like your daughter -- you are strong
6 like your mom, I was told. (French spoken)

7 And if I may say, I am not going
8 to dictate to you what to do or what to say, but
9 please, you never failed your mom. You did not
10 fail your mom at all (French spoken) Because when
11 you mentioned that, I was like, "Oh, my God. You
12 are honouring her every second of your life." And
13 it is huge. It is huge. (French spoken) And
14 husband since Grade 6.

15 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Well, we only
16 got married seven years ago. We do things backward
17 up North. We see if it will work out before we get
18 married, have kids.

19 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:
20 Well, it is important to have the proper support.
21 (French spoken) Thank you for being here. And
22 every man should be like you, beside the woman. I
23 am raising three boys. (French spoken) Thank you
24 so much. And thank you for the support. (French
25 spoken)

1 MS. LESA SEMMLER: I just wanted
2 to say one last thing. And I wanted to just thank
3 you. That as part of the NFAC, one of the things
4 that we kept stressing was that we wanted this
5 space to feel safe. It feels safe. I feel safe,
6 and I feel good that we've been able to share my
7 mom, my grandma's daughter.

8 And to the other families that are
9 out there that want to share, it's safe here. This
10 is a good thing. And you guys are doing great.
11 And like I said yesterday, thank you for continuing
12 on this journey for the families. And we're the
13 families. We're not part of any organization. We
14 are the families, and we are telling our stories to
15 you. And I don't need anybody to speak for me.
16 Thank you.

17 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: The lawyer
18 has also known Lesa for about ten years because I
19 used to live in Inuvik. But I did not know Lesa --

20 MS. LESA SEMMLER: Because I
21 didn't talk about it.

22 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: She did
23 not talk about this. But a proud moment to see
24 someone with so much courage.

25 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:

1 Before we wrap up this session, I think we have
2 some small gifts that we would like to share with
3 you. And I am going to ask our grandmothers that
4 are here to help us distribute those gifts with us.

5 MS. BERNIE POITRAS: I was asked
6 to explain about the eagle feathers again. It
7 started its journey in Hidiguay. Again, over 400
8 that were given. And now it has made its way
9 across to all across Turtle Island up here, up
10 north. My niece is the one that takes care of the
11 eagle wings when they are gifted. So it has come
12 from sea shell, Manitoba, Saskatchewan,
13 Newfoundland, Nova Scotia. Many territories have
14 donated. And also a scarf that has been given to a
15 family member, here, that was made by the Native
16 Women's Association of the Northwest Territories.
17 So again, to the families again.

18 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Please
19 take your seats, we're about to begin. My name is
20 Wendy van Tongeren, and as soon as you take your
21 seats. You'll have the benefit of the singing of a
22 song. A very special presentation.

23 --- OPENING CEREMONIES

24 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: All
25 right. Now that we have all done our daily

1 exercise, both spiritually and physically, let's
2 have an introduction of the special people who are
3 up here to speak to you today, and the first
4 encounter that I had that started basically this
5 preparation that has been done by Noeline Villebrun
6 was the meeting of Noeline, so I wonder if you
7 could just start by just put your name on the
8 record and then we're going to hand the mic around
9 to everyone who is seated with you in support just
10 to start in a good way so everyone knows who is
11 with you today.

12 MS. NOELINE VILLEBRUN: Masi cho.
13 (Speaking in native language).

14 MS. CINDI-RAE HARRIS: Hi, my name
15 is Cindi-Rae Bonorouge (phonetic) Harris.

16 MS. ROXANNE LANDRY: (Speaking
17 native language)

18 MR. JOHN LANDRY: Masi. My name
19 is Johnny Landry, and I'm from Fort Providence and
20 I'm a singer-song writer. I want to thank you very
21 much for inviting me to sing for you, Masi cho.

22 MS. MAGGIE MERCREDI: My name is
23 Maggie Mercredi, I'm from Yellowknife. I'm Dene,
24 and I am here to support in is sharing today.
25 Masi.

26 MS. RITA AERY: My name is Rita Aery, I'm a family

Noeline Villebrun, John and Roxane Landry and
Cindi-Rae Harris, In relation to Stella Cardinal

1 support liaison person from the Native Women's and
2 I'm from Aklavik, Northwest Territories. ---

3 Exhibits (code: P01P09P0102).

4 Exhibit 1: Folder
5 containing 13 digital images
6 provided by the family and
7 displayed during their public
8 hearing.

9 **Hearing # 3**

10 **Witnesses: Noeline Villebrun, John Landry, Roxane**
11 **Landry and Cindi-Rae Harris**

12 **In relation to Stella Cardinal**

14 **Heard by Commissioners Brian Eyolfson, and Michèle**
15 **Audette**

16 **Commission Counsel: Wendy van Tongeren**

17 **Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge-keepers: Laureen**
18 **"Blu" Waters Guadio, Bernie Poitras Williams,**

19 **Denise Pictou-Maloney and Maggie Mercredi**

20 **Clerk: Trudy Mckinnon**

21 **Registrar: Bryan Zandberg**

22 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Now, this
23 afternoon, we're anticipating that Noeline will be
24 the lead, but we can anticipate as well that other
25 members of the group here will speak when they feel
26 that it's something that they would like to do. So

Noeline Villebrun, John and Roxane Landry and
Cindi-Rae Harris, In relation to Stella Cardinal

1 that means that everyone is going to actually
2 affirm on the eagle feather, so this is kind of a
3 group project to start off with. So Mr. Registrar.

4 THE REGISTRAR: Good afternoon,
5 everybody. I'll maybe just affirm everyone all
6 together since you're speaking as a group. So just
7 give me a second to good afternoon, John, Roxane,
8 Noeline and Cindi-Rae, you can see seated or you
9 would like --

10 MS. NOELINE VILLEBRUN: I would
11 prefer to stand please.

12 THE REGISTRAR: Yes, whatever you
13 prefer. So John, Roxane, Noeline and Cindi-Rae, do
14 each of you promise to tell your truth in a good
15 way to the commissioners today. Yes, from all of
16 you. Thank you very much. Looks like I missed two
17 people. Could you just remind me quickly, your
18 name was? Rita, okay. And Maggie? Okay. So Rita
19 and Maggie, do both of you promise to tell your
20 truth in a good way this afternoon as well. Thank
21 you.

22 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So you
23 know, the audio/visual fellows do have the
24 photographs that you submitted, so when you are
25 ready to show those, just give the direction and

1 they will appear. But I have listened to you, and
2 I look forward to hearing what you have to say. I
3 know that there are things that you want to say to
4 the commissioners and to the people in the room and
5 to the world, and so I kindly ask you to start.
6 Masi cho.

7 MS. NOELINE VILLEBRUN: Before I
8 begin, I would like to acknowledge some people that
9 I feel need -- I need to recognize them. She may
10 not be Dene, but this women has been an inspiration
11 to me for many years. I read her story and she is
12 actually a murdered woman. And she was a warrior,
13 a woman warrior. And her daughter is here with the
14 inquiry right now, so I am so on honoured to meet
15 with her and to know that she is here. That also
16 gives me comfort besides the people that are here
17 around with me. Her name, the warrior's name is
18 Anna Mae Pictou. She was murdered during the
19 American-Indian movement. Her daughter is here and
20 I would like to acknowledge Denise Pictou-Maloney.
21 I want to welcome her to my territory and that she
22 does us a great honour. She has been a voice out
23 there for many years standing up not with
24 organizations, but bringing in truth so I wanted to
25 honour her and her mother, (speaking native

1 language). Masi cho. Thank you from my heart.

2 I also want to acknowledge my
3 husband and my children and my grandchildren that
4 could not be with us. I want to acknowledge Carol.
5 She is 42 years old. She gave me four
6 grandchildren. My second oldest daughter is here
7 with me, Cindi-Rae, and she gifted me with four
8 grandchildren. My youngest son, he is my pride and
9 my joy for being a young Dene man today. Not that
10 my girls don't honour me, but my son is carrying on
11 the tradition of my father my grandfather, and all
12 of his ancestors before him. So I wanted to honour
13 them too.

14 But my husband too for being my
15 foundation for supporting me and supporting all the
16 Dene that have come for help to our home or reached
17 out and I want to thank you him. He could not be
18 here with us today, but I wanted to bring balance
19 to this circle so I asked Johnny, the elder Johnny
20 Landry, the artist to come and sing, and bring that
21 balance of having a man with us. So Masi cho,
22 Johnny. Roxane, thank you for being there for me,
23 for being my little sister, thank you. Maggie and
24 Rita, thank you for having my back. Masi cho.

25 I also want to acknowledge all the

1 women that are here struggling with their grief,
2 with the loss of their loved ones. I acknowledge
3 your pain, I feel it, I understand it. This is why
4 I find that prayers are so powerful and so helpful
5 in my journey, my healing.

6 But before I go on, there is some
7 items that I had brought with me that are very
8 precious to me. One of them is an RCMP medicine
9 bag. Even though that was gifted to me by the
10 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, it signifies my
11 family members that are/were RCMPs. I also have a
12 copper knife that was given to me made from the
13 Copper Mine River. It was given to me by one of my
14 counsellor's from Aurora college by the name of
15 Dave Grundy who has since passed on. So I want to
16 acknowledge also Dave's help and to his family.
17 And my auntie, my little auntie for all her love
18 and her wisdom and when I answer her, I would ask
19 her a question, she would help me to understand the
20 difference between Denes and speaking English and
21 the meaning between English and Dene, that was my
22 little auntie Agnes Villebrun.

23 I also want to acknowledge all of
24 my relatives, the women, the young girls that have
25 been murdered or missing. And many of the women in

1 my community that have been murdered or are still
2 missing.

3 The flag was given to me in 2012
4 by a Dene gathering in Saskatchewan, and there for
5 the first time in 200 years, there was a ceremony
6 for clan mother. So in 200 years, I was given the
7 honour of being a clan mother for some families, so
8 it is a great honour to be able to sit here and
9 know that through our traditions, practices and
10 beliefs that we are still being able to talk for
11 our people, help them to understand.

12 I have a staph that was given to
13 me last year in New York. I was invited to the
14 grandmother and grandfather sacred circle sage.
15 When I left New York, I was given this staph and my
16 duty is to share the common struggles that we have
17 in all three of our countries, Mexico, US and
18 Canada. That all of the grandmothers and all the
19 grandfathers, our struggles are the same. We are
20 faced with the same issues so when I was asked to
21 carry the staph and to share the message in Canada,
22 I have tried my best and I -- I am honoured.

23 It's hard sometimes when you are
24 going to tell a story. You know, when that story
25 is about your life, the struggles, the barriers,

1 that we face as women. You know, not just Dene,
2 not just tribal women, but all women on this earth,
3 and this is why I wear the scarf proudly today
4 because this scarf was given to me but the women of
5 Israel when I went to Jerusalem to talk about women
6 gender and issues, and how we as Dene were able to
7 overcome some of the assimilation and colonization,
8 and that I shared the message that we used our
9 elders to go back our grandmothers to go back to
10 our teachings because they are the knowledge
11 holders and the keepers.

12 I also want to help the
13 commissioners understand and hopefully have bring
14 some solutions and recommendations. I know your
15 jobs are stuff right now because of all that is
16 going on out there in the media, the insinuations,
17 and I am -- I was no different. I was no
18 different. I was frustrated, frustrated with the
19 system, and it is just like another process, that's
20 how I feel, that's how I felt and why, because I
21 have survived. I have survived many, many changes
22 in the policies and the laws. And this is why I
23 feel our women are so vulnerable today, we have
24 been put in a vulnerable position.

25 I have been told through teachings

1 When my parents split up, they
2 were in Fort Smith the welfare took my brother and
3 I was only a baby my grandfather found -- found out
4 so he went to Fort Smith. He went to Fort Smith to
5 get us, my brother and I, and he said my
6 grandchildren are not dogs to just be given away,
7 to be thrown away, abused, starved, chained up.
8 When my grandparents took me home, I had love. I
9 had security. There was safety, that's what the
10 system takes away.

11 I became a ward of the government
12 at the age of 14 years old. For me that was one of
13 the most humiliating times of my life the
14 government put me through. They brought my mother
15 into a place, into the courtroom, made her sign
16 papers while I stood there, put me up for adoption,
17 that's this is government. This is the government,
18 that makes these types of laws and policies. This
19 is the institution that has no heart. If these
20 institutions had a heart and they were to do what
21 they're supposed to do to begin with is to help the
22 Dene people survive in townships. It didn't happen
23 because the government institution abandoned the
24 people. The federal government for development,
25 left a lot of families destitute, they re-located.

1 My families, many families because the government
2 wanted to build the Talson (phonetic) River Dam.

3 There is the stories that the
4 elders gathers for our consultant, and it's called
5 the way -- "The Way We Lived; The Way We Were".

6 And some of my relatives are in there, so I read,
7 but one of the things that I found most profound
8 was the words we were happy. We were never hungry.

9 We had lots of food. So even if the elders tell
10 us their stories, we know that even at that time,
11 the changes had come and this is why our lives,
12 even as women fell apart. And that's what I'm
13 finding today is this government institution took
14 down our tepees. And now they want to put it back
15 up for us, but they don't want to listen to the
16 women, how they should fix their tepees and how
17 they should put up the tepees.

18 The government doesn't want to
19 listen to that for some reason. I shouldn't say
20 that because I have come to answer understanding of
21 why the government is doing this, and I will come
22 to that later.

23 When I was in the system, a ward
24 of the government, there were other young girls,
25 vulnerable that were also beaten and raped. We had

1 workers, government workers that were perpetrators,
2 yet the institution turned a blind eye. Why?
3 Today I say, so they can fulfill their contracts.
4 And that my life growing up and in the system as a
5 ward of the government was just one big contract.
6 But I can the honestly say today to Prime Minister
7 Trudeau and that Parliament that all of your
8 service contract is one big failure. Why? If it
9 was working very well, we wouldn't have women
10 homeless, destitute, turning to alcohol and drugs
11 to numb the pain. I know, I took that path for a
12 while. What brought me back was my grandmother's
13 teachings. That kept me alive because, like, many
14 other children of the government, wards of the
15 government, many of my family members, along with
16 friends, family up and down the Mackenzie River
17 committed suicide, and are still committing suicide
18 to this day, as far back as last week a Dene
19 mother, grandmother took her life. Is this what
20 this government has given us? That there is no
21 hope. That there is so much helplessness around
22 that our women, our men, our youth, our children,
23 are self-harming.

24 Yet, when we go to meetings and
25 your government wants to know, oh, how can we

1 improve? The people sitting there on the other end
2 don't want to listen is the way I see it or they
3 don't understand, or they can't comprehend.
4 Because how do you deal with human lives, that's
5 the problem with this institution, any institution
6 because most of these institution, the federal
7 government has umbrella institutions underneath
8 them, and one of them is the Government of the
9 Northwest Territories, 1964, took 25 signatures to
10 create, and that's been our demise ever since
11 because this institution took on the programs and
12 services that were to be delivered to us in a good,
13 respectful and meaningful manner. Instead, we were
14 faced with racism, discrimination, abuse to the
15 point of death. That's a reality. That's our
16 reality. That's our truth.

17 Over the years from my
18 grandmother's teachings, she would tell me about
19 the teachings of the Creator, love, but I knew
20 already I had that love. I didn't have it from
21 government workers. I didn't have it in foster
22 homes. All I was a contract on a daily basis or
23 month or year, and if they didn't have room for me
24 or if the foster family didn't care for me, or
25 anyone else for that fact because it's not just my

1 story, it is every child that has been in the child
2 welfare system who are adults today are the ones
3 that are traumatized are the ones that are
4 affected. We're the abandoned ones. This
5 government abandoned us on the streets.

6 As parents, do we abandon our
7 children on the streets. No, when this government
8 institution said they were my parents, what did
9 they provide for me as parents, absolutely nothing,
10 but a few dollars here and there for a new pair of
11 pants or whatnot, that's it. So I see a system as
12 one big failure that we're just one big contract.
13 And when I talk about the women know how to fix
14 their tepees, we do, but we're not given that
15 opportunity because this institution does not
16 believe in us, does not value, even that education
17 they paid for, they say for on our behalf, they
18 told our parents, they told the world they were
19 doing this to educate us. Okay. Fine, I picked up
20 enough skills to survive.

21 When I was 15, 16 years old, I was
22 here in Akaitcho Hall and I was beaten by some of
23 the girls. That's when I left Akaitcho Hall
24 because the supervisor wanted me to apologize to
25 these girls that beat me up, and the only thing I

1 could see why I had to apologize to them was
2 because they were in the favour with the
3 supervisors and this is what we face with many
4 times in society, favouring, nepotism, inequality.
5 I have tried getting jobs, for example, I could
6 see why our women end up on the streets, end up
7 losing their babies because they don't have enough
8 money to survive, that money that makes this world
9 go around. When you talk about the Northwest
10 Territories thriving, it's not everyone thriving.
11 I see government workers thriving. I see industry
12 thriving and all the workers and contractors and
13 the businesses and the service providers, I see
14 them providing because they are providing us with
15 the programs and services, they are getting the
16 contracts. The thing is for myself, those
17 contracts have failed us. Those service contracts
18 have failed us. Those programs, some of them, have
19 failed us, have failed the Dene women. Some of
20 those programs don't help because the words are not
21 ours and that goes to terminology. How this
22 institution changes our names, our identities at a
23 stroke of a pen.
24 So how can we as women, men and
25 youth, be able to feel good about who we are when

1 this institution will not give us that honour of
2 our own Dene names, registering us in our own Dene
3 names. This is our demise. This is why we are
4 where we are today continuously from the inception
5 of the Government of the Northwest Territories,
6 from the inception when the Government of Canada
7 became a legal body, a corporation called Canada
8 registered under the United States. And all I see
9 is our people, Dene people, our land, our water,
10 our resources, just one big grab, and they don't
11 care who is in the way because remember, they
12 removed my family, they removed a whole nation and
13 changed our name and our identities, relocated us
14 to places that there was no homes for us, but the
15 government had to get us off the land.

16 I learned why -- today I learned
17 why because international law says there can be no
18 tribal sovereign people living on the land you want
19 to develop and if you're going to, you have to ask
20 permission, but the thing is the government ask its
21 permission, and they don't care who they ask it to.

22 Sometimes they ask the wrong people, and that's
23 what I know and that's what I see happening even to
24 this day. Why? Because the government took our
25 identity. They call us Indigenous. They call us

1 First Nation. I'm not Indigenous, I am a sovereign
2 Dene woman along with every tribal sovereign woman
3 on this Turtle Island. That's what happens when
4 you're stripped. It's no different than standing
5 in a room full of people and being ridiculed
6 because that's what these institutions and these
7 employment workers under a contract do to us, and
8 this is where our demise is is the people that you
9 hire under these employment contracts. Nobody
10 questions their decisions or their actions when
11 they abuse a child or their hurtful decisions and
12 it's based, not for the well-being, but maybe for
13 political reasons or maybe for religion or for
14 whatever personal reason that is being made.

15 I know today, they have me
16 registered as a First Nations woman under the
17 Government of Canada. I am not a First Nations
18 woman, and I say to all the women and the men on
19 Turtle Island, the only way we're going to stop
20 some of these abuses is if we take back our power.
21 We take back our names. We take back our
22 language. We take back our identities, our true
23 identities, our true language. This institution
24 allow us freely to practice it, and not allow
25 another registered society to speak for us.

1 Because there are many registered societies with a
2 name because anybody can get a society number and
3 give it a name. My point is these registered
4 societies are funded by the federal government, so
5 they follow contribution agreements. They have to
6 abide by the contribution agreement whether it's
7 for housing, education, health, social programs.

8 I have worked in the system also.

9 I worked with youth, young offenders. The
10 government trained me to be a young offenders
11 worker. I was trained to guard in an institution
12 that housed our men when they committed a crime, a
13 federal crime. And that's one of the issues today
14 is if this institution is failing it's because they
15 are enforcing institution laws versus our Dene law.

16 Dene along with every other tribe had laws in our
17 language that was given to us directly from the
18 Creator, and what I do know today is the language I
19 speak is one of the oldest languages in the world.

20 It helped win World War II, so obviously our
21 language was of value, but not good enough for this
22 Canadian corporation. But I could see why today
23 they have that. They want to continue and assume
24 that control because without our names, they have
25 nothing. They use our names as lines for of credit

1 each province and territory. Maybe some of you
2 don't -- some people may not understand in this
3 room, but when I learned, and I stepped outside
4 that box, I stepped outside the box because of what
5 I was seeing inside the box. I was fed up, tired,
6 frustrated, hurt because whatever is going on
7 inside that box with the First Nations, with our
8 people, it seems like we can never get out, we can
9 never get ahead, so I learned, I went out and I
10 learned.

11 I spent time with different
12 tribes, with different elders to help understand.
13 I reached out in the world, and got advice from
14 experts, international treaty experts. Financial
15 experts. I learned Wall Street, what makes their
16 world go around is exactly what has been happening
17 here is a land grab, the resource grab. Because
18 remember this territory that we come from is one of
19 the richest territories in the world. How many
20 other territories has six diamond mines and had
21 three gold mines. How many billions were taken out
22 of here, and yet our women are murdered and missing
23 and why? Because your government cannot afford a
24 home, they say, or we're on a budget that kind of
25 makes me shake my head and think, yeah, get

1 frustrated, so I go and I pray, and I asked for
2 guidance two summers ago an elder, Nancy Scanny
3 (phonetic). (Speaking native tongue). And why do
4 I want to thank Nancy? Because she delivered to me
5 a document a Queen's Bargain. I would like to have
6 that shown up there, please.

7 So notwithstanding, the elder,
8 brought the document to me, she had heard what I
9 was trying to accomplish up here with our tribal
10 rights and our sovereignty and when we say we're
11 Dene, there's meaning behind that word Dene, that
12 we are tribal, we are sovereign. I read this
13 document over and over and over to try to
14 understand what the Queen was trying to do with our
15 people. She puts the new King of Canada, that for
16 me was very profound. Why? Because that says
17 right there, the Queen did not look at us Dene
18 people as subjects, but as equals. So why is her
19 representatives today have us in servitude under
20 this institution that is created in her name where
21 the Dene today and all the regions are (inaudible)
22 surrendering Dene land for public interest. That's
23 the problem today is this public interest is our
24 demise because it's a public interest that is put
25 forth.

1 Even from lifting the sanctuary of
2 the spawning, where the coney spawn here at
3 Yellowknife, this is why Yellowknife and the name,
4 the original name is (speaking native tongue) that
5 means no teeth, fish with no teeth. (Speaking
6 native tongue) that means mouth, that's where the
7 coney spawn, the mouth of the Coney River. That's
8 the Yellowknife River. They lifted that sanctuary
9 of the spawning of the fish so they can build giant
10 mine, okay.

11 Despite that agreement, and I can
12 see why because there is no monitoring, right.
13 Nobody monitoring what's going on here. If you --
14 if you can just put it down just a bit, because
15 what -- if you -- down some more. Yes, some more.
16 Okay. So she put: I am writing to you, okay, we
17 have to change the rules of the whites. We will
18 put head offices in Canada and on the Indian Act
19 and superintendent on provincial rules and lawyers
20 for your business, doctor, Indian Affairs. Sorry.
21 Okay.

22 So the reason why I need to read
23 and to bring this out is because the demise of our
24 people started with this document, but this
25 document was hidden in the New York archives. This

1 document when it was delivered, the elder Nancy
2 Scanny said it took her close to five years to get
3 this document because, number one, she couldn't get
4 it certified from the university or the archives
5 here in Canada because the original was not here,
6 it was in the New York archives. Okay. And when
7 she went there they said she could not get a copy
8 and get it certified because she was not a United
9 States resident, so she had to go and get her
10 friend from North Carolina to pay for the document
11 and then the document was sent actually directly to
12 Nancy in Cold Lake -- to Cold Lake, Alberta.

13 But this document here, Nancy has
14 brought in to a few court cases with her and has
15 won and shut down some court cases with this
16 document. And this why I feel this is so profound
17 and so important because when she says we have to
18 change the rules of the whites, we will put head
19 offices, that's because in the year of 1820, she
20 says we sent Simpson to control the company.
21 That's Simpson and that's where Fort Simpson was
22 named after, and you got to remember the doctrine
23 of discovery and how today a lot of our rivers and
24 our schools and that are all named after these
25 explorers and fur traders. So she sent Simpson to

1 control the company in the year 1821. We sued
2 Hudson for selling your goods.

3 So now we have another problem, we
4 have a whole company, trading company with
5 investors, whether it's the royal you know, Prince
6 Rupert or Queen Victoria or the Queen of Spain
7 because they were all in this together, so I am
8 renewing the treaty and money so the last bargain
9 on treat we was -- she had fired Hudson, which is
10 now the Hudson Bay Company. And I know today that
11 they had obtained this Charter falsely. So she is
12 renewing the treaty and money, the rules of the
13 Indian Act of Canada when the years went the
14 superintendent will give you the money tax free.
15 Now you will have to make the townships and this is
16 where -- when they -- when they wanted to develop
17 an area that they were interested in or had mineral
18 claims. That they moved us into these towns. And
19 these communities are recognized through the
20 Government of Canada through council of orders,
21 okay. If you don't have a council of orders, you
22 don't get -- you don't get infrastructure dollars,
23 okay. So even if a little community is trying to
24 thrive, if they're not under the government, they
25 don't get the same. So the whites will have to pay

1 you for everything you have, you make head
2 townships in Canada, have reservations to keep the
3 whites off the reserve and free Indian navigations,
4 free gates for settlers and timber of 100 acres.
5 We leave it to as you gave it to the settlers, only
6 the pine for the lumberman and 60 cents share on
7 navigation rights if you are on the boat. It's
8 free travelling all over Canada, any place you want
9 to go, but yet the founding fathers and the people
10 that created that institution ensured that we were
11 put on reserve and were not allowed or were jailed
12 or shot or murdered because I can say today, I
13 feel that this institution has murdered many of our
14 people whether they're Dene or not, for
15 assimilation, for colonization, for development and
16 for immigration.

17 If you want a home, a house in
18 Canada, you go to the superintendent, put in your
19 order and he will see that it is built. When I
20 read that, that means that I as a Dene tribal
21 woman, when I want to start my family, I can get a
22 home that the -- that relationship should have
23 given me that home or any other woman for that
24 fact, or any other man and family. Because what I
25 see what they did with that, they put it under

1 their institution, under their Housing Act. And
2 they're housing acts have rules and regulations,
3 and if we don't meet them, you're homeless. And
4 this is what I don't understand, this institution
5 saying, well, what -- how can we improve it, do we
6 build more houses? Well, if you have to, build
7 more houses.

8 But my point is today, and my
9 recommendation is today and my solution is today on
10 that is to give us back that responsibility because
11 the government is failing. The institution is
12 failing. The institution has rules and laws, but
13 in order for this institution to be effective, it
14 has to have enforcers, so this Canadian government
15 uses the RCMP to enforce. They use wildlife
16 officers to enforce. They use housing officers to
17 enforce. They use the sheriff to enforce. They
18 use the GNWT courts to enforce and to evict.
19 Because how many times the Government of the
20 Northwest Territories land officers would go to my
21 relatives' place and threaten, took them to court,
22 brought her a document and said if you're not off
23 your -- this land in 30 days, we will remove --
24 forcibly remove you, but her comment back, they
25 were -- they were going to die for their land.

1 Because that's exactly what I told the income tax
2 man too when he came to my home to assess my home.
3 If I am not to pay taxes why am I paying taxes?
4 Why am I being evicted? Why are the people, the
5 women, being evicted from their homes, even under
6 the Government of the Northwest Territories housing
7 program? When a mother loses her children, oh, you
8 don't have any children out in the street she goes.
9 If a woman becomes widowed, they kick her out.
10 That's not right. That's where the failure is. I
11 see the solution to that. Does this institution
12 give us back the monies, they don't need to be the
13 middleman anymore. They don't need to be the
14 service providers anymore because if they hold my
15 name, when I was born this government of the
16 Northwest Territories took my name and registered
17 it to their public corporation. I didn't ask their
18 permission. They didn't ask my mother's
19 permission. They just took it and if they didn't
20 sign, then they would have to pay the bill because
21 our names are not registered for payment or who is
22 eligible, let alone that we are the Dene and why do
23 we have to prove. You know today, I say I don't
24 need ancestry.com to know where I come from because
25 Dene blood have been in here from time and

1 memorial, and I am still here and my grandchildren
2 are still here. My daughter is here. And this is
3 why our women are destitute and our women are
4 vulnerable to the point where their lives are of no
5 value.

6 If this institution does not value
7 our lives, you think the world is going to value it
8 also? No. Because the way I see it, this
9 institution is a just about every country where
10 there are tribal people. This is why I hold this
11 staph proudly today because our grandmothers and
12 our grandfathers have struggled in the past and
13 today we're still carrying on that struggle, and we
14 are up against institutions rules and laws that
15 have no heart. Industry doesn't have a heart,
16 machine don't have a heart, but our people do. And
17 this is why I feel that the women's lives and the
18 Dene lives are of no value. Only -- the only time
19 I see the government coming around is when they
20 need to consult. When they say consult because
21 they do not know how to consult. They are
22 consultants, that's their jobs to consult, to find
23 information, and that's the problem there's too
24 many consultants here in the north, but they don't
25 come and ask us how we should fix our tepees, how

1 we should bring our children back for healing.
2 They're not our saviours, they're on a paid
3 contract to fulfill a contract, that's it. That's
4 what we do when we take up an employment contract,
5 whether it's for the government or private
6 industry, we follow the policy of the business and
7 the institution, and that's the demise of the Dene
8 people, the women and the youth.

9 The north is one of the highest
10 places in this area and Canada for suicide we have
11 a high rate and that tells me that our -- our
12 people are feeling so hopeless and helpless. They
13 don't love themselves enough or not thinking ahead,
14 that it's only at this time that it's -- there's
15 hardship, you know, our ancestors always hung on to
16 their beliefs, their traditions, their practices
17 because that's what helped them to survive so we
18 can be here today but that was taken away. They
19 took away Dene law and they replaced it with
20 corporate law, so now when somebody, a Dene did
21 something, they didn't understand what they were
22 doing and years ago there was no mercy. It was
23 degrading how they treated the men if they broke
24 the law of the federal government or they broke The
25 Wildlife Act. Remember these men out to hunt, to

1 feed their families and because the queen wants to
2 build an economic trade relationship because that's
3 what I see, that bargain and that treaty as, it's
4 not a bargain to seed and surrender our lands, for
5 what? For someone else to have control to the
6 point where we cannot even say how we can better
7 ourselves or how we can make ourselves well.

8 Even with our healing, Dene are
9 going to heal by going back on the land, every
10 tribal person is going to heal if they are given
11 back their circle, their teepee and be allowed to
12 hunt freely, be allowed to fish, to harvest because
13 this is where this institution is making us break
14 the law, enough is enough. I have had enough. I
15 am up against all kinds of odds because I want to
16 speak out.

17 It's a good thing I'm a strong
18 woman I go to meetings they have these meetings
19 advertised. I go to the meetings. Somebody will
20 see me in the crowd. Oh, there's Noeline, she's
21 going to create trouble, so I'll have a chief, I'll
22 have a government lawyer or I'll have the deputy
23 minister come up to me and say you got to leave,
24 you're not a chief. So it's not about government.
25 It's not about helping -- helping us because they

1 don't want to hear the truth, they want their
2 paperwork to look really nice with all these fancy
3 words. Remember the government institutional
4 language is all made up, their terminologies for
5 each project, each whatever because in Dene, we're
6 descriptive, we tell a story, okay.

7 I have been wanting to blame,
8 point fingers because I'm only human, but I have my
9 teachings. I have my prayers. I think about my
10 grandmothers and watching them grow up. It was
11 safe. It was happy. My grannies would laugh
12 together. They would tell each other stories, and
13 there was no swearing. I didn't hear them swear to
14 one another or call each other down, but it was
15 encouraging. They encouraged one another. You
16 don't have this, I'll help you, but they all made
17 something together for one another. And that's
18 what we don't have today because this institution
19 puts in rules because they don't know.

20 This institution also created a
21 forum for negotiating and it's going to get worse.
22 It's not going to get better. I feel it's not
23 going to get better, it's going to get worse
24 because it is already and nothing stop. There's a
25 continuation of the hurt, the suffering, the lack

1 of, that's what I see going on and continuing on.
2 These institutions, First Nations, or whether
3 they're First Nations or what I call competing
4 funding agencies, you know, friendship centres, all
5 these groups that apply for money to help us
6 sometimes we don't access those programs and
7 services. You know, there's, it doesn't always
8 meet the need of the individual because there's
9 paperwork. There is -- when a woman, and I have
10 gone through it, you know, trying to fill out forms
11 to satisfy the government that I am going to use
12 that money for what it is to be used for, that's
13 what the contribution agreements are all about,
14 right. And that's a problem with all of these
15 programs, they're on a budget from Ottawa, but yet,
16 that money that's coming from Ottawa is coming
17 from, like, a royalty fund, and all the monies that
18 are taken from the diamonds, the gold, everything
19 that was taken from the Northwest Territories was
20 sent to Ottawa and sent back and divvied out to us
21 in programs and services that have failed. Health
22 is failing us.

23 They're trying to make this great
24 big super board. You know, I don't, I see the
25 super board failing like every other board. All

1 these boards do is create a process for their
2 institutions. Sometimes these boards are a barrier
3 to the communities because when you take money
4 away, it doesn't go into the community, because a
5 lot of the funding is divvied out on population or
6 residency or membership. And if you live in a
7 place like Yellowknife and you're from another area
8 or another town, they tell you, sorry, can't help
9 you, you don't, you're not from our band. That's -
10 - that's the mentality that some of the people have
11 today, and I call that brainwashing into an
12 institution, accepting without question that this
13 is the way it is. It's not because I have been
14 dealing with this institution since the time I
15 could speak English.

16 I spoke Dene first through my
17 grandmother, and then English when I went to
18 school. And when we had to live in Fort Resolution
19 because of the building of the Taltson River Dam
20 and the re-location and giant mine and the highway
21 and Pine Point Mine, all of this development
22 usurped all the Dene people in the area. Our
23 lives. The women. The women had no more homes.
24 When they -- we were all put into Fort Resolution
25 after Residential School, it was all -- it was a

1 township. It was for the church. It was for the
2 institutions that had workers, and that community
3 is built on the church and even the church did not
4 value our lives. Many of our women and our men
5 died in that institution and only today the
6 government has acknowledged. They haven't fully
7 acknowledged the deaths. I acknowledge it because
8 I lived through Residential School for how many
9 years. I lived through their child welfare system
10 for how many years. I lived through every law and
11 policy that this government of the Northwest
12 Territories and federal government has put out to
13 control our lives and this is what I see as these
14 institutions controlling our lives for development.
15 Not giving us enough to live on, but ensuring
16 their own wages, their own pensions are in place,
17 and this is what I see, this devolution doing to us
18 women and men and youth.

19 This is why we're still having our
20 women and our youth committing suicide to this day.
21 Because the system is not about the tribal people.
22 The system is about economics and building and the
23 money. Yes, the provinces and territories are --
24 have their own -- they run their own system. But
25 also, remember the Dene people were sent to

1 Edmonton. We were sent to Charles Camsell
2 Hospital, Aberhart Hospital. The women were sent
3 away from home.

4 So this institution did a lot of
5 damage and is still doing many damage today. If
6 people use these institutions against the
7 membership, it is harmful because the north is
8 known for nepotism and whatnot. To the point where
9 this government had to put in a policy called
10 affirmative action because there wasn't enough Dene
11 working in their system. There wasn't enough Dene
12 in housing. But yet, there is still not enough
13 Dene in housing. We're still out on the streets.
14 You still a lot of empty federal houses. The
15 government should be ashamed of themselves. Behind
16 my behind my home, that house has been empty for
17 year-and-a-half, and yet people are freezing to
18 death because this institution and the people who
19 make the rules and the laws have other priorities.
20 We're not a priority. Our lives don't seem to be
21 a priority, but the economics getting the
22 permission to build these diamond mines.

23 I'm a descendant. I have yet to
24 receive a benefit. Why? Because I don't belong to
25 this band here. See, the government created

1 division through these bands. They have
2 membership, and if you don't meet the criteria, you
3 don't -- you're not a member. You don't get help.
4 How many times my people were turned away and were
5 told go back to where you come from, that's tribal
6 people saying that to one another, hurting one
7 another. These institutions that are created to
8 help us are hurting us because the people that are
9 running them are hurting us. They're not well
10 themselves. They are still chiefs that have been
11 exonerated. There are healers exonerated from
12 rape. It's who you know is the way I see it, the
13 hiring, the nepotism. It is who you know. It's
14 not what you can do. It's not what you know. It's
15 who you know. It's who accept you.

16 You know what the joke is with
17 myself and my friends? About a month ago, three
18 weeks ago, I was asked to leave a leadership
19 meeting because I was not a chief, although I was a
20 Dene national chief, although I was the vice
21 president of the Native Women's, Michelle was with
22 me, Michelle may have been a witness that year when
23 I push for Bill C-31. I am proud to say that I
24 push those issues for women to the forefront, every
25 chance I got, I stood up. Why? Because of the

1 inequality, the imbalance in the institution, they
2 can't fix it. The only way they're going to fix it
3 is if they take us out of that institution and we
4 create our own registry. We create our own
5 governance system. We have enough young minds,
6 beautiful minds, smart with technology. We can
7 create then our own process for our own people.

8 We need to get our royalty monies
9 from the federal government's trust because we are
10 of age today I'm a grown woman. I'm a grandmother
11 of nine. My oldest is 22 and my youngest is six
12 years old. But that's not counting the many young
13 girls and the young guys that went through my home
14 that I helped, whether they were Dene or whether
15 they were white, it didn't matter because I have
16 Dene heart. You help everybody because those are
17 the values of our ancestors. You help. You care.
18 You share. And that's what we did when the
19 Europeans came here. Our grandparents never turned
20 anybody that was hungry away because that's the law
21 of the land. That's natural law. But government
22 law is different. Government law takes away, takes
23 away everything you have to the point of death.
24 Why else would our children and our women and our
25 men and our grandmothers and grandfathers commit

1 suicide because of the hopelessness.

2 My granddaughter's grandfather
3 committed suicide and many other family relatives
4 committed suicide because they didn't have that
5 hope in their heart, they didn't feel loved. They
6 didn't feel they were worth it. I know today I'm
7 worth it, that's why I stand up because many of you
8 women out there told me, hugged me, Noeline you
9 stand up for us, you speak for me. Don't stop.
10 How many times I go to meetings and I'm asked to
11 leave and I'm, you know, I leave because I have
12 pride, I have dignity and I think about my
13 grandmother, my grandparents how they treat each
14 other and how it should be but I go in there not to
15 create distention, but to bring in good
16 information.

17 These institutions, they spend
18 millions of dollars in one year with consultants to
19 come and consult with us and to ask us how to fix
20 our tepees. How to fix -- how to get our
21 education. How to do this. I think it's time that
22 that stops because our women are the backbone and
23 always have been. It's a European concept of the
24 male inherits. In our culture, it is the woman's
25 bloodline. That's why these membership codes are

1 detrimental to our women and our people because
2 that brings division and if you don't meet the
3 criteria, you're not allowed to be part.

4 I was told by a Metis president at
5 a meeting and they said Noeline is not a Metis, but
6 yet, I carry two Metis bloodline. But I am Dene
7 first in my territory because I speak the language.

8 I was raised by a Dene grandmother. Bilbra
9 (phonetic), I found out about Bilbra, they were
10 part of the Riel rebellion. Our family separated,
11 some of us came up here up north, some ended up in
12 the States, Minnesota. We just found each other
13 about four years ago, five years ago so I know back
14 then they were already dividing the families, and
15 in -- through force, through death, treason,
16 accusing our people of protecting of treason when I
17 see that Queen's bargain, that document and anybody
18 who handled it, is the one who committed treason
19 against the Dene and the tribal people in the
20 Canada, because when they took that document and
21 they bastardized it and they said this is what is
22 to be, that's not what the Queen's Bargain says.

23 If I'm not to pay taxes, why is
24 the federal government tax office coming and
25 knocking on my door after telling them I'm Dene,

1 and the thing is I don't owe them that money. It's
2 an institution that I was getting a wage from they
3 should have fixed it, but political interference,
4 so who has to suffer through all of that process,
5 it's myself as a woman. But in the meantime, I'm
6 going to meetings and presenting to tax committees
7 and telling them that they should not be evicting
8 the people from the land for taxes because that's
9 what's happening that they should not be taxing our
10 people. They should not be turning our lands
11 freely over for development the way it is. Because
12 where are our women going to go? They can't meet
13 the public needs and the criteria for housing. Do
14 you know public housing means that anybody that
15 comes to Yellowknife can apply, any resident in
16 Canada, so we are competing as Dene people who have
17 that right to housing and who have a right to those
18 funds, and that is being administered by the
19 government that is not being divvied out properly.
20 That's why the women are suffering. That's why
21 there are broken homes and children in care and
22 being murdered and abused and raped.

23 I have three nephews, three ashes
24 of my nephews that were on the street. It's hard,
25 you know, to see -- see them suffering and --

1 needlessly, and you know they come from a good
2 background that their grandfathers were good men,
3 their grandmothers were good women, good people,
4 all was the matter was that we had good hearts,
5 that we shared. That we cared for another human
6 being, but the other end, didn't. It's like when
7 they said the treaty party would come around. You
8 know, when my people, my family members were at the
9 table too from what I understand and I know my
10 family members went to the treaty table with good
11 intentions, they didn't go to the table to lie or
12 steal or cheat, it was their land. It was the
13 other people that came and lied and stole and
14 cheated and took. Any way, it didn't matter at
15 whose expense, at times a whole nation, at times a
16 whole family unit, and this is what we're still
17 faced with today. This is why our women and our
18 men and our children are still vulnerable because
19 of these institutions and how they are being run.

20 You know our elders too thought it
21 would make it better if we ran in these elections
22 and if we applied for these jobs, but our demise is
23 that these institutions and these jobs have rules.
24 So how could we help our own people freely when
25 you have these rules. I learned. I worked in

1 Alberta. I was a constituent worker for Ray
2 Martin. He was the opposition leader NDP, and
3 that's where I learned quite a bit how programs
4 run. How they're being divvied out. Who to talk
5 to. That was my job. Until I came home, I had to
6 come home because I also at that time was not in a
7 healthy relationship. I had to leave I came home.
8 I came back north to try to better myself and heal
9 and to help my family because that was what was
10 happening. My relatives were saying move back
11 home, help us. Our political system was in a
12 turmoil. Families were against families because of
13 the politics who wanted to be a chief, who wanted
14 to be an MLA, it was terrible, the division. So as
15 national chief, I fought to have the NWT human
16 rights also implemented, but I also had a clause
17 and put in there that we should not be
18 discriminated for political reasons, family
19 affiliation because I got tired. It was like if
20 you weren't a friend or a family of a leader, you
21 got nothing. Or if you didn't vote for them, there
22 was retaliation, you weren't able to access the
23 housing or your home fixed. Or allowed any of the
24 programs and services, that's what we're facing as
25 women too. Other women that are jealous to our --

1 grandmother looking at the pictures, and she didn't
2 want to learn and read like the rest of the
3 grannies when they tried to teach them the basic
4 English and writing. She said (speaking native
5 tongue) she says: No, my girl. I'm a Dene. I'm
6 not a white person (speaking native tongue) I'm a
7 Dene. She says you bring (inaudible) you learn it,
8 but (speaking native tongue) because it's going to
9 be useful to you that's what she told me growing
10 up. She seen the change.

11 My grandmother, my great
12 grandmother and this is why we wanted court by the
13 way when my cousin was evicted we wanted court
14 because we proved that our lineage, our bloodline
15 came right from this land here called Yellowknife.
16 My great grandmother hunted and trapped. She was
17 medicine gatherer, she delivered babies and she was
18 four-and-a-half foot. Beautiful woman, tough, she
19 persevered and she wanted nothing but the best for
20 her children and her grandchildren, and I know my
21 ancestors did not sign any agreements or any kind
22 of document to suffer us until death or for the
23 rest of our lives because this is what this
24 relationship has done to us women, it's taken away.
25 So whatever they take away, they took away from us

1 is my solution. They took away our Dene law,
2 replaced it with corporate law, we bring back our
3 Dene law. They took away our Dene language, we
4 bring back our Dene language. And that's what
5 should be the language of this land, not French and
6 English because that is our demise too when our
7 people are trying to phone for help, the first line
8 -- front line worker is French or immigrated worker
9 that barely speaks any English. This is not to
10 discredit them. This is to point out a fact that
11 is a barrier to our people. This is why we don't
12 get the proper help or the help that we need right
13 away because of these types of barriers, language,
14 you know, the contractors that have taken on these
15 contracts, all they care about is fulfilling that
16 contract and meeting the requirements of that
17 contract, and that's why I always say we're just
18 one big contract. And that's why the system is if
19 failing because those contracts have failed, the
20 service contracts that this government is providing
21 on our behalf is failing on us, whether it is
22 housing, whether it is education, whether it is
23 health, it doesn't matter. Because if this city is
24 thriving, it's not because of us, although, it's
25 because of our resources and our taxes that are

1 the services are being divvied out to us, nepotism,
2 favoritism, racism, discrimination, for political
3 beliefs, family affiliation.

4 So I see the continuation on,
5 especially under this government of the Northwest
6 Territories. I see an institution, many
7 institutions because I've seen many frameworks of
8 corporations or setting up one and they all have
9 by-laws. They all have a constitutions. So how
10 many constitutions are there? You know, all these
11 corporation have constitutions, and Canada
12 corporation has a constitution, and that's where
13 they're looking after us, us women under the
14 constitution, under the federal laws. When they
15 try to give us back our rights through Bill C-31, I
16 look at it now and all they're doing is negotiating
17 within the system, within their corporation and
18 appeasing. How? By changing words, terminology.
19 Today, we're Indigenous. I'm not an Indigenous
20 person, I'm a sovereign tribal Dene grandmother,
21 mother, auntie, cousin, friend, woman.

22 I want to say, though, that the
23 only way I see resolve is if our names are taken
24 out of the federal government, the federal
25 government no longer house our names, that all

1 responsibility go back to the tribes the way it was
2 before. But we use our modern technology, we use
3 the tools around us because the one thing I do know
4 for a fact if Dene have survived from time and
5 memorial, we did have trade, we did have an
6 economy, but all of that was replaced with
7 corporate rules and laws. And institutions so
8 that's what I see as one solution that every tribal
9 man, woman, and babies name be removed from the
10 federal territorial institutions and not be
11 registered as a civilian or a public, okay.
12 Because remember, our names are used to get money.
13 And this is why many of us have stood up and said
14 that we are part of a budget you use our names to
15 negotiate, more monies or benefits or interim
16 benefits agreement with the mines and that. Our
17 names are continuously being used but they do not -
18 - that institution does not give us back that same
19 value.

20 When I look at the institution and
21 who makes up the institution it's human beings, and
22 that's, there's a history here, and a legacy in the
23 north we're -- we're not free from corruption. We
24 have been known, the north and Government of the
25 Northwest Territories took their premier down for

1 corruption, that went right back to my community.
2 That hurt a lot of families. But for them, it was
3 more about political gain. There's corruption at
4 the First Nations level. I see it all the time.
5 The people in the communities feel it, there's no -
6 - I don't see a lot of the negotiations being open
7 a lot of the people when they see the final
8 document and they see the seed and surrender to the
9 Government of the Northwest Territories and the
10 federal government and the Queen that you surrender
11 all your Aboriginal rights and title, All your
12 treaty rights to public government so that we could
13 share all of the land, all the resources. Okay,
14 fair enough. But you know what, we need our homes
15 because this money from the resources and right
16 from the time the influx of the Europeans and the
17 fur trade, we should have had proper homes. If the
18 government took over our names and divvied out in
19 programs and services, they failed because our
20 women are missing, our women are murdered, our men
21 are murdered. Our youth are missing and murdered
22 because of no homes. There's barriers, doors being
23 closed to them.

24 And this political system is not
25 our system. We know that. But we have to put up

1 with it. If the people want money for programs and
2 services, we have to put up with what's going on,
3 whether we agree with it or not. It's not -- you
4 know, our lives are not what it, you know, like the
5 same way they treat businesses on the stock
6 exchange. You know, that's how they treat our
7 land. That's how they treat our resources. We go
8 up -- run bid to the highest bidder. Now there's,
9 you know, going to countries and China is buying
10 dam C, site C. You know, so what's -- what's going
11 to happen to the people around there. Look what
12 happened to the Dene people, look what happened to
13 my family when they built Talson River Dam. They
14 told us, oh, you have to move here. It's a good
15 thing my grandfather, had enough money, he bought a
16 piece of land from the church that was already ours
17 because of the exchange of land between the queen
18 and the representatives and the Hudson Bay and them
19 selling to the government of the Northwest
20 Territories.

21 You know, it's all over the land,
22 the land grab. That's why the people in Canada, US
23 and Mexico are in a situation because of the land
24 grab. Even your own Supreme Court judge in Canada
25 said that, I think it was Beverly McLachlin. She

1 said, and it's recorded that the people in Canada,
2 the tribal people in Canada, the government has
3 created cultural genocide against them. So this,
4 whatever I'm speaking about is all part of the
5 cultural genocide. This is the examples. This is
6 the experiences of the cultural genocide. And it's
7 called also systemic because we don't get any help
8 unless we go into this system and we agree to
9 whatever is in this system. It's derogatory. Our
10 elders, our women, our men, even if they go sit
11 there and they get \$200 for food for the next
12 month. In the north what is \$200? When a loaf of
13 bread is like \$5 or in the communities it's like
14 \$10 for a quart of milk. So this is what this
15 institution is doing to the people and this is why
16 we're having a public inquiry for the government to
17 try to figure out what is going on.

18 We know what is going on. It's
19 the institution that wants the answer, but when
20 they get the answer, they don't know what to do
21 with it because it's an institution. They're not
22 human beings. The human beings are the ones that
23 enforce the policy. It's Parliament that makes the
24 laws and they have to follow it, and that's why
25 we're in this mess is because of the laws, the

1 health care, the housing that is being controlled
2 manipulate and looked after by this federal
3 institution and this is why I know and I learned
4 that if I want answers and I want resolve, I have
5 to take that next step, and that next step, I need
6 answers. And I'm going to take those steps. If I
7 have to file lawsuits against those contracts, then
8 that's what I'm going to do, and that's what I
9 encourage every child that was a ward of the
10 government and every child that went through the
11 child welfare system to file a case against the
12 government for failed contracts, failed contracts
13 to ensure that our lives were not at risk, that we
14 were safe, we were healthy, happy and fed.

15 The government knew and they --
16 the people working for the government new and some
17 of them were perpetrators themselves, so this is
18 what we were up against. This is the only way that
19 I see the people getting out of this enslavement
20 because that's where we are. We're enslaved.
21 We're enslaved to the system because the government
22 has taken over our sovereignty, has taken over our
23 lands for public interest. And they say your names
24 are in there so your interest is looked after, but
25 it's not because we're here at this inquiry and the

1 government is trying to figure out what they did
2 wrong. They have to quit kicking us out, us women
3 out into the streets, they have to quit refusing,
4 you know, to quit -- to stop their ideologies and
5 enforcing them upon the people. That's the only
6 way our lives are going to get better.

7 Because there's no law in the
8 world that says this Government of Canada has to
9 continue to keep our monies in trust. There is a
10 process for a trust fund that I learned right when
11 you reach a certain age. That through the courts
12 you receive the funds that is entrusted on your
13 behalf. Well, I was told -- a figure I was given,
14 Noeline, when you were born, this is how much
15 you're worth as a Dene, you're born, you're
16 probably worth at 100 million, each Dene that's
17 born, each baby, tribal baby that's born in this
18 world it's probably worth 100 million each, that's
19 what the government holds in trust through the
20 lands, through their resources because remember,
21 they come from a world of trust funds, they come
22 from a world of inheriting, they come from a world
23 where money is everything.

24 Dene the way they look at their
25 everything, was a land, the water, the animals, the

1 people, the air. We thrived, we were happy. There
2 was interference, interference by a society and
3 that society has to change their attitudes and
4 their behaviours also. Because as civilians, they
5 vote for their government, when they vote their
6 government in and their political party, that's
7 another demise of the people because it's the will
8 of the party, and we've seen it many times in
9 negotiations, thank you to Elijah Harper who became
10 a good friend and a mentor. I learned a lot of
11 from Elijah Harper. And to his message to me was,
12 Noeline, don't ever give up, keep going and this is
13 why I keep going despite being ostracized. Despite
14 my home being egged. Despite my property being
15 damaged. Despite the people going after my
16 children because of my political beliefs. My
17 family suffered and they stood up with me. They
18 persevered. I'm very proud of them because we were
19 all on this journey together. They all gave me
20 strength. They gave me the reason to live.

21 I have a beautiful granddaughter
22 sitting over there. You know, she's my reason to
23 live too today. I don't want anyone to hurt her.
24 The way I've been hurt and the way my relatives and
25 the way all the women have been hurt. I would give

1 my life to protect them. Because we do not want
2 any other women to feel the pain, the suffering
3 that we face on a daily basis. And we know, and
4 how do we know because our teachings says the only
5 time our grandmothers in the spirit world will
6 intervene if the earth and the people, the animals
7 are at risk, she will use the weather. The people,
8 the animals, the earth, the water, everything is at
9 risk, so she is doing what she can and we haven't
10 had this from the time of the flood, from the time
11 of the ice the age, from the time of the
12 (inaudible) and remember, this is how long the
13 Dene have survived. And we're still going to
14 survive because we are women, we are live givers.
15 This is what this creator gave us, this gift, to
16 give life. The men were put by our side to protect
17 us, to help us, to provide us with food. The
18 children gave the grandmothers -- the grandparents
19 joy because that's now what they had the
20 responsibility to teach.

21 So today, I understand why the
22 system is failing and what has happened to me as a
23 survivor of a rape. Kidnapping. This man that did
24 this to us because I'm not the only one, there was
25 many women in the community that he did this to.

1 He was one of them that they put away for life, he
2 can never come out because he is detrimental to the
3 world out there. We're not safe with men and women
4 that are hurting us, we need a build -- we need to
5 build a relationship again, and the one thing I do
6 understand because I'm Dene and my grandmothers,
7 they had a heart, but they wanted unity, they
8 wanted peace, they wanted cooperation, harmony, and
9 we can bring that back with each other.

10 I have mixed blood I'm of French
11 decent, Scottish, Dene. So I can't fight myself.
12 I can't be mad at myself that bloodline but I do
13 know from way back that we do co-exist together,
14 whether it's good or bad. But we can do a better
15 job and if the people in the government want to
16 know how to fix it, then they have to talk to us.
17 Talk to the women, we know how to fix our tepees.
18 We don't need consultants. We don't need any
19 outside help. We can do it ourselves. We can heal
20 back on the land. And that's what our women want.
21 That's what our men want, that's what the youth
22 want. They are starving for that information and
23 when they get it, they're so proud of who they are.

24 I think my tummy is growling.
25 Masi cho. (Speaking native tongue). What I said

1 was I wanted to thank you guys for coming here for
2 listening and for allowing us to speak, but thank
3 you for having the courage sit across and not take
4 it personal, thank you. That I hope message that
5 you bring back is that we need to do better, but to
6 do better, we need to take those certain steps I
7 mentioned, we have to remove ourselves from the
8 corporation, it's not working, okay. And then
9 we'll maybe -- and maybe then our people will not
10 get charged for hunting or doing any of this stuff
11 and the one thing I do know, is that when Dene
12 don't have their food, they also get traumatized
13 and they get cranky. Our grannies used to get
14 cranky, so that's my story. My survival. My
15 encounters. The barriers. My hope. My dreams.
16 My wish, you know, that, you know, the people that
17 are you supposed to help us do help us because
18 that's -- we got to stop. This has to stop, that's
19 all I know, that's all I want. Maybe, you know,
20 before our lifetime is over, we will see it, but
21 that's my dream and this earth, we have all kinds
22 of nations, all kinds of people and we do all have
23 to live together, but we all have to change
24 together, especially in Canada that's what I do
25 know, and it will come through education, through

1 our voices, through media, without prejudice,
2 because we're only here to help.

3 So with that, I want to say masi
4 cho for allow me speak freely without interference.

5 Thank you (speaking native tongue) with all my
6 heart. (Speaking native tongue) I love you all.
7 Masi.

8 MS. ROXANE LANDRY: (Speaking
9 native tongue) I have my Uncle Johnny here, Uncle
10 Johnny Landry he tried to up us, our family, to
11 help us heal through his music, to help us not
12 forget where we come from because the first wave of
13 residential school (speaking native tongue) are the
14 first ones. Itso (phonetic) is buried right beside
15 the residential school in Fort Chip even though
16 they took my grandma from the three islands in Fort
17 Simpson with her siblings, her brothers and
18 sisters, and they took them to Fort Chip. When
19 they were in Fort Chip, my uncle lost two great
20 grandfathers because they were murdered in the
21 residential school. And in our culture, what I
22 remember is that we do not ask why, ,we don't
23 question Creator. We don't question (speaking
24 native tongue) we know what had happened there.
25 Now it is for us to help the white nations, the

1 supposed to help each other in the circle of life.

2 If we help the four-legged, the flyers and the
3 swimmers, mother earth and the water, the sun, the
4 moon, the stars and the air, they help us. They
5 help us heal.

6 Because now, we come to a point
7 where so much chaos, even our babies -- our babies,
8 my great grandmother had all her babies taken away
9 from her in the first wave of residential school.
10 She died when her sons died in the residential
11 school, and she was buried right along with them in
12 Fort Chip next to the residential school. They
13 never -- they never questioned the residential
14 school, they just accepted it because in their
15 culture, peace because you got to have peace, when
16 you lose a loved one, you have peace and love
17 because that's what is going to help us get
18 through. Like (speaking native tongue) said, love
19 overrides hate. Love will cure sickness. You pray
20 over the water, you help cure the impossible, you
21 help cure your broken spirit, your broken heart
22 because those things we cannot see. And then from
23 that in the failed services that are happening, are
24 the front line workers that (speaking native
25 tongue) they don't speak any of the Dene languages.

1 Half of our problems are due to suppressing and
2 sedating those hurt feelings that we were robbed of
3 how the residential school taught us how discipline
4 came in the fist and then when our men went home to
5 try to discipline the family the way they taught
6 them in residential school. No, that's wrong.
7 That's wrong. You have to go to jail now. You
8 couldn't ask why, even though you seen the
9 educational genocide system discipline our loves
10 ones, and in that genocide educational system, you
11 were alienated against your own brother and sister.
12 You weren't even allowed to hug your brother. You
13 could not love him, you could not touch him, that's
14 why in residential school, do not touch, do not
15 cry, do not feel. Well, our heart and because our
16 children. I have family who have went to the RCMP
17 because assault, rape, and the RCMP told my family
18 it's all in your head, you're delusional. That's
19 what they told our family and the RCMP at the time
20 to deliver that message on a Saturday night, while
21 family was by herself away, and she was suicidal
22 after that. What do you do? What do you go to the
23 RCMP and they tell you it's all in your head,
24 you're delusional and then at the same time, you're
25 alone, you're away from home for school to better

1 educate yourself so you would make it in this
2 world. But thank God for (speaking native tongue)
3 and for our teachers and our healers and thank you
4 for healing -- hearing our story because together
5 we are going to work at it. We are going to work
6 at it together because the nations are coming
7 together if we put our wisdom and understanding
8 together and all our resources in the right spot,
9 Canada will be the most powerful country on this
10 planet because we have vibrant, vibrant, vibrant
11 soil, mother earth has blessed us with our food and
12 our medicine and the our shelter and in those
13 things and the teachings that our grandmothers and
14 grandfathers have taught us and with the prayers,
15 we are going to do this because we are going to
16 respect -- the government is going to respect our
17 spiritual inheritance. (Speaking native tongue).

18 MR. JOHN LANDRY: Well, my name is
19 Johnny Landry and I have been writing songs for
20 maybe about 30 years and all of the songs that I
21 have written maybe about 30, 37 songs, but all the
22 things that I have written are from Dene values
23 like helping, respecting, loving each other and
24 things like that, that's how I wrote -- I learned
25 from elders and I had to stop. I had to straighten

1 out my life maybe about 20 something years ago so
2 the elders could respect me to tell me these values
3 and in the last 10 years, I learned one of the
4 values was before the residential came to our land
5 is that you don't hit women, you don't talk back to
6 women or you don't argue with women, it was a Dene
7 value, and we lost those things, those values. And
8 today, like, in my home, like everyone one in my
9 hometown, you wanted to learn about Dene, there is
10 no place you can go, you're on your own like all my
11 life, like, all the things I done, I done it on my
12 own, I never got no hand out from nobody, not
13 everyone the government, that's how I'm still
14 going, you know that's Dene. That's how Dene was
15 before white man came, they were independent
16 people, and they all help each other. The woman
17 was really highly respected, and maybe we should
18 learn and teach our grand kids, that's what I've
19 been doing about to respect women again, maybe
20 things might change, you know, for everybody in the
21 home. In the home, that's where it's going to
22 happen, that was all taken away from us. Dene
23 people is about the family, that's what it is
24 about, number 1, it's family, you know. Thank you
25 very much for listening. I hope positive -- that's

1 where we come from, we are positive people, we're
2 not negative people. They brought that to us, and
3 today we're dealing with it, but the way to solve
4 it is to share, thank you very much. Masi.

5 MS. CINDI-RAE HARRIS: Hi, my name
6 is Cindi. Noeline is my. Mom from my experiences
7 of violence, we need more help. We shouldn't be
8 questioned on why we want to leave I had to do it
9 on my own with my mom's help, but I don't know
10 sometimes I think of the incidents that have
11 happened to me, in my relationship, my marriage
12 that I had to leave and I did try a few times but I
13 always questioned by organizations. Are you sure
14 you want to do this, are you sure you want to go
15 somewhere else, your home is here that's not my
16 home, that was my ex-husband's home. You know and
17 we just to need not to be questioned when somebody
18 wants to leave a relationship nobody questioned me
19 when I wanted to be in the relationship, so why
20 should somebody question me when I want to leave
21 that relationship.

22 You know you live unhappy, you
23 live because other people want you to live like
24 that, you know, there should be no question when a
25 woman wants to leave with her children because of

1 violence and because of drinking. You know, I
2 lived for many years behind closed doors with a lot
3 of abuse, a lot of abuse that my family did not
4 know about. It was always, you know, nothing
5 above, I was always bruised, hurt, called down to
6 the point where I actually thought that I was no
7 good, you know, I thought wrong of myself and I
8 knew that that's not the way you're supposed to
9 live because you're supposed to be happy, you're
10 supposed to be, you know -- but my recommendation
11 would be, you know, that when somebody reaches out,
12 that they get that no questions asked, you know, if
13 they want help to leave this relationship, they
14 should just be helped, know, in small community,
15 there's no resources there. There's no place where
16 somebody could go. You know, in small communities,
17 everybody is related, so it's hard to reach out to
18 somebody that is related to your partner or your
19 ex-partner.

20 You know, I grew up in the Sahtu,
21 and I know of a few people that have been murdered.
22 And you know, if the -- it moves down to -- down
23 this, down to Fort Providence in 1999, and I lived
24 there up until December 26th, 2015, when I finally
25 had to leave. Christmas is never going to be the

1 same for me or my family or my children. When I
2 wanted to leave years before that, there was no
3 help. You know, there was no somewhere I could go
4 to ask for help to get me out of here, out of this
5 situation, so I stayed, you know, until it just got
6 to the point where I couldn't. I couldn't stay, so
7 you know, I had to call my mom. My mom helped me
8 get out of that relationship. And I am, today, I
9 am very happy where I am. I did a lot of work on
10 myself, but it wasn't just myself that helped me,
11 it was my kids and my partner that I have now that
12 we really made me see the light of different things
13 of how beautiful you are, how -- how you could be
14 loved, you know, because you don't receive that
15 love besides your parents and, you know, your
16 family members. When somebody is special to you,
17 they tell you that you start to believe it. And
18 you know, I am, if you were to see me three years
19 ago, you wouldn't recognize me, because I am
20 smiling today. It took a lot of courage, and you
21 know, we need help out there for people that are
22 stuck in these abusive relationships. Especially
23 in the smaller communities, they need a resource
24 place or, you know, somewhere to go. There's no
25 place to go there in small communities. That's

1 what they need. They need help. A home, you know,
2 a safe place. Where they could go and know that
3 it's safe and they are protected. But that's what
4 I think that, you know, a lot of the smaller
5 communities need is not to be questioned when they
6 want to leave, it does cost a lot of money to
7 leave, but you know, these people shouldn't be
8 questioned if they want to be happy. If they want
9 to feel safe, that's all I have to say. Thank you.

10 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And
11 Madam, Mr. Commissioner, is there anything that you
12 would like to say at this juncture?

13 COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:
14 Thank you. I just want to thank you -- thank you
15 all very much for being here and for sharing, and
16 for sharing your strength and resilience. You've
17 given us so much to think about, I -- I don't have
18 any specific questions. I know it's getting late,
19 but I just -- I'm really grateful for you coming
20 and participating and contributing to the work of
21 the inquiry, what you share with us is a gift to
22 the work that we're doing at the national inquiry,
23 so thank you very much.

24 COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE:
25 Merci, Commissioner Brian. It was -- for me, I

1 have to use the right word that we can understand
2 each other. What you shared to us every time we
3 listen and receive and honour the truth that come
4 from a family or a survivor, there's transcription
5 after that come a couple days after, and then we
6 discuss. For me, for sure, if you're okay with
7 that, Noeline, that we can -- we can -- we are, I
8 am inspired by what you shared to us. And we have
9 to talk about the impact of colonization so people
10 can understand why women are missing today. Why
11 women are murdered, men and boys, you mentioned
12 also our men and boys. It doesn't just happen like
13 this. There is many, many ripple effect, many
14 reason. And I felt like I was in the old days,
15 that passion you brought us back there where people
16 need to understand the root cause and you brought
17 so many of them, so many with documentation, also
18 if we can access of that photo that you put there.
19 The bargain with the Queen. And if we could use
20 your passion, your knowledge, to help us when we
21 will write the report to make the government
22 accountable, responsible, understanding for real
23 our realities. So I'm asking you if we can, and of
24 course, in a respectful way, and everything was
25 there in your words, you used the English words, we

1 are (inaudible) people also, descriptive when we
2 speak (inaudible) my mom, my auntie, and your
3 people wrote a book together about caribou, I was
4 young. I should have brought it, so proud of that.
5 Now I understand why they fell in love with you.

6 So thank you so much and to listen
7 also our ceremonies, our laws, that we teach in the
8 song are with the drum, our recognition with mother
9 earth, our connection with everything. Everything
10 was there. I see hope. And many generation also
11 with you that we can stop that cycle of violence,
12 that many of us think we can't another fact today.

13 Some people need to see fact. Well, I had some
14 today amazing ending with you this beautiful
15 journey so it's a gift. I will honour it, and
16 thank you for giving me the 2018 fire again to
17 continue. (Inaudible) you want to fire me.
18 English. So I have so much left for you and I hope
19 we stay in touch, technology I hope we stay in
20 touch. And if we feel down, lift us up, we need
21 your love, we need your gentleness that you showed
22 us and that you showed to the world today.
23 (Speaking native tongue) thank you very much.

24 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And
25 there's just one last the thing too, but I know

1 there's more. Noeline actually put together kind
2 of a summary of her life and her experience in the
3 various positions, and she has asked that I share
4 this, and in fact, if anybody in the room, would
5 like a copy, we can make that available. So I
6 would like to start with the commissioners, and
7 also filing one as an exhibit.

8 A Copy of Noeline's History.

9 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: And I
10 have, apologize, I didn't appreciate that Maggie
11 also wanted to say something when the microphone
12 was being passed, so please, that would be
13 delightful if you would like to do that.

14 MS. MAGGIE MERCREDI: Masi cho, I
15 would like to say it has been an honour to be a
16 part of this hearing this afternoon, and I have
17 known these women a couple of them for just a very
18 short time, but the other for quite a while, and it
19 is through their voice that helps me every single
20 day to live my truth and to say no when it's time
21 to say no, and to let go when it's time to let go.
22 And to hear Noeline's words are so powerful is
23 like that flame is being lit again within me. The
24 support in our communities are so vital not just
25 the Non-Indigenous, our brothers, our sisters, our

1 other Indigenous groups to support each other now
2 today, right now, and not wait until we're a
3 statistic. When we're missing, when we're in
4 trouble, when we're murdered, when we're raped or
5 in a violent situation, not then but right now to
6 support and to help us to be everything that we can
7 be. That is what is missing in our communities.
8 It's like Noeline said, we, the women, are the
9 leaders in the community and the men are there to
10 support and it has been backwards where the men are
11 taking up and leading when the heart of our
12 communities are sitting with the women. There's a
13 prophecy that says: When the hearts of the women
14 are on the ground, that will be the end of our
15 people. Meaning our women have all fallen. And so
16 as an Indigenous woman, to support -- like, I need
17 that support from my community, from my sisters, my
18 brothers, from my community, to help me so that I
19 can continue. Continue to be everything that I am
20 capable of being, everything that I'm able to
21 provide, and bring for the wellness and for the
22 health of my community. It is an honour to be a
23 part of this. It's an honour to meet everybody and
24 I wish the commissioners and everybody in this
25 process well and healing. Masi cho.

1 MS. RITA AREY: I too would like
2 to say, I'm very honoured to be a part of this
3 process and very humble, feel very humble in
4 witnessing the stories and hearing the passion in
5 our women. And like Johnny said, the women are the
6 leaders and we've got to learn to teach our
7 communities again to respect our great leaders who
8 are the women. Noeline and I go back to
9 residential school. She was over at Breynat Hall
10 in Fort Smith and I was at Grandin College. And
11 Grandin College, if you were in Grandin College in
12 those days, you were in the upper class, and if you
13 were at Breynat Hall, you were the kids down there,
14 but we became good friends, and we didn't see one
15 another for many, many years, and it was like we
16 never even lost those years. We just picked up
17 where we had left one another, and I had the honour
18 of having her in my home community in Aklavik and
19 she came, I share my food with her, my home, and we
20 enjoyed many laughs, and I'm very proud of Noeline
21 because she speaks with passion from her heart, and
22 she knows the history of the Dene people. Noeline,
23 masi cho for having me here and thank you to the
24 commissioners for listening, you did an awesome
25 job.

Noeline Villebrun, John and Roxane Landry and
Cindi-Rae Harris, In relation to Stella Cardinal

1 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Okay.
2 With all these amazing word, we have reached the
3 end of this session and now is the time for you to
4 do some self-care, find something to eat. Oh, John
5 is going to sing a song? Okay. Great, even better
6 -- and there's gifts, so it's now 20 to 7:00 and
7 we'll do the final ceremonies and gift giving and
8 end with a song. Take rest eventually, everyone.
9 --- Exhibits (code: P01P09P0103)

10 Exhibit 1: Folder Containting
11 18 digital images provided by
12 the family and displayed
13 during the public hearing
14 Exhibit 2: One-page CV of
15 Noeline Villebrun
16 Exhibit 3: Document entitled
17 "Agreement between Dekis and
18 Queen Victoria, The year 1665
19 on the Bargain 1835" (one
20 page)

21 --- FINAL CEREMONIES.

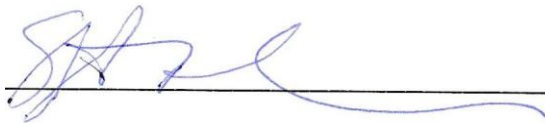
22 --- Whereupon the hearing concluded at 7:57 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best
of my skill and ability,
accurately transcribed from a pre-existing
recording
the foregoing proceeding.



Jennifer Rotstein, Court Reporter

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best
of my skill and ability,
accurately transcribed from a pre-existing
recording
the foregoing proceeding.



Stephanie Menard, CSR(A)