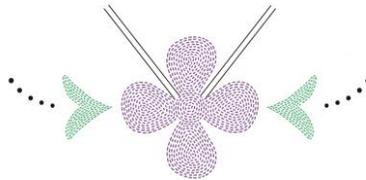


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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 I Public Hearings
Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel
Britannia Ballroom
Metro Vancouver, British Columbia**



Public

Wednesday April 4, 2018

**Public Volume 79:
Catherine Mills,
In relation to Mary Anne “Marion” Mills nee Phillips**

**Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller
Commission Counsel: Wendy van Tongeren**

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APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations		No Appearance
Government of British Columbia	Jean Walters (Legal counsel)	
Government of Canada	Anne Turley (Legal counsel)	
Heiltsuk First Nation		No Appearance
Northwest Indigenous Council Society		No Appearance
Our Place - Ray Cam Co- operative Centre		No Appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada		Beth Symes (Legal Counsel)
Vancouver Sex Workers' Rights Collective		No Appearance
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Métis Nation		No Appearance

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1 Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Wednesday, April 4, 2018, at 12:07

3 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** I welcome everyone.

4 Madam Commissioner, my name is Wendy Van Tongeren, V-A-N,
5 T-O-N-G-E-R-E-N. And, I am counsel who just learned how to
6 turn on the microphone.

7 The next witness is Catherine Mills, M-I-L-
8 L-S, and she is here with members of her family. And so,
9 we have a number of starting things to do. I should say
10 the reason why I'm standing is that eventually, Catherine
11 and I will be changing places, because she has chosen to
12 speak at the podium today. So, I'm very much looking
13 forward to hearing that.

14 And, the first thing that we need to do, of
15 course, is to introduce everyone who is here. And so, I'm
16 going to hand the mic first of all to Catherine and just as
17 I did before, only the mic is on now. You give your name
18 and then pass it to the person beside you.

19 You are here to speak about Marion Mills.
20 And, it may be that as each person takes the mic, you could
21 just describe what your relationship is with Marion. Okay,
22 thank you.

23 **MS. CATHERINE MILLS:** I'm Catherine Mills,
24 and Marion Phillips Mills was my mother.

25 **MS. JOAN BROWN:** Joan Brown, sister to

1 Marion.

2 **MS. ISIDORE PHILLIPS:** My name is Isidore
3 Phillips. I am her nephew.

4 **MR. GERON MILLS:** My name is Ron Mills. I
5 am Marion's brother-in-law.

6 **MR. KYE MILLS:** My name is Kye Mills, and
7 she is my grandmother.

8 **MR. CONNOR MILLS:** My name is Connor Mills,
9 and I'm his nephew.

10 **MR. VINCE MILLS:** Hi, my name is Vince
11 Mills, and Marion Mills was my mother.

12 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** And, Ms. Mills --
13 sorry, is it okay if I call you Catherine?

14 **MS. CATHERINE MILLS:** Sure is.

15 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Okay, thank you.
16 So, Catherine has decided to actually affirm on an eagle
17 feather as well as swear on the Bible. And, frankly, she
18 is a Justice of Peace in the Province of British Columbia,
19 so she could probably administer her own oath, but she
20 doesn't want to show off. So, Bryan.

21 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** I'm just wondering
22 where my Bible -- there's my Bible. The Justice of the
23 Peace has my Bible. Great. I'll pass you up the eagle
24 feather, as well, Catherine. Well, good day, Catherine.
25 Do you solemnly affirm that the story you will share today

1 will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
2 truth?

3 **MS. CATHERINE MILLS:** Yes, I do affirm.

4 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Okay, thank you.

5 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** So, Catherine,
6 begin whenever you're ready.

7 **MS. CATHERINE MILLS:** I actually had to
8 write down, number one, say my name. So, again, my name is
9 Catherine Joan Mills. My background is that of First
10 Nation and Irish English. My father was an Oblate
11 originally. And, he was from St. John's, Newfoundland, and
12 he travelled across Canada where he was working in the
13 residential schools, and he eventually met my mother.

14 And, for work, I work for the Ministry of
15 the Attorney General. I am a court clerk and a Justice of
16 the Peace. And, in the course of duties as a Justice of
17 the Peace, I am able to travel to communities of Bella
18 Bella, Klemtu and Bella Coola, and which I view it as a
19 great honour that I am accepted in these communities to
20 work there and be with the people there and be accepted.

21 So, with me today is my brother, Vince
22 Mills; his two sons, my wonderful nephews, Connor, Kye; my
23 uncle, Ron Mills, which is my father's brother; my aunt,
24 Joan Brown, my mother's sister; and my cousin, Isidore
25 Phillips.

1 And, it is a blessing to me today that they
2 are here with me and that they are supporting this.

3 Because when I started this journey, it was originally to
4 correct the records of my mother as her death, I felt, was
5 listed incorrectly.

6 And, I was doing this for myself, and I was
7 doing it for the generations that are coming up behind us.
8 Because I thought what if one day they're doing a family
9 search and they come across our mother's records as listed
10 as an alcohol overdose when that wasn't what it was, and
11 they wouldn't know the history, that that's all they would
12 have to go by are incorrect records.

13 So, that was the purpose of me starting
14 this, was I wanted it for them and for their children and
15 their children, and so on, so that they would know the
16 truth and the reality for when my brother and for when the
17 rest of us were gone. So, that will be written down for
18 them and that people would know my mother as well through
19 that.

20 Do you want me to continue on?

21 So, I wanted to start off with my mother as
22 well, Mary Anne Phillips Mills. She went by the name of
23 Marion. She was born August 27, 1941, and died November
24 11, 1976. Her parents were Gabriel Phillips and Catherine
25 Laura Phillips nee Wycotte. Her siblings were Ralph,

1 Gladys, Antoine also known as Koliya (ph), Joan and
2 Wilfred. Her children are Susan Viola, Edward Kevin now
3 deceased, Ralph Francis, Vincent Thomas, myself Catherine
4 Joan, Kimberley Ryanne (ph) and Virginia.

5 These are important because these are people
6 that are without her, some that knew her, some that didn't
7 know her, but her name needs to be spoken and it needs to
8 be remembered, and to be remembered by these people that
9 knew her or loved her or lack, didn't know her love because
10 of what happened.

11 So, I wanted to start with history of 1875,
12 and I'm not going to go every year or decade from there on.
13 But I wanted to start, and I will link it in together.
14 And, I think probably from being in the court system for so
15 long, I have to give history. You have to show cause,
16 like show reason why things are happening and why things
17 are in place.

18 So, I found something on a posting, and it
19 was in 1875, the Goal of Residential School, and it was
20 written by Bishop Brandon. He said, "We instil in them a
21 pronounced distaste for the native life, so they will be
22 humiliated when reminded of their origin. When they
23 graduate from our institutions, the children have lost
24 everything native except their blood."

25 May 9th, 1883, John A. MacDonald to the House

1 of Commons, "When a school is on a reserve, the child lives
2 with his parents, who are savages. And though he may learn
3 to read and write, his habits and training, mode of thought
4 are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write.
5 It has been strongly impressed upon myself as head of the
6 department that Indian children should be withdrawn as much
7 from parental influence, and the only way to do that would
8 be to put them in central training industrial schools where
9 they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of the
10 white man."

11 1885: John A. MacDonald implements
12 restrictions upon the movement of Indigenous groups,
13 requiring them to receive formal permission from an Indian
14 Department official in order to go off the reserve.

15 Definition of a savage: "A member or group
16 of people regarded as primitive or uncivilized." Now, the
17 Cambridge Dictionary as well -- and I decided to include
18 this, because so much of the residential school is based on
19 English or Irish backgrounds, my father from a St. Francis
20 de Sales Order from a Roman Catholic Church.

21 Cambridge Dictionary definition of savage:
22 "Extremely violent, wild or frightening, a person whose way
23 of life is at the early stage of development or someone who
24 is thought to be in a wild state and to have no experience
25 in civilized society."

1 An anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan,
2 defined the three stages of development of humanity: One,
3 savagery; two, barbarism; and three, civilization. From
4 those definitions, they decided to define the First Nation
5 people of Canada which led into residential schooling and
6 taking away the Indian in people.

7 Cultural genocide, also known as cultural
8 cleansing. Genocide: Intentional act to destroy a people
9 in whole or in part. I bring up these terms and quotes to
10 highlight how long the brainwashing of society has been
11 going on for to perpetuate the Indian being seen as dirty,
12 unworthy, lacking in value, to remove them from the family
13 unit, family culture and family values, to create a blank
14 slate by cutting them from culture to make them more
15 malleable, even the use of alcohol to make them more
16 pliable to take advantage of.

17 This cultural genocide, genocide, and
18 shaming has brought forth generations of non-native society
19 to view us as less than, that it is okay to rape, kill and
20 abuse because we are less than.

21 As once said to me, "Indigenous people, we
22 are like trees." This was said to me by somebody from
23 another culture who was part indigenous from their country.
24 His grandmother was Indigenous and he was part Spanish.
25 And, he watched the genocide of the Indigenous people in

1 his country and surrounding countries and said, "Indigenous
2 people are like trees. The men are the trunk standing tall
3 with the limbs extending out to protect and shade and to,
4 you know, protect the children as they go out. But, the
5 women are the roots, the foundation in which the men and
6 women stand upon."

7 He said, "So you kill the roots, you kill
8 the society." And that's what this has been about. They
9 have been killing the women, they have been killing the
10 girls, and they have been killing the children. And, that
11 has been going on historically. And, that's part of the
12 cultural genocide and the genocide of our First Nation
13 people in Canada.

14 Moving forward to a timeline of July 1976,
15 my grandfather "disappears." We are descended from
16 hereditary chiefs. My grandfather was a hereditary chief.
17 He disappears. His name is Gabriel Phillips.

18 The police are reported to, but nothing is
19 done. No report is filed, no follow-up. Repeated attempts
20 to find out what is being done is met with silence and
21 stonewalling because we are less than.

22 November 11, 1976, so five months later, my
23 mother, Mary Anne Phillips also known as Marion to her
24 family, she dies 1:41 a.m. at St. Paul's Hospital in
25 Vancouver. Her death is listed as alcohol overdose, but

1 her blood alcohol level is .04.

2 Even during the autopsy, the focus is more
3 on gathering supporting evidence of her being an alcoholic
4 rather than any suspected foul play, such as her brain
5 dying well before she actually died, mucus in her lungs,
6 and so on.

7 But, instead, the focus is on her enlarged
8 liver and other inflamed organs due to possible alcoholism.
9 There were no barbiturates found in her system, but neither
10 is it listed what was in her prescription bottles which
11 were found at the scene.

12 The report speaks of a prominent bruise over
13 her left lateral upper arm that is four centimetres across,
14 and there is a bruise below her right kneecap, which to me
15 speaks how did she get a bruise two inches long on her
16 upper arm, and why is there a bruise on her right knee?
17 But, nothing further is mentioned about that.

18 Potential cause of death was listed as
19 general visceral congestion. Two, probable overdose of
20 drug yet to be identified, which again speaks to
21 prescription bottles that were found in her home, but it
22 wasn't listed what they were, nor was she tested for
23 anything other than basic barbiturates. Three, possible
24 hepatic coma. Four, acute fatty degeneration of the liver.

25 The autopsy report does not indicate any

1 other testing for drugs beyond stating barbiturates,
2 despite making notes of recent needle marks on the back of
3 her right hand, the left wrist and the upper right arm at
4 the crease.

5 For me, having had hospital visits and --
6 you know, my wisdom teeth taken out, I know from being
7 hospitalized in emergencies. I've had needles here, IVs
8 here and blood drawn here to which I have scars.

9 All these are pointed out in the autopsy,
10 but it's still focused on her being alcoholic, not anything
11 else. The focus was more on proving that she was that.

12 However, that same year, in July 1976, my
13 Aunt Joan received a postcard from my mother saying that
14 she had quit drinking. And, even our visit at the
15 coroner's office approximately two weeks ago, they actually
16 note that the file is incomplete, that there are pieces
17 missing.

18 The police report is now missing the who. I
19 inquired in the '80s when Gilbert Jordan -- I shouldn't
20 even say his name. But, when that was all out in the news
21 and people were asking people to step forward, for people
22 who had lost their mothers, their sisters, their aunts,
23 their cousins, their daughters, who had died of drug and
24 alcohol overdose, to come forward to see if it was this
25 fellow, I had somebody look at her records.

1 I had a friend at the Vancouver Police
2 Department. He looked at her records, and he was horrified
3 at what he had found. I had been told that she was getting
4 ready to go out with this man. He asked me if I wanted to
5 know his name, and I said no.

6 And, I wish at the time that I did.
7 Because, at that time, I told him no because I needed to
8 work on the aspect of forgiveness, that if I knew his name,
9 I would show up at his doorstep, and it wouldn't have
10 turned out very well, and I'm sure I wouldn't be a Justice
11 of the Peace today. My Irish side sometimes kicks in.

12 Fast forward now, over 20 years later, I get
13 the police report and the who is missing, the name of the
14 fellow that said that it was an accident. He didn't mean
15 to. He had done it prior with her consent but, of course,
16 we only have his word to go on. That aspect is missing.
17 That part where they said he didn't mean to do it so they
18 let him go, that part is missing.

19 I remember being told the story by my father
20 when I inquired when I was 15 about my mother, because I
21 wanted to know who I came from, who I was. Why was my skin
22 different from his?

23 And, he told me the story of this man and
24 the subsequent -- the police having to break into the
25 apartment that, you know, because he felt bad. But, when

1 he felt bad, he locked all the doors and windows behind him
2 when he left, so that they actually had to break in to get
3 to my mother who was in respiratory distress.

4 The report had stated that while she was in
5 the bathroom, he slipped these pills into her alcohol
6 without her knowledge. When they finally -- the police
7 finally arrived approximately 40 minutes later, they broke
8 in, discovered her, did a quick inventory of what was
9 around the room, and then called for the paramedics or the
10 ambulance drivers as they said at the time.

11 She finally arrived at St. Paul's at 1:20
12 a.m. and then later died at 1:41 a.m. However, the police
13 report lists her arrival at 12:25 a.m. This speaks to the
14 lack of caring, that the police couldn't even be bothered
15 to get the timing right of when they showed up, when she
16 arrived at the hospital, the sequence of events.

17 There was more attention paid to how much
18 she had in her purse, which was \$16.94, than what
19 potentially had happened. They were more worried about
20 securing her \$16.94 than they were securing about what was
21 in the pill bottles or who was this fellow that was no
22 longer there and why she was found alone where they had to
23 break in.

24 They do make again, like I said, multiple
25 notes on the prescription bottles, that there was two pills

1 left in each of them. One was rather large, but the other
2 one wasn't, but not what the prescriptions were.

3 They listed the doctors, even listed down
4 possibly they were the family doctors, but again not what
5 the prescriptions were for. And still, no mention of who
6 called her in as a female in distress, but did note that
7 she was alone.

8 The loss of our mother in this matter is
9 profound. Our roots were never as strong as they could
10 have been, but we learned to be strong despite this. My
11 brother is a phenomenal father, and I am proud of the man
12 that he is, because he has given his boys what we never
13 had. And, he is strong. He is creating a strong
14 foundation, and he has unconditional love with his boys.
15 He gets and he is building on what we never had. And, I am
16 grateful to him when I picture those two boys.

17 The loss of our mother has left more
18 questions. Who was she? I was eight when she died and in
19 foster care. My brothers and I were raised mostly in
20 foster care. So, who was she? What could she have
21 achieved in life? Would she have achieved sobriety, which
22 I think she was on the path to? What was she like? What
23 did her laugh sound like and how did she love us?

24 Because my nephews will always know how
25 their dad loved them, but that is what is missing for us.

1 And, what did she think when she looked at us as her
2 children? What were her hopes and dreams for herself and
3 us?

4 And part of the reason for being --
5 achieving what I'm achieving within the court system is
6 because I'm doing it for her, and I'm doing it for all the
7 people that couldn't do it, and I'm doing it in face of
8 people, culture, and society thinking that we are less
9 than. I am proud of you, Vince.

10 There are things that I know about my
11 mother: that she knew how to embroider. But then on the
12 other aspect, I think I'll never learn that from her. And,
13 that's something that I think most of us go, "Oh, yes, my
14 grandmother used to do that," but at least people had the
15 opportunity to do that. And, I sometimes think, what else
16 have I not had the opportunity to learn from my mother?
17 What stories did I miss out on?

18 The impact of residential schooling or the
19 cultural genocide and genocide, by calling us savage was to
20 kill us, but they didn't. They didn't kill the Indian in
21 us. We are still here. My mother lives on in me. And,
22 when I look at my brother, Vincent, she lives on in him.
23 And, I look at my nephews and I look at their eyes, and she
24 lives on in them. And, Kye and Connor, you two will -- I
25 will spend the rest of my life telling you two how grateful

1 I am you are here, and you will always know love from the
2 family.

3 And, like I said, I started this journey
4 initially for myself, for my mother and for my nephews, so
5 that when I am gone, they will know the true story.

6 The impact of cultural genocide and genocide
7 has her death listed incorrectly. I may not be able to
8 officially change her cause of death, but they will know
9 and their children will know that I tried, that our mother
10 was worth it, that she was real and she was worth it. They
11 will know her name, what she looked like and that she was
12 loved and missed every day, and my aunt can speak to that.

13 This photo, I was three months old when this
14 photo was taken. It's my grandfather walking my aunt Rita
15 down the aisle, my aunt who was married to my uncle Frank,
16 my father's brother, and my mother. And, in the background
17 is my uncle Tom and with the little white hat is my nan.

18 There are very few photos that we actually
19 have of our mother, and I didn't know that my brother
20 didn't even have what I had, and I'm in the process of
21 printing them for him. But, I didn't even know how I
22 looked like my mother until somebody sent me one of the
23 photos and I put it up against my grad photo.

24 Excuse the spiked hair, but at least the
25 purple was growing out by that point. There's no purple in

1 this one. But, it was when I put that -- excuse the '80s
2 hairstyle. Egg whites worked really well for spiking.

3 It was when I looked at that photo and
4 another one of her with her hair all done up that I got --
5 I looked like my mother. And, that was only, like, two
6 years ago that I discovered that. And, I'm going to be
7 turning 50 in 11 days, and it was two years ago that I
8 learned that I looked like her.

9 When I read the terms of reference for the
10 murdered and missing, and they were wanting suggestions, I
11 had to think about it because I grew up knowing shame,
12 whether or not it was from being a foster kid, from being
13 sexually abused, abused emotionally, mentally, that despite
14 my father having married a native woman, he still had us
15 deny our heritage.

16 He said it was to protect us and he didn't
17 want to expose us to racism or prejudice, but we did
18 anyways. And, my father and I used to have a couple of
19 blow-out fights about this, because I told him one day, I
20 looked him straight in the eye and I said, "I learned that
21 from you."

22 And, of course, you know, hell kind of
23 rained down that day, because I dared point the Mills'
24 finger back at him and said that I learned prejudice and
25 racism about who I was from him. He was an Oblate and

1 that's how he met my mother.

2 That was still the impact of residential
3 schooling, the thought process that he still had. He could
4 sometimes be a violent man, verbally and emotionally
5 abusive, which I witnessed as a baby towards my mother.
6 She was with him for about six years, and I believe her
7 subsequent choices of men in life was a result of
8 residential schooling, being taught it was okay to be
9 abused, to live with shame and be okay to be less than.

10 So, what do we do now to end the cycle of
11 abuse, the throwaway mentality that society has towards our
12 First Nation people? And, being a Justice of the Peace and
13 being able to travel, like I said, into some of these
14 smaller communities has been a true blessing to me, because
15 I get to see with pride what is happening and the steps
16 that people are making to overcome the generational abuse.

17 It's a slow process. It crawls at times, it
18 may be appearing to go backwards, but we are moving forward
19 and we are getting stronger. The roots of our community
20 are getting stronger because the women are stepping forward
21 to say, "No more."

22 So, my suggestions with the RCMP and other
23 police agencies is education, cultural training. And when
24 I say cultural training, I don't mean a day. I don't mean
25 a week. I mean indoctrination, indoctrination into these

1 police agencies as hard hitting as they did with regards to
2 residential schooling and the Indian.

3 Start the educational material at the
4 elementary school level. Because how often is it -- later
5 on in high school only recently and some universities that
6 people learn about First Nation people and residential
7 schools. If we learn about Nazi Germany, South Africa with
8 apartheid, we see all the gritty films of the gas chambers,
9 the other cultural genocides, rape camps, everything like
10 that, why aren't we learning about the smallpox? Why
11 aren't we learning beyond the smallpox epidemics and the
12 flu epidemics that were given to our people?

13 Why isn't it explained that in South Africa,
14 the townships were based on our reservations systems, and
15 that even in South American countries, they're doing the
16 same to Indigenous people that they did to us.

17 For people, it is not real. They don't
18 understand the last residential school only closed in 1996,
19 that a generation hasn't even passed since our closures.
20 Teach people at that elementary school level because by the
21 time they reach teenage years, the prejudice and racism is
22 set in, because they're learning it from elders, which is
23 something they took away from us as First Nation people,
24 the ability to learn from our elders. Thankfully, some are
25 still around where we're learning from them.

1 Teach our communities how to budget. It's
2 one thing throwing funding at the people, but if you don't
3 know how to manage it, it just perpetuates the cycle of the
4 dumb Indian, that we don't know what to do. "Well, look,
5 we throw money at them and it's water through their
6 fingers." So, it still perpetuates that cycle, that
7 brainwashing.

8 And, working as a Justice of the Peace, I
9 get to see the impact of restorative justice in our
10 communities. Bring on more First Nation courts. Fund for
11 that. Fund for the counselling.

12 Educate people on the rich cultural heritage
13 that we had before the church came. Educate how we had our
14 own justice system, we had our own isolation camps, we had
15 our own healing circles, we had our own sentencing circles.
16 Educate people on that. Not just educate them on the
17 statistics of First Nation people that are in our jail
18 system, the over-representation of our First Nation people
19 in the jail system. Teach them about our culture and our
20 history. Teach them why they're over-represented in our
21 prison system.

22 The government must acknowledge that it's
23 hard to rebuild the trust. But they need to show good
24 faith that they want to correct history beyond just a pat,
25 apology. But this will take time. And, they have to

1 acknowledge that as long as it took to create that distrust
2 with the First Nation people starting in 1875 or prior, it
3 will take almost probably as long to rebuild that trust.

4 One of the things about the education, and I
5 was unsure whether or not to bring this story up, because
6 my aunt Joan just told me this the night before -- a couple
7 of nights before. The one thing that I consistently hear
8 from my aunt and my uncle is they're missing chunks of
9 time. They don't remember the time in residential school.
10 And I think how horrific must the abuse have been for them
11 not to remember.

12 And, one of the stories she told me was
13 about how five girls ran away, and everybody was sent out
14 looking for them, but they were hoping that they got away,
15 she said, but then they sent out the dogs. Let that sit
16 for a moment, then they sent out the dogs.

17 We hear about Black History and how they're
18 tracked with dogs, but we don't equate that to our own
19 people. So, the dogs found them and they were brought
20 back. And, when they were brought back, they were brought
21 back to the cafeteria and made to kneel and had their hair
22 cut off.

23 And one by one, they were made to stand up
24 to apologize to people, again bringing shame. Their
25 actions were shameful. Their actions for wanting to keep

1 with their culture, keep who they were, was shameful, and
2 they had to apologize for it.

3 This is something that needs to be
4 acknowledged. We need to learn about this earlier on in
5 school. People still -- I was talking with Wendy earlier.
6 People still don't get about the smallpox was a deliberate
7 -- like, to me, it was just like, well, yes, I knew it was
8 deliberate, but how many people still don't know that there
9 was now no Beothuk in Newfoundland and Labrador, where our
10 father is from. An entire race has been wiped out.

11 People don't know that. They didn't even
12 know there were Indigenous people in Newfoundland and
13 Labrador because the genocide. But, we don't learn about
14 that in school. This is what I'm talking about with
15 regards to the education.

16 I had asked my uncle Ralph Phillips to come,
17 and he was unable to. Sequence of events, a truck broke
18 down, his backup ride wasn't now able to make it.

19 And, trying to keep with some of the
20 tradition when I was coming here to speak, I said,
21 "I'm asking for permission." I said, "Well, sort of. I'm
22 going to do this, but I kind of want to ask you if it's
23 okay." And, I said, "But, I'm telling you I'm doing it."
24 But I said, "I guess what I'm doing is I'm asking for
25 permission to make it public." And, he said "Yes," that

1 our mother's name has to be spoken, Mary Anne Phillips
2 Mills, Marion Mills. Marion Phillips' name has to be
3 known.

4 And then I asked him if there was something
5 else he wanted me to say. And, he asked me to pass along
6 this message. He said to tell them how the government
7 still doesn't look at us as people, that we hardly count as
8 people.

9 He's an elder in our community and a
10 hereditary chief, even though we don't have that title
11 anymore. But, he works in our heritage site on Soda Creek
12 which is the reserve that -- I'm a band member of and my
13 brother is.

14 So, they get a lot of people in from
15 Germany. And, he says, "The people from Germany are always
16 so respectful, and they want to learn everything they can
17 from our culture." So, he says he asks them, "How do you
18 know so much about the native people?"

19 He said that they're taught from Grade 1,
20 Grade 1 about the rich history and culture of the First
21 Nation people, the culture and the history that we have and
22 how much they respect us, but our own government doesn't.
23 This is what he's hearing from Europeans. They even know
24 that the government hasn't respected our people.

25 He says tell them that when he was at

1 residential school, that his grandmother – they called her
2 Mamise (ph) – they told him that she was teaching him the
3 work of the devil, even though she was a devout Catholic
4 and teaching him about God and to live a good Catholic
5 life, to be good to people, to be kind to people.

6 But, this was the mistrust that the
7 residential school was feeding in, the divide and conquer
8 of the family, the mistrust of our elders, how residential
9 school had him not know his siblings anymore, and he was
10 never close again to my mother or his siblings again or as
11 close as they used to be before residential school.

12 He told me that my grandfather was
13 threatened to go to jail if they didn't bring my mother to
14 residential school, so they sent him with her. He was
15 three years older. And, they told him to watch her,
16 because that's what older brothers do.

17 We had a different kind of watching. He was
18 usually trying to get me into trouble, different time
19 frame.

20 But, he said when she went there, they
21 separated him. They cut her hair, again that cultural
22 identity, the cultural genocide. And, they put him out in
23 the hallway where he couldn't speak to her. But, he said
24 he showed up every day, and every day they put him out in
25 the hallway. They put him outside, and they did not allow

1 him to speak to her.

2 And, he said, "I guess I just gave up."

3 And, that's what I hear from a lot of First Nation people
4 is they just gave up, that the cultural genocide was
5 working. But, again, like I said, it didn't. The genocide
6 did not work. I am here. My brother is here. My nephews
7 are here. My cousin is here. I have other cousins, too,
8 but he was one of the ones that managed to make it. And,
9 my aunt is here.

10 So, my mother, Mary Anne Phillip Mills, born
11 August 27, 1941, and died November 11, 1976. Her parents,
12 Gabriel Phillips also known as Gibby, Catherine Laura
13 Phillips nee Wycotte. Her siblings are Ralph, Gladys now
14 deceased, Antoine also known as Koliya, Joan and Wilfred.
15 Her children, Susan Viola, Edward Kevin now deceased, Ralph
16 Francis, Vincent Thomas, Catherine Joan, Kimberley Ryanne
17 and Virginia.

18 **MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN:** Thank you very
19 much, Catherine. Chief Commissioner, do you have any
20 questions for Catherine?

21 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I have so
22 many questions, I don't know where to start. You described
23 getting not only the coroner's report, but the police
24 report regarding the circumstances around your mother's
25 death. Was it difficult? Was it easy? What did you have

1 to go through to get those records?

2 **MS. CATHERINE MILLS:** This time it was very
3 easy, because working with Frieda and FILU, a lot of the
4 work was done for me. And, the staff sergeant -- I don't
5 know if I need to say his name or not, but the staff
6 sergeant that's working with FILU and the murdered and
7 missing, extremely helpful. I found him to be very
8 compassionate, very caring, which is what we need.

9 We need people like him. Because I remember
10 being told by my friend, who initially pulled my mother's
11 records -- everything is on microfiche now, but, at that
12 time, it was still the paper. That's how I know parts are
13 missing.

14 And, I said, "You know, I work for the
15 government. I understand the flow of paperwork. Things go
16 missing. Things happen. It's unfortunate. You can't even
17 get angry about because it's not going to change what's not
18 there any longer."

19 But, he was very helpful because in that
20 police report, I remember my friend saying, "I know those
21 two cops that showed up there. They viewed her because her
22 apartment was on Frances Street in the east end. They were
23 racists. The coroner was an alcoholic and a racist."

24 And so, it makes sense now, after having
25 gone to view her autopsy report, which I think only for

1 where I work, I was actually being able to look at this.
2 And, it was later on that I got it. It was, like, oh, my
3 God, that was my mother's report that I was looking at,
4 because I went into my work mode. I realized how much
5 medical knowledge I actually have learned from where I
6 work.

7 And, it has been interesting because -- I
8 think because of how I have grown up in foster care and
9 abuse, et cetera, they give me some of the really crappy
10 stuff to deal with at work, some of the worst murders and
11 child abuse, sex assaults. And, it's just sort of like,
12 you know, there are some days I don't eat lunch because,
13 like, you know, the murder scene was particularly gruesome
14 that I looked at.

15 But, everything that I have been through has
16 made me stronger and has made me be a voice, which
17 sometimes doesn't go over well in the workplace because I'm
18 viewed as confrontational or causing conflict. But
19 sometimes the truth still needs to be told, despite being
20 labelled, because I'm standing here to say we are not less
21 than and we are worth it.

22 And, I'm grateful for, you know, that member
23 of the VPD that was giving me the police report, because it
24 sort of makes null and void the treatment in the past.
25 And, he's had training. He's had cultural training on how

1 to deal with people.

2 And, when I was first being read the -- he
3 did it over the phone when he first read the report to me,
4 and I started crying, which was very interesting because
5 I'm very analytical in my thinking, and I'm always going,
6 "Why am I thinking this way? Okay, like, I'm getting
7 emotional. I'm getting, you know, ticked off or whatever."

8 And, he was apologizing to me. He's like,
9 "I'm sorry. I should have done this in person." And
10 that's what we need more of. It's, like, yes, the apology,
11 but to actually have it meant, and I got that from him,
12 that he meant it. Which is why, when I say about the
13 cultural training for the RCMP and the other police
14 agencies, is they have to have that cultural training. So,
15 it's not just -- because I think we all know when people
16 are just going, "Yes, yes, I'm sorry." Like, we know that.
17 We're not dumb.

18 So, I do have some regret that, years ago,
19 that I didn't get the police report, you know, and I went
20 through. I should have, you know. But then I thought,
21 "I'm not going to keep on with that generational 'I was
22 wrong. It was bad,'" you know. And, it's just like, well,
23 it just happened. And, it was appropriate at the time that
24 I didn't.

25 But now, like I said, this is the

1 opportunity here to speak, so that my nephews know, going
2 forward in the future, the truth, that there are chunks
3 missing from the autopsy report. There are chunks missing
4 from the police report, that she was in respiratory
5 distress for a lot longer than what was reported. And,
6 chances are she probably would have been alive for a lot
7 longer than she was, than to die at 35 years of age.

8 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I have no
9 further questions. Thank you.

10 **MS. CATHERINE MILLS:** Thank you.

11 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:**
12 Catherine, we're very grateful that you are here today.
13 And, it's going to take a while for what you said to really
14 sink in, because what you said was very profound, so I want
15 to thank you. What you've said is also very important to
16 our work, so I want to thank you as well for that.
17 Personally, I know how difficult it is for you, so I want
18 to thank you for that as well.

19 **MS. CATHERINE MILLS:** Thank you.

20 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** And, your
21 family, your beautiful family, thank you all.

22 **MS. CATHERINE MILLS:** And, I am grateful for
23 my family coming and particularly my aunt, because I know
24 this was difficult for her and all the trauma that she has
25 experienced through the Indian hospitals and residential

1 schooling. And, I'm grateful to you, Auntie. I'm
2 grateful.

3 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** So, we
4 have a gift for you. We were told early on that we should
5 support witnesses, people who come forward. And the
6 matriarchs on Haida Gwaii said the way to do that is
7 through gifting eagle feathers.

8 And, I've learned all across Canada now that
9 we all have similar but different stories and beliefs about
10 eagle feathers. I think -- I hope I'm not watering it down
11 too much to say that. Of course, eagle feathers are meant
12 to lift you up and hold you up when you need it, and
13 they're there to lift you even higher than you thought you
14 could go, which is what you have done today.

15 **MS. CATHERINE MILLS:** Thank you. And I want
16 to keep bowing.

17 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Also, we
18 have some seeds. They're wild strawberry seeds. We're
19 going to ask you to plant them. We hope that something
20 grows. And, if something does grow, please take a picture
21 and send it to us for our archives. Because we also
22 believe that this process is about new life and hope. So,
23 we hope that the seeds will represent new life and hope for
24 you. So, our profound thanks for what you have done today.

25 **MS. CATHERINE MILLS:** Thank you for allowing

1 me to speak. Thank you Freida, Aubrey, Wendy. Thank you.
2 Thank you for listening, everyone. Thank you.

3 --- Exhibits (code: P01P15P0102)

4 **Exhibit 1:** Folder containing seven digital images shared
5 during the public testimony of Catherine
6 Mills.

7 --- Upon adjourning at 12:54

8

9 LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

10

11 I, Shirley Chang, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I
12 have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and
13 accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this
14 matter.

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Shirley Chang

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April 16, 2018

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