National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 4 Closing Oral Submissions of the Parties with Standing
Sheraton Eau Claire - Calgary, Alberta

Part 4 Oral Submissions - Volume 2
Tuesday November 27, 2018

Vancouver Sex Workers Rights Collective
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
Native Women’s Association of the Northwest Territories
Government of Saskatchewan
West Coast LEAF

Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller
& Commissioners Brian Eyolfson, Qajaq Robinson
& Michèle Audette

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Oral Submissions Volume 2

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The use of square brackets [ ] indicates that amendments have been made to the certified transcript in order to replace information deemed inaudible or indecipherable by the original transcriptionist. Bryan Zandberg, Registrar for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, listened back to the original source recordings and completed all amendments to this transcript on April 25th, 2019 in Vancouver, British Columbia.
--- Upon commencing on Tuesday, November 27th, 2018 at 9:08 a.m./L’audience débute mardi, le 27 septembre 2018 à 9h08

Mme CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: [Boozhoo]. (Speaking Anishnaabe). My English name is Christine Simard-Chicago. I am your MC throughout the next couple of days for the final submissions for the National Inquiry.

We are going to start our opening ceremonies, and I would like to call up Elder Gerald Meginnis.

--- OPENING CEREMONIES/

MR. GERALD MEGINNIS: Good morning. I welcome you to Calgary. I guess this is some of my territory. Ours are just on the southeast of Calgary here. I came in last night. I was kind of tied up yesterday, so I couldn’t make it, so accept my apologies. But I welcome each and every one of you, my Elders, my brother here with me that’s doing the prayers too, and all the people that come from far and wide, the Commissioners.

The thing that I’m going to pray for is to come to a solution. It seems that the world doesn’t revolve without problems. So I’m going to ask the Great
Creator to help us, because in the end, he’s the one that makes the decisions for each and every one of us. So I’m in the habit of always asking him. I think to myself, “When is he going to say no to me?” But lately it’s been a good track record.

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

MR. GERALD MEGINNIS: I guess I’ll know when I do the wrong thing.

So I’ll welcome you, the people that come near and far. I hope you had a safe trip.

With that, I’ll say a prayer for each and every one of us that we have a good day and that problems and the things that we’re going to talk about, that we’ll come to a solution, not as one, as a group, because we’re all here as Native people. And this problem, I hope we solve it one of these days, and I pray and hope that we get to that solution.

(Prayer in Aboriginal language).

Thank you very much.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: All right.

We’re going to have a hand drum song that’s going to be done by Spike, Jr. from Siksika Nation. He’s with the Blackfoot Confederacy Drum. He’s travelled all over.

Spike.

(DRUM/TAMBOUR)
MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Megwetch.

Now we’ll have Myna doing the lighting of the Qulliq this morning.

(SHORT PAUSE/COURTE PAUSE)

MS. MYNA MANNIAPIK: (Speaking in Inuktitut). Good morning. We finally got MMIW (Speaking in Inuktitut) today and yesterday I wanted to mention about one of the things that I learned when I was a child living in a camp and my grandmother and my mother used to say whenever the flames are swaying back and forth, it means that they are scared because there’s a presence of spirits – of lost ones – loved ones.

And yesterday I certainly experienced the (NATIVE LANGUAGE) experience. Yesterday the presence of the loved ones we have lost; mothers, sisters and daughters.

Thank you.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Miigwetch.

So with just a couple of housekeeping things. For parties withstanding that arrived today and that will be presenting, we have the Elders room in the Mariposa room, which is around the elevators to the right.

We have health supports with us. We have, I think, 8 or 10 health supports. They’re either wearing purple shirts or they have purple lanyards, so if you’re
having difficulty please reach out. Or maybe they may
approach you if they notice you’re in distress.

And we also have my friend Gerry here and
Coralee who are doing healing through beating in the
Elders room. It’s a good exercise to help ground
yourselves with the stories that are being told, et
cetera, that you’re going to hear throughout the day.
Just a place to lighten your spirit.

Right now, we have a couple things to do.
We have a start of 9:30 so we’ll reconvene at 9:30.
Megwetch.

Start in five minutes.

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

--- Upon recessing at 9:19 a.m. /
L’audience est suspendue à 9h19
--- Upon resuming 9:24 a.m. / /L’audience est maintenant
reprise à 9h24

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: ...ask everyone to
please take a seat. Also, a friendly reminder to turn
your notifications or volume off on any of your cell
phones or devices.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Just
before we get started, I have two announcements to make.
First of all, I want everybody to know that Michelle
Brass, who has been counsel for two police organisations, has been appointed as a provincial court judge in Saskatchewan.

She’ll be based in Estevan Saskatchewan and of course we have very high expectations of her, so I just wanted to make that part of our formal record, that it’s going to be judge Brass.

And I think it’s effective immediately or sometime this week, anyway.

UNKNOWN: That means we don’t hear from her.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: That means we don’t hear from her, that’s right.

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: One way of avoiding this.

The second thing that -- announcement I want to make, I made a mistake yesterday and I take full ownership for this. Our -- I didn’t understand how our clocks were working yesterday, so the clocks will show 40 minutes for parties to give their submissions. The clocks then will show 10 minutes for our questions.

So I just want to clarify that it was my mistake. We weren’t watching the clocks properly, so I’ll go and stand in the corner for that.
CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Thank you.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good morning, Chief Commissioner, Commissioners. Thank you.

Before we start by inviting the first party up, I just wanted to also introduce on the record Commission counsel, so Associate Commission Counsel Thomas Barnett who is sitting up here with me today. He will also be calling the parties up today.

The first party that we would like to invite up to do their closing submissions, is the Vancouver Sex Workers Rights Collective. Their counsel Ms. Carly Teillet will have 40 minutes.

---SUBMISSIONS BY MS. CARLY TEILLET:

MS. CARLY TEILLET: (NATIVE LANGUAGE), bonjour and good morning. I want to acknowledge that we’re gathered on the traditional territory of the nations of Treaty 7 and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

And I’d like to acknowledge the spirits of our stolen sisters, the survivors and families, the big drum yesterday, the drum and song this morning, the Elders and their prayers, the lighting of the Qulliq to give us light and warmth, the sacred bundle and the medicines that are here so that we can do our work in a good way.
My name is Carly Teillet and I am the great-grand-daughter of Sarah Riel and she was the niece of Louis Riel. And I am Métis from the Red River community in what is now Winnipeg.

And I have the honour of being here today as counsel for the Vancouver Sex Workers Rights Collective.

It’s a collective of Indigenous trans and cis women, and individuals from diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, who participate or have participated in sex work or provide sexual services in the downtown east side of Vancouver.

These submissions focus on the importance of being heard, believed and the urgent need for action. I’ll begin by briefly discussing the importance of language and terms, and then move into a discussion of the importance of hearing voices and the challenges to being heard. And then I’ll discuss the recommendations of the Vancouver Sex Workers Rights Collective.

In keeping with the diverse Indigenous traditions of my clients, and the Inquiry’s mandate to be respective of Indigenous legal principles and practices, I will be sharing some stories today. As I’m sure many of you have experienced when you ask Knowledge Keepers or Elders why something is important to them, it’s a story or
an experience that they share with you. And so my talk this morning is filled with the voices and stories of my clients because they are the experts, the voices that need to be heard, and they offer important knowledge and stress the urgency of their recommendations. And I want to take a moment to remind everyone listening that they may need to protect themselves because stories are powerful, and they may be difficult to hear.

We recognize the importance of language and its power, and to that end, we wish to be clear about terms that are used. We define Indigenous to include Inuit, Métis, and First Nations individuals. And we acknowledge a spectrum of gender identities and define the term, gender identities, to include trans and cis women, two-spirit non-binary and gender-fluid individuals. We recognize a continuum and a diversity of sexual identities and define the term, sexual orientations, to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, and queer individuals.

The importance of voices. Stories build a strong foundation. A strong foundation for our work is necessary to understand what needs to change to get action, to make life safer for individuals who participate in sex work or provide sexual services. One of my clients, an Indigenous woman who describes herself as
survivor of the streets, asked me to share one of her
stories so that people can try and understand. She
shared:

Who among you can understand what it’s
like? Have you been raped? Do you know
what it is like to be raped? Walking down
the street at night, you hear footsteps
behind you. He put a rope around my neck.
Later, when the police came, you hear, “You
were drinking; weren’t you?” “Why were you
out so late?” I could report this, but
it’s a waste of time. When I think about
all of this, the recommendations and the
Inquiry, I had a rope around my neck and
that is my visual. How can we get that
experience across to people? To know what
it’s like to have a rope around your neck,
to know that you were so close to death.
If they had taken me seriously, maybe other
people wouldn’t have been raped.
And with these words, “If they had taken me seriously,
maybe.”

I turn to discuss briefly how Indigenous
women and individuals of diverse sexual orientations and
gender identities, who participate in sex work, have been
excluded, silenced, and their truths have not been believed, firstly, by the police. Indigenous women and individuals of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, who participate in sex work, face multiple and often compounding barriers to reporting violence to police. These barriers act to silence the truth. In Regina, RCMP Commissioner Lucki agreed that barriers to reporting violence include: distrustful relationships with police, previous bad experience with the police, fear of having their children removed, losing their housing, or violence, and the fear of being outed to their families and communities as someone involved in sex worker trade.

When Indigenous folks who provide sexual services share their truth about violence, they’re often not believed. First by the police, then Crown prosecutors, and sometimes judges. In Quebec City, Jacqueline Hansen of Amnesty International discussed the role of stigma, and how the criminalization of commercial sex means that folks may be mistreated by police, and men may exploit this reality and engage with a violent -- engage in violence with impunity. Stigma and violence silences truth.

In St. John’s, Lanna Moon Perrin who started street-based sex work at the age of 16 and worked in multiple cities and settings, and at the age of 40, is
still a sex work advocate. She was asked to draw on her 24 years of involvement in the community, and she was asked to stress -- oh, sorry. Pardon me. She was asked to reflect on how often people who assault sex workers are charged or convicted. She entered -- answered simply and powerfully, “I don’t know any.” This is a failure of the state to investigate, charge, and convict people who break the law by assaulting and murdering individuals. The knowledge that, no action comes from sharing further silence, is truth.

Overwhelmingly, Indigenous trans and cis women, including folks of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, who participate in sex work, are excluded. They’re not allowed to be safe or to have justice. Indigenous trans and cis women, and folks of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, who participate in sex work, have been excluded from meaningful participation in the creation and implementation of laws, policies, and decision making. In St. John’s, the Chief of the Winnipeg Police Force acknowledged that nothing should be done without Indigenous women being at the table, that it was part of the solution to murdered and missing Indigenous women and excluding them was a problem.

Indigenous women and folks of diverse
sexual orientations and gender identities, who participate in sex work, are often stigmatized and shamed in their Indigenous communities and in Indigenous women’s organizations. Shame and stigma silences truth and creates exclusion. Lanna Moon Perrin stated, “I am hurt more and stigmatized more by my Indigenous sisters than Canada or the government.” In Iqaluit, Dr. Smylie noted that the stigma of sex work and the fear of being shamed is a barrier to accessing health care and also exists in Indigenous women’s organizations.

Indigenous women and folks of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, who participate in sex work or provide sexual services, are excluded and silenced in many of the processes that are supposed to shine a light on their realities, including inquiries. The Missing Women’s Commission, or the Oppal Inquiry, that investigated the conduct of police into the missing women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, and the mishandling of the investigation into Robert Pickton, failed. It excluded, and it silenced the very people it was meant to serve, the women who were murdered and disappeared for the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, the survivors and their families. This was raised yesterday by Judy Wilson of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs. Even with key errors, that report called for the very voices it excluded to be heard.
In this Inquiry, Indigenous women and folks of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, who participate in sex work or provide sexual services, have been excluded and their voices have been silenced through the processes of this Inquiry. Some of my clients shared that they didn’t feel welcome or safe attending the statement gathering held in Richmond, British Columbia. And the Vancouver Sex Workers Rights Collective has repeatedly requested that the Inquiry provide, facilitate or fund statement gathering in a safe, confidential location. Our requests were not answered. The stories of many of my clients were not heard and are not part of the evidence of this Inquiry.

Additionally, there’s been a deep personal cost for some of my clients who have chosen to attend and tell their stories. For some of my clients who shared with the Inquiry, there has been no after care. Their experience affirmed for others in our Collective that sharing with this Inquiry was not as safe as it should be. Last week, some of my clients were able to participate in an informal meeting with the Chief Commissioner to share some of their truths. They value every opportunity to be heard and believe that it is a great loss that what was shared at that meeting will not form part of the formal evidence of this Inquiry.
At the Institutional, Expert and Knowledge Keeper hearings, dozens of documents amounting to hundreds of pages, were not provided to the Parties with Standing in a timely manner. We often received documents the night before witnesses testified, and sometimes after they testified. This process made it impossible for meaningful review of the evidence by counsel and the clients themselves. Further, many of my clients don’t have cellphones. And to borrow their terms, “They don’t have the privilege of sitting at desk.” They could not answer emails or answer the phone right away to give instructions at the last minute. The late delivery of documents, documents that became evidence at this Inquiry were not properly tested. This process did not allow for informed participation and it silenced the invaluable feedback and expertise of my clients.

Opportunities to challenge the narrative of four or five key witnesses per panel and hundreds of pages of documents was limited to sometimes as little as three and a half minutes of cross-examination. This was simply not enough time to meaningfully test, challenge or supplement the narrative entered into evidence. The process silenced Indigenous responses to evidence by failing to provide adequate time.

And finally, I want to turn to attending
the hearings and these oral closing submissions. The funding model of the Inquiry is one that requires significant expenses, tens of thousands of dollars to be spent and then carried for months, waiting for reimbursement, all to participate. These up-front costs have made full participation in the Inquiry by my clients, survivors, family members, community members, some of the most marginalized folks, simply impossible.

Their strength, their determination and the importance of their stories have driven the Vancouver Sex Workers Rights Collective to be heard today, despite all of these obstacles. They are committed to improving the lives of folks in their communities. They are committed to doing what they have always done, and that is fight to be heard, believed, to keep themselves and others safe.

And so now I turn to the recommendations of the Collective, Indigenous trans and cis women, individuals of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations who participate or have participated in sex work or provide sexual services in Vancouver’s downtown east side.

No single recommendation can be taken up in isolation. No single recommendation is the solution. Widespread change is needed. The voices and stories of my clients provide the foundations for their recommendations.
The first theme: include and respect their voices. One of my clients, an Indigenous trans woman shared this story:

"Growing up in a small community was really hard. Growing up in a small community and being Indigenous was even harder. Growing up in a small community and being an Indigenous transgender person was absolutely unbearable. There was no safe place to go. No one ever talked about trans people. I tried to learn how to pretend to be a boy. It wasn’t easy to play this role, and I reverted back to my feminine self regularly, until I was looked at strangely or someone said something like ‘fag’ or ‘faggot’. I eventually couldn’t stand living this double life and I couldn’t focus on school. It was exhausting. And so I ran away to the city and I found safety in the gay scene, and I felt really comfortable there for a long time. And it was there that I found out about feminine boys and trans
people and how to get on hormones to become the woman I really felt I was inside. During this time, I met a lot of other trans women exactly where I was in transition and we became each other’s family. We learned how to do street work and how to keep an eye on each other. It became like a natural way of making money to have our needs met. Gaining meaningful employment and being a trans person in transition wasn’t accepted and it isn’t safe. We had to learn to keep ourselves safe. Most of the clients of sex work were good people, but of course there are bad folks in every community. There were drugs and alcohol around, and many of us became addicted. Eventually, I started to lose friends, many to disease, a lot to violent murders, just because they were trans women, and just as many to murders while doing sex work. The predators out there know that there is little protection for women that do sex work,
and it really makes us easy prey to these sick individuals. I really feel if people were educated at early stages of education, more trans people would have better qualities of life. We’re just as normal as anyone else. It’s as simple as that. If we’re given the chance, many folks will realize that we’re no different than any other boy, girl, man or woman. I think there should be more money put into funding for safe places for trans women, Indigenous and two-spirit people and people that do sex work. It’s these folks that are the most vulnerable, and I consider myself one of the lucky ones. I was able to leave the street behind because I found one of the only sex work agencies in Vancouver that gave me the opportunity to give a little back to the community I grew up and survived in.”

And so we call for the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous
Women and Girls and all actions taken to implement the recommendations to include Indigenous trans and cis women, two-spirit, non-binary and gender-fluid individuals, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, pansexual and queer individuals.

They said:

“You can help sex workers by listening to them, acknowledging them with a smile and a hello, show them you care. Love them. They’re beautiful inside and out. When policy and law makers talk about sex work without talking to sex workers, I feel they don’t have a clue how hard they’re making it for us, not hearing, like a third wheel, unimportant, that our, my, personal wellbeing is not on their agenda. Very upset and left out.”

We call on all governments, decision makers and policy makers to include Indigenous folks from diverse gender identities and sexual orientations who participate or have participated in sex work or provide sexual services as participants in the developments of all policies, programs and laws that will impact them. This includes but is not limited to policies, initiatives and
laws related to police, health, housing, justice and child protection. In such efforts, compensation must be provided for the time, knowledge and participation offered.

The next theme: police must recognize our right to be safe and free from violence. They said:

“More police in the community would mean more police treated us all fair and with dignity, not judging us, who we are.”

We call on the Vancouver Police Department to expand the role of the Sex Worker Liaison position by creating, at a minimum, a second liaison position.

They said:

“As a sex worker, I would like respect as a human being, regardless of profession, gender or ethnicity.”

We call on the Vancouver Police Department, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and all police forces across Canada to revise all forms and educate all officers so that officers consistently and respectfully ask how a person identifies gender, their pronouns, and if they identify as Indigenous, what nation or community they are from.

They said:
"When I needed help, the police
brutalized me and took me into city
cells, let the perp go."

We call on the Vancouver Police Department
and the RCMP to work with Indigenous sex workers,
organizations, and Indigenous women’s organizations to
create enforceable policy that ensure that when reporting
violence or when police are called to a violent incident,
the victim is treated with dignity and respect and they
are not arrested for a minor unrelated outstanding charge.

One of my clients, an Indigenous woman,
shared this story:

“I got away. I was lying on the
sidewalk. I raised my hand up. They
were four cops in an undercover car.
They saw me. I told them they were two
minutes behind him. I told them what
the van looked like, what he looked
like. I said ‘He went that way’ and I
pointed. I told them I was tazered.
I showed them the marks. They said
no. They didn’t even open a notebook.
They didn’t even take me to a
hospital. They asked where I lived.
I was homeless. They put me in a car
and they drove me back to Main and Hastings. They didn’t even open their notepads. It could have saved other lives. My truths had no relevance, no truth, and after that, 25 more women went missing. I went to treatment to deal with the crippling anxiety for what they have not done.”

We call for an independent review of the Vancouver Police Department’s responses, to 9-1-1 calls involving violence or threats of violence in the downtown east side of Vancouver, and any policy that sets priorities for police responses. This review must investigate the overwhelming evidence that police are not protecting indigenous folks from diverse gender identities and sexual orientations who participate in sex work or provide sexual services.

With this review, we call for the creation of an independent mechanism that will create accountability for failing to respond in a timely manner or to investigate when violence is threatened or committed.

They said, "We need empathy and compassion. Harassment has to stop. They don't believe us. We need respect for women who experience violence".

We call for the long-term sustained funding
of victim services for those that participate in a police complaint mechanism that is equal to the services and support provided to police officers who are being investigated.

The next theme, the law must not deprive us of safety.

They said, "We need a place where you can take your date where you know you'll be safe". We have safe injection sites. We need that, but for sex.

We call for the decriminalization of safe, clean indoor spaces for sex work or the provision of sexual services to take place. Long-term sustained funding must be provided for sex worker organizations to set up and run these indoor spaces.

They said, "Engage all safety practices that sex workers know will keep them safe". The law creates danger by pushing sex workers underground in back alleys in the dark. They don't have the time make certain that they're getting into a safe situation.

They also get ripped off because they're rushed and can't see the money they ask for is fake or it's not what they've asked for. If they can't have a clear conversation with clients about business, it can be unsafe.

It is also unsafe sometimes sex workers
lose their housing because of the laws. Also, sex workers can be blackmailed into giving free services.

We call for the decriminalization of sex work, including the purchase of sexual services, the employment of third parties for safety, and communication for the purpose of participating in the exchange of sexual services.

Communication is essential for safety and security, consent and negotiation of sexual services.

They said, "We need mentors and a kit so that young folks are safe when they try it, know what to expect, what they're getting into, who to trust".

We call for the funding and creation and distribution of sex worker safety kits for folks who are new to the community, and the kit would include at least a whistle, a phone, harm reduction equipment, lists of resources including safe places and shelters, any information for the police sex worker liaison officer, amongst other things.

The next theme, provide safe spaces and housing now. They said, "If her or her kids are beaten up or sexually assaulted, there is nowhere to go if a woman wants to leave".

We call for the creation of safe spaces or shelters in all indigenous communities and in all cities
in Canada that are accessible 24 hours a day for indigenous women and girls, including all folks of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

They said, "The way I got into sex work was almost losing my home. No food in the home, no husband, and lots of money to make and sex being paid for. It looked exciting for me being plus sized. I was 19 and with low confidence".

We call for the immediate construction of new housing and the provision of repairs for existing housing for self-identified indigenous women in indigenous communities.

They said, "If I had a stable source of income, I would move out of the downtown east side into a house".

And once out of detox, there is no housing. Some places kick people out if they get high. The recovery house needs wet rooms.

We call for the provision of clean, safe housing in urban centres and cities for indigenous women, including folks of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The housing should be located in a variety of neighbourhoods and must serve a variety of specific housing needs, including transitional housing, safe housing specifically for indigenous women and girls who've
experienced violence, housing for specific tenants, including single women, indigenous women and their children and indigenous families, housing that allows for overnight guests, housing that is not condition on maintaining sobriety as well as dry housing where no substance or alcohol use is permitted.

They said, "I stayed in sex work because I needed money for food and to pay my bills" and "Sex work helped me pay my bills".

And so if we call for an increase in social assistance and disability income rates that will provide a livable income.

The next theme, fund our vision of support and services.

They said, "We are experts in the violence". We call for funding for sex worker supportive organizations to digitize existing bad date reports, develop and run a searchable bad date report database and create a mobile application for greatest access to safety and information.

They said, "So many women I was connected with are gone. We need that connection. We know what it feels like. We were there". And "We need an integrated outreach team, culturally competent if they weren't able to get to me with that help that I desperately needed".
We call for long-term sustainable funding for indigenous women's organizations to create sex worker outreach or safety positions in every major city with those roles staffed by current or former sex workers who would be responsible for building trust and taking bad date reports, spotting for sex recorders or recording licence plates and someone you could let know where you were going and when you would be back, and providing information and taking requests and referrals for services.

They said, "If I had community support, I would feel safe, sing, be grateful, grow emotionally and be courageous".

And so we call for a sustained core funding of indigenous organizations, sex worker organizations and sex work supportive organizations.

They said, "Isolation kills women. I didn't want to be stuck where I felt like I didn't belong".

We call for free cell phones with phone plans to be provided for indigenous women and girls, including those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, for use in emergency situations.

They said, "Transportation is huge. This is my war zone. I hate walking these blocks". And
"There's no real option for escape. We're pushed out onto Highway 16".

And so we call for free or low-cost safe transportation between indigenous communities, from indigenous communities to cities, and within cities.

They said, "Recovery is about giving back. The men need to be taken care of to leave the women alone". And "Programs need to think about a continuum of care. It took me a long time to heal, search and find, navigate services myself. A program would close and I would lose faith and trust".

We call for sustained core funding for the creation and running of holistic indigenous healing centres, one-stop shops. The focus on healing and prevention where the whole person is healed with access to medical care, specific cultural and ceremonial practices, counsellors, Elders, sacred medicines and prescriptions all in one location.

They said, "You can help sex workers by being kind, patient, open-minded, compassionate".

We call for the creation of low-barrier medical care in the downtown east side, including medical care that does not require identification documents or a fixed address.

They said, "I deserve to be acknowledged
and validated for my courage and resilience and perseverance”.

And so we call on all service providers, indigenous organizations and shelters to adopt a meet them where they're at policy, decreasing or eliminating barriers for sex workers to access services.

We further call on all service providers, health care providers and government officials to change all forms and educate all staff so they can respectfully ask how a person identifies their gender, their pronoun and whether they identify as indigenous, Aboriginal and what Nation or community they may be.

They said, "I stayed in sex work because of my addictions to drug and fast cash. I started chasing cops around to take me to jail. I wanted treatment".

That moment of clarity. The line-up for treatment was so long.

We call for the creation of community integrated healing centres, including substance and alcohol misuse in urban centres and indigenous communities. The healing centres will provide a continuum of care and assist individuals to transition out of treatment and continue healing in the community. The next theme, our families deserve healing and support, not disruption. An Indigenous woman shared:
The role of aunties. The role of aunties and street aunties is very important. Their role is to teach young girls and women for the first time to respect themselves. There’s a role of aunties to help you cry at home, so that outside, you can show your strength.

We call for support and services for Indigenous families to thrive. Children should not be removed from Indigenous mothers or families solely due to poverty, including inadequate housing.

They said:

I’m Indigenous women who teaches her children to be respectful, and healing creates more choices.

And so we call for a fundamental change to child protection legislation and policy, including requiring the perpetrator of violence, rather than the child, to be removed from the home. Providing support to Indigenous women and girls, including the spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities who seek help, to remove themselves from family violence. And providing support to someone who tried to protect a child, rather than removing the child.

They said, “We are mothers, daughters,
sisters. Treat us all equally.” We call for the
decolonization and Indigenization of the definition of
family and parent in child protection legislation. They
said, “Listen to us. Don’t cut us off. It’s not our
fault.” We call for the revision of permanent removal and
adoption timelines as they fail to recognize ongoing
colonization and barriers to lifelong healing for parents
and fail to recognize that the removal of a child is toxic
interference with the mother and traumatic for a parent.

The next theme, listen to our teachings.

They said:

I didn’t feel like I belonged. I didn’t
have a connection with family and other
women. Being on the rez was colonizing in
a way. Running away, finding people like
me. I didn’t know I had a human right I
didn’t have to get beaten up.

We call for the education of all children and youth to
include history and recognition of ongoing colonization in
Canada; the history of strong, vibrant Indigenous peoples;
the role of power dynamics in society, decision-making,
policy-making, and law; self-esteem, self-awareness, and
body positivity; basic human rights, including the right
to be free from violence; lifting up and normalizing folks
of all sexual orientations and gender identities; bodily
autonomy; the concept of consent and, specifically, consent to sexual activity; sexual health, including STDs and HIV; positive and negative physical touch; and hope.

They said:

It has entrenched so much abuse. My sister had a black eye and won’t talk about it. I can’t go back and pretend it is normal.

We call for Indigenous communities to participate in facilitated, safe, open discussions about violence within their communities, particularly, how this violence disproportionately impacts Indigenous women and girls and individual of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

They said:

We need a safe place outside of the police station where it is safe for us to report violence. That we know that it isn’t going to be hidden or covered up within the police. It doesn’t look like anything’s ever done about the way the police are treating people. We need accountability. The policeman just made their own judgement on whether it should be reported or not.

It happens so much to Native women. I grew
up just never being able to fully trust the police. My grandpa was killed by the police. They assumed he was drunk because he was Native. Meanwhile, he was in coma because he hit his head.

We call for the education of the police and all service providers and decolonization, including self-awareness about the role of settlers and police in the colonial system, and the imbalance of power and control inherent in their work.

They said, “I’m a matriarch, Knowledge Keeper.” We call for the creation and full support of matriarch schools that will pass on traditional knowledge empowering young Indigenous women. They said:

We need more people to reach out to the youth to say, ‘I used to do what you did.’ We need more Youth workers. Someone to give them birthday gifts, food, clothes, a sense of love.

And so we call for the creation and support of sex work mentors.

And in conclusion, as individuals who participate in sex work or provide sexual services, my clients hold valuable knowledge and truth. They have never been silent about the violence they have
experienced, including violence because of structural inequality and colonialism. They have never been silent about friends and family members that were murdered, are missing, or disappeared. They have never been silent about their desires to be seen and treated as human. Human beings that have made choices in their lives that advance their priorities, self-actualization, and their survival. And they will never seize to call for the celebration of their humanity and their Indigeneity. Their voices have been dismissed and ignored. Their truths and lives not valued, and this must change now. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: If we could reset the time. And do the Commissioners have questions for Ms. Teillet? Go ahead.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you very much for your submissions. I just wanted to ask you about one of the recommendations you just made near the end. You called -- said, call for the creation of matriarch schools. I’m wondering if you could expand upon that a little bit? Or if you’re aware of any good examples that exist, if they do.

MS. CARLY TEILLET: I’m not aware of any good examples that exist. It was something that came out
of many of the stories that were shared by my clients about not realizing their value, and that they are special, and they have power, and they have a right to speak, and that there is a traditional way of holding up women and valuing them in each of their individual cultures. And that that needs to be brought back. We need to go back to traditional ways of celebrating women and the knowledge they carry. And that we could -- one of the ways that we could do that is by training -- really investing in training future matriarchs.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Hi. Good morning. I wanted to ask you about the recommendation in relation to the independent mechanism for accountability when dealing with police non-responsiveness. And this is -- I mean, you know we’ve heard about this not only in the community hearings, but even in the institutional hearings. And one of these -- one of the issues is when -- when the officers don’t even open their books, don’t even open a file. There’s no internal mechanisms within the forces to hold officers accountability for non-responsiveness, right? So I would like to hear your thoughts on what this independent mechanism would look like, and what key -- what are some foundational elements to this mechanism that you see as being instrumental to
these being effective and trusted? Because there are
existing mechanisms, but the mechanisms are viewed to be
ineffective and there is equal lack of confidence in these
accountability and oversight bodies as well as the forces
themselves. So I’d like to hear your thoughts on what key
elements must this type of a body or measure include?

MS. CARLY TEILLET: I think that the best
place to start is bringing together the experts on what
happens. So there needs to be -- the body needs, at a
very basic level, needs to be created in partnership with
Indigenous women’s organizations and folks who have
experienced violence at the hands of police or feel, as
one of my clients, “Has over policed and underserved.” So
bringing together groups that really want to have
successful outcomes out of this mechanism, to build it
together. And I think that’ll really lead into the trust
piece because if it’s a mechanism that’s entirely built
within a police force, or set up by the government as a
separate body, those are still part of, at least from -- I
believe, the -- from the perspective of my clients, still
part of the same colonial machine. And so, really, we
need to bring together, in particular, Indigenous women’s
organizations as part of the group that makes this
mechanism.

The other things I’ve heard from my clients
is that ...it has to be accessible. So right now, there’s
the opportunity to fill out a two-page sheet - a police
complaint sheet - or to sue the police. Neither of which
are really accessible to folks that are struggling and may
experience disproportionate amounts of police attention.

The other thing with both of those pieces
is there’s no real outcomes that come from that. There is
huge power difference between individuals who are making
complaints and the police unions on the other side who can
hire lawyers, who can choose court dates, file motions.

And we have folks that are looking for
poverty lawyers to help support them through the process
to make sure their voices are heard. So we need to make
sure whatever process goes forward has some equality in it
so that both parties are heard, but that from the very
outset there isn’t this unbalance, just in the very
process.

I think one of the other things we’ve heard
a lot from folks is:

“I’m the one who was hurt. My arm was
broken. This happened to me. The
officer is on paid leave.”

Now they’re saying that very clearly from
the beginning sends the message to them that they’re not
valued in the same way that that officer is valued.
He gets a vacation and I am healing. I’m trying to heal and I’m trying to fight this upward battle to have my voice heard and to have justice.

And so that’s where that recommendation comes in, it’s that we’re not necessarily saying you need to take the paid leave away from the officers, because they need to have their story heard as well, but we need to support folks who are saying we’ve been harmed as well.

Counseling, all these services that are available to a police officer when on leave should be made available to the other person going through the process.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Thank you for your submissions and your answer.

MS. CARLY TEILLET: (NATIVE LANGUAGE)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Are you going?

COMMISSIONER MICHELLE AUDETTE: O.k., merci. Merci - thank you very much for your presentation. It goes beyond your mandate. There is a lot of passion and love for the people that you represent and it’s always very nice to see.

You’ve mentioned in your opening remarks or opening statement that stigma against Indigenous women and the people that you represent, individuals from diverse gender, all what you explained to us, who participate or
still participate or provide sexual services, is often more present in the Indigenous community itself. So do you have any recommendation on how we can reduce this stigma within the Indigenous community?

**MS. CARLY TEILLET:** The recommendations on how to move forward really do come from my clients. I’ve had people sitting in the room offer and say if you would like I will fly home if there’s a facilitated safe space and I will educate them about my journey as a trans individual and why I had to leave. Or the choices I had to make to get home for ceremony, for a funeral, to provide sexual services to get a ride somewhere, because that’s how important this is for me.

To really show that they are human, they’ve made choices to survive, to thrive, to -- as Lana said, to provide tap shoes for her children, to send them on school trips, to show -- to really put a face to what might only be talked about kind of in hush terms or behind closed doors.

Really to try and educate folks about the fact that there are a diversity of sexual experiences and there are some choices. But it’s part of the bigger education piece about what is positive sexuality. That sex can be a wonderful thing and there’s also bad sexual experiences and really trying to learn what is positive,
what is not, what is consent, what is not. And to not
shame people for having participated in different sexual
experiences to live or to get those tap shoes for their
children.

So really to have kind of an open
collection about what sex is, what loving oneself and
one’s body is and really start -- and what violence
currently exists in the community and kind of start having
those conversations about what’s happening right now.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: En tout cas,
Maître Teillet, si je peux me permettre ce commentaire
très personnel -- if I may allow this comment, I think you
are quite an impressive young lawyer. Thank you very
much. I don’t need any translation to understand what you
said.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: The
questions I was going to ask have already asked have al,
so I’d like to -- with the wonderful task of thanking you
so much for the wonderful work you do on behalf of your
clients and also to thank your clients for speaking up and
speaking out. Their voices are heard and will continue to
be heard. Please tell them that. Thank you very much.

MS. CARLY TEILLET: Thank you.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Chief Commissioner,
Commissioners, I would now request a 20 minutes break. It
has been built into the schedule. It is now 10:10, so I ask that we break until 10:30, please.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Ten thirty (10:30), please.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you.

--- Upon recessing at 10:14/

L’audience est suspendue à 10h14

--- Upon resuming at 10:38 p.m./

L’audience est reprise à 10h38

**MR. THOMAS BARNETT:** Everyone, if we could begin again. Next up with have Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami represented by counsel Elizabeth Zarpa. And shortly after she delivers her recommendations, we’ll also be hearing from the president of ITK, Natan Obed.

---**SUBMISSIONS BY MS. ELIZABETH ZARPA:**

**MS. ELIZABETH ZARPA:** (In Inuktitut). Good morning. My name is Elizabeth Zarpa and I am legal counsel representing Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the National Organisation that represents 60,000 plus Inuits across the country.

A majority of Inuits live above the 60th parallel throughout 51 communities within 4 land claim regions known as Inuvialuit, the North West Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik, Northern Quebec and Nunatsiaq, Northern
Labrador.

These communities are predominantly fly-in and the cost of flights are in the thousands of dollars and sometimes hundreds of kilometers apart across the Iron Lands.

This makes leaving or traveling to Inuit Nunangat inaccessible to those who are incapable financially. Inuit Nunangat has the highest cost of living in Canada.

Inuits do not live on reserves and Inuits are not governed under the Indian Act. This legal distinction has political and fiscal implications for Inuits programming and also funding regimes.

This has to be taken into account by relevant provincial territory owned federal governments and other governing decision stakeholders who make decisions that affect Inuits.

The changes that have happened throughout Inuits communities in the last century is stark. The adjustment to colonization and globalization in a short period of time has had a lasting effect on Inuits communities and this is still felt today.

As we have heard throughout several hearings, the experiences of residential schools and day schools, the experiences of being forcefully settled into
communities and the slaughtering of Inuits sled dogs, this all his still has an effect today.

It was testified in Iqaluit that the individuals whose dogs were killed by the RCMP have not yet received any formal apology.

I want to thank the First Nations of Treaty 7 and the Métis Nation of Alberta for allowing me to be on your territory this week.

I also want to thank the inquiry staff for your dedication to this national emergency for the last year and a half.

I want to thank the Elders in the room, the NFAC members and the Commissioners for your continued guidance and strength throughout these very challenging part I, part II and part III hearings across the country.

I acknowledge the strength of the Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQ (In Inuktitut) who are still with us today, who are not murmured or missing, but who endure ongoing lateral domestic and other forms of violence in our daily life.

Your story and your life are valued. Keep striving. There is help out there.

I acknowledge the spirits of those Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQ2S who are not with us today for reasons that are unfathomable to the human mind,
I specifically acknowledge the Inuit women, girls and children who have died due to violence, who are missing, or who we have had the privilege to learn about throughout these hearings; namely, these 20 people: Alexandra [and Aliyah], Edith [Angalik], Mary Birmingham, [Sula Enoaraq], along with her two daughters, Mary Evans Harlick, Kimberly [Jarause], Betsy [Kalaserk], Sylvia [Lyall], Jessica Michaels, [Deidre] Michelin, Angela [Meyer], [Alacie Nowrakudluk], [Katie] Obed, Della [Ootoova], Loretta Saunders, Joy [Semmler], Tracy [Uttak].

All forms of violence against Inuit women, girls and LGBTQ2S has to end, and the permanent funding Inuit-specific programs to support the end of violence against Inuit women, girls and LGBTQ2S has to be taken seriously by all relevant governments and stakeholders.

We’ve heard throughout the hearings in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Montreal and other hearings, that Inuit women experience sexualized violence within their communities and Inuit children and youth also experience sexualized violence within their communities.

As Ms. Barbara Sevigny publicly testified in Montreal, we have to end the silence about violence. This has to end, and all relevant governments, stakeholders and community members have to take a
proactive role in eradicating all forms of sexualized violence against Inuit women, girls, LGBTQ2S, children and youth.

   When there are children who experience abuse or child sexual abuse within Inuit Nunangat as was testified to be extensive in several of the hearings where Inuit were present, but most relevant at the Winnipeg hearing on child and family welfare, the access to safe, healthy and supportive child and youth spaces in Inuit Nunangat is lacking.

   The issue is being addressed on a program-by-program basis, but the access to essential services like child and family programming and safe spaces is being funded on a project-by-project basis, and it is not a permanent resource available to Inuit throughout the 51 communities.

   The permanent funding of infrastructure for safe spaces for children within Inuit Nunangat and the permanent funding of Inuit child and youth programming throughout all 51 communities is needed, as was testified to in Winnipeg by Ms. Susan Aglugark, the founder of the Arctic Rose Foundation.

   We’ve heard from Inuit women and girls about the experiences of domestic violence or intimate-partner violence and how that leaks into the community,
where individuals are beginning to see violence within
their community as normal. This has to stop.

There was testimony in Happy Valley-Goose
Bay by Ms. Harriett Lamb (phonetic) that when the police
were contacted in relation to her late daughter, Kimberly
Gerarcy, who was murdered, this was her experience:

“There was one time that Kimberly
charged him. He spent one, two three
months in jail. In November 2009, two
months before she was killed, she came
home very frantic and messed up hair,
screaming and crying that he tried to
choke her and that he almost choked
her at that time. Now, I called the
RCMP. I said, ‘I need you to come up
here right now and talk to Kimberly
because she was almost choked by her
boyfriend. And they, the police, said
that they’ll need to come in tomorrow
to make a statement. But the next
day, she did not go to make a
statement. She was in an abusive
relationship.”

The thorough investigation of intimate-
partner violence by the police and the RCMP within Inuit
communities is lacking, as expressed by Ms. Harriett Lamb in the murder of her daughter, Kimberly. And the issue has to be adequately addressed with the police and RCMP being adequately trained to deal with intimate-partner violence in a trauma-informed manner in a northern context.

There is also a need for safety expressed throughout the testimony of Inuit women. An Inuit woman who publicly testified in Happy Valley-Goose Bay explained that out of 53 communities throughout Inuit Nunangat, there are only 15 communities that have a shelter.

Inuit women and their families are unable to access safe houses and transition houses, and women are leaving their communities to access services in the south, simply because the services are not available to them and their families in the community.

There has to be 24/7 access to safe houses, shelters and transition houses for Inuit women and their families throughout all 51 communities within Inuit Nunangat.

As we have heard here in Calgary at the hearing on government services, indigenous shelters struggle with funding, staffing and paying their staff competitive salaries. The paid positions within Inuit shelters has to be equitable at a living wage economy as a
cost of living within the north is the highest in the country.

The issues of violence are not applicable to only Inuit women and girls, as was testified to in the community hearing in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Montreal. Inuit men and boys also experience violence.

Ms. Mary Thomassie explained in Montreal:

“\textquote*{I’ve also worked at helping people come out of jail because they too need so much help. Our men need help. There was a man in jail 14 years. There’s a place of accommodation where we are providing counselling. I was a counsellor for 14 years. They, the men, are the ones that need the most help out of our population. We must help our men too. They will not ask for help first either. We women are more open to receiving help. We have men come home, back to their community, and they have nothing to say or to share while their hearts hurt.”}

Mr. Joanisse Lamp also expressed in Happy Valley-Goose Bay that Inuit men and boys are also
experiencing violence.

The need for men and boys Inuit-specific programming to deal with issues surrounding violence is needed, as expressed by Ms. Tomasi and Mr. Lamp.

The approach of rehabilitation programming has to be a holistic and whole family, whole community approach to address the issue of violence against Inuit women, girls and LGBTQ2S. As explained throughout the testimony from several Inuit women and Inuit men, there’s a growing number of Inuit that are travelling south to urban centres like Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Halifax and St. John’s either voluntarily or involuntarily to access essential human needs like healthcare, birthing centres, cancer treatment, education, post-secondary education, Elder care and, at times, even affordable housing.

And the reasons for this was testified extensively throughout several hearings. The most common reason is because access to essential services is simply not available within Inuit communities. And if it is available, then it isn’t sufficient to meet the needs.

As was testified to extensively by Inuit women and men, Inuit travel south to the closest urban hub to access healthcare not available to them within their own community.
It was expressed in Montreal that the quality and care of healthcare professionals who work within Inuit communities has to be of high standard. It was also expressed that there are some Inuit who do not have access to financial means to fly down south, which costs them thousands of dollars, and they’re paying their own flights.

It was also expressed in Iqaluit that there are Elders who are having no other option other than to go down south into an Elder care home because they’re not available within their community.

It was testified that an Inuit woman was sexually abused when she travelled to Montreal for a medical, and she recommended all Inuit have access to an escort when travelling down south for medical.

In Iqaluit it was testified that there were instances where there was strain on the family when a mom had to leave her family to give birth in another place because it isn’t available to her within her own community.

It was testified in Montreal that a mother had to leave her children behind for weeks or months to attend to her baby, who was diagnosed with leukemia, and how this was a very difficult time for her family members.

Ms. Tracy Denniston testified in Quebec
City at the human rights framework hearing that access to universal health care through Inuit Nunangat doesn't exist.

This lack of access to health care has a detrimental effect on the lives and experiences of Inuit women, girls and LGBTQ2S, and addressing this has to be taken very seriously by all relevant governments and stakeholders.

It was also testified throughout the hearings that there's a lack of access to permanent mental health resources throughout the 51 communities within Inuit Nunangat.

The need for mental health resources and grief programs for homicide survivors through Inuit Nunangat was also testified as something that's lacking, and access Inuit-specific counselling services in both English and Inuktitut was something which was expressed as important. The rotating door of counsellors and health care professionals isn't working.

Ms. Barbara Sevigny expressed another recommendation I would like to see is some more Inuit-specific grieving programs delivered in Inuktitut and English. Often a lot of non-Inuit hire to deliver Inuit programs and don't speak Inuktitut, but are Inuit. But it's the language that really connects.
For those of us who do speak Inuktitut, we need to speak our language when we are feeling.

Ms. Charlotte Wolfrey expressed, "I really think there should be wrap-around services for families in crisis, everyone working together to get healing and, for me, most especially for the children left behind. And I really think for Inuit what is needed is land-based healing camps because when we're on the land, we are in tune with our bodies, our minds are clearer".

And Ms. Elisapi Aningmiuq, in Iqaluit, testified that, "To go out on the land, if you were to travel in the winter, you need a snowmobile. A snowmobile is, I don't know, 13,000, 15,000, 16,000. On top of that, you need gas and then you need a humitik(phon) to carry all the other stuff, and all that costs money. Everything you bring out on the land costs money. Same thing in the summer. A lot of times, people have to bring their shelter, like tents, their bedding, everything to go out on the land, and all that takes time and it's very consuming, so somebody who doesn't have their means of getting out on the land has to rely on others, so financial support to the culture is very important".

The ongoing financial support of Inuktitut and English mental health resources and Inuit on the land healing programs throughout all 51 communities is clearly
a need which is expressed by witnesses.

It was testified that once Inuit women travel to the city, there are several barriers, like accessing transportation, which was testified to in Quebec City on the hearing on criminal justice, experiencing blatant racism and sexual harassment while walking down the street, which was testified to in Montreal, and being over-policing for being in poverty, which was testified to in Calgary in the government services hearing.

These barriers once coming into the urban centres create more vulnerable circumstances for Inuit women, girls and LGBTQ2S.

There are, at times, Inuit children or youth being taken from their families and communities, and they're sent to the south with non-Inuit families. The family members whose children are being apprehended are left without adequate Inuit-specific legal representation. They're left feeling powerless within a colonial legal system.

As was testified to in Winnipeg at the child and family welfare hearing, the system doesn't speak their Inuktitut language, and getting their family member back is taxing on their human spirit.

As was testified to in Happy Valley–Goose Bay hearing with Mr. Gordon Obed, he expressed, "Our
oldest grandson lives with us while he is in Goose Bay
doing a program with the college, and the other two are
still in care on the island. The point I'm trying to make
is what we ask for, like visitations, we'd like to have
visitations to us. We don't have any say how long they
can stay. They have so much authority. On one hand, I
feel they failed at their job, their job and going by the
book. Us indigenous people, when we get into situations
like this with our grandchildren and children, we never --
well, we don't seem to have much say in what Child, Youth
and Family Services does with our children, our
grandchildren."

Dr. Turpel-Lafond explained in her
testimony that Inuit children and youth who are
apprehended have a more difficult time accessing their
family and community after being sent south and, because
of this, the Inuit children sometimes never return north.
The number of Inuit children and youth who
are apprehended within the provincial and territorial
systems across the country is unknown because there is no
disaggregated data system in place to track that
information.

We heard in Montreal the relevance and
importance of having conversations around keeping the
families together instead of breaking them apart. The
issue of the apprehension of Inuit children from Inuit families is an ongoing issue that has to be seriously considered by the relevant governments and stakeholders.

And then there are Inuit men and women who are being flown to southern prisons or penitentiaries. The number of Inuit men and women within the federal, provincial and territorial incarceration institutions is unknown, as was testified to.

When there are Inuit within prison or penitentiary systems, access to culturally relevant, Inuit-specific rehabilitative programming is not available to them, either inside or outside when they're exiting the institution as was testified to in the Quebec City hearing on criminal justice.

There are Inuit women, girls and youth who are choosing a post-secondary education and accessing Inuit-specific education in the south is available through programs like Nunavut Sivuniksavut and Nunavik Sivuniksavut, but these Inuit-specific educational programs which educate youth about their respective land claims agreements, are not yet available within the Kivalliq Region and the Nunatsiavut Region.

If an Inuk wants to pursue a university degree, there is no other option other than to leave their home in Inuit Nunangat because Canada is the only
circumpolar country without a university above the 60\textsuperscript{th} parallel.

Dr. Barry Lavallee, in the hearing on racism in Toronto, indicated that universities could potentially do more to reach out to Inuit and make post-secondary education more accessible to them.

The relevant governments and stakeholders have to seriously consider post-secondary educational institutions like universities in the north and the incorporation of Inuit knowledge within these educational systems has to play an integral role within that process.

We've heard in St. John's that Inuit women and girls are at risk of being sexually exploited -- or there are already Inuit women and girls who are being sexually exploited. The eradication of the risk factors that contribute to this reality has to be made a priority by the relevant governments and stakeholders who make decisions that influence Inuit communities.

Those are my -- that's my brief overview. And right now, I'll read through the qualifying recommendations. These are preliminary qualifying recommendations.

Recommendations.

Inuit-specific and -- sorry. Inuit-specific and access to post-secondary institutions.
That Inuit be equally funded to independently undertake any future inquiries or inquests on pan-Aboriginal national, provincial or territorial commissions that are involved in investigating Aboriginal matters.

That any future inquiries or inquests involving a pan-Aboriginal approach investigate the matter in each of the four land claim regions, Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, as well as major urban centres where Inuit reside.

That governments, post-secondary institutions and stakeholders fully endorse and permanently fund Inuit-specific post-secondary programs within Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, and these post-secondary institutions accredit Inuit knowledge as a core requirement to that education.

That governments and stakeholders fully endorse and permanently fund the creation of Inuit-specific educational institutions, including support for the creation of an Inuit Nunangat university and Inuit-specific programming within major urban hubs where Inuit reside.

Recommendations in relation to sexualized violence and domestic violence.

That governments and relevant stakeholders
permanently fund culturally-relevant programs and
infrastructure within Inuit communities to prevent and end
childhood sexual abuse throughout all 51 communities
within Inuit Nunangat.

That governments and relevant stakeholders
permanently fund culturally-relevant programs and
infrastructure to eradicate domestic abuse and sexual
abuse within all 51 communities throughout Inuit Nunangat.

That governments and relevant stakeholders
within Inuit Nunangat permanently fund Inuit-specific
rehabilitation programs for men and boys within all 51
communities throughout Inuit Nunangat.

That governments and relevant stakeholders
within Inuit Nunangat fully fund infrastructure where
rehabilitative programs can take place throughout all 51
communities within Inuit Nunangat.

That governments and stakeholders
permanently fund rehabilitative programming for Inuit men
and boys who are within federal, provincial or territorial
penitentiaries or prisons and that governments and
stakeholders permanently fund rehabilitative programming
for Inuit women who are within federal and provincial and
territorial penitentiaries and prisons.

That governments and stakeholders fund
rehabilitative programming and transition housing for
Inuit men and boys who are exiting the provincial, territorial or federal penitentiary or prison systems and that governments and stakeholders permanently fund rehabilitative programming and transition housing for Inuit women and girls who are exiting the provincial, territorial, federal penitentiary or prison systems.

The creation of educational campaigns for Inuit women, girls and youth regarding the signs of being groomed for sexual exploitation and the creation of meaningful paid positions for Inuit women and girls who are looking to exit sex work.

Recommendations in relation to safety, responding to violence within Inuit Nunangat.

The creation of and permanent funding of training or programs relating to non-violent communication for community agencies or services who deal with domestic violence within Inuit communities, and this training be accessible to Inuit community members.

Mandatory trauma training, domestic violence training and Inuit cultural competency training for RCMP or police who work within any of the 51 communities throughout Inuit Nunangat.

The creation of campaigns throughout Inuit Nunangat to end silence about sexual violence and domestic violence and the reforming of medical care systems that
create vulnerability for Inuit to be sexually exploited.

Next set of recommendations will look at access to permanent and culturally-relevant mental health supports and health care throughout Inuit Nunangat.

That families of homicide survivors throughout Inuit Nunangat have access to permanent whole family healing programs to address the aftermath of the homicide of their loved one.

That grieving programs are put in place for Inuit homicide survivors, and this is offered in English and Inuktitut throughout all 51 communities within Inuit Nunangat.

The permanent funding of Inuit-specific on the land healing programs throughout all 51 communities within Inuit Nunangat.

The permanent funding of Inuit-specific treatment centres throughout all 51 communities within Inuit Nunangat.

The creation of Inuit traditional healing methods -- sorry. The recognition of Inuit traditional healing methods as a credential in the accreditation of rehabilitation program training within Inuit Nunangat and the creation and permanent funding of Inuit-specific services for Elders and their children with a colonial legacy of forced relocation, the slaughtering of Inuit
sled dogs and the experiences of residential schools can be openly and safely healed from.

Permanent mental health services that are Inuit-specific and permanently funded within all 51 communities within Inuit Nunangat.

The financing of infrastructure to build health care centres throughout all 51 communities within Inuit Nunangat.

Permanent health care staff and health care professionals throughout all 51 communities in the north.

The creation and financing of fully-staffed birthing centres with doctors or Inuit midwives throughout 51 communities within Inuit Nunangat.

Mandatory Inuit cultural training for health care professionals who work within 51 communities across Inuit Nunangat.

The creation of medical training programs and professional medical designations for Inuit.

That Inuit women and girls travel with an escort when going to an urban centre to access health care services, and this travel and accommodation is paid for by the relevant governments.

My second -- I'm almost done. My two further recommendations, or two categories of recommendations -- qualifying recommendations is creating
safe spaces for children, youth, LGBTQ2S.

The creation of and permanent funding of 24/7 safe spaces for children, family and youth, including LGBTQ2S individuals across 51 communities throughout Inuit Nunangat.

The creation of and permanent funding of child advocacy centres within each of the four regions, including Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut.

My last set of recommendations go towards child, youth and family services.

The financing for the creation of a Children's Commissioner in each region of Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut.

The creation of a national unified disaggregated data system that analyzes the number of Inuit children and youth within the child and family welfare systems across the country, and this system is a mandatory system that each of the child and family welfare departments in each province and territory has to use.

Thorough investigations into family dynamics by an independent body before an Inuit child is apprehended by the Department of Child and Family Welfare.

The establishment of affordable legal supports and lawyers who aid Inuit families throughout the processes involved in child and family welfare
proceedings, and these legal supports be established in each province and territory.

The opportunity for Inuit families to keep their children within their own family and community when child and family welfare departments are involved in any proceedings.

That summarizes my oral submissions and the qualifying recommendations. I'm going to pass the mic to ITK's President, Natan Obed.

Thank you.

MR. NATAN OBED: (NATIVE LANGUAGE)

I want to first recognize all the Elders in the room, First Nation, Inuit and Métis, Myna for tending the qulliq, Commissioners. Nice to see you all again. Any other elected leaders in the room, and all those who care so much for the subject.

My intervention this morning will build upon our lead counsel, Elizabeth Zarpa's, statement, and it will get into some of the larger issues, the things that go beyond just the conversations that we've had but get at the root -- the systemic root of the challenges that we face in implementing or in making the strategic policy, political or real system changes that are necessary to end violence against indigenous women and girls.
I will start with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the primacy of that particular UN instrument and its potentially amazing effect or transformational effect on the way indigenous rights in Canada are upheld and are implemented.

The Government of Canada has talked about the creation of a piece of legislation, Bill C-262, that acknowledges the Declaration and attempts to integrate it within to the Canadian legislative context.

I would like to pause and talk about the importance of remedy or recourse within the application of UNDRIP within Canada, especially in relation to section 35 of the Constitution, where Minister Bennett has talked about -- a lot about the UNDRIP fitting within. But without remedy, without recourse, without any fundamental way of going about doing that, then we -- where, really, are we?

And for the recommendations for -- for this Inquiry, the importance of accountability within systems is just as important as ambition, or intent, or sympathy, or empathy. Getting the systems right and having the -- the ability to go and litigate, to -- to enforce our existing rights, is still something that, in many cases, does not exist in this country. So if it means opening
the Constitution and actually putting the entire text of UNDRIP within Section 35, then let’s have that conversation. But let’s not stay in this endless debate and conversation about whether or not Indigenous rights in this country exist, and how little the Government of Canada, or other governments, have to do to meet such a low bar, that in the end, perpetuates the violence and perpetuates the socio-economic inequities that exist in this country that drive the violence against Indigenous women and girls.

ITK has entered into evidence a number of our strategies or reports. I’d like to pause and talk about the importance of the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy and the -- the holistic way in which the strategy tries to build a new narrative about why suicide happens the way it does in our community, and what we then do to push back against it, what interventions are necessary. Social equity is the key driving factor for the rates of suicide in our communities. The challenges that we face, in relation to child sexual abuse, or all other risk factors for suicide, play into this issue of violence in our society. And suicide and self-harm is a form of violence, and it is not something that is the individual’s prerogative in many cases. There are sets of circumstances that create risk. We are manufacturing risk
in our communities. And our National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy talks about the way that that happens and then the way to counteract that.

ITK just hosted a child sexual abuse forum last week in Ottawa. And we hope to enter into the evidence the -- the key findings from that conference because we know that there is an explicit link between child sexual abuse and a risk for suicide, and all -- and a whole host of other risk factors for suicide. We also know how huge the challenge is that 41 percent of respondents to the Inuit Health Survey reported being sexually abused during childhood.

We also entered into evidence our National Inuit Research Strategy, and that strategy, again, promotes self-determination, resetting a broken system. The ability for this Inquiry to learn from the work that has already happened with the national Indigenous organizations, and any other Indigenous representation organizations, fighting for self-determination, and has already outlined paths to self-determination, will allow for your reports to -- your report to immediately have traction in a way that it would not if it did not consider the work that has already been done.

There’s a difference between politics and governance and leadership. And I -- and I’ve -- I’ve
listened in as much as I could to the hearings. I’ve heard so many people talk about this being a non-political space and wanting to push politics out of the conversation. And I totally understand that, and as a politician, I’d some people tell me that I am. I’ve had to reconcile with that and come to terms with why individuals have a deep distrust for all political systems and all political leaders, Indigenous or otherwise. What we’re lacking is proper governance and also the leadership to create that proper governance and the implementation of it.

It comes down to leadership, and I think that our communities, Inuit, First Nations, Métis, we can understand and embrace leadership when we see it. And too often, we have seen leadership in a vacuum of political power. And so I do hope that we can continue to have this conversation about how to best use governance and use leadership to drive changes without having to just say that where, at large, politics is not needed within this exercise. Because if you think about research, or policing, or health care delivery, or education, we have the same considerations and same historical attitudes that are well deserved. Why should we send our children to a formal K to 12 system, when it’s broken? And all that we get back are children who don’t know their language and
don’t know their culture, don’t know themselves, and don’t have the skills to be successful within a southern environment. Why would we do that? The solution isn’t to throw out education completely, just as I would hope that you are not going to throw out politicians completely from the work that we all do.

Also, that racism in this country is alive and well. And we need to say it for what it is. And this Inquiry has heard so much about how racism has impacted the way services are provided. The -- the respect that people have or don’t have, and that it isn’t something of the past. And these are hard conversations to have, but we need to have them.

The infrastructure deficits that exist are linked with racism. They’re founded in a belief that Indigenous people are not as human, we are sub-human, we do not deserve the same level of care. Historically, it was much more black and white about how all that happened. But we are still within the roots and the foundation of that same system.

We do this work to -- to improve the lives of all that come after us and improve the lives that are people who are here who need more help. We do this work, not because it’s easy, or not because of gratification, but we do this because it’s necessary. And I do hope that
we can find the optimism in what we can all achieve, more
than we can find the pessimism in what we have not
achieved to date. This Inquiry was never going to be
everything for everybody. And, yes, there are huge
challenges that -- that our people are -- that Inuit have
had in accessing the Inquiry itself, or some of the other
challenges. But I do hope that we can focus now in this
last sprint on what is possible, and how to change
systems, and how to get the best possible outcome because
we’ve heard from so many Inuit, First Nations, Métis, and
all those who have wanted to help. It’s -- and that is so
important.

So I’d hope that this will all culminate in
a report that we can use for a long time. And I do hope
from the -- my angle, that I can push for a First
Ministers’ Meeting in relation to murdered and missing
Indigenous women and girls, so that not only the federal
government who has called for this Inquiry and has -- has
administered it, but all those other provinces and
territories who have signed on as well. We’ll see this
through to the end, and at the highest level, we’ll act
upon the findings. Nakurmiik.

(APPLAUSE)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good job.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Have a seat.
MS. ELIZABETH ZARPA: Thanks.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: And Chief Commissioner --

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I do.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: -- Commissioners, if there’s any questions.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Okay.

Okay. Go ahead. What --

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Ullaakuut and nakurmiik to you both. I have one question of clarification, Ms. Zarpa, in relation to your recommendation for a children and youth advocate in each of the regions. Are you envisioning this institution and this position to be similar to that of AMC’s advocate where it’s -- we heard ...from Ms. Morgan when we were in Winnipeg, and she occupies that role for AMC, or are you envisioning this to be a provincially or territorially legislated position similar to what exists in Nunavut or Inuit identified and Inuit specific?

Just wondering, who empowers and who do they serve?

MS. ELIZABETH ZARPA: So listening to the testimony from the child and welfare systems and also testimony from the Happy Valley-Goose Bay hearings with Mr. Gordon Obed and also other Inuit, it was clear that
when individual family members were -- there was no Inuit-
specific place to go to, whether it was in Winnipeg when
Annie expressed directly that she knows Inuit children who
are taken within the system and she doesn't -- her friend
has no voice in that process. She's not sure how it
works.

Throughout -- who it would empower would be
determinant upon the individual region or the different
governing systems, but I think that conversations around
how to allow Inuit children and families to have a better
voice, a clearer voice and representation within these
very powerful systems that can sort of take with -- and
then families are left feeling voiceless or not really
knowing who to go to from a legal representation because
of a lack of access to justice throughout northern
regions, representation from lawyers, paralegals who
understand Inuktitut.

So it's -- it's the creation of these
conversations from the different areas to understand how
to better create these dynamics in a way that Inuit-
specific -- Inuit families themselves can deal with this
and have more of a voice in that process, if that makes
any sense.

So I'm not sure if it's geared towards
AMC's mandate specifically or ---
COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I'll tell you why I ask, because in Nunavut there is a territorially-legislated child and youth advocate, and they're funded by the territorial government. Inuit make up 80 to 90 percent of the population, so it's clear that their mandate, although created by a public government and for all citizens of Nunavut, should theoretically serve Inuit families and children.

But in a province like Quebec, for example, where Inuit Nunavik do not make up a majority of the population, a child and youth advocate in the province of Quebec may not have the resources or a mandate sufficient enough to give equitable services to Inuit in Nunavik versus Inuit in Nunavut that receive it from their territorial government, so this distinction between provincial and territorial public governments being the body that creates this position and supports this position.

So that's where my concerns rest. In a province like Quebec and even in Newfoundland and Labrador, a province-wide child and youth advocate may not have -- Inuit may become off the side of their table more than a focus.

I also want to challenge the idea of jurisdictional boundaries, and I know ITK has pushed for a
long time to create Inuit Nunangat policy spaces, so why
not have an Inuit Nunangat child and youth advocate that
could be funded territorially, provincially and federal,
five-partite or whatever.

So I'm just sort of thinking outside of the
box on how you ensure that these advocate bodies, which
often end up being created through the silos of federal-
provincial jurisdiction, is actually going to serve those
families and children that -- and children and youth that
need it most that you are asking us to make a
recommendation in relation to.

MR. NATAN OBED: Just in that same vein,
within our -- under our position paper, we talked about
the creation of an Indigenous Human Rights Tribunal, and
it would sit alongside the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal,
but it would be specific for indigenous peoples because
there is an expertise within the field. And that to
ensure that there is recourse or redress remedy for
violation of human rights, that we go to the place where
it is explicitly for us.

The same principle could be applied to
child welfare and to an institution that focuses on
upholding the rights of children, of Inuit children.

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Thank you.

My final question goes to the issue of
social inequities. And you raised the issue of migration to urban settings and basically in order to access essential services.

And when we were in Calgary, particularly on the issue of FHNIB -- what's that acronym for -- health benefits, the witness from Indigenous Services Canada talking about the different programs that were available confirmed to my question that these services are recognized as programs and not as rights-based programs.

And it also has come out that in terms of the delivery of those services under that branch, there is no mechanism or certainty in the equity of services. So you can have Inuit women in Gjoa Haven with the exact same needs, health needs, and then a woman in, say, Reglet, and there's no -- although they're both eligible for this benefit, there is no certainty in the quality of the service or that it's going to meet their needs.

And it struck me particularly when you look at the decision by the Human Rights Tribunal in The Caring Society how the characterization of what was being provided as a right versus a service gave more recourse and remedy in the hands of the Court.

Programs, when they're not characterized as being rights-based, are provided out of the goodness of heart, not because they are tied to a fundamental human
right, yet health, education, safety, security, and I
would add food security, which are all outlined in terms
of your social indicators and the inequities identified in
-- I can't remember which report now, but there's a great
photo that was submitted when we were in Quebec that shows
the discrepancies in, say, household income, housing, food
security, life expectancy.

My large preamble, just do you have
thoughts on what we might or should be seeing with respect
to these services as being rights versus benefits, and is
that something that is important for the Commission to
take a position on?

MR. NATAN OBED: This is an ongoing
conversation for decades now in relation to non-insured
health benefits program. And the risk for First Nations
and Inuit always has been if you fight too hard for rights
and the government pushes back on it being a program, then
you could very easily find yourself losing non-insured
health benefits completely.

And so there's always a risk when there
isn't an equitable relationship between indigenous rights
and Canadian rights.

If we are coming in and trying to assert
rights and a government has the flexibility to take away a
program, that is a massive amount of leverage within a
space that then does not allow for indigenous people to truly exercise the rights that we have.

So yes, this is something that is of great concern.

Also, in the same vein, the way in which funding flows from the federal government or from provinces and territories to indigenous peoples, and the idea that indigenous-specific funding could flow to public governments and not to representatives of Inuit and that that is a fundamentally sound way this federal government still operates is a vestige of another time.

Inuit are demanding that we have the right to decide how Inuit-specific funding from the federal government flows into our homeland, the priorities that are put on it and how it is delivered, and that is essential to self-determination and also essential for us to ensure that we are delivering in the best possible way for our population.

**COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Thank you.

I’ve run out of time. I have more questions. Elizabeth, I know you know how this feels.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I’m sure we all look forward to receiving your final submissions today. It was just a wonderful taste of what’s yet to come.
Thank you, President Obed, for reminding us to think large and to dream because the dreams are what have been taken away from us. So thank you.

Thank you all.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: And, Chief Commissioner, Commissioners, if we could take a one-hour lunch break and reconvene at 12:30?

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Thank you. 1:30 please. Sorry, what time again?

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: 12:30.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: 12:30.

Thank you.

--- Upon recessing at 11:33 a.m./L’audience est suspendue à 11h33

--- Upon resuming at 12:36 p.m./L’audience est reprise à 12h36

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Next up we have the Native Women’s Association of the Northwest Territories. They are represented by counsel Caroline Wawzonek.

--- SUBMISSIONS BY CAROLINE WAWZONEK:

MS. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Good afternoon.

I’m grateful to be here on Treaty 7 Territory. I’m grateful to be presenting on the Métis Nation of Alberta’s lands as well. This is the nation of my biological paternal family.
I want to bid good afternoon to the families, to survivors, to the Elders, to the Chief Commissioner and the Commissioners, and I’m very lucky this afternoon that I can introduce to you Marie Speakman. She is one of the Victim Services workers from the Native Women’s Association of Northwest Territories, and she’s travelled from Yellowknife to give a brief welcome on their behalf today as well.

**MS. MARIE SPEAKMAN:** (Speaking in indigenous language). I just wanted to say in English that I welcome everyone here. Thank you, and for the Commissioners too. Thank you.

**MS. CARoline WAWZONEK:** As I’ve said, I’m here on behalf of the Native Women’s Association of the Northwest Territories. I want to talk to you today about trust. The Native Women’s Association has placed their trust in me, and it’s an incredible gift that I’ve accepted, and as long as I take care of this gift, I know that I have the potential to have this gift forever. But if I break this trust, I may not get it back.

And we are trusted, all of us here, with the stories of the survivors and their families. We have been trusted to hear their stories and to now accept their stories and to act on them, and that too is a trust that I would say we cannot break.
And I want to talk to you a little bit about the importance of trust, how easily it’s lost, and then our recommendations as they focus on rebuilding the trust in Canada.

Commissioners, I would suggest you can take notice of the fact of how important trust is to society, how important it is to our relationships, both starting in our families and all the way up through our governments, and that as Canadians, we’ve put our trust into so many social institutions and political institutions. And when I call the police, I trust them to be available. I trust that they are in my community. I trust they will show up. I trust they will hear me and investigate a matter.

And if I attend for healthcare, I trust that they will evaluate me, look at my symptoms, even if those symptoms might happen to overlap with signs of addiction.

If I send my children to school, I trust that my children will see themselves reflected in what they learn, and I trust that they will be safe at school.

And I trust that if I’m challenged by one of those things, and if those things don’t happen for me, I trust that I can go to the halls of power and say “Please fix this.” And then if the politicians don’t listen, I would go to the media and say to them, “Please
fix this.” And I can trust that someone will do something
because I’m Canadian and I matter.

But that has not been the evidence that you
have heard in the course of the Inquiry. And in Iqaluit,
Inukshuk Aksalnik described the work of the Qikiqtani
Truth Commission and recommendations arising out of the
Qikiqtani Truth Commission, looking at the impacts of
relocations and dog slaughters, and she says that most of
those recommendations in response to society-destroying
events are recommendations looking at a way to arrive at a
point where the design and the delivery of services is
done for Inuit in a way that Canadians take for granted.
In response to dramatic events, all they want is to be
brought to a level that is the same as when I say I
matter, that she too can know that she matters.

It’s a very simple thing to take for
granted, our trust, and one of the most simple ways that
we take for granted will bring me to my next point about
trust. And it was when Elisapi Aningmiuq also in Iqaluit
said: “How come we as Inuit are the one who must
understand you?”

And I would suggest, based on all that you
have heard, that simple question applies to the First
Nations and to the Métis Peoples as well. Why do we need
to understand you?
And she illustrated this point with a simple question from her son: “Anaana, why do the Inuit speak English but the Qallunaat don’t speak Inuktitut?” And asking that question in Iqaluit, I would suggest, is a very powerful thing. The simple ability to communicate our needs, to communicate to power and to government is something that we too easily take for granted.

And when trust is broken, the more times you break it, the harder it is for someone to trust you again. That is clear from the evidence of the families and the survivors, that the police do not come when they are called. They come, but you feel like the criminal.

The offender might be found guilty and taken away but then returned to your community unrehabilitated and with no change and no protective structures when they return.

The education system takes your children, does not educate them, and your way of life is not reflected. They’re told, in fact, that it’s bad.

The health system takes you away from your community, treats you in isolation. Indeed, when you’re born into the world as a child in the North, your mother very often has been flown out of her community and is giving birth to you away from her community and away from her family.
The Terms of Reference of what brings us all here, of course, ask for the reasons why there’s such violence, and disproportionate violence against indigenous women.

But I would suggest that the reasons that we are here truly is not actually the issue. The issue is why are we still here?

In the Northwest Territories in the 1970s, we had the Berger Inquiry. And while this was in response predominantly to an assertion of rights over land, ultimately what came of that was a recommendation that was not only a moratorium on the development but a call to the need to pay attention to what is being said by indigenous communities, to protect those indigenous communities and to involve them in the decision making about indigenous communities.

Twenty (20) years later, the 1990s, we have the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples where it is said we realized that the usual strategy, tackling the problems one at a time, independently, is tantamount to putting a Band-Aid on a broken leg.

Instead, we propose a comprehensive agenda for change. What we want is something more radical. To bring about change in human lives is to ensure that Aboriginal children grow up knowing that they matter, that
they are precious human beings, deserving love and respect, and they hold the keys to a bright future with possibilities in society as equals.

And yet we are still here. And we were told this all again, this same decade, by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They had given us guiding principles on truth and reconciliation. I want to highlight only Number 6 for now in the interests of time:

“That all Canadians, as Treaty Peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.”

This time around, it seems there is some work that has begun, but if the issue here is around protecting indigenous women, we have to ask if that needle that is in the critical red is moving fast enough. And the evidence before the Inquiry suggests that it simply is not. It is certainly not the evidence in the Northwest Territories, where there are high rates of violent crime, but particularly the highest reported rates of violence against women in Canada. In 2013, the rates of violence against women was nine times the national average. By 2016, the rates of domestic violence in the Northwest Territories was the second highest in Canada. And while I’m not certain, but I strongly suspect it was our
neighbouring territories who rounded out the top three.
And in fact, the real numbers are far worse. It is widely
known, and it was explained to you by Dr. Pertice Moffitt,
that it is often unreported and particularly so in small
communities that violence is normalized, and that this
creates significant risk of behaviour and expectations
passing generation to generation.

In addition, the Indigenous population in
the Northwest Territories have below average education
levels, high rates of poverty, low employment rates,
housing shortages, high rates of addiction, and a multi-
sourced inter-generational trauma. So, again, the needle
simply is not moving fast enough, and the situation
remains critical despite having been told in the ‘70s and
in the ‘90s and in earlier this -- in this decade, that we
need to change our ways.

So why are we still here? Dr. Moffitt and
her collaborators used the imagery of a web, depicting how
all the different factors intersect to create a web of
oppression. And that you may successfully address one of
those strands or, perhaps, you’ve created a program that
targets available housing, that increases access to
transportation, that increases access to available
childcare. But when you’re only taking one, or even two,
all of the strands stay there, and they anchor the
oppression. And it is high time, having been told again and again, that we need to acknowledge that the efforts strand by strand are not working.

And we are asking this Commission to have a broader vision. To have a vision that looks at what is anchoring this web, and not simply strand by strand. And that’s where I come back to trust. If you look at trust, and the trusts that are broken, and the underlying trust underneath each of those strands, you will start to -- I will suggest that you will start to see that there are connections and linkages, and there is something that can be done to change the relationships.

And it’s -- this is true even for those with the best of intentions, which is, perhaps, this -- the one that’s the most difficult to root out. Dr. Janet Smylie in Iqaluit said:

One of the most disruptive parts of colonial policies and processes is the attitudinal and systemic racism when outsiders, and now sometimes insiders, who may not have been exposed to these ways, they don’t see, or they misunderstand, or they underestimate a piece of this way of living, and they try to replace it with something that they know, but something
that won’t work for us.

We need to trust the people to know. Part of the mission of the Northwest Territories Native Women’s Association is to build relationships with all levels of government and with other organizations, and they are relationships that will be built on trust.

Which brings me to our recommendations. They are recommendations that look to the future. We wish to articulate a path to renew trust of Indigenous women to all levels of government and to all government services. But we also want to find a path to ensure that governments start to trust Indigenous women. So we have four core recommendations. We are mindful that the Inquiry strives for decolonization and for respect of Indigenous self-determination. We are mindful that to build upon the resiliency of Indigenous peoples in communities, as has been demonstrated and heard time after time throughout this Inquiry so powerfully. And fundamentally, our four recommendations seek to rebuild a trusting relationship between all nations within Canada.

Number 1, is that all Canadians and the Canadian political leadership must meaningfully -- meaningfully acknowledge that violence against Indigenous women and girls, including members of two-spirited, LGTBQ communities, are at a state of national crisis that demand
an urgent and an active response. Number 2, that all Canadians and Canadian political leadership must proactively re-establish, build, and foster trust between all levels of government, service providers, communities, and citizens. Three, that the federal, provincial, and territorial, and Indigenous governments should ensure that the purpose and objective of all government services is to be community and person-centered. And four, that the federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments establish senior levels of entities mandated to be accountable for monitoring and reporting on measures of Indigenous women’s safety, health, education, and any other socio-economic indicators as measures of their equality, dignity, and wellness.

Before we got to our four recommendations, we started with almost 40. And it was when we went to cross-reference these against the Inquiry’s master list of recommendations, we realized two things. First, that, again, we actually have been told much of this already. That so many of these things have been said in one way or another. But two, what a treasure the master list is. We would also urge you, then, to take those 233 pages, and growing list of recommendations, and don’t lose it. Make it accessible. Make it user-friendly. Add to it the powerful and thoughtful recommendations that you have
already begun hearing in Calgary and will continue to hear
over the course of your -- of these next hearings. Make
it interactive. Allow the incredible dialogue that has
happened over the course of these -- this -- of all of
these hearings, not to end. It is a tool, and it can be a
tool, and it should be a tool for leaders, politicians,
policy-makers, and advocates.

Because I’m confident in this dialogue, I
wanted to highlight, briefly, some of the recommendations
that we had -- I’m calling them the additional
recommendations for consideration, for lack of a better
term. And I know I have been -- they’ve been provided to
the parties and to the Commission in their fullness, but
to -- for the sake of those listening only, I wanted to
highlight, as I said, a few that were particularly
salient.

One is that the federal, provincial,
territorial governments, in collaboration with Indigenous
governments, need to establish working groups to reduce
the high turnover rate in front line services. Provincial
and territorial governments, in collaboration with
Indigenous governments, must establish working groups with
Elders, Grandmothers, and youth, to develop and deliver
public education and community awareness in a number of
arenas: Safe and healthy relationships, warning signs of
abuse, warning signs of personal crisis, ending stigma around victimization, and safely accessing community services. These people -- these groups must also come together to develop cultural safety. They should come together to develop trauma-informed training. And all of that should then be shared with law enforcement, front line service providers, and others in the justice system.

We’d suggest having a mobile trauma-recovery team. We suggest also that there be community-based addictions treatment services, each one ensuring that there’s aftercare supports. That you engage the Elders, the youth, the Grandmothers to develop these community-based services. And similarly, develop community-based anti-violence programs, recovery programs for survivors, and ways to safely re-integrate offenders into their communities.

I want to spend the rest of my time going over our four core recommendations and giving a bit of meat to their bones. Firstly, the acknowledgement. And we’re conscious that the Interim Report already indicates that all levels of government should publicly acknowledge and condemn violence against Indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ and two-spirited persons. But we want to consider for a moment what is meant by the word, acknowledge. And I’ll go back many years to the Royal
Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, again, where they call for a realistic look at Canadian history and in acknowledgement that government policies built on 150 years of colonialization was wrong. And I quote:

Every Canadian will gain if we escape the impasse that breeds confrontation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across barriers, real or symbolic. The barriers — barricades will not fall until we understand how they were built.

Dr. Janet Smylie in Iqaluit acknowledging that there is unequal social positioning:

If we don’t acknowledge the social positioning, how can we begin to correct it? If we are trying to be able to bridge across differences, you need to be aware of one’s own social positioning to even out the interaction.

We need to acknowledge our shared history, our current reality, the social inequalities, and it is more than simply shame or blame.

And then Gabriel had many strong words for the government, but she also said this, "Canadians have to move beyond the guilt. Help us progress because we are spinning our wheels in the mud of colonialization". 
That's the acknowledgement that we're asking, one that comes from knowledge and one that comes with understanding.

It should start with those who take on the responsibility of leadership and in whom we place trust.

Our second is to then re-establish and build trust. Witness after witness has made it clear that the Canadian government cannot continue to impose an external world view on indigenous people and simply existing them to conform.

Non-indigenous Canadian leadership must start trusting the world view of indigenous Canada.

We already know again that these conclusions are being drawn in the interim report, but still, it's how you build that trust is a real issue and is an ongoing question.

We would ask that all governments be required to take steps to establish, build, demonstrate trust in the ability of indigenous women, girls, LGBTQ and two-spirited persons to show that they know the ways of healing, the ways of strengthening and ways of themselves working towards equality.

We would also ask that you please, please encourage us not to be afraid. Dr. Blackstock in Winnipeg noted:
"The governments are worried we're going to screw up. We might screw up, but we have survived our own mistakes for thousands of years. We might not survive theirs. The evidence is very good that we might not survive theirs. It is time for them to learn how to give up control and to understand that it is not going to be chaos on the other side, that we demand much more of ourselves than that."

And so Commissioners, we ask you to please help us all stop being afraid to trust each other.

So how do you go about re-establishing and building something like trust?

This is where the power of those 233 pages of recommendations come in, and the power of all the recommendations you will hear here. These are the requests of the people. A good starting place to build trust would be to take some of them and actually act on them.

We would highlight just a few.

Better and more dialogue, education and collaboration. With respect to dialogue, an example of how you might do that is to actually understand the person
with whom you are speaking and to even be in the place
with the person with whom you are speaking.

So for example, I'd asked how the
Anishinaabe Aske Nation was able to create a better
awareness about the needs of their northern communities
when they were negotiating their police agreements. And
their Chair said to me, "One of the things we did was
invite the negotiating parties from both Canada and
Ontario to come and visit in our communities because most
negotiation processes take place in an urban setting".

The reason to take them up north was to see
firsthand what any specific community has to deal with,
whether that's a poor facility or even the geographic
layout itself. Most people don't know anything about the
north. That certainly has been our experience as well,
and likely extends to so many communities across Canada
vis a vis the people making the decisions about them.

Dr. Blackstock again offers insights:

"For so long the communities have been
told, 'No, you can't have it', so I
think it's a duty on the government
and, in fact, it's an obligation on
the government under the UNDRIP to go
out to the communities and say, 'Not
only are we changing the page
ourselves, we realize our previous approach was not the one we should have taken."

And she goes on:

"We sincerely are interested in hearing from you or, alternatively, under something like the touchstones of hope to allow communal visioning to happen. They shouldn't be waiting in their offices. They need to get out there and really speak to people."

Dr. Blackstock, of course, provides a roadmap, a roadmap to develop trust in the form of the Spirit Bear Plan. And we would suggest that that, too, is another way to establish and to build trust.

It's a simple five-step plan. And it involves, at one point, a 360-degree evaluation process where governments have to have an honest dialogue with themselves because, as she has said, "Unless governments reform themselves in a serious way, not tinkering around the edges, the vestiges of colonial powers and practices will continue to pile up."

The second of our highlights with respect to trust is education.
In Quebec, Helen Gabriel described it as an injustice that, through our education system, Canadian children are denied historical truth and continue to be fed "the garbage we were fed to feel ashamed". She calls for decolonization of the education system so that with knowledge, this next generation will not make mistakes like this one.

Let's raise a generation of indigenous kids who do not accept inequality and non-indigenous kids who understand that an injustice was done to all Canadians.

Northwest Territories Native Women's Association delivers adult training programs and sees firsthand the difference that a holistic and culturally-safe approach can actually make.

Many of the women served in these programs cannot complete the training in other programs and in other places. Sometimes they can't access them or they can't complete them because they have a number of complex needs ranging from child care to the fact that they may be recovering from trauma.

They need to be accepted as they are, where they are and have their learning needs addressed as whole people. When that is done, they succeed.

And so we know that building trust in education is possible. We hope there's a similar approach
that can be expanded across ages.

And this isn't just education for young people. It's education for all of us who missed out when we were young, whose education systems didn't teach us.

Education doesn't end. We all have to continue to educate ourselves and continue learning.

And the last of our highlights with respect to the building of trust is collaboration.

Manager of the Northwest Territories Community Justice and Policing spoke in Calgary, Leanne Gardiner. She said:

"Service provision to victims is best delivered when all of the stakeholders are communicating well, and especially in a small community. The reality is, there's maybe one victim services worker, two or three RCMP officers. Whenever there's any turnover in any of these positions, that impacts this relationship."

Speaking about the inter-agency relationships, Dr. Moffitt also said that in the Northwest Territories, and again, I suspect many smaller communities, not only does this kill the institutional memory, it breaks the bonds of trust between the service
providers and the clients they are serving.

There are benefits for formalizing cross-institutional relationships so that the relationships are not dependent only on the individuals filling the roles at any given time, but also they can translate then to being something that lasts within those institution and goes beyond the individuals filling those roles.

And in our view, this creates a far better foundation for trust between agencies and it will create a far better foundation for trust with the people they are serving.

Our third recommendation, to be person and community centred in our government services.

And on this point, it's not simply a singular occasion. It's not just one government service. We actually mean every single one of them.

The purpose and objectives, often found in a preamble or in the policy document that lays out how the government institution is meant to be providing a certain type of service, should actually be retooled so that instead of having it be about the service, it is about the fact that they need to serve the wellness of the whole person, whomever they are serving in whatever capacity and for whatever reason.

They need to start seeing their clients as
complex people with complex needs, and very often with families.

Shifting to the purpose of government services at each entry point to being whole person centred creates an umbrella, and there's a better sense of trust coming from the client if they know that they could go to a point of access and receive whatever need they're professing to need, but that their other needs won't be forgotten, that they won't be handed a card and told to go to the next place, that they will actually be accompanied there, that they will be taken care of and that whatever their access point is, they know that every one of their needs contributing are all going to be serviced and cared for.

So that instead of, if it's raining, rather than handing them a newspaper and saying, "Well, head over to that office there and I hope you don't get wet", this is the umbrella. We actually are going to protect them and take them and make sure that they get where they need to go so that all of their needs are cared for.

What does it mean to see the whole person? Commissioner Robinson had asked about counselling that is either family oriented versus one on one. And Elisapi Aningmiuq said, "One on one is non-indigenous. Inuit don't focus on the individual".
In her organization, they don't consider what they do as siloed programs. What they do focuses on the way of life, taking a holistic approach. It is not just a program. As she says, "My life is not a program. It is my way of life. Our life is not a program. It is our way of life."

Dr. Turpel-Lafond gave some examples. She observes that, at times, people from remote communities who need to visit a medical facility in a major centre.

And we don't suggest that that's suddenly going to come to an end, but without a care plan, that person risks being left in downtown Winnipeg or name your major centre and may never get home again.

In another example, Dr. Turpel-Lafond observes that poor quality and short-term addictions treatment for mothers is not working. We need to create a priority that you incentivize and support post-treatment like at-home supports.

And she described the work that is happening in the First Nations Health Authority in British Columbia where they are seeing clients as whole individuals, including clients who are parents. And instead of saying, "You need to take care of your child", which she observes most parents do know, instead the system's focus changes to this person as a whole person,
and the question becomes, "How can we make sure that this person has the supports he or she needs to be healthy, to understand the needs of their child and to provide them?"

The focus changes. And it is not shaming and blaming as much as it is on motivating and supporting.

Keeping a person in their community working with their community obviously has the potential to build trust. Taking them out of their community, taking them away from their family obviously has the potential to break trust.

Now, we note and we're conscious that certainly there is an argument that has been made that perhaps these small communities and their service providers don't have the right academic qualifications.

But the point has been made exhaustively that indigenous nations and communities have the knowledge, have traditional knowledge to support the emotional, spiritual healing and wellness of their people.

Dr. Janet Smylie described an extraordinary example of how you can build indigenous and non-indigenous health care networks that use the best of all these worlds.

And in prioritizing a community-centred approach, then the focus should be on the strengths of the community, to support those strengths rather than worrying
about the deficits. Again, we don't want to get lost in fear.

And instead of insisting on external experts, the current system -- as the current system does, perhaps we can focus on their strengths and what can do instead is ensure that the person who has the experts -- the expert knowledge for that community bring them the opportunity to get the academic qualifications instead of always bringing the academic qualifications and hoping that they can start to understand the community. That approach seemingly hasn't gone very well.

And the last, number 4 out of our recommendations, accountability.

No matter what recommendations this Commission ultimately lands on, without accountability there will be no ability to ensure that progress is meaningful and that progress is effective.

Dr. Turpel-Lafond spoke about accountability in her testimony where she said that:

"They must identify a point of leadership within your institution responsible for every component of proposed change. They must have the capacity to conduct detailed reviews. They have to have sufficient authority
to change the process if it's not working. There must be clear timeframes, and there must be a process by which that person can ensure that whoever is responsible for change sees and understands how they fit into the process, and the person who's accountable needs to report back publicly."

But besides accountability within individual institutions, Dr. Turpel-Lafond points out that when there are many or different overlapping systems, there needs to be accountability between those systems.

By way of example, she described the senior level meetings that are among stakeholders engaged in child welfare in British Columbia, and that involves a Director of Child Welfare, the Public Guardian, the Ombudsman, many.

Every single one that attends that level of meeting becomes accountable to the others so that as each system changes, not one is left to be falling behind.

And so the Northwest Territories Native Women's Association proposes that the federal, provincial, territorial and indigenous governments all have this responsibility to be accountable. They are all going to
have a responsibility to develop to build trust, to establish that trust and build that trust, and to deliver programs and services within a spirit of trust. And they need to be accountable for doing so.

In conclusion, I would reiterate again our desire to catalogue all the recommendations that you have and that you will receive, but to look beyond individual services and individual programs and go to the very core of our relationships as Canadians.

We urge the National Inquiry to take a multi-generational view. We are seeking recommendations for change that aspire to transform how Canadians and how Canadian institutions understand and see and treat indigenous women and girls.

We want to have acknowledgment through understanding. We want commitment to rebuild our trusting relationships. We want to change the entire focus and delivery of services to being community and person-centred and establish accountability to make sure it actually gets done.

The Northwest Territories Native Women's Association looks forward to a future for indigenous children and grandchildren to grow up proud of their indigenous heritage, confident of their place in Canadian society and where our non-indigenous children grow up
knowing the truth of their history where they can benefit from the powers and the gifts of their indigenous neighbours.

And in this future, indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ and two-spirited persons can have trust that they will be treated with dignity and with respect comparable to every other Canadian.

Thank you.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Chief Commissioner and Commissioners, before you ask any questions, would it be possible that Commission counsel can ask two simple questions just to clarify things for the record?

Of counsel, Ms. Wawzonek.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Go ahead.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: So Ms. Wawzonek, just to be clear for the record, is the master list that you're referring to, is that the same one that is available on the National Inquiry web site that's titled "Master list of previous recommendations organized by theme"?

MS. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: That's the one, yes.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Okay. And then you also referred to the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories two-page document about the
recommendations.

Are you seeking that to be an exhibit on the record?

**MS. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes. I apologize on the process.

Yes, if I could perhaps -- the document that we had sent in that outlined our recommendations, if I could please ask that that be made a formal exhibit.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Exhibit 3.

---**Exhibit 3:**

“Primary Recommendations on behalf of the Native Women’s Association of the NWT” (4 pages)

Submitted by: Caroline Wawzonek, Counsel for Native Women’s Association

**MS. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank you, Commission counsel.

**MR. THOMAS BARNETT:** Yes. And thank you, Chief Commissioner and Commissioners. If you have any questions.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** For once, none of us have any questions.

But we all do want to say thank you very much for your thorough and very passionate submissions,
and we look forward to reading more.

Thank you so much. Thank you both.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: And if we could take a 20-minute break.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Twenty (20) minutes, please.

--- Upon recessing at 13:14

--- Upon resuming at 13:33

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Thank you, Chief Commissioner and Commissioners.

Next we have the Government of Saskatchewan. They are represented by counsel, Barbara Mysko.

--- SUBMISSIONS BY BARBARA MYSKO

MS. BARBARA MYSKO: Good afternoon, Commissioners. I’d like to acknowledge that we’re gathered this afternoon on Treaty 7 territory, the home of the Blackfoot and the Métis. And I would like to start my submissions by extending my gratitude to the Commissioners for their tireless efforts. To the activists who continue to shed light on matters of public importance. To all of the Parties with Standing for their commitment. And, of course, to all of the staff and those who have made this Inquiry come together. Most importantly, though, I’d like to thank the families of the missing and murdered
Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, and transgender people. And I would like to acknowledge the spirits of those who have passed on.

It’s important for us to remember who is at the center of this process. It’s not the provincial government, it’s the people we try to serve. And in that respect, I take note of Betty Ann Pottruff’s reply to a question I asked her in her evidence in relation to her work from the provincial partnership on missing persons. And she said:

I think the other lesson we learned was that the families, they had a lot of valuable information to contribute if anybody would listen to them.

And I think we have all understood the truth of that statement throughout this journey over the last two years. So I will do my best to keep this front of mind during these submissions, knowing that this is probably one of the more difficult things I’ve done in my career. I am a little bit nervous, but I also know that this is absolutely nothing compared to what the families have endured, so this is the least that we can do.

So on that note, I will provide a road map for the submissions. First off, we’d like to start with first principles and talk about the terms of reference for
the Inquiry. Speaking to Saskatchewan’s engagement with the process, and our desire, our seeking of concrete solutions to affect positive change, we’ll speak to the importance of recognizing best practices, not for the purposes of marketing or self-promotion, but for the purpose of building, learning, and becoming better. I’ll then go into review some of Saskatchewan’s efforts in reconciliation, education, housing, child welfare, and numerous other areas, many of which I won’t be able to cover exhaustively in the submissions today. Throughout this, I’ll try, as best as I can, to recognize some of the areas in which we’re struggling. But we’ll also repeat very importantly some of what we’ve heard in the evidence. The presentation will, of necessity, be incomplete.

So to start off, as we all know the mandate of this Inquiry is expansive to say the least. And I would like to refer to something that Jessie Wente said in the racism hearing in June, which was:

The reality is, our existence is nuanced. It requires nuanced responses. Not everything for each community is going to be the easy answer.

We know the disproportionate violence against Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit people, is a complex problem. And something that Betty Ann Pottruff said to me
throughout the course of this Inquiry really resonated with me and that was, “Complex problems require complex solutions.” For that reason, the mandate of the Inquiry is expansive. The expansiveness, the breath of the Inquiry affirms the complexity that’s inherent in examining and understanding systemic causes of violence.

According to the terms of reference you, the Commissioners, are directed to inquire into and report on and, of course, you know this, systemic causes of all forms of violence, including sexual violence, against Indigenous women and girls in Canada, including underlying social, economic, cultural, institutional, and historical causes. No small feat. As well, institutional policies and practices implemented in response to violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada, including the identification and examination of practices that have been effective in reducing violence and increasing safety. Any and all decisions taken by this Commission are informed by these terms of reference. It’s for that reason that I go back to it today.

This broad mandate recognizes the need for carefully considered and constructed solutions to complex problems. Such solutions require a multi-sectoral involvement, dialogue among partners, to promote an exchange of information, encourage understanding, and
support capacity building. Dialogue is facilitated by the very nature of this process. I may be used to adversarial processes. This is not that. This in -- is an inquisitorial process, the very nature of which is meant to facilitate open discourse about past and present challenges, existing practices and proposed solutions. As the Commission knows, its role is to investigate, educate, and provide advice to government.

Where, then, does Saskatchewan fit into all of this? I’d like to speak to something that Dr. Allan Wade said in his evidence. He said:

I don’t think there’s any substitute for working together as allies. People in different positions, who have different things, who bring different things to the table. If we are going to work together, that would be my hope.

We are here because we want to encourage the Parties with Standing to see public servants as their allies. Maybe not today, or tomorrow, but some day. I’ve been reading a lot from Simon Ruel, the author of The Law of Public Inquiries in Canada. And he notes in that text that public inquiries -- only matters of very significant -- public importance, rather, should be entrusted to Commissions of
Violence against Indigenous women and girls is a matter of significant public importance. Saskatchewan has recognized this by providing the Commission with the authority into inquire into issues under provincial jurisdiction. Saskatchewan’s Order in Council affirms that it is in the public interest to entrust to the Commission of Inquiry the mandate to carry out its work in matters of Saskatchewan’s jurisdiction. Our OC, or Order in Council says further that the province is committed to working with Indigenous communities to end the threat of violence against women and girls, and to ensure the safety of future generations, to take action to support reconciliation, working in collaboration with Indigenous peoples based on principles of mutual respect and shared benefits.

I’d like to tell you today that Saskatchewan’s paying attention. We have a team of officials that meet on a bi-weekly basis that monitor and review the evidence raised at the Inquiry. At the risk of giving evidence, this team is composed of officials from across government representing ministries of education, health, social services, justice, corrections, prosecutions, the Public Service Commission, Status of Women, FILU among others. Officials, over the past few
years, have been monitoring the institutional and expert proceedings, and there was significant representation at the Saskatoon community hearings, including for members of the Saskatchewan Elders Forum. Government representatives, who have been in attendance at every institutional expert hearing since August 2017 have identified themes in the evidence, and regularly report back to their team for consideration.

While along the way, and in the past, Saskatchewan has implemented some best-practices, it understands it does not have all the answers. We acknowledge the significant over representation of Indigenous people in the child welfare system as well as in the corrections and justice system. We recognize the challenges of service delivery in remote and northern communities, and the existing disparity in income, education, and employment for Indigenous people. We have participated in the Inquiry to seek out more effective and responsive solutions to these challenging issues. And I’d like to review some of what we’ve heard in the testimony, so that you can understand that we are listening. And the list is, obviously, not going to be exhaustive.

We have testimony on recognizing the resilience of Indigenous women and children and families; ensuring a person with lived experience is at the table;
understanding Indigenous world views, plural; building capacity in families in communities; implementing culturally appropriate services and programs; educating those who are delivering services, so that they can provide equitable, respectful services; ensuring that supports and services exist in and for remote and northern communities; keeping women and children safe in their homes and communities where possible; spreading awareness of the problem of human trafficking; educating and training men and boys; collecting reliable statistics; performing objective evaluations; ensuring that risk factors do not penalize, but instead create opportunities; being mindful of the language and signals that people use to alienate, humiliate, or create more vulnerability; creating alliances among women; addressing the marginalization of two-spirit people; providing meaningful funding.

No list can be exhaustive. We are seeking concrete solutions to address the complex challenge of violence against Indigenous women and girls in line with the terms of reference that ask the Commissioners to do exactly that. The terms of reference also direct the Commission to identify practices that have been effective in reducing violence and increasing safety. We ask, urge the Commission to look carefully at existing, effective
practices in developing its concrete recommendations. The quality and strength of the Commissioner’s recommendations require a proportionate, but rigorous review of the information that’s available.

Saskatchewan recognizes that this Commission has been unable to hold a viva voce hearing on every possible systemic cause. For this reason, we have tried to provide a series of evidentiary submissions to the Commission outlining past and existing practices, which I understand the Commissioners have already begun to review. Although, these submissions are far from exhaustive, they’re intended to assist in the development of your final report: Carefully considering existing, effective practices of all organizations, not just provincial, federal governments, serves to promote trust among those who work in the field, and those who are impacted by the work; build on momentum of existing efforts and encourage capacity building within institutions; contribute to a sense of well-being and hope for Indigenous people rooted in their demonstrated successes. We’ll provide a brief outline of some of the initiatives for the purpose of promoting and understanding of what progress has been made; spreading awareness that the public service is capable of empathetic service and is committed to performing progressive responsive work for
and with its Indigenous partners; and calling for your advice.

So I’d like to start by talking about reconciliation and referring, again, to my favourite quoteable, Betty Ann Pottruff, who said in her evidence:

One of the major issues that you need to deal with in work like this, is building trust.

We’ve heard a lot about that today. Betty Ann went on to say:

Because if you don’t build the trust and focus on relationships, then it’s going to be that much more difficult for you to be successful. People have to feel that they’re in a safe environment in which they can say what they want to say, even if what they want to say might be hard to hear.

Well, here is one of those hard truths. Saskatchewan knows that it shares in Canada’s legacy of residential schools and disproportionate levels of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Of the 139 recognized residential schools that existed across Canada, Saskatchewan was home to 20 of those and the highest number of residential school claimants. It is a consistent theme in the evidence that the residential
school system has long-lasting impacts for family cohesion, domestic violence, and child welfare. It’s important for the Saskatchewan public to be educated and informed about the legacy of residential schools. Greater understanding leads to more empathetic provision of public services, reduces negative stereotyping, and improves the quality of life for Indigenous people.

As this Commission has recognized in its Interim Report, no one knows for sure how many Indigenous women and girls have been murdered or gone missing in Canada. However, it is clear that Indigenous people are disproportionately represented as victims of crime, generally. Nationally, we know Indigenous women experience significantly higher rates of violent victimization than non-Indigenous women. Since the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police began recording long-term missing persons statistics in 2006, the number of missing Indigenous women in Saskatchewan consistently represents 50 percent or more of total female persons in the province. This compares with Indigenous women accounting for only 15, 1-5, point 6 of the female population in the province.

So we acknowledge, we don’t have all the answers. We have heard, and we understand that it’s important to collaborate with our Indigenous partners to
address the serious challenges and underlying causes of violence. Truly collaborative efforts, relationships, provide the necessary climate to educate those working in the public service to lead systemic change from within. Collaboration and education are mutually reinforcing and result in an exchange of ideas and greater understanding among cultures, traditions, and lived experiences.

We understand that our government is enhanced through the contributions of Indigenous people. We understand Indigenous people in Saskatchewan are the fastest growing demographic of the working age population. In order for us to be responsive to the needs of our population, the government must be an attractive employment option for Indigenous people, from policy development to service delivery, to senior management. Many Indigenous people unfortunately -- not all -- know government through encounters with child welfare and corrections. Government officials are making now a concerted effort to create positive encounters with Indigenous people and to build trust.

Including Indigenous voices within government enhances the quality and responsiveness of the services that our province delivers to its citizens. To that end, our public service commission has entered into a contract to ensure that all provincial government staff
receive Aboriginal awareness training. Saskatchewan hopes that by providing government wide education about the lived experiences of Indigenous people, that Indigenous staff members will benefit from an enhance sense of belonging in the public service.

Several ministries, many of which will go unnamed here today because of time, also have internal training programs specific to the services delivered by that ministry. For example, and this is highlighted in our latest submission that was filed under Rule 33 in November in some detail, the Ministry of Social Services provides five types of cultural awareness training delivered by Indigenous consultants for its Child and Family Program staff. And I had the benefit of learning more about this programming in the course of this Inquiry, and it’s truly inspiring. This training, which includes education on the calls to action of the TRC, is an important part of ensuring that Child and Family Services staff are providing services that are culturally appropriate and respectful.

Saskatchewan’s Indigenous population is also young. As of 2016, 42.5 percent of the total Saskatchewan, as defined as, Aboriginal population was under the age of 19. It’s important for all of us that young Indigenous people have opportunities to thrive.
Corey O’Soup said in his evidence that:

I believe that we have to invest in our children. We have to invest in them early and often.

This Commission itself has identified as one of the systemic causes, the existing gap in education skills and employment training between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The Commission has called on all governments to bridge these gaps. To address the gap in education, specifically, Saskatchewan’s carefully working to ensure that Indigenous people feel a sense of belonging in the provincial education system.

In the meantime, the achievements of Indigenous people must not be overlooked. For self-identified First Nations and Métis students, the five and three-year high school graduation rates have risen to a notable extent. In the past ten years, among adults aged 15 years and older, there was a 48 percent increase in the number of First Nations and Métis graduates in Saskatchewan who had a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree. Enrollments of Indigenous students in the three Indigenous post-secondary institutions is high, over 80 percent in all three of them. Enrollments in the other post-secondary institutions are increasing year by year.

We are cognizant of the strong positive
correlation between increased educational attainment and higher earnings over a lifetime, better health outcomes, and lower criminal activity. Furthermore, the TRC calls to action highlight the importance of incorporating Indigenous issues into provincial curriculum. We created an action plan in response to the TRC, and it’s – are committed to incorporating indigenous ways of knowing into the provincial curriculum.

Just a few examples and, again, I commend the earlier submissions to the Commissioners on this point that outline these efforts in significant detail.

For one, 2007 -- since 2007, we've had mandatory treaty education in the provincial curriculum. In 2009, the Ministry of Education released "Inspiring Success", a policy framework guiding the development of First Nations and Métis education plans at all levels.

First Nations and Métis Elders from across the province have vetted the provincial high school Catholic studies curricula in which truth and reconciliation is directly addressed. The history of residential schools is taught in social studies in four separate grades. And "Following Their Voices" is a very inspiring initiative designed indigenous student outcomes.

In developing this initiative, Saskatchewan engaged with Elders and knowledge keepers as well as First
Nations and Métis students, their parents and caregivers, teachers and administrators to further improve the capacity of teachers to create a sense of belonging for indigenous students.

First Nations and Métis education is a Ministry-wide undertaking, and there is a First Nations and Métis advisor in the Deputy Minister's office of the Ministry of Education.

Again, this is only a brief overview, so we encourage the Commissioners and the parties with standing to review our submissions.

According to this Commission's interim report, indigenous women and girls continue to be marginalized in socioeconomic ways. We're committed to closing the poverty gap for indigenous people not only through measures related to improving education outcomes and labour market access, but also in relation to greater access to affordable housing and improved health care.

Cindy Blackstock said in her evidence, "We need to empower indigenous women through education and financial independence."

Saskatchewan understands that engaging indigenous people in the labour force is important. For the 2017-18 fiscal year, the Ministry of Economy committed $27.8 million for skills training and employment
initiatives targeted at First Nations and Métis people.

We have heard about connections between
safe, affordable housing and the vulnerability of women
and children. In our province, it's the Saskatchewan
Housing Corporation that provides adequate housing options
and increases affordability of housing for those in need.

One thousand, three hundred and seventy-nine (1,379) of those units are located in the north and
play a prominent role in northern housing markets.

We know that there is an under-
representation of indigenous people in Saskatchewan
Housing Corporation's own social housing in southern
communities, so it is through program reviews and ongoing
engagement with housing authorities and indigenous
agencies that the corporation is working to understand
this and to better serve off-reserve indigenous
households.

We further recognize that there's a gap in
the health status of indigenous people and the general
population, and a priority for the new provincial Health
Authority is to work in partnership to address the health
disparities of the indigenous population. The new Health
Authority structures includes indigenous representation at
the Board and executive levels.

A working group was formed for the months
leading up to the transition of the single Health Authority, and the mandate of that group was to engage indigenous communities, both rural and urban, to inform the new Authority on how best to address the health needs of indigenous people. And it was based on these discussions that a vision of health care should include holistic and traditional care and collaboration with western medicine, respectful care for all people free from racism, harm and discrimination, and a commitment to work together for the betterment of people and communities.

Child welfare.

Saskatchewan acknowledges a significant over-representation of indigenous families in the child welfare system. At the heart of those families are women and children who are often shaped by or exposed to generational poverty, violence, addictions and the legacy of residential schools.

Cultural identity and community connection are critical components to strengthening families.

Saskatchewan has built on initiatives already under way and incorporated the principles of reconciliation into existing programs. Social services reports on the number of children in care and updates their actions taken in response to the TRC.

We acknowledge the testimony of Ms. Turpel-
Lafond in which she stated:

"First of all, I think there should be a priority on where First Nations children, in particular, are placed. They should be placed with community, if not with -- or with family [rather], if not within family, within kinship community inside their own Nation."

We'd like to tell the Commission since the beginning of 2015, the percentage of children placed with extended family in Saskatchewan has increased by 15 percent. First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies have played a key role in support this effort.

Saskatchewan utilizes the child rights impact assessment when making changes to policy, ensuring that child and family practices, programs and services have a rights-based lens.

While the CRIA focuses on safety and well-being for children, there's also a balance in the decision-making process. Child protection workers must ensure child safety while preserving the family and promoting the rights of the child to have access to their community and culture.

In circumstances where, as a last resort,
children have to be removed from their parents due to safety, Saskatchewan does work hard to keep children with extended family and/or within the community.

We are entering into partnerships with community-based programs to build capacity for parenting within the family home. There are many of these which we've outlined again in detail in the submissions which I refer to the Commissioners.

One which I'll mention is called "Keeping Families Together". It's a pilot. We've heard the comments on pilots.

It provides what is referred to as integrated services, so social housing for Regina families who currently have children in care and who face a housing barrier to reunifying.

Saskatchewan heard Ms. Turpel-Lafond also when she said, and this is important:

"I lift them up with the accomplishment. Some of them are grandparents in their eighties and they're still raising children support with no support from any system. So that gives me a lot of hope and it gives me a lot of examples of positive change. That is remarkable
We heard Ms. Turpel-Lafond, and we wish to acknowledge significant compassionate caregiving that has been and continues to be provided by indigenous families, commonly by grandmothers. There is power in capacity-building with indigenous caregivers, and Saskatchewan welcomes opportunities to work with indigenous families to continue to leverage those strengths.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond also said that there's no children's law program in most provinces. We acknowledge the concern around the availability of children's advocacy programs and we do wish to point to Saskatchewan's recently-developed Council for Children program as a potential high point.

We also support the Aboriginal Family Court Worker program in three urban centres. Family Court Workers serve as a bridge between indigenous parents, families, legal counsel or children protection authorities.

To further strengthen families, Saskatchewan has also recently developed a program of free legal advice for survivors of sexual violence called the "Listen Project".

Saskatchewan has programs to assist children and youth who have witnessed or experienced
interpersonal violence or abuse with a goal of preventing them from becoming victims or perpetrators of violence and abuse in their future.

Justice system.

Saskatchewan recognizes, again, that there is significant over-representation of indigenous people in the justice and corrections systems in our province. It is also true that since the 1980s, a focus for our province has been to engage directly with First Nations and Métis groups to improve justice services for indigenous people in the province.

The Ministry has sought to involve indigenous organizations and communities to inform, lead and partner with the Ministry of Justice and Corrections to be more responsive to the needs of indigenous people and their communities.

This dual reality, the existing over-representation and Saskatchewan's history of collaboration, is a crucial point to understand. We have provided detailed information of this history again in our submissions.

Just some high points. In 1993, to respond to the reports of the Saskatchewan Indian Justice Review Committee and the Saskatchewan Métis Justice Review Committee, Saskatchewan Justice developed and implemented
an Aboriginal justice strategy to focus on crime prevention and reduction, building bridges, employment equity and race relations, and self-determination issues. This strategy is the foundation for the Ministry’s efforts to engage Indigenous groups, supporting the development of a community-based justice approach in response to concerns about cases such as Neil Stonechild.

The province worked collaboratively with First Nations and Métis groups, and police services leading to the establishment of the Commission on First Nations and Métis Peoples and Justice Reform. The Commission was mandated to identify efficient, effective and financially responsible reforms to the justice system.

This report did not simply sit on a shelf to gather dust. Saskatchewan, in fact, implemented many of the recommendations, including the establishment of the Public Complaints Commission, the redesign of the Coroner’s Program, the establishment of the Missing Persons Task Force, province-wide expansion of Victim Services, creation of victim programs to respond to the needs of children, seven therapeutic courts and enhancements to community justice and alternative measures program.

Other notable efforts to improve the experience with the justice system include, in 1995, the
Aboriginal Court Worker Program being re-established; the 
Cree Court was established to provide culturally-
appropriate court services; the seven therapeutic courts. 
Specifically in relation to the drug treatment courts. We
now have access to safe housing at Kate’s Place. This is 
the only housing for women offered by a drug treatment 
court in Canada, and it has been shown to result in 
significant reductions in reoffending.

In 2006, the Public Complaints 
Commission was established. It’s a five-person civilian 
oversight body which continuously includes at least one 
Métis person and one First Nations person, as per Section 
16 of the Police Act.

There are too many initiatives to go 
through, but again, I commend the earlier submissions to 
the Commissioners. In particular, I would like to 
highlight the Northern Transportation Safety Initiative, 
which recognizes the impact. There are no shelters north 
of La Ronge in Saskatchewan, and the need for access to 
transportation is high. This tries to provide a flexible 
option for women fleeing violence and abuse in their 
communities.

There’s one initiative that should 
absolutely not be overlooked, and that’s the Elder’s 
Advisory Committee. In 2004 and 2005, the Ministries of
Justice and Corrections and Public Safety established a traditional Elder’s Ministerial Advisory Committee to provide advice to the provincial government on a broad range of justice related issues. It was later recast and called the Ministry of Justice Elder’s Forum. Countless initiatives have benefitted from the advice of elders, including the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on First Nations, Métis People and Justice Reform, the establishment of the Public Complaints Committee, the redesign of the Coroner’s office, the establishment of the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Initiative, advice regarding the Saskatchewan Provincial Court jury selection, and involvement of elders in family justice matters.

I’ll speak briefly to prosecutions. It’s really difficult to address anything in any sort of exhaustive manner, but we would like to speak to some of the evidence that we’ve heard through this process in which families who have been calling for assurance of perpetrators of violence be brought to justice. Families have also said the system must be sensitive to the circumstances of women and girls in conflict with the law and demand a determined prosecution of violent crimes.

Prosecutors, as we know, are bound to observe their role in the justice system, which is not to
obtain a conviction, but to lay before a jury or a judge what it considers to be credible evidence of a crime. The courts have told us repeatedly that the role of a prosecutor excludes any notion of winning or losing. And, for this reason, public prosecutions policy insists on an initial and ongoing assessment of whether each case meets the prosecution’s standard.

Other policies encourage just resolution short of trial where appropriate. Prosecutions refers matters down alternative and restorative justice paths, and is a driving force behind the seven therapeutic courts in the province. It supports and participates in the use of video conferencing, the Cree Court, and works closely with Victim Services and Aboriginal court workers.

Where cases should go to trial, they are prosecuted vigorously and with care. Come sentencing, prosecutors are familiar with Gladue issues, and try to address them in the courts. At the same time, prosecutors draw attention to the need for sentences that consider the victim’s situation, and as appropriate, the communities. Sometimes that means an extensive jail term, and sometimes it means a community-based sentence. Canada’s justice system rests in no small part on incarceration only where necessary.

Prosecutions remains committed to
providing ongoing guidance to prosecutors regarding Gladue
and other matters to help prosecutors better understand
the unique circumstances and perspective of Indigenous
people. The intent is to find just conclusions, but also
to help complainants, witnesses and victims participate in
the search for truth and proper resolution. Further,
Prosecutions has established a committee to review the
calls to action issued by the TRC.

We have spoke to community justice,
restorative justice, the importance and the integration,
incorporation of culturally-sensitive programming in
Corrections institutions. Again, as I note my time is
running low, I, too, refer the Commissioners to our
submissions on those points. We have provided some detail
about the extent of collaboration with community-based
organizations in the context of restorative justice
programs, as well as the incorporation of Indigenous
perspectives in culturally-sensitive programming within
Corrections institutions.

Betty Ann Potruff, in her testimony at
the Government Services hearing, spoke on the important
work of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing
Persons, which is a similarly collaborative approach, a
strategy for addressing the challenges of preventing and
responding to cases of missing persons.
We heard her evidence about the sessions with families of missing persons as a means of conducting research, and the recommendations that were made, the vast majority of which had been implemented, some of which include, just very high level, legislative reform, creating resources to support families of missing persons, establishing missing persons liaisons, launching public awareness activities, initiating community based programming.

Particular attention in the evidence has been paid to the toolkits for families developed by the PPCMP, as was explained by former Chief Weighill in his evidence. The toolkits walk families through a missing persons checklist, a communications log, what they can expect from police, what the police are going to expect from the family, et cetera.

Saskatchewan met with the families in another time in 2009 and heard that they were pleased with the activity, but recommended that more was to be done. The PPCMP listened to the families and led work on improving interjurisdictional collaboration, improving public awareness, and providing seminars on ambiguous laws. While all of these initiatives are important, Saskatchewan remains committed to doing more.

It is also within the Terms of
Reference that the Commissioners make recommendations on ways to honour and commemorate the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. And, again, I commend to the Commissioners our evidence from Betty Ann Potruff on this point. I think it’s -- she makes some really astute observations about the different experiences based on her work and her experience on the PPCMP between families of the murdered and families of the missing.

These are, I think, good lessons to draw on in determining what commemorative approaches are appropriate in given circumstances. Saskatchewan asks that the Commissioners take this evidence into consideration in recommending ways of honouring and commemorating the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

Finally, I’d like to end, again, with the words of Betty Ann, and it has to do with her description of having planted an oak tree in Wascana Park in 2014. I think it’s possibly one of her more important points. And, she says, “We also planted an oak tree in Wascana Park in 2014 because this is a tree that will grow tall and strong and live a long time and protect a lot of area. That’s what we want for our families. We want our communities to grow tall and strong and protect each other. That’s what we want for
our families. We want our communities to grow tall and
strong and protect each other. ” Thank you,
Commissioners.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: If we could reset the
clock to 10 minutes?

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I have a
quick question. First, I’d like to thank you for your
oral submissions and I’m not sure if you were here
yesterday, but the Government of Yukon, following their
submissions, I asked a very similar question. As a
government that will be receiving our report in accordance
with the OIC, it’s important to us, and I think that I’d
like to give you the same opportunity I gave them, or the
Yukon government, an opportunity to talk about steps that
your client may be willing to take or mechanisms that you
may have thought of with respect to implementation and the
oversight of implementation of recommendations following
the release of the report, recognizing, as you have
reiterated, this concern about reports collecting dust.
So, I’m wondering if you have ideas on how to give it
teeth?

MS. BARBARA MYSKO: Thank you for your
question, and I did hear the question yesterday, and it
gave me some to think about it, so I appreciate the head’s
up.
I think at the risk of binding my client, and of course, that’s always a risk in these types of situations as a lone representative standing here before you, what I could tell you is this, and it’s just to refer back to my submissions about the official’s group that we have that represents many, many ministries all across government in Saskatchewan, many of whom are probably back home watching this at this current time and who have been monitoring the proceedings since Day One. I expect that we will probably continue our efforts on that group. And, certainly, we will take your question back and talk about ways that we can carefully look at the recommendations.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Okay, merci beaucoup. Est-ce qu’ils vous ont donné la…

MS. BARBARA MYSKO: Oui.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Okay, merci beaucoup. J’ai mon brain grill!

MS. BARBARA MYSKO: I’ll try to understand you in French.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Okay, super Sean! Tout d’abord, à cause du temps, I want to say thank you very much. I don’t know if you remember in my opening remarks, I said that I was reading from some submission, and that some of the initiatives or programs or services don’t
exist in Quebec. So, it was about your submission.

**MS. BARBARA MYSKO:** Thank you.

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** There’s a lot of information, more than I thought. I have to be frank. So, merci beaucoup. And, also, very interesting approach where the elders are involved. They will advise les personnes avec... comment on dit ça... haut places dans le gouvernement, so --and I think we met also with them when we started this journey.

**MS. BARBARA MYSKO:** Yes.

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Very early. So, we saw that they are very strong and very vocal and very passionate and very grassroots. So, it was good to see that.

And, we know also that there’s strong Indigenous women coming from Saskatchewan, the regions. One of them is a Senator, Madame Dyck, who presented to us informally her bill our proposition. And so, you have so many people, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond also. So, there’s a beautiful list that makes me feel comfortable that you will -- mais oui, my big chief here. Sorry. I adopted her in my region, so...

So, we know that after this Inquiry, these women will make sure that you and your government do implement some or many of the recommendations.
MS. BARBARA MYSKO: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: Merci. I’ll switch in French. Je veux juste vous dire, à la lumière de votre document, de plusieurs documents, pardon, vous démontrez que vous travaillez avec les Premières Nations, avec les Métis. Mais en même temps, on voit que des groupes vont dénoncer, comme dans chaque province et territoire, des politiques, des programmes et ainsi de suite.

Ce que j’ai apprécié dans votre présentation, souvent, vous avez dit : « Nous reconnaissions que nous ne faisons pas assez. » Est-ce que reconnaître, pour les peuples autochtones de la Saskatchewan, c’est assez pour eux autres ou il faut faire autre chose que juste reconnaître?

You can answer in English.

MS. BARBARA MYSKO: Sure. Thank you.

Certainly, recognizing is what I can do in this forum. And so, what I can do in this forum is limited, and I can -- that’s the least that I can do. But, I think some of the efforts and programs and services that we’ve put in place show that it goes beyond recognition, that it’s more than recognition. We try to listen to our elders on the advisory forum, and take their concerns seriously, and are trying to implement programs across government.
So, certainly, it goes beyond affirmation of the challenges. Yes. I hope I understood the question correctly.

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Yes, you did. You did. For us Indigenous women, it’s very important. Yes, there is a recognition, but the action also that goes with that recognition to see a real change. So, we will follow this very proche, là, en espérant qu’on puisse voir des recommandations aussi dans notre rapport final qui vont être appliquées de votre côté comme gouvernement.

Merci beaucoup beaucoup!

**MS. BARBARA MYSKO:** Right.

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Et pour une femme nerveuse, ça n’a pas paru! Bravo!

**MS. BARBARA MYSKO:** Merci.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank you. I just have a couple of questions about Kate’s Place from your materials. I’m assuming that it’s not required that women who are in the drug treatment court have to stay at Kate’s Place? It’s optional?

**MS. BARBARA MYSKO:** I hate to make myself out to be an expert on Kate’s Place, but what I would like to propose is that I take the questions and try to answer them at a later date, if possible? And -- I don’t -- I
would be guessing to say whether it’s optional or mandatory.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Okay.

Optional or mandatory; number of beds; graduation rates; and numbers of Indigenous women who have gone through Kate’s Place and the Regina Drug Treatment Court.

MS. BARBARA MYSKO: Thank you.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: And, anything else you think I might need to pass on to my colleagues. Thank you.

MS. BARBARA MYSKO: Thank you.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Those are my questions. So, thank you very much. This has been a wonderful walk through your written submissions. Thank you. You have been very thorough and we appreciate your passion. Thank you.

MS. BARBARA MYSKO: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Merci beaucoup.

MR. THOMAS BARNETT: Thank you, counsel. Next, we have West Coast LEAF. They are represented by counsel Kasari Govender.

---SUBMISSIONS BY KASARI GOVENDER

MS. KASARI GOVENDER: Good afternoon, Chief Commissioner, Commissioners, elders, community members,
family members and colleagues. I want to recognize that we are here today on the traditional homelands of the people of the Treaty 7 region and of the Métis Nation of Alberta.

I stand here on this land with humility and gratitude to make these submissions on behalf of Westcoast LEAF.

Westcoast LEAF's mandate -- I'll pause for a second. There we go.

Westcoast LEAF's mandate is to use the law to create an equal and just society for all women and people who experience gender-based discrimination in B.C. In collaboration with community, we aim to transform society by achieving access to health care, access to justice, economic security, freedom from gender-based violence, justice for those who are criminalized and the right to parent.

We use litigation, law reform and public education as tools to make change.

As an organization, we are committed to an intersectional vision of gender equality and attentive to the continuing colonization and oppression of indigenous peoples. Our office is located on the unceded and traditional homelands of the Coast Salish people presently known as Vancouver.
We are grateful for this opportunity to the long-awaited and vital work of the National Inquiry. This submission is offered respectfully in acknowledgement of the women and girls who have been disappeared and murdered, and to the families and communities who have lost them.

There is no question that the work of the Inquiry, as you've heard repeatedly, must be rooted in the experiences and collective wisdom of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls and two-spirit persons from diverse communities across these lands. The recommendations cannot be imposed from outside or from above.

Indigenous women are not objects or bundles of risks. They are leaders, experts and agents of change.

The National Inquiry, you heard ample evidence of indigenous women's strength, creativity, resilience and resistance. Their knowledge and experience is the key source of power in addressing all forms of violence experienced by indigenous women wherever it takes place, so the experts have spoken.

The challenge before you now is daunting. You must bring together all the experiences, information and analysis that you've heard and offer a meaningful and accountable path forward.

Westcoast LEAF use our role in this Inquiry
as a conduit for translating the experiences and expertise
shared by indigenous women and communities both in the
Inquiry and more generally into changes to law, policy and
institutional or state practice. Our submissions will
focus on this aspect of the Inquiry's work.

I want to spend my time here today speaking
first about the lens through which we believe that the
crisis of violence against indigenous women must be
viewed, then thinking through a life cycle approach to
both the problem and some of the solutions with a focus on
the child protection system, and then finally addressing
recommendations.

Interpersonal and systemic violence against
indigenous women is not a women's issue, it is not an
indigenous issue; it is both. It implicates all of us,
settlers and indigenous people alike.

The evidence before the Inquiry establishes
without a doubt that indigenous women, girls and two-
spirit persons' lives are continuously and dynamically
shaped by their experience of the world as women, girls or
two-spirited and as indigenous peoples coming from
distinct communities. They're indelibly gendered and
racialized.

The intersection of gender and race must
specifically ground the recommendations of the Inquiry. A
gendered analysis must incorporate how various systems of oppression are recursive and mutually constitutive or replicative.

As Dr. Cindy Blackstock said in her testimony:

"This issue of gender discrimination is not just distinct to indigenous women and girls, but certainly it is amplified in many cases for indigenous women and girls because it has a colonial overlay on top of it and it is also affected by these multi-generational inequalities that have often been more pronounced in their disadvantage for indigenous women and girls."

For the National Inquiry to look into and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against indigenous women and girls as required by its mandate, it cannot shy away from calling out the manifold ways in which the historical and continuing colonization of indigenous peoples perpetuates gender violence.

The experience of indigenous women, girls and two-spirit persons are, as heard in the evidence, indivisible from their colonization and the colonization
of their communities.

For example, you heard from Jacqueline Hansen and Connie Greyeyes about Amnesty International's "No More Stolen Sisters" report concerning the experiences of indigenous women around resource development. They spoke about how, while resource development can be seen as a boon to indigenous communities by some, the burden is felt by and on indigenous women's bodies.

You also heard from Tracy Denniston about how the housing shortage in her community has a particular impact on Inuit women, who are subjected to violence by their intimate partners and living in poverty because they have nowhere else to go but their shared home in the one social housing facility in the community.

You heard from Dr. Pertice Moffitt, who testified that researchers have consistently concluded that indigenous women are at a greater risk of intimate partner violence than non-indigenous women and, of course, women overall are at a much greater risk of serious domestic violence than men.

Your recommendations must account for the intersectional nature of the problem or they risk failing to address the crisis. For example, if you recommend training of police or judiciary or other system actors as you've been called on to do, training on the history of
residential schools will be insufficient without a focus on how residential schools impacted mothers, grandmothers and girls in unique and perhaps disproportionate ways.

If you address disproportionate criminalization and imprisonment of indigenous people, you must specifically address the fact that indigenous women are the fastest-growing group of people in prisons across the country.

If you recommend improved data collection by the RCMP or by Statistics Canada, again, as you've been urged to do, the data must be disaggregated on intersectional basis, not just by sex and race, but also by gender identity, indigenous nationhood and mixed-race identity.

One of the key ways to integrate the intersectional approach is through looking at the colonial project of "taking the Indian out of the child" through the eyes of women and girls. As the evidence has shown, taking children away from their families and their communities has been a key part of this project which is, of course, central to the colonial project as a whole.

The Inquiry has heard, for example, by Dr. Amy Bombay, that forcing children into residential schools led into the sixties scoop and the removal of children by child protection authorities which we know has then led to
the over-incarceration of indigenous people, including youth.

This narrative of colonialism is key to understanding the current crisis of violence against indigenous women and girls.

Dr. Bombay cited Maria Yellowhorse Braveheart for this point:

"Historical trauma is cumulative, emotional and psychological wounding over the life span and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma."

Today, there are three times more indigenous children forcibly removed from their parents and placed into foster care than at the height of the residential school era. Indigenous children make up 60 percent of the children in care in B.C., yet only about eight percent of the general population of children and youth.

Indigenous families are being investigated for neglect at six times the rate of non-indigenous women -- or non-indigenous families.

The B.C. representative for Children and Youth's Office received 200 critical and injury death reports for kids in care every month.
Indigenous families and, disproportionately, indigenous mothers are regarded as unsafe. The child welfare system runs on the myth that indigenous children and youth are vulnerable with their families and will be protected in state care, be that residential school or foster home, and yet the evidence indicates otherwise, but the pipeline of taking children from their homes and communities and placing them in culturally-inappropriate and ill-equipped temporary homes away from family and community is putting women and girls at much heightened jeopardy.

Breaking family and community ties creates risk rather than inoculating against it. Evidence of this that you have heard includes evidence from Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, who highlighted the vulnerability of girls in state care and how state intervention cannot only fail to -- not only fails to address the problem, but, in fact, adds layers of further risk and vulnerability on indigenous girls.

She talked about how a disproportionate number of children and youth who are subjected to sexualized violence in government care are Aboriginal girls. In her report, "Too Many Victims", that she cited in her evidence, she said:

"Of the 121 youth who reported being
the victim of sexualized violence while in government care, a total of 74, or 61 percent, were Aboriginal girls despite the fact that Aboriginal girls comprised, on average, only 25 percent of the total children in care in B.C. during the same time period covered by this review."

In fact, sexualized violence is the most common type of critical injury involving children and youth in care, she testified, equalling 21 percent of all critical injury reports.

Dr. Turpel-Lafond talked about Paige's story in her evidence, and I want to talk a little bit about that -- Paige's experiences and Paige's life and how that illustrates the point of the risk of the child protection system. In our view, Paige’s Story illustrates the depth of the system failure at work here.

Paige lived in the Downtown Eastside, came in and out of the child welfare system, struggled with drug addiction, was forced to be a drug mule to pay off drug debts, and lived in shelters where she traded sex with older men for alcohol. She died of a drug overdose at age 19, shortly after aging out of care. Her mother died shortly after, also of a drug overdose.
The report found that she was treated with professional indifference at every turn, including by health, education and justice systems. The report found “social workers and MCFD as a whole had, by far, the most and best opportunities to help Paige, as well as a lead responsibility in law and policy.”

The Ministry mishandled her file from the very beginning, failing to adequately assess the risk to her as an infant, and then continuing to return her to her mother’s care rather than pursue more viable options. One of the best options, an aunt and uncle who were actively interested in caring for her, and with whom she had developed a bond, were inexplicably never seriously considered as a placement option, even though they could have offered Paige connection to family, culture and stability, which are her rights under the child welfare legislation in B.C.

The report concludes that Paige was left for three years in conditions that no reasonable person would find acceptable for their own child. Tolerance of this situation represents an abject failure of leadership and policies by governments at all levels.

The report goes on to find that the findings in the report were different, or rather, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, in her evidence, testified that, “The
findings in this report were different than other findings and reports I made, because not only did I find that this was preventable, but actually, the finding in this report was that it was predictable."

And, that is a very significant finding, I think, for this -- for a statutory officer to make, which isn’t that we can learn to prevent. Actually, the system appeared to accelerate her circumstances to the point where she died, and that’s the point I want to emphasize here: The system itself contributed to her death.

The overall finding is that despite the absolute predictability of this tragedy, the child protection system, health care system, social service agencies, education system and police consistently failed in their responsibility to this child, and passively recorded her life’s downward spiral.

I’m going to talk for a moment about the evidence of Cora Morgan, the First Nations Children’s Advocate in Manitoba, who characterized child apprehension as violence against mothers. She testified on how contact with the child welfare system can lead to mothers’ murders and suicides. She said, “One of the things that I learned earlier on, we had this elder, and the elder said, ‘You know, the most violent act you can commit to a woman is to
steal her child.’” And, it is. When you take away
people’s children, it is the most violent act, and it
takes your hope away. It takes your purpose away.

Ms. Morgan talked about how difficult
it is for mothers when apprehension of their children
becomes final. Again, she talked about hopelessness, and
she said that these women are losing their lives because
the system is stealing their children.

She also spoke about the connection to
domestic violence. She called on the system to stop
penalizing victims of domestic violence by apprehending
their children. “Stop. And, that one is important to
me,” she says, “because any woman here in Manitoba or any
under particular urban centres, if you report a domestic
violence, the child welfare system automatically
responds.”

And so, we know there’s an enormous
amount of mothers who aren’t reporting violence because
they know that their children will be taken, and I think
that they shouldn’t be further penalized from being a
victim of violence to losing their children.

Indeed, generations of interference by
the state and Indigenous families often mean that they do
not trust authorities in general, and therefore, do not
report violence in part because they fear child
protection, and in part because they may fear the impact
of policing in their communities.

In their closing submissions, the
Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre says the connection
between the child welfare system and violence against
Indigenous women is stark. Indigenous girls in the B.C.
child welfare system are four times more likely to be
victims of sexual violence than non-Indigenous girls.
Over 60 percent of children and youth who report sexual
violence in government care are Indigenous girls.

And, we know that childhood sexual or
physical abuse is statistically linked with a much higher
rate of sexual assault in adulthood. So, the higher
incidents of sexual violence in government care creates
this life cycle of violence in the lives of Indigenous
women and girls, often rooted in the operation of the
child protection system early on.

The mainstream paradigm of child
protection does not have to operate the way it does. Of
course, children’s safety is and should be paramount for
all of us. But, the very system that is designed to keep
children safe shouldn’t be putting them at greater risk
now and in the future.

There are alternatives to the current
approach, including flipping the support apprehension
paradigm on its head. The focus must shift to prevention, providing Indigenous-led and culturally-relevant services for pregnant women, families, parents, grandparents and other kinship carers to improve economic security, address addiction and mental health issues, and dismantle the legacy of inter-generational trauma.

You’ve already heard some really interesting examples from other jurisdictions so far in the last couple of days about examples of how this is being implemented, and I want to draw your attention to a couple of others. The Chief Ed John Report that was cited by Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond contains some of these examples.

I want to talk for a moment -- please forgive me for my pronunciation on this, but the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation Intervention and Removal of Parent Program is a really interesting example of how innovation is shifting the model of child protection, how this is possible for us to do.

The approach is to remove children from the home to help not only the child, but also the parent, to seek counselling, therapy and understanding of their responsibilities. It also allows community to assist in -- to assist the family in rediscovering methods that help them thrive and grow by reconnecting them to
their Indigenous traditions and culture.

Research has shown that it is better for children to remain in the home. Many children have feelings of guilt when they are the ones removed from the situation. The Cree elders say it is the children that create the home. The house belongs to them and they should never be forced to leave. In Cree traditional teachings, raising children is a community responsibility. And so, this model really goes back to those traditional values.

Another model I want to speak about in Chief Ed John’s report is the safe babies court team, which is a U.S. model. This is an inter-disciplinary team, including a judge, community members and early childhood educators who work together to provide services to families and to counter the structural issues in the child welfare system that prevent families from staying together and healthy.

The model prioritizes methods of encouraging family unification and offers individualized supports to both parents and families. The program advocates for frequent opportunities for visitation, because they believe that those opportunities to bond will further increase the chances that family will be reunified.
The local teams are working to provide parents with the necessary tools to continue their personal healing journeys, recognizing the need to interrupt cycles of inter-generational trauma. Services to parents include support for victims of domestic violence, programs for individuals struggling with substance abuse, and assistance to those facing enduring unemployment. The teams are also undertaking targeted, unique projects, depending on the needs and ideas of the communities that they are working directly with.

Turning now to our recommendations, we are now just over three years out from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Actions being publicized, and we know that there have been little implementation of many of the initiatives.

Principle 9 of the TRC’s Principles of Reconciliation says, “Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.”

In this spirit, we urge you to be realistic about how your recommendations will be used. We know they aren’t binding on anyone, and depend on the creation and mobilization of political will and joint leadership, as the TRC report said.
As you’ve heard repeatedly over the last couple of days, any past inquiry or commission recommendations -- many past inquiry or commission recommendations have gathered dust on the shelf. Let this knowledge inform how your recommendations are framed. Now that we are nearly through the process of the Inquiry itself, the persuasiveness of your recommendations will be the most important measure of your Inquiry’s success.

Your report and recommendations will be used to set the stage and frame for how action on violence against Indigenous women and girls will move forward. For this reason, and you’ve heard this before, you need to be big, bold and nuanced, and be grounded in Indigenous experience and perspective. The scope is only going to be narrowed going forward, so let’s start big at this stage.

You must be intersectional in your approach. This is not just about racism or misogyny or economic inequality. It is about how all these factors interact to put Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people in the most vulnerable place in our society. The temptation of your audience will be to understand this as a race-problem only, which will inherently limit the solutions going forward.

Your report and recommendations will
also be used by advocates to shame and inspire governments to action and investment. For this reason, we urge you to be strategic and targeted. Give us recommendations that speak to the public and will help raise public awareness about these issues and the solution, which will ultimately help us raise political will.

Your report and recommendations will also be used as a yardstick to measure progress. For this reason, we urge you to be specific and action-oriented in your recommendations. If you give us only generalities or focus more on the problem than the answers, we will not be able to use this report to hold governments to account.

So, turning, then, to specific recommendations, we would like to see you highlight accountability mechanisms that could be established on an immediate and urgent basis. I’m sure you’ve looked extensively at the provincial inquiry report that came out of B.C., and you may have noted that there were two immediate recommendations, and that has really helped as an organization that’s done advocacy on these issues, it’s really helped to be able to show some of the priorities that were assigned to different recommendations. So, I urge you to take a similar approach.

We want to echo the Inuit Women’s Organization’s recommendation that within 12 months of the
release of this report, Canada and each provincial and
territorial government must table population-specific
action plans, which set out for each recommendation report
how it intends to address the gap, the money and resources
that the government will devote, and a timetable to
complete the work.

These action plans must be rooted in
the local cultures and communities and developed with
local Indigenous nations, and they must be publicized.
The action plan should impose annual departmental
reporting by government to the public or should
demonstrate a commitment by governments to do that kind of
reporting.

Our second recommendation is also
about accountability. We’re calling for the appointment
of a watchdog for the implementation of the
recommendations. I notice that there’s been some interest
from the Commissioners about how do we hold governments to
account? What will those processes look like?

In our view, this watchdog will be
like -- could be like a children’s representative, an
ombudsman, but on a national level for state responses
to violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit
people. This office should be set up as an independent
officer of both Parliament and the provincial and
territorial legislatures, holding all governments to account.

Many governments have independent legislative officers who report directly to the legislature, although none, as far as I’m aware, have ever been set up in this intergovernmental manner. And, certainly, this will pose some political problems. It’s not going to be a simple ask. But, we believe it’s possible and necessary, and perhaps part of what all these governments have committed to by signing their Orders-in-Council and committing to this process.

The role of the watchdog will be to hold government to account while having a direct role in government, which is what sets it apart from civil society organizations who already act as watchdogs of various sorts, but don’t have the official status or direct channels of communications and influence that this independent officer would have.

Government simply reporting on its own progress, while an important mechanism for accountability, as I’ve already mentioned, is not sufficient and risks turning all of the work of the Inquiry into a political football. We’ve certainly seen that in B.C. over the years.

Independence from processes built into
the legislative framework and mandate of independent
officers, including pegging salary to judicial salaries,
��统性报告调查和建议被直接呈递给立法机关，充足资源和
the ability to control their own staffing are also key
elements of independence.
The office must be culturally
appropriate, and accessible, and welcoming to Indigenous
people and perspectives, and the mandate of the watchdog
should be threefold.
First, to ensure accountability and
transparency in the government’s implementation of the
Inquiry recommendations.
Second, to continue the work of the
Inquiry by engaging in ongoing systemic inquiries and
investigations as matters arise.
And, third, to receive complaints
about specific instances of inadequate state responses to
violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit
people, and investigate and report on these complaints as
appropriate.
Our third and final recommendation is
focused on child protection. There must be a nation-wide
paradigm shift in child protection services. Apprehension
must be the last option after all methods of providing
support for the family -- support for the family are provided. This would have the following benefits.

First, supporting mothers to parent and maintaining deep bonds with their children, making mothers less vulnerable to mental illness, suicide and violence.

Two, ensuring that children are able to maintain essential ties with their families, cultures and communities.

Three, reducing the vulnerability of children by keeping them out of the foster system, which we know has high instances of sexual and other violence.

And, four, rebuilding communities and allowing cultural and traditional practises to replenish after the destruction of colonialism.

It is important to remember here that destroying community and family connections wasn’t just an unfortunate by-product of colonialism, but a key plank of the colonial philosophy; again, taking the Indian out of the child. Decolonization or reconciliation necessitates righting this wrong. So, keeping families and communities together has both the practical benefits of reducing the risk of violence for Indigenous women and girls, but also has enormative benefits of restitution with Indigenous peoples.
For all the reasons I’ve just discussed, we would like to see a strong recommendation for a national strategy on child apprehension. Legislation and attendant funding must support the jurisdictional transfer and exercise of governmental powers over child welfare to Indigenous communities as highlighted in Chief Ed John’s report.

The strategy must be based on the following principles, starting first in international law, and you’ve heard a bit already and some excellent submissions yesterday about international law. I won’t repeat those here. Instead, I will focus on a couple of principles -- a few principles, some on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

So, in that Convention, Article 7 says the child shall have, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.

Article 30 says in those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of Indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is Indigenous shall not be denied the right in community with other members of his or her group to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess or practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.
And, of course, Canada is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UNDRIP, as well, also has some relevant provisions. The preamble of UNDRIP says that the declaration was made recognizing, in particular, the rights of Indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent, again, with the Rights of the Child.

Article 7 says Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples, and shall not be subject to any act of genocide, or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group. So, again, this recognition of the removal of children is an act of violence in and of itself.

In this national strategy, we would like to see an expanded and -- both expanded and more specific definition of the best interest of the child, including a number of very specific aspects that we think are necessary for the best interests of children to be respected. So, that’s the right of children to be kept in the home wherever possible, so that a parent or caregiver should be removed before a child is.

The right of children to be kept with
their families wherever possible, families should be defined broadly to include a child’s primary attachment figures, whoever those may be. The right to be raised according to one’s traditional and cultural values and practises, this includes the right to learn the language of one’s community and be raised within that community as spoken about in UNDRIP.

And, the right to be free from violence and witnessing violence. Witnessing violence must be understood as a form of violence itself. Families must be supported and violence addressed wherever there is family violence, even if that violence is directed at a mother rather than a child.

We would like to see this national strategy on child apprehension recognize that the rights and well-being children are inexplicably bound up with the rights and well-being of their mothers. Mothers must be supported to leave abusive relationships, as we heard from some of the evidence, including the provision of Legal Aid, housing and social assistance. Mothers should not have to choose between their children’s safety inside an abusive home and their economic security if they leave that abuse.

And, finally, the national strategy should commit to ending removals of babies from their
mothers at the hospital. Make all hospitals safe birthing  
zones for mothers.

And, finally, we’d like to see this  
national strategy commit to making innovative and tailor-  
made approaches the norm in child protection. There is no  
one model that will work for every family or every  
community. I’ve reviewed in these submissions just some  
of the innovative and culturally-specific models for child  
protection that are emerging in many jurisdictions across  
Turtle Island. The dominant paradigm for child protection  
of removing children from their families, homes and  
communities simply isn't working. The national strategy  
must turn this paradigm on its head and reimagine how to  
keep children safe within their extended families and  
within their communities.

And those are my submissions today. Thank  
you.

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: My whole  
brain is gone. I'll try.

It's just a comment. You want us to be  
bald -- bold, okay, because I was going to say I have  
hair, okay. See, lost in translation.

But yes, we want to -- this is what we want  
to do, for sure. How? It's something that we have  
collectively and we will work with many people in this
organization which is called the National Inquiry, that's for sure. But you gave us a lot of example where it's very interesting or very powerful or very obvious this is where we need to go.

So I want to say merci beaucoup, and we'll try our best. But let's remember -- let's remember, and help me on this, and for those who will present this week in Ottawa, we can have the best recommendation or the one like you mention -- I wrote it in French. What about the political willingness who -- I'm talking about the government who will receive those recommendation, the society, the groups, the private sector and so on and so on, that, too, as a Commissioner, it makes me nervous how they will respond to that.

I don't know if you had any thought on that that you could share to us.

**MS. KASARI GOVENDER:** Yes, if I could. I know it's posed as a comment more than question, but that's what I was trying to get at, was be bold and innovative, but think big. Not bald.

But also be specific and targeted because that's where I think politicians can see themselves acting, and also as advocates we can continue to push and use those as real tools.

You know, I know from experience of trying
to mobilize other recommendations in other contexts, when we meet with government there's a couple of things that come up.

One is just sort of this is a bunch of words and they're nodding and you're not really sure what's happening on the inside. And the other is, there's not a lot of public will. So we understand this as politicians, maybe, but we don't see this as a voting issue.

So that's why we -- I also said speak to the public as well. Raise the awareness of what's really happening in there so that the public in general sees this as important issues that matter to them as Canadians, as people who live across these lands. And those are some of the aspects that will help generate the political will that we know is necessary to actually implementing these.

You know, often I think when you're big and bold, you give us the broad strokes, so I'm saying do that, but also give us the specifics.

**COMMISSIONER MICHELINE AUDETTE:** Merci beaucoup, and anxious to read your written submission in English and the French version also, and most of it, that part where you're proposing a path to follow on recommendation.

Merci. Merci beaucoup.
CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: I, too, want to thank you, and I'm very glad we'll have a transcript because I just can't type that fast. But thank you, to you and to your organization for some very passionate and helpful submissions. And we have heard you. We intend to be bold, not bald. Thank you.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Chief Commissioner and Commissioners, that concludes the closing submissions by parties for today. However, before we do adjourn, I note that we will ask that our MC come up because I know that we'll be having closing or a song again today.

And also, I wanted to ask while on the record and while there's parties with standing in the room, tomorrow opening remarks start at 9:00, but one of the things we recognized after this morning is that we may be done our opening remarks quicker, so what I'm going to ask is -- and I will touch base with the first party with standing, too.

There may be a possibility that we'll start immediately following the opening comments, so as opposed to our schedule clearly states it will start at 9:30, but I'm going to request that if the closing -- sorry, if the opening prayer and stuff is done in a short amount of time that we just proceed forward.
And I just want to do that more as a housekeeping and a request, but if it's okay with you, too.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:

Certainly. If everyone's ready to go before 9:30, that's fine. We're not going to force people, but if they're ready, that's fine ---

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Perfect.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: ---

because you know how excited I get about being ahead of schedule.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Absolutely. And on that basis, I do know and I see our MC coming up, that we do have a prayer today, but just for the purposes of the hearing record if we could adjourn until tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Yes, we're adjourned until 9:00 a.m. Thank you.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: So good afternoon. We're just waiting for our hand drummers to come in.

Again, for the parties with standing that are here and the new ones that have joined us, we'll be doing an honour song for you all again. We have Elder Gerald here, who will do the closing prayer for us for the
day today, so we're just waiting, so just give us a couple minutes.

(SHORT PAUSE/COURTE PAUSE)

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Could I ask the parties with standing to come up, please?

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Do we have everyone up here? So today, we’re going to have the gentlemen come sing -- sing for the -- with the -- for the Parties with Standing that have contributed a lot to our process.

(SINGING)

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Migwetch. I’d ask to ask Elder Gerald Meginnes to come up, please? You’re okay?

MR. GERALD MEGINNIS: Thank you. When there’s a ceremony like this, especially when you do a prayer, you always have to have a song. Listening to these two boys make me feel young again because I was sitting over there, and my foot went to sleep and just keeping in tune made me really ambitious, you know. I’m glad that you know all these songs because without these songs, we can’t do too much, really. Like I say, every tribe has their own songs, and they’re very sacred. And I -- I sure appreciate these two boys doing this.

But it’s been a -- a long day, the women
that represent, their -- their speeches went through very smooth, and I could understand the problem that we still all have, not just one, as a nation. And we try and pray. Anyway, I do try and pray too. I ask God to help us solve these problems because it’s mostly -- it targets the young women. Why the young women? That’s what I can’t understand. Why is it -- it just targets our young daughters and mothers. We’re very likely that something like this doesn’t -- but I do have -- we do have problems. And we’re -- on my reserve, too. But I share the problem that you women do have, and I hope the Commission will come to terms and come to a solution, too. Solve these problems for these people. So with that, I’ll say a short prayer for everybody.

(CLOSING PRAYER)

MR. GERALD MEGINNIS: Thank you.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: And now, we’ll have the extinguishing of our Qulliq with our Grandmother, Myna.

MS. MYNA MANNIAPIK: It has been -- can you hear me?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

MS. MYNA MANNIAPIK: It has been -- oh. It has been an incredible two days to listen to the incredible strong testimonies by very strong woman --
Indigenous woman from coast to coast. I am really
grateful to be here at -- to sit at this hot seat of the
house. Well, I’m looking forward to tomorrow. Have a
good night. Yeah.

**MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO:** So with
that, I wish you all a good night, and we re-convene
tomorrow at 9 a.m. Have a good one.

--- Upon adjourning at 3:12 p.m./L’audience est ajournée à
15h12

**LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE**

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

Félix Larose-Chevalier

Nov 27, 2018