National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part IV - Closing Oral Submissions
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Oral Submissions - Volume 9

Nunatsiavut Government

Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

Association of Native Child and Family Service Agencies of Ontario

Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik

New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council

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Upon commencing at 8:32 a.m./L’audience débute à 8h32

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO:  Hope everyone had a well-rested night. I certainly did.

Today is our last day and it's been a long -- not a long -- it's been a quick two years of, you know, working with the Commissioners and staff, Parties with Standing and everything to get this done.

But good morning.


MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO:  So now I'd like to call upon our elders, Vince and Elaine and Reta.

M. MATHIEU MELLON:  Nous aimerions inviter nos aînés Vince et Elaine.

---OPENING REMARKS BY/REMARQUES PRÉLIMINAIRES PAR ELDERS

VINCENT, ELAINE, AND RETA:

ELDER ELAINE KICKNOSWAY:  So boozhoo.

We give thanks for the rising of today,
give thanks for the water and the sun and the earth and
the movement, the continue of the movement and the voices
and the place of what we call the missing and murdered,
the places of the song, the words, the advocacy, and the
effects. But also through that is the resilience and the
strength of the learners and the teachers, the learners to
listen and also in the teaching to listen, in the creation
of the strength that comes through our resiliency, our
resiliency of love, our resiliency to be here and continue
to support and survive through our songs and our dance and
throughout the strength of each other, even just to lend a
hand, help each other, help each other out and in that
place of coming together in a good way, always in a good
way. So I say miigwetch.

ELDER RETA GORDON: (Speaking in Indigenous
language). Hello, everyone, and welcome. Bonjour à tous
et bienvenue.

I want to thank the people that invited me
here. I've never had a week like it. My heart is so
full. Sometimes I wanted to cry for the people that were
hurt and for their loved ones and all what the
Commissioners have done.

Today I'm not going to say a prayer, as
such. I'm going to read about what a mother is. For
those of you who are lucky enough to still be blessed with
your mother, this is a beautiful story. And for those of
you whose mother has passed away, I hope this story
reminds you of your mother.

"The young mother set her foot upon
the path of life.
'Is this the long way?' she asked.
"And the Creator said, 'Yes, and the
way is hard. You will be old before
you reach the end of it. But the end
will be better than the beginning.'
"The young mother was happy and she
would not believe that anything could
be better that these years. So she
played with her children, she fed
them, bathed them, taught them how to
tie their shoes, how to ride in a
school bus, and reminded them to feed
the dog, do their homework, brush
their teeth, to always be polite, and
to say their prayers.
"The sun shone on them and the young
mother said, 'Nothing will ever be
lovelier than this.'
"Then the nights came, the storms, the
pain, and the children shook with fear
and the mother drew them close,
covered them with her arms, and the
children said, 'Mother, we are not
afraid, for you are near and no harm
can come to us.'
"The morning came and there was a
steep hill ahead. And the children
grew weary and the mother was tired
but she said to her children, 'Keep
climbing and if you fall, I will pick
you up.'
"So they climbed. And as they
climbed, they learned to weather the
storms, and with this, she gave them
strength to face the world.
"Year after year she showed them
compassion, understanding, hope, but
most of all, unconditional love. When
they reached the top they said,
'Mother, we would not have done it
without you.'
"And the days and weeks and the months
and the years passed and the mother
grew old and became little and bent,
but her children were tall and strong
and walked with pride.

"And the mother, when she lay down
looked up at the stars and said, 'This
is a better day than the last, for my
children have learned so much and are
now passing on their knowledge to
their children.'

"And when the way became rough for
her, they lifted her and gave her
their strength, just as she had given
them hers.

"One day, they came to a hill and
beyond the hill they could see a
shining road and a golden gate flew
open. And the mother said, 'I have
reached the end of my journey and now
I know the end better than the
beginning, for my children can walk
with their heads held high. They can
walk with dignity and pride. That's
all I had to give them, but I'm
happy.'"

Thank you for listening.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)
**MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO:** Miigwetch.

**ELDER VINCENT KICKNOSWAY:** Boozhoo.

Kwekwe. Ahneen. (Speaking in Indigenous language).

These are some of the greeting salutations within this region here. I extend that to the many directions that are in attendance. I don't know your language or your greetings but I extend that this morning in the pipe ceremony to all who have travelled from the west, south, east, and the north. I acknowledge that. These are the elements in life that we appreciate, I appreciate.

(Speaking in Indigenous language)

My English name is Vince Kicknosway and my Anishinaabe name is (Native name). And I am so grateful that I had grandparents but I've also had many teachers, and that's what I'm very appreciative of.

We acknowledge (speaking in Indigenous language) this Algonquin territory that we stand upon and walk upon. We are so grateful to the people of this territory.

We acknowledge and give thanks and I ask Gitchi Manidoo, our Creator, to watch over, as I had indicated in our pipe ceremony to the Commissioners and their ability to listen through the many times and the journeys and the paths that they have taken through this Inquiry, that ability to listen. To those who have come
forward in the many areas that have used their voice, I acknowledge and I give thanks.

I acknowledge and give thanks to those helpers. There have helped tremendously throughout these many days and many times that the Inquiry has come forward. We are so grateful to the grandmothers that are here. We are honoured to the mothers, to their sisters, to their nieces. We are honoured. I give thanks to that.

To those who have coordinated and facilitated, the organizing of this Inquiry, we are so grateful. We are honoured. We are so grateful to the Inuit because we have within this region many Inuit that have come from the north to share with us, to teach us their ways of life.

To the Metis, we are so honoured and grateful to the many Metis in this region that have come from other places. To our First Nations of many Nations of the many cultures, we are so grateful. We honour that.

So with the greeting of Gitchi Manidoo I ask, as I did this morning in the pipe ceremony to watch over us, to help us recognize our abilities of what we will see through this day and what we have seen throughout this week, what we will hear, what we will smell, and the delicious foods that we have been served for what we have tasted.
And mostly how we feel. These are important parts of what I understand the Creator made available to us. We are so grateful to that.

(Speaking Ojibway).

I acknowledge and I give thanks and greeting and that everyone has a very wonderful day. Miigwetch.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD—CHICAGO: Miigwetch.

Now we would like to call upon our drum group, Eagle River, to open us up this morning.

M. MATHIEU MELLO: Nous accueillons maintenant les joueurs de tambours de Eagle River.

(EAGLE RIVER DRUMMERS/TAMBOUR)

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD—CHICAGO: Miigwetch.

Now I’d like to call upon Eelee to do lighting of the quilliq and she will do the translation with Micah.

M. MATHIEU MELLO: Donc on aimerait inviter Eelee qui va procéder à l’allumage du quilliq.

MS. EELEE HIGGINS: (Speaking Inuktitut, translated by Micah)

Good morning. Welcome everyone. And I have been very impressed this week. I am very grateful to
see the Commissioners doing their work. I know it’s hard work but we can see your dedication and commitment and we are very proud of you.

You Commissioners and all the staff have been very great and welcoming and hospitable so I just wanted to acknowledge the hard work and dedication that have been shown this week.

And the invited guests, I am very impressed with them as well. Thank you.

All this week I’ve been doing what I’ve envisioned that I’ve always wanted to be a firekeeper and so therefore I am very grateful to be able to light the quilliq this week. I’ve been very grateful for being given the opportunity to do this.

And although I speak English my preference is to speak my mother tongue, Inuktitut, because it gives me strength. Thank you.

This week I’ve been emphasizing the importance of unity, and welcoming, being a servant, and negotiation, also training, exercising, and also collaborative approaches consistent of firsts and practices, working in unity, and innovativeness tending to our environment. These I’ve been emphasizing all week. All those that has been discussed during this week all relate to these items that I noted.
I'm very grateful for this week. Although I'm capable of getting my own cup of tea or water, they've provided all those to me during this week and I am very grateful for that. Because welcoming and friendliness is very important in this situation, and even little things will bring us up, even to us -- someone in need. As little as getting water or a cup of coffee or a tea being brought to me has been very important.

Getting along is very important and working in unity is very important as a value for our people. And this week, especially when we lose our loved one, we automatically go to that person to comfort them and to console them. You don't need to say anything to them, but you know. And the energy that comes with what happens, the energy is there, and we can all feel that moment when bad times arise or even good times arise.

Like this week, we've all negotiated on each item discussed or we have planned this in unity. Therefore, innovativeness is very important because we -- they could have Plan B if Plan A doesn't work. So those kind of things are very important so that we can make -- consistently improve things over the process during this -- during the hearings and meetings.

Thank you so much. Have a good day.

Nakurmiik.
MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Thank you. Just a friendly reminder, we have smudging and healing through beading with Gerri and Cora Lee in the Québec Room.

MR. MATHIEU MELLON: Donc pour ceux qui le souhaitent, nous vous rappelons que dans la salle Québec y’aura de la purification par la fumée et du perlage qui est une activité-là qui favorise la guérison dans la culture autochtone.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: So have a good day. We have 4 minutes so we'll take a quick 4 minute break and reconvene at 9:00 a.m.

MR. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors nous allons prendre une petite pause de quatre minutes après quoi nous allons débuter la journée.

--- Upon recessing at 8:57 a.m./La séance est suspendue à 8h57
--- Upon resuming at 9:06 a.m./La séance est reprise à 9h06

MS. VIOLET FORD: ...Violet Ford. I am one of the Commission counsel, and sitting next to me is my colleague, Meredith Porter. She is also Commission counsel.

To begin this morning's session, Commission counsel would like to call to the podium the Nunatsiavut
Government, Johannes Lampe, President of Nunatsiavut

Government. And you have 40 minutes.

---SUBMISSIONS BY/REPRÉSENTATIONS PAR MS. JOHANNES LAMPE:

MR. JOHANNES LAMPE: Nakurmiik. (Speaking Inuktitut)

It is indeed my pleasure to be here today to provide opening remarks on behalf of Labrador Inuit and the Nunatsiavut Government. Our journey as a people and as a government has been a long, and at times, a difficult one. The Labrador Inuit Association, which preceded the Nunatsiavut Government, was formed in 1973 to promote our culture, to improve the health and well-being of our people, and to protect our constitutional, democratic, and human rights.

In 1977, the LIA began the long path towards self-government by filing a Statement of Claim with the Government of Canada seeking rights to the land and sea ice in Northern Labrador. Our dream of self-government was realized on December 1, 2005 with the signing of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement and the establishment of the Nunatsiavut Government.

We are the first Inuit region in Canada to achieve self-government, guided by Labrador Inuit Constitution to give our own government and regions a future where Labrador Inuit are self-sufficient,
practising our unique way of life, our culture and traditions in healthy communities and within sustainable environments.

Our connectivity to each other and our cultural values as Inuit have shaped who we are as a people and as a society. We have learned from the past and we know all too well the importance of family, of community and personal values. We have shown time and time again that we can overcome challenges, personally and collectively. And we have proven that we can move forward with renewed strength, hope, and determination.

There are five communities within Nunatsiavut which in English means “our beautiful land”. There are no roads linked to our region or connecting any of our communities. The primary means of transportation is Twin Otter aircraft from Happy Valley, Goose Bay, though there is a passenger and a cargo carry operating during the summer and fall and some travel between communities by snowmobile during the winter and spring.

Services from Advocacy to frontline practice by Nunatsiavut government have been repeatedly shown to positively contribute to individual, family, and community wellbeing. Supporting self-governance such as the Nunatsiavut government to be active leaders and service-generating bodies must be a key priority in
improving individual, family and community wellbeing.

As a government, we are committed to addressing these social inequities faced by our people and our communities but we can’t do it alone. We need help. That’s why it is important to build on our relationships with both the federal and provincial governments so that our strength and needs are considered in the development of all policies, programs, and practices.

However, those relationships and our partnerships must be based on trust, understanding and mutual respect with the goal of merging our combined efforts in the best interests of Labrador Inuit. The Inuit-Crown partnership is a significant positive step in this direction but one which will require continuous support and commitment in order to remain effective.

Likewise, there are examples of effective partnership with provincial leaders and service providers. Unfortunately, too often these partnerships are vulnerable to changing provincial and federal government leadership priorities.

Changing personnel in management and civil service positions are overlooked entirely when Inuit perspectives do not align with the priorities of federal or provincial partners. Meaningful involvement of Inuit requires a sustained commitment to engage with Inuit
leaders regardless of changes in political leadership, changes in personnel, or differing priorities.

There must be sustained funding and support to allow us to self-govern and to deliver services. And there must be active engagement of Inuit leaders in all stages of the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programs, services, and practice approaches which impact Indigenous communities and peoples.

Addressing social inequities will significantly improve the wellbeing of Inuit communities, families, and individuals and create opportunities for further healing, success, and leadership. Many of the services to our people in our communities are provided by the province such as Kindergarten to Grade 12 education, transportation, health, social assistance, child welfare, and justice.

The Government of Canada also provides services such as policing through an arrangement with the province. As a third distinct level of government we also offer a wide range of services and programs including those the domains of community programming as well as social development, mental wellness, communicable disease, and public health non-insured health benefits, language, and cultural programming in schools, research, resource extraction and development, economic development, post-
secondary student support, and much more.

Labrador Inuit have a holistic and collective understanding of wellbeing. Healthy individuals exist in a context of healthy families; healthy families exist in a context of healthy communities. Healthy communities in our regions arise when the broader Canadian society acknowledges, respects, and supports Inuit leadership, knowledge, and culture.

Labrador Inuit lag behind non-Indigenous Canadians in many key indicators in relation to the social determinants of health. There are high rates of crime and violence within Nunatsiavut. In fact, the court circuit serving Nunatsiavut has been documented to have the sixth highest rate of domestic violence in the country. One in three respondents to the Inuit Health Survey 2008 identified having experienced sexual abuse during childhood and one in five identified having experienced sexual violence as an adult.

Rates of police-reported homicide and attempted murder are also above the national average as are the rates for common assault, police-reported victimization by violence.

We also have high rates of families involved with the Child Welfare system. Some 142 Labrador Inuit are currently in care, 60 of whom live outside of
Nunatsiavut, away from their families, the culture, language, and community supports.

Family and community distress are closely associated with suicide, the leading cause of death in our territory. In fact, the suicide rate is nearly 20 times higher than the Canadian average and the rate of hospitalization due to suicide attempts and/or injury is 5.7 percent higher.

It is estimated that only about 10 percent of our people speak and understand Inuktitut which poses and increasing challenge. It is difficult to hire Inuktitut speakers for key roles such as teachers, translators, and interpreters.

Graduation rates are lower than both the provincial and national averages and the unemployment rates which vary from community to community are much higher.

These challenges to Inuit social determinants of health and social inequity were present across the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls testimonies of Nunatsiavut. Understanding this broad context for violence is critical to addressing the issues, as has been repeatedly stated, but cannot be overstated.

Addressing social inequities faced by Inuit
is critical to improving individual, family, and community wellbeing. The disappearance and death of nearly 1,200 Indigenous women and girls is an ongoing national tragedy, one that needs to stop. The families and friends of these victims have waited long enough. The healing needs to start so that these people can move on with their lives and the victims deserve justice.

Deirdre Marie Michelin, 21, was a mother of 4 from Rigolet who was shot and killed in a murder/suicide by her then partner.

Henrietta Millek was a 25-year old mother of 2 from Nain who disappeared in St. John's December 11, 1982. She was last seen in a bar with two men. The only trace of the young woman was her purse found on the floor of the bar.

Sarah Obed, 45, was stabbed on August 13, 2005 in her boyfriend's home in Nain. She later died in hospital. No charges have been laid in connection with her death.

Nineteen (19) year old Kimberly Jararuse of Nain went murdered on January 12, 2010. Her killer was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to time served and released a year later.

In February 2014 25-year old Loretta Saunders, a young Inuit woman from Happy Valley Goose Bay,
lost her life in a brutal and senseless act of violence. Her killers are currently serving time. And there are others.

To reduce incidents of violence and violent death among Labrador Inuit we are of the view that measureable actions must be taken in addressing the poor social determinants of health.

Inuit self-governance and participation in national, provincial, territorial governance is the most effective means of ensuring policies, programs, services and practice approaches are appropriate for Indigenous communities and peoples. Within this overarching theme, Nunatsiavut Government has put forward multiple sub-recommendations.

Challenges within Inuit communities all, in some way, relate to a lack of social determinants of health. And while there has been some progress in addressing these concerns, the work is far from complete.

These inequitable social determinants keep Inuit trapped in cycles of poverty and violence and leads to high rates of physical, mental health concerns, child and family welfare issues, substance abuse and addictions, unemployment and under-employment and incarceration.

Education. Labrador Inuit need and deserve equitable access to educational opportunities and
outcomes. Inuit children require access to high quality education, ranging from early childhood to post-secondary. Due to the developmental importance of early childhood, this time period is particularly important. Educational achievements starting in early childhood promote individual and family wellbeing across a lifespan.

Inuit leadership and ownership over the delivery of education services must be supported by ensuring sufficient resources are available.

Adequate funding for a year-round daycare and childcare services must be made available for Nunatsiavut. Educators and staff in the education system must be made familiar with Inuit culture, language and community context.

Inuit should be encouraged and supported to pursue positions within the education system. Inuit culture and language must be meaningfully incorporated throughout the school curriculum, with Inuit as a core component.

Inuit must be supported to participate in post-secondary education with specific consideration for unique cultural and contextual barriers they may face in preparing for attending and returning from post-secondary.

Culture and language. Inclusion of Inuit culture and language in programs and services must be a
Inuit should be encouraged and supported into roles of delivering services and providing input to service development, delivery and evaluation. As well, service providers including health, social services, justice, education, et cetera, within Nunatsiavut must be educated on Inuit culture, history and community context prior to commencing service delivery. Those service delivery systems and policies must be flexible to adapting to the needs of Inuit and context of Nunatsiavut.

Economic opportunities. Poverty, both absolute and relative, reduces individual family and community wellbeing. Employment opportunities must be available for Inuit which provide a sustainable and equitable livelihood. And for those requiring social assistance support, this must be sufficient to cover the basic costs of living within Nunatsiavut.

Employment and social assistance for Inuit in Nunatsiavut must match the cost of living in Nunatsiavut. Support for Inuit entering and participating in a labour market according to their ability and/or interest must also continue and strengthen.

Given the significant higher cost of living in Nunatsiavut, the minimum wage should be increased to levels of similar in other northern communities in the
country.

Rates of payments for social assistance must also reflect the higher costs of living within Nunatsiavut and broader social determinants of health.

Justice services. Protection and justice services within Nunatsiavut, including child welfare, policing, courts, correctional centres and offender reintegration must be adapted to the unique Labrador/Inuit context. Current systems of protection and justice have been transplanted from the south and do not align with the reality of life within Nunatsiavut and frequently result in needless distress for all involved.

There must be continued commitment to redesign child welfare services to meet the needs of Inuit and Nunatsiavut communities. And there must be a continued commitment to support the evolution of these services from the government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The right to timely court proceeding, both family and criminal, must be upheld and enforced. And alternative means of courts including family, mediation, domestic violence courts, drug courts, sentencing circles, et cetera, must be explored and implemented within our region.

Correctional services must promote rehabilitation and individual wellbeing, including access
to culturally congruent mental health and health services, educational and employment development services and reintegration planning and services post-release.

The needs of Inuit women in correctional centres in Newfoundland must be giving specific consideration due to a severe lack of access to culturally congruent supports.

Transitional housing and halfway housing must be made available to offenders being released to Nunatsiavut and Labrador. Emergency shelter and housing for men, including offenders, must be given targeted consideration as a means of preventing violence and increasing healing and well being.

Shelter services must be made available to vulnerable and homeless women, including those housed in unstable situations, regardless of whether they are currently fleeing a situation of violence.

To the greatest extent that child safety will allow, children must be supported to remain in their home with their families. This may include providing extensive support to parents and families to address concerns, including housing, insecurity, and overcrowding, for their security, housing repairs and/or maintenance, etcetera, within the home, such that the children may remain there.
For situations where children cannot be maintained safely within the family home, every effort must be made to keep them within their families, communities, and within Nunatsiavut where they can receive community supports, be connected to their culture.

Our protection and justice services including policing, courts, correctional centres, child protection, and health and mental health services must be grounded in knowledge of trauma-informed practice with specific consideration for the impacts of inter-generational trauma, forced relocation, residential schools, and family violence. Service providers must be specifically trained in how to intervene in situations of family violence and how to promote safety, healing, and wellbeing for all.

Inuit must be supported in training, recruitment, and retention into justice service positions. Overall recruitment and retention practices for justice service professionals must be reviewed and improved.

There must also be an accessible mechanism for reporting and addressing malpractice and poor services within justice and protection services. Such mechanisms must be broadly advertised and easily accessible to community members.

Access to adequate housing, particularly in
Hopedale, is significantly lacking. While we have made considerable strides in recent years, more needs to be done.

High levels of food security in all of our communities is also a major contributing factor to poor health amongst our people. Barriers to housing and food security must be urgently addressed collaboratively between all levels of government.

Health and mental wellness services must be accessible to our people. Accessibility considers not only geographic and financial barriers but also socio-cultural barriers. Practitioners must understand and be able to mitigate potential barriers of language and communication differences, cultural and contextual differences, impacts of colonization, and inter-generational trauma, and the challenges posed by poverty, overcrowding, and food insecurity.

For healing services, a pan-Indigenous approach to services is inadequate. Inuit culture and context is distinct from other Indigenous groups and our needs in mental illness and healing services, including inpatient treatment, must be given specific consideration in the continuum of culturally-congruent services made accessible to all Inuit.

As I stated from the outset, Labrador Inuit
have a holistic and collective understanding of wellbeing. Our identity has been shaped by our relationship with the land, the sea, the animals, and with each other. This is what has defined us as a people. It has made us strong, vibrant, resourceful, determined, and above all, very proud.

These traits can never be taken from us. As a government, we have a responsibility to future generations of Labrador Inuit to remind them of the past so that we may protect the interests, find ways to gather strength so that we can seize the opportunities and meet the challenges that await.

We are confident that with the core resources, we can and we will overcome those challenges. Again, thank you for your time. It is my hope that the concerns of Labrador Inuit will be heard loud and clear and that they may be given full consideration in the Inquiry's final report.

In the end, we all want justice, we all want the violence to stop. (Native word).

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MS. VIOLET FORD: Thank you, President Lampe. Do you have any exhibits that will be entered ---

PRESIDENT JOHANNES LAMPE: Yes.

MS. VIOLET FORD: --- that can be provided?
PRESIDENT JOHANNES LAMPE: Yes. As of today, we will be sending an email, an electronic copy of the submission that I have provided today. (Native word).

MS. VIOLET FORD: Thank you. I'm not -- Commissioners, Chief Commissioner, do you have questions for President Lampe?

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: (Speaking in Indigenous language).

I want to thank you for your submissions and I want to emphasize or share with you how strong the Nunatsiavut people's voice has been throughout this process. I note some very strong Nunatsiavut women who have played a role and I want to mention them here today within the Inquiry. Violet Ford on the National Family Advisory Circle, Charlotte Wolfrey (phonetic), and with the Parties with Standing, Elizabeth Serpa (phonetic), strong amazing women from your community.

Thank you for sharing them with us. They’ve represented Inuit and Inuit within their region, Nunatsiavut and across the country so well. (Speaking in Indigenous language).

I want to acknowledge you and your wife (Native name) for sharing with us your daughter Kimberly. (Speaking in Indigenous language).

I want to acknowledge as well that you are
before us a leader of your people but also as a father and
we must always remember that and acknowledge that.
(Speaking in Indigenous language).

I look forward to reading your written
submissions and learning more and I want to thank you
again for your presence here today. (Native word).

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: President Lampe, I just want to say thank you for coming here and
speaking to us today and for sharing with us some of your
recommendations. And I also look forward to reading the
written materials that you provide. (Native word).

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: I too
want to thank you, President Lampe, for being here today
and being such a powerful advocate for your people. Thank
you for reminding us of the importance of the social
determinants of health and the role that they will play in
our analysis of the evidence. And I also want to thank
you for reminding us about the importance of language and
the loss of language.

So thank you, President, for being here
today, and we're very grateful for your submissions, and I
look forward to reading them again. Thank you, sir.

MS. MEREDITH PORTER: Thank you.
President Lampe, one housekeeping item before you take
your seat.
Chief Commissioner, the -- there was a two-page summary of recommendations that was provided by the party prior to their presenting their oral submissions here today, and we do look forward to receiving the full written submissions by email later.

But at this time, is it your request to have the two-page summary made an exhibit as part of the formal record? There was a two-page summary that was submitted on behalf of your party previously, a written summary of your recommendations. Is it your interest in having those made an exhibit?

**PRESIDENT JOHANNES LAMPE:** Yes.

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Yes? Okay.

**PRESIDENT JOHANNES LAMPE:** Yeah.

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thank you.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:**

Exhibit 20 please.

--- **EXHIBIT NO./PIÈCE NO. 20:**

Summary of recommendations (two pages)

Submitted by: Johannes Lampe,

Representative for Nunatsiavut Government

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thank you.

Thank you, President Lampe.

**PRESIDENT JOHANNES LAMPE:** Nakurmiik.
(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MS. MEREDITH PORTER: The next party I'd like to invite to the podium is Grand Chief Garrison Settee, and Grand Chief Settee is providing oral submissions on behalf of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO).

(SHORT PAUSE/COURTE PAUSE)

---SUBMISSIONS BY/REPRÉSENTATIONS PAR MS. JESSICA BARLOW:

MS. JESSICA BARLOW: Good morning. I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude for being here on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Nation. As I have done many times before, I would also like to acknowledge the spirits of our sisters, the Elders and the grandmothers, the sacred items in the room and the medicines, the families and survivors, and the Commissioners, the Inquiry staff, and the health supports as well. Thank you.

My name is Jessica Barlow, and I have been privileged to be legal counsel on behalf of MKO throughout this Inquiry. And with me today is MKO Grand Chief Settee, and also Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz who is the MKO MMIWG Liaison Unit Manager.

We also have many people from Manitoba sitting with us today in support of MKO's submissions, and I thank you for sitting with us.
If we could bring up an image on the screen, and I would invite Ms. Anderson-Pyrz to speak to that image, please. Thank you.

And with that, I welcome Ms. Anderson-Pyrz to speak to you today.

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON-PYRZ:** Good morning, everybody. I just wanted to say thank you for having me here today. And Grand Chief is going to bring official greetings on behalf of MKO, so I'm going to save time and not do that.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Hilda Anderson-Pyrz. I'm the Manager of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Liaison Unit for the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak.

And I just wanted to share a little bit about the image that we have on the screen here. When I started in the unit a little over a year ago, we wanted to have a logo that represents the full circle of life for our woman and our girls to show how strong we are. When we start out as babies, we go into little girls, then we go -- we become women, and then we become grandmothers.

And grandmothers have a very significant role for us as Indigenous women and girls. They're our protectors. Anytime we struggle we go to our grandmothers, and our grandmothers make us feel safe.
And if you notice in the image, the grandmother is holding sage and the sage is burning a circle of protection around our women and our girls. And the butterflies in the image represent our sisters who have been murdered, and the stars in the image represent those who are missing to always know that we have a light shining for them, and we always hope that they find their way back to us.

And why I share the image today is for me, as an Indigenous women, I really struggle with the fact that Canada cannot protect our lives and allow us to live that full circle of life. For us that's important.

And I feel that Canada needs to recognize that as Indigenous women and girls that we should have every opportunity and all the mechanisms should be in place to allow us to grow into grandmothers, you know, to allow us to see our grandchildren, to allow us to see our children succeed, you know, to allow us to basically have a family. You know, a family unit is really important in our culture, and for us, in many situations and circumstances, our family units have been very fractured by the loss of a loved one.

And I also wanted to share that in my role and part of the family information liaison units, our funding comes from Justice Canada through Manitoba
Justice, and we have a contract with Manitoba Justice. And we're funded $200,000 a year for all of Northern Manitoba.

And we've done some amazing work in the year that we've been -- or little over a year -- almost a year-and-a-half that we've been in that role and giving families different tools for healing and going forward, as well as working on tools for prevention. Because prevention is critical. We need to ensure that those tools are in place to protect the lives of our women and girls.

And with that, I'm just going to hand it over to Grand Chief. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

GRAND CHIEF GARRISON SETTEE: Tansi.

(Speaking Indigenous language.)

I bring greeting from Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak territory. I also want to acknowledge the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Nation; Chief Commissioner, Commissioners, Elders, grandmothers.

But I also want to also make a special acknowledgement to the women's organizations from the grassroots level that prompted for us to be able to look at the gravity and the seriousness of this undertaking. It is because of them we are here to look at the stark and
shocking reality of what our people had to live through with our missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and also the two-spirited people.

I want to acknowledge first and foremost the families and the two-spirited people who have experienced loss, tragedy. My condolences. My heartfelt sympathy for the journey that you’ve had to travel. And you are here today as a people that are resilient, strong, courageous, brave. I acknowledge that as I stand before you on this day that I believe is a sacred time when we look at the national tragedy that has happened to our women, our girls, our sisters. They have experienced horrific systemic domestic and sexual violence, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, compounded by racism and patriarchal dominance.

You are the real experts when it comes to moving forward because you have lived this tragedy. You are the ones to guide us, to move us forward, because you’ve lived and felt the pain of losing a sister, or a mother, or a grandmother. You are the greatest teachers, and we want to learn from you, and we should learn from them.

And as Canadians and leadership all across the nation, government representatives, we must ensure action and implementation of all the recommendations based
on the truths that have been shared. We must ensure that action takes place.

I believe the time of leaving reports and recommendations to collect dust on shelves are over. The lives of our Indigenous women and girls and the two-spirited people have suffered too long for this issue to be neglected. The time for action is now, because these peoples’ lives mattered, and they still matter, and they will forever be in our hearts. We will not forget. We will not forget their spirits and the dignity that was taken from them. And we have the rights as Indigenous people, and particularly our women, to live free of violence and to thrive in environments that are healthy, safe, and where you are respected.

And as a Grand Chief of MKO Territory, I give you my personal commitment to do my utmost to create those safe spaces for all of you and for the generations to come. Where it is possible, I will make every effort to educate and bring in partners to support strong and healthy women and girls, who in turn will support healthy families and safe communities.

The National Inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls is a vehicle to share important truths, but as a country we have an obligation to protect the lives of Indigenous women and girls and
two-spirited individuals.

    And as a leader, I have the political will
to implement the recommendations to the best of my ability
using the limited resources and supports we have within
the MKO Territory.

    So I want to say love and peace to all of
you.

    I want to begin by sharing a story when I
was nine years old. I heard a story of Helen Betty
Osborne, and it has impacted my life the way a Cree young
woman was brutally murdered in The Pas, Manitoba, stabbed
52 times, helpless, no one there to stand up for her to
protect her. That story has been part of my life for a
long time.

    And 40 years later I was at the site of
where she died, and we as a group in her 40th anniversary
-- the death of her 40th anniversary, we walked from where
she was killed and we walked into town of The Pas and we
had a theme for that march. It was called “Walking into a
New Dawn”.

    That is what Canada must do when it comes
to murdered Indigenous women and girls; we need to pave a
way forward so that these tragedies will no longer take
place.

    So I’m here today as a warrior to protect
our women and girls from future exploitation, from further violence to their lives.

We’re not here for political posturing but we’re here on a mission. We want to see a paradigm shift in this country when it comes to the lives of Indigenous women and girls. We must protect them, and they must be protected, and they will be protected, because the warriors are standing up. That is our role, to protect the women and girls in our Nations.

As a former chief of my First Nation I came to the assembly here in Ottawa, and I believe I was one of the first chiefs to pass a resolution for an inquiry into murdered Indigenous women. So this is real to me. This is something that is part of my spirit, because the tragedies that our women have faced should have never happened if they were protected.

And this day I find that we have a choice, we have a responsibility, we have decisions to make when it comes to murdered and missing Indigenous women and also the protection of all those that are with us today. This Inquiry should make transformation, transformative change when it comes to Indigenous women, and I want to be part of that transformation. I want to be part of that change. We must create a pathway for change to survive, to thrive in their environments in a way that is safe, and healthy
and positive.

I’m an advocate that every First Nation should have a women’s shelter. Every First Nation should have a place where a woman can run to for safety, and also, second-stage housing where they can begin to move forward, overcoming the life of violence and tragedy.

And I feel that we need to be part of that solution as Indigenous people. We can point the way on how these women can be protected, if we are allowed. Historically, policies and legislations have harmed our people, beginning 150 years ago with the residential school system.

Any time other entities have tried to fix our problems, they have always created a bigger mess. So it's time to include us. We know the way. We know the path. Allow us; allow us to lead the way because these are our people. These are our women. These are our girls. These are our people, and we must be given that opportunity to do so.

In our traditional way of life, everything is non-linear. It's circular, interconnected. We must return these women back to their culture, to their language, to their ceremonies, and their communities, to their environments where they can be near their waters and their rivers and their forests. And through this holistic
world view, our relationships, our connections, and the
world around us can guide our path like they did before
the newcomers came to this land.

The imposition of western ideologies,
systems, and institutions have caused us to lose our way
and our women and our girls are the ones that have borne
this loss the most.

So now is the time for action. The future
is now. We do not need for the report to be completed.
Today is the day of action. Today is the day for change.
On the streets, young girls are vulnerable in every urban
area; young women are vulnerable of being exploited.

So that's why we must act now. We must
allow for our people to access resources and supports,
families to have resources to heal themselves, and
survivors to be able to heal, and two-spirited people to
have a chance to accept their place in our society so that
they can be whole.

And we must look at this from our
Indigenous lens. We need to provide that capacity for us
to move our people forward. And there are also human
rights considerations when we look at us. We have a right
to be treated like every other individual in this country.
But the way our women and our girls have been treated is
an atrocity, their cases put on shelves because of who
they are and where they're from.

Human rights violations continue to take place in our Nation when it comes to our women. It's time for that to stop. And we need action. We need Indigenous-led and implemented based on Indigenous values and our traditional ways and our laws. We want to focus on prevention rather than reacting to every incident that occurs.

A lot of the things that are happening are happening without us being involved. So we need to be part of this design and we need to implement it ourselves as Indigenous people because families are the core of our societies. Those families were created to be one entity, but because of government policies and legislation, that has been severed. It has been broken.

And people sat in a boardroom to decide the fate of children, women, from foster home to forced foster home, traumatized and being sexually abused under the caregivers, most of whom are non-Indigenous.

So we must change that. And these young women and girls come out of foster care, go out in the streets with no support whatsoever, left to survive on their own. What kind of system are we perpetuating here in Canada?

It is wrong and it must stop. It is wrong
to take a child from their home, from their community, away from their culture and their language and their relatives to put them in environment that is strange and foreign to them. And that's why we have so many women and girls on the streets, because they have been traumatized by government, legislation, and policy.

The impacts of colonization have impacted our women and our girls. The lack of proper education, proper housing, community facilities that provide safety has caused many women to leave First Nations and go into urban areas where they get caught up in a system that eventually brought them to their demise.

Ninety (90) percent, maybe 85 percent of First Nation communities are unemployed. Women don't find adequate housing for themselves or for their children and they move away from the First Nation trying to find a better life. But with limited educational opportunities, they succumb to the pressures of urban life and they get lost, and they become dependent on many things. And that all could have been prevented if they had those resources in their communities.

Even the health system is impacting our women. Lack of proper health facilities cause our women to go to urban areas, even young women, medical appointments in urban areas. And many examples in
Winnipeg of young women leaving their hotel there on a medical appointment, next day they're found missing, next day you find missing persons announcements.

Young women are lost. Some have been found in the Red River of Winnipeg. Sadly, some have been found in waste disposal sites. Some have been murdered by serial killers.

And as the Chief of my First Nation, I looked around with the help of my people for over 2 months to find one of our girls. She was 18 years old. Her name was Lorna Blacksmith. She fell victim to a serial killer who allured her with drugs and different things.

That's the first time as a Chief that I cried. That's the first time I was broken to see such a beautiful young woman taken from us because there were not supports in her community to be able to help her. She moved around from family member to family member, and eventually ended up in Winnipeg.

And our health system is exposing our women and girls to tragedy. That system must be changed.

Policing. Going back to the hell in Betty Osborne case, she was not considered important at the time. Her file was brushed aside. And even though everybody in that community knew who killed her, everybody knew who the perpetrators were, but nothing was done
because she was an Aboriginal woman. Policing has failed our people.

Even in the areas of hydroelectric projects coming into First Nation communities where people come in disrespecting our women, violating our women, exploiting our women, these complaints have never been handled seriously. And the truth came out this summer when the Clean Environment Commission’s report that such incidences took place, and 40 years after the fact it was only brought out into the open. Because they were Indigenous women, that's why these -- these complaints should have been treated seriously by the police that handled them, and we need to change that.

Our relationship with the police must change. Their relationship with us must change if we are to alleviate the problems that we're facing today when it comes to missing and murdered Indigenous women.

The industry on First Nations has also impacted our women. Man camps. Male workers coming into the First Nations disrespecting our women, taking advantage of our women. It's time the warriors stood up and say enough, we're not going to allow that to happen anymore. We're stepping into our roles as warriors. The violence must stop. The violence must end, and it must end now.
And we need to ensure that our families and the survivors have access to all types of healing traditionally through ceremony healing gatherings, monuments, art displays, education, and programs on prevention and awareness. We must do that as we move forward.

And our jurisdiction must be respected. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People have recognized that our jurisdiction must be respected and we must be allowed to take over systems that are currently being run by other entities. Because we know how to solve the problem. Because all these years people have tried to alleviate and try to fix our problems, but the problems are still there because we are left out of the process. But now we're stepping up. We're going to be part of the process.

And these systems have never worked for us because they were not designed by us and they don't have our interests at its centre.

And today I come here because I want all Canadians to listen, to learn, to recognize that we are a resilient people, we are a strong people, we are a powerful people, and we can define for ourselves the best way forward to live dignified lives. That has been taken from us through the residential school systems, the
Sixties Scoop, child and welfare systems. Those were
taken from us.

GRAND CHIEF GARRISON SETTEE: But today we
take it back.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

GRAND CHIEF GARRISON SETTEE: Today we take
it back. We take back our dignity. We take back our
jurisdiction. Today, we take back our inherent rights to
govern ourselves, to sustain ourselves, to protect
ourselves, to stand up for ourselves, and to exercise our
rights. And today we come, and we have the political will
to do so, We have the political means to do so, and we
want Canada to get on board.

Because we know the root causes of violence
against our women. We know the impacts it has on our
families, and we hold the solutions. And we call upon
this Inquiry to listen about our people, our truths, our
stories, our pain, our tragedy. We want you to listen.
It is in your hands. It is in your hands today to make
changes.

And we seek justice for our families, our
survivors, and we need to continue to commemorate our
sisters who have been lost so that violence does not
impact one more Indigenous woman or girl.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)
GRAND CHIEF GARRISON SETTEE: We call on you Canada to recognize that this tragedy affects us all and the time for action is now.

In closing, I just want to highlight five important aspects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations. In closing:

Number 1, call for an implementation of UNDRIP framework in its entirety, recognizing the inherent rights of all Indigenous people.

Number 2, use a family centric approach to form all actionable recommendations that respect the diverse and unique needs of families, survivors, and communities.

Three, recognize that our women and girls deserve to be safe no matter their race or geography, and the appropriate measures must be taken no matter the cost.

Focus on the need for Indigenous-led programs and services that include women and youth in decision-making processes and core funded.

Five recommendations are specific to and applicable to the implementation in remote and isolated communities, especially in northern regions.

Lastly, number six, establish a legacy fund for families and survivors, regardless of participation in this Inquiry such as there is -- such as individual
compensation for victims, and also fund funds that will last over time to create safe spaces and programs for the future.

So I'm here today to say it's time for change, time for action. Let's change the lives of murdered and missing Indigenous women and the survivors going forward. (Speaking in Native language).

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

**MS. JESSICA BARLOW:** Chief Commissioner and Commissioners, subject to any questions you have, those are MKO's submissions.

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thank you, Grand Chief Settee.

Ms. Barlow, I'm just going to request some clarification. Would you like the photo that was put up to be made an exhibit?

**MS. JESSICA BARLOW:** Thank you. We don't request that it needs to be made an exhibit as it forms part of our written submission.

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Okay.

**MS. JESSICA BARLOW:** Thank you. We don't request that it needs to be made an exhibit as it forms part of our written submission.

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thank you.

**MS. JESSICA BARLOW:** Thank you.

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thank you.

Chief Commissioner, Commissioners, do you have any questions for the party?

**COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Grand Chief
Settee, Hilda, Jessica, their colleagues in the back, (speaking in Native language). I want to thank you for your leadership and your powerful words reminding us of the importance of recognition, acknowledgment and justice.

You've said a number of times -- and I want to raise my hands to you for stepping up and stating your political will. We need all leaders to do that and I want to acknowledge that what we've heard from so many is the lack of political will, words are great, but unless people with power are doing something, it means nothing, right down to the rights. Rights are paper unless you respect them. Rights are no different than this if you don't respect them and uphold them.

So I want to acknowledge the power of your expression of your will and acting by speaking and showing up and standing with the women in your territory, the knowledge keepers and Elders within your territory. From what I've learned from your people, from Hilda, from Thelma, is that that means something significant and I want to acknowledge that.

You've mentioned a number of time limited power and resources. And that we've heard from a number of parties and Indigenous governments. The lack of that space or the lack of power, I guess it's the lack of jurisdiction. And I want to say that I recognise your
inherent jurisdiction, but what needs to be recognised or what has to happen, the acknowledgement and recognition has to happen and has to be given by those that currently hold it, the state, provinces and territories and the federal government.

So I would like -- and perhaps this is something that will be in your submissions. I'm not saying right now, but some guides on how we create this paradigm shift to ensure that the power shifts.

There are certain instruments in this country that entrench and hold tight that power. I posed this to NWAC. The Constitution is the big one, the division of powers, for example. And I wanted to give you an opportunity to share with us what you see is needing to be done to ensure that that power shifts. How do we break free some of that power so your inherent jurisdiction has space to be exercised and asserted?

**GRAND CHIEF GARRISON SETTEE:** I personally believe, as Indigenous people, within the constitutional framework we have an inclusion of our Aboriginal rights, our treaties. And in that is the right to self-govern ourselves. So, if the Constitution is to be honoured and upheld, it must allow for that, and that includes jurisdiction. And we need to be allowed to exercise and mobilise those rights. That has not happened yet. Yet
the Constitution specifically states that our rights are
recognised and affirmed. It's time for Canada to honour
their Constitution. We're ready to move.

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: (Speaking in
Native language).

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you
very much for your submissions, Grand Chief.

I too was struck by your mentioning
commitment or political will, to having political will.
And you also said that and you want Canada to get on
board. So I'm wondering if you or -- and if you, Ms.
Anderson-Pryz or Ms. Barlow, have any thoughts or
recommendations on when we make our recommendations, how
can we compel governments like Canada and the provincial
and territorial governments to implement the
recommendations that we make?

GRAND CHIEF GARRISON SETTEE: I think that
Canada needs to be honourable. They need to be sincere
and they need to get back on the moral compass when it
comes to our people. They need to exercise ethics when it
comes to us as First Nation people. And many inquiries,
Aboriginal justice inquiry, RCAP, have been put on
shelves. All they need to do is take those things off the
shelves and start implementing them. It's already in
place. They just have to have the political will and the
moral and I guess to have some integrity.

As a society, as a government and as a people of this nation, we must do our utmost to do that which is right. And when you honour those, you're beginning to do the right thing. And the time to do the right thing is now.

**MS. HILDA ANDERSON-PRYZ:** I also say to Canada it's time to end the two-tier system, that we should all be treated as equals. And if you don't have the political will to implement the recommendations that come forth from this inquiry and all the other recommendations that are collecting dust, shame on you, Canada.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

**COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you very much for your submissions. I look forward to your written submissions.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Well, thank you all. First of all, I want to thank people at the back there. Sandra, Thelma, Gerri, I'm sorry, I can't see everybody there, Hilda. Thank you for holding our feet to the fire. Thank you for your kindness, your love and I have to say I'm going to miss you all.

Ms. Barlow, thank you for being an exemplary advocate on behalf of your client or clients, I
suppose.

Grand Chief, I'm going to challenge you I hope in a respectful way. You're saying it's time. Can I in a respectful way say it's time to stop asking for permission?

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: And I have a question for you. How can we, as a national inquiry, empower our own people across Canada to stop asking for permission.

GRAND CHIEF GARRISON SETTEE: I think that after you have done all that you have -- all of the information that you have gathered through this Inquiry, every Canadian must know the truth, because it's truth that liberates; it's truth that emancipates. Education is power. Canadian society must be educated from coast to coast to coast. That's the key.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Thank you, Grand Chief.

Thank you all. It's been a pleasure and I'll miss you all.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

(SHORT PAUSE/COURTE PAUSE)

MS. VIOLET FORD: Chief Commissioner and
Commissioners, we are now scheduled for a break, and because we are breaking early and we're not due to come back until 11:00, we're recommending a half an hour break, but I seek your direction.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Let's return as scheduled at 11:00 a.m. please.

--- Upon recessing at 10:35 a.m./L’audience est suspendue à 10h35

--- Upon resuming at 11:05 a.m./L’audience est reprise à 11h05

(NOTE: APPROX. 1 MINUTE OF RECORDING MISSING)

---SUBMISSIONS BY/REPRÉSENTATIONS FINALES PAR MS.

KATHERINE HENSEL:

MS. KATHERINE HENSEL: ...policy and funding regime that at times requires them to adhere to practices that they know are not only ineffective but actually do harm and lead to many of the risks, vulnerabilities, and actual tragic outcomes that you’ve heard so much evidence about throughout this Inquiry.

This Commission has heard ample, repeated, extensive evidence about the risks and harms that arise and have arisen for decades and continue to intensify from known Indigenous Child Welfare practices. While not every missing or murdered Indigenous girl or woman had direct contact with the Child Welfare system, virtually all had at least indirect contact with Child Welfare because as
Indigenous people, virtually all of us do. Many, and likely most of the girls and women who are lost did have direct contact and involvement with Child Welfare authorities, whether as children in care, as adoptees, as the siblings of children in care or adoptees, as the daughters of women raised in care or adopted out, or as the mothers of children taken into care. Many have been subject to all of these forms of Child Welfare intervention.

There is ample evidence before the Inquiry for the Commissioners to find that but for the experience, the girls' and women's experience of non-Indigenous Child Welfare practices, many of these sisters, daughters, and mothers would still be with us today.

There is no longer any doubt that transforming Child Welfare practices is a critical and urgent task, yet it is one that has not seriously begun in this country.

The Association urges the Commissioners to find, based on the evidence that's been placed before it, that non-Indigenous Child Welfare practices are a readily-identifiable cause in the deaths of Indigenous girls and women, which is not to say that -- when I said "but for", it was advisedly. It is not the full explanation for the harm and the tragic outcomes. But without these
interventions, without the risk and harm that resulted from Child Welfare, non-Indigenous Child Welfare practices, it is reasonable to assume that the losses would not have occurred.

Late last year, Minister Jane Philpot described the ratio of Indigenous children in Canada's Child Welfare system as a humanitarian crisis. The Ministers held -- Ministers Philpot and Bennett held a two-day emergency meeting in Ottawa in January for First Nations leaderships, ministers, provincial ministers, and child welfare professionals. And they noted there and we know -- based on the evidence before and the exhibits and the expert evidence that this Commission has heard -- that the rates of Indigenous children in care, the numbers, the sheer numbers and the proportions, are higher than they have ever been, ever.

And when you look at the causal links, the "but for" connection between the loss of Indigenous girls and women and Child Welfare, particularly apprehensions and spending time in care, how can we hope to stem the tide of loss without addressing the Child Welfare question and crisis?

You look at the legitimacy and purpose of Child Welfare statutorily, ethically, morally, it's all premised exclusively on promoting the best interests of
children and protecting them. Sadly but certainly, the
history and current practice of Child Welfare in the lives
of Indigenous children and families and communities have
failed to protect children and promote their best
interests. And beyond this failure, the evidence before
this Inquiry makes clear that the practice of child
welfare not only fails to protect but actually causes
harm.

ANCFSAO's members know which practices and
services will be effective in serving and protecting
Indigenous children, families and communities, and they've
identified approaches, and legal basis, and resources that
they believe would change the practice if Indigenous child
welfare from a source of risk and harm into a foundation
for intergenerational recovery and healing.

This would not only stem the tide of loss
of our girls and women, for every girl or woman that we
have lost there are hundreds who suffer, who live
marginalized painful existence, and who do not enjoy the
comfort, safety, the conditions -- the pre-conditions to
thriving that are necessary for their safety and well-
being.

So the transformation of the child welfare
system would not only -- and the child welfare practice
would not only stem the tide of loss but improve the lives
of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people in this country, as well as posing -- raising the possibility of intergenerational healing.

So ANCFSAO's recommendations and submissions are intended to assist the Commission in arriving at findings and recommendations that, if adopted, would transform Indigenous child welfare.

I asked some members of my client and the executive director over the last week, to Blue Sky, what -- if you could envision the resources and legal framework and conditions upon which you could do the best work, within and through your agencies, and it was a struggle for them to respond.

They said, "We're so busy trying to cope. So busy scrambling from crisis to crisis, so busy trying to meet the different measures of accountability imposed by the province and imposed by the statutory regime that we don't have the headspace at times to even envision what we know would work -- what would be necessary to do what we know is -- will work."

I have, throughout the years, worked with many of the members of the Association and heard time and time again that in terms of intergenerational healing every time a child is removed from their family, an Indigenous child, the clock on intergenerational harm is
reset. It means that any possibility of intergenerational healing throughout the generations is reset and must begin anew.

Every time a child is apprehended, that trauma reverberates for generations in the lives of children and families and their descendants. This Commission has heard evidence of how that trauma is -- that -- this trauma, and other traumas, are transmitted at a chromosomal level, hormonally, physically, and in the lives the lived experience of families throughout the generations.

What the members of the Association tell me is that when you -- the only hope for reversing and recovering at an -- on an intergenerational basis from the traumas of colonization, racism, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, all the systemic and historic and current traumas that this Commission has heard evidence about, the only way that can happen is when families remain intact. And that separating children out, removing them from their families negates and prevents and renders impossible any hope of intergenerational recovery.

It's not only intergenerationally that the effects of child -- non-Indigenous child welfare practices have been felt and transmitted harm. If you look at the lives of girls and women, and all Indigenous people, their
exposure, the conditions of their lives are affected by child welfare before they are born in the lives of their mothers and fathers, prenatally.

They may well not -- their mothers may well avoid seeking prenatal care, you heard from witnesses in the Winnipeg hearings because of the fear of birth alerts and apprehension at birth. So before a child is even born, they experience harm because of the relationship between child welfare authorities and the fear that their mothers have of loss.

At birth, if and when they are apprehended and in care as children and as youth, the effects of removal from community, from territory, from language, from culture, from the very relationships that must be the most protective factor in their lives, have and -- have had and now have devastating consequences and lead to the very losses that are the subject of this Inquiry.

You've heard evidence of the effects the impact of living a life in care on children and youth. The devaluation of human life that girls and boys -- Indigenous girls and boys experience. You heard Cora Morgan testify about how children who are raised in care and who live in group homes, for example, the value they place on human life is diminished. Their own lives and the lives of others. These are the preconditions for
loss, for violence and for loss.

This Commission has heard evidence of the effects of dislocation from community and culture, of children and youth being moved far -- even thousands of kilometers from their communities and families in order to even secure a foster home placement or to receive specific services that are not available within or near their communities. Children are often removed for years and years permanently and lose any meaningful access to their families, cultures, territories, and communities.

This practice not only precludes the culturally and community-based placements and services that would be most effective for Indigenous children and youth, it severs -- renders impossible the very relationships that ANCFSAO has found to be vital to the safety and well-being of Indigenous children in the moment and for the rest of the children's lives.

So children taken so far away from home are left without vital connections and supports when their placements break down or when they encounter the dangerous influences in, for example, group home care. They become so vulnerable to all the harms and risk that contribute to tragic loss.

For that reason, ANCFSAO requests that the Commission make recommendations to prevent such removals,
including provincial and federal funding that both permits and prioritizes the delivery of services to children living within Indigenous communities, no matter how remote.

In particular, that governments ensure the availability of dedicated permanent funding within and for Indigenous communities for the type of infrastructure that is necessary for emergency family receiving homes, for placements within community, for things like homemaking to assist families who are struggling with the basics of running a household in a safe way.

I don’t know how many cases I’ve dealt with as a lawyer and that the members of the association have dealt with that but for the hygiene and cleanliness of the home and the organization of the home the children could safely stay, that’s the only issue, but it’s an overwhelming issue. You send in a homemaker. But the funding is siloed and that’s not part of protection.

We urge the Commission to make recommendations that funding formulas that support families, including extended families caring for children, be made available and indeed prioritized.

I’m going to move on now to how we got to this terrible state legally, politically, and in practice.

The operation across the country,
provincial and territorial statutes, purports to occupy
the field in child welfare. The provinces have asserted
uniformly exclusive jurisdiction over the care and
protection of Indigenous and other children. The
statutory regimes across the country that do so also
occupy the field with protection, what is termed
protection, measures intended to identify children who at
risk, who are in need of protection, and to take those
steps necessary to address those needs and the risks.

The statutes belabour and detail the
procedural requirements and considerations for society’s
intervening on an involuntary and mandatory basis in the
lives of children and families. They each make reference
for the need to adopt least intrusive measures to prevent
risk and harm but they don’t spell it out and they don’t –
- it’s rendered not mandatory.

Funding models reflect that. They reflect
an imperative of unlimited funding available for children
in care, and you’ve heard lots of evidence about that,
that there’s unlimited funding available once a child is
taken away for the foster family, for all services, for
recreational activities, but severely capped and limited
funding for truly preventative measures that would permit
children to safely remain at home.

Further, the statutes neither acknowledge
nor permit the operation of Indigenous jurisdiction over the care and protection of children other than through the delegation of authority from the province to Indigenous agencies.

And the regulatory regimes that accompany these statutes effectively and at a very granular level prescribe the delivery of services, such that the members of ANCFSAO and other Indigenous agencies don’t have any flexibility about how they can deliver services, it’s all quite prescribed at a very particular level.

And the combined effect of the statute and regulations and funding models is to preclude the exercise not only of Indigenous jurisdiction over the care and protection of children but prevents -- functions to prevent Indigenous agencies from employing best Indigenous practices in relation to the services they provide to Indigenous children and families.

You saw in the video that my colleague Ms. Beamish presented yesterday and entered into evidence that had us all sniffing, that video reflected the types of relationships that can and will protect Indigenous children, and the centrality of those relationships, that is the core of actual protection.

You don’t see those relationships reflected in the legal regime, the mandatory statutory and
regulatory regimes, and they’re not reflected in the funding models that operationalize it with the results that we see now, the humanitarian crisis.

Many of the members of the ANCFSAO all of them operate with delegated provincial authority; many but not all of them also operate with -- pursuant to the inherent jurisdiction of -- for example, the Anishinaabeg Family Care exercises the authority of the Robinson Superior Treaty First Nations. Abinooji exercises the inherent authority of Grand Council Treaty Number 3. But it’s an uneasy set of dual accountabilities.

And again the provincial regulatory and funding regimes really occupy the field and prevent the agencies from adopting measures and practices and resourcing measures and practices that will honour the relationships in the way that the video “Embrace Love” yesterday demonstrated.

No Indigenous people or Nation in Canada has ever, to the best of our knowledge, surrendered its right to govern itself with respect to the care and protection of children and families. It’s never -- this right has never been extinguished through any valid constitutional instrument.

The operation and paramountcy of provincial law has been merely assumed and imposed by federal and
provincial authorities from at least the ’60s onward.
This assumption must be challenged if the necessary
transformation and the care of Indigenous children is to
occur.

It’s simply impossible, under the
provincial statutes, as they’re currently construed -- and
they get amended. You know, Ontario’s Child and Family
Services Act was amended and turned into the Child, Youth
and Family Services Act. They get -- the reform comes
nowhere near the level of transformation that’s necessary
to prevent further loss.

We entered into evidence in Winnipeg the
Spallumcheen Bylaw, the Secwepemc assertion and
operationalizing of inherent jurisdiction of the people of
Splatsin and Spallumcheen. That is an exclusive -- it’s
exclusive assertion of -- exclusive jurisdiction.

Splatsin’s agency has been operating since
1981 and not a single child has been lost while in their
care. This is an extraordinary record and represents best
practices, reflects best practices that are only possible,
in my submission, once Indigenous agencies and communities
can step out of a fundamentally colonial non-Indigenous
provincial statutory regime.

The members of the ANCFSAO describe
practices -- their practices, and child welfare generally,
as too little too late with Children's Aid Societies left
to pick up the pieces through traumatic protection
measures when children and families are in acute -- and
youth are in acute crisis, when earlier dedicated and
focussed prevention measures would and could have served
to actually protect Indigenous children and families by
addressing the manifestations of colonisation, of poverty
and intergenerational trauma in a supportive manner, at
home, with and through an intact family. But, again, the
resources are not there for these approaches. And within
the framework that I've described, those early
interventions, the supportive relationship-based
interventions are not only not prioritised or resourced,
they're rendered impossible.

Canada has, through Ministers Philpott and
Bennett, very recently recognised this paradox in funding,
in particular, as one of the causes of the humanitarian
crisis in Indigenous child welfare. In statements made
earlier this month, Ministers Philpott and Bennett
contemplated federal legislation that would eliminate what
they described as the perverse incentives for the
apprehension of Indigenous children.

In our written submissions we will be
urging the Commission to make recommendations that they
follow through with this contemplated legislation, but we
note that any such federal legislation would be limited to
on-reserve children. And we know that many, if not most,
Indigenous children who have contact with child welfare --
possibly not most -- but are in urban centres or off-
reserve.

So we will also be urging the Commission to
make recommendations so that the provinces correct and
reverse and eliminate the perverse funding incentives that
not only don't fund prevention, but incentivise the
removal of children in their legislative and funding
regimes for child welfare.

Members of the Association repeatedly have
experienced youth -- children and youth in crisis, to the
extent that there are police involvement -- there's police
involvement, there's mental health involvement, there's
child welfare involvement, and the crisis that the
children and youth are experiencing are exacerbated by the
lack of coordination of the multi -- many disciplines of
service that the children -- that intervene in the life of
the child, which renders some of the services not only
ineffective, but counterproductive if they're not properly
coordinated.

We will be urging the Commission to make
recommendations that community-based institutions
including police, hospitals, education, in addition to
Child Welfare authorities, are required to enter into MOUs, protocols, to coordinate their responses, not only at institutional levels, but with respect to individual cases and children.

Members of the Association have found -- and we will be, in our written submissions, including references to written expert reports -- that when young children interact with multiple systems of care the fragmentation and the lack of appropriate or sufficient communication and information-sharing amongst services and service providers is institutionally driven; that the barriers to sufficient communication and effective service provision are at times structurally endemic; and that those barriers -- and so we will be urging the Commission to make recommendations so that those barriers to coordination and information-sharing be removed.

The members of the Association note that prevention is protection. Protection -- child protection as is currently construed, for all the reasons that we've described and that you've heard in evidence, that's not protection. What will actually protect Indigenous children and girls and women throughout their lives and intergenerationally is prevention.

We will be urging the Commission to make recommendations that provinces reform child welfare
legislation to make prevention measures, as in services, 
resources and interventions that serve and protect 
children within their families and communities mandatory 
for child welfare agencies and for all service providers.

That provinces reform child welfare funding 
formulae to dedicate most resources to prevention services 
rather than so-called protection measures.

That all governments, Indigenous, 
provincial and federal, enhance prevention and protection 
services specifically oriented towards intergenerational 
recovery from the effects of colonisation, residential 
schools and non-Indigenous child welfare practices, and 
that Indigenous child welfare service models be developed, 
reformed and resourced, which prioritise the availability 
and delivery of services within communities and that such 
services are available to children at home and delivered 
in a timely way.

We will also be urging the Commission to 
make recommendations that provinces adopt legislative 
reform that both acknowledge (sic) and encourages the 
exercise of inherent jurisdiction over the care and 
protection of children and families by Indigenous 
communities where such communities have asserted and have 
chosen to exercise such jurisdiction. And that the 
operationalising, the delivery of those services resulting
from the exercise of jurisdiction be resourced at a level
at least as high in funding terms as the delivery of
services under provincial statutory models.

And I say at least as high because
communities and agencies need resources in order to
recover and give life to Indigenous practices and laws.
They have been effectively suppressed for so long that it
will take time and work and money, unfortunately, to
uncover, to breathe new life into and to adapt Indigenous
laws and practices to operationalise them.

Subject to any questions you may have,
those are my submissions on behalf of ANCFSAO.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MS. VIOLET FORD: Thank you for your
submissions.

And, Commissioner, Chief Commissioners, if
you have questions?

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: Ms. Hensel,
thank you for your presentation and your submission,
especially considering I know you're not feeling very
well.

I want to thank you for drawing a path,
particularly when it comes to legislative reform. You've
heard my questions, this issue of power and jurisdiction
and we've heard from some of your clients and from other
witnesses how, particularly in Manitoba, the delegation to
Indigenous-run organizations that are just -- I call it
putting sealskin on the existing beast, right? Like, it's
tokenization, it's superficial, and how that's a huge
problem.

So I want to thank you for, in a very
practical way in your recommendations, outlining a path on
what that transition has to look like, how not only do
governments have to meet their obligations and do better,
but where the shift in power has to happen as well.

So I want to thank you very much. You've
given me a lot to think about and I look forward to
reading your client's final submission. Thank you, thank
you. Miigwetch.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Ms. Hensel, I
want to thank you as well. Similar to my colleague,
Commissioner Robinson, well, we've heard so much about
Child Welfare and its negative impacts, so I want to thank
you for sort of connecting some of these things together
and summarizing and pointing out recommendations. And I
really look forward to reading your more fulsome written
submissions. Chi-miigwetch.

MS. KATHERINE HENSEL: (Native word).

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Well, I
echo what my colleagues have said. We look forward to
reading your final submissions.

Once again, I want to thank you for -- I don’t mean this in a cold way at all -- the surgical precision that you show, not only in your submissions, but in questions that you’ve asked throughout our hearings. It's been very helpful for us, to start with, but also, it shows me that your clients are very lucky to have you as counsel.

Thank you so much.

MS. KATHERINE HENSEL: Thank you.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MS. VIOLET FORD: The next Party with Standing that Commission counsel would like to request to come to the podium is -- and forgive me if I pronounce this -- I think it's Women Walking Together, if you can just advise -- it's Darlene O’Kemaysim-Sicotte.

---SUBMISSIONS BY/REPRÉSENTATIONS PAR DARLENE O’KEMNAYSIM–SICOTTE:

MS. DARLENE O’KEMNAYSIM–SICOTTE: Good morning. I'm sad, nervous, hopeful, nervous, excited in a weird way about the future. We've worked so hard and I'm really pleased with all the parties that we saw over the last six months and getting to know how they do their thing.
I'll just start my presentation.

Thank you, tansi. Firstly, I want to acknowledge the Creator for giving us all such a beautiful day, and also acknowledge the prayers and drum this morning, the pipe ceremony, and their carriers.

I am the non-legal advocate and here on behalf of Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik, Women Walking Together, from the Treaty 6 area in the City of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

As we sit here in Algonquin land, which is on unceded territory, you and I are all sitting on a very unique area which represents space, part of the first contact with settler society in Canada’s history.

This week is about truth, talking about it, being honest, and Canada being accountable. It includes the four Rs for Indigenous people, especially Indigenous women: respect, recognition, resurgence, and even revolution.

As you know, our people have tried many ways, many forms to carry out the truth. We still face obstacles that are always in front of us -- the residential school, the Sixties Scoop, and the biggest barrier, the Indian Act.

I echo what Chief Marie-Anne Day Walker said at the police hearing in Regina in June 2018.
"I stand here as a woman, an Indigenous (Native word) Cree woman, a great-grandmother, myself a grandmother. We are able leaders, strong leaders, strong women in the future.

"The Inquiry is a place and an opportunity for our people to speak the truth, to be strong, and that those prayers that were said this morning asking the Creator to be with us will always be with us to give us that strength, to give us that courage, and we need to stand together.

"Nobody wants to talk about the ‘R’ word, racism and that's the biggest challenge we all have, is to overcome that so at the end of the day, at the end of the week, that we do better than yesterday. That's all I ask, and that our Treaties, our First Nations, our Treaties are paramount. We need to honour these together." (As read)

Good morning to the Chief Commissioner
Marion Buller, Commissioner Qajaq Robinson, Commissioner Brian Eyolfson, and Commissioner Michèle Audette, the National Family Advisory, and fellow Parties with Standing. Last but not least, families of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ2S.

Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik Women Walking Together final report was focused on a human rights-based approach, an ad-hoc practitioner experience with no government funding, no office, and not even non-profit status for the last 13 years.

Iskwewuk laid out in our report consultations with families, policy change arguments, awareness education, measuring change in the media, the sustainable development goals and national implementation strategy, anti-racism national strategy, health, aftercare, and feel for missing women, the memorial fund and commemoration fund, and Iskwewuk recommendations, calls to action, a missing persons national centre, a missing Indigenous women and men’s fund.

I will be sharing some of these keys on this oral closing submission, as this Inquiry knows that there is a great need to support families of the missing, the taken, the murdered, and nearly-murdered Indigenous women and girls, which includes to maintain some intense and thorough contact, building rapport and trusting
relationships with family members.

We must always bring attention and honour to the memory of the missing, the taken, the murdered, and nearly-murdered Indigenous women and girls.

We do this by attempting to keep up with a central record and send out these alerts of missing persons around the country and with our allies, raising awareness and fostering prevention through education and political action, missing, taken, murdered Indigenous women and girls.

We do this to promote the dignity of all women, particularly Indigenous women and girls, networking, partnering with organizations also dedicated to the issue of missing, taken, murdered, and nearly-murdered Indigenous women and girls. We do this to maintain contact and communication with organizations, groups, families, and individuals with similar concerns and goals.

In our policy change arguments we have in our closing submission, we are including primary objectives that should provide a consistent and systemic approach to modify and improve current policies and legislation on public safety and prevention of violence against Indigenous women and girls by the country. The intention is to have effective processes in all areas of
At this closing, Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik will focus on 1) access to justice for families, 2) families experience of treatment by RCMP after reporting, 3) families experience of search process, 4) systemic racism as tragedy, and 5) the Human Rights Watch SAS policy. In our face-to-face request to Minister Carolyn Bennett, Crown, Indigenous Relations in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, we shared that we in Saskatchewan hope to have five FILU locations. To date, only one FILU office is operated in two locations in Regina and in Saskatoon, despite the fact that Saskatchewan is considered one of the four hotspots in Canada. But we all know that Canada is a hotspot for missing women.

Despite the June 2018 announcement that the FILU's will be funded until 2020, we are actually needing this to last 5 to 10 years, because our women and girls are still going missing. The families of MMIWG 2SLGBTQ to complement any existing national crime prevention centre initiatives, we believe this work is needed to provide national leadership on effective ways to prevent and reduce the crime of missing, then found murdered, by intervening on the risk factors before the crime of missing, then found murdered, happens.

This can't happen if federal departments
and agencies don't contribute or work directly or indirectly with each other. We must have all of them work together on this: Public Safety Canada, RCMP, Correctional Service of Canada, the Department of Justice, the Canadian Centre of Justice Statistics, Canadian Heritage, Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. All these partners are to supplement this access to justice by families of MMIW.

This brings me to the hopeful changes in policy of RCMP urban police services when families of MMIW LGBTQ approach these spaces regarding the reporting of their missing loved ones. From the recommendations of the Commission on First Nations and Métis Peoples and Justice Reform in Saskatchewan, we add and support and made focus of several of those recommendations.

That the Government of Saskatchewan and Government of Canada, in view of the fact that it invest in community policing initiatives, conduct province-wide surveys every two years to monitor the degree of public satisfaction regarding policing within all communities.

We also recommend that an Aboriginal liaison worker or volunteer individual be available for First Nations, Métis, or Inuit upon their arrival at a
police station or detachment office.

We also recommend an independent complaint investigation agency that will meet the needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit with the objective of having such agencies around the communities in the Country of Canada. In Saskatchewan, the FSIN Special Investigation Unit will hopefully continue to reflect and respect that spirit and intent with those supports.

For any policies that are focused on search and rescue, families are told and learn for themselves that there is limited supports, resources, or search vehicles. We need to have search efforts and emergency preparedness plans for, one, search of missing Indigenous persons; two, sexual assault; three, suicide, and these require staff, resources, and a fleet of vehicles. In Saskatchewan, searches predominantly take place with the families whom are currently and often enduring trauma while hunters and group-known trackers take their place.

Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik has since inception 13 years ago has made efforts to tackle the race issue regarding MMIWG 2SLGBTQ during every aspect of our awareness and remembrance on the way victims of MMIW LGBTQ are portrayed.

Currently, an anti-racism strategy is taking place across the country with Minister for the
Department of Heritage, Honourable Pablo Rodriguez. This is an opportunity for the Commission to witness what has happened to the families of MMIW LGBTQ about their loved identities, their personal attitudes, and their own beliefs and behaviours towards the families by general society in understanding the impact of racism on the development of our families and our children of MMIW experience.

There is a need to decentre and extend sympathy, sympathy and empathy, by giving, providing awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the Indigenous cultural experiences and histories of Indigenous individuals and Indigenous groups. This requires many changemaker leaders to develop anti-racist attitude skills and build on that confidence in and out of our schools, offices, institutions, homes, and governments.

In regard to the aftercare health, Iskwewuk acknowledges fully the challenges and barriers of First Nations, Métis, Inuit in Canada which holds many human rights violations. In June 2018, the government announced 20 million to healthcare for families of Indigenous MMIWG 2SLGBTQ. As of early fall, all of that 20 million has already been disbursed country-wide. I am not certain that these funds are being used once more for other health services needs other than mental, physical, emotional, and
spiritual needs of the families of MMIW.

It took almost a year to finally submit my aftercare plan to the Inquiry. I was very insistent to plan a feast, a mentoring with a female Indigenous Elder, massage therapy, and hopefully some counselling. I was pleased to see that the Indigenous Services Canada updated their mental health counselling coverage prior approval request form with a tick-off for clients seeking counselling services related to the impact of MMIW. So I am just putting that out there that there is counsellors out there, there is a tick-off.

As part of our recommendations, we reiterate the possibility of two health positions for Canada, an Indigenous health auditor, an Indigenous health ombudsman. As Dr. Barry Lavallee said in Toronto expert hearings, "it would be a good start", after Iskwewuk had cross-examined him.

These positions would be required to review and report to Indigenous peoples and to Parliament on progress and failures of healthcare to Indigenous peoples. The ombudsman would respond to and resolve complaints about their healthcare experience.

In our recommendations, Iskwewuk suggests that efforts pay attention to the UN 17 sustainable development goals where 11 of 17 affect the daily lives of
Indigenous women and girls in our country. Canada scored 1.5 out of 7 on a rating for meeting these goals, and that's discouraging and shocking.

Canada has now opened a SDG office under the Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development, the Honourable Minister Duclos. In particular, we must pay attention to Goal Number 5, which talks about violence against women, and Goal Number 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

At this time, I want to take us back to some transcripts of previous expert hearings held this spring that supplement the SDG goals.

In my cross-examine to Dr. Dalee Sambo-Dorough, I introduced myself as:

"'Good morning. My name is Darlene Rose O'Kemaysim-Sicotte. I am the Co-Chair for Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik, it's Women Walking Together. We're a grassroots organization in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in Treaty 6. We actually have been doing our work for [13] years. We...don't have [any] government funding, we don't have no office, we're not even non-profit. So we've had a long journey on this work
on awareness, remembrance, and supports to families, in particular.
So my first question is Dr. Dalee, and my six questions to be to her and then a few others.
In [her] testimony, [she] spoke about the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women in her 12-day visit to Canada in April 2018, in particular, about the ongoing systemic inequalities, and violence against Indigenous women in Canada.
The expert visited Ottawa, Iqaluit, Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg, and this goal was to review, assess and address gender-based violence against women to ensure that Canada is honouring its commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, with special attention to the situation of Indigenous women who face multiple and interconnected forms of discrimination.
and violence.

My question is, do you agree the biggest challenge is the inability of the current government to commit to a long-term political will to address this?"

Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough responds,

"Thank you for the question. I think it's fair to say that, at least with this current government, there has been [...] expressions of willingness.

The campaign promise of the Trudeau Government, not to mention the mandate letters that were issued to various members of his Cabinet with regard to implementation of the UN Declaration, but also the reference, the specific reference, for example, to Minister Carolyn Bennett, indicate and expressly state reference to international human rights law. Given that, [these] two items, the campaign promise, the subsequent promise, [then] finally elected, as well as the mandate letters, that it appears there
is an opening [of] an opportunity to do so.

Political enterprises and political will, I cannot point to you for certain, and I think to some extent it is a call to action to all of us to uphold these promises. And I would regard them as solemn obligations, especially when you see the statements of the ministers within the hallowed halls of the UN General Assembly.

[Minister] Jody Wilson-Raybould spoke to the UN General Assembly, Minister Carolyn Bennett spoke to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. So I would characterise [these] as solemn obligations, the representatives of government who have made important pronouncements.

And words matter, as I said yesterday. So I would suggest that, absolutely, and let's see how the promise intersects with the political will [to] regard to, not only the UN
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but as stated in the mandate letters, other international human rights law."

I go on to ask,

"Do you agree that Canada should immediately, in terms of the visit from the Rapporteur, to immediately implement legislation and provide maximum resources to address the inequality of access to housing, funds to education, employment training and child welfare on reserves, and if so, can you expand?"

Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough responds,

"The short answer is absolutely. I think that the visit of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women is a alarm. And usually, when you hear an alarm, you pay attention, you take action, you exit the building. Whatever it takes; right?

So as far as the opportunities, I think at [that] moment that she issued these statements, it would have been
highly constructive for Indigenous women across Canada to stand up, link arms, and say, did you hear what she said. Sort of along the lines of what Corey [...] was saying in [his] relation to children.

I think that there are numerous options on the basis of the statements that she made, and as you know, the forthcoming actual country report. And in fact, that may have been an opportune time in terms of [...] issuing of the report to take further action at the local level and the regional level, [and] at the national level, but also, I think it's an invitation at the international level."

I go on to ask her,

"This is still in regards to [your] visit [to] the Rapporteur. Do you think Canada, all provinces and territories, should redesign the child welfare and foster care system and practices, in particular those
children left behind of the missing, murdered Aboriginal women?"

Dr. Sambo Dorough responds,

"Yes. I must say as a proviso, that I am not intimately familiar with the specific conditions of Indigenous children in Canada. However, if the issues are similar to those in Alaska, a concrete, constructive response needs to be undertaken, especially in the context of orphan children.

This is [...] when, for example, when Corey O'Soup spoke about the best interest of the child, the Indian Child Welfare Act in the United States and with [...] our communities, our Inuit communities and other Alaska native communities that actually mean something and something important. The urgent nature of it, the threats and risk to such orphaned children needs immediate response."

I go on to ask her,

"Do you [...] agree that a monitoring mechanism is recommended and
recommended in [...] the document of CEDAW to track and monitor the conditions of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls post Inquiry is necessary to prevent further violence against Indigenous women?"

"Yes. I would only amend that statement to say throughout, and not necessarily post Inquiry. And I think that [there] is one of the key messages of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women as she left Canada following her country visit. That even before the work of the Inquiry is concluded that action should be taken.

So I would say that not only post Inquiry, but as soon as possible, [...] and I think there are ways in which action could be taken."

In my last question to Dr. Dorough I ask, "Do you agree that [there should be] a national action plan on violence against women [and] should [it] have a
specific prevention of violence
against Indigenous women that reflects
the barriers the *Indian Act* and to
accommodate the over 620 [First
Nations] different communities [and
Métis Nations in Canada and] their
languages and cultural practices as a
plan?"

She responds,

"I think that the first step should be
outreach to all of those Indigenous,
First Nations, Métis as to what the
major priority is in regard to the
*Indian Act*.

I am not familiar with
discussions to date regarding the
*Indian Act*. I'm familiar to some
extent with its impacts upon
especially Indigenous women but I
think that any kind of national action
plan in response to these issues needs
to start with dialogue with the
Indigenous peoples concerned and their
exercise of the right of self-
determination because they are the
self in self-determination and that a national action plan should begin in that way in order to identify the priorities and what the specific problems are and what the potential solutions are.

If there is dialogue and discussion about instituting a national action plan, it should also draw from the developments that have taken place at the international level. Yesterday I referred to the U.N. declaration, a range of [...] international human rights instruments, as well as the sustainable development goals and you could probably very quickly and easily identify the alignment of the issues and concerns related to the Indian Act, the status and the rights and interests of Indigenous women and girls and put together something fairly comprehensive."

That ended my questions for Dr. Dorough, but I had questions for Brenda Gunn. In her testimony she
spoke about,

"...forced disappearance may be a rule of customary international law which would apply in Canada.

Would you say that this forced disappearance implies murder when they're the first one -- [when they're the first --] when there's first abduction, then detainment ending with location of the person that was abducted? In Canada, how would we hold Canada responsible under the international convention for the protection of all persons from enforced disappearances? If so, would you recommend that compensation and restitution take place for the families of missing and murdered [Indigenous] women and girls?"

Brenda Gunn responds,

"Yes, I did say that [...] forced disappearance is beginning to be recognized as a rule of customary international law. And so my point was if it is a rule of customary
international law."

At least some people in some communities and some are making that argument.

"And so my point [is] if it is a rule of customary [...] law, then [...] it [does] apply directly in Canada as law and that was sort of held by the court in 2008 with how customary international law applies.

I did raise that convention and the idea of [...] forced disappearance because I do think that many of the circumstances that we know about the process of murdered and missing Indigenous women and the way in which Canada has known about this situation for a significant period of time and arguably has failed to act in a way to successfully prevent, investigate, prosecute, punish and compensate that, you know, this seems to fit [...] with what [...] convention is aiming to do.

Now I [...] want to be clear."

She says,

"I know that Canada has not actually
ratified that convention, so we can't use that convention generally but holding Canada responsible I think is always a challenge. Despite being a lawyer, I don't always think that litigation is our best [-- best] approach [or final approach].

I do think that the inquiry is part of the process of holding Canada responsible and I think that's part of [-- I mean,] holding someone responsible is also understanding what they've done, right. And so the truth that is being sought through the inquiry process I think is key to that accountability process.

I can't say that the international standards do speak to compensation and reparations. Reparations is the term generally for a remedy in international law. So it would be reparations and compensation is what they speak to. And if so Canada is found to have these obligations, which I strongly believe
they do, and has failed to uphold
them, then yes, international law
requirements does include aspects of
compensation and reparations. And
it’s important to also think that
reparations internationally can
include a broad range of activities.
Yesterday I spoke about some of the
cases of genocide that I worked on in
Guatemala and for those communities,
they were looking for a range of
things. There was some personal
compensation that was made but in a
couple of the communities, there were
memorials that were built. [Some] […]
of them in particular was a big stone
[monument] […] and it [had] […] the
look of a book and all around it [had]
[...] all of the names of the people who
were lost in particular to genocide.
There were dollars set [aside] […] for
community health. [And] I’m trying to
think of the range of activities.
[But] there is a need to apologize
publicly and in various Indigenous
languages and on the radio and to make
[...] decision publicly available so
that, you know, for the survivors and
others to know that the genocide had
occurred and that Guatemala had [that]
[...] part of that responsibility. So I
[...] just want to point [...] that
compensation and individual financial
payments can be [a] part of that but
it can also be much broader and
include some of those requirements to
do community building [...] some of
those socio-economic programming that
is necessary to adjust the situation
going forward, [with] [...] both a cause
and a consequence in that sort of way.
[...] I’m really glad that you [...] [gave] that example.”

And that’s what I want to share from the
expert hearings that had impacted the kind of work that
Iskwewuk does.

I’m going to read a bit from a victim
impact statement that I submitted during the trial for
late Daleen Bosse-Muskego. Oh, God. This first sentence
is always so hard.
"I have been deeply impacted by the missing person case of Daleen Bosse-Muskego who resided in the city of Saskatoon in May 2004 with her husband Jeremiah and her daughter Faith. She was a student in one of our Native Studies classes at the U of S. You could say she was an adopted student daughter and a resident of Saskatoon with four children, an employee at the University of Saskatchewan Department of Native Studies. In the work of an admin a person gets a panoramic view of the residents of the city who are of Indigenous ancestry. It was not uncommon to meet students who have enrolled at the U of S and interact with them. Maybe not face-to-face, but work amongst them as they pursue their studies and become involved in city wide gatherings. As an Indigenous woman who is active in the City of Saskatoon, you become to rely on seeing these active students go from student experience to building a
life, maybe in the city, or leaving to pursue their career once convocation has taken place. As a mother myself of four, it was not uncommon to take my children with me, especially my only daughter, to city events. And many times, I’ve had the opportunity to see late Daleen there with her little family. She would garner a smile. We would admire each other’s children and just be happy, I guess, to be in a city that did not always welcome Indigenous peoples to their gatherings or circles. After Daleen went missing I was still employed at the U of S as an administrator; a unique post for most women on campus. But during that time there was much concern and worry from students, instructors and some of the public that were known to be in her circles. I was at the assembly of First Nations gathering the day she was last seen. I understand she had worn a black top and I’m confused if I had seen her and
not because our department had a display table close to the assembly that I was manning, but because it was a warm summer day. No one wore coats from what I remember and then I’m thinking she might have come down the stairs that afternoon around 2:30 p.m., but I am not sure. From that day forward, I would not have known how long and dedicated my life would turn in wondering what happened to Daleen.”

I’m good.

“What I know is that I missed a community member and a student which staffers tend to bond with, in terms of admiration and nurturing capacity. So when someone you know is an acquaintance it bothers you a lot and worry sets in. As an Indigenous woman, we were always very proud of our students walking into class, onto the campus or into the department offices for services and support. Knowing she was not seen for so long
and that no search had taken place I often wondered about in those early years of being what I call “the Daleen experience”. When you are situated in a role as an administrator for a huge campus and being a sole administrator in Native Studies, it was very a common place to discuss, monitor and evaluate trending news, and perhaps provide experts and interviews with journalism in all sorts of mediums and the late Daleen was a steady discussion in our department. A month later a colleague’s son on the campus who was enrolled I ITEP program which late Daleen was in, decided to search on his own for her. He knew the colour of her car and in June 2004 located the car. I recall my colleague, the late Trish Monture, shared this with me during one of our brief visits on a business campus day. She was truly concerned because it was affecting her son who found the car, another student. So that is when it
really began to set in with me that
this is more serious. As a staffer I
felt it was my duty and responsibility
to monitor and follow the story and
situation in the case other affected
people need support, advice and
sharing of information. Not only to
settle their minds but also to see if
there’s anything they can do or if any
other persons’ lives were in danger.
That is how I lived that first year.
We all lived that way the first year.
Silently monitoring late Daleen’s
disappearance. Keeping my eyes and
ears open at a distance without
seeming nosey, without trying to act
uncaring or trying to be an
instigator. My personal feelings as a
human being began to be really tested.
A year later an active community
member named Arlene Carter, whom I
knew to have raised in Onion Lake
First Nation, met with a handful of
students, staff and friends in a local
pub on a Friday night to discuss the
next day. We planned a search in the Sutherland area. I remember it was cold and starting to blow. I went home early that evening and waited on the news of the search through the media. Nothing in the news came up about the search. My children were in daycare during the week so leaving early in the day on a Saturday to search was not something I could do with them without them getting very cold, but I knew my heart was with the students as they searched, as would become the fashion of my role as a campus administrator. The Student Council Office was just a floor below me and so there were always ways to keep focused on what we were willing to share. Anyhow, come October 2005, there are over a dozen missing Indigenous women and girls in and around the city that were very alarming to a lot of people. Late Daleen was one of these humans. A group formed in Saskatoon and I became
a member. Was asked to liaison with families. This meant having to know the missing person’s family, their heritage, where they resided, the family composite. Did they have a husband, a boyfriend, a common law. Were they mothers, sisters, nieces or grand-daughters. As part of this role a person will get to know the last whereabouts of the missing person. I learned a great deal about late Daleen. From what I could see, when she was with us is that she was very energetic and enthusiastic and loved to smile.” (As read)

I work at the Gordon Tootoosis Nikaniwin Theatre and she was in the first program. I wanted to pop that in there.

“I learned she had been giving some personal items away, something that Indigenous people see as signs of something either of someone prepared to leave this life or of not returning. These kind of revelations would break my heart over the next 10
years... over the last 10 years. On Saturday December 10th, 2005, on International Human Rights Day, a group posted an event in honour, remember, and bring awareness to those who are affected by missing -- to missing then found murdered. A picture of late Daleen was brought to the event and put on a chair with a blanket.

This was an extremely delicate time for me to contain my personal feelings of anguish and suppress extremely strong emotions, a common thread throughout these years, and invite families to possibly speak to journalists, provide gifts on behalf of event organizers, and generally watch over and protect the families during what would be a very public display of their frustration, grief, and anger of the missing person experience.

When this is happening your mind becomes a flurry of the missing as we
do these public events, so late Daleen was on my mind the days leading up to that day, the day of the event and afterwards during the hub of the season, the Christmas holidays. Over the next 3 years -- over the next 3 more years there was no location of late Daleen. I became very upset in the early summer of 2008 wondering why after all the work the family has done to educate, speak to MPs, do their walks and (indiscernible) and searches and publicly work with people to help them find her was all done in vain, no word yet. And it broke my heart again, asking if the Creator was not listening to our prayers, to their prayers. And seeing the effort of so many people that late Daleen be found. Then during the Missing Women's Conference at the U of R in August 2008, we learned that she was located. The news came during a week of work. So I broke down in tears and asked my vice-president could I leave that day.
I had mixed feelings: jubilation, heartbreak, and sobriety, curiosity and pain mixed as to what would be shared.

It was during this time that Walk for Justice was coming through Saskatoon, and they just..." (As read)

I don't know how Creator puts us all together, but I just want to thank Bernie and Gladys for being there when this time was happening:

"'We were able to say good-bye and lay to rest this dear and beautiful woman, and seeing her remains in the coffin in a small box. It broke my heart over and over. I again suppressed as much as possible, wanting to scream and scream. 'How wrong is all this?' Over the past 10 years, this anguish and the loss of late Daleen affected me physically. I developed anxiety, emotionally I became depressed and I was sad. Mentally, I had anguish all the time throughout the process. And spiritually, I became weakened.

Reading news articles and hearing her
name and seeing images of her brings pain to my heart, along with all of the other families that we worked with. My ability to function sometimes during the hardest part of the work brings much anxiety. What I know is that of sister, daughter I barely knew became a very big part of my life after her missing story, and I will never get over what she endured, what her life could have been in that -- in the City of Saskatoon, or in her community of Onion Lake. Would we never again sit near each other at a community event to smile and say hi to each other ever again? I know that she would have been so happy, and by now we would have been good friends, if not one day be a colleague or a fellow activist in the work of women.'" (As read)

This victim impact statement affected the judge and he used it as part of his sentence. And I was very pleased with that because all this work that we do is not in vain, and it is effective, and we can't give up.
And those are my -- this is Iskwewuk's closing submission.

(APIPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

**MS. DARLENE O'KEMAYSIM-SICOTTE:** I just want to thank the supporters that are behind me. Judy Hughes, Elmere Decette (ph), Shirley Wolfe, Gladys Reddick, Bernie Williams, Carol Wolfe, Michelle Audette.

And I want to, lastly, say in memory of our missing sisters in Saskatchewan: Melanie Geddes; Dahleen Bosse Muskego; Amber Redman; Karina Bethanne Wolfe; Shelley Gail Napope, my cousin; Emily Osmond, Myrna's aunt; Victoria Nashacappo; Tamara Keepness; Courtney Brianna Johnstone; Happy Charles; Ashley Morin; Shirley Lonethunder; Marie Norma Mike; Brandy Wesaquate; Maggie Natomagan; Mary Goodfellow; Carolyn Burns; Edna Smith; Lavina Tochette; Corrine Moosomin; Myrna Montgrand; Joyce Lieeotson; Ernestine Kayson; Patricia Maye Favel. These are some of the families that we have known -- and Danita Faith Bigeagle.

Do you have any questions? Am I done?

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

**MS. VIOLET FORD:** Thank you for your submission. Just a couple of questions as to the documents that were submitted. Do you -- would you like to have those entered into as exhibits?
MS. DARLENE O’KEMAYSIM-SICOTTE: Yes.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Thank you.

MS. DARLENE O’KEMAYSIM-SICOTTE: And I had a PowerPoint that could be submitted.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Yes. That's part of ---

MS. DARLENE O’KEMAYSIM-SICOTTE: I was hoping it would be played. Okay.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Those are the ones I'm referring to.

MS. DARLENE O’KEMAYSIM-SICOTTE: Yeah.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Okay. The exhibit numbers?

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Okay.

So we have the summary document, that will be Exhibit 21.

---EXHIBIT NO./PIÈCE NO. 21:

Bilingual executive summary of oral submissions (13 pages)

Submitted by: Darlene R. Okemaysim-Sicotte, Representative for Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik

MS. VIOLET FORD: Yeah.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: We have the recommendations that are separate as Exhibit 22.

---EXHIBIT NO./PIÈCE NO. 22:

List of recommendations (two pages)
Submitted by: Darlene R. Okemaysim-
Sicotte, Representative for Iskwewuk
E-wichiwitochik

MS. VIOLET FORD: Yeah.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: And a separate PowerPoint as Exhibit 23; is that right? Yeah, okay. Twenty-three (23), please, is the PowerPoint.

---EXHIBIT NO./PIÈCE NO. 23:

Slide presentation of Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik (36 slides)

Submitted by: Darlene R. Okemaysim-
Sicotte, Representative for Iskwewuk
E-wichiwitochik

MS. VIOLET FORD: Thank you. If the Chief Commissioner and Commissioners have questions.

COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON: I don't have any questions. I just want to say thank you.

When you say you're a non-legal advocate, you know, I hope you recognize how powerful that is to be in that role, and you've done it with a clear commitment to the women that you work with, the families that you support, and the women that you stand with. And you've brought, with your questions and your presence and your approach to how you have done this, so much information for us to consider, but also paving the way for these
kinds of processes that tend to be -- that we expect to be really legal and it's only for the lawyers to do. And you've really helped break that and --

**MS. DARLENE O’KEMAYSIM–SICOTTE:** It's very, very hard.

**COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** But you've --

**MS. DARLENE O’KEMAYSIM–SICOTTE:** We were winging it the whole time.

**COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Secret lawyers wing it all the time too.

No there was no way for anyone to know how to do this, and you found your way and your voice, and thank you so much for sharing it with us.

And to the women standing beside you, Myrna, and all the women with Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik, thank you.

And you know, I had questions but they were for Ms. Audette behind you.

*(LAUGHTER/RIRES)*

**COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Teasing.

Thank you. Thank you again.

**COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** I also just want to thank you very much as well, Darlene, for your
submissions, your very thoughtful, powerful submissions. And thank you so much for contributing to the work of the Inquiry and for your thorough submissions and detailed recommendations that you’ve provided to us which I have been reviewing so and I will continue to do so. So thank you very much.

**MS. DARLENE O'KEMAYSIM-SICOTTE:** You're welcome. I was shocked that we put 64 in our whole file - report. They're not numbered. They're all over the place.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Darlene, miigwetch. Thank you very much for bringing the beauty, the wisdom, and strengths from our women who are on the frontlines every day doing the hard work. Thank you so much. You’ve made a big difference to our work. Thank you.

**MS. DARLENE O'KEMAYSIM-SICOTTE:** You're welcome.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

**MS. VIOLET FORD:** Chief Commissioner, that concludes the parties that are scheduled to be heard this morning. The time now is 12:30 and we're scheduled to return back at 1:40 for the afternoon submissions. I'll seek your direction on taking an hour and 10 minute lunch break.
CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:  Yes, we'll reconvene as scheduled at 1:40 this afternoon.

Thank you.

MS. VIOLET FORD:  Thank you.

--- Upon recessing at 12:30 p.m./L’audience est suspendue à 12h30

--- Upon resuming at 1:43 p.m./L’audience est reprise à 13h43

MS. VIOLET FORD:  Good afternoon. Chief Commissioner and Commissioners, Commission counsel would like to call the last Party with Standing for the afternoon, the New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, Amanda LeBlanc. So you have 40 minutes. Thank you.

---SUBMISSIONS BY/REPRÉSENTATIONS PAR AMANDA LeBLANC:

MS. AMANDA LeBLANC:  Thank you.

Good afternoon, elders, families, friends, Chief Commissioner, and Commissioners, Parties with Standing, and other guests here today.

I'd like first to acknowledge the unceded Algonquin territory that we're gathering on and thank the Algonquin people for allowing us to do this really important work on their territory. It's both an honour and an obligation that I'm here today representing our constituents.
My name is Amanda LeBlanc. I'm from the Wolastoqiyik Nation along the beautiful Wolastoq River in New Brunswick. I'm here today as the interim President-in-Chief of the New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, and I speak to you representing our constituents as well as the constituents of our sister organization, the Native Council of Nova Scotia which we've collectively received standing.

I'll first introduce who we are. The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, formerly the New Brunswick Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians, was founded in 1972. We constitute a community of Indigenous people, both status, non-status, territorial, non-territorial, who live in the ancestral homelands of the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, and Passamaquoddy peoples.

The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council is duly mandated to protect the rights of Indigenous people who live off reserve and to have direct representation to government, exemplifying self-governance practices.

The Native Council of Nova Scotia advocates for united voice between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Nova Scotia. As an elected body, the Native Council of Nova Scotia respects traditional Mi'kmaq
governance, maintaining the relationship with the communities' ancestral homelands.

Through political advocacy and collaboration with regional, national, and international organizations, the Native Council of Nova Scotia works to improve the social, economical, and political conditions of the Mi'kmaq and other Aboriginal peoples living in Nova Scotia.

Since 1971, Native councils have represented the interests of off-reserve, status and non-status Indians, and Métis all across Canada. While we are all Indigenous, historically, some of us have not always been recognized by Canada as Indian people. Through our national voice, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, we've led and participated in monumental court decisions, most recently, the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in Daniels. For 16 years, the Congress of Aboriginal People fought tirelessly for the recognition of rights of non-status and Métis people.

Canada has employed various methods, including the Indian Registry under the Indian Act, to control, civilize, and assimilate indigenous people; in other words, to relinquish their responsibilities. With the government's thought to register all Indian people, a large people didn’t register. Some didn’t know they were
supposed to, others were afraid to acknowledge their heritage, and some were deliberately left off this registry. They and their children were therefore not entitled.

Some people were voluntarily and involuntarily enfranchised if they wanted to access things that the average Canadian had access to like education, employment.

One of the more familiar ways that a person became a non-Indian pertains to women marrying non-status men and the children who were born from these marriages. The policy result was to deny their rights to the creation of a new class of non-status Indian or the "forgotten Indian".

Many non-status women across the country, including strong leaders from our communities, lobbied governments to repeal the discriminatory practises and policies of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

In 1985, after many years of pressure, the Canadian government attempted to fix the damage the Indian Act had caused. As my colleagues have pointed out on various occasions throughout this Inquiry, Bill C-31 enabled those who were negatively impacted by section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act and their first-generation children to register as status Indians. However, the
change and the subsequent changes did not address other discriminatory practices in the *Indian Act* and how it applies to Indigenous people who live off reserve. Inequities remain today and we remain the innocent victims of that Indian policy.

While many who were non-status in the early 1970s are registered Indians today, most continue to live off reserve and are still represented by Native councils, not the bands that their status cards associated them with.

Far too often, the Native councils and the people we represent, the off-reserve, status, and non-status Indian people, are overlooked by governments in what we believe to be a deliberate attempt to shut the door in our faces, preferring to follow the myth that all Aboriginal peoples living in the Maritimes are represented by reserve communities that are scattered throughout.

As the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People stated,

"There is a history in Canada of putting Aboriginal people in their place on reserves."

Nations have been divided by policy and legislation. The violence and the perpetuation of these policy decisions was echoed during the Inquiry proceedings.
in Moncton. A map of New Brunswick that included the 15 reserve communities was shown by the National Inquiry and it was asked for comment by the knowledge keepers.

Elder Meg Mahon (phonetic) stated,

"The map that everyone is looking at, that identifies us. It is the first act of violation against us, primarily against women. When we look at the land, we are looking at our sacred Mother, looking at ourselves as a people. New Brunswick is a colonial border. We are the Wabanaki." (As read)

For nearly 50 years, the Native councils have been asserting our right to self-govern our own communities. As proclaimed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples again, we are a political community. However, our members are disadvantaged and denied the necessary material benefits to manage their affairs. They face consistent erasure due to the disproportionate focus by Canadian settlers on Indigenous reserve communities. This makes non-status and off-reserve people extremely vulnerable to continued racism and discrimination in their daily lives.
It has long been recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada that off-reserve and non-status Aboriginal peoples are distinct groups with Charter rights under section 15(1), even though they may be very diverse. The Court has noted that these groups have faced a long history of discrimination from others in Canadian society, especially our women and girls.

The Supreme Court of Canada decision in Daniels as late as 2014 affirmed that the federal and provincial refusal to acknowledge jurisdiction over off-reserve, non-status, and Métis peoples, the daily impacts of the discrimination and marginalization experienced by our women and girls, refusing to mention them in policy puts Indigenous women and girls at risk of greater violence.

Again in Moncton knowledge keeper Dr. Judy Clark spoke on the continuing impact of the Indian Act’s gender discrimination. She stated, “We are survivors of the Indian Act, of systemic racism and discrimination.”

Although the Canadian courts again have long recognized that these discriminatory practices exist, they continue to insist on their application when claiming to fulfil their duties to Indigenous people in Canada and they perpetuate the systemic violence.

In R. v. Midiskis (phonetic), a Section
15(1) challenge, the Federal Court of Appeal ruled that off reserve communities as functioning Aboriginal communities and as worthy of recognition as a reserved-base community.

Today over 75 percent of Indigenous people live off reserve and nearly 24 percent are non-status. By Canada ignoring non-status and off reserve people through their chosen representation, such as Native councils, it places our women and children in extremely vulnerable positions to violent victimization.

So I’d like to talk to you a bit about what community means to us.

So through RCAP and countless other court proceedings it has been long established that we have a right to self-government and a right to self-representation.

One of the definitions of community is a body of persons or nations having a common history or a common social, economic, and political interest, but politically community has widely been accepted by Canada to that which is attached to a reserve.

Out of necessity, Native councils came into existence. We established our own communities. We celebrate together, we grieve together, and we rally to support each other when the call is made.
The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, to which Canada is signatory, states that Indigenous people have a right to participate in decision making matters in which would affect their rights through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures as well as to maintain and develop their own Indigenous decision making institutions; Article 18.

And it further states that Indigenous people have a right to determine their own identity and membership in accordance with their customs and traditions to determine the structures and to select the membership of their institutions in accordance with their own procedures; Article 33.

Still Canada continues to refuse to accept our claim to community, even after decades of reaffirmation by the courts. Because we’re not a colonial creation, we’re not allowed the same recognition that reserve communities experience. As it was stated this morning in relation to child welfare, our right to self-govern has not been extinguished.

So here’s what we bring to the table. You’re living two lifestyles when you live among settlers. Unfortunately our constituents are vulnerable to the day-to-day racism and violence in a way that they have no way
from retreating from. However, because of our particular positioning along Canadian society our organizations bring a unique set of expertise to the questions posed by this Inquiry because we are always interfacing between Indigenous communities and settler institutions. Another component is the expertise of Native councils to represent across tribal lines. Native councils are uniquely placed to realize that Nations extend beyond the colonial borders and therefore need to support our fluid and shifting communities.

We also shed light that those of us who have lived off reserve, for whatever reason, have unique lived experiences then those who may have spent time in their connected reserve communities. We are constantly having to remind Canadian mainstream society that we are Indigenous.

When we are asked where are you from, and we don’t respond with a reserve community that they’re familiar with, our identity is immediately diminished in the eyes of the asker. We’re constantly defending who we are.

When we reach out to mainstream services and they don’t meet our needs, the phrase we’re often faced with is, “Well then go back to the reserve.” Native councils have had an exceptional
track record of working with researchers. We’ve developed our own research capacities over the last five decades. The recommendations that we provide to you we’ve developed from these research capacities.

We encourage the Commissioners to give due consideration to the weight of that track record. We also want to draw the Commissioners’ attention to the consistent reality in Canada that research outside of our own organizations is not focused on the off reserve populations, especially in the east.

This Inquiry has also heard from the other parties that have similar interests to ours. What we’re speaking to is connected to what you heard from Roy Stewart and Amy Hudson from NunatuKavut and Alisa Lombard from the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, specifically, that our women and girls have been marginalized and ignored through systemic racism; that the devaluation of our people and that the eraser and minimization of our history and that their policies were to get rid of us, all of which has impeded our ability to support our women and girls and the daily impacts of the discrimination and marginalization just because of where they live, all of which stems from the refusal of Canada to recognize our authority to represent them.

So now I’d like to talk a bit about why we
chose to participate in the National Inquiry process. We got involved because, like our sister organizations, we were concerned that the particularities of history and current realities in the east we’d be forgotten yet again. We also wanted to ensure that the women and girls who live off reserve and who may also be non-status had representation.

The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council initiated a research and community action project called “Looking out for Each Other.” This project was designed to enhance collective understanding of cases involving missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and sexual gender minorities in eastern Canada with a particular focus on the off reserve.

The objective is provide concrete and effective assistance to families and friends when an Indigenous person goes missing by supporting the Indigenous communities and organizations through collaboration, as well as to access the services and resources they require.

Activities include opportunities for families, friends, and communities to share their stories and their experiences in dealing with the law, with media, and the justice system when a loved one has experienced abuse, gone missing, or was murdered.
Information gathered is being used to support the development of culturally appropriate resources and supports at the community level. The stories provide valuable information in our work with the legal clinics and the law firms to provide services to people seeking this legal advice with policing services to ensure that protocols and tools are responsive to the needs of the Indigenous missing persons and their loved ones and with media to have more helpful and non-discriminatory reporting practices.

We’re also working with a team of researchers from the University of New Brunswick, Université du Québec à Montréal, St. Thomas University, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Mount Saint Vincent University, King’s College, and Dalhousie University to respond to a community identified gapped in practices, policies, media, and policing to develop tools and resources in collaborations with the communities and organizations to assist them in addressing the victimization and loss.

Throughout the Inquiry many have identified systemic discrimination at the heart of the missing and murdered Indigenous women tragedies. The recommendations of the New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council draws particular attention to Indigenous people who live off
As we’ve heard through the Inquiry, many experts are still unaware of how many people live off reserve and who represents them. The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council continues to hope for an inquiry that is inclusive of the lived realities and perspectives of Indigenous people who live off reserve. We hope that the recommendations that the Inquiry puts forward will not reflect this misunderstanding.

Therefore, to assist the Inquiry at this late stage to adequately understand and address the realities for many murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls and their families and communities, we respectfully make the recommendations in our final submission on behalf of us as well as the Native Council of Nova Scotia with whom we’ve collaborated in preparing the submission.

We committed to this process of the National Inquiry to ultimately achieve better outcomes of missing cases of Indigenous women and girls in the east and also for the overall betterment of Indigenous peoples and their communities, whatever that community may look like.

We’re hopeful that Canada will be truthful in upholding their commitments of implementing
recommendations of the Commission in a meaningful and timely manner. We also hope that the recommendations are truly inclusive and representative of all Indigenous women and girls regardless of status or residency.

With this hope, we still hold a bit of hesitancy due to Canada’s refusal to even acknowledge our existence in their oral submission.

I want to turn your attention now to Canada's 10 principles to respecting the relationship with Indigenous peoples.

We've heard Canada talk about adopting the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, yet at the same time, Canada perpetuates outright discrimination in their boldly written number 10, which states,

"A distinction-based approach is needed to ensure that the unique rights, interest and circumstances of First Nations, the Métis Nation and the Inuit are acknowledged, affirmed and implemented."

But how can Canada reconcile this exclusion with the UN's International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination which states in Article 1,
"In this Convention, the term "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on equal footing of human rights and the fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life."

How can we be confident that Canada's putting the needs of our constituents, our women and girls first while still trying to maintain this distinction-based approach?

Indeed, in Canada's oral submission this week, the act of only acknowledging three of the five national organisations and excluding the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Canada continues a broader politics of exclusion.

Now I'd like to discuss some of the recommendations that you'll see us putting forth to the Commission in our final submission. You'll find that we have 46 in the written submission, which include numerous
citations of the research that informs our position. We highlight the fact that urban and rural Indigenous people who live off reserve often have different experiences and needs from Indigenous people who live on reserve, and that a one-size-fits-all response are inadequate for adjusting the realities of the various Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The obligation to engage does not only rest with governments, their organisations or their various initiatives. The exclusion and omission of off reserve Indigenous people by researchers and educators is similarly unacceptable.

This is, in part, because when populations are not included in research, their existence and needs become or remain easy to ignore.

Now I want to start by making three overarching recommendations.

Firstly, that any of the recommendations by the National Inquiry must include a strong and meaningful representation from off reserve communities; secondly, that any recommendation that is not consultation-based must still have a focus on off reserve; and thirdly, that an inclusive approach of who is Indigenous needs to inform your recommendations.

To illustrate the inclusion of off reserve perspective I'd now like to draw your attention to a few
of the recommendations you'll find in our submission.

So the first recommendations are about our right to representation and the acknowledgement of that right.

As previously stated, through exclusion, Canada is impeding our right to representation. We call on the federal and provincial governments to correct their practices of erasure of non-status and off reserve Indigenous people and to consult with all Indigenous people, including through the five national organisations and their provincial affiliations.

Second recommendation. We call on researchers, educators and policy makers in Canada to collaborate with Native councils and friendship centres alike, to focus on off reserve populations in research, training, service provision and government programming, and to cease perpetuating the false idea that Indigenous people only live on reserves.

The third recommendation. As mentioned often throughout this inquiry, Indigenous people are perpetually placed in positions of having to educate settler service providers about Indigenous culture, social context and historical relations when seeking services or navigating the justice system. This can result in repetitive retraumatization. It forces Indigenous people
to explain and relive painful, systemic experiences in 
order to teach non-Indigenous people about the current 
realities of the systemic discrimination they face.

We call on all Canadian settler 
institutions to demonstrate through sustained and vigorous 
efforts that they're dedicated to acknowledging and 
correcting systemic wrongs committed against Indigenous 
people.

Our fourth recommendation. Mistrust 
permeates the interactions that Indigenous people have had 
with non-Indigenous institutions and services such as 
police and child welfare services. We've heard from many 
that neither trust these institutions, nor do they see a 
path forward and to allow a trusting relationship to be 
built.

Moreover, we've heard that some people view 
the measures that have been taken by institutions such as 
hiring more Indigenous employees and requiring cultural 
competency training as superficial changes that rather 
than a genuine interest and progress in improving how the 
institutions interact with Indigenous people.

This perception is important to recognise 
because given genuine efforts will not lead to improved 
trusting relationships of Indigenous people who do not 
believe that the institutions are interested in changing.
Institutions should expect resistance, frustration and continued distrust from Indigenous individuals and communities, but should nonetheless be committed to the sustained efforts required to improve institutional attitudes and interactions with Indigenous people across the country.

This challenging work must be done to truly work towards reconciliation and to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people in general and Indigenous women, girls and sexual gender minorities in particular.

It's simply not enough to state, all I can do is say "I'm sorry."

I want to draw your attention to a disturbing story, but it's one that illustrates this problem well. In preparation, please remember self care is important and please seek it if you feel the need to.

We've heard from police officers who are Indigenous and those who are women face continued discrimination in many police services. In our research, we heard from an Indigenous female police officer who was violently sexually assaulted at work by her commanding officer.

The commanding officer was pushed into retirement as a result and receives his full pension. And
despite being found guilty of the assault in a court of law, he was given an absolute discharge because the judge believed that going through the criminal trial meant that he had suffered enough for attacking his employee.

In contrast, the officer we spoke with says she's missed valuable promotion opportunities as a result of her complaint and that the assault -- and does not believe that she will ever be promoted from her current position for the same reason.

This appalling example illustrates how police officers who are members of marginalised groups can be left vulnerable to abuse by other officers without direct protections from sexual and racialised abuse and discrimination. It also sends a message that police services are unable or unwilling to properly support civilian Indigenous women if they cannot or will not protect their own in their own ranks.

With this, we call on the government and mainstream services to implement meaningful change with long-term strategies in place, realising they have decades of mistrust and lost confidence to overcome.

Now the next few recommendations are specifically in relation to police services.

Our fifth recommendation. We've heard in our research that the process for investigating civilian
complaints has been improved in some police forces.
However, it's unclear whether all forces are improving
civilian complaint investigations and whether similar
changes have been made to the process of investigating
internal complaints.

As we've heard in this inquiry, an example
of the need for better processes for investigating
civilian complaints against police services comes from the
response to the sexual and other abuse complaints by
several Indigenous women in the Sûreté du Québec or SQ
officers in Val D'Or, Quebec.

The women were let down by the Crown
prosecutors declining to prosecute any of the 6 SQ
officers who were named in the 35 complaints. Adding
insult to injury, some local police in Val D'Or began
wearing the wrist bands to symbolise support for the SQ in
light of the complaints.

This action was felt as an act of
aggression against the complainants, despite statements
that the bands were shown to show support for the SQ as a
whole, not for the suspended officers.

The response to the complaints in Val D'Or
shed light on the need for impartial and robust
investigations into complaints by civilians against police
officers. It also demonstrated the importance of
understanding the systemic violence and discrimination
that impacts both how police services interact with
Indigenous people and how police services investigate
complaints against officers.

The situation in Val D'Or raises further
questions about how complaints by officers against other
officers are investigated and what pressures could be
placed upon the complaining officer as a result.

We call on police services to increase
transparency and civilian oversight regarding how
complaints, both civilian and by officers, are
investigated and responded to.

Independent civilian oversight bodies
should be formed to achieve this goal. We join Ellen
Gabriel in the recommendation -- and recommend Indigenous
led authoritative and well-resourced oversight bodies.

At the very least, oversight bodies must
include seats for Indigenous representative organisations
with authority and resources to initiate independent
investigations when required.

Disproportionate representation from
marginalized communities is appropriate in these oversight
bodies, as the populations who are most subject to the
discrimination and abuse by police, such as Indigenous
people, have more experience and expertise with both
systemic discrimination and the discrimination perpetuated by police.

There should be a separate oversight body whose jurisdiction includes monitoring for discriminatory application of disciplinary procedures to Indigenous officers.

Our sixth recommendation. Police services have had the opportunity to work with media outlets to widely disseminate accurate information about missing persons’ investigations so that popular myths don’t impact how a loved one responds when someone goes missing.

Importantly it’s a nearly universally held belief that a missing person can’t be filed until the person has been missing for 24 hours. This is not the case as we’ve heard in this inquiry, but if people believe it to be true then they’re likely to wait before contacting police which reduces the chances of successfully finding the person safely.

We call on all police forces to establish a uniform media protocol to ensure that police services are effectively using the media to locate missing persons and are appropriately supporting families in their contact with the media.

Work with media outlets needs to ensure that accurate information, rather than prevalent myths, is
widely available about missing persons’ cases. Every police press release should include the information that there is no wait period for missing person.

Now I’d like to switch gears a bit and go into children in care with our seventh recommendation. Our research and the TRC’s final report have noted how a lack of focus on supporting families and preventing child apprehension greatly contribute to the over representation of children in care.

Research with Indigenous families has demonstrated how quickly apprehension is resorted to, including when parents come to child welfare services to receive support in parenting and demonstrate a desire to provide the best for the children.

In missing person cases we’ve also heard that some parents don’t report right away in fear of losing their other children. Especially if they’re already known to child services.

Inquiry testimony also discussed how the funding for child and family services organisations is based on the number of children in care, so that incentives -- there are incentives to apprehend children rather than provide the families with the supports they would need to keep their kids in custody.

We call on child welfare agencies to
establish practices that prioritize prevention rather than apprehension by working with families to provide the supports that would enable them to care for their own children and using apprehension as a very last resort.

Prevention officers -- sorry, efforts must include increasing the resource capacity of Indigenous organisations that serve off-reserve, urban and rural communities such as friendship centres, Head Start programs, to develop and provide programming to support off-reserve families who are at risk of child apprehension.

Our eighth recommendation. While in community placements are crucial to develop and support, significant attention must also be paid to supporting Indigenous parents before and after their children are placed in care, so that they can avoid losing their children or are able to regain them.

When children have been apprehended, parents often face impossibly high standards and the requirements for their children return to them, which frequently makes apprehension permanent.

Indigenous parents are therefore not only under higher scrutiny by child welfare organisations, but the higher scrutiny can prevent them from taking advantage of opportunities to improve their skills, which in turn
makes apprehension of subsequent children likely.

Programming such as Head Start programs, provide support to Indigenous parents, including advocating for parents seeking to regain custody of their children who have been apprehended.

Currently in New Brunswick, the majority of Aboriginal Head Start programs are in-reserve communities and there is only one Head Start program for the whole urban center -- in one urban center for the entirety of the off-reserve community in New Brunswick, and they only receive funding to support six families.

We call on child welfare agencies to ensure that children in care have continued connection with families and communities and the cultures, by offering Indigenous focuses programs and services rather than colonial one-size fits all programs.

We recommend that off-reserve Indigenous families are identified as Indigenous and receive culturally appropriate programming.

We call on the Federal Government to provide sufficient resource capacity to off-reserve Indigenous organisations and service providers to provide safe programming for families, children in care and for non-Indigenous care providers.

Now our last recommendation speaks to
resourcing and it’s two part. So as stated in RCAP, most
contemporary institutions governing Aboriginal life are
regulated by the norms that originate outside of
Aboriginal communities.

    The services they offer are fragmented and
sometimes overlapping. These services are extended or
withheld from Aboriginal persons on the basis of status
categories that are also determined by non-Aboriginal
authorities.

    This results in a service deficiency
affecting more than half of all Aboriginal people. In
urban and rural off-reserve areas, Aboriginal people
confront an array of services, scarcely any of which even
show a token acknowledgement of the varied cultures and
the needs of the people they are intended to serve.

    We have heard on numerous occasions during
this inquiry that the expertise to offer programs and
services that are relevant and safe already exist within
our own communities and organisations.

    We call on the Federal Government to ensure
that Indigenous communities and organisations are fully
resourced in the provision of programs and services.
Secondly, more substantial training is needed for all
educators and service providers.

    For example, we’ve heard from the educators
and professionals who after they receive their initial education on Indigenous culture and Indigenous settler relations, continue to feel woefully unprepared in their professional capacities.

We call on all mainstream educational institutions and professional associations to ensure mandatory, meaningful and comprehensive cultural competency training that is developed through consultation with Indigenous elders and organisations since Indigenous people access these services and professions in all areas of Canadian life.

We humbly thank those who have participated in the inquiry and for their dedication and sharing of their stories, expertise and time.

With that, commissioners, I’d like to thank you for your dedication to this process and wish you luck with the very hard job you have ahead of you.

We trust that you will ensure the best recommendations are put forward for all Indigenous women and girls and they can live the lives they choose and deserve. In peace and friendship, (speaking in Indigenous language.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MS. MEREDITH PORTER: Thank you, Ms. Leblanc.
Chief Commissioner, commissioners, do you have any questions or comments for the party?

**COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** I don’t have any questions. I just want to express my appreciation with CAP, with NunatuKavut. You have brought a very historically silenced perspective to us and it’s one of the areas where I’ve learned the most, so I want to thank you for that, and thank you.

**COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Merci, Commissaire Robinson.

I don’t know who said that yesterday or the day before. I think it was Cheryl Maloney who lent the mic to a young Indigenous woman lawyer and I’m glad that she mentioned that, because over the year - many, many months - I was impressed to see young women to take the mic, and the beautiful wisdom in the back to say take it. So it’s encouraging and for me this is hope. And I always like your energy each time I got my morning hug, so merci. I just -- one comment to reassure you. I don't know for my colleagues, but we all live outside of the reserve, our own respective community, and we're very sensitive about what's there, what's not for us Indigenous people when we leave the community.

But also, to remind you or remind the people who are listening that for some of us here reserve
is a creation of the *Indian Act*, another good example of colonialism, you know. So you have us there. I just want to reassure you.

And one of the beautiful teachings that we got from the Grand Chief where I live close by in Wendake, that it's not a reserve, it's a territory. So yes, I will make sure that we capture that in our recommendations.

Merci, beaucoup.

**MS. AMANDA LeBLANC:** Merci.

**COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you, Ms. LeBlanc. I just want to thank you for your submissions, for being a part of the Inquiry, and for providing us with your written submissions and the -- all the written recommendations. Thank you very much.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Yes. I just simply echo what my colleagues have said. My thanks to you for excellent written submissions. They were brilliantly done. Thank you. And also, thank you for all of your hard work all across Canada. It's been a pleasure. Thank you so much.

**MS. AMANDA LeBLANC:** Thank you.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Thank you.

Chief Commissioner and Commissioners, that concludes the oral submissions that are to be presented by
the Parties with Standing. And at this time, we're scheduled to have some closing remarks from lead Commission counsel, Christa Big Canoe.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I've had a request for a 2-minute break, not a 5-minute break. Okay. So we'll just take a quick 2-minute break.

**MS. MEREDITH PORTER:** Okay. Thank you.

--- Upon recessing at 2:23 p.m./La séance est suspendue à 14h23

--- Upon resuming at 2:32 p.m./La séance est reprise à 14h23

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Good to go. Yes, if we could commence please. Everyone grab a seat.

---**CLOSING REMARKS BY/REMARQUES DE CLÔTURE PAR MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:**

Aaniin, wena boozhoo (ph), (speaking Indigenous language).

Good afternoon, Chief Commissioner, Commissioner Eyolfson, Commissioner Audette, and Commissioner Robinson. As you know, I'm Christa Big Canoe. I am from the Otter Clan, and I'm Anishinaabe kwe from Georgina Island First Nation. I am lead Commission counsel.

I started in Anishinaabemowin just to recognize the unceded territory of the Algonquin to thank
the Creator, the grandmothers, the grandparents, those
that are here and those that have passed before our
ancestors.

Today, I'll be making closing statements on
behalf of Commission counsel. What a journey the National
Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and
Girls has had.

A debt of gratitude is owed to family
members and survivors. It is their strength and tenacity
that we must be grateful for. Their calls for a National
Inquiry is why we are here. They have demonstrated
fierceness in their participation, advocacy, and through
their representatives and counsel for the Parties with
Standing.

You have heard many people and
organizations characterize the violence that Indigenous
women and girls and two-spirit people are experiencing as
a crisis. You have heard compelling and heartfelt pleas
for action, you have heard of the need to be bold and
brave time and time again. It is my hope that Commission
counsel's submissions today will assist you in the tough
task that you have ahead of you.

But as I said in my evidence overview,
today we'll just scratch the surface. Commission
counsel's work on a slate of recommendations or advice
will really only begin after today.

Today is the due for written submissions by all of the parties, and today was the conclusion of oral closing submissions. In the two weeks of closing submissions we have heard from 53 Parties with Standing. Their words and submissions have been powerful, compelling, and have advocated the diversity of opinions and knowledge from many perspectives. Our next steps will include continuing to analyze and look at those submissions, along with continuing to look, read, and analyze evidence received by the National Inquiry.

Before I discuss what I will cover today, I must reiterate what has been said by many parties and individuals about the true crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The crisis is not new. As acknowledged by the National Inquiry, it's colonial legacy and continuing colonial attitudes and practices that cause and ensure that the crisis endures.

The crisis is continuing. Women, girls, and two-spirited Indigenous people continue to be stolen and murdered, even as the National Inquiry crisscrossed the country. Truth gathering. Weekly we have heard about a missing or murdered sister or child. Our social media news has filled with disappearances of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people the entire time we've sat
as a National Inquiry. We have held numerous moments of silence as part of our process when loss or tragedy has occurred, and this has been too often.

So the work we are doing must be acknowledged as part of a path, but not the end. For even as we investigate root causes, hear truth, and work to heal, more and more of our Indigenous sisters and children are stolen.

It has been acknowledged that the National Inquiry could never be everything for everyone, and you as Commissioners have said time and time again that the government and state actors should not wait for your report to begin actions to end violence against missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited, they should act now. That remains true. Although it will turn around quick in the few months before your report is due, actions could be taken.

We have called on all Canadians to engage and learn about the crisis and to act in ally-ship, to educate themselves and act against the violence and oppression, and not to contribute to any further violence.

This public Inquiry has created a public record that now must be utilized by all those who want to demand child, all those who want to stop the crisis, and those that want to be part of the required cultural shift
that will make this a better and safer place for everyone.

My submissions will occur in three parts today: First, I will be continuing and updating on the evidence overview I provided on November 26th, 2018 in Calgary, Alberta; second, I will address processes in the current context in which you're making recommendations and; third, I will more generally discuss recommendations.

On November 26th, I advised you of some information or some facts about what we had heard to date in terms of the witnesses and the hearings we had, and those were correct from the time period between May 2017 to October 2018, but I do have a couple updates that I think are important to ensure we put on the record.

I previously told you, and it remains true, that we had 468 public witnesses in 202 public hearings. That we had 202 in-camera witnesses in 147 in-camera hearings. I previously provided you the number of 641 statement providers. This number has been updated to the last statement that was taken, and I can advise that it's actually 744 statement providers in 604 statements. That's almost 100 more than I advised.

We've had 7 informal submissions. We've had 600 -- I advised we had 604 individuals that provided artistic expressions. The number is -- has increased since my last updated. The total is 623 individuals that
have made artistic submissions, and we have received 224
objects.

That would change the total participants
that I had previously provided you at 1,992 to 2,189. And
of course, sometimes, you would have someone who would
make a statement but also provide an artistic expression,
so the numbers aren't completely drilled down or broken,
but I thought it was important you heard that.

One of the things I talked about was the
sheer number of hours of testimony that we heard,
including 552 hours of testimony in 349 hearings. One of
the things I didn’t get a chance to elaborate on and that
I want to make sure is included is to discuss the
documents and the video archive that this public record
has also created.

I am advised that we have over 100
tetrabytes of raw video footage that has been filmed by
professional audio and visual teams, tech teams.
Apparently -- and I don't know this, I can't lie -- a
tetrabyte is 100 gigabytes, so that's a lot of
information.

We also -- and any of the Parties with
Standing I'm sure would attest to this and part of their
submissions address this -- have a large and voluminous
document repository. A lot of these documents that are
created, 1) the transcripts that exist out of all the
hearings; and 2) is any of the document or evidence that
came in with the witnesses, particularly in Part II and
III; and finally, we had a number of practice direction 33
submissions. So the documents in evidence are large,
needless to say.

Any of the public documents from the
transcripts, (inaudible) documents will be available and
will constitute part of the public record.

During my evidence overview, at one point,
I stumbled and I overlooked listing the witnesses from one
of the events. So as I was describing the nine, the nine
Part II and III hearings we heard, and I got lost in my
notes and did not let you know who the witnesses were for
the Criminal Justice System Oversight and Accountability
in Quebec City, held September 17th to the 21st in 2018.

The witnesses included Chief Terry
Armstrong, Mike Metatawabin, Connie Greyeyes, Jacqueline
Hansen, The Honourable Kim Beaudin, Kassandra Churcher,
Savannah Gentile, Diane Sere, Patricia Tate, Professeure
Renee Brassard, and Ellen Gabriel.

And just as a refresher from that, we heard
many interesting things that week. But Ellen Gabriel
reminded us a couple of things that I thought were worth
mentioning.
She had said,

"We are living in a society that is topsy-turvy everywhere we look, where human rights accomplishments are really just on paper, where the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People is viewed as aspirational, and that they will only, the government, have said in its rights and recognition papers, it will take articles instead of implementing the whole of the Declaration. “Just as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has become the bedrock for a lot of human rights acts in Canada, whether it's the Canadian Humans Right Act, whether it's Quebec's, because you cannot discriminate, you have to treat people as equals."

She also said,

"We know what the root causes are. Society looks at us as if we are privileged, that we get everything for free, and that makes us appear to them
as if we're just sitting on our elbows all day and they think we are rich.
And if we had such great benefits from the Indian life, then we would be the most richest people in the lands, and we are not. We are the most impoverished. We are the most marginalized. And I don't say that with pride. I say that with sadness."

(As read)

At this point, we will be showing a video.

So during the evidence overview, we ended with the voices of the witnesses who had testified in Part I, the families and survivors that were sharing their story. This video includes footage from our Part II and III hearings, but again, as I explained in the evidence overview, this is a scratch. This barely touches the surface. There were a number of clips and a lot of information that we heard that could be used.

So this is going to just show sort of a bit of what we heard during these proceedings. And again, as I mentioned in the evidence overview, even though it's not families or survivors talking, I'm going to ask that everyone do protect their spirit and keep in mind that sometimes it's hard to hear or review our evidence.
If I could ask for the video to be shown at this time. Thank you.

--- (VIDEO PRESENTATION/PRÉSENTATION VIDÉO)

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. Again, I have to show immense amount of gratitude to both Tiar Wilson and Shelby Thomas for putting that compilation together for us.

I would ask that we do mark that an exhibit to my submissions.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Exhibit 24.

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

---EXHIBIT NO/PIÈCE NO 24:

Video presentation provided by Commission Counsel Submitted by: Christa Big Canoe, Commission Counsel

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** That actually concludes the first part, the sort of overview or update I wanted to give on the evidence as it related to the hearings.

I now am going to turn my attention to a couple things, talking a little bit about our process, your authority, as well as the context that you'll be making your findings and recommendations in.
So as we're well aware, the terms of references and the Orders in Council, so I had said, but I
will repeat it for the purpose of the record that the mandate of the National Inquiry comes out of the federal
terms of reference that laid out the mandate you have to investigate, explore and to make findings and
recommendations. All other 13 jurisdiction, governmental jurisdictions put into place. Orders in Council that
mimicked and repeated. And your mandate is not a light mandate. Everyone's recognised that including parties
with standing and nobody envies the position that you find yourselves in.

One of the things that you have the ability to do is to set your own rules and process and you have
done that pursuant to the rules of the legal path under 10.

One of the other rules that's kind of important because it allows you to look at any pre-
existing reports, studies and other substantive materials and evidence, just in case we didn't put enough evidence
in front of you to make the findings of fact, you consider relevant to discharging your mandate.

Well, as you're aware, based on the hard work of our research team, grandmothers, NFAC, a number of people providing you all of the reports, this too would be
a very large body of things that you can take into account.

So it's in this vein that I want to talk about the current environment in which you're making recommendations. I think the momentum of the National Inquiry itself, the participation we've seen nationally, has actually -- did bring us a momentum. And that we're in a different time context because we come after Truth and Reconciliation Commission where we had reports and reports you can rely on, but what we're seeing more and more of as a society is sort of a true reflection or look at some of our systems and problems.

You, as Commissioners, will also have an opportunity in your findings and recommendations, but I just want to give some context. And specifically I would like to raise two reports as examples. And that's what they are. They're examples. They're examples because they speak to only one community in this country. They speak to Thunder Bay. And, of course, it's very timely because both reports release this week.

They do speak of policing issues. So when I speak, I'm not painting every single police officer or service with that one brush. I am speaking to you only the findings that were made in both of these reports.

The first report I want to draw to your
attention is one entitled "Broken Trust". You have heard other parties make brief submissions on this particular report. This was released by Gerry McNeilly. He's the Director of the Independent Police Review Director, so the Office of the Independent Police Review Director.

And what has happened is he had called a review into systemic racism within the Thunder Bay Police Services in regards to the things that are happening and occurring as they relate to investigations regarding Indigenous people, like missing Indigenous people or murdered Indigenous people.

The report, I would suggest, is a good example of being brave. Having said that, I also have to really press home a really important message, this is a brave report. It speaks truthfully and honestly, but as an Indigenous person and knowing all that you've heard in the course of this inquiry, I would suggest that it didn't require this report to legitimise the story of those Indigenous people that have been experiencing the systemic discrimination that was found to be true; that this is the pre-existing issue that we know as colonial legacy and continuation.

Having said that, I think this is an example of a brave report that points out and doesn't hide from the issues. It tries to address them head-on.
The Director actually addresses the racism, stereotyping and racial discrimination in a lot of detail. He talks about the impacts and it's a lengthy report. I will not get into it given time, except to -- I do want to point to one point. The Director in his findings -- and this is contained at page 184 -- he talks about the attitudes about Indigenous people among Thunder Bay police officers.

This, again, is just one small part in a report, but I think it's an important one because we heard this time and time again that people had this same feeling that for some reason they felt as an Indigenous person they weren't being heard or that there was stereotypes working against them.

Specifically the Director states,

"Unfortunately, we also heard very disturbing views expressed by some officers in our interviews. While these views were expressed by a minority of officers, they were expressed by more than "a few bad apples." These officers exhibited a contempt bordering on hostility toward[s] Indigenous people, manifesting in an attitude of
"[blaming] the victim"...

The next page, which I won't go over, includes quotations from interviews that OIPRD had with officers and they are, quite frankly, appalling, disgusting. I don't even want to give them mic time.

But one of the other points that was made between the quotation is that some of these disturbing attitudes related to the conduct of death investigations; and, in particular, to the assessment of whether the death of an Indigenous person is deemed suspicious.

Essentially, the Director is pointing out the fact that that bias impacts investigations. And I think it's a theme we've heard a lot of.

So, that's one of the reports I just wanted to contextualize for you.

Another report that was just released today was the Thunder Bay Police Service Board Investigation, a Final Report. It was written by Senator Murray Sinclair. He was the lead investigator. The report informally released in November, but just formally released to the public today at 2 o'clock.

So one of the things that I think is important to contextualize is their findings. And so this investigation wasn't looking at the Police Service. It was looking at the Police Board. And the findings as
stated in Senator Sinclair's report under that heading, "The Findings" on page 6 state,

"The Indigenous population of Thunder Bay experiences racism, both overt and systemic, on a daily basis. High-profile cases of murder and violence are only the tip of the iceberg; every Indigenous interviewee had a personal story, ranging from inferior service, verbal insults, and racial profiling to physical assaults, threats of violence, and, in many cases, the death by violence of friends [and] family members. This general climate of racism was most powerfully described by those who experience it daily; it was also reflected in an analysis of media coverage, statistics [and] on rates of [violence] and race-based crime and prior studies on these issues.

As a result, the Indigenous community has lost its confidence in the ability and, in many cases, the commitment of
the [Thunder Bay Police Service] to protect them."

This is part of the context that you'll be doing reports. And another part is the one we saw in some of the video clips where you actually have some police services recognising their contribution to the harm. So I think there's both opportunity to look to both phenomenons (sic) happening; one where we see continued racism as found by independent reviews, and one where we have open-mindedness and maybe this is a window or a door, an opportunity for change.

I'm going to turn to my third -- the third part of what I'd like to present to you. And this is speaking more broadly on recommendations.

And so I had said earlier that I'm scratching the surface. I'm not going to get an opportunity to go in and I also said earlier that our work really just begins now. So I'm not going to stand here and provide you a slate of recommendations or enumerate recommendations or actually make any positions on the recommendations we've heard. But there are six areas we believe that you should consider as you go into deliberations. And this is based on Commission counsel having raised the evidence and led the evidence and done all the work looking at what we heard in all three parts
of evidence.

And so there is (sic) six areas. I'm going
to list the six areas and then I'll walk through them with
you.

The first is a space, place and process to
hear more truth.

The second is about how language matters.

The third is it's our position that law is
on your side. The breaches have been many. The law is on
your side. The breaches have been many.

The fourth area is about accountability and
implementation.

The fifth area is about calls to action.

And the sixth is listening to the families,
because we know we have the solutions. The solutions lay
within community.

I'm going to start first with the space,
place and process to hear more truth. Over the course of
both community hearings and part two, three hearings, and
I would suggest even in the last two weeks of submissions
by parties with standing, we have heard time and time
again that although it was great to have this process
here, the truth of people, that there is a real need and
desire for you, as part of your recommendations or a part
of something that you're suggesting needs to be done, is
to create ongoing space or places where families, when they're ready, can tell their truth in a way that people can listen and hear.

And so that obviously will look like different things for different people. And, of course, it can no longer be included in our process; however, advocating so that there is continued opportunities. I know we've heard things about how retelling your story can be retraumatizing. We've also heard that healing occurs in the ability to be able to share your story and empowering people to share their truth.

So that one is fairly short and concise, that I think there is a need and a desire and we heard it many times.

The second thing I'd like to discuss is language matters. There's actually two parts to this and I'm going to describe both.

The first starts with Indigenous language or the failure to recognize or support Indigenous language. I mean by state actors, I mean by educators, post-secondary institutions, even elementary schools. We invest little money ever in Indigenous languages in this country.

And so one of the things we heard time and time again was about the ability to regain or to share,
those that have the knowledge and power of their language, to be able to share it with others.

Ellen Gabriel reminded us about language in this country. She said,

"It's a new form of assimilation, what policies are doing. It's a new form of assimilation when two languages, which are languages of this country, Canada's linguistic duality, continues to impose upon us, our children, and our youth, that they should know those languages more than they should know their on."

She continued,

"Our languages contain within them traditional knowledge. It is embedded. We see the links to our ancestors and how they thought, the cosmology, and it is being treated as if it's nothing." (As read)

It is once again the crabs in the bucket of where they're at funding for languages and cultures. But there's no evidence that the government is sincere about it.

We have heard a lot and we have seen in our
process, when we have had the ability to have translators, it's assisted in people being able to share their truth from their language, which also includes their perspective, that connection to the ancestors, and the relationships that are part of language, which is often part of Indigenous law.

So as you're moving forward in your deliberations, we, Commission counsel, believe that is one important thing to think about.

The other part is also about language, but it's different. It's not about the linguistic background you have. It's about the way we name things.

The truth that people have shared has taught me the importance of using words that matter. Language does matter.

We heard Dr. Wade and Ann May Schrader (phonetic) as well as other speakers talk about using proper words to describe the violence, not gratuitously, not to talk about violence gratuitously, but to characterize the harm in an appropriate manner.

This became a personal lesson that has had a profound impact on me. It is this concept of finding the right words to describe violence and the strength and resiliency of survivors who have shared their truth, that has helped me.
It's no secret that I survived an incidence of sexual violence as a child. And over the years, I've gained strength to be able to speak about it and to do the advocacy work I do. In fact, that experience drives my advocacy. I have always had the love of family and friends and it is their love that has supported me. I have been able to say these words out loud, but in a very softened way. I was sexually assaulted.

To convey my understanding to other survivors, it helped that I can share that experience, understanding as an Indigenous woman and as a survivor. But it has only been in this process, hearing from and being with and healing with other survivors that I have gained enough strength to name what really happened to me.

There is no way that a six-year-old girl understands sexual context and unfathomable that the violence I experienced, that I could understand that that was sexual violence. I did not have sex when I was six years old. I was raped. I was threatened and I was told if I told anyone in my family, I would be harmed.

I was unable to disclose or share the violence and the hurt that I experienced until I could truly understand what had happened to me. And it has taken years to stand in this place of strength. Who knew that the love experienced in this process could empower me
more?

In your deliberations on legislation, policies, and in general, naming the violence is important. We need to stop softening the truth of what has happened to us.

My next point is that the law is on your side. The breaches are many. In my overview, I talked about how we had heard so many times, particularly about international human rights or other human rights. I had cited child advocate Corey O'Soup's statistics and the information he had to share with us just to demonstrate.

Then again, we go to Winnipeg and we hear from a number of child advocates the truth and reality. And I would suggest that there has been a lot of breaches of human rights. We've all acknowledged them, we've all heard them, but now we need to actually use the law on our side to ensure. And whether it's domestic law or international law, I suggest the law is on your side that will give you boldness and strength in your submissions and in your recommendations.

When Dr. Blackstock spoke to us the second time, she provided some information about her role as being a commissioner or a report called "Just Societies". When she testified October 3rd, she discussed a quotation by Eduardo Galiano (phonetic). His quotation was -
actually, I'll give where she started and I'll let you know when his quotation comes up. Dr. Blackstock said,

"I came upon his quote which I think really captures, to me, the essence of the danger of colonialism as differentiated between and two other forms of discrimination."

And this is what he writes. Eduardo says,

"Blatant colonialism mutilates you without pretence. It forbids you to talk, it forbids you to act, it forbids you to exist. Invisible colonialism, however, convinces you that serfdom is your destiny and impotence is in your nature. It convinces you that it's not possible to speak, it is not possible to act, and it is not possible to exist."

Dr. Blackstock then continued,

"And I found that quote so important because too often, we talk about the mechanisms of colonialism and we too often negate the psychology of colonialism, which builds prisons around our own lives and our own
existence and gets in the way of people being able to live the lives they wish to have. And because we do not give that adequate attention, we do not often give attention to the structural situations that reinforce that invisible colonialism within our society." (As read)

And particular, in my case, because the group I work with most often is children and young people. I am going to suggest to you if the law being on your side, particularly as it relates to international instruments, human right instruments, one of your major focuses should be on the voices of youth and children.

The next point that the Commission counsel would like to bring to your attention is around accountability and implementation. I know this has been an area that has been important to each of you because throughout the course of Part II and III hearings, I have heard you ask really important questions to a number of the witnesses about well, how could we implement this or how do we hold someone to account? So I know this is one of your ongoing concerns.

And so our recommendation is however you draft or create your recommendations, that you build in a
section, a part, a recommendation that speaks specifically
to implementation plans. There have been examples of this
in other reviews and inquiries in terms of asking for
timeframes and responses back, setting up recommendations
around implementation committees, implementation time
plans, and who or which government, state actor, service,
non-profit, Canadian society in general, who is liable,
including pointing to leadership.

And on that point, I want to remind you
about what Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond told us. She
explained,

"My own experience was, if you make
recommendations and they involve
system change, you need to try and
shift the system to be permanent,
long-term change, take accountability
for that area, and continue to report
into the future."

So that is part of the legacy of
improvement. If it's a one-off recommendation, that could
be very helpful to one person, but it doesn’t eliminate
the need to continually go back to the same problem. So
systemic type of change is very significant.

She also added,

"When you have an entity like a public
inquiry, when you look at success for those inquiries or institutions, generally, they are more successful if there has been a process to track, monitor, and report on compliance and implementation, that if that isn't there, then we tend to have successive reports." (As read)

Now you have heard time and time again, and you have asked yourself that question about, “what about the report collecting dust on the shelf”. And I’m going to turn back to Dr. Turpel-Lafond, because she did actually talk to this and she said:

“I think in terms of recommendations to change systems, they need to be powerful recommendations. As we know with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, they didn’t call them recommendations, they called them ‘calls to action’, because commissioners felt they were stronger than recommendations. They wanted action. I think making the report reflect the information that’s been received about the circumstances that
families have been through is incredibly impactful. I think in terms of the recommendations to change systems they need to be powerful recommendations, as we know, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” (As read)

She also said:

“So there may be some areas that are recommendations, there may be some things that are called ‘calls to action’, so it’s important to make that distinction and, I think, building on what we’ve learned.” (As read)

She, on a personal reflection, said:

“Certainly, as one person I don’t see reports as dust. I mean, I appreciate they don’t get actioned, but when I look at the importance of reports that have been produced in Canada, like the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the report on Truth and Reconciliation Commission, these are real significant.” (As read)
In my life they’re very significant to me and they’re deeply meaningful and they’re impactful, and I’ve seen a lot of progress and change.

One of the common things about any public inquiry is you often don’t feel the impact in the time of the process and sometimes even until years after. Often the impact follows and it’s part of that cultural shift, so there’s value and importance.

As a litigator who often cites things like RCAP and AJI, even in litigation up to the highest levels of Court, there is value in the report and it takes change.

We’ve also heard sometimes it takes generations to change. One example I often use is my now 13-year-old who was 11 when I started this. My -- and whose birthday was this week and I missed. He, in Grade 5, learned about residential schools. I didn’t learn that in Grade 5.

Now I’m a second-generation survivor. My father attended, so he knows more than his classmates. But to come home from school and actually have a good conversation with me about what Indian residential schools were, I found encouraging. Not the topic. The fact that in Grade 5 they’re already talking about these things.

And when people ask me well why was I
coming here or “what can I do at the National Inquiry”,
I’m like, “I don’t know”, but I hope that my daughter’s
class when she’s a young woman and she goes to a school –
a non-Indigenous school – they’re going to be talking
about the strength and resiliency of Indigenous women in
the face of all the adversity they’ve had, given the

crisis of MMIW.

The next point was on call-to-action. I
think actually Dr. Turpel-Lafond already addressed that.
This is not to be, you know, any recommendation on the
prescriptive nature of how you come to what
recommendations, but I think she made a good point. I
think you can have both and I know that it’s in your
discretion and that you have the authority to make both
the findings and recommendations you will.

But there may be a good way or balance that
those things - that need for cultural shift - could be
achieved in something like calls-to-action that demand
people to take up the cause, versus more detailed
recommendations. So I encourage you to put thought to
maybe doing more than just one thing.

The final point was on that the families
and survivors know best. They have the solutions and time
and time again, from witnesses and from parties, we have
heard “we have the solutions”.

We’ve heard a lot about the de-evolution of services back to Indigenous community, we’ve heard time and time families talking about when they were dealing with various services, whether it was medical services, coroner services, police services:

“Why aren’t they asking me. I knew her best. I can tell you what she was wearing. I can tell you where she was, where she may be, but if you wait too long and you don’t include me it’s too late.” (As read)

So a really important consideration, I know that you have all actually expressed this too, that the families and survivors’ truth and stories come first and that you recognize they do have the best solutions.

It’s time that trust is a two-way street.

We’ve heard about listening and changing, part of the change is not about Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women and girls, and two-spirited people, having to change. We don’t need to change. We need others to change.

And we talk about trust. We’ve heard about legitimate reasons such as these two reports, why people are afraid of things like the police. Maybe it’s time that more governments, states, services, put trust in
Indigenous people. Trust for them to know they know what’s most important to them, they know what they need, they know the basics of livelihood, spirituality, mental health, that will help their communities. The trust street works both ways. It’s important that people start beginning to trust rather than make choices for Indigenous people.

In conclusion, as I said in my evidence overview, you have a large body of evidence before you. It’s so large. You have the ability and authority to look at any report you want. That is also very large and daunting. But you have kept at task in many regards and although our process hasn’t been perfect, it has been a first. There has not been a national inquiry before this.

Learning as we go and absorbing a lot of the information has been something that you have done attentively and read well, and there is confidence that you will put forward and meet the mandate that has been given to you.

One of the things that I think, if I could leave on a couple -- two points. One that exemplifies Indigenous peoples’ empowerment, Indigenous peoples’ skill and Indigenous people advocacy, is the fact that this process has had the most Indigenous lawyers of any legal process in this country to date. We’ve had a number of
allies and other counsel, and everything that everyone has
had to contribute has been of assistance and in a capacity
to act in the public interest to provide you information
you need.

but I’ve got to return to those Indigenous
lawyers and largely women lawyers. If you look at the
lawyers in the room and you’ve looked over the course -- I
believe Mr. Darrin Blain put it well when he said, “I have
over 70 sisters and a few brothers”.

And that’s not to knock our male
colleagues, but the amount of women that have come to this
process either to represent or as legal counsel is
astounding. And particularly the number of young
Indigenous lawyers. It’s almost a point of pride, just as
an Indigenous lawyer myself, to see the strength of the
representatives and the counsel that stand up here and
that make submissions or ask tough questions it’s uncanny,
but I also believe it should be exemplifying to states, to
services, to all Canadians.

It’s not like we’re in the stone ages.
We’re smart people and that doesn’t require a law degree.
It requires the tenacity, the care, the love and the
compassion for families and survivors and for our
communities.

And to see that many of them in this space,
contributing and working, I just say Chi-miigwetch. And some of them are going to be kick-butt lawyers in the future and representatives, so my Indigenous sister feels a lot of pride for them.

Finally, the families and survivors, I started this with my overview and I’d like to finish with this, is I will never be the same.

I have had the opportunity to work with amazing people – and some of the legal team are behind me here – other staff, but the families, survivors, who trusted us enough to sit down with us or to talk on the phone with us, even before we were in a hearing. Who trusted us enough with their stories, with their precious memories, with their strength and with their sadness. The impact that will have on me for the rest of my life has ever changed me and I’d say for the better. It’s enriched me.

Even when we’ve shared tears and even through the sadness. That type of trust and that type of relationship, if we all had those, I don’t think we’d be talking about missing and murdered Indigenous women. We’d be probably having tea like Dr. Smylie suggested.

Those are the submissions. I thank you very much for your attention and time. It’s been a pleasure presenting the evidence overview and some of our
basic concepts on what we believe may be of assistance to you. Chi-miigwetch.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I believe that concludes this portion, but there will be a closing ceremony, but for formalistic process this would conclude and it will be the last public hearing that we hold, so.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Okay, then until April 30th, 2019, time and place to be announced, we are adjourned.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

(SHORT PAUSE/COURTE PAUSE)

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: It’s been brought to my attention we just need a couple minutes to reset the space for the purpose of the closing, so just a couple minutes.

---CLOSING CEREMONY:

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors tout le monde, on sent qu’y’a de l’excitation. Peut-être un peu de nervosité alors que la journée tire à sa fin.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: So if we could ask everyone to take their seats we’d like to get started with the closing ceremonies of the truth seeking
process of the National Inquiry.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors on demanderait...
on vous demanderait, s’il vous plait, de regagner vosplaces pour qu’on puisse débuter la cérémonie de fermeture
de ce processus de consignation de la vérité.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: So right now
I’d like to call up our National Family Advisory Circle
members that we have here, Charlotte Wolfrey, Norma
Jacobs, Barbara Manitowabi, Sarah Nowyakallak, Michah
Arreak, Gladys Radek and CeeJai Julian.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors on inviterait lespersonnes qui viennent d’être nommées à s’avancer à
l’avant et ils sont membres du Cercle conseil national desfamilles.

(SHORT PAUSE/COURTE PAUSE)

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: So we’ll askNorma Jacobs to say some closing remarks on behalf of theNational Family Advisory Circle.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors on invite MadameNorma Jacobs à prononcer quelques mots pour le Conseilnational des familles.

ELDER NORMA JACOBS: (Indigenous languagespoken)

I just would like to let everyone know howproud I am to be participating in this Inquiry and to have
the support of everyone here, especially the family
members, and it’s just been quite a journey.

I’ve learned so much and I’ve felt so much
from everyone, and I, you know, felt the love of all of
the women that came to share their stories, and all of the
people who participated in sharing their expertise with
us.

And we’ve learned a lot, you know, and it
was great to always be here and to stand with one another
to be strong and to know that when we stand together that
there is so much more strength.

It reminded me, you know, of unfolding our
bundles, and that we all had something to bring here to
this place, to this gathering, and that as we opened the
bundles and looked inside what we seen, you know, was not
pleasant, and that we are rewrapping those bundles as we
move through this Inquiry and put everything back into
place and to be proud of who we are as Indigenous people.

And so, you know, with those bundles now of
everyone’s story that we can move together in a good way
and to take action with the things that we’ve learned, and
to take them to heart and for us to really begin to
activate, you know, all of the things that we learned and
all of the injustices that had happened over time that we
now have been validated for that.
So we’re ready to move forward and to do
the work as we need to do as Indigenous people and to make
right those wrongs.

And, you know, I think that we forget over
time that our people are a fierce people, you know, and we
became colonized and we forgot about our power that we
have from within that the Creator gave to us many, many
years ago.

And so I’m proud to see that today that
through our journey that we’ve been revitalized and we’re
re-energized, and we remember today, we remember those
ancestors, remember our stories, and remember all the
values and the protocols that were given to us to guide us
in this earth.

So I’m proud to be a part of that. And I
don’t feel alone anymore, and I have all of you to thank
for this journey, for the support and for the love that we
share for one another.

The Commissioners worked hard and, you
know, I supported them always, and they’ve done a great
job. They’re doing a great job.

So we’re putting -- rewrapping our bundle
in a good way and that we are going to, you know, continue
to draw from that good bundle to strengthen us and to keep
us strong through this time as we move forward together.
Nia:wen

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MS. CEEJAI JULIAN: I know I’m not on the schedule, but I just really want to emphasize that the National Family Advisory Circle has supported me in so many ways of healing through the loss that I had of my sisters and many of my friends in the downtown east side.

And I want you guys all please don’t forget, don’t forget what you’re learning here. You know, all those recommendations we can apply it in our lives today.

I’ve got to go back to the downtown east side, and it’s like people are dying every day, you know, like our woman aren’t safe, and that’s why I’m here. We fought hard for this.

And, you know, I’m just grateful. I’m grateful for the Commissioners. I’m sad because it feels like I’m not going to see you guys again. And I look out and I see the supporters and some of them -- you guys have good recommendations and you kicked their ass, right, and I really -- well, theirs, but anyways, I just wanted to say thank you, and safe travels, and all my relations, and mahsi cho to my ancestors.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Miigwech.
Miigwech National Family Advisory Circle.

I’d like to call up Audrey Siegl, who’s one of our knowledge keepers that we work with here -- well throughout the Inquiry for -- she’s been with us through the entire time.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors on aimerait inviter Audrey Siegl qui est une de nos gardiennes du savoir qui est avec nous depuis le début.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: I’d also like to call up the Commissioners to join Audrey through this process with the commitment sticks.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors j’inviterais également les commissaires à se joindre à nous à l’avant pour la remise des bâtons d’engagement.

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: My teachings are first to acknowledge the land, to say (Indigenous language spoken). I thank you. I thank the ancestors. I thank the land. I thank the people of the land.

Introduce myself. (Indigenous language spoken). My name is sx̣íemtənə:t. I am from Musqueam. I am the granddaughter of the late Stephen and Selina August and I am here as a survivor, as a family woman, and as someone the Canadian government is still trying to eliminate. So for each of you to be here and stand with us, I raise my hands to the drum, to the drummers, to the
Commissioners, to everyone who has made this work.

I have the amazing fun task tonight of calling the names of the people who are going to be gifted copper. These aren't just pieces of copper. This is part of what is at least over 800 pieces of copper that have been carved and gifted by my aunt (Indigenous language spoken) Bernie Williams. She is the only woman mentored under Bill Reid and she is fierce and she is a warrior and we are so grateful for her to have walked this road with us.

So first we would like to thank the Elders, Vincent, Elaine, Reta Gordon, the land for his songs, Eli for the qulliq, and as -- any of these people present can make their way to the front.

I want to say the names of two women from this land who went missing, Macy and Shannon. Carry them with you. Send love to them and their families. These are two names too many and we say them today to honour them and to bring medicine, not just to them, but to all who loved them.

So the gift of copper is one of the highest gifts. As a Haida woman my aunt carves these. They are often a gift given from chief to chief. They are gifts, again, of honour, of recognition, of support. And our Commissioners will be sharing them with you so that you
can always carry a reminder that you're loved and that the work you've done here has made a huge difference.

We say howa, (Indigenous language spoken), hai, hai, miigwech.

(GIFT REMITTANCE/REMISE DE CADEAUX)

FEMALE VOICE: Sorry, did I do that?

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

MS. AUDREY SIEGL: So now we move on to -- oh, boy, we're already balling up here -- the commitment sticks. So first I'd like to share about the commitment sticks that Elder Fred Johnson in 2015 from Alkali Lake which is near Williams Lake in B.C., he created these sticks as a movement, as an awareness, as a recognition of what needs to happen.

That -- this is -- these sticks are a commitment to stop the violence, to stop the violence that continuously leads us back to the same place of murdered and missing Indigenous women, to live with respect and dignity and honour, to act with respect and dignity, with honour, whether you are a man or a woman, whether you are a child or a grandparent. This is what we need to do. To me this is the number one and only call to action.

So we would like to -- again, the Commissioners are already here and Barb Manitowabi is standing with me. So we're going to call up the parties
with standing who have shared so much of themselves and
their lives and their time. They’ve each brought their
own medicine. They’ve each brought their own teachings.
And they have each, I’m sure, experienced their own trauma
and hopefully found healing from that trauma that
inevitably brought them here to stand with us as family in
the National Inquiry.

The first party is the Nunatsiavut
Government, Johannes Lamp and anyone who was presenting.
They had to leave? Okay.

So we're going to move on to the Manitoba
Keewatinowi Okimakanak, MKO, Grand Chief -- I notice the
MKO at the end.

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

ELDER AUGUST SIEGL: And thank you for your
patience. I am -- I believe that our language is a huge
holder of knowledge and if I fumble, please know that I've
done my best and I mean no insult.

Grand Chief Garrison Settee et al. So we
have amazing women standing here to represent the
Association of Native Child and Family Services agencies
of Ontario, Katherine Hensel, the Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik,
Darlene -- oh, she had to leave and she has asked Mirna to
collect her stick for her. Okay. Somebody will gather
that stick for her. And Amanda LeBlanc, the New Brunswick
Aboriginal People's Council.

(APPLAUSE APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

(GIFT REMITTANCE/REMISE DE CADEAUX)

**MS. AUDREY SIEGL:** And Corey O'Soup here still? I'm just checking my notes again. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

**FEMALE VOICE:** Corey, Corey, Corey, Corey.

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

**MS. AUDREY SIEGL:** And if there are any parties with standing that we forgot to mention or who haven't received their commitment stick yet, please feel free to come up now and let us honour you.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

(SHORT PAUSE/COURT PAUSE)

**MS. AUDREY SIEGL:** So the next phase is the one I look forward to the most because I love singing. We have a change. So sorry. Rewind.

**MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO:** So before we go into honouring the Parties with Standing and all our family members in the ceremony that we're going to have to honour all the survivors, families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, we're going to ask our Commissioners to do their closing comments first, and then we'll go into a ceremony. And that way with the grandfather drum and the extinguishing of the Qulliq, but
we'll have our women drummers come up as well to honour our women as well.

**MR. MATHIEU MELLON:** Donc avant de procéder aux dernières étapes de la cérémonie où on va rendre hommage aux membres des familles et aux survivantes, nous allons inviter les commissaires à dire un mot de la fin.

**MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO:** So if you guys want to take a seat for a couple of minutes, and then we'll do this part of the agenda first. Thanks.

Oh, so I'm going to call up Commissioner Robinson to come up and do her final remarks.

--- CLOSING REMARKS BY/REMARQUES DE CLÔTURE PAR COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:

**COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** Nakurmiik.

Thank you.

And first, I want to, of course, thank the land and the people who have welcomed us here. We stand on the unceded, unsurrendered land of the Anishinaabe people. We have had many from that community welcome us this week and join us through this process, and it's been a true honour.

I am a guest in your lands as well. I live in Hull. Go Hull. And I hope I walk gently on these lands, and I hope that the work that I do on these lands will make these lands safe for Indigenous women, girls,
trans, and two-spirit. It's never lost to me whose land I stand on.

I want to acknowledge those that have guided our week, who have kept this space safe, who have kept the spirits of the Indigenous women and girls who have been silenced or whose lives have been stolen, their spirits safe in this place with the offerings of food, prayer, pipe ceremony, song. It's fundamental that that's the foundation of every day.

And I want to thank Vince and Elaine Kicknosway, Reta Gordon, and Eelee Higgins for your prayers, your presence, and for the fire. Nakurmiik (speaking Inuktitut). Nakurmiik.

I want to acknowledge the flame of the Qulliq, but also the teachings about Inuit law that Eelee shared with us this week, those laws that too often aren't given their rightful place of purpose, understanding, guidance, and power.

As she shared with us the Inuit laws, I'm not going to call them principles, they are laws, particularly about (speaking Inuktitut) being welcoming and about how we go through and work together to come to understandings, and how those laws are foundational to the solutions became clearer to me again, and I wanted to thank Eelee for that reminder.
I want to thank those -- the drummers -- the Eagle River drummers, as well as those women who come up to the front, pick up a rattle, pick up a drum, and end our days with songs. I've learnt some of those songs and they've been such powerful medicine. As our hearts hurt and our lungs tighten up, and our diaphragms doing this work become so -- I'll be blunt -- enraged, the release and the hope that the drums and the songs bring have been some of the most powerful medicine for me. So thank you.

I want to acknowledge the families in the room, families and survivors, those that are here to observe, those that came with Parties with Standing, and the members of the National Family Advisory Circle.

I want to acknowledged one specific family member, Kathy Meyers. I want to acknowledge your attendance. I want to acknowledge your punik (ph), Angela Meyers, and I want people to say her name and I want people who know where she is to give Kathy and her family the answers they need. And those that play any role, to do the jobs they are tasked to do to the best of their abilities.

And I say this for Kathy, and I say it for all the mothers, all the fathers, all the sisters, all the families of the heart who need answers. Justice cannot ever be forgotten and truth can't ever be forgotten is a
fundamental objective that we always have to strive towards.

I also want to acknowledge Laurie Odjick, for I know this is your battle too.

Members of the National Family Advisory Circle, CJ, Myrna, Gladys, Charlotte, who had to leave, but you were here with us this week, Micah, Norma, Barb, and Sarah, and your supports and your family who were here with you this week, thank you again for walking with us and guiding us.

Our grandmothers, Lacey (ph), Blu, Bernie, Kathy, Penelope; I want to acknowledge Leslie Spillett as well, and our medicine keeper, Audrey Siegl. You're quickly moving into Grandmother territory. But definitely knowledge keeper is the role, I think you hold.

Our hardworking staff, always, I give you my appreciation and love.

And to the Parties with Standing, for giving us so much to think about, this is a legal mandate. Our task was to investigate the root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls. And this was because families have wanted this for many, many, many years. And they deserved it. It was right and it was needed.

The investigation is complex, the scope is incredibly broad. The time we were given was tremendously
lacking. But we heard powerful truths, truths that now
that we know, nobody can ignore and nobody can put back in
their boxes and nobody can silence, nobody.

We have heard from close -- what was it --
close to over 2,000 people, 2,000 people; families who
have shared their truths to us directly; families and
survivors who have shared their truths with statement
takers; who have given, through their words or through
their expression, artistic expression, songs, beadwork,
poems, your truth. And that guides the way forward. That
is the pavement on the road we must now walk.

I want to acknowledge the tremendous
courage this took, to stand up against the forced violence
and forced silence that is at the root cause of this
national epidemic crisis crime.

Your words, I will never forget. Your
strength, I will never forget. Your humour, I will never
forget. Your compassion, I will never forget. Your love,
I will never forget. And that love I know is so much the
key to how we go forward.

Parties with Standing, again, thank you for
representing your organizations. And as I often do, I
want to share a little bit with you what I heard. It's an
important thing to let people know that you're hearing
what they're saying.
And I want to share with you a little bit of what I heard this week. It's without dispute that the cause of the violence is colonization and continued colonization: colonial attitudes, colonial policies, colonial actions, colonial inactions that continue today.

We are desperately in need of disrupting and dismantling this. Now, we've heard a lot about how, how this needs to be done. We've heard about how human rights are a tool, a guide, a path. In the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a road, is a path.

And I agree, they're fundamental, but what I've also heard is all those papers, all those words don't mean anything without action, without believing, without — sadly, without believing she's worthy, without believing she's equal. She is my sister. She's all of our sister, and our daughters, and our mothers, and our grandmothers. We would never tolerate this if we saw Indigenous peoples as equal. It's just as simple as that.

So action is required to show that that is believed, that it is believed that she matters. That means police officers doing their jobs. That means Child and Family Services staff understanding the best interest of the child is not the best interest of their child; it's what's in the best interest of an Indigenous child
according to her family and her people's world view. We all show love in different ways. We all have different beliefs and practices. Respect difference.

And I think fundamentally -- and I'm going to end here -- what I've heard is that it has to be Indigenous people that provide the services and lead the way to self-determination in service provisions, to self-determination in governance, to self-determination in land and resource management, to self-determination in every aspect of Indigenous people's lives.

It's going to be a long road and there's a lot to be done to get there. But in the meantime -- and this is the message to non-Indigenous peoples, the Canadian government and all state actors -- the time to think that Indigenous people need to be helped, saved, that's over. I really appreciate some of the recommendations and the actions and the best practices that were brought forward by some governments, but fundamentally, if it's not designed by and for Indigenous peoples, it will continue to be non-Indigenous people thinking they can save Indigenous peoples.

So do what you promised to do according to your international domestic laws, the promises that you've made in Treaties, and support and stand with Indigenous people. They don’t need saving. Quite frankly, for this
country to be saved, we need to follow them.

And that's all I'm going to say until the final report. Stay tuned.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Thank you. Thank you so much, Commissioner Robinson. Merci beaucoup, Commissaire Robinson.

I'd like now to invite Commissioner Eyolfson to address his remarks. Alors j’aimerais inviter le Commissaire Eyolfson à prononcer son mot de fermeture.

--- CLOSING REMARKS BY/REMARQUES DE CLÔTURE PAR COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you.

Merci. Chi-miigwetch.

First, as a guest in this territory, I want to thank the Algonquin and Anishinaabe people for hosting us in their traditional unceded homelands this week.

I also want to acknowledge all the families and survivors of violence across the nation and the spirits of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, including trans and two-spirit people, for you are at the heart of our work. And we'll continue to do our very best to honour your shared truths.

I would like to acknowledge the guidance and support, the prayers, the pipe ceremonies provided to
us throughout the week by our elders with us here, Elaine
and Vincent Kicknosway, Reta Gordon, and Eeelee Higgins,
for maintaining the fire in the quilliq for us all week.

And I'd also like to acknowledge the drum
and the drummers for their songs this week.

And thank you to Gerry Pagnin and Coralee
McPherson for joining us this week in the last few
hearings for offering to share your gift of beadwork as
healing for all. Thank you very much.

I also want to thank our MCs this week,
Christine Simard-Chicago, Christian Rock, and Mathieu
Mellon.

As you know, the National Inquiry is
mandated to inquire into and report on the systemic causes
of all forms of violence against women and girls,
including 2SLGBTQIA people, and to make recommendations on
concrete actions that can be taken to improve their
safety.

And work of this magnitude has many moving
parts, and it could not have been done without the support
of so many people.

I'd like to acknowledge and say special
thanks to all those who have supported and engaged in the
work of the National Inquiry, including our special
grandmothers and cultural supports, Istchii Nikamoon, our
Earth Song, Blu Waters; Gul Kitt Jaad, or Golden Spruce Woman, Bernie Williams; Notalavak (ph) or Louise Haulli; Elder Kathy Louis; Penelope Guay; Evelyn St. Onge (ph); Leslie Spillett; and our Audrey Siegl for providing us with guidance and support through these hearings.

And I really want to thank all the members of the National Family Advisory Circle for their commitment to walk through us on this journey -- to walk with us on this journey and to provide us with advice on our work. And I'd like to just mention those that are here with us this week to support us: CJ, Myrna, Gladys, Charlotte, Micah, Norma, Barbara, Sarah, and all their supporters that are here as well.

I also want to thank all of our hardworking staff for their commitment, for their many long hours, and for sharing in this journey with us, and all of those who have joined in person or via webcast this week and over the last approximately 2 years to honour the spirits of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and to honour those continuing to live with violence today.

Over the last 2 years, the National Inquiry heard -- held 15 community hearings where family members and survivors of violence shared their truths; 9 knowledge keeper, expert, and institutional hearings; and these final 2 weeks of final submissions, for a total of 26
legally-mandated hearings.

And because of the shared truths, we've heard about how women, girls, and trans, and two-spirit people continue to encounter violence on an ongoing basis, and the many underlying reasons for that violence. We've heard it described as a crisis, an ongoing crisis, and that Indigenous women and girls continue to be impacted on a daily basis.

So as we close our hearings with final submissions this week, I'd also like to thank all the Parties with Standing and their respective leadership, and representatives, for also joining us in this Inquiry, for the hard work in developing their final submissions and sharing their submissions with us.

In preparing those submissions, many of you listened to the voices of women and girls and trans and two-spirit people that shared their truths, and for many of you, your submissions were by and for Indigenous women and girls. And the valuable information you shared with your final submissions assists us in developing actionable recommendations on how to address these issues at regional and national levels.

Just looking back personally, I think that to unburden yourself in the spirit can be one of the toughest acts of courage in life. And we've heard from
many courageous grandmothers, mothers, sisters, aunties, daughters, grandfathers, fathers, brothers, uncles, sons, and other family members, including families of the heart, about their loved ones who have gone missing or have been murdered, as well as many survivors of violence.

But to witness the strength of the families and survivors has been incredible and empowering. The strength of their shared truths will always be in my heart and observing such strength and resiliency has always and also given me positive home that change on this stain that has covered this country for so long can take place.

All Canadians have a responsibility to take action to address the issue of violence against Indigenous women and girls, and 2SLGBTQI people, and I firmly believe that the work of this National Inquiry is an opportunity for change as we move forward.

To be clear, the launch of our final report, due April 30th, 2019, will not be the end of this work, and our recommendations must not be forgotten. It will inform Canada and the nations and the peoples of this land on how to improve outcomes and living conditions for all Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and trans people and increase their safety. We all have a responsibility to unite on this journey to support safe spaces and equality for everyone.
Again, I want to thank the respected
Parties with Standing who have shared with us and helped
honour all the missing and murdered loved ones with their
presence and their knowledge this week.

And in closing, I want to acknowledge the
women, girls, trans, and two-spirit peoples who have been
stolen from our communities and acknowledge all who are
continuing to live with violence today. You are loved.

Chi-meegwetch, marsi, nakurmiik, thank you, merci.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Meegwetch.

Now, I'd like to call upon
Commissioner Audette to provide some closing remarks.

--- CLOSING REMARKS BY/REMARQUES DE CLÔTURE PAR
COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:

COMMISSAIRE MICHÈLE AUDETTE: Merci beaucoup, Madame la Chairperson. Où est votre chaise
homme? Ah, vous êtes là, Monsieur Mellon.

(Speaking Indigenous language.)

On est chez vous ici, alors un gros merci.

Merci de nous accueillir -- I’ll speak English don’t
worry. De nous accueillir sur ton territoire et je joins
mon amour et mes pensées aux paroles de la Commissaire
Robinson sur les pas qu’on fait sur ton territoire.
Merci beaucoup à tous les aînés qui ont fait les prières du début jusqu’à la fin, comme cette semaine au quilliq. Ça c’était très important-là dans tous les endroits où nous sommes allés.

Et je veux dire un gros merci à toutes les personnes qui nous ont suivies, soutenues, encouragées, critiquées, pour faire mieux les choses, mieux travailler, mieux écouter, mieux recevoir la vérité, au cours des 20 quelques mois ou 2 années intensives.

Vous êtes plusieurs, les familles, les survivantes, les leaders autochtones, nos belles guerrières des Premières nations, du People Métis et du People Inuit. Merci à nos alliés, hommes et femmes, à travers le Canada, qui ont appris sur nous, qui ont grandis avec nous, qui ont réagis pour nous et avec nous. Merci beaucoup.

Je veux dire merci aux gens du gouvernement, des provinces, fédéral, provincial et des territoires, les gens des municipalités, qui ont osés poser des questions soit par internet ou par téléphone, pour essayer de comprendre pourquoi cette tragédie.

Je crois aussi que nous avons la présence d’une membre du Parlement du Gouvernement Fédéral à quelque part par là-bas. Je vous salute, madame. Y’a un homme qui me cache.
Alors maintenant je vais vous dire en anglais. In English. It's going to be something to say this in English when my brain and my emotion don't do the translation. I'll try my best.

Before I start, I said in French to you, Laurie, and your people, your nation, thank you for accepting me in your territory. What a courage. You have a Parliament on your territory. So I'm sure you have the 1-800 direct line to present the report to them or to help us when it's going to be time to present the report and recommendations.

And I was saying in French, I know we have the visit of one of the members of the Parliament, Madame la ministre qui est ici. Ah, I see you. Bonjour, Madam Bennett.

Yes, thank you so much. Thank you for the Elders. I know Qajaq and Brian, you said thank you to everybody, so I won't repeat.

But this special thank, I want to say it, I would like to invite Serge. Serge was there since the beginning, never grumpy. Come on, you're part of the Inquiry. And he's the one who made sure this week I'm here. He took care of many things this week so we can have a roof tomorrow night when we go back in Québec City for those who know.
But thank you for the families and survivors. Beautiful teaching last week in Wendake when something happened to our family, Marie Morrison (ph) and Jacquie Gistabish (ph), Nancy Jordan, and other families from Québec were giving me hope, but at the end of the day what they were saying, it was sincere. But I was sitting there and saying, oh, my god, I just lost a material when the women in front of me lost a sister, a mother, a friend, a relative, a sibling and Serge and I was like, ho, we have to stand up and continue this work here in Ottawa. Merci, Serge.

I would like also to invite our grandmothers Cathy, you, Louise, toi aussi de venir ici, Blue, young Blue, all the grandmothers, you can come here please. I speak English, la.

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: La -- ask Laurie, will tell you what is la in English. It’s not la for you, la, Maître Big Canoe, it’s la for, you know, people in Quebec.

Bernie, there she is.

I’d like to ask all the NFAC members to come here also, please, and family members that accept to work and to paddle with us in this huge canoe that we had to build and can paddle at the same time, all of you
families that work with us.

Remember when the announcement was made in Gatineau, we were sitting there not knowing what will be the next minute, not the next day but the next minute. And five of us that time made sure that we will, chew, read, read over and over this decree, order in council, and we saw some space there where we can have families walking with us or letting us walking with you. We saw some space where we were able to have grandmothers to guide us, our own laws.

You’re a family member, toi aussi, a survivor, tu peux venir. I was inviting all the survivors that works at the Inquiry that can stand here.

And you will understand why I’m asking you to join me; two simple reasons.

On a personal note, I have to be honest, that was quite a journey. Very powerful. We learned. I learned. We cried, we yelled, we wonder, we question, we had all kinds of emotion, but never I had a doubt ever, ever about our personalities, can we get along or not.

One of the best values I found in this journey was respect. They let me be crazy, clumsy, Frenglish, or creating words, but they let me be who I am, and that’s so powerful. And coming back on me I was able to give back and say what a beautiful diversity we are,
and this is my family.

I leave my family, like all of us, to go to hearings, meetings, or demonstrate, or walk, or denounce, or hope, but I was coming to a place where I was always welcome. Thank you so much.

And for the grandfathers and grandmothers that welcome us everywhere we went to follow your protocols, your love, the way we should do things, thank you so much. I learned. We learned.

All of us here, even if there were four of us sitting there, on T.V. or in the room, let’s not forget that hundreds of us were receiving your truth, your message, your tears, your laugh, your hope, and we had, and still today, did this in a most respectful way, which for me I say in English with an open mind, with an open spirit, with something that will help us to do the work we have to do.

So they don’t know what I’m going to ask them to do but I’m sure they’ll say yes.

This commitment stick or stick commitment, this stick, it’s a symbol. Very powerful for me when I saw that in one of our hearings in Calgary, c’est ca, with Chef Bello, we say in French, that I was hoping that it would be something that we do everywhere we go. And I know Maggie, Sandra, I saw Hilda and other women in this
room -- oh, there she is -- the families, the survivors that participate or didn’t participate but knows that there is an Inquiry, perfect or not perfect it was or is, doing enough, not enough, but something is happening, among many other things across Canada.

My commitment to you, my commitment as a mom, as a partner, as a member of a big family here, is I want to walk with you, not for you, but beside you. I want to laugh, cry. I want to do things spiritually or physically side-by-side with you even after the Inquiry. I’ll be free moccasin. More free to speak. But this is my commitment to you. And I’m pretty sure my family here has the same feeling for you.

If you can stand up family members so I can see you. I can see you. I want to see you. Merci. Merci beaucoup.

So this is my commitment to you. And families, with me, yes? Parfait. That same energy. That same energy.

Our mandate is not over yet. You know how sad I was because we didn’t have the extension. Okay, fine. There’s so many other systemic causes that need to be examined, that need to be studied, that need to be relooked or brought to the federal government, provincial government, and territorial, and our own government also.
I’m pretty sure in our report we’ll mention that so many things need to be done, still happen, or, you know, to do the work that we were mandated to do.

So I know we have a woman who represents the federal government, Carolyn Bennett. She’s a human being. She’s courageous to come here. And I want to acknowledge that.

That you will receive a report, a report that will come from hearts, from passions, from determination, sometimes frustration, but with lots of hope, lots of hope that there’ll not be cherry picking -- what did Dr. Pamela said -- but that it will be for me for sure we recognize as citizens and members of government, we recognize that something was wrong and still today. We apologize, but with those apologies there’s action. Simple. That’s my medicine for today and my hope.

So I’ll say I love you. It’s not over yet. And my God we will read, and read, and read, and continue the reading while Serge does all the rest at home. Oh, no home over there.

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE: And to make sure that I can be there and be the strong woman I was and still today for you families and survivors. Merci beaucoup.
(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MR. MATHIEU MELLON: Thank you. Thank you very much.

I’d now like to call Chief Commissioner Buller to address a few words.

J’aimerais maintenant inviter la Commissaire en-chef Madame Buller à prononcer son mot de clôture. Merci.

--- CLOSING REMARKS BY/REMARQUES DE CLÔTURE PAR CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:

COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Thank you so much. Thank you.

I want to start by acknowledging the spirits of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, 2S, and trans people. They are always with us. They’ve been in the room this week, they still are. Thank you for joining us. And stay with us as we move ahead please.

Thank you. Merci, et Krisani, Tansi, hello. Thank you.

I want to thank the Algonquin Anishinaabe for welcoming us into their region this week. Gracious, warm hosts. Thank you.

Thank you, Laurie.

I also want to acknowledge the families and
survivors of violence who are here today and have been
here this week, and those who have been joining us on our
Webcast. Remember always that you are loved, and we are
inspired by your strength, resiliency, and perseverance
for justice. You’re not forgotten and you never will be.

We know the truth. We know that Indigenous
women and girls, 2S and Trans people all across this
nation have experienced a disproportionate rate of
violence of all descriptions. This is a harsh reality
that families and survivors have been teaching us and all
Canadians. We must continue to learn from them.

Each mother, auntie, daughter, friend,
cousin, niece; all are vital to the health and wellness of
our families and communities. We will continue to carry
this message of their importance, of their value, in our
hearts and in the words that we will write.

As always, this has been a very informative
week. My goodness, all the things we’ve learned, and this
is our final public hearing.

We could not have done this work without
the guidance, encouragement, and support of so many
people, all of whom are committed to the truth.

I want to thank our respected Elders who
are here this week, our knowledge keepers as well:
Vincent, Elaine, Reta, thank you for your prayers and
stories, your guidance over the week, your handholding. We couldn’t have gotten through this week without you. Thank you.

Eelee, thank you also for -- wherever you are. Where are you? Eelee, for tending the qulliq.

You know, the qulliq gives us light; it helps us go in the right direction. The qulliq keeps us warm at times when we feel the cold, the fear, the anxiety.

Eagle River Drummers, thank you for your songs, your prayers, and thank you for reminding us that every time we hear the drum, we hear our own heartbeat even stronger.

Thank you Christine, Mathieu, Christian, for keeping us on track, and I might I add, on time. You know how important it is to me to be on time.

I also want to thank our health and wellness team, the people who have the purple lanyards; the people who always seem to have the Kleenex when you need it, and the glass of water, even when you don’t know you need it. Thank you for taking care of us all.

I want to also thank our communication team who have, in very hard circumstances, made sure that Canadians are listening and learning our lessons.

I want to also thank our research and legal
teams. They have done an incredible job of marshalling
evidence, not only from witnesses that people can see here
in the hearing room or a room like this, but also all the
reports and documents that we have to consider as part of
our work. Thank you to all of you for doing that.

Also, I want to make special notice of
people who you don’t see but whose work is invaluable; the
statement gathers, some of whom are here today.

They have met with people all across
Canada, more often than not one on one to collect truths,
to honour truths. They are our true frontline, and I’m
grateful for each and every one of them.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Speaking
of people who work outside of the camera spotlight and
outside of public view, more often than not, thank you to
our translation team at the back of the room. I know who
you are.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: You give
voice to us. Thank you. English, French, Inuktitut,
thank you.

And thank you also to our translation team
at the front of the room who are signing. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)
CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Now let’s hope they don’t turn off my microphone.

Thank you to the AV guys at the back there.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: I don’t know how they do it but we have internet, we have Webcast, we have microphones, we have power bars all across Canada. The AV team is brilliant, nothing less than that. Thank you very much for making us look good and sound good.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Our logistical team. Wow. I see at the back of the room there. I know who you are. You constantly work magic to make this happen. Thank you so much. We wouldn’t be in the right place at the right time without you. And I know you take calls from stranded travellers at weekends, middle of the night, and you still make it happen for us, so we are truly grateful.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: And I want to mention the rest of the National Inquiry staff who aren’t here, who are working at home or working in our offices all across Canada. We wouldn’t be here today standing here without each and every one of you. Thank you for your dedication, your commitment, your long hours
to the truth. You’re making it happen.

Thank you to the parties with standing who have appeared all across Canada with us. The questions, the submissions have been beyond my expectations. The excellence in advocacy, both by lawyers and advocates, has been truth telling in and of itself.

Thank you for your commitment to the truth and thank you for your commitment to your clients.

I just want to take a moment here. I had an “Ah-ha” moment earlier this week.

A long time ago back in the dark ages when I was a lawyer and I still had black hair, you could take the number of Indigenous women lawyers and put us in a minivan and still have a seat or two left over. And I was honestly touched by looking around the room and seeing the number of highly skilled, incredibly smart women, Indigenous women, who are lawyers.

I’m also greatly impressed with the Indigenous men who are lawyers and advocates. I think we’d need a couple of buses now to get everybody on board. And I’m so grateful for that. It’s changed the legal landscape of Canada. Each one of them in their own way has changed the legal landscape.

I want to thank the allies who have helped and worked with all of our Indigenous lawyers. You’ve
made a pretty awesome team in your entirety.

I don’t think I can do this without kind of losing it a little bit. I want to thank my fellow Commissioners. And I think about all I can say is this: When we first met, over two years ago now, almost two and a half years ago, we were strangers. Over time I think we’ve become even stranger.

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: I’ll get a translation for you, Michele.

This is our last day of public hearings. It isn’t a sad say, even though we’re saying good bye and thank you to so many people. This is more like a change in seasons where we get to look back on the gifts of the past and look forward to the opportunities that the future provides us.

Through the courage and grace of the many the many families and survivors across Canada. We have heard the truth and we have gathered the truth in numbers far beyond my expectations. Now it’s time to honour the truth through our final report and to start looking forward to giving life to that truth through commemoration.

While we are doing this, while we are preparing our final report to honour the truth and move
forward to give life to the truth, I want to pass along a message to all of Canada. We have heard from families and survivors and others this week and for months all across Canada that there has to be a paradigm shift, a change in culture, a change in thinking.

So here's the message to all Canadians, all governments, all agencies, all individuals. It is now time to rediscover and reset your moral compasses. Join us, the Indigenous people in Canada all across the country in our canoe. It reaches from coast to coast to coast. There's room for everyone. Learn from us. Heal with us. Let's have some difficult conversations.

I will gently remind all Canadians the non-Indigenous people will not be steering the boat, the canoe.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Don't miss the canoe. Don't be left on the shore because you don't own the shore.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: But I can assure you this, there's no need to be afraid, Canada. You will be in safe hands. Even if you try to tip our canoe, even if we run into some rough waters now and then, you will enjoy the safety in our canoe together, the
safety that Indigenous women and girls have not enjoyed, have not been able to enjoy. You'll be safe with us, safer than we have been with you.

Thank you all. We'll meet again at the end of April with the final report.

And in the meantime, Canada, get on board our canoe. Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Miigwetch. Miigwetch for those powerful words from our Commissioners.

Right now, I'd like to call up Laurie Odjik. I'd like to call up our elders, Vince and Elaine and Reta to come up, please.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors on aimerait inviter à l'avant Laurie Odjik, ainsi que nos aînés Vince, Elaine et Reta.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: And I'd like to call up the women singers and drummers in the room to come up as well.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: J'aimerais inviter également les joueurs et les joueuses de tambours à venir nous rejoindre à l'avant.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: So that's Audrey Siegl, Granny Bernie, Barbara, Bobbi-Jo if she's in the room, Christa Big Canoe, Tarya (phonetic), and if
there's anyone else that would like to come join us,
please do so.

So right now while we're organizing this part of the closing agenda, what I'm going to do is I'm going to ask Laurie Odjik to go by the spirit chair. The spirit chair represents our loved ones that are gone, that are missing, that have passed on. And because this whole Inquiry is about our loved one, she needs to be centre, along with our families.

And because this is Algonquin territory, and out of respect and the honour and love I have for my sister Laurie, I'd like for her to move the spirit chair beside the bundle.

**M. MATHIEU MELLON:** Alors pendant qu'on se prépare pour la suite de la cérémonie de clôture, on aimerait inviter Laurie Odjik à venir proche de cette chaise qui représente, en fait, les esprits qui nous permettent d’honorer la mémoire des femmes et des filles autochtones disparues et assassinées.

Comme nous sommes en territoire Algonquin, Laurie qui nous accueille sur son territoire a un rôle important à jouer.

**MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO:** So next I would like to have our Commissioners up here, our Parties with Standing, all the family members that are in the room
and survivors, if you could please come up.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors on aimerait inviter les commissaires, les partis ayant qualité pour agir et les membres de famille qui se trouvent dans la salle à venir se joindre à nous.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Let's make a big circle here.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors s’il vous plait on va essayer de former un grand cercle.

MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: We have a short recess right now. No? Okay. Never mind.

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: I think sometimes the first thing you have to is admit your mistakes and I made two big ones.

First, I want to thank the members of NFAC who have been joining us in person and by webcast all across Canada. And I guess sometimes you forget the people who are the closest to you, inadvertently because they're standing so close to you.

So grandmothers, knowledge keepers, and NFAC circle, I apologize for not mentioning you earlier.

But thank you to our grandmothers and NFAC for wrapping us in support and love in all the work that we do. Thank you to each and every one of you.
MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Miigwetch.

Okay. So is everyone here in our circle?

Charlotte?

So before we ask our women drummers and singers and our drum group to continue, we're going to go into to have Vince and Elaine and Reta make -- start with the ceremony that we had discussed.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Donc avant de procéder à la partie où on écoute les joueurs et les joueuses de tambours, on va demander à nos aînés Vince, Elaine et Reta, d’adresser quelques mots.

ELDER RETA GORDON: Hello, everyone. Is this on? I had all this to say but it has been said. So all I would like to say is, I would like to thank all, as a group too numerous to name individually, those who worked in groups, then came together as a team to put in place this fantastic, well-organized conference.

So I'll just say a little short prayer.

(PRAYER/PRIÈRE)

ELDER RETA GORDON: Till we meet again may a rainbow always touch your shoulder, may the sun shine through your window pane, and may all who enter your abode be blessed and let us never forget that we will always be remembered by the happy tracks our moccasins make in many snows yet to come.
And I said at the beginning of this gathering that the Lord said we're all his children, so remember that. We're all brothers and sisters and treat every brother and sister, no matter from the smallest to the oldest, from those way up there to those who unfortunately are down there. Never look down on anyone unless you're looking down to give them a hand up.

I ask the Creator to those who live close and those who live far, to guide them safely home to their loved ones.

And I won't be seeing you and I wish each and every one of you Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, and a Happy, Healthy New Year.

Til we meet again, God bless.

(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)

ELDER ELAIN KICKNOSWAY: Sometimes every day you start talking about peoples and sometimes every day there is good news and then sometimes every day there is not so good news.

So we want to acknowledge the 15-year-old girl that was found murdered this morning. And that was in The Pas, Manitoba. Her death is being investigated as a homicide.

And across this nation, as we continue the wave, the wave of the truth, the wave of our talk, the
wave of our languages, the wave, the wave of even our
sorrow through the rivers and the tears to acknowledge
we're grabbing onto each other and holding tight.

As a domestic violence survivor myself,
there was a point when it was dark but I looked towards
the light, tried to figure it out, to know that there's
not an alone place. It's just trying to figure it out
half the time through your voice and your song and your
dance and whatever can help you stand tall. And if it's
holding on tight to somebody, hold on tight, because the
wave is coming. We are the wave.

The beauty of you and the gracefulness is
the wave. And through that comes the whistles, comes the
songs, comes the dance and the ceremony. Even if you
shake, you dance through it. You sing through it. You
tell the truth.

And so today I blow the eagle whistle for
you all. It's one that I've carried when I met my family,
when I went back home as a Sixties Scoop survivor; there
is different places of where we've been raised, to know
that city and know the land, to not be afraid to tell our
truth, to be okay through role models, to know that
there's so many more that aren't talking but we're
encouraging them through our voice, through our song,
through even just sitting together, hearing a little bit
of a piece, to say, "Yes, that's me."

So I blow my eagle whistles to you and thank you for your breath of life.

And I'm going to start in the west and then I'm going to go to the other directions. **Miigwetch.**

**ELDER VINCENT KICKNOSWAY:** Boozhoo.

Kwekwe. Ahneen.

Forgive me, for I know not the greeting, salutation to the Inuit. (Speaking in Indigenous language). **Chi-miigwetch.** (Speaking in Indigenous language).

We are so grateful as it has been acknowledged earlier that this beautiful territory that we are in, we acknowledge each and every one of the Anishinaabek Algonquin peoples.

We are so grateful. We've heard all the very wonderful voices of thanks from all the Commissioners to all the parties to the individuals. We are so grateful at this time to acknowledge, give thanks to everyone that it has been acknowledged. We are so grateful. And yes, as it has been said, as long as we continue to paddle together in that large canoe, that chi chimaun, that we can make it to where we are going. And that's what we want in life, is a better focus on a violence-free lifestyle for our women, girls, trans, and two-spirited,
Closing remarks

Buller

and to all the men who too face that, those young ones.

We will carry as best as we know how those abilities within our own individual selves for what we have seen, heard, smelled, spoke, taste, and felt. And may we do that and continue on from this day forward to make those changes. We say to our spirit gods and I say to our spirit helpers, a big *miigwetch*. And I ask Gitchi Manido to watch over each and every one of us and to those who have came to this gathering this week that they have a safe journey back to their destination. I say (speaking in Indigenous language). *Miigwetch*.

**MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD–CHICAGO:** So now we're going to go to our women to start with what Audrey had discussed with our drum group that we have here.

**M. MATHIEU MELLON:** Nous allons donner maintenant la chance aux joueuses de tambours. ...de nous faire une chanson.

**MS. AUDREY SIEGL:** The song we're going to share is the Strong Woman song. It's a song of strength, it's a song of courage, and courage we should never have to bear.

We sing this song for our lost and our stolen. That's who guides us. As much as we're here to change things for the future, first we need to make it right for them. First, we need to show them that they are
loved and that we are working so hard to bring the justice
that they deserve, the safety that we all deserve.

   We stand in front of you, as my aunt says, "the red women rising", and we will not be stopped until
there is justice, and we will not be stopped until there
is safety, and we will not be stopped until there is
balance. And this is part of how that happens.

   It is not up to the Canadian Government to
decide if we will be safe. We decide. And we do that
every day through prayers and teachings and what some will
call reclamation and reconciliation, but all that is, is
us standing up and being who we are.

   So I invite each of you, you are indigenous
to the land somewhere, honour those ancestors, do how they
did, and as Marion said, "follow our lead while you're
here on Turtle Island, on our ancestors' land".

   So we sing this song, and then we pass it
off, and we raise our hands to you for finishing and
closing with the song that you have chosen. Because we
need that balance between the men and the women or nothing
is going to change. So we thank you for standing with us
and for bringing that balance and for leading the way with
us.

   (SINGING AND DRUMMING/CHANT ET PERCUSSIONS)

   (APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)
MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD-CHICAGO: Okay. So now we’ll continue with our closing ceremonies and -- where’s Eelee; I can’t see Eelee -- with extinguishing our qulliq.

M. MATHIEU MELLON: Alors on va poursuivre et c’est maintenant le temps d’inviter notre Aînée Eelee Higgins à éteindre le qulliq.

(SHORT PAUSE/COURTE PAUSE)

ELDER EELEE HIGGINS: I need an interpreter.

(LAUGHTER/RIRES)

ELDER EELEE HIGGINS: Thank you.

First I would like to thank and acknowledge that today and this week have been given such good days. You’ll recall yesterday that we sang in Inuktitut, “This Little Light of Mine”. Now, today when you are leaving this space, this place, this process, make sure you keep that light in you burning and bright. And when people try to extinguish that light, dampen that light, you fuel it even more; you make it even brighter.

Thank you. Safe flights home.

I will now say a prayer in Inuktitut.

Let’s bow our heads.

(CLOSING PRAYER/PRIÈRE DE CLÔTURE)

ELDER EELEE HIGGINS: I will now extinguish
the qulliq.

**(EXTINGUISHING OF THE QULLIQ/EXTINCTION DU QULLIQ)**

**ELDER EELEE HIGGINS:** Thank you.

**(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)**

**MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD CHICAGO:** So now we’re going to just finish off with our travelling song that we sing when we leave our gatherings, because we know that we don’t gather like this for a long, long time. So take it away, boys.

**M. MATHIEU MELLON:** Donc en terminant on va se laisser avec une chanson des joueurs de tambours. Chanson qui nous accompagne dans nos voyages pour notre retour.

**(SONG/CHANT)**

**(APPLAUSE/APPLAUDISSEMENTS)**

**MS. CHRISTINE SIMARD CHICAGO:** And that’s a wrap.

--- Upon concluding at 5:27 p.m./L’audience est close à 17h27
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.

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Félix Larose-Chevalier

Dec 14, 2018