Delee Nikal,
In relation to Cecilia Anne Nikal, Ramona Wilson, Delphine Nikal & Danielle Larue

Statement gathered by Caitlin Hendrickson
II

NOTES

NOTE 1: Where not required by other statute, redactions to this public transcript have been made pursuant to Rule 55 of the Commission’s Legal Path: Rules of Respectful Practice, which provides for “the discretion to redact private information of a sensitive nature where it is not material to the evidence to be given before distributing the information to the Parties. The National Inquiry will consider the public interest in releasing this type of information against the potential harmful impact on the individual whose personal information is at issue.”

NOTE 2: The use of round brackets ( ) in this transcript indicates that amendments have been made to the certified transcript in order to replace information deemed inaudible or indecipherable by the original transcriptionist. Maryiam Khoury, Public Inquiry Clerk with the National Inquiry completed the amendments July 25th, 2018 at Ottawa, Ontario. Ms. Khoury listened back to the source audio recording of the proceeding to make all amendments.
### III

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**List of documents submitted with testimony:**

1. Photograph collage; 3 photographs of Loved One with family and friends, 1 photograph of commemorative shirt
--- Upon commencing on Tuesday, September 26, 2017

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: So my name is Caitlin Hendrickson, with the National Inquiry for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I’m speaking on the record with Delee Nikal, here in Smithers, on September 26, 2017. We are here to speak on the case of Cecilia Anne Nikal. And you are here to voluntarily give your statement.

And present with us today is Delee’s mother, Carmen Nikal; her cousin, Lucy (Glaim); her aunt and Elder, Antoinette Austin; our health care support, Barbara; and statement taker, Kerrie Reay.

So if you’re ready to begin can you please tell me a little bit about Cecilia?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Cecilia was my older cousin that -- who I only knew for the first quarter, you know, of my life. And she came and lived with us. We lived in the same community, obviously, and played together because we were relatively close in age. And she came and lived with us as a foster sister for a while. I don’t know exactly the duration.

And she was always one of my cousins that was nice to me, because not all my cousins were always nice to me. So -- and she’s very soft-spoken, really soft-
spoken. And very kind and nurturing, even as a young girl. And happy, she was always smiling and she always had these, like, dimples and when she laughed it was like this really super soft giggle. It was super shy sounding, which was funny because I -- even though she was my older cousin, I guess, looked out for me and took care of me, she was much less assertive than I was, (being) even younger. Yeah.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** What community did you live in together?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** In Moricetown. Yeah.

(Coryatsaqua) (inaudible).

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** And do you know how old you were roughly when she came to live with you?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** I would have been probably about five or six, I think.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** And you don’t know how long she lived with you?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** No, not the exact time. She -- because our -- my other cousin, [Cousin 1], lived with us around the same time, or stayed with us at least.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M’hm.

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** And then my little cousin, he’s ([Cousin 2]) lived with us off and on. So it was kind of a lot of cousins coming to live with us and stay with us for ---
MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: M’hm.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: --- bits and piece(s) of time.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: What were the circumstances that led Cecilia to coming to live with you?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: There was -- her dad drank quite a bit, so she was in care for -- from quite early on. And I think he was living in Prince George by then. So he wasn’t able to take care of her, and I don’t know why she was removed from where she was staying.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Was she living with her dad?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: No.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Sorry, what was her dad’s name?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: (Emil).

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Do you know how to spell that?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: (E-m-i-l).

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay. Do you know about his last name?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Nikal.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Nikal, okay. And how long (her mom)?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: I can’t remember her name,
phoned me a lot of times.

    MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah. Did you say

Loretta?

    MS. DELEE NIKAL: Loretta, yeah.

    MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Loretta. She has

    MS. DELEE NIKAL: No. Her last name was ---

    UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pierce? Or Walters.

    MS. DELEE NIKAL: Walters, Walters. It was

Walters.

    MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay, yeah.

    UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [Caregiver 1], she

was living with [Caregiver 1], that was her primary
caregiver before she went (inaudible) (to you and then
[Caregiver 1]) passed away.

    UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, she came with

us because [Caregiver 1] got sick. She was in the hospital
and they had nobody in the home to watch over Cecilia. Do
you want me to repeat that?

    MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: So we’ve just got

clarification that [Caregiver 1] was her caregiver ---

    MS. DELEE NIKAL: Yes.

    MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: --- and fell ill

and could no longer care for Cecilia and so she came to
live with you and your family.
Okay. What was [Caregiver 1]’s last name?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  [Caregiver 1]?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  [Caregiver 1].

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:  [Caregiver 1],

okay. Just get that.

So after -- so you said that she lived with you for a period of time. Where did she go after that?

MS. DELEE NIKAL:  Where did she go after that? Back home? Back to [Caregiver 1]’s, yeah.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:  Okay. And we can get more of those details in just one minute here. Okay.

Did she remain in the same community as you when she left your home?

MS. DELEE NIKAL:  Yeah.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:  Yeah, so you were close?

MS. DELEE NIKAL:  We were relatively close, yeah. She’s my cousin, you know? You just play with your cousins.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:  M’hm. What was your favorite thing about her?

MS. DELEE NIKAL:  That she was always watching out for me.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:  Yeah.

MS. DELEE NIKAL:  You know, she was never
mean to me, because lots of kids were mean to me. So she
was always very -- she was always kind and timid, like, I
don’t know. It was hard, like I said, because she was my
older cousin and because she did take care of me, but at
the same time it was like she was always -- I don’t want to
say scared, but that’s what it seemed like.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: M’hm.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: And I mean, the
environment that she lived in when she wasn’t with us.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Can you tell me a
little bit about what it was like at [Caregiver 1]’s?

MS. DELEE NIKAL (UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER):
It’s only a child’s perspective.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah, just what
you understand. And if you don’t remember that’s okay.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: [One line redacted
pursuant to Rule 55]. If you were not one of their
children you did not get treated the best and you most
certainly weren’t -- you most certainly weren’t watched out
for. Meaning there was a lot of sexual abuse that went on
in the homes that Cecilia was in. Not -- and I don’t know
like -- I know what went on in those homes.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Who else lived in
that home?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: [Cecilia’s Brother] lived
there for a while, but he mostly lived with -- which is her brother.

[Six lines redacted pursuant to Rule 55].

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Was [Caregiver 1] family?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Yeah.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Yeah. And were there any other adults in her home, like husband or anybody else?

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Extended family.

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Yeah. There was kind of a revolving door of people that --

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Lots of coming and going?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Yeah. Yeah.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** And you say that there was sexual abuse. Do you think that Cecilia was subjected to that?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** I’d say like every kid there was subjected to it.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Every kid.

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Myself included. Yeah. It was not good. I was relatively fortunate because I didn’t have to live there, I just spent time there, (I guess). Like, it was -- there -- but it was some pretty --
as much good as there was with, like, tradition, being raised traditionally I guess, and my family. There was a lot of really unhealthy behaviors and I know that there were a lot of the -- a lot of the kids that lived there or went to stay there were treated fairly poorly.

And my family, like, the Nikal family wasn’t exactly looked highly upon. So a lot of the kids from the Nikal family got shit on a lot. I was -- especially they -- especially like, Cecilia, [Cecilia’s Brother], my little cousins, [Cousin 2], [Cousin 3], [Cousin 4], because they were -- they were fully Native and I got probably picked on a little bit less because I was a half-breed. But sometimes picked on more because of that as well.

But you could see, like, [Cecilia’s Brother] was -- I know that he was beaten or hit, like, because I saw it and I’m sure that Cecilia was too, because you could see it in her actions. Or maybe she witnessed it enough that she was -- but I know she was incredibly timid and quiet, and I know that that was a lot of the reason why.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: M’hm.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: She didn’t have an easy childhood, I know that. Like ---

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Who made the arrangements for children to go stay there? Was there a social worker involved, or ---
MS. DELEE NIKAL: Well ---

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: --- was this more of private family arrangements?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Lots of time it was family. Like, they would just take care of other family. If somebody just didn’t show up then the kids would just go -- there wasn’t a huge showing of Ministry and Children and Family Services concerned about First Nations until (inaudible) working on the reserve. And this was kind of you -- the responsibility fell under you, which then led to comments in certain households about kids being a burden and people wishing that they were never born, like being (said in front of them is a pretty) sent from a just like fucked up situation. Sorry.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: It’s okay. So can we move into talking a little bit about, you know, maybe some events that led up to her disappearance?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Well, I wouldn’t -- I was so young, I wouldn’t know -- I wouldn’t have known even that she had planned on going anywhere. I could understand that she wanted to.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Where was she living at the time?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: She was living -- she was still at -- she would have been at [Caregiver 2]’s, I
think.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think so.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Yeah, [Caregiver 2] and there were a lot of kids living in that household then.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: How old was she?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: She would have been 13 by the time that she -- maybe even older than that. Maybe 13 or 14.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay. And were any reports made when her disappearance happened?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Yeah. Well, yeah, people thought that she had taken off down south. But then -- and then there were some people that said, “Oh yeah, well she was heard from and she made it down south.” But I don’t know if there were ever anything from the reports that she had 100 percent made it down south.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Where down south do you think she was going?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Vancouver.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Her mum lives down in -- I met her down in Abbotsford. Her mum was down south, but they didn’t -- they weren’t close. Like, her dad was in Prince George living -- he was living on the streets by then, off and on.
MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: So have you, in your adulthood, followed up on -- with any kind of -- to see if there was any kind of police report or anything like that?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: I kept in contact through my mum. My mum, she was the anchor point in which keep update and keep me updated. And then I lived in Prince George for 11 years, so I would see my uncle (Emil) quite a bit.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: M’hm.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: And he would try to update me. Mostly it was just, you know, if I ran into him I’d pick him up and we’d go get something to eat, or if I saw him like, on the streets or whatever, we’d stop and talk and usually I’d buy him, like, a meal or whatever. And you know, when he was in the hospital I went and visited him and he’d always talk about Cecilia.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: M’hm.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: He’d always talk about what he had heard, or you know. He was always hopeful that -- well, he wasn’t always hopeful. There were a couple of times where he talked about her disappearance and he was saying he was pretty sure that she had been murdered, or he had kind of lost hope after a while, I’d say.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: M’hm. So was
there any kind of an -- any kind of immediate response, like people going out and searching for her?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Not really. People just assumed that she had taken off, like that she had runaway or whatever. Fuck, I’d run away in those conditions too.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: M’hm.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Like it wasn’t -- I mean everybody knew how crap -- her and [Cecilia’s Brother] especially -- were treated. They were treated worse than most of the kids out there.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Did anybody try to help you to understand what had happened since you were such -- so young and didn’t know where your cousin had went?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: It was -- no a lot of people just were -- said, you know, well she just -- she took off. And it wasn’t -- I don’t think that -- I think that -- it think that was the, maybe one of the easier ways for a lot of people to cope with the possibility that somebody had gone missing. There was a relatively high rate of alcoholism in the community at that point and it was -- the amount of deaths, and suicides, and unfortunate events was fairly high. And it was really -- it could be really depressing right around that time, and especially with a lot of families that were struggling with -- with
those issues and with high rates of abuse in certain homes.

It’s -- and dealing with Smithers, you’re not -- there wasn’t a really strong show of support between communities. It was actually incredibly divided and that’s me putting it very nicely. It was a very racist -- it was very, very segregated situation. So you knew that there was not any -- there were no niceties by the police. There were no -- you could tell them something and they wouldn’t give a shit, and that was apparent. There wasn’t any support.

So if there was -- you’d be lucky if something happened in Moricetown and there was violence out in the community, if you called the police you’d be really lucky if the police showed up. That was not -- and that was not an uncommon occurrence. There was -- I’m sure that not every police officer was like that, but it was -- it was not a very strongly supported community. There wasn’t -- there weren’t a lot of healthy - not a lot of healthy people or, I don’t know, organizations supporting. Some of them were dire times.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** You were really young when this happened. And you probably wouldn’t have known what to do then and probably felt pretty powerless to do anything about it. I’m just wondering, knowing what you know now as an adult, what do you think might have helped
Cecilia?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Not go missing?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah.

Essentially. Like what kind of interventions do you think, you know, were missing in your community? Because you said there was a lot of gaps, there wasn’t a lot of support.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: I don’t think that it’s necessarily a community problem, and I don’t necessarily think that it’s a family lack of support problem. I think the fact that there was no seriousness taken when she did go missing or a majority of those young women went missing, it a systemic problem, and that’s a Canadian government problem.

The fact that First Nations women are sexualized and diminished and viewed in this very derogatory and very easily disposable way, that’s the problem.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: M’hm.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: So I don’t think that it’s a matter of -- I don’t think it’s a matter of changing, you know, what could have happened. It’s a matter of looking at the fact that there is so much violence and that it’s not taken seriously.

So I don’t think that things could have changed. I don’t -- I could say, oh well, if she hadn’t
been put into that home. But that doesn’t mean that she
(would’ve) wouldn’t went missing. If she -- even if she
had been put into that home and she had run away, or she
had taken off, or -- somebody wouldn’t have felt that it
was okay to take any of these women if they were white
women. They would -- I don’t see a whole bunch of white
women going missing, but it’s been okay by society to view
First Nations women as disposable, of as objects.

There is no way that I should have had to
have viewed as many women as I have, go through violence,
whether it be sexual, physical, emotional, verbal. There’s
no way I should have had to have ever seen my cousins at
that age be taken and/or disappear with no real follow up.
Like, the fact that that happened. The fact that it’s not
just one or two. There’s four girls in my life. The fact
that it was not taken seriously on any one of those, for
any one of those girls. For my cousins, my sisters, or my
friend. The fact that it wasn’t followed up and it was
just deemed “runaways”. There’s no way that that should
have happened, and it wouldn’t have happened if it was
another -- if it was another ethnicity.

The fact that I had to grow up and think my
cousins went missing and nobody follow up, and then have --
I had a partner that was abusive and he turned and he said,
“I could kill you and nobody would care because you’re just
another squaw.” The fact that that’s not just him. That’s not just -- that’s society. That’s society saying that to me. It didn’t hurt because it was him, it hurt because it was true. Well, it’s not 100 percent true, but I mean that’s society’s view. That I -- and I had witnessed that my entire life.

That I witnessed Cecilia go missing and nobody -- there was no seriousness. This young girl is just gone. I witnessed Delphine go missing and then it’s not taken with seriousness. I witness(ed) Ramona go missing and they’re still runaways. Danielle gets killed, it’s -- that’s not -- that is not a one-person event. What needs to change is everything. But I mean, what do I think could stop that? You know, if I could turn back time, what would stop it?

You would have to go so far back, there is no -- like, you would have to -- you’d have to go right back to when settlers first came here. Like, it’s not something that can be changed overnight, and I get that. And it’s not something I can say, like wouldn’t happen, but it’s like, laws, you look at -- is it Bill C-51, like stripping Indigenous women of their Aboriginal rights because they married outside of the community. Like, those are the things that have all lead up to these young women going missing and just -- and nobody following up with any
So it’s not something I can say, like, oh, if she wasn’t in that home, or if she was treated better, if she got to stay with us. Because that wouldn’t have stopped the violence against those young women. It wouldn’t have made it allowable, or acceptable. That’s the problem. It’s not just a community thing, it’s not just a young woman thing. It shouldn’t have mattered if she took off.

If she was -- if she had taken off, or if she had gone missing, or if she was (Nicole) in the (inaudible) who had, you know a $100,000 reward out for her, like her life was valued as much as, you know, a non-First Nations young woman, maybe she would have been found. Or maybe somebody would have reached out if they saw her and said, you know, “Hey, you need to go home.” People would have been looking out for her.

So it’s not a matter of her individual situation, or the situation of any of those girls. It’s a matter of how society views young First Nations women, or First Nations Women in general. And it’s a matter of the worth, or lack thereof, that they put upon First Nations Women.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: You’re right.

None of this is okay. None of what has happened to your
family or to anybody’s family is okay, and it does go that far back. And we’ll have to make changes for the future, and that’s what I’m hoping we can do by taking your statement and I really appreciate you being very strong and forward about what you think about that.

I understand that you were really young when Cecilia went away and you don’t know really what happened. But we’re here to try and do something about it. So what would you like to see in your vision of what the National Inquiry is, what would you like to see happen to honour Cecilia?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** I would like it to be -- I would like for this to be treated with the utmost seriousness, and not this shim sham, call me the day before shit happens, kind of like, this is -- and I understand that it’s going through growing pains. But to see something -- to see young women that have gone missing in my life and family members that have been -- I don’t want to say disposed of, because I’m sure that the people from the Inquiry were not a part of that. And I understand that the intent is to help.

But in order for this to be taken with the utmost seriousness, and in order for people to recognize that these young women’s lives were and are important, it needs to be run really well and a little bit more organized...
than it has been. And it needs to be publicized. This needs to be -- the stories of these young women, like you can -- they need to be heard that these -- these are people’s sister, these are their friends, these are their daughters, these are -- these are people’s lives.

And if it’s all just like -- if we just continue to refer to missing and murdered Indigenous women, it doesn’t give them a face, it doesn’t give them a name. Then it’s just -- then they’re statistics. My cousins aren’t statistics, they’re my cousins. My foster sister isn’t a statistic, she’s my foster sister. Like, they have names, they’re not just missing and murdered Indigenous women. They are not just a red dress. They are -- they’re our family, they’re our friends. And so for it to be just a -- for it to be just you who does this, this case, like it’s -- it sort of -- it almost dehumanizes in a way.

And I understand, I understand the -- I understand the difficulties being faced and how do you really go about this? And I understand that that’s what we’re doing today is trying to figure out how to go about this, but a really important way is not allowing their stories to just be the end result of what they were. Their stories need to be from when they were alive. Their stories need to be of Cecilia and her laugh.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Can you share with
me some of those stories about Cecilia? What was it like when she lived with you?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: I don’t know I -- my memory is not that great.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: When you talk about a laugh, that seems very vivid in your mind. What are some of the things you’d laugh about?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: We were always playing around in my room, on my bed. And she would braid my hair, I love my hair being braided, except for by my auntie because she was too mean. It was too tight.

(laughter)

But she would play with my hair and we would always -- even though she was older than me, she -- and I don’t know if it was that she humoured me because I was her little cousin, and played with my dolls, or if it was because she didn’t really have that. Maybe it was both. And we would -- were always laughing.

We’d go down to my cousin’s place, down in the village because we lived kind of up on this, up on a hill -- hillside, like along the highway. We’d go down into the village and we’d play kick the can with all the kids, then we would play hide and seek, and like, just tag, and we’d play red rover. And it was always just -- she was always laughing even though, I guess then I even -- I saw
the way that she was treated, I saw a lot of the way they -
- like a lot those kids were treated in certain households.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** I think one of the
reasons why you remember her laugh so vividly is that she
was happy with you. You guys had a lot of good times
together.

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** She was happy with the
kids, yeah. Just the kids.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So I think that
you’ve shared a lot. I’d like to take a little bit of a
break and give you some time to ground yourself. And you
can do that with Barb and your family and we’ll -- I’ll
step out with Kerrie for a couple of minutes and I’ll see
if there’s anything else that we should ask. And if not,
we’ll conclude.

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Okay.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Finish up. But
again, I want to thank you for what you’ve shared and the
strength that you’ve brought in this room. There is a room
full of very strong women here and I think that’s a real
testament to your family and everybody that loves Cecilia.

--- Upon recessing
--- Upon resuming

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So we’re back to
continue taking your statement.
So we’d like to go back to where you were talking about your childhood with Cecilia and experiencing some sexual abuse in the home with [Caregiver 1]. And you said that you yourself were subjected to that as well. Are you comfortable sharing with -- some of that with us?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Well, some of my earliest memories would be like, when we played hide and seek. I had a couple of older cousins that would tell me that -- to go with them so that they could take care of me and help me hide, and then would sexually abuse me and sexually assault me.

I remember hiding in a basement, it wasn’t at [Caregiver 1]’s but it was the house next to her, and I was taken down to the basement by one of my older cousins and he penetrated me, and I was like five or so. And then it just kind of was ongoing off and on, not just with him, but with a couple of other older cousins. And sometimes it was right in households in that area, with like adults present in the other room -- well, adults, some of these guys were adults.

From like playing wrestling (where) they were doing body slams, to hide and seek, to -- I had one cousin that just outright brought me to the basement and this like piss mattress, this mattress that was out, still smelled like, and was still damp. And he like laid
on top of me and ejaculated through his pants or whatever.
Yeah, it wasn’t -- it wasn’t a good environment. This is
the environment that Cecilia lived in.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: So this was the
kind of things that Cecilia was also exposed to ---

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Oh yeah.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: --- and subjected
to?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: And I remember some of my
female cousins coming in one time and one of my older male
cousins was on top of me and one of my female cousins
yelled at him to get off me. And then he went over and
punched her and then the other cousin just kind of looked
at him and said, “You guys are going to get in trouble.”
And I remember her saying you guys, and I was like, “What
the -- what -- why?” Like, why am I getting in trouble?
But I thought because I was there that I was -- that I was
going to get in trouble.

And I saw the way that they gave kids shit
and I saw the kids that were about my age, well maybe a
little bit older, getting hit and I didn’t want to get hit.
So I wasn’t bringing that up to anybody.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Was any of this
(reported later on) reportedly known?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: When I was -- finally when
I was about 16, maybe I was -- or it was maybe before that, I had -- we had lived in Victoria when I was 13 and 14 and when I was -- just before my 14th birthday I went to the lake with some of my friends. And these two older Latino guys were there and I had a crush on one of them and we went -- they asked me if I wanted to go cliff diving with them, and so we went to walk around to the cliff diving area. And the one guy said that he had to go use the washroom in the woods. Because like -- they’re all, I was all in the woods, like I don’t know where you’re going.

And he pushed -- his friend pushed me down and raped me and then as I like laid there crying in these like thorny bushes, because my inside of my thighs were all bleeding and I didn’t know how I was going to describe it or tell my friends what happened, or how I was going to get away. His friend came over to comfort me and ended up doing the exact same thing.

And when I moved back to Smithers after that I talked to a councillor, I think once, and unfortunately it was somebody that was friends with my mum so I didn’t trust her. And I -- so I didn’t feel comfortable talking to her because I thought that she was going to tell my mum everything. And so I didn’t talk to her again after that.

And then, yeah, I didn’t -- it think I finally -- when I was like in my mid-20s I worked at a bar
and some of the perpetrators from when I was a child, like when I was between five and 10 roughly, one of the perpetrators came into the pub that I worked at. And I just -- he was with some of my older cousins who didn’t -- who were not perpetrators of violence against me in any way, shape, or form. I’d always -- I had always felt safe with them.

And I told them that he needed to leave and when one of them asked why, I said “because he is a fucking pedophile. And I will not be serving any pedophiles in my bar.” So and then nobody knew how to react and then he left. So it was never formally dealt with. I didn’t -- I didn’t feel like I would have any real support.

You see so many women go missing and so much violence against First Nations women, why would you ever feel like you have any support? You know, I wasn’t stupid. I was an incredibly intelligent kid. I saw the way that First Nations women were portrayed, saw the lack of care and concern, picked that up on a regular basis.

And then you have to weigh your options. You have to think, am I going to deal with this and bring it out in the open and have it possibly affect me adversely? Or I’m going to have to go through this battle that I may be not ready to fight emotionally, mentally?

And even though you know that you -- in theory you should
have the supports there and you have the support of people in your life, they view you differently. They do. I know people are always like, no they don’t. They do. But now I don’t worry about that. So I have no problem speaking about it now.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Did your mum have any idea what was going on when you were a kid?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Not until I was 16 and finally I just -- I acted out a bit when I was in my early to mid-teens. And finally, I’m just pretty sure, lashed out and didn’t go in too full a detail of what I had endured, but was pretty vocal about not thinking that she was a very good parent. So ---

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** How did your mum respond to that?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** From what I recall not very well. It was a little more dismissive than I would have probably liked. But it was very much I didn’t know, so what was I supposed to do, or how was I supposed to change that? But my parents were very different. They played very different roles in my life.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M’hm.

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Mum was very scientific, and intelligent, academic, not calculated but logical. And dad was the emotional. I wouldn’t -- I don’t think I
didn’t tell my dad until I was in my, like, early 30s, because he would not take it well.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Did your dad live with you when you were growing up?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Only until I was seven.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay. Sorry, what was your dad’s name.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Herb Nikal.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Are you still connected to him?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Yeah, yeah. He was -- I mean off and on throughout my life, there and then not, there and then not. He endured a lot of -- not that it makes it okay to be absentee in a child’s life, but he carries a lot of ghosts with him, a lot. So I don’t think that he ever really has fully dealt with any of that. So it’s very hard for him to deal with anything emotional.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Did he attend residential school?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: No. He ---

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Catholic School)

(inaudible) though.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Yeah, which was not good.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: How’s your relationship now? How did he respond to you -- your
telling him what you experienced?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** I didn’t go into very
detail. Just, he would probably go off the deep end and
he’s battled with alcohol his entire life and he’s battled
with suicide and I just -- some people have the capacity to
deal with things and some people don’t. And I would not
burden the people that do not have the capacity to deal
with those things. That’s their journey. It’s not my
responsibility to add more on to the bearer. I don’t need
to put more on their plate.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M’hm. So you
talked about how you moved from this place of not knowing
what to do with what’s happened to you, to a point where
you’ve got the strength to talk about it openly now.
What’s given you that strength to be able to move forward
and kind of, reclaim yourself and be able to speak out
about it?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** In the beginning, seeing
strong women in my life, my mum, my aunt, some of my older
cousins. Knowing -- I guess, reading a lot and being able
to -- being able to read people. Knowing my audience and
being able to -- being able to grow and develop
relationships throughout my life that were with people that
were very supportive and would reassure me that they
respected me.
Because then I knew that I wasn’t just -- I wasn’t just another statistic. I wasn’t just some little “rez kid” that got abused. I had made a number of friends. I worked in the public, you know for -- from the time that I was 13 on, and I was -- so then I was comfortable knowing that I wouldn’t be viewed as just a statistic.

And also coming to terms with knowing that that wasn’t me. Like, I went -- I saw councillors, different various councillors over the years and it was just, like, such a -- I don’t know, there was almost such a victim mentality with a lot of them. Like, you know, this happened to you and you know, it’s okay to feel this or it’s okay to feel that. And I was like, “yeah, I fucking got that part. Like, you don’t actually need to reassure me of that.” I understand that, you know, I’m conscious -- I’m a conscious being. I understand what I’m going through.

But being able to like, discuss it and just -- and realize, come the realization that I didn’t do it. Like it wasn’t -- it was something that happened to me, it was not something that defines me. It’s something that helped define me, for sure, because if I hadn’t gone through everything that I’d gone through I wouldn’t be at the place that I’m at.

I was in a couple of very abusive
relationships and if I hadn’t made it through them, if I hadn’t gone through what I had gone through in those relationships, if I hadn’t heard those words from somebody that I thought that I loved at the time, if I hadn’t survived those relationships I might not have been able to be in the position that I’m in today.

Meaning, I don’t know if I would feel strong enough. I might be afraid of hearing something that might break me, or might hurt me or -- and instead I can just be like, fucking cold, and a little bit detached I guess. But it’s not -- I don’t consider it (detached) dispassionate, I consider it -- I’ve gone through a lot of shit and I know that -- I know that I’ve made it through. I’m not missing. I haven’t been murdered, knock on wood. Apparently, I haven’t (inaudible) (it happens a lot in Canada).

And everything that I’ve gone through has led me to the point where I’ve been given a platform to speak to different people throughout, like across Canada and actually, now into the States. And I guess, speak on behalf of the women and the sisters and the family that don’t have that platform, and without fear because I’ve been through -- been through enough.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And about your position?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Can you expand on
that?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** I work for CN rail. I build and maintain -- I don’t build anymore because (inaudible) (they’re instinct), I maintain the timber trestle bridges and I’m the first ever female bridge person that has stayed in the position for longer than three months. I was the first ever elected female and Aboriginal -- or Aboriginal-identifying person, because somebody else was like, part Cree, but they didn’t identify as Aboriginal -- person elected at a national level. At -- first ever female to get a position as bridge foreman. So I’ve always just dealt with all men and (---) (inaudible).

And I’ve been able to attend a lot of conferences. I spoke up at the Canadian Labour Congress, Rise Up for Your Rights Conference, eight and a half years ago. (I was) one of two delegates out of 500 that deemed missing, murdered, or violence against Indigenous women as a key human rights issue that wasn’t being addressed in Canada. So I ran a caucus with Holly Page from the BCGEU. And ---

**(SIREN SOUNDING)**

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Sorry, what’s that?

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** I’ve always been the ---

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** One minute.
MS. DELEE NIKAL: Yeah. I’ll just (inaudible) (It’s just ---). So Holly Page and I ran a caucus on violence -- back then it was violence against Indigenous women and I spoke about Cecilia, and Delphine, and Danielle, and Ramona. And then it just continued on from there, the -- I spoke with our Human Rights Director from the United Steelworkers. And once I was voted into a national position I had the ear of our National Director. So I pushed for it and spoke up at several conferences, several workshops, and have always -- have always, always pushed for this to be an issue brought to the forefront of any sort of human rights. You can’t say that you fight for human rights in Canada if you’re not fighting for the rights of missing and murdered Indigenous women, or women -- First Nations women that are subjected to violence on a -- can’t even say regular basis, on any basis.

So -- and then I was selected to attend a leadership program in Pittsburgh. So the -- when I go down there and I attend our program, I’m able to connect with people or members from our strategic alliances in Mexico, and we have a couple of unions that we deal with in Puerto Rico, Unite from the U.K. And I’ve been able to speak on the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, which is not -- surprisingly not very well-known.
My last -- I went last year in April I think it was, and we talked. Everybody went around the room and talked a little bit about -- there are 80 students a year that are selected from North America, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and the U.K. And so we have students from all over, and when I brought up the issue of missing women, Indigenous women, a lot of people didn’t really have any knowledge of it. And I had people that were like, what? “Is there actually women going missing?”

And like what (the) fuck? Like how -- how do people all over the world not know this? How is this -- especially in a labour movement and a -- you know, that specifically deals with human rights issues. It was just -- it blew me away and then I -- and then it kind of sank in. Another like, I had spoke at conferences where people would come up and thank me and they’d say, you know, awesome that you’re bringing this to the forefront. But clearly, we haven’t done enough to make sure that this is identified as a major issue.

We haven’t -- we list it as MMIWG. It’s not putting a face to it, it’s not humanizing it, it’s not -- people are not connecting with it. It’s not being presented to labour organizations as a human rights issue. Right now, it’s an Aboriginal women issue and I hate to say it, but that’s not taken all that seriously. If it’s
presented as a human rights issue and pushed with the organizations that have the capacity to get it out to hundreds of thousands of members, you know, half a million members, then it become -- then it becomes an issue.

So I have -- I’ve been fortunate enough to have the platform, but I’m only one person. There shouldn’t just be one person pushing for this. Like, it’d be nice if there was -- if it was -- if the inquiry, like, one of the best things that I think the inquiry could do is start working with labour organizations. And saying, if you’re all about human rights issues, and it’s -- they have to step up.

[Fifteen lines redacted pursuant to Rule 55].

That needs to be -- it just needs to be a bigger -- I don’t know. If there was some sort of like, way that the people from inquiry could work in conjunction with human rights groups and make it a key issue. Because as it is, I was just at a women’s conference and I asked about the inquiry and what we were doing with it to ensure that it was taken with the seriousness that it deserved to be viewed at -- or be viewed with. And they were like, well we wrote a letter to the Prime Minister. What?

Like there should be -- there should be a consistent like, communication pathway there. Like that just makes sense, then you have the support, you’re working
together. Because if you’re working as an independent
organization you’re not getting the full -- full benefit.
Like, there are benefits that you could ---

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Thank you. That’s
really helpful for us to know and that’s something that I
can bring forward to -- who is, you know, kind of
overseeing the statement takers. Because I mean, I’m only
one of, you know ---

**MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Yeah.

**MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** --- several that’s
going to be and we’re going to be doing -- conducting our
training for all of the other statement takers, you know,
very soon. And getting those kinds of suggestions is
really helpful because then we can bring that to the rest
of the inquiry who -- obviously, we wouldn’t handle any of
that. But maybe our research team can get that going and
see how we can make this bigger and make it a real
impactful organization, right?

And I appreciate you sharing your truth
today with us, and all of your accomplishments. That
sounds amazing, what you’re doing, and you know speaking
up. You’re right, you’re only one person, but every time
you speak you are getting to people and you know, 7 billion
people in the world, it’s going to take some time. But it
sounds like you’re doing some amazing things and I ---
MS. DELEE NIKAL: I try.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: But I raise my hands to you, I really do, because you’re going to help get more people on board to do that, right? It’s not going to be just you. You’ve got people really supporting you and we’re supporting you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I honour your (resilient spirit) resilience (inaudible). You didn’t become a statistic.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: And we appreciate what you say about all of the women that you’ve lost in your life. They do all have names and identities and people who loved them. And we only spoke about Cecilia today and we only spoke a little bit about you. But I’m going to keep -- I said her name throughout the whole time because you’re right, she is a person, what happened to her wasn’t okay. And we want to honour Cecilia and you know, that’s what we’re here to do.

[One line redacted pursuant to Rule 55]. How about we take a break. We’ll go over that in a little bit. Do you feel like there’s anybody else that we should be talking to, about Cecilia specifically, that would like to come forward?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: [One line redacted pursuant to Rule 55]. I don’t know if the story can ---
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [One line redacted pursuant to Rule 55].

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Okay. Yeah.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah, so she won’t be able to do that. I was just wondering if there was anybody else. Or if there’s anything that you want us to look into in terms of police reports or any kind of investigation. I know you’re saying that really nobody did anything. But one thing that our lawyers can do is they can look in to see what kind of paper trail that there is, if any, to see that -- if anything was done.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Yeah.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Because that’s what they want to do. They want to know what the quality of the police investigations or anything like that around Cecilia.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: That would be good, because like I said, my uncle, each time that I talk to him he’d usually have like, kind of -- there’s be conflicting stories. Like, (each time I saw him) he’s (inaudible) and I know that sometimes it was because he had a lot of hope that she was okay, or that she had just run away, or she was living somewhere down south. And then other times I guess he didn’t have a lot of hope because of where he was at or whatever. So I mean with him gone, like, I don’t --
yeah. I don’t get to hear anything about that.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Do you feel like
you’ve been heard today?

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Yeah. Maybe would
[Cecilia’s Brother] want to -- do you think he would?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Someone asked him
maybe.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: May just want to know.

Okay.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: They can still
register if they want to. They can go through the process
by calling the toll-free number. It doesn’t have to be
right now just because we’re here. It can be done at any
time.

MS. DELEE NIKAL: Okay.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: So I mean, it
remains open. So with that I’m going to conclude this and
turn off the recorder.

--- Upon adjourning
CERTIFICATION

I, Suzanne Jobb, 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.

Suzanne Jobb

October 16, 2017