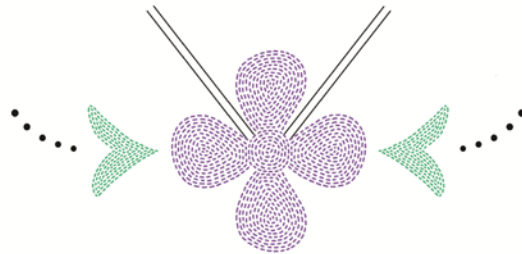


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
Smithers, British Columbia
Northwest Community College**



PUBLIC

Tuesday, September 26, 2017

Statement - Volume 8

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

Statement gathered by Caitlin Hendrickson

**INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.
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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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement Volume 8
September 26, 2017
Witness: Delee Nikal
Statement gatherer: Caitlin Hendrickson

	Page
Testimony of Delee Nikal	1
Reporter's certification.	39

List of documents submitted with testimony:

1. Photograph collage; 3 photographs of Loved One with family and friends, 1 photograph of commemorative shirt

1 Smithers, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Tuesday, September 26, 2017

3 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So my name is
4 Caitlin Hendrickson, with the National Inquiry for Missing
5 and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I'm speaking on
6 the record with Delee Nikal, here in Smithers, on September
7 26, 2017. We are here to speak on the case of Cecilia Anne
8 Nikal. And you are here to voluntarily give your
9 statement.

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

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

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

23 And she was always one of my cousins that
24 was nice to me, because not all my cousins were always nice
25 to me. So -- and she's very soft-spoken, really soft-

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 spoken. And very kind and nurturing, even as a young girl.
2 And happy, she was always smiling and she always had these,
3 like, dimples and when she laughed it was like this really
4 super soft giggle. It was super shy sounding, which was
5 funny because I -- even though she was my older cousin, I
6 guess, looked out for me and took care of me, she was much
7 less assertive than I was, (being) ~~even~~ younger. Yeah.

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

10 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** In Moricetown. Yeah.
11 (Coryatsaqua) ~~(inaudible)~~.

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

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

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

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

21 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm.

22 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** And then my little cousin,
23 ~~he's~~ ([Cousin 2]) lived with us off and on. So it was kind
24 of a lot of cousins coming to live with us and stay with us
25 for ---

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: M'hm.

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

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

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

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

13 MS. DELEE NIKAL: No.

14 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Sorry, what was
15 her dad's name?

16 MS. DELEE NIKAL: (Emil).

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

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

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

22 MS. DELEE NIKAL: Nikal.

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

25 MS. DELEE NIKAL: I can't remember her name,

1 phoned me a lot of times.

2 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Yeah. Did you say
3 Loretta?

4 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Loretta, yeah.

5 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Loretta. She has
6 that last name, Nikal?

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

8 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Pierce? Or Walters.

9 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Walters, Walters. It was
10 Walters.

11 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay, yeah.

12 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** [Caregiver 1], she
13 was living with [Caregiver 1], that was her primary
14 caregiver before she went ~~(inaudible)~~ (to you and then
15 [Caregiver 1]) passed away.

16 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Yeah, she came with
17 us because [Caregiver 1] got sick. She was in the hospital
18 and they had nobody in the home to watch over Cecilia. Do
19 you want me to repeat that?

20 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So we've just got
21 clarification that [Caregiver 1] was her caregiver ---

22 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Yes.

23 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** --- and fell ill
24 and could no longer care for Cecilia and so she came to
25 live with you and your family.

1 Okay. What was [Caregiver 1]'s last name?

2 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** [Caregiver 1]?

3 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** [Caregiver 1].

4 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** [Caregiver 1],
5 okay. Just get that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm. What was
21 your favorite thing about her?

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

24 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Yeah.

25 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** You know, she was never

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 mean to me, because lots of kids were mean to me. So she
2 was always very -- she was always kind and timid, like, I
3 don't know. It was hard, like I said, because she was my
4 older cousin and because she did take care of me, but at
5 the same time it was like she was always -- I don't want to
6 say scared, but that's what it seemed like.

7 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm.

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

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

12 ~~**MS. DELEE NIKAL**~~ **(UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER):**
13 It's only a child's perspective.

14 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Yeah, just what
15 you understand. And if you don't remember that's okay.

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

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

25 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** [Cecilia's Brother] lived

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 there for a while, but he mostly lived with -- which is her
2 brother.

3 *[Six lines redacted pursuant to Rule 55].*

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

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

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

10 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Extended family.

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Myself included. Yeah.
23 It was not good. I was relatively fortunate because I
24 didn't have to live there, I just spent time there, (I
25 guess). Like, it was -- there -- but it was some pretty --

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 as much good as there was with, like, tradition, being
2 raised traditionally I guess, and my family. There was a
3 lot of really unhealthy behaviors and I know that there
4 were a lot of the -- a lot of the kids that lived there or
5 went to stay there were treated fairly poorly.

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

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

20 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm.

21 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** She didn't have an easy
22 childhood, I know that. Like ---

23 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Who made the
24 arrangements for children to go stay there? Was there a
25 social worker involved, or ---

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 MS. DELEE NIKAL: Well ---

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

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

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

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

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

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

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 think.

2 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** I think so.

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

5 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** How old was she?

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

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

11 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Yeah. Well, yeah, people
12 thought that she had taken off down south. But then -- and
13 then there were some people that said, "Oh yeah, well she
14 was heard from and she made it down south." But I don't
15 know if there were ever anything from the reports that she
16 had 100 percent made it down south.

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

19 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Vancouver.

20 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay.

21 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Her mum lives down in -- I
22 met her down in Abbotsford. Her mum was down south, but
23 they didn't -- they weren't close. Like, her dad was in
24 Prince George living -- he was living on the streets by
25 then, off and on.

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So have you, in
2 your adulthood, followed up on -- with any kind of -- to
3 see if there was any kind of police report or anything like
4 that?

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

10 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm.

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

18 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm.

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

25 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm. So was

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 there any kind of an -- any kind of immediate response,
2 like people going out and searching for her?

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

6 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm.

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

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

15 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** It was -- no a lot of
16 people just were -- said, you know, well she just -- she
17 took off. And it wasn't -- I don't think that -- I think
18 that -- it think that was the, maybe one of the easier ways
19 for a lot of people to cope with the possibility that
20 somebody had gone missing. There was a relatively high
21 rate of alcoholism in the community at that point and it
22 was -- the amount of deaths, and suicides, and unfortunate
23 events was fairly high. And it was really -- it could be
24 really depressing right around that time, and especially
25 with a lot of families that were struggling with -- with

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 those issues and with high rates of abuse in certain homes.

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

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

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

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 Cecilia?

2 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Not go missing?

3 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Yeah.

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

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

14 The fact that First Nations women are
15 sexualized and diminished and viewed in this very
16 derogatory and very easily disposable way, that's the
17 problem.

18 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm.

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

24 So I don't think that things could have
25 changed. I don't -- I could say, oh well, if she hadn't

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 been put into that home. But that doesn't mean that she
2 (would've) ~~wouldn't~~ went missing. If she -- even if she
3 had been put into that home and she had run away, or she
4 had taken off, or -- somebody wouldn't have felt that it
5 was okay to take any of these women if they were white
6 women. They would -- I don't see a whole bunch of white
7 women going missing, but it's been okay by society to view
8 First Nations women as disposable, of as objects.

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

22 The fact that I had to grow up and think my
23 cousins went missing and nobody follow up, and then have --
24 I had a partner that was abusive and he turned and he said,
25 "I could kill you and nobody would care because you're just

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 another squaw." The fact that that's not just him. That's
2 not just -- that's society. That's society saying that to
3 me. It didn't hurt because it was him, it hurt because it
4 was true. Well, it's not 100 percent true, but I mean
5 that's society's view. That I -- and I had witnessed that
6 my entire life.

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

16 You would have to go so far back, there is
17 no -- like, you would have to -- you'd have to go right
18 back to when settlers first came here. Like, it's not
19 something that can be changed overnight, and I get that.
20 And it's not something I can say, like wouldn't happen, but
21 it's like, laws, you look at -- is it Bill C-51, like
22 stripping Indigenous women of their Aboriginal rights
23 because they married outside of the community. Like, those
24 are the things that have all lead up to these young women
25 going missing and just -- and nobody following up with any

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 of them.

2 So it's not something I can say, like, oh,
3 if she wasn't in that home, or if she was treated better,
4 if she got to stay with us. Because that wouldn't have
5 stopped the violence against those young women. It
6 wouldn't have made it allowable, or acceptable. That's the
7 problem. It's not just a community thing, it's not just a
8 young woman thing. It shouldn't have mattered if she took
9 off.

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

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

24 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** You're right.
25 None of this is okay. None of what has happened to your

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 family or to anybody's family is okay, and it does go that
2 far back. And we'll have to make changes for the future,
3 and that's what I'm hoping we can do by taking your
4 statement and I really appreciate you being very strong and
5 forward about what you think about that.

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

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

22 But in order for this to be taken with the
23 utmost seriousness, and in order for people to recognize
24 that these young women's lives were and are important, it
25 needs to be run really well and a little bit more organized

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 than it has been. And it needs to be publicized. This
2 needs to be -- the stories of these young women, like you
3 can -- they need to be heard that these -- these are
4 people's sister, these are their friends, these are their
5 daughters, these are -- these are people's lives.

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

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

25 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Can you share with

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 me some of those stories about Cecilia? What was it like
2 when she lived with you?

3 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** I don't know I -- my
4 memory is not that great.

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

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

12 (laughter)

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

19 We'd go down to my cousin's place, down in
20 the village because we lived kind of up on this, up on a
21 hill -- hillside, like along the highway. We'd go down
22 into the village and we'd play kick the can with all the
23 kids, then we would play hide and seek, and like, just tag,
24 and we'd play red rover. And it was always just -- she was
25 always laughing even though, I guess then I even -- I saw

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 the way that she was treated, I saw a lot of the way they -
2 - like a lot those kids were treated in certain households.

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

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

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

16 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Okay.

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

22 --- Upon recessing

23 --- Upon resuming

24 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So we're back to
25 continue taking your statement.

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 So we'd like to go back to where you were
2 talking about your childhood with Cecilia and experiencing
3 some sexual abuse in the home with [Caregiver 1]. And you
4 said that you yourself were subjected to that as well. Are
5 you comfortable sharing with -- some of that with us?

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

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

21 From like playing wrestling (where) were
22 they were doing body slams, to hide and seek, to -- I had
23 one cousin that just outright brought me to the basement
24 and this like piss mattress, this mattress that was out,
25 still smelled like, and was still damp. And he like laid

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 on top of me and ejaculated through his pants or whatever.
2 Yeah, it wasn't -- it wasn't a good environment. This is
3 the environment that Cecilia lived in.

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

6 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Oh yeah.

7 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** --- and subjected
8 to?

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

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

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

25 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** When I was -- finally when

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

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

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

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

24 And then, yeah, I didn't -- it think I
25 finally -- when I was like in my mid-20s I worked at a bar

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 and some of the perpetrators from when I was a child, like
2 when I was between five and 10 roughly, one of the
3 perpetrators came into the pub that I worked at. And I
4 just -- he was with some of my older cousins who didn't --
5 who were not perpetrators of violence against me in any
6 way, shape, or form. I'd always -- I had always felt safe
7 with them.

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

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

20 And then you have to weigh your options.
21 You have to think, am I going to deal with this and bring
22 it out in the open and have it possibly affect me
23 adversely? Or I'm going to have to go through this battle
24 that I may be not ready to fight emotionally, mentally?
25 And even though you know that you -- in theory you should

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 have the supports there and you have the support of people
2 in your life, they view you differently. They do. I know
3 people are always like, no they don't. They do. But now I
4 don't worry about that. So I have no problem speaking
5 about it now.

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

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

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

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

22 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm.

23 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Mum was very scientific,
24 and intelligent, academic, not calculated but logical. And
25 dad was the emotional. I wouldn't -- I don't think I

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 didn't tell my dad until I was in my, like, early 30s,
2 because he would not take it well.

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

5 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Only until I was seven.

6 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay. Sorry, what
7 was your dad's name.

8 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Herb Nikal.

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

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

18 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Did he attend
19 residential school?

20 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** No. He ---

21 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** (Catholic School)
22 ~~(inaudible)~~ though.

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

24 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** How's your
25 relationship now? How did he respond to you -- your

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 telling him what you experienced?

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

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

18 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** In the beginning, seeing
19 strong women in my life, my mum, my aunt, some of my older
20 cousins. Knowing -- I guess, reading a lot and being able
21 to -- being able to read people. Knowing my audience and
22 being able to -- being able to grow and develop
23 relationships throughout my life that were with people that
24 were very supportive and would reassure me that they
25 respected me.

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 Because then I knew that I wasn't just -- I
2 wasn't just another statistic. I wasn't just some little
3 "rez kid" that got abused. I had made a number of friends.
4 I worked in the public, you know for -- from the time that
5 I was 13 on, and I was -- so then I was comfortable knowing
6 that I wouldn't be viewed as just a statistic.

7 And also coming to terms with knowing that
8 that wasn't me. Like, I went -- I saw councillors,
9 different various councillors over the years and it was
10 just, like, such a -- I don't know, there was almost such a
11 victim mentality with a lot of them. Like, you know, this
12 happened to you and you know, it's okay to feel this or
13 it's okay to feel that. And I was like, "yeah, I fucking
14 got that part. Like, you don't actually need to reassure
15 me of that." I understand that, you know, I'm conscious --
16 I'm a conscious being. I understand what I'm going
17 through.

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

25 I was in a couple of very abusive

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 relationships and if I hadn't made it through them, if I
2 hadn't gone through what I had gone through in those
3 relationships, if I hadn't heard those words from somebody
4 that I thought that I loved at the time, if I hadn't
5 survived those relationships I might not have been able to
6 be in the position that I'm in today.

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

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

23 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** And about your
24 position?

25 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Can you expand on

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 that?

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

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

21 (SIREN SOUNDING)

22 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Sorry, what's
23 that?

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

25 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** One minute.

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 MS. DELEE NIKAL: Yeah. I'll just
2 ~~(inaudible)~~ (It's just ---). So Holly Page and I ran a
3 caucus on violence -- back then it was violence against
4 Indigenous women and I spoke about Cecilia, and Delphine,
5 and Danielle, and Ramona. And then it just continued on
6 from there, the -- I spoke with our Human Rights Director
7 from the United Steelworkers. And once I was voted into a
8 national position I had the ear of our National Director.

9 So I pushed for it and spoke up at several
10 conferences, several workshops, and have always -- have
11 always, always pushed for this to be an issue brought to
12 the forefront of any sort of human rights. You can't say
13 that you fight for human rights in Canada if you're not
14 fighting for the rights of missing and murdered Indigenous
15 women, or women -- First Nations women that are subjected
16 to violence on a -- can't even say regular basis, on any
17 basis.

18 So -- and then I was selected to attend a
19 leadership program in Pittsburgh. So the -- when I go down
20 there and I attend our program, I'm able to connect with
21 people or members from our strategic alliances in Mexico,
22 and we have a couple of unions that we deal with in Puerto
23 Rico, Unite from the U.K. And I've been able to speak on
24 the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, which
25 is not -- surprisingly not very well-known.

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 My last -- I went last year in April I think
2 it was, and we talked. Everybody went around the room and
3 talked a little bit about -- there are 80 students a year
4 that are selected from North America, Puerto Rico, Mexico,
5 and the U.K. And so we have students from all over, and
6 when I brought up the issue of missing women, Indigenous
7 women, a lot of people didn't really have any knowledge of
8 it. And I had people that were like, what? "Is there
9 actually women going missing?"

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

20 We haven't -- we list it as MMIWG. It's not
21 putting a face to it, it's not humanizing it, it's not --
22 people are not connecting with it. It's not being
23 presented to labour organizations as a human rights issue.
24 Right now, it's an Aboriginal women issue and I hate to say
25 it, but that's not taken all that seriously. If it's

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 presented as a human rights issue and pushed with the
2 organizations that have the capacity to get it out to
3 hundreds of thousands of members, you know, half a million
4 members, then it become -- then it becomes an issue.

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

13 *[Fifteen lines redacted pursuant to Rule 55].*

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

23 Like there should be -- there should be a
24 consistent like, communication pathway there. Like that
25 just makes sense, then you have the support, you're working

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 together. Because if you're working as an independent
2 organization you're not getting the full -- full benefit.
3 Like, there are benefits that you could ---

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

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

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

19 And I appreciate you sharing your truth
20 today with us, and all of your accomplishments. That
21 sounds amazing, what you're doing, and you know speaking
22 up. You're right, you're only one person, but every time
23 you speak you are getting to people and you know, 7 billion
24 people in the world, it's going to take some time. But it
25 sounds like you're doing some amazing things and I ---

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** I try.

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

7 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** I honour your
8 (resilient spirit) ~~resilience (inaudible)~~, you know. You
9 didn't become a statistic.

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

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

24 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** *[One line redacted*
25 *pursuant to Rule 55].* I don't know if the story can ---

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [One line redacted
2 pursuant to Rule 55].

3 MS. DELEE NIKAL: Okay. Yeah.

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

12 MS. DELEE NIKAL: Yeah.

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

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

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1 yeah. I don't get to hear anything about that.

2 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Do you feel like
3 you've been heard today?

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

6 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Someone asked him
7 maybe.

8 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** May just want to know.
9 Okay.

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

15 **MS. DELEE NIKAL:** Okay.

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

19 --- Upon adjourning

20

21

22

23

24

25

Delee Nikal

(Nikal, Nikal, Wilson & Larue)

1

2

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

3

4

I, Suzanne Jobb, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I

5

have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and

6

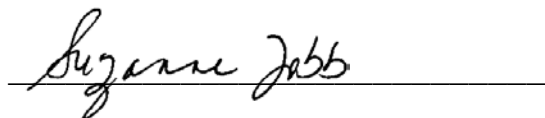
accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this

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matter.

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Suzanne Jobb", is written over a solid horizontal line.

10

Suzanne Jobb

11

October 16, 2017

12