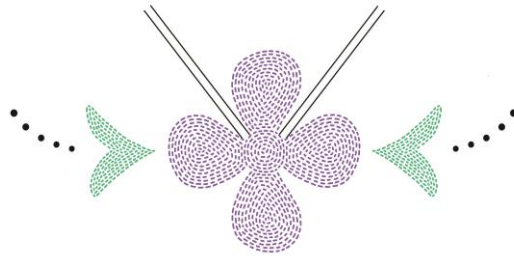


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

Thursday September 28, 2017

**Statement - Volume 18
Mike Robertson,
In relation to Chassidy Charlie & Doreen Jack**

Statement gathered by Caitlin Hendrickson

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.
41-5450 Canotek Road, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 9G2
E-mail: info@irri.net – Phone: 613-748-6043 – Fax: 613-748-8246

II

NOTE

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."

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2. Composite page of photographs of Chassidy Charlie
3. Lyrics of song written by Statement Provider in memory of Chassidy Charlie

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NOTE

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. The use of a strikethrough mark indicates where an error was found in the original transcription. Susan Grant, Legal Assistant with National Inquiry made all amendments on May 29th, 2019 at Vancouver, British Columbia. Ms. Grant listened back to the source audio recording of the proceeding to make the amendments.

1 Smithers, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Thursday, September 28, 2017

3 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** This is Caitlin
4 Hendrickson with the National Inquiry for Missing and
5 Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, speaking on the record
6 with Mike Robertson. He has travelled here from the south
7 side in B.C., just south of Burns Lake. And we're here in
8 Smithers, B.C. today on September 28th, 2017.

9 Mike, you're here to voluntarily give your
10 statement in the matter of missing women that you've had
11 involvement with over the years, including Chassidy Charlie
12 as well as Doreen Jack who disappeared with her family.

13 Present with us is Barb Sevin (ph)? Sorry?

14 **MS. BARB SEVIGNY:** Sevigny.

15 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Sevigny, sorry.
16 Health Manager with the National Inquiry.

17 And so your statement is going to be audio
18 recorded today and you've also indicated to us that you're
19 okay with us videotaping your statement.

20 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yes.

21 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Can you please
22 confirm you're in agreement?

23 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah, I agree.

24 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay. Thank you.
25 So you can start off wherever you like about what you have

1 to say there.

2 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I've been around the
3 Cheslatta people since I was a teenager. ~~(Inaudible)~~ (My
4 wife, I mean) my dad had a ranch in Grassy Plains. I ~~heard~~
5 (hired) a lot of the men to ~~tell my (inaudible)~~ (cowboy for
6 him and put up hay). And ultimately I got acquainted with
7 a new Chief that was elected in 1981.

8 I -- one -- just a short story, one Sunday
9 afternoon I went to the dump. Back then (it was just an
10 open-pit dump) ~~I just making big dump~~. And I backed up
11 there. It was a Sunday afternoon and I -- to unload some
12 stuff. And I looked around and here's old maps, old
13 documents, old correspondence all to do with the Cheslatta
14 Carrier Nation. And I started picking it up and I -- it
15 was all about the flood and the dislocation of those
16 people. So I gathered it all up and I knew that Albert
17 George (ph) had been elected Chief the day before. As it
18 turned out, the old Chief, he just took all this stuff and
19 threw it in the dump.

20 So anyway, I went back and gave all this
21 stuff to Albert and he started telling me the story of the
22 eviction. And to make a long story short, he asked me to
23 help him and I've been with him ever since.

24 So over the years I've become very -- well,
25 I became one of them and I've pretty well dedicated my life

1 to help the people out of the position they were in back
2 then. And it's just an ongoing thing. And through my 36,
3 7 years I've witnessed a lot of trauma in the community and
4 the surrounding community and the Burns Lake area, and the
5 cases of people going missing and the violent crimes that
6 sometimes occurred in our community and in the Burns Lake
7 area.

8 I -- at one time we had a very good
9 relationship with the RCMP and the methods and the
10 dedication of the people back in the late -- well, in the
11 80s, was one of very close relationships with the Indian
12 people, taking things on a personal level. And over the
13 years, as more and more cases happened, I saw a pattern of
14 disconcern, of apathy of basically going from a police
15 force of to serve and protect and to take it serious and,
16 you know, personal relationships and go the extra mile to
17 investigate crimes and to, probably starting in the early
18 90s, of a culture of disregard and disrespect or no
19 respect. And as more and more cases happened, not only on
20 Cheslatta, but on the Skin Tyee and Nee Tahi Buhn, Burns
21 Lake, (Lake Babine) ~~like they're being~~ -- the growing
22 pattern of, again, lack of sufficient work on a specific
23 case.

24 On the personal level, when the Jack family
25 went missing, they -- the initial work that they did was

1 quite diligent, but there was a lot of leads that could
2 have been followed up on, there was a lot of evidence that
3 was on the reservations both sides of Stoney Creek,
4 Cheslatta, that were never followed (through) with. It
5 seems like it was a big invisible wall of -- you know, they
6 would look at a case outside the reservation and do certain
7 things to solve it. And when they came on reserve, it was
8 like how can we close this thing the quickest.

9 So after the initial work on the Jack case,
10 the work of the local and regional police just diminished
11 into (an annual) ~~a manual~~ reposting of the posters and the
12 token calls to the media and all were working on this.
13 Every now and then media would pick up on it and cause the
14 police to react or respond. But the real case of who done
15 it was something that I observed it wasn't a priority with
16 the police.

17 The later case of Chassidy Charlie -- and
18 I've been on the scene of many accidents and crimes and
19 incidences that required police to be there, and kind of
20 ~~frame~~ (from) a positive force coming in onto the scene that
21 became like why even waste our time calling these people.
22 When Chassidy was murdered it was a particular horrific
23 scene. I was the first on the scene and I removed all the
24 families and stayed with the remains for quite a long
25 period of time. And I had an opportunity to observe the

1 scene. And I later went back, several days later and the
2 body sat there for three days as they supposedly
3 investigated this. And they finally remove the body.

4 So I had to go back a few days later and let
5 a cleaner in the house to do the clean-up. And I'm a
6 photographer as well, and I was shocked at what I saw at
7 the scene. And without going into gory details, the
8 ultimate finding of the police report didn't reflect the --
9 what I observed and [*one line redacted pursuant to Rule*
10 *55*].

11 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Can you describe a
12 little bit? Like I know you don't ---

13 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Well ---

14 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** --- want to go
15 into the details, but details are helpful for the Inquiry.

16 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** The body -- Chassidy
17 was killed by blunt trauma, by a blow to the head, a very
18 brutal multiple blows that caused a lot of blood splatters.

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

20 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** And when I came on the
21 scene, she was laying out on the floor with her face up and
22 her hands were laid out like this. And her face had been
23 completely burnt. And she had another burned area there
24 where some kind of fuel was placed on her and lit. And on
25 the floor was a carpet of magazines and newspapers laid out

1 just like this square, meticulously laid out. And so when
2 I first got there with a first aid kit, I bent down and
3 touched her hand, just first reaction with first aid is to
4 check, see if she's still alive, but it was clear she was
5 dead. But it struck me that her hands were ~~really wiped~~
6 (lily-white) clean. There was no -- you know, I watch a
7 lot of Columbo, but there was -- I checked her fingers for
8 trauma marks if she was fighting herself. Nothing. And
9 then I thought this is really strange because she -- her
10 clothes were spotless. There was no blood on the body
11 whatsoever. Her clothes again were clean.

12 So when the police came I just gave a quick
13 statement and later gave a more detailed one with these
14 observations. And when I went back to let the cleaner in
15 to clean up this one [*one line redacted pursuant to Rule*
16 *55*]. All the papers had been removed and the body. But
17 underneath the papers was clear evidence of somebody trying
18 to clean up the blood. Because when the papers were
19 removed, there was rivulets of blood that hadn't dried
20 enough and when they laid the paper down and pulled it up
21 there was strings of paper. But it was clear that they had
22 used just paper to try to clean it up.

23 But it was my conclusion that subsequent
24 evidence that we found out later that the body -- or
25 Chassidy was murdered on a Sunday. There was somebody that

1 came back into the house a day later and, in my opinion,
2 took her body and washed it, redressed her, laid out the
3 papers, brought fuel, poured it on her face and her belly,
4 lit it and took off, basically trying to eliminate the
5 evidence and burn the house down with her in it. But when
6 they closed the door all the windows were shut. It was in
7 January. Cold. And the fire snuffed itself out by a lack
8 of oxygen.

9 So I gave a second statement reporting this
10 [*three words redacted - Rule 55*] and my interpretation of
11 what happened and the residual evidence that we found out
12 since the body was discovered. And none of that detail
13 ever made the official record of the case, or at least into
14 the court as evidence.

15 My workmate was also listening that day and
16 he gave a similar statement of his observations on the
17 body. But it's my opinion ultimately that [*one line*
18 *redacted pursuant to Rule 55*] but it was a cover-up, and
19 when lack of any will of the police to follow up on any of
20 this stuff, and it was real evidence, outside of the crime
21 scene.

22 I'm not going to go into detail of who I --
23 [*one line redacted pursuant to Rule 55*], but the Chassidy
24 murder was a horrible crime in itself but it was what
25 happened after she died that was the worse crime, and how

1 the police (directed) ~~dragged~~ their investigation in --
2 away from the crime scene into the community. They didn't
3 take advice from the Chief or Council at the time, the
4 Elders. [One line redacted pursuant to Rule 55].

5 Subsequent crimes like that were not
6 followed through with. Again, it seems like when the
7 police come on a crime scene it's -- they look at a -- you
8 know, the easiest way out of how do we bring this case to
9 closure with the least amount of work. So I definitely
10 observed that.

11 And I'm not at -- I'm a pretty solid guy
12 who's steady. I don't get too shook up over things but
13 this really, really bothered me. And it hearkens back to
14 before that the -- when the Jack family especially came on
15 and then when they did the early call out for people to --
16 with a hotline, to call in with any information you might
17 have on the (Highway of Tears) ~~family of terrorists~~. I
18 called three times. And one time I got a call back because
19 I and other people in the community, including our leaders,
20 had suspicion and we wanted to give confidential statements
21 to the police as to some suspicious men that frequent
22 ~~(inaudible)~~ (Highway 16). Kind of fit the bill for a
23 potential person that could cause people harm.

24 So anyway, this lady called and she was very
25 eager to talk to me and other people there. So I went in

1 one day to give a statement on a arranged date. She wasn't
2 there. So I left a message and that was never followed up
3 on. Then this was three times that myself and other people
4 tried to give hints or tips. That's what they were calling
5 for. In the meantime, I think after that another 15 or so
6 (women) went missing.

7 I participated in searches along Highway 16
8 for other victims. We had a dowser on the south side that
9 was called out quite regularly, not by the Mounties but by
10 the family members that went out searching for bodies.
11 They had a good record of finding both evidence and
12 victims, whether it was drownings or violent deaths. So I
13 got to kind of observe from an off-reserve perspective of
14 how the police dealt with some of these. But, again,
15 (being) ~~begin~~ involved with Cheslatta for almost 40 years,
16 I've seen a decline of the police's mentality of how they
17 investigate a crime on the res.

18 And the Chief that I took all that stuff
19 over I found at the dump, he became an extremely good
20 friend and a mentor of mine. His name was Albert George.
21 *[One line redacted pursuant to Rule 55]*. And the police
22 came out to investigate. They wrote it off as a suicide
23 because, again, it was the easier route, and *[one line*
24 *redacted pursuant to Rule 55]*.

25 So a couple weeks after that, I was going to

1 town. I stopped at François Lake. There's a general store
2 there. And a friend of mine ran it. And he says, "Mike, I
3 got something interesting to show you." He pulled out a
4 little envelope and he put it in his hand. It was a
5 bullet. I says, "What's that?" He says, "This is the
6 bullet that killed Albert George." I says, "How in the
7 hell did you get it?" He said, "The cops gave it to me as
8 a souvenir." This is in 1985.

9 But that's the attitude of the frontier
10 mentality out there. When we have a major crime at
11 Cheslatta, special units have to come out from Prince
12 George. And it takes hours and hours and hours. So, you
13 know, people have to sit with the body. And when they do
14 come out there it's like an inconvenience to them.

15 I attended a couple suicides -- "suicides".
16 They were murders. Right on Highway 16. We -- I attended
17 a scene. It was this one guy, 16-year old kid who was a
18 very strong, vibrant, healthy guy. And he was hanging from
19 a poplar tree with his feet on the ground, with blunt
20 trauma to his body and his head. And they wrote it off as
21 suicide. And regardless of what sex you are, it seems like
22 that's the easy way out for the police. If that would have
23 been a white guy or, you know, from a prominent family in
24 Burns Lake, they('d) have ~~would~~ call(ed) out the special
25 units.

1 The -- a lot of times they basically leave
2 it to the community to accept what happens, whether it's
3 murder or suicide or questionable death, they have this
4 attitude that we'll let the Indians work it out with
5 themselves. We got too much else off-reserve to deal with.

6 So, again, where the police used to come in
7 to the Cheslatta office and sit down and take their hats
8 off and either make a cup of coffee now for the last 20
9 plus years, they walk through the door with flak jackets
10 on. ~~We'll~~ (Boy), you can't pat them on the back or touch
11 them, they're just so rigid.

12 We've had some good constables, Native and
13 non-Native, come through Burns Lake. And just about the
14 time they get a level of comfort and respect in the
15 community, they're gone. Transferred. The last one who
16 came, and she's up here now, she took the ~~(inaudible)~~ [name
17 redacted pursuant to Rule 55] case and reopened it,
18 attempted to. Did a meticulous amount of evidence
19 collection, re-interviews. She actually found the car
20 [*five words redacted pursuant to Rule 55*]. She went to her
21 senior people in Prince George and they didn't want to open
22 the case because it would be too much manpower and cost,
23 when she had clear evidence.

24 And, you know, again, that's what we put up
25 with. And I'm sure other people have similar stories of

1 the reservation way or outside the reservation.

2 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So I just want to
3 go back to Chassidy for a moment. [*Two lines redacted*
4 *pursuant to Rule 55*]?

5 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah.

6 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** [*One line redacted*
7 *pursuant to Rule 55*].

8 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yes.

9 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** [*One line redacted*
10 *pursuant to Rule 55*].

11 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** [*One line redacted*
12 *pursuant to Rule 55*].

13 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** They take any
14 documentation that a person wants to provide and [*one line*
15 *redacted pursuant to Rule 55*] ---

16 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah.

17 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** --- to bring to
18 your statement because ---

19 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Sure.

20 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** --- [*one line*
21 *redacted pursuant to Rule 55*]; right? So ---

22 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah.

23 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** --- [*two lines*
24 *redacted pursuant to Rule 55*] -- your statement didn't make
25 it ---

1 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah.

2 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** --- to the trial,
3 so I mean, that -- if that's something that you'd like to
4 submit after, but ---

5 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah.

6 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** --- you know.

7 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Sure.

8 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** We definitely
9 would accept that. I was also just wondering if you knew
10 Chassidy or the Jack family before?

11 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Oh, yeah.

12 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Yeah?

13 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah.

14 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Can you talk about
15 ---

16 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I knew Chassidy her
17 whole life. Chassidy was an extremely (bright), ~~very~~
18 beautiful young gal. I have kind of related all this
19 ugliness in this song I'd like to sing for you. [One line
20 redacted pursuant to Rule 55].

21 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** [One line redacted
22 pursuant to Rule 55].

23 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** [One line redacted
24 pursuant to Rule 55]. The -- Chassidy was basically a hobo
25 living in her own home. She always had a backpack going to

1 school or even in the summertime. Her backpack always
2 included her -- like she didn't carry a comb -- purse with
3 your personal toiletries in it but also a couple pairs of
4 change of clothes because she never knew where she was
5 going to spend the night. Extremely (quiet) ~~quite~~.
6 Absolutely not a partier at all. A wanderer around. Very
7 meticulous health keeper. Just a wonderful gal whose dream
8 was to become a veterinarian. And she lived in this
9 trailer house by herself, her mother and her mother's
10 boyfriend lived in Burns Lake. And she was bothered a lot
11 by her brother who was (ultimately) ~~also~~ convicted of a
12 crime. She was 17. He was 16 when all this happened.

13 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** How -- sorry, what
14 was her [sic] name? If you don't remember, that's okay.

15 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah, I didn't have
16 much to do with him. I would come to work at 7:00 in the
17 morning every day during working hours. And without
18 question, Chassidy would be outside the front door waiting
19 for the bus. So this happened for the last two years of
20 her life. So I got to know her on a personal level a lot
21 better because we had -- (one on one) ~~went on long~~ talks
22 and I was kind of the historian of Cheslatta and I would
23 always share stuff with her and encouragement and
24 everything. But she wanted to be a vet. She wanted to go
25 beyond the reservation and get the hell out of the life she

1 was in. And she was close to it.

2 So, yes, I knew Chassidy from the time she
3 was born. [*Sixty lines redacted pursuant to Rule 55*].

4 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** How old was
5 Chassidy?

6 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Seventeen (17).

7 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** And what year was
8 this?

9 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** 2011.

10 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Can I check in for
11 a minute? You doing okay?

12 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Can you check in?

13 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Yeah, I just want
14 to check in with you.

15 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Oh, I'm all right.

16 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay. I'm just
17 going to do that every now and again.

18 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** So the Major Crime Unit
19 came out from Prince George. This happened I'd say 4:00,
20 quarter after 4:00. They didn't get there until late, late
21 that night. And they -- the body stayed in that house at
22 least (I believe) until Saturday, three days. And they had
23 ample time to follow some leads. And, you know, we gave
24 statements the next day, all of us that attended the scene.

25 We gave follow-up statements when we learned

1 more about what happened. The -- I'm not questioning what
2 the Major Crimes did on the scene, but when it came back to
3 the court and the evidence presented, it was cut and dried.
4 It was clearly a murder [*one line redacted pursuant to Rule*
5 *55*].

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

7 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** But, you know, I've
8 shared this story with other people and I've had
9 discussions with other people and other leaders in other
10 communities. And it's a similar situation in a lot of
11 cases of the lackadaisical attitude of police
12 investigation. And when they get a tip or a lead it's
13 like, well, we'll do it next week. That was all said. We
14 had a guy from another band shooting down on a guy on a
15 canoe on the lake. And so the guy on the canoe gets
16 running up to the house and calls the cops. Say, "Hey,
17 this crazy guy shooting at me." Police says, "Oh, don't
18 worry about it. We'll be out there Monday morning." And
19 the ferry's on call 24 hours a day, especially to emergency
20 vehicles. All you have to do is call now. But the
21 attitude is oh, there's another Indian crime, another
22 debacle on the south side. We'll get there when we get
23 there.

24 The south side is a haven for people that
25 want to get away from something or hide or be alone or

1 reclusive. There's only two ways that you can drive into
2 the south side and they're quite far away, or there's a
3 ferry. Well, when you commit a crime, that's the last
4 place you want to be is on the ferry.

5 Yeah, the -- you know, we can give any
6 excuses we want for the logistics and where we live or the
7 geographic area or the transportation problems, but the
8 fact is, I've seen crimes committed against white people
9 and I've observed the process that goes through when those
10 -- when it happens to them. And there's no comparison.

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

12 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I was going to work in
13 May this year. I came through Southbank at 8:00 in the
14 morning and I passed a pickup that was parked right in the
15 middle of the road and that's the rural country there. And
16 there was a guy just sitting there. He just kind of waved
17 me on. Anyways, when I looked in my rear view mirror,
18 here's a body behind the pickup. Holy shit. Because I
19 knew who it was, I thought.

20 So I went back and walked up to him and it
21 wasn't who I thought -- just thought. It was a white guy.
22 And this was, again, 8:00 in the morning. But it turned
23 out to be a good friend of mine. He was face down. I
24 didn't recognize him. But he had happened to become
25 friends with the ex-wife of this guy and this guy was very

1 jealous and he shot him in the head one time. But the
2 police didn't get out there until 8:00 that night. They
3 didn't remove the body until about 10:30, the Major Crimes
4 Unit, you know. They did arrest the guy and he's -- but
5 anyway. That was one instance of why, good lord, I can
6 walk from Prince George to Burns Lake by now.

7 So anyways, we do have challenges there but
8 the biggest -- there's a lot of things that could be done
9 to give people confidence that they do have a police force
10 that is competent and willing to do stuff, but it's --
11 doesn't exist. And, again, I've spent most of my life on
12 Highway 16 and in this area and I've seen just a complete
13 breakdown of any humanity in the police generally.

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

15 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Again, there's some
16 good people but they're squelched. Did (To) get a kick
17 (ass) ~~out of~~ constable that we had in Burns Lake, (who's)
18 he's here now --

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

20 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** -- that understood the
21 piss-poor investigation that happened back in 2005 and was
22 compelled to follow up on some of these leads and it became
23 clear that there was a lot of credible evidence out there.
24 And when she went to her superiors in Prince George, they
25 told her to forget about it. How many times that happen on

1 Highway 16 with the ladies?

2 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So I just have a
3 question going back to Chassidy for a moment because you
4 seem to have known her pretty well.

5 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah.

6 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** I just want to
7 know, was there anybody in her life that tried to
8 intervene, support? Were there any social workers?
9 Anything like that?

10 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Chassidy was a very
11 independent lady. She had -- okay. In Grassy Plains --
12 she went to school in Grassy Plains, which at that time
13 went up to Grade 10. And then she had to go to high school
14 in Burns Lake.

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

16 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** So she had to catch the
17 ferry. And at the Grassy Plains school she was picked on
18 and bullied by male and female kids. And it was sad. It
19 was not just pulling her hair but slapping around and
20 physical, very physical. And Chassidy was tough, but when
21 you're ganged up on it's -- pretty soon it's overwhelming.

22 She never got the support she needed at
23 Grassy. She never got the protection that should be
24 accorded to any kid there. There's probably 90 to 100
25 students at Grassy from Grade 1 to Grade 10. She was such

1 a nice gal. She had a lot of friends of teachers, but the
2 assaulters or the perpetrators were the ones that got the
3 attention in Chassidy's case, not the victim.

4 You know, they -- limited people there and
5 they would have to deal with the hoodlums and the victim
6 was basically, "Oh, I'm all right. I'm all right." You
7 know, tough Chassidy. But she also didn't have any home
8 support either to -- she lived by herself. She had a
9 couple lady neighbours, Marlene (ph) being one, and Marlene
10 was like a mother to her but she lived in separate houses
11 and Marlene could only do so much.

12 She had a couple foster mothers, non-Native
13 on Cheslatta Lake that really mentored her and worked
14 closely with her but they were 20 miles away.

15 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Were those
16 arranged by the Ministry?

17 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah. She had good
18 relations with her foster mother who really cared and went
19 the extra effort to look after Chassidy, stopping in and
20 seeing her from time-to-time, but she was a ranch lady who
21 had other kids and ---

22 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Do you know her
23 name by any chance?

24 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** [Foster mother].

25 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay. Do you know

1 how old she was when she was in foster care?

2 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Well, pretty well --
3 I'm just guessing from age 7 or 8 until 15, 16.

4 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** And then she moved
5 on her own?

6 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah.

7 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** But that she still
8 had contact with her mom ---

9 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Oh, yeah.

10 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** --- throughout
11 this time?

12 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Oh, her mother, yes,
13 and her foster.

14 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay. Do you know
15 anything about her mom, like if she went to residential
16 school or any kind of historical trauma there?

17 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Well, again, the
18 Cheslatta people were forcibly relocated in the 50s. So
19 they left a very tight community, a very tight circle of
20 life style (down) at Cheslatta Lake. They were thrown up
21 into the Wetsodin (ph) territory and basically forgot
22 about. Everybody looked after themselves. They lost their
23 culture, their -- again, their cycle of life. They became
24 -- well, being traumatized, they turned to alcohol, drugs.
25 So the dysfunction, especially like when I started there in

1 the early 80s was extremely bad.

2 It was -- to this day there's still no
3 community centre in Cheslatta. To drive to all the
4 reserves it's 170 mile trip. So the -- Geraldine (ph), her
5 mother, was kind of tossed around her whole life. And --
6 yeah, Geraldine was a victim of this life for sure,
7 subsequent -- the community trauma that everybody went
8 through and is still going through today.

9 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Does -- did
10 Chassidy's father live with them?

11 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** No, he lived in Burns
12 Lake.

13 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** What's his name?

14 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** His name is [Chassidy's
15 father].

16 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay.

17 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** And he was actually
18 charged with sexual abuse and I believe convicted. I'm not
19 sure. But when Chassidy died, people were surprised to
20 find out he was the father. It was always this thing that
21 [Man 1] was the father. So that was a surprise to
22 everybody. [Chassidy's father]'s from Lake (Babine) ~~Beni~~
23 ~~(ph)~~.

24 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Do you have any
25 thoughts on what could have helped Chassidy with preventing

1 her death?

2 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I guess more personal
3 visits in kind of a non-regimented way to where she could
4 expect visits without having to go through the process of
5 making an appointment. Again, we live in a pretty isolated
6 rural area out there.

7 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Can you specify
8 visits with who?

9 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** With some kind of a
10 counsellor or ---

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

12 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** --- social worker.

13 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay.

14 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** We have drug and
15 alcohol workers that are primarily based out of Prince
16 George, 180 miles away. They basically work 9:00 to 5:00
17 including travel time. We see -- the Mental Health Council
18 is in the drug and alcohol people there. They -- we need
19 counsellors, drug and alcohol, social workers available
20 24/7 like any major city has.

21 We're, again, limited by the ferry but, you
22 know, ~~the~~ (Carrier Sekani) Family Services get a lot of
23 resources to implement these types of programs, and in the
24 more isolated areas we suffer from, you know, lack of
25 personnel wanting to be in those communities, and the fact

1 that these guys 200 live miles away. They get a call and
2 will say, "Well, I can't help you. Go see your neighbour."
3 There is no -- I can't say there's no follow-up there.
4 There is but it's well after the fact and after the threat
5 is there.

6 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So what I'm
7 hearing from you is that there's too much time between the
8 initial call and an actual response.

9 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah. There has to be
10 these support people in the community.

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

12 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** In our case, especially
13 with limited access. And there's got to be some means of
14 compensating them for that. You know, don't just pay them
15 a standard rate. Better compensate them for living in a
16 challenging area. It's expensive. But also, support them
17 with an atmosphere where they can do the work.

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

19 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** The counsellors are
20 always looking for places to have AA meetings or one-on-one
21 meetings, and to find a place like this is impossible.
22 It's like, "Oh, I'll meet you down at the cafe or I can
23 come over at 5:00 tomorrow." Well, there is no place they
24 can go in that they feel safe and confidential. But, I
25 mean, the transportation of course to get from Chassidy's

1 house to wherever, you know, it's tough.

2 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So I just want to
3 mention that we've been going for about 45 minutes now.
4 I'm not limiting our time. I just was wondering if we
5 could take about a five-minute break.

6 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Sure.

7 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay.

8

9 --- Upon recessing

10 --- Upon resuming

11

12 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** So, you know, there's
13 no prescribed remedy, but there's definitely pathways
14 forward to improve the situation to make it more
15 accountable to the people they're supposed to serve and not
16 to their bosses or their -- you know, they're working for
17 the people.

18 You know, we just mentioned that the social
19 workers, the counsellors that get their degrees and, you
20 know, get all certified and come out, and they generally
21 work with younger people, are absolutely not trained in the
22 real world, in the situation of, let's say, Cheslatta's
23 case or if they work up north or on the coast or down
24 south. There's challenges and there's an environment where
25 you have to wear the right coat or the right boots or

1 you're going to fail. So the cookie cutter approach of the
2 academic world needs to be challenged and there has to be
3 like an apprentice-type way of you get a Masters in social
4 work or whatever. By golly, that doesn't kick in in full
5 force until you do a year or two of apprenticeship and go
6 and see what the real application needs to be out there.

7 Again, the poor students go through the
8 system and is indoctrinated and has a passion for -- let's
9 just keep it at social work, that when they come out of the
10 real world, they're more likely to fail in two or three
11 years and burn out than they are -- and, you know, that's
12 the pity of them going through that trauma, but they also
13 don't deliver the services that are required out there and
14 there's gaps. ~~But in~~ (Of the) Chassidys it's ~~all~~ (fell)
15 through. So some kind of ongoing training or exposure to
16 the real world has to become -- has to be implemented.
17 Because the more -- you know, how smart you are and how
18 dedicated you are to the human race, there's communities
19 that I wouldn't even want to sit in unless I knew exactly
20 what I was getting into.

21 The last two drug and alcohol counsellors we
22 had, again, what little time they did spend in the
23 community, the communication issue, they -- English was
24 their second or third language. We ~~didn't~~ (couldn't)
25 understand them and the clients the same way. They finally

1 just give up because they couldn't understand or they
2 couldn't communicate with these -- again, the young,
3 bright-eyed wellbeing kids, but I'm sorry, when you're
4 placed in a community, have special skills beyond what you
5 learned in the curriculum. Prepare these people because
6 it's not a nice place a lot of times. And the challenges
7 go beyond, you know, what they're prepared for, the
8 counsellors. And they do -- their prescription is
9 basically take an aspirin and call me in a couple days.

10 So the system is letting us down and the
11 reality of -- again, let's just stick to the reservation,
12 is not good.

13 The -- there's a lot more that could be done
14 that ~~it~~ reflects the reality of communities that they're
15 supposed to serve. And it goes -- you know, again, there's
16 some very well meaning people in the executive of the
17 health and social services delivery, but there's a lot of
18 hierarchy in those organizations that kind of go like that
19 into some of these issues. They -- a lot of times they're
20 unwilling to invest the extra effort it takes to correct
21 the problem, rather than the reactionary issue after
22 Chassidy's dying or another woman goes missing on the
23 highway.

24 But it -- you know, it's -- you know, your
25 ~~elimate~~ (client) is the Chassidys of the world but it's

1 also generational with the parents and the grandparents and
2 the situation in the communities. Cheslatta's an extremely
3 blessed community with resources and good water and like
4 lots of nice land and opportunities. Anybody that wants to
5 work in Cheslatta can. So there's not a lot of poverty but
6 there's a lot of -- again, the generation and dysfunction
7 of how these kids were raised and how their parents were
8 raised.

9 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Can we jump over
10 to what you ('d like) ~~brought~~ to discuss about the Jack
11 family? Unless you have more to add about Chassidy, you're
12 welcome to -- if there's something I haven't asked you or -
13 --

14 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** No, I -- your questions
15 on what can be done to possibly help the -- I wasn't ready
16 for that one but if I did get some stuff out of there that
17 -- we have issues with, again, the frontline staff, so
18 that's definitely an issue that has to be dealt with,
19 acknowledged and dealt with.

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

21 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I don't care how many
22 degrees or what is it you that you have on your name, if
23 you don't got the personality and the dedication, that the
24 -- you can't deliver.

25 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** I agree with that.

1 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** You have to have
2 dedicated people ~~(inaudible)~~ (like me, you know, I don't
3 have a degree). But I dedicated my life to this and you --
4 we went through the process of hiring a director of
5 operations in the last month. Oh my god, there are people
6 from all over the world applying for this.

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

8 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** ~~There was as many as~~
9 (Resumes) a mile long, degrees and experience. But when it
10 came down to the hands-on interviews, it was scary.

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

12 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Of what these people
13 were like under their skin, not just on paper or picture.
14 It's like whoa. So we were very blessed in finding the
15 right person and the guy is a dream come true but we were
16 lucky.

17 So the challenge of getting qualified and
18 dedicated -- you need dedicated people before you need
19 qualified. You know -- sorry, you need these degrees to do
20 this, but sometimes it's Granny Jack can provide more
21 counselling without a degree than Joe Blow with the
22 fricking masters ---

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

24 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** --- or PhD.

25 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay. That's

1 something I forgot to mention before we started. I am a
2 social worker. So but I want to say, like I totally agree
3 with you. Like, there's a lot of people that I've met and,
4 you know, went to school with where I could tell weren't
5 necessarily suited for that. So, yeah, you're right about
6 the dedication. We (You) have to be ready to do the work.

7 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Yeah.

8 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** And that's part of
9 why I'm here with the Inquiry too is -- and I've noticed is
10 the passion to want to make change happen. And it all
11 starts with dedication, not necessarily your credentials.

12 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Good. And God bless
13 dedicated social workers. I admire you people. Sometimes
14 us on the front lines we think we have it bad, but I have
15 all the time in the world to listen to dedicated social
16 workers trying to make a change ---

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

18 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** --- or a dedicated
19 foster parent. There's -- Corrina, our Chief, makes a huge
20 effort every year to honour the caregivers. They have a
21 special day at Cheslatta Lake where the first and foremost
22 people that Cheslatta people honour are the caregivers and
23 the social workers. It's a huge celebration every year.
24 But Cheslatta also goes a long ways to educate the people
25 but you have to want to be -- want to learn the history and

1 the dynamics of a community. It's not that they're trying
2 to cover anything up. We want the blood and guts laid out
3 in front of you. We want the smells and the sounds and the
4 -- it's a great place to live but it's also a challenge.

5 The Jack family, this was back in the late
6 80s. Times are different now, but back then the cops drove
7 purple police cars. We -- that was, of course, mass event
8 with two adults and two kids that went missing just out of
9 the blue. But, again, the police did a huge investigation
10 initially. But then it's -- it was a very compelling case
11 but it also took a lot of work.

12 And when your attention gets diverted on
13 another case and then it was the next summer the Oka thing
14 come up. That's another thing, come to think of it, 1990,
15 a year later was an incredible trying time with the police
16 and the non-Native people. When the Oka crisis was going
17 on -- they called it crisis -- it affected every person in
18 our community in one way or the other. And it impacted how
19 -- you know, looking back on it and having this discussion,
20 that's when the mentality of the police force changed from
21 friends of the Indian people to, wait, check this out first
22 before I come to have a cup of coffee with you. And then
23 pretty soon it was the flak jackets and the rigid. I'm not
24 going to blame it all on the Oka thing at that time but it
25 definitely mobilized the non-Natives, the rednecks. And

1 generally, a police or service person is a different breed
2 of cats. They're not sitting around playing Rumbly Pigs
3 or, you know, mounting daisies in a scrapbook. These guys
4 are tough.

5 We had (no) ~~four~~ female police back then at
6 home. These were two old boys that were tough, you know,
7 some non-military. But when the Oka (event) happened and
8 it challenged and -- well, the (inaudible) and that (the
9 law that occurred out in Quebec and I) went out there
10 shortly after that. The -- that's -- there's a link there.
11 The humanity of the RCMP diminished a lot.

12 We -- at that time we were trying to get our
13 feet on the ground with the economic development. The
14 couple that went missing for -- especially Doreen, I was
15 closest to her than any of them, she worked for me. We
16 were a team in the office. But anyway, we're working with
17 some local contractors. And Marlene (ph) and some of the
18 (inaudible), and we were developing a really good
19 relationship. And almost overnight in ~~Cheslatta~~ (July of)
20 1990 that all changed into the whole (fucking) Indian
21 thing. (God damn and the bitchin' and whining about all
22 this. 'Get a job!' you know, well, that really hurt us. And
23 that took a longer time to recover.) ~~Between minor battles~~
24 ~~-- even John (ph) got overwhelmed, (inaudible), and that~~
25 ~~took a long time to recover.~~ And that's kind of when the

1 investigation fell off the tracks too. Again, the media
2 would bring it up from time to time. The cops would make
3 the standard phone calls to me and the family. And a
4 couple times they'd come to meetings asking questions about
5 -- it's kind of a flavour of the day, every five to seven
6 years they do a front-page article, where is the Jack
7 family? The reporters themselves do more digging than the
8 cops do.

9 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** What was Doreen
10 like?

11 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Doreen was -- if you
12 got to know Marlene (ph), they're twins. Real outgoing,
13 toothy grin, long, beautiful, black hair, just kind of a
14 dreamer but a hopeful person, willing to invest time and
15 sacrifice to make her community a better spot. Loved her
16 kids, loved her -- loved Ronny and she was a big part of
17 the community. About my age, a little younger. Yeah,
18 Doreen was a good person.

19 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Did you know Ronny
20 well?

21 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I didn't know him as
22 good as I knew Doreen. Ronny was ~~maybe~~ (I believe) younger
23 than Doreen. I can't remember. But I knew Ronny's older
24 brothers very well.

25 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Did you know them

1 together as a couple?

2 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Well ---

3 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** What their
4 relationship was like?

5 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** --- yeah. Their
6 relationship was good. They were just almost like teenage
7 lovers with these two kids that the grandparents looked
8 after more than they did. Ronny was kind of a partier.
9 Doreen was the more of a serious ---

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

11 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** --- housekeeper type
12 gal. But they were very happy-go-lucky kids, probably more
13 so than any couple on the res at that age, by far.
14 Adventuresome. Dedicated workers. When we built the Band
15 office in '83, he was one of my favourite workers. But he
16 was a lot quieter than Doreen or Ronny was quieter than any
17 of his brothers but a real prankster type guy.

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

19 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Fun to be around. You
20 could trust him. And Doreen you could trust. I knew
21 Doreen's father extremely well. He was a very good friend
22 of mine.

23 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Yeah, who was her
24 father?

25 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Charlie. Charlie Jack.

1 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Did you know ---

2 MR. MIKE ROBERTSON: ~~(Inaudible)~~ (Two-day
3 (ph)) Charlie.

4 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: --- know her mom?
5 Did you know her mom?

6 MR. MIKE ROBERTSON: Katie (ph). She was
7 not living on the reserve when I started working there that
8 I knew. Real quiet, mousy type gal, had the alcohol
9 problems for a long time. Charlie did too when he was
10 younger but he sobered up.

11 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Do you know if
12 they went to residential school?

13 MR. MIKE ROBERTSON: Doreen did. I don't
14 know about Ronny (ph).

15 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Do you know where
16 Doreen went?

17 MR. MIKE ROBERTSON: Beg your pardon?

18 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Do you know which
19 school she went to?

20 MR. MIKE ROBERTSON: (Lejac) ~~Little Jack~~.

21 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay.

22 MR. MIKE ROBERTSON: Charlie didn't go to
23 school as far as I know.

24 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Do you know if
25 Ronny did?

1 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I don't know.

2 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay. So you
3 wouldn't know if his family did.

4 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** He had a lot of age --
5 that's -- he would have been (very) ~~fairly~~ young if he did.

6 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay.

7 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Because he was about
8 25, 27. So he might have.

9 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay.

10 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** He was born in around
11 1960, so it's likely.

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

13 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I know his brothers
14 did.

15 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Did you know ---

16 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** His oldest brother was
17 a foster parent, (wound up) being raised in Kamloops.

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

19 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** But his little brother
20 did go to a res school.

21 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** I was going to
22 say, did you know their boys very well?

23 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** No. I've never had
24 kids so I don't get too close or pay much attention to
25 kids.

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

2 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** When people show me a
3 picture of their baby, it's like ah, forget it.

4 (Laughter)

5 No, I -- you know, they were just kids.

6 "(Shut up) Jack, we got work to do." No, I didn't know the
7 kids that well.

8 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** So what led up --
9 what -- what are the events that you understand that led up
10 to their disappearance?

11 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I don't know. I think
12 Ronny may have dabbled in drugs. Doreen might have smoked
13 a little dope but I think Ronny was being a kind of a
14 happy-go-lucky party guy, got in over his head with
15 somebody. But that's just my -- I don't know. There was a
16 lot of talk of, you know, drug or debts -- issues with
17 Ronny, both in ~~(inaudible)~~ (Sikas (ph)), ~~Don (ph)~~ (Stoney)
18 Creek and Prince George. Ronny was a good worker but he
19 had a weakness for diversions, drugs and booze.

20 Yeah, it's [T.] who was the last guy to
21 speak with him and [*identifying information redacted*]. I
22 was talking to him this morning. He's the last one to talk
23 to Ronny. And he figures he got into a bad crowd or owed
24 somebody money. And Doreen was a fighter, even more so
25 than Ronny.

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

2 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** And she would have been
3 a handful in a challenging situation. But he got a phone
4 call about -- I don't know, it was late, 11:00 at night or
5 so, and [T.] says he was suspicious of somebody just off
6 the -- you know, offering work to his whole family. But
7 anyway, that's the last he ever talked to him.

8 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** What was the last
9 contact you had with them?

10 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Well, it's -- gosh, I
11 don't know. Doreen was working.

12 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Was it before they
13 moved?

14 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I wasn't working at the
15 Band office at that time but I lived right next to them. I
16 think Doreen was probably more in the community than Ronny.
17 I don't know.

18 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Okay. That's
19 fine.

20 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I can't remember.

21 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** And so after you
22 learned of their disappearance, what happened next for you?

23 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** I came back to
24 Cheslatta but just a couple months later. I was ~~only 20~~
25 (in the community) but I know that we answered questions

1 from the police. They did an investigation at that time.
2 There was a phone call from an unknown party or people to
3 the residents at Stoney Creek that would happen to get
4 recorded. And the cops came out and played that tape over
5 and over and over again in early 1990, a few months after
6 they went missing. And they came back a couple years later
7 and played it again. And I honestly can't remember what
8 the call was about but nobody can place the voice.

9 Ronny's mother is -- she was a different
10 gal. Mabel. You met her. And I('m) kind of (reluctant)
11 ~~elected not~~ to talk too much about Mabel on tape [*one line*
12 *redacted pursuant to Rule 55*]. And she definitely wasn't
13 involved in the Ronny disappearance, [*two lines redacted*
14 *pursuant to Rule 55*]. Yeah.

15 So I know we're not going to talk about
16 [*name redacted pursuant to Rule 55*]. [*One line redacted*
17 *pursuant to Rule 55*]. Anyway.

18 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Is there anything
19 that -- again, going kind of to the same question that I
20 had before, is there anything that you think would have
21 helped the family?

22 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Well, back then it was
23 -- there wasn't a whole lot of hope in the community.
24 There was not much going on. We had odd jobs here and
25 there, nothing regular. There was a lot of depression in

1 the community at that time. 1989 was some tough times.
2 The Chief at the time was just this domineering bully of a
3 guy and he didn't have a whole lot of respect in the
4 community. There was -- quite a few people just moved
5 away. There was a lot of dysfunction back there. I left
6 an office. But I came back in that spring in 1990.

7 We didn't have a social work people at that
8 time. We had agencies where you had to generally go in and
9 make an appointment if you have an issue. And home visits
10 back then to -- what I recall were pretty few and far
11 between. It had to be something major to compel a social
12 worker to come out to your house.

13 Housing was a huge issue. I worked for the
14 Tribal Council in the early 80s and we did a housing
15 survey. And it was off the charts third world. We went to
16 every community. ~~The last time~~ (Cheslatta) I remember
17 being the most horrific of 15, 20 people living in 2 or 3-
18 bedroom houses. Stoney Creek was another bad one.

19 When I started at Cheslatta, not one house
20 had electricity, water and sewer in only 1 house out of 25
21 houses. They had to haul their water. No roads. When the
22 people came out of Cheslatta Lake, they had some money from
23 the compensation, they bought their own places. They were
24 generally just rat shit beat down places that the white
25 people couldn't sell to anybody else except the Cheslatta.

1 So that's why they're scattered over creation.

2 So when I got there, again, there was no
3 water and sewer. Electricity in a couple places. Some
4 people had electricity but the hydro ~~hung-out~~ (unhooked)
5 them because they couldn't pay the bills. So that's one of
6 the first things I got involved in with the new Chief was
7 putting water and sewer in the homes. And then almost
8 overnight the change in both the family lives and the
9 people on the -- kids attending school improved
10 immediately.

11 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** M'hm. Is there
12 anything that you would like to see from the Inquiry that
13 would honour Chassidy and Doreen and her family, so some
14 kind of outcome or something that you want to see happen?

15 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Get rid of the *Indian*
16 *Act*. That's a -- the *Indian Act*, you know, they beat their
17 chest over account of 150. This year I was -- and this is
18 also a 143rd or 4th anniversary of the *Indian Act* to people.

19 I don't know if I mentioned it, but when I
20 took all that stuff from the dump over to Albert that
21 night, he asked me to help him with it. I says, "No." He
22 didn't have any money and I was broke. Just got married
23 the month before. But I always keep in touch with Albert.
24 I'm curious. I was the historian. And he says, "Before
25 you go, I got something for you." And he handed me a

1 little booklet. And he says, "This is our rule book. Read
2 this thing and then come back and tell me what it says."
3 Albert could read but very rudimentary. So I said, "Okay.
4 I'll read it. Sure."

5 Never read legislation in that kind of
6 writing before. So I sat down that night and I started
7 reading and it was like 23 pages long. By the time I got
8 done with them my hands were shaking. The *Indian Act*. And
9 I went back to Albert that next day and said, "I'll help
10 you."

11 Oh, yeah. I always wanted to write my
12 memoires and I think it's going to be entitled "The Man
13 that Went to the Dump and Never Returned." Because beyond
14 this, the historical and the interest of -- that I had in
15 the people, it was reading that *Indian Act* that compelled
16 me to make changes.

17 You know, you see stuff downstairs,
18 moccasins and crafts that -- you know, crafts. If a status
19 Indian made this on (her) ~~their~~ kitchen table and tried to
20 sell it, it's against the law. If a -- somebody goes out
21 in their garden on the res and plants turnips and puts a
22 little stand alongside the road, that's against the law.
23 You need the Indian agent's permission to sell these. Any
24 kind of commerce on the res is against the law without the
25 permission of Queen Elizabeth.

1 The housing situation, we were lucky. We
2 worked many years to get state-of-the-art water system at
3 Cheslatta. But the depression, the hopelessness of these
4 people, that's what this song is about. It's about the
5 Ministry -- the residential system and the *Indian Act* and
6 how they -- it's so carefully designed to keep a people
7 down. There's absolutely no allowances for opportunity or
8 self improvement, individual type.

9 When you -- that should be required reading
10 in any curriculum from high school on up is having a course
11 on the *Indian Act*, an interpretation of it, and getting
12 anecdotes from people that have lived under the *Indian Act*
13 and that understands the -- it's ugly. It's absolutely
14 horrible.

15 My dad, when he first came up here in 1973,
16 he leased hay (land) then from a couple of old, old Indian
17 ladies, both of them blind. It's actually Doreen and
18 Marlene's (ph) auntie. But ~~this~~ (as) time (went on), these
19 ladies just grew to trust him and, you know, they couldn't
20 say (see) how much hay he got but they trusted him and dad
21 was a very honest man.

22 So one day he gets a call. It's the Indian
23 agent. He says, "Have you been buying hay from Granny
24 Camorse (ph)?" He says, "Yeah." He says, "Well, I just
25 want to let you know that's -- it's against the law that

1 you do that." He says, "You have to buy it from me and
2 then I'll give her the money because if ~~you end up~~
3 ~~(inaudible)~~ (you're a buck selling) this stuff you got to
4 give a quarter to Queen Elizabeth to be held in trust in
5 Ottawa for the benefit -- use and benefit of the Band as a
6 whole." So he told him to "Fuck off. I'm not doing that."
7 And he continued to buy hay from Granny until she died.
8 But anyways, just an example.

9 In your more rural community it's a little
10 easier there. But when you try commercial activities --
11 you know, there's lots of talk about tax breaks and
12 everything. But the reality here is you need -- again, I
13 make a joke out of Queen Elizabeth but when I started
14 everything was in the right of Canada and Her Majesty the
15 Queen. It's changed a bit now but in that song I talk
16 about that.

17 But I don't know. We need investment in the
18 communities too, you know. The governments, provincially
19 and federally have taken so much off the land that they've
20 come up with these little revenue share packages that are
21 around. Take a ~~set~~ (third) of a mineral royalty and
22 divide it up amongst 25 bands. So you take your little
23 \$312 off of a fricking billion dollar mine and that
24 satisfies some of their legislative stuff.

25 Got involved in a reconciliation with

1 British Columbia right now over the Kenney Dam and all the
2 flooding. How Canada has made close to \$50 billion off of
3 our water through limiting power sales. And the offer that
4 Alcan has put on the table is laughable. But I'm just
5 talking to that reporter downstairs. It's the 20th
6 anniversary of the ~~(inaudible)~~ (97) agreement where the
7 government cancelled (inaudible) in the second phase of the
8 hydro project. And Alcan took them to court and settled.
9 And part of the settlement was the Nechako River, (they
10 gave Alcan) ~~a cave-out~~, gave the entire river. A private
11 corporation, they gave them our river. The second biggest
12 ~~treaty~~ (tributary) ~~tied~~ to the biggest salmon river in the
13 world belongs to a private company.

14 The 120,000 acres that flooded in our
15 territory is -- ~~we~~ (re)diverted. They used to go east.
16 Now that river runs west through turbines and Alcan makes
17 100 million bucks a year selling power. What do we get?
18 Nothing.

19 I can honestly say that British Columbia
20 reconciliation that we're involved in is incredibly
21 progressive and open-minded. And sorry. They have
22 admitted they did wrong. And ultimately they'll come to
23 terms of settlement that is sort of ~~there~~ (fair), except we
24 still don't have our river. But that's by no means the
25 case in other communities in B.C. or across Canada.

1 The reconciliation process is definitely
2 something that has to be ~~there~~ (done) but you have to be
3 ready yourself as a community to accept that. You have to
4 have honest leadership. God, there's so much corruption
5 and, you know, all across the globe. And sometimes the
6 corruption in First Nation communities far exceeds Idi Amin
7 ~~of~~ (or) Joseph Stalin. I mean, god, it's sick. I mean, we
8 have ~~too many~~ (two neighbouring) bands that are going
9 through that right now.

10 So when you're talking healing communities,
11 it's -- there's a lot of layers in a community big and
12 small. And that's, you know, the *Indian Act* kind of
13 dictates the *Indian Act* governance of Chief and Council
14 elections, custom elections. They don't address any social
15 things at all in the *Indian Act* basically. It's all
16 economic. And retaining control over the Indian people.
17 Absolutely nothing social or schoolish in the *Indian Act*.

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

19 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Shit. If there is
20 ~~money~~ (revenue) to be made off the reservation, Queen
21 Elizabeth wants her share. And to try to get that money
22 back from the capital accounts in Ottawa, and every band
23 has it, you got to go through freaking horrible ~~processes~~
24 (process) to do that.

25 Indian Affairs were at one time -- and you

1 might find this hard to believe, but back in the 80s and
2 early 90s they were extremely sensitive to the histories on
3 the res. They worked with us. They helped us. They had
4 engineers. They had -- the social workers weren't part of
5 if but when they devolved and re-centered all of Indian
6 Affairs offices in Vancouver, we haven't had much to do
7 with them since.

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

9 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** The social agencies
10 that are formed over the last 20, 25 years have done a
11 great job establishing a presence, but there's a lot of
12 gaps in that. There's a lot of issues with over-
13 administration or over-staffing of the hierarchy and not to
14 putting enough attention to the deliveries to help the
15 communities is a big problem, especially in the geographic
16 area that we are under. The CFS is based out of Prince
17 George, but they go all way to (inaudible) out east here or
18 west. You know, it's a huge area.

19 Anyway -- what can be done? Get some
20 reality. Yeah, anyway, I could go on about that.

21 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Do you want to
22 share your song now?

23 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Okay. Yeah, I got to
24 get home. If I leave now I'll catch the 7:30. Here, ~~you~~
25 can (I) see ~~the~~ (that) picture. ~~(Inaudible)~~ (Just got to

1 look at it while I'm singing this.)

2 This is the segue about -- what our
3 discussion was the reservations. This is not a ~~perfect~~
4 (pretty) song. It's not nice. It's a mean, tough song
5 that's as mean and ugly and tough as the reservation is.
6 And I'll sing the long version but I have a short version.

7 Stephen Harper apologizes -- ~~stupid~~ (to all
8 the people) in 2006. Oh, ~~I'm~~ (he's) so sorry. I got to do
9 something. I thought I had it in. (Lots of headlines.)
10 (Women keep dying.) The Chassidys keep ~~(inaudible)~~ (trying
11 and a lot of Chassidys fail).

12 (Mr. MIKE ROBERTSON performs a song)

13 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** That was ~~the hardest~~
14 ~~thing~~ (hard to sing.)

15 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Thank you. Is
16 there anything else you'd like to share before I turn off
17 the camera?

18 **MR. MIKE ROBERTSON:** Well, I honour people
19 like you guys that are fighting for the Chassidys in the
20 world, the hope and energy and passion of the Chassidys who
21 put their honour. And they got to go beyond again, they
22 got to honour them beyond plastering the trees with posters
23 of these beautiful ladies. So I honour you guys and all
24 the people that are working on this confines and all the
25 people out there that are working their butts off and --

1 but it takes a big movement to finally enact things. And
2 you can't do it overnight, but by golly, you can
3 acknowledge what's wrong now and slowly, patiently make it
4 right.

5 It's a generational thing. It's not a five-
6 year program we're talking about or -- it's a -- takes all
7 sides, all governments, from the community which includes
8 the families and takes the responsibility, people, because
9 some of this responsibility rests with the guardians in the
10 families, going out to the community, government, to the
11 village of -- municipalities, the provincial and the
12 national governments, because we definitely got problems
13 here. There's been some positive movements sometimes.
14 There's this transportation thing but it all starts up here
15 too. You need change at the community level and -- yeah,
16 anyway. Thank you.

17 **MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON:** Thank you.

18

19 --- Upon adjourning

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21

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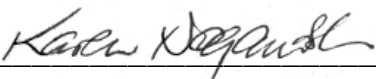
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LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Janice Gingras, Legal Transcriptionist, hereby certify that I have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this matter.



Janice Gingras

October 16, 2017