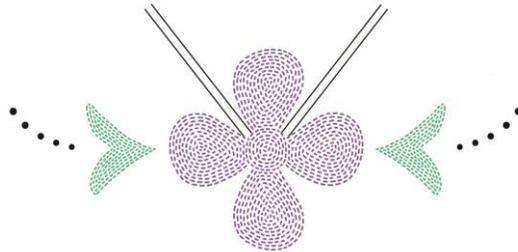


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Radisson Hotel
Winnipeg, Manitoba**



PUBLIC

Tuesday October 17, 2017

Statement - Volume 40(a)

**Phyllis Racette & Jennifer Spence,
In relation to Sandi Malcolm**

Statement gathered by Frank Hope

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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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Documents submitted with testimony:

Item 1 Handwritten notes including link to YouTube
 commemorative video (1 page)

1 Winnipeg, Manitoba

2 --- Upon commencing on Tuesday, October 17, 2017 at 12:32

3 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** My name is Frank Hope,
4 Statement Gatherer. We're in Winnipeg, Manitoba for the
5 National Inquiry. We're at the Radisson Hotel, room 1500.
6 And, I'm with Phyllis Racette. Can you introduce yourself?

7 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** My name is (speaking
8 in Indigenous language). My English name is Phyllis
9 Racette, R-A-C-E-T-T-E.

10 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Okay.

11 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** I'm from Ebb and Flow
12 First Nation.

13 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Thank you.

14 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** I'm Jennifer, S-P-E-N-
15 C-E.

16 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** And, you're the daughter?

17 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** I'm the daughter,
18 yeah.

19 **MS. BELINDA LACOMBE:** I'm Belinda Lacombe
20 (phon). I'm here as a health support today.

21 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Okay. Welcome. So, the
22 time is now 12:31. And so, we'll just begin. Phyllis,
23 what brings you in today, and what would you like to share
24 with the Commissioners?

25 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Well, anyways, I

1 didn't know this was going to happen, the Missing and
2 Murdered Indigenous Inquiry. I heard a lot about it on the
3 TV. And, I've been now directly affected in my family.
4 One of our family members passed away seven years ago.
5 And, anyways, my mom and my cousin, we decided that we were
6 going to come here.

7 And, we telephoned many places, and finally
8 it was -- we got some help to be able to travel this way.
9 I got no help from my community to come here. I would say
10 no help; they gave us \$100. I'm a very humble person, so
11 \$100 means a lot to me, I guess. But, I would say that was
12 really not any help.

13 So, anyways, why I'm here is to talk about
14 my niece, Sandi Lynn Malcolm. She was murdered in our
15 community, Ebb and Flow First Nation, on February 29th,
16 2010 -- 2009 -- 2010, right? 2010. Sandi was only 17
17 years old. She was bright; she was a happy child. I was
18 the first one to hold her when she was born. They lived
19 here in Winnipeg, my brother and his girlfriend. She asked
20 me to go be the labour helper.

21 So, I went there, and I watched her being
22 born. They handed her to me right away. I don't know why,
23 but they had to work on Glenda, so. And, I know, like, it
24 was so difficult for Glenda, what she had to go through. I
25 just can't imagine with my daughter. I'm telling the

1 truth, what she went through.

2 But, the day she was born, I was there.

3 And, my brother only had two kids -- two girls. The other
4 one is [Niece 1]. They both have different moms. And now,
5 they are separated, my brother and his first girlfriend,
6 and [Niece 1] went to live with her mom. And then he met
7 Glenda, and he had Sandi.

8 And, you know, I just can recall that night
9 so easily, because Sandi spent a lot of time at our house.
10 She grew up with her mom when they -- she married another
11 guy. And then she moved to -- further north from us.
12 That's where she went to elementary school. Then, she
13 moved back to Ebb and Flow; lived in Bacon Ridge. And,
14 Sandi lived with her mom, and she was already by that time
15 a teenager.

16 So, Sandi was friends with my daughters and
17 my stepdaughters. They were very close, like sisters, so
18 they spent a lot of time together. And, even my
19 stepdaughters were deeply affected by this death.

20 And so, that night, we all went to bed.
21 And, I guess it was about three o'clock in the morning when
22 I got a call that Sandi was stabbed. And, I didn't want to
23 think right away something was -- bad was happening. I
24 know, but I didn't want to think that she had passed away.
25 And, little did I know how really, really terrible it was.

1 And, we went to a -- because I knew, like,
2 who had done it. It was my nephew by marriage -- my
3 husband's nephew, and he's my nephew also. I knew -- I
4 know who he is, like I -- I knew him from when I worked at
5 the daycare. So, I watched him grow up. You know, when I
6 look at that picture of that young man when he was like a
7 five-year-old in daycare, or four-year-old, I look at him
8 and I think what happened? Like what -- why did you do
9 such a thing? How did you, that sweet little boy, turn
10 into that monster?

11 And, I don't want any -- I don't have any
12 forgiveness for him, because it's too painful. I can't --
13 I don't even want to think about him. He's in jail now.
14 And, he's in jail, and he's been given 25 years. But, like
15 my mom says, I don't think he should even get out, because
16 he's a dangerous person.

17 Anyways, you know, we went to my brother in
18 law's house first that night, and all my in-laws were
19 there. It was so confusing what was going on, because the
20 police were out there -- the house next door at my brother
21 in law's house. And, I didn't know, like, what was really
22 happening.

23 And, apparently, Glenda went there. Like,
24 her mom, she went there right away, right after that
25 happened. She found her laying here. She was with Sandi

1 about half an hour after that happened; half an hour, or an
2 hour.

3 Anyways, I guess there was a party there
4 that night. And, he -- that guy was somewhere else. And,
5 apparently, I heard he took pills. And then they went and
6 got him with my brother in law's car. And, yet, that car
7 didn't even want to start before, and I guess they made it
8 start like. Even I think about that, like, why did that
9 car start like? If he -- if it didn't start, then they
10 wouldn't went and pick him up wherever they went. And then
11 he came there.

12 She had such an abusive relationship with
13 that guy, and she'd only met him like less than a year.
14 But, she was so hooked on him. He drank too much. Like,
15 we started noticing bruises, and we knew something was not
16 right. And, even that February, my stepdaughter was having
17 her birthday party on the 19th, and she came. And then he
18 tried to come there, and my husband chased him away from
19 the room, wouldn't let him come in -- come there. And, he
20 tried phoning and then wouldn't let him talk to her. So, I
21 always say it was only him that did it, not my whole
22 family, my in-laws. It was only him. He did that to her.
23 And -- because we tried to protect her so many times.

24 Yeah. So, you know, when we went there, and
25 then nobody knew, really, what was happening. We just

1 heard, like, bits and pieces of this horror story. Like,
2 he went after everybody with knives. And then she was
3 crying out for help, like, "Help me, help me. He's going
4 to kill me; he's going to kill me." And, everybody took
5 off into their rooms. They were so scared of him. And,
6 yet, there was -- like, my brother-in-law was there, and
7 some other people were there. I don't know why they didn't
8 stop him. They were all scared of him.

9 And then, she -- he chased her into the
10 washroom, and that's where he killed her. He stabbed her
11 101 times. Everywhere. Then her mom, Glenda, was the one
12 that went in there, helped her. She already passed away.

13 It was so traumatizing, that seven years ago
14 that we all bear the pain. All of our family. It was hard
15 to even think I was going to talk about this, because it's
16 opening up all my wounds again about Sandi and where is it
17 going to go after this?

18 I watched her grow; little, little funny
19 girl; so sweet and so bright. The last time I seen her,
20 she came over that -- when it was Rachel's birthday party.
21 And, the last time she took a picture where her dad was at,
22 when we had a feast for my dad. And, she took a picture
23 with him.

24 And, my mom, we went to her house, you know,
25 after that happened. And, the police had it all taped up

1 and we couldn't go there. And, my mom was just sitting
2 there, just rocking. Like, it's so hard to watch her.
3 And, we didn't even know what to do.

4 And, I just can't imagine that Glenda went
5 through that. And, after a while, when we used to go to
6 vigils and things like that, she didn't want to come
7 anymore, [*one line redacted - personal information*] And, I
8 guess, you know, it's just like, "I want to put this away
9 here now," and that. She didn't want to come anymore to
10 the vigils. She said, "I'm done talking about her."

11 And, he tried to contact my daughters, one
12 of my daughters, that guy. He was -- he's in jail. I
13 think he's in Prince Albert. I'm not sure, but he had sent
14 a letter. I intercepted that letter, and I just ripped it
15 up. I didn't even open it. I ripped it up and I -- and I
16 said, "You're not going to be talking to him," I said. "My
17 heart is still broken."

18 I don't know where forgiveness comes from,
19 but I just can't seem to have that for him, because he
20 pulled our family apart, and especially me. I felt so torn
21 -- torn up, because it was my -- my in-law's family. And,
22 I know they didn't blame them all. It was only him that
23 did that.

24 But, it was -- it was so hard even like to
25 go to court and everything. Like, it just dragged on and

1 dragged on. Like, after a while, I just didn't feel like
2 going anymore, because it was taking so long. We made
3 victim impact statements and all that.

4 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** If you can tell me a little
5 more in regards to -- you said when that happened, the
6 police -- there was a lot of police that arrived very
7 quickly. Did they arrive quickly? And then from that
8 point -- from that point on, did they have a lot of contact
9 with you and the family? Was there a lead -- was it
10 Winnipeg Police or the RCMP?

11 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** It was the RCMP from
12 Ste. Rose du Lac.

13 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Okay.

14 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** The nearest community.

15 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Okay.

16 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** But, you know, like,
17 they had contact with different one of us before that even,
18 because there was things that were going on like -- and he
19 was hiding. He was hiding from the police, because he
20 assaulted her and -- oh, like, he made her run through the
21 snow in bare feet and -- like that. He tried to choke her
22 with a -- I don't know what it was -- an extension cord or
23 something; tried to choke her. And, they tried to find him
24 in the community. And, his family is in -- my in-laws,
25 they hid him. They hid him.

1 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** So, they were separated?

2 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Yeah.

3 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** At that time.

4 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Yeah. Yeah. Before
5 that, but -- and Glenda tried to keep her away from him,
6 you know. She tried hard. But, she had so -- she was so
7 frustrated with the police, the system. She was frustrated
8 with the whole system, because she couldn't seem to stop
9 that snowball effect, so...

10 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Yes. And, that's really
11 important to know.

12 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Mm-hmm.

13 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Those barriers.

14 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Mm-hmm.

15 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Those things, so...

16 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** It was -- it was like
17 they weren't listening. That's what it was.

18 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Okay.

19 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** They weren't listening
20 to her. They weren't -- maybe they did, on a scale of one
21 to ten, maybe five as something important too.

22 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Why do you think that was?

23 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** I think the police,
24 like they followed their own mandate or whatever. So, they
25 don't go -- they don't come unless the victim phones. It

1 can't be the mother, or the mother in-law, or whoever. It
2 can't be the grandmother phoning. She -- the victim has to
3 phone. And yet, sometimes that's not possible for that,
4 you know?

5 Because, I've been through that myself with
6 my [Family member 1]. I've seen that when we tried to get
7 her away from her abusive partner. And, it's like when I
8 would call them, then they would tell me, like, she has to
9 do the calling. And yet, she -- how could she? She's in a
10 dangerous situation. And, sometimes, you know, they have a
11 hold of them through emotions, right? So.

12 And, you know, even after when we were
13 trying to help [Family member 1] get out of her abusive
14 relationship, and then I phoned the police and I said to
15 him, "What do you -- I said, "What do you want?" I said,
16 "Why can't you come?" I said, "Are you waiting till this -
17 - like the same thing that happened to Sandi-Lynn Malcolm,
18 my niece, are you waiting for that?" And then he got mad
19 at me, that policeman. I don't even know his name. I
20 can't remember. But, he says to me over the phone, "Don't
21 you talk to me about Sandi-Lynn Malcolm. Don't you dare
22 talk to me about that."

23 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Did he explain why?

24 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** No. Because it -- to
25 them, I guess, it was the worst case they've had to go

1 through in our community.

2 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** And, this was after it
3 was ---

4 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Yeah.

5 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** They went to court, and it
6 was all finished?

7 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Yeah. Yeah. Because,
8 I guess, it -- it was a very hard job to go in there. And,
9 it's traumatizing to come and see how she died. Because,
10 you know, [*two lines redacted pursuant to Rule 55*]. And,
11 you know, like, they're still suffering in that family.
12 They live in that same house. It's been renovated. But,
13 [*two lines redacted pursuant to Rule 55*]. Their family is
14 still suffering from that, too.

15 Yes. So, domestic violence in our
16 community, yeah, it's well hidden. You hear about things
17 happening, but there's no support there. There was no
18 support there after Sandi died. We didn't have anybody to
19 go to and talk to about this. We went through that
20 funeral, and we couldn't even see her body; couldn't touch
21 her hand or anything. It was closed, totally, because she
22 was mutilated.

23 I made a video. It's still -- it's still on
24 YouTube, and it has all of her pictures from when she was a
25 baby till she was that 17-year-old. I really think my

1 niece was sexually abused, and I've heard that too. She
2 was sexually abused as a little girl. And, that's why she
3 gravitated toward a person like that because he's a
4 perpetrator, so...

5 You know, my brother, he died two years ago.
6 He never got over her death; never had any support to talk
7 about what happened to her. The last time I was with him,
8 me and my mom, we were again invited to that Silent Witness
9 project with the red silhouettes. And, when -- and Sandi
10 was one of them. And, Glenda was supposed to go that time,
11 but she couldn't come because she was working. So, she
12 said to ask Kingsley. So, I phoned my brother and asked
13 him, "Let's go and see it." He wanted to come. And then
14 that was April 24 when he came here to the -- was it the
15 West End Cultural Centre?

16 So, we brought him, you know. And so, my
17 mom was sitting in the passenger side, and he was behind
18 me. And, we were talking all the way, and I said to him
19 when we were getting into the city, I said, "Do you see
20 anything coming so I could change lanes?" And then, he
21 says to me -- he says, "Well, that's why you have mirrors,"
22 he said. "You're supposed to use your mirrors." I will
23 never, never forget that, because that was the last thing
24 he said to me. And, I always look at my mirrors now.

25 But, anyways, when we went there, he brought

1 Sandi's picture, and then we went up and placed that
2 picture in front of that silhouette. And then he fell.
3 And, I went up, helped him up. And, he also had
4 Parkinson's, so he was -- oh, was he ever shaking bad that
5 day. And, you know, that was April 24 that he came.
6 Twenty-one days later, he passed away. He died from a
7 broken heart. He died because of his little baby girl.

8 You know what his favourite song was,
9 Kingsley? That song there -- I put it on the video, the
10 memory video. It's called -- anyways, it's about a broken
11 heart.

12 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Was that his -- was that
13 his only child?

14 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** No, he had two
15 daughters, yeah. [Niece 1] still -- she lives here in the
16 city. [*One line redacted - personal information*]. She was
17 really very sick last year, you know. It's all this.
18 Like, it's all this hurt and pain just oozing out and, you
19 know? I really think she's sick because of that, because
20 she never got over Sandi.

21 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** So, I would like to ask how
22 -- like after Sandi passed, how did the family cope?

23 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** I know [*One line*
24 *redacted - personal information*]. We just tried to cope
25 the best way we know how. Sometimes we gathered together

1 at my mom's and we cooked food outside. We go to the
2 graveyard. We visit with our brother there. You know,
3 like, things like this in our community, it's so hard to
4 find somebody that you can trust to talk about that,
5 because it's a small community.

6 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** What's the population?

7 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Two thousand on the
8 reserve, and about six or seven hundred off. Yeah. But,
9 three-quarters of the reserve is kids. There's a lot more
10 kids than there is adults, so...

11 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** So, in terms of when you
12 went through the court process, how was that? Like, was
13 there support for the family?

14 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Well, Glenda had
15 somebody from the Victim Services that helped her. And
16 then my mom and my brother used to go, but most of the time
17 I just hated going. I think I went a couple times and that
18 was it.

19 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** How come?

20 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** It's too heart
21 wrenching. It's too -- it dragged on so long.

22 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** And, how long -- how long
23 was it?

24 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** I think it was a
25 couple of years at least. Yeah, a couple years.

1 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** For the actual sentencing?

2 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

3 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** What kind of changes would
4 you like to see in regards to a process, a court process
5 like that?

6 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Okay. Just let me put the
7 camera on you, so you can read.

8 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** Some of the things
9 that I had thought of, because this, like my mother says,
10 has impacted all of us. And, we lead very different lives.
11 And, a lot of us are survivors of domestic violence. I'm
12 one of them, through birth and then through my own
13 experiences growing up in those homes, living with people
14 who were abusive.

15 And, the wake of this -- this tragic
16 circumstance is that, it -- for me, it highlights the fact
17 that the lives that surround, domestic assault, domestic
18 abuse, are -- are very -- I almost want to say biased
19 towards the abuser. It protects a lot of the abusers;
20 protects a lot of their family members.

21 So, with that said, the things that I felt
22 really strongly about these laws, as I understand it, when
23 Sandi passed away, there was a warrant for her abuser's
24 arrest. And, he had eluded the RCMP on a number of
25 occasions, because he was being kept away from them --

1 being hidden. And, there was no consequence to those
2 people who were hiding him, other than that they lost --
3 they lost their loved one through the prison system.

4 And so, there are things that I wished would
5 be a consequence for those people who choose to hide wanted
6 men and women, especially when they're making threats, when
7 they're making threats to cause a great harm to the person
8 that they're abusing.

9 I think there's a really big bias, racially,
10 between the Ste. Rose RCMP and the Ebb and Flow First
11 Nation community. I've experienced it firsthand as a
12 community member. I've seen others experience that. And
13 so, when I think about what -- how they investigate the
14 crimes that happen to our people in Ebb and Flow, I see
15 bias.

16 And so, I think that comes also from
17 personal experience. We're trained from how many
18 generations back that it's okay; it's okay to slap your
19 partner around for not listening to you, that it was
20 acceptable to do that in public at one time. And, that it
21 compels a young woman who's only just barely getting toward
22 her adulthood to hide that from everybody. It's very
23 telling of who that young lady felt she could trust with
24 those injuries.

25 So, I think that the RCMP needs to work on

1 their sensitivity towards families who are going through
2 this, but I think they also need to work on those laws
3 around how to keep women safe. So, if I can't call and
4 report that my relative is being abused, my relative has to
5 call them; when are they going to come and help her if she
6 chooses not to? That needs to change.

7 I think that was all I wrote. That was one
8 of the hardest things to express, because it comes from my
9 heart, but it comes from my personal experience, and it
10 comes from the experience that my family has had to walk
11 with every day since she left. It's a 25, 30-minute drive
12 from hers to our community. So, when somebody calls and
13 says, "Well, this guy is over here." And, if they're
14 saying she has to call, she's not going to go. But, if
15 they come looking for him, and then he knows they're
16 looking, he's going to go somewhere else, and they're not
17 going to tell them where to find him. And, that's what
18 happened.

19 Those people that were keeping him away from
20 being found, when that happens going forward, something
21 needs to change. Maybe we need a consequence for
22 harbouring a fugitive. Like, he's running from the law.
23 They need to apply those laws. They need to be trained to
24 apply them. They need to be trained to be more sensitive
25 to our cultural way of life, because that's another reason

1 why our people are suffering, and they can't see.

2 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Thank you. I just want to
3 ask, how did you make the change in your situation?

4 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** To get out of that ---

5 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Yes.

6 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** Out of that situation?
7 It was a really long and slow process separating myself,
8 first physically, from my ex-partner, making us live
9 separately since then. And then emotionally and
10 physically, and that was last. That was the last
11 separation before we were completely done being in a
12 relationship. And, it was only that I had met somebody
13 else, and married that person, and moved forward.

14 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Right.

15 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** I was with that man
16 from 1997 to 2014.

17 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Mm-hmm.

18 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** Subsequently, the
19 separation of that relationship has cost me custody of four
20 of my children. And, he warned me before I left that if I
21 ever left him that's going to happen. They'll take our
22 kids. And, they did.

23 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** You're still going
24 through that.

25 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** I go to court in

1 November for that. I haven't seen my children in months.
2 And so, I'm still suffering. If I can elaborate further on
3 that, he's still able to commit acts of domestic violence
4 against me by using our children to control the interaction
5 with me. And, I don't think I'll ever be really free of
6 him until one of us is dead. That seems to be the status
7 quo for a lot of women. In terms of being really free,
8 someone has to die.

9 Since that happened between my ex-partner
10 and I, he's made threats against me. And, when the police
11 went to investigate, they couldn't charge him, because the
12 witness who saw him verbalizing those threats was a child.
13 It was (indiscernible), and that child now is addicted to
14 methamphetamines, intravenous drug user. She's 17.

15 So, I see a cycle that's going to repeat
16 itself constantly, because there's things that don't
17 change. I now have four children who have no mom.

18 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Right.

19 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** I'm fighting very hard
20 to be their mom. But, I could tell you that those children
21 are going to grow up and become either abusers or victims,
22 because they grew up with a parent that's still living in
23 it. They're watching somebody being victimized by not
24 being allowed to see that person.

25 So, I think that the domestic violence laws,

1 or laws around how to protect our women and mothers,
2 because they're -- that right there is the big answer.
3 Family court goes way long too. I've been dealing with
4 this for three years. And, the courts favour who has a
5 better lawyer, not what's in your children's best interest.
6 So, I fear for people who have to put themselves in the
7 system, the judicial system as a whole.

8 And, what happened to my family, as tragic
9 as it is, I don't think that I could ever express how
10 difficult it's been to live with the knowledge that that
11 man is still allowed to live. He's still allowed to have
12 some freedoms, and (indiscernible). He's still allowed to
13 breathe this air. Honestly, because he took something very
14 precious from us all.

15 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** And, how has your support
16 been during this process?

17 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** I carry my anger.
18 And, that anger fuels passion for me to be an activist in
19 the community. And, those are the people who have been the
20 greatest support for me.

21 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Mm-hmm.

22 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** Those people that live
23 in our grassroots, they want things to change. In every
24 area of society, there's somebody who's fighting for
25 change. And then -- we had a protest camp here, at the

1 legislative held in Memorial Park. There was a 16-day
2 camp, and I was there for two weeks of those 16 days, which
3 is where I met Murray, the man that I am currently with,
4 who saved me from that relationship.

5 But, we were calling for this. We were
6 demanding this to take place. We were making calls to the
7 Conservative government to put this Inquiry together. And,
8 we do that. That's where my passion went after losing
9 Sandi. I use that as an example of ways in which our
10 society must, and to get answers to the core to what causes
11 these things to happen, to the root of it. So, I look to
12 my greatest allies for that support. Look to ceremony;
13 walk a ceremonial life. And, it's a really hard walk,
14 because I want to carry that anger, too.

15 But, I have to work on knowing how to apply
16 forgiveness, and how to set that anger somewhere, so it's
17 not always living inside me. And, you can do that when
18 that stuff -- you don't think about it. It doesn't sit
19 there gnawing away at your insides.

20 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Mm-hmm.

21 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** So, coming here, as I
22 got closer to this room, I was starting to have lots of
23 trouble breathing, just breathing. And, in the beginning
24 when all of this happened, I couldn't breathe. The night
25 that she died, about 1:00 in the morning, I started waking

1 up. And, I had had a really restless, fitful sleep in that
2 time. I was having bad dreams. And, I can't recall those
3 dreams now, but I'd wake up, and I'd sit up, and I'd start
4 having an anxiety attack. I'd start, you know, being
5 really short of breath, and -- you know.

6 Around 5:30 in the morning, my phone rang.
7 It was my mom, and she told me what happened. It made a
8 lot of sense that my spirit was restless. So, I take that
9 ceremony really seriously, because that might have been the
10 start of an awakening for me, of getting to know me better.
11 And, if I know me, I know that I don't ever want to lose
12 another (indiscernible). I shouldn't have to. I should be
13 the example for my community. There should never be this.

14 But, I didn't seek out counselling myself.
15 I had a counsellor. We talked about what happened. I
16 don't think it helped. And, I think that part of that is
17 because it's (indiscernible). And, I don't want that for
18 you. I want healing, but I want him to suffer. And, it's
19 hard to heal when you want (indiscernible). I don't think
20 he has suffered enough.

21 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Thank you for that,
22 Jennifer. And, I acknowledge you for the work you're doing
23 for yourself and for your community. And, that's what it
24 takes. Thank you.

25 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** I appreciate that.

1 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** So, Phyllis, you mentioned
2 before that you had -- you guys were working at something
3 in regards to honouring. Can you tell us a little more
4 about that?

5 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Yeah. Because one of
6 the things that I see in our community is that there is no
7 safe house or safe place for our women to go to, our girls.
8 The nearest one is an hour away in Dauphin, the crisis
9 shelter, Parkland Crisis Shelter. And, most women --
10 because I work in that capacity, most women don't want to
11 go there. And, it's on a very rare occasion that they end
12 up over there, because it's too dangerous in their
13 community or their home.

14 And, it's also -- like, I've been there
15 myself. So, I know that there needs to be some changes
16 around that, and especially around cultural sensitivity.
17 And, after this happened with Sandi, what I wanted to do
18 was to go have a crisis shelter in that community. And,
19 you know, we'd -- like, we'd always hear, "Okay, they're
20 going to give out money for this; they're going to give out
21 money for that." But, you know where it goes? It goes
22 into the hands of the political leaders, and it doesn't
23 really go to people that really need it.

24 And, I solemnly and firmly believe that it
25 needs to be accessed by people like us. We hardly even

1 have any -- that kind of support. We don't have anything
2 like that, you know? The climate has changed. The
3 teachings we had of our -- are almost non-existent, you
4 know, because a long time ago, back then, women were
5 honoured, honoured as life-givers. And, that's totally not
6 what happens right now.

7 I always envisioned in my heart that we
8 would have a crisis centre and that would be named after
9 Sandi, because she didn't even get a chance to have a baby;
10 didn't even get a chance to finish her school. She didn't
11 have a chance to raise children, have a home. She was only
12 17. And, three weeks later, she would have been 18, I
13 think. Her birthday is on April the 3rd. Is it three
14 weeks or a month later? Yeah, about a month, because
15 February 29th and -- yeah. So, one month later, she would
16 have been 18 years old. That's some of the things I want
17 to see, you know?

18 Just recently, too, in the little town of
19 St. Joe there, my husband and I went, and then he was
20 making a turn. It's provincial highway there, but by that
21 Petro gas station, you can make a turn to turn around. I
22 don't know. He was turning this way and making a left
23 turn, and then when he was turning, there was a black
24 vehicle coming kind of a ways. Anyways, it was a traffic
25 cop. And then she stopped us and said that, you know, you

1 made that turn -- it's like a normal turning lane, too.

2 The car was a ways, and she said that we turned in front of
3 her and she had to brake. And, oh my gosh.

4 Anyway, she smelled something in our vehicle
5 because, you know, I always smudge my vehicle before I go
6 far places. And, that was the day I was going for training
7 to do the blanket exercise. And then she smelled something
8 she thought was marijuana. It was sage. And then,
9 anyways, she was questioning my husband and getting the
10 licence and everything. And then my husband pulled it out
11 from the glove compartment there. And, she takes that
12 little bag like this and -- like, as if it's going to dirty
13 her or something. Oh, she pissed me off so. And, I said,
14 "Don't you know what that is?" I said. "Oh, no, I'm from
15 Quebec." And, oh my God. Okay, she doesn't know anything
16 about anything like that. I'm thinking that way.

17 So, I told her what it is. And, she goes in
18 her car, comes back, and gives it back. And then I said,
19 "You know what? You need to come to one of our trainings
20 here." I said, "You need to take that blanket exercise."
21 I said, "Obviously, it doesn't seem like you know anything
22 about our culture." And then, she's said, "Oh, I'd love
23 to," like that, because I told her what that was. And, I
24 told her, "What's wrong? That's not going to dirty you," I
25 said. Oh, then she changed her attitude about that.

1 So, I still have her name. I'm still
2 inviting her, because I did get that training, and I am
3 going to. When I phoned her boss in Minnedosa, he said
4 that that training they get is blank -- like, it's all
5 across the board. Like, yeah, it's all across the board.
6 So, it's not specific to Anishinaabe culture or even Native
7 culture. So, I don't know what they learn, but anyhow.

8 And then her boss said, "I've heard about
9 blanket exercises, and I saw that video." And, I said,
10 "Well, yeah." I said, "Your detachment needs to come to
11 that," I said. So, yeah, like, things like that, I guess,
12 is what needs to be changed, you know. And, maybe they
13 would understand the systemic part, the 500 years of
14 history behind what happens in our communities.

15 And, there is a bias. I went to that school
16 in St. Joe's. I remember going through that, the racism.
17 And, today, you don't see it outright. Like, it's more
18 hidden in different ways.

19 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** This is in your area?

20 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** In our community,
21 yeah. So, it's the racism even. The profiling.

22 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Intergenerational impacts.

23 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Yeah. Yeah.

24 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** It's also the environment
25 that Sandi grew in.

1 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Yeah. Yeah. For
2 sure. And, yeah, so crisis shelters. We have a severe
3 drug problem in our community with meth, and jib, and
4 cocaine, and everything. Like, we need -- we need healing,
5 not just in our community. There's many of us that are --
6 have been on that healing road. And, you know, it just is
7 going to be that way for our grandchildren. Yeah.

8 Like, if Sandi would have had a place to go
9 -- like, I know she was at her mom's, and sometimes she was
10 at our house, sometimes she was at her -- my sister-in-
11 law's house, because he did go to jail for a little bit. I
12 can't remember why he went to jail, because he burned a
13 house down or something that time. It wasn't because of
14 assault of Sandi, but he had burned a house down. So --
15 and there was something else besides, so he was in jail.
16 And then that whole four months that he was in jail, she
17 spent that time at my sister-in-law's house -- like, the
18 auntie, so...

19 Yeah, that whole policing system has to --
20 has to change something, have to change about that. They
21 have to be more sensitive to what goes on. And, I lived in
22 a domestic violence situation too, like, with her dad, and
23 I got out of that. And, it's like Jennifer said, it took
24 long. It took 14 years until I finally was able to get out
25 of it, and try and find out who I was, because I was lost

1 in that relationship. I was immersed in it, and not
2 knowing who I was, and I think it was the best thing that
3 ever happened to me.

4 So, though I had that anger that fueled me,
5 and I know -- I went on all of (indiscernible). I no
6 longer get up with that situation in my heart. I dealt it
7 through my head, my logic. This is what -- if I do this,
8 then what's going to happen, what's going to happen, what's
9 going to happen? And, that I think something that our
10 young girls, even in the school system, they need to learn,
11 to have that self-esteem, and to listen to those red flags,
12 you know?

13 Yeah. That's why I came here. That's why I
14 came here. And, it was -- it was really painful, very,
15 very painful. I can just feel my heart just -- and I hope
16 that the Commissioners will listen to our story. And,
17 we're going to be in another part where we can give some
18 recommendations. Like, we've given some, but there's more
19 especially for our community. Because, you know, what
20 happens too is like there's so much trauma, one on top the
21 other. Like, we're just getting lost with all this trauma.
22 We don't even know where to being. Do we start -- where do
23 we start from? Because in one year, there was eight deaths
24 in our community. We were like literally -- I know death
25 happens all the time, but some were suicide, you know? So,

1 it's -- that's got to be addressed. Why is that happening
2 in our community? What is behind that happening?

3 And, I just want to put this in because, you
4 know, I really feel that our people are resilient people.
5 And, our humour is what gets us through a lot of difficult
6 things. And, one of those Commissioners -- she said her
7 name was Penelope. Or, I think her name was Pamela, but
8 actually her name is Michèle. There you go. Thank you.

9 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** So, you want to conclude
10 right there?

11 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Yeah.

12 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Okay. So, just in
13 conclusion, I just want to say yes, I certainly think you
14 are very -- have a lot of strength and resilience. And,
15 also, your daughter.

16 **MS. JENNIFER SPENCE:** Yeah.

17 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** So, yes. Certainly, we can
18 put that forward to the Commissioners, so they can see.
19 And, that's a lot of information that you've shared today.
20 And, not -- also, you have a lot of pain behind it. I know
21 it's still going on. And, it sounds like you have your
22 culture to help you through that.

23 **MS. PHYLLIS RACETTE:** Mm-hmm.

24 **MR. FRANK HOPE:** Through that, your cultural
25 practices. And, so I just want to say again, in my

1 language (speaking in Denesuline). Thank you for coming in
2 to share your truth with me. And, Belinda being here to
3 help and support us in this process.

4 Okay. So, I just want to conclude there,
5 the interview, that the time is now 1:33 p.m. And, that
6 concludes the interview. Thank you.

7 --- Upon adjourning at 13:33

8

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Shirley Chang', written over a horizontal line.

Shirley Chang

February 28, 2018