Harold Robinson,
In relation to Julie Cardinal

Statement gathered by Alana Lee
## II

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Statement - Volume 81**  
November 7, 2017  
Witness: Harold Robinson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Testimony of Harold Robinson</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporter’s certification</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement gatherer: Alana Lee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of documents provided by witness:**

1. Article “Alberta: Reconciliation starts. Here’s how”  
   (3 pages)
2. Photocopy of photograph identifying Julie Cardinal Conklin and June Cardinal Conklin, 1947
3. Official Due Book, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen andHelpers
--- Upon commencing on Tuesday, November 7, 2017 at 12:15 p.m.

MS. ALANA LEE: So this is Alana Lee, statement gatherer with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I am here with Harold Robinson. Harold is originally from Edmonton.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: M’hm.

MS. ALANA LEE: And you’re Metis?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yes. Yes.

MS. ALANA LEE: Yeah. Born and raised right?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yes.

MS. ALANA LEE: Okay. It’s November 7th, 2017. We are currently at the Edmonton Inn in Edmonton. And you’re here on a voluntary basis?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yes.

MS. ALANA LEE: Okay. And I understand you’re here to talk about the death of Julie Cardinal?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yes.

MS. ALANA LEE: Okay.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Okay.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And also about my uncle who I am named after.

MS. ALANA LEE: Okay.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Can I just start
anywhere? Or --

MS. ALANA LEE: Yeah. So what would -- what
would you like --

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Okay. Well, I think,
a couple of things. I -- I’m happy that this Inquiry is --
is taking place. I think it’s an important step in
reconciliation and hopefully will be a good opportunity for
healing as we move forward. What I’m hoping the
commissioners will take away from my statement is just a
little bit of insight into the life and death of my uncle
and the life and death of my aunt and how that impacted my
family and me a little bit. So I’m -- I’m named after my
uncle Harold, Harold Emile and he --

MS. ALANA LEE: Could you spell -- sorry,
don’t mean to interrupt but can you spell his last name for
me.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: That’s his middle
name.

MS. ALANA LEE: Okay.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Harold Emile,
E-M-I-L-E. And his last name was Pleuz (phonetic).

MS. ALANA LEE: Okay.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: He was a teamster and
he died in the -- in the spring of 1965 and I was born in
June of 1965. And I was named after him and so I actually
have a nickname in part because it was a little too
difficult for my granny to call me by her recently dead
son’s name. And so I’m known as Buzz, which is also a --
sort of a Metis thing as well though. So -- but this is
somebody who I never got to know and you know, there’s --
there’s an absence there.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And it was a -- a
story that simply didn’t get told in my family. I was told
he died and then found out later how he died which was he
was hit on the head at night and left out in the winter and
froze to death. So, you know, that’s -- that’s a thing I
think that greatly impacted my family, certainly my granny
and my mom and sisters. So that was just a area of silence
in terms of, you know, who was my uncle and what was he
about. It simply wasn’t discussed --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- which I think is a
shame. And I brought down and I’m hoping that you guys can
see this. It’s Harold’s official due book. His
International Brotherhood of Teamsters. So he was a
teamster. And this is David (phonetic), March 1965 in Fort
McMurray. So just part of, you know, the opportunity for
me is to commemorate that I had an uncle, his name was
Harold --
MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- and that he was loved. The other person I’m hoping to talk about is my Aunt Julie. And she’s here in the -- the middle. I think this is around 1948, 1950 or so in Conklin, Alberta. And this is my mom, June (phonetic) who has also passed. But I remember Julie from -- from my youth growing up. She was beautiful and high cheek bones and full of life and really an important part of our family. And I could tell that just by the way that my mom would interact with her. And there was just always joking and there was always real happiness whenever Julie came over.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I know that Julie, in the ‘70s, was homeless for a period of time and that was tough on my mom to see that. And Julie would sort of drop in and out and be in various states of sobriety and that was tough on my mother to see that. And it was tough to see my mother and how that affected her whenever Julie left because there was this great concern, you know, where are you going, how are you going to live and survive?

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: But I remember in 1980, I was 15 and the phone rang at about two in the morning. And we lived in a -- a two bedroom place in
Westmount. And there was four of us sharing one room and my mom was in the other. But we all came out and Mom answered the phone and I remember her answering the phone and then sinking to the floor being told that her sister had died and then being told that not only had she died but she had, in fact, been beaten to death, you know, by her partner of -- of the day. And so that loss, seeing the immediate impact of that on my mother and then later on my granny and my other aunt Martha (phonetic) was something that stayed with me. To see how in a phone call that part of my mother was just stripped away.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And the silence that followed her loss. I mean, she -- you know, we were robbed of her laughter, we were robbed of her, you know, great zeal for life. And my mom was robbed of a friend and a sister. And so that stuck with me and the rest of our family because we were all there and we saw --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- you know, the impact of -- of the call. And it just -- it literally pulled the rug out from -- from my mom. I also remember, I mean, selfishly, I had been working part time while I was in school and had -- had a big cheque coming to me --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.
MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- for work that I did over the winter. And I -- we had no money to pay for her funeral. And so, you know, what money I’d made went towards paying for a casket for my aunt. And it was years -- it was years before we could even afford a grave stone for her. And we finally got around to doing that. It was 15 almost 20 years after the fact. It was nice to be able to do that later. But for a long time, you know, she was buried without a headstone. And we knew, you know, the spot but there was no plaque there to say she was here. She was daughter of and sister of and mother of. And so, you know, for me the -- the impact of -- of that was personal, it was -- it made me feel powerless but it also, in a way, you know, as a 15 year old, you’re having to grow up pretty quick to deal with these sorts of things. And so, you know, I’m -- I’m not sure that, as a whole, you know, what other impacts, you know -- my mom went to went to residential school. She went with -- with Julie.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: She didn’t talk about it. And so, you know, these are things that are there but unspoken.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And so what I’m hoping is that the commissioners will catalogue and help provide a
narrative around some of the impacts. And I know they have a job to do --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- to connect some of the dots around some of the, you know, the institutional failings. But if part of what they do includes impacts on families --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- and ties that into some reconciliation, creating an understanding amongst other Canadians --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- as well of this circumstance. And I’m, you know, I’ve -- I’ve also -- I’m a lawyer now and I’m, you know, a lawyer in part because I had the love of my mom, who died too young as well, but of cancer. And with that I was able to, sort of, move forward and know that there was always somebody in my corner backing me and providing me that strength and -- and support --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- which was good.

But, you know, Julie’s kids didn’t have that.

MS. ALANA LEE: How many children did Julie have?
MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Two as far as I -- I know. And -- and, you know, they were robbed of that. But they had other supports including my -- my granny who basically raised them.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So, I mean, they’re actually pretty successful now and doing their -- their thing. But I, you know, have to think that they would trade in, you know, the love of Granny for the love of their mother. And -- and to have both, wouldn’t trade it in but --

MS. ALANA LEE: Yeah.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So one of the things that I’ve also done over the last 12 years or so as -- as a lawyer I’ve been adjudicating Indian residential school claims. And so have sat where you are sitting and have invited people to tell me their story and have learned from that experience that residential schools has done an incredible number on our families and our -- and on our communities.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And in my view, I think, the work of this Inquiry will expose even more the impact of the residential school experience and what it means to a community, what it means to a family to take
kids away from parents --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- and how that destabilization, you know, leads to other horrible things.

MS. ALANA LEE: Yeah.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So what I’m hoping is, you know -- one of the things that I -- I learned through -- through doing that experience is when people are given the opportunity to reach out, to connect and to have somebody listen to them that what I’ve seen is there’s positive things that come out of it. As hard as it is, that -- that dialogue can be the underpinning of progressive healing --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- as we move forward.

So I’ve suggested that Alberta take up some responsibility --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- and establish a secretariat to catalogue, provide best practices, to give Albertans and -- whether it’s First Nation, Metis, Inuit or, you know, non-Aboriginal --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- Albertans a place to call or a door to knock on to ask what is going on out
there. How can I get involved? What, you know, what -- what can you tell me that, you know, will help me be a better neighbour.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So I’ve -- I’ve put a proposal out there to the minister, Minister Feehan, to establish a secretariat. And it doesn’t have to be anything huge, I’m thinking two or three people with a computer and a phone.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And they can already be working in government, whose job it is to, sort of, pull this stuff together and make it available.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And so far it’s -- it’s, you know, he’s saying, “Well, I’ve got a lot of other things on the go.” But I think this little thing could yield major positive impacts and maybe be something that compliments the work of the Inquiry as well.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And I’ll --

MS. ALANA LEE: Do you want to say a little more about that?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Okay. Well, I’ve actually, I’ve got a proposal that I’ve written down and
that I’ve forwarded to government and I’ll leave it with you.

MS. ALANA LEE: Okay.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So the -- the basic gist of my proposal is that residential schools was built on a breach of human rights.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And Section 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations says the state has one positive duty. There’s a lot of things the states shouldn’t do. But there’s one thing the state should do, which is to protect the family unit.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Because the family unit is the fundamental building block of society. So you contrast that with what John A. MacDonald said in Parliament in the late 1800’s which is documented in the TRC report. He got up and I don’t know if he was drunk or not. But it doesn’t matter, he was in Parliament and he said, “If you teach a savage how to read and write, he’s still a savage. You have to take the child away from his parents and to assimilate them into the ways of white society.” And that’s -- I’ve read it recently so that’s almost word for word what he said.
Harold Robinson  
(Julie Cardinal)

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And of course the program was built on that dictate of his in Parliament. And so we have a program, right, that ran for 100 years or so that took kids away from parents. And what I learned in adjudicating the residential school claims is there were three basic questions that people sitting where I’m sitting now had at me as the listener. The first one was, “What gave Canada the right to take me away?”

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And of course we know there was no right. That was a breach of their right not to be taken away. The second thing they would ask is, “Are you listening?” And they were talking to me --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- but they were also talking to the representative from Canada or the church or even their health support person. Are you listening? There’s a good word in Cree that I recently learned. It’s nistohtamowin. And nisto is three in -- in Cree. So it’s a part of three part component to listening which is listening with your whole being, being present. Two is participating. And three is understanding. So reflecting back and moving --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.
MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- which I think is a good word. And maybe, you know, the word for reconciliation ought to be nistohtamowin if we’re going to use, you know, our words. And so maybe this could be the secretariat for, you know, for nistohtamowin or --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So it’s those -- so the second one was, “Are you listening?” And -- and the third is, you know, “Is someone going to say sorry?” I think we’re still needing to recognize, you know, our -- our -- our lack of presence. And whether it’s government or today, you know, hearing about things but not doing that thing that we as Canadians usually do well which is to ask the question, “Are you okay?”

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And to care about the response. And to educate ourselves to know that when we’re asking the question, “Are you okay?” sometimes what you’re asking is, “Did you go to residential school?” Sometimes what you’re asking is, “Did your aunt get killed?”

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: “Did your uncle get killed? Did you lose a family member before their time?” And so educating ourselves and -- and taking the opportunity to -- to step up. Because I think it’s
Statement - Public
Harold Robinson
(Julie Cardinal)

actually in our nature. But if we do, again, you know, seeing the few times when survivors were asked, “Did you go to residential school?” And it was only recently that they were asked the question by social workers, parole officers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, anybody.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: The amount of times that a professional actually asked somebody who was in care or in custody or in the emergency room for the 15th time that year, “Did you go to residential school?” I could count on two hands in the hundreds of appeals that I -- I dealt with. But the times that they were asked I -- the next bit of conversation that I usually had was, you know, the person would say and you look on my employment record and, you know, after I talked to whoever they talked to it’s about the time I kept the job and got the job and kept it. It’s about the same time when I started going back for Thanksgiving with my family. It’s about the same time that other good things started happening. So I believe that this reconciliation opportunity, it’s bigger than Canada, it’s bigger than Alberta, it’s bigger than any one institution. It’s got to be all of us. And so that’s the opportunity is to get all of us involved, those of us who want to be involved. And the secretariat, as little as it might be, could have this profound impact.
MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And so it’s a little thing I’m asking for with, I think, a really great upside to it. It’s not easy but I think it’ll be profound. And one of the things I researched was the AFM did a -- a study in 2012. And they said, “If you combine healing with education the economic returns could be upwards of 450 billion over a generation. The reduction in -- in social services and other health supports could be a reduction of 150 billion over 25 years.” And I looked at that report I thought, “Okay, you know, what if that’s only ten percent right?” Still good --

MS. ALANA LEE: Yeah.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: There’s still 45 billion to the good and 15 billion to the good. So why wouldn’t, you know, the folks out there who have their -- the ability to say yes to certain things say yes to this. So I’m hoping that the commissioners might see this, and I apologize for blathering on, but maybe look at this proposal that I’ll -- I’ll give to you.

MS. ALANA LEE: Absolutely.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And if they think there’s anything to it to, you know, maybe picking up the phone and calling Minister Feehan or whoever. Because it’s one thing to say no to me. It’ll be a little tougher
saying no to the Inquiry, I think.

MS. ALANA LEE: Absolutely. Thank you.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So that is, for me, you know, the opportunity was to come here and mention Harold to -- to mention Julie and, you know, to say they were an important part of my family.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: We lost them too early. But if we can take that loss and turn it into something positive then, you know, it won’t be a loss for nothing.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm. Absolutely. You mentioned that Julie and your mother both went to residential school.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: M’hm.

MS. ALANA LEE: What residential school did they attend?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Blue Quills.

MS. ALANA LEE: Blue Quills. Okay.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yeah. And again, you know, we didn’t hear much about it. I -- I heard that she, my mom, ran away. She stole a horse even. But -- and at the time I thought, “Oh wow, what an outlaw”, you know, when I was young and heard the story.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.
MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: But I now know that you didn’t run away from residential school unless you had a goddamn good reason to do that. Because, tell you what, when she was brought back it probably wasn’t pretty.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So, again, I mean, there’s just parts of my mom’s childhood that we don’t know about. And, you know, she passed away in -- in ’91. So we won’t know about it.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And again, that’s, you know, that’s a loss. But I love that picture of the two sisters.

MS. ALANA LEE: Both very beautiful.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: M’hm.

MS. ALANA LEE: Like, stunningly beautiful. Yeah.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yeah. And so, you know, it was those two together going to take on whatever life had in store for them. And I, you know --

MS. ALANA LEE: That’s absolutely what it looks like --

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yeah.

MS. ALANA LEE: -- in the picture. Yeah.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yeah. So it’s -- it’s
Statement – Public
Harold Robinson
(Julie Cardinal)

-- it’s a loss for us. But, you know, they also gave
everything they had while they were here. So --

    MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm. And you said you were
    15 --

    MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: M’hm.

    MS. ALANA LEE: -- when Julie’s life was
taken. What -- was there any conviction around that? So
it was her partner at the time?

    MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: You know, I -- I don’t
know. And it wasn’t something that our family was --
was -- was focused on.

    MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

    MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: You know, it really
was the loss. And I think the assumption, and maybe there
was a discussion of that, but it wasn’t something that was
discussed with me.

    MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

    MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: The assumption, I
think, is that because they got the call, it was the
police, and we knew that it was her partner [Julie’s
partner] who beat her to death that all that was going to
be taken care of. With my uncle I don’t know, you know, if
they ever caught the person who hit him on the head and
left him outside.

    MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.
MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I don’t know that, you know, my granny would have insisted on -- on knowing that or just grieving her -- her son.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm. Did your uncle attend residential school as well?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I don’t know.

MS. ALANA LEE: Okay.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yeah. That’s -- that’s a big blank in our -- in my understanding.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm. Okay. You said because your uncle has since been laid to rest does he have, like, a headstone?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I don’t think so.

MS. ALANA LEE: Okay.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I honestly don’t know. I mean, if he does we’ve never visited it. Yeah. What little I know is he played guitar and was the life of the party.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm. Okay. Is there anything that you would like from -- I mean, we -- we can’t make any -- any promises. But is there any kind of requests that you’d like around information around your uncle?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: It -- it never occurred to me. It just -- it seemed like it was one of
those things that happened and --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I don’t think so. I think at this point I would just as well have it lie un -- sort of, touched any -- any further. I don’t -- I don’t see much positive coming out of that. Although I appreciate that if -- if you had the resources or you have the resources this could be one of those things that potentially is looked at. But I don’t think that from where my family is at and where we’re at now that that will help.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm. Well it seems, you know, it seems like -- I mean, this is fanatastic. I mean, you’ve come with a proposal so it’s, you know, correct me if I’m wrong but it sounds like, you know, even with -- with all of this loss you’ve come to terms with it. And you’ve put together some really great recommendations for moving forward so, you know, in -- in helping, you know, the rest of -- the rest of us and the rest of Alberta, Canadians, to kind of help deal with these things as well. So --

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I’ve been fortunate in the time that I’ve -- I’ve finished doing that -- that work and been working on this proposal is to see how interested others are.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.
MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And so there’s letters of support that I’ve gotten from church groups and from social groups from the City of Edmonton, even from Chief Commissioner Wilton Littlechild on this, which bugs me then. I’m a little frustrated that even with all that the minister still, you know, told me to talk to the hand because the face doesn’t care.

MS. ALANA LEE: Yeah.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So again, but it’s -- it’s, you know, you can say, “You know” to Harold but maybe it’ll be a bit more difficult if the Commission thinks, you know, the opportunity here is to leverage the best, sort of, the best tendencies and then -- and the best intentions not just of institutions but of individuals.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: That I think is the great opportunity. And if we are able leverage that, and that’s what’s this proposal is about, is we don’t have to wait 100 years, you know, to see that turn around.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I think 25 years and we’re going to see an incredible turn around. But it’s bigger than any one government.

MS. ALANA LEE: Without leaving this right now is there, kind of -- is there anything that you would
like to -- would like to explain --

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: M’hm.

MS. ALANA LEE: -- about your proposal.

Just -- you know, I mean they’re definitely going to get this paper copy. But maybe just, kind of, you know -- what -- what are some of the questions that you’ve gotten asked in the past about this, you know, after somebody has sat down and reviewed it. Maybe we can kind of --

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: M’hm.

MS. ALANA LEE: Yeah.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Well I was surprised -- and I’ve met with the Minister a couple of times. His first response on this -- his first sort of question and comment was, “I don’t want to turn this into Alberta’s problem.”

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I’ve heard from others that, in part, they don’t want to make a mistake of, you know, the old saying is, “The road to hell is paved with good -- good intentions.” So giving the Minister the benefit of the doubt that what he wants to avoid is the mistake of hurting instead of helping --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- by, you know, charging ahead without having the tools to -- to work with.
What I am -- what -- my response to that is well, first of all, I don’t think you can make things much worse. I mean, you’ve got, you know, 72 percent of the kids in care are Aboriginal. Five years ago that was 70 percent. And so the numbers are -- are still going the wrong way. You know, I did some work with Homeward Trust. You know, the number of, in Edmonton, of -- of homeless, of those who are continually homeless, not just homeless sometime, it’s -- it’s upwards of 60 percent are Aboriginal.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And we’re, what, seven percent of Edmonton’s population. And, you know, in -- in those who are incarcerated is, what, 30 some percent Aboriginal. We’re four percent of the population. So my initial response always is, if you’re going to make a mistake, don’t make the mistake of doing nothing.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Don’t make the mistake of thinking the status quo is in any way acceptable or tolerable. You know, if you’re going to make the mistake make the mistake of trying to help. Make the mistake of getting involved. Make the mistake of having a discussion that may be uncomfortable. So my response is, be prepared to be uncomfortable but be prepared to also be part of -- of a positive change.
MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And your -- and as -- as a citizen or as a minister able to, by respecting somebody long enough to listen to them and show you care and develop a bit of trust, can be a profound agent. So that’s my, sort of, response to the, “Gee, I don’t want to make things worse.”

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And so, you know, that’s one of the bits of advice if the, you know, commissioners asked about this proposal --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- that I would give. I also think it doesn’t have to be big. Simply identifying, recognizing good intentions, good work, good practices. And maybe in some of the things that have been tried and have failed miserable --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- to say, “Well, you know, you know, be careful of the language you use.” My pet peeve is when people talk about our Aboriginal community. Like I -- fucking own me.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: You know.

MS. ALANA LEE: Absolutely.
MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: You can talk about Aboriginal people in Canada, that’s fine. The same way you talk about Ukrainians in Canada, the Germans in Canada. So, you know, just language.

MS. ALANA LEE: Very distinct language (inaudible).

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yeah. Yeah. But it’s -- but again, I’d prefer that the discussion happened.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And if there’s breaches of protocol then there’s usually, like -- a good, “I’m sorry” goes a long way.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And, “I want to do better” goes a long way to mending any rifts.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And so just be genuine would be, you know, my other bit of advice and trusting and be optimistic.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: You know.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Albertans in general, I think, can help, want to help. If we can help them get there then, you know, we’re all going to be better off on
the go forward.

**MS. ALANA LEE:** M’hm.

**MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:** And there’s also -- I mean, there’s a lot of stuff that happens -- has to happen internally in our communities as well, you know, between brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles. And, you know, how we have those discussion, I don’t know. I don’t know if we ever really do, other than know that there’s always going to be a place at the table.

**MS. ALANA LEE:** M’hm.

**MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:** And maybe that is what we -- the best we can hope for, just having a place at the table. And, you know, I think this proposal suggests that Albertans can have room at their table --

**MS. ALANA LEE:** M’hm.

**MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:** -- but within our families as well --

**MS. ALANA LEE:** M’hm.

**MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:** -- is that there’s value in that even if there isn’t a lot that’s said.

**MS. ALANA LEE:** M’hm.

**MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:** So that could be one of the things that’s recognized. And again, this doesn’t have to cost a half million dollars. They already have people who I’m sure would be delighted to take this on.
MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: You know, they don’t have to spend anything more.

MS. ALANA LEE: Structurally, how do you -- how would you envision this, like, the structure. Like, you even said that just having a few people. You know, start out with a few employees phone, kind of answering that (inaudible) organizations that are already doing some of this work.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: M’hm. Yeah. I -- I mean, there’s different ways of -- of getting this done, I think. I mean, I -- just off the top I thought well, why doesn’t the Government of Alberta step forward. Premier Notley apologized in the spring of 2016, after they formed a government, for Alberta’s silence --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- while kids were being taken away. And quite frankly, there’s another issue with day schools and with the administration of old residential schools being taken over by the Government of Alberta. And now years of operation jurisdictional questions that were raised because it was no longer Canada calling all the shots. And what happened is in some schools like Ermineskin, for example, in 1969 they changed the so-called administration but they didn’t change the
people who worked there, they didn’t change the culture of
the people who worked there, they didn’t change their
mandate, for crying out loud. So there’s kids who were
abused in the spring of 1969 -- show up and are abused in
the fall of 1969 by the same people and sometimes in the
same location --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- but we’re told
because Canada made this argument towards the end of the --
of the assessment process that their abuse doesn’t count
because there was a different administrative setup within
those institutions. Only the people on the ground who are
doing the abusing apparently didn’t get the memo. And so
we’ve got a whole group of people now who are on the
outside looking in who won’t, and to me this is the real
problem, have the ability or be given the opportunity to
tell their stories.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And so, you know, if
the Inquiry is one of the calls for action from the TRC, I
think the Inquiry might also use its -- its mandate and its
authority to say, “There’s still work to be done. There’s
still stories that need to be told.” Because those
experiences --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.
MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- that happened two months after led to other consequences in that individual’s life --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- that led to other consequences where somebody goes through their, you know, rest of their childhood and adulthood and even into their senior citizenship carrying around mistrust, carrying anger with them and not having, you know, the tools that they would have received at home had they been able to stay at home to deal with what happened. So it’s work that’s left undone that is still yet to be resolved that, you know, in addition to the million other things that you guys have to do might be beneficial to closing the loop on this and could also provide the information to provincial governments that if you stood up in your legislature and said, “Sorry.” If you stood up and you said, “We accept the calls to action” then the work isn’t done yet. And part of that might be provincially setting up or stepping up and instituting a process so that those who aren’t allowed to tell their story under the existing settlement agreement --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- can tell their story and get some peace on the go forward. So, I mean,
that’s one of the spin offs, I think, of this. But getting back to your -- your question, I mean, it’s just -- it’s me -- it’s a couple people, was what I was thinking, and they could already be employees of the Government of Alberta. And if I was the minister what I would do is I would ask my DM to put the call out, “Who here wants to be my secretariat?”

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: “Show of hands. Who thinks this is important. Who sees the opportunity? You know, who was moved by the TRC? Who’s moved by the Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women? And who thinks that we can, you know, leverage something special here in Alberta? Put up you hand. Okay. You and you, you’re my team. And whatever you’re doing there somebody else is going to take over. And for the next five years we’re going to have this thing, it’s called a secretariat. And they’re doing it in B.C., they’re doing it in Ontario, we’re going to do it here in Alberta. And, you know, with you two we’re going to leverage a whole new dialogue and we’re going to get the rest of our citizens involved, or at least every citizen who wants to be involved.”

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: And that’ll be, you know, the best money we’ve spent.
MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Okay. Well, thank you for listening and for this opportunity.

MS. ALANA LEE: Is there anything else you’d like to add?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: No. I’m probably missing a bunch of stuff. I’m trying to think of, you know, what my mom would have me talk about. You know, she would talk about how lucky she was to have her granny. She would talk about how lucky she was to have kids. I mean, she raised four of us on her own.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm. So she was -- you said granny meaning your granny or was your mother raised by her grandmother?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yes, to -- to both. So my granny, who was mom’s mom --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- and an important part of our family. I mean, it’s -- I think a lot of Aboriginal families, you know, your granny comes and she lives with you.

MS. ALANA LEE: Yeah. Absolutely.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Right. And she keeps her hides under your bed. And, you know, her beads
scattered all over the place. And -- and you’re lucky for that. It’s -- and then she moves in with your aunty for any number of years. And you’re lucky for that. And you see each other, you know, every weekend because you’re at each other’s houses.

**MS. ALANA LEE:** Yeah.

**MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:** That’s -- that -- that was my experience. So I was lucky to have, you know, granny and aunties and my mom there.

**MS. ALANA LEE:** M’hm.

**MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:** And their encouragement. So, you know, I think what my mom would have me say is, you know, don’t forget to tell them how important family is, how lucky you are as a father to be able to kiss your kids goodnight --

**MS. ALANA LEE:** M’hm.

**MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:** -- each night.

**MS. ALANA LEE:** And so Julie’s children, you said they’re doing well today.

**MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:** M’hm.

**MS. ALANA LEE:** That they were raised by granny?

**MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:** Yes. Yeah. Yeah and they -- they, I mean, they’re -- like I said, they’re -- they’re -- they even may have already been involved, I’m
not sure.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I’ll have to ask them next time I see them. But it’s -- it’s for them to come out and tell -- tell their story, I think.

MS. ALANA LEE: Were they living with Julie at the time?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: No. Well, Julie was already out and homeless by that period of time. So her kids were out doing their thing.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So -- yeah and it was, you know, one of those things that, again, was unfortunate in that -- that, you know, that -- that rupture that -- that occurred. One of the -- one of the best things that happened though was when we able to get a headstone and we all gathered again.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: They could see how much it meant. You know, I called them my aunt and my uncle but they’re actually my cousins. To be able to look down and, you know, see their mother’s name there and that they were remembered in -- in -- in what we (inaudible).

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I know it’s about
having a place to -- to go sometimes. And to, you know, 
grieve but to also say thank you.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So having that -- that 
place, that home is, for me, you know, what -- what has 
been taken away but could still be restored --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- I think. And maybe 
the secretariat is a place to go --

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: -- as well.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Okay. Those are good 
questions. Is there anything else? Or --

MS. ALANA LEE: Was there anything else you 
would like to add. I mean, there’s -- there’s some 
questions but you’ve covered most of it. And I think that, 
you know, this is -- this is -- would be a really good 
opportunity for the commissioners, maybe even after we’re 
done this interview I want to -- I want to look at this a 
little more in -- in depth and read it. Because, you know, 
I’m asking questions about it but I haven’t really had the 
opportunity, it’s just kind of what you’re --

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: M’hm.

MS. ALANA LEE: -- you know, what you’re
speaking of, to look at this. And, you know, I think, like, fantastic and, like, thank you. You’ve really put this -- put a lot into this. And so, I mean, this is, you know -- I mean, one of my questions could be, like, what do you think would make it better for future generations. Well, you’ve already handed that over here, well structured proposal, it’s ready to go, you know, you’re doing your part to make this happen. And so, you know --

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: I need others though, you know, to carry it forward.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: So whatever -- if you think there’s anything to it. If you have any questions my contact information is on there. Feel free to --

MS. ALANA LEE: Right. And it’s right at the bottom right?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yeah.

MS. ALANA LEE: Just for the record. Yeah.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: Yeah. Then if there is other better ideas than that, then I’d be happy to -- to know the other better ideas.

MS. ALANA LEE: M’hm. Thank you, I mean, is -- is there anything you’d like to add?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON: No. No. But thank you for doing this.
MS. ALANA LEE:  Do you feel like you’ve been heard today?

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:  Absolutely.

MS. ALANA LEE:  Okay.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:  Yes. No, thank you so much.

MS. ALANA LEE:  Perfect. Thank you.

MR. HAROLD ROBINSON:  Okay. Good luck.

MS. ALANA LEE:  It is -- oh, I apologize commissioners. We began the interview at 12:15 and I forgot to state that. And we’re concluding at 1:04.

--- Upon adjourning at 1:04 p.m
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

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

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Julia Hehn

March 5, 2018