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Truth-Gathering Process
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Statement - Volume 92
Brent Burnstick,
In relation to Denise Burnstick & Relative 1

Statement gathered by Kerrie Reay

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.
41-5450 Canotek Road, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 9G2
E-mail: info@irri.net – Phone: 613-748-6043 – Fax: 613-748-8246
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Documents submitted with testimony: none.
NOTE 1:

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

NOTE 2:

The use of square 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. Amendments were completed by listening to the source audio recording of the proceeding and were made by Bryana Bouchir, Public Inquiry Clerk with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ, April 24th 2018 at Vancouver, BC.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So that is recording, and we are recording there as well. Okay. So for the record, this is Kerrie Reay, statement taker with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls at Edmonton, Alberta, and the date is November the 8th, 2017, and we are starting this statement at 3:27. Today I am speaking with Brent Burnstick. He resides on the Alexander First Nation Reserve and is from the Cree tribe. And, Brent, you are here today voluntarily and agree to being video-taped?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And today we're hearing your truth for the -- your sister, Denise Burnstick, who was murdered in 1979.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Who I believe to be murdered.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Who you believe to be murdered. Is she missing?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: She was missing, but now she's passed on.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: She passed on 1979.


MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah. She went missing, but due to some -- some -- other issues, and then she was found.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Found -- but there's still kind of a scary -- scary issue.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Because we -- we heard of all -- well, we read stories, we seen news on TV and stuff about what happens to some of the women out there, and for a young girl of this -- being exposed, maybe, to -- to something totally new, right, like, where she lived is just, like, isolation, so -- and coming out to something new could have maybe damaged or heard her more and totally not aware of surroundings and whatever else, right?

MS. KERRIE REAY: So why don't we start with your sister, and why don't you tell us about growing up in your family?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Well, for myself, I'm a Cree man in my mid-50s. There's a family of seven. Now
there's only a family of six because we lost our late sister in 1979. We -- we lost both our parents. They both passed on. They're in the spirit world. My father in 1983 passed away due to freezing, mother passed away 2005 due to health complications or health issues, and they were -- I have to say there's a number of factors that play into this -- to this issue of what happens to us in regards to murder, missing, or other things in regards to child welfare, and some of it, I -- I think, has to do with each individual themselves, but again, it's about the other thing that are being -- might as well say forced on to you, coerced, because you are coerced of accept things, and if you refuse them, you're still coerced in another way.

So this puts a -- a lot of a -- men, women, and children in unpredictable situations, and one -- one of them I go back to is colonization. Number one is colonization. That -- that's the main factor that -- that hurts our people today. I see it because my family is trying to decolonize themselves from it, to not participating in the system, because it's a broken system, the system in regards to child welfare, the law, policing, the justice, human rights, everything like that. You know, there's -- it needs to be revised and looked at, and we -- we as individuals like myself who are sort of -- I'm knowledgeable, educated, also, but I'm not one of the
individuals that's chosen to go help and put input in to help. We are excluded lots of times, and -- but that's one of the factors.

The other one, too, is the church. The church was supposed to be there to do what? They're supposed to help bring children into what -- into the glory of Christ, but in regards to me, and I have to say this, up here, is I had to distance myself from the church because when I got a little older, I realized that something was done to me that wasn't right, and I was abused by the church, by the helper; not the priest, but by the helper. So I distanced myself from the church.

And the other thing, too, now, is the justice system. We go to the police. Who is the police to protect? There is -- there's a line, so it breaks. Does it go in a pyramid? Who do they really protect? And everything goes back to the state, the government. They keep the -- it keeps nothing, responsibility, so -- and that's all levels of government. You know, we can say there's four, but for us as First Nations, there's two: The Federal Government and our own First Nation -- our own -- might as well say First Nation government, and again, there -- there's other issues that come, other factors. You know, it's history. The true history's not being told on the -- the issue that affect
us, and that's what I think is affecting us today is, for myself, I see it that men and women differ in some way, whether -- if you can try to use a -- a -- I use balance and harmony because if -- if I can't connect to the woman, how can I connect to being a man? So I have to do both, and if I can, then I get balance and harmony, and I can -- I can relate to how a woman feels.

So it -- there's a lot of, like I said, different factors, and the other thing is the mentality of each individual on how -- how do they feel if they're trustworthy, or are they worthy? And everyone is worthy. You know, the other thing, too, I say, is a label. You know, and how do you get labeled, people label you, like, stereotypical remarks or saying you're -- you're this, you're a lazy Indian, you're a lazy drunk Indian or you're a bum or whatever. Those are not -- you know, because they feel refused any which way to getting something -- say somebody wants to advance themselves, and they go how many times to go, and they're totally refused, so it goes into their mind saying, well, what's -- what's my purpose of going there if I'm going to be always refused? So their self-esteem or ego gets knocked down, and that's -- I don't follow that. I say I'm not a quitter, so I get up again. I got to swallow that.

So it's a residential school, then the day
school, and then being -- you know, the justice system, like, being in prison. Those are the factors, like that. The policies, the laws need to be changed. Like, I spoke at the pre-inquiry for murdered Indigenous women that -- I think it was River Cree back in February of this year, or was it last year, but I spoke, and the minister was there, and I spoke out on exactly that, that the child welfare laws need to be changed, the criminal justice -- Criminal Code needs to be changed, child welfare and other -- other things like that, right, social policies in regards to denying families because if you're denying families, you're putting them in that predicament of -- for these issues to happen, so those have to be (indiscernible) and revised.

Okay. Now -- and alcohol is -- is number one, and the other one, too, I say -- I see is prescription pills, prescription drugs that are over the counter. Those are all -- when you mix those up with your alcohol, your mind is not in the right state because I know it went through -- because I tried the (indiscernible) [commit suicide] four times. I did. When I'm still here today as -- as a man today because I swallowed that. I seen it, what happened, what was going on, and I understood that it wasn't me. There's something, like, a different force inside of me that came out, and I'm glad it is out of me today.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Good. Good.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So those are issues, and I was incarcerated, in prison, in jail because of issues like, again, family breaking up, alcoholism, and the different value system that is imposed on us, and -- well, I'll say this. My -- my brothers and sisters listening to others instead of their own parents, because that's where a lot of miscommunication happens, right?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: When you -- when you -- a parent is trying to tell the -- the child is truth, and then you come over here, someone else is telling them, no, you can't do this, and -- some other individuals are not serious, and some other individuals are trying to put different things into their head. That's not right. Like, totally swaying them from your teachings.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm. M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Or the -- the proper way of being taught.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Right.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah. Okay, now, I grew up, like I said, in that area, rough, been taken away, system, and then I get up to my age, and I'm back home now. And so back home, my mom and my father broke up. That was in the '60s, so -- my father and mother broke up, so my
mother found another man, and that was kind of disruptive because alcoholism was involved there. I was abused and certain things, physically abused, and -- our family wasn't together because we were -- we were separated. We were taken away by the child -- child services or child welfare back in the day. Some of us went to Stony Plain, and some of us went to Fort Saskatchewan, and then we never, ever got back together, really, as a family. You can still see it today, and -- but us younger ones came back to stay with Mom and whatever, but we seen that abuse, and the older ones, and once they were grandparents, and my dad, back in -- on our rez, and we were staying in Edmonton at that time, and that's what it is, is the different surroundings, it's just like shock doctrine, I might as well say, because a lot of things were new, right, as -- as an Indigenous child coming from -- might as well say we were kind of isolated and then coming into the city and all these new things, so it's like shock doctrine.

So you get into different things, and then the other thing is peer pressure or peer influence, saying -- a friend of yours, oh, try this, it's good for you, or someone is else gives you that. So that was that back in the day. Like, I did things that maybe I shouldn't have done. Like, I sniffed gas. I sniffed glue. I tried even taking -- drinking hair spray -- not hair spray.
Lysol. That was not good. You know, a lot of the things was introduced to me, might as well say, and -- so a lot of that has a factor in how we were brought up, and -- and then it has to -- I know it had a factor, like, my mom been taken -- my mom and dad been taken and going to the residential school.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** So they both went to --

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** Both were in the residential school. My dad stayed there probably about a week; my mom, longer. And when my mom left -- left us in 2005, like I said, she had never mentioned anything about what she had went through in the residential school, so she took her story with her, and we had -- I left it like that until now because -- I have to speak out because I -- I do not like what's happening on my First Nation let alone what I hear from where my wife is from and where my children are registered, that the children and women are being denied, and that's not right, and that's why I speak out. I'm very politically active. I speak out if I have to, and I do it, out of respect. Try to be careful with that, but if someone's going to try and be ornery and, you know, tough to me, I have to be tough too.

And so they broke -- broke that up, but -- but I don't know about my grandparents. That's one thing I didn't -- I was not told about grandparents from
both sides, right, if they were in the residential school, but they probably were.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Did you know your grandparents?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yes, I did. Yeah, both -- both sides, and like I said, both of them were involved with the culture, my grandfathers and grandmothers. My grandfather on my dad's side was a trapper, a hunter, and all that, too, so the -- we carried on traditions and customs.

And -- okay, then we get older, get into school, the -- like, the -- the education system, and even there, even when I was in day school, I was getting roughhoused and everything like that, you know, bullying. Bullying from school started there, and you know, it's not just at home. It starts from school when -- let alone it comes from adults, not -- just not happening in the education system. It happens on a daily basis.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So just -- just for the record, Brent, when you talk about day school, can you sort of put a time frame on that? How old, about, were you in -- what year would that be?


MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. I just -- I'm just
helping --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- to put a bit of a timeline. So when were you born?


MS. KERRIE REAY: You were born in 1961, and -- and your sister that you'll be speaking about, Denise, was she younger or older than you?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Older than I was.

MS. KERRIE REAY: She was older than you. Can you --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: 1957.

MS. KERRIE REAY: She was born in 1957. Okay. And so when you talk about day school, was that on the reserve?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yes, it was. Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And was that run by the church?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: No. That was run by the -- by the Alberta Government or the Government. Federal Government.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So it was a -- a public -- a public school?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Public, but -- but still yet, you were -- you were -- we were forced to take
religion --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- in the day school.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. All right. Okay.

Sorry. So please -- please go ahead.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So yeah, there were -- that was happening there and stuff, and -- like, bullying and things like that from some of the students and even the teachers, and then a lot of us, because there was new things, and again, I -- I always say, the focus has got to go back to the education system, because as soon as I was introduced to the education system, my belief about compassion and care and respect was getting wiped out because at home, this is what we're taught, right?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: But when you go to the education system, it's not because we had a non-Indigenous teacher that did -- had no -- probably no idea about our customs and our traditions and how to keep family together let alone of respecting men and women, right? Because when I was younger, I thought it was funny or something, but I went out and I pulled a -- a young girl's hair or something, and I made her cry, and the teacher was a woman,
non-Indigenous woman, so what she does is she grabs me by
the ear, and she goes pulling me right to the principal,
and as I'm walking up the steps, and the principal, you
know, they had those fire alarms? Remember those old-time
fire alarms?

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, yes. Yes.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: I seen that, and I
pulled it, and the fire alarm went off and everything, and
I got punished for, also, doing something like that, so...

MS. KERRIE REAY: So was your day school on
the reserve, or were you -- did it --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: On the reserve.

MS. KERRIE REAY: It was on the reserve?
Yeah.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: After that fact,
we -- we did have to leave Edmonton because -- I mean, our
First Nation because our house had -- we had a fire on
a -- in our home, right? So we had to relocate into
Edmonton, so we had to take education off-reserve, also, so
the day school applies to that.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And I'm -- I'm
sorry, I'm just trying to -- again, the timeline. So when
you were -- when you were talking -- you talked about child
welfare had stepped in with your family, so was that, like,
from the time you were born until you went to day school?
I'm just trying to --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: No. It was while I was in day school.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Because alcohol was still being consumed at home, right, so...

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: The system back in the day, if they see this, it -- it has to still do with their residential school era --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes. Yes.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- of taking the kids away.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah. But you were still on the reserve?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: No. We got moved out.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And then you came back?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: But we only came back to Edmonton because my mom moved to Edmonton.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And do you remember when that was?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: '70 -- I don't recall, but it was in the '70s anyway.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Probably about mid-'70s.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Because even that, after that, I got into trouble again. My three younger brothers and sisters stayed with Mom, and I ended up going to Grande Prairie, just me.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And who was --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Just me.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And who was in Grande Prairie?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: There's a -- a thing called a youth assessment centre. That's where I was, and that has to do with, again, the residential school, church --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm. M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- child welfare affecting me, and the other thing I say is television. Television brainwashes people. Brainwashed me to steal because back in the day, I remember the '60s, we had three channels: 2, 3, and Channel 11 -- I mean, 3, 5, and Channel 11, and Channel 11 is the French station, and after midnight, and I said this at the residential school hearing, after -- after 11:30, 12 o'clock, when you turn it
to that, and being a young man or a young child, being curious with that button, (unreportable sound), you change it to Channel 11, what do see? Pornography. That's what I seen, and that's what I said in the thing.

So back in the day, the government and whoever -- did they have a plan (indiscernible) to destroy people's lives? So that's what I seen with that -- back in that day because we were one of the first -- because my dad -- late dad was a good worker, right, and in the '60s -- and we were one of the families -- first families to have a TV.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Hm. Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So we're -- that's when we are started getting brainwashed, and then we watched those things about cowboys and Indians, you know? And a lot of us wanted to change who we were as Indians, so -- we'd rather be a cowboy. So that's where that hurt us also, that imaging, right?

So that -- a lot of that plays into factors and -- you know, sort of, we -- we disrupted us, and our -- we stayed -- like, some of -- my siblings stayed with different family members, right? But -- some stayed with my grandparents, some stayed with aunts and uncles, some totally just left, like, they were old enough, 16 -- 15, 16, right? So they went on their own. Like, my
late sister, she took off at a young age, and she ended up having her first baby in, say -- at '72, so she was 15 years old, and then her second daughter, because there were two girls, in '75, and then she -- she met someone -- or she went to Hobbema because we have relatives in Hobbema, right, Maskwacis? We have relatives over there, and she went over there, and she was staying with our grandparents, and somehow or another, or something, she met a man, and we didn't hear nothing about it, anything, then all of a sudden, we get a call, and -- saying that our sister is in the hospital, and that -- at the old University of Alberta Hospital on the south side of Edmonton, and so we -- we all go to her, and it must have been about ten days or so that she was in a coma, but we were there for one week, anyway, because we heard about it, been transferred from hospital, hospital, then she ended up at the U of A, so we went, and we sat there the whole week because she stayed around for a whole week with us, and just before she left us, I was the last one to sit with her. I was sitting on her -- on her -- in the room with her, right? She was on the bed. I was sitting on a chair. She was here. I held her hand, and no word of a lie, it was like her last life, she squeezed my hand, and then 15 minutes after, I went -- well, 15 minutes, I went out -- 15 minutes that went by, right? I went out. Doctor
came in and told us that she left.

Then a few years go on. We kept trying
to -- I kept talking to my relatives, because the relatives
were still alive in Maskwacis, my aunt and my grandfather
and grandmother, aunts and uncles who were still alive back
in the day. So we started inquiring about it and finding
out because what we heard is that she fell off a horse and
she banged her head while intoxicated. Then we start
thinking, well, even if you're intoxicated, wouldn't you
want to maybe try to stop yourself from getting hurt or
something, especially if you were -- if you were to fall and
slip? Like, I would.

So we left it like that, okay, the -- has to
do with her horse, knocked her -- bucked her off or
something. She fell off a horse. She banged her head.
And then, like that, she left us, right? So we
kept -- like, we kept talking to the family back in
Hobbema, and eventually something came out, and it was
mentioned that she was beaten up by this man that she was
with, and then we asked about that man, that man. We kept
asking. We got a name, and then we found out later that
that man had -- that done -- done the harm to her, he had
got sick and -- well, he's gone, too, so ...  

But then there was a report that was written
by the police, by the RCMP or the police back in the day.
There are some things that we -- I don't think they thoroughly questioned or thoroughly investigated because I seen -- looked like there was loop holes in the report, and I didn't like it that they labeled -- the RCMP or the police labeled -- it was like my sister -- my -- my nieces were probably 7 -- 4 and 7 years old or something like that, right? But on that report, the RCMP labeled "these two young girls maybe will be unfit mothers when they get older."

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Do you have a copy of that report?

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** I'm going to have to talk to my niece about it because she had it, and I seen that report. I have actually read it, and even my other brother who was the Chief of the First Nation -- of our First Nation read that report also.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Would you like the Commission -- if you can get a hold of that report, would you like the Commission to get a copy of it?

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** Yes, I would. Yeah.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. So we'll talk about that --

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** Yeah.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** -- later. Sorry, I just --
MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah. And yeah, so that's how it went, and whatever -- we didn't like it, you know, but -- being labeled, you know, after reading that report, because I didn't read it at that time, eh, like, '79 or when it was done or completed. I read it probably about maybe ten years later or something.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Sorry, I'm just making sure this is working. I heard a beep.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So I always worry about --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- something being turned off --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- so thank you. Yeah. No, I'm just trying to make sure -- good.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So, yeah, like said, reading the -- reading the report after fact.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah, and I didn't like it about that -- labeling. You know, that's just like racial profiling of our children, of our youth, our women, and I didn't like that, and that's one of the issues, also, why I'm here. Like I said, stereotypical remarks, racial inequalities, racial differences, racial labeling,
discrimination. You know, that all -- that all plays in, factors of what happened with our women, children -- men and women, our men and boys, and then -- I was going to say, even my late father -- I'll just mention it. My late father leaving us in 1983, and he was left on the road frozen due to alcoholism, and that's another issue that I can speak of because I was a contact for that, and I -- I kind of left it alone for a bit, and then I talked to my late mom before she left -- left us to go to the spirit world. I mentioned to her and family members that I was thinking about reopening the case because I was not satisfied, in here, because it was still hurting, but when I -- when I started mentioning it, the individual that my late dad was with, and this individual's the one that left him on the high -- on the road, when I -- when he got wind of it, he had got sick, and he -- now he's not here. So I don't know what kind of answers I will get now.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: But even then, the report, the police didn't even do the report or whatever, and my -- my father's not here today, and then I'll go -- now we'll go to 2015, because again, I would like to see an inquiry about what about our men and our boys, also, that are going missing? They're just as important as every other walks of life in the world, so that's with -- closing
with that.

And then now we go to 2015. My -- my [Relative 1], she -- she lives up in the [Town 1] area, in Alberta. We got a call one day saying that our [Relative 1] had not been contacted, she'd gone missing for -- one day she's gone, and so we -- we got all riled up and everything. We're trying to locate funds, right? So we contact two bands, my wife's band and my own First Nation so get some fund so we can go help them search, and we don't -- we totally get refused or get no response or reply back to -- to see if they're going to help us.

So with that, with no response from either leadership, it affects my woman, my wife, whose [Relative 1] is missing, because she's scared about her safety, she's hurt, she's thinking that something could be -- could have happened to her, and it even affected my kids because my kids grew up with her. They're just like a sister to their [Relative 1], right?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm. M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: And it affected them, too, and if their mom was to go hitchhike all by herself and left me with the kids to take care of them and would -- and something happened to her, it would affect the kids totally today, but I -- we had to go through some hard discussion, me and my wife, hard, hurt feeling, you know?
Like, she went to cry. She was hurting. She was mad. She was willing to hit me to actually leave so she can hitchhike to go, and I had to totally -- not -- like, not push her but to hold her and say, no, honey, because if you go, what if something does happen to you, and you're going to be another stat, another number that's going to be added onto this? And I said, maybe, honey, you could stop and breathe and think about this, what I'm talking to you about, so she did, and I says, breathe, honey, because that hurt is going to hurt you if you do not let it out. So she breath, then she start relaxing, and I says, now, think about that, honey. If you go down, what if somebody picks you up and does the same thing? And she thought, okay, you're right, and so we calm -- she calmed down and whatever, and eventually down the road, my brother does dig out of his own pocket, but -- you know? That's what the band is there for. But he digs out of his own pocket, but at that time, I guess because through text-messaging and other things, my [Relative 2] is asking me, how can I help, and other things, right? And I was thinking, well, we have technology now today. What is the RCMP doing? Because they had called the military. They were going to get the military to go search because it's forested area, the Rocky Mountains, right? It's a big area that's forested. So they're going to call the military, and I start thinking,
well, with our technology today, get RCMP decide to do a
track on her phone because the phone's got GPS.

So I text this to [Relative 2], because
she's talking with the RCMP, right, so I said, why don't
you guys track her phone? See if her GPS is on her phone.
So they do that, so later they found her, but the -- the
issue is that everything that's happening on the First
Nation, it's at home, First Nation, the education system,
and the government, so the -- now when you look at that,
with that one, there's one, two, three, four, five, because
First Nation government and the federal government, because
their responsibility, so the federal government, so there's
five individuals that are involved now.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So that's what needs
to be looked at.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So can I ask, when
your [relative] -- [Relative 1]?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: When she went missing, you
said you got a call the next day. Were the -- do you know
if the police were contacted? Because you talk about the
military. Again, the military just --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: No. There was
two -- there's two texting because the first day, right --
MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- they text us and saying they didn't hear nothing from [Relative 1] and stuff, and I says, well, I think I need to file a missing -- a missing persons report.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Uh-huh.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So they did, right?

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, they did?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Okay.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: And we didn't have a -- I totally forgot to bring. I have copies of that, too, right, of that.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And was there something in that report that bothered you?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: That was -- that wasn't a report, that just -- of what -- what goes on because, again, we're here to find out what is the cause to why are -- some of the women, men, or whatever, right?


MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Why they leave, why they go missing, and again, again, about the values of each individual.
MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: It's the values, you know? Like, for myself as a -- as a Cree man, my -- one of my values is -- is respect.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So I don't know if it follows in other -- other -- other ethnic groups, right? And how strong is that respect in -- in other ethnic groups? For me, it's strong, and that's what I teach my -- my young ones right, today.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So if it's not that strong with others, how can they come and say that they care? Because I -- I -- I use my value systems -- like, there's honesty, trust, respect -- well, I'll leave respect open -- love, from -- you know, and there's kinship, and -- and togetherness, and if we don't work all together like that, you don't get respect, so that's what I'm saying. If individuals don't follow a lot of this, how are you going to get over here, right?

But, again, I mention about the school. Well, there's bullying. That was going on with my -- my [Relative 1]. Bullying at the school, bullying with the staff, and -- and the leader were not addressing this. Why? Because it has to do with election voting.
Statement - Public
Brent Burnstick
(Denise Burnstick & Relative 1)

1  MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.
2  MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: And this also plays
3       with the non-Indigenous.
4  MS. KERRIE REAY: So how old was your
5       [Relative 1] when she went missing?
6  MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: [A teenager]. Yeah,
7       [teenager]. She's just going on -- I think she's [age]
8       now. Yeah.
9  MS. KERRIE REAY: So -- so are you talking
10      about [Relative 1]?
11  MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: [Relative 1], yeah.
12  MS. KERRIE REAY: So she was [age] when she
13      went missing?
14  MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: When she -- yeah.
15  MS. KERRIE REAY: And you -- and they found
16      her.
17  MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: They found her, yeah,
18      through -- like, how I said, though.
19  MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Yes.
20  MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: But the RCMP not
21      thinking that.
22  MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah.
23  MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.
24  MS. KERRIE REAY: Sorry, just in terms of
25      trying to put the context, and -- and she had passed.
MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: No. She's -- she's okay.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, she's okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: But now -- but now -- that's what I'm saying, today now, today now, [Relative 2] does not know, she's in [City], so we don't know what she's getting into. That's what I'm saying.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: If you're looking at trying to solve issues, right, a broader picture.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: There's bullying, the education system, bullying by staff, bullying even by Chief and council --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- their -- their people around, right?

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Because families -- there's big families on First Nations. These big families can go target other individuals and try to make a -- you know, disrupt it.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Like, I guess what I'm coming back to was because given that [Relative 1] was only 16, and you had spoken that neither her band --
MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Or my band.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- or was -- would --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Would not help.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- would not help financially --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Financially.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- to look for her.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Even though she was only 16.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And when -- and can I ask, when they found her, was she with somebody else, or was she lost, or was she --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: She was -- they found her right in the [Town 1].

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, so they found her in a -- another community?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: What -- what had happened is -- like, her First Nation, there's about 60, 70 miles in the wilderness.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: And she come walking -- I guess she walked out of the residence, walked on the highway, and somebody seen her, and then after that,
nobody seen her after, so right away --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- thinking, did she get picked up?

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Get kidnapped?

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So that's the notion we got, right?

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Because I -- way out in the bush, and --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- strange vehicles, because it did happen to us. We were driving down the highway. A vehicle comes pulling up right beside us, he looks at us, backs up, he backs down, comes behind us again, does the same thing.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So that's where it made me think, did something happen to her?

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, absolutely.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And in 2015.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Right? Yeah.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah. So -- but -- so was
she found in the -- in the community, then? She was
just -- (indiscernible).

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah, (indiscernible)
there. She was right -- she was about 60 miles away,
though.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Like, in the town.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah. Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah. But then
there's brought up of why? Because of all -- like I said,
it's -- because -- has to do with the human rights abuses,
might as well say it, because it's -- when you're racism
and discrimination, right? So that's what -- that's what's
a factor on our First Nations now because that's what is
going on with her.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Because, like I said,
it's the bigger families, and she was sort of -- like, she
was friends with some of these -- these bigger families,
right?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Like, the -- the
younger ones, the girls or whatever.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: But then different influence, again, because of what? Oh, you can do this. Oh, I can move up. The social elite ladder, might as well as say. She started getting bullying from the school and then staff, and staff is pick -- picking because a staff member works there, and their children are in school, and if somebody -- displays with the -- you know, argues or gets in the middle -- tension with a staff member or student, the staff pick that student --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- protect the staff and the student.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So -- so what I hear you saying is that young girls like [Relative 1], even in 2015 at 16, are -- she's at risk.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: At risk, yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: At risk. And so one of the things that the Commission is looking for is recommendations, as well, as to how to support young girls and women, of course, Indigenous, to -- to help keep them safe, you know? So those recommendations, you may not have them right now, so we can certainly -- you know, you could go away and -- and think about what kind of recommendations
from your experience would help at-risk or higher-risk girls that are facing these -- racism and bullying and stuff in the communities to help keep them safe.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: I can -- I can give the right -- right off the top. Recommendation is they come -- they attend one of our traditional camps.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Traditional camps without influences -- influences meaning technology, you know, like cell phones, video games -- and living on the land again because they lost their connection. They lost the identity of who they are and how they're connected, and that's one of the things that I didn't lose focus on. Sure, when I was younger, growing up, I lost focus, but then when I got initiated, I'm grounded again. I'm grounded meaning my feet are here. I'm not up here. I'm...

MS. KERRIE REAY: So can I ask, what did it take to move you from that time as a youth and sort of the -- the lifestyle that you were having? Was it just getting older, the age, or did you have an experience that got you back and grounded you back in your culture and in your land?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Well, I mentioned about four times trying to commit suicide.
MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: The last time I tried to commit suicide, my late grandfather and my late mom were alive, and we had went to an -- came in to see an Elder, another Elder, for some spiritual guidance, and without him being there to guide us and to -- you know, because he was the one that actually had the vehicle and the funding at that time to take us to go see the Elder, and I'm very grateful, and from then -- that day forward, I've really changed my way and looking at life, eh? And I had to think about it in saying that, why am I trying to be somebody different? I can't be any different than who I am as a Cree man, as a Cree person, Cree human, so why am I trying to be somebody else? You know? This public image or this image that you see from others, right? I want to be a rock star. Well, am I ever going to be there? I don't think so. So I don't -- I don't follow those beliefs. My beliefs are on who I am.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right, and that's where you've come to through reconnecting --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Reconnecting.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- and it comes back to a comment you made when we were first starting about -- as a -- as a child watching TV and the cowboys and Indians.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.
MS. KERRIE REAY: You wanted to be the cowboy.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Wanted to be the cowboy.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And that -- that's -- that's a reaction to negativity.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Negativity, yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- in what has surrounded you.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: And now -- since I've -- like I said, since I've touched the culture, and that was 1987 when I got initiated, my life has kind of changed, become more and more -- it's positive. You know, sure, I'm unemployed. Hey, don't bother me. Like, for me, myself, as a grounded man, and for who I am as Indigenous man, I'm not rich. I'm not supposed to be rich with money. We're supposed to be rich in knowledge and what's in our body -- in our heart.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So those are the issues that I have, you know, and like I said, the justice system needs to be changed, totally re -- rehauled. Like, I see things there -- you know, they're not asking every
one of us -- sure, they're going to these justice ministers in every province, but why not come down to the grassroots level like us? Ask for our input? You know? Maybe there's some -- some recommendations in there that can help --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- with this, right?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: The other thing is child welfare. I sat on a child welfare board for my -- my band. Then they removed me out of there, and -- you know, and now when you look at the issues that are going on today with children in care, women being hurt, men and women being hurt.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Boys being hurt too.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm. M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: And then the justice system, like, our -- for myself, being penalized and, you know, punished and -- in there because, again, it had to do with our survival. We just wanted to live, but again, I -- I always go back to that TV. Brainwashed. Oh. Steal. That's why -- now, I won't bother. I -- I won't even allow my children to do that.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm. M'hm.
MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: I told them, keep your hands to yourself because you can get yourself in trouble by touching, and that's touching even a woman or a girl or anyone.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And so, if I can, the -- the -- sort of the comments in terms of your own personal experience, did you see much of Denise's -- or was she in another home? Because you said some of the family were together, some were in different homes. I'm just wondering, because you said she went off to Hobbema, and I'm just wondering how much connection, like, this --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: We didn't -- before she left us, there was not much connection. I think there was about -- about good two years, right, because Mom and her had a disagreement and whatever, then she left, and there's little -- little contact.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah. So -- so did you feel that with the -- with the residential school, with your parents and -- and -- and it's just what you feel.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: From listening to what you've said, sort of the -- those -- the systemic issues, the -- the residential schools, your parents had -- and you -- sorry, I'm -- I'm digressing here for a second. You said your dad only went for a week.
MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: About a week or so, yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: What -- what did he do? Did he drink?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: His grandparent -- well, his parents kept him home.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Kind of hidden him because I -- I heard some stories after the fact -- after, right, after the era --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Uh-huh.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- that some of the parents did actually hide their children.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: And my dad maybe was one of them.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Because even then, he didn't even go to finish school, but he had become a good work and a good carpenter.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: He learned on his own.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And you said one of your
grandparents was a trapper?

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** I think both of them were, but my dad's dad was -- because I -- I seen him, right?

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M'hm.

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** I could seen him. He would actually go out just about every -- every other day or -- to go get his -- check his traps and stuff, and he'd actually showed me how to do the beaver and stuff like that, and...

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** So I just want to -- in my own -- in my own mind, I want to make sure that I understand. So large family, and the children at a young age were separated into different family homes.

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** Yeah.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** And what I'm hearing is that even when you sort of came back, you -- you were still disconnected.

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** Disconnected.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** The relationships -- the people you hardly -- you knew, you were a sibling, but you really didn't know one another. Is that what I'm hearing?

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** Well, I know who they are, but it just (indiscernible) --

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** No, but I mean as a
person.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah. Not --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes, you know, that those --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- relationships.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Relationships.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And so you sort of -- so for Denise, she left and went to Hobbema.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And -- so you really didn't have a lot of contact with her?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: No, not --

MS. KERRIE REAY: And distance and stuff.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Distance, but we were close because I -- I did live with her in Edmonton here, when she was younger, right, before, and then after that, we just lost connection. Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And did you have another sister?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah. I have two others.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Two other sisters?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: I have a younger one, and there's one that's disabled. Like, she's mentally
disabled. Like, she lives in the city here. She's a little older than I am.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: And then I have younger one that -- and like I said, has to do with the residential school --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- and what it's done to our parents, with alcoholism coming in, and making a woman, saying to her, oh, I'm not worthy about this, and with alcohol, and if someone -- a non-Indigenous man, because my mom drank, my mom met an non-Indigenous man, and they had, what do you call, sexual intercourse, and that's where my younger sister came out.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: A non-Indigenous man, so mixed blood.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And how -- how -- do you have a relationship with her?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Touch and go.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Touch and go?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: And she lost her -- the sister that I'm talking about lost her son this
year, September.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, dear.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Murdered.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And that comes back to your earlier comment about the need to also look at the loss of the men --

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: The men and the boys.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- and the boys.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So in -- is there -- I had -- I had mentioned at the beginning that one of the things about the inquiry is also looking to how to commemorate and how to honour the -- the women and girls that have lost their lives, the missing and the murdered. Do you have any thoughts?

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Well, for me, and -- for me and my family, I don't -- I know she's resting, my sister's resting, and uncertain about my -- about my [Relative 1] and where she is right now, but I know my sister's resting in the spirit world, and the way we are as family here, I -- I strongly believe until we can set aside our differences and reunite and bond as a family, why would just mean -- want to go make a commemoration when it should have been all of us to do it together?

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.
MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: And this way, will be -- maybe it'll bring us all stronger together, and they'll say, well, (indiscernible) because that's all it is is sometimes garbage, that's all it is, because we pile it on too much, and people don't know how to deal with it.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Yeah.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: So that's what I recommend.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: You know, for me and my family. If we were to do something for my late sister and others, that's what I think needs to be done.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Come back as a family.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: Come back as a family, and -- you know, to speak from here, not from here.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: From here.

MS. KERRIE REAY: From the heart.

MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: From the heart and do something for them and -- but for us, you know, and I don't -- I don't think it happens lots in the non-Indigenous world, but for us when we lose our loved ones, we have ceremonies. We hold feasts for them, and we hold round dances, and we do our own ceremonies --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.
MR. BRENT BURNSTICK: -- in our peaceful way that we can, and we always do it in four, so after our fourth one is done, we kind of let them go back and time for them to rest until we're ready to call them again. So that's my recommendation for my family and the Commissioners, and if I can help, like I said, as a spiritual man who had done a lot of his healing for going on 30 years now if not more, I'm willing and able to in any which way I can.

And, like I said, the issue, I really believe, is trust amongst everyone that's involved in how we take care of everyone in our daily lives. That's the -- number one that's gone is trust. It's broken. Until that is fixed, you're not going to fix the problems that are facing Mother Earth and mankind because we see it -- like, from ourselves, you know, we -- we hear that they're -- some individuals are experts. How are they experts when we still see things happening? How -- how are they going to ever stop that?

So why can't they set aside these differences and say -- admit and say, we are not experts. We need help. We need outside help, outside of the government with grassroots people. Like, we are grassroots. You know, there's -- it's not just me grassroots. Could be another -- from another ethnic group
or another race that's a grassroots. Why not listen to them too? Because they lived the hardship just like myself and that. There's --

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right.

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** But some didn't live the hardship, so how are they going to help if they've -- what we say is spoon-fed with a golden spoon? And when you -- when you actually don't live and experience rough lives and whatever, rough upbringing, abuses, the hurts.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Pain.

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** Pain, the suffering. Yeah. And I just need to try to see if we can do it together.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay.

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** And I always say, no one is better than anyone. You know, how are we going to get equality if you're always giving you, oh, I'm better than you, I'm sitting on this pedestal. Don't put anybody on a pedestal. That way you'll -- you'll avoid the stereotypical remarks or whatever. Like, I -- I always -- I say that for myself. I tell my babies back home, my woman and others, I'm not better than anybody. I says, maybe I got knowledge up here, but I'm no better than anybody. I says, look at me, you know, I don't -- I don't
buy myself the best of clothes. If I have to, I'll stay
who I am because that's who I am now. I'm going back to
who I am, right? Being grounded.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Better place.

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** Better place, yeah.

You know, I'm not -- and my honey always tells me that when
I first met her, and I like -- I like this compliment from
her. Honey, when I first met you, look, you have not
changed yet, even up here. You're still at that same, like
that picture. And I told her, well, honey, one of my
mottos is, why worry over things that you have no control
over? And I only have control over my life. That's how I
try to help, and that's what I teach my young ones. I have
three young boys, three young men in my home. Right now,
my oldest boy is the man of the house. I told him that
that's your role. You protect our woman, and your woman
are the boss of the house. That's what a lot are
forgetting, the responsibilities of each one of us in that
home, and I can help.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Good. Any last words for
the Commission?

**MR. BRENT BURNSTICK:** Well, yes,
I -- Commissioners, I seen some of your reports, some of
your sayings, and I know that you wanted to exclude some of
the stuff in regards to going after police, but the trust
is broken between the RCMP police and the people, especially us, the Indigenous. I have something that I can probably pursue, but right now to try to help out in any way, I'm trying to be compassionate about not pursuing it. You know, I'm trying to reflect that how -- how am I to help if I'm trying to make something hurt, always trying to hurt? Well, you've got to get a balance, so all walks of life got to learn to set aside their differences if you want to make this a better world and we get a balance and harmony because without it, we're always going to have a rough road, and you'll never get the solutions or you'll never solve the problems. And with that, thank you. Hai, hai.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Thank you.

--- Upon adjourning
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Jenessa Leriger, 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.

Jenessa Leriger

March 13, 2018