National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
Edmonton Inn & Conference Centre
Edmonton, Alberta

PUBLIC

November 9, 2017

Statement - Volume 98

Muriel Desjarlais
In relation to Judy Desjarlais

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
II

NOTE

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

**Statement - Volume 98**  
**November 9, 2017**  
**Witness: Muriel Desjarlais**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Testimony of Muriel Desjarlais</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporter’s certification</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statement gatherer: Kerrie Reay

Documents submitted with testimony: none.
Upon commencing on Thursday, November 9, 2017 at 10:02 a.m.

MS. KERRIE RAEG: Okay, Muriel, are you ready?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. This is Kerrie Reay for the record. I’m a statement taker with the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We are at Edmonton, Alberta on November the 9th, 2017, and the time is 10:02. Today I am speaking with Muriel Leona Desjarlais. And she is of the Cold Lake First Nation and is currently residing in Edmonton, Alberta.

So, Muriel, you are here voluntarily and you, to give your truth, your story. And you’re okay with the video camera and the audio recording?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Good. Good. And today you are here to talk about your sister who is missing, Judy Isabelle Desjarlais.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M’hm.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And in the room as well is health support, Belinda --

MS. BELINDA LACOMBE: Lacombe.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- Lacombe. Okay. All
right, Muriel, the floor is yours.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, I just really wanted to talk about all the effects at the residential school, they took us, like, from my mother and us, me and my sisters and brothers, all we had to go through and we were never taught anything, or we never had any physical or emotional caring, I think. My mom was so -- was so closed off. And so as a -- all of us, my sisters and brothers are totally damaged from -- from my mom being in Blue Quills school and, the rest of us.

I think that is why my sister is missing because she didn’t know how to handle life, how to talk to anybody or how to be open or to, really -- I always felt like an outsider. And I always felt like to be -- I had to make myself invisible, because I never felt good about myself.

And I think my sister, I think was the same. And I -- she was lesbian, and I think that is another thing too that. Traditionally in our family that is really looked down on. And she was not accepted by my brothers for that.

And, anyway, what I’m trying to say is that we weren’t given a chance to really -- to really become beneficial to society or ourselves, because we didn’t know how to -- I don’t know how to love. I don’t know how to
communicate.

I wasted all my life on alcoholism, trying
to bury my pain. And now that I am a recovered alcoholic,
I have so many mental problems and physical problems from
my cirrhosis, that now I’ve been in recovery for about four
years, and I’m still not healthy. And I don’t think I will
ever be healthy or ever be normal, mentally or physically.

And I think this is a result of my not being
taught -- my mother, my parents we never taught anything.
Nothing at all. Not how valuable school was or -- or
anything at all. Even though my mother never drank, my
mother was never an alcoholic. My dad was. My dad is a
recovering alcoholic now, but as we were growing up he was
never there. And my mother was the one for us. But she --
we did have food and a place to live and were secure and
that, well -- but we had no emotions. We weren’t supposed
to feel anything and whatever happened in the house, you’re
not supposed to say anything. So all my life I’ve been
like that. I don’t trust anyone. And I just used alcohol
to ease my pain and I think my sister did that. I think,
it is going to -- I don’t know. I think it, it’s just
terrible anyway. That I never had a chance at life and now
my life is coming -- is towards the end. And I haven’t
really accomplished anything because I didn’t know. I had
no -- no help in life to -- to really help me get -- go to
school or do anything -- anything beneficial, which now, I know. I tried, like, I went to school and did jobs here and there and that. But alcohol and pain, inside pain, and being ashamed of who I was, how I looked, that’s how I was meant to feel.

And always running into racism and ignorance everywhere I go, even to this day. On my way here, I ran across two -- two incidents of being -- people treating me bad because I look like the useless person, like a street person, like a bum. And that is how I am always treated no matter how I dress, how I look, how I speak. I am just a Native and useless and invisible and that is how I am always treated and that’s what really frustrates me. And it always has and -- and it is still ongoing today, the way I feel.

And I have been in trouble with the law a lot, but that was lashing out because my inner pain. I just wanted to get back and -- now I just ignore everybody, ignore -- I just stay home and I just -- I just don’t even want to come out and face the world anymore because of all the racism I always face. All my life I’ve always felt ugly and useless. And that is the end of my story.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Well, would you mind if I asked some questions? Can you talk -- did you grow up on the reserve?
MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: You grew up in Edmonton?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. We grew up like off the reserve. My mom took us -- didn’t want us to be on the reserve.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Can you tell the Commissioners why your mom didn’t want you on the reserve --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Because --

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- growing up?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- I don’t know. She -- she never really told us things. But she just didn’t want -- she never even associated with the reserve either, herself.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Did she -- did she talk about her time in residential school or did she -- was she very silent?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She was very silent.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So where did you grow up?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Lac La Biche area.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Around the Lac La Biche area.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.
MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: In the country.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And you talk about your siblings. So how many -- how many siblings?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: There is ten of us. I’m the second oldest.

MS. KERRIE REAY: You’re the second oldest. And your sister Judy, was she the oldest, the youngest?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She’s the middle -- the middle sister.

MS. KERRIE REAY: The middle sister, okay. So you grew up around Lac La Biche?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M’hm.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And you talk you talked about your inner pain. And -- and one of the things that we understand, is often pain comes from violence. Would you like to share with the Commissioners where your pain came from?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: What do you mean?

MS. KERRIE REAY: What -- what happened for you as a survivor. You’re here today. So you talked about turning to alcohol, you talked about things happened in the house that you weren’t supposed to talk about. And I’m just wondering if you’d like to share that with the Commissioners about, sort of those some of those systemic things that come from -- from parents who have been in
residential school. Things happened to the children and then the grandchildren. And I am just wondering if you would share with the Commission some of that pain.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** My mother was so closed off and I felt like you have to be. You, like -- you have to be strong and that I -- I -- followed my mom, like to be emotionless and I don’t know how to say it like, to -- to be just I don’t --

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** It’s okay.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** -- it’s hard to describe.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm. Was there violence in the home?

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** No. But I’m sure there was a lot of sexual abuse because my memory of my childhood is, like, erased. Like I don’t remember much. I don’t remember much happiness or anything like that --

**MS. KERRY REAY:** Right.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** -- you know.

**MS. KERRY REAY:** And I wonder about that, given you describing about that inner pain and that you turned to -- to alcohol. So you suspect that there was abuse?

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** I think so.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. And -- and you
talked about your -- your mother didn’t drink. What about your father, did he go to residential school?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. But he -- do you know if his parents went to residential school?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And was -- and you -- you said that he is now recovering?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And so -- so I guess if you don’t have much recollection of your younger years then, you know, I -- I understand that. Do you remember much about going to school?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I know I liked -- yeah, I liked school.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I was pretty good at it.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Like I always got you know, like in the 90s and --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Yes.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: That’s why, I don’t know, I didn’t have no push to even continue. I did try. I went to -- I got accepted to Concordia University. And
of course, alcohol got in -- in the way. And --

**MS. KERRIE REAY**: And what were you going to take at university?

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS**: I don’t know, something in the helping profession.

**MS. KERRIE REAY**: Okay. Okay. So you talk about your -- your struggle with alcohol, do you remember when you first started consuming alcohol?

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS**: I remember we were really young and we stole some. A whole bunch of us went and drank and -- and then it was just always there. Just everyone did it, so --

**MS. KERRIE REAY**: M’hm.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS**: -- it was just normal for -- for me, all my friends did it. But not at home, my mom didn’t allow it at home. But that is what, I wonder why we’re all so mixed up. We are all so screwed up. And my mom always tried to have a good home for us, but I think it is because there was no emotions -- like she didn’t. We know she loved us, well I think, well I don’t know, but she tried her best anyways. We didn’t starve to death And --

**MS. KERRIE REAY**: M’hm.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS**: -- stuff like that, like the other kids. She tried to teach us how to -- how
to be -- not to be -- to be -- to really have control of
yourself.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: That is what she
tried to teach us, I think, self control. Yeah, self
control.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Self control.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And so growing up and --
and in school, you talk about feeling the racism, even this
morning.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M’hm.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Can you talk about as --
as a child or as a teenager, what kind of experiences you
had with racism?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, even at
school, my girlfriends that were white would tell me, oh, I
can’t -- they would play with me at school, but they
weren’t allowed to play with me out of school and I
couldn’t walk home with them, and stuff like that. And
even the dentist would just pull our teeth and not put our
crown -- put crowns in our teeth and even if we’d had asked
for them.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And we knew we
Muriel Desjarlais
(Judy Desjarlais)

didn’t want to lose -- I didn’t want to lose my teeth. I knew you had to keep them.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And even the teacher. I know I had 100 percent all the time, 90s and in -- he skipped a girl and she was lower grades than me. And she was white and she got skipped one grade, and it was supposed to be me.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And things like that, you know. And everything, like, even going into the restaurant, everybody gets served first and you are the last one. And they just ignore you, they’re so busy that they don’t -- you have to wait. I have to wait all the time for everything. Even if I’m there first, they’ll even call up somebody that is behind me, and -- you know, all the time. You know, and I just ignore it, but I get so mad and then I just get violent. I’d burst and then I really create a scene, which I -- I do on purpose actually, so they won’t do it again to somebody else because I’m tired of being hurt. I’m tired of being -- being hurt inside all the time. And that’s why I don’t even want to go anywhere or do anything. Go back to school or anything. Well, I can’t anyways, my mind’s too screwed up. My memory, I can’t even -- anyway.
MS. KERRIE REAY: So -- when -- could you
tell us at what age you left home, roughly?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Around 14, I think.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Around -- around 14. Can
I ask what year you were born in?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: ’62.

MS. KERRIE REAY: 1962, so that makes you 55
this year. Okay. And do you recall when your sister, Judy
was born?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She’s about five --
five years younger than me.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, so Judy about 1967
maybe?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And what year did she go
missing?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, about 10 years
maybe.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So about 2007?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Around there.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I’m not even sure.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Like my memory is
bad.
MS. KERRIE REAY: No, no that’s okay. It’s okay. Just -- you know, your story is what you remember and -- and that’s what’s important. So you left home about 14 and where did you go? Did you stay in Lac La Biche or did you --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No, I just, I don’t know, just went all over.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, by yourself?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah, I just -- relatives.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Cousins, friends, just went all over. Just stayed here and there.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And what about in terms of -- so you applied to go to university and you said alcohol got in the way. Did you go to work in an employment area, in a helping field, or did, what -- what did you --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I took one year community resource work in Lac La Biche.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm. That’s the college?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And that is where I did, like, field placement and I was a teacher’s aid for a while in Saddle Lake and in The Friendship Centre in
Bonnyville. I did field placement there and a youth assessment centre in Lac La Biche.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. Okay.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Then, of course, after I finished, I only did one year. I was supposed to come to Edmonton to do another two, three, four years, but, of course, no. I never finish what I start, but I did finish one year.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. But you -- but you had that opportunity --

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** -- to help in -- in the in that -- in those fields.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Yeah. And so when did you come to Edmonton?

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** I think about 20 years ago.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** About 20 years?

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Over 20 years.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. So you’ve been living here?

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M’hm.

**MS. KERRY REAY:** And -- and what type of work have you been doing here?
MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Nothing really.

MS. KERRY REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Oh, I did a job corp.

MS. KERRY REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And that was for about a year.

MS. KERRY REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And I didn’t really work. I was mostly drinking all the time. Drinking, then sometimes I’d have brief periods of -- oh, I worked as a welder’s helper. I forgot. For quite a while.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: In Bonnyville. Yeah. So I did that for about four years off and on.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I forgot about that.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: I want to give you a bit of time, right?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Help you recall, right, right?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.
MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And that’s about it. Mostly just drank a lot.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Mostly a party life -- like.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And so you spoke about getting in trouble with the law.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Can you tell the Commission what that was -- what’s that like and what happened?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, I was in an abusive relationship. And he -- we got into a fight and it was either me or him. So, I guess, we were fighting, having a knife fight, so I won the fight. And he was paralyzed and then he died a year later. I was charged with attempted murder and then it was reduced to a -- to assault, so I got two years for that. But my -- my parole officer, who is Maria Fitzpatrick, now she is in the government and really high in the government.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: You know her hey?

MS. KERRIE REAY: No, I’m actually from B.C., so ...}

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Oh.
Muriel Desjarlais  
(Judy Desjarlais)

(LAUGHTER)

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She, now she’s in in the Legislative Assembly.

MS. KERRY REAY: Oh, she’s a MLA.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes. I seen her on T.V. a couple of times.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I want to write to her. But anyways, she’s -- she really helped me.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And I knew she was, she -- she really helped me. Like, there is not too many people that I remember in my life, but --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- she is one of them that really -- and she believed in me, and she got me fast tracked to get out of jail fast, and she said I didn’t belong there. And I didn’t know that she was abused too. She -- and here, you know, I know there -- I knew there was hope for me.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh. And so your experience in -- in, you were in a Federal jail --
MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- penitentiary. Can you tell us a little bit about your experience and -- and how the treatment is as an Indigenous woman while you were in custody?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, I was one of the first ones at the women’s prison --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- in the west end. And, well, I was there alone after they closed it down and the other girl’s murder. And then they closed it down, and then when they re-opened it I was the first one there and I was there by myself for six weeks.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh no.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: In the whole unit, the whole housing thing.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I was the only one and then everybody started, they started letting everybody back in. But I -- it was a good experience for me. Like, I don’t know, I just fit right in.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, dear. Do you think there was an element of safety for you?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.
MS. KERRIE REAY: You know, because you described a very, sort of, more of a riskier lifestyle with the alcohol, and the custody gave you a different sense of structure or -- because you say it was a good place for you. So I’m just --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: I’m interested in understanding that.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Because I -- I had somewhere to -- the four walls belonged to me, it was my place.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Where nobody could invade my space --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Now was that, was that an opportunity for you because you said that you’ve been recovering for about four years, did you say? That you --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Since I got out of the hospital, yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Out of the hospital. So when you were released -- and you said you were fast tracked for parole, when you were released, how -- how was
it adjusting back in to the community; do you remember?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: It was easy.

MS. KERRIE REAY: It was easy?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I didn’t spend much time, only like six months.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Six months?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And -- and when you came back into the community, can you recall how it felt, did you feel hopeful, did you -- did you have hope for the future?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I -- I always think like, it’s too late for me. I can’t do anything any more.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And how -- do you recall how old you were when you -- were when you came out, when you were released?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. I think this happened in the early 80s.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So, at a very young age, you -- you felt hopeless about -- for hope for -- hopeless for yourself --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- at such a young age.
Even though you thought, you just said, you were too old?

**M's. Muriel Desjarlais:** M’hm.

**M's. Kerrie Reay:** But in -- but in the 80’s you were only in your 20’s.

**M's. Muriel Desjarlais:** Yeah. Just I don’t know. Just, I just felt like I could never do anything, you know. Like, I kinda knew, like, that I would mess up again. I would mess up all the time with booze.

**M's. Kerrie Reay:** M’hm.

**M's. Muriel Desjarlais:** Because that’s the only thing that made me feel good.

**M's. Kerrie Reay:** M’hm.

**M's. Muriel Desjarlais:** And you know, made me feel like I was alive.

**M’s. Kerrey Reay:** Did you find yourself in trouble with the law again?

**M’s. Muriel Desjarlais:** No. I didn’t. Out of trouble ever since.

**(Laughter)**

**M’s. Kerrie Reay:** So you didn’t -- so you know, that -- that -- that hope was there.

**M’s. Muriel Desjarlais:** Well, I’m just not a law-breaking person. If I was, I’d still be doing it, but I never was, you know.

**M’s. Kerrie Reay:** So -- so, when you
-- so can I ask, what -- what happened for you that you decided that you -- you wanted to give up alcohol?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I didn’t. I ended up in the hospital, near death.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And that’s what it was?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah, because, when my mom passed away, it was worse then. And then -- then my son passed away about five, six years ago. And I lost hope when my mom passed and --

MS. KERRIE REAY: How did your -- how did your son pass away?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Rheumatoid arthritis and that wasn’t fair. And I was never a good mother to him. I didn’t even know how to be a mother. My mom took care of him. And I had a daughter, seven years after him, and I never took care of her either. My mom did.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And where is your daughter now?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She’s on the street. She was, her too, heard she’s into drugs.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Heavy drugs.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Do you see her at all?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. Because she physically tries to beat me and take money away from me and
stuff, so.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And so, as a -- in your time of recovery, what has it, if I can -- and I’m not sure this is the right way to ask it, but what has it meant for you? Are you hopeful? Are you -- have you -- how are you finding life now?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I don’t know. It’s -- I get frustrated because my -- I wrecked my body so bad.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And my brain.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And now, like, now that I -- I finally realized, you know, it’s just -- it just feels like I don’t know what my purpose was or is.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: You know, just a waste, waste of life, you know. That’s what I think. And I -- I -- it’s just depression all my life.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I think I’ve been depressed all my life. And I still, I don’t care -- have any feelings actually.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm. Have you been able to access any resources for support for your depression?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I don’t want -- I --
I could -- I have -- I mean, I know I can reach out and all that, but I don’t want to face it. I’ll lose my mind if I --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I know it’s too much I can’t handle everything.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I never -- and I don’t want to.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Because I know I can’t -- if I start getting too deep -- deep into it --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- I know I -- it’s just too much for me.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And so here telling your story today --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- are we going too deep for you?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. I just wanted to check in, because I want to make sure that we don’t do any more harm either.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. I know how to
shut down.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I know my limits and stuff now.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Okay. So -- so you had the two children?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And how old would your daughter be? What’s your daughter’s name?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: [Daughter].

MS. KERRIE REAY: [Daughter], how old would [Daughter] be?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She was born in ’85.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And my son in ’78.

MS. KERRIE REAY: ’78. And his name?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Terry (ph).

MS. KERRIE REAY: Terry. Can we talk a little bit about Judy?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And so did Judy -- Judy was younger than you, by -- by about five years, you said?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.
MS. KERRIE REAY: And you left home about
when you were 14.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M’hm.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Did you see much of her
after you left home?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. No, like, you
know we never were close in our family, like, it was like
everybody for themselves.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: When there -- like,
I never had no feelings for them.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm. And so --
MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I don’t think she
did either.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: No, but that was a large
family and when you -- when you speak about your mom having
difficulties showing love and affection, I -- I take from
what you’ve said. So do you know how old Judy would have
been when she left home?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She was always
around my mom.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Was she?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah. Edmonton --
because my mom moved to Edmonton and everybody did.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: So she had her own place.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No, I don’t -- she never really ever, really, really left home.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRY REAY: And so it’s been about -- about 10 years, you say that she went missing. Did she go missing in the Edmonton area?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah. I think her boyfriend threw her in the river or something, murdered her.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And, anyway, when we went tried to question him, and he was trying to, he -- he pulled out a rifle when we were trying to go to his place.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: So I think he has something to do with it.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And did you -- did the family report it to the police?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.
MS. KERRIE REAY: And were you part of reporting it to the police?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And can you tell us what your experience with the police was?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well they -- he got a, he got -- he got the police on his side. We weren’t allowed to go to his place or I think he got some kind of order against --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- my -- my brothers and --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- that for us to stay away from him. Then he moved out of the city. And -- but after that, never heard anything for years and then out of the blue, just lately, a female police officer phoned me and she was cold case.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: So that -- so I know they’re -- at first we thought they weren’t doing anything. Well they didn’t actually because right after, there was a boy that -- that jumped in the river and then they had all -- all the canoes, everything out there searching for him and they found him. And my sister went missing just before
that, and they didn’t even try to look for her in the river or nothing.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm. Even though, you -- I gather from what you’ve said, that you said that to the police when you filed the missing person’s report? You thought maybe he had thrown her in the river?

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah. They all said that, my brothers and sisters.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. And so how -- can I ask how did it feel getting this phone call out of the blue after all these years?

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Well, it’s like she read my mind.

*(LAUGHTER)*

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Like, I was thinking about it, hey.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And I was trying to get a hold of my sisters, but they don’t talk to me. I -- I have two sisters left. And I was trying to -- even to get them to come here for this today.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** To meet me here and come here and help me and help each other but they didn’t. They won’t even answer my calls and they know it’s my phone
MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Like that’s how dysfunctional we are.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Right.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And so that’s terrible. What was the question?

MS. KERRIE REAY: I was just asking how you felt about after all these years of the police doing nothing --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Oh.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- to get a phone call, and why -- why did they call you? Were they wanting something?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: A DNA.

MS. KERRIE REAY: DNA. Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah, so I gave her all the information about my other sisters, what I know, their phone numbers.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm. M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: My brothers and -- because they were closer to her, so they might -- they have to know more than I do.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Because I wasn’t
Muriel Desjarlais
(Judy Desjarlais)

that close to her at all.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Right. Did --

were you able to give the DNA sample?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No, I told -- I got

them in touch with her daughter.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, okay, so she had a
daughter?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And my sister’s --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- I told them to

let them take care of it. I don’t think they are though,
doing anything. Because I was -- I -- I have a lot of

health problems --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- and I have

seizures and blackouts and stuff.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: So, you know, I
can’t really do much because I don’t know how long I’ll be

here or if something happens --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: to me, you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And -- and so you --
you -- you have to take care of yourself.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I try.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes. Yes. So have you heard back from the police or was it just the one time?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No, I got her number.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She gave me her number.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: It’s a cell phone and she said to phone her anytime.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: So.

MS. KERRY REAY: Right.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And she said if there are any updates she’ll phone.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, she told me to keep in touch with her.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm. Okay. And how do you feel about keeping in touch with the police?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: All right.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Like, I don’t have a
problem with the police.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Like, they helped me. Like, I’m not -- I’m not against them. I -- I work with the law even though I -- I was on both sides of the fence.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah. I worked at, like -- but no, I’m really glad that they’re doing something now, finally, you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Good. And so can you -- you said you know being on both sides, can I ask what your experience was with the justice system when you were charged and convicted with the assault?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I was treated fairly.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I was treated really good by our justice system, you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I seen other people not being treated as good as I was, but I think that’s because I was so honest with them.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.
MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And -- but that's the way I am.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: You know, I just say -- say it like it is.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And if you don’t like it, too damn bad, you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And -- and you did talk about the -- the relationship with your husband was abusive and violent. How long were you with your husband?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, we’re just common-law.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Off and on for years.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Was he the father to Terry --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- and [Daughter] ?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No, I never had a committed relationship. I didn’t want one.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Just too much hassle.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So one of the things, of -- of many that the Commission is looking at is recommendations about how to -- how to find a way for Indigenous women and girls to be safe, to be taken care of. And because one of the -- the themes that I have heard from you is, is that racism and discrimination and -- and how it impacts --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- our soul and -- and how we feel about ourselves. And -- and I’m just -- just wondering, you know, you’ve had a lot experiences from -- from, you know, a parent in residential school. The challenges of being out on your -- by yourself at a young age as a girl, in -- in riskier situations with the use of alcohol. You know, you’ve had a lot of experiences and -- and from experiences, I think, comes some wisdom.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: About you know, what -- what would help -- what would help the young girls today, to keep them safe and -- and to -- to not face, you know, the difficulties that you faced growing up.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: First -- first, number one is communication.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Number one is to
Muriel Desjarlais
(Judy Desjarlais)

tell the -- the girls right from the beginning --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- when you’re young, like you --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- need education.

And about the effects on alcohol, not just -- don’t say, don’t drink.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Say don’t drink because you will have a lot of health problems and explain -- explain why you shouldn’t do this or why shouldn’t do that.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: You know. It’s just communication, I think that’s the main thing --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- is to try it.

Just -- there is too many things, like, to open up a person’s eyes, like, to knowledge, like, teach them, like, that you’re worth something, you are valued, that, you know, you’re not just -- show them some affection. So you got to know that, you know, life is not just -- there’s -- I think, I don’t know, there’s no normal. But I mean, like, to -- I know there is not too many in our Native
people, like, you don’t have many role models.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: But that’s what we need more of and I think -- just to teach the girls, like you’re worth something, you’re -- you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And you could be strong. You have to go to school -- you got to go to school, learn and that you’re -- no matter what you look like that you’re -- you’re a person.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Even though you think nobody cares there’s got to be somebody.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I don’t know, like --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: It’s just trying to give a girl the foundation and the inner -- inner strength, inner peace, like, I don’t know how -- how to describe it, but I think knowledge and communication, like -- yeah, like, if I was told about alcohol, what a bad thing it is, like, what it does to your system and your inhibit [sic]. It changes your value system and everything. And just to teach the girls, like, about drinking. Even about birth
control and stuff and the effects of having kids. Like, too many girls are having children because they want to start a family and have a family like they never had.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** You know, and then it’s still the same. Their families, like, you -- you -- what you know is what you teach your kids, so you have to break that -- break that and find other ways.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. And I -- I you mentioned -- that your mom didn’t want the family growing up on the reserve. And so I’m wondering as we see more and more culture, First Nation culture, becoming more -- more prevalent, more -- more in the open in terms of -- like, here at the Inquiry, we have drummers and we have a sacred fire. Did you have much of your own culture growing up?

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Well, my grandmother was a healer.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** On my dad’s side.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** That’s on the Cree side.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And so I had that, but every -- like everybody -- I even had to hide that,
like -- like, from the society.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Because my grandmother was a medicine woman. And, you know, I was scoffed at and that for -- for believing it, believing in it, so I had to hide that.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So instead of being able to be proud --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- you had to keep it deep inside.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M’hm.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah. So anything else from your experience? Because you’ve had a wealth of experience in terms of teachings.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah, that’s the only -- the thing is that right from the start --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- is to teach a kid that they’re valued, and they’re worth something --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- and how to steer them into education And --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- the effects of
alcohol and -- and drugs and stuff. If I had a -- if I knew all that, I never would have drank. I would have went to school. I would have stayed in school.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And I would have, you know -- and to teach kid that because your poor -- there’s other ways, you know, getting funding to go to school and stuff.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And you got to learn to ask for help.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And you just can’t stay back and just let people walk all over you, but not get violent, you know, like I do.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: But you know, you learn. It takes a part -- all my whole life, finally I know, you know -- It feels like it’s too late, but I wish I knew now what I knew. You know, like everybody says that, I know, but it’s the truth.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: If somebody had taught me things like, if my mom would have told me, stay in school because school is what you need to get ahead and
to feel better about yourself and stuff. And that’s a
normal thing and if you grow up not knowing -- everybody
lives not working, so you think that’s normal?

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: You know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And my dad never
really worked. My mom was always busy trying to keep us
alive. So we didn’t know -- I didn’t know anything about
pay cheques or anything like that. You know, when they are
young they got to learn how the world goes around.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: You know, you don’t
-- money, you don’t get money for nothing, you’ve got to
work for it. And --

MS. KERRIE REAY: So that’s some of the
teachings that need --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- that need to be shared.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah. Right from
the beginning.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Right, right.

MS. KERRIE REAY: You’ve got to. I think
that if -- if a parent communicated with their child right
from the beginning, that would be really beneficial.
MS. KERRIE REAY: But it also comes back to what you were saying, that you know, you learn from your parents and -- and that’s you know, that’s -- that’s --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- one of the barriers, I think --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- that exist right now, is how -- how you break that cycle? How do you -- how do you --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah, that’s the thing.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- and hearing you speak today, you know if -- you know, you can -- you can hear that you have that knowledge now from your experience and you -- and you -- and you see that. And any thoughts about how your experiences and other people, like, how that could be shared with -- with younger people.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Oh, I don’t -- you know, like, I never -- like, you get so selfish you don’t even think about. Like, even me, like, now it’s just -- I think what I did to my, what I am doing to my kids right now and my grandchildren, like -- and I feel like it’s just so overwhelming I can’t stop it.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.
MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Like, I can’t stop -- stop my family and I try to help them and they turn on me, like, Oh, now that you don’t drink you think your better and all this and that. No, no, I’m just trying to help you. Mind your own business. You know, and so that makes you feel like overwhelmed, you get overwhelmed.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And I think that’s important.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: I think that’s an important thing that -- that people do get overwhelmed.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M’hm.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Even when they -- even when they become healthier.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M’hm.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And they -- and then they start to see what is happening to other family members and -- and then you try to help them and they don’t want it.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M’hm.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So that -- that must be very difficult as well for you.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Is there anything else you’d like to share with the Commission?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, it’s just --
racism too is -- is such a big thing. Especially -- well, for me it was.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: You know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And I still -- I still really -- like, it’s people, I -- I’m fair to people, like, I don’t care about their colour and stuff because, you know, one of my great -- great -- on my dad’s side was French, from France. And the thing is like, I wish all people would think like that. Like, we are all the same inside, even how we look outside, you know. That’s the only -- racism is so awful. You know, that’s the worst thing. And that is what I think keeps -- you feel like, even, oh -- even me, like, I don’t like going into like fancy -- fancy restaurant because, well, it is true, I -- I don’t get treated right. No matter how I dress, if I -- if I have a $1,000 clothes on, still, you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And that’s what I don’t like. That’s what really kept me down, was they make you feel not good enough, you’re not worthy -- worthy. You’re never going to amount to anything. Even when you face it everyday, like, even walking down the street, like somebody will through a snowball at you, you know, and
things like that. Every day, I -- I get some kind of a negative, racist -- I run into a racist person, you know, that is so terrible.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And that is where change --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- needs to happen.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And they -- nobody listens. Like, you don’t see it unless it’s happening to you. And even if you do see it, if you agree with it, you just ignore it. And a lot of people really agree with it. You know, and there -- if I -- I, that’s why I don’t go to a lot of places. And if I -- if I don’t -- if I stay away from all the places that -- that treated me bad, I can’t even step out my door, you know.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: That’s how bad it is.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Okay, anything else?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. It’s just a -- it seems like it is just endless and it’s never going to
stop, but the thing is now we -- we know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: You know, and I hope there is more of us that want to change. It’s all up to the individual.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Very much so.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: You know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: So I hope there’s more people that really want to, but it’s hard. Especially when your stuck on so much that you -- it’s hard to build yourself back up.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Really, really hard no matter what.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And it sounds like you’re trying to do that a lot on your own.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes. You need help, I know, but, I don’t want it, yet, you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I’m not at that point yet. I don’t know if I ever will be.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And -- and but you know, it’s -- it’s good to know yourself that way, where you’re at.
MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M’hm.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I wish -- I wish I was -- like everybody would. Yeah, I wish I had communication with even my mother, like, or somebody would have stepped in, like even a teacher, or -- or --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- somebody, you know, one person even in my life.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Could have made a difference?

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Would have made a difference, you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah. And your marks, you know your marks were a sign, you know --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- that you had a lot to offer.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes, and that’s the thing. Like that principal, I remember his name, Mr. [B.] He was the one that really crushed my -- my -- doing that to me, you know. And then a lot of -- and everybody knew, like, our community, Native community.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And, you know -- and
even his daughter was in my class, [V.]. And she was, and she would even tell me she wasn’t allowed to play with me. She asked her dad if I could stay overnight because they lived at the school.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Oh, my dad said I’m not supposed to ask you.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: So what that --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And that’s the principal.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah, and so what that teaches me, what that tells me is, is that the children learned --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes, they are passing it on. Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- from the parents, right? That that attitude --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes. Yes. Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- that -- that racism, you know, and as --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes, that’s what I know

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- as a child.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M’hm.
MS. KERRIE REAY: She didn’t, she saw you for you.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, it’s not only one, there’s a lot of times like that. That I had friends that --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes. No, and I didn’t -- I didn’t mean to -- I didn’t mean to imply just one, but as children.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: As children.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: There was, and even when we moved to a big town like Lac La Biche, this was Rich Lake School, one room school. And Lac La Biche, it was still the same, I thought it would be different, but it was still the same.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Then I would beat up -- because of being treated like that, I didn’t beat up the girls because they are too weak. I’d beat up the boys, the white boys.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: That’s how it goes, eh.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh dear.

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Well maybe on that note.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. KERRIE REAY: Well, Muriel, thank you so much for coming. You know, it took a lot of courage to come here today and -- and share -- and share your truth. Share your story. And so I’d like to -- I’d really like to thank you for -- for coming. And --

MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah. I don’t think I was any help though, but --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, you were. Oh, very much so, very much so. You -- you have a lot to offer today. And I’d like to thank you.

--- Upon adjourning at 10:56 a.m.
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Jamie Woodrow, 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.

___________________________
Jamie Woodrow

March 9, 2018