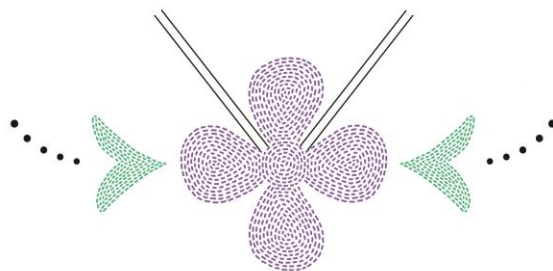


National Inquiry into  
Missing and Murdered  
Indigenous Women and Girls



Enquête nationale  
sur les femmes et les filles  
autochtones disparues et assassinées

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered  
Indigenous Women and Girls  
Truth-Gathering Process  
Part 1 Statement Gathering  
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**

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## II

### NOTE

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

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Documents submitted with testimony: none.

Edmonton, Alberta

1  
2 --- Upon commencing on Thursday, November 9, 2017 at 10:02  
3 a.m.

4 **MS. KERRIE RAEY:** Okay, Muriel, are you  
5 ready?

6 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

7 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. This is Kerrie Reay  
8 for the record. I'm a statement taker with the National  
9 Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and  
10 Girls. We are at Edmonton, Alberta on November the 9th,  
11 2017, and the time is 10:02. Today I am speaking with  
12 Muriel Leona Desjarlais. And she is of the Cold Lake First  
13 Nation and is currently residing in Edmonton, Alberta.

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

17 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

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

21 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

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

24 **MS. BELINDA LACOMBE:** Lacombe.

25 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** -- Lacombe. Okay. All

**Muriel Desjarlais**  
**(Judy Desjarlais)**

1 right, Muriel, the floor is yours.

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

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

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

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

**Muriel Desjarlais**  
**(Judy Desjarlais)**

1           communicate.

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

8                           And I think this is a result of my not being  
9           taught -- my mother, my parents we never taught anything.  
10          Nothing at all. Not how valuable school was or -- or  
11          anything at all. Even though my mother never drank, my  
12          mother was never an alcoholic. My dad was. My dad is a  
13          recovering alcoholic now, but as we were growing up he was  
14          never there. And my mother was the one for us. But she --  
15          we did have food and a place to live and were secure and  
16          that, well -- but we had no emotions. We weren't supposed  
17          to feel anything and whatever happened in the house, you're  
18          not supposed to say anything. So all my life I've been  
19          like that. I don't trust anyone. And I just used alcohol  
20          to ease my pain and I think my sister did that. I think,  
21          it is going to -- I don't know. I think it, it's just  
22          terrible anyway. That I never had a chance at life and now  
23          my life is coming -- is towards the end. And I haven't  
24          really accomplished anything because I didn't know. I had  
25          no -- no help in life to -- to really help me get -- go to

**Muriel Desjarlais**  
**(Judy Desjarlais)**

1 school or do anything -- anything beneficial, which now, I  
2 know. I tried, like, I went to school and did jobs here  
3 and there and that. But alcohol and pain, inside pain, and  
4 being ashamed of who I was, how I looked, that's how I was  
5 meant to feel.

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

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

23 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Well, would you mind if I  
24 asked some questions? Can you talk -- did you grow up on  
25 the reserve?

1 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: You grew up in Edmonton?

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

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: Can you tell the  
7 Commissioners why your mom didn't want you on the  
8 reserve --

9 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Because --

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: -- growing up?

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

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

18 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She was very silent.

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

21 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Lac La Biche area.

22 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Okay.

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

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.



1                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** In the country.

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

4                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** There is ten of us.  
5 I'm the second oldest.

6                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** You're the second oldest.  
7 And your sister Judy, was she the oldest, the youngest?

8                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLIAS:** She's the middle --  
9 the middle sister.

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

12                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

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

18                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** What do you mean?

19                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** What -- what happened for  
20 you as a survivor. You're here today. So you talked about  
21 turning to alcohol, you talked about things happened in the  
22 house that you weren't supposed to talk about. And I'm  
23 just wondering if you'd like to share that with the  
24 Commissioners about, sort of those some of those systemic  
25 things that come from -- from parents who have been in

1 residential school. Things happened to the children and  
2 then the grandchildren. And I am just wondering if you  
3 would share with the Commission some of that pain.

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

9 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** It's okay.

10 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** -- it's hard to  
11 describe.

12 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** M'hm. Was there violence  
13 in the home?

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

18 **MS. KERRY REAY:** Right.

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

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

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

25 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. And -- and you

**Muriel Desjarlais**  
**(Judy Desjarlais)**

1           talked about your -- your mother didn't drink. What about  
2           your father, did he go to residential school?

3                       **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** No.

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

6                       **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** No.

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

9                       **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

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

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

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

17                      **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** I was pretty good at  
18           it.

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

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

22                      **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. Yes.

23                      **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** That's why, I don't  
24           know, I didn't have no push to even continue. I did try.  
25           I went to -- I got accepted to Concordia University. And

**Muriel Desjarlais**  
**(Judy Desjarlais)**

1 of course, alcohol got in -- in the way. And --

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** -- stuff like that,  
25 like the other kids. She tried to teach us how to -- how

**Muriel Desjarlais**  
**(Judy Desjarlais)**

1 to be -- not to be -- to be -- to really have control of  
2 yourself.

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

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

7 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Self control.

8 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

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

12 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

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

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

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

25 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And we knew we

1           didn't want to lose -- I didn't want to lose my teeth. I  
2           knew you had to keep them.

3                       **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right.

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

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

10                      **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And things like  
11           that, you know. And everything, like, even going into the  
12           restaurant, everybody gets served first and you are the  
13           last one. And they just ignore you, they're so busy that  
14           they don't -- you have to wait. I have to wait all the  
15           time for everything. Even if I'm there first, they'll even  
16           call up somebody that is behind me, and -- you know, all  
17           the time. You know, and I just ignore it, but I get so mad  
18           and then I just get violent. I'd burst and then I really  
19           create a scene, which I -- I do on purpose actually, so  
20           they won't do it again to somebody else because I'm tired  
21           of being hurt. I'm tired of being -- being hurt inside all  
22           the time. And that's why I don't even want to go anywhere  
23           or do anything. Go back to school or anything. Well, I  
24           can't anyways, my mind's too screwed up. My memory, I  
25           can't even -- anyway.

1                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** So -- when -- could you  
2 tell us at what age you left home, roughly?

3                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Around 14, I think.

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

6                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** '62.

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

10                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** She's about five --  
11 five years younger than me.

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

14                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

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

17                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Well, about 10 years  
18 maybe.

19                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** So about 2007?

20                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Around there.

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

22                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** I'm not even sure.

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

24                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Like my memory is  
25 bad.

1                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** No, no that's okay. It's  
2                   okay. Just -- you know, your story is what you remember  
3                   and -- and that's what's important. So you left home about  
4                   14 and where did you go? Did you stay in Lac La Biche or  
5                   did you --

6                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** No, I just, I don't  
7                   know, just went all over.

8                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay, by yourself?

9                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah, I just --  
10                  relatives.

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

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

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

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

20                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:** M'hm. That's the college?

21                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

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

23                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And that is where I  
24                  did, like, field placement and I was a teacher's aid for a  
25                  while in Saddle Lake and in The Friendship Centre in



1 Bonnyville. I did field placement there and a youth  
2 assessment centre in Lac La Biche.

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

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

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

11 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

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

14 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

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

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

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

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

21 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. So you've been  
22 living here?

23 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

24 **MS. KERRY REAY:** And -- and what type of  
25 work have you been doing here?

1 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Nothing really.

2 MS. KERRY REAY: Okay.

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

5 MS. KERRY REAY. M'hm.

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

8 MS. KERRY REAY: M'hm.

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

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh.

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

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, M'hm.

17 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I forgot about that.

18 (LAUGHTER)

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

21 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

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

24 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

1                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And that's about it.

2                   Mostly just drank a lot.

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

4                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Mostly a party  
5                   life -- like.

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

8                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

9                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Can you tell the  
10                  Commission what that was -- what's that like and what  
11                  happened?

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

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

22                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** You know her hey?

23                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:** No, I'm actually from  
24                  B.C., so ...

25                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Oh.

1 (LAUGHTER)

2 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She, now she's in in  
3 the Legislative Assembly.

4 MS. KERRY REAY: Oh, she's a MLA.

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

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh.

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

10 MS. KERRY REAY: Okay.

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

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

21 (LAUGHTER)

22 MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh.

23 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh. And so your  
25 experience in -- in, you were in a Federal jail --

1                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

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

6                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Well, I was one of  
7 the first ones at the women's prison --

8                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Oh.

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

14                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Oh no.

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

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

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

22   **(LAUGHTER)**

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

25                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

1                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:**     You know, because you  
2                   described a very, sort of, more of a riskier lifestyle with  
3                   the alcohol, and the custody gave you a different sense of  
4                   structure or -- because you say it was a good place for  
5                   you. So I'm just --

6                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:**   Yeah.

7                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:**     I'm interested in  
8                   understanding that.

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

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

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

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

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

17                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:**     Now was that, was that an  
18                  opportunity for you because you said that you've been  
19                  recovering for about four years, did you say? That  
20                  you --

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

23                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:**     Out of the hospital. So  
24                  when you were released -- and you said you were fast  
25                  tracked for parole, when you were released, how -- how was

1           it adjusting back in to the community; do you remember?

2                       **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** It was easy.

3                       **MS. KERRIE REAY:** It was easy?

4                       **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** I didn't spend much  
5 time, only like six months.

6                       **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Six months?

7                       **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

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

12                       **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** No.

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

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

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

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

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

24                       **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

25                       **MS. KERRIE REAY:** -- at such a young age.

1 Even though you thought, you just said, you were too old?

2 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: M'hm.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: But in -- but in the 80's  
4 you were only in your 20's.

5 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah. Just I don't  
6 know. Just, I just felt like I could never do anything,  
7 you know. Like, I kinda knew, like, that I would mess up  
8 again. I would mess up all the time with booze.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

10 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Because that's the  
11 only thing that made me feel good.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

13 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And you know, made  
14 me feel like I was alive.

15 MS. KERRY REAY: Did you find yourself in  
16 trouble with the law again?

17 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. I didn't. Out  
18 of trouble ever since.

19 (LAUGHTER)

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: So you didn't -- so you  
21 know, that -- that -- that hope was there.

22 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, I'm just not a  
23 law-breaking person. If I was, I'd still be doing it, but  
24 I never was, you know.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: So -- so, when you



**Muriel Desjarlais**  
**(Judy Desjarlais)**

1 -- so can I ask, what -- what happened for you that you  
2 decided that you -- you wanted to give up alcohol?

3 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** I didn't. I ended  
4 up in the hospital, near death.

5 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** And that's what it was?

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

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

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

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

19 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** She's on the street.  
20 She was, her too, heard she's into drugs.

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

22 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Heavy drugs.

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

24 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** No. Because she  
25 physically tries to beat me and take money away from me and

1 stuff, so.

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

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

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

10 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And my brain.

11 **MS. KERRY REAY:** M'hm.

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** I don't want -- I --

1 I could -- I have -- I mean, I know I can reach out and all  
2 that, but I don't want to face it. I'll lose my mind if  
3 I --

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

5 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I know it's too  
6 much I can't handle everything.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

8 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I never -- and I  
9 don't want to.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

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

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

14 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- I know I -- it's  
15 just too much for me.

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

18 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

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

21 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. No.

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

25 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. I know how to

1 shut down.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

3 (LAUGHTER)

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

6 (LAUGHTER)

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

9 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

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

12 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: [Daughter].

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

15 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She was born in '85.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

17 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And my son in '78.

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: '78. And his name?

19 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Terry (ph).

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

22 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

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

25 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

1                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** And you left home about  
2 when you were 14.

3                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

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

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

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

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

12                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:** M'hm. And so --

13                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** I don't think she  
14 did either.

15   **(LAUGHTER)**

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

21                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** She was always  
22 around my mom.

23                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Was she?

24                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah. Edmonton --  
25 because my mom moved to Edmonton and everybody did.

1 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

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

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

7 (LAUGHTER)

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Okay.

9 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

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

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

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

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

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

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

25 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

1                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** And were you part of  
2 reporting it to the police?

3                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

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

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

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

11                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** -- my -- my brothers  
12 and --

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

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

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

20                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** So that -- so I know  
21 they're -- at first we thought they weren't doing anything.  
22 Well they didn't actually because right after, there was a  
23 boy that -- that jumped in the river and then they had all  
24 -- all the canoes, everything out there searching for him  
25 and they found him. And my sister went missing just before

**Muriel Desjarlais**  
**(Judy Desjarlais)**

1           that, and they didn't even try to look for her in the river  
2           or nothing.

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

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

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

12                      **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Well, it's like she  
13          read my mind.

14   **(LAUGHTER)**

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

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

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

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

23                      **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** To meet me here and  
24          come here and help me and help each other but they didn't.  
25          They won't even answer my calls and they know it's my phone



1 number.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

3 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Like that's how  
4 dysfunctional we are.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Right.

6 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And so that's  
7 terrible. What was the question?

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

11 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Oh.

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

15 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: A DNA.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: DNA. Okay.

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

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

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

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

25 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Because I wasn't

1           that close to her at all.

2                       **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right. Right. Did --  
3           were you able to give the DNA sample?

4                       **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** No, I told -- I got  
5           them in touch with her daughter.

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

8                       **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And my sister's --

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

10                      **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** -- I told them to  
11           let them take care of it. I don't think they are though,  
12           doing anything. Because I was -- I -- I have a lot of  
13           health problems --

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

15                      **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** -- and I have  
16           seizures and blackouts and stuff.

17                      **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Oh, okay.

18                      **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** So, you know, I  
19           can't really do much because I don't know how long I'll be  
20           here or if something happens --

21                      **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right.

22                      **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** to me, you know.

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

25                      **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

1 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

2 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I try.

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

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

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

8 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: She gave me her  
9 number.

10 MS. KERRY REAY: Okay.

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

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

14 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: So.

15 MS. KERRY REAY: Right.

16 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And she said if  
17 there are any updates she'll phone.

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

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

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

23 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: All right.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

25 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Like, I don't have a

1           problem with the police.

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

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

7   **(LAUGHTER)**

8                           **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right.

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

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

16                           **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** I was treated  
17 fairly.

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

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

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

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

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

1 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: And -- but that's  
2 the way I am.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

6 (LAUGHTER)

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

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

12 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Well, we're just  
13 common-law.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

15 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Off and on for  
16 years.

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

19 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No.

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

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

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Okay.

24 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Just too much  
25 hassle.

1                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. So one of the  
2 things, of -- of many that the Commission is looking at is  
3 recommendations about how to -- how to find a way for  
4 Indigenous women and girls to be safe, to be taken care of.  
5 And because one of the -- the themes that I have heard from  
6 you is, is that racism and discrimination and -- and how it  
7 impacts --

8                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

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

17                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

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

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

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

25                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Number one is to

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

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

3 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- when you're  
4 young, like you --

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

6 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: -- need education.  
7 And about the effects on alcohol, not just -- don't say,  
8 don't drink.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

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

19 Just -- there is too many things, like, to open up a  
20 person's eyes, like, to knowledge, like, teach them, like,  
21 that you're worth something, you are valued, that, you  
22 know, you're not just -- show them some affection. So you  
23 got to know that, you know, life is not just -- there's --  
24 I think, I don't know, there's no normal. But I mean,  
25 like, to -- I know there is not too many in our Native

1 people, like, you don't have many role models.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

15 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: I don't know,  
16 like --

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

18 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: It's just trying to  
19 give a girl the foundation and the inner -- inner strength,  
20 inner peace, like, I don't know how -- how to describe it,  
21 but I think knowledge and communication, like -- yeah,  
22 like, if I was told about alcohol, what a bad thing it is,  
23 like, what it does to your system and your inhibit [sic].  
24 It changes your value system and everything. And just to  
25 teach the girls, like, about drinking. Even about birth



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1 control and stuff and the effects of having kids. Like,  
2 too many girls are having children because they want to  
3 start a family and have a family like they never had.

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

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

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

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

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

19 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** On my dad's side.

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

21 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** That's on the Cree  
22 side.

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

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

1           like -- like, from the society.

2                                   **(LAUGHTER)**

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

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

9                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

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

12                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

13                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Yeah. So anything else  
14 from your experience? Because you've had a wealth of  
15 experience in terms of teachings.

16                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah, that's the  
17 only -- the thing is that right from the start --

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

19                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** -- is to teach a kid  
20 that they're valued, and they're worth something --

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

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

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

25                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** -- the effects of

**Muriel Desjarlais**  
**(Judy Desjarlais)**

1 alcohol and -- and drugs and stuff. If I had a -- if I  
2 knew all that, I never would have drunk. I would have went  
3 to school. I would have stayed in school.

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

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

9 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Yes.

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

12 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Yes.

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

16 **(LAUGHTER)**

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

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

23 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** If somebody had  
24 taught me things like, if my mom would have told me, stay  
25 in school because school is what you need to get ahead and

1 to feel better about yourself and stuff. And that's a  
2 normal thing and if you grow up not knowing -- everybody  
3 lives not working, so you think that's normal?

4 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right. Okay.

5 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** You know.

6 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Yeah.

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

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

13 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** You know, you don't  
14 -- money, you don't get money for nothing, you've got to  
15 work for it. And --

16 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** So that's some of the  
17 teachings that need --

18 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

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

20 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah. Right from  
21 the beginning.

22 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Right, right.

23 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** You've got to. I think  
24 that if -- if a parent communicated with their child right  
25 from the beginning, that would be really beneficial.

1                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** But it also comes back to  
2                   what you were saying, that you know, you learn from your  
3                   parents and -- and that's you know, that's -- that's --

4                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

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

7                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

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

11                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah, that's the  
12                  thing.

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

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

25                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right.

1                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAI:** Like, I can't stop --  
2                   stop my family and I try to help them and they turn on me,  
3                   like, Oh, now that you don't drink you think your better  
4                   and all this and that. No, no, I'm just trying to help  
5                   you. Mind your own business. You know, and so that makes  
6                   you feel like overwhelmed, you get overwhelmed.

7                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. And I think that's  
8                   important.

9                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes.

10                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:** I think that's an  
11                  important thing that -- that people do get overwhelmed.

12                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

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

15                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

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

19                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

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

22                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

23                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Is there anything else  
24                  you'd like to share with the Commission?

25                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Well, it's just --

1 racism too is -- is such a big thing. Especially -- well,  
2 for me it was.

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

4 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** You know.

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

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

19 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right.

20 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And that's what I  
21 don't like. That's what really kept me down, was they make  
22 you feel not good enough, you're not worthy -- worthy.  
23 You're never going to amount to anything. Even when you  
24 face it everyday, like, even walking down the street, like  
25 somebody will throw a snowball at you, you know, and

1 things like that. Every day, I -- I get some kind of a  
2 negative, racist -- I run into a racist person, you know,  
3 that is so terrible.

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

6 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yeah.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: -- needs to happen.

8 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: Yes.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right?

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

18 (LAUGHTER)

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

20 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: That's how bad it  
21 is.

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

24 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: No. It's just a  
25 -- it seems like it is just endless and it's never going to



1 stop, but the thing is now we -- we know.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: Very much so.

7 MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS: You know.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah.

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

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

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

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

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

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

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: And -- and but you know,  
24 it's -- it's good to know yourself that way, where you're  
25 at.

1                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

2                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right?

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

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

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

10                  **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Could have made a  
11 difference?

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

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

16                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

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

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

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

25                  **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And, you know -- and

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**(Judy Desjarlais)**

1 even his daughter was in my class, [V.]. And she was, and  
2 she would even tell me she wasn't allowed to play with me.  
3 She asked her dad if I could stay overnight because they  
4 lived at the school.

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

6 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Oh, my dad said I'm  
7 not supposed to ask you.

8 **(LAUGHTER)**

9 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** So what that --

10 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** And that's the  
11 principal.

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

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

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

19 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes. Yes. Yes.

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

22 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yes, that's what I  
23 know

24 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** -- as a child.

25 **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** M'hm.

1                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** She didn't, she saw you  
2 for you.

3                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

4                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Yeah. Yeah.

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

8                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Yes. No, and I didn't --  
9 I didn't mean to -- I didn't mean to imply just one, but as  
10 children.

11                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

12                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** As children.

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

18                   **(LAUGHTER)**

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

23                   **(LAUGHTER)**

24                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** That's how it goes,  
25 eh.

1                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Oh dear.

2                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah.

3                                   **(LAUGHTER)**

4                   **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. Well maybe on that  
5 note.

6                                   **(LAUGHTER)**

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

12                   **MS. MURIEL DESJARLAIS:** Yeah. I don't think  
13 I was any help though, but --

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

17

18                   --- 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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jamie Woodrow". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Jamie Woodrow

March 9, 2018