Thursday November 23, 2017

Statement - Volume 127

Gloria Oakes, Jones Oakes & Leona Wesaquate,  
In relation to Janine Wesaquate Oakes & Brandy Wesaquate

Statement gathered by Kerrie Reay

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Statement Gatherer: Kerrie Reay
Upon commencing on Thursday, November 23, 2017, at 11:00

MS. KERRIE REAY: We’re recording now. And
we’re recording on the video. Okay. We’re ready. Good
morning. And I’m going to make a statement for the record.
And this is Kerrie Reay. I am a statement taker with the
National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
and Girls, and we are at Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, on
November the 23rd, 2017, and the time is 11:00 a.m.

And, today, I am speaking with the family of
the young lady, Janine Rene Wesaquate Oakes who was taken
on December the 8th, 2004 in Regina. We have Gloria
Wesaquate Oakes who is the mother to Janine and is sitting
in the middle of the three. Jones Wesaquate Oakes is
Janine’s father and he’s to the right of Gloria. And we
have Leona Oakes on the ---

MS. LEONA WESAQUATE: No, Leona Wesaquate.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Sorry. Leona Wesaquate
who is an auntie to Janine and is on the left of the couch.
And off camera is Janine’s son, Landen Oakes. The family
is from the Piapot Nation and is residing in Regina, other
than Leona Wesaquate, who continues to reside on the Piapot
reserve. And Jones Oakes, you are from the Nekaneet First
Nation.

MR. JONES OAKES: Nekaneet, yeah.
STATEMENT – PUBLIC
Oakes, Oakes & Wesaquate
(Janine Wesaquate Oakes & Brandy Wesaquate)

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. All right. So, as I explained before we started, this is your story, this is your truth, this is your time and your space. And I leave it to you to begin your story.

MR. JONES OAKES: Hi. Do I say my name? My name’s Jones Oakes. I’m from the Nekaneet First Nations. I kind of grew up in Maple Creek area and went to Regina, went to Lebret residential school, and from Lebret, I’ve been in Regina since after I went to residential school. But I do go back once and awhile to go visit my relatives on the Nekaneet reserve.

But I feel more comfortable in Regina. It’s been my home, that’s where I, you know, have my family now, my wife and my kids, my grandkids. And that’s their home, my home. And speaking of my daughter, I guess it’s been a long time since December 8th, 2004. Long time waiting for answers, waiting for the police to come, tell me, “Well, this is what happened to your daughter.” And I haven’t seen that happen yet. No answers, don’t know what happened.

You know, it’s been hard for myself. I guess when this happened to my daughter, kind what happened to her and she was in a house fire and that’s how it -- what happened is she burnt in the fire, and the police have ruled it a homicide, but nobody’s ever been charged for the
murder. And I guess I feel fortunate right now that people are -- somebody’s going to listen and hear what I have to say. It’s been an emotional rollercoaster, a big ride since 2004. I more or less dealt with the alcohol and the drugs, you know. I dealt with turning to the alcohol, turning to the drugs and [then trying to quit] (indiscernible).

So, it’s been up and down, but I think the thing that’s made me pulled me through it was probably pray and the sweetgrass, hoping that someday that, you know, we’ll find out what happened to her. You know, I just keep praying and that’s the thing that keeps me going I guess, praying. Praying to the Creator, praying to God, because that’s the way I was brought up saying, you know, the Creator understands all of us, all languages, all the race people, all of us here on earth and he understands all the language.

But it’s been hard, you know, when I lost my daughter I held my tears in. I never cried. I never cried at the funeral because I was more in shock and, you know, I did not deal with it or didn’t know who to talk to. But the main thing that pulled me through was probably just smudging with sweetgrass and praying. And it’s been back and forth for myself, but I had to turn to drugs because that’s how my daughter -- I took it hard on the way she
went missing and how we found out she was burnt in the fire
and I took that all hard.

And to this day I still hurt and -- but I
never cry and I was just told I was -- told by some other
friends that told me that, you know, Jones you need to go
out and go cry, and I haven’t did that. You know, to go
out somewhere, pray somewhere in the bush, go cry, and I
haven’t did that. Like, I said, I’ve taken this hard and I
don’t know how to deal with it.

But I guess the way I was brought up to try
to be tough and don’t cry, just the way I was brought up.
I just take it pretty hard and -- but I’m glad that
somebody’s going to listen and from there that I hope and
pray that we will seek the answers we’ve been seeking,
through justice, through somebody to be charged, to be
accounted for. And still, you know, that person’s probably
still out there walking around. Like, how can they live
with themselves, you know, if they’ve taken a life? A life
and -- it’s pretty hard on my part because that’s my only
daughter and daughter -- yeah, it’s been hard for me.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Would you like to raise
the picture that you’ve got with you?

MR. JONES OAKES: Yes. This is a picture
that we had for a memorial for my daughter. We’ve have it
for four years at the Piapot reserve. They did a good way
in honour. We give friends from -- all of us, our family, we gave them blankets and gifts, I guess in memory of my daughter. And it made me feel good, show my picture off.

[(Crying)]

[Try praying that someday we will get answers.]

I was told by the city police not to say anything and not go to media and stuff like that, but it’s something like the way I was brought up, we don’t say this, don’t say that. I guess that’s silly. I was brought up not to say this, be respectful towards people, elders, you know. I was brought up like that, but that’s been emotional for myself, and I take it hard.

But the thing is, my daughter has a son and I guess that’s where I get my strength and I keep praying and someday I hope to get some answers. And hopefully things will change and, you know, that everybody will -- even for other missing Aboriginal women, hopefully they’ll get answers, what their seeking for, for this -- probably what they’re going through, they don’t know what happened after their daughters.

It’s hard not knowing because you don’t know what happened. And, yeah, it’s been hard for myself. And I remember when my daughter was born, I held her in my arms, telling her, “Daddy’s here and I’ll take care of
you.” But then I get hurt because I don’t know what happened to her. I guess, maybe it finally feels like I let her down. At the same time, I still try to pray and keep going.

So, hopefully, one day we’ll get our answers. Because I don’t think -- it’s not right for people to go missing, get killed, it’s not right. People have to get accounted for and brought to justice. And, you know, go to jail because when I break the law, I go to jail for my crimes, for my crimes that I did. I went to prison for my crimes. I paid for my crimes. And, yeah, I hope to get answers one day for my daughter.

But I keep praying and that’s what’s keeping me alive today is my prayer in the Creator, to keep praying and never give up. Because that’s the way we were brought up, to never give up on ourselves. We don’t take our lives because it’s not our time. It’s not up to ourselves to decide when to end our lives. It’s up to the Creator upstairs to come for us. And that’s the way I was brought up, so -- and not to say too much.

But that’s -- like, I mentioned the police they’d say that, in the beginning say -- they rule it a homicide, but not to say too much. CBC news wanted to interview us back in 2004, but we didn’t want to say anything to maybe -- because they were investigating and
then we don’t want to say too much in regards to that matter and what happened. It’s been an emotional rollercoaster ride for me.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Can I ask then, you were asked in 2004 not to say anything, but you’ve stayed silent since?

MR. JONES OAKES: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And maybe once we’ve talked, we can talk about how that’s -- how you felt about keeping such a burden to yourself. So, if you want to talk about how it’s felt all these years to have the police ask you not to say anything.

MR. JONES OAKES: Yeah. Well, they say that and I just, you know, taken their word, wait for it and I just pray -- keep praying that someday that they’ll, you know, get answers and someday they’ll come knock on the door and say, “Look, we charged this person, we’ve charged this person, this person for what happened to her.”

So, that’s what I keep praying for and hopefully one day we’ll get justice and I -- my heart goes out to the other families that are (indiscernible) missing. I see it on the news and the media, and I can relate to them because my daughter was in the same -- I guess, in the same thing, but I still found out how she -- you know, she was murdered in a fire. But for them, they don’t know and
it’s hard to carry that pain everyday.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And it sounds like you don’t have all of the answers ---

MR. JONES OAKES: No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: --- in terms of ---

MR. JONES OAKES: No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: --- what happened either ---

MR. JONES OAKES: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: --- all these years later.

MR. JONES OAKES: Just that I’m being hopeful that one day it’ll come.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And -- okay. I want to acknowledge the incredible courage that you’ve had to come in here today and sharing your story.

MR. JONES OAKES: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And it is emotional. All that pain has been bottled up for so long.

MR. JONES OAKES: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah.

MR. JONES OAKES: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Gloria?

MS. GLORIA OAKES: I’m Gloria Oakes. And this was my daughter, Janine Rene Wesaquate Oakes. I lost her 13 years ago now, December 8th. I was with her the
night she was murdered. We were both shopping at the Cornwall. She was getting her stuff prepared for her day the next day to be going to Cilas (ph) because she was taking a program to be special -- how do I say that? Yeah, special homecare, she was going to be -- yeah, that’s what she was proceeding to do before she got murdered.

And we were shopping that evening and she was getting herself prepared, what she needed for the class next day. And we were bussing it and we even walked from the Cornwall to the bus stop. And I remember she made a call and -- because it was a cold night and I remember, like, we had our stuff, right, to -- what we had to take home on the bus.

And then sometimes I blame myself because why didn’t I tap her on the shoulder and say, “Janine the bus is coming, let’s get on it.” But because she was on the phone with someone, I don’t know who she was talking to, I just assumed she would know that I got on the bus while she was still talking to whoever she was talking to and that she would get home.

So, I get home and she doesn’t show up. And, it’s not like my daughter not to show up because, like, she has her son here, Landen, her only son. And he was only two years old and she was still breast feeding.

So, it was getting concerning to me that, how come my
daughter’s not getting home and it’s not like her not to phone. And she was breast feeding and, you know -- like I want to blame myself sometimes thinking, “You could have just tapped her on her shoulder and say, ‘Come catch the bus, let’s just get on the bus.’”

I do really blame myself lots because, like, I don’t know who she was on the phone with, but anyways I get home, she doesn’t get home. And then I start getting worried. And then we’re all waiting in the living room, the next following day, still no word.

And then all of a sudden, we’re all laying on our couches watching the evening news and this is my testimony that God is very powerful to show you something that is meant for you to see, which he showed me that -- when the news came on and we’re all in the living room and I look at the news and see this fire and this house on fire and I look at it and there’s Janine in -- like, you know, when you’re looking at your news TV, she’s right there saying, “Mom, come it’s me in the fire.” Like, that was my experience through God to tell me, go find your daughter, that’s her. She’s -- that’s what she was telling me. She said, “Mom, come, it’s me. I’m in the fire.” Like, she’s talking to me through the TV, watching the news. And I scared my family. I said, “That’s Janine. She’s in that fire.” And they said, “Don’t, don’t say that. You’re, you
know, you’re going crazy, that’s not her.” And I had no
vehicle and I can admit that I’m poor, like, I’m not a rich
person.

And so, when I knew this was her because
God’s telling me and she’s saying, “Come, this is me, Mom.”
I tell my family that and I leave my house and I have to
walk because, like I said, I had no means to get around and
I live in Glen Cairn, and to go find my daughter. And I
find her and then it made me feel -- I was like, uneasy
because like, all the police, everything was there at that
house, the ambulance. And I felt like a criminal, the way
I felt by the cops, the way they treated me because I said,
“No, that’s my daughter in there.” And they were saying,
“Well, how do you know?” And I just said, “Well, because
God’s telling me.” Or, you know, I’m trying to explain it
to them. And they said -- like, they didn’t believe me or
they maybe thought I must be the one or something.

I don’t know what they thought of me, but I
was put in the car and then took me down to the police
station. And then I had to tell them stuff and then they
-- how do you say? The only way they could really identify
my daughter is through dental records, that’s how bad it
was. And then they must have believed me finally because
it was her. And that’s why I say I blame myself because I
wish I could have just tapped her and said, “Let’s get on
the bus,” so that didn’t happen.

And for me, for a mother, I would like to have justice too because I know at that time, 2004, and then after that I knew in Regina there was lots of murders. I mean, like lots of things happening in the media where other people also were getting murdered. And I feel sorry for everybody else too that’s in my situation because I found -- I hate to say that about anybody, but I feel like sometimes the police let me down.

I felt like I was let down because every time I tried to phone about my daughter’s case with them, it’s like they would say something like, “Phone me back. It’s still being investigated.” I think once I was put on the backburner, is that how I say that? I didn’t feel I was -- I didn’t feel that they realize -- like, that’s my daughter and sometimes I wish I could have told them, if that was your daughter wouldn’t you want the police to help you too the way I wanted help at that moment and those times after?

And then the thing that gets me is, they would also say, “We have to keep our cards close to our chest,” which I don’t really understand what that meant at the time. And I thought to myself -- because now to this day, when you want to go talk to them, I think everybody is retired or something’s happening with the police that the
ones that investigated, they’re not there anymore, even though there’s other ones that will take over.

But, I always find I wish I could have just dealt with the ones that were there and the ones that did investigate. And that they truly one hundred percent completely investigated, because I think sometimes when I did say what I needed to say to the police -- they even told me one time, you go talk to those people that you think that have something to say, that they could come forward and help with the investigation. But, then, how do I -- as a parent, when you don’t know who they are? You know, like maybe the police, them, they could have went and did that.

But, for me to do that, I didn’t even know where to begin. And it hurts me because she had her whole life ahead of her. She was only 20 years old when this happened. And, like I said, she has her only son here, Landen. And it breaks my heart and their hearts also. And I can never be, how do you say, fixed up again because my heart’s broken.

And, I know, like what Leona was telling -- my sister here was telling the other lady that we have to try and carry on. And I find it so hard since that time, that I can’t even celebrate special occasions, Christmas, I can’t seem to celebrate to get into the celebration of
Christmas because it happened just around that time. And I think for me, my heaviness is to this because you have no answers to the questions like, who murdered you? Like, why? She was such a nice person. Like, who wants to take your life? Why did this have to happen to her?

And like what my husband said, we want someone to be accountable for what they have caused, her death. And we need justice. We need peace. And I think because this is our first time really speaking out truly, that peoples that are out there and if this ever does get to air, that the ones that do -- like, what I said, know something, that they should come forward and try and help even though sometimes even maybe they’re scared to come forward because who knows?

Maybe they’re still scared that they think something will happen to them too. I don’t know. You know, like, we need to heal and we can’t seem to heal because, like Leona said to the other lady, my husband turned to alcohol, used drugs.

My other two sons are in the same situation. They turned to alcohol and drugs. And our life, ever since this happened, is all very dysfunctional. It’s not the happiness that we once knew. And I’ve been trying to carry on because of Landen. But sometimes I just feel like I want to go so crazy and just lose it and I think, “No, I
can’t.” Janine wouldn’t want me to because we have Landen
to care for and I have my other -- I take her as my
daughter and she was only two years old too and her name is
[M]. (ph). She told my husband here -- she was a little
girl, she said, at that age for a two-year-old to say that
to him was like, “I know you lost your daughter, but I will
be there for you to be like, his daughter, take me as your
daughter because I know you lost your daughter.” And she
was just two and a half years old. She was saying that to him. I thought that was so -- a nice thing to say.

And like I said, I cried lots at home, and
then Landen, he was only two and he was just a little baby
learning to talk, and I would cry. He must have knew I was
crying. And my grandson, he put his little hand on my face
here like this, and he said, “Grandma, everything’s going
to be okay.” And that’s just a little two-year-old baby
telling me, “Grandma, everything’s going to be okay.” And
he had his little hand upon his face and as he touched my
face, I’m seeing such a beautiful place where -- when he
put his hand there, some voice said, “This is where your
daughter is in this beautiful place.” And that was such a
beautiful place where they showed me that she is, not to
worry, that she’s gone to a good place. And I think I have
to carry on for all our family members.

But I would like justice if it can be,
because I know we’re all getting old in our lifetimes. And I know my grandson would like answers too, because that’s his mom and he has to live everyday of his life without his mother. And I have to live without my daughter, and it’s very hard because I’m sure Landen too feels the same way as someone or some peoples took a life. And like my husband said, they need to be accountable for what they did and who knows who they are. They’re still out there. I don’t know. It’s difficult, I find it. But I try my best to keep going even though I have my moments. And, again, I find that it’s hard because for me -- I still never got the autopsy report.

So, it’s just something like when the police told him like not to say nothing, me too. And I’d phone and they say, “Oh no, we can’t get that yet.” And now, I’m thinking, “Oh, 13 years, when will we ever get to get it?” Yeah. And then I think I’d like to say something for my grandson Landen because he told me to speak up and say what he wanted me to say for him on -- in his own words here. And that’s her son, poor Landen Wesaquate and this is his mother, Janine Wesaquate. And Landen says in his thoughts and in his own words, he says, “I think that the people that murdered my mom, Janine Wesaquate, should be in jail because she was murdered. It seems like nobody’s doing anything about it and no one’s helping our family with
this. I, Landen Wesaquate, grew up without my mother because someone murdered her, and we need justice for our family. So, whoever can help us, please do help us because we need to heal. And it’s hard to heal when you still have fresh feelings that someone’s out there and we don’t know who you are, but we need help.” So, please help us to solve this murder of our daughter, Janine Rene Wesaquate Oakes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Would you like a break? Would you like to break for a moment?
--- BREAK

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, so that is recording. So, it’s 11:35 and we will commence again. And for the record, health support worker [Health Support Worker] is in the room as well and has been since we started. I’d just like to acknowledge that Landen has had his grandmother give his statement and he would prefer not to speak at this time. But if Landen does feel like speaking at some point, he is more than welcome, Landen, so that you know that, okay? And so, we will now go, Leona will now speak, Janine’s auntie.

MS. LEONA WESAQUATE: My name’s Leona Wesaquate and I’m Piapot First Nation. Janine was my niece, and I loved her dearly. From the time her mom brought her into the world, she was a little light, full of
energy and had a big heart. And I was blessed because that’s the thing that we believe is that our kids are unknown to us, our kids are gifts and that the Creator loans them to us for however long their journey is here on earth. We’re taught that they’re -- that we share them and I thought we would have had this girl for a lot longer. You don’t think that as parents that you’re going to outlive your child. It’s not a natural course in our thinking. And so, for us to lose our -- a child is a very hard thing, but yet we’re supposed to trust in our Creator.

Now, that’s one thing, but in the case of missing and murdered Indigenous women, in this case with Janine, her being murdered, her life was stolen from us. We never had a chance to say goodbye to her or to be able to make peace with it when, like I said, stolen. For us to be able to heal, we need to have answers, we need to know why, we need to know truths, what really happened to her, the full story.

For her mom and her to be shopping, we all say there’s a little bit of blame in us, in our -- in everything. I know her son, like when he was just a tiny little guy, I was even doing child development and school activities with her because of where I worked. And we would -- wanting him to grow and to be a healthy baby and then I remember her telling me, “I want to be a nurse. I
want to go to school -- back to school.” And then I helped her and I encouraged her and she went back to school. She, you know -- this picture of her. I was telling her mom. Already went and got her her gloves because she had to have the gloves and everything, and how beautiful she is and that time and she’s giving us a hard time. And then I told her, when she’s smiling, I said, “You’re just like a little model. It’s graduation day. Auntie’s so proud of you. I’m so happy you’re going to have a good life. You’re going to go to school, and you’re going to have a good life, and you’re going to become a nurse, and you’re going to make a good way for you and Landen.”

I paid for her that time. I told her we needed her transcripts for her to go to -- so I asked and and we needed to her to go into that nursing program, we needed to pay for the fees and everything and she was, “I can’t. I don’t have money.” I said, “No, Auntie’s paying for it, that’s for graduating. So, you’re going to be able to go. We’re going to register you.” Then she went on. She was taking her classes. She was just happy and excited, making friends, being happy.

She got a student loan. I helped her, because she couldn’t get funding that time from our reserve. And then that’s what she had. She had her student loan, why she was able to shop. And, I still think
like, that’s part of it, that they somehow knew she had money and they stole her life because of it.

We all have little things that bother us. It’s not fair that she didn’t to get to be able to have that goal completed. It’s not fair that she had to be a mother that wasn’t able to raise her child, only for a short time. Some things you come to understand after.

Because I remember whenever her boy was just a tiny little baby and how he’d look at her like she was an angel. You’d just see such true love. And maybe already her path was being set for her to be back with the Creator. Why he would look at her like that, like she was like a pure angel. It’s hard to lose children.

In the Indian way, we take on, we share our kids, we raise them together, we guide them, we do different things. It’s hard to watch the pain and the agony and the suffering. I raised her brother’s son. Her two brothers, one older, one younger, they suffer. I’ve watched her dad, I’ve seen these two be torn apart and be back together. I’ve seen the hardship on their family. Turn to addictions, turn to other things because of trying to cope, trying to deal with it. But to release it when people can’t talk.

My sister, she’s like a Christian woman, believed in her faith and God showed her, even in a burning
fire, her daughter that was burnt alive. No matter who you are in this country, no matter what person, to listen to it, to realize that inhumanity for anyone so cruel to be able to do that to another human being, we need answers, we need justice for this girl’s death. We need people to understand that -- how hard it is.

How would you feel to not be able to look in your daughter’s casket to see her face? What they did, what they took from us, life cannot be replaced. Life does not have a dollar sign; it’s priceless. The time that you get, the love, there’s nothing, no price with that. There’s no nothing with it. We can’t say, but what we can say is we’re raised to believe that was the gift of life that we had. And to have it stolen from you is not fair.

And then not only for these ones who did this to her, to, yes, to live with it, but me, I think, speak to it, have them realize how can you live with yourself and not come forward and have the truth told? At least face the truth and give the truth to the family of who you hurt. And to the police that said, “Don’t say anything because it’ll jeopardize the investigation, don’t...” that’s wrong too. And then to not have the answers and to be years and years and years later and always to be waiting and wanting to know what’s happened. And yes, we say we’re poor people. We don’t have a problem
to say that.

But even like with this hearing, like,
yesterday I was at a chief-in-counsel meeting and then
during the break on of the counsellors brought up about
missing, murdered inquiry, and I said, you know, I said, “I
would be there right now, this minute I would be there, but
I have no means. I have no way. I have an eight-year-old
son I raise. It would have been her nephew. And I would
take my sister and her family to go up there to Saskatoon.
It’s not here in Regina. It’s at Saskatoon. And I said,
“But I don’t have gas to be able to get there.” And then
the one other counsellor went and spoke up to the chief,
went and told him of my circumstances and he took that time
to be able to give me gas so I can come. That’s how we
made it here.

But that’s the whole thing. Like, no one
told us about this, no one told us. I don’t have cable. I
don’t have — like, we — you hear things from other ways
and meanwhile this is — we have her and we had one missing
in our family. And we need to speak. I phoned her right
as soon as I had the means and said, “We got to go. We
have to have our voices heard. This is like our last
chance to speak to her life. Her life is more important.
Let’s just go. We don’t even have to worry about having
clothes and things and different kinds of stuff to get
ready to go on a trip, just get in the car and go.”

And where we going to stay? That other girl that was coming, she said, “I’ll give up my room,” she said. “Me, I’ll stay with Kokum. You can go and stay -- if you go with your sister and your family and you can stay in that room.” We stayed in a borrowed room to come here. That’s the whole thing, the injustice is that it happened to Aboriginal people from day one in this country.

The fact that is that we’re misplaced people. We were given reserves to stay on from the time of contact all the way over the years has -- there have been misjustices. All the way there’s been sufferings. There’s now these blanket exercises that are going around and that are showing people to understand in a different way all the loss, all the things taken, all the things stolen from us.

In the same way, I know, yes, I’m a residential school survivor. I’ll say, yeah, trying to survive maybe, not quite. I can’t say, I’m already survived because we’re still feeling the repercussions of it. So, is there truly such thing as a survivor? Or more that it’s still weighing us down and that we’re still carrying those heavy burdens on our backs.

That’s what we’re given is a heavy burden to carry and the dysfunction. The dysfunction of being put in a separate place and then not raised by your family and
then not able to show -- to know how to show love to your child. Not able to know how to be openly bonding and loving and all the things that come with it, all the hardship and all the ones committing suicide, the ones -- I have friends, I know those people.

When -- this one time, I went to university, this one girl, we were talking -- they were talking about stereotypes and things and the girl says, “Oh I don’t like that you’re talking about Indian people like this.” She said, “You’re making, like, it sounds like it’s -- everyone has these problems.”

So, I jumped up and I spoke up and I said, “You know what? I’m so happy that you’re a First Nation person and your life has never been touched by it. But me, I can’t say that because me, yeah, residential school person; yeah, my dad was an alcoholic; yeah, my family there’s been addiction issues; yeah, I have other relatives on the other side too that have had -- been affected by street life and the drug abuse, by prostitution, by deaths and murders, by violence; yeah, that -- boy, you’re so lucky,” I said. “How many of the rest of you guys in this room that are First Nation people, Aboriginal people, how many can you say the same thing that there’s not one family member that that’s not true?” I said, “Stand up if you’re one person that hasn’t been touched by it.” And that girl,
she said, “I’m wrong, I’m wrong, I take back what I said.”

And I said, “Yeah, because the truth of things is in my life I can tell you what the psychologist said about me. Like an onion, layers and layers of trauma, that’s our life.” We were talking in my reserve about putting on a grief and loss workshop, December 27th, 28th in Piapot.

And we said we don’t have money to get keynote speakers or guest speakers to come to our community. It costs a lot of money, hundreds and hundreds of dollars to get people to come and talk. But yet, we’ve all experienced it. We said we’ll -- a few of us said we’ll volunteer and talk, because the one thing we know is that during the holidays, it’s hard.

For us, I was telling my sister on the way to come, “Let’s try to make a Christmas again. We never had it the way it was before.” I said, “Gloria, you I know.” I said, “I got a little bit further, but you, you’ve been not putting up the decorations, not trying to have Christmas, not trying to do the stuff. We can still apply for hampers and we can still try to have a holidays and make it, let the kids live. We got to live again.

Now, we’ll have a voice we can say our things. Now, we can finally have a tear and say and speak to it.”

Now, the same thing with her son. He can now have his words say, “Give us justice. Listen to us.
Her life counted. Her life meant something to us.” He has -- that time I was going to school when I was at school and I heard from her, and she said, “You going to come?” That was Janine. They put her on fire. Who? What? I was saying. And then from that moment on, I stood by her and I said, “Now we need to do what we can do.”

Before I come here today, one of the things I told her, I said is, “We’ll have a prayer.” I’m glad I told her too, it was -- that there was a paper at that hotel and how it said that there was a sacred fire in there and that we would be able to put tobacco there. This means this is a ceremony.

So, you, Commissioners and different people who are going to listen to this taping, this makes this a ceremony. This makes this -- don’t leave us unanswered no more. When treaties were made long time ago, they smoked the pipe and why? Because that lifts up those prayers for the Creator and you have to speak truth. Us to smudge, I asked that we have a smudge before we started here. We speak truth and we are saying, “Hear our prayers.” We want that to burn so that that goes up and our prayers are answered. That there’s justice. That her life means more, and that the people of Canada, not just one person, not just the legal system, but everyone in Canada hears our missing and murdered Indigenous women, our lives count, us
too, we count. It doesn’t matter if they were single, if
they’re married, if they’re a child, in any way, they
count. They are human beings and they belong to this
country.

We are the first peoples that have shared
our country, so listen to us and have there be a true way
and that the police really do the work and find the
answers. And that they don’t close the file. Oh, but it’s
been sitting there 13 years. Oh, the people are now
retiring and going on and the file is gathering dust. No,
shake the dust off and make them look for the answers.
Give the answers to this family. That’s what we’re asking.
Don’t stop with this. Some of us never got the supports.

We were saying -- no, we tried to pray, we
tried to support each other. We had -- when we lost her
and like I said, we are poor, we had other people -- I
remember going and asking people to come and pray to lift
the pipe, the drum, the men, they come to sing and lift her
up to send her home in a good way. And then four years, we
did giveaway back. We tried to collect little blankets all
year long and different little, nice things to give back to
the people who helped us.

And our home community, Piapot, they gave us
the place to do that by having pow wow and that’s a
ceremony and that’s a way. And we did that to try to --
because it was such a tragic thing. I remember Gloria, she said, “How come we can’t just do this once? How come we have to do it four years?” Four years we’re going to do it because it’s such a tragic thing that -- the whole thing of how much -- how we lost her.

And I remember because I went around that arbour, and I took and gave away sweetgrass. And I gave sweetgrass saying -- each person I handed that sweetgrass to I said, “Why I’m giving you this sweetgrass is because every time you burn this braid now, you pray for our family, you pray for us.” All you people that will be doing -- being part of this ceremony, to dance and to be gifted, we’re asking also you still pray for us and take a little bit of that away. That’s how much pain we have. So, these are things we need.

Last night, like I said, we would have loved to have been at that round dance, but we weren’t there because we couldn’t get here in time because there wasn’t money to be able to do that. And we never had a way. We never knew enough in time. But part of it is like, the people that work with these families, they need to -- there should have been like recognition and there should have been someone to have made phone calls to these families at least.

**MS. GLORIA WESAQUATE OAKES:** You have to
keep in touch.

**MS. LEONA WESAQUATE:** Somehow a longer thing, because until her case is closed, there should be someone that’s reaching out and saying, “You know, we hear you and that case is still there.” Never has my niece called my brother in-law, never has he had that police officer come to tell him what happened to his daughter. She hasn’t had the answers to the autopsy. She hasn’t had the answers to what’s happened. He hasn’t had the justice to have justice for his mother, to live and to grow up without a mother because someone stole her life. It’s a hard, hard thing.

Yeah, I have Facebook too. I had said on Facebook, “All of my friends and family, pray for us. We’re headed to the missing, murdered Indigenous women. It’s going to be hard. Asking for prayers because we don’t know how hard this is going to be to release some of this.” This is traumatic. It’s hard to think back, and we were like lost, I think. When a death occurs and it’s like a storm, like when you go through a blizzard and you’re in a blizzard and you can’t see. And that’s what it’s like when you lose someone and there’s not answers.

We’re still stuck in that storm and no one’s leading us out and no one’s giving us light. That’s what we need. Someone turn a light on and lead us out. Let there be answers. I know I was told once by old people,
I’ve been lucky to have had a lot of old people, elders, that have given me lessons and guided me in different ways. And that time, I told them about how things were so hard. And this old lady she told me, she said, “My girl,” she held onto my hand and she said, “My girl, there’s one thing though that I have to tell you but it’s going to be hard.” I said, “What, Kokum?” “Pray for these ones that did this even though this is one of the hardest things for you. Pray for these ones that somehow they give those answers that they answer to their sins and to what they’ve stolen from you. Try to find a way to forgive.” She said maybe that’ll take a long time, maybe it’ll never happen, but she said, “I hope you try.” She said, “Because maybe in that way, maybe at that point, maybe then you’ll be able to find a way to be able to get past it.” I don’t think we’re yet there because we haven’t had the chance to tell our story. And the only way you can heal is really if you release it. So, I say thanks to be able to have the chance to be able to talk. But, again, this trauma to our family, it was a stolen life. And it was one thing to be victimized by the people that took her life from us, but it happened again in another way. To not have justice and to not have the answers to her death again victimized us. Again, for us to have to hang our heads. For us to be -- for us to try to say about how her life mattered and that
her life was priceless to us, we needed to be able to say that.

The world has been going on all around us and yet we’ve sat and waited in a storm because we’ve needed and wanted to have the truths of her murder be acknowledged and not have all -- whatever little bit of answers you have, not to have it shared with us. We ask for help, because in order for us to be able to heal, we need our voices heard and our story told.

Yesterday was Landen’s birthday. This is the way we’re bringing him to come to have his mother’s story told. How fair is that? I don’t see that as fair at all. There’s so many women. It’s sad when you see the women, the people all lost. I went to Treaty foregrounds when there was the -- they had had a giveaway there. And I remember the -- all of us, we were all, me and my grandchildren were all lined up and we were shaking hands with them and us too, we were taking part.

My wee, little tiny granddaughters, I had just walked away to make sure to acknowledge all of the people that I was thankful that there was people talking up for missing and murdered women. I remember my tiniest, little granddaughter, her too, she was walking, she was coming, she was shaking hands with them and I remember thinking, wow I forgot all about her. And then when we
made it around the arbour, and I was weak by the time we got her on the arbour and I sat down.

“Grandma,” she said. I said, “Why you were in there? You see me shaking hands.” “Yeah, me too, Grandma, because I know my grandma’s hurting so much. I don’t know why anyone would do that,” she said. And I said, “Yeah, baby, I don’t know anyone would do that.”

This has led to all kinds of hardships for our family.

Our family changed. When there used to be a time when at the holidays on Christmas I’ll be getting to her house and handing out presents and us having dinner and being happy and me seeing her decorated house. That’s not what’s happened in these past years. And now this girl, we’re finally trying to speak up and say, “Answer us for her life.”

To the police officers that have worked on her case and the Regina police service, bring them answers, give them answers. I know it’s not going to bring her back, it’s not. Unfortunately, I know even with this inquiry and everything else, we’re not going to get her back. And it’s true what my sister said, there’s a part in all of us that broke, that’s not going to come back. And she said, when the one woman asked her, “Well, you know, what can we do to heal that?” And she said, “When I’m gone and I’m with my daughter again maybe, but nobody’s going to
be able to fix it because she was stolen from us and that
-- we weren’t able to say any kind of goodbye to her or any
kind of thing."

We just have to trust that God is taking
care of her and we trust that. Our family is there and
they’re loving her and they’re -- there’s more. I pray
that there’s people though that like, like I said when us,
we have our little gathering of our grief and loss
workshop, I hope that we come. And I hope that we try to
find ways. Because there isn’t anybody that’s been
reaching out unfortunately. I’ll say, I know that my
family hasn’t had support services, haven’t accessed the
services that are out there. And maybe it wasn’t their
time, but I pray that somehow more supports come and that
there’s more answers for all of these missing and murdered
women across the country and that people stop taking lives.

But I also think -- I believe in prevention
services and I believe in the fact that the government can
help to be able to make a more affordable society. Why
should our children be sent in classes on the reserve? We
don’t get the same funding for our education as the ones in
the city and yet we’re the ones that are the most
dysfunctional now because of a result of all of the way the
world has become.

This is a rich country. Right now, I know
I’m not against immigrants, but one of the things I know there is lots and lots of immigrants that are being brought to this country and more money is being paid to help them. But yet, look at the conditions on our reserve when there’s having to boil water advisories, even with things how we struggle to be able to -- we don’t have the infrastructure.

We were laughing last night telling this boy, we don’t remember --us, we were melting snow; us, we never had toilets when we were kids. And that’s a newer technology and -- for us. And I said, and us, we lived it hard, and those houses are all wrecked in lots of places. It’s not that much really good housing. And it’s -- in terms of looking at unemployment rates and you see it’s not our people that are easy to get employed, especially the ones that end up having records because as kids they’re trying to steal to be able to have food in their mouths.

Our kids are stolen from us, had been in the ‘60s too. I know day school. I was in day school. I know residential school. I remember when I got my dollars from the residential school, I was telling my kids, no, we’ll -- you guys -- I’m going to pay these few things, but I said I don’t even want that money. I said because, me, I think of the abuse that I had to go through for it.

And then I remember that time, four times I had phoned that line. There was supposed to be a reach-out
line, and I was getting put on hold. One time it just rang
and rang and then one time when I got through to someone
and they said, “We’ll get someone to phone you back.” I
was like, “You’re going to get someone to phone me back
when I’m telling you right now this has all brought up all
of the hardship and all of the pain and you’re going to
have someone phone me back? Thank you. That’s really
good, because right now, like, I’m really in a lot of
pain.” And then, in the meantime, I’m going to funerals
because my friends were committing suicide, and why?
Because they had to live with it.

And as men, some of them too, were ashamed
of that to have happened to them, and they ended up --
yeah, they got some money. Yeah, addictions took control
of their -- of them, and then they hung themselves. Yeah.
(Indiscernible). All of this, how come it ended up to
missing and murdered women? How come it got to this point?
Is because yes, systemic racism.

Yes, all of the other things that come with
it, and all the dysfunction. When are we going to have
people that are going to all -- when are we going to have
communities that -- where our kids are getting educated?
When are we going to have people -- us knowing that there’s
jobs? Us knowing that there’s not the racism that exists?
When are the Canadian people going to see us as valuable
enough to be able to invest in us too and in the futures?

I speak to that and I hope that whoever hears this also understands, this is a forever journey with pain. And until there’s going to be more healing things happening and more resources available, more people to heal, more counselling happening, will people be able to move past all of this? And until there’s answers.

Again, this is a ceremony. I’ll be putting this in the fire and saying a prayer and asking that my niece knows today we spoke to her life and that she looks over her family and in some way her life is not gone for nothing. But that somehow, some kinds of changes happen and are a result of this, of her life being lost, that people realize that the violence that happens, it shouldn’t happen anymore.

I remember just reading the other day about how there’s such a low incidence, I think it’s Japan, that where they hardly have any gun use. And that there’s really low incidences of anything with guns. And that there’s low incidences of crime to the way there is here in Canada and in North America. And when we will have that day? That our kids can be safe? Why is it now there’s shootings in our city schools? Why is it that there’s things that are happening that there’s gangs the way they are? Why is it our children are getting murdered and
missing? Creator, hear our prayer, please, please hear our prayer. Many thanks for this day and for us to be able to share our words. Many thanks for getting us here. All my relations, hay-hay.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Thank you. Incredible. Incredible courage. Janine sounds like she was just a beautiful person. I want to say that.

[**MS. LEONA WESAQUATE:** Yes, she was]

(indiscernible).

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** One of the things that the Inquiry is also looking at is, how can the Inquiry honour Janine and her life and the loss? And isn’t the family. You may not have something thought of right now, but we certainly invite you to let us know.

Now, when we spoke before we started that we would ask you to bring -- to stand and have Janine’s picture more prominent for the video camera and for the Commissioners. And it has taken a phenomenal amount of courage to speak today to the life of Janine. And you have lots of questions and I certainly hear and the Commission hears that you need answers. And I understand from what you’ve said, that the reasoning that those answers have been difficult to get is because it’s an open case. But at the same time, the family needs some information.

**MS. LEONA WESAQUATE:** I don’t even know if it
is an open case or if it -- you know, if they had closed it in anyway because nobody’s come to talk to us about it.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** I will -- we believe that it’s still open. I will make notes on the paperwork for the Commissioners for them to inquire and to notify them, please. That this has been coming 13 years. And the family needs to have that follow-up and it needs to be more than what it’s been, because from what I’ve heard today, it hasn’t been much of anything for you.

So, in terms of what we were talking about before, before we went on the record, you also wanted to speak to the missing family, Brandy Wesaquate. And so, the other -- and Leona, you’ve spoken a little bit to it today and how -- that some of the systemic factors that have impacted you. I don’t know if now is a time that Jones may want to speak. You talked quite a bit about the impact of what it’s been like for you with your addictions and struggles that you’ve had since losing Janine and the relationship.

So, it sounds to me that there is still matters to be discussed. If that’s the case, we can take a break. I said to you earlier, this is your time and your space. So, if I can invite you to stand then I will -- then if I can just sort of stand together with Janine’s picture, and I don’t know if Landen would like to be part
of sharing this moment. And I’ll just move this so that --
would you like to be part of this, Landen?

MR. LANDEN WESAQUATE: Okay.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So, I’ll just have
you raise it and -- why don’t you come -- come stand beside
your grandmother. Just bear with me as I move the camera.
Any words you’d like to say to the camera with her picture?

MS. GLORIA WESAQUATE OAKES: We want
justice. We want answers for Janine. Janine’s life was
stolen from us. And we need to find a way to be able to
heal and to be able to bring answers for her son and our
family. And now we finally had a chance to be able to
speak out about her life and her -- the loss of her --
because of her murder. But please don’t just leave our
story in a box or on a shelf or in a file. Instead, bring
answers, don’t just leave it there. Find a way to be able
to help the missing and murdered Indigenous women, to be
able to have healing and peace.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Thank you. So, I’ll just
put it on pause and give everybody a chance to -- would
anybody like some more water or -- I’ve got more bottled
water here.

--- BREAK

And we are now recording. And for the
record it is now 12:37. And while we were off the record,
there was a discussion by family and they would like to have that go back on the record. So, Leona you were going to speak?

**MS. LEONA WESAQUATE:** Coming here was really rather fast, that there really wasn’t time to actually figure out how we could bring Janine’s brothers to be able to participate in the hearing and have their voices heard. And she had a older brother and a younger brother. And both of them had been very impacted by the loss of their sister’s life, and both of them when Gloria had before been able to talk to the police, they were there. And then when there was this for us yesterday and we -- I’m driving a Hyundai, a little tiny car, and we could only fit the four of us in the car. And so, her brother wasn’t able to come with us and we didn’t even know where the other brother was.

But they both since, like, her younger brother he was involved with the church and had been working at an Indian restaurant in the inner city in Regina before. And, you know, at a time he had been on a better path and then, you know, all of this had changed so dramatically his life and he turned to addictions as did his older brother. And that -- now, drugs and alcohol take -- have a big role in their lives. And that -- yeah, crime has come there too like where there’s been, you know, so
many other things, not only being hurt by other people, because, you know, like, someone attacks you and you’re not safe when you’re not in your right, normal frame of mind. Different things that have happened and impacted them and the fact of that we didn’t know where they would be at different times to be able to tell them so they could participate, and them saying to their mom, “I wish I would have been there. I wish I could have said something.” And we want them to have a say.

This is the last day of the hearing and we only got here like late last night. It was like, you know, I think just about 10:00 and then we just checked into the hotel we had and went to Wal-Mart and grabbed a couple things to eat, and we’re eating late and then coming here in the morning and being lost and not knowing Saskatoon, that was a hardship for us too because we drove right close to this hotel but then we went all the way back down 22nd and all of this.

And then now, today, like, I -- like, I had seen the -- a thing telling how there’s other stuff going on in the city and how it was too late for us to try to go to a round dance and yet that was healing. And it was -- I seen that there’s different kinds of things set up and nice stuff.

But there’s no time for us to take part in
it. Our role here, we wanted to come and to have our words
on record and to have our say, to testify to what our story
for Janine’s life and for our other niece that is missing.
And we wanted that to happen. But we wanted those boys to
be a part of it and for them to be able to say and -- how
it impacted their lives. And two healthy guys that had
families and their families torn apart by it all and to
turn to drugs and alcohol and to be at a messed-up place in
their lives now, we want their voices heard.

We ask that you hear them too and that they
get recorded and that their words -- because this is the
way that it’s also affecting the men in the communities,
that, like, it’s affecting them in ways of addictions and
them ending up in jails. The high incarceration rates and
how there’s just not a good future for them when this is
what it does and it tears families apart and destroys the
strength. And people break down and then they don’t talk
and they don’t share and they don’t have just a normal
life.

I want the normal lives again for this
family. I want them to be able to be heard and that them,
too, they don’t get missed, because I think you’re not
going to be able to record for all the different people,
but yet there’s still more voices that need to be heard.
And the fact is the Inquiry is going to end today and
there’s still voices not heard, still parts of the story not heard and parts of the impact not -- that message not carried completely across. Because I bet you if you took the camera up to the jails, you could hear a lot of stories there even as well. Like -- and if you -- and if some of these cameras go to the places where these men also are impacted, and I know her two brothers they need a voice, they need to tell their story.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. Thank you. I will record that on the document to highlight the need to have statement takers make arrangements to speak with Janine’s brothers and if there’s any family -- and Jones, and that can arranged.

**MR. JONES OAKES:** Yeah.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay. Jones, did you -- is there anything for the Commissioners that you would like to express? You don’t ---

**MR. JONES OAKES:** No. Just thankful to be here. Thankful to express myself, I guess, and let them know how it affected me. And it affected me in a bad way, I guess, for myself. Been in residential schools, been in jails, seen a lot of fights, seen a lot of violence, pretty much all that I know now life is violence. Protect yourself. You know, try to protect yourself. Even with my daughter being murdered and, you know, now that’s back at
me, I get upset and angry.

You know, I wish I could find these people that burned her and did stuff, but I just let it go and say that I’ll leave it in God’s hands and, you know, they can deal with it on the other side of -- when they face their judgement day when it comes. So, a lot of that weighs on that, the way I try to pray to keep going and a lot of times, you know, I pray, sometimes I say, “Well, why don’t you take me? Why don’t you burn me? Let me burn, you know?” But I guess that’s not my way. I’m not going to go like that. So, we don’t all know how we’re going to pass away or -- and stuff like that, but it affected me in a bad way for myself.

For the Commissioners and stuff, like, I turned to alcohol and drugs because that’s all I knew. I grew up with that on my reserve. I grew up at every house, people like to drink wine and, you know, I grew up with it. That’s pretty much all that I’ve known since I was a little baby, little kid. I used to see houses on the reserve with smoke all over and I used to walk along the floor (indiscernible) I seen this cloud of smoke. And yeah, that’s pretty much how I dealt with it. I covered my pain with alcohol, through drugs, even turned to intravenous needles to cover the pain, wanted to forget for a little while, just to be out of it.
So, that’s what I had to do -- but since, you know, since July/June, I went to jail for impaired and I’ve been pretty much straight since. I’ve been -- got out of jail and I like the feeling now that I’m not on drugs, I’m not messed up no more.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** So, a new journey?

**MR. JONES OAKES:** Yes, a new journey. And I just pray that, you know, some day people get all their justice that they want and are seeking, you know. And I have feelings for the other people like myself. It’s my only daughter. I don’t have no other daughter and that’s the only daughter that was taken away from me.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Well, this will part of her legacy, your story, your truth for the Commissioners, this will be part of the legacy of Janine.

**MR. JONES OAKES:** Yeah.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Is there a way that you would like to see her memory honoured, commemorated?

**MR. JONES OAKES:** I don’t know, just -- lot of times I wish I would get the justice, but I somehow feel that I won’t get that, so. I guess it doesn’t really matter to me.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Maybe the answers?

**MR. JONES OAKES:** Yeah, the answers.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Gloria?
MS. GLORIA WESAQUATE OAKES: For myself, I would like to see justice, but again like what Leona said, people are afraid to come forward that do know stuff. Because we really don’t know really what happened and then we have all these questions, but who’s truly going to be there to answer them? And like, I said we’re all getting old. We’re not -- and when our health isn’t good. Like Leona said, it takes a toll on a family where, for me, I’m broken and I don’t think I could ever be fixed from this happening to me. Like, I -- she tells the truth when she says, you have to live again, but I find it so hard.

Like, I have a home, but I feel from whoever did this, you sure took my life. Even though you took my daughter’s life, you took my life too, because I find it hard to live even though I have Landen and other children. They say, “Grandma, we love you. Please...” like, when she said, “Carry on, keep going.” And at times I have a hard time, but I try my best.

But I just wish that there could be answers for our questions and hold people accountable but -- there’s that’s but again. Hopefully, somebody will hear our story and come forward and say something to help us to heal because we do need healing. I find we suffer with not healing and then for seeking. Like, there is agencies out there like the bereavement. It’s just that us, we need to
go take ourselves there and say, “Help me. Please be there, support me.”

And I find it’s hard for my sons to do that. I think even for my husband, he said this is his first time he cried and that’s 13 years. This is the first time he let himself be heard and let his tears fall. And I believe my grandson too, like in his statement, he wants justice for his mother because he has to live without his mother for the rest of his life like we do. And then something is taken that cannot ever be replaced. And that our family was torn apart because of whoever took her away.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** And what I’ll ask, for Gloria, for Jones, and for Landen and Leona is health support will help you with an aftercare plan so that you don’t go home -- because today has been a very intense day emotionally. And we don’t want you going home with more trauma than you came with. And so, I will, you know, when we’re done Judy will take some time here in the room with you and start to make those connections for you.

**MS. LEONA WESAQUATE:** Like, maybe there should be, like, how us, like, when I said how we had to do giveaway to -- for our -- (indiscernible) her life afterwards, like for the four years. But maybe there should be like something, like some kind of summer gathering that where you bring people together and people
can actually have the support people to come back and to meet with people and where people can talk and share and just talk about their families.

And maybe there should be the round dance like scenario and pow wow where things, like, where it’s healing things and activities and stuff for kids and families to all be able to come, and not just a few people, to have words, but something like that. And maybe there should be, you know, trees planted to show or a place -- a sacred place that’s going to be to -- with monuments that acknowledge all of these missing and murdered women and that their lives aren’t forgotten. And that where their names can all be, and where people could go to try and have peace with it, and a place that where it’s clean, it’s taken care of. And that maybe this should be even put in our Canadian history books, that this is what’s happened, you know, all the different things that it’s led to this.

That -- for this not to happen again to Indian women and across the country. But that there be, you know, some kind of place and that some kind of trees and some kind of newness and some kind of growth to happen that, you know, is treated with a sacred respect that now we acknowledge you. And that permanently we’ll have that left. The way they leave for -- you know, to honour people when they do that, I remember her dad was a veteran and we
-- when the one funeral home had told us they had -- did a
tree at this one place for us if we ever wanted to go back
there and acknowledge his life. And, you know, like, maybe
there should be something like that or -- and -- but I
think for sure the supports because, like, we’re only now
having -- being able to speak to it, 13 years later. Like,
and there’s the same thing with lots of families that lots
of time is passing and yet only now it’s being that they’re
finally getting stories told and things acknowledged, but
then it’s true. How do you just leave it here?

**MS. GLORIA WESAQUATE OAKES:** And with that
because of men, they’re different from women where they
can’t really show their emotions with us. You know what I
mean? Like, there’s a togetherness. They find it harder,
I think, men. I find that with my grandson too, I tell him
it’s okay to cry. It’s okay to show your emotion and I
find it’s harder, hard for the men. Like, I think even my
sons, I think that’s why they tell me they want to, but
then it seems one I couldn’t find and then the other one,
there was no room anyways, like -- kind of a thing.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** It’s like an internal
struggle, you know, sitting here and watching Landen and
Jones struggle. I could see the struggling trying to
contain the emotion. With men, it is different. And it
doesn’t matter what that I say that this is a room for you
to share your emotions, it may be. But the ability to let
go when you’ve had a lifetime of keeping everything bottled
up and everything so tight, it is difficult, there’s no
question. But Leona, I think you’ve offered some great
insights. I really think the idea of bringing people back
together, you know, in the summer or something like that,
where people can come back, families are connecting here,
families are feeling part of a greater purpose on this
journey.

MS. LEONA WESAQUATE: Like, we’re not alone,
like we’re all suffering the same thing. That we’re there
as ---

MS. KERRIE REAY: And strength does come in
numbers and your idea about, you know, trying to put
something together, maybe in the summer, that brings people
back, that the Inquiry and its visit to Saskatoon is not
forgotten. All right. So, the other thing -- the other
matter was Brandy Wesaquate.

MS. LEONA WESAQUATE: Brandy was, like, our
niece too. And it’s been, we think, around 11 years that
she’s been missing. And what we know about it is, like,
this confusion. I remember how, you know, the -- ones were
reached out on Facebook and that they had went to -- and
reported her missing and then that -- like how, how our
understanding was really that she participated in the sex
trade and that was a street walker and that may have been
picked up in that way. And then that -- and likely
murdered is what we believe. And there’s -- there was no
answers to anything. It’s just that she just vanished.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Can you tell us ---

**MS. LEONA WESAQUATE:** Brandy was born, like
her birth name had been Charlie Wesaquate and was born a
male, but then lived her life as a girl. And right from
when he was tiny, he would play with dolls and live the
life as a girl. And as he grew up, like he -- we always
accepted that he was, like, with the girls. Like, I
remember once even, like, telling all the girls to do
something and he laughed and said, "Yeah, but auntie I’m,
you know." And then I laughed and said, "It’s okay, like,
it’s okay.” And it was just the way it was.

And the one thing that we know is, he
presented himself the way he wanted to be, with the way he
was choosing to live as a girl, as a woman. And we don’t
know if that, you know, how it played a factor in it. And
we don’t know other than to say that, like, we knew she was
kind and caring and funny and wanted to be called Brandy as
opposed to Charlie and then that she too was taken and that
her life mattered too. Nobody is really speaking about her
because her mom died. Her mom was [Brandy’s Mother]. And
we know that she had brothers too, [Brother 1] and [Brother
2] and [Brother 3], and they all loved Brandy too. And that had many cousins that cared and wanted answers and wanted at least, you know, to find her body and not to give up and so that she could at least be buried in a decent way, if that’s really what happened. Or to find her and to know. And the one thing, like I said, we have to speak to it because that’s her life. And ---

MS. GLORIA WESAQUATE OAKES: But also because of everything, losing everything, them too, they turn to addictions.

MS. LEONA WESAQUATE: Yes. And

(indiscernible) 11 years ago, so about, like 2006, yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And where was Brandy from?

MS. LEONA WESAQUATE: Regina.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So, she was last seen in Regina.

MS. LEONA WESAQUATE: In Regina.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MS. LEONA WESAQUATE: And lived all her life in Regina. And then, like, yeah, the grandmother had passed away and their family living street lives. And, like, it’s highly unlikely that anyone spoke from her family. And we don’t know because we weren’t in touch with any of them, if anyone, you know, made it to come into the Inquiry to speak. We hope so, but we highly doubt it. And
then -- and the same thing, them too, like ending up incarcerated, ending up in hard ways and -- but, yeah, like, them too, a life that’s lost and a tragedy that turned even more tragic and even more traumatic when you lose someone and then it ends up multiplying the effect because of how much pain and how people can’t -- don’t know how to handle things and people don’t have the family and don’t have the love and don’t have the support. And we’re raised, you know, to have those things as a normal thing. And then when everything falls apart, they turn to closing themselves off to isolating, to depression and to addictions to mask all of the pain and the hardship and then it just ends up pushing and multiplying even more into more violence and into more effects. And that’s what we see and what we see happening. And, like, more needs to be done for Aboriginal people. Like, it shouldn’t be that -- it’s like we’re on the bottom of the pole and our life aren’t mattering but everyone else’s lives are mattering and are up here and our lives are like, the street and the hardness and the reserves and jails and all of that. That’s how it seems. And it seems that -- where do we go from here? How do we make this stop? Who’s going to help to make this stop? Who’s going to help families to be true families and not to have all of these problems and
these kind of lives? Because when is it going to change? Will it change and how can it change? And, like, pressure the government to make changes, to make supported communities, put the funding there to help families have literacy and families be able to read and write and families to be able to be educated and let that education be a buffalo and let it -- let that buffalo also come in health and help our families heal from these addictions and help these families deal with trauma so the violence can stop. Help us have decent lives so people aren’t stealing and living in crime and living in other ways, but having the means to be able to support their families and having homes and having more.

We’re bringing so much more people to our country, are we going to make this even worse? And now, like, I know I feel like we’re even getting lower than that. And, you know, things are being given to help these families come, and I’m not against that because I care about families, but, at the same time, it’s hard not to feel like a little bit envious and wanting there to be a better life here for us too. And for it to stop and for at the least that we don’t have our girls going missing and being murdered and no one caring.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** If I can -- truly that is the mandate, that the scope is very large and that is the
mandate of the Commission, of the Inquiry, into making recommendations and hearing all of the stories because there are themes. The same message is being said and many different messages. And so, the Commissioners will put that together and the recommendations to the Government of Canada, that is their mandate.

**MS. GLORIA OAKES:** Because like -- I’d like to say something. I have a granddaughter, [J.], she went to school at Glen Cairn there and she came home and she was upset and she said, “Grandma.” And I said, “What?” She said, “How come my skin has to be this colour?” And I said, “What do you mean?” She said, “Because the kids at school...” — and that’s a high school — she said, “...they’re making fun of her skin colour.” She goes, “Why do I have to be this colour?” I said, “You just love what God put you in.” I said, “That’s you, just love it.” But like what we say pray when someone hurts you that way to make you feel like you’re worthless because you’re born Indian. Like, I think sometimes the people have to realize just don’t look at my skin colour, I’m worth something.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** And I think that’s a very important message that Canada has to hear. So, thank you for saying it.

**MS. GLORIA OAKES:** Yeah, because I thought she -- like, it’s still going on, like ---
MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.


MS. KERRIE REAY: No, that was an important message to say today. And I thank you. It takes courage to say those comments and it took so much courage coming here. And we want to recognize that courage.

MS. LEONA WESAQUATE: Well, so many of our kids are going into foster care and so many of the kids are getting even more lost in the system and like, there’s -- like, there was that one case that I know had went -- I don’t know if he was tribunal and then it went to the international courts. And it was about how like the funding is different for children in care. And, you know, and yet the decision was shown -- it was shown that this is what -- you know, there’s a difference between the funding for kids and yet it’s still happening. They didn’t change it and give funding to be able to make it equal even.

Like, we’re not even equal and yet the craziness is we’re the first peoples. We share the land. When I tell my little guy on Treaty Day, I tell him, “We’re sharing the land. That’s why we get five dollars.” And I said it’s a commitment that was made with a pipe in a sacred way that we share the land and we share the resources and we share this country. And yet, our people are falling in the poorest of circumstances with the most
disparity, with the hardest times. And how do we change
that? I know, like, I have an education, and yet also I’m
struggling, like, I’m really struggling. And why? Like,
why is it like this?

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** And maybe on that
question, that really closes our time. I think that’s a
good question to leave with the Commissioners, if you’re
ready. Okay. Well, thank you.

--- Upon adjourning

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**LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE**

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

March 14, 2018

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