National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1: Truth-Gathering Sessions
Maison de la famille
Maliotenam/Uashat mak Mani-Utenam, Quebec

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Marie-Jeanne André
Heard by Sheila Mazhari

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**Heard by:**
Sheila Mazhari

**List of exhibits:** none
Upon commencing on Friday, December 1, 2017, at 1:24 p.m.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: OK?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: It’s uh... You’re not doing the...

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Yes, I’m going to...

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Yes, I’m ready.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Yes, OK.

OK. Hello, my name is Sheila Mazhari and I work for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It’s December 1, 2017, and we’re in Maliotenam, Quebec. I’m speaking to André and...

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Marie-Jeanne.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: ... Marie-Jeanne from Maliotenam and the other person with us is Jean-Guy Pinette. And your testimony will be audio and video recorded. Do you consent to this?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Yes.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: OK.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: When you’re ready, you can introduce yourself.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Uh-huh. I asked Jean-Guy to come support me because we’ve known each other for a long time. I was there for him when he needed me, and today I
need him, and he’s good at supporting me. He’s a pipe holder and
sun dancer for the Kutikuniu Centre too. I have a healing centre
that I... I went through a lot before opening it; a journey to
heal from sexual abuse... wow! It’s hard! (Sobs) I didn’t think
that by leaving like that I would... (Sighs) See, no matter how
much time has passed, how long you’ve been trying to... Those
things come back... It’s not pleasant, feeling this way.

When I was young, I was abused by the priest in
Maliotenam. His name is [Priest]. He’s still alive, and he’s
old. I was 9 when it happened. He brought me to his office. He
had an office here, at the presbytery, and uh... and the two
other girls were cleaning upstairs and I had to clean his
office. He always had handicrafts in his office and he said,
“Choose a necklace, choose something, it’ll be your reward and
after you can wipe off the desk.” I didn’t understand much
French back then, but I understood what he said so I bent over
to look at the necklaces, which had Indigenous designs. That’s
when he grabbed me from behind and it’s like I can’t remember
what he did, but I... (Sobs) It’s like I built up a wall inside
me. And I can feel his breath, everything he did, but I can’t
feel what he was doing to me... I blocked it. It’s like I could
have protected myself, but I was powerless, frozen, paralyzed.
After he was done... We wore little cotton skirts from the
residential school, and... I ran. There was fresh sperm... I
didn’t know what it was at the time.
But I ran to my grandmother’s, and when I got there I wanted to say something, but I couldn’t. In the end I just said, “The priest.” And I showed her my skirt. She knew what it was. Then she got up and she was angry. She left. She took her apron off and she left, walking fast. I had left my sandals behind at the presbytery, and I was following my grandmother and... we went in and I grabbed my sandals and my grandmother started yelling at him. She said, “(Speaking in an Indigenous language).” That’s what I heard her saying. Then I ran back to her place, because I used to spend all my weekends at my grandparents’ place, but I was there during the week. That’s where he would come get us... To go do his cleaning. But at first, I could feel it too, I hadn’t realized at the time, but looking back... At first, when he came to the residential school, he would always say, “Hello my darling.” You understand? I would say, “He’s nuts, you know, he’s crazy!” So after that happened, whenever he’d go there, I’d always hide and I would stay hidden until he had gone, until he was done talking to the nuns and girls. I would hide. It happened one time and uh... I didn’t want to...

I didn’t know about those things... What those things were. Until I talked to a girl in my group of friends, at the residential school, and she said that a priest was abusing her at night. She said, “Come sleep with me.” And, “I’m scared at night.” So we were scared, but we wanted to help her. There were
four of us girls. That’s when I heard the word abuse for the first time. So that’s it, the years went by... I kept that to myself, and pretended to be OK, but I still thought about it all the time. I couldn’t sleep well, and I was always scared that he would come in the night with the... Whenever I heard the nun walking around the dorms at night, I always felt unsafe.

So at one point... I stayed at the residential school for a long time; I started at 9 and left there at 15. When I left, the younger children were still there. So that caused me to keep to myself when I was a teenager, to be quiet, to run off whenever someone talked about kissing, fondling, boys... It scared me so much. So my grandfather, my father, he would often send me back when... There was a conflict between me and my mother, and my brothers, my sisters, and my father. During the summer holidays I tried to reconnect with them, but it seemed impossible. So I was unhappy when I was there. Then one of my brothers also dared to... I woke up and he was masturbating in front of me. So that’s another thing that I absorbed. So it was hard. I told my father and he hit my brother who had dared... who had disrespected his sister, a girl. Because there were a lot of boys in our family. After that my father said, “You’re going to your grandmother’s. You’re going to your grandmother’s; you’ll be safer there.” So I went back to residential school and I spent my weekends at my grandmother’s. It’s always the same thing. When I was old enough to get married, well, other things
happened. My husband was very violent and he beat me up all the time. He was very jealous and uh... Even when I was pregnant, I felt like it was dirty in the house, my children... I felt terrible. All of that made me feel broken. It’s like I felt unworthy of being a mother. So that really broke my life. I didn’t know it would be terrible. So as I grew older, I got fed up of living with violence, and I was fed up of not feeling good. So I moved here. I went back to Schefferville and to my parents’ place. That’s where I married a Greek guy. After that... When I came back here in 1983, my friends greeted me at the train station. It said, “Welcome Manishan.” That made me happy, because in Innu my name is Manishan. Even that, I would always sign “Marie-Jeanne André,” but they also changed my name, I don’t know when... Our last name used to be Kapesh. Until 1942, my father’s last name was Kapesh. I don’t know when it got changed to André. That really bothers me too; everything that the government did, imposed on us. It all impacts us; we haven’t been the same since. It’s not just what’s going on now; the missing and murdered women. We’re all missing and murdered inside too, and we feel bad when we ask for something; we always feel like we’re begging the government. I have a healing centre and it’s thanks to that that I opened a healing centre. All my pain, my journey, my healing process. It’s all of that. I was thinking of the others who were like me, because I think I’m one of the first to speak out against the sexual abuse that happened
at the residential school. And it was with [D.L.], the 
psychologist. He said, “You could help a lot of people.” I said, 
“No, not right now.” When I finally felt ready, I went to see 
him and said, “OK. I’m ready!” He came with me to the community 
radio station, SOCAM. At the time, it hadn’t been open for very 
long (speaking an Indigenous language).

**MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE:** Socam.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** Socam is a radio 
station that all the communities know about and listen to. That 
was the first time I spoke out about it. I was scared, as if I 
was the bad guy, as if I was the one who had abused a little 
girl. I felt so terrible. I was scared, so scared. I was 
sweating, and I said, “Oh my God! Doing this is making me feel 
terrible.” When I started talking about the priest who abused me 
when I was 9 years old, I could see the radio host getting 
really uncomfortable, like he didn’t know how to sit anymore. I 
started thinking, “Is he listening to me or is he 
distracted?” But the truth is, it didn’t matter whether he was 
listening to me or not, the goal was to get the message out. And 
I was scared of being heard, scared that my people would 
criticize me, judge me, because... there’s a lot of judgment 
here, a lot of criticism, a lot of... of belittling, a lot of 
disrespect. A lot of it. It’s a plight in our community. That’s 
why we can’t grow together. We’re always bitching about one 
another, and we get jealous of one another. So you can’t go
forward; you have to step aside, keep your head down and keep going. So when I got home, the phone started ringing and it was the older women saying, “You crazy bitch! How dare you say that about the priest who works for God, who blessed you, who baptized you!” Ouch! I was scared, oh my God, I was so scared, and I was panicking. I was alone at home. Some time after that, I was driving someone to the airport, and an older woman said, “You, ever since you’ve come back here...” Ouch! I was upset. It was taboo... I knew that would happen, but I hadn’t realized how badly people would attack me. So I kept doing my own thing without getting too... But there was something heavy inside me: their judgment and... Because that was new, you know, we hardly ever heard about stuff like that. At some point, a few months later, or some time later, I don’t know. Time, dates, all that... I don’t remember any of that. I was watching TV and I saw the government saying that Chief Phil Fontaine was going to make an extraordinary statement about what he experienced in residential school. So I watched it and that’s when he revealed that he had been abused. I was so happy! Do you understand? I wasn’t happy because he was abused, but because an important person talked about it like I did. I felt a sense of freedom, and that’s what allowed me. I said to myself, “Well, I’m going to do things in my community!” I thought about how much my father had given me, and how much my mother had given me. I remember the first six years of my life very well. Both my
grandmothers, you know, I have a lot of tools. So after that, I
decided to get the tools. So I went to... I met a woman, Dr.
[L.M.] from Ontario. I went to her, and she treated me, she
healed me. She took care of me for six months, she made me feel
better. So I’d travel back and forth; she taught me things and
she gave me my cedar bath. She said, “I’ll give you a cedar
bath, but at the same time, I’m teaching you so that you can
free your people in Quebec. And you’ll be the only one in Quebec
who has learned this.” The cedar bath freed me from the sexual
abuse and the violence; it released everything, all the memories
that had been stuck in my brain. It’s like it came out, but I
didn’t get rid of it, it’s still there, and when I need it, like
right now, I can take it from inside me so that you can feel my
truth, my healing. After that, I went to get more medicine. She
gave me lots of medicines and said, “Now go adapt what you’ve
learned for the good of your people.” She said, “You’re not
(indiscernible), you’re Innu.” So now, all the stuff I
learned... I went back and forth for six years, and she died a
year ago. We went together, me and him, because they knew each
other. She said, “Now that you’ve been cared for, it’s your turn
to... open your healing centre.” And she said, “Don’t let anyone
else get involved, because it’s hard...” Like I said earlier,
everyone gets jealous, everyone wants to tear others down...
It’s a sickness in our community that we have to heal. And we
can take care of that, we have tools for that, we have tools to
uh... heal the abusers, heal the abused. We provide all types of care; we have a healing program. Our centre is called: Abri pour la nuit, Kutikuniu. It’s 6 km east of here, east from Pointe de Moisie. It’s a former community, where we used to live, where our parents used to live, and they got chased out to Malio. I bought some buildings there. But Indigenous Affairs, the Canadian government, doesn’t recognize it. They subsidize it, but they say that they subsidize just because, I don’t know which column we belong in, there’s never been a healing centre like that before, it’s the only one in Canada. There are no others like it because I created it based on our needs, our values, here, our traditions, all... everything. Even for the treatments, it’s difficult. We have to prepare people before treating them; they really need to adapt, to assimilate. After, we give treatments that we take. And sometimes the... That’s what I want to suggest to the government, to the Commission, that they inject money, a lot of money, so that we can... When we finish our program, we want to follow our traditions, we want to go in the bush. But for me to go in the bush, I would need a teacher to teach the people who come after they’ve been healed. OK? Then, I have a linguist. The language is getting lost and I’d like a teacher for that. Since I’ve opened my centre, I’ve encountered a range of needs that haven’t been met. But it would be comprehensive, it would be like an Innu, an Innuversity, that’s how much we need the money. I can’t afford to be afraid
to ask. I’ve begged the government so much; they never increased the funds. Like this morning, we had a conference call with the Indigenous Affairs minister, and once again they made me feel insecure, saying, “We don’t know if we’re going to be able to keep giving you funds much longer; you’ll have to find other people to help you.” They’re making me doubt myself. That’s economic violence! Do you understand? All their terms, they come back to them, the violence we experience, all types of violence... Well, the government is carrying out economic violence, that’s their language. So I have to... To grow, to achieve reconciliation, which they keep talking about... I’ll never be able to reconcile as long as my people haven’t finished their healing process. Give me what I need for my centre: all my teachers who... That’s what we need! Give me what I need! And then I’ll thank you for helping me rebuild myself and rebuild my world. Do you understand? We’ve created our own system, based on how we understand things. We don’t use papers there! Forget paperwork! Forget anything that’s not necessary: look at us with our identity crisis, we’re living it here, we’re all missing, we’ve all been killed by them. They have to do their part so that we can reconcile with ourselves before shaking hands with the one that betrayed me, that... I’m accusing the government of lying to my parents, telling them you would take care of me and then not taking care of me. They did all kinds of stuff to me there. They changed me and killed everything I learned from my
father. I’m accusing you of all of it: of putting me in that situation. Oh my God! What it did behind our backs is unforgivable. Killing the ambitious people we would have become, the visionaries we would be today, instead of losers living in our communities, doing drugs, drinking, doing nothing, playing bingo, (indiscernible), playing slot machines for days and days and ignoring our responsibilities. I wouldn’t have turned out this way if you hadn’t lied to my parents. The priests and... Oh my God! The priests and the nuns never had children, how can you expect them to raise children from... Oh! God! It’s hard. I still feel bad for my parents. They’re still using. Everything is painful... Seeing people belittle each other. Those who go to school come here with their bachelor’s degree in... and they look down on us and act like they know everything. I went to university too; I got diplomas to prove that I was someone, that I had potential. This man beside me has made progress as well; he’s been following me since he was young. Today, he’s doing fine [Ten words redacted – personal information], he does everything... Everyone who comes to see him goes back to school. In the ten years of negotiation with the government, it took ten years for me to get somewhere in the... in their mould to obtain $250,000 per year. What do you want me to do with that? Eh? With all the people who want to do something after, to pay the teachers, I can’t do any of that. It would be full, it would be a nice Innuversity, it would bring those people back to the bush
or give their children a chance to experience it. You can’t do that today. At least, At least, look, him there... At least go in the bush with his children, his grandchildren, his children. He can’t do that, but his children will grow up without being able to do any of that. I see the other mothers in my community, we’re very poor, culturally, we just have the surface, appearances at a certain time. The will is there, but we can’t because we still need a lot of resources. There are a lot of resources from the government, social services, resources... but all already... their budget is already all planned out by the government. Do you understand? But over there, we do things the way we want. That’s what the government doesn’t like. It can’t justify that in its paperwork and its... What is it called? In its accounting, accounting for what we’re doing. Go get rocks, you write “rocks”: expenses for rocks, geez! You write: expenses for branches, expenses for gathering in... for all the medicines we want to make, we can’t. It’s quite the story. We can’t freeze caribou, fish, game meat. They’ll look in the freezer and ask what the expiration date is. Where did it get killed? Where did it get butchered? Oh! God! The system is complicated! Its system doesn’t even work for them. How can it be expected to work for us? It makes us sick, it makes its workers sick. The government is just paperwork, paperwork, paperwork. It spends money on paperwork instead of on its people. It works for its society. It should do the bare minimum at least: be receptive to society, to
social concerns. There should be that. So with all those things, of course, the Commission, yes, it feels good to get it all out, thank you. You’re very patient.

But the last time I went through something like this, a hearing about the residential schools, the judge who heard us died. He died from a heart attack. It must have been hard to hear all those things over the years. One of my friends used to do that; she listened to testimonies, helped, like he’s doing. And she was exhausted. Sometimes she would get sick and not tell anyone. Do you understand?

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uh-huh.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: It was sad. Oh! God! All that to say that I need help. I need the Commission to come see me in... over there. Come see the people who are there, visit us and ask questions to all the people there. They should come and see what the Kutikuniu Centre’s logo is, it’s all in there. And here in the Commission’s room, I see a lot of people from my centre, and I think that’s what made it possible for them to talk, be open, and everything. Do you understand? And what else did I forget? I also wanted to meet someone and...

My brother died in a...

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: (Speaking an Indigenous language.)

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Uh-huh.

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: (Speaking an
Indigenous language) In a detention centre.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** Yes, at the detention centre in Schefferville and I never understood... I’d like that case to be re-examined to figure out what happened, because the last time we went to court, the police called us, from our community, and said, “You should do something. What happened there wasn’t normal.”

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** So I said, “OK.” We tried to do something through the court and the judge asked, “How did this man die? His hands were tied behind his back; he couldn’t have started the fire. How? It’s a mystery. That’s all I have to say,” he said at the time.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** So not long after, he sent money to my brother’s ex-wife, and then it was over. I’d like to know what happened. Did the police hate him? My brother often told us... That’s why I want the case to be reviewed, but I don’t know how to do that. My brother used to say, “Oh, Manishan, I’m scared, the police are always after me. They keep saying that they’ll get me one day! They’ll find a way to get me.” And he would always hide when he saw a police car go by. Well, he would run. He would say, “Yes, he’s the one working tonight.” And, “Sometimes he tries to... I don’t know how he does it, but it’s like he’s trying to get me to go... to the
post office to pick up a package. And I know the package contains money... uh, drugs, and if I pick it up, they’ll get me. Sometimes they’re parked outside when I go check the mail.”

It’s bad, eh? And he said, “To make me look like a drug dealer.” And at one point, they got him and he got sent to prison. He beat his girlfriend and she reported him. And that’s the night he burned. He died.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** What year was this?

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** I don’t even know what year that happened. That’s why I... When the lawyer told us... I don’t even know what the lawyer’s name was, can you believe it! I was going through so much back then. Uh... he told us, “Oh my God! We have to do something.” But he said, “Look, when you sue the police, the justice system...” He said, “You’ll never win. You’ll get exhausted, you’ll be broken, you’ll all get sick. You’re better off accepting what they’re offering.” I said, “They’re not offering us anything.” He said, “Yes, your sister-in-law got a cheque.” But I said, “What do you mean, she got a cheque? She wasn’t living with him anymore. That should go to my mother.” Because my brother was living with my mother.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** But he gave [Five words redacted – personal information] for the coffin and all that. I paid for the coffin and everything. So I would like his case reopened to know if it’s possible to get it reviewed.
MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: He was at the Schefferville detention centre?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Yes.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: And his name?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: His name? [Brother]

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: And I have no idea of the year. ’90, ’93, I don’t know.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uh-huh.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: We’d have to go see to make sure. And I don’t know how to get help for that. Because we experienced traumatic events during the... The body was transferred and we always had to... He was burned to a crisp. And he screamed and... That’s why I’d like to see the guard who was on duty that night. He said... When the judge said... When the person who analyzes the materials, I can’t remember the name...

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: The coroner.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Yes. About the material in the padded room my brother was in, he said, “That burns in three seconds.” Really, that’s the worst. When the two police officers put my brother in there, they said one of them went down with a cigarette. I don’t know if he threw it in. That’s what he told me. But he died too. Yes?

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: Uh-huh.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: He died too, he got
sick.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Did he go to residential school too?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: My brother?

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Yes.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: No, he didn’t go to residential school. He was too young. My God! There were eight boys in my family, and the three oldest and I went. And the two youngest after me.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: And do you remember what year it was when you were nine and at the residential school? It was in 19...

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Around ’59.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: ’59...

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: (Speaking an Indigenous language.)

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: (Speaking an Indigenous language) 59-60 (speaking an Indigenous language).

Finally...

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: You were born in 1950?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Yes. Yes.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: OK. And...

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: I was there for six years.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uh-huh.
MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: I went in when I was six and left when I was around 15.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uh-huh.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: 6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15, that’s it, 9 years.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: And the priest [Priest]...

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Yes.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Is he still alive?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Yes.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Where does he live? Does he live here?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: He lives in [speaking an Indigenous language].

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: (Speaking an Indigenous language.)

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: He lives in Quebec City.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uh-huh. What community?

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: It was the white men, the Whites.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: The residential school was...

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: Well, he isn’t a priest anymore. He left that.
MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uh-huh. And the name of the residential school?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: The Maliotenam residential school.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: And no one ever filed a complaint against [Priest]?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: No, but there have been a lot of complaints in the residential school hearings.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: But never...

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: We were compensated for that... but that’s not what’s going to heal us.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: But never with the RCMP or...?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: No.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: No?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: No.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: So he’s free now?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Yes, he’s free, and he had many, many victims. The judge told me, “Him again!” And he said, “Do you know you’re the 56th one?” Yikes! “Oh my God,” I said! You see, I thought I was... I knew there was someone else; we had talked about it and I knew she... that there were two of us, but I had no idea there were so many.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uh-huh.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: And if all those
people could talk freely without being afraid or being judged...
That’s the barrier for people here, all the judgment. Because
they cover up for the abusers here. A lot of people will stand
by him and support him. (Speaking an Indigenous language.)

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: (Speaking an
Indigenous language.)

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: It’s really hard to
work together. We have a program on how to heal from abuse as a
community, how the abuser can go on a healing journey to one day
be able to sit face to face with the person he injured. We have
a program for that, but it isn’t being used. Here, it’s the
social services that... It’s powerful, it’s... all about the
money. And we can’t do that, we’re trained for that, we support
each other for that, but we can’t. We can’t because... We would
become too big if we... It’s like the world is scared of us
becoming visible. It’s like the government is afraid that we’ll
become visible, because often it says, “Listen, that’s not
useful anymore, you have everything you need. We have all this
for free. You’re just complicating things now, Marie-Jeanne.” It
says, “You’re making things complicated!” It’s not complicated.
I want to give my people their culture and identity back. I want
to give back what I received when I was young. Do you
understand? What I still use to this day. Do you understand?
Being Innu, not half, but to think... My children are Métis. OK?
They’re full; they feel fully Innu and they feel fully Greek.
And after that, they connect their children in the multicultural. You understand? That’s quite a journey too.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Do your children speak Innu?

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** No, that’s the thing. Do you see? That’s why I need language teachers, because I can’t teach it to our children again. Yesterday this guy told me, “Geez, Manishan! You use our ancestors’ words a lot.” Eh?

**MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** I said, “Of course, you never forget that.” So, you see, it’s all that stuff. I’m a woman who teaches healing. And there are many people that I would like to... There are frauds that try to do what I do, and they find followers. That’s what’s dangerous; they haven’t followed that. I took a class; I learned from a well-known elder. She taught in universities and talked about culture. Nowadays, I often get asked to give talks at universities and conferences. You understand? And I really emphasize that this teaching needs to be recognized. You understand?

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** The reconciliation, I’m going back to that, if I sow small seeds like that in universities, the students will understand, they’ll understand us and our communities. And they say, “Oh my God! We did that to you?” You know. “Still today!” That’s the history, Canada’s
history. That’s it. Go over the whole history, everything that happened here, the five days you were there. Show it and teach it in the schools. I’m asking for that, a recommendation: that it be taught so that when children say, “Hey, when the Commission came, they talked about it. Look!” You understand?

All the research... They have to say, “Oh! Look at what Manishan has done for the community!” I want everyone to know our history. I worked hard here, in my community. You understand? I got through it... I was disruptive at first, but a teacher told me, “It’s good to be disruptive! That’s how things change.” So he helped me keep going. You understand? So that’s it. And there was a lot of appropriation of our values. You understand? You teach white people something and they’ll use it to get their lives back; there’s a lot, a lot of that. We’ve been broken by that too. You understand? And I fight for that too. I can’t be afraid of being shy, of speaking of it openly; it’s reality, it’s everyone’s reality. So I hope that those who listened to me and my message take it: crucial. It’s very important, it’s for our survival: help us rebuild, then you won’t have a reason to come back. If we rebuild ourselves and understand our history, if we can claim it, if we are able to state our needs, if we can say, “My people are sick. Will you give me this tool? I need it.” That’s how people who do healing circles envision it. We must heal together, not individually. It takes too long individually. When I’m there, it’s every month, from the 1st to
the 14th... I didn’t book any groups this month because my daughter gave birth and I wanted to be there, and I wanted to come here. For once, I can be with people who are doing something. I never made it before because I had groups. I do it year round, what they’re trying to do. I’m not sure if you understand.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uh-huh.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: What they do here, in the community, once in a while, I do it year round over there. So that’s my contribution to society. And it felt good to cry; I hadn’t cried in a long time. That morning, I was sitting by myself at the centre, I live there, and I was looking at the river and praying and I thought, “God, give me the words, I don’t know what I’m going to say. It’s like I’ve run out of stories, like they’ve all been extinguished.” And then I cried on my own, and I was thinking about him and how he had to support me. You understand? Because he’s the only loyal one who comes to help the... Because people know he’s a pipe holder, so he comes over and helps my people out. People come for two weeks; they sleep and eat there, and I bought the buildings in 2002. And I’ve existed since then, and it’s not Health Canada that’s going to announce that I exist. Nor the ministers; they’re so scared that people will go there. You understand? It’s like an obstacle. Like today, at the meeting I mentioned: “Well, you’re off the reserve!” Yikes! It hurts to hear that.
Off the reserve. Is it a crime to have a great healing centre?
The government tells me, “You’re off the reserve; we can’t give you too much.”

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: (Indiscernible)

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Yes, when I opened the centre in 2002, I asked his uncle, Eudérick McKenzie, to come for the opening. Michelle Audette was there too, she was hosting, and Indigenous Affairs and Health Canada were there, along with journalists and all the counselors. So I asked Mr. McKenzie, “Would you do the opening ceremony with the drum?” And he said, “Of course I’ll do the opening ceremony and play the drum here. This is where I used to run when I was young, in 1923, I would gather wood here.” He said, “We used to live here; my cousins and I grew up here.” And he said, “Each fall, we would take the same river and go into the bush for the year.” You understand? He used to live there. He lived here and felt good here. So that’s why, when I opened the centre, he said, “Thank you! You’re a strong woman! I’ll come applaud you! Of course I’ll come!” And he also left us a drum. So it’s everyone, the elders that come to visit get nostalgic. They say, “Look over there.” They remember things. You understand? That’s history too. It’s a richness that we want to keep for our youth, an inheritance.

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: Uh-huh.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Our ancestors used
to live there. We went back there to purify ourselves from the inside, mentally and physically. And now we serve the whole province of Quebec. It’s a good program. It’s for everyone, the four colours: the Yellows, the Asians, the uh... Us, the Indigenous people, the Whites, the Blacks, the Whites. It’s quite a program, it’s rich. And now we’ve mastered our program and it’s like we’re doing our PhD. People heal there, and it’s really special. And we take before and after pictures, and even faces are transformed. I know we’re all the same; when people arrive there, I welcome them and they feel at home right away. They don’t see me as the manager, the owner. No, they’ll never get that feeling from me. They’ll always... I tell them about my woes too, my suffering, my substance abuse, my... What got me through it when I quit using, well, it was our actions, our... I am what I am today thanks to [L.M.].

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: (Speaking an Indigenous language.)

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Uh-huh.

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: (Speaking an Indigenous language.)

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Uh-huh.

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: (Speaking an Indigenous language.)

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Yes, [L.M.] died last year, her name was [L.M.]. Before she died, she asked that
we continue to laugh, dance, cry, be happy. Because at some point in your healing journey, you stop crying! For a long time, you don’t cry. And to keep drumming. Because when she died, they put all her sacred items in a community centre. (Speaking an Indigenous language.)

**MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** And they removed all the pictures that were there too. That field too; we should go back. There’s a lot of work to do on what we were taught; when someone dies, you don’t bring them to... In church, you bring them to a place where everyone will feel comfortable. You understand? Not everyone is Catholic, not everyone, you know. Everyone went back... Since she did cedar baths, her coffin was made of natural cedar, and it also had a cedar crown. And all the trees all around were cedars, and there was nothing on the walls, all her items. There were two baskets on her coffin: a basket to take the tobacco and make an offering, your prayers and your worries. When you were done, you put it in the other basket. And they buried the tobacco with her. It’s the first thing that they... instead of sand... that goes in first. We watched the whole thing. So those are all things that were...

Even about 20 years ago, she said, “The first thing that humans want to heal, when they come to me, is the abuse.” And she said, “Abuse is an energy.” And, “It’s certain that with time, it will come around, like a snowball, and everyone will work on the
abuse.” And you see, today, throughout the world, abuse is coming out, and here it’s coming out too. You understand? Well, that’s what she explained. She said that the energy gets stronger when you work together. That’s what I said to a girl yesterday, “She said that more than 20 years ago. And now you’re talking about it! That’s a snowball!” You understand? It started at home, the Innu weren’t afraid anymore after the acceptance of... That word, it was taboo before we opened up. They used to say, “Oh, those guys and their abuse. Indians are always talking about abuse...” and all that. You know, residential schools... After that, it’s like it became, everywhere in the world now. Everyone’s working on abuse because if we spend our time putting them in jail, they’ll be the same when they get out of jail. But if they come to our place and let us work with them, they can change, transform and heal that habit. You understand? And the abused, we can also work on... support them in their healing and help them let go of the hate in... Of course what they did was painful, it’s like they tarnished us and... The dirt, you had to cry it out with tears to release it, to cleanse it. Tears are like bleach. And I’m glad they’re using... Look, it started there, at the centre.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** There, we would never put our tears in the garbage.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Uh-huh.
**Public Hearing**

Marie-Jeanne André

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**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** You know, someone thought about that and... Yesterday, the candles... We do that there too, you know? Someone did that, and lit all the candles. I see people doing a lot of things. So that was my story. I hope I didn’t forget anything. If ever you need anything, you can contact me and I can help you with your work too.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Thank you very much. And have you known any girls or women who have gone missing or were murdered in your community or...?

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** That’s... I don’t know. When I was young, I don’t know, about 6 or 7... When I was at my grandmother’s I used to hear people talk about Anne-Marie who disappeared. It must’ve been her, the woman who disappeared. And in the summer too, when we were growing up, they would always say, “Don’t go down that road, the Whites will take you!” You understand?

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** That must’ve been around the time when people went missing. That must be why they would scare us, so that we didn’t walk on that road. (Speaking an Indigenous language).

**MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** (Speaking an Indigenous language).

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** What was the name of the
woman who went missing?

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** Anne-Marie

**MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE:** Anne-Marie Jourdain

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Anne-Marie...

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** They talked about her here. The Jourdain family was here.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** It was almost... In what year?

**MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE:** In 1958, they said.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** (Indiscernible) I was around 6 (speaking an Indigenous language).

**MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE:** (Indiscernible)

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** I was 7 when I used to hear about her.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** From Maliotenam?

**MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE:** From Maliotenam.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** She said she got lost in the forest in the evening, then she disappeared and they never saw her again.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** So that was her.

**MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:** Uh-huh.

**MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ:** But I’m telling you that we’ve all gone missing.
MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uh-huh.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: We’ve all been taken and killed inside.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uh-huh.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Would you like to share a message in Innu?

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: In Innu?

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Yes.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: The commissioners...

OK.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: To the commissioners, the people, today’s youth...

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: OK. I would like (speaking an Indigenous language) her name was Michelle when she was young (speaking an Indigenous language). And to all the people who are around you, who work for you, with you, the commissioners, and in all the organizations, I know that it’s a very, very complicated task, everything is exhausting, but it’s so comforting for our community. To all those people: thank you for understanding, thank you for giving us the time we needed, for freeing us, healing us, crying with us. Thank you for being patient with us and thank you for realizing what our common goal is: getting out of there to become whole after the work is done. I know this won’t be the only time, there will be more times, and more communities, and I know it’s a journey. And I hope you
have protection around you so that you don’t take in everything people say and pretend you’re holding a garbage can. You’re holding a garbage can between the people who are talking and everything they say falls into the garbage, not on you, otherwise you’ll get sick, exhausted, burned out if you don’t do that. And always ask the Creator to protect you from all that. And thank you very much, continue on your journey, safe travels, and I hope your team remains close. Thank you.

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Thank you very much.

MR. JEAN-GUY PINETTE: Oh. Oh.

MS. MARIE-JEANNE ANDRÉ: Hey! Thank you, Jean-Guy!

MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Yes, that’s true.

--- Upon adjourning at 2:25 p.m.
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE*

I, Félix Larose-Chevalier, hereby certify that I have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and accurate transcription of the digital audio provided in this matter.

Félix Larose-Chevalier, August 19, 2018

* This certificate refers to the original transcript in French.