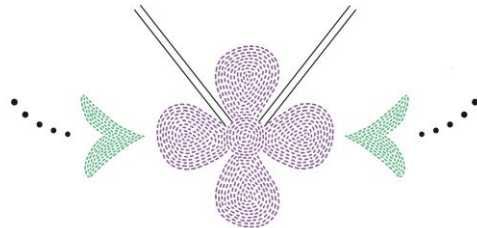


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
Chateau Nova Hotel
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories**



PUBLIC

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

Statement - Volume 199

**Eric Wardell,
In relation to Sarah de Vries,
Lorna George & Janelle Mercredi**

Statement gathered by Kerrie Reay

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Documents submitted with testimony: none.

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NOTE

The use of round brackets () in this transcript indicates that amendments have been made to the certified transcript in order to replace information deemed inaudible or indecipherable by the original transcriptionist. The use of a strikethrough mark indicates where an error was found in the original transcription. Bryan Zandberg, Registrar for the National Inquiry, made all amendments on May 23rd, 2019. Mr. Zandberg listened back to the source audio recording of the proceeding to make the amendments.

Statement - Public
Eric Wardell (de Vries,
George & Mercredi)

1

1 Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

2 --- Upon commencing on Tuesday, January 23, 2018

3 at 2:40 p.m.

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, Eric, are you
5 ready to start?

6 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, good. So, for the
8 record, this is Kerrie Reay, statement taker with the
9 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
10 and Girls at Yellowknife, Northwest Territory, on January
11 the 23rd, and the time is 2:40 in the afternoon. Today I
12 am speaking with Eric Wardell, W-A-R-D-E-L-L, who is Métis
13 --

14 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: -- and resides here in
16 Yellowknife. Eric is here to tell his truth for his two
17 friends who were victims in the Robert Pickton matter in
18 the Greater Vancouver area of British Columbia, as well as
19 his stepsister, Janelle Mercredi, who was murdered in
20 Edmonton, Alberta, in 1986. Also, Eric will speak to his
21 experience as a survivor of the Sixties Scoop.

22 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: And also in the room
24 today, Ayira Defreitas. And Eric, today you are here
25 voluntarily to provide your truth as you speak to the

1 people that I've just mentioned as a survivor of the
2 Sixties Scoop, and you agree to the videotaping of your
3 truth today, both video and audio.

4 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah. No problem.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: And Eric, you've also
6 agreed that this can be a public statement?

7 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah. I don't care.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So, Eric, where
9 would you like to start? This is your space, your time.

10 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I mean, when you say
11 murdered or missing, murdered Indigenous women, you know,
12 I'll be honest with you, I think of that, and -- first
13 thing that comes to mind is Robert Pickton, you know,
14 because he was such a big picture in that topic, should we
15 say. And the reason why it hits me is because: One, I was
16 in jail with one of the victims. I have his name and took
17 my time. I have a picture, but I can't get his name.
18 It'll come to me, watch.

19 But Sarah, Sarah de Vries, pretty sure
20 that's how you pronounce it, we used to get high together.
21 We used to do drugs in 1990 in Vancouver -- 1991, I think
22 it was, yeah. So, being that close to them and being, you
23 know, right in the (thick) ~~flick~~ of everything going on,
24 you know, I wasn't in Vancouver when they went missing. I
25 was actually up north when I found out through the

1 Internet, you know.

2 And I just have to say that, yeah, I miss
3 them all. Yeah, I wish they were here, you know. And you
4 know, there again, I say, Why them? Why couldn't it have
5 been me? And I don't know why we think like that. We just
6 think that way. It's tough. It is really tough because
7 they're great people, you know. They had a drug problem.
8 I had a drug problem. They were good people. And for
9 someone just to take their lives because of whatever, like
10 they didn't like them, that's what gets me, you know. I'm
11 still here and they're not, you know.

12 Until now, it's basically the wrong time,
13 the wrong place, we were told. She was just -- there
14 again, not a bad girl, you know. Steven Crowe, the guy
15 that she was with there again, he was a friend of a friend
16 -- he was the brother of [B.C.] in Saskatoon. That's how
17 small -- yeah, we knew everybody in that whole picture when
18 they got murdered. And it shouldn't have happened. It was
19 useless and senseless, you know. That was all.

20 And you know, I could go on and on and on
21 about why this, why that, but to me, you got to be strong,
22 you know. You got to be strong for them. You got to be
23 strong for, you know -- my sister, Shelly, she died of
24 emphysema at 32 years old. The doctor said in '91, "You
25 only got eight years to live." So, we knew that Shelly

1 wasn't going to live very much longer. And she always told
2 me, "Turn your life around, turn your life around." That
3 was in '96. It just took me a little longer, but I'm doing
4 it; I'm doing it. I'm turning my life around.

5 And that's what gets me is, you know, when
6 she was sitting there and she was barely breathing, you
7 know, 24 per cent of her lungs passed. To me, everything
8 that was told in my lifetime, what was shown to me, is not
9 a waste, you know what I mean? Like, if you went to Eric,
10 try this over here, and one day, I mean, not do it today,
11 but, you know, down the road, "Hey, you said do that."
12 It's a good thing for you, right, so you try it and just
13 like that. It's like, okay, you try and quit smoking while
14 one day here it might kick in, hey, you know, whatever may
15 be. Sex, gambling, whatever, eating, you know, but this is
16 where I am today.

17 And that's the biggest thing is for me,
18 I'm not shy of my life. I'm not ashamed. The biggest
19 thing is not to be ashamed, not to be, Oh, I'm 30. Oh, I'm
20 bad because I broke the law. I stole or I lie, whatever
21 may be. You just weren't, playing by the rules. But you
22 know what I mean. You guys, all my life I've been like
23 that. All my life since I was, you know, able to walk, you
24 know. I notice that.

25 I notice that when they say, "oh, bad

1 kids," and, you know, I was thinking when you say "bad
2 kid," I mean, the kids are going to be bad. The kids going
3 to act all bad, and when you tell them bad, you know, I
4 started believing it. I actually believe, "Hey, man," --
5 it's like when we see things, you know what I mean, we're
6 not smart, but we see things.

7 I didn't see I was FAS, you know. I was
8 born FAS. We all called it spectrum disorder as they put
9 it. And then I look back at my life, you know, being in
10 the hospital, kicking my little shoe up and the little
11 slippers and it land on the light and you know, you're
12 grounded. You go to your room. And I look back at that,
13 just on that alone, you know, going to school, and I'm
14 still hyper. I'm still fucking hyper to this day. That, I
15 can live with. But how people interpret it, you know what
16 I mean, alcohol -- impulsive -- yeah, I'm impulsive, but
17 I'm doing a better job of it.

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, I'm wondering, it's
19 sounds like -- were you on the Downtown Eastside in
20 Vancouver for a while?

21 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

22 MS. KERRIE REAY: So you would have seen a
23 lot while you were there.

24 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Would you like to share

1 with the commissioners, as an Indigenous man in the
2 Downtown Eastside, and what you saw and what you learned
3 from what you saw down there for what was happening for the
4 women and for the men?

5 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I went to Vancouver in
6 February '89, and then I got picked up and sent back to
7 Yellowknife. I came back to Vancouver in February '90,
8 actually. I was actually in Vancouver for my birthday on
9 [date] 1990, and I stayed there from February '90 until
10 September '95.

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, how old were you in
12 -- can I get your date of birth?

13 MR. ERIC WARDELL: [Date of birth].

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: So you were in your
15 early twenties.

16 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah, but you know what
17 I mean, like, when I think about it, you guys, you always
18 got to remember the era because, you know, back then, to be
19 honest with you, compared to today, it was more like Mardi
20 Gras. Seriously. Everything was so open, so relaxed, so -
21 - we knew that things were happening. We knew that things
22 were bad, you know what I mean. You know, there's --

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: So you're talking about
24 downtown on the Eastside? Very kind of laid-back
25 atmosphere there?

1 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah. I mean, the
2 reason why I say it totally because I -- 1990 until 2007 --
3 2007, it was totally different, like this night and day.
4 But back then, I'll be honest with you, less population,
5 less people, you know what I mean, but as for the economy
6 at the time, the economy, it was doing good because you had
7 all these little agencies open at the time to help out drug
8 addicts, you know. They had a, you know, sobering centres
9 or OD block centres. They had a lot of that going on.
10 They did at the time in 1990/1991, that era.

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: Is that what took you to
12 Vancouver from Yellowknife, was to access that?

13 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah, I did.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: In Yellowknife?

15 MR. ERIC WARDELL: In Yellowknife while I
16 was doing time.

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

18 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I just finished doing
19 18 months. 12 months, for the \$15,000 I stole from the
20 drugstore the year before.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

22 MR. ERIC WARDELL: So, I was out, I did
23 another B&E, got 500 bucks, and I went to Vancouver.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And was that the
25 first time or the second time -- 1990, you went?

1 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah, 1990. That was
2 the second time I went to Vancouver. That's when I stayed.
3 It was -- put it this way, you'll never see it again.
4 You'll never see that era, those people, you know what I
5 mean, like, where are they today? Are they alive? The
6 whole thing back then, it was more like we weren't violent,
7 personally, amongst ourselves. We weren't. Our group of
8 people --

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: Men and women?

10 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Men and women. 20, 30
11 of us, we were not violent. We weren't. We didn't have
12 guns. We all wanted to get high. We all want, like, you
13 know, relationships, blah, blah, blah, right. I stole.
14 Did a lot of prostitution in that time, too. That's where
15 I came out -- and oh yeah, it was just like a blur.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: Now, your friend, Sarah,
17 was she there as well in the Downtown Eastside, Sarah de
18 Vries?

19 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah. I met her in
20 Burnaby in '90, June -- May '90, yeah, and we made a lot of
21 money. We did a lot of drugs, you know. We helped each
22 other. We always, you know, helped each other. You got
23 rig, I got coke. But there's always like a sense of --
24 there was not like a -- how can you say, you guys -- not
25 like today. Today is so, like, it's so -- if you touch

1 someone the wrong way like that, they're -- you know what I
2 mean? They're so -- what's the word?

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: Well, it sounded like
4 when you were using your hands, "Back then, it was more of
5 a sense of belonging"?

6 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, my God, just -- it
7 was relaxed. We were, "Hey, how you doing?" And everybody
8 understood everything.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: Today there's tension?

10 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh shit, yeah. I swear
11 as we sit here, it totally changed.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: And so, was Sarah --
13 from what you remember, was there something that made the
14 women in the downtown east end more vulnerable?

15 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I've had girls want to
16 work for me. I had girls come up and say, "I want to be
17 your girlfriend. I want you to be my pimp. I want
18 protection." And I looked at them and I said I couldn't do
19 that because we're on drugs, and I'm a criminal, you know,
20 and I can't take care of you and take care of myself the
21 way we are. I know that. I can't do that. I can't hold
22 you to put a ring on my arm and then go, you know, (sell)
23 ~~sew~~ my ass and come back and say I love you.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, there was a sense
25 from what I hear you saying from the women that they were

1 nervous or scared for their safety in the Downtown
2 Eastside?

3 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I would say they put on
4 like a front. There's another one which is -- yeah,
5 another girl, George, Lorna George (ph). She was found
6 November '92, if I'm correct, and you will find out, you
7 guys, I have a wicked, wicked memory for dates. I'm just
8 born that way. And she -- break my heart.

9 They found her in Burnaby at a
10 construction site, naked, curled up in the fetal position
11 and died of hypothermia. It was '92, I believe, because I
12 was in jail and I read that. Yeah, Lorna George. And then
13 her brother, Darnell -- Darnell was his name, Darnell
14 George (ph). He OD'd. You know, when you touch base when
15 you hear people, you know what I mean, but Lorna really
16 stood out because to me, she was just -- she was beautiful,
17 but then she was the type of person that would -- you know,
18 I'll never forget her walking up to someone just slap him
19 like that, "Hey, fuck you." Me and her boyfriend, [W.C.]
20 (ph) from Saskatoon -- but she was that type of person
21 that, you know, type of woman that, you know, I can do
22 this, you know what I mean? She had the look; she had the
23 whole demeanour, you know what I mean, but I think there
24 again, she just went too far. What's the word like this --
25 got off, you know, and drunk, whatever may be. It's almost

1 like drinking and passing out. You don't see yourself
2 passing out, but you know what I mean. And the next thing
3 you know, you're gone.

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Okay, yeah.
5 Very sad.

6 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, that's the thing,
7 like, I'll be honest with you guys. When I was down there
8 -- the sense of everything, like, okay, just focus on your
9 question. There was a sense of "we do care." We
10 understood that, okay, you're a prostitute, I'm a
11 prostitute. Whether it be male or female, we all
12 understood eachothers' problems.

13 The disease of HIV and Hep C didn't really
14 come up much back then. We heard about it, you know what I
15 mean. But there again, a lot of people, you know, as time
16 went on -- we don't use those words, you know what I mean.
17 We did have that sense of -- okay, we didn't care; she has
18 HIV, you have Hep C, you know what I mean, and we'd tell
19 each other. We would literally talk.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

21 MR. ERIC WARDELL: There was that sense.
22 I can say that there was a sense of -- we're not bad guys,
23 you know. Another guy, what's his name, [M.1], nickname -
24 [M.1], they took him in '91. I only knew the guy for a
25 month. He was my best friend, like a friend like you

1 wouldn't believe, you guys. One friend that just, you
2 know, instant friendship, instant -- everything we did, we
3 didn't get caught, you know. We're like this.

4 And I heard he got killed over \$35 -- \$37
5 he got killed for because he owed the guy. They bashed the
6 back of his head in, and I went to the hospital and then
7 one guy walked by "[M.1]'s in the hospital dying," but his
8 real name was [M.1]. I forget his last name, but he died
9 down in -- he got attacked down by Pigeon Park, and -- you
10 know what I mean, all these little things, it's just like -
11 - I wanted to hit him, the guy that knew the people that
12 killed Doc. I can't break my belt; I can't break my word.
13 So, we're walking down Hastings with me, [M.1]'s
14 girlfriend, [K.] -- but [T.C.] is the new boyfriend to
15 [K.]. So, we're all walking, this guy here is telling us,
16 "I know who killed [M.1], but I can't tell you." I looked
17 at [K.], I said, "You want me to kill him?" As we sit
18 here, she would have said yes; I would have killed him
19 right there. I would have. All I need was her, like -- I
20 would have, you know. I would have stabbed -- I would have
21 attacked him right there. She was just like, "You should
22 just let him go, Eric." Okay, and I go. But to hear the
23 guy saying, "I know who killed [M.1], I can't tell you
24 though," like, you know. It just went away, you know what
25 I mean, like, I don't know whatever happened to [K.] or her

1 boy -- well, [T.C.], he got murdered. He got, like, all
2 slowly -- this is how strange my life is. (That) † was in
3 November '91. He was basically ripping off drug dealers on
4 the street for a gram, you know, three-and-a-half gram --
5 whatever. [W.1] in the penitentiary put a hit on [T.C.]
6 and they found him and they killed him.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, that was from prison
8 they had --

9 MR. ERIC WARDELL: That was in '91. And
10 2007, when I got arrested for -- no, I mean '97 for a
11 laptop -- watch this. I asked the cop, "You guys ever find
12 [T.C.]?" You know what the cop said? "Eric, I'm the one
13 that found [T.C.]." He was the cop that told me about all
14 that. So, I found out how [T.C.] died, and you know, [C.]
15 and [J.], so many other people. The fine line is, it comes
16 down to a choice. Even with Sarah. There's a documentary
17 on Sarah.

18 Before she died, and you know she said,
19 "I've been on the streets ten years." She literally said
20 that. She literally said, "I've been on the streets for 10
21 years. I'm surprised I'm not dead yet." So, like, when
22 you say sometimes what, you know, you almost make your own
23 destiny.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, Eric, when you talk
25 about your friends in the Downtown Eastside, were many of

1 the men and women Indigenous?

2 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah, they were to a
3 degree. I didn't really hang out with the Native Natives
4 because there was a fine line in Vancouver, but there was,
5 like, you know, up in downtown and then you got the west
6 end, and you know, there's a little -- so, I love everyone,
7 but I'm not -- I have to say, okay, like, my idea of, you
8 know -- my criminal part of my life, like, okay, what are
9 you -- steal, whatever, okay, that's totally different than
10 the idea of downtown. So, these people here were like --

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: Who are "those people"
12 there?

13 MR. ERIC WARDELL: They're the people that
14 buy all my stolen stuff whether it be laptops, whether it
15 be -- whatever.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

17 MR. ERIC WARDELL: And they did that, so I
18 kind of -- okay, put those clothes on, okay, go talk to
19 them, okay, then make money then go downtown and then get
20 high, do drugs.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Where I was
22 coming with that question is: What brings in your
23 experience, and maybe in your own personal experience, what
24 brings people together? Did they come to Downtown
25 Vancouver to the Downtown Eastside?

1 MR. ERIC WARDELL: You know, I think it's
2 -- to be honest with you, it's just -- it's a thought, hey,
3 right on, you know, it's going to be better; it's going to
4 be different. It's going to be -- you know, I'll be honest
5 with you. At one time in 1990, it was. It was Disneyland,
6 I swear. I felt it. I lived it. I've been there, done
7 that, you know, and today, it is so tough, man. It is so,
8 so tough.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, trying to put your
10 experience in the nineties into context, and you've talked
11 about getting high, criminal activity. Were you born in
12 the Northwest Territories? Where were you born?

13 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Born in Yellowknife.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: You were born in
15 Yellowknife. Do you know your parents? Because you're
16 part of the Sixties Scoop, so I'm just wondering --

17 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I know my dad, but I
18 don't know my biological mom.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And what do you
20 know of your dad? Was your dad or your mom in residential
21 school?

22 MR. ERIC WARDELL: My dad -- they're both
23 --

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: What does that mean?

25 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Because I just -- I'll

1 be honest with you. I don't like my dad because he says,
2 "Oh, you're like your mom." I look at my dad and I go and
3 say, "How the fuck can I be like my fucking mom when I was
4 adopted at 18 fucking months old?" How can a 18-month-old
5 baby learn from his mother? How can I be like her when I'm
6 just an infant? So, that really gets me, you know what I
7 mean. See how he judges me. I don't know my mom. I seen
8 her once in my life. So, it gets me. You keep saying
9 that. But to me, it's like they're saying they never do
10 nothing bad. On my mom's side, "Oh, we don't do nothing
11 bad."

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: How old were you when
13 you were taken from the home?

14 MR. ERIC WARDELL: 18 months old. That's
15 what I know. That's all I heard. I've not confirmed, but.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: And were you aware that
17 being taken from your family, were you an only child? Did
18 you have siblings? Are you aware if you have any siblings?

19 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I didn't know until
20 '95.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: And what happened in '95
22 that you found?

23 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, I found out who
24 my dad was. But there again, you guys, I'll be honest with
25 you. That's not even confirmed. Just because he says he's

1 my dad -- I'd take a DNA test. Seriously. I'll take a DNA
2 test. You could have pictures. You could have whatever
3 the fuck you want, but that -- you know what I mean. Does
4 that really mean you're my dad?

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: Is that something that's
6 missing for you? I sense that when you say you'll do a DNA
7 test that it's important for you to find out if he is or he
8 isn't.

9 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Just because he says --
10 it's like, you know, if you were my wife and I got caught
11 with her in a bar, do you think I'm really going to
12 fucking, you know, like, yeah, I was really digging her,
13 baby, you know what I mean? I'm going to tell, you know,
14 my loving wife, yeah -- you know what I mean. We were just
15 sitting there having a few, you know, happy drinks, you
16 know what I mean. So, what I'm getting at is, I'm going to
17 downplay it with you to make it, like hey, there was no
18 heavy thing going on here. But in reality, you're sitting
19 there going, Well, you're telling me that, but is that the
20 truth? So, what I'm getting at is, my dad goes and says,
21 "Oh, I kissed you," and I called so-and-so. He made it
22 sound like everything was just ducky. How do I know that?

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. So, you have
24 lots of questions or had.

25 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, you know, I went

1 home and I was hungry. I went home and they said I was
2 trying to run away from the house.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: When you say "they," is
4 that the couple that adopted you?

5 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, yeah, [K1] and
6 [K2] would have to guard the gates, you know, they would
7 put me in the -- and I'd take off. I'd try to run away.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: And where were you
9 raised? Where did you live when you were young?

10 MR. ERIC WARDELL: In Yellowknife.

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: So you stayed in
12 Yellowknife.

13 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah. Until '81.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: And they adopted a set
15 of twins.

16 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah, [K1] and [K2].

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: [K1] and [K2], and then
18 there was [M.], and then yourself. Shelly, [M.], and then
19 yourself.

20 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: And all Indigenous
22 background? And were [D.] and [W.]-- were they Indigenous?

23 MR. ERIC WARDELL: No.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And so, you
25 talked about running away from home?

1 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, that's what they
2 say. I don't remember that part, but, you know -- I mean,
3 it just -- you know, going to school, you guys, on that
4 alone, I mean, I remember going to school and I don't know
5 how it was, but I'm only like six years old maybe, and I'm
6 walking to school, my mom's at home, you know, and I don't
7 know why she wouldn't strike me, but I went and stole a box
8 of crackerjacks. First day at school, there's those
9 crackerjacks -- I lied to my teacher, Ms. Bradshaw, and,
10 you know, all these little things.

11 My mom making fun of me, like, that really
12 hits me, you know, when I see my mom and how she -- you
13 know, my adopted mom, [W.], cracking egg over me and having
14 her friend, you know, just laugh at me. And you got to
15 remember, [W.] is an alcoholic, okay, she's the type of
16 (alcoholic) ~~alcohol~~ where I got control and here's my
17 orange juice and vodka and I'm doing okay. That's the type
18 -- you know, I'm in control. I run the show. "I got no
19 problem" kind of attitude.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Okay. Was she
21 like that with all the children?

22 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I think she was mean
23 with everybody. I got the raw deal with that one. [K1]
24 and [K2] were there '64, August '64; Shelly's August '67;
25 [M.]'s November '67; I'm February '68. So, we were really

1 close, you know. Us three -- they were stuck together, so
2 they were taking care of each other, you know what I mean.
3 But me, I was by myself. I'd wake up, I'd go look for my -
4 - you know. [W.] would be -- okay, in bed hungover,
5 whatever, and just lay there, like, you know.

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: Where was your dad?

7 MR. ERIC WARDELL: He's at work. My dad
8 aced it. My dad did nothing wrong. He -- nothing. I
9 swear to God. He fucking nailed it, I swear. No alcohol
10 problem. Never hit us when he's drunk. Never spanked us -
11 - punished us in a appropriate way. All reasonable, you
12 know. There was nothing wrong with him.

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: But [W.]

14 MR. ERIC WARDELL: [W.]. No, seriously.
15 Christmastime, the plastic breaks and she freaked -- I'll
16 never forget all this. She freaked out on me, like, what
17 the fuck you're getting mad for? It does break, [W.]. But
18 anything you did wrong or anything like -- you know what I
19 mean? I remember back one time I pooped, and I pooped on
20 my pyjamas, and she freaked out on me. Everything was a
21 dilemma. Everything was like, what the fuck are you doing?

22 I remember staying in the hotel behind
23 here. She used to have smokes out the Expo hotel when it
24 first opened, and see us run behind there because she was
25 sitting in the bar and watching us and she ran out after us

1 and caught us. There again, got shit. Yelled at, you
2 know.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, not such a happy
4 childhood, then.

5 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, how she left us
6 out, too. She left us -- this is a big thing. She just --
7 one day in '77 -- it was wintertime, whatever -- we came
8 home and then Dad's sitting there in the living room -- in
9 the kitchen room. He says, "Well, you guys, we got bad
10 news. Your mom left you."

11 So, right there, it was almost like okay,
12 who's taking what? I'm going to take a -- we were all
13 trying to (jockey for) ~~job keep-er~~ what position we're
14 going to take, you know, and me being the youngest, okay,
15 get her to do it -- to steal or lie or do anything wrong --
16 well, I'll do it -- and got away with it a lot of times.
17 After everything turned out with the family and all that,
18 there was a lot of damage there, okay, with the family
19 unit, but Dad talks a lot, you know what I mean.

20 We went to see the family, you know, in
21 Manitoba and all that. We got to see things. It wasn't
22 just -- you know what I mean? Dad provided big-time for
23 us. At one point, Dad had five of us and four other
24 children from another woman. 9, 10 -- 11 people in the
25 house. Dad was providing for 11 people at one point, okay,

1 that's how good of a man he was. No, [J.] did some work
2 and that blah, blah, blah, but nothing to really make it.

3 But there again, we got through it. Dad
4 went and met [S.C.1] in '80 -- in 1980, they got married.
5 So, in '81, we left Saskatoon -- we all went to go to
6 Saskatoon. But with [S.C.1] in the picture now, I don't
7 think we'd be where we are today if it wasn't for her.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: And what do you mean by
9 that?

10 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, she taught us so
11 much. She was a nurse. But there again, when she got
12 married -- I'll never got forget it -- "Hey, you're my
13 mom." She said, "Hey, I'm not your mom. I'm [S.C.1]."
14 I'm just like, fuck. Damn, didn't get that one.

15 But she talked to us, you know what I
16 mean. She would never cross that line to say, hey. She
17 knew that. She always said, "Here's your dad." And there
18 again, I remember one time watching TV -- learned on TV, "I
19 hate you," I said. Maybe I said it because I heard it.
20 Maybe I just wanted to say it because I wanted to say it.
21 See how it sound or maybe -- but you know what I mean.
22 Like, in hindsight, I didn't mean to hurt her. It was just
23 spontaneous, impulsive -- FAS.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: So you were in Saskatoon
25 in the early eighties?

1 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yes.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: And so, what about your
3 sisters, [K1] and [K2]?

4 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, that's the thing.
5 They went to Fort Smith in 1980. There again, [J.] --
6 before [SC1.], [J.] sent them there, so it's kind of a
7 bucked-up time, but they went there and [K2] talks about
8 that, she knows all about that, and then we went to
9 Saskatoon, and then they kind of followed us to Saskatoon.
10 They kind of went to Edmonton or Edmonton and Saskatoon.
11 So, in '82, March of '82, Dad wanted [K1] to -- what's it
12 called. Oh, no, that's mine. My phone's on.

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: I just wanted to make
14 sure that this hasn't stopped because sometimes it beeps
15 when it stops. I just wanted to make sure this thing is
16 still running.

17 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, yeah. We're good.
18 We are good. See.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: No, I think this has
20 stopped.

21 MR. ERIC WARDELL: That stopped. Oh, no.
22 That didn't stop. Oh, shit. Now we got to start all over
23 again.

24 MS. BERNICE LYALL: It's a good thing you
25 checked.

1 MS. KERRIE REAY: You know what, it didn't
2 actually turn on. But no, everything's on this one.

3 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, on this one here.
4 Testing, testing. Hello?

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: It's still running, so
6 let me just --

7 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Reprogram?

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: No. What I'm going to
9 do is -- So, this is Kerrie Reay, the statement taker with
10 Eric Wardell, and it appears that the video camera has not
11 been recording. I'm not going to rewind to check, but we
12 do have the tape recorder going, so we'll continue with the
13 interview, and my apologies.

14 MR. ERIC WARDELL: No problem.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: But everything is on the
16 tape, on this one. It's still taping well. So, we were
17 just talking about the girls. So, [K1] and [K2] were sent
18 somewhere else. Do you know why they were sent somewhere
19 else?

20 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I don't know about
21 that. That's what [K2] says. [J.], not even our -- you
22 know, my dad's girlfriend, she came home and said, "You got
23 to go. People are coming to pick you up now." But there
24 again, when I see back then, it wouldn't happen today. But
25 it did happen back then, it was -- whatever, take the kids

1 away, we don't need them, and it was easy. The system
2 wasn't, you know, too accountable.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: But you know, those are
4 important observations for the commissioners, when you say
5 the system wasn't accountable. So, it's important to
6 understand that, how children were moved around with very
7 little accountability.

8 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, yeah.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. So, you then
10 said your sister, Shelly, passed away?

11 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah, she passed away
12 in '99.

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, and that was from
14 emphysema, you said?

15 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yup. But just on that
16 alone, I mean, we can't figure it out. I'll be honest. I
17 don't know why I stole all my life. Like, for 40 years, I
18 stole. I don't know why. I can't blame you. I couldn't
19 blame you, you know what I mean. I don't know why. It is
20 what it is.

21 But even when I look back at it, my mom,
22 my biological mom, would steal, I heard. It sounds very
23 farfetched, but it's just ironic that my biological mom
24 would put me in a baby carriage in August of '68 and push
25 me around and steal -- to put things in my carriage, you

1 know, and then I end up being a thief, you know what I
2 mean. There is evidence of that. There is actual -- you
3 know what I mean. I don't know where they got this, Oh,
4 you're a bad guy, you know what I mean. It's almost like,
5 you want to light me or what -- look different.

6 But, you know what I mean, I understand a
7 lot more today, you guys. A lot more. It can be better.
8 There's a lot of work, you know. And it's -- like me, I
9 don't give up. In some instances, yeah, you might just say
10 it's a dead issue. It's a dead end. Can't go on any --
11 move on. Let it go.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: But you also talked
13 about a stepsister or half-sister, Janelle?

14 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah, Janelle Mercredi.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And Janelle, was
16 she -- your stepmom, [S.C.1], was that her daughter?

17 MR. ERIC WARDELL: So, there's -- this is
18 really messed up.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: No, that's okay.

20 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I was born Tommy
21 Bosley. Marie Tarny (ph) are friends with Martha Mercredi.
22 Martha Mercredi put her daughter up for adoption, which is
23 Shelly. They are babysitting me. My dad and Martha
24 Mercredi are babysitting me because my mom took off for two
25 weeks and went and got drunk in 1969, I guess. And they

1 phoned social services and they said they came and got me.

2 And that's how I was put up for adoption.

3 That's how Shelly and I became sister and brother, which is

4 the sister to Janelle. Janelle is the younger sister --

5 hold it -- Shelly's younger or -- I don't know who's older

6 -- but, yeah. So, Janelle, I see in 1980, last time I seen

7 her was '85, December '85, and we're talking, blah, blah,

8 blah, and then I'm like, okay, and then I end up in jail in

9 '86. [M.] comes to me in July '86, and told me Janelle was

10 murdered a month before that. And that's how Janelle is.

11 That's how Janelle, Shelly, and [P.], and [W.C.] were

12 found.

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: And Shelly was your

14 adopted sister that passed away in '99.

15 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And so, Janelle

17 wasn't living with you or --

18 MR. ERIC WARDELL: No.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And do you know

20 anything about her murder whether or not they found --

21 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, yeah, they found

22 the people that did it. It was Calvin Smoker (ph) and some

23 other woman, a guy. They were married or whatever. They

24 were at a party and ended up killing Steven Crowe and

25 Janelle Mercredi, but they all got convicted for the

1 murder, so yeah, they got life. But we don't know why she
2 was there, how she -- you know what I mean. It's one of
3 those things, you know, like why was my friend murdered or
4 why had he died and I didn't or -- you know, I OD'd in '93
5 one time, you know.

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: What did you OD on?

7 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Heroin. But, you know,
8 it was just -- the drug dealer in the house was like,
9 "Throw him out in the alley." Like how [J.W.] said -- you
10 know, here he's doing a fix, he leans over, "Well, what's
11 wrong with him?" "Well, he's dying." "Well, throw him in
12 the alley." I just -- what do you mean throw me in the
13 fucking alley? I'm a fucking human being, damn it.

14 And so, without my friend, [J.W.] and that
15 drug dealer girlfriend, "Hey, that's Eric. Hey, man, I'm
16 not going to fucking leave him." So, I guess they left.
17 [J.W.] phoned the ambulance, stayed with me, and when they
18 came in, [J.W.] jumped out the window. They gave me Narcan
19 and brought me back to life. If it wasn't for that, I
20 wouldn't be here. I'd be gone. Just in that alone,
21 [J.W.], the next day, he was in the hospital. I'm dying,
22 hooked up on the machine here. "Let's go steal. Let's get
23 out of here," he said. "Let's leave. Let's go, you know,
24 like, do a B&E." "[J.W.], I just died, man. I can barely
25 move."

1 Narcan looks like this actually.
2 Seriously. When you look at Narcan, look at water.
3 They're a little vial. That little vial, girl, it's like a
4 stick of dynamite. And when they go and say "Narcan and
5 black tar," Narcan is basically reversing the effects, and
6 you actually throw up black tar. It's black. It is the
7 worst feeling I'll ever feel in my life. You don't ever
8 want to feel that. Seriously, bad.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: And did that experience
10 make any difference for you?

11 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, it did because
12 [J.W.] -- like, he didn't care. He just -- "Okay, let's go
13 do this." I took off on [J.W.]. I literally run away from
14 him. And I said he's just going to use me to go do B&E,
15 blah, blah, blah. You know, I just died, [J.W.]. It took
16 me three days from the time for Narcan to make me feel
17 normal again. To this day, that was in '93. I still feel
18 it. I still taste it.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: Quite the experience.

20 MR. ERIC WARDELL: No, seriously.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: It stayed with you all
22 these years.

23 MR. ERIC WARDELL: But, there again, I
24 heard [J.W.] got caught later. He's doing ten years or
25 whatever -- drug dealing, whatever.

1 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, where did you go
2 when you were released from hospital?

3 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I went back to that
4 halfway house I was in in Burnaby.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, at that time, were
6 you on federal parole if you went back to a halfway house?

7 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, not parole. I did
8 my time, provincial time. So, I ended up there in '93 and
9 then ended up going to Kelowna. I left there and I end up
10 in jail, and then got out in '94, and then I ended up in
11 jail again. Basically, I ended up getting a suspended
12 sentence in '95, March '95, and then that's when I found
13 the family, wound up status, and that's when I went north
14 in September '95.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: Can you tell us a little
16 bit about what happened there?

17 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I was in a halfway
18 house. I was out on bail and then this girl that I met,
19 her mom is a court worker, and I'm going up for charges for
20 B&E or whatever, theft. She said, "Why don't you write the
21 government to see if you're status Indian, so I wrote them
22 saying, "-- my status. I want to know who my parents are."
23 Find my fucking parents, damn it. And they wrote back and
24 they said -- that's how fucked up they are, you know. It's
25 a good one. Show it to government.

1 In a nutshell, "You come from the Fort
2 Good Hope Band." That's all it fucking said. But what
3 came to me was, the guy that I met in '89 in the
4 correctional centre saying, "Hey, we're from Fort Good
5 Hope." I don't know if it was two guys, [C.M.] and [M.3]
6 (ph) there, but yeah.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: So you found out you
8 were from Fort Good Hope.

9 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yup. Status Indian, so
10 -- go up there.

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: You went to Fort Good
12 Hope?

13 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, yeah. They paid
14 my way, all the way up there, so I go up there. I see my
15 grandparents; I see my family.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, how did you make
17 that connection?

18 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, because I wrote
19 the government.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. But how did you
21 know who your family was? Did you go to the band?

22 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I didn't know nothing
23 before that.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Did you go to the band
25 office in Fort Good Hope?

1 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Nope. I didn't even
2 know -- I thought I was Inuit. That's the only connection.
3 You know what, I would never, ever know to this day if it
4 wasn't for -- what's her name -- saying, "Write to the
5 Government. Here's the address. See, you're status
6 Indian." That's how fucked up it is.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, just for the
8 commissioners, we're trying to understand. So, you decided
9 to go north, come back to the Northwest Territories. Did
10 you go to Fort Good Hope?

11 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I did, yeah.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: And so, when you go to
13 Fort Good Hope, do you know anybody in Fort Good Hope when
14 you arrived?

15 MR. ERIC WARDELL: No, no. Nobody.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So, what steps
17 did you take to try and find who your parents were?

18 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I knew that. So, in
19 February 9th, I would find out. I phoned Fort Good Hope.
20 I asked the band and then my auntie, like, there again --
21 piss me off. (There's) ~~They're~~ a lot of anger. A lot of
22 like -- fuck you, you know, like, seriously? Because they
23 acted (as if) ~~up~~, "We're all there. We're going to take
24 good care of you."

25 That, there again, is another slap in my

1 face because it was almost like I went there and it was
2 almost like -- they're looking at me and they're judging me
3 like, Oh, he looks gay. Oh, he looks rough. Oh, he looks
4 this and that. Seriously, my grandma basically said, "Oh,
5 he's bad." She's monarch of the Crown. She calls the
6 shots and that's how they looked at me to this day. To
7 this day, man. I swear. I do.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: That must have been hard
9 for you.

10 MR. ERIC WARDELL: It is. It's tough,
11 man, but I just want to find out my history, you know. To
12 be honest with you, the Tarney family didn't do fuck all
13 for me. That's reality, okay. They never did fuck all.
14 Tommy Bosley, same thing. Never did fuck all for me.
15 Nothing. He has 10 grand in payback. I say, "Hey Dad, can
16 I have some money?" He gives me 20 bucks out of 10 grand,
17 like, fuck, really? And then he just drinks up the rest.

18 But it's all this little shit, but at the
19 end of the day, I know who's who and what's what. That's
20 all I wanted to know. But there again, I don't hold on to
21 it. I just know about when I think about it, I think that
22 was a raw deal that I had. Okay, Tommy Bosley, you had
23 your opportunity to even, you know, to think, okay. I got
24 things happening, you know what I mean.

25 And I -- correct this. I may not be able

1 to do the whole thing, but I can do part. I told him -- I
2 said, "Why can't we go to Walmart? Why can't we do
3 something without the fucking booze?" "Oh, no, it's okay,
4 we can drink." You know, he's 75 years old. He's still
5 drinking. That's pretty messed up. My long-lost sister,
6 "Let's go out and have fun. Let's go and you know, like,
7 do something. Don't just sit there and fucking drink, you
8 know." That's sad. That is sad.

9 Same with my mother, you know. My mother
10 going to the neighbour's and said -- if you were drinking
11 with my mom -- I never heard this one before, but she
12 started looking through the fucking house. She looked in
13 the toilet. She would look everywhere for more booze.
14 Even if it's your house. All these little things, right,
15 and so, I hear all this shit and I see everything, but at
16 the end of the day, it's like wow. I mean, I could. I
17 know -- I went out in '95. I was told, "You should write a
18 book." That was in '95. Fuck, it's going to be a real
19 ring dinger for 2018, you know what I mean.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, when did you leave
21 Fort Good Hope?

22 MR. ERIC WARDELL: In '96.

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: And where did you go
24 from there?

25 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yellowknife.

1 MS. KERRIE REAY: And have you been here
2 ever since?

3 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, on and off. I
4 went to Vancouver, Edmonton. But basically, I've been back
5 here since 2005.

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: And how are you feeling
7 being back in Yellowknife?

8 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I love Yellowknife, you
9 guys. I do. I love it. I really do. I mean it. I tried
10 the big city. I would go to Vancouver just to connect with
11 the gay community. I would, just on that alone. But
12 that's down the road. I may go down just to connect with
13 those people, right, because there's nobody here to connect
14 with.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: And how's your health?

16 MR. ERIC WARDELL: My health? I feel
17 good. I mean, I found out I have Hep C and -- watch this,
18 you guys. I'm really bizarre. The woman that accused me
19 of raping her in 1997, when I went to the medical -- when
20 you go to jail, you see a medical, right, and that woman --
21 God bless her soul. She passed away. Brain aneurysm of
22 all things. [S.B.]. Beautiful woman. She's the one that
23 told me, "Eric, you have Hep C."

24 Now, you won't fucking believe how I found
25 out. The woman, [A.M.], accused me of rape. She has Hep

1 C. That's how I found out I had Hep C. How weird. How
2 fucking weird. That's true. That's the weirdest thing,
3 you know what I mean. It was meant to be or whatever, but
4 oh, yeah, I've had it ever since.

5 I'm 50 next month, and, you know, to put
6 everything -- in my lifetime, I lived two lifetimes. What
7 I've seen and been through, you know, like, the people I
8 met and all that, not too many people can do what I did.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, you seem quite
10 healthy. You are doing well in --

11 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, yeah, you guys,
12 you have to. I mean, yeah, I'm down, but I'm not out. I
13 keep clean, I shave, you know, wash everything, you know
14 what I mean? I take care of myself. I don't sit there.
15 And I can -- while I can sit here blowing all my shit all
16 day long and, you know, and I do nothing, but I get up,
17 okay, what, I got to do this, this, this, and keep your
18 chin up, you know what I mean?

19 I smoke weed. I don't like drinking
20 alcohol. Alcohol just messes me up. I don't do cocaine
21 and I don't do heroin. How the fuck can anyone take a pill
22 and take a chance? "Let's get high." "Oh, shit, I died.
23 Damn." But you know what I mean? I have that sense of,
24 you know, like, it goes up and down, but I have enough
25 common sense to say, "Hey, I don't have to go that far

1 because of this shit."

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: And you seem to have a
3 bit of a sense of humour.

4 MR. ERIC WARDELL: You got to. You got
5 to, girl. If you didn't have humour, we'd be all six feet
6 under.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: And that is how you
8 cope?

9 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, it's -- I don't
10 agree with a lot of things, you know what I mean. Like, I
11 respect religion, but there again, some people, "Oh, I woke
12 up and Jesus saved my life today," or "I woke up and the
13 Pope can kiss my ass today." And there's no disrespect,
14 but there's nothing wrong with changing your beliefs. I
15 don't believe in that today.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, can you offer your
17 thoughts in terms of managing, and this probably sounds
18 judgmental, managing to leave the Downtown Eastside and
19 come somewhere else? Can you offer insight, how difficult
20 that was or what you thought?

21 MR. ERIC WARDELL: You got to read my
22 book. All my life, I've been special. All my life, I've
23 been -- I have a gift. I know that. I have something that
24 most people wished they have. I have it, whatever, but
25 once you get away from it, it's like a hangover. It's

1 like, oh, my God. If you take your worst hangover, it's
2 like you're fighting that "oh, I can't leave," you know
3 what I mean? Now, the idea is, it gets better.

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: There's a real drawback
5 to it.

6 MR. ERIC WARDELL: It is. It's such a
7 vacuum, you know, like being in obsessed relationship. Oh,
8 I love you; I love you, you know, and then finding out, Oh,
9 my gosh, we weren't compatible. We're better off this way
10 than that way, you know what I mean? It's like that. You
11 know, I look back, you guys, and -- I mean, I used to steal
12 15 grand in ten minutes. We used to blow five grand on
13 drugs in two nights, you know what I mean. It's fuck-all
14 to us. It's nothing.

15 The kicker is, the reason why a criminal
16 doesn't like to do nine-to-five is because he doesn't want
17 to wait two weeks for \$800. When you make ten grand a
18 night, 15 grand, and, you know, whatever comes and goes.
19 That's pretty hard to take. So, for me today, how I look
20 at it, yeah, I have nothing, but I'm free. I'm free today.
21 You're no different; you're no different. You could wake
22 up and you could go steal, and you could end up in trouble
23 or you could do anything wrong.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: It's all a decision.

25 MR. ERIC WARDELL: So, when you think Oh,

1 Eric doesn't have a thing, you're fucking right. Don't
2 think of the same things when it comes down to it, just in
3 a different way, you know what I mean? So, when I go and
4 say I need help or hey, I feel like this, okay. You're
5 asking for help. You know what I mean? You know, like, I
6 want to put a gun to my head because I don't know -- I
7 don't understand my sexuality. I don't understand what my
8 mom -- you know what I mean? All these things. So, you
9 have to talk about it.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. And are you
11 talking?

12 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Eventually I am, you
13 know what I mean. I am slowly, but when I think of the
14 Sixties Scoop, that is -- that's tough. That is tough.
15 You can't even relate to somebody, right? You know what I
16 mean, like, I never went in residential school. I was
17 raised in elementary, but even there, I had ups and downs,
18 like, excuse me, but I'm born FASD, you know. Like, my
19 brain is damaged. There's holes in my head which you may
20 not have.

21 But then again, I have a gift. You know,
22 I do. I'll give you an example. We're trying to prick our
23 fingers at school, right, and everyone's scared, so I said
24 fuck it. So, I punch myself in the nose and all this blood
25 comes. And I had like 20 kids, "Oh, blood --" but what I'm

1 getting at is, it takes the one person, like a Rosa Parks,
2 like that one Chinese guy that stood in front of Tiananmen
3 Square with the tanks. He stood there and that's how I see
4 it.

5 So, I'm not a bad guy. I'm not evil.
6 I've done some things I'm not proud of. I hurt a lot of
7 people. But as a product of the system to where I am
8 today, you know, when one guy looked at me, like years ago,
9 he said, "Eric, if I was you, I would have killed myself a
10 long time ago. You're a strong person." But you know what
11 I mean? And I look at that, you know.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: And so, can I ask, when
13 you describe yourself -- did you find that many of the
14 people in the Downtown Eastside felt very similar to you in
15 what you've just expressed?

16 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, yeah. You know
17 what, when I was down there, you guys --

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: Men and women?

19 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, yeah. You know, I
20 was with a bunch of prostitutes and this guy, fucking
21 millionaire, owns -- fuck -- this one building down, like,
22 it's right on Skid Row. He's a fucking multibillionaire.
23 "You go finish him off," and I'm like, "Oh, my God, you
24 guys. We're all prostitutes here. This guy wants money,"
25 you know what I mean. And nobody would step up, so I went

1 and did it.

2 And then, okay, party went on, right, but
3 you know what I mean, like, don't be afraid of saying, "Oh,
4 I never did that," or "I never thought this," you know what
5 I mean. I mean, some people -- I don't know why -- went,
6 Oh, my God, I ate one extra cookie too much. I got five
7 more pounds, you know what I mean. And it's not that
8 you're a pig or you're bad because you ate one extra cookie
9 and you put five more pounds on, it's just that you got to
10 work, you know what I mean, you got to balance that.

11 And just like me, I got to balance, you
12 know. Like, okay, I'm jobless, but I got no money, but I
13 can go steal, but if I go steal a purse -- okay. Oh, shit,
14 I got 20 bucks. Then I give back the purse, spend 20
15 bucks, and then what's going to happen when you spend the
16 20 bucks? You got to go steal her purse. It doesn't stop.

17 So, the way I see it, stop, be honest, and
18 put on a table. I'm hungry. I need to be clean. And you
19 know what, 90 per cent of the time, they all help you. And
20 that's how I see this. Why hide it? Why go and say, Oh, I
21 never did that or I never did this. I never put a needle
22 in my arm. Oh, God, I never sucked cock. Oh, my God, I
23 never -- you know. Never -- whatever.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, you're finding the
25 support here that perhaps is helping you move forward.

1 You're finding --

2 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Totally. I do. I
3 think -- like, my auntie says religion really does have a
4 hold on this place. Religion is really -- I'll be honest,
5 that is a big -- that is.

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: Here in Yellowknife?

7 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, fuck, the North.
8 The North is really -- they're just hardcore. And I'm not
9 saying change your belief, but you got to look at reality.
10 Reality is reality, you know. What you pray for and what
11 you feel are two different things. I don't disrespect your
12 religion, your cosmos, or whatever. But at the same time,
13 you got to see through that to say, hey, come on, like, you
14 got to -- you know. You can't believe in the old -- St.
15 Peter going to come save the day tomorrow, and everything's
16 going to be ducky.

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: So, one of the things as
18 I was saying earlier to you before we got started, one of
19 the things the commissioners are looking for is: In terms
20 of recommendations, you bring some significant observations
21 here today about life on the Downtown Eastside of
22 Vancouver, and we know that there were many, many women
23 that were lost to Robert Pickton.

24 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: And so, what insight

1 would you like to offer the commissioners in terms of the
2 lifestyle in those women and men as you said were
3 prostituting, were drugging, to make it so our young girls,
4 our girls that are turning 12 and 13, is there some lessons
5 that could be shared from the time there to help make sure
6 that in the future, the young girls and women are safe?

7 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I know what you're
8 saying. You're right. But there is. There is a way of
9 being safe. There is a way. There again, I believe it's
10 what I said. It always come down to money. 90 per cent of
11 the time, it comes down to money. Oh, we're going to make
12 some money off this, you know what I mean? It's always
13 taxes or "regulate this, got to have safety." I understand
14 all that.

15 But at the end of the day, it's always
16 like, "Oh, we're not getting enough of our, you know, piece
17 of the pie so to speak. It can be really confusing by
18 trying to fix something that can be fixable or make it
19 safer, but too much politics. Too much red tape. Too many
20 chiefs, not enough Indians, you know what I mean. And
21 that's true. It can be, you know. Yellowknife, I think,
22 is small, but today, a lot of people, like not in the
23 street but just people in general, know that downtown can
24 be scary at times.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Here in Yellowknife.

1 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, yeah.
2 Unpredictable. I mean, women walking to church, whatever -
3 - got knocked down about a month and a half ago and just
4 took her purse, and the purse was just a Bible. So, the
5 guy thought he was robbing this woman for money, blah,
6 blah, you know, knocked her down, hurt her, you know. It's
7 tough. That is a tough, tough question to -- you know what
8 I mean. But there is an answer to it, but it's a lot of
9 work.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: And it may not be an
11 answer but just some ideas about how to keep young women
12 and girls safer.

13 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: If you think of
15 anything, you're welcome to share it back with the Inquiry
16 if you have any recommendations.

17 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, yeah. Phone
18 numbers, Facebook. You know, have a phone. Always let
19 someone know where you're going. Little things like this,
20 right. Like, you know, my girlfriend doesn't know I'm
21 here, but her brother sees me. I mean, family sees me.
22 So, okay, Eric's safe. Eric's okay. We know. And that's
23 all it counts, as long as people know where I am. It's
24 like me, I'm one person that, hey, my girlfriend is -- all
25 right, my baby's okay. He's not going to break the law

1 today. Oh, Eric's back in jail.

2 So, I have to prove -- no, even myself.

3 So, I got all these people looking at me saying, "Eric, you
4 keep doing it. You're doing such an awesome job," you

5 know. And it's a lot of hard work. Don't be ashamed.

6 Don't be, Oh, I'm not worthy. You are worthy. My story is
7 worthy, you know.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: And same, is there

9 anything that you would like to tell the commissioners

10 yourself? You've shared your story, your truth here today,

11 but is there anything else that you think is really

12 important from your experience as a survivor of the Sixties

13 Scoop or your time on the Downtown Vancouver Eastside that

14 you would like to share with the commissioners here?

15 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I'll just say just more

16 education. Don't focus on the past as much as you can

17 focus on today (and) ~~in~~ the future, you know what I mean.

18 Like, you got to get it in the brain. I think it's more of

19 a mental thing than it is a physical thing because

20 mentally, I can remember, you know, like that when I was a

21 kid. When you think, Oh, my gosh, I remember that

22 Disneyland, the feeling -- oh, yeah, the heroin, I feel

23 that, you know what I mean.

24 But trying to change your thinking, like,

25 I changed my thinking from stealing to lying to being

1 honest to okay, Eric, I got to do this, this, this. Okay.
2 So, after this, I go to Subway, I have something to eat, I
3 go to bed. All good. I'm not going to stay with Stickers
4 because Sticker gets drunk and starts arguing, so I don't
5 need that. I'm up six o'clock in the morning, but guess
6 what, no one's yelling at me, no one's screaming at me, and
7 I slept good, you know.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: And that comes back to
9 what you were talking at the very beginning about decisions
10 and how you were making decisions, either you could do this
11 or you could do that, and so.

12 MS. BERNICE LYALL: Taking little things
13 from different people.

14 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, that's the thing,
15 right, you get my girlfriend drunk and sometimes it would
16 be perfect. Other times she just blacks out and just
17 starts freaking out and "Get out of the room," or she'll
18 attack me, scratch me, and I don't -- you know, today, I
19 don't really get mad, you know what I mean.

20 We're getting better at handling each
21 other. We're getting better at staying away from the
22 booze. We're getting a good routine, her and I, which is
23 good, which is -- we've always wanted. Now, maybe next is,
24 okay, we get our apartment or whatever may be, or full-time
25 work. But we have come a long way from where we used to

1 be, you know. And it's just like you guys with this
2 inquiry, right. Like, that's a lot of people and that's --
3 you know, eight months is a long time to be talking to
4 people.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: It's important to hear
6 from people.

7 MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, yeah. I'm not
8 ashamed, you know what I mean. Life's not fair, man. That
9 sucks. And when you get jaded, when you get ripped off by
10 the system, it is tough. You look at that one story --
11 I'll give you an example with Valdez, with the oil tanker
12 in '89. The one guy literally committed suicide over it.
13 It was so sad. It was so sad, he committed suicide over
14 it. He couldn't deal with it. It's like, no, you don't
15 have to do that.

16 You're right. Every one of us. You.
17 You. You could do it. You could do it just on a long
18 thought. That Oh, I didn't add up to Grandma. Oh, Grandma
19 said you were just a -- you didn't get money, you know what
20 I mean. And poof, you could. That's what you got to ask
21 yourself, Hey, if I do that, what's going to happen?
22 Nothing, you know. So, you being here still going helps
23 us. We see that. And that's how I see it. I see it like,
24 hey, I'm here, I take part, I do -- you know.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: And you know, you've

1 offered a lot of insight in terms of what it's like to be
2 in the Downtown Eastside. You've offered a lot of the
3 feelings and the thinking that keeps both men and women on
4 the Downtown Eastside, and I do appreciate that. And the
5 courage to come here and share your truth as you've done
6 today is admirable. It's not easy walking into a room with
7 people you don't know to be able to share as you've shared
8 today for the commissioners, so.

9 MR. ERIC WARDELL: It's not about that.
10 It's true, though. I'm one voice that does care, that does
11 want to make a difference, you know. I made a difference
12 in my life not to get in trouble, not to do what I've
13 always done, and here I am. So, it is working. It does
14 get better.

15 So, with this, hopefully, one day that we
16 could -- it'll be in the past. That's true. That is true.
17 It's a big country, big world, but at the same time, we all
18 got to pull together no matter what.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: And this is the sad
20 truth that you bring here to the Inquiry today here in
21 Yellowknife. This is information that the commissioners
22 are gathering across the nation, and it's important for a
23 Northern voice, somebody who's experienced, raised in
24 Yellowknife yet found themselves in Vancouver on the
25 Downtown Eastside, and you've come back and doing well.

1 And so, I just would really like to thank you. Unless
2 there's any last words that you would like to say to the
3 commissioners -- I think we've covered a lot today.

4 MR. ERIC WARDELL: I just would hope --
5 pray that things get better for everybody, you know,
6 everybody from A to Z, from politicians to homeless people
7 to teachers, family, sisters, brothers, you know,
8 everybody. It affects everybody in a good way. Have
9 another happy day.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, well, thank you,
11 Eric. And just for the record, we are ending at 3:54.

12 --- Whereupon the statement concluded at 3:54 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best
of my skill and ability,
accurately transcribed from a pre-existing recording
the foregoing proceeding..



Jovelle Domanais, Court Reporter

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