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)

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

--- Upon commencing on Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at 2:40 p.m.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And also in the room today, Ayira Defreitas. And Eric, today you are here voluntarily to provide your truth as you speak to the
people that I've just mentioned as a survivor of the Sixties Scoop, and you agree to the videotaping of your truth today, both video and audio.

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah. No problem.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And you know, I could go on and on and on about why this, why that, but to me, you got to be strong, you know. You got to be strong for them. You got to be strong for, you know -- my sister, Shelly, she died of emphysema at 32 years old. The doctor said in '91, "You only got eight years to live." So, we knew that Shelly
wasn't going to live very much longer. And she always told me, "Turn your life around, turn your life around." That was in '96. It just took me a little longer, but I'm doing it; I'm doing it. I'm turning my life around.

And that's what gets me is, you know, when she was sitting there and she was barely breathing, you know, 24 per cent of her lungs passed. To me, everything that was told in my lifetime, what was shown to me, is not a waste, you know what I mean? Like, if you went to Eric, try this over here, and one day, I mean, not do it today, but, you know, down the road, "Hey, you said do that."

It's a good thing for you, right, so you try it and just like that. It's like, okay, you try and quit smoking while one day here it might kick in, hey, you know, whatever may be. Sex, gambling, whatever, eating, you know, but this is where I am today.

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

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

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Would you like to share
with the commissioners, as an Indigenous man in the Downtown Eastside, and what you saw and what you learned from what you saw down there for what was happening for the women and for the men?

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: [Date of birth].

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: So you're talking about downtown on the Eastside? Very kind of laid-back atmosphere there?
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Eric Wardell (de Vries, George & Mercredi)

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Men and women?

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah. I met her in Burnaby in '90, June -- May '90, yeah, and we made a lot of money. We did a lot of drugs, you know. We helped each other. We always, you know, helped each other. You got rig, I got coke. But there's always like a sense of -- there was not like a -- how can you say, you guys -- not like today. Today is so, like, it's so -- if you touch
someone the wrong way like that, they're -- you know what I mean? They're so -- what's the word?

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Today there's tension?

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: So, there was a sense from what I hear you saying from the women that they were
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nervous or scared for their safety in the Downtown
Eastside?

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

They found her in Burnaby at a
construction site, naked, curled up in the fetal position
and died of hypothermia. It was '92, I believe, because I
was in jail and I read that. Yeah, Lorna George. And then
her brother, Darnell -- Darnell was his name, Darnell
George (ph). He OD'd. You know, when you touch base when
you hear people, you know what I mean, but Lorna really
stood out because to me, she was just -- she was beautiful,
but then she was the type of person that would -- you know,
I'll never forget her walking up to someone just slap him
like that, "Hey, fuck you." Me and her boyfriend, [W.C.]
(ph) from Saskatoon -- but she was that type of person
that, you know, type of woman that, you know, I can do
this, you know what I mean? She had the look; she had the
whole demeanour, you know what I mean, but I think there
again, she just went too far. What's the word like this --
got off, you know, and drunk, whatever may be. It's almost
like drinking and passing out. You don't see yourself
passing out, but you know what I mean. And the next thing
you know, you're gone.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Okay, yeah.

Very sad.

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

MR. ERIC WARDELL: There was that sense.

I can say that there was a sense of -- we're not bad guys,
you know. Another guy, what's his name, [M.1], nickname --
[M.1], they took him in '91. I only knew the guy for a
month. He was my best friend, like a friend like you
wouldn't believe, you guys. One friend that just, you
know, instant friendship, instant -- everything we did, we
didn't get caught, you know. We're like this.

And I heard he got killed over $35 -- $37
he got killed for because he owed the guy. They bashed the
back of his head in, and I went to the hospital and then
one guy walked by "[M.1]’s in the hospital dying," but his
real name was [M.1]. I forget his last name, but he died
down in -- he got attacked down by Pigeon Park, and -- you
know what I mean, all these little things, it's just like --
- I wanted to hit him, the guy that knew the people that
killed Doc. I can't break my belt; I can't break my word.
So, we're walking down Hastings with me, [M.1]’s
girlfriend, [K.] -- but [T.C.] is the new boyfriend to
[K.]. So, we're all walking, this guy here is telling us,
"I know who killed [M.1], but I can't tell you." I looked
at [K.], I said, "You want me to kill him?" As we sit
here, she would have said yes; I would have killed him
right there. I would have. All I need was her, like -- I
would have, you know. I would have stabbed -- I would have
attacked him right there. She was just like, "You should
just let him go, Eric." Okay, and I go. But to hear the
guy saying, "I know who killed [M.1], I can't tell you
though," like, you know. It just went away, you know what
I mean, like, I don't know whatever happened to [K.] or her
boy -- well, [T.C.], he got murdered. He got, like, all slowly -- this is how strange my life is. (That) I was in November '91. He was basically ripping off drug dealers on the street for a gram, you know, three-and-a-half gram -- whatever. [W.1] in the penitentiary put a hit on [T.C.] and they found him and they killed him.

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: So, Eric, when you talk about your friends in the Downtown Eastside, were many of
the men and women Indigenous?

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Where I was coming with that question is: What brings in your experience, and maybe in your own personal experience, what brings people together? Did they come to Downtown Vancouver to the Downtown Eastside?
MR. ERIC WARDELL: You know, I think it's -- to be honest with you, it's just -- it's a thought, hey, right on, you know, it's going to be better; it's going to be different. It's going to be -- you know, I'll be honest with you. At one time in 1990, it was. It was Disneyland, I swear. I felt it. I lived it. I've been there, done that, you know, and today, it is so tough, man. It is so, so tough.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Born in Yellowknife.

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

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: What does that mean?

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, I found out who my dad was. But there again, you guys, I'll be honest with you. That's not even confirmed. Just because he says he's
my dad -- I'd take a DNA test. Seriously. I'll take a DNA test. You could have pictures. You could have whatever the fuck you want, but that -- you know what I mean. Does that really mean you're my dad?

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

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, you know, I went
home and I was hungry. I went home and they said I was
trying to run away from the house.

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

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: In Yellowknife.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So you stayed in
Yellowknife.

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah. Until '81.

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

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And so, you
talked about running away from home?
MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, that's what they say. I don't remember that part, but, you know -- I mean, it just -- you know, going to school, you guys, on that alone, I mean, I remember going to school and I don't know how it was, but I'm only like six years old maybe, and I'm walking to school, my mom's at home, you know, and I don't know why she wouldn't strike me, but I went and stole a box of crackerjacks. First day at school, there's those crackerjacks -- I lied to my teacher, Ms. Bradshaw, and, you know, all these little things.

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: I think she was mean with everybody. I got the raw deal with that one. [K1] and [K2] were there '64, August '64; Shelly's August '67; [M.]'s November '67; I'm February '68. So, we were really
close, you know. Us three -- they were stuck together, so
they were taking care of each other, you know what I mean.
But me, I was by myself. I'd wake up, I'd go look for my --
you know. [W.] would be -- okay, in bed hungover,
whatever, and just lay there, like, you know.

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: But [W].
MR. ERIC WARDELL: [W]. No, seriously.
Christmastime, the plastic breaks and she freaked -- I'll
never forget all this. She freaked out on me, like, what
the fuck you're getting mad for? It does break, [W.]. But
anything you did wrong or anything like -- you know what I
mean? I remember back one time I pooped, and I pooped on
my pyjamas, and she freaked out on me. Everything was a
dilemma. Everything was like, what the fuck are you doing?
I remember staying in the hotel behind
here. She used to have smokes out the Expo hotel when it
first opened, and see us run behind there because she was
sitting in the bar and watching us and she ran out after us
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and caught us. There again, got shit. Yelled at, you know.

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

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

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

We went to see the family, you know, in Manitoba and all that. We got to see things. It wasn't just -- you know what I mean? Dad provided big-time for us. At one point, Dad had five of us and four other children from another woman. 9, 10 -- 11 people in the house. Dad was providing for 11 people at one point, okay,
that's how good of a man he was. No, [J.] did some work
and that blah, blah, blah, but nothing to really make it.

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

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: So you were in Saskatoon
in the early eighties?
MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, on this one here.

Testing, testing. Hello?

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Reprogram?

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: No problem.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: I don't know about that. That's what [K2] says. [J.], not even our -- you know, my dad's girlfriend, she came home and said, "You got to go. People are coming to pick you up now." But there again, when I see back then, it wouldn't happen today. But it did happen back then, it was -- whatever, take the kids...
away, we don't need them, and it was easy. The system wasn't, you know, too accountable.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, yeah.

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

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

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

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

But even when I look back at it, my mom, my biological mom, would steal, I heard. It sounds very farfetched, but it's just ironic that my biological mom would put me in a baby carriage in August of '68 and push me around and steal -- to put things in my carriage, you
know, and then I end up being a thief, you know what I mean. There is evidence of that. There is actual -- you know what I mean. I don't know where they got this, Oh, you're a bad guy, you know what I mean. It's almost like, you want to light me or what -- look different.

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

move on. Let it go.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah, Janelle Mercredi.

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

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

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

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

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

That's how Shelly and I became sister and brother, which is
the sister to Janelle. Janelle is the younger sister --
hold it -- Shelly's younger or -- I don't know who's older
-- but, yeah. So, Janelle, I see in 1980, last time I seen
her was '85, December '85, and we're talking, blah, blah,
blah, and then I'm like, okay, and then I end up in jail in
'86. [M.] comes to me in July '86, and told me Janelle was
murdered a month before that. And that's how Janelle is.

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: And Shelly was your
adopted sister that passed away in '99.

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And so, Janelle
wasn't living with you or --

MR. ERIC WARDELL: No.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And do you know
anything about her murder whether or not they found --

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Well, yeah, they found
the people that did it. It was Calvin Smoker (ph) and some
other woman, a guy. They were married or whatever. They
were at a party and ended up killing Steven Crowe and
Janelle Mercredi, but they all got convicted for the
murder, so yeah, they got life. But we don't know why she was there, how she -- you know what I mean. It's one of those things, you know, like why was my friend murdered or why had he died and I didn't or -- you know, I OD'd in '93 one time, you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: What did you OD on?

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

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

Seriously. When you look at Narcan, look at water.

They're a little vial. That little vial, girl, it's like a stick of dynamite. And when they go and say "Narcan and black tar," Narcan is basically reversing the effects, and you actually throw up black tar. It's black. It is the worst feeling I'll ever feel in my life. You don't ever want to feel that. Seriously, bad.

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Quite the experience.

MR. ERIC WARDELL: No, seriously.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: But, there again, I heard [J.W.] got caught later. He's doing ten years or whatever -- drug dealing, whatever.
MS. KERRIE REAY: So, where did you go when you were released from hospital?

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

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

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: I was in a halfway house. I was out on bail and then this girl that I met, her mom is a court worker, and I'm going up for charges for B&E or whatever, theft. She said, "Why don't you write the government to see if you're status Indian, so I wrote them saying, "-- my status. I want to know who my parents are." Find my fucking parents, damn it. And they wrote back and they said -- that's how fucked up they are, you know. It's a good one. Show it to government.
In a nutshell, "You come from the Fort Good Hope Band." That's all it fucking said. But what came to me was, the guy that I met in '89 in the correctional centre saying, "Hey, we're from Fort Good Hope." I don't know if it was two guys, [C.M.] and [M.3] (ph) there, but yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Did you go to the band office in Fort Good Hope?
MR. ERIC WARDELL: Nope. I didn't even know -- I thought I was Inuit. That's the only connection. You know what, I would never, ever know to this day if it wasn't for -- what's her name -- saying, "Write to the Government. Here's the address. See, you're status Indian." That's how fucked up it is.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: I did, yeah.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: No, no. Nobody.

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

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

That, there again, is another slap in my
face because it was almost like I went there and it was
almost like -- they're looking at me and they're judging me
like, Oh, he looks gay. Oh, he looks rough. Oh, he looks
this and that. Seriously, my grandma basically said, "Oh,
he's bad." She's monarch of the Crown. She calls the
shots and that's how they looked at me to this day. To
this day, man. I swear. I do.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: In '96.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yellowknife.
MS. KERRIE REAY: And have you been here ever since?

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

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

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

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

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

Now, you won't fucking believe how I found out. The woman, [A.M.], accused me of rape. She has Hep
C. That's how I found out I had Hep C. How weird. How fucking weird. That's true. That's the weirdest thing, you know what I mean. It was meant to be or whatever, but oh, yeah, I've had it ever since.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: You got to read my book. All my life, I've been special. All my life, I've been -- I have a gift. I know that. I have something that most people wished they have. I have it, whatever, but once you get away from it, it's like a hangover. It's
like, oh, my God. If you take your worst hangover, it's
like you're fighting that "oh, I can't leave," you know
what I mean? Now, the idea is, it gets better.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But then again, I have a gift. You know, I do. I'll give you an example. We're trying to prick our fingers at school, right, and everyone's scared, so I said fuck it. So, I punch myself in the nose and all this blood comes. And I had like 20 kids, "Oh, blood --" but what I'm
getting at is, it takes the one person, like a Rosa Parks, like that one Chinese guy that stood in front of Tiananmen Square with the tanks. He stood there and that's how I see it.

So, I'm not a bad guy. I'm not evil.

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Men and women?

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Here in Yellowknife?

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

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And so, what insight
would you like to offer the commissioners in terms of the
lifestyle in those women and men as you said were
prostituting, were drugging, to make it so our young girls,
our girls that are turning 12 and 13, is there some lessons
that could be shared from the time there to help make sure
that in the future, the young girls and women are safe?

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Here in Yellowknife.
MR. ERIC WARDELL: Oh, yeah.

Unpredictable. I mean, women walking to church, whatever -
- got knocked down about a month and a half ago and just
took her purse, and the purse was just a Bible. So, the
guy thought he was robbing this woman for money, blah,
blah, you know, knocked her down, hurt her, you know. It's
tough. That is a tough, tough question to -- you know what
I mean. But there is an answer to it, but it's a lot of
work.

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

MR. ERIC WARDELL: Yeah.

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

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

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

So, I got all these people looking at me saying, "Eric, you keep doing it. You're doing such an awesome job," you know. And it's a lot of hard work. Don't be ashamed.

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: And same, is there anything that you would like to tell the commissioners yourself? You've shared your story, your truth here today, but is there anything else that you think is really important from your experience as a survivor of the Sixties Scoop or your time on the Downtown Vancouver Eastside that you would like to share with the commissioners here?

MR. ERIC WARDELL: I'll just say just more education. Don't focus on the past as much as you can focus on today (and) in the future, you know what I mean. Like, you got to get it in the brain. I think it's more of a mental thing than it is a physical thing because mentally, I can remember, you know, like that when I was a kid. When you think, Oh, my gosh, I remember that Disneyland, the feeling -- oh, yeah, the heroin, I feel that, you know what I mean.

But trying to change your thinking, like,

I changed my thinking from stealing to lying to being

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

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

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

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

We're getting better at handling each
other. We're getting better at staying away from the
booze. We're getting a good routine, her and I, which is
good, which is -- we've always wanted. Now, maybe next is,
okay, we get our apartment or whatever may be, or full-time
work. But we have come a long way from where we used to
be, you know. And it's just like you guys with this
inquiry, right. Like, that's a lot of people and that's --
you know, eight months is a long time to be talking to
people.

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

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

You're right. Every one of us. You.

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: And you know, you've
Eric Wardell (de Vries, George & Mercredi)

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
16 So, with this, hopefully, one day that we
17 could -- it'll be in the past. That's true. That is true.
18 It's a big country, big world, but at the same time, we all
19 got to pull together no matter what.
20
21 MS. KERRIE REAY: And this is the sad
22 truth that you bring here to the Inquiry today here in
23 Yellowknife. This is information that the commissioners
24 are gathering across the nation, and it's important for a
25 Northern voice, somebody who's experienced, raised in
26 Yellowknife yet found themselves in Vancouver on the
27 Downtown Eastside, and you've come back and doing well.
And so, I just would really like to thank you. Unless there's any last words that you would like to say to the commissioners -- I think we've covered a lot today.

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

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

--- 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