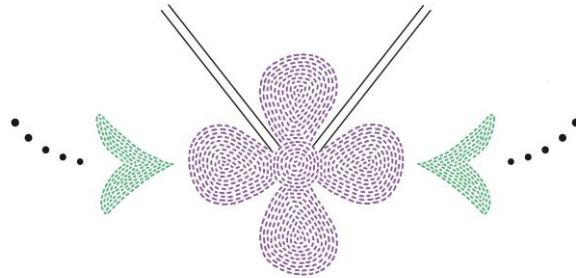


National Inquiry into  
Missing and Murdered  
Indigenous Women and Girls



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**

**Wednesday, January 24, 2018**

**Statement - Volume 206  
Henry "Raymond" Abel,  
In relation to Yvonne Desjarlais**

**Statement gathered by Kerrie Reay**

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Documents submitted with testimony: none.

**Statement - Public**  
**Henry Abel**  
**(Yvonne Desjarlais)**

**1**

1 Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

2 --- Upon commencing on Wednesday, January 24, 2018

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: Raymond, are you ready?

4 MR. HENRY ABEL: Yes, I'm ready.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay; all right.

6 So as I said, I'm just going to read for  
7 the record the information required, just to start, to  
8 start this -- your testimony.

9 This is Kerrie Reay, statement taker with  
10 the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous  
11 Women and Girls, at Yellowknife, in the Northwest  
12 Territories, on January the 24<sup>th</sup>, and the time is 10:38.

13 Today, I am speaking with Henry Abel.  
14 Henry goes by the name of Raymond, so I'll be referring to  
15 you as Raymond.

16 With us today is Raymond's niece, Diana  
17 Lockhart, and Raymond's nephew, Bernard Michel(ph).

18 Raymond is of the Denesuline?

19 MR. HENRY ABEL: Denesuline.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: First Nation?

21 MR. HENRY ABEL: First Nation.

22 MS. KERRIE REAY: And also known as  
23 Chipewyan? And you reside in Lutsel K'e Dene.

24 MR. HENRY ABEL: Lutsel K'e Dene.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Lutsel K'e Dene, and that

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2

1 was formerly known as Snowdrift, here, in the Northwest  
2 Territories?

3 MR. HENRY ABEL: Yes.

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: And today, you are here  
5 to speak about the murder of your sister Yvonne Desjarlais,  
6 here, in Yellowknife, on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

7 Also in the room today we have Roy  
8 Erasmus, that's E-r-a-s-m-u-s, as your health support.

9 And Raymond, you are here voluntarily, to  
10 provide your truth, for your sister, and also to provide  
11 any information in terms of your own personal survivorship,  
12 that you would like to share with the Commissioners, and  
13 you understand that you are both being videotaped and that  
14 you're being audiotaped?

15 MR. HENRY ABEL: Yes.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. We have also  
17 discussed your evidence today and we are asking the  
18 Commissioners for in-camera designation, with anonymity.  
19 And I will get you to confirm that the reason that you're  
20 asking for this is that your community is very isolated and  
21 the information that you may provide today could cause you  
22 and your family great difficulty in securing food and using  
23 local services. And the isolation is that there are no  
24 highway into your community and to get food outside of your  
25 community could be anywhere from four hours to two days,

1 depending on whether you have to fly out, take a boat or  
2 use a Ski-Doo.

3 Is that correct?

4 MR. HENRY ABEL: That's correct, yes.

5 *[Registrar's note: the witness subsequently requested that*  
6 *his statement be made public.]*

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So as we discussed,  
8 Raymond, the floor is yours. Please start wherever you  
9 would like; if you want to start when you were younger and  
10 growing up with your sister, or -- it's up to you.

11 Now, to clarify; you were going to start  
12 in your language --

13 MR. HENRY ABEL: Yes.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: -- and that language is  
15 Dene?

16 MR. HENRY ABEL: Dene and some (inaudible).

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Welcome.

18 MR. HENRY ABEL: (Native language)

19 I'm happy to be part of this gathering of  
20 Missing and Murdered conference. I come from a small  
21 community called Lutsel K'e Dene, home of the Lutsel K'e  
22 Dene First Nation.

23 Growing up in that community that used to  
24 be called Snowdrift and the name has been changed in -- I  
25 believe in the 1980's - place of small fish. That's what it

1 transfers to in Chipewyan (Native language).

2 Right now I'm in (inaudible) territory, in  
3 Yellowknife. Also, in Chipewyan, we call it (Native  
4 language). It's another fish of the species of white fish.

5 And we have been neighbours there through  
6 stories that I've heard were in Treaty 8 (inaudible) and  
7 through talking about land claims.

8 In the 1970's, there, I remember a formed  
9 Indian brotherhood which is now the Dene Nation. At that  
10 time the chiefs got together on this -- to make good for  
11 Native people that were caught up in racism and land  
12 grafts, and the industrial growth, there, that was  
13 happening in Yellowknife, with the gold mine that existed  
14 at that time and -- and that gold mine that was here, I was  
15 part of it, in work-wise, working underground.

16 And that was a wages of earning to live in  
17 a place like Yellowknife, a bigger place, community, city  
18 of -- larger than where I had grown up, and working for  
19 wages.

20 And prior to that I would go back to my  
21 name change. I went by the name Raymond, growing up. My  
22 parents called me Raymond, elders, people that knew me,  
23 same age, knew me as Raymond.

24 And going to day school up to Grade 6,  
25 turning -- less than a month before turning 13, I was sent

1 to Lapointe Hall, in Fort Simpson. There, I stayed there  
2 for a nine-month school year -- 1968-1969 school year, and  
3 I went to Breynat Hall the following year, in Fort Smith.

4 But in that school year, in Fort Simpson,  
5 there was a person that was my mentor, my grandmother,  
6 passed away while I was in residential school. I wasn't  
7 aware of it. I was never informed or contacted. When I got  
8 back in June, when school was over, going back home, I  
9 didn't know what to expect; shy, I had been away for ten  
10 months, and when I got back my grandmother wasn't there,  
11 and when I got back there my mother informed me that my  
12 grandmother was gone, she had passed away.

13 And when he said -- what she said about my  
14 grandmother; my mother told me that she didn't know I had  
15 left for school. Through the time, through the years,  
16 through the months that I was gone, she's been asking for  
17 me. Grandma has been asking for you; why I was gone, where  
18 I went. But I don't recall that she did tell me I went to  
19 school or not, but that's when she told me that. She asked  
20 for me, and she's gone.

21 Maybe from that point on, I don't know how  
22 I felt that time. I felt that something was gone, something  
23 was lost but I didn't know what it was.

24 To me, with my mother, it's similar. Like  
25 I don't know where -- I mad over that. To me they're gone,

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**Henry Abel**  
**(Yvonne Desjarlais)**

6

1 they're gone somewhere.

2                   There will come a time in my life that I  
3 will run into them. I will see them again.

4                   And finally, I have to be there myself and  
5 know that they're gone. I won't see them again. But I have  
6 the good spirit that I know, being with them, that keeps me  
7 going. I remember their words, their laughter.

8                   When I think about this like that  
9 (inaudible), it's telling me: Always, always respect your  
10 surroundings, the land you walk on. The water you travel  
11 on. We travel on a lake every year and the lake we travel  
12 on has been respected. Offerings; certain areas we travel.  
13 They told me to do offerings. There's something greater  
14 than ourselves that we don't see.

15                   (Native language)

16                   Some things that we don't see, that are  
17 around us, they're helpers of The Creator and (inaudible)  
18 words. Those kind of things that I've learned from my  
19 grandmother, who never went to school, that never spoke  
20 English. And I'm thankful for being part of that teaching  
21 (inaudible) have told me that I have kept.

22                   And elders that I've passed through; same  
23 -- similar words: Always respect. Respect the land you walk  
24 on. Respect other people's area. You go travel to another  
25 place, offer respect and walk in a good way, so the place



1 will be good.

2                   Through that -- growing up through the  
3 years of living, understanding two different worlds that I  
4 was in, in the English world, speaking English words, and  
5 then Dene Lutsel K'e, Chipewyan, where education in today's  
6 world is important.

7                   At the same time, in this education, you  
8 have to struggle to be well educated, in modern times  
9 today, of technology, that keeps the world going, and  
10 within this technology there are laws and there's also  
11 rules that we live by.

12                   In my education, learning my ABC's, number  
13 and how to say words that are positive, that role make my  
14 life in a good way, that I understand in English the same  
15 as in my first language. You say you speak the good words,  
16 good things will follow. It's the same thing in English for  
17 me. If I say good words in English, as I understand it,  
18 positive words, good things will follow. Whenever I say  
19 negative words, negative will follow on.

20                   That's my understanding of reading the  
21 Bible. In the beginning, it's the Word, according to God,  
22 and that Word is God.

23                   How we produce -- how we say our words has  
24 come out of our mouth? It's coming from the heart. That's  
25 who I've become. If my words are negative, that's no good.

1 That -- that turns into (inaudible), and when I say good  
2 things, good words, people will be happier. They would be  
3 happy to hear you say good words, positive words that will  
4 be uplifting.

5 I have a journey that I went through in  
6 different ways in a good way and in a bad way, and in the  
7 bad way I was stronger in my life and I recognize it. The  
8 bad way of living, for me, was taking alcohol. That is what  
9 has overpowered me and my surroundings, where I've been --  
10 where it's not a good place for me. I was crawling in the  
11 dirt. I was crawling in the dust. I have slept on the  
12 streets, with no blanket. I've been dead, walking around.  
13 In English terms, I kind of looked at myself as a dead man  
14 walking. I heard the phrase somewhere, dead man walking.  
15 I'm under the influence of alcohol; blackout, no memory. I  
16 would never remember that, but I'm still walking. I'm dead  
17 -- dead man walking. That's how I referred to myself when I  
18 was drunk, in a blackout state.

19 However, by the grace of God I'm still  
20 here and I recognize my defaults, my way of being, and I'm  
21 fighting that demon that's in there -- in here, through  
22 alcohol. That substance that I have taken, was destroying  
23 me, my body, my soul, my spirit, and I had no control over  
24 it. Once it got a hold of me, it got a hold of me in a bad  
25 way where I would go looking for it. How I can get it. And

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9

1 it came to a point where that alcohol substance came in  
2 place, something that produces alcohol. (inaudible),  
3 mouthwash. I took that with that effect that it's got  
4 alcohol in there. I crawled. I'd be carried physically,  
5 losing weight, not eating. But I didn't care. I didn't care  
6 how I would end up. Looking forward to waking up, looking  
7 for -- where can I get my next drink?

8                   And it involved people that I'm around,  
9 that are in the same situation. We would get together. We  
10 would get together and find it, and we did find it.

11                   And through all that my mind goes back to  
12 that eight-year-old, nine-year-old again. Putting myself in  
13 that place. Why am I doing this? I had seen my parents  
14 drinking. I had seen the effect that it does to them, and  
15 here I am. I'm right in the same --

16                   So when my mind goes like that again I try  
17 to get up and there are people there to help me, and they  
18 help me through programs and treatment centres -- alcohol  
19 treatment centres. I counted them; five treatment centres  
20 that I've been to, tacking my alcohol, to understand it.  
21 And it worked. I understand it. I see a little bit more  
22 each time I go a treatment, but I fall, after. Sometimes I  
23 have to get up and I do get up, but I got help. And to go  
24 back to alcohol --

25                   I had a brother (inaudible). Two years ago

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**Henry Abel**  
**(Yvonne Desjarlais)**

10

1 he was living with me and he has also got an English name,  
2 Peter. His (inaudible) is under Peter - Pierre Germain  
3 Abel.

4 Growing up together he was my older  
5 brother that I would look up to. He too went to residential  
6 school before me. I don't know what year he went but me, I  
7 remember I went in 1968. The first time he went before me.  
8 It could have been 1965 or 1966, when he first went to  
9 residential school.

10 And he too battled alcohol, but he too  
11 understands the effect of alcohol, what it does to people.  
12 He worked as an alcohol counsellor. In 1983 he passed away  
13 and he was working as an alcohol -- drug and alcohol  
14 worker, at that time, in Lutsel K'e Dene. I was 28.

15 And during the funeral, there, it was like  
16 this, sunshine, going up to a funeral, for a burial. While  
17 we waited for the burial and a car was moving and there was  
18 sunshine, and the cars are moving in and they formed a ring  
19 and it started ringing right at the burial sight, and it  
20 rained heavy. I got soaked. I didn't expect that.

21 But then one of the persons -- the elders  
22 said: We've got to finish it. We've got to bury it -- bury  
23 my brother.

24 So while standing there, burying my  
25 brother, I talked to him, spiritually. In my mind, my

1 brother, he tried to help people to come back from this  
2 disease of alcohol, but your work is incomplete. You're  
3 gone. You left. I'm going to pick up where you left off.  
4 Standing there, in my mind, speaking to him like that.

5                   After that -- after that, finally  
6 underground, the funeral, the coffin is put down, I started  
7 putting dirt back on. The (inaudible), the party again and  
8 the (inaudible) came out of that, the sun.

9                   And standing there, there's spirit that is  
10 there, communicating or talking. I did work for drug and  
11 alcohol after that. In 1983 I went up back upgrading to get  
12 more grades. I had planned to go to a human service  
13 counsellor in Ontario, in Thunder Bay and Toronto.

14                   I got accepted in Toronto's George Brown  
15 College for human service counsellor in 1986-1987. And I  
16 did attend college in Toronto. I didn't stay on, maybe  
17 three weeks. It was intense and I realized the program is  
18 based on city standards, a bigger place, but where I wanted  
19 to go with that training was -- in a community of 200  
20 people. I realized this wasn't really what I thought it is.  
21 Their training was based on street life or city life, skid  
22 row. People back home, we don't live in the city. We don't  
23 have skid row.

24                   So I dropped out of that education  
25 training in that area. But I started working in that area

1 in that field. I did guard -- during that time a young  
2 offender opened custody hours. It was guard for them.

3                   And working downtown in a place called  
4 Native men's residence, they only had -- it's also had a  
5 name -- they called it Nanny rest. And that was for people  
6 that had been living on the street and failed to get on  
7 their feet. It's not a detox. It's a place where they'll  
8 help you get back on your feet, staying sober. You could  
9 live up there for three months, in that place, and after  
10 three months of going straight and staying sober, finding  
11 work. In three months, if you stayed there and find work,  
12 you will have enough money to go on your own. That was the  
13 kind of place that I worked in. Anybody walking in the door  
14 and we smelled alcohol on their breath (inaudible) who  
15 lives here, I stayed in there. The alcohol, under the  
16 influence, then you're not allowed there. You've got to go,  
17 because that place is for people that are trying to go in a  
18 good way. That's how I look at it, I think.

19                   So I think my part there, in working that  
20 field of alcohol, related to alcohol, and dysfunction a way  
21 of being, that was the work I was doing.

22                   But I didn't take care of myself. I fell  
23 down again and went back to where I'd been abusing my body  
24 again by alcohol. And to be in alcohol, you fall many  
25 times, like I said, and when my eight, nine-year-old boy

1 that helps me get up again, knowing that alcohol is not  
2 good, why am I doing it again. I'm doing it again.

3                   So I would get back on my feet again. Like  
4 a yoyo, off and on, off and on. Through AA meetings too.  
5 Every time you fall, get up. How many times you fall,  
6 you'll get up. And I tried to understand. I'm a grown man,  
7 now. Why do I do this? I was caught in a cycle.

8                   And that alcohol had done a lot of damage  
9 to me and my surroundings. I learned to relive it and I  
10 stopped going. I stopped going on with my surroundings. I  
11 learned how to be with it. I could help -- it could help  
12 me. That's where I'm at, going through life now. I need  
13 help. I can't do it by myself.

14                   And I started reading the Bible. Reading  
15 the Bible, that I understand Jesus has worked for us, for  
16 me, to be where I am today. Jesus never failed me. Jesus  
17 gave me a helping hand. He gave instructions to go by and I  
18 didn't go by his word.

19                   I'm learning that through the rhythm, the  
20 Bible, in words, in English, where I had my education, in  
21 that way, and through reading that I understand of what and  
22 where I'm going, and how I'm going to conduct myself from  
23 here on.

24                   My understanding is what comes out of my  
25 mouth is what is me. It comes from my heart, how I say it.

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**(Yvonne Desjarlais)**

**14**

1 I defile in the Bible is what comes out of your mouth  
2 defines who I am. If good words come out of my mouth good  
3 things happen, and bad words come out of my mouth, bad  
4 things are going to happen.

5                   The word is health, good words is health.  
6 And a lot of people have said good words to me that have  
7 helped me, gave me a smile to my face. It uplifted me. It  
8 makes me feel good.

9                   So that was my helper in where I'm walking  
10 to this, reading the Bible and other books, help books that  
11 have helped me through the 12-steps program, AA, helped me.

12                   However, to that, because I'm only human,  
13 sometimes I lose track and I fall, I fall down, and I fall  
14 hard. The alcohol is one of my major, major enemy that I  
15 know. It has defused me many times and I ignored that. And  
16 I don't it want to be in control of me. This fire water  
17 that in English terms we call way before me, 100 years  
18 before me, to reading, my understanding the first encounter  
19 with alcohol, they called it fire water. And that fire  
20 water, it burns.

21                   But it's deceiving. There's fire water and  
22 today it looks like water, regular water that we drink in a  
23 cup. One is going to be good for my health, the other one  
24 is going to destroy me. If you put them side by side, they  
25 look the same. They're clear.



1                   And sometimes, when I -- what I see, they  
2 look the same, but one is not right. It's deceiving. And I  
3 don't want alcohol in me from here on. I do not want it to  
4 control my life.

5                   Be gone! Alcohol has got a spirit too. Be  
6 gone! You have taken many lives, my family, my brother, my  
7 friends, uncles, aunties.

8                   From reading and understanding the English  
9 way, I had to get back to my roots, of where I come from,  
10 from the land. Chipewyans have always been caribou hunters,  
11 caribou eaters, we've been called, and we're still there.  
12 Caribou is our backbone and the water that our elders have  
13 put forward in and told us to respect.

14                   We have food on the land. We have clean  
15 water. We have fish in the water, food. We have birds in  
16 the air. There's food. That's how I was brought up. I  
17 didn't go to a store to buy food. I didn't have no money.  
18 Money wasn't in existence. Warmth, wood - we have wood. We  
19 would keep warm. We would have our shelter to build a  
20 house.

21                   We would have the seasons of  
22 understanding, the four seasons. It's all there. In this  
23 time and age, there, with the world going fast in the world  
24 of fast food, cheap terms in eastern gratification that we  
25 live in, that have no connection to my grandfather -- our

1 grandfather. That's not healthy. We start losing sight.

2 I mentioned the land, the caribou. There  
3 are parts of that animal that keep our strength, food. The  
4 caribou give us a hide to keep us warm. It could be made  
5 into a drum. We have to drum. We are not broken. We need to  
6 go back and pick up the drum and keep going again, to be  
7 better, to give me strength, give us strength.

8 The federal government has taken control  
9 of my life. All this funding, all that money has come out  
10 of our area, gold, diamonds, now, uranium, before. They had  
11 a mine, there. Before I was born I think they had a mine of  
12 -- not that far from my community. It's closed now.

13 And the government has been going on for  
14 resources. We are one of the richest communities here, with  
15 that damage, but it's not ours. The federal government  
16 claimed it. They claimed the diamonds underground. They  
17 made rules. They made laws. It's not ours. The (inaudible)  
18 is not ours, it's underground.

19 Some land claims that are written in  
20 treaty say: Yes, it's your land but you're on top. That's  
21 your area. That's part of the treaty.

22 But what is underground is not yours, now.  
23 That's the government's ground. Well, how can that be? You  
24 have to go through the top to go to the bottom.

25 But this (inaudible) whatever is here,

1 (inaudible) with the federal government, but what's  
2 underneath, no, it's not yours, it's ours. That is theirs.  
3 That's how the law is written. Man-made law. That's man-  
4 made law.

5                   And some of these laws that we live  
6 through today, some are good, some are not too good. I go  
7 out, I could make a fire, keep warm, cook my food. In my  
8 area, we (inaudible).

9                   I go to a place, bigger place, different  
10 place that's governed by federal law, territorial law, camp  
11 grounds here, in (inaudible). You cannot pick up dry wood  
12 to burn. They'll charge you for burning dry wood in the  
13 park camp ground. They made those laws, the people,  
14 provincial, federal law.

15                   But back home, dry wood, we burn it. It's  
16 good -- it's good firewood to keep warm. By in the  
17 (inaudible) it's different. You get charged for it. You get  
18 charged for chopping a tree down. (inaudible)

19                   My grandfather - I never met my  
20 grandmother - my mother, my dad, they grew up on the land.  
21 They didn't need these permits from the government to chop  
22 down a tree. And today, it's different. Times changed.  
23 People made laws accordingly. To whose benefit?

24                   We did have laws, guidelines, when to  
25 harvest, when not to harvest, the law of nature.

1                   So I have encountered a lot of laws in  
2 different parts of being in my travels.

3                   MS. KERRIE REAY: I'm wondering if I --  
4 because you're talking about the law; we haven't come  
5 around to talking about Yvonne. And --

6                   MR. HENRY ABEL: That's where --

7                   MS. KERRIE REAY: That's where you're  
8 going? Okay, okay.

9                   MR. HENRY ABEL: -- I was going to, when  
10 you mentioned that.

11                  MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

12                  MR. HENRY ABEL: Through alcohol, that has  
13 been a strong destroyer of my people, is alcohol. I have no  
14 good things to say about alcohol. And alcohol took many  
15 lives. It took my sister's life. My sister was never a  
16 violent person. I've never seen her get really angry or be  
17 abusive. It wasn't in the nature of her. She's also a  
18 residential school survivor too.

19                  And I remember, she got married in 1966.  
20 In that same year, her husband passed away. And at the same  
21 time her husband passed away, my godfather passed away,  
22 together, and his name was Henry, my godfather, Henry  
23 (inaudible).

24                  And my sister's husband's name is Nap,  
25 Napoleon (inaudible). And that's how I got my name, Henry,

1 with the government, I believe, through my godfather.

2                   Through that law, with my sister, she had  
3 a different (inaudible), and I saw her turn to alcohol. But  
4 she wasn't always stuck in alcohol. She always came out of  
5 it too. Like I said, she never got angry, that I saw, or  
6 physically fight anybody. She always had something on the  
7 stove, recently, before she's gone. There's always people  
8 there. Her sons, friends; something on that stove, when you  
9 walked in. Have something to eat, bannock.

10                   She always worked in education. She's an  
11 assistant teacher, that I remember, when she lived in that  
12 community.

13                   But through the times of the laws and the  
14 Government of the north, alcohol was a major issue in the  
15 communities and the place right here, in Yellowknife.

16                   And even though she had a few to drink she  
17 was always friendly. And through alcohol we don't have no  
18 warning signs. We don't have -- if we have four beers,  
19 that's good enough. We don't have those kinds of switches  
20 in our brains and we keep on, keep on drinking until it  
21 overpowers us.

22                   But with my sister, she's always friendly  
23 or drunk, I would call it, a friendly drunk, happy. But she  
24 also had overdone it. It took control of her.

25                   And there are some things that I remember

1 she's still happy, and even sober she seemed to have some  
2 (inaudible), some unexpected word in her saying, and one of  
3 her sayings I recall is when I hear it; my mind always goes  
4 there. She was saying: Ooh la la! Is one word. That's her  
5 word I heard her saying.

6                   And when she got murdered, I went to the  
7 court. I was under the influence myself. I remember going  
8 to the court, (inaudible) a little bit, alcohol in my  
9 system, feeling strong, no fear. But that was all in my  
10 mind, sitting here, looking at it, thinking like that. I  
11 wasn't well, but I think I was well, seeing the person  
12 convicted; 13 years for clearing -- to me, that wasn't  
13 enough. My mind was in that space; it's not enough. It has  
14 got to be a life for a life. That's how my mind works; life  
15 for life. For briefly it crossed my mind. Okay. I'll go to  
16 jail and do that. I will take his life, through my alcohol  
17 (inaudible). Then, it will be settled. That's how my mind  
18 had worked during that trial; angry, a little anger  
19 pinching at me. How am I going to do it? Do I need a knife?  
20 Am I going to use a knife or hit him on the head? Always  
21 different ways.

22                   But -- that was on my mind but I didn't go  
23 through with it. That was the alcohol, the devil talking to  
24 me, trying to get me going.

25                   But there were people and there was God on

1 my side, to help me go through that. And people that have  
2 helped me, I haven't thanked them yet. When I left her, I  
3 thanked my niece for standing beside me all through that,  
4 through my failures. She helped me get up.

5                   And my nephew, not aware of it but he had  
6 helped me. Seeing the way I had been, seeing words that are  
7 encouraging. At the same time my nephew, we speak in the  
8 first language. We stand on the same ground. (Native  
9 language). English words but Chipewyan words, that's a  
10 different way of understanding. It's two hurdles. In the  
11 English world it's a different meaning of our understanding  
12 Chipewyan words. And then (inaudible) is the space between  
13 that I had to connect. That's how it means -- maybe it  
14 means this way but in the English way I've seen this  
15 different. But Chipewyan words is always soothing, our  
16 first language. When you hear it, it's very soothing.

17                   Yvonne spoke her language, even though she  
18 went to residential school she never lost it. She spoke it  
19 fluently.

20                   And I remember her as always being a  
21 positive person. I never looked at her as a negative  
22 person. And she has touched many lives in her life too, her  
23 children and her husband and friends. And she may be  
24 missed.

25                   I've been back home for over a year now. I

1 go past where she stayed, where she lived. I will walk in -  
2 different. It's different. I expect her, but nothing.

3                   But only memories remain, now. That time I  
4 learned to be at that place, laughter, positive energy that  
5 has been through that -- some sad times too. Her spirit is  
6 always there. It's never going to leave.

7                   Just like with my spirit, with my  
8 grandmother and my mother; it's not going to leave. It's  
9 going to be with me forever, until I'm gone. I learned to  
10 take what is good in life, leave behind what is not good. I  
11 don't need it.

12                   Teachings that I learned in true stories  
13 and reading; one of the stories that I remember my  
14 grandmother told me. Like I said, she was blind and she  
15 never saw me, but just by the touch she recognized me.

16                   She had told me stories always positive.  
17 She never told me really scary stories. Positive stories,  
18 good happenings. And going back to why I'm here, to tackle  
19 and come to understand what needs to be done to help me and  
20 my surroundings, and all over Canada and the world, the  
21 violence is not part of us. We don't need that. We need to  
22 go in a good way, good way on road, the way of life, that  
23 has no sadness, no hurts, no loss, no fear of being put  
24 down. Be happy. Positive words have been helping me to say  
25 to myself: Things are okay. Things are going to be okay,



1 and the days are going to be okay.

2                   Where do I go from there? Where am I going  
3 to go? I have to make my life to be comfortable to me, as  
4 to my surroundings. I have a big family that we have  
5 tripled through life, and some of them are still  
6 struggling. We need to come together and hold hands to keep  
7 our strength and help each other to live our heads up and  
8 be proud of who we are.

9                   Many times I have put myself down, like  
10 I'm not good enough. I'm not good enough for where I'm at,  
11 with this alcohol that had taken control of me. And it  
12 wasn't always there. There were times that it was gone, and  
13 sometimes it will show up and do it over again.

14                   And doing it all over also made me fail.  
15 It made me more stronger now. How many times I fell? Many  
16 times I fell into it.

17                   I have struggled and I'm still struggling  
18 to go in right way, go in the right path. There are many  
19 roads that I have tried. I have tried walking in the ways  
20 that will help me. There are little ways, there, that did  
21 help me to pick up a little bit; going to church, going to  
22 AA meetings, talking to people; my surroundings, where I'm  
23 at, sitting by a tree, on a rock, thinking, meditating;  
24 listening to birds out there, in the summer and spring.  
25 Those things are uplifting to me. In the house we kept

1 going.

2                   And going back to why I'm here; alcohol-  
3 related, substance, that I'm tackling right now and that  
4 has taken me (inaudible) and my sister, I believe that she  
5 would be sitting here, if not for the alcohol that has  
6 taken control of her.

7                   I would like to pause.

8                   MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

9 --- The interview is suspended.

10 --- The interview resumes.

11                   MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So we were just off  
12 the record for about two minutes, and -- while Raymond took  
13 a moment for himself. It's now 12 o'clock.

14                   So, Raymond, a tremendous amount of  
15 courage to come and to speak today, and to share your truth  
16 and the challenges that you've had with alcohol.

17                   But there's a couple of things that -- as  
18 you have spoken, that really, really makes me feel that for  
19 you and your family, you talked about alcohol and substance  
20 abuse with your parents. You talked about your brother,  
21 yourself and your sister Yvonne - all went to residential  
22 school - that there was a real separation for you when you  
23 went to school and the loss of your grandma. And you talked  
24 about -- you didn't know who you were, and you also talked  
25 about -- that Yvonne struggled with her own -- you used the

1 word for yourself: Demons; but that she too had a really  
2 difficult time with alcohol and the impact that it had on  
3 the family.

4 And so, were you aware -- was your  
5 generation, the first generation that went to residential  
6 school -- or did your parents go?

7 MR. HENRY ABEL: No. My parents never did.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. But alcohol had  
9 come into the community. Because you spoke about -- a  
10 number of times you spoke about being eight or nine, so  
11 there was something there for you, at eight or nine,  
12 watching your parents consuming alcohol. And you talked  
13 about being lost.

14 And I feel that as you have spoken today,  
15 that there's that -- still, there's a sense of loss there,  
16 for you, and trying to understand who you are.

17 And you keep talking about coming back and  
18 getting back on the right path, and such courage to -- and  
19 the determination that you showed to continue to try to be  
20 well.

21 So I do hope that that is there for you,  
22 as the days and the months come.

23 And I'm so sorry for the loss of your  
24 brother, so young, and for your sister Yvonne.

25 And it just -- if there is anything that

1 you would like to add in your own language or if there is  
2 anything that you would like to say, then you are more than  
3 welcome to continue.

4                   Sorry. I did have one question. You talked  
5 about Yvonne in residential school. Did Yvonne ever share  
6 with you, or did your brother and you ever share about your  
7 experiences at residential school?

8                   MR. HENRY ABEL: No.

9                   MS. KERRIE REAY: Did you feel that there  
10 were secrets?

11                   MR. HENRY ABEL: Hm-- no.

12                   MS. KERRIE REAY: No? Okay. Okay. But a  
13 great deal of pain?

14                   MR. HENRY ABEL: Yes, great pain and being  
15 apart.

16                   MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes. And that sense of  
17 loss? Yes.

18                   Would you like to close and -- in your  
19 language?

20                   MR. HENRY ABEL: Yes, okay. I will do that.

21                   MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay; unless there's  
22 something else you would like to add.

23                   MR. HENRY ABEL: No. I will just close now  
24 and stop now.

25                   MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

1 MR. HENRY ABEL: And what I was also  
2 mention about is the living conditions and one store that  
3 the community has and --

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay; and the experience  
5 of racism.

6 MR. HENRY ABEL: The spread of racism.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

8 MR. HENRY ABEL: But I'm okay with that in  
9 here.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: Are you sure?

11 MR. HENRY ABEL: Yes. I'm okay.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. All right, then. If  
13 you would like to close in your language, or a few words in  
14 English and then in to close in your own language?

15 MR. HENRY ABEL: Yes. Okay.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: I'll leave that with you.

17 MR. HENRY ABEL: (Native language)

18 I would like to thank the people that put  
19 this together, this Missing and Murdered Women's  
20 conference. It's been a pleasure to be here, be here and  
21 share part of my story.

22 And my recommendation is to respect each  
23 other and work together in ways that are positive. It could  
24 be in dancing, singing, get together as a whole and do  
25 things that are positive.

- 1 (Native language) - thank you.
- 2 MS. KERRIE REAY: Thank you.
- 3 --- Whereupon the recording ends.

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



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Josee Payette", is written over a solid horizontal line.

Josee Payette, Transcriptionist