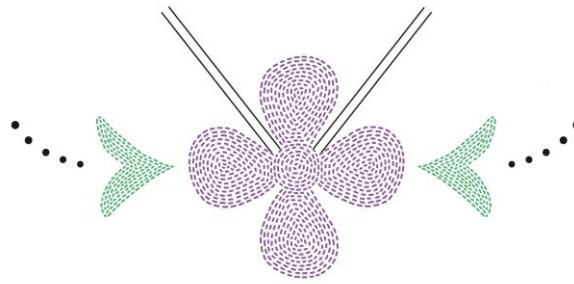


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

Thursday January 25, 2018

Statement - Volume 213

**Joachim Bonnetrouge,
In relation to his son Delmer Bonnetrouge**

Statement gathered by Frank Hope

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Statement - Public
Joachim Bonnetrouge
(Delmer Bonnetrouge)

1

1 Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

2 --- Upon commencing on January 25, 2018

3 at 4:14 p.m.

4 MR. FRANK HOPE: My name is Frank
5 Hope, statement taker with the National Inquiry Into
6 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls at
7 Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, on January 25th,
8 2018. We are at the Nova Court, and your name is?

9 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Joachim
10 Bonnetrouge.

11 MR. FRANK HOPE: Okay. And we also
12 have in the room mental health worker?

13 MR. ROY ERASMUS: Roy Erasmus.

14 MR. FRANK HOPE: Okay. Mahsi. Mahsi
15 for coming in, Joachim. What brings you in today, and
16 what would you like the commissioners to know in regards
17 to your story?

18 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yes, I am --
19 I really appreciate this. My son Delmer has been
20 missing for two-and-a-half years now. He went missing,
21 I believe, April 18, 2015. We have not heard anything
22 from him as of today. I guess it -- initially there was
23 a lot of support in the community. Because of the time
24 of the year, we thought maybe he had gone somewhere
25 hunting, it was slippery, he may have fallen down, hurt

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1 himself, but with huge support, we, we must have covered
2 at least 100 mile radius around Fort Providence and
3 there was even aerial -- aerial searches done by, I
4 think by the Canadian Forces and also some air searches
5 by the RCMP, I believe. So -- so we're pretty sure he
6 is not out there. I guess the -- when I was talking to
7 my wife about half an hour ago telling her I was
8 stopping here and I mentioned there was missing girls,
9 missing women and then Delmer is still missing. Delmer
10 is still gone. I started crying. I didn't realize it
11 was that close.

12 We've -- the -- I guess sometimes we -
13 - we miss him so bad, I -- I guess he was such -- he was
14 -- he played such a big part in our family, and of all
15 his brothers and sisters, he's got -- he was the closest
16 to his mom. They've got a special connection. And
17 sometimes I -- sometimes we worry about his mom Nancy.
18 She cries sometimes. And I -- to this day, I miss him
19 tremendously. He -- I always was proud that he was such
20 a value to our community because -- just because he was
21 an electrician, and he was on call, helped people out
22 with their -- if their fridge broke down or furnace, and
23 also the other part, he had spent a lot of time with his
24 grandma and grandpa out in the bush, and he was
25 beginning to be a heck of a moose hunter. That's what I

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1 personally really miss every fall time. Wish that he
2 would be here and help us fall hunting and so on.

3 And when we first reported a couple of
4 days when I phoned it in, they said there's going to be
5 somebody coming from the Yellowknife to visit us. And I
6 did that during the day, and right after supper, two
7 RCMP members an old truck, black truck came to our
8 house, and gosh, if it wasn't for my daughter, my
9 younger daughter being home, they started interrogating
10 me. And I had a sense that my son was missing and it
11 seemed like I was a number one suspect. But it is --
12 well, people say it is what it is.

13 And then as time went on, well, one of
14 the things was a few days later his aunt came to visit
15 from Hay River and she said she saw Delmer about a week
16 ago, she said, in front of the Royal Bank in Hay River.
17 And she said Delmer didn't look the same. Usually he's
18 kind of happy and teasing and good natured. Delmer
19 really seemed different and she said -- she said, well,
20 Delmer probably feeling he wasn't getting the breaks in
21 life and that he had gone off to look for happiness
22 somewhere.

23 MR. FRANK HOPE: So how long after he
24 was reported missing did she see him?

25 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Before?

1 MR. FRANK HOPE: Yeah, at the bank in
2 Hay River?

3 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, a week
4 before.

5 MR. FRANK HOPE: Oh, a week before he
6 went missing?

7 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, yeah,
8 he saw him in Hay River in front of the bank.

9 MR. FRANK HOPE: Okay.

10 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: So she said
11 that and I got -- I got upset. Well, anyway, so -- and
12 we were going through the searches, and every time with
13 a ski-doo or a quad, somebody brings in a piece of
14 clothing, a jacket, a shirt or something, they would
15 call one of us and Nancy and I would rush over to the
16 blue house, we call it. And sigh of relief, it wasn't
17 Delmer's jacket so that went on about three, four, six
18 months, so that's -- and then slowly I guess the
19 encouragement, the support systems just kind of died
20 off. But that first year, even though we didn't have
21 very much money, we basically changed down every rumour
22 or gossip or sighting even going -- kind of drove around
23 High Level, even went to Lake St. Ann, and I went to
24 visit Alexis First Nations their office, and even met
25 with the chief there because we heard he was around that

1 area to no avail. They didn't see him, just to follow
2 up.

3 So things like that went on, and my
4 biggest fear was -- but to backtrack a little bit,
5 trying to -- Delmer went missing trying to come to terms
6 with did he run away? Did he -- we had no clue, his mom
7 didn't have no clue, his mom didn't have no clue where
8 he had gone or why? But there is some sensitive
9 background issues because even before that he moved out
10 of the house, he was working in the mines back and forth
11 and he had a relationship, a little baby with a woman in
12 Fort Smith, things were going on back and forth. So he
13 moved out for a while, we call it the six-plex in Fort
14 Providence, an apartment, all what young people do, six-
15 plex, how many times, three, four, five times, his
16 little apartment got broken into. How many times we had
17 to change the locks. There was a lot going on, the
18 weekends, I guess, party, drinking. Young people,
19 coming back and forth. So like you said, it went on for
20 a while until -- until finally we said -- couldn't
21 afford the -- couldn't afford the break-ins anymore,
22 can't afford the rent, so he moved back in. He kept on
23 working for [Company] building the new hospital in Hay
24 River. He was an electrician.

25 So -- but then I heard he was getting

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Joachim Bonnetrouge
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1 charged, so I asked him, I heard you're getting charged,
2 you're supposed to -- and he said, dad, I don't want to
3 talk about it. So just left it. Left it like that.
4 And for the longest time, and I guess he missed two --
5 two court -- two court dates. No show. And then I saw
6 something on Facebook, on the internet, and at the time,
7 I was the chief too. And of course, headline, chief's
8 son missing. And then CBC said -- it was alleged that
9 chief son's had three charges against him. And it was
10 to do with, I think it -- for about a year or so, I
11 couldn't understand what the charges were because we --
12 in our communities and in the north and in our culture,
13 we don't have that, that kind of stuff. It was
14 something to do with luring or something or other, so we
15 had those checked out. And people said, well, there's a
16 couple of -- couple of girls, women that complained that
17 Delmer was trying to do something with them or -- and
18 then you know what, those two girls they do that kind of
19 stuff, they said it might be extortion or what's it
20 called, they're trying to get back at him.
21 So by -- so I met with a sergeant out
22 of Hay River RCMP. Trying to find out what do they
23 know, what are they doing to try and find him, and what
24 we also did in the community, trying to tell them Delmer
25 was missing. So it was pretty cordial. But then about

1 information]. And so that, I guess like any mom and dad,
2 worry about stuff like that that he be okay.

3 They -- the local corporal too, did
4 say -- I had a meeting with him about a month ago, he
5 said -- he's going to try and find Delmer, and he talked
6 lots about closure. And I, I shared whole-heartedly
7 with him what we went through, and some of the
8 underlying possible reasons why he took flight if he did
9 at all. Missing and haven't heard from him for two-and-
10 a-half years. Wonder. And I -- and he said he was
11 going to -- because of his own background and
12 experience, he said he was going to -- he said he's
13 going to find Delmer. And even last year, we got a
14 message, said, hey, Delmer got arrested in Peace River.
15 Holy man, for a while I got scared and then a few
16 seconds later I was happy. Good gosh I'll see big bad
17 again in a few days if he's arrested, but that was just
18 gossip, rumour. Drunk talk whatever they do. But
19 anyway, they -- I guess the nature of the complaint, I
20 guess with -- because with luring for sexual favours or
21 whatever it is, it will take a lawyer. The family would
22 need to hire a lawyer to find out what -- what's the
23 information. But like I don't think we want -- we want
24 to go there yet. But -- and because of the nature of
25 the charges, the three charges, it's shame based. And I

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1 was chief at the time, and he is the kind of person that
2 he -- he probably didn't want to bring any shame upon
3 his dad. I was the chief. So it probably just go away.
4 And don't have to deal with kind of the shame based.
5 Something like a sexual assault or a rape kind of thing.
6 But -- but luring is, I still don't even understand.

7 Anyway, so that's, that's where it is
8 at right now. There was, yeah, I am concerned too
9 because I know about -- throughout Canada, throughout
10 the world, throughout the native communities maybe
11 because of Residential School, poor sexuality. Not
12 healthy way of boys and girls, men and women all that
13 kind of stuff. It's always there. But nobody -- nobody
14 wants to go there. And -- and talking about addiction,
15 there's -- and we're -- we're Dene and being a Dene
16 community there's two maybe three generations very
17 unhealthy relationships. Regarding respect for, you
18 know, now I think about if there's a girl, I will tell
19 my sons respect them like you respect your mom. That
20 kind of messaging young people just don't have. How
21 many generations, I don't know. There's a lot of
22 drinking in every community, and stuff happens and so I
23 guess that's why I -- to help -- because I am no
24 different than what my sons are going through, terrible
25 time with relationships -- relationships. Even as a

1 seven years and then his brother was coming home,
2 Delmer was home. His brother was coming home. Holy man,
3 everybody was happy. It didn't pan out. They had total
4 different -- it didn't work out so he wanted to do so
5 much with his little brother, go hunting and finishing.
6 Doing different stuff that just didn't pan out. I think
7 that also hurt him too. So all kinds of different stuff
8 like that in a nutshell. Like, his brother, and all of
9 his friends I guess miss him terribly, and even about an
10 hour ago, I was saying that when I mentioned Delmer's
11 name to my wife on the phone, I started crying and,
12 yeah, I guess the big thing now is trying to put some
13 closure, you know, if that's the way it's meant to be,
14 then at least some acceptance and gosh emotionally, I
15 know my family, myself, my wife and the rest of the
16 family, terribly need some emotional support because
17 yeah, if we don't begin to deal with it emotionally,
18 properly then -- then people, we may suffer, we don't
19 need to suffer, that kind of stuff, that I worry about
20 too, and I guess the main big animal -- elephant in the
21 room with this inquiry, and the healing that needs to
22 really begin is relationships and sexuality and boys and
23 girls and men and women, you know, it has been hidden
24 for too long and the -- the laws in Canada are not, not
25 really forthcoming too. And obviously we -- we need to

1 develop various different things in our communities
2 because right now we're full-blown denial for anything -
3 - anything that's health -- healthy thing.

4 So still to make headway to contribute
5 to our community, our people, just too much, still too
6 much -- too much hurting going on and we -- I hope by me
7 talking here we -- at least begin to break that cycle,
8 you know, and for sure my other son and Delmer's
9 sister's also need to -- so that the -- this hurting
10 will stop. Yeah, I really pray because I -- I love my
11 wife dearly and my children, I always did, even though I
12 may not have been there for them all the time but I love
13 them dearly and want to be the best father that I could
14 be and now I'm a grandpa. I want -- I want to be -- I
15 want to be the best I could be for them, yeah, and I
16 guess I needed to finish off that way sharing that.

17 MR. FRANK HOPE: Okay.

18 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah.

19 MR. FRANK HOPE: So just a couple of
20 questions, so at the time that Delmer was reported
21 missing, what -- how long was it before he was reported
22 missing and he was living -- he was living with you guys
23 --

24 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, he had
25 just come home, but dropped off his clothes and he was

1 working in Yellowknife, Hay River, back and forth.

2 MR. FRANK HOPE: So he was transient
3 with his work?

4 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah.

5 MR. FRANK HOPE: But home base was your
6 place?

7 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, drops
8 off his clothes there.

9 MR. FRANK HOPE: So he was -- he would
10 go to Yellowknife, he would go to Hay River, and he
11 would work at these sites for days and then come back?

12 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, yeah.

13 MR. FRANK HOPE: And go to another job?

14 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah.

15 MR. FRANK HOPE: So how long in between
16 was he reported missing before you actually reported
17 him?

18 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Actually,
19 according to his mom, his mom was at home, and I was
20 travelling. I think maybe too, maybe three days before
21 she noticed. Usually he comes in, pops in, checks on
22 his mom, or checks on the house, and three days and all
23 of a sudden, he was just not there anymore.

24 MR. FRANK HOPE: Right. And then who
25 reported him?

1 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Officially I
2 did.

3 MR. FRANK HOPE: Okay. You reported
4 him to the RCMP?

5 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yes, yeah.

6 MR. FRANK HOPE: Okay. And from the
7 time that you reported him to the RCMP, what was their
8 involvement. How did they respond in regards to your
9 actual report?

10 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: They said --
11 well, they received my phone call, and they said they'll
12 have somebody look into it.

13 MR. FRANK HOPE: Mnhmm.

14 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: And then four
15 hours later, I think there was two investigators, plain
16 clothes came to my house. Right away, I felt like I was
17 number 1 suspect. They interrogated me.

18 MR. FRANK HOPE: From Yellowknife?

19 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, from
20 Yellowknife, yeah, yeah.

21 MR. FRANK HOPE: And how long did that
22 process happen? How long was that interview taking
23 place?

24 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: The interview
25 took about three hours, yeah. Just outside on a picnic

1 table.

2 MR. FRANK HOPE: So what made you feel
3 that they were interrogating you? You felt like a
4 suspect?

5 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, I felt
6 like a suspect. It's a good thing my daughter was
7 there, I guess, to correct and -- because they asked
8 some pretty pointed questions, yeah.

9 MR. FRANK HOPE: And then how did it
10 end?

11 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: I -- you
12 know, just the way I am, I -- I had nothing to hide, you
13 know, so -- but I felt like I was interrogated, yeah.
14 Number 1 suspect. I guess that's -- that's what they do
15 across Canada, I guess.

16 MR. FRANK HOPE: Yeah. Yeah, because
17 there's always process, you know, when someone is
18 missing, you know. A woman, a girl, a man, a boy.

19 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, yeah.

20 MR. FRANK HOPE: Right? There's always
21 -- the RCMP or city police if it's in Saskatoon,
22 Vancouver, whatever, they all have their different types
23 of response. You know, they all respond differently.
24 So I guess that's what we're looking at is looking at
25 those themes and those systemic issues of -- you know,

1 if it's an issue of, you know, race, is there racism?

2 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, there
3 was a bit of that. At that time too, during that time,
4 we should have, I think the band should have. There was
5 a lot of muscle being put on by two RCMP members. Just
6 during that -- during that whole time.

7 MR. FRANK HOPE: From the community or
8 from out?

9 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: They were
10 there, but they were beating up a lot of younger guys.
11 A lot of intimidation by the RCMP -- those two RCMP. In
12 retrospect, I did mention it to the G Division
13 commander. At that time, we should have laid a
14 complaint. They beat up four -- four of our young men
15 very unnecessarily just maybe just to intimidation -- so
16 that was going on too. My suspicion is maybe because
17 Delmer was young guy, good looking, doing well, maybe
18 they didn't like that I sometimes think. I know it's
19 kind of -- yeah, I still believe that trumped up
20 charges, and they are the ones that probably wrote it
21 up. Yeah, so -- yeah, so that that's probably a good
22 possibility so that's what I asked the RCMP to review
23 the file but I guess they don't want to, I guess, yeah.

24 MR. FRANK HOPE: So Delmer is missing,
25 so in regards to the justice system, all those, the

1 charges that he -- you said there's three of them, three
2 charges?

3 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Three, yeah.

4 MR. FRANK HOPE: So do you know if
5 those charges stand while he's missing, like, how does
6 that work; do you know?

7 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Say that
8 again?

9 MR. FRANK HOPE: Yeah. Do those -- the
10 charges that he's -- you said he missed two court dates.

11 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah.

12 MR. FRANK HOPE: He missed two court
13 dates to appear for the three charges. So as long as
14 he's missing, those charges stand?

15 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, still
16 stand, yeah, yeah.

17 MR. FRANK HOPE: So they stand, hey?

18 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, yeah.

19 And I've learned also if he keeps on being missing after
20 seven years, they can declare him dead, yeah. After
21 seven years, you might know a little bit about that too.
22 And then statute of limitations also say that after 20
23 years, those charges will drop. Yeah. It will be more
24 charges, and then Delmer will be 58 years old, he'll
25 come home. But myself, I don't know about his mom, but

1 my wish is that he would -- he would come home and
2 answer to the charges, a lot of his aunts -- aunties are
3 saying he'll support him and maybe -- maybe raise money
4 for law to, get him good defence and get those charges
5 thrown out. Sometimes I wish that it would happen and
6 of course it will be all to enter the process and deal
7 with it and there's healing involved because I believe
8 the truth will always set you free. The truth will set
9 you free. I have learned that, and I believe -- I
10 believe in that. Yeah.

11 MR. FRANK HOPE: Yes, so as you know,
12 this national inquiry is looking into those systemic
13 issues in regards to the missing and murdered women and
14 girls, and you know, a lot of those systemic issues are
15 -- like, some of the themes we're looking at is -- some
16 of them are, you know, unsolved, some of them -- some of
17 the women are survivors. Survivors of domestic
18 violence. Survivors of -- that have been left to die
19 and survived, that have been involved with being raped,
20 being held captive, you know, all of these horrendous
21 things that have happened to them, and the police
22 involvement, how the police have been involved in that
23 process, we're looking at sexual exploitation and abuse.
24 There is child welfare involvement. There is foster
25 care involvement. Adoption, addiction, healing,

1 culture, ceremony, resiliency, systemic racism,
2 barriers, and certainly a lot of -- a lot of causes are
3 from men. A lot of it is comes from men that have been
4 reported in the process. So we're listening to stories
5 of husbands and common law and partners that have been
6 involved with a lot of these issues.

7 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yes.

8 MR. FRANK HOPE: So what would be your
9 message in regards to that or recommendation in regards
10 to your own story?

11 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Yeah, I
12 guess, it -- it's so basic how many generations of
13 families have been -- families have been torn apart.
14 Dislocated. Holy man, a lot of recovery even to trace
15 back to your mom and dad or grandpa, even to begin that
16 conversation, I think right now is critical to, yeah,
17 I've got a lot of respect for this inquiry because even
18 that whole notion of giving us our voice back, and more
19 so giving voice back to women because I guess the big
20 societies, it's men domineering. Women finally
21 beginning to -- and I get excited sometimes too because
22 in -- for a while in our community, the women were the
23 movers and shakers, and I guess they were doing their
24 own healing. But men, those on the perimeter, nothing
25 happening for the men. And like you say, men were

1 generally perpetrators so that's got to be worked out, I
2 guess. Yeah, even -- even the whole -- in the community
3 -- in the community, if there's domestic violence, what
4 happens is the women and the children are removed. And
5 the man stays in the house. Even simple things like
6 that has -- that's got to change. You have to reverse
7 that. The woman should never ever have to leave her
8 home with the children. So even simple thing like that,
9 I -- it was pointed out to me is that usually the --
10 that's the worst thing you can do to the family is the
11 guy stays at home, he has done the domestic violence
12 thing. The woman, the mother black and blue with the
13 children, they're sent away. That's a total no no, even
14 we can get that number 1 in our community. And we need
15 to say any abuse against girls or women zero tolerance,
16 period. And just maybe make a sign, the buck stops here
17 kind of thing, and that ownership. And it's always a
18 catch 22 because it's through the all the drinking and
19 all the drugging, on the weekends, holy man, we're
20 enabling. But even if you wrote out, stop, stop, no
21 more abuse against girls and women in our community, and
22 I would be one of the first ones to sign mine name.
23 Take ownership. Just a simple thing like that. We need
24 to start that, yesterday started today, you know. Yeah,
25 it's -- I can probably go on for another half hour to an

1 hour, but we just need simple little steps, like, what I
2 just suggested. That abuse has to stop and the healing
3 has to begin, and what is happening here is giving
4 voice. Giving the women, young girls their voice back
5 there is abuse happening in your life, do something
6 about it. Yeah. And god knows we need training, we
7 need caretakers, we need counsellor, we need therapists,
8 gosh. Gosh, there is nothing in the communities.
9 Thirty years ago, we had AA, we had sharing circles and
10 all of a sudden, I don't know, the funding dried up or
11 people -- the people that were at the forefront, maybe
12 we burned them out. Maybe the second generation is not
13 coming up, we don't have any counsellors, we need
14 therapists, support groups, you know. Boy, if you're
15 trying to be sober nowadays in any community, in my
16 community we wish you luck. There's no support. If
17 somebody is going to live a sober lifestyle, there's no
18 support anywhere. Yeah. Maybe the mom and dad are just
19 hanging on to each other the rest of the children may be
20 this. All kinds of different things might be happening,
21 but just hanging on for dear life. Yeah. Yeah, it's,
22 we need support systems for families, just basic. To
23 simmer things down a bit. Holy man, just -- I guess our
24 community is not the only one, I travel, see what's
25 going on. Drugs we're supposed to prepare, but holy

1 man. Alcohol, we -- I think we have learned to manage
2 it, but drugs that are coming in now, holy man, it's
3 dangerous stuff, and a lot of our young people have gone
4 there already, so yeah.

5 MR. FRANK HOPE: So kah (ph).

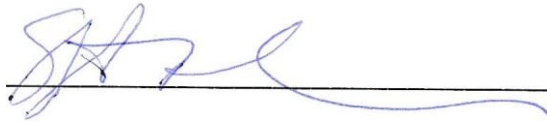
6 MR. JOACHIM BONNETROUGE: Kah mahsi.

7 MR. FRANK HOPE: Mahsi, thank you for that.

8 That concludes our interview with Joachim today, and the
9 time is 5:07.

10 --- Whereupon the statement concluded at 5:07 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.



Stephanie Menard, CSR(A)