National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth Gathering Process – Part I
Public Hearings
Bonaventure Hotel
Montréal, Quebec

Translation
Thursday, March 15, 2018
Public Volume No. 67
Adrienne Anichinapéo and Catherine Anichinapéo
Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller and Commissioners Michèle Audette and Brian Eyolfson
Commission Counsel Shelby Thomas
INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.
## II

### APPEARANCES

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<td>Conseil des Anicinabek de Kictisakik</td>
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<td>Directeur des poursuites pénales et criminelles</td>
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<td>Government of Canada</td>
<td>Jennifer Clarke</td>
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<td>Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami</td>
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<td>Innu Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam (ITUM)</td>
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<td>Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach</td>
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<td>Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada</td>
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<td>Saturviit Inuit Women’s Association of Nunavik</td>
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<td>Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre</td>
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<td>Quebec Native Women Inc.</td>
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<td>Regroupement Mamit Innuat</td>
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**Witnesses: Adrienne Anichinapéo and Catherine Anichinapéo**

Heard by: Chief Commissioner Marion Buller, Commissioners Michèle Audette and Brian Eyolfson

Legal Counsel: Shelby Thomas

Grandmothers, Elders, Knowledge-Keepers: Melanie Morrison (NFAC), Sarah Nowrakudluk (NFAC), Laurie Odjick (NFAC), Sedalia Fazio, Louise Hauilli, Audrey Siegl, Pénélope Guay, Kathy Louis, Oscar Kistabish, Évelyne St-Onge, Bernie Poitras Williams, Laureen “Blu” Waters-Gaudio, Martha Greig, Patricia Kaniente Stacey, Michael Standup, Elaine Kicknosway, Edouard Chilton, Sharon Tardif-Shecanapish, Winnie Bosum, Priscilla Bosum

Clerk: Maryiam Khoury
Registrar: Bryan Zandberg
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<td>Mario Brisson: <em>Étude sur la santé et l’expérience de vie des femmes de Kitcisakik</em>. Thesis, Université de Sherbrooke, February 2014 (149 pages)</td>
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--- Upon commencing on Thursday, March 15, at 9:05 a.m.

**MS. KONWATSITSAWI M. MELOCHE:** (Speaking in Mohawk). I am here this morning with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

Thank you to Thriving Thursday. It’s a very challenging day. We are on day number four. So thank you to all who are tuning in and coming out today.

We have a couple of announcements -- today we will have the opening by our Mohawk Elder, Kawenodas (phon.) from Kahnawake who will say an opening prayer, followed by Martha, who will do the Quliq.

If we could get you up, please, Kawenodas?

**MS. SEDALIA FAZIO:** Kuei. (Prayer in Mohawk).

So I say good morning. I welcome you to Tiohtià:ke, Montreal, unceded Mohawk territory. My name is Kawenodas. I am Bear Clan from Kahnawake. And my prayer for today, our fourth day of the Inquiry, is that (speaking in Mohawk), our Creator and (speaking in Mohawk), our medicines, listen to everything they’re going to hear today and that the non-Aboriginal people who are going to hear what they’re going to hear today, listen carefully and help us. These are our truths. These are the things that are happening to our people. They’ve been happening to our
people for many years and they are happening today. This is
not something that was in the past. It’s something that
continues to happen. And without the help of (speaking in
Mohawk) our Creator and our medicines and those non-
Indigenous people, without your help, we can’t get
anywhere. We need you. As I said, these are our truths.
Please listen with open hearts and open minds, and may
everyone who is here at the Inquiry, may we bring our minds
as one so it’s one strong mind and one strong heart as we
listen to these people. They need your minds. They need
your hearts.

(Speaking in Mohawk). Have a good day.

MS. KONWATSITSAWI M. MELOCHE: (Speaking in
Mohawk).

MS. MARTHA GREIG: (Speaking in Inuktitut). Good morning. I’m once again lighting the
Quliq. And this, I won’t get into explanations too much
because you’ve been hearing it for three days now. This is
the fourth day.

But as I light the Quliq, I just want to
share that this is something that is very important to us.
It’s our survival. Though we only use it now for ceremonial
purposes, it still reminds me of what it was like back when
we -- before the white people came to our territory. Like I
said, this is our source of light and our heat, and it
provided our food -- I mean to cook our food and dry our clothes. That’s something that is so beautiful. And I just wish everyone a good day, and especially the speakers. Don’t forget to take a deep breath from your nose and out through your mouth and have your feet grounded on the floor because that helps you to be grounded.

And everyone who is listening out there that is here, my heart goes out to all of you and to the Commissioners. God bless you all.

Thank you.

MS. KONWATSITSAWI M. MELOCHE: Thank you.

Just a reminder to shut off your phones, please.

Also, there is -- there are also the -- the headphones at the back of the room. It’s number 2 for French, number 1 for English, if you need to change the headphones.

There will be no opening remarks this morning from the Commissioners.

And just a note, please, for all of the media, please. The stories here are incredible. There are many, many problems today and each day and the lives, our lives, it’s very, very hard for an Inuit, an Indigenous person, a native Attikamek, Crees. Life is very hard for
us, but I must recommend that you, please, take the family 
after the testimony today, please stay about 20 minutes for 
the people. Take a break and take -- because there is a lot 
of emotion. There’s so many emotions of trauma. 

There is a term that’s come up in the last 
couple of years called trauma-informed care. And I know 
that you, the media, have a job to do. However, we are 
asking that you do it respectfully and please allow the 
families time to regain their composure and realign 
themselves because it’s not an easy situation. 

So as we go through this week, and we are on 
Day Four, Thriving Thursday, but it’s also Trauma Thursday 
because lots of trauma has occurred for us historically, not 
only present-day stories but historically, and it’s a 
challenge. And I’ve been informed to ask you to please take 
time – take care of the families, please. 

Okay. Thank you. 

I have to introduce the witnesses today, 
today’s witnesses. The lawyer is Ms. Shelby Thomas, also 
the witnesses, the witnesses are Adrienne and Catherine 
Anichinapéo. 

Merci. (translating self) Thank you. 

First Hearing 

Witnesses: Adrienne Anichinapéo and Catherine Anichinapéo
MS. SHELBY THOMAS: Good morning, Commissioners.

This morning, Adrienne Anichinapéo is going to tell her personal story as a survivor.

My name is Shelby Thomas and I am one of the legal counsels for the National Inquiry, and I’d like to take the time to thank you for being welcomed as guests here in this territory.

Mr. Registrar, Adrienne would like to be sworn in on the Bible.

MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Good Morning, Adrienne. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. ADRIENNE ANICHINAPÉO: Yes.

MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Thank you.

MS. SHELBY THOMAS: Adrienne, to start, could you introduce yourself to the Commissioners?

MS. ADRIENNE ANICHINAPÉO: Kuei. (Speaking in Algonquin).

First, I’d like to thank you for welcoming me today. It’s a great honour for me to be here. I’m a mother, a woman, a mother of three children. I have a spouse. I have my family. And coming here to share what I’ve -- been through in my life, this is something huge for me.
I’m getting a bit emotional because it’s the first time that I’ve allowed myself to share with you what I’ve gone through. I’m also very honoured that my older sister is here with me, and I know that my family back home feels strongly about what I’ll be sharing here. And it’s thanks to them that I’m here today, and there are people that I’ve met in public that I’m happy to know are here because it’s important for me, Nick and his team.

I’m -- can I start? For me, an introduction is talking a bit about myself, but it seems that it hasn’t started. I was saying earlier that I’m a mother and all that, but I was born into a family too. My parents had 12 children, but now there are only 9 of us children left in our family.

My father was a great trapper. He lived in the extreme poverty of the Indigenous people. We weren’t well off, us either, in our -- my father didn’t have a lot of money to feed us and there were a lot of us. He had to work. He had to hunt and trap really hard to be able to feed all of us.

And my mother, my mother lost her parents at a very young age. She was orphaned very young. It was very hard on her. I know only too well how she must have lived her whole life trying to show us what’s like to be a mother, when she herself had not known -- not really known
her mother. Unfortunately, today, she died in 2006, but she still decided to be very serene, because my mother, when we were children, she always -- she often drank alcohol to drown her sorrows, to drown all the miseries of the life she had been living until pretty much the last five years of her life. In the last five years of her life, you might say she was catching up, making up for time by sharing her childhood with us.

And the way she experienced her childhood, I sort of experienced it too. She made me relive things that she had gone through, violence from adults who had raised my mother. My mother was raised by one of her aunts who was extremely violent with her. At one point, she had to like -- in the end, to stay alive, she had to run away from her aunt because my aunt had split my mother’s forehead like this from here to here. And it’s the grandmother to my husband now, grandmother to my husband that he had at the time before she passed away; she’s passed away now. I think she must have been close to 98, or something like that. She’s the one who cared for my mother. She helped my mother escape her life there.

My mother got married very young. She was something like 14, I think. She got married in 1956-57. She was born in ’42. That’s like, very young in those days. She had many, many children and no guidance to help her raise
her children. A child having children, that was my mother’s life.

I grew up -- my earliest childhood memories are of binges, drinking during the holidays. It wasn’t easy. I was -- I was born on August 27, 1970, in December 1970. The furthest back I can remember, because in the last five years of my mother’s life, I asked her a question. There’s something that has always -- often haunted me or kept coming back to me whenever I would see moonlight, the stars. And in it, someone is covering me with something black like this. I asked my mother what it was. It was always coming back to me, that period, and I’m someone who’s -- I dressed like this today -- I’m someone who likes hunting and trapping, fishing. That’s the kind of person I am, to help me find my roots, regain my identity, that’s how I was able to recover.

And my mother, when I asked my mother that, it was a story involving drinking where they all knocked over the wood stove to keep us warm in winter, in some minus 20 degrees, but it’s my sister who took me in the (speaking in Native language). I was all swaddled. The others had a made room behind the house to sleep outside. They put everything -- they had set it up. I don’t really know how, but they set it up. It was she and my other sisters who dressed me to keep me warm. That’s as far back
as I can remember. I was barely three months old.

All this to say that a child can remember way back when something is done to them, when something happens to them.

Then I grew up. I went to school like all the other children. In those days, we didn’t have a school in our community, which is no longer the case today, at least not for our elementary school children. I had to leave home to go to school.

I remember on my first day of school, I was looking at a large hallway. It was in Lac-Simon. I threw a fit there because I didn’t want to go in. My brother took me inside the school, “Come, come, we’re going in too. Come. (speaking in Native language).” That’s what he told me. I could speak a little French, because my brothers all spoke French. It was quite a shock, my first day of school, a traumatic experience. I went to elementary school in Lac-Simon. I went to high school in Lac-Simon.

It wasn’t easy for me to live like that. Still, I did finish high school. I graduated from the high school in Lac-Simon in ’88. Despite my parents not being there all the time for me, to my surprise, my mother came to my high school graduation, a mother who was never there the whole time I was in school. I barely saw her. We’d leave in August, September and then I wouldn’t see her
until December, June, April, Easter holidays, June. That’s all the time I had with my mother. At my Secondary V graduation, she was there and she was very proud of me.

My father wasn’t really there. That was my childhood.

Along the way I also experienced sexual assault. It also wasn’t easy to live with the violence from my brothers. I don’t remember any sexual assault from my brothers, but I do remember boys who were older than me and who sexually abused me.

When I was in therapy, because I started therapy in ’93 with a psychiatrist who helped me work through the trauma I had experienced, the whole issue of physical violence, sexual assault, verbal, all of that. I experienced all of that. And in the post-traumatic treatment that I got from the psychiatrist, he went through each event with me. This helped me a lot because it allowed me to release all the pain and the frustrations that I had experienced and that I had kept deep inside of me. It was quite hard.

At one point I told my psychiatrist: “I want to go into therapy.” He said, “Aren’t you already in therapy with me?” That’s what he said. I said, “No, I want to go and see what it’s like in a treatment centre.” So he -- and me at that time, in -- it was in ’95 -- I wasn’t
drinking. I didn’t have any substance abuse. I didn’t drink alcohol. I was smoking -- I’d smoke some hash from time to time. I wasn’t even eligible for therapy because I didn’t have an alcohol or drug problem. I asked my psychiatrist to help get me in. I went in to see and I did get the answers I was looking for after all. Now I know what a treatment centre is. At least I know what it is. At least, the treatment centres where I went, they helped me a lot. And so I worked. I started to work after that. I was always either in school or working for the summer when I was in high school until the age of 18, when I started going to CÉGEP. I think I did one year, a year and half, of an accounting course in the early ’90s. It seems like so long ago. And yet I’m only 47. They tell me I’m only 47. I feel very old because of everything that I’ve been through, to me, it seems to be so long ago. I was in CÉGEP. When I was in CÉGEP, my godfather came to get me. He was a Chief at the time. He told me then, “You’re going to stop going to school. You’re going to come and work. We need people for work.” So I started working then. I wasn’t able to finish my CÉGEP. I think I had about a year and half or two to finish. I never went back. That was over 20 years ago. On November 4th of ’94 I started to work in my community. I was barely 24. So I worked as
secretary while my sister and other people who were there also tried to finish high school. I was done and I was asked to go replace them while they were attending their adult education courses upstairs, on the second floor of the healthcare centre.

By the way, I’m from Kitcisakik. Kitcisakik is a community where we don’t have electricity, no running water. Modern homes, we don’t have that. We’re not used to that, because we don’t have that to this day. We’re in 2018, and our children back home live in those conditions.

I’ve always worked. I’ve done -- I worked in education. I worked at a healthcare centre. I worked helping young people go back to school. I’ve also managed social assistance programs. I worked my whole life like this, until 2009.

In my community, the former Council had conducted a study to try and see -- try to assess and also see what women had gone through. They set up a study on the health and experiences of women in Kitcisakik. It was sponsored by the World Health Organization. This was also done for the men, something which had never been done before, because we often talk about what our women have experienced. Our men too have experienced it. They often say that guys, men, are very violent people, but it’s -- we’re all people who are suffering. That’s how I see it
today.

In the study that my community took part in, on the number of -- because it was divided into age groups, the way the World Health Organization measured the different levels or stages of violence -- physical, sexual, psychological, all of that -- everything was outlined. At that time, in that study, most -- I’d even say close to 90 percent had experienced sexual, physical or psychological abuse. It’s a reality which is hard to hear.

So we, in Kitcisakik, did this study in order to try to find a way to help our people, because now I know that it’s possible to escape it, but some people are still trapped in their trauma. I think that everyone deserves to go at their own pace when it comes to finding a way out.

And, when I got in the position of -- because we’d experienced a situation. Before me, there were two men who were Chiefs in the community, one man had been there for quite a while. My spouse was also Chief before me. It was not easy what we went through.

Now, when I got in as Chief, my goal was to get my community out of the squalor we were living in and it’s still like that. At the beginning I wasn’t too sure. You know, I did have some work experience, but I didn’t know -- I had no idea about the level of responsibility
that I had accepted going in as Chief. Yet I had seen my sister who had been Chief. The first female Chief in my community was my sister.

My mother wasn’t around when I got in as Chief because I know that my mother, when we had the elections, when my husband got in, I still decided to run because I believed in myself. I believed that things -- but I knew that at that time, I wasn’t going to be elected the first time I ran. I was well aware, because my community so badly needed someone to kick-start things, and my spouse was elected for the first time and my mother would often tease my husband. She said, “I’m going home. I lost the election.” She’d say that to tease him. I knew that my mother loved my husband very much, and I knew she was going to support him until he was able to do it.

It was incredible to see my mother, because of the love she had for us that she was able to give us toward the end of her life, it was wonderful because she shared her life, how she had lived.

When I watch -- sometimes I watch this movie. One of my younger brothers watches it quite often. It’s the movie Little Aurore’s Tragedy. That’s how my mother’s life was. I always get choked up when I watch it. “Ah! Turn that off!” I often say to my brother, “Turn that off, your movie’s boring.” I’d say that because it was
really upsetting for me to watch it. I could see, like, my mother in the movie.

My mother didn’t necessarily go into therapy, but she did open up her heart to tell us what she’d been through. Despite what she’d been through, she was able to give us love, to me and to my spouse when he became Chief, my sister when she was Chief. That was something she was always supportive of. And she always told us -- how did she say that -- she’d say -- (speaking Native language). It means that “You do not take your sister’s or your brother’s or your child’s side when he’s a community leader,” because she, in her mind, it’s because you belong to the community, not to your family. That’s how it was. It was like that.

And my mother, when my sister became Chief, it was very hard for her. It was very hard on us too. It was very hard because it was at the time when women had decided to stand up and denounce the violence we experienced. We had also spoken out against sexual assault involving the police, and all of that. There was a cleanup that was started at the time by the Chief who was there at the time. It was my godfather Donat. I feel I can say his name, because he was my mentor, as they say. He was Chief for a long time. He was there. He supported my sister when she was Chief.
When I got in, the Elders were supporting me, or at least I had the Elders that remained. There must have been at least a dozen left at the time I started.

At the beginning, the violence I was subjected to included being bullied, insulted because in the -- I worked on the impact of violence, the levels of violence we were subjected to. I was very much aware of it, of how it was, how it is. I was told all kinds of things. I was accused of all kinds of things that I didn’t even have anything to do with, nothing to do with the wages I was getting. I was being told that I was earning wages that I shouldn’t be getting, when it wasn’t true. I was making $47,000 a year while my directors were getting wages a lot higher than what I was getting, and I was being told that.

But that, these are things that are – that was one of the things -- that’s how they started publicly saying things to me. At a certain point, I lost it. At one point, I just got up from the meeting and left. I was, like, fed up with hearing all those things. I didn’t want to stay on as Chief anymore.

We called my grandmother Suzanne Tchikwemnam (phon.). How old was she? Ninety-six (96), I believe. Anyway, she was quite old. I went to see her. I asked her what had been happening and then she said to me: “Adrienne, I’ve never asked you to step down. I’ve never told you
anything. Your community elected you. You’re staying on.”
I stayed on. She said, “You’ll see, it’s will -- if you
bend to what those people want, just because they want you
out of the way, it’s always going to be like that.” That’s
what she told me. So then I went back and took my place
back. My grandmother, I was like, relieved to hear that she
was lending me her support. It’s not nothing getting
support from an Elder like that. I understood right away.
She told me that that’s the way it is when you’re in
politics here in Kitcisakik. That’s what she told me. A
Chief’s life is no longer her own. It belongs to the
community. So I asked myself, why is it like that? It
shouldn’t be that way. That’s how I said it to her. She
said, “It’s been like that for half of my life.” The
grandmother told me that, because the grandmother, she
happens to be the mother of my godfather who had been Chief
for a number of years. “I could never say anything when my
son was the community Chief for x number of years; he was
being told all kinds of things like that.” That’s what she
told me. She spoke to me like that.

My mother wasn’t around anymore. My father
wasn’t around either. I couldn’t go see my parents to be
near them, because I really needed them. But I told myself
that my parents were spared going through what the kokum
was going through when her son was Chief. I was going
through so much that my mother would have blown a gasket, because today I know that in heaven, she is always there.

And another the reason I went through so much was because of the community’s village project. I paid a high price with my mental health for a project like this one, a community project. I was always being told that it was a community project. Children’s futures, for me this was something that -- and it still is -- it’s something much too important not to offer something better to our children, because each day at home, I look at my children. Yes, they’re close to their parents. I look at the parents, the families living in squalor, not having any water, no electricity to keep them warm in their homes, because winter, for the people of my community, is not easy.

Sometimes, I see single mothers on Facebook. “I’m goddamn sick and tired of winter.” They often say that. “I’m fed up with the cold. My children are cold. Their feet are so cold. Their hands are so cold.” That’s how life is.

I’ve always been -- I’ve never stopped believing this and then I presented -- we did lots of things to try to work with the community to solve these problems. The issue was creating a village. The community was very involved in the consultations we had done in the previous Council and at one point we had a referendum
asking the community, “Are you willing to move toward becoming a village?” The community said yes. The people serving on the Council with me, they said that -- me, I strongly believe in the democratic principle of my community and the people who participated said, “We want to have our village. We want to keep moving forward. We no longer want to live in the conditions we’re in now.”

That’s what they were saying. But part of my Council who was there said, “Ah! There are a lot of people who didn’t participate.” You know, I said to myself, if they didn’t participate, that’s their business. You can’t force someone to go out and vote if they don’t want to. I said that’s the democratic principle. You have to accept it. The person who decides not to vote, they have to accept the results. That’s how I saw it. But that’s not how my whole Council understood it. I got the feeling that they were playing with the future of people back home.

They all -- it stayed like that in 2013 and people from our home community, most of them left. I was trying defend things and trying to -- you know, I was looking into things. We got the government to help us renovate the houses a little because we knew what the families were going through -- they were cold and all that. The government gave what it could. And this is not meant to imply that the government is nice. No, that’s not it. It
did what it could do with us. They gave us money to
renovate homes, the school. You know, we did a lot of
things like that. Today Kitcisakik has an elementary
school. We’ve had an elementary school since 2010. Because
before, our children, when they were kindergarten age, had
to go to Val-d’Or.

My oldest -- my two children, who are now 26
and 19, had to go to Val-d’Or. Every fall I cried my eyes
out watching my children leave. I didn’t even see them. It
made me think of my mother and what she must have felt when
I was leaving for school. I didn’t even see my children
grow up, seeing how they are now.

I still remember how my son, the oldest, was
when he started school. He didn’t speak a word of French,
that little boy. I’d say to myself, how is he going to
manage to follow the group? Oh, he’ll learn, I said. He’s
got his whole life to learn. Today, he speaks French well,
but he still speaks Algonquin, my son. He understands
Algonquin well when we speak to him. He’s 26. When I was
going to CÉGEP, he stayed with his great-grandmother in the
bush because I wanted him to spend as much time as possible
with his grandparents to learn Algonquin, and that’s how he
learned it. Today, at home, he still speaks his language
with his grandmother. When I go somewhere, I say, “My son
are you going to take care of kokum while I’m gone?” He
Hearing-Public  
Adrienne and Catherine Anichinapéo

1 says, “Mom, I’ll to take care of her. I’ll take care of
2 kokum.” He’s the one who prepares the firewood. He’s the
3 one who prepares meals for his grandmother. He does this
4 even though today, you know, he’s got his own problems in
5 life.

6 You know, we experience a lot of problems
7 with alcohol and drugs in our communities. But my son also
8 struggles with this, but I say to myself that one day he’ll
9 come out of it, because he’s clearly someone who has a
10 conscience. He’s aware of where this is leading him. I tell
11 myself that one day -- I dream for him to get back on track
12 and then come out of it.

13 All the same, he’s done some very nice
14 things in life. He came -- we’re in Montréal -- he came to
15 Quebec City to take some courses and all that. He went
16 there. He finished his course and all that. But, since
17 there were no jobs for him he turned to alcohol, drugs.
18 It’s true that this is where it leads to in a community
19 when there isn’t a reserve. You know, I’m not saying that
20 we want a reserve at all costs, but we still want to have
21 homes, electricity, because there aren’t any jobs for young
22 people.

23 Nowadays, all you have is office managers,
24 social assistance, general managers, you know, things like
25 that. That’s not much. There’s something like, I don’t
know, maybe 20, 30 direct jobs in the community. It’s not a lot. It’s not a lot for a population -- we’re close to 500, I think. It hurts to see that today, for our youth, there really isn’t a future in such an environment.

People on the outside don’t see what’s happening in the community. They’re always saying, “I feel so sorry for the Kitcisakik community.” But our lives are not always great, having to get firewood all year long, water. The children have to go out of the house to take a shower. Summer is fun, they go swimming, but now they catch all kinds of things with everything that’s in the water. The kids often end up catching -- what’s it called? -- you know, their legs get all swollen. I can’t remember what you call it, but anyhow, they catch bacteria, their legs swell up, all kinds of things. Now there are so many things in the water. We can see it, that nature is sick too. I can’t remember what it’s called, nonetheless, they end up in the hospital getting IV antibiotics, the whole works and whatnot. But you know, it’s like that, in the water, as if there were some -- anyhow, it’s an infection that they get in their legs when -- they get impetigo often, they catch these sorts of things. It’s all things like that, that our youth have to live through. It’s fun for them in the summertime, but when it’s always like this, I find it hard to watch.
I’ve experienced -- I’ve always wanted to --

I’d talk to my Council and say to them: “Listen, we have to do something for our youth. You, as managers, you’re fine. You’ve got lots of money. That’s not the case for everyone. You can feed your children well, but that’s not the case for everyone here.” If everyone could have jobs and work and be able to provide for our children -- because I know that today, there are children who are not eating throughout the month because their parents are on social assistance. There aren’t any jobs for them. And sometimes, between the first of the month and the 20th, it’s the toughest time for them because they buy their food on the first. They often buy food, but not enough because most of them have problems with alcohol, drugs. They put a lot of their money into that. We know that, but that doesn’t mean we have to leave them like that, not feeding the children.

I always think -- we’re in Canada and how is it possible that things are still like this? I don’t have anything against -- I don’t have anything against the government and all that. I’ve got nothing against them because they’re not the problem. I think that they did whatever they could for our communities, but the violence we’re experiencing today, it’s not even coming from the outside, it’s from within the community.

The study we did, the health study, clearly
shows that physical, psychological and sexual violence is between ourselves that we are killing each another. That’s how it is.

Even today, when I was re-elected -- I spent eight years of my life in politics. My first mandate was the village project. And I was re-elected in 2013 for a second mandate because the community wanted so much to have a village. They wanted it so much, and knew that I, that this was my dream for them, not for me, not for my own gain at the expense of my people who were already in poverty. No. Because I had something in here for the children and the elderly.

When I was elected in 2013, with the big crisis and all that, they did everything to make -- I had to go to Federal Court to have my election recognized -- to validate the elections that I had -- the fact that I’d been re-elected. It wasn’t easy for me to defend my community because there was a bunch of people there who wanted to grab power or have control over the community at all costs, to undo, to stop any development in my community. I went to court. I had to pay out of pocket to go there. My Council had cut off everything from me. It didn’t even want to pay for my travel expenses to go to meetings. I was going to meetings, to the Chiefs’ table, I had to pay out of my pocket to get there. I went anyway, because I wasn’t in it
for the money.

I went. By the way, I would like to thank Gislain. He has often supported me, Gislain Picard, the Regional Chief. I told him what was happening back home. I never wanted to be one who signed the cheques for my community. I never wanted a credit card under the Council’s name, never wanted it because I wasn’t there to try to control things at all cost, no. What I wanted was for my community to get itself out of the hole, the fact was I didn’t accept that.

Today, until March 1st, last week, I was coming back from the bush, yet another complaint against me for some money matters. I haven’t even been on Council for seven months. They filed a complaint just to get back at me. Today, this is me. I’m being harassed. Christ, I’ve paid dearly for that in terms of my mental health.

I shared my experiences with women at the Chiefs’ table. I also went to the assembly of elected female chiefs to share my experiences as a female Chief, as a woman Chief who’s going through these sort of things. That was my life.

The men who were there before me, they were not treated like that. They were highly respected. Why? It wasn’t just men who were doing the bullying. It was mainly women. It’s not normal for women to act like that.
Solidarity between women in Kitcisakik is not very strong. Things are not good.

My mother -- I’ve always prayed for my mother to help me because I know that she’s with God. My family, my sister, my nieces, my brothers, would look at each other every time I was experiencing these things. My brother sometimes defended me. He’d be told, “No right to defend your family.” He’d say, “I’m not going to put up with violence here.” That was my brother. My brother, he was nothing short of a miracle. He’s God’s miracle. The doctor said that there was nothing more they could do for him. The next day he got up. I don’t exactly know what he said. My brother had been in a coma for three weeks. He woke up just like that. I said to my brother, I’d say -- well, I was praying a lot. I saw him lying on his bed. I could see his chest, here, rising, the fact that he was breathing. In my head I thought: as long as there’s life, there’s hope. That’s what I told myself. I’d pray to God, you know, “If you need to take my brother, take him, but don’t let him suffer for long.” But, my brother’s duty here on earth wasn’t finished. He got up just like that the next morning, in January, I think 2011, something like that. He got up. He wanted some orange juice, I believe. He got himself back up.

Now, ever since that time, he’s been gravely
ill. He was living in the streets. He was using a lot
before and then he woke up like that, as if -- when he woke
up he said, “Saint Peter told me to go look for the key for
you.” That’s why I believe so strongly in religion, this
sort of life experience. My brother, it was miraculous, and
he is the one who dared to say enough with violence, that’s
enough. He is the one who has supported me in everything
I’ve been through lately.

At one point, there was a woman. We, the
Council, we decided to have a meeting in a healing lodge. I
went there. I was over there. There was no one there and
me, I was like also -- I was very stubborn and very -- how
can I put it -- someone who stands up. Once I make up my
mind about something, that’s it. Nobody can change my mind,
especially about something -- because of everything I had
gone through with my Council, decisions were made, and it
was a resolution, and it would be written down. That’s how
it was, even if it was often difficult, because the
Council, there were four of us on the Council. Four is not
a good number at all, because the one person who supported
me was a man. The two women serving on the Council with me,
the two women were always, like, blocking everything I’d
undertake.

There were managers who were blocking my
way, who were being insubordinate. They were usurping in
the name of the Council. They conveyed messages to the community that it was them for everything. It was like that all along.

When I was harassed regarding an assembly we were supposed to have in the bush, I was coming from the bush, from the healing lodge. I got there. A lady came racing up with her car. She stopped right next to me. She started screaming at me. I was there. I looked at her. I wondered who she was talking to and then she said: “You should be talking your Council. You should be doing this, this and this.” I said nothing. I said nothing. I got back into my car as if nothing had happened. Sometimes, you tell me that I should always do this, not react. I’ve never reacted, not even in the face of violence. I’ve never reacted because I don’t want to live with the burden of having done something to hurt someone, not even a slap. No. I’d never forgive myself for that, or say something mean to someone who’s already suffering. I wouldn’t want him to go and hang himself or whatever, things like that. I’m very mindful when it comes to that level of violence. And that’s something --

When the lady stopped yelling at me and banged on my car, that’s when I jumped. She scared me. In my home, I don’t experience this kind of violence.

My husband is a wonderful man, every
morning, coffee in bed, every morning. I made a -- my
sister -- I think it was my sister who bought me a little
gift, a little bell with “Coffee, please” written on it.
Sometimes I have fun ringing it. He hears it. He always
comes to see if I’m awake. I wasn’t working so I’d sleep in
instead of getting up to look after the kids. No, he’s the
one who looks after them in the morning. I’ve been spoiled
in life by having someone like him in my life, because he
too has suffered violence. He’s gone through things in his
life. He, too, has been down. It took me four years to help
him get back on his feet. Today, he’s a truck driver. He
operates heavy machinery. He can work wherever he wants.

What I’m still going through today, the
Council that’s there and that my sister also serves on now,
but I know what they’re going through. They’re going
through pretty much the same thing I went through. They’re
not respected by the people around them, the managers or
anyone, the people who are there.

I’ve been through so much stuff like that.
Today, when I look back at everything, that’s the highest
level of psychological violence. When we look at the World
Health Organization indicators, it was that.

The Council that’s in place today -- as of
today, I haven’t worked for seven months. I’m someone who
goes into the woods, trapping, hunting. But you know today,
I’d really like to work. I’ve now given my name three times for jobs that I’m qualified for back at home, but management sees my name or whatever, they see my name and they don’t want me. Three times.

I’ve -- just last Monday, before coming here, and Tuesday, I again gave my name. I’m also very stubborn. I’m like that. I’m someone who doesn’t give up easily, but I say to myself, it’s okay. One day, I’ll get a job that will match my worth and where I’ll be appreciated. That’s what I tell myself.

Some days are harder than others because sometimes my self-esteem takes a hit. When I go back home to see my family, that’s where I find comfort, because I’ve got a wonderful family, my sister, my husband, my mother-in-law. There are only three Elders left in the community. Most of them live in Kitcisakik, the real Kitcisakik, because where we are today is not Kitcisakik, it’s Douzois (phon.), where there are some government buildings, and all that.

But there really aren’t many people left in Kitcisakik. Of the Elders who lived there, three died last summer in 2017. Those were all the Elders who lived there.

Despite everything I went through, I never exposed my children to it. I’ve always protected my children. Once when some people came to barricade -- not
barricade -- to protest in front of our house. It’s as if I was the bad one of the bunch. They came to protest in front of my house. I told my sister-in-law, I told her, “Take my kids. Take them with you. If anything happens I’ll call the police.”

Though I’ve always had -- you know, when people mention the police this, the police that, it’s not true that the police is always bad. Sometimes, there are some nice people in the police force. That’s my understanding, because when I went through all those issues, they were often there for me. There was even a man -- I can’t remember his name. I’m trying to remember this man’s name, he was an officer from the SPVM in Montreal. “If anything happens to you, you can call me any time, day or night, and I’ll send help.” That’s what he said.

Because at one point, they threatened to burn down my house, all that to scare me, to scare me about no longer having a place, because even though I have a cabin deep in the bush, that’s only for when I trap and hunt. My home is where I live with my children while they go to school. They have their own rooms, my mother-in-law too. They threatened to burn my house down. I saw that on the news once, the home of a Chief in Kanesatake, I think that they had burned down his home.

If they had burned down my house, I don’t
even have any electricity or running water. That was it.

That’s what it was at that time. That’s like when a member
of the community comes and tells you, “So, you want to be
Chief? You’re a lush.” You know, that kind of thing is
 unacceptable.

And someone told me, “Be careful, Adrienne,
because they want to burn your house down. They want to
burn your house down.” I said, “Thank you for warning me.”
I said, “I’m going to take the necessary precautions so
that it won’t happen.” And my house is still standing.

You know, burning down a house -- my family,
my in-laws, my mother-in-law, she lost three children in a
fire, so I didn’t want my house burned. It’s something
horrendous for her, and especially since she lives with us.
I’m very aware of all these things, of all the levels of
violence that I’ve experienced, extreme violence.

Once, at a town hall meeting, there was a
lady who was mad at me. She was standing right in front of
me, staring at me. “You, you’re just this. You, you’re
that.” She went on like that. She was really -- she was
pointing her finger at me in front of everyone who was
behind her. My family was at the back. They couldn’t say
anything. It seems like everyone stays quiet when there’s
violence like this. No one dares to say -- to stand up and
say “Hey now, that’s enough.”
Today, you know -- I recently took part in a meeting for women in my community and the same bunch of people who had created the same violent environment when I was Chief was there. They were mocking a woman who couldn’t express herself well, when I had just finished saying, “You know, you want to have women’s meetings, then you need to respect the women who struggle to speak.” I had just finished saying this at the meeting. The woman who had yelled at me, who had gotten out of her car and banged my car, was mocking the other woman. “Hey, that’s enough! What did I just say?” My instinct is to be direct like that.

You know, I’m not someone who usually reacts this way, but I had had enough. I was fed up with this shit -- pardon my language, but I had had it up to here with the violence I had experienced.

Today, it still -- it’s still here. I still have the wounds. It’s my children who soothe my pain, the suffering that I endured. My daughter -- I have a 10-year-old girl. I’m also a foster parent. I also experienced this, meaning that they tried to discredit me as a foster parent just to undo what I had built. And my daughter -- I have never involved my daughter in politics, my sons, never. Even my 26-year-old son, he’s a young man. He knows that he has the right to vote. “Mom, I don’t want to vote. I know that nothing is going to change.” You know, I
respect his viewpoint because that’s what he’s always seen.

We’ve been talking about Kitcisakik for a long time now, how it’s a poor community, but it’s not the government that’s doing this. I want to be clear that it’s not the government that’s doing this. The government, let me tell you, was ready to fund the village project 100 percent. They’re not always ready to do this everywhere, but we were successful in getting the government totally on board.

Unfortunately, this never materialized because we were missing just one Council resolution to move forward. When I had -- when we had the election in August 2017, just before I finished, I had written a letter to the government to tell them -- to thank them for all they had done while I was there, the support, the dedication on their part while I was there, despite the fact that they knew everything that was going on in my community. They’ve always been there, trying to help us. You know, they funded a lot of things, despite our living conditions. These are things that I thanked them for, and I also asked them to be as open as had been to me when I was there, because I still wanted the Council to be able to start off on the right foot, but I now know that they have their own thing happening.

Sometimes I find it awful -- I feel very sad
about the fact that they won’t be going ahead with the
village project when everything is ready.

I look at the young people. There are quite
a few now -- I tell my child to go to school. He asks, “Why
do you want me to go to school when there’s nothing here?
There’s no development here. I don’t want to work somewhere
else. I want to work here in my community, but there’s
nothing here.” That’s what they say. The youth are right
in saying that, but I tell them one day, I’d really love to
see the youth in my community stand up and say, “Hey,
that’s enough! We want this. We want that. We want to have
some development in our community. We want to live here in
our community, but under these conditions, with the levels
of violence right now, it’s not ideal.”

But it hasn’t changed. Just send a message
to Nick that conditions back home haven’t changed.

When elections were held in 2017, in August,
I went through a lot of grief. The elections were fine. I
accept the fact that I lost the election. That’s fine. I
was very sorry for not -- to my community, that they
wouldn’t be getting what they always wanted, because they
had responded to our referendum. They responded. They
participated. They believed in it. All their hopes were
dashed. Most of them left to live in the city. They have
apartments in Val-d’Or and so they’re living in better
conditions than us who are without water, electricity. They
have washing machines.

It takes me an hour to go to into the city, an hour to go do my laundry, and then coming back is another hour. That’s what I do. And we organize a lot of, many, activities for our children. They play hockey. My daughter is into figure skating, and when she goes skating, I take my laundry, too. We don’t just make one trip for one thing. We make one trip and we fill our car with laundry. That’s how it is.

But there are some families who don’t even have a car. Today, they’re living in squalor.

And the people who are blocking the village project don’t even bloody care to help them, you know, for a minimal fee, just pay the gas. It’s very expensive. They’re charging $120 for an hour of driving to go and one hour to come back. That’s expensive for someone who gets $300-something a month. He spent his money, say, on some car tires. Our young people have it very hard.

And then we expect them to go back to school. We want them to work, but there aren’t any jobs for them.

My children, my two boys have asked to go to work. They haven’t had a job yet. They are paying for what I’ve -- I was on the Council. They’re paying a damn steep
price, my children, but I tell myself that one day they’ll find a job. One day they’ll succeed. I’m a big believer in that, because that’s what has helped me survive everything I’ve experienced over the past eight years of my life.

Let us not forget that violence isn’t coming from the outside. It’s inside our community. I suppose it must be like that everywhere else too. At some point, the energy we need to invest will be to eradicate violence from our communities. Anyhow, in Kitcisakik, that’s how it is. I wouldn’t be surprised if this happens in other communities when I see sometimes -- you know, at times I’d tell myself, when I spoke with Chiefs from other communities, I’d envy them a lot when they were telling me, “I have the support of my Council.” I didn’t even have that. I didn’t even have that in my -- while I was there. I’ve always had people who blocked me, who -- .

Today, I said it earlier, I’m looking for a job. I don’t mean to push my CV here, but I simply want to show what a damn steep price we pay when we defend our community with our hearts, and our kids are paying for it too.

My husband is someone who stands strong and supports me tremendously. He’s the one who, as they say, kept my head above water. Sometimes, I just wanted to run away. We’d go out to get some fresh air. I often like to
fish in the summer, and in winter too. I’ve developed some
health issues. I almost died three times because of heart
attacks. I also suffer from migraines. Today, it’s getting
better. I have fewer migraines. I didn’t have them when I
got in eight years ago.

Recently, just before, in the week of
February 25-26th, I had another (speaking in Native
language). The doctor never figured out what it was. All
symptoms I’m living with these days.

I’ve seen my children’s faces, “Mom, we
don’t want you to die.” That’s how my daughter put it:
“Mom, I don’t want you to die. I don’t want anything to
happen to you.” Every morning they come to my bed to see
me: “Mom, I love you.” That’s what my life is like with my
family -- I have friends who are wonderful to me. I don’t
need a lot of friends, but I do want real friends who are
there for me, because I know what it’s like when you have
too many friends. You have people who are -- let’s say
hypocrites, because they’ll stab you in the back. I’ve
learned that. I learned all of this through everything I
experienced.

I also know how much the Elders supported
me. I believe in that. I believe in support from the
Elders. I know that they’re here today. When I look at the
floor, there’s a box of cookies. It’s the kind of cookies I
used to bring to the Elders back home whenever I was able
to go to a fishing competition up North -- the Cree had
them -- I’d buy several boxes and bring back them as gifts.
They’d say, “Oh, you went fishing?” That was it. That’s
how my life was when I was a female Chief, as a woman.

Now, I went into therapy in October because
when I lost the election, I was -- I had trouble dealing
with it. Not being able to work, not being able to do
anything for my community, and not being in a position to
do something, was hard for me, because I’ve always worked.
I’ve always worked. I’ve done lots of things. When I
stopped working, I saw -- I felt I was no longer useful. I
felt like -- the violence I suffered, led me at one point
to having suicidal thoughts. It was horrible, but I sought
help. I asked for help for that. I went for therapy,
healing -- not therapy, healing, and then I told myself,
“My children are here. They’re the ones who are going to
keep me standing, my family.” I told myself that in life,
when you have a family who supports you, you can do
anything.

I also now understand why women from our
communities move to the city. I learned this because of
everything I’ve been through, because those women, their
families fell apart. They felt rejected by their community.
It’s like that for many.
We can go around blaming everyone else, but it always happens around us, the violence around us.

Nowadays, I can never thank my family enough for being there. That’s how I want to live. I’m someone who loves to teach the traditional ways. Sometimes, when people talk to me about politics, “Don’t talk to me about politics. Talk to me about the bush. Talk to me about other things. Talk to me about trapping. Ask me if I’m going to show you how to do something. I’ll do it.” That’s how it is, because I’ve suffered enough because of politics.

Politics is not all bad, but in my community it is. But I’ve met some wonderful people, Michèle Audette. I met my lawyer, Nick. I met lots of other people, the girls from the FNQL. I met them, they are wonderful women, amazing people. I met other Chiefs too. I met women elected to the FNQL who’ve been wonderful to me. I’ve also worked very hard to get the Commission to come, because for me women’s health, well-being, is something I care deeply about. I did all kinds of things like that.

I don’t know where I found the energy. I don’t know. I was a strong believer. I’ve always prayed. Each morning, it was, “Thank you God for being here. Thank you (speaking in Native language) for being here.” In healing lodges, we’re taught to drink lots of water, but I was already doing that often. I go fishing. I go hunting
and I always have water. That’s truly how it works in everyday life.

And I’ve always kept four survival elements: water, fire, air, and all that. I’ve always kept that in mind, that this is my balance in my life today.

I can never tell my family enough that -- family is something important in political life. Anyway, for me, that was the case because they are the ones who supported me, who held me in their arms when I needed to cry. It’s also they who at times -- because sometimes I’d forget to eat. I was so focused. I was too – it’s like you’re always keyed up, and sometimes you forget to eat.

Once, I said to Gislain. I said, “Gislain, did you eat?” “I ate a bit.” “You have to eat.” I’d say that to him.

The grandmother who was living with us always said, “Don’t forget to eat. You need to feed the one who has to work hard inside.” She’d often tell me that and that’s what I did. I learned a lot from the elders in that way and thanks to them now and thanks to my kids, my family, I’m here.

I care very deeply for my community. I hope that one day, the young people back home will stand up. I hope one day they’ll accomplish their goals, if only for themselves. My family members were very good people who had
a lot of love to give, but I think that people who are suffering can cause harm. I think that people who hurt me a lot, I forgive them today because they must surely be people who are in pain.

Even though the things that I went through seem difficult sometimes, I want to allow myself to forgive myself for having -- for letting myself live through all of this, because all of this caused -- I was always told -- at a certain point, I had someone, I can’t remember who it was, but he said to me: “I would’ve been long gone from there.” He said this because I had told him what I was going through. “I would’ve gotten the hell out of there a long time ago.” That’s how he talked to me. “I would’ve quit and left there a long time ago.” But when you care for your community, that was it, the children’s future.

So I think that pretty much covers what I wanted to say. I think that’s pretty much all I wanted to say.

And I’ve left out pretty much all the dates, and given more of a broad outline of what I’ve gone through. It’s more to show you -- to show you that violence is not coming from the outside, it’s coming from inside our communities because all the abuse, all of that, that’s where it’s coming from. That’s how I see it and I’ll keep picking myself up and standing up. Besides, I’m already
standing. I will continue to do so to survive. I am surviving, but I always have my mother inside of me who has always been an inspiration to me, because of what she lived through; I tell myself all the time that what I’m going through is nothing compared to that. She lived without her mother. I at least lived with my mother who gave me a lot, despite what I went through with her. She compensated for that in the last five years of her life; she gave us back a lot of things, my father too.

Today, I know that they’re with God, hand in hand, watching over us, they’re watching over my family. This is my experience in terms of the violence I’ve experienced.

Miigwetch.

**MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Adrienne, you are an inspiring, strong woman. I’d like to know if you have a message to give to other women, to share your inspiration with us?

**MS. ADRIENNE ANICHINAPÉO:** At one point, I was in the -- I’ve always believed -- we often talk about solidarity between women. When my godfather was alive, this is something that has always stayed with me, which was ingrained. He’d say, “In our community, it’s the women who will lift us out of poverty.” That’s how he put it. I’ll always remember that.
I know that there are women today in my community, back home, who’ve lost this concept, because I think that solidarity between women should be much stronger. It’s something that should be deeply rooted everywhere.

At the beginning, when I was a Chief, I was in a minority at the Chief’s table. There weren’t many women. We felt small. I know that today there are many Chiefs who are becoming more aware that there’s a place for women at the Chiefs’ table, that there’s a place for them. And in communities, it should be like that. Women need to be trusted too, because women can do anything. We are able to do two or three things all at once. Women are able to do plenty of things, two or three things at a time.

For a while, I teased my husband quite a bit. I’m so lucky to still have him with me, because when I go somewhere, it doesn’t bother him a bit. I’m not saying all men are like that, but some guys, when their wife goes away somewhere for a few days, they flip out, they do. But my guy, my husband, he’s not like that. “Oh, take all the time you need. Take your time and take time for yourself.” That’s how it is. Men, you can learn. You have to trust women. That’s how we will lift our communities out of poverty and stop the violence. It’s something that is very -- violence in all its forms. Psychologically, you know, I
almost took my own life because of that. Psychological violence is the worst kind of suffering there is on earth.

Thankfully, I’m still here and I’ll keep on being here because my children are waiting for me at home and so we must stop violence like that, psychological, physical violence, sexual. We can’t turn a blind eye. We need to denounce it. We must denounce it.

I know very well that when we speak of the police today, it’s a whole different matter, but we shouldn’t lump everyone in the same category. We shouldn’t put all police -- that they’re scum, because there are some good people too. I know it. I’ve experienced it. I know some good people. I can count on ten fingers the number of police officers that I’ve met who are good people, who want to help the community get out of trouble. But there are some rotten apples in there too. It’s like that even back home. People are suffering. We need to help them.

It’s solidarity between women and also, men too, they have to give -- they should trust women, because we’re very -- people who have a heart right here. This is how I see it. A community cannot better itself if only one part of the community is doing it. We need to do it all together, and for the future of our children.

That’s what I’m hoping will happen back home. I know though that when I return, it’s going to be a
whole different matter. I’m very much aware of that. We’ll see what happens when I get back. The same cycle will start all over again. But at least today I know how to handle it and I know that there are still people who support me. They’ll say, “You went and told stories, eh? You went there.” It’s always this sort of gossipy blather trying to undo the -- this doesn’t even bother me anymore, because I’m here and I hesitated for a long time before coming here. I hesitated for a long time. I met Counsel Wylde. I met her. She saw what I had. She inspired me so much to come here and share this reality, the sad reality of living in Kitcisakik.

I really like it when I hear about women protesting. They’re always singing things like “so-so-so-solidarity.” I like that because this is what needs to be done. Solidarity -- you need to be real, and not be stabbed in the back once your back is turned. We need to show solidarity with women. That’s how I -- it’s because that’s what I experienced.

Sometimes, I see so many images, caricature pictures of someone sitting and lots of stuff sticking in her back, that was me. But my family removed it. They have removed the knives that were there. That’s how I recovered psychologically from all that, even though it still hurts here. But my injuries, are they going to stay? At some
point, eventually, they’ll be gone if I talk enough about
it, like today.

That’s it. Miigwetch. (translating self)

Thank you very much.

MS. SHELBY THOMAS: Adrienne, do you have
any recommendations or ideas on how to stop the vicious
circles or how we can stop or prevent violence against
women?

MS. ADRIENNE ANICHINAPÉO: I think we really
need to speak out against violence and stop turning a blind
eye. When there’s violence against women, the children feel
it too. Children also carry the burden. I was very sad when
I saw -- my daughter, she’s 10. Her friend -- one of her
best friends, her parents had just had a fight and the
little girl didn’t want to go home. And she didn’t even
want to come to our house because she told me -- my
daughter told me this, “Mom, my friend doesn’t want to come
over because she says you’ll report her and then she’ll be
placed.” It’s quite something having your own daughter
tell you that.

I talked about this during a meeting the day
before yesterday at a town hall meeting we had back home. I
spoke about it with the people who were there. Our Council
had set up a town hall meeting. I talked about it. I said,
“You should be paying my daughter to intervene. There are
how many workers here and what are you doing? What do we have to do to protect the kids?” That’s what I said to them. We need to do things to protect kids, to talk with them. Stop hiding domestic violence between four walls. Speak out and eradicate it -- help children.

To this day, this little girl is still scared to come to my house because in her mind, I’m going to report her and she’ll be placed. I’ve spoken with her. I told her, “Listen, if I report it, it’s not so that you’ll be placed. It’s to get some help for your mom and your dad and for you too. You shouldn’t be living in fear. You shouldn’t be going through what I went through. I also went through this when I was a kid.”

Today, there are services. And I think that if we approach social services this way, if we believe that we can make it, I think that this can work because social service agents are not bad people. There are some, as they say, that are bad apples, but there are also many with good intentions who want to help our families. We’ve all experienced trauma at some point in our lives, in our communities, and sometimes it requires help from outside just to give us a little boost, to tell us, “Hey, you’re a good person. You can do good by your children, for the future of the children.”

We play around a lot with that, eh, with
children’s futures? We’ve been messing around with it for a very long time. That’s what I tell myself.

Solidarity between families is -- in a family is very important. That’s how I see it. Yes, that’s how I see this, that’s the best way to go.

**MS. SHELBY THOMAS:** Thank you. Madam Commissioners and Mister Commissioner, do you have any questions or comments?

**COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you, Adrienne. Can you hear me?

I just had a question of clarification, if you don’t mind. You had talked about a study done in your community to help and for health, and you talked about violence and abuse. Could you just clarify what the purpose of the study was? Was it in relation to violence and abuse or health issues more generally?

And you also spoke about building up the village and economic development. Was that part of the findings or recommendations of the study and were there other recommendations?

**MS. ADRIENNE ANICHINAPÉO:** The goal of the study performed in my community was to be able to help -- well, in fact, we wanted to know, what their life experiences were like, because the study covered every aspect of violence, the cycle of violence, from such an age
to such an age, the whole lifecycle. We covered it all, environment, family, domestic life and the whole community. We listed these in the questionnaire. It was like that.

There were also units of measurement that were used, let’s say in terms of -- the unit for measuring psychological violence. The first level was insults or making you feel bad, things like that. After that was, did he do something to make you -- bully you, for example, to scare you? Do I have this document? It’s written in the book that we had. I don’t know if we have it somewhere. All the different degrees of psychological violence are detailed in it. That’s how we were able to measure the degree of violence the person had experienced, at the psychological level.

And there was also the level of -- the type of physical assault that one suffered. Was it simply a slap, or a punch, a stab wound all the way up to things you can die from, if not kill you? Things like that.

And sexual assault, have you been assaulted by someone you know, someone you don’t know, someone in your family or someone who you didn’t know at all? These were the types of things which were in -- that’s how the degree of -- violence was measured.

And the women -- the men who took part in it, sometimes we could spend -- the longest time -- you
know, I worked on it. I participated. I was the investigator in that study because I had taken some training do this study, to do -- to be investigator in the study. And the longest interview I had, was something like a three-and-a-half hour interview for just one person. There were many, many questions. We talked about the person’s environment. We talked about all of that. It wasn’t easy.

And as for, I think, economic development, which didn’t factor in there, but it was just another -- because, when I talk about economic development, it’s more about my community, because currently my community doesn’t have an economy. Considering the whole context, the conditions in our community, the fact that we weren’t -- designated as a “reserve” like all the other communities, we just get basic funding for survival, as they say. We don’t even have financial resources to develop anything we’d like to. That’s how -- without reserve status, that’s how it is.

Of course, this was a major -- in my community, this was a major -- how do you say that? A huge debate, the reserve issue and so on. Because some members of my community had this image that the word “reserve” mirrored the Indian Act. Yes, it’s the Indian Act, but right now that’s all there is. That’s what I always
thought.

I know that communities with reserve status nonetheless have things that we, we don’t have, and that’s where we are currently. It’s as if we’re surviving. Try jogging and then breathing through a straw. That’s how it is in our community. After you finish jogging and you breathe through a straw, you need air. So this is just to give you an idea of what our community is like, that’s how it is.

Does this answer -- ?

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Adrienne, thank you very much for sharing with us today.

I have a few questions and it’s about things that women Chiefs have said, you and others, that we don’t lift each other up, we tear each other down.

Why do you think that’s true?

MS. ADRIENNE ANICHIWAPÉO: It’s within. In fact, we talk a bit about it in -- well, we talk about it in the document I submitted to you. One of the major highlights that we mention is that violence is inflicted -- it’s self-inflicted between those of us in our communities, it comes from within and not from the outside. The abuse coming from the outside is minimal. I don’t know the numbers off the top of my head, but it’s not even 10 percent of the violence that we experience, something
like that. It’s very low. But most of all, all, all the violence that we experience is from within our community.

When I was Chief, I wasn’t as well respected as a man who is Chief in his community and that’s really too bad -- very sad, when it is the community that chose me to be Chief in my community. I was for a long time -- in the time that I was Chief of my community, people who didn’t want me to be there would ignore me, shame me, reject me. You know, all that, I experienced all that, while my predecessors, when they were Chiefs, they were respected. They were respected at the level of someone who is honourable. That’s not something I was able to experience.

You know, I wasn’t asking for people to roll out the red carpet, no, all I was asking was that they’d take care of me, that they’d say, “So, how are you? How is it going? Do you need anything?” That’s not how it was. I never asked anyone to serve me a plate of food. When there was a feast in our community, I always let the members of my community go first, the Elders, the children. I always went last. My husband also did that frequently. He and I, when we were -- even when I was Chief, he’d say, “We’ll wait for them to finish eating. Yes, it’s alright. It’s alright if there’s nothing left. We can make ourselves something to eat all the same.” But in the Anishinabe
tradition a feast is supposed to be something joyous. It’s
supposed to be a feast where a meal is shared, but this
often wasn’t the case.

These are all things that I experienced. And
in my family, we often organize family meals in my family
with my aunts, my cousins. We make sure everyone eats. I’ve
always felt this love from my family. When I shared a meal
with them, it was welcoming. But that’s not what I got, not
even when I was sworn in.

I’ve been to many swearings-in in many other
communities. For me, they just handed me the headdress and
deal with it yourself. It was a bit like that.

When I went to my colleague’s swearing in at
Lac Simon, I loved seeing how she was greeted and taken
care of by members of her community.

We have a lot to learn in Kitcisakik. When
the new Chief was elected in August, they organized some
big festivities. So all this to show you the level of
appreciation given to a woman compared to a male Chief
who’s been newly elected. I have nothing against him. In
fact, I met him before the holidays. That’s alright. He was
elected. It’s okay, it’s the community’s choice and I
greatly respect that. You know, this doesn’t mean that
we’ll be great friends, but I have respect for his
authority and that’s fine.
For me, I think that’s what it means to make peace with our experiences and I’m someone -- sometimes I’m surprised that I’m this open-minded and big-hearted, despite all the hurt I’ve suffered. And yet, when I was elected, our managers, our director general and all the people around did not organize a big party when I was elected. When the Chief was elected, they organized all of that. They made beautiful arrangements. You know, inequality between women is a bit harsh and unfair. That’s what it is. We still have a long way to go before accepting that a woman can lead a community and can be at the head of a community, and that she is given the love and affection that she needs to successfully carry out her role as Chief.

And this is what it makes me think, the fact that you asked me this question. And it’s also okay to ask it because it lets me see -- see this for myself how -- because I’ve experienced so many things and people don’t see -- and often people don’t see it. But my family -- I often remember my sister-in-law, who was always saying, “Adrienne, I’m not ashamed to be with you, because I experienced that, the fact that they made me feel rejected, not accepted.” That’s huge. So my sister-in-law is one who was never ashamed to be with me. She’s always been there and my sister too. My family has always been there. It’s very important that they’re -- that you have a good family.
Anyhow, for me, that’s how it was. And so when a woman is on a Council, you need to give her care, respect her, the authority that she -- yes, there’s a certain level of authority, but above all, that’s how you should treat people. That’s how I -- I was -- if I can give you a caricature of the image of how I was, I was like a punching bag, hanging there in the middle of the community and you take a shot at it. That’s how I saw myself when I was Chief.

My family, at least, took care of me. That’s how it is. That’s the image I have of this whole story. And inequality exists. We can’t ignore the inequality between men and women.

I have great respect -- hats off to women who accept to move forward and communities that decide to put a woman on Council. Take care of women because these are the people who have brought life into the world. We bring children into the world and it’s not a small thing to bear children. It’s no small feat. We’re part of the community.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MICHELÈ AUDETTE: Thank you, Marion.

First of all, a big, big thank you for
taking the time, and especially having the courage and
strength to come and speak to us.

My colleagues and I have been travelling
across Canada and will continue to do so, and I’m very
proud to say that over the 13 hearings across 11 regions, I
was able to listen to incredible women like you, but it’s
the first time, the first time that as part of the National
Inquiry we welcome a woman who has spoken about exactly how
it works when we’re in politics and we’re a female leader
who wants change and all the collateral damage, the
violence, and all that it brings. It’s the first time that
we have heard such truths, and I really admire that. I
thank you, because we needed to hear that. Canada needed to
hear it, but especially our communities, especially our
communities. We’re asking women to stand up. We’re asking
women to speak out. We’re asking women to bring change to
politics and business, but we forget that the community may
not be ready yet.

So, what courage you have. I thank you.

And I know that you, Catherine, you have
also been a Chief. You mentioned it. Thank you so, so much.

And what you’re doing today, you saw,
Catherine, last week we were with your colleagues, the
elected women for the Quebec territory. It’s a difficult
path, to the point that your health is at risk, your safety
is at risk. That’s unacceptable. I find it a shame that in
our suffering -- we know where our suffering comes from,
the Indian Act, colonization, residential schools, but
today we can no longer just blame that, and you’ve said it,
it happens in our community every day. So that, too, is
important evidence as part of our work.

And I’d also like to make it official -- I
understand that you’ve submitted the study you did, to us.
So that too becomes a piece of evidence for the Inquiry and
we’ll use it. We’ll analyze it and then we’ll try to
extract some very, very important things that will provide
food for thought in our deliberations and recommendations.

So this is a first in the work of the
National Inquiry that a woman speaks out to us about the
violence she suffered publicly because she was part of it,
you as a female Chief. We’ve heard other women who’ve
denounced other issues in camera because they were leaders.

So for that, thank you so very, very much.
You are leading a healing path today for other women who
are still in politics, who are in survival mode because
they believe in it, because they, like you, love their
community, and we shouldn’t be forced to leave our
community. We shouldn’t have to leave our community. So
we’ve also heard you send a message to your community that
you’re staying and you will continue to believe in change.
And on a personal note, I’d just like to tell both of you that there’s a love story between Kitcisakik and me. It started on a personal level, but it was also a part of what I did for many years. It’s where I found out that I was pregnant with my first son. We were staying on the island in a beautiful little church and I was sick and it’s there that the nurse from your community told me, “Well, Michèle, you’re pregnant.” So I have some fond memories.

And my other nice memory is also -- there are some people in your community, Mary-Jane, when we were young, who continued with their studies. These were people who inspired me, your husband who was Chief. These people inspired me a lot, people who we couldn’t follow on the Internet, but when we would see each other, they were great mentors, and of course, your sister Catherine too.

So these are some beautiful love stories and once I stopped in your community by chance, on the 117 if I remember correctly, with Gislain, and I caught my first sturgeon, but I stole it without realizing it. It was in a little pond to keep it fresh and then all the members of the community said, “We’ll let her. We’re going to let her believe that she caught her sturgeon.” So I was so proud, and then so embarrassed.

(LAUGHTER)
COMMISSIONER MICHELE AUDETTE: It’s not funny!

So through the everyday suffering, you have given us this gift today, of seeing that culture is very much present, the welcome, the warmth and love for a woman who’s a stranger, or any stranger. That, for me, has been a wonderful gift. And as a woman who has fought and continues to fight, you were the first ones to publicly denounce sexual assault in ’91. That sent shockwaves across all the other Nations.

And so for that, I thank you for having been trailblazers in speaking out against sexual assault, and today you’re part of an important inquiry to continue what you did throughout those years. So you have my all admiration and thank you so much.

Catherine, would you like to add anything?

MS. CATHERINE ANICHINAPÉO: When the accusations took place in 1990-91, that’s when I -- I won’t say that -- that’s when I was elected as Chief, because there weren’t any men who wanted to run and speak out about this, to go before the media. I got up the courage, and then our mentor, who has unfortunately now passed away, helped us a lot, that I accepted. If it had not been for him, I don’t think I would have accepted, because he really believed in women. He also publicly said at the time,
before he died, that he was -- that if there were any women who wanted to speak out about any harm he may have caused them, that he was going to accept it. He was really -- he was kind-hearted with women. Personally, I always respected him very much. Because he asked me, I said, “Okay, seeing that none of the men want to run, I’ll run.” So then I was elected and I worked for two -- I was there for two years. And eventually, it didn’t work out.

As Adrienne said, we’re not respected as Chiefs. I went through the same thing as she did, except it was in the ’90s. I was there between ’92 and ’94. I stepped down because of all the knives in my back. I wasn’t as tolerant as her because I had already left my spouse in ’89 and I no longer accepted violence. So in ’94, I no longer put up with those things. I stepped down. I had become unstable because I wouldn’t allow violence in my life anymore. So, that’s why I went away and left my community, but I’ve always continued to work in health. Nowadays, I’m a councillor. It’s not easy, that’s for sure, but I’m able to express myself and say what I think, and I think that with women like that, we’ll be able to keep on going. Now there are two women on the Council. We were elected by acclamation, but we said to ourselves that it doesn’t matter how you’re elected, it’s valid. The psychologist told us, “It doesn’t matter what circumstances you’re
elected under, it’s just as valid as if you were elected by
the members, when you’ve voted and so forth. It’s just as
valid.” Because they also doubted us.

So that’s it. I’m not giving up, but it is
of course difficult to live through situations like these.

I’m very thankful to Adrienne for coming
here to talk about our parents, about her own life.

Obviously, it wasn’t easy for me to be her support during
her eight years of political life, that’s for sure. All
this to say that in politics, there’s a lot of violence.

Especially against women. As she was saying earlier, when
you’re a man who’s in power, we don’t treat him like a
punching bag, or whatever, but it’s really only the women
that we do these things to. I wonder why. I’ve always asked
myself this question and wonder why we treat women this
way, when they have a good heart. They work with their
heart, and all that.

She’s had the courage to speak out against
all the improprieties in the process. It’s all well and
good to establish electoral codes, but why not respect an
electoral code if it’s in place? There are people who
worked with the electoral code, too, who thought that the
elections were not okay and so on. I’ve admired her a lot
and I’ve always stood by her and I’ll always stand by her,
because many times, I almost lost my sister. Many times,
there were thoughts of suicide. People don’t know the harm they’ve caused her.

The last time I picked her up, I was in Maniwaki. She said, “I’m leaving and never coming back.” So, her sister-in-law and I, we were in Maniwaki. We were attending an FNEC meeting on education. This wasn’t very long ago. It was at the end of November. Just to see the violence against her continuing, seven months after she stopped being a Chief, seven months of her still enduring these things, even if she’s not Chief anymore. What she’s going through today is harassment and bullying, pure and simple. The fact that she hasn’t got a job, that she hasn’t been hired, that’s what she’s going through.

These days, I don’t tell my Council where I am. I only worked one day this week so that I could accompany her, but I don’t care because I’m not here for the money. I’m not here -- I’m here for the members, to accompany them in their journey and so on. So when my sister told me on the phone, that day at the end of November, “My sister, I’m leaving and never coming back,” for me, this was serious. I said, “Hold on a minute, Adrienne.” I said “Hold on. What do you want to do?” And then I said to her sister-in-law, I told her, “Call the police because Adrienne is not okay.” So she was on the other line and the officer said to the other one, “Keep her
on the line so that we don’t lose her.” So that’s what we did. And so we spoke with her for a long time from Maniwaki.

These are all things that I know she forgets to talk about. She went through so much trauma. At a certain point it’s like she wasn’t herself anymore, the way she just went off without thinking, without thinking of her children, only the trauma of being in the dark and just leaving like that.

It was easy for me to understand her because that’s what I had been through when I lost my mother. Then I said -- the paramedics have arrived at her house. She said, “What’s going on?” I said to my sister, “I know what you’ve just told me.” I said, “You were going to leave and never come back.” I said, “I’m scared for you. I’m scared that you’ll hurt yourself or do something crazy.” I said, “I don’t want you to take your life or anything.” I said, “I’m the one who called the police, because we want to take care of you.”

So after that, the police arrived. I was finally able to reach her husband, he had been gone in the bush with someone. I finally got a hold of him. I said, “You have to go see Adrienne, she’s at that road over there and she’s with the police and the paramedics.” He had seen the police and paramedics on his way back because he was
coming from there. So then he went back right away. He said to the man, he said, “I have to go back over there right away. That’s my wife with the police and the paramedics.”

This wasn’t that long ago. It was in November. That’s why I’m always with her to support her and also to keep her going, because for eight years they made her life hell.

And I hope that Kitcisakik today is going to take care of the women who are on the Council, that it’s going to take care of all the managers and all that, because it’s not easy living like that.

On top of that, we’re orphans. And so I want to send the message that we really need to change our attitudes, in the way we behave with elected women.

Miigwetch.

COMMISSIONER MICHELÉ AUDETTE: Thank you very much.

We have this request for both of you. Would you accept a gift, a symbol of the respect that we have for you who have dared to testify with so much, so much love and passion? It’ll be coming to you in two ways, if you accept the gift, the one which we give you today and the other one will be arriving by mail because -- it’s a good sign that a lot of women have come out to speak and all the eagle feathers have been given out, but there are other ones that are in Vancouver and they’re waiting for us and
we could send them to you by mail, if you accept.

   And here we will give you sweet grass that
was donated by an incredible woman who denounces the whole
issue of violence against Indigenous women and a gift from
the Inuit from Labrador, some Labrador tea and sage. That’s
what we’d like to give you today, if you accept.

   (GIVING OF GIFTS)

   CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: We’ll
stop for a break.

   Thank you.

EXHIBITS (code: P01P13P0401)

--- Exhibit 1: Mario Brisson: Étude sur la santé et
   l’expérience de vie des femmes de
   Kitcisakik. Thesis, Université de
   Sherbrooke, February 2014 (149 pages)

--- Upon adjourning at 11:23 a.m.
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE*

I, Nadia Rainville, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this matter.

Nadia Rainville
March 23, 2018

* This certificate refers to the original transcript in French.