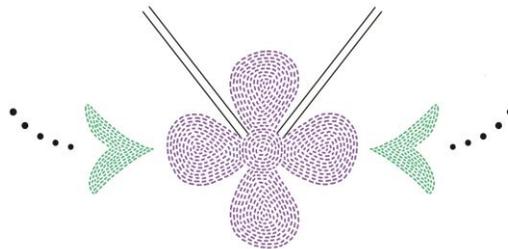


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan**



PUBLIC

Wednesday March 28, 2018

Statement – Volume 416

**Aleisha Charles, Margaret Bird, Ashley Howe
& Mitchell Poitras, In relation to Happy Charles**

Statement gathered by Jayme Menzies

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NOTE

The use of square brackets [] in this transcript indicates that amendments have been made to the certified transcript in order to replace information deemed inaudible or indecipherable by the original transcriptionist. Amendments were completed by listening to the source audio recording of the proceeding and were made by Maryiam Khoury, Public Inquiry Clerk with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ, August 1st and 2nd, 2018 at Ottawa, Ontario.

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Documents submitted with testimony: none.

1 Prince Albert, Saskatchewan

2 --- Upon commencing on Wednesday, March 28, 2018

3 at 4:04 p.m.

4 MS. JAYME MENZIES: I'm going to introduce
5 myself. I'm Jayme Menzies, and I am from Manitoba. The
6 date is March 28th, and it's 4:04. So I'm going to hand
7 the floor over to Mitchell, and if you don't mind
8 introducing yourself, and then you can get us started.

9 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: My name is Mitchell
10 Poitras, and I am from La Ronge, Saskatchewan. I'm here to
11 talk about my sister that's been missing since April of
12 2017, and just really when she went missing. I feel like we
13 had only our family - my immediate family - helping. And
14 it really makes us, makes somebody feel helpless in a way
15 because it's such a big city, and we're not used to the
16 city because we live in a town. And you come to the city
17 to look for somebody, just, you don't know where to look.
18 And, yeah. You feel helpless. And, yeah. There was only
19 about eight of us, looking, searching. And it's just
20 really, I don't know, mind blowing, I guess. Like, how
21 we're, how we're disconnected from our own neighbours. We
22 no longer talk to our neighbours. We no longer have that
23 connection. As I was growing up, I felt a disconnection
24 because I did a, I did drink a lot and did drugs. But now
25 I'm starting to understand my connection, where I should

1 come from. Like, our culture is gone, our language. I
2 don't know my own language. Um, yeah. Just identity. My
3 own identity is gone and you are disconnected with each
4 other didn't keep it to find my sister. I think we all
5 should be together and working together as a community, but
6 my community in La Ronge - because she's not even from
7 Prince Albert - so not much people know, knew her. So it's
8 hard to get help from people that don't know ~~what~~ [who]
9 that person is. So I'm sure they'd help a family member,
10 but not just a random, random thing to do.

11 You girls want to say anything?

12 Yeah, just -- I don't know. Just really, pretty hard.

13 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Can I ask you a
14 question about that?

15 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Um-hum.

16 MS. JAYME MENZIES: So when she went
17 missing initially, did somebody contact the police right
18 away, or what, what happened there? What was the timeline?

19 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: My mom I'm pretty
20 sure got contacted --

21 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Within a week.

22 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: -- yeah. Within
23 the week she went missing, because before she went missing,
24 like, before she actually went, went missing, she was
25 missing before that. And I guess her boyfriend had her

1 locked up, but the police don't investigate him or do
2 anything it seems. Like, they don't -- I don't know. I
3 don't want to say they don't care, but it seems they don't
4 want to, they don't want to go forward on investigating
5 further --

6 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Right.

7 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: -- who the, who
8 the, um, guilty people might be. Like, usually when
9 somebody goes missing, you look, you look at their spouse -
10 -

11 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Yeah.

12 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: -- like, that's
13 usually the first person you think. But no, in that -- in
14 my sister's case they didn't -- well I don't know if they
15 investigated him or -- because I've seen him going around
16 searching, like, for two days, and then he was gone again
17 back to his lifestyle.

18 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Um-hum. Right. So she
19 -- nobody was hearing from her for about a week, and then
20 we called the cops, and then they pronounced her missing,
21 kind of thing.

22 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Well, we knew, like,
23 she was in Prince Albert, and even then, we didn't get a
24 hold of her, like, the next day or two. So -- and then we
25 all came down.

1 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: And for some
2 reason, his mom phoned my mom, and she never talks to my
3 mom.

4 MS. MARGARET BIRD: I think the (~~inaudible~~)
5 [one time --] the last time we talked to her was the 2nd --

6 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Um-hum.

7 MS. MARGARET BIRD: -- and then the 3rd was
8 the last time they saw her on video. And then maybe 6th or
9 the 7th, I got a message, from, from [M.], that's
10 [Boyfriend]'s brother's wife, and she asked me what
11 happened to my mom. And right after that she started
12 naming some other guy's name. I forgot what his name was,
13 but I have it on my phone.

14 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Um, [B.]? Is that
15 the one?

16 MS. MARGARET BIRD: No, this was a
17 different name.

18 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: (~~Inaudible~~) [That's what]
19 they're talking about in Saskatoon or something.

20 MS. MARGARET BIRD: No, they said that he
21 was in La Ronge and he was, he would - [A.] said that she
22 was last seen in La Ronge with him. She said -- I don't
23 know. Her story seemed, like, really mixed up, though.

24 (*Several people speaking at the same time*)

25 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: By herself and she was

1 with [Boyfriend] when she got here. Because they met up.

2 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: And another thing
3 that I find very disturbing, actually, is we hacked into my
4 sister's Facebook and we checked the messages from her
5 boyfriend, [Boyfriend], and there was only four messages
6 between each other in that whole time they were dating --
7 or together. They have a child together. There's only
8 four messages between them in that Facebook. And I looked
9 at all the other old messages and you could see absolutely
10 everyone. Somebody went in there and deleted them, which
11 is -- I don't know. Just makes me want to tear my hair
12 out. It's so obvious, like --

13 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Right.

14 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Yeah, and the message
15 was,

16 "Oh, what happened to you the other
17 night?"

18 Well, would you wait a few nights to
19 message her when she has nowhere else to call there besides
20 to see you?

21 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Um-hum. She was
22 going to go see him.

23 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Hum.

24 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Because he waited a few
25 days after she got there. Because, like, as soon as she

1 got there to P.A., that was within the day she went
2 missing.

3 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: And there's some
4 footage I seen but, but, I don't know. It doesn't seem
5 like she's doing what they say -- the police think that
6 she's doing. They think that she's just digging in the
7 garbage. It doesn't look that way.

8 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Sometimes it looks like
9 she's hiding in some of those pictures, too, they showed
10 us. But then, can't they keep following her to see more?
11 Like, didn't get that much out of those videos and
12 pictures.

13 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: And street cameras,
14 they didn't show us those.

15 MS. MARGARET BIRD: They started bringing
16 up the name [A.R.], that they saw her with him, and [E.]'s.

17 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: But that's not even who
18 she was with in Prince Albert.

19 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. He was in La
20 Ronge the whole time. They were just --

21 MS. JAYME MENZIES: It's just a lot of
22 conflicting --

23 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. They're --

24 MS. JAYME MENZIES: -- stuff, stuff.

25 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: It's like

1 [Boyfriend]'s family knew that they were trying to confuse
2 us on our own search.

3 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: (~~Inaudible~~) [Might] even
4 seen her that -- when she hitchhiked. Because she stopped
5 by my work, and she was all by herself. She wasn't with no
6 one. And I guess that's when she left the apartment and
7 hitchhiked there.

8 MS. JAYME MENZIES: So did the police
9 start either investigating any of those guys right away or
10 help you start searching right away?

11 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: They didn't help
12 search anywhere.

13 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: They just basically say,
14 "Oh, she was missing a lot there."

15 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. They just
16 pretty much disregard she's a human being because of her
17 lifestyle.

18 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Right.

19 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: So she's living
20 that lifestyle. They don't really seem to care. Because I
21 remember -- I can't remember who it was - but they were
22 talking about a lady that's a hooker. They were talking
23 about that, and they were saying,

24 "Oh, she's just a hooker."

25 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Right. So they have

1 that attitude and that --

2 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: That's a human
3 being.

4 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Um-hum.

5 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: It doesn't matter
6 what they're doing; it's still a human being. And they
7 have kids, they have families --

8 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Right. good point.

9 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: They're somebody's
10 sister, someone's relative, and you can't just take that
11 away from other people just because of their lifestyle.
12 Because there's people that love that person. And that
13 kind of mentality is not something we should be putting
14 into our future and our children's future. The hate needs
15 to be -- I don't know. It's the way people are raised. I
16 don't think it's the kids. There's no way kids can act
17 that way. Yeah, it's a lot to do with the way we're
18 brought up. But yeah, the help received, I don't -- I
19 think I seen them once, but they weren't even searching
20 where we were searching. They were just driving in an
21 alley. That was the only time I seen the police actually
22 searching.

23 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Couldn't have -- they
24 could have been not even searching for her. Just a call or
25 something.

1 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. They just
2 could have randomly.

3 MS. MARGARET BIRD: For a while there,
4 they'd come out when we, when we found something.

5 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Yeah. They'd just come
6 check out what we'd find. Yeah.

7 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: They could find,
8 like, shoes in the bush, and then we'd call them, and then
9 they'd just come and just come --

10 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: They found, like,
11 backpack and stuff like --

12 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Not necessarily
13 Happy's, but just people's --

14 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: No, but just didn't want
15 to touch it and --

16 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Um-hum.

17 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Oh, yeah.

18 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: In case it was hers
19 or --

20 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Right.

21 MS. MARGARET BIRD: And after a certain
22 point, they stopped, they stopped coming out when we called
23 them.

24 MS. JAYME MENZIES: So how, how is that on
25 your family here -- I guess you guys probably came into

1 Prince Albert and spent some time searching?

2 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah.

3 MS. JAYME MENZIES: So how did it affect
4 the family having to do that?

5 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: It took a lot of,
6 it took a lot of money.

7 MS. MARGARET BIRD: Energy.

8 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah.

9 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: I got dumped.

10 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Just because you were
11 devoting so much time to --

12 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: Yeah.

13 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: To searching.

14 MS. MARGARET BIRD: Emotionally draining.

15 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Yeah.

16 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. Yeah, just -
17 - I don't know. We just all probably feel so helpless,
18 like, it's such a big city, because we're not used to the
19 city and we don't know where the people that live that
20 lifestyle, we don't know where they go. Like, we asked the
21 people on the streets where spots are and we found a few
22 places, but no, no evidence of my sister.

23 MS. MARGARET BIRD: And it's just one piece
24 of evidence is when her hat was found. Some guy found it.
25 I forgot where it was. I think (~~inaudible~~) [it was]

1 Twilight Hotel (ph), maybe.

2 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. That sounds
3 right.

4 MS. MARGARET BIRD: That guy showed it to
5 [Boyfriend] and he said,

6 "Hey, this is Happy's hat."

7 Because he saw my mom's name in the
8 inside of it. And then right away, [Boyfriend] got really
9 mad and grabbed the hat out of his hand and said -- he
10 swore at him and said -- I forgot what he said. But he, but
11 he put it in his backpack. And then that guy told my Kukom
12 (ph) about it. And then my Kukom told the police. And
13 the police didn't do anything with it

14 MS. JAYME MENZIES: They didn't go ask
15 [Boyfriend] about that or anything?

16 MS. MARGARET BIRD: No.

17 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Like, they could have
18 did, did more at the time with [Boyfriend] and then his
19 mom, and -- I don't know.

20 MS. MARGARET BIRD: It's just suspicious
21 when she left. Like, she's been in the apartment for
22 years, and all of a sudden, once my mom goes missing, like,
23 a month later, she's out of there.

24 (Several people speaking at the same time)

25 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Changed her

1 vehicle.

2 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Who's this, sorry?

3 MS. MARGARET BIRD: [Boyfriend]'s mom.

4 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: [Boyfriend]'s mom.

5 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Oh, okay.

6 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: That's who he lives
7 with.

8 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Oh, okay.

9 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: And when he had her
10 before, [Boyfriend]'s mom was in that house.

11 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah, yeah. She
12 let [Boyfriend] keep Happy, and we thought she was missing.

13 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Right.

14 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: And she was beaten
15 to the point where he didn't want to let anybody see her,
16 and his mom let him do that.

17 MS. JAYME MENZIES: When did this incident
18 happen? Is this --

19 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Um, about a -- was
20 that about a year before she went missing? Or -- I don't
21 know. That was quite a while, actually --

22 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Because he would always
23 beat her. ...

24 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah.

25 *(Several people speaking at the same*

1 time)

2 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: (*Inaudible*) [They
3 probably just] took it too far, I'm thinking. I don't
4 know.

5 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: That was, like, three
6 or four years ago.

7 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. I don't
8 know. Time flies.

9 MS. JAYME MENZIES: So I did have a few
10 more questions, but maybe I'll just open the floor to you
11 two to just, kind of, share whatever comes to mind for a
12 bit. If you don't mind introducing yourself first, and then
13 we can kind of (*inaudible*) a little bit.

14 MS. MARGARET BIRD: My name is Margaret
15 Bird. I'm Happy's second oldest daughter. I'm 21, from La
16 Ronge. This has been, like, a really hard year for me.
17 And I've been through - me and my family have been through
18 a lot and... from when she first went missing, the first
19 year I, I wasn't getting a really good feeling, but I still
20 had a lot of hope. But I tried to push away that feeling
21 that she, she was gone. Then after a month rolled in, I
22 started feeling like she wouldn't, she wouldn't leave us
23 for this long and she's never -- the only time I've been
24 that, been that, been away from her for that long when I
25 was in foster care. And she was, she was always talking

1 with my Kukom (ph). I just felt like something was, wasn't
2 right. Something happened to her. Because things started
3 not adding up with [Boyfriend] and his family. And, and,
4 and it's a really hard thing hearing people say that we'll
5 find her and I'm sure she's okay, she'll be okay. Because
6 somewhere I felt like she wasn't okay. She was, she was
7 gone. Because if my mom were still alive, she's be here
8 right now. I don't know what to expect from here on out.
9 I just hope that the cops will do what they can. And I
10 still pray that we find her. I don't really think about it
11 too much anymore. It's just -- it just makes me frustrated
12 because they could have done a lot more from the beginning
13 -- the cops. They could have had a, a search party go out.
14 They could have checked the whole area with the whole town
15 or city with dogs.

16 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: They could have
17 told everyone to look in their backyards like they did for
18 the other lady that went missing and they found within a
19 week.

20 MS. MARGARET BIRD: We believe that maybe
21 her body's been moved. So if they were out there from the
22 beginning, we could have found her.

23 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Like, even saying
24 it on the radio, just say,

25 "This woman is missing, can you

1 her [vehicle] -- and she doesn't have that apartment
2 anymore.

3 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: (Inaudible).

4 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: I didn't want to
5 point fingers at them, and I don't want to blame anybody,
6 but the lack of investigation is incredible. I would be
7 ashamed to be an investigator on that case, to call myself
8 a police officer and wear that badge. Because I'm sure
9 they don't really have anything -- we did more
10 investigating in that case than the police officers did.
11 We even hacked into my own sister's Facebook which they
12 said they would do.

13 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: They were waiting for
14 someone from --

15 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: California, they
16 said.

17 *(Several people speaking at the same time)*

18 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: -- Facebook, they just
19 took it from us.

20 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. And didn't
21 let us see anything else.

22 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Because we called them
23 right away when we got into it. We just checked those
24 messages from [Boyfriend] ~~and circulation~~ pretty much, and
25 (~~inaudible~~) [browsed through, see] if there was anything.

1 MS. JAYME MENZIES: (~~Inaudible~~) [Should -]
2 do you want to introduce yourself and say a few words?

3 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: My name is Aleisha
4 Charles. I'm 22. I'm my mom's oldest daughter -- Happy.
5 I'm from La Ronge as well. I always delete my messages on
6 my Facebook. I, I like a clean, I like a clean message
7 thingy, and my mom's Facebook, she left, she left it on, on
8 my tablet, and I locked her out. I didn't look at any of
9 her messages because I, I respected that. But something
10 was telling me to look, though. She wasn't gone yet. She
11 didn't leave, yet, but I wanted to -- I felt like I needed
12 to look. I just, I just stopped my curiosity there and
13 just turned it off and her last messages to me I deleted.
14 I tried to not think about that feeling that I had that
15 this was the last time, because I knew when I first felt
16 her hugging me that -- before she was leaving on April 1st,
17 when she hugged me, I knew it was going to be the last time
18 I saw her. And it was a really short hug. Wasn't even two
19 seconds. And I just said,

20 "See you later,"

21 and she left. And I took off her
22 Facebook. If I had listened to my feelings, if I had, if I
23 hadn't just ignored that feeling that I had, I could have
24 checked her messages and seen, seen that she was going to
25 go and see [Boyfriend]. And she always, she always used to

1 say that she'd never go back to him, but -- because he was
2 really abusive. But you know, you know, it's hard not to go
3 back to someone when you think that it's the only person
4 that would ever want you. And that's how she thought. So
5 she was, she was going to P.A. to go see [Boyfriend]. I
6 found out the next week that she was, she was missing on
7 the, on the seventh. I was still trying to not believe it.
8 I already had this really dark feeling inside that she
9 wasn't around anymore, that she wasn't even with us
10 anymore, but ~~some~~ (inaudible) [like Margaret] said I tried
11 to drown that out and just believe it wasn't true and tried
12 to hope. After that, I was, I was kind of spiralling with
13 my emotions. They were, they were going crazy and my, my
14 boyfriend at the time - that's my baby's daddy - couldn't
15 handle, handle what I was going through. It was too much
16 for him because he was, he was already a suicidal person
17 and dealing with me and his own feelings at the same time;
18 he couldn't do it. And he just broke up with me right away.
19 And he stopped seeing his son, too. So I had to kind of
20 try and deal with it alone, I guess. And as more time went
21 by, I still had hope, but -- I was still spiralling and I
22 got a new boyfriend since then and with that one I was
23 being the worst girlfriend ever. I was just -- I was -- I
24 had -- I cried a lot because I missed my mom. And -- I
25 don't know. We just kind of all accepted that she wasn't

1 alive anymore. And I was, I was, I started getting really
2 violent, and I didn't project any of that to my son. But I
3 did, I was very violent with my boyfriend. Like, I know
4 that it's wrong of me to do that. I just -- I didn't know
5 how else to deal with my emotions. And I hadn't been to a
6 sweat in a long time, either. And I was also having
7 miscarriage after miscarriage, and it was just getting
8 worse and worse and worse throughout this whole year. And
9 I just, I just wish I could talk to my mom. Talk to her
10 about everything. It's, it's really unfair that everything
11 that could have been done wasn't done to find her. We
12 could have had closure. I think I feel like I need a
13 funeral to move on because it doesn't, it doesn't seem
14 like, it doesn't seem like -- I don't, I don't even put it
15 in words. Because in my dreams when, when I see her, it
16 just seems like she came back and I wind up missing her all
17 over again. Like, she's just freshly left. And it's not -
18 - it hasn't -- that closure isn't there because I don't --
19 I haven't seen her, and that's just what I need, I think.

20 MS. JAYME MENZIES: A question, a question
21 for any of you. Have, have you been offered any services
22 from any organization for, like, a therapist or a
23 counsellor or a psychologist or any kind of grief support
24 or anything like that? Has any -- have any organizations -
25 or even the cops or the justice system or anything -

1 reached out to anybody in the family for -- to offer that
2 sort of stuff?

3 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Not me.

4 MS. MARGARET BIRD: Not for me, either.

5 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: We're the forgotten
6 ones, I guess you'd say.

7 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Do you know if anybody
8 in the family has been informed of options about that?

9 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: I think they would
10 have told the rest of us if --

11 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Yeah.

12 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: -- because we all
13 got out there at that time and we all help either other
14 out.

15 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Um-hum.

16 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: And my parents are,
17 like, I'm very grateful for my parents because they're both
18 very powerful spiritual people, and they helped us become
19 who we are today. Like, me and my bothers and my sister,
20 we all respect everybody. We don't hurt anybody, we don't
21 do anything. Which is why I don't understand why somebody
22 would even hurt my sister. Because we were raised to not
23 hurt people. And my sister, even if she was under the
24 influence, she wouldn't go out of her way to hurt somebody.
25 She's just not that kind of person. Like, that's how I

1 think everybody should be. I'm not saying we're all, we're
2 all great, but we got to have those values of helping our
3 neighbour. Respecting others, respect them the way you
4 want to be treated. No matter what you're going through.
5 Yeah. They -- I think they've helped me a lot.

6 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Your parents have?

7 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. And our, our
8 teachings.

9 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Yeah. I heard mention
10 of a sweat. Have you guys done any sort of sweats or
11 ceremonies or anything since?

12 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Not as much because
13 my dad is sick.

14 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Oh.

15 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. So, we're
16 usually doing a lot of them --

17 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: A lot of people that came
18 to the sweats, all of those people have been coming to
19 help.

20 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Um-hum.

21 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: (Inaudible) traditional.

22 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Right.

23 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: There's a sweat every
24 week in Stanley Mission, but --

25 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Can't always make it over

1 there.

2 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: It's really hard to
3 get over there.

4 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: The roads --

5 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. The roads
6 are horrible to Stanley.

7 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: I would like to be
8 able to go there ~~most~~ [more] often, and maybe (inaudible)
9 bridge (inaudible) pretty much.

10 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: And then the sweats, too,
11 when they had the sweat over there, people are putting it
12 down, the sweat they have at their house.

13 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah, it's still,
14 still very ridiculed, like, our tradition.

15 MS. JAYME MENZIES: By?

16 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: By our own people.

17 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Like, his neighbours -
18 drug dealer, partier neighbours - saying,

19 "I don't know why they have sweats
20 over there. It doesn't make me
21 comfortable."

22 He's not bugging anyone. It's in their
23 own yard.

24 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: It's like me saying
25 I don't want that church sitting there.

1 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Right.

2 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: It's the way --
3 it's our way of -- it's not even a religion. It's a way of
4 life, it's spirituality. And (~~inaudible~~) [we don't] go by
5 our religion. We accept all religions in our way of life.
6 Like, we have a lot of different religions coming into the
7 sweat, too. My dad invites people from out, outside of
8 our, our ways, I guess.

9 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Margaret, have you,
10 have you spoken to anyone? A professional or any -- gone
11 to any sweats or anything like that, that have helped you
12 since?

13 MS. MARGARET BIRD: I talked to a lady
14 once but -- at the hospital. I didn't really feel
15 comfortable talking to her, though. So I didn't go back.

16 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Yeah, those people, they
17 do not make people feel comfortable.

18 MS. MARGARET BIRD: I've been to a sweat
19 down south -- a couple of them. Whenever we have a sweat
20 here it's usually on a day that I work, and I can't, like -
21 - I don't know, like, give up hours. So I don't go to
22 sweats too often, but I'm not, like, you know, into drugs
23 or alcohol or anything either.

24 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Sweats are okay, but it's
25 still not the closure we need. It's not going to bring her

1 back.

2 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Um-hum.

3 MS. MARGARET BIRD: It's, it's healing.
4 Still I feel, like -- I still feel like I'm trying to get
5 though every day. Like, try and make it through the day.

6 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: I seen a mental
7 health officer. I don't know how to -- what they're
8 called. Someone that lets you talk to them or something,
9 about three times, I guess. But, by the end of the third
10 one, they said I was healed and that I was good to go.

11 MS. MARGARET BIRD: Yeah. Whenever I
12 talked them, too, they were, like,

13 "Oh, it looks, it looks like you
14 already know what you need to know."

15 And that was, just, like, the first visit.
16 Like, she'd tell me things I already knew. Like, didn't
17 really make me feel any better.

18 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Yeah. Some days are
19 easier, some are harder, it just depends. Because they
20 don't know what you're going through, they just say,

21 "Oh, okay. You seem okay."

22 MS. JAYME MENZIES: These people that you
23 spoke to were they in Prince Albert or available in La
24 Ronge for you guys?

25 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: They were in La

1 Ronge. And I do find that I feel a lot happier after I go
2 to a sweat lodge, but I don't get to do that often.

3 MS. MARGARET BIRD: I agree.

4 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. It gets rid
5 of a lot of bad energy.

6 MS. MARGARET BIRD: It's a (~~inaudible~~)
7 [lot] clean [--]

8 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: (~~Inaudible~~) [It]
9 clean, cleans your system it feels like. (~~Inaudible~~)
10 [Relieving].

11 MS. MARGARET BIRD: We just, like, lack
12 funds for gas to, to go out of town, to go to the sweat or
13 to get wood, too, to have a sweat at our place. So either
14 way you're still spending, like, \$100 or more. Because you
15 got to get wood and flakes (ph) for praying.

16 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: And tobacco, and you
17 got to get everything every time.

18 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: ~~All the~~ (~~inaudible~~)
19 [Yeah --].

20 MS. JAYME MENZIES: So my understanding is
21 there hasn't really been much of an investigation, no
22 charges have been laid against anyone. What's -- does your
23 family have a plan going forward or -- as individuals or as
24 a family, what do you think are the next steps? Are you
25 guys going to continue searching or is the -- are the

1 police still investigating? Like, what happens now?

2 MS. MARGARET BIRD: There's a search in
3 May. A search we've been fundraising for.

4 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Once the snow melts
5 more, we'll be able to see the, see everything again. But
6 it'll probably just be -- well, I don't want to think
7 negative, because you always get a negative outcome, but if
8 we stay positive and go search, hopefully we can find
9 something.

10 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Um-hum. What kind of
11 -- so for your family and for other families that are going
12 through this - because unfortunately, there are too many
13 families that have to deal with this sort thing - what kind
14 of things could be in place that would make this process
15 easier for you guys? Whether it's funding or something
16 that the cops do differently or mental health, you know,
17 mental health aids or, you know, anything. Like, what
18 could make this whole process easier for your family?

19 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: I think having,
20 having something set up for people to be able to have their
21 voice heard more widely. Instead of just, kind of, hidden
22 investigation, kind of. Because we were trying to put it
23 on Facebook and trying to get -- but we're not popular
24 people so we don't get much help. Like, having a voice, I
25 guess. Having somebody voice out it that this person is

1 missing and if you see her then try and look out your, your
2 backyard or your apartment or wherever your anything. I
3 don't know, it's just really -- it's kind of hard because
4 it's a city. In a smaller town, it'd be easier to set up
5 something to help people.

6 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Yeah. Um-hum.

7 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. I think that
8 would be the biggest help because, like, having more, more
9 bodies, I guess.

10 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Okay.

11 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah, more people.

12 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Check more to the outside
13 so (~~inaudible~~) [I think --] because they -- I don't know.
14 They think more in the highways, they're going to have to
15 do a long search, and it will take a while.

16 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: And investigators
17 that actually know how to use a computer, because the ones
18 we spoke to didn't even know how to use their phones.
19 Their touch screens and their computers. And that guy said
20 he doesn't know much about technology, so I don't know how
21 he's going to search in these files when he doesn't know
22 anything. It doesn't make sense to be in that area of
23 work. Yeah. Just really it feels like the police are just
24 too busy for us. Maybe there's too much crime in the city
25 here going on that they can't help with the search. I

1 don't know. Like, yeah. They didn't -- I don't know why,
2 they still didn't investigate him -- well I don't -- I'm
3 pretty sure they didn't because he's still roaming around.

4 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Um-hum.

5 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: I don't know why.
6 Like, if he was guilty, would you let somebody walk around
7 society that -- I don't know. Especially for somebody to
8 beat a woman until he doesn't want to let her out of the
9 room. Like, somebody like that probably has the - what do
10 you call it - conscience to take another person's life.
11 Because if you even hit a woman once, then you probably
12 don't even have a conscience at all, because no man should
13 be hitting any woman. It doesn't matter. It's not how he
14 should have been raised. If I even hurt a woman, holy
15 shit. My dad would beat the shit out of me. But I guess
16 it's the way you're raised. Some people just don't have
17 the time for their kids or something, I don't know. But
18 his dad -- well, I guess I shouldn't go into that, but --
19 yeah. I think he should be investigated soon anyway, or at
20 least talked to. There's something up with that.

21 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: They could have followed
22 him around or something at the beginning because then
23 something -- he'd probably go back there.

24 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: And he wasn't
25 sleeping in his apartment because when they were searching,

1 they seen him sleeping in the graveyard, which is a weird
2 place to be sleeping.

3 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Do any of you guys
4 want to share some memories of your mom or your sister or
5 just kind of -- whether it's from when you were really
6 little or just more recent? Just kind of things about her
7 that you'll remember and that will honour her memory a
8 little bit?

9 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. She was
10 really, she was really good at fishing.

11 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Fishing?

12 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. When I was
13 smaller, I remember my dad caught a fish and right away my
14 sister already had it cut up ready to cook. I was, like,
15 "Holy, man. She's good."

16 And then when I was younger, too, she
17 took me snare fishing, and just fish after fish they were
18 just pulling up. ~~Like, I was this~~ (inaudible) ["Grab this
19 one! Grab this one!" And I had] two poles with the, the
20 wire on it. And then when she'd pull one out, I'd give her
21 the other pole and she'd grab that pole and pull another.
22 Yeah. She was just really good. She taught me lots.
23 Yeah, she used to take us walking every day, too. Well,
24 took me walking and her kids. Go uptown every day. She
25 was a really, really awesome big sister.

1 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Aleisha? Is there
2 anything you'd like to share?

3 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: Whenever I'd have
4 troubles with anything, it seemed like she was the easiest
5 person to talk to about it. She wasn't judgmental and
6 she'd -- she wouldn't talk about how bad I was or anything
7 like that when I was telling her how I was feeling about
8 something. She was -- she can understand and she'd
9 sympathize with me and things like that. And it was really
10 the main person that I talk to about those things. She was
11 just, like, my, my emotional rock. And like, kind of hard
12 to find one that's as good as her, that was as good as she
13 was. But that -- she was good at making me laugh. She was
14 really weird. If I was getting overly upset or something,
15 she'd just do something really weird, like, all of a sudden
16 make a funny face or make a weird sound and I'd stop what I
17 was thinking and I'd just start laughing. She was really
18 good at that. ~~And~~ (inaudible) [I miss her a lot].

19 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Margaret, did you want
20 to share anything?

21 MS. MARGARET BIRD: She was really, she
22 was really kind. When I would be upset she'd - like
23 Aleisha said - she'd be supportive and she'd just listen.
24 And I remember two years before I graduated, I asked her if
25 she was going to make it to my graduation, and she said she

1 would. She was living in P.A. when I graduated, but still
2 she found a way to come see. She took a bus to La Ronge.

3 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. I almost had
4 to dance with her for your graduation, then her mom showed
5 up.

6 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: She stood in place,
7 with my dad as well. She always gave us advice and always
8 told me to be kind to my sisters.

9 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: She told me to get
10 my nephew, she wanted me to be watching him for a while now
11 because her boyfriend's brother is actually watching him
12 now. And I don't know, she doesn't like them, I guess.
13 Like, she said that her -- like [Boyfriend]'s brother is
14 more abusive than he is. So she wanted me, she wanted me
15 to take [Child 1].

16 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Who's [Child 1]?

17 MS. MARGARET BIRD: [Child 1].

18 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: A year, a year old
19 then --

20 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: He was nine, eh?

21 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah, two years
22 older than my oldest son. I still remember. I think she
23 wanted me to get him because she doesn't want him to be
24 raised by someone like that.

25 MS. MARGARET BIRD: And some of it kind of

1 shows [Child 1], too. He's sneaky and very secretive.

2 He's such a good boy, but, like, they're going to --

3 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Poison him. Yeah.
4 Poisoning his mind with their upbringing, I guess - or his
5 upbringing -- [Boyfriend]'s brother. Because they were
6 brought up by a very abusive man, their father. And that's
7 actually why their mother left them, I'm pretty sure,
8 because he beat her so badly. But she just moved away, came
9 to P.A.

10 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Ashley, do you have
11 anything you wanted to share about Happy?

12 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Just hard to talk.

13 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Like, it doesn't
14 make sense that some random person would just go pick her
15 up and take her away. That's what the story's supposed to
16 be. She was last seen with her boyfriend, though, and they
17 were fighting. I'm no police officer, but that doesn't take
18 much investigation. Yeah, she was always kind to
19 everybody, no matter what she was going through.

20 MS. MARGARET BIRD: She loved kids, all our
21 nephews, nieces, grandbabies. Even when she got mad at us,
22 she'd point -- she'd come back later and apologize. Or if
23 I went to go apologize, she'd right away give us a hug.

24 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: She was really good
25 at sewing and beading. That's one thing she was really

1 good at. It only took her two days to make a pair of mitts
2 or something, with beading; and those are nice, big mitts,
3 too. She was good at cutting hair, she was good at
4 everything. Just a real awesome big sister.

5 MS. JAYME MENZIES: I don't have any more
6 questions for you guys, but if there are any, kind of, last
7 thoughts, whether it's about frustrations with how the
8 process went or memories of your mom or your sister or
9 recommendations to the inquiry commissioners that will be
10 hearing your story -- anything like that.

11 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: I recommend maybe
12 have a little seminar to get people to treat everyone
13 equally. Like, maybe even police officers and -- yeah.
14 They should treat every case as the last. Nobody should be
15 treated any differently. Race, color, beliefs, it doesn't
16 matter. Everyone deserves justice. We want justice for my
17 sister.

18 MS. MARGARET BIRD: She'd been through so
19 much in a lifetime. If I'd been through as much as she has
20 been through, I would have been gone a long time ago. She
21 was really strong.

22 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. Just I think
23 they just can't forget, can't forget about everyone.
24 Because we are human too. We weren't even considered
25 humans until '80s, I'm pretty sure. (~~Inaudible~~) [And

1 learning that in school] kind of, like, what the heck?
2 Like, you don't know about that until you get educated, but
3 it's something I don't think they want people to actually
4 know. Because people that aren't from Canada don't even
5 know about it. They don't know a lot of things that
6 happened here.

7 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: I noticed when
8 talking to the street people, almost every single one that
9 I've ever talked to, when I mention my mom, they know her
10 and they know her boyfriend. And before, before, before it
11 was really well known that she was missing, and then before
12 she even went missing, if I talk to anybody about my mom,
13 they'd say how much they don't like [Boyfriend] with him --
14 with her. They don't like her with [Boyfriend].

15 MS. MARGARET BIRD: You'd bring up her name
16 and they're, like,

17 "Oh, I know her. She's so nice.
18 She's so, she's so kind."

19 They'd have a lot of good things to say
20 about her and then brought up [Boyfriend] and --

21 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: It would be, like -
22 - yeah. It's like nobody liked him around here. Or even
23 in La Ronge, too. Like, they didn't -- there was a few
24 guys trying to beat him up if they see him before she went
25 missing. Because he's repeatedly beated [sic] her, like,

1 beaten. She's been beaten too many times and I think
2 they're getting sick of seeing her like that. But even --
3 yeah. I, I went after him once but wasn't able to do
4 anything because he ran away. And I was only, like, 16. I
5 think he was, like, 20 something. But that's what cowards
6 do. Can't stand the man. Can't stand up to a man because
7 that's why they hit a woman. It makes them feel strong or
8 something. I don't know.

9 MS. ALEISHA CHARLES: I don't have
10 anything to add.

11 MS. JAYME MENZIES: Okay. Margaret? Any
12 last thoughts.

13 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: We can't give up.

14 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Yeah. [Boyfriend] needs
15 to be investigated more because he was, like, what? The
16 number one suspect. He was with her for so many years and
17 even after she went missing not long, he was already with
18 someone else. Right away.

19 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: He probably beat
20 that girlfriend, too.

21 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: And that was the only --
22 not even two weeks. There's something wrong with that
23 picture.

24 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. How could
25 you forget somebody you're in love with in two weeks?

1 Because he was with another woman two weeks after she went
2 missing. That doesn't make sense. He should be out there
3 searching for the woman he loved, if he really loved her.
4 It's the mother of his son. I don't know where his head's
5 at, but --

6 MS. MARGARET BIRD: ~~I'll~~ (inaudible) [When
7 they broke up before I don't] recall seeing him with anyone
8 else or making public or Facebook or anything.

9 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Yeah. It was public on
10 Facebook right away. That's how we all seen it.

11 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Because they were
12 off-and-on a lot, like, for a long time, too. And he's
13 never been with anybody but for some reason, as soon as she
14 went missing, he posted it all over.

15 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Because he knew she was
16 gone. Who knows, maybe she could have helped, too, if they
17 were together that quick.

18 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: And he trembled,
19 was trembling. Like, he was trembling when I was
20 questioning him. Why the hell is he trembling if I'm just
21 asking him a simple question of where my sister is? He
22 doesn't need to be like,

23 "Thank you,"

24 like, he just -- he can't even look me in
25 the eyes and tell me that he doesn't know where my sister

1 is. He just keeps looking away, looking everywhere. Like,
2 just can't be a man and look me in the eye and tell me he
3 doesn't know. It just doesn't make sense. I'm sure there's
4 a lot of families out there that will not, will not be
5 receiving much help, either. Because there's a lot of
6 things happening in this world; it's not, not good at all.

7 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Most of the unsolved
8 cases are Aboriginal, so that says something.

9 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Like, for all we
10 know, it could just be somebody random, even. Because
11 with, with all the crazy people.

12 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: Not much people, like, go
13 missing around here. So --

14 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah.

15 MS. ASHLEY HOWE: It (inaudible) to the
16 fact. It's all I've got to say. Just, we need more help.

17 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Yeah. More help
18 from the investigators (inaudible) [as well]. Because we
19 have no authority to good interrogate people, interrogate
20 people. Like, they should have at least investigated him
21 because he was the closest to her. Not just ask him a few
22 questions and say,

23 "Okay. Be on your way."

24 Like, I think, like, now that I think of
25 it, I should have did it at that time, call her in and say

1 she'd robbed a bank because that way they'd actually find
2 her. Because they care more about money than the people.
3 They're not there to protect the people, they're there to
4 protect and investment. That's how it is.

5 MS. JAYME MENZIES: It's pretty smart.

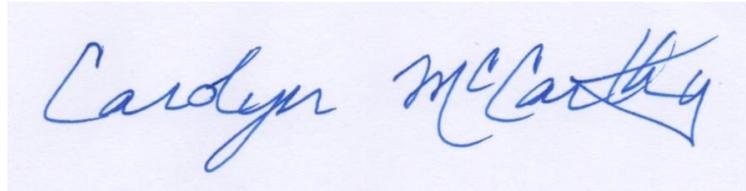
6 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Um-hum. That's why
7 I can't be Chief. Too honest.

8 MS. JAYME MENZIES: I'll leave that one
9 alone. Well, thanks for sharing, you guys. I'll maybe
10 turn off the recorders, and we can kind of just debrief a
11 little bit. Do that sound okay?

12 MR. MITCHELL POITRAS: Um-hum.

13 --- Whereupon the proceeding concluded.

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



Carolyn McCarthy,
Stenographer and Authorized Court Transcriptionist