National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
The Saa-Ust Centre
Vancouver, British Columbia

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Statement - Volume: 378
A.V.

Statement gathered by Caitlin Hendrickson

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ORDER

Pursuant to Rule 7 of *Legal Path: Rules of Respectful Practice*, Chief Commissioner Marion Buller ordered that all names in this transcript and any related documents be rendered anonymous. This order was made April 18, 2018.
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Documents submitted with testimony: None.
Upon commencing on Saturday, April 7, 2018 at 4:01 p.m.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay. So I’m just going to note that it’s 4:01 p.m. It’s Saturday, April 7, and we’re at the Saa-ust Centre in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

And I’ll get you to introduce yourself, and if you could please just spell your name for the record.

MS. A.V.: Okay.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: And then from there I’ll leave it open to you to share with me what you’d like the commissioners to know.

MS. A.V.: Okay. My name is A.V. That’s spelled [spells name].

And so I am an Indigenous woman, and I’m very grateful that this opportunity is being provided to me by the commissioners and the Government of Canada.

I’m also an immigrant, and so it’s been unique for me to be here because of my immigration status. I am a Canadian citizen, and growing up here, because I did grow up here since I was a child. It’s been awkward. It’s been awkward to be Indigenous, but a little bit excluded because I’m not First Nations from the Canadian
perspective.

But nonetheless, the efforts that have been made in Canada through my life here, since the ‘80s, have helped me. I’ve sort of benefited from it in the whole, you know, decolonisation and reconciliation with my own Indigenous heritage so that there’s a little bit less division within me because there is a lot of that and there’s -- I’ve become very aware of the effects of colonization, and we call it conquest in [country where witness was born].

So I’m very grateful, like I said, for the work that’s being done here that I’ve been able to benefit from.

The difficult parts have been and the violence that I’ve experienced here, and the treatment of myself and my statements when I made them to the police.

And specifically the fact that I, when I made my statement to the police I brought them -- I brought forward a serial rapist, and because of their outright dismissal of my report, he was able to continue to rape at least another 20 women, and so their negligence and incompetence in dealing with my claims not only resulted in myself being injured emotionally and physically really because I lost my ability to do a lot of physical things because of my mental issues. There’s pain. I got pain in my
body, everything.

And then the impact on my son as well and on my family. Like it’s just -- it’s like a wave. So not only, like I said, the impact to me and my family, but also the families of the women who were -- who went on -- who he went on to hurt.

Eventually they did catch him and they did -- they did prosecute him. He was convicted and he’s in the midst of being sentenced through an application for a dangerous offender. So I’m still waiting for my justice, and yet I find myself unable to access that justice because of everything that I’ve lost since then.

I -- you know, I -- like I said, when I came here I graduated with honours, you know, from school and high school, and I went to post-secondary. I had, you know, I was a professional. I was a homeowner. I had a career. I was a sales manager at a medical device firm, a manufacturing firm. And my income, according to the numbers, was like in the top six per cent of Canada. But after the assault and after the way things were handled with the police, and also the way my workplace handled the aftermath of all of that, I ended up losing my job and I lost my home and I lost all of my savings, and I managed to sort of hold onto like whatever was left of my life through getting help from the government agencies that were out
there that were able to provide help -- like you know, subsidized housing and income assistance -- but those, as grateful as I am for them because I am very grateful, were very difficult, very, very difficult to access. Cost again a lot of woundedness. And I sort of discovered sort of personally what they mean by the poverty trap.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Can you expand on that, on the poverty trap?

MS. A.V.: Yeah.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: From your point, what is that like for you?

MS. A.V.: Yeah, from my point of view it’s the fact I had to sell my house, and I got a substantial amount of money, which I was allowed, so when I applied for disability benefits I was allowed to put that into a trust because that’s what the sort of rules said that I could do and I could hold onto up to $200,000 in that trust.

But when I applied for income assistance the process was so onerous and the people -- the lady that kind of initially took my call and my case, her lack of training and her threatening kind of behaviour scared me so much that it made it, made me -- it took longer for me to -- to deal with getting that trust set up.

And it turns out that my bank, which is the Royal Bank, had -- they had no idea how to set up such
a trust. I was -- I had an advocate somewhere who gave me
the phone or whatever of a notary who charged me $100 or
$500 to set up the trust papers, but that whole process
took six months. And by the time I got all that said and
done, my initial application was closed and I didn’t know.
So then I was basically forced to reapply again, and there
was a lot of avoidance of that.

Because of my own mental health
perspective, I was scared again of dealing with the -- I
thought that’s how they all were, you know, because she was
accusing me -- well not accusing me, but she was -- I was
staying in a home, which right now I’m thinking was really
cheap rent. It’s like $1,500 for a three-bedroom. And she’s
like, oh, you know, when they see how much you’re spending
on your rent they’re going to think that you’re hiding
money. They’re going to think this. They’re going to
investigate, you know, and she was really -- Like maybe in
her mind she thought she was trying to help, but all she
was doing is pressuring me to be afraid to get services.

And then she used language like -- because
my son’s father is not paying any child support, she said
the language like well, they’re going to go after him, and
I don’t really care what they do to him, but just the way
that she presented what the Ministry does by investigating,
threatening, going after people, and things like that, it
just, the entire impact of that was that it took me an entire year to get to the point where I could apply for disability benefits, and in that time my nest egg that I had saved up for myself, or not the nest egg, but my equity, the only money that I had to help me out with things was spent on living, living expenses and health expenses.

And the fact that I couldn’t cook for myself, I couldn’t go get groceries, I relied a lot on expensive like junk food type things. So you know, people would -- that around me would all like criticize me that I spent my house money on pizza, and that was very hurtful. I mean, obviously not entirely true, because a lot of money on pizza, but that’s the essence of selling your house to live off of it and then losing it all.

So I also lost my RRSPs because I had to also cash them out and put them supposedly into the -- into the trust. But because, like I said, everything took forever, and the benefits dragged on, I guess, for a year, I lost all of that too.

So by the time that I finally was awarded disability benefits, I had nothing left, like zero money, like $5,000, which I kept, which to me is like compared to the initial amount is nothing.

So it sits there in a trust, thinking
maybe one day I’ll have money to put in there, because after all that work I’m thinking I am not going to let go of this trust. But -- the trauma and the hurt and the pain of having lost everything really put me in a very poor place to think about working again because like I said, I come from a professional background. I can work. I have skills. I have a ton of experience. But not being able to wake up in the morning, eat, basically sleeping all day, being bedridden with depression and triggers and PTSD and everything, how could I work? I mean, that’s why I was accepted for disability.

I wanted to get better. I thought maybe I could get better. So I tried to look at how I could get help so that I could heal physically and mentally. And the only thing that I thought at the time could help me was maybe an occupational therapist because that’s what they do. They work with people to help them get back to work.

Well, unless it’s a Work B.C. issue nobody pays for it. I have no money for that. So how am I supposed to pay for a doctor to help me get back to work when I have no money? And I think everybody would want me to work, but without help how can I do that? It’s not covered by MSB. It’s not covered by the Ministry. It’s not like income assistance, it’s not covered. And the Work Safe B.C., I eventually found out, I didn’t even know you could do this,
make a health, make a mental health bullying type claim for injuries and such.

But because initially when I lost my job, which I did feel like my human rights were abused, the statute of limitations had passed, and the reason I decided initially not to pursue that is because I was so wounded. I had not a leg to stand on. There’s no way that I could have -- I thought I wasn’t strong enough to deal with both police, rape case, and a human rights case or a civil case, I couldn’t fight everybody at the same time.

So I prioritized the police thing and trying to get benefits from crime victims assistance. I got denied.

That was the other issue. I got denied that the first time. The second time I applied for it, they did accept me, but it took two years. And when I made a claim to get money for my lost job, they denied that. And their basis for denying it was what in my mind I thought was ridiculous. I could have fought it, but the injury was too much. I can’t even go back and look at that because I haven’t even healed from that yet, and that was eight years ago or seven years ago. How they twist everything around to make it look like -- they don’t want to take responsibility. They want to be accountable. They don’t want to put employers in a position of being the bad guys
because then that’s bad for business, right? And that’s what matters. It’s to keep the business afloat.

So then me, who I’m a very capable and skilled and experienced person, I can’t even get back to work or get help for it. But -- So there was that. There was the RCMP the way they handled everything. There was the Work Safe as well. When I tried to apply for that, they denied it as well.

The only help I got was from the not-profits, non-profit housing people. I got a house and I thought, well that’s housing first. You know, how can I work if I don’t even have a good place to live? And so that was my plan. I thought, I’ll get myself on the disability benefits. I’ll get a house. I’ll -- I’ll therapize myself. I’ll just do it, and I did.

I am -- I thought I could do gradual entry back to work with a very low stress job that was beneath my skills so that because there was a trauma, because of the way my bosses treated me, they bullied me after they found out what happened to me. So I did that, and I worked part-time for two years. But then that job sort of dried out.

And my son got into trouble because of the aftermath of all of this that happened to me affected him, affected his mental health. It affected my ability to me a mom to him, and he got sick. He got mental health issues.
He got depressed. He became suicidal. And everything that I needed to -- I needed to turn my focus to him. So I stopped taking care of myself and I just took care of him.

I stopped all my healing. I stopped all -- pretty much everything so that he could be good again. And between that and just life things, when last year I found out that the offender, the one that raped me in 2010, he had been convicted. That was a big blow to me. It was a big blow.

People thought well that seems validating, and I thought, no, it’s not validating because it’s not good news to find out that you were in the claws of a serial rapist. It’s not. There’s no -- there’s no relief there. There’s nothing there. There’s only anger and rage against the police that were supposed to protect us and they didn’t. I handed that to him. They had him and they let him go.

And then because all of that has been unhealed in all this time, the police aspect, I was really very, very, very vulnerable and triggered substantially. My vulnerability put me in a position to be raped again, and I was raped again by two men, separate men, separate incidences in one night in October of last year, so about six, five months ago.

I made a new police report. Again, not
because of me, because I have zero -- zero confidence that
I would get justice for myself, but I just thought again,
look, it’s on them to protect women. It really is on them.
And people who do this sort of thing -- and we already know
this, there’s no excuse -- there’s -- they’re not -- they
don’t rape just one person. They’re serial rapists, most of
them.

And that’s what I did. I just put it back
on them and just say, you need to protect women from these
people.

It’s been six months and I haven’t heard a
word from the police. They said that they would get back to
me. That is part of -- I believe legally they’re supposed
to come and tell me what has happened or transpired. Not
one thing from them.

So that, all of that is -- what I believe
puts people in, and women specifically in danger, and
children, not just girls, but children because the
injustices, they compound, and one thing leads to another.
And vulnerable people, because of their vulnerability, get
re-victimized. And that’s what happened to me.

But instead of looking at that they just
think, I mean I don’t know what they think, but there’s a
lot of fear. I have a lot of -- I had a lot of fear in
reporting again because I thought that they were going to
dismiss everything again and not do anything again. And from being there and witnessing what these men do to women, by how -- what they did to me, I know that they -- it wasn’t just me that they did this to.

I wanted access to a lawyer to help me make my statement, but there is nothing to help women with that because the police, the way -- they question, the way they question you, you’re actually a suspect, and every suspect needs to have a lawyer present.

Yet when men are treated like suspects de facto, and yet we don’t have access to a lawyer to be there with us when we make our statements. And yes, I know we have access to advocates, but they’re emotional supports. But when you’re making a police statement it’s a legal issue. It’s not an emotional issue. This might be an emotional issue, what we’re doing here. I don’t need a lawyer for this, but I do need it when I’m making a police statement.

The way they questioned -- the way they questioned me the first time and the second time with leading questions, with making me -- putting things -- putting questions in such a way that I could answer them in a way that’s going to exonerate the man -- was a big thing that I found frustrating.

Also, me not knowing what some of the
legal terms meant, like when they said did he use force?
Did he use threat?, there’s a colloquial meaning to that, but then there’s a legal meaning, which is different. And me not knowing them made me answer wrongly.

But then if you go back and say, well wait a minute, now that I know the real truth, my answer’s different. Well now they construe that as well you’re changing your story. So now you can’t be believed.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Can I ask you a few questions about both of those incidences? So in both 2010 and 2017 were you taken for medical care? Was a rape kit done for either of those incidences?

MS. A.V.: The second one, yes.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay.

MS. A.V.: But not the first time.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: And the police -- you haven’t heard if they found anything from that. And I don’t want you to share more than what you’re comfortable with, but I’m wondering if you can walk me through a little bit about the first time in 2010 about what happened and what immediately happened after when you went to the police?

MS. A.V.: Sure. So this was a man who used the Internet to meet people, or his victims. So he -- he came to me through Facebook, and the story of violence
there is that I was involved in an abusive, toxic relationship and I couldn’t escape it. And not having the skills or -- I had some support, but it wasn’t what I needed because nobody identified the narcissistic type things that were going on. They just said: Leave him. But no -- I didn’t get proper counselling, but I was in the care of doctors. But it wasn’t the right kind of care, I guess, to help me actually leave. So I got it in my mind that if I met somebody else and I saw what a real person or a real man treated, the way a real man treated a woman, like in a nice way, would motivate me to leave the other person. So that was my motivation for accepting an invite from a stranger, from a strange man who said nice things. And I’m Catholic. He was Catholic, so I thought, you know, people of faith have, you know, they’re peaceful type people and, you know, I wasn’t going to be dangerous. And I made it clear to him that I wasn’t interested in anything sexual or romantic. It was just pure friendship, and I wasn’t even trying to meet him in person. It was just -- but he sort of kept pushing to meet. Eventually we did. And even then I always told him that it was purely platonic and that I wasn’t interested in anything with him. And -- so we would hang out. You know, I went to his place a couple of times, and every single time
I had firm boundaries to not -- for him not to do anything to me, which he kind of, you know, abided by. So he gained my trust that way.

But initially he did lie. He did say that his job was to be a modelling agent, and his pickup line was you look like somebody I just worked with, a model I just worked with. And right away I knew that was a lie because my self-esteem is too low, I know I don’t look like a model, so it has to be a lie. But also it also sounds like what you say to somebody if you just picked them up. And I don’t know. I just -- I just saw right through that.

But I guess just my own stupidity to not realize that a man who lies to you right off the bat is somebody you shouldn’t keep talking to; but I did. And throughout some of our conversations I found him to be very pushy and a little bit toxic, the way he made me feel sometimes.

But, you know, it just seems like I ignored all my -- all the red flags, you know, and that’s part of what being vulnerable is, is that unless you’ve had the right kind of therapy or education or even training to be aware of what a red flag is and to know what to do about it, you know, you just see the stop signs and you just speed on through.

And anyway, so on one occasion he invited
me over to watch a soccer game, and I -- immediately I said you know what you want is -- is to sleep with me. And that’s why you’re inviting me. And no, I don’t want that. And specifically I don’t -- I don’t want you -- I don’t want to be in your bed or -- that’s all you want, and I said no. And he like, no, no, no, it’s not like that. And after some back and forth I just made it clear that if I went it wasn’t for that. But the second I got there, that’s all he did.

So he -- the way he said hello to me with his hug, it was very sexual in nature. And I -- and that confused me and threw me off, off track. And from that point forward I was also triggered because I was not expecting that -- that contact, that kind of contact. I’d been raped in the past. I was abused as a child. And in fact not only had I been raped in the past, I’ve been raped multiple times in the past as well. So yes, it was triggering for me for him to do that to me. And I was confused and I froze and I didn’t understand what was happening. I didn’t understand where things went from we’re friends and all of a sudden it’s sexual.

And my previous history of trauma kind of put me at a disadvantage in defending myself because when I was abused as a kid I wasn’t asked for consent. Things -- I was ordered to do things. So I learned to just obey, you
know, or comply. And it was by somebody with authority over me. So when I was 16 I experienced statutory rape, and that relationship was exploitative in nature. So when I said no it was not allowed, otherwise it would be sort of psychological silent treatments and mad and being mad and whatever, so on and so forth, so I really couldn’t say no.

So I was conditioned to not -- to not have my no be dismissed, my feelings not being taken into consideration and my desires not being necessarily important or relevant in a sexual scenario.

When I was 20 I was at a party with a co-worker, and even though we were sexual I was not intending on having sex with him. I ended up passing out in his bed because I was going to spend the night. I couldn’t drive, and while I was unconscious he undressed me and started raping me, and the rape was so violent that I woke up in pain, and he was -- he was hurting me quite a bit.

And knowing his history of battery with his girlfriends, I was scared to fight or say no. I thought he would actually force me, and I knew I had zero chance, especially because I was so, so drunk, which I didn’t even recall drinking that much either, so I was worried that I’d been drugged.

And so the only thing I could do to make the pain stop was to literally act and pretend like I was
enjoying it, so maybe it would be over sooner.

And between the trauma of that and the drunkenness of everything else, it actually stayed, it kind of programmed me to always act that way because later on that year when I was in an attempted rape situation, I did the exact same thing with the pretending to love everything at the same time when I was saying, let me go, because this person was holding me tight, and he looked at me like I was crazy because I was saying, no, I have to leave. I don’t want this. Don’t do this. Don’t take my shirt off. Don’t do this. Yet I’m sort of like acting like I’m enjoying everything.

And it was just all trauma reaction, just from before.

So you know, it happens again, and you know, there’s other times, there’s so many times of rape. My son was conceived in rape later after that, and I said no so many times again, and I was ignored.

So when this time around came and I said no ahead of time, I said no, I couldn’t figure out how to get him off of me. I couldn’t figure out how to tell him to stop and to get away from me because the fact that he had his hands on me, he was all over me, that kind of prevented me from thinking properly. And I would say things like I don’t think I’m ready for this because that’s -- I remember
that’s something that worked once, and it didn’t work.

Then I thought, well maybe if I get him to
go get a condom he’ll stop touching me and then I can just
leave or, you know, get a break. Think, you know, just stop
being around me or grabbing me. But he refused my requests
for that as well.

When he -- he wanted to penetrate me, I
kept saying, like I didn’t say no, but I kept saying, wait.
I don’t know why I said wait instead of no, but that’s all
I could think of. And I blocked him with my body so he
wouldn’t be able to do that, but he kept trying and I kept
blocking him till he finally managed to do it anyway.

And then instead of saying -- because at
that point I was -- I was -- mostly just repeating myself.
It was just like, you need a condom, you need a condom.
That’s all I could get out. That was my way of saying get
away from me, like literally stop what you’re doing, get
away from me. I didn’t really -- I didn’t want to have sex,
but it was just my way of getting him to be off of me.

Because no, obviously it didn’t work. I already told him I
wasn’t interested in sex. I already said I wasn’t ready.
You know, I already tried different things. And that never
worked. He didn’t care about what I wanted, so I thought
well maybe if I say, you should protect yourself, maybe
he’ll care about himself.

A.V.

Statement - Public
But the police took that as oh no, that means consent because that lets him know that you want to have sex. I’m like, well, still he’s not allowed to have sex with me without a condom if I’m saying you need a condom.

The thing is is that when I kept saying that and he didn’t get off of me I was getting ready to push him off of me, physically push him off of me. It was – it’s hard to know how long it lasted. It seemed like a minute. Maybe it was two or three. I don’t know, but the point is is that he actually finished. He pulled out. He finished. And then to me that’s a completion of the act.

But the way the police said it’s like well he did what you said. He got out. And I’m like, no, he didn’t get out. He finished is what he did. So that made me really angry because he did not do what I asked. Instead he just finished what he was doing and he was done with it.

But the way they construed that is saying that he did what I asked, which wasn’t -- which he did not do that.

Later he -- he wanted -- Oh I didn’t know how to get out of the situation. I was -- I didn’t understand. At the time I’d never had any rape counselling. I didn’t understand anything about how rape worked, and being abused so many times I just thought that those things
were normal. Like I had no idea about anything. I never
reported a rape. I’d even thought I’d never been raped
because every single experience I had, they all matched
each other. So I’m thinking, this is how things are.

I thought that rape was when somebody
pulled you off of, you know, from the street and -- from
the bushes and some random stranger came to you with a
knife. I didn’t understand what date rape was or intimate
partner whatever. I didn’t know any of that stuff.

So I was confused, and I told the police
that the whole thing confused me. But they took that as
well I didn’t know if I liked it, which that’s not what I
said. I said I didn’t know why I wasn’t fighting. I didn’t
understand. It took trauma counselling to understand why I
didn’t fight, why my actions were all pre-programmed from
my previous experience. And I explained this to the police
because I went back after a year because even back then
they didn’t tell me what -- after I left like 20 messages
and had advocates left messages, they wouldn’t even get
back to us.

I made a complaint to the police that they
would not call me back, and finally that’s how I got a
second interview to find out what happened.

And this is where they told me that they
had dismissed everything, that they declared it unfounded,
that it was all consensual. And that hurt because I thought
if I couldn’t get the guy or the police to believe me, how
can I ever be safe? How can a no ever mean anything?

So that second interview was extremely
traumatic because the police decided to, reminded me a lot
of my abusive relationship where things get twisted around.
They do something that apparently looks like a nice thing
that they’re doing, but in reality what they’re doing is
the opposite.

So the police would say, well I’m taking
two hours of my time. Like I’m -- he would say I must or we
are or I am, he called it a serious -- crime investigator
or something like that. Serious crimes. So he was doing a
nice thing.

Like he’s saying he didn’t even have to
sit down with me and explain anything to me, but he was
doing -- what he was doing was really nice. But then he
turned around and said that this guy, what he did to me was
-- made him maybe a jerk and that he wouldn’t like it if
his sister dated him, but what he did wasn’t illegal.

And he also said that even though they
believed me, they also believed him, and that they thought
that what he said to me is not what they wrote in the
report. What he said to me was that there was not enough
evidence to conclude that it was non-consensual, which in a
way makes sense.

I’m thinking, all right, well you know, whatever. You do what you do and that makes sense. But in the report they wrote it was consensual. And that was a huge violation of me because, well just for so many reasons because that one thing gave me nightmares.

I would have nightmares that I was getting raped, and I would think in my dream, oh, I have to say specific words; otherwise the police won’t believe I didn’t want this. Like think other things, whether it’s I don’t want this or -- or wait or anything that seems hesitant, it’s not enough. Like hesitancy is not -- no. And it doesn’t matter that it’s not yes, but it’s not no, and what they want is no.

But what I know now is that legally speaking, that doesn’t even hold water in a court, the fact that you didn’t say no. That you need is an affirmative concern -- consent. But that’s not the way they investigated things. Those were not the questions they asked me. They didn’t say, how did you say yes? Or I bet you anything they didn’t even ask the guy, how did you get her to say yes?, because I never said yes.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm. Well in that case too like -- you’re saying what they want to hear is no, but they don’t think about the danger that could put
the woman in in saying no, in getting more violent.

MS. A.V.: It’s true.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Like it sounded like you had some solid defence mechanism going because you’ve experienced before that you were trying to ease him off. And that’s not consenting, that’s protecting yourself from being more badly hurt.

MS. A.V.: And the thing is is that none of this defence is mental. Everything is all instinctual. And that’s why when in the moment things are happening, I’m trying to think, and none of it makes sense.

Like when I was raped in October, I did feel that I couldn’t run because it was late at night. I was wearing heels. I was drunk. He was strong. He would catch me. He wasn’t drunk. How do I know that he’s not going to freak out if I start saying stop, stop, stop, I don’t want this or whatever? How do I know if I let it known that I think I’m getting raped, how do I know he’s not going to freak out and kill me in a panic? Because men do that.

I actually read a recent court thing where they’re sentencing somebody because that’s exactly what he did. He wanted to have sex with a girl, but he didn’t know how to do it. She freaked out and he killed her. It happens. So it’s not -- it’s not unbelievable to think that
a woman in that situation might fear for her life or her safety.

And it happened again when in October I was at a party, and this man who I’d never met in my life, I was even scared of him, and I brought an ex-boyfriend of mine to the party. Like I arrived there by myself but left because I felt so unsafe because that man was there, that I wanted to get like reinforcements from somebody that I could trust.

When we -- after drinking some me and -- well I went out to have a smoke and that guy went out there with me. And that’s where he kissed me, but he did not give me any warning. I did not give him any indication that I was interested in him. He just did it. And because it was an aggressive move that he just like I know how -- how someone -- when someone’s abusing you or wants to abuse you they test you to see how you’re going to react, to see whether you’re going to fight them or whether you’re going to let them. And that’s what that was. He was testing me.

So the fact that I knew that he was testing me, it made me even more scared, but it also made me feel defeated because I knew that the only way to -- like basically I was already there like with a grizzly bear. You know, you’re already in danger. You’re already there. You could run, but you better run fast. But you know
they’re going to catch you, and that’s how I felt. I thought, I can’t do this. I thought I can’t keep doing this, keep fighting these people off. And I shut down. So instead of running or fighting, I shut down. But even so, even in my I guess psychologically -- psychological state of defeat, of being defeated, I still fought.

The police asked me: Did you ask him to stop kissing you? And I knew that was a trap because if I said no, then they were going to say, well then he didn’t know that you didn’t like it. Because no, I didn’t ask him to stop kissing me, but what I did do and I said, and I said this on purpose was I stopped the kiss.

Why do I have to ask him to stop? I can just get away, you know. I didn’t appreciate the way that question was worded because that’s how you build a case against the woman, not against the man. That’s how you build it against the woman.

So unfortunately, because of my experience, I knew how to answer that question. And they asked, the police asked me if I’d been drinking, and I said, yes, and I told them how much. But I was not making a claim that I didn’t remember anything because alcohol’s a double-edged sword. Yes, it can be a defence for being too drunk to consent, but it can also be a defence, well if you’re too drunk and you’re not remembering, you’re
black out, how do you know you didn’t consent?

So they’re -- I did not black out and I did not -- and I did remember everything. So that’s not what I was saying. What I was saying is that it does impair your ability to reason, to have good judgement, and to make good decisions, and decisions that I needed to be making was like to leave the party.

I did try to leave the party before things got out of hand, but my ex-boyfriend, he’d actually gone off into a separate room and went to sleep and he didn’t -- I couldn’t get him to wake up. I couldn’t get him to wake up. So I felt stuck and that I couldn’t leave the party.

This time around the police did not ask me if he threatened me, but he did, and the threat was you’re next. That was the threat, those were his words: You’re next, it’s your turn. Because like I said, I was at a friend’s birthday party, and her and him got involved. She took him to a bathroom to do whatever in there, and when he came out he said: You’re next.

But prior to that when they had started getting sort of intimate in the couch while I was there, they were interrupted by somebody at the door. He came at me and he tried to do things to me, and that’s when I pushed him off with my feet, like with my legs because he was kneeling, so I pushed him off, like literally kicked
him away. I never said no, but kicking somebody in the head to stop him from doing things to you, I think that’s -- that’s probably more no than no.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: But when he came back the second time and said you’re next, and then she didn’t know what had happened, she just thought everybody was having fun. She’s like, great, yeah, do it, do it, do it! She didn’t know that I was not consenting, that I did not want any of that. She didn’t -- she was way gone anyways.

So inadvertently, she contributed to what he was doing to me, and that’s how between -- she sat next to me between the two of them. They trapped me, and I felt trapped, and I felt defeated and I felt like I didn’t know what to do to get out of the situation because now, on top of it, I was scared that my ex-boyfriend was going to walk in on everything and think that I was part of it, which I wasn’t.

But on the other hand, I wanted it to stop, so that would be good too, but then I’d have to deal with him freaking out, and I couldn’t deal with that either, so.

I tried to push his head away from what he was doing to me, just push him away, but all I kept thinking too was just like -- this doesn’t look good at
all. Nobody’s going to believe me that I don’t want any of this. Nobody’s going to believe me.

And that -- and my -- like my previous experience with the police interfered with my ability to protect myself that time as well. So their actions caused actual damage to me seven years later, because they get in your head.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: And instead of protecting me, they disarmed me. Instead of giving me something to protect myself, but they disarmed me by not believing me, my no. And the culture as well that they are basing their, I don’t know, judgements or their gut instincts on a culture that’s very sexually permissive. Nobody -- I felt like they thought that it was completely plausible that a woman would be all for and ready and available for whatever the guy wants.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: Like that, I felt that, like the myths surrounding women, and I suppose our sexuality or something or -- were sort of used against me because if I say, in 2010 if I say no, I’m not going there to do that, and yet that’s the first thing he does when I get there, and the police found it completely plausible that I would switch my mind from the moment I entered the door, like how
does that even make sense? It doesn’t. It doesn’t make any sense whatsoever. But to them it did.

And that’s related to, like I said, to myths about how men and women deal with each other, and -- which again are complete myths and also how I suppose women are there for -- to please men.

And yet their mind, their mindset was on this is all consensual. But what they don’t -- they did not do an unbiased appraisal of the situation because yes, there’s a side that says, oh, maybe the guy just wanted to, you know, seduce her or whatever, and because she didn’t fight and it was a misunderstanding and they’re thinking, oh well, it’s personal, right? Sure, maybe it could be that. It wasn’t, but maybe it could be that.

Or it could be an actual predator. It could be an online predator who gains the trust of women to find them at a vulnerable spot to finally make his mark. And he knows that when a woman, because he’s done this before, he knows when he starts grabbing, touching a woman against her consent, she’s going to be all confused and she’s not going to be -- because speed is a factor in these things, and he was quick and they’re quick. They move very quickly.

You don’t know what’s happening, and police in their training should know that this is one way
that offenders operate. They move very quickly so that the woman doesn’t know how to react. She doesn’t know what’s happening. She doesn’t know what to do, and by the time she’s sort of figured out what’s happening, it’s over and done with. He’s done what he’s needed to do.

And that was the reality because that’s what this man did. He was an online predator who found women: Facebook, Plenty of Fish, different places. And what he did to them was even worse because I was not the kind of person who was interested in modelling or acting. But what he did to the other women is he presented himself to them with different aliases and he promised them auditions.

And for -- whether it was, I don’t know, commercials or TV, but he said, mostly porn. And that’s how he would get them into -- into sexual situations. And that’s -- and he -- so he filmed everything for them, and that’s how they were able to catch him because there was proof of what he did to them.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: But so when I presented them -- him to the police, I presented a man who lied about his --

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Occupation?

MS. A.V.: Occupation. About his name, and the line he used on me is the line he used on all those women. And I knew that he was a fraud, and like I said, I
had my own issues as to why I continued to be with them,
but I’m the victim. They’re the police. They’re the ones
that ought to be like wait a minute, yeah, that’s a red
flag. That they didn’t follow up on his occupation, so they
could have caught him on the job lie. They could have
cought him on how -- his MO, which was online.

And they had every -- like they had the
opportunity to examine his online whatever activity. They
could have caught him earlier, and then all those other
women would have been spared what it was. But at the end of
the day I’m only one woman and they don’t care about one
woman. They only care about catching a guy who’s already
had a serious history of crime.

So really I feel like -- well even though
he did it to 20 different women than me, they only had
enough evidence to convict him on five charges. So that’s
what they like to do. They like to bundle everything up. So
I feel like I’m devalued. I’m worth one-tenth or one-
twentieth of a person. Because what they should be doing
for one woman they’re doing it for 20.

And in this case, with the Inquiry it’s
even worse for Indigenous women because it’s not 20’s not
enough, 10’s not enough. Maybe that might be for different
races, but for Indigenous women it’s 50, it’s 100, it’s
200, and then they’ll do something.
And that’s the devaluation that -- and that is -- that’s how I feel. Like I’m one-twentieth, one-200th of a person. That’s my value to the police, and really that’s -- they’re the ones out there whose job it is to protect people from violence. It’s nobody else’s job.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: And I’m scared. You know, after having gone through that in 2010 and then now again, part of me is not sure what my -- what’s in my future because I thought I was -- I might be lucky I’m still alive, but the statistics aren’t good, you know, for people like me.

So I have to keep fighting and I have to keep -- I have to get myself stronger, and I need help to do that. And it’s like trying to get blood from a rock to get any help that’s meaningful or what you need because that’s the other thing: the help that’s out there, it’s very regimented.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: You know, it’s like we’ll pay for your eyeglasses, but we won’t pay for physiotherapy. Well, what I need is physiotherapy, all right? They won’t pay for that. That’s not covered by anything or anybody.

So I need physical strength so I can last a day at the job, you know. You know, those are all what mental health people call protective factors.
And places like Work B.C., for example, I asked for money there so I could go to a pain clinic and get -- take their programs because it’s self-education. It’s all self-management. It’s not drugs. They can give you money for drugs, but that’s not what we need. That’s not what I need.

I need education on self-management and I need support to do that. And that’s not covered by anybody, so I have to pay for it, which again, I can’t afford. So when I asked them, look, if I’m physically strong and I can handle my pain, then I might be able to handle a job. And they’re like, oh right, well those things are health issues; those are not work issues. We can’t pay for that.

So they said no. And that’s the trap. That’s going back to that poverty trap.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Would you say that your diagnosis of fibromyalgia came following extensive trauma?

MS. A.V.: Yeah. I had -- the worst fibro pain that I had was while I was working. So that would have been 2010 in the middle of all of this. And even before, because like I said, I already have -- like this was sort of like a wake-up call for me in 2010. That was finally the first time that I was
able to get some rape counselling, and I understood a lot of the trauma behind that sort of thing.

But the pain was already there. And as soon as I stopped working the pain subsided, right? Like so now it’s more manageable, but that’s only because I -- there’s no -- well there’s no work stress. I sleep a lot. I’m in bed a lot, you know? If I was to have a full-time job and my kid, I’m a single mom, the pain would come back, right? And that’s the thing.

And it’s -- well, the pain’s one part of it. You know, suck it up. What I can’t suck up is fog, mental fog, right? I can’t suck up that. So -- I used to volunteer. I got fired from volunteer positions because I couldn’t do that job either. I couldn’t show up there on time. I couldn’t do the math, simple math, like selling two hot dogs together. I couldn’t -- my working memory wasn’t there. I’d forget what things cost. And so I couldn’t -- yeah, I couldn’t do that because the job was supposed to be in the kitchen or -- and I couldn’t work with people because I was so sensitive about what they thought of me or they were criticizing me.

And that was what I suffered, the trauma I suffered through at work because they were male bullies, and they scrutinized me literally to death, and then they fired me. So after seven years of exemplary work there they
1 just -- They’re like, yeah, we’re done with you. You’re no
2 good.
3 So it’s been a real uphill battle, and I
4 feel like this past year, it’s just gone down again. And
5 now that I can’t even live with my son, like I said, he’s
6 gotten into trouble. And because of his issues that I don’t
7 really want to get into too much, I’ll just say that I
8 can’t live with him. And the reason I can’t live with him
9 is because he’s not allowed to live with me in my building.
10 If I lived somewhere else, I could be with him. It’s just
11 not -- he just can’t be in that building.
12 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Is it a no go on
13 the address?
14 MS. A.V.: Yeah.
15 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay. That’s all
16 I need.
17 MS. A.V.: Yeah.
18 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: How old is your
19 son?
20 MS. A.V.: He’s 15.
21 MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay. So he’s
22 with your grandparents -- or your parents?
23 MS. A.V.: His -- yeah. Yeah, my mom, so
24 his grandma. And I go back to -- the only reason I can’t
25 live with my son is because I’m poor. If I had enough money
to pay for market rent I’d just move out and be with my baby, right? He’s 15, but he’s still my baby.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: And -- but it’s that whole poverty issue.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah.

MS. A.V.: Right? And with the whole housing crisis now, it’s even worse because even if I had the money I don’t even know if there’s rentals out there. There’s so much discrimination, you know. There’s so much discrimination against people who don’t work or who have disabilities or who are on income assistance.

And the way that system’s set up, it’s a nightmare because you have to disclose to them all these private things. You have to get an intent to rent. You have to get your landlord to sign all of this stuff. And there’s a lot of logistics that I haven’t been able to figure out how to get a lawyer, or not a lawyer, a landlord to not rent it to somebody else while I go get the Ministry things set up. Like --

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: It’s very deficit based system.

MS. A.V.: What’s that?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: It’s a deficit based system, and it’s hard to get anyone outside of that
system to work with you.

MS. A.V.: And, you know, part of me doesn’t blame the landlords. Who wants to deal with the Ministry? I don’t want to deal with the Ministry, right? It’s not -- And yeah, I’m, because of what happened I am in danger of being evicted. The landlords where I am are nice. I don’t -- they may be not aware of my situation or they’ve got other fish to fry, but I feel like I’m on borrowed time.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Are you in subsidized housing right now? And is there a time limit or do you have long-term housing with, is it B.C. Housing?

MS. A.V.: No, it’s [Housing Organization].

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay.

MS. A.V.: So -- so -- like they -- they have grounds to kick me out. Don’t tell them that, but they do. And like I said, they haven’t like because they just haven’t, right?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Do you want me to remove that name from the record?

MS. A.V.: Sure.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah. Do you have a police file number for when you made the report in October 2017?

MS. A.V.: Oh. I can get it. I don’t right
now, but I can get it.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: That’s okay. It’s good information to have should I flag this with our legal team and they look further into things because then they can like actually look at what the police may have done from now.

One thing I would like to get you information for is the family information liaison unit because they might be able to lend you some support as well in contacting the police and seeing like have they actually done any work in terms of any of what you’ve already reported? You said that you went to the hospital. You did all of the investigative, the rape kit and everything. So I want to get you connected with them so that they can help you with that.

One thing I just, I wanted to make a comment on is you said that you wanted, you need help to get stronger. First of all I want to acknowledge how strong I think you already are because every word that’s come out of your mouth in this session has been so eloquent.

You even talked about like how very educated you are. It’s very clear. And you’ve kind of made your story come out in such a flow that, you know, really, I acknowledge like the way you just -- it rolls off of you. And that only comes from really, really deep inner
strength, and so I wanted to acknowledge it.

MS. A.V.: Thank you. Thank you.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: So in terms of getting stronger, what do you think that you need to do that?

MS. A.V.: Well I mean definitely the --

What my plan was, like I said, it was because I contacted a pain clinic, and I did -- I took all their recommendations from the free stuff that they could give me, but we reached a point where the rest of their recommendations were for me to take their paid classes and also physiotherapy so I could learn how to do the non-pain causing exercises.

I got depressed again, and so I had --

there’s still some courses I could take that were free, but I was so depressed I couldn’t even make it to the sessions, and then they started to bill me. Like if you miss a session they still bill you like $75 or whatever. And I’m like, no, I should just cancel that because I can’t afford it, and they were nice enough and they waived that.

So it was -- you could tell that that clinic named Change Pain, they’re phenomenal. I love them.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: What is it called?

MS. A.V.: Change Pain. So they’ve been very good to me and they’ve helped me out a lot with, like
I said, everything that they’ve -- It’s sort of like a new thing in B.C., and they’re trying to advocate a lot for pain management. So they’re doing literally business not as usual. And that’s sort of what needs to happen in so many ways.

And for me, part of my healing -- part of what I need to sort of move forward and just put all of this behind, I feel like I need closure with this issue, with my previous police statements, and now this one. And when I was going through initially I went through a period -- You talk about me being educated. A lot of -- I am not - - I do not have a university degree. I just self-educate through the Internet and whatever research and library I can find.

But in the library I found zero information on how police conduct sexual assault cases. I found one book, which is outdated. There was a new version of it, and my case was right there, like literally my case was -- if they’d gone by the book they might have caught him, but they didn’t even go by the book.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: Anyway, so I requested that the Vancouver Public Library get the updated version, so I didn’t check back to see if they did or didn’t, but they took a note of that.
And I -- part of me holds onto this anger against the specific people that handled my case because it was their personal biases and myths and whatever training or non-training that they received that have caused this. I wish that there was a way to hold individual public servants accountable, like -- and what I wish there was because when I tried to Google them, the constable and the inspectors, there’s some information on, like for example police complaints or if they’re named in news articles you see that.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: But what I wish there was was like the way doctors have it. They’re registered in their College of Physicians. You have where they went to school, who accredited them, where they worked, and blah, blah, blah. Just a public profile, right? They have that for doctors. Well, police people are public servants, and when they mess up my case so much I want -- I want accountabilities. Like who trained who? What -- like and what did they teach you and why didn’t you use what they taught you?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm. It’s a good recommendation.

MS. A.V.: Like just -- like -- And also, I want to know that you’ve actually solved actual cases. Like
what are the cases, because it’s a public record for --
when you’ve convicted people.

You know, I was able to go online and
download the oral decision from the judge that convicted
this man in 2016. And everything’s all on there obviously.
I don’t know whether the names of the police people are in
there or not, but obviously whoever did work on that, that
belongs, they contributed to bringing that to -- to
justice. So good. List all the stuff, all your accolades
and all the cases you’ve -- all the people you’ve put away.

You know, like I want to know that you’re
good at your job because you did not do a good job with
mine. So that was one thing that I really wished I had
access to. I wish I had access to a lawyer. And even now I
want a lawyer right now because I still think that -- I
want justice. I do. But I don’t know, I do not want to face
them myself because of the way they hurt me already when I
went to them on my own, I don’t want to put myself through
that again. I need somebody to protect me from the
protectors, so I want a lawyer --

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: -- to advocate for me, someone
that knows what they -- what the police people’s job are
and what the laws are and what my rights are because, yeah,
I could do this myself maybe, but it would take me forever
and how am I going to go to work, right?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: That’s not my job to be a lawyer for myself, if I want to be protective in society. So that’s one thing I found missing like in a grand scale. No woman ever gets legal advice before making a police report for their violence, whatever violence was done to them.

And the other thing that of course I don’t get access to, because I did a freedom of request for information, I got a redacted copy of my own statement, which kind of pisses me off because it was my information that I gave them and I’m not allowed to have it, the complete version of that.

So it’s all any time where I said anything about the offender that got bleeped out, any private information about him. And it’s -- and for me I find that so offensive because here he is, he violated my personal integrity, but we’re worried about his privacy.

The other thing too, part of holding the police accountable is what exactly did they ask him? You know, nobody wants to tell me what his answers were, fine. But I do want to know what the police asked him because it just doesn’t seem like they did a proper test to see whether or not he fit the profile of a serial rapist.

You know, I think that any time a man gets
accused, he should be tested to see if he fits a profile.

Instead they -- he is supposed to be treated as he’s innocent before proven guilty, but at the same time he’s potentially a very dangerous person. So you can’t -- when you’re investigating you actually do have to play the devil’s advocate and you do have to see does this man -- does this man’s actions match up with offenders -- typical offenders’ actions?

It’s like the MO online predator, yeah, that does. That’s one way to doing it. Gaining trust and then turning it around. Yeah, that does it. You know, being asked -- being -- having -- making requests and ignore them? Yeah, that matches up, too. Right? Lying about who you are? Okay. Yeah, that’s one. These are all facts that were there in my case. Maybe, you know, if somebody said to me, well, even after we looked at your case there’s some legal problems so that we couldn’t go forward with it, I’d understand that. But I would still want them to say we screwed up. We had enough to get him here because of the way he --

He had already raped women by that point.

You know? They should have built a case. They should have had something ongoing on him. They should have talked to women that he talked to. But yeah, they screwed up, and that’s what I want. I want them to acknowledge that they
screwed up. They had him and they let him go.

So all those things weigh -- weigh on me.

And my -- my lovely friends tell me, well why can’t you just forget about it? I said, look, I did. I forgot about it. I never even healed from it. I just buried it, but look what happened. The news come up and it says oh, look here, here’s the big face of your rapist splattered all over TV and the news. And that just shook my world and it --

Two weeks later I got raped again. And, you know, so there’s just some things that even though you try to forget, you move on, you just say, well let karma deal with it or whomever, they come back until they’re properly dealt with. And that was initially what my plan was.

I wanted to properly deal with everything, put everything behind me, put everything to bed and then get on with my life and building all those protective factors that doctors say I need to do with having a social system around me, friends, family, work, activities.

But that all takes time because every single time I deal with somebody and they break your trust, it makes it difficult.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Do you have any other recommendations that you think the commissioners should know? I think you’ve given some really solid ones
about the police and the accountability.

MS. A.V.: Yeah, there’s -- yeah, there is one other one.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Sure.

MS. A.V.: One of the things that made me really, really upset were some of the numbers thrown around about the -- what do they call it -- the conviction rate, right? They say it’s like three per cent or something like that.

That’s -- that’s very embarrassing. It’s -- it’s intolerable. You take a murder conviction rate, it’s higher than that. It needs to -- that needs to be brought up. And just literally whether by law or mandate, I don’t care what they have to do, they need to bring it up equal to that murder rate -- conviction rate and because all -- all you ever hear from police, whether it’s the RCMP or whether it’s the city police, it’s like oh well, it’s he said, she said. Oh, it’s tough to investigate. There’s so many excuses. But what there really isn’t is a will to hold themselves to a higher standard.

Like if -- if I had a three per cent closing rate in my job as sales when I was doing sales, I’d be fired.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: You know, there’s a minimum
level of productivity that’s required out of every worker.

There’s -- just they’re failing, and I just -- Even to just 
say it and then not do it it’s a beginning because it’s -- 
no one ever bitches, goes, yeah, I know, it’s sad. Yeah, 
it’s bad. But nobody actually makes it be a mandate.

Even if they fail at their mandate I would 
take that, but at least have it be a mandate first, right?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: That’s a first step. Then work 
it up, right? So that’s what I would like to see. I would 
like that -- all those conviction rates mandated to be at 
an equal level as the murder ones.

But for that, for the police definitely, 
that’s the violence part of it, and then the other part of 
it is the housing side of things where -- that’s a big 
stumbling block in the poverty, in the poverty trap because 
like I said, in my case right now I feel like how can I 
focus on -- on building like a life with a job and things 
like that when, you know, my housing security is in danger, 
and I can’t even live with my own kid?

Like his well-being is a priority and it’s 
affecting him that he can’t be with me. So that, I need to 
prioritize that, and like you know, make my own housing 
first policy, right, my personal housing first policy. And 
that system is very gated. It’s very -- aside from the
housing crisis that there’s nowhere to live for anybody and it’s too expensive, you can’t even advocate yourself with building managers or know what their rules are because everybody has different rules and they don’t even follow their own rules.

And they sort of, B.C. Housing just sort of treats -- treats you like a number, an application, and that’s it. And nobody actually takes the time to look at each person and see how to house them. Nobody does that. Yet they have the information who needs housing. But nobody -- it’s nobody’s job to see where we can fit you, right?

I have a transfer request, so from my building, and what needs to happen is somebody somewhere needs to move out so then I can get their place. But there’s like all these other homeless people that don’t even have a place to live and they are probably going to get that spot.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: In the meantime there’s like hundreds of us who are waiting for transfers. And I just want somebody to look at the transfer people and just say let’s switch you. We don’t need to wait. I mean, we don’t -- Because those are open spaces that can’t be opened or unoccupied because there’s something else going on here, which has nothing to do with us.
MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah.

MS. A.V.: But it’s nobody’s job right now to do that, to say, oh look, in B.C. Housing here’s a registry of hundreds of people who are just waiting to move. Let’s just switch them with amongst all the buildings, and then that waiting list is going to go down.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: That’s pretty solid, yeah.

Look, there are a lot of things that make so much sense, and you’re just wondering why -- why isn’t it happening?

MS. A.V.: You know, my thing is look, just give me access. I’ll do it myself. And that was -- that’s my other thing. I just wish that the whole Freedom of Information was there, was -- and not as gated as it is because -- Maybe I don’t need to know the building manager’s name, but it’d be sure nice to know their email, like building manager at this building dot com. Right?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah.

MS. A.V.: And so I say, look, this is who I am. This is me and my kid. This is our life. This is, you know, what our life is like. Please, if you have something come up, remember us. That’s all I’m asking for.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: So -- So -- anyway, so I was
just -- with some of the services that I connect with, you
know, I float around some ideas. Like well how about a
housing fair, just so that everybody can meet each other?
Like the people who are offering housing meet, or give the
people an opportunity to advocate for themselves with the
people that make the decisions and have some movement that
way. So that idea’s already gone out there.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: Right? But what I’m dealing with
right now in addition to my own stuff, I’m helping, as I
was saying before, I’m helping my friend [A.] who’s given a
statement already.

And her situation is that she’s homeless
and she’s been staying with me until something happens, but
she -- that situation’s getting sort of to the end of its -
- its sustainability there because I’m not allowed to have
her over. I’m in subsidized housing.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Guests can only
stay for so long.

MS. A.V.: That’s right.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: And it could put
your housing at jeopardy to have her there.

MS. A.V.: Well, that’s what I mean. That’s
what I mean. I already qualify for that, if they figure it
out and if they decide to do something about it.
MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah.

MS. A.V.: Right? So not only is she homeless, I’m already in danger of becoming homeless. Not just because of her situation but because of my other stuff that I have going on. So it’s combined. Now there’s multiple things.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm–mmm.

MS. A.V.: And I’ve been helping her to advocate for herself because her situation, she’s in crisis right now, and her human rights were violated. And what I’ve noticed about her is that her ability to find housing for herself is -- it’s being obstructed by the injustice, the weight of the injustice of what was done for her.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm–mmm.

MS. A.V.: So the fact that it’s so difficult for her to get some peace on the justice side of it, she hasn’t been able to devote as much time or energy into asking for housing because every time you ask for a house, every time I try to make an appointment for her there’s a chance she might not show up because she’s too angry, too tired. She’s got disabilities and like basically her disabilities are my disabilities. We have the same similar -- that’s why we get along so well.

And -- yeah -- it’s -- it’s been hard for me as well, and like I’ve noticed some of the flaws in the
system, like more so with her with regards to housing than with anything because, you know, my situation’s I need a transfer, but I have a home. Well, she’s in absolute homelessness, and there’s not even room in the shelters for her. And they’re not willing to pay for a hotel for her either.

So how is she going to survive on the streets with her kids? And then that’s the other part, they’re going to take them away if she’s homeless for long and in the streets. So. And this was all created by housing people already in the system. This wasn’t created by some random guy in, you know, whatever.

It was -- it was created by the people at V.N.H. And the lady there that kicked her out, she had no oversight. When we asked for oversight we were denied. I went there. [A.] just stormed off. She was just crying. It was too much for her. So I had to speak for her, and I sat there and I talked to other property managers who are equal to that property manager. But they have no oversight. They can do whatever they want and nobody tells them. They don’t have a superior or a supervisor or whoever that is doesn’t care or got fired or I don’t know what happened. But they are unwilling to make themselves accountable as well.

And -- and I found that very scary because that really opened up my eyes to the fact that anybody in
the system for the B.C. Housing and the affordable housing, we think that we have security housing, but it’s not because anybody could come in and kick them out for any reason whatsoever. They can make things up. They could do whatever they want, which is what happened here. And to pump up numbers perhaps, you know, to say oh, we’ve housed all these people, you know, to -- It’s no use if somebody’s there 15 years. It’s like we don’t care about helping one person for 15 years. We prefer to house hundreds of people every two years.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: That looks better. Right?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: But they’re not looking at the statistics of where they’ve moved on to.

MS. A.V.: Or why or what happened to them after.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: So what’s happening in that situation is people are getting evicted without them already having new housing, and they’re being put into homelessness. And -- and it’s not just people, it’s families because I know of two families that -- not just my friend [A.], but I know of another -- another. And then [A.] told me about one -- somebody else, so that’s three
families that I know of now personally who were all of them evicted without already having somewhere else to go. And I’m just thinking that should just be illegal. You cannot evict somebody into homelessness. No reason. Zero. Zero reason whatsoever. Especially families. So that’s the biggest issue that we have here besides the issues that this -- this is a federal commission?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: Well, housing is a local issue. So when the federal government isn’t paying attention to what the local municipalities do in terms of providing housing for its people, there’s an issue there as well.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: Because yes, I know this is Vancouver and yes, there’s B.C., but then there’s the federal and if the federal government cares about individual people, then that does mean having to deal with the local governments.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: And if the City of Vancouver can’t pay for my friend [A.] to have somewhere to live, I mean I’m not talking about this commission per se, but -- and if between all the governments, between the city and the province and the federal government, they all need to figure out a place for her to not be there in the streets.
This is Canada. She got evicted in a snowy, snowy time.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: Yeah, it’s -- I don’t understand how that’s allowed to happen at all. And you know, that’s the worst part, it didn’t even need to happen. All you have to do is prevent people from evicting people into homelessness and you’ve saved yourself that headache.

In the meantime, yeah, I don’t know what we’re going to do because -- this is the other part, and this is how it’s affected me. When she got evicted, and immediately I said, no, I need to help you. I can’t stand to have people that I know be homeless because I’ve lost my house so many times, not just through the immigration. Like I was a kid. I didn’t ask for it. I lost all my stuff there.

I lost my house again in 2010 and then I had to move out of my expensive three-bedroom. Now I might lose this place. Like I know what it means to lose your home. And so it really hit home, you know, what this means, what this means for her. So I wanted to help her.

We had one day -- she was evicted on a Thursday. On Saturday we called the Ministry of Children and Families to help us house her for a night because at the time I was thinking I can’t put myself and my son in risk of losing the one place we have.
So at that time I was just like, you know, I can’t really have them come here, but you know, maybe we’ll call, we’ll get help. And innocently I just thought they’d help us. They refused to help. They just said, oh, we’ll just put you in shelters, but because of [A. ]’s family makeup, she can’t be separated from her adult child.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yes.

MS. A.V.: And they did not care. And they made it look like she was being difficult when she actually wasn’t. She’s preventing probably -- she’s probably saving his life is what she was doing. Like they would never dream of saying to a mom we’re going to have to separate you from your three year-old. He’s going to have to go into some adult men homeless because he’s a boy.

Like that doesn’t make sense, but when you have somebody with a cognitive disability and other mental health issues the way her son was, and especially with the way he’s being protected, because she’s taken really good care of him, he wouldn’t last, so. So but anyway, so they -- they said to her, no, we won’t help you. We only help you by putting you into the shelter.

I called back and I said, look, right now she just came to my house to use the phone so we could get help. You guys said no, but now you’re putting me in danger, okay? So now it’s not just one family; now it’s two
families because she’s there, and if she has nowhere to go
I’m not going to tell her, well leave, and literally leave
her in the sidewalk. And the lady’s like, oh, well you just
need to call the police then.

And I just thought, are you insane?
Because even the police couldn’t get [A.] out of her
original home when she was being evicted. They had to call
the Ministry for help because they weren’t allowed to do
that. Even the police are not allowed to take somebody
physically out of where they live.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.
MS. A.V.: So the only way they actually
managed to get [A.] to leave her apartment was to call the
Ministry of Children, have them find her room at the Y, and
then she left.

But this -- this government lady expected
me to do it as well from my house, so it’s not just
repeating the trauma, but she expected me to do something
that even the police themselves couldn’t do it -- or sorry,
couldn’t do because they’re not heartless. I’m not
heartless.

But her answer to me really -- like --
well, after I got off the phone with her I cried for an
hour because of how she treated me. Right? And this isn’t
even about [A.] anymore. This is about how this lady
treated me. I called her for help and I said I have this -- I have this problem, you know. I can’t offer my home. I wish I could, but I can’t, not at this time.

And she’s like, oh, well if you don’t want her there call the police. And I’m somebody with mental health issues. So if I did that and something happened to [A.], what would happen to me and my mental health and the guilt?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: And your previous interactions with the police.

MS. A.V.: And -- well then there’s that.

Like how could she say that to me?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: And like seriously is the government so hard up for money? All we asked for was one night. Are they so hard up for money that they can’t give a homeless person $150 so they can have somewhere warm to sleep? And not just a person; a family with children.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm. Yes, and she just told me about her situation.

MS. A.V.: That’s right, so it impacted my ability to help her because when I was treated that way, I felt powerless. I felt dismissed, little, like I couldn’t do anything. And I didn’t help her for a whole week or two. I had to recover. And in the meantime she’s floundering,
struggling with her things and whatever, and she had to do
it alone because I couldn’t even help her. Like the one
support she had got shot down by the people --

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Well that’s the
Catch-22, right? Like you know exactly what she’s going
through, and so you’re there saying let me help you, but it
takes a toll on you. And --

MS. A.V.: That’s right. It does -- well
I’m happy with the toll if the toll wasn’t that people
saying stupid things to you or refusing to help when they
know they can. And that’s -- that’s where the injustice is,
right?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm--mmm.

MS. A.V.: And so that was, both of them,
it was MCFD and Income Assistance who together that weekend
kind of took us down both.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah.

MS. A.V.: Right? And then the last part
that I noticed was with VACFSS. When -- we thought, again,
innocently that Vancouver Aboriginal Family Services would
actually help out Aboriginal families. We thought that they
were educated and sensitive on the issues that Aboriginal
families go through. And yet the help they offered my
friend was to place his son -- her son in temporary
placement.
MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: And as far as I’m concerned that’s equivalent to saying to -- somebody from Jewish descent, would you like to shower in my gas chamber because the trauma and the genocide that’s happened to Indigenous families is that. They themselves call it baby snatching. And there’s been, the federal cases that have been won because of all the advocacy that’s been done and there’s all these apologies. There’s reconciliation. There’s been recognition that --

And even in B.C. there was just recently a case, right, where the Ministry took a baby away. Now they have to give it back because they did it for no reason at all. And the help that they’re willing to offer my friend is to take her kid away? Like it just -- Of course she hung up on her, but the impact of that, and this is what [A.] may not have told you, is that now she cannot use that as a resource anymore. Those -- what she was supposed to -- what they were supposed to do for her is actually help her find housing.

Her problem wasn’t that she couldn’t take care of her kid or her kid took up so much of her time that she couldn’t find housing or that she needed to put him somewhere. That was not her problem. Her problem is I just need somewhere to be. But she no longer could use them as a
resource.

So a huge thing that I needed help -- like
I need help to help her. I couldn’t even go to them on her behalf because then she would probably flip me off for trying to go back to them. Right?

I don’t even know where that came from, why they would offer to take her kid away from her. Like as help. And then to frame it as somehow being helpful. You just don’t do that from a -- not from a practical or rational perspective and certainly not from a historical sensitive healing perspective. You don’t do it in any way, shape or form.

So luckily that’s -- she’s been homeless now for two months and that was over a month ago. So I said, look, every time she calls for a shelter she cries because they say no. She can’t call 20 shelters and cry every single day until she finds -- and you know -- And I can’t do it either because they say, well no, the client has to call. I’m nobody. They treat me as nobody.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah.

MS. A.V.: I’m not an advocate, even though I’m advocating. So I say, you know what? Go back to VACFSS. I was finally able to create a situation where I could safely say go back to VACFSS, Get them to do the hard work for you because this is hard on you.
MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: Right? So she did. But she just left a message and they probably haven’t called back. They haven’t done anything. It’s the weekend. They probably won’t do anything until Monday anyways.

But that is something that’s systemic. So she’s connected to specifically aboriginal entities that are supposed to help her. But they all together put her in this situation. And it’s -- she’s homeless because of the system, right? Yeah, so yeah. So anyways, so she’s homeless because of the system, not because of any mistake she made. And that’s -- those are my observations and corroboration to her account.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: So anyways, I guess that’s pretty much the -- the majority of what I wanted to let the commissioners know, and my sincere hope is that they actually care about doing something differently.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm. Well one thing that I can do too is I’m going to give you my card so that you have my contact information. And if you have anything else that comes up, like the file number that I’ve asked you for --

MS. A.V.: Oh, yeah.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: If I have any
other information that I might need to get from you, because I’m probably going to just send this to my boss just to review it to see if there’s anything that we should be looking deeper into, because you’ve brought up a lot of serious issues that you faced. And it can be --

MS. A.V.: Yeah, but a lot of different government places, like they all work together to keep you down.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah. And well, we’re not part of the government. We’re funded by them, but we’re independent from the government in this Inquiry. So I’m hoping that they can look at some of what you’ve had to say because, like I said, it’s very eloquently delivered and I think you have a lot of profound things to say, so I hope that -- like it’s going to be reviewed by commissioners no matter what, but I think it needs to have a closer look taken at it too.

So I want to say thank you for what you’ve shared today. Is there anything else that I haven’t asked you?

MS. A.V.: Yeah, probably at this time I don’t think so. I think -- I just wanted to make sure that I had my say about [A.’s] situation because it’s -- it’s -- I think like when you talk about profound things, my philosophy is that family is really the best place to --
for people to go to for help.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

MS. A.V.: Unfortunately a lot of people don’t have the families, right, that they need to have.

Like I am so blessed. My mom and my brother, they -- I wouldn’t be here today if it wasn’t for them. And when I see my friend with lots of family but not the kind of family that can help her, I can’t -- I put myself there as that because families cross office hours.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Yeah.

MS. A.V.: They cross needs. It’s not just housing or just money or just a food card, you know, or just pay for this. Families do it all, you know? And -- No, families help do it all and they’re really the primary care for every single person out there.

So supporting families remains the -- and in this case, families in kind, like what you guys were saying, helping people help themselves is great. So that’s why there’s a lot of frustration. If like -- just let me in your office. I’ll do the work myself. I’ll fix things and then I’ll go away, right? I’m not here to cause trouble for anybody. I’m not here to make work for anybody. I’m just here to -- and like there’s the myths that people want to be in their situation and that they don’t want to help themselves. It’s that their people won’t let them. They put
barriers for what they need to do. So -- I just want to reiterate that, that it’s people, and people and their families and their support network --

    MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Hmm-mmm.

    MS. A.V.: -- that really feeds people’s souls, right, and keeps them going. Yeah. But no, that’s it.

    MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Okay. Well again, thank you very much for everything that you’ve had to share and for sharing so candidly. It’s very much appreciated on behalf of the National Inquiry.

    It’s 5:51. I’m going to shut off the camera.

--- Whereupon the statement concluded at 5:51 p.m.
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best of my skill and ability, accurately transcribed from a pre-existing recording the foregoing proceeding.

Antoinette Forcione, Legal transcriptionist