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

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Statement – Volume 412
Gary Olver, In relation to Josephine Campbell

Statement gathered by Caitlin Hendrickson

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NOTE 1: Redactions to this public transcript have been made pursuant to Rule 55 of the Commission’s Legal Path: Rules of Respectful Practice, which provides for “the discretion to redact private information of a sensitive nature where it is not material to the evidence to be given before distributing the information to the Parties. The National Inquiry will consider the public interest in releasing this type of information against the potential harmful impact on the individual whose personal information is at issue.”

Redacted names have been set off in italics to avoid confusion with amendments.

NOTE 2: 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 8th and 9th, 2018 at Ottawa, Ontario.
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Statement Gatherer: Caitlin Hendrickson

Documents submitted with oral statement: none.
Upon commencing on Monday, April 30, 2018, at 2:04 p.m.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Whenever you're ready.

MR. GARY OLVER: My name is Gary Richard Olver, O-L-V-E-R. My last name is O-L-V-E-R. It's spelled without an I in it. That's a common mistake a lot of people do. That's my adopted, given name. My biological name, I was a Sanderson. That was my father was Neil Stanley Sanderson. And my mother was Josephine Campbell of Moose Lake, Manitoba. My -- I believe my father, Neil Stanley Sanderson, was out of (inaudible) [Pasqua] in Saskatchewan. In about 1973 my mother on January 7th was murdered on the outskirts of Winnipeg. She was found down seeing my father and wasn't able to find him. And this is what I know. My brothers, some of my other brothers and sisters have a father and when my older brother was alive, he's deceased now, his name was Ken Cook, and then I had another older brother, James Cook. And Ken was dying of cancer, brain cancer. And in 1990 or 1991, I got to meet by brother Ken and my oldest 1 who was dying of cancer in La-Paw [The Pas] Hospital. And I spent a month with him. And during that month we reminisced of a lot of the things that we had endured, as I was the youngest and he was the oldest. And
so he helped fill in a lot of the gaps and then my other
brother, James, when I met him, he got to fill in other
parts of the gaps.

Some of the brothers and family would
argue that Stanley Cook was my father, but what I know is
from Lola Campbell, which was my mother's sister, she said
that Neil Stanley Sanderson was my father. And James
collaborated with that. James also knew that that was my
father. My other siblings would argue that point and would
say that Stanley Cook was my father.

Stan worked in a trap line in northern
Manitoba and he really loved my mom. And to the point of I
think being obsessed. And he didn't like the fact that my
father was with my mom. And one night him and his friend,
Shorty -- I don't know Shorty's last name -- but Shorty
worked for the railroad company in northern Manitoba, and
that's how people got around, by railroad in the north. And
that's how they were friends, because he'd jump on the
train to go to his trap line. And in January -- it was
January 6th, my one other sister went out to the airport to
try to stop her father from going to Winnipeg. Her father
had said to her basically I'll be back tomorrow. I just
have to go and do some business.

And so my sister was turned back and she
got back into the town of La-Paw [The Pas]. And that was
my one sister, Clara.

Now, that was her father and on January 7th of 1973 I believe that Stan Cook had -- and his friend Shorty -- had picked up my mom from La Portage Avenue in Winnipeg. And this is what I know is -- in 1991 I had gone back to Winnipeg and myself and my one other older sister went to investigate what -- how my mom passed away. And what we found was kind of very disturbing. This is what everything that I know is true, it -- when my mom was raped and stripped down naked and her legs were bound and she was dragged from the car. She was dragged naked with her legs bound. And the two guys got out and they went up and they stabbed her 42 times. She didn't die. She wasn't dead. And the men left. And this family that had a camper van had come down the road and found her on the side of the road, and she kept repeating to them, Shorty did it, Shorty did it.

And she was stabbed by Shorty. And so that's what I believe. I believe that these two were the assailants and they were the ones that killed my mom. And it was her ex-husband and his friend. It was tough for me that -- to feel this because that night when I went back, I had gone back to my natural family and tried to find out who I was. I went back up to La-Paw [The Pas] after and I kept these things to myself, and I ended up out in Sheridan
with Stan Cook. And one day during the spring, there was
still snow out up there, I went out grouse hunting and the
sun was out and I looked down in the snow and I saw a
shadow of a rifle pointing at me. So I turned around and
sure enough, Stan was pointing the rifle at the back of my
head. I pushed the rifle barrel basically out of my face,
and said, what are you doing?
And he looked at me with this kind of a
really evil look and he said, I should have killed you when
I killed your father. You remind me of your father.
And I said, yeah, yeah.
I just kind of sloughed it off and was
joking around. You are my dad, is what I said to him.
And we went off grouse hunting. And I went
back to the lodge where he lived and he had some other
family members over and that night they started drinking
and I was laying on the couch and I pretended to drink.
They got all really intoxicated and that night I took the
rifle breaches out of the rifles and put them into the
bottom drawer in the kitchen. And when I heard that train
coming in the early morning, at six in the morning, I was
there to meet it. And I got out of there and I went back to
La-Paw [The Pas]. I stayed with my sister. It was later,
after that, that my brother ended up in La-Paw [The Pas] in
the hospital of brain cancer and I got to sit and visit
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with him for a month and he filled in the blanks in a lot of the incidents that happened to me as a child. And he apologized to me for an incident that had happened and that incident is this scar here. I have a scar here and a scar here. And this scar here is much larger, it was a (inaudible) [A long ovoid] but I had surgery since. His father had directed him to lead me on the train tracks to basically get rid of me. And what they'd done is they took a tin can, it was like a paint can, and they took a knife and put holes and slits into this tin can. Then they put it on my head and said, let's go play knights. And they put me on the tracks, and my brother threw rocks at me. The rock had hit the face of the can, and dented, and that's where I had (inaudible) [got the lacerations] here and here. I fell on to the tracks and my one other sister, [Sister 1], who had been arrested [came to my rescue]. She was only a couple of years older than I was and she dragged me off the tracks as the train was coming and I rolled down the small embankment on the other side. This was in the town of (inaudible) [The Pas]. And my other brother, James, had just coming down to that other way, the other side of the tracks, and came over, saw what had happened, and tried to remove the can, and realized that I was bleeding through the slits and he couldn't remove the can off my head. So he put me under his arm and he took me to the hospital and
they removed the can. And when they were examining me, they
realized that I had had a tumor. I had a tumor in [behind]
this left ear here. And they removed the tumor also and
stitched me up. And I was left in the hospital.

And I was -- after I was released I went
back to my home and there was a lot of alcoholism and me
and my one other sister used to hide in the closet and
sleep. And there were sometimes there was no food in the
house and we'd have to eat mice and sometimes the garbage
that was left behind the stove. And I -- I had a really
terrible time as a young man, as a boy. In times I was
quick to [Stan Cook would] come home and he'd come from his
trap line and (inaudible) [he would do] a lot of drinking.
And he'd bring friends and those friends would molest my
sisters. And after my mother was absolutely intoxicated.
And then there were other times that I -- he'd torture --
he'd beat my mother to a pulp and I remember this one time
he beat her and I remember looking down at her because he
was holding me up by my stuff from my arm pit and she was
wearing brown slacks and a Paisley blouse and he had just
beat her to a pulp and her face was just black and blue and
she was crying. There was blood. And I remember saying,
it's okay, mom, it's okay. And he's hurting me now, it's
okay, he's not hurting you anymore. And I'd fight and kick
and scratch and bite. And that particular time he ran my
arm through a wringer washer and in the old days we used to
have the [inaudible] [tubs and the] wringer on it. And that
was in the kitchen and he ran my hand up to my wrist into
my forearm of my left arm. At that particular time I
remember [inaudible] [this euphoria] coming over me,
basically saying it's okay, mom, it's okay because he ain't
hurting you anymore.

And yeah, it just -- I endured a lot of
torture so to speak. I guess [inaudible] erased and [raised
in] trauma all the time, I guess it's considered a sense of
normalcy, right?

And then one night Stan and this fellow,
Shorty, showed up and he took me and my sister in the
outskirts of town and dropped us off in the Jack pines and
the tundra and he put a rifle on us and my sister
[putting] her arm on my face and I kept pushing
her hand away. And I looked and I saw this man aiming a
rifle at me. But at that age I didn't really see the -- as
that being out of the ordinary. And he ended up leaving us
there. And we found this little shed that was along, like,
a train track. And in the shed that we spent the night. And
then in the cold and my sister had a red turtleneck sweater
on and I think I had some type of parka on. And we ate mice
and we walked only at night because there was -- we could
see which way we were going because the reflection of the
town lights off of the clouds. And we came across a road, and the road had street lights on it and we walked that road. I remember crying and I was tired and my sister saying, don't cry, don't cry. And she -- he and her, our whole lives we were inseparable. We came across a trailer and I remember seeing that trailer and it was silver and it had, like, a pink line down the centre of it. And we went inside and the people there recognized us. I didn't know who these people were. But then I looked over and I saw one of my brothers there. And it was my brother, Roland, and my older brother [one of my older brothers]. And basically the police were called, the RCMP showed up and it took three RCMP to pull me and my sister apart because we fought and kicked and screamed as they pulled us apart and put us in separate cars. And I always remember my mom saying to me, don't ever go across bridge. If you go across that bridge, you'll never come home. Because in La Paw [The Pas] they had a bridge that wasn't too far from our home, and it was my mom's way of saying if you cross that bridge, just to keep us off so we wouldn't fall in the river or anything. That was her way of scaring us not into ever going across the bridge.

And I remember being back in the back seat of that squad car and I was crying. I looked up and I remember seeing the gentle face of that one police officer.
that was on the right-hand side, looked back at me and said, you'll be okay, boy, you'll be okay.

And then I fell asleep. And I woke up in a foster home the next day. And basically from there I ended up being adopted out. And they moved me up to Flin Flon where (inaudible) I stayed with an elderly lady. I can't help you with the names. I was so young. But I stayed with them I guess for -- I don't know, a while, and I had this tractor that was out in the driveway, it was a pedal tractor, and I just loved that thing. And I remember the day was so short, [the social worker] they were coming to get me. I fought with that (inaudible) [social worker]. And then after that, that's when I was adopted into the Olver home.

And it was a completely different lifestyle. I remember my adoptive mom telling me that the first Christmas that I had with them was I slept until something like 10:30 or quarter to 11 or something like that. The rest of the family just were waiting for me to come down the stairs to open presents and they got -- they ran upstairs to wake me up and I come down and I shared my first Christmas with them, and you know, they gave me crayons and (inaudible) [plasticine]. I got everything that a boy could ever want, you know? My dad adored me, he loved me. I remember seeing some of the photos from the
time I was, like, five and I would dress like him. I'd have
the white T shirt on and blue jeans on, just like he would
dress on his days off. And he worked for -- it was called
(inaudible) [ABC] mining up in Flin Flon, and he just a
young fellow at the time. I think he was in his early 20s.
And he adopted me. And then later they had two kids of
their own. My brother, Trent, was born first, and Gail was
born -- the last one born. And then from there we moved
from Flin Flon to B.C., where my father worked at
(inaudible). And I was raised in a very non-Aboriginal
community, (inaudible) [I think I was the only native
person in, I don't know], 20 miles. And the only other
minorities in the school were Italians, so I kind of -- the
Italians were the only other ones I kind of got along with.
I played soccer with them, swim club, and you know, lots of
them were my friends. I think one of first jobs I worked
for an Italian family that let me work as a stock boy in
the supermarket with an Italian family. They knew who I was
and they allowed me to do that.

But I had -- I got a [dealt with a] lot of
racism (inaudible) [in my community, and got called] every
name in the book. Everything from, like, (inaudible) [china
man, chink] kike to just terrible things. And I always had
to fight. I always got beat up and my dad wanted me to go
to judo and karate and my dad said, no, that's -- I don't

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want you doing things like that because you can go to boxing. So I started boxing. That's how I learned to defend myself. And I learned to take a punch and basically I had to [sometimes] practice that in the school yard. I was always being prejudiced and hit by other kids. But my [the Olver] home was a safe home. It was a good home in a way. Like, I had new bicycles all the time, I had food all the time, I was dressed well. We had, like, Sunday's best to wear. I had pajamas I had to wear when I was going for bed. You know, it was like I got a bedtime story read to me. You know, Christmas was something that was very special. We all had to wake up and sing merry Christmas to wake up all the adults. There was never any alcohol. There was no smoking, there was no drugs, there was none of that. It was a very, very clean home. And we always went on vacations and got to see a lot of the world and we always did pretty much what we were told. And again, it was the prejudice and the racism in our community that basically put a real toll on our family. And there was my first incident run in with the law was over a bicycle. And I had found this bicycle and I tried to give it back and they charged me with stealing of a bicycle [bike]. And but I knew who stole it and it's the fellow's name is Dave Elliott and I never back then it's, like -- I never snitched him out. We never -- but he -- I took the rap for that. And basically I ended up on
probation and during that time on probation I was in -- I
was about 13 and I was in an alternative school. I put into
an alternative school for [inaudible] [fighting and stuff
in the] regular school. And I ended up with some pretty
other bad kids. One day after school he removed I guess a
wallet from one of the custodians jackets that were hanging
in the -- it was hanging somewhere in the gym. And he had
removed money out of it. And I didn't see it happen, but
this is what he had told me to say. And we went to get a
bite to eat and I said, well, where did you get the money?
And he goes, well, I got money. And then we went to the
arcade and the RCMP came in and they arrested us. And I
didn't know why we were being arrested. And once I got the
-- they put me in the cell with him and he told me what
he'd done. And he goes, you know, I have been in trouble
with the law a lot and they're going to send me away to
Wellington if -- he goes, if you take the rap for this, he
goes, I won't get anything and they'll just give you
probation. And you have remember, I was just a young
fellow, right? And I had already been on probation for
something I hadn't even done. And but I took the rap for
it. And anyway, I got sentenced to 14 weekends at Santa
Rosa, it was a boys' camp for boys that had to pay back
restitution. They had to cut firewood and -- but I -- yeah,
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was guilty. And he said, you're guilty and I don't get sent away and, you know, you'll get probation. So I stood up in front of the court and I said, I'm guilty. Not even knowing what the word meant at 13 years old. I was kind of naive. And he sentenced me 14 weekends in Santa Rosa and at that point I ended up in a foster home. And I had to go off to a boys' work camp every weekend and cut firewood by hand with a hand saw. And split it by hand. And we would sell cords of wood to pay back this custodian that had lost their money. And because I had said I was guilty, I was the one that had to pay it back. And that boy I was hanging out with, he ended up getting sent away anyway. You know? So I had twice I owned a mistake on behalf of two other people. And that was my run in with the court system as a boy.

And I had to deal with a lot of prejudice and also deal with [that has to do with] the Indian Act back in that day. As an Indian we didn't have rights. We were basically considered guilty of a crime and we had to prove ourselves innocent. So regardless what I had said, they already had my number. You know? I tell you today as an adult is that I look back at that and I thought I was just doing it to protect my family, right? And my friends. And you know, that was something I learned. I learned from that day when that person tortured me and broke my arm, as I watched my mom being beaten, and that was something that...
somewhere in my head it was like it's okay, it's okay to abuse me, it's okay to emotionally hurt me. It's okay, I can talk it. And you know, I had always done through my whole life. So I ended up in a number of foster homes and I ended up in a number of group homes after that. And they paired me up with another kid that was adopted out. And me and him ran amok. And we ended up -- we were liked in our community. Like, we were loved in our community by some people and then despised by other people in our community. We were raised to be white but we looked native. And anything that ever happened in my neighborhood, and was always blamed for, you know? And that's not right. You know, it wasn't until later in life that I had a friend of mine that called me and we were talking here in Vancouver and he'd told me some of the allegations that were made about me when I was growing up. And I was absolutely shocked by some of the things that were said. And I had to deal with racism. I was the only minority in the neighborhood. And they were, like, that kid out there, he's wild because he jumps bikes and makes hang gliders and flies them off banks, and stuff. And they just thought I was just a bad kid, right? I was just kind of a daredevil. And so other kids would just go, I broke a window, he must have did it. Or you know -- I think there was one case, me
and my family were out on a summer vacation out here in
Vancouver and I was accused of breaking windows at a
school. You know, I was with my family. So you know, it
just never ended. It never stopped. It was -- I had been --
when I was 13 my sister had a few friends that lived next
door and they -- one summer I was accused of a sexual act
with the neighbour's daughter. And I would have been only,
like, three years older than they were. You know, it wasn't
later in life is when the fellow here in Vancouver told me
that this is what I was being accused of. That those girls
had gone forward and it had turned out to be their father
that was molesting them. You know, and it was -- they -- in
communities would find a native person and accuse them of
things. It was a scapegoat where a lot of things that were
happening. And that's not right. And then the laws, because
of the Indian Act, we were considered guilty of these
crimes, you know? I'll get more into details about that a
little bit later, but I was in [inaudible] [group] homes
and I went to [inaudible] [um I ended up moving back to]
[inaudible], I ended up staying at a boarding house
[inaudible] [and it was run by this little senior lady],
her name was Margaret [inaudible] and she -- I lost her a
couple of years ago. She adopted me as her family. And she
was just a beautiful soul. And she had a grandson by the
name of Jim. Jim I knew from the time I was in grade two.
And we used to do a lot of outdoor things. We did a lot of camping and climbing and hiking and fishing. And I ended up -- we had lost touch for all those years, and then I ended up at this grandmother's house in her boarding house. And then Jim moved back in and we became like brothers and I went to work and she raised us as teenagers. And we went off and did the normal things like rock concerts and we started drinking. That's when my drinking really started. I just tried to drink like the rest of the guys and -- but the alcohol didn't agree with me. I'd always end up in a fight when I started drinking. And but I had already had this kind of notorious type of -- I don't know -- kind of -- I don't know what you'd call that -- I was kind of considered notorious in the community at that point. I was drinking. And I ended up sitting in a bar one time and I got -- that's where I met my first partner and we ended up having a child together. And we sobered up together and we moved up to Nelson B.C. there and we had this little house and I worked part-time jobs with for a landscaper. A kind of outfit that restoring old Victorian homes and things like that. And it was -- I used to kind of enjoy that type of work. And then I'd go fishing in the evening. I enjoyed my fly fishing. But she -- my son was born in 1992, September 28, 1992. And me and my spouse split up and I ended up working for a movie company in Nelson. There was a
big production came through and one of the stars was -- approached me, I actually ran into him right down the street in Nelson, and he said me, he said to me, he goes, do you have any friends? I went, no, not really. But he goes, well, could you meet out on set later? And I went out to (inaudible) and I hung out with this super country music star. And he said, yeah, would you like to be in this movie? And I said, yeah, sure. He said, I need some help. What's that? We need some more native people. So the people that I rented from in this little house, their friends knew some native people. So I called and talked to him and before you know it, there was like a whole band, natives that came from Vancouver to Nelson to do this scene for this motion picture. And but I ended up on the beach with this music country star and he had told me, it's -- we were sitting under a tree one day there and we were braiding one another's hair. At the time I had really, really long hair. And he said to me, you know, nothing is for free in this world. So they'll offer you it all, but never take it. Stay away from drugs and alcohol. He says he's seen too many men in the business lose their lives to drink. And that was his advice to me. And you know, I ended up down -- I ended up breaking up
with my partner and I went back and me and her ended up in an argument and there was -- we were both highly intoxicated and he[r] brother had thrown a pot out the window and I split my head open and there was a shouting match (inaudible) [that had occurred,] the local police were called and they locked me up and they threw the book at me. And I ended up being incarcerated for being held in remand custody for about three months. And then I ended up I took it to Supreme Court and they asked -- well, I didn't have a criminal record and they were wondering why I was being held. And they let me go. And when they let me go they gave me this very special piece of paper. And it was their way of apologizing to me for incarcerating me for something I hadn't done.

I ended up making Vancouver my home. I did a number of TV shows and I was a model for a bunch of clothing manufacturers] at the time. And I ended up falling down again and ended up drinking and I ended up (inaudible) [Downtown Eastside] and a fellow came up and he hit me with a pool ball. And the pool ball shattered a piece of bone from a part of my head here (inaudible) [into my brain]. And it killed me. And they threw my body into the alley basically I was revived in the ambulance and I ended up in hospital with the right side of my face completely pulverized. And I seen a doctor here.
He's retired now, his name is Robert Thompson, he's a phenomenal plastic surgeon. And he was able to reconstruct my bone structure on the right side of my face. And he took the bone from here and a bit here and put it through here into here. And if you look at me today you can't really tell I was ever in an accident that way. And I still have a bit of a speech impediment. That part of my mouth [inaudible] [and stuff, I don't have any feeling in there]. That was a trial that again was caused from alcoholism. And it was -- it all stems back to when I was a boy. And trying to drown out those feelings. And I ended up in relationships that were filled with alcoholism. And I always thought I was trying to rescue my partners and the result of that is I was living a really unhealthy codependent relationships that -- I was emotionally, physically abused, financially abused, and in how I was raised as a young -- when I was a baby, and I look back at it like it's okay. I think that's where my self-worth was basically compromised. I had gone through life saying it was okay. Somewhere in my head it was okay to abuse me, it's okay to throw me out, it's okay to -- and [inaudible] [that's not right, you know, and I would] drown that out. I drowned out all the things that I deal with. And remember, I was in my 20s, right? I'm 50 now. So you know, I didn't get real help until I was in my 40s. You know, I had
remained sober for 13 years and then I fell down and now I have seven years. I'm seven years sober today. And during that time I had to go back now to 92 when I met my first partner and I had my first son. And I had gone -- while I was down here in Vancouver, I believe it was in 1994 I got a call from [The Minister of] Child and Family Services that I needed to get custody of my son, [Son] and I went to the Supreme Court and they basically said to me that -- because I was an aboriginal male by nature that we don't -- we have no business in raising our kids. And they wanted me to sign a document, which I did, and I figured that I'd just -- you know, I'd get in touch with (inaudible) [partial custody or something]. My partner, his mom, my ex-partner, his mom ended up with custody. And he lived through some really horrible things. And then he started seeing me when he was about ten. I would fly him down here to Vancouver and spend a couple of weeks with him every summer. And take him out and get him clothes and toys, he'd get to hang out with his younger brother and they were telling me that he had some, like, attention deficit disorder and that he wouldn't sit still. And they had him on this medication. I disagreed with it, so whenever he came to visit, he hated taking the medication, so he didn't take the medication. And he became this normal loving kid. And he'd sit and he'd carve with me for hours at a time.
And I still have one of his pieces. And I lost touch with him when he was about 16. And he -- I called his mom's place and her new husband would answer and he'd always give me an excuse that he was off at university or he was off doing fire fighting training. And I was, like, real proud of him. And then he showed up a couple of years ago here in Vancouver. In 2016 he showed up here and he was happy to see me. And while he was here he talked about his trauma that he'd gone through. And how he was molested and abused by this couple of fellows that his mom was seeing. And he had done this to me, a confession when he went out and got loaded and confessed to me that he was an alcoholic and he needed help. And I got him sober and took him to his very first AA meeting. And he started hanging out and we [we] carved and he was a phenomenal artist. And he'd -- we'd talk about some of the abuses he went through and we were ready to set to go and maybe lay some charges, [inaudible] [look at laying charges] and my son ran off with his girlfriend and I didn't really approve of their relationship. And he ended up back up to his mom's place for his sister's wedding. And he came back to Vancouver September [date], on his birthday, he'd borrowed his mom's car to drive down here. And I told him to drive safely and when he went home, he said, dad, mom, I'm a good driver. And he basically he went back and on September 30th I was
washing my windows in my home, because my partner and I
live now, and there was a knock at the door and the police
showed up and they asked me outside. And I stepped outside
and I asked, can I bring my partner, and he said,
absolutely. And he had to regret to inform me that my son
had gone down into the basement of his mom's home and he
hung himself.

So I look at this, the trauma of
everything I have gone through in life, and it only seems
to be put forward on to the next generation. You know, my
other kids never suffered any trauma. My other wife never
suffered any trauma at all. Good kid. Well educated. He's
all grown up now, he's a big boy. He's a really big boy. I
had only wished that at that point my life that the Supreme
Court at that time had given me custody. You know, because
it's -- you have to look at this family means everything to
me. This is how I was raised. (Inaudible) [My adopted
family], they raised me with family means everything,
right? And that's what I wanted. That's what [I needed] --
my adopted father (inaudible) [was a young man in his 20s
when he started his family] and so was I. Even though there
was alcoholism, and I went to fight for custody of him and
I lost because of some act that Canada has, a law, and you
know, I look at it like this: If he had been in my
custody, he would probably still be alive to this day.
Because I would have been able to give him the tools to
manage his life like how I managed my life. And
spirituality and helping others and believing in a God, you
know. That was something my oldest boy couldn't comprehend.
It was, like, (inaudible) I educated him why we do these
things. He didn't understand that, couldn't grasp the
concept. Because when he spent most of his time with his
mom, his mom was -- she was atheist. She didn't believe in
any of that. So he was never raised that way. And that to
me was, it was kind of hard for him to understand that.

Anyway, who I had [am] today, you know, I
work in my community. I'm a producer for some radio shows
and co-producer and producer. And I also do co-producing
and was a producer for television, for access television,
it was a community-based (inaudible) [cable] show here in
(inaudible) [and all the funding got cut] so we ended up
all of us ended up (inaudible) [losing our jobs]. We still
do volunteering and go to (inaudible) [it goes online] but
I'm really working in my community. I make my money through
the arts and everything else I do is pretty much volunteer.
I like to promote spiritualism and healing and more
positive way of living in my community. So it's a community
of artists here living a clean, sober lifestyle. And doing
it the only way you can do that is to be clean and sober
and by example. And I have learned over the years with
working with a lot of aboriginal people in Canada is how
the traumas that they've been through over their lives. And
as I got more involved in politics and the politicians and
had talks with them, I found that a lot of our problems
here in Canada has to do with the Indian Act. And the
Indian Act was designed to repress people here in Canada
and keep us from our full potential. And we are considered
an enemy combatant, so-called back in the day. And
residential schools and 60s scoops were all designed to
assimilate the native and try to assimilate us into a non-
aboriginal way of behaviour. And what I found is I was
raised in a very proper home, and a church. I go home and I
believe in god and Jesus and things and but again, I found
my own spirituality as a native person and that's who I am.
And part of the same in spiritual context, believing that
it's the same god, we just have different needs for him and
the similarities are really very close. That's how society
abides the faith. And non-aboriginals call it Christianity
and then some native people that have heard things that
kind of residential schools and things condemn
Christianity, but then again it's the label that's wrong.
It wasn't Christianity that designed the residential
schools, it was the Roman Catholic church. And so, you
know, they misinterpret and they label things in ways and
there's people like me out there that educate my own people

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and have to say it's -- they went through residential school, that wasn't Christianity. That was the farthest thing from Christianity. That was no more than a concentration camp for aboriginal children to assimilate them into something that they weren't -- that they aren't. But spiritually, they were already spiritually, you know, proper. You know, and it was the systemical breakdown of the residential schools and the 60s scoop in a lot of ways that robbed us of our culture and it robbed us of who we are. It's like I have met one of my cousins here and he's around the same age as me, and he was raised in the bush in northern Manitoba, and he makes me laugh. He speaks his traditional language and after the first day I met him, I walked down the street and I started crying. And my partner said, why are you crying? And I was, like, well, because I realize how much I was robbed of my culture. My cousin and his beautiful ways of looking at the world and has all to do with the language and it was a language that was taken away from me. I know that when I was little, that's all I spoke. And when I was in my adopted home, and I was sent in grade two I was sent to a part of the school, it was called ESL, and they'd teach me how to pronounce my words properly. And I started losing that -- my dialect. I had a very heavy accent at that time and that's how I was conditioned, really. I was groomed, you know?
In my journey in my life of healing I went from -- I have gone through the church, I met Navajos, people of all walks in life, I still turn to my own local church, but I know that there's two sides of me. One side of me is my faith and the other is my culture. And in what I do for a living as a sculptor, I carve in a very unique (inaudible) [material called catlinite] which is pipe stone, which Native Americans use to praise to our creators. And I took this material and I started creating and honouring a nation here in -- I covered in the northern form of up the coast here, and the (inaudible) [in their] style. I did it out of honour because they were the first natives that I really met on one of my vacations that I ended up in (inaudible) [Haida Gwaii]. And my adopted father's brother is stationed up there. And that's where I met the first real Natives in my life. And I liked what they were about. And (inaudible) [it wasn’t until] later in life that I realized that I was gifted in being an artist and who I was. And that's how I make my living, as a sculptor.

You know, my own family, biological family has suffered terrible traumas. I had -- I have a sister named Sarah and Audrey and they died. They are both deceased now. They died of alcoholism. They were horribly abused as children. My brother, Ken and James, they were...
physically abused quite a bit. And they ended up as young
teens in and out of penitentiary. And my one other brother,
he seems fairly okay. He had his little run ins here and
there, but he ended up working in a fishing lodge and
that's what kept him out of trouble. And my other brother,
my oldest, last, remaining oldest brother, Allan, he was an
iron worker and he retired and he raises all of his kids.
And he's [inaudible] [a really nice] man. And that's the
sense of a lot of the Aboriginal ways of the family, were
traditional ways of take on sometimes other people's kids.
Because there was no sense of abandoning your family. Let's
say you have a brother and his kids died, then you'd take
on his family. His kids, and raise them as your own.

And then my brother taught me, he taught
me a new example -- he's a nice man. And then I have my
oldest sister, [Sister 1]. And that was the one that when
we were kids, that it took the police to pull us apart.
I'll be meeting her next weekend for the very first time. I
have talked with her over the phone, I have talked with her
on Facebook. She wasn't ready to meet for so many years
because it brought back so much pain for her. I told her I
was coming here to do this and she said, do it. Speak
loudly. And she wants me to be heard and that's something
that, you know, that she wanted me to do. And it's
something I believe in. And be heard, right?
My suggestion to the Government of Canada is to -- the Supreme Court of Canada to abolish the Indian Act in its entirety. And to allow the reservationists to become a municipality. Allow them to have their own by-laws as their own traditional office. And then in this way that the natives of those communities would no longer get Indian Affairs hand out. But they could apply for federal funding to the federal government and create their own municipality where they'd have to build infrastructure in these communities. And that would give hope to a lot of the young people and people on those municipalities. Because I know that we're having a real serious problem with a lot of young people committing suicide because they have no hope. I know that's -- I think allowing the Indian Act to be abolished would be a good thing. It would give us a fair shake. It's like how I look at it is like they raised me, they wanted to assimilate me and they assimilate me, but then I don't get the same rights as them? Like, that's not fair, right? In that process, you know, I lose my oldest boy because they deem me because I was an aboriginal and I had no business raising him [children] because my [by] nature (inaudible) [apparently we’re bad for our] children is what they said.

You know, that's my recommendation to the Canadian government. I think, you know, reconciliation, I
think that if they were to abolish the Indian Act, that
would be true reconciliation. And if they would recognize
our elected grand chiefs as a political party in
themselves, and allow them to stand in Parliament as a
political party, I think they would allow anything that
would get consultation right away in anything that happens
in our country.

And I mean, when -- I mean in every
Canadian's -- all Canadians. Not just Aboriginal, but all
Canadians.

That's my recommendations. We don't get a fair shake. Even though some of us are assimilated more
than others. And but I do have a good understanding of what
goes on and I'd like to see Canada do this, you know? I
think the Indian Act is -- it's a racist law and I know
that it was the framework for the African apartheid. They
took the framework from the Indian Act and applied that in
South Africa. And I would like to see that gone in my
lifetime. So my grandkids can walk in our beautiful world
of Canada, this land is amazing, free. And be truly free.
Like, non-aboriginals. I know that there's amendments to
the Act right now that does allow us to stuff to be made up
and before we have to defend ourselves in court anymore,
those rights have to be recognized. We
can't just be arrested for whatever anywhere. And I think
we should -- we could work together as one. And make Canada a really awesome, more awesome place to live. Some of the governments would take some of the advice of the aboriginal people, I think we could fix a lot of the problems in our world here. It has to do with everything from pipelines to fish barbs. There's enough here for everyone, you know? That's my recommendation.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Thank you. You were kind of just very detailed and very eloquent, so I don't actually have a lot of questions in regards to clarifying anything of what you've shared. I think you delivered what you had to say very, very well. I just want to say that.

One thing I did want to know that I don't recall if you mentioned or not was whether or not your parents did attend residential school?

MR. GARY OLVER: My biological mother -- my grandfather was Henry Campbell. He was one of three brothers and he was from Dark Bay [Duck Bay]. And he was half [Saltee (ph)] and half Cree. Which is very unique because the Saltee [(ph)] nation never really ever integrated with any other race. Because they were considered a very top spiritual powerful tribe that was, like, to get you with their dreams and things like that. And they were feared among a lot of the other nations.
My mom was born in Moose Lake, which is by the mouth of the Saskatchewan River that goes into Cedar Lake in Manitoba. And our people are descendants of I think it was 1876, I think it was, when the Indian wars on the plains were going on and the migration of Natives from the States into Canada through Saskatchewan were running to escape the soldiers during the Indian wars. And they took the Canadians as far as up as they could go up the Saskatchewan and they ended up taking the native peoples of royal descent chiefs and shamans and hid them away in the swamps to (inaudible) where the horse could not go and chased them. And that's what I'm a descendant of. And my family had arranged marriages for the longest time to keep our blood lines -- if you look at me, you look at my sisters, you know we're all related. You can -- we all have a certain distinct family look, a family trait to us. And that was from arranged marriages back in the day. And it wasn't like an arranged marriage where it was like the elder women would sit among themselves and then go say, that boy gets along with that girl and she's the family this. And so let's bring them up together. And those two would be brought up together and then later as they were brought up together, they were always like one. And they would be married and have kids. And that's how that was done, right?
But that's one of the -- you know, I'm a descendant of leaders and shamanic people. Like, my grandfather was Henry Campbell and he was half Saltee and half Cree. And very, very spiritual. He was very, very -- he was a boat builder and a fisherman. So I see that's where I get my creativity, right? It's, like, he carved and he built his own tools and he built boats. And that's branded me. And that's why it's so familiar, I guess when I was growing up in the home, I knew how to build boats. Little model boats and planes. I just started creating stuff and I would carve my wood and bring together and my parents were so fascinated, they had -- they still have some of those from the time I was a little boy. Stuff that I created myself. They look like they came out of a store. But that's the power of that -- of arranged marriages. Those gifts were passed down from generation to generation. And it's those gifts that passed down, then look at the trauma. And it's only recently that they discovered through DNA that basically your trauma can be transferred down to your kids. Like, unless I deal with them, then my kids get passed on with my traumas. Right? But how I look at it is, it's all about spirituality for me. And pushing forward and doing the right thing in the world. And helping others. And overcoming your own traumas, unlike I think -- it's key to
a good life. And it's not about fancy clothes and cars and
-- it's about your spirit and finding somebody to enjoy
your life with and just go hang out and have a cup of
coffee or sit in a park and watch a caterpillar. These are
the most meaningful things in life. And you know, we all
have to work and we do our jobs and then we try to do them
well and go home, and then that's our time to relax and
leave the work at work and be who we are as spiritual
people. And that's key to a good life. You know? And just
try to help people. Be friendly.

So are we finished?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: I have one more
question for you. Just in regards to your mom's death, and
you kind of did a lot of investigating on your own. Did you
ever feel that it was properly investigated by the police
in Manitoba?

MR. GARY OLVER: It wasn't investigated
properly. I talked with my uncle and I still haven't talked
with my auntie Mary still over it. They just pretty much
discarded my mom. They threw her in a pine box and sent her
to La Pas [The Pas] and my uncle, Ron, asked for it to be
opened, and they refused to. And so they pushed the guy
aside and two brothers, Ken and Ron, my uncles, opened the
top of the casket and found my mom there, their sister,
caked in blood. She wasn't washed or cleaned. Her skin was
peeling off of her body. (Inaudible) and they washed her and they buried her in a blue dress. And everybody knew who did it. But there was nothing ever done. And even some of his own family members and cousins and stuff know that he did it. And I recently lost that when one of his relatives that she used to talk with me all the time and she was so proud of me, of who I became and how I brought honour to the family name because of what I do as a lifestyle. And being an artist and doing what I do. And she would constantly remind me of that, because it was all -- what he did, and we know what he did. And they just -- you know, they never did anything. He's deceased now and the other fellow is deceased now. And I carried that on my shoulders for a long time, like, from the 1990s. I never spoke about the incident, of him pointing a rifle at me. I had only told I believe one of my own other sisters. I told my brother, James, and he said, you know what? Just leave. Just disappear and leave. He goes, don't bring it up because you're going to cause a family split, a family feud. That was something I carried on my shoulders for years and years. Now I'm in my 50s, I'm the youngest, you know, all my other siblings are all pretty much -- have left this world. So there's only a few of us left. And but I have an understanding. It's, like, their father, Stan Cook, and his friend, Shorty, killed my mom. And their one
daughter, one of my half sisters, killed somebody when she was 14 out of being possessive. Then later in life again when she was married, she shot and killed her husband -- well, didn't shoot him, I think she cut him up and she ended up in a psychiatric hospital. And she had murdered him I believe and ate part of him or something like that. She was locked up. And she's been recently released but she's not in a very good -- health-wise, not very good. She has no feet or anything anymore. But you know, I don't talk with her. I stay pretty much away from all of my biological family. And what I see is that that's their behaviour. You know, and like even that obsession and how they obsess and then they kill somebody. It's quite sad. You know, at time I feel blessed. For me, (inaudible) [I get mixed feelings, right]. Here I was raised in a beautiful home but then again, because I was raised in a beautiful home and lived, then I look back, I'm well educated, but then I look back and I'm, like, well, I didn't learn my language and I didn't learn my culture and I didn't learn this. And I feel really robbed of that. But if my mom had remained sober, because she was a traditionalist, she didn't become a raging alcoholic until she made it to La-Paw [The Pas]. When she lived out in the bush she was a traditionalist. When I was a baby, she carried me in a papoose. A traditional papoose. So you know, at that time of her life,
she was a traditionalist. And so you know, it was when she moved into the town of La-Paw [The Pas] is when she's lose all her rights. She lost her rights. And for her to be able to go to the bar, she had to say I'm no longer an Indian. And so my father, Neil Stanley Sanderson, that's where I get my status and my treaty from. And he still remained on a reservation, but he worked on a boat that took the people in and out of the reservation. So the waterfronts in Manitoba. So you know, it's -- it's all messed up. It was so messed up. A different time, a different era. But where we're at today in the new millennium, those laws shouldn't apply anymore. They should be gone. The Indian Act should be gone. I do talk with a lot of people about that and I hear both sides of it. The fear of losing it and the fear of not wanting it anymore. But I'm on the side of it and I had been victimized by it myself. And I don't like it. And I don't want that to be put on to any of systematically put on to any of my grandkids. It's not fair. It just wouldn't be fair to them. Where they lucked as a lesser people. It's not right. They haven't done anything wrong. I never did anything wrong when I was a kid, but you know what? I got kind of the raw end of the stick because of the alcoholism. That was all caused from being repressed. Right? Yeah, just doesn't make any sense.

And then my mom -- it's funny, here I'm at

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50 years old and I can close my eyes and I can still feel my mom's heart, having my head against her and hearing her heart. That's strange. Even at 50 years old I can still remember that. You know, before I started to come in here to prepare myself, in the last couple of weeks, I had talked to my sisters, my one sister, and then I got times and dates down accurately, and then she brought up stuff between me and her that we endured together, and it was funny that I talked to her, parts of it, and I had quite a way, and then all of a sudden it was like bang, and she brought it out. And that's, like, that's right, that did happen. And me and her, when we were growing up, we were inseparable, me and my sister. We always walked hand in hand. We went everywhere hand in hand all the time. We hid in the closet -- there's a closet at the top of the stairs and we put the jackets that were hanging in there, and then we made this little bed in there, and we'd go to sleep in there together. And when people were drinking, that way they couldn't find us. Because we saw what these people that were intoxicated would do to some of our sisters and stuff, and so we would just go and hide. And lock ourselves in there and sleep in this closet, at the bottom of this closet. And we had it all lined up with, like, jackets as a mattress and covers and stuff. And we'd go in there and sleep. If food around the house, bread or whatever, that
was served. But I remember my father, he was -- when he'd show up, he's always bring me paper bags and he'd show up and he'd always give us food and my mom would always be happy and running and jumping into his arms. And she'd go and put it in the kitchen and she'd hug him and kiss him and then they'd -- she'd cook something for him to eat right away and then we'd all eat with whom. And bring out the toys for us. And that was something, when I met James, we sat and reminisced about -- James was always telling me about him. He was, like, yeah, that man was so nice to you. He was so nice to all of us. And he always brought us toys and food. He never drank. And that was my dad, my biological father. And they beat him to death. He was walking home after my mom and me -- I think it was a week later, he beat him to death, they beat him to death in the La-Paw [The Pas]. He was walking up from the boat and they beat his head in.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: After your mom's passing?

MR. GARY OLVER: Yeah. He was killed. I saw the newspaper clipping of a picture of where the -- there was this -- in La-Paw [The Pas] there was this warehouse that was along the train tracks. And it was, like, a sugar warehouse where the trains come in and they had -- something sugar on it. And he went up that way from
-- he was -- you could see the lump, like, the shadow. And
then the cops [inaudible] [were standing there and it was
kind of a] far away shot. It was kind of grainy because
it's all pixilated. Newspapers. And I saw that and it was,
like -- so I knew exactly where he died. Ask I went over
there. I brought some sweet grass and I burned it. I put it
down there. I knew his presence there. It was really
bizarre behaviour. It seemed like he had been waiting for
him all these years. I just say a prayer for him, right?
It's terrible. It's terrible what's happened in this
country. The secrets that Canada, part of the dark history
of Canada and what it's done in -- I'm reminded every day.
And but I try not to allow it to dwell on it, right? Like,
after I leave here, I go home and on my walk home, I shake
it off. Right?

Anyway, was there anything else?

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: No, if there's
nothing else that you feel the Commissioners need to know
that I haven't asked? I have asked all of my questions.

MR. GARY OLVER: Nothing I can think of.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: If there's
anything later on, you -- I already gave you my card. You
can always send me an email and you can add anything in
writing. Or add any documents that you have or any -- if
you'd like to submit any pieces of art or anything that
you've done in film and media that you might want to --

MR. GARY OLVER: What I could do is I could submit an interview that my partner did with my son on the very first morning he woke up. Because he got here I think it was June and he was really tired. So we got back to my place and he went to bed and the next morning they got up early and he was up early and she got out her camera and she started interviewing him. He's sitting there and playing with his ears and it's, like, what's that building over there, right? He goes, wow, this place has really gotten good energy. You can see that interaction and then it goes -- are you happy to see your dad? And he's got this, like, ear to ear smile on his face, right? And that's how I'll always remember him.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: That would be great.

MR. GARY OLVER: I could share that with you. It's video footage of him. For me, I think, you know, if this hadn't have -- if it had been different, like, if the Indian Act hadn't been there, I would have my son. And that's the truth of it. If I wasn't -- if I hadn't been racially, you know, picked on my whole life, and I'd gotten a bad reputation and I think they -- that had to do with the Indian Act. And then it would have gave me -- I'd have been able to at that time apply for custody of my son and I
would have gotten it just like anybody else. You know? And he'd have been alive today. And he would probably -- you know, we'd have a business together. That was something that [inaudible] [we wanted to do, putting a] jewelry business together. He was a better artist than I was. I trained him when he was, like, young. And I still have a piece of art that it half finished. I carved inside and he carved. And he was about nine when he made that. I just keep that for keepsake now. But it's -- I think it was -- he was doing that at nine. So and where he'd have been now, it would have been -- he could have -- he could mimic my cuts and you couldn't tell that it was two people carving one piece. And it's -- if he'd be alive, we'd have probably a business going and [inaudible] [you know, we would push forward in our lives and] he wouldn't have suffered the traumas that he'd gone through. I wouldn't have went through the traumas that I went through. I probably would have still remained in my adopted home. [Inaudible] [I wouldn’t have left my adopted home at such a young age] and that was all -- that's how it kind of worked. That's [inaudible] [kind of my life]. But that's what -- [inaudible] [that’s the stem of it all] and when I was out at the [Missing and Murdered] Inquiry and I listened to a lot of the testimonies, and a lot of what people were saying, it all stems from the Indian Act. If the Indian Act...
wasn't there, if it's gone, our people would be free. We
wouldn't be in the predicaments we're in. You know, and
that's the truth of it. Because there wouldn't be a
reservation and people would have jobs, they wouldn't live
in poverty anymore. And go out to sell drugs and the
alcohol and the abuse that breaks up those families that
cause all of that. And the gangs, that wouldn't exist. And
there would be municipalities where people went to work
every day, come home every day, eat, go out tobogganng
together, go do things together, right? No alcohol. You
know, that wouldn't be even in the equation. That was just
because they were repressed. Our people were repressed by a
law and put on a reservation and reservation is no more
than a concentration camp without fences. And residential
schools, that was just prison for kids. And that all has to
do with simulation and it all has to do with the Indian
Act. And the Indian Act has to go. It has no mace in the
modern world.

MS. CAITLIN HENDRICKSON: Thank you for
what you shared today. It's 3:45 p.m. and I'm just going to
shut off the recording.

MR. GARY OLVER: Okay.

--- Whereupon proceeding adjourned at 3:45 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.

____________________________
Rubina Jan, Certified Court Reporter