Brent Cletheroe,
In relation to Shirley Cletheroe

Statement gathered by Kerrie Reay

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Statement – Public  
Brent Cletheroe  
(Shirley Cletheroe)  
Quesnel, British Columbia

--- Upon commencing on Wednesday, October 3, 2018 at 3:19 p.m.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, this is Kerrie Reay. I am a statement-taker with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and today is October the 3rd, 2018, and we are in Quesnel, British Columbia and the time is 3:19. Today, I am speaking with Brent Cletheroe. That’s ‘C’ as in Charlie, L-E-T-H-E-R-O-E, of the Tahltan First Nation. Brent is here to share his statement for his mother, who is Shirley Cletheroe, C-L-E-T-H-E-R-O-E, who went missing in June of 2006 from the Fort St. John, BC area. Brent is also here to share a statement on his vision for the future as well. Also present in the room is Bonnie George, a statement-taker, and for the record, Brent, you’re here voluntarily and you understand that you are being videotaped and audio taped?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Thank you. And so Brent, when you are ready, please, you can start wherever you would like.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: First and foremost, I want to thank everybody involved with the Inquiry and with all the First Nations groups represented, government officials, and everybody who is looking into this issue. I
think it’s a very important issue and it’s a defining moment in Canadian history, and so I am honoured to be here today. And just to kind of frame what I want to say today, I think at the beginning, I’ll -- I’ll talk a little bit just about my political views and -- and different ways that I see the situation, and then I want to share my -- my personal story of my mother’s disappearance, and I’ll begin with the weekend of, so when it -- when it occurred, and then I will -- it’ll unravel to the -- probably the origin and the backstory of -- of all the things associated to -- to how it happened.

So first and foremost, I -- I was discussing with the ladies at the beginning to try to unpack a lot of the -- the feelings and emotions that I have around the sociopolitical conversation around stereotypes and social stigmas around missing and murdered Indigenous women’s -- the movement in general. I spoke at a Sisters in Spirit conference in Peace River, Alberta, and my mother’s story is unique in that she, although being an alcoholic, didn’t have, I guess, a -- wasn’t living on the streets or wasn’t involved in the sex trade, wasn’t, I guess, easily swept under the rug or -- or -- or easily neglected or easily categorized or compartmentalized like so many other women, I think, that are involved in this whole process. And -- and that, to me, is -- is -- it’s offensive and it’s
harmful to -- to -- first to touch on that, so that, you know, I’m not -- I don’t get overly emotional based on things that are out of my control, out of my influence. And I think that that’s important and so I can just focus on the emotional well-being and the healing aspect of -- of what I’m going to say today.

I think it’s important that I talk about from Stephen Harper apologizing to First Nations to Justin Trudeau and -- and some of the promises that he’s made, I believe, are very hypocritical and -- and that I never believed in from the beginning of his campaign, that -- that I believe First Nations, we will have been duped. But again, it’s -- it’s all a government framework regardless of Liberal, Conservative viewpoints of the issue. I’m just glad that it’s -- it’s being looked at, it’s -- it’s being addressed. And so I identify as a Conservative, I identify as a -- as a Christian, identify as a First Nations male, and I -- I do believe that, without the way they are going into the details of the things that I find very offensive and -- and challenging about this whole issue, I think that human beings in general can rise above compartmentalizing each other.

And -- and, you know, I don’t want to attach this to what I find very elementary, basic ideas like racism, different things will not define what I want to say
today. I think that love conquers all and that, through all of this being discussed and eventually categorized and eventually filed away, that everything that I say today, I think, will ultimately be a -- a fact and to be the truth, not a truth or just another voice in the conglomerate.

But I think -- and I do believe in unity and I do believe that all of this will combine to become something very powerful.

But I believe that my voice -- I really want today to be individual. I want it to be unique and special based on the fact that what I say today, I think I want to be framed or background with an absolute truth. I don’t want there to be versions of the truth or versions of my personal truth or the way other people may see the issue, but basically the facts and strong words that everything gets, at the end of what I have to say, placed in -- in one category. And that is that, even 100 years from now, if somebody was to look at this, that it would be a very as-a-matter-of-fact statement of the way I see the world and -- and the way I think. People can relate to who we’re looking at everything from a very black-and-white perspective, very straightforward kind of a way, instead of it being not poetic or just romantic or, again, emotionally driven. But -- but I just think that there is a -- a -- a major problem in our country, and -- and with, you know,
just humanity in general at this stage of history in our country, and I think that this is really going to shed light or bring that truth to the surface.

And so all that being said, I just want to talk about my mother, Shirley Cletheroe. She was a very beautiful human being, very real, very in-your-face, very — at times described as a firecracker and a -- a wolverine. My dad was over six feet tall and close to 300 pounds, and a very abusive home that I grew up in, alcoholic home. My mom held her own. My mom was a very strong person, very -- very as-a-matter-of-fact. So I think that’s where I’m coming from today. I think that’s a great way to describe what I have to say, because how she raised me affects everything I’m going to say and -- and -- and influences everything I’m going to say and -- and helped develop the personality that I have.

And so my mom always told me and my siblings we were very special and we could make a difference in the world and never allowed somebody to be little or, again, categorize us or marginalize us or put us into stereotypes and -- and different things, and -- and was, like, basically against this idea of -- of racism or weakness in a -- portrayed as -- as whatever is dysfunctional in your life, whatever is vulnerable. And -- and it -- it actually just makes you stronger. It’s not something that you need
to shy away from or be embarrassed about.

And so I think a lot of First Nations people in the earliest stages of them developing their personality, becoming who they will be in -- in -- in their adolescence onward, feel an overwhelming shame for being First Nations. They feel an overwhelming, for some reason, I think it’s a generational curse, just a lot of the hurts and -- and how I see that as a strength. I don’t see that as a -- a shameful thing. But choosing -- choosing to be Native, I think, is very important, whether you are or not. I think a lot of people don’t even know, because of how watered down, I mean, their culture may seem. But that -- that defining moment of choosing to be First Nations and face the world as somebody who is First Nations is very important, and when you -- when you have that awakening to not merge with the culture that may be European or the military-industrial complex doesn’t become your -- your flag. I mean, you are marching to the beat of a different drum, which is a traditional drum, which is a Native aspect of -- of your culture that you identify with, is very important in developing who you will be in life.

As a -- a -- I guess a proud way to look at being First Nations is as a warrior and as a -- as somebody who can overcome. Because one thing that I do identify with as a First Nations, regardless of shame and -- and
cultural bias and -- and some stigmatic stereotypes or -- or racism in general, I believe, can never destroy, is that being a First Nations person is -- is something that -- that makes -- makes you -- it -- it’s something that can never die. It’s something that can never be eliminated from the ground.

The blood that cries out from the systematic institutional racism and -- and hate and -- and, you know, the government and governmental, I would say, genocide of culture and of our people only testifies of our strength that we’re still here and that we are being identified and that we can’t be pushed aside and can’t be neglected and -- and swept under the rug of our history, and -- and we never will be. And I think that’s because of our ties to the land. And -- and so our ties to the land and the Creator or God-given authority that was given to us here, we can’t be eliminated, can’t be exterminated.

And so I think that, with that -- with that idea of who we are, it -- it -- it’s empowering to be First Nations. And so I think that’s important in this conversation, that we begin to promote some different ideas like that, than how we are victims and we need to be blanketed or -- or -- or coddled or -- or comforted because we are victims and we’ll always be victims. I don’t receive that narrative. I don’t believe that. I believe
that, eventually, we’re going to shake off the chains of oppression, and the backstory of who we are is -- is written by people that didn’t see us in the -- in the right light. So this is an opportunity for First Nations people to stand up in this generation and -- and not speak their truth, but speak the truth that -- that who we are and who we always will be will be powerful and a force to be reckoned with.

And so self-government and -- and different conversations around this issue are -- are not only a necessity, but a -- an eventual long-term mutual agreement that -- that I think the -- the powers that be or the government -- governments of the world, and we think of community in general of the human race, that -- that we are becoming more connected every single day to the rest of the world through the Internet and so forth as a global -- as a global governance, you know, for the people partnering around the world, that First Nations people will always be independent and a very unique part of that conversation.

And -- and so, all that being said, I believe I’ve been on a very -- a very hard journey with a very healthy outcome through -- I’ve been through. So beginning to talk about the weekend of my mother’s disappearance, growing up, again, from this -- this perspective of -- of -- of a mother who -- who didn’t
coddle us, who didn’t, you know, necessarily promise us
that life would be easy, but that if you had clothes on
your back and food on the table and a roof over your head,
you know, you -- you were blessed and that you should never
complain with what life dishes you out. That you should
make your way in the world and your life will be what you
make of it. And I think that that is such a beautiful
concept, and it’s not only a -- a survival mentality but a
thriving mentality, because what I -- what makes my heart
bleed about other people, not just First Nations, but any
human being that has a defeated backstory, has a defeated
mentality, that has a very ...

Being a -- being an Apostolic Pentecostal
minister, you know, sometimes I speak in Scripture or
somebody would speak from inspirational quotes or would
speak from -- from influential people in history. Now, a
lot of times, I -- I speak these principles in the Word of
God in -- in the Bible because they mean so much to me and
-- and they frame what I’m trying to say better than I
could ever say it. And I think that the Bible says that --
that God’s “strength is made perfect in weakness.” And so
I believe that -- that, just because a person is broken,
just because a person is -- feels defeated or they are
right now, doesn’t mean they can’t.

With -- the most powerful thing on the
planet is an idea, in my opinion. Not guns, not fighting, not muscles or strength or, again, I think something that’s -- that’s very, very common in this issue is -- is a -- is a man domineering over a woman or -- or that -- that woman is weak in any way, shape, or form because she is not physically at the same, I guess, level and God-given way that -- that -- men are created different than women. That that -- that that was a strength in itself. There’s something beautiful in how women being effeminate or being the weaker vessel, sometimes we see that physically, that -- that there is something stronger in many other ways. And -- and to equalize men and women is actually -- it’s foolishness, in my opinion. It’s ignorance, because you’re -- you can’t make something -- it’s just -- it’s just not a very intelligent comparison at all, because they’re beautiful in their own way, so.

All that being saying -- said, is that with -- with the strength that I believe will come to every person will be unique. It won’t be -- it won’t be a blanket statement that, you know, an apology to every single person is going to somehow bring this healing. It’s -- it’s actually specifically to women and it’s specifically to men, it’s specifically to children, and it’s specifically to, I believe, that -- that -- how they see themselves, that -- that defining moment they chose to
be Aboriginal and -- and how they -- they chose to face the world with that, you know, as a broken wing or as soaring like an eagle.

And so -- so I think that that’s ignorance, first and foremost, that people can start to get somewhere with not just pulling themselves up by their bootstraps and -- and trying to push on. I mean, that’s -- that’s -- that’s ignorance too. It’s this idea that -- that I believe, once a family structure is identified as healthy, as proper, as normal, they -- a lot of people don’t like those terminologies, but where human beings, regardless of the colour of their skin or their cultural background or what dysfunctional things may occur in their upbringing, the bottom line is, globally speaking, that every -- every human being on the planet hurts and -- and suffers and -- and experiences joy in overcoming different, you know, aspects of that dysfunction and -- and can -- can all come into agreement with is that there -- there must be a best-case scenario.

We see the worst-case scenario daily. We see the statistics. We see the, you know, MCFD and -- and social structure of foster care, different things being represented very highly, 70 percent or something of -- of children in care are Aboriginal, the jails, such and so forth. And everything we’re trying to do is put a Band-Aid
and solve problems and things that we -- we see as a problem.

But we never, ever focus on the opposite, which is proactive, which is identifying strengths, identifying what is the best-case scenario. You know, what -- where -- where can a person thrive and -- and benefit with that aspect from that perspective of -- of -- of, despite my weaknesses, despite my flaws, despite the dysfunction, I can be strong. I have an identity. Who I am is very important to the world. And -- and -- and therefore, my existence matters.

That right there is the core of -- of everything good that will ever come out of this Inquiry or out of this, I guess, movement or -- or -- or national attention that's given to this issue, is that people have to think they matter. They have to think that they have a spiritual value or -- or a -- or an eternal value. And so, based on my Christian beliefs, I think a lot of people can turn to God or to a benevolent and all-knowing being of -- that can help them, empower them. To have that identity that they do have dignity despite of their sins, despite of their shortcomings and the dysfunction that has occurred in life.

And every person bleeds the same colour. Every person experiences pain and -- and also joy and hope.
And -- and so, all of those things being said, that growing up in a -- in a post-Christian culture, I think that, at one time, there was these values in my mother’s life especially, you know, going to church or being a good person and different things like that, that have dissolved. And -- and I’m not here to preach a sermon, but -- but I do think that that gives you the -- the 70’s and 80’s ideas and -- and concepts around some of the things my mother believed. She was a Christian, she went to church for two years very, very faithfully, and -- and I remember growing up as a -- as a young man that she told me to respect women and to be a gentleman.

And that one thing my mother always said was that, you are the oldest, you are the -- the chosen one. You know, you have to blaze the trail, you have to be an example. You can’t be selfish and do what you want to do. You can’t throw your life away because you are essentially throwing your family away. Your brothers and your sisters look up to you. And at times, it -- it -- it kept me from doing very shameful things and very selfish things, because I knew that I would have to be held accountable to my mother and to my father, to my brothers and sisters. And I remember times being on drugs and -- and looking in the eyes of my little brothers, who were, like, ten years old, you know, and they’re old enough to know, kind of, what’s
going on. And to feel like, is this -- is this who I’m supposed to be?

And I think it’s important to talk about the addictions and the -- the hurts, habits, and hangups or whatever may be, eating disorder or -- or abuse or -- or all of it. I just want to call it the, you know, the negative effects of -- of just navigating this broken, sinful world. I think that’s why we have a broken system, that’s why we have broken institutions that -- that have made this -- this issue worse and not better, is because the answer is not physical. It’s not financial. It’s not something that you can write a cheque for. And as long as people keep identifying this and saying, No, no, no, let’s go back to identity, who are you? You know, who -- who will you be and who are you becoming? Why -- why do you -- why do you want to be here? I think if that suicide will tell the story, and -- and the -- the statistics based around a type of a negative identity or -- or a shameful purpose that -- that people feel they identify with, this is who I am, but I’m embarrassed of it, they choose to end their life because it’s not -- it’s not the life they want to live.

And so all these -- all these questions and these -- these social issues and these spiritual -- spiritual decisions should frame this conversation. Not --
not the political stuff and who’s in office and not what happened in the past. The past is the enemy of the future, in my opinion, and -- and looking to the past to teach us about the future is -- is, you know, is like buying shoes that are too small for you, because it just doesn’t make sense. But -- but to say to yourself, who do I want to be, who -- who do I want First Nations to be, and, you know, in the future, and will I be ashamed to be First Nations ten years from now, 100 years from now? If I’m not ashamed to be First Nations now, then I’d better make sure that I have an input or stand. And I am a warrior and I am strong so that, in 100 years, somebody’s not ashamed of being First Nations.

Then so I think that a lot of this is -- it is very important to -- to face the hurt and to face the -- the shameful part of your identity and your background, the dysfunction. Once that is dealt with and you have the strength to speak openly and publicly and can share what it feels like to be a -- a survivor, you know, ongoing raging battle, and so -- and you’re in the trenches of -- of social opinion and -- and all of these different things, you can -- you can emerge victorious by -- by simply taking the good and the bad and the ugly and -- and embracing that -- that you can still thrive and -- and be healthy and be -- have some self-respect and -- and self-confidence and
dignity on your choices tomorrow and your choices now.

You know, now is more important than the past or the future. Now invents the future. And so living in the now, having dignity now, changing everything that you think about yourself right now is -- is this huge opportunity to -- to change, to grow, to -- to be a -- to choose to be empowered. To be a champion, you know, to -- to, again, be victorious or be a warrior. Because the social -- the social pain, some of the things that have been felt over hundreds of years, are not going to change overnight. They’re not going to get better, a lot of times that we feel in our lifetime.

You’ve maybe seen great, sweeping change, and -- and -- and sometimes you feel that whatever you’ve been through is best forgotten for that reason, that you think, well, it’s insignificant, I’m nobody, I -- I’m never going to be recognized or significantly be given a voice. And I -- and I think that that’s defeating. So when you basically say, you know, right now is the time, today is the day, and, you know, I have just as much of authority as anybody else, you know, and whether you’re a Prime Minister or you’re a -- a -- you know, a -- a judge or a -- a -- you see these institutions as not intimidating anymore, because every person, every person has a voice. Every person, when they -- when they choose to -- to embrace their dignity and
their identity and their story.

And basically, you’ll see a lot of us First Nations people, we’ll make fun of or we’ll try to laugh off very dysfunctional things, because that’s how they’re dealing with their dysfunction and that’s how they’re dealing with their shame and pain. And I think that that’s belittling. Again, this ghettoization of -- of -- I believe the reservations are -- are the ghettoization of First Nations people, living isolated and shoved into a -- a foreign -- maybe a -- a remote place so that they’re not heard and they’re not educated and they’re not, you know, they’re -- they’re -- they’re -- they’re -- they’re given something, but at the same time, it’s -- it’s like hush money, you know? It’s, like, exploitative and it’s -- it’s -- it’s corrupt, you know? It’s -- it’s a -- a broken system throwing money at social issues. It’s not in any way, shape, or form going to bring any kind of hope to the degradation and the -- and the -- the -- the beaten-down, the downtrodden.

Real talk, of the -- the -- the -- the condition of -- of some of the things that are happening in our country, that -- that there were people who came here that were immigrants from all over the world that worked hard and -- and -- and so became, you know, had that dignity and -- and became established in our country and
built the country to what it is. And so just because we were here first doesn’t mean that we have to have the same true grit to -- to get nothing the government hands us, or there are no crutches that are going to bring healing to this -- this issue. This issue is -- is so much deeper.

It’s -- it takes that want to. Got to have the want to -- to get up. You have to have the want to -- to make a change and to be different and to stand out and to have a voice. And so my mother put that into me, or else I wouldn’t be here today. My question is, how many families and people chose not to speak to anybody about what they went through because they could not fathom the pain to verbalize some of the things they’ve been through?

And I think that, if somebody understood how much hurt it takes just to be open, just to be real and just to share your heart and speak some of the things that have happened to every single person, these videotapes and these recordings, and -- and -- they would be worth more than gold, you know? Because they’re so -- they’re so unique, because for every person that tells their story represents thousands that have died and -- and never, ever spoke what they went through or thought they could change anything. And they weren’t insignificant because, you know, I can -- I can speak for them in that.

What is being addressed in this Inquiry, the
story of my mother, is -- it -- it -- I guess, like I said, again, back in the beginning, cries out from the ground. It -- it’s -- it’s a story that needs to be told, and it’s so much more powerful, and again, it’s just an identity, you know, of strength and not weakness because of what you’ve been through and the things that are shameful, you know, are like a -- are like a -- a shadow on what you’re saying. That -- that’s actually not true. Everybody faces pain, everybody goes through things, and -- and regardless of how you deal with it, maybe, differently, everybody who goes through it is empowered by every victim that’s ever gone through something. If you -- if you believe that, then -- then what you’re saying is so important and you have got to find the courage to share.

And so, you know, so if my mother put this into me from birth that I was a trailblazer, that I was the chosen one, and from chores to -- to -- I said I was going to say and talk about the disappearance on the weekend of my mother. I just am really beating around the bush because I don’t think I’m going to do that. I keep going back to the beginning. Anyways, I’ll just stay there, because that’s -- that’s something that I need to build up to, I think.

So when I was -- my mother was pregnant with me when she met my dad, and so -- so my real father, you
know, biological father was -- he -- he’s actually deceased a couple years now. And so at five years old, I found out that my biological dad and my, you know, my -- my dad currently at the time wasn’t my real dad by my -- my stepdad giving me discipline and giving me a spanking. And I was very upset and I was crying and said that I hated him and I slammed the door and I was really throwing a tantrum. And I hurt his feelings, and he said to my mother, you know, that it -- it hurt his feelings, you know, that I was saying I hated him and all this stuff.

And -- and my mom came flying in the room and she set me straight. You know, even at five years old, said he doesn’t have to love you, he doesn’t have to clothe you, doesn’t have to feed you. He chose you to be his son, even though you’re not. And you know, you have to understand that. Anybody can be a father, but it takes a real man to be a dad. And I was like, immediately, immediately turned on a dime, even at five years old, you know, to this responsibility of -- of being a -- a good human being, because, you know, I had an example, and then wrestled with, again, my identity, like why my real father abandoned me, why he wasn’t part of my life.

And so that -- this -- I’m talking about a lot of issues that face First Nations men, so -- and I -- and I think, I don’t know if I stated it at the beginning
of the video, I do believe that there was a be-all to end-all answer to a lot of the social issues in Canada about First Nations or any human being, regardless of the colour of their skin or where they come from, is that there is a best-case scenario of what a family structure was like. And if our country does not value that, whatever is not valued will not be valuable. We will discard what healthy, proper childrearing and family looks like. We’re descending into chaos, and this will be, literally, the end of our country. It’s the end of the world if we start to reidentify what family is, and the government can never be family. The government institutions that exist, foster care and the correctional facilities and -- and the way we deal with human beings like cattle and -- and try to categorize people, can never be family.

And -- and if we -- if we -- if we keep looking to these institutions to solve these social problems, we are going to, again, reap the whirlwind. So I believe that -- that Family Day and, you know, this -- these holidays and different things need to be -- you know, they need to be promoted in such a way that -- that men are able to do things with their family, men are able to be a provider, men are able to be a protector, men are enabled to be that good human being that my dad was to me and made those decisions. And the men who don’t embrace those
responsibilities to the men that don’t see themselves as powerful or don’t have a healthy identity and -- and are selfish and making destructive choices need to understand that they are destroying the country. They are destroying themselves, their families or -- or their exes or their six different kids with six different mothers that they don’t have any responsibility to because they’ll get welfare or they’ll get child tax or they’ll get something, I don’t have to look after my family. You have to understand that you are the murderer, you are the rapist, you are the -- you are the destruction of -- of moral fabric and of every family.

And if you kicked in the door in the middle of the night and butchered somebody with an axe or a chainsaw and you were some horrible person, if you cut somebody’s head off on a bus, a Greyhound, and you were just released back into society as -- as somebody who’d received enough counselling to become a good human being again, that -- that -- that you’re -- we’re trying to tame what’s identified as a monster, what’s identified as wrong, what’s identified as Heaven or Hell or consequences to our action. And a slap on the wrist for these atrocities, you know, you -- they’re -- you run out of places to point your finger, run out of institutions when you can’t blame everything on the government. Can’t blame everything on
your father, who wasn’t there, you know? And you have the opportunity to be a father who is there.

And so how you see yourself and how you feel empowered to finally be the person that stands up and -- and deals with all of Hell is where you camp out at the gates of Hell to make a difference will determine whether or not you go to Hell. I mean, I think a lot of people believe in Hell as a place that’s figurative or -- or, you know, some people see it as literally on Planet Earth, you know? I’m going through Hell. I feel the flames and suffering every day with decisions that I’ve made and things that I’m doing, and it’s not getting better, it’s getting worse. And so if that’s the case, then -- then why don’t you stand up and fight? The -- the only person that you can change, the only person that you can actually make a difference in their lives, and that’s yourself.

And so I -- I think that, at five years old, I decided, hey, you know what, I have somebody that will be my example, will be my provider, my protector, and looks after and loves my mother. You know, as -- as my understanding was at five years old, and life’s very complicated. I chose to trust and I chose to let down my guard and I chose to be moulded by -- I just know that I -- that I subconsciously just yielded to the fact that I was like, you’re my dad, you know. You’re going to be my -- my
whole world, you know?

And I think that, when somebody doesn’t have to, doesn’t mean they can’t ever find that. I mean, that’s why God is called our Father, because regardless of if you had a father -- obviously, there was a physical -- there was a physical transaction that equalled you being able to say that you had a father, even if that person wasn’t your dad and you were raised by your mom or by your grandmother or -- or by your community, whatever you identify as your family, we all have this idea that we can have a Heavenly Father, somebody that -- that cares about us or -- or sees something of worth or dignity in our lives.

And so, regardless if you’re a man or a woman, whether you’re a child, whether you’re a grandparent, whether you are suffering, you know, in the Sixties Scoop or -- or, you know, all of these different atrocities of the past, you can -- you can say that. I am loved and I am important and -- and I do have dignity and -- and I can have self-worth and I can have a -- a -- even if I don’t have a -- a self-confidence, I can have a God confidence. I can have a Creator confidence. I can have this idea that I’m made for a purpose, I’m here for a reason.

And -- and that’s why I’m still talking about family right now, because there’s a lot of lies, in
my opinion, that are being promoted in -- in institutions
like educational facilities that are saying, you know,
there’s this idea of evolution and that we’re all just
animals and -- and we should conduct ourselves as such. If
you don’t want people to murder each other and to, you
know, join a gang because they don’t have a family and, you
know, to be a man of integrity and character and -- and
rear up a family that doesn’t commit crimes and different
things and however you want to get your finger on the pulse
of what’s right and wrong in the country, then you have to,
first and foremost, give them a -- an identity, something
to believe in that is -- places more self-worth on them
than something that was an accident.

I mean, that’s what the Big Bang speaks of
and evolution and different things that are theories, that
are not proven, that are not science. These are all --
these are all ideas. And when I said that at the
beginning, too, that ideas are the most powerful thing in
the world, these ideas are propagated by our government and
by a global government, by a global idea that, if we tear
down family, then the government becomes the family, and if
there’s one government, there’s ultimately global control.
And this is also a Biblical idea. All that being said,
that if -- if we take, as First Nations people, and go back
to where there was never evolution, it was never -- even
though we had respect for creation and we respect a
Creator, evolution and all this garbage is so foreign to
our culture that we -- we should reject that openly at a --
at a -- at a unifying level. Because that is what’s
actually destroying any hope of reconciliation or -- or a
commitment to -- to having a healthy family structure.
Because if we have no worth, then this will get worse.

We have only seen the beginning of history
repeating itself, whether it’s, you know, even -- even, in
comparison, I guess, that any Mao or -- or -- or Stalin or
Communistic, you know, even -- even the fascism and -- and
Germany and -- and World War II and -- and gas camps and --
and what happened to Jewish people. You know, we can go
back farther than that. There has always been -- the worst
possible atrocities you could ever imagine are all based on
the fact that these are not human beings, these are
animals, these are numbers, they’re not -- they’re not
actually spiritually important and individuals that have a
voice.

And so -- so the more we embrace, the more
we embrace, as First Nations people, in -- indeed, this
dysfunction narrative that we are broken, we’re victims, we
need help and we need to be picked up and we need to be
helped up and -- and brushed off and everything, we’re --
we’re -- we’re identifying that narrative. We’re saying
that, like, hey, I’m just another person that needs the government and I need something from somebody else. And as long as we’re looking to somebody else, we will never, ever -- it will get drastically worse, because those people, the saying comes to me, you know, don’t bite the hand that feeds you. Because the hand that feeds you can stop feeding you, and when that happens, we eat each other.

And that’s what’s happening right now, that there are ideas in First Nation culture like being an apple, or you’re, you know, you’re red on the outside, you’re white on the inside. And some of them are benefiting from -- how come a handful of people on the reserve have businesses and -- and are the chief and council and -- and have a good life and their -- their -- their kingdom is in squalor? There are so many broken people that I minister to that are so -- that are so dependent on -- on getting a cheque at a certain time, at a certain place, that are so dependent, they’re codependent on -- on an institution that ultimately hates them and never, ever represented them, never, ever. That tried to exterminate them and now is wearing a different mask and trying to feed them. It’s like, I’m not a dog. I’m not on a chain. I don’t want anybody to -- to feed me.

But I mean, First Nations people will, if they identify it as -- as a, you know, I would be a -- a
wolf, you know, not a -- not a domesticated animal. And so this idea that we are a pack and we are strong and we can more than survive, we can thrive, you know? We can be the -- the -- the -- the king of the jungle, if this is the law of the jungle. If it’s kill or be killed, if it’s the -- the survival of the fittest or whatever narrative that Darwin or evolution or these institutions are feeding us, it’s -- it’s -- all you have to say is, yeah, but I would be the one on top. If that’s the way it is, then I would be the one that is also the most compassionate.

So I’m not going to identify as a victim. I’m not going to identify as somebody that was broken and needs to be fixed. I’ll identify as somebody who is -- they say the winner of a war is the one that creates the narrative, creates what they want history to reflect. I think if First Nations people understand this, then they would stop bickering with people who have no power over them. Why are we asking to be validated? Why are we asking to be healed? Give us more money, that will help us to become, you know, obviously, whatever they want us to be? Because they’re paying us. They’re paying us to be what they want us to be.

And so when you receive payment for something, you know, it’s -- it’s like prostitution. It’s just like constantly feed us more victimization or kind of
scenarios where, if we yield more of our rights, we get more money, and if we, you know, bend over just a little bit more backwards, then we’ll get recognized and we’ll -- that obviously doesn’t make any sense. There should come a point where we say, you know, I am who I am and I’ve been through what I’ve been through and I -- I -- I’ve taken all that I can take, you know, and -- and not have to give more than I have to give. And that -- that is the answer, is to -- to -- is to -- not to receive what is prepackaged, but is to repackage whatever you’ve been through into something that enables you and empowers you.

And at this point, it doesn’t even matter. There are people assuming that doorknob over there is their higher power. You know, they’re just, they -- I don’t have the power myself because I’m an addict and I can’t stop being an addict, so I have to believe in something else to help me overcome my addiction. And it’s like, if the answer lied in us alone, we -- we wouldn’t have any problems. So it’s crazy that there’s a dual nature, that we have to have -- be empowered and have an identity and be strong, but if -- you cannot be strong yourself. That

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** But -- yeah. I was just going to say, sorry, I -- because I’ve -- didn’t want to interrupt. It comes back, I think, to what you were saying
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at the beginning, which was, First Nations are not the ones writing the narrative. It’s -- it’s the non-Indigenous community. It’s the people who are in power that are writing the narrative. And so it’s -- it becomes an opportunity that First Nations need to write the narrative, is what I think I hear you saying.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Absolutely, and I -- and I think the narrative is not written or recorded or -- or -- or, you know, basically implemented in -- in -- in court cases and different things to come out, to give the right or wrong.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You know, recognized, socially accepted end of the story. I think what it is, is the lives that are lived in integrity and the character of the people that fought the battle and were involved and had the courage to tell the story and -- and actually, were the strongest one in their family, were the ones that were the -- the patriarch.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Or the matriarch. You know, somebody had to stand. And I’m coming from a family of very strong women. My grandmother and my mother, you know, went through very horrific things, and -- and I think that I -- I feel embarrassed to tell my story based on what
they faced. They didn’t have the Internet, they didn’t have a cell phone, they didn’t have the conveniences. They didn’t have push-button appliances. You know what I mean? And yet they were the ones being kicked around and abused and had no rights and -- and were, you know, choked off by a system that -- that wanted to -- that wanted to exterminate them, and they had, you know.

And -- and here we are now, saying, you know, I feel discriminated against because I’m not hired for a certain position or I’m not -- you know, which is still, in my opinion, even worse, because it’s a systematic -- it’s like when killing people becomes automated.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Versus when somebody has to do it with their bare hands, you know? And so it’s definitely the same on -- on many levels, but at the same time, it’s like, I’ve never had to sleep on the ground in a cabin in the woods and try to make my, you know ...

MS. KERRIE REAY: Are you speaking about your mom and your grandmother?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: My grandmother, yeah.

So then --

MS. KERRIE REAY: And just for the Commissioners, your family, your mom’s family is from Telegraph Creek in northern British Columbia, so it’s very
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-- the wilderness --

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Well, I -- I think that, yeah, so I want to say that my grandmother came from the Yukon.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, okay.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And originally came from the Yukon, and my mother was the youngest in her siblings, and I have my Uncle [Uncle 1] and my Auntie [Aunt 1], my Auntie [Aunt 2], and my mother, so there’s four of them. That was my immediate family on my mother’s side. I think -- have two different dads, I think.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’mm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And so there seems to be the -- the norm when it comes to a lot of First Nations families, is there’s a lot of, you know, there’s jokes oftentimes -- again, how First Nations people try to hide their shame and their hurt and their pain -- that Father’s Day is the most confusing day on the reserve. These different things, you know. And it’s, like, the same with a lot of minorities, that regardless, if you say, like, Indian time, they’ll say it’s, like, Jamaican time or any other. You know, there’s a lot of excuses for our cultures because we don’t fit in a -- in a European mindset about time and different things like that, that it’s -- it’s shameful, so we have to make a joke about, you know, I’m
late because of this.

Ms. Kerrie Reay: Uh-huh.

Mr. Brent Cletheroe: I come to the point where I say, you know what? If I show up, I show up. If you don’t validate me as important, then it won’t bother you, and if it is important, then you have to wait for me. You need to wait for the Prime Minister. You need to wait for a game. Then you’ll wait for me. I’m important or I’m not, and if I’m not, then life will move on without me.

But if people have an identity where they say, you know what, I’m not punching a clock, I’m a business owner, you know what I mean? I -- I show up when I need to and I do my job to the best of my ability and I have contracts and recurring customers because I’m good at what I do and they don’t mind.

Ms. Kerrie Reay: M’hm.

Mr. Brent Cletheroe: You know? If I come and go as I please, because I do what they’ve asked me to do. And that way, I’m earning my living by having integrity --

Ms. Kerrie Reay: M’hm.

Mr. Brent Cletheroe: -- and being -- and having character about my -- the quality of my -- my job and -- and what I’m -- what I’m offering society.

Ms. Kerrie Reay: M’hm.
MR. BRENT CLEHEROE: But I’m -- I’m important or I’m not, again. So if people don’t see themselves as important in how they interject their gifts and talents and -- and abilities and things that they are here to do? Really, everybody has a role to play and a purpose in their life, getting back to this idea of a God consciousness. Like, hey, you know, I’m important for this reason. Nobody else can be who I am. Nobody else can do what I do. And if you have that identity, then all of a sudden, you’re like, now I have to implement that into my children.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLEHEROE: It’s so awesome that you can pass that on and it becomes a strength. And that’s what heritage should be. Not like, oh, we -- we beat a drum or we do this or that or the other. You know, that identifies us. It’s like, every culture on the planet beats a drum, you know what I mean? And I’m not taking away from that. I’m saying that’s very important and you can pass that on and you can. But if that’s what identifies you, if you forget how to play the song --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Does that come back, though, to your --

MR. BRENT CLEHEROE: -- then you don’t exist.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Does that come back to your comment earlier? I -- I don’t know if we were on the record or not at the time. Talking about how you feel that the reserves have -- have created an isolation, because when I hear you talking now, it -- it sounds more of an urban feel and that it’s about integrating. Is that what I’m hearing you say?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Absolutely. And -- and because I feel that that’s -- this is the scary part, is that would feed into, a lot of times, the way the government would like to railroad the process and to just rip up your roots and -- and try to put you somewhere again, is a raping of the culture and of the -- and so that the heritage and -- and -- and everybody. So that’s why this is such a slow process. Nobody wants to be uprooted or torn out. But at the same time, it’s like our identity can’t be reservations.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: That’s so funny. That’s like saying that our, you know, we’re going to be stuck in this room for the rest of our lives.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And this is ours and we -- and this is great, you know? This is our carpet, this is our table.
MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And you know, you’re my friends and we -- we -- we’re prisoners. You know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: If this was your existence, there is not a window in this room. Your -- your life is very sad, but it’s yours and it’s -- it’s amazing, you know, and it’s -- it’s everything, and then, you know, it’s decrepit. It -- it -- if -- I’ve been on many reserves where there’s -- it’s in shambles. It’s -- it’s -- it’s very dilapidated. And yet they’re -- they’re -- but this is our, you know --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- this is who we are. We’re this people and this -- our name is on the band office and we’re, you know, even though there’s, like, molestation and alcoholism and drug addiction and -- and -- and as far as you can see, broken vehicles on front lawns and garbage piled up everywhere, you know? But, like, I’m the king of this garbage heap, you know, is -- is this identity. That -- it’s not healthy. That’s not normal and that’s not who we are.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: It’s like when -- when white people drive down the highway and look at the
mountains and say, look at that, you know, that’s amazing.
You know, it’s like, that’s mine. That’s mine.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** That’s my backyard.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** That’s mine, you know?
And it always has been, always will be.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And -- and if this
highway overgrows with weeds and the cracks come through,
and life always will undo what man does, you know? Every
law and every RCMP officer that -- that has authority over
any First Nations person, when they look to the mountain,
they -- they -- they don’t recognize that authority. And
there are men in government that wring their hands because
we just will not recognize that they’re God’s gift to
control us and to -- to push us around or tell us what to
do.

I hold different licenses, which I think are
taxes in disguise, you know, and they’re constantly -- from
trying to tax us for the air that we breathe, this carbon
tax lie of -- of global warming and all this garbage, it’s
just, like, constantly, they’re coming at you with more
rules to tell you how to live your life. It doesn’t matter
what colour your skin is to realize that, you know, mankind
is -- it will ultimately always be free unless we give up
our freedom. And I don’t -- and as First Nations people, I
-- I think we are a symbol of freedom.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: There -- as much as I see in the United States and in -- in Canada and the -- the manifest destiny that was given by -- by, you know, obviously allowing, just like every human being has a free will and God doesn’t control everybody, you can do whatever you want.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You can commit murder, you can do something good for humanity, you can do whatever you want. You will ultimately be held accountable for your actions, you know, in eternity, and -- and whether it’s going to jail for whatever you’ve done, there’s consequences to our actions. It’s the same thing with God allowing people in history to dominate, you know, and -- and to control different times of history who was the king of the heap, again, like I said.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: This idea that there’s different governments and -- and -- and you know, that’s why this -- this reconciliation stuff is actually foolishness. That says, oh, we’re going to go back and make right everything that was wrong. Well, where do you start? The Garden of Eden? And where -- where do you go
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back? It becomes -- it becomes foolishness again. It’s a -- it’s a fool’s errand, you know what I mean? It’s like, so people have to understand. It’s like, wait a second, the only thing we can change is now and what we can change right now is how, you know, we -- we integrate. And so if we have power over that, if we have power over that and we say to ourselves, okay, what would -- what would my palace look like? What would my -- what would my subjects, you know, which is maybe your little family, this idea that you’re the king of the castle, you know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And your wife is the queen, and, you know, my children are -- are a -- a princess and a prince, you know? They’re important. My dad -- I -- I grew up in, and I think this will help a lot of people, I grew up with a dad that says, you know, when you’re -- my nickname was Big Lips. You know? My -- my family has larger lips. They’re (indiscernible) and they’re from Telegraph Creek and from the Yukon, and a lot of people in my family have -- have big lips. Which is actually, you know, kind of a -- a good thing. I found out later in life that, you know, you know, there’s a lot of, I guess, it is -- is sought after. People actually use, like, collagen and stuff, and they, like, you know, they want big lips.
MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: So -- so -- so something that was, but in my home, it was, like, shameful. You know, ugly, thinking of big lips. And so -- so I was saying to my -- my sister [Sister 1], she was very dark, and so my dad called her [Sister’s nickname 1], you know, or -- or [Sister’s nickname 2] or something, and so.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Was your dad First Nations?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Your --

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- the dad that raised you?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Yeah.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: I -- I want to get there. You know, I love him and -- and I respect him and -- and I want to honour him, and there has to be, I guess, a progression of -- of how I tell the story that --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- builds all these different characters as they walk onto the stage for the finality or what happened in my mother’s life, so. But -- but with being, I remember, like, being in high school and
-- and doing, in grade 8, like, a hundred-yard dash, and then my dad was across the field in an apartment, drinking a beer with my -- my cousin. That was his apartment and they were there, you know, kind of rooting me on from afar. And -- and there was dead silence before the starting pistol went off, you know, and my dad could be heard across the field saying, go, Big Lips! You know?

Fired the starting pistol, we all run, you know, and I’m, like, third or fourth or something and I’m there holding my knees and I’m breathing hard and -- and these guys around me saying, what did that guy say? You know, Big Lips or something? You know, and I’m just, like, ashamed and horrified.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Oh.

**MR. BRENT CLEFTHEROE:** You know, my dad was always joking and giving me a hard time, but -- but one thing my wife said to me when my daughter was young, well, she said, like, why do you have to call her, you know, stinker or -- or, you know, why do you have to call her? I was always, like, come here, you -- you little bozo, or something, like, you stinker or you -- you know? And -- and she was like, you know, why can’t you call her princess? Why can’t you call her, you know, something good? And it really hit me then that I was like, you know what, there’s something so wrong with how people in our
culture raise their kids and how they see each other, and
you know, a lot of times, I’ve heard people call their
kids, like, you know, come here, you little S-H-I-T. You
know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And it’s just like,
that’s the future. That’s the most important thing that
you will ever handle. It’s the most valuable asset, our
future, and -- and you -- you see it as nothing. As -- as
worse than nothing. And so I was like, wow. If that
doesn’t change, there’s nothing, there is no hope. And so
-- so how do we do that?

And I think there’s a lot of, like, youth
programs and different things that we try to promote about,
like, it’s so sad that it’s like, well, we have to write
off the Elders because they’re done, you know? When --
when they’re the most important part of everything else.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: In First Nations
culture, we look to the Elders, you know? But this whole
reconciliation and making a change is like, by the time
that the implement ever comes into power or changes
anything, they’re going to be dead. And it’s like -- so
it’s -- it’s, again, a fool’s errand, where we’re always
like, well, if we write off these ones, we’ll save these
ones. That’s like saying, if I cut off one arm, I’ll still have another arm.

And we’re -- the only answer from the institutions, the only answer from social -- the social construct of -- of whatever people is it that the -- the -- you know, they -- it’s -- they -- they always say, like, you know what they say. Well, who is they? You know, why -- who is -- who is steering this -- this -- this country? Who’s steering the ship, you know? Is -- is the social narrative, the social opinion, right, on any given day.

**MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.**

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You can -- it’s like the changing of the weather, the changing of people’s opinions. And so you can’t build a life on -- on social opinions. And that’s why. That’s why racism isn’t powerful. That’s why. This stuff is -- doesn’t really exist. These are ideas that you either embrace or reject. And so when you reject them and you say, it doesn’t matter what anybody says ...**

When I was growing up, my nickname was -- I upgraded from Big Lips to -- to Bad News. You know? That’s what my family said. You know, I’d show up with the police and -- and I broke windows or got in trouble stealing or something, and all my uncles and my aunties would call me Bad News, you know. That’s -- you got kicked
of school today, Bad News, what happened? You know. And so -- and -- and I went from Bad News to preaching the Good News, you know. God changed my name, changed my identity, changed everything about me.

And so early in my life, I realized that -- I remember in the backyard one time, it was, like, a back alley, actually, there was a man that came out, and -- and I was shooting a -- a slingshot, just kind of randomly, and -- and I guess you -- you get a -- you get a little boy with a slingshot in the backyard, you know, he’s obviously committing a crime, he’s doing something wrong. And regardless, I think little boys, regardless of the colour of their skin, can cause a lot of problems with a slingshot, so. But he came out and said, hey, you little wagon-burner, like, get off of my property. Like, get out of here.

And I -- I was like, you know, I’m going to tell my dad to punch you out, you know? My dad beats people up all the time. That’s part of my life. I see violence all the time and my dad will beat you up, you know? Because I don’t like the way you’re treating me. And I went home. I was a young’un, six years old, maybe seven. I told my dad. I said -- I said, well, what’s a wagon-burner? My dad was just enraged, you know? He was enraged. Who the, you know, F told you that? And I told
him, over here. You know, and he went over there and dealt
with this guy. I don’t know what happened, whether he even
got -- the guy probably left or something, but.

He had to -- he had to sit down and explain
to me what a wagon-burner is and tell me, you know, it’s
cowboys and Indians and stuff and it’s not, you know, it’s
-- it’s derogatory. It’s -- it’s actually a -- it’s a
racist term, you know? It’s -- don’t ever let somebody
call you that. Those are fighting words, you know? And
that was always the kind -- my mom and dad would say, you
know, those are fighting words. If somebody -- somebody
tries to frame you into being a victim, those are fighting
words. You don’t receive that.

And at the same time, I was always the
champion of the broken and of the hurting. My mother would
always say, you never -- you never treat somebody, you know
what I mean, that’s different or everyone picks on, you --
you protect those people. You have to be -- and so there
was the -- it’s -- it’s -- as much as there was dysfunction
and problems and all that, there was so many beautiful,
beautiful ideas and things and concepts that were talked,
you know, into me to -- to -- the underdog. You know, my
mom always said, you always fight for the underdog, you
know? And I think that that’s really, in this generation,
my responsibility. I think it’s why I became a preacher.
You know, essentially, God called me from my mother’s womb
to be a hero, a hero and a champion, to stand up in this
generation and help people that are vulnerable and
different things. And the only way you can do that is if
you don’t see yourself as vulnerable.

But at the same time, you -- you don’t --
you don’t shirk back or be afraid. Part of the courage of
-- of not being vulnerable or being strong for somebody
else is allowing yourself to be vulnerable at different
times. And it’s -- it’s very -- it’s a very, very -- it’s
a paradox. It’s very, very confusing that that person who
is very strong in one sense, that is a protector of others,
has to be very vulnerable and -- and have an underbelly and
-- and show it and humble themselves at times, because it
takes a bigger man to walk away from a fight than it does
just to fight everybody. Because if you fight everybody,
you -- you’ll never win. Or you --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Or the courage to come
here.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Yeah. You’ve got to
pick your battles.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And so I think that --
that what’s amazing is -- is so, you know, when I found out
that my dad chose to be my dad and the difference between a
father and a dad, I think that’s important to this whole conversation, because the government’s not my dad. And I think, until -- until that gets told, you know, until it’s like, your mother is not your dad. Like, yeah, well, you know, that’s offensive to me because my mother raised me and she was so strong and all this stuff. Yeah, but she wasn’t your dad, and until you acknowledge that, you’re going to be looking for a dad. And that’s more dangerous than acknowledging the fact that you’ve never had a dad.

And so a lot of people are very -- they’re, like, they’re taking their identity from pop culture. They’re taking their identity from the government. They’re taking their identity from their reserve or from their tribe or from their feathers and their drum and their whatever, but it’s like, that’s important to somebody else and somebody else told you that was your identity and you received that as your identity. But you still have the same problems you had before you chose that identity.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLEThEROE: And now you’re looking for a new identity. And I see -- I -- I -- what I love, and it’s a great example, and First Nations people should really wise up to this and see this, is you see people who love First Nations culture and they’re -- and they’re Caucasian.
MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLEThEROE: They’re European. And they’re there and they’ll -- you could pretty much get them to walk off a bridge. They’ll do anything to be a part of the powwow and they want to wear the, you know, the -- the regalia. They want to be involved. They -- they love it because they see -- they see the freedom that being Aboriginal represents, and -- and -- and they don’t, you know, and I think they do want to make a difference and they want to change the -- the circumstances. But listen to this. As much as they would shed their identity as Caucasian people and say, you know, I’m German and I’m Russian and I respect that, but I love First Nations culture, you know, they, they -- it’s like Chinese food is not really Chinese food, you know? It’s this North American version of Chinese food.

You know, it’s a -- regardless of what you choose for your identity to be, you’ve got to be very careful about what you release, because you can’t -- unless you release something, you can’t pick something else up. So in one sense, if you’re going to a regalia and -- and you want to be Aboriginal, you want to join the powwow, you want to be involved as a -- as a Caucasian person, you know, you -- you are, in some way, shape, or form, putting down what you already are. And that -- and -- and again,
it -- it’s, like, what releases us from this confusing back-and-forth of what’s more important is saying, I am what I am.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** At any given moment, again, the power. Being empowered by the now. Being like, no, I -- I don’t feel ashamed to -- to not play a drum as a -- as -- as a -- I don’t -- if -- if I’m a First Nations person and I don’t choose to be traditional, that’s not shameful. And if I choose to be very traditional and I choose to -- to make up my culture as I go because this is what I think it was and -- and that’s not shameful either. Because people are like, I really don’t know the songs. I really don’t know the colour of the regalia. I really don’t know, but I -- I’m -- I’m picking this up in the now. This is what I want it to be. This is who I want to be. That’s great.

And so -- so at the end of the day, if you are living a lie, if you don’t believe in your identity when push comes to shove, then you need to go back to the drawing board of this idea of who your father is. Because your father -- your father is your identity. That will never, ever be different. That will never, ever change. That is an eternal concept of all humanity, that your father is who you are.
And if that -- if that is not the
-- not the conversation that’s in the mainstream, it’s --
it’s shied away from, it’s not talked about, what will
happen is people will -- they’ll have a myriad of different
masks they wear and different identities that they want to
choose at any given different time. This is what masks
abuse. This is what masks -- if you want to know why a man
would choke a person that he claims to be his wife and --
and beat her and to -- to abuse his children and to be a
monster, it’s because he doesn’t have a father. He doesn’t
have somebody that can spank him or be authority in his
life that -- he would never act like that if he had a
father. Because his father would punish him, his father
would be an authority in his life.

Somebody who -- who acts selfishly and
steals and has no honour, and -- even among thieves, even
on the most basic level of criminal activity in Canada. I
-- I used to steal and I used to hurt people. I was
involved with drugs and I was involved with -- with fist-
fighting and identifying as the -- I was strong because I
could hurt people. That’s why I was strong. And -- and I
just realized, well, wait a second. How come I’m over here
trying to be the best dad or, sorry, the best big brother I
could be?

There was a conscience. I did have a God-
given conscience that God told me, you know, that -- that I
was wrong. I felt -- I felt wrong. I didn’t feel like I
could look at my brothers again, being high on drugs,
saying, you know. I didn’t feel strong. I didn’t have a
good feeling in my stomach. I was ashamed to be who I was,
and I -- and so I had to recognize that. If you feel that
way, stop trying to make that identity strong. It’s not
strong. It’s wrong. It doesn’t work, it never will. And
-- and if we keep telling victims that their victimization
and all their problems is -- is they -- they’re -- they’re
strong in that or they can stay where they are and it will
change their outcome or the result of their future, then
we’re lying to them.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Because if they do not
radically change their identity, even at -- and this is why
I said it’s the most important part, no matter how hurt you
are or how much you’ve been abused and that, what’s going
on in your life, that doesn’t identify you. That doesn’t
-- that’s not your identity. Just because you -- just
because you, you know, just because you’ve done things that
are wrong doesn’t mean that you are wrong as a person. And
that’s what I’m trying to say, is -- is just because you, I
think, have been hurt, that doesn’t make you a victim, you
know what I mean?
And -- and you -- you choose to hurt people, hurt people. So if you are accountable to your actions, you say, I’m hurting this person because I’m hurt, that means, you know, I’m the problem. I’m the problem. So we go back to this idea that my identity or why I’m doing this or what -- what am I getting out of this, what is the -- the soul search, you know? And then basically go right back to the beginning and say, well, who is my father? Who is my father? You know, is he Darth Vader? You know? “Luke, I’m your father.” “No,” you know?

My father climbed in the window of my mom’s house and -- and, you know, fornicated with my mom and had no -- no emotional connection to me at all, you know? And so does that mean that I’m worthless? So that -- that’s where these people are, is they’re like so many people and, like, I hurt people because I was hurt. I’m not a -- I’m not a soul, I’m not a -- I’m an animal, you know? I’m not -- there’s no accountability. There’s no -- nobody’s going to give you a spanking. Nobody is. You can put me in jail for the rest of my life, you can’t change. It’s like saying that you can take the Indian out of the bush, you can’t take the bush out of the Indian. It’s like you can take the dysfunction out of their life, that doesn’t mean it hasn’t scarred this generation.

So how do we end dysfunction, have victory?
Statement - Public
Brent Cletheroe
(Shirley Cletheroe)

How do this dysfunction -- do we overcome? How do we identify with the proper, healthy family structure that is the platform to build on? Because right now, we’re in sinking sand. Everything we’re building on, it’s just -- it’s not -- it’s not really getting us anywhere, because as fast as we build it, it’s falling down, and I think that that’s what social programs do. It’s like, hey, we’ve got a youth centre. There’s never been a youth centre in this town. Right on. What did the youth centre do for us? Nothing. That’s where they sold drugs and, you know, that’s where -- that’s where we played pool and that’s where we, you know. There was nobody there that we -- divinely inspired us to change our lives and be something different.

So -- so all that -- that I’m saying is, if we constantly create these safe spaces or youth centres or youth programs or whatever, if that -- if that youth coordinator is in the bar when you get there, then what is the point? What is the point in having a youth program on your reserve if the person who runs the youth program is a stinking predator, you know? It’s like, who is your father? Who is the leader? Who -- who’s in charge? And if we start celebrating First Nations women, we’re going to understand that they will never be a father. They cannot be a father. And even though they are the fabric, there
wouldn’t even be First Nations people without mothers, they
are the origin of life, and so -- so -- you cannot be one
or the other.

And this is the problem with gender
confusion and all of this stuff that’s being promoted as
choosing whatever you fluidly feel like any given time, is
again, the nail in the coffin. It’s just erasing
identities and causing confusion. And the deeper we go
into pleasing people or trying to put, you know, A-B-C 1-2-
3 or whatever we identify you to here in this -- this whole
Inquiry, whatever, God, you know, validates that human
being. They’re -- they’re important. That person,
regardless of what they identify with.

I’m not judging anybody. You can do and be
whatever you want to be, whether it’s a murderer, whether
it’s a, you know, and how you see yourself. If you can --
if you can live in that lifestyle and it doesn’t cause you
to commit suicide, if you can live in that lifestyle and
you can hold your head up high and -- and not force
everyone else to validate why you’ve chosen to live that
lifestyle, then -- then obviously, all the power to you,
right? Each to their own. But -- but if you’re constantly
looking to be propped up because your identity is -- is
defective, it’s -- it’s not healthy, it’s destructive, then
-- then you need to look and do that soul-searching again
on what you’re -- what you’re doing with your life. What are you doing with yourself?

So all that being said, is -- is I would love this to be framed. I think this is what I’m saying, in a nutshell, before I continue on with my mom’s story, and I’ll just get to what is obviously going to break my heart. It’s hard for me to talk about, is -- is that I would say that if there was a title, if there was a purpose to what I’m saying, it -- it’s, who is your father? Who is your father? At the youth centre, you know, who is your father? And when you sit down with your grandmother and your mother, who is your father? You know, when you sit down with your friends in your apartment, right, who is your father? Nobody here is your father, you know?

Everywhere that -- that men look for a father, that women look for a father, they will find their identity. As dark as it is, as dysfunctional as it is, if you can say, I never knew my father and I need a father, then you’re on the path to choosing your destiny and your identity. And until you identify the false fathers, that’s it right there in a nutshell. Because you look at all these chiefs and -- and grand First Nations that we look to as -- as strong leaders in the past and even now and into our future, you know, the First Nations chiefs, being men or female, you know, regardless.
Again, this is, though, becomes a political position. We take away from this idea about who our father is, and -- and we see, like, even in the United States and how they were formed and how the First Nations interacted, you know? A very toxic relationship there that bled into Canada and everything else, I believe. They said, you know, the -- the white father. You know, the President, you know, the white father. You know, the -- that -- that who is your leader is your father. And so what I’m saying is, I think Justin Trudeau is not my father, you know? And -- and regardless of -- of what the government institution is that’s involved. And if you’re in a prison, the warden is not your father, you know? Who is your father?

It’s just this haunting question, and if everyone will face it, and I think, like, literally, if they were, like, you want to roll out? You want to roll out a propaganda, you know, propaganda campaign to help anybody on the planet? If you want to label it First Nations or -- or women or -- or missing and murdered Indigenous groups or, you know, men, or women, just roll out a big banner that says, who is your father? And who -- and how -- who is not your father, you know? The government doesn’t have to put food on my back, clothes on my table to protect me. You know? Anybody can be a father, but a real man is your dad. He’s your dad. He
loves you. He -- he’s going to help you.

And -- and if we -- if we’ve got to stop
looking at these false fathers, social programs and -- and
welfare and foster care and, you know, handouts and -- and
you know ...

MS. KERRIE REAY: What else? What else?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: I’ll share -- I’ll
share this and then I’m going to -- I’m going to man up,
tell my story. So -- so I was a youth coordinator for the
[First Nation 1], which is a phenomenal -- I think that
every -- every reserve has their problems, but this reserve
is very honourable and I would say that they are wonderful
in what they’ve accomplished and -- and what hand they’ve
been dealt and what they’ve been doing.

In Fort St. John, I grew up there, born and
raised, I eventually became a youth pastor, and I was asked
to become the -- the youth coordinator on the [First Nation
1]. And -- and I think they just created a -- a program so
they could get some money from the trust and then they
dissolved that program so they could do whatever they
wanted with the money, and I think that’s a very common
process in -- in a lot of the First Nations communities and
should be flagged. It should be identified.

And again, because it’s a misappropriation
of funds and I think that is the -- the nail in the coffin
of the whole conversation about how First Nations are being
dealt with by the government. That is obviously their plan
from the beginning. The government says, you know, show me
your leader, and it’s like, we don’t have a leader.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** What was the name of the
First Nation?

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** [First Nation 1],
yeah.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** [First Nation 1].

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And again, I’m not --
I’m not -- it’s not a -- a negative thing, but again, I
think it’s just a mismanagement. You know, there are some
issues at the top, not just with this reserve but with
every reserve in Canada. The reserve system in general is
completely broken and they just keep -- it’s hush money.
They just keep paying and paying and paying and trying to
have these settlements and -- and now shut up and --

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Keep going. Keep going.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** Okay. Because I think
it’s challenging that -- that we -- anybody who pays you
owns you, essentially. And if you don’t understand that,
then you obviously have never bought anything at the store
or you’ve never purchased, you know, clothing or whatever.
That person works for you. The customer’s always right,
you know, this idea that, if you’re a business owner, you
know the customer is not always right. At the end of the
day, it’s the bottom line. It’s --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- whether you make a profit. It’s whether -- there is some real straight truth. That’s why I said, I don’t care about your truth or what you think is the truth. And I -- and I understand that’s a way to -- to change it from being a statement or something very cold and -- and -- and sterile, but -- but the truth is, the bottom line is, either you make a profit or you don’t make a profit. Either your business goes under or it’s successful, or either your government, you know, is -- is lynched or it -- or it serves the people. Okay?

So -- so there are some absolute truths that -- that I need to keep propping up, because for some reason, this is, like, the ignorance of this generation, that people don’t understand common sense and just the general purpose of, like, why is everybody against the father? You know, why is everyone against the -- the -- this idea of manhood and -- and being powerful or aggressive or, you know, where mansplaining is like this evil thing. It’s like, no, somebody has to be in charge. Somebody has to be the boss. And if we get that mixed up, you know, if you tell an RCMP officer that you’re the boss, you’re going to find yourself in handcuffs. You’re going
to find yourself in jail. You’re going to find out who’s
the boss. And it’s the same thing in the -- in all these
situations, is if -- if women want to be the boss or if
homosexuals want to be the boss or if somebody -- somebody
tries to supersede the father, supersede that -- that
authority, that final authority, what they find is very
harsh truths about life.

So -- so, like, if you have a -- I have a
cousin, his name is -- I won’t use his real name, I guess.
He -- he -- he -- he was raised by my grandmother. And he
would always say something offensive or he would kick you
or he would do something and then he would run behind his
grandmother because he, you know, you could never -- he was
spoiled rotten, you know. And his dad was an alcoholic who
died an alcoholic and his mother was -- left him very
young, and -- and so he was left to his grandmother. And
the sad thing is, is that the kids that she raised, she
raised their kids as well. And so this is something that’s
very common in a First Nations community and a lot of
communities. It’s just dysfunctional, you know, and it so
-- so happened that my grandmother was the father. My
grandmother is the authority, my grandmother is the boss,
you know, whatever.

And so my -- my cousin hides behind my
grandmother, and I said, We’ll get you later. This --
we’ll line you up when she’s not around and then we’ll beat you for every single time that you went behind your grandmother, because -- because we’re the authority. You know what I mean? We are the aggressive male -- we are the role model. We have to teach you that. And it’s teaching them dysfunctionally, teaching them the wrong way. And so, because we didn’t know, and so the thing was is, I was in an abusive home, so it was like, I got beat, so then I would beat my sisters and my brothers. If they didn’t listen to me, then I would beat them. And whoever had the biggest stick is the winner.

And we think that this is very, oh, this is very -- this is terrible. This -- the -- you know, that makes you a terrible human being. It’s like, no, whoever has the most nuclear, you know, firearm -- or whoever has the nuclear firepower is the -- is the world authority. Whoever has the biggest stick is in charge. That’s who is the father. And that is what is -- is -- is absolute truth, that there’s a pecking order. There is a -- a natural way that humanity operates, and the animal kingdom and in -- in -- you know. And -- and that’s not the right way. I mean, obviously, violence and abuse are not the right way. But a reverence and respect.

I wish -- I wish that I had a father that said, don’t -- don’t make me discipline you, and loved me
more. You know, this -- this, you know, spanking your
children is taboo, you know. It’s this idea that it’s like
-- my kids, I -- if I have to spank them, I’ve got to spank
them, but I do everything in my power not to ever come to
that point. So our father is very merciful, you know?
That’s what you want, a merciful father. But -- but
there’s this vicious judgment that comes with a lash or the
belt and all this. Abusive. Maybe you got -- maybe you
got disciplined with a tire iron. I don’t know.

That’s -- that’s what we see now, is this --
this depiction of a father, because nobody has a father.
Nobody has had a good father for so long, nobody knows what
a father is anymore. And I think that, when we understand
that the powerful men that abuse are a powerful, you know,
influence and they’re trying to -- they’re abusing it for
their own purpose and they’re selfish and they’re sleeping
around and just trying to sexually gratify themselves and
then the kids are the after result, it’s not their
responsibility, you know?

And the women are left to be the strong ones
and they have to be the grandma and they have to be the --
the woman that feeds every kid in the neighbourhood and
every -- you know, all that kind of stuff. That’s the --
that’s not to be celebrated. That is -- that is
derogatory. That is detrimental. That is -- it’s
beautiful in that at least they had somebody, you know what I mean? And -- and that I understand, but we -- we’re almost at the stage now, we’re so abused and -- and so used to the cycle, we’re like, man, my mother was a strong person and she was a -- but she shouldn’t have been. And if we don’t -- if we don’t start there, it’s amazing, again, don’t cut your hand off to -- to try to save your arm. It’s like, no, where are the fathers? Let’s -- let’s get back to this place where, you know.

I identified with my dad being -- disciplining me as something I needed, and I hated it. Every day, I think, when you’re a kid, you don’t understand. That’s why the immaturity of people don’t understand. Like, by -- if I -- if I made the comment that, like, your life is dysfunctional if you don’t have a father, that’s very offensive. Especially this generation. And people would -- would spit in my face and be very angry with me if I said that, but they don’t know the value of a father because they don’t have one. If I told somebody, like, can you imagine how wonderful it would be if we didn’t have a government and we did whatever we wanted to do and we could -- there’s no taxes and no -- you know? No, you don’t know that, because you’re institutionally -- you know, you’ve never --

MS. KERRIE REAY: My life.
MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- you’ve never

known --

MS. KERRIE REAY: No. You can’t know that.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- life without a
government. So -- so again, it’s like saying that, you
know, oh, I’m free because I’m First Nations and -- and
tipis and all this kind of stuff, and I said, wait.
Saying, the biggest argument or the biggest slap in the
face from -- from 90 percent of Canada to First Nations is,
like, you don’t live in tipis anymore, you need to
integrate, you need to wake up. You need to -- you need to
grow up. You need to integrate and you need to -- you need
to, you know, man up. And so the men that are First
Nations, they are the answer, and if we protect our women
and celebrate our women and -- and the origin of life and
the beginning of -- of everything that -- that is the
fabric that actually -- think about this. Think about
this.

It’s easy for a man to leave a family. But
the nurturing aspect that -- naturally to a woman, that she
just has to raise her kids and everybody else’s kids, it’s
so natural, is actually the strength that kept us where
they are. You know, because the men have dropped the ball.
The men are gone. The men have been very cowardly and
sacrificed what’s most valuable. Again, back to saying,
come here, you little S-H-I-T, you know. Stinker, you know. [Sister’s nickname], Big Lips. There’s no -- there’s no -- but -- but I think that identity, knowing who your father is, saying, hey, I’m going to be a good father, you know?

And then a woman has to say, I’m not a father, I need to find a father. And if I -- and then I -- I don’t even mean husband. I don’t even mean that you have to have, you know, this significant other that -- that fulfills you and -- and whatever. I’m saying that, like, if my -- if my son doesn’t have a father, who is his father? I’m going to be his father. You’ve lost your son because you can never be a father. That’s like saying, you know, if you -- if you change -- if you change water for oxygen, you know, you’re going to drown. You know what I mean? You can’t -- you can’t change two things that are completely different. And if women keep trying to be a father, then they keep bearing sons that don’t know anything about being a father. They can’t be a father.

So we’re -- it’s generational. And -- and so it’s slapping -- slapping you in the face, obvious. So what should a -- what should a woman do in a situation where you have a child and there is no father? You know, and there’s no dad? There is a father, but he’s not being a dad. Because you have to have a dad, whether it’s an
older brother, whether it’s a -- a program, somebody who, in the community, you can look to that has character and integrity, you know? That’s why -- that’s why electing corrupt leaders is so bad, it’s so negative. It’s -- it’s the end of the world. If a chief is stealing money from the reserve and he drives the nicest truck on the reserve, that man is evil. That man is -- is the false father, because every little boy on that reserve is looking up to him and he doesn’t care if they live or die.

MS. KERRIE REAY: So can I ask a question? When you speak of children needing fathers and dads and you’re speaking about a generation, your generation and future generations, those fathers that are not there, do you see a connection to that -- to the residential school system, where -- where children were taken from families and then come back out into the world as adults with having had no love and having had no guidance from their father?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: That --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Do you -- do you see that? When you talk about intergeneration, do you see that as part of the reasoning behind men not being able to be fathers?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: I have to -- I have to be careful with this, because again, every -- every situation is unique.
Ms. Kerrie Reay: M’hm.

Mr. Brent Cletheroe: Every -- it’s like a diamond or a snowflake.

Ms. Kerrie Reay: M’hm.

Mr. Brent Cletheroe: Every -- every person is very unique and -- and intricate and you can’t just smash them all by saying one blanket statement. That -- the government loves to do that. That’s what we -- we wish we could do, is just broad-stroke an issue and then go to bed and say, we’ve changed the world, you know, everything’s fine.

Ms. Kerrie Reay: Okay.

Mr. Brent Cletheroe: But I would say that -- that going to prison or going to a residential school gives you the same result, with somebody who’s re-injected into society that -- that missed the last ten years or five years as their life came to a pause. And so it’s the same thing with addictions, you know?

Ms. Kerrie Reay: M’hm.

Mr. Brent Cletheroe: Addictions is like a prison in your mind, and -- and they -- you’re -- you’re still 15, and you’re 55. You know, we see elderly people who are --

Ms. Kerrie Reay: M’hm.

Mr. Brent Cletheroe: -- still trying to
party. They’re just -- they’re -- they’re still -- they’re stuck in, you know, a prison of their mind. And so if you -- if you dump people from one -- from one extreme to the next, they -- society can be a prison. You know what I mean?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: It’s like, whatever -- whatever, again, those social norms and the social narrative or what everyone has agreed, everyone’s voted upon, this is popular. You know, this -- this is the hit song, this is the whatever. All of that stuff is -- is marching and -- and hurting people, right? Again, this is, like, sociopolitical understanding that, how do you control people? As a government, that’s what they’re trying to do, right?

This whole thing is about -- not -- not about reconciliation. I -- I don’t really believe that the white father, whoever is the Prime Minister, whoever is in charge really cares about my story. I -- I don’t believe that. I believe that it’s like, hey, we’ve got to do something about this, because it’s -- it’s a -- this is a, what do you call it, a smear campaign, you know? I think they’re just saying, like, this makes us look bad. How do we -- how do we deal with this now? I mean, how do we come out -- how do we come out smelling like roses after --
after this?

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** And -- and you’re talking about the government with this Inquiry?

**MR. BRENT CLEOTHEROE:** The government, yeah. Because -- because the residential schools, of course, is government, okay? And unfortunately, it’s Catholicism. And this is important for me to say this, and I would go to the grave saying this, and -- and it’s very important to me, as -- as much as the statement, who is the father, right, would be the -- the -- probably everything I’m talking about would be affected by that statement or -- or titled by that statement. I would say that Catholicism is not Christianity, and until people understand that, that the origin of Catholicism is actually paganism and it’s actually worship of idols and it’s actually never been Christian.

One of the -- one of the slickest tricks that the devil has pulled in -- in the last, you know, whatever, 100 years of our country is -- is why would the government merge with a religious group? You know what I mean? That was supposedly going to do good things and -- and going to -- no. I -- I think, just as much as -- as anything like -- like we’re talking about, who is the father? The Pope is not the father.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.
MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Yet they refer to themselves, that -- that’s what priests refer to themselves as. Father this, father that. And the reason why there is child abuse and molestation and things and it’s coming to light, it’s been -- everybody’s known it for hundreds of years with this organization, is that because there is no marriage, there’s no family. The leader who is the father is -- is -- he’s childless, he’s barren. He’s a false father. He’s everybody’s daddy, but he doesn’t meet their needs.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: He doesn’t love nobody. And so you have these people who are -- got this disgusting view of the world and -- and how they have institutionalized people’s birth to their death, how they should be controlled, and the robes that they wear and the lanterns they swing and the smoke of the incense, that’s blinding. A lot of people have said that’s when First Nations began to -- to smudge, is when they used to smudge for body odours in their home. They just -- it was a common-sense thing to do, is to burn something to -- to make your house smell better. But it became a religious thing when they saw the Europeans using it in such a pagan fashion, which is not, you know, any more -- if you study the Bible, the Christian, you know, practise.
It's -- is that, again, back to this false father, it's like there's one guy in the Vatican there who's in charge of everybody, and he's the -- the be-all and the end-all and he's the -- he's the final say, but you know, the -- the truth is that that's the same thing as, like, a Prime Minister. Everybody else is supposed to be the answer, the be-all-end-all to all these problems. It -- it just can't happen that way. And what happens? I mean, look. Look at the residential schools.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Look at Catholicism today. First Nations people absolutely are -- are institutionalized by it. I've seen -- I've seen a lot of First Nations communities that are just, like, very, very Catholic, to -- to an extreme, and then I've seen some of them absolutely despise anything called Christianity because of the abuses of the Catholic Church. So again, you have this -- this stigma, stigmatizing view of, like, you know, what sin is and what righteousness is and everything the Bible says is right or wrong is totally destroyed by the -- the Catholic Church. And so -- so that's what's happened, is the -- this idea that everything that First Nations people are has been -- has been shattered by -- by a bad example of a -- of a bad family or a bad -- bad father.
MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHROE: And so a bad government, bad -- so -- so I would say that the people who went to residential schools and who were re-injected into society and -- and basically were paralyzed, you know, they’re -- they’re crippled, you know, by -- by that experience, have to see and identify it as, again, like, as a strength. This, like, you know what, but I’m still here. It didn’t defeat me. I’m not done. It’s not over.

My grandmother received some money, you know, because she was a residential survivor, and now my grandmother doesn’t really know who she is. I mean, she has [private information] and she’s -- and she’s -- but -- but I would say this many times in my life. I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for my grandmother. That -- you know, what she’d been through, she was so strong. My grandmother had a busted wrist, and you could see the bone protruding out, the way it healed, because they just put some sticks on it and tied it up, you know? And -- and so she was tough as a bull moose, you know. My grandma was very strong. And so on both sides of my family, the women were the strongest, because the -- the men were nowhere to be found.

And so this is generational. And -- and you will see people touch on this, and they -- they see it as
an issue, but then they’re like, you know, what do we do to empower men? You know. And -- and it’s like, wait a second. So we have to have healthy fathers. So we have to have leaders. We have to have men that are celebrated, that have been in the trenches, that are meeting needs, and -- and that’s what I’m doing here today. If I would be transparent, I have a selfish motive to be somebody’s father, to help somebody that hears this or sees this, that they would be forever changed in knowing that -- that -- if you scrap your identity, you’re not a ghost. You know, you don’t -- you -- you can -- you can pick up a healthy -- healthy identity when you just find who your father is, and then -- then you will get somewhere.

And literally, I think within two generations, this is very arrogant and it’s very, very offensive, maybe, to some people, I think in less than two generations, with a proper father figure, everything can be corrected.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** And the reason I -- the reason I brought up residential schools, and -- and you actually referred in terms to the coming out of residential school crippled, if you come out of residential school as a -- as a man, at 18, and you come out of residential school as crippled emotionally --

**MR. BRENT CLETEROE:** M’hm?
MS. KERRIE REAY: -- mentally, and -- and maybe even physically, how do you be that father that you describe?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Well, you immediately, in that situation, look to somebody else to give you your meds, to give you your food, to give you your --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Because they are kicked out of bed at a certain time and told to go to bed at a certain time.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Which is completely foreign to First Nations culture. I mean, I don’t -- my mom’s like, eat when you’re hungry, sleep when you’re tired, you know? And -- and if you’re late for school, just go to school, you know? And you’re not staying here.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You’ve got to toe the line, and so there was responsibilities, but it was very, very, like, you’re the captain of your own destiny. And I -- I loved that. My mom was always like, well, if you don’t go to school, you’re going to go to work. Like, you’ve got to -- so there -- there was always options. It was -- my mom was never like, this is what you do, this is when you do it, this is when you’re happy, this is when
you’re sad, this is when -- you know? It was like, well, everyone’s drunk at your house at 3 AM and you can’t sleep, but you’ve got to go to school tomorrow. It’s just like …

MS. KERRIE REAY: But have they been crippled by the addictions that came from being at residential school?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Well, again, I think it’s --

MS. KERRIE REAY: I’m just wondering about the different generations. Because I -- I hear you talking more about today’s generations, and I’m trying to think of --

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Well, if --

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- how that happened that those men aren’t there.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: If you notice right there, what I’m trying to say is -- is, whether it’s a residential school or a dysfunctional home, how you were raised, how you were reared, how you were fed, how --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- you were clothed, how you were, I guess, told to conduct yourself.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You know, my mom would tell me to stand up straight all the time. It was just
like -- it was just like that was a capital offence at my house. My mom would up and backhand me if I didn’t stand up straight.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm?

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** Because she wanted -- she was like, you don’t know who you are, you know? And I didn’t know that when I was a kid, but all throughout high school and in through my adolescence, it was like, oh, you’re arrogant. You know, you’re -- you’re a -- you’re a, you know, you’re a -- you’re a narcissist or something. You know, you’re -- you think you’re so self-important. You’re so -- that is so beat down in society. The government wants you to be completely, totally subservient.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** They don’t want you to have an -- an opinion. They don’t -- they sure don’t want you to have an identity unless it’s a defeated one. They do not want you to have dignity of self-worth and -- and to stand up for what you believe in and what you are if it’s different at all.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And so -- so what I’m saying is, is that’s what residential school is. The nakedness of the -- the institutionalized. It’s like, hey, let’s steal some kids, let’s throw them in here, we’ll...
militarize them and -- and basically treat them like
animals and we’ll see what happens to them. Let’s -- let’s
loose them into society and, like, now go be normal after
we did all these horrible things to you. And then it’s
like, you know, in your home, it’s like, you know, rape and
-- and whatever. If there’s molestation in your home,
abuse, physical abuse, alcohol abuse, all this kind of
stuff is going on.

And it’s like, hey. Go get a job, mule. Go
change the world. Go, go, go and do something different.
When it’s like, you broke my legs and told me to run a
marathon. You know what I mean? It -- it’s like, what do
I do? And then ought to do, you look to your father. You
know? And I mean, over and over again, it’s just the
answer. When those people hit the street from residential
school, the first thing they did was went into some kind of
subservient relationship, whether it was abusive or drug
addiction or welfare. It’s like, who beats me now? Right?
And that’s the thing. It’s like, don’t bite the hand that
feeds you. It’s like, bite everybody or bite nobody. You
know what I mean? It’s like, I’m going to become a
predator, I’m going to become a carnivore, or I’m going to
be fed when they feel like feeding me, and I’m not willing
to stand up for myself or be a human being. And so we --
we -- both answers are wrong.
So -- so I think that -- that those people who are, if you are a man out of a residential school, I pray to God that some of those men found the courage to be a father and -- and compartmentalize. It’s like coming out of war, you know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: There are some people who did very, very terrible things in -- in the heat of a battle, and they say, well, I’ll never let that -- I’ll never speak that, I’ll never talk about that because I have to be a father. I’ve got to go home and -- and love my wife. I have to be a human being and I have to give back to society. As these people came out of residential schools --

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- they did one or two things. They bit everybody or they bit nobody. Or they became a father. And so I think that -- that we never write people off, regardless of what they’ve been through. I think there’s a lot of heroes in residential school, a lot of people who -- who rose up and became very powerful, men and women, that -- that were like, oh, that was a part of my life that I don’t like talking about, but it doesn’t define me. You know? Then there were those that are like, oh, that’s why I’m here today and I’m in a bad way because
of that. And so no, you’re in a bad way because you want to be where you are by the choices you made.

And if people don’t talk like that, this generation’s lost. This country’s lost. Because people have got to have a father and they’ve got to be accountable to their father. That’s what’s -- that’s what the number one thing is, is like, you know, if we don’t see ourselves as children. And I don’t say that in this, like, you know, metaphorical way that it’s just like, oh, you know, well, we were all children at one time. We see children as vulnerable. We value children. It’s just a natural thing about humans that we just, you know, whoa, the -- the baby’s going to fall. You know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Catch the baby.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Even if it’s not your baby, it’s like, we’ve got to, you know, protect the babies. If you see yourself as a child of God, or -- or you have a -- a Heavenly Father, you know, that’s why it’s very beneficial, then you can be vulnerable. You can make mistakes. You can grow and learn and -- and bump and, you know, and -- your way through life. And -- and so -- so if we see people as children, see ourselves as children, there’s a lot more forgiveness, there’s a lot more -- you
know, if you -- as silly as it would sound, if you could see a -- a young child in a court case or -- or speaking for themselves or -- or a baby as a judge making a decision in a situation, everything becomes very -- in abstract ideas, everything’s play. You know, it’s -- it’s a -- it’s a joke, you know? Everything’s not really important.

And so I think that if people take themselves less seriously, they can have a lot more healing and a lot more -- is this, like, I think that -- that this -- this childish way of looking at things is not an excuse to make mistakes and to be a baby forever. You know, there’s this idea of, wait a second, a lot of people missed their childhood because of drugs, because of abuse, because of residential school. My grandmother’s birthday’s on Christmas, and so she got two pieces of ribbon candy in residential school, and she would share it with her friend, who was the littlest girl there. And she got it the worst, you know? She was beat the most and she was raped the most. My grandma would give her a piece of her candy. She got two.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You know, on her birthday, and one was Christmas, one was for her birthday. And that being said, a lot of times, it is -- is -- there’s this idea of not taking yourself so seriously, about being
a child and -- and how you see healing, redemption, purpose, and -- and looking for a father. You know, I need a father. I’m vulnerable, I need help. Puts you back into a very -- we’ve got to -- we’ve got to -- everyone has a place in their inner being. I had to come out of here because I was in there for a long time.

I think this will help a lot of people, too, is that there’s a place where no one can hurt you anymore, nobody can abuse you, nobody can call you down, nobody can -- can take your dignity. And that secret place, it’s a protective place within yourself, and it becomes your wall. It becomes your womb. It’s your everything, and -- and you know, as -- as life rips you out of that place and you get fired or you get, you know, sexually molested or something happens to you, you retreat back into that place, and then that place becomes your everything.

Like I said, if this was our whole world, you know, we would just be like, oh, we’ve got it made. But really, it’s a prison. And so these people who have found the strength of being protected in their secret place, it -- it -- for them to come out of there, it’s like a rebirth. It’s like I’m a baby again. I need to find my daddy. I need to find protection. And unfortunately, you know, it’s like they embrace some negative idea of a false father, and then when they retreat back into their secret
place and they get the courage to come out again and to be
embraced by some other false father. And a lot of women, a
lot of women are looking for their father, you know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: In -- in relationships
and things. All that being said is -- is if that -- that
rebirth, that -- that courage, that -- that way to step out
and say, I’m -- I’m going to find a healthy father, he has
to have accountability. Your father has to have
accountability. So that’s the thing about it, is it’s like
a -- somebody who’s an authority of my life, but they have
no authority in their life, then you’re guaranteed to have
a dysfunctional situation. And so I think that -- that men
who want to be accountable, who want to be fathers, they
have to have fathers.

And so there’s this, again, now -- now, this
is what I call, like, a healthy institution, right? A
healthy institution is not a clean, sterile facility like a
hospital or, like, a government building or something
where, you know, the foster care or something like that is
the answer. I would say that proper institutionalizations
of healthy traditions would be that, if, you know, fathers
were accountable to -- to other fathers, you know, that
were called into correction and -- and made to toe the
line. You have to get a job.
You have to produce. You know, you have to.

If you don’t replicate, you know, if you don’t produce somebody, even if it’s not a physical error, you know, you’re not, you know -- there’s no substitute for science, you have to have someone to pass your heritage to. You have to have somebody to -- and you see this in every ministry in the correctional facilities and different things, is they -- they really are offering to say, I want to pass something along and I want to be important to the process and I want to help young men go through the same thing that I went to and so I want to be their father. They’re not saying that, but really, what they’re saying is, gangs are not your father. You know? And -- and the RCMP, obviously, are not your father. The judge is not your father. The Prime Minister is not your father. You don’t even know who your father is, maybe. So -- so now what? You know, who is your father?

We have to keep going back to this and there has to be accountability. So if I don’t have a father, I won’t be able to father. And so we have to go right back to this idea that, okay, wipe the slate clean, all sins are forgiven, there is no right or wrong answer here, just your courage to take your first step out of your secret place, that -- that place where you were hurt, you know. This is a -- a substitute. It will never be a father, I mean,
unless we have a -- find a way to authentically heal
families into this idea again of having a patriarch or
somebody that they -- protects them and provides their
needs. That we can say, listen, this guy right here, his
name is Brent Cletheroe. This is what he’s been through.
This is who he’s accountable to. He has a father. It’s a
Heavenly Father, you know? This is his father. You know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: [Step-father] is my
dad and he -- he was not my biological father, but he
raised me, and I’ve looked him in the eyes and I told him
that everything, you know, from beating my mother to being
a, you know, an alcoholic, a drug addict, you know, being
in camp and -- and not, sometimes, being there for me, and
-- and, you know, my God, if you knew what he went through,
thank God that he gave me a shred or a scrap of what he
knew what being a father was so that I had a hope to be
what I am today. And I’m rebuilding that, you know, based
on what I know the Bible says to be a father.

So we can never say there is no example.

It’s lost in history. It’s -- the screwed-up situation is
what it is and it will always get worse, and we need to
accept that. That’s -- that’s the pathway to oblivion.

And if we embrace that as First Nations people, as human
beings in general, it’s, well, cut your arm off and save
the other arm, you know, we’re already halfway to Hell.
There’s no -- there is no redemption. But if we say, now,
wait a second, if you can stand up here and tell me that
you won’t hurt me, you won’t take advantage of me, you’ll
protect me, provide my needs, and you’ll kick me in the
rear end to be like you, then you are my father. And it’s
like, wow. Wow. It’s like, hey, how you doing? You know?
And this is what I do for a living. It’s -- it’s -- I
become a disciple and then I make a disciple. And that’s
what this is. We’re talking about -- discipline is where
we’re disciples. So we’ll just --

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- erase the whole
Christian aspect of -- of, you know, what -- what -- I’m
not -- not preaching again. It’s this idea of disciplines,
to discipline.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You take a First
Nations man, regardless of how old he is, no matter how
young he is. Just because you’re old now doesn’t mean that
you get a -- a pass.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Because you’re an
Elder. You know, you can be drunk all day and -- and now
you’re -- you’re off the hook, you know? It’s like, no,
you’re a loser, and you need -- and you need to -- you need to get up. So you could lose and not be a loser, you know what I’m saying? You can win and not be a winner.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: I mean, there’s --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- there’s this whole thing that people, no matter -- no, I’ll tell you this. No matter how much good I do in the world, no matter how much I struggle to do what’s right in life and supply the needs for my family and be a father to -- to as many people as I can be, I never, ever -- my -- my self-worth and who I am is -- is something I thought was, like, you know, this confidence or this arrogance, you know? Or something that people thought was --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- offensive or -- or -- it was always trying to get -- trying to beat it out of me. The school system tried to beat it out of me. The -- the RCMP tried to beat it out of me. You know, you need to sit down, you need to shut up, you need to do as you’re told, you need to stop talking out, you need to stop being ADHD or whatever you’re doing, just -- just be like everyone else, you know? And I was like, no. Like, to my death, like, I will be an individual. I will be heard. I
will be unique. I will be different. And -- and bring it on, you know? What can you do to me that hasn’t already been done to me?

And if -- and if you can do that for the good, see, that’s why I keep saying that’s, like, this dysfunction empowers you. This hurt, this pain, if you channel it to be a father and to look for a father, and if you -- if -- if you spent your entire life broken and dysfunctional, you’re -- you’re all -- you’re -- you know, you’re -- you’re now a senior, you’re an Elder or something, you know, and you have come out of the residential school and you still are completely in chaos, you’re in addictions or whatever, there’s no hope for you, you know, you’ve been written off, it’s like, if you spent every waking moment looking for a father, the day that you find a father will bring everything into context. It would make sense. It would be the end of the story. It’s the -- it’s the happy ending.

MS. KERRIE REAY: The hope?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: The hope. And that’s the thing, is if somebody has a father, you know, that -- that’s the thing, is if you were looking for your identity, you’re searching for your father.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’mm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You know, when you
find him, he tells you who you are and where you’re from
and how you can be proud of who you are and he dusts you
off and he -- he loves you back to the place. And then
just before he fades, because our fathers will always pass
on, they’ll -- they’re asleep. We -- we will also sleep
with our fathers. There will be a day that we have to
leave a lineage and a destiny and we hold that baby and we
hold that child and we hold that son, we hold that
daughter, and we say, guess what, I found your father. I’m
going to be that for you.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETEROE: And -- and then all of
a sudden, they don’t have to search. See, that’s the most
important thing. When I was talking about the beginning,
about families and -- and what is the best-case scenario,
what is the most healthy, it’s when that baby never has to
wonder and search who their father is. And so they’re
playing in the backyard and they’re having fun and they’re
-- they’re loving life and they’re enjoying things and they
have never wanted for anything.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Never (indiscernible)?

MR. BRENT CLETEROE: No one’s ever hurt
them, they’ve been protected, and they have been kicked in
the rear end. They have been disciplined and they have
been trained and they have been told, you’re somebody. You
hold your head up high and you do your job. You go to work and you provide for your family. You know? And -- and women are the same, you know? Nobody’s off the hook here.

That’s what’s -- that’s what’s crazy, is everybody’s looking for somebody to blame. Everybody’s looking for somebody in this magical -- this magical formula that’s going to solve the problem, and the bottom line is that it’s like, look in the mirror. That’s the person that -- that is to blame. That is the person that is not doing anything that they should be doing about this whole thing. I believe that, you know, what you’re doing, you’re writing down everything and -- and being part of the process, is great. But -- but that -- you know, the paperwork is not the father. You know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: But it’s like -- it’s like, wait a second. Who is the father of my children? You know, who is the -- it goes, all of a sudden, it’s, like, personal.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: It’s like if somebody stood you up on national television and said, okay, have -- have you ever abused your children? Ever neglected them? You ever been angry? Have you ever hit your children out of anger?
MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: On BC TV News, you know? I’d be like --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- oh, my God, like, I don’t know what to say right now. I’d say, I’ve been a father to the best of my ability and I will not shirk and be ashamed of how I have done my very best to just be a protection and provision to them, and what I went through and what I’ve lived in my life, they will never experience, because I’m shielding them from that. And whatever little bleed-over there will be, we are a product of our environment, we ought to nip that in the bud.

I’ve got to stop cycles and things in my life. It’d be Mother’s Day and I would just punch holes in the wall, I’d be so wrecked. I wouldn’t know what day is -- what way is up, I -- which way is down. And I went to counselling and I had to leave my job because I was on, you know, 30 days of counselling, and I got fired over it. It was crazy. It was like, you know, I -- I took 30 days out for counselling because I was kicking and you can’t at work, I was going into the saws. I didn’t care if I went in the saws. I was so, just -- the lights on where nobody was home, you know? And my -- my foreman said, hey, man, you -- you know, if I was you, I wouldn’t be here. You
just lost your mom.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And roughly when was that?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: 2007, 2006. You know, right at the time when my mom went missing, but that, for me, was years later. See, this -- this makes perfect sense, this for everybody went through something that I’m going through, and everybody that’s going to talk on this camera has -- has had an experience, and is that -- you know. I -- like, four years later, I’m married, you know, and everything, and -- and -- and moving on. You know, good things are happening while I’m stable, I’m not blaming, I’m not -- you know, I’m not -- I’m -- this is healthy. Everything in my life is good.

My foreman calls me in the office and he says, hey, man, you were late this morning and if you don’t pull up your socks, you’re going to get fired. I said, I’ve been late three times in six and a half years. I don’t know where you’re getting information, but that’s hardly grounds for termination. No, you take it up with the union, you know? I’ve -- I’ve -- I’m doing my job. You know, I like my job, I want to be here, I -- I don’t -- I -- I don’t think that being late three times in six and a half years is this big track record for me, you know, getting fired. I said, you know, you -- where are you getting information? You’re building a case here to fire
me, you don’t have a leg to stand on.

He said to me, that’s not what the computer says. The computer says you got a lot of absences and stuff, and so we’re watching you. That next Monday, I was late. My alarm didn’t go off, and I was just, what’s going on? My alarm works every time, and now, because I’m, you know, in trouble, my alarm didn’t go off? I was like, this is destiny. Something’s wrong here. Whatever. I go into work and I kind of laughed. I said, hey, man, I know I’m in trouble, you know, because -- but you know, being late three times in six and a half years and then being late today after you gave me a hard time, you know, is just -- I’ll take a suspension or something, but don’t --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- fire me, type deal.

But the guy said, no, you’re done, you’re out of here, clean out your locker. Fired me. And I went on EI and I’m trying to pay my bills, I’m in a panic and I’m in the shame of losing my job and everything, and while I’m trying to explain to my wife, I don’t know, you know? I’m not that late all the time. I don’t know what happened. And I get a phone call from the union, and they said, you know what, the computer flagged those lates and absences when you were counselling, when you were out of work for a month and you were supposed to be in counselling and all that. And so
they threw the book at you because of that. We want you to come back to work.

I said, okay, and -- and one of the old-timers at the mill said, hey, don’t go back unless they backpay you, bro. They owe you two months’ pay because they shouldn’t have fired you unjustly. That’s -- that’s crazy. And I said, well, okay, so I said, well, I’m not coming back unless I get backpay. And they’re like, we’re not going to backpay you, we just want you to come back and do your job. I said -- I said, you know, you’ll just find another reason to fire me now. This is just a -- this is a bad situation. You know? You walked me out of that mill and shamed me in front of everybody there and fired me for something I didn’t even do wrong, and above and beyond that, it’s for the disappearance of my mother. Like, that is something that’s just horrific, and then you’re telling me, well, just -- we’ll just go along like nothing happened.

And so there was an issue and they -- they had to pay me out. They had to pay me out, I think it was a week’s pay for every year of service, so I think it was six or eight week’s pay or something, and then I ended up being able to -- to buy a house and some things and move on with my life, but talk about, like, ripping my -- my mother’s rotten corpse, you know what I mean, out of the
ground and, like, shaking it in my face. Like, that’s --
and it’s just, like, over and over. That’s how I feel.

Like my mother, you know, I -- my -- my wife
was saying to me, you know, how come you don’t cry, you
know, when you’re talking about your mom, and how can you
go through something like that? I would be losing it all
the time. I’d just be a mess. And I told her, I said, you
know, that God’s given me comfort and given me closure, you
know, that God spoke to my -- my life and He said to me, He
said, you know, your mother is in my hands and it’s none of
your business. Because I was very concerned whether she
went to Heaven or Hell or what. You know, as a preacher
and as a, you know, I was just like, what -- you know,
something that I’m -- everyone wrestles with this in
different ways, you know? And I wrestle with my identity
and, you know, my father, you know, and everything that I’m
trying to be. I needed to -- you have to put this
somewhere. It has to be filed somewhere in your life. It
doesn’t just --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And so the people who
don’t have a place to file it, no wonder they can’t even
make ends meet. They can’t even get out of bed because
they’re stuck, you know. It’s a temporary insanity that
becomes a lifetime. It’s just like, what do you do with
this chaos? And so I was like, I’m not going to drive down
the street, and every time I see somebody that looks like
my mom, I’m going to pull over, you know? I’m not
wondering every time the phone rings if she’s going to be
my long-lost mom that’s come back and she’s, you know, been
on some crazy adventure or something, you know? Like, what
-- what am I going to do? And -- and there’s no headstone
to visit. There’s no closure. There’s no end to this
nightmare. And -- and when God spoke to me, He said, she’s
in my hands, it’s none of your business. You know? I’m
God, I’m in control, I’ve got this figured out.

My mom always used to tell me, as I was --
beautiful here, I just kind of keep moving on with the
story, that with my mother, in my adolescence, and I got
kicked out of every store in Fort St. John. I had a school
file as big as a -- as thick as a dictionary, and
counsellors have always asked me, well, what’s wrong with
you? You know, what’s the matter with you? Does your
parents beat you, do they starve you? I said, yeah, they
do, I never ate today. Really, really? I said, no, I’m
just playing with you. Because he was trying to
psychoanalyze me, you’re trying to -- and that’s why I told
my story before I started this, because I wanted to be in
control and I didn’t want somebody to tell me what -- what
they wanted me to say or whatever.
And so it was the same thing with the counsellors, you know? I’d always get this, like, head-shrinking. You know, oh, are you abused, are you -- are you, you know, sexually abused, like, what happened to you, or something? And I would play along with it and then the bells and whistles would go off and they’d be like, oh, we nailed him, we can categorize him, we know what his problem is. And I’d say I’m -- none of that’s happening, that’s not me. Stop trying to push me in these categories and trying to make me be what you think I am. That’s not what I am. And -- and so they would be frustrated with me, you know, we can’t figure this kid out. Like, he’s -- he’s always being kicked out of school and he doesn’t go the -- he’s not being herded. How do we get him to -- to go in the right direction?

And so I remember one counsellor, his name was [L.S.]. He told me one time, he said, Brent, what do you want? That was the most refreshing, that was the most -- that was the craziest thing I’d ever heard in my life at that moment, when I was in grade 4 or 5 or something. Because he spoke to me like an adult. He asked me a legitimate question. He didn’t try to psychoanalyze me, he didn’t try to pigeonhole me into saying what they wanted me to say, you know. He just said, what do you want? He’s like, you’ve got everybody just, you know, dangling, like,
hanging by a string. Like, you -- the whole school is looking at you like, what is the -- everybody wants -- you know, I’m getting paid to sit here and talk to you about your -- your mind, you know, what -- the way you -- the way you see life, what’s happening here. And he was just like, yeah, so what do you want?

And I said, I want to be -- I want to be respected. I want to be talked to like an adult. You know? I was like, my -- my parents pay taxes, it’s the salary of these teachers. You know, they work for me, that’s how I see it. You know, I don’t see it as, like, I have to do what I’m told. Like -- like, I was -- never failed a grade in my life, you know, and some -- I -- I passed grade 7 in three months or something because I was in Alberta. I got kicked out of every school in BC in my school district and I had to go to Alberta to go to school with my uncle, and he was very, very military and kind of tried to straighten me out, you know?

All that being said, I’m -- I’m sitting here talking to this counsellor, and I just said, you know, I just want to be -- I want to be able to go for a walk. You know, I’m done my work. I want to go to the bathroom. Oh, no, you have to sit here with all the other people who are not done their work yet, and without poking them or laughing or joking or something. You know? I’m just like,
I need to go for a walk. I’m going nuts, you know, I need to be -- so that was the beginning of this whole thing with ADHD and stuff that had never been mentioned. Nobody knew anything about that, and it was just like, oh, and I -- and I think that’s just an excuse to medicate people and -- and try to stop them from being a -- a leader, stop from -- them from being -- having a personality or whatever. And so I think that, basically, I was a class clown or I was something that was dangerous, you know. I was a loose cannon if -- if they didn’t get me to -- to kind of do what they wanted me to do.

But I told him, I said, you know, I -- I need -- I need somebody just to acknowledge the fact that I have a brain and that I need to, you know, and I want to kind of negotiate what I’m doing here, you know? And so he was like, okay, that’s fair enough. And so I used to have a -- there was a bicycle wheel under a desk, and I could -- I could sit there and I was on -- I was on suspension, in-school suspension, and I would sit in this, like, in the idiot room, you know, where they hide all the bad kids, and -- and I would sit there and -- and I would be writing down what I needed to do. My -- and they said, you know what, Brent? Like, I used to tap a lot, I used to make noise, and they said -- I couldn’t sit still, and so they were always like, you know, what’s wrong with you, type deal.
And -- and they -- and then I said, you know, if I could just pedal this bike, you know what I mean, I could change the world. Like, I could -- I can concentrate, you know, on -- on what I’m doing. And they’re like, well, you can’t have this bike in class or everybody will want one in the school and it’s not going to work, so you have to find a way to -- to harness your energy and -- and stuff. And so I started, like, moving my leg. My leg would always be vibrating, it was always bouncing. And as I got older, I think I -- I think now I’m just kind of more laid-back, you know? I don’t have the energy I used to have to expel in -- in an excess kind of way of just wasting it, but.

Yeah, so -- so when he said that to me, it changed the way I see the world and stuff, and everything my mom told me was confirmed, you know? And the institutions and -- and the -- the police would tell me, you know, like, one time, I was in the back of a police car with handcuffs on with some pretty big-time guys and we were going to jail. It was -- we were doing at least two years, probably. And I thought, oh, Lord, I’m -- I’m in -- I’m in for it now. And so I prayed a simple prayer. I said, God, if You’re out there, you know, and You care about me. You know, I made a mistake. I’m in trouble. I need your help. You know? And that’s what I prayed. I said -- and all of a sudden, the -- the RCMP officer pulled
over, got out on the street, took off my handcuffs, you
know. I -- right after I prayed this prayer, you know. I
started rubbing my wrists in total shock and disbelief. He
said, you’re running with the wrong crowd, get out of here.

And I said, I’m special? There’s something about me that’s different, you know? They -- they see, because I didn’t have a criminal record. You know, I’m running around with these guys that have got records as long as their arm, these are really big, heavy guys, and he’s like, you know what I’ve seen? I want to make a difference in your life. You know, I would say that that was a person that, in my life, probably saved me from that, or I would never be making this video. I’d probably be dead.

And so I -- I had a teacher. His name was [D.C.], and he was in the alternate program. So I hit grade 8 for about two months and then I got kicked out. You know, this is my story. I was fighting and -- and getting kicked out all the time, and I ended up in the Key Learning Centre. So I’m the guinea pig, you know. This is a new program. These stuff -- this stuff is common now. You know, alternate education is common now. But this time, it was, like, radical and nobody was doing it. And so --

MS. KERRIE REAY: What year was that, sir?
MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Ah ...

MS. KERRIE REAY: What time was that?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: I graduated ’98, so I don’t know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: This was, like, ’94 or something? I don’t know, ’93? But -- but I end up in the Key Learning Centre and it’s the alternative program, and I said, oh, they’re going to alter a Native, you know? The alternative program, alter this Native, you know? But I -- I went in there, and you know, it was crazy. They were, like, come as you go, learn at your own pace, you know.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Do whatever you want. And I said, something’s wrong here. You know, there’s no father here. You can do whatever you want here. Something’s wrong. And then I began to understand that they want you to fall through the cracks. They just want to take you out of the regular system, where you’re bothering people, and put you in the dummy class or whatever and just let you fade away. That’s -- that’s what happens. Everybody goes and most of them, they just drop out or they just go away.

And so I thank God for a man like [D.C.], who pulled me aside and said, hey, everybody is against
you. They think that you’re an idiot, they think that you are dysfunctional, they think that you can’t make it, and I’m here to try to prove them wrong, because I believe in what I’m doing. I’m trying to help you. So I’m not your enemy, I’m not against you. What he was saying was, like, let me try to be your father.

Ms. Kerrie Reay: M’hm?

Mr. Brent Cletheroe: You know, let me try to help you. And -- and my dad was always in camp, and when I hit 14, my mother was looking at my chin. You know, I was bigger than her. And my dad always told me that -- I guess the mistake that my dad made, he said, you’re the man of the house. You know? I’m six years old, and you’re the man of the house, you’ve got to look after your mom and your sister. So I was -- I went hunting with my dad, blood up to my elbows, you know, in moosemeat, and everything. Hunting and camping and fishing. And -- and my dad was my hero. So when my -- when my mom, when my -- my dad was in camp, then I would have to be the protector, you know?

Ms. Kerrie Reay: M’hm.

Mr. Brent Cletheroe: I was -- and it’s dysfunctional. I was raising my brothers and sisters. That’s not right, you know, that’s not right. I don’t expect my daughter, she’s 10, my son’s 3, to feed him and clothe him, to look after him. And -- but at that time,
you know, my mom would be passed out on the floor and I would have to make noodles and keep the house going and don’t answer the phone, don’t open the door. Ask any First Nations person, they’ll tell you that’s --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- there’s some rules, and it’s like, if there’s white people around, it’s, you know, cover your bruises. You know? Try to -- you have to play functional in certain situations. And so, you know, while this was happening in my life, you know, I don’t ever want to paint my parents as being some terrible people. There was house parties and there was alcoholism and there was one time I stole my dad’s beer. For, like, two or three weeks, I kept stealing beer from my dad, and I’d put it in a -- and I was young. I was, like, ten years old or something. And I put it in wrapping paper and I gave my dad beer for Christmas, you know. That’s what I know he loved and that’s what he liked. I thought I was doing good. And I got beat up and I got a spanking over that. She says, you know, that’s -- your dad -- that’s your dad’s beer, you gave it back to him, you know? What are you doing, you know? But -- but really, they were -- I think they were embarrassed that I knew what was most important to him, what he wanted.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.
MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And so I look back at some of that stuff and I’m like, man, that’s crazy, you know? Like, that -- that even children, a lot of times, they don’t know they’re dysfunctional. They don’t know that something’s wrong. I would be at school and I would tell stories about, you know, getting beat or something. I remember even being up to when I came into the church and when I started trying to live right and trying to get up out of the ditches and stuff. I was 18 years or 20 years old, all saying, oh, yeah, you know, and my dad would me by the throat or throw me across the room or something, people were just dead silent. So uncomfortable. They just -- and I’m thinking, man, when I tell this story with all my friends, they all start laughing, and everybody -- you know, they -- because they’ve been there. They understand. And I was like, whoa. People started crying when I’m talking about how I grew up. Something’s wrong, you know? This ain’t right, something’s different, you know? And so I think this is how we have to get into the mind of somebody that’s dysfunctional. They don’t know they’re dysfunctional.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: So when they’re dysfunctional with somebody else, there’s consequences, they’re like, what? What’s going on? Where were you when
this happened to me? Don’t tell me the rules are different now, that -- that, you know, the generations change or somebody else sees this as wrong, you know, well, you weren’t there for me, so why should I have to honour your rules or your? So -- so where is the -- where is the initiative, where is the motive to be a father? You know, where is the -- there has to be a carrot on a stick.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** Like, that’s -- that’s what this is all about, is if there’s going -- who is the father, and if you’re going to be a father, what is the value? What is the benefit of being a father? You know, and if the government creates an incentive, which I don’t think they will. I think they want to break people down and they want to break demographics and people and splinter them and keep them weak and they want bigger government, not smaller government.

Because if you had fathers, there would be no government. A father is a government. He’s -- he’s the -- he’s the king of his castle, you know? But -- but that’s getting more and more where you can’t boat without, you know, a license, you can’t wear -- can’t ride a bike without a helmet. I mean, it’s getting to the point where kids are going to wear helmets on playgrounds. I mean, it’s just -- it’s ridiculous. They’re regulating people to
becoming, you know, pretty much animals, and so you can’t think for yourself. You can’t do anything for yourself. But if you get the First Nations, who are already warriors, who have already survived the best that the government can throw at you for --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- you know, trying to subjugate you or control you, if -- if somebody ever watches this video that doesn’t have a family or doesn’t have a father, you know, they’ll -- they’ll wake up. They’ll be -- they’ll be a -- they’ll come to this most powerful idea. Again, I said that ideas are the most powerful thing --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- on the planet. Is -- they’ll be like, wait a second, I do have dignity. I am somebody. I can shake the chains off. I can -- I can change the world. I can do something different.

And so with -- with my -- with my mother, you know, I said that, when she was -- one time, it’s a horrific story, [two lines redacted pursuant to Rule 55]. And you know, and I was old enough to do something about it, and I thought, you know, but I was so paralyzed with fear and shame and I -- you know, I’m like, this is my hero. You know, what am I going to do? I can’t fight my
hero. Like, I can’t. But I’ve got to stick up for my mom. Could you imagine? My soul was ripped right in half and I didn’t know what to do. People -- people live like this all the time, and not just First Nations people.

Like, it’s like, you know, nobody -- nobody addresses this stuff. We don’t talk about it. It’s like, oh, again, like, they didn’t feed you, or were you abused, or? I’m like, no. It’s deeper than that. It’s deeper than that, you know? I want to be addressed not for my dysfunctions, not for my problems, you know? I want to be addressed for my strengths, you know? That’s -- that’s how you -- that’s how -- the answer -- the answer is not addressing the victimization of the First Nations. The answer is empowering them.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: To be great regardless of what they did to you, and seeing value in that person, you know? And -- and I think that that’s -- if they’re like, wait a second, you know what? If I have a shred of dignity, if I have even -- even a small percentage of self-confidence and -- and you know, I have somebody with dignity, you know, that’s my father, and -- and gives me time to get on my feet and stuff like that, and -- and kicks me in the rear end, not to stay down, and you know, I tell people, there’s a difference between basically -- a
difference between basically -- oh, yeah. Failing and
being a failure, is -- is falling and not getting up.

    MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

    MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You know what I mean?

Because everybody fails, but if you get up --

    MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

    MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- and -- and you keep
-- and the just man falls seven times, but yet he will
arise. And this idea’s like, no matter if you’re a
complete failure, no matter how much of a failure you are
at whatever astronomical level, that you just really
condemn yourself, like, I’m everything I’m -- you know, I’m
-- I’m -- I don’t validate my worth, I’m worthless. Yeah,
but -- but if you just get up, you become the most powerful
person on the planet, because what’s you’ve overcome is --
is --

    MS. KERRIE REAY: Is that how you felt?

    MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- is something that
nobody else can face.

    MS. KERRIE REAY: Is that how you felt that
-- that moment you were describing [one line redacted
pursuant to Rule 55]? Is -- is that -- is that how you were
feeling then?

    MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Watch this. And this
is the most terrible part of -- of all of that, is -- is
that, in that moment, I had to be a protector. I had to be enabled. I had to be -- I had to be complacent. You know, what do you call it, an accomplice, you know? [Thee lines redacted pursuant to Rule 55]. You know, you’re my hero, you’re my example. And there’s my mom, who’s just like, you’re the man of the house, you’re my sonny boy, you know? You’re -- you’re my oldest, you’re my chosen one, you know? You’re there for me when your dad’s not there. You’re, you know, and -- and then -- and -- but it was always -- it was always rectified. You know, it’s just none of your business. You know, it’s -- it’s not -- it’s not your problem. You know what I mean? Don’t -- don’t take it upon yourself.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** But you did that day?

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** That day, I stood there, like all other people do. If somebody fired a gun in this room, you’d be dead still. You wouldn’t even blink. Because when horrific things happen, people do fight or flight or they freeze, and a lot of times, when you’re in an abusive situation, you’ve got nowhere to run. That’s your family. That’s your mom and dad. You can’t run away from somebody that feeds you and clothes you. You’re not going to do that.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And you’re not going
to fight them, because you don’t -- you don’t have the
power. You’re like, they’re the ones that beat me on a
regular basis. I’m not going to be able to overpower them.
So you only have one other option.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Did you love them?

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** Yeah. And -- and

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Yeah. Those are your
parents.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** -- love is action.

Love is -- love is unconditional, you know?

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And I think that’s
beautiful about my mom, and she said, you know what, my
drinking and everything that I do, you know, as long as you
have more than I was given, that was the validation, you
know?

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** Food on your back,
clothes on the table, roof over your head, you’ve got
nothing to complain about, and then I can do my drinking
and -- because she didn’t even have that.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And so -- because of
drinking. And so I guess, again, you have this
rationalization. You’ve got this, basically, trying to 
make sense of your addictions and whatever you’re going 
through.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: So you know, and I -- 
I want to put my mom in the best light and my parents in 
the best light, because my dad shot -- taught me how to -- 
how to hunt and how to fight and how to spit, how to be a 
man. You know, how to carry myself and -- and to be 
confident, you know, and -- and skills and different 
things, and you know, a lot of people don’t have that, and 
my original, my -- my biological father, he missed out on 
that. He didn’t -- 

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: He wasn’t that for me. 
And so instead of me being like, oh, you know, he didn’t 
value me, you know, it must be that I’m not valuable, I 
said, this guy comes right out of the woodwork to be my 
dad.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: I must be -- I must be 
a diamond in the rough, you know? He’s -- he’s choosing me 
when he doesn’t have to. My mom told me, she said, you can 
hate your biological dad if you want to and you can go 
after him for money and you can try to get something out of
him, it would be like blood from a stone. She said, the
truth is, he’s a child himself, and she said, you’re more
mature than your dad. And now you understand why he’s
never been there for you and you want to pity him and not
hate him. And I was like, you know, my mom was so wise.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And she was so real.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: I’d watch a horror movie and I’d be afraid, she just grabbed me by the scruff
and dragged me up to the TV and said, go shut it off, then.
You’re scared, you don’t want to watch it. Well, I want to
watch it. Well, then, shut up, then, because it’s not
real. Okay, you know? Like, crying in the dark.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You know, oh, leave
the door open. My mom would drag me in the -- in the
bathroom, push me in the bathroom and shut the door. The
light’s on the outside in the bathroom in the apartment,
you know? Aaahh, beating on the door. This is horrific,
this is -- this is terrible. Then she -- I had this little
police car that had lights on it, and she said, now look
around with that car. What do you see in there? And I’m
just screaming, I’m tormented, this is crazy. I said,
well, I see a toilet, I see a bathtub. She said, you see,
it’s the same in the dark as it is in the light. Turn on
the light, there’s nothing in there. Nothing to be afraid
of. Go to bed. All right.

I didn’t -- I didn’t have a chance to
process it. It was like, don’t -- don’t be stupid. That
was my mom’s whole thing. It was just like, smack, don’t
be stupid. You know, you -- and it was all -- it was all
the time, it was just this common sense, and -- and so that
night, I went to bed with the door shut, you know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And -- and my mom was
very strong, and she -- she didn’t have time, she didn’t
have time to -- to coddle me. And I remember at my
adolescence and when I got to the worst part of my journey,
I guess, becoming who I was supposed to be, and -- and I
was getting strung out on LSD and some different things and
experimented with drugs and I was an alcoholic. By the
time I was 12 years old, I was smoking and drinking, you
know, whatever my mom was smoking and drinking, and running
out and car-hopping and checking doors and trying to steal
people’s stuff and trying to get, you know, and -- and
drinking my dad’s beer, you know? Instead of giving it
back to him for Christmas, I just started drinking it, you
know? But doing my own thing, and -- and I got to the
place where I didn’t recognize myself in the mirror. You
know, pretty scary place when you lose your identity. You lose your --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- all sorts of -- sense of even direction of where you are. You know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: That’s still a young teenager?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Yeah, about 16 or 17, when I -- I got freaked out on drugs. Like, I was just -- I was completely lost. And my mom told me, she said -- she said, if you do cocaine, hard drugs, she says, if you -- if you become like that, she said, you’ll be a write-off. You won’t be welcome in my house, I’m not going to feed you, you can’t sleep here, and I don’t care if you die in the street, she said, because I’ve got four other brothers and sisters to raise here, and if you won’t be the -- you’re not going to be the chosen one, you’re not going to be -- you’re not going to blaze a trail, then you won’t -- then you’re not going to be here. And it was shocking, because my mom used to hit me with anything she could get her hands on.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: When Dad was in camp, I had a couple scars on my head. My mom hit me with a frying pan one time. She said, do the dishes, and she went
to the bar, and I was playing Nintendo, I was 12 years old, and I said, I forgot about it. She came home at 3 in the morning, I was still playing Nintendo, and she said, did you do the dishes? I said no, and she’s throwing a terrible fit and kept asking me the same question over and over. You know, did you do the dishes? I said no and she just grabbed me by the hair and was -- had me in the sink, saying, did you do dishes? I said, yeah, I did the dishes. Then she just hit me with this frying pan and the blood came down. And, like, a lot of stuff that -- that happened with that time of my life and growing up this way, it was like, when my mom said something, she was dead serious.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** There was no playing games. She -- she did -- there was absolutely no -- I don’t want to say grace, because it was never like that. It was like, do whatever you have to do, do whatever you want to do, in the parameters of whatever, you know, I’ve -- I’ve said in the rules or whatever. But it was like, man, if my mom took after me with a mop handle or something that she could get her hands on, you know? But I was 15. I just used to throw a blanket over my mom and hug her, you know? I just used to push her around. She wasn’t powerful anymore, she wasn’t my authority. She wasn’t my father.

And I feel bad because I used to push my mom
down when she was drunk. She’d try to attack me or something and I’d just push her down, and I disrespected her, you know, so many times that way and stuff, and you know, I felt so bad when she was gone. Now you -- that’s all you think about. You don’t first think about the good things. You don’t think about all the -- the -- you know, it comes later. It comes later, when you appreciate what your mom did for you, but it’s always like, I wish I would have said this and I -- I wish I would have done that.

And so I’m like, that time my mom told me, she was like, you know, if you make me a grandmother before I’m 50, I’m going to neuter you, you know I’m going to. So there was all of this, this -- this dysfunction, but there was all of this -- there’s this beautiful -- I just loved it, what she did instill in my life.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You know? So -- so pure. Like, it was just like a matter of fact again. How you frame everything, how you see things --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- is -- is so important. And -- and so she said, you know, I’ll write you off if you don’t -- if you don’t smarten up type deal, and so I just -- I couldn’t just go into this oblivion and reckless abandon all these principles. I used to see my
friends and they’d just be, like, partying on drugs and doing whatever and having six different girlfriends or whatever, but I was like, why do I have to have integrity? Why do I have to be a gentleman? Why do I have to be -- I’ve got to, you know, I’ve got to -- I have to be something for my mom and I’ve got to be something for my brothers and sisters. I’ve got to -- I’ve got to -- my dad would just, you know, again, if you discipline me, you know right or wrong.

I used to -- my -- my mom used to say, I said, yeah, but my friends, they can run around all night, they can do this, they can do that. She -- yeah, but they don’t have a father. They don’t have a dad. My mom -- yeah, Mom’s, you know, and -- and the moms letting them run all -- all over, and she said, you’ll see those are the ones in jail, those are the ones that are going to be dead. She said, and you’re not going to be like that, you’re going to be different, because you’re going to stay home with your mom. You’re going to stay here and you’re going to do what I say. You’re going to listen to your dad and you’re going to follow the rules and you’re going to be something, you know?

And I said, okay, and -- and so I -- at the time, I was upset, because I wasn’t allowed to hang around with this one, I wasn’t allowed to go with that family,
that family was, you know. I would hang out with them anyways, and everything my mom said would be true, you know? Everything she said. They won’t -- they won’t be your friends, they’ll stab you in the back, you know? They’ll -- they’ll rob you blind, you know, whatever. You need to be aware that what I’m saying is true.

One thing my mom always said, and this is real haunting, resolves my story, my mom, she said, you should listen to me, because someday, I’m not going to be here. And I would always say, wow, you know, when she’s old and grey, that’s what she means, you know? She’s going to go on and -- and you need to listen to what I say. But she used to be mad. She used to say, no, listen to me, someday, I’m not going to be here and you’re going to have to remember what I said. I said, okay, Mom, you know? Whatever, you know? I’ve got years, you know? When you’re young, you think you’ve got forever, and I was like, yeah. You’ll always be old and you’ll tell my grandkids all the same stuff and, well, you know, we’ll hash it out then.

And so, from about 18 to 20, that’s when I got into church. This is a good story right here. You guys will like this, I know. My mom -- so -- so I was going to church and I was drunk on Friday and there was church on Sunday, and I was trying to -- I was trying to get it figured out, and there was this thing in Fort St.
John was on the radio, and it was a -- a model invitation out, and so in Banff National -- in -- in the Banff Springs Hotel, they had this -- this national campaign for models and -- and agencies that were looking for new talent, and they were looking in northern communities and different places all over Canada to go to the cultural centre, which was, like, a theatre kind of a space, and then you went in there, because I wanted to do this thing to see if I was, like, you know, could be a model, type deal.

And I went in there, me and my buddy, and -- and we were always competitive, you know, the young Native guys, you know, we were trying to -- trying to be studs or whatever, you know? We were always constantly trying to compete with each other. He said, no, let’s go to this thing here, you know, and I’m going to go get -- become a model and you won’t even get in. You know, he was giving me a hard time. And when we went there, he actually was rejected and I -- they asked me to stay. And then, you know, he was mad at me, and I was, well, I’m just going to stay and see what this is about.

So they said that you made it past the first round to go to Banff Springs Hotel and -- and to be -- there will be a bunch of agencies there and stuff like that. And I thought, man, this is great. And it’ll be about $700 in total in travel and for me to pay the
registration fee and all this stuff to -- to march in front
of these -- to be on the catwalk in front of all these
agencies and stuff.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And I really thought,
like, this is it, like, this is my ticket, you know? This
is something that’s going to change my life. And so I told
my mom and stuff, and -- and I knew this guy, he was a
really nice guy, he was a Christian guy in our community,
and he was a father. You know, he was a -- somebody who
was a senior guy in my life that saw that I was trying to
go to church and he was being in my life, and he -- and I
knew he could lend me that money. I knew he could and I
knew he believed that I -- I was a -- a good young man, I
would pay him back, you know? And at that time, $700 was
like $7,000, you know?

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm?

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And I was like, well,
he will never lend me that much money, this is crazy. But
I said, if he does it, I know it’s God’s will. You know,
this is the destiny, this is something that will happen.
And I told him, I said, I really do believe that this is
something God wants me to do, I think it would be something
for my future, and -- and he said, you know what? I -- you
have a good job and -- and you -- I was working in a lumber
yard, I think, or something like that. And he said, I -- I know you’re a man of integrity, I know you’ll pay me back, I know your family really well, and I’m willing to take this risk you. I want to -- I’ll give you the money.

I couldn’t believe it. I said, man, I’m going on this trip, this is something else. And -- and so I found a ride with another guy who was going. He was going down there, I think, just to go snowboarding or something, and so they dropped me off at this conference, and I stayed in a room with a king-size bed and you could open the balcony and it was like you could touch the mountains.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: You know? Me and my family have spent Christmas there since then, and it’s a beautiful place. And so I was in there and there’s armour in the hallways and --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- and it’s phenomenal. And so they had this big thing about, you know, basically training, you know, how you walk on the catwalk and how you approach and you had to have a certain portfolio and pictures and everything, so I had all that. And then the day came when I had to walk in front of everybody, and I did, and I ended up getting two callbacks.
MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: So out of, like, 1,200 people, I think it was, there was only eight people or something that got callbacks, and I got two of them. And it was amazing, it was crazy. People were coming up to me and they were just, like, what -- how did -- you know, how did that happen, you know? This is awesome. And -- and I was like, oh, so I must have done it, like, this must be it.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And there was a guy who had a bulldog, and he walked on the catwalk and he got a callback, and he came up to me and I -- I recognized him because he had the dog. He was the only guy that had the -- the dog. And I said, man, that was cool and your dog’s really nice and stuff.

And he said, you know, when I do this, I -- I march in protest, he said, of this event. And I -- and I said, why? He said, you got two callbacks, right? I said, yeah. He said, you’re pretty excited, right? I said, yeah. He said, I want you to know what this is really about. I just want to educate you, he said. You can do whatever you want, it’s your life, but he said, I have a friend who came here, who got the most callbacks anyone’s ever gotten in this event. He’s had something like eight
callbacks or something and he was offered this million-dollar contract with this magazine and everything and he was really, really kind of had the tiger by the tail. He was a big deal, and he became, you know, famous, basically, overnight to do what you’re doing. And -- and he was here, he stood here and we -- we did it together, you know? And -- and I was happy for him. I didn’t get a callback at that time, but he got all these callbacks.

And he said he went to this party and it was a talent party, it was, like, this big celebration of who was going to be in the magazine and -- and all these new -- the new talent. And somebody had drugged his drink and then he was raped by, like, five men and they put $20,000 cash on his dresser. This is the story he told me. He said, I just want you to know, man, they’ll get you on drugs. They’ll want you to be thin and -- and to have certain -- it’s very controlling, he said.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: This is very -- this is not a very good industry. You be careful. Don’t be ignorant. I said, okay, because I had prayed if it was God’s will. And the whole time that I was at this conference, I stayed in this big room and I felt like a king. Like, I was like, this is great, and it validated my identity, validated that strength. I thought I was special
and I was important, but I had to maintain my -- my 
integrity.

There was girls there, they were, like, 13, and they looked like they were 25, you know? And there was a MuchMusic dance party and stuff and everything and there was a bunch of people. It was, like, underage drinking and a lot of things going on there, which was my scene before, but now I’m trying to change my life, and I’ve got these, like, little girls, essentially, knocking on my door, you know, but I’m trying to -- I’m trying to hold it together, you know? I said, God, I’m coming up here, and I said, this is Your will, I’m going to try to, you know, do it right. I’m not going to -- I’m not going to indulge and -- and fall to the temptation of -- of doing what I usually do or what I always used to do. And so -- so I stuck it out and did the right thing.

And so when I found out what this guy told me, he’s like, this is a distraction from what I felt, from what God’s call was in my life and what I should be doing. I came home and I knew that I wasn’t going to pursue it. And so they had already called my mom and said that they put $2,500 already put in my account and I had an -- an agent in Vancouver and I was going to go stay in this -- this, like -- like, a halfway house, I guess, for, like, new talent and all this stuff.
MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: It was Miami Sands as a -- they shot Saved by the Bell and Dawson’s Creek.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And they wanted me to take some acting courses and stuff, and there was another one that was a runway agency, it was for modelling, like, clothes and stuff. And I told my mom when I got home, I said, I’m not going to do it. And she just got mad at me and she started, like, you know -- this (indiscernible) when I first started going to church. I was, like, 18 or 19 and -- hey, I was 19, 19. She told me, like, this is your big ticket, like, you’ve got to do this, like, this is something you need to do, and I said, no, Mom.

I said -- I said, you told me that Jesus was the most important thing, you know, in the world and life and -- and you know, I think that this is the dark path, you know? And I’m -- and I -- I said, like, I -- I think God is calling me to be a preacher. And she started crying. And she started hitting me and she said, you’d better go all the way with this if you’re going to do this, if you’re going to sacrifice this, you’d better not, you know, steer away from what you’re doing. You’d better go all the way with this. I said, I will, Mom.

And so she was always proud of me, you know,
and -- and what I was doing, choosing going into ministry and stuff. And so at this time, I was 20 years old. My mother really went into, like, a depression, I think, so she -- we lived in, like, these chicken coops. It was, like, a -- a -- Green Acres, it was called, and townhouses, and -- and the reason we lived there is we had a big family without a lot of money, so there was, like, upstairs, downstairs, we could make bedrooms everywhere, you know?

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And so it kind of worked for us. And I was in the basement and I was living there, but they said, like, soon as you graduate, you’ve got to move out. You know, that was it. And so during this whole time, we would be fighting. My mom would be fighting, I’d be fighting with my dad, and I’d be fighting with my dad and my mom said, leave him alone, I’d be fighting my mom, my dad would say, leave him alone, you know. But it was very -- like, if I sat here, my dad would sit there, and then I would have to sit over here and he’d sit over there, you know. He was in charge. He was the boss. And so there was a lot of conflict because I was -- I guess I grew up, you know?

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And so when I -- when I graduated, one time, me and my mom were arguing, and she
was like, you know, one -- one week, my dad would kick me
out, the next week, my mom would kick me out, and then they
would say, you know, don’t -- don’t kick him out, type
deal. And I -- I remember I -- my -- my friend was coming
to pick me up because we’d gotten an apartment, and so one
-- one night, my mom was -- and I forgot to tell my mom.
It was, like, a week, you know, I was going to tell her
that I was moving out and stuff and I was -- there’s a
point in your life when you’re just like, you come here to
eat, come here to sleep --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- you come here to
shower, and you’re never home, you’re never there. And so
my mom was always mad at me that I wasn’t home a lot, and
-- and so I didn’t get to tell her that I was moving out.
And so that night, he was coming, and I was -- I was like,

oh, yeah, I forgot to tell my parents I’m moving out
tonight. And I got in this big argument with my mom, and
she’s like, you’ve got to get out of here, you know, you’re
kicked out or whatever, and I said, fine, then I’m out of
here, and I said, my rides are here. So I started packing
stuff up and she started crying, you know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: She was like, I didn’t
mean that, you know, you don’t have to go, and I -- and I
said, sorry, Mom, I was going to tell you, I feel bad. And so it was kind of a hard -- hard goodbye, but I moved out. My mom always used to say, no news is good news, you know? If I didn’t call for something or I didn’t need something or, you know, then obviously, I was doing good, you know? There was times I’d come home and I just remember when I was a kid, I used to complain about her hamburger soup all the time.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** She’d say, one of these days -- you turn up your nose to good food, you know, saying, one of these days, you’re going to wish, you’ll just -- you’ll beg for my -- my hamburger soup, you know? I said, oh, it’s dog food, you know, I want pizza, I want this and that or the other. And sure enough, when I moved out, I would come home and say, Mom, make some bannock, you know, make some hamburger soup, please. I’ve been eating so much takeout I can’t take it, you know? I -- and I was -- I was living on -- I was living on peanut butter and jam, you know? I was like, come on, just make me something.

And so even though I was, like, 20 years old, you know, 21 years old, my mom was, come lay with me, son, you know? I would lay with her on the couch, you know, when nobody’s around. You know, I was embarrassed, a
full-grown man, you know? My mom said, I don’t care, you know, you can come lay with your mom, you know. And so when I was about — you know, this is me pursuing the ministry now and going to church and —

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** -- and I’m always zealous and telling my parent, you’re going to Hell and everybody’s going to Hell and trying to invite people to church, and now I’m just -- I would -- people would cross the street when I was walking down the road because they knew I was going to invite them to church, you know? Small town, everybody used to call me, you know, Father Brent, you know? That was because I would be -- I would be drunk on Friday, in church on Sunday. I’ll be at a party and they say, man, quit talking about God when you’re drunk, you know? Stop, like, you’re a hypocrite, you know? And so I was struggling to get it all together.

But when I got it together, this was a conversion in this Pentecostal church. I got the Holy Ghost, speaking with tongues, I was baptized in Jesus’s name. And like somebody flicked a light switch, I didn’t drink, smoke, or swear, and my life just changed radically overnight. It was scary. My parents didn’t even know me. They said, who are you? This is crazy, you know? You’re in college. Like, there’s something weird, you know? Then
my dad said, sit down, have a beer with me, son. I said, Dad, I don’t -- I don’t drink. I said, I wasted so much of my life that way, you know? I said, you take a beer, you put it in a Christian’s hand, you put it in a sinner’s hand, you ask somebody which one’s a -- which one’s a Christian? You know, I --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- I got to represent what I believe. And I -- and I -- and God comes before my family. And that was something they just, like, they were just crazy, they couldn’t understand that. They thought I’d, like, shave my head and -- and go to a monastery or something, it was crazy. But --

MS. KERRIE REAY: How old were you, about?

Sorry.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: I would say I was about 25.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Twenty-five?

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Twenty-four.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Twenty-four or 25.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And so my mom went missing when I was 26, and so at this time, you know, my -- I basically kind of had this standoffish relationship with my family because my dad would always be like, hey, your uncle’s in town, you know, want to go to -- go golfing on a
Sunday morning?

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** You know, you should come with us. They haven’t seen me for a while and everything. I said, well, Dad, you know when church is done, I’ll be there, and that’s my priority. You know, pursuing the ministry is my focus. It’s -- it’s my conviction, you know, it’s something I do.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** He would just tell me off and call me down, but I would get on to church and then I would come rushing over to my mom’s house, maybe they’re having a beer after they went golfing. And my dad tore into me a little bit in front of everybody and said, oh, you’re at church, and all this kind of stuff, and basically was embarrassed, you know, that I didn’t go -- I didn’t honour my family and go --

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Right.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** -- golfing with them and stuff. And all of a sudden, my dad’s silent, you know, and my uncle stood up. He said, [Step-father], and he came walking over. My dad’s name is [Step-father]. And my uncle [Uncle 2], he -- he came and put a big hug on me and he said -- he said, I wish my kids would go to church. I wish one of my kids was a preacher. And he gave me a hug.
MR. BRENT CLETEROE: And my dad, too, the whole family, you know? He came and he said, I’m so sorry, son. You know? You know, I’m so proud of you, and stuff. But it was -- if I was a crackhead, my dad wouldn’t care. But I was a Christian, and that was like, you know, it was radical. It was different, and that was the problem, is like -- a lot of times, in First Nations communities, it’s like, if you’re dysfunctional, then you’re accepted. If you -- if you become sober, well, you -- you think you’re something better. Well, because you -- everyone’s convicted. Everyone’s -- everyone’s uncomfortable because you’re not laughing off your dysfunction, because you’re like, guys, this is -- this is scary.

MR. BRENT CLETEROE: This is wrong. This is, you know? And you become the odd man out, and so my father recognized that he had to change how he saw me. Because if -- if you live right long enough, then you have to acknowledge it.

MR. BRENT CLETEROE: And that’s -- I think that’s the beautiful thing. Like, if you choose to be a father, if you -- if you take the responsibility and the accountability and the character, integrity building and
the -- the long grow that it takes to try to un-tarnish
your name, you know? And overnight, you can have the
authority, overnight, you can decide to be empowered and
have an identity that’s going to be -- change the world,
but then you’ve got to start to work. You’ve got to get on
that long road, start walking one step at a time. “A
journey of 1,000 miles begins with one step.” You’ve got
to do the work. But someday, everybody -- everybody was
against me, too. You know, everybody says, oh, you’re a
hypocrite and you’re -- you’re a joke and you’re never
going to be -- you’re always going to be the same, you
know, you’re not going to be different. Everybody wants to
tempt you, like, oh, hey, you know, have a beer with me,
you know? Come on, sit down. It’s like when you smoke
cigarettes and you’re addicted to nicotine, when you want
to quit, everybody wants to give you a smoke.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Nobody wants to see your
success.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** Yeah. And then when
you -- you know, when you -- when you’re in the -- when
you’re in the throes of the addiction, they want to spit on
you, you know?

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** When you’re digging in
the couch for change to try to buy a pack of smokes, you
know, or you’re smoking butts, you know, it’s a shameful thing. But when you want to quit, man, everybody wants to give you a smoke.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And -- and my mom used to say, she worked in a kitchen, and she said there used to be crabs in a pot, the chef would put them in to boil, and they’d all start crawling out. My mom, she was a -- a prep cook, and she came around the chef, she said, the crabs are coming out. You know, they’re all crawling out. He said, Shirley, don’t worry about them crabs, because the other ones will pull them back in.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And she said, that’s just like the world. She said, that’s just like addictions and all that stuff. She used to educate me with these kind of stories.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And I found them to be true. I thought, man, I’m trying to change my life and everybody -- everybody wants to take me out. Everybody wants to do something, you know? Girls were trying to tempt me, you know. Everybody was trying to tarnish the -- what I was trying to do.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.
MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And then it was odd, it was contempt. Then it’s overnight, everybody hates you.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Everybody’s against you and your own family won’t spit on you, they want nothing to do with you. And you’re walking this road by yourself and you’re alone, and so you have to be strong enough, you know, at that point to realize that, you know, I have to go all the way with this thing.

And so, that being said, that was a beautiful part of the story, is, like I always used to, I was working in a saw mill. So my dad always used to be embarrassed of me and the church and stuff, but this time, he embraced the fact. He’s like, obviously, he’s going to go all the way with this thing. And so he -- he changed the way he saw me, and he would tell people, my sonny boy, he’s a preacher, you know? My son, he’s a preacher. And -- and I said, Dad, come to church, I want to preach. He’s like, I -- I don’t want to go to church, you know?

Finally, him and my mom, they came one time. They hear me preach one of the first times I preached, and my mom, she stood up, and she was a Christian before, and so she raised her hands. She was crying, you know, in the presence of the Lord, and my dad stood there. When he stood up for me, he was proud, you know, that I preached. And I sang a song
and I preached, and everything there was good.

And so while this is all going on, the
dynamics have changed, you know? They’re celebrating my
conviction to be a minister or whatever. What happened
was, my -- my mom and dad -- so -- so I was delivering
pizza. I was doing everything I could to make sure that
Sunday was my priority. You know, I had to be in church.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: I couldn’t take a job
in camp. When you grow up in a northern community, there’s
a lot of good money out there to get a job.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Yeah, yeah.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: To go work in the bush
and everything.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And my dad would
always get mad. My dad would always get mad at me because
I wouldn’t take a job that -- that interfered with church.
And so he said, oh, that stupid church and everything, you
need to come with me out in the pipeline, and all this kind
of stuff. And I said, Dad, you know, you’ve got to back up
a little bit. When I was 18, it was the same thing. Like,
my buddy, he dropped out of high school, the guy that I
moved in with, the guy that I first got my first place.

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.
MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: My mom was crying when I moved out. He was working on the rigs and he dropped out of school in grade 10 and he wanted me to work with him on the rigs. Man, he says, stop pushing carts at Safeway, you know, like a clown. You need to come out here and get --

you know, I’ve got two sleds, I’ve got a truck, I’ve got all this money, you know? And every -- all -- a big TV and all this kind of stuff. And I said, no, I said, I’ve got to graduate, you know? I said, no one in the history of my family since they lived in tipis have ever graduated, on both sides of my mom and dad’s family. I said, I want to be the guy. I want to be the -- you know, that -- that gets a grade 12. Which is, you know, really nothing compared to, you know, education, but to me, it was this big -- this goal I was going to reach.

And so [D.C.] and -- and I had a principal, his name was [A.B.], and these guys, they were just, like, rooting for me, you know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And I’d get in fights at school and they’d -- I’d be in in-school, but I was hanging on. Like, I -- I want to -- I want to graduate, you know? And I took my provisional exam courses. My mom would always say, like, don’t take these dummy classes they want to push you into. You know, you get your -- you get
your, you know, biology, you know, 10, 11, and 12 so you
graduate properly. You need to, like, and -- get
(indiscernible) or something, a certain kind of diploma,
not a good enough diploma. You know, no.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** I want you to get a
real diploma. And I said, okay, Mom.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** And that’s how she
was. She was like, you’re going to do it, you want to do
it right. And so when I graduated, I had a lineup of
teachers that were shaking my hand off, you know? Saying,
we knew you could do it and we believed in you and stuff.
And I -- I won a bursary for $1,000 to go to college. It
was great. I went to the -- for about three months and
then I cashed it in and got drunk. I was on welfare and I
was a mess, and -- and God changed all that, you know?

And so here I am, 25 and 26 years old, and
so my mom and dad were, like, basically, you know, you’re
-- you’re -- this church and stuff is a joke, you know? My
dad was still giving me a hard time about working and
everything, being a man, and going to get a real job. And
I told them, I said, God will provide my -- my needs, Dad,
you’ll see. And then I got a job at the mill, and I was
making, like, 25 bucks an hour or something like that. And
all of a sudden, I was, you know, a single guy, so I, you
know, I had a nice car and everything, you know, I was -- I
was kind of -- everything was lining up for me and my dad
was so proud of me, you know. He says, you’re right, son,
you know, you stuck it out and God did provide for you.
Obviously, He did, you know?

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: And it was years of
ridicule and giving me a hard time and then finally, it all
came together for me, you know? And so I was working at a
saw mill and I come home and my dad would say, come here,
son, let me smell you. You know, he used to work in a saw
mill, he loved the smell of fresh cut wood, and my mom
would be there.

And one day I came home -- well, to my mom’s
house. I had my own apartment, but I came to my mom’s
house, and she was doing dishes, and the sun was coming
through the window. It was a beautiful afternoon. And she
was quiet. My mom was never quiet, you know? My mom would
always tell you, how was your day, have something to eat,
sit down, you know? And she’s -- I’m going to talk to her.
So she was a talker, you know, and my mom would always be
talking. When I got there, she was quiet, and I thought --
I got in, I say, hey, Mom. Nothing, you know? And I said
-- said, what are you doing? Clinking the glasses, she was
doing the dishes, and she said, oh, nothing, she said. I’m just talking to the Lord, she says. Shock, you know? I mean, what is it, what do you mean, you know? And I came over, I -- I hugged her around the waist and I kind of looked at her and -- and there was tears coming down her face. I said, what’s going on, Mom? She said, oh, I was talking to the Lord, she said.

And my -- my brother, [Brother 1], he’s my youngest brother and he was born premature, and when he was born premature, they had to send him to Edmonton and they were going to pull the plug on him if his lungs didn’t develop, and my mom tells a story that she was, like, you know, pulling her hair out, just begging God to save her son, you know? Don’t -- don’t let my son die. When she went to Edmonton, my grandmother told her, she said, if -- if that little boy lives, he’s going to be the biggest one out of all of them. And -- and God spared my brother’s life, and he’s the biggest one out of all of us today. And she said that, at that -- that night, that God spoke to her and said, if -- if I save your son, you have to serve Me, you know? You have to get back on -- on the right track with Me, type of deal.

And so that -- that afternoon, I said to Mom, I asked, what’s going on? And she said, you know, I was talking to the Lord and He said that I’ve got to come
true on my promise that I made to Him when -- you know, when [Brother 1] was born. And she said, you know, I need to -- I need to make it right with Him, you know? And so I was -- I thought it was good news, you know? And so I prayed with her and -- and, you know, and -- and this was literally, like, about a month before she went missing.

And so I used to pick her up. She used to call me, she’d be at a party drinking somewhere in a fire pit somewhere in somebody’s backyard and listen to all of her country music and then get drunk. She’d want me to two-step with her, you know, all the time she’s drunk, you know? And I was embarrassed at my mom for so many years. Embarrassed. I used to have friends, I’d bring them to school, I’d -- I’d go home and I’d go the long way around. Yeah, I didn’t want people to know where I lived, you know? I was embarrassed. There were a lot of times I was embarrassed of the addictions and of the poverty and my mom’s on welfare, my dad’s in the woods and he doesn’t care if we live or die, he’s all strung out on drugs or something, you know? My mom would have to make ends meet. And -- and so, you know, I was always embarrassed at my mom.

There just came a point where I was like, I don’t care. I love my mom, you know? And I told her, Mom, I’ll pick you up wherever you are, you call me. And so I
would be my mom’s chauffeur. She would call me in the
Condell Hotel in the bar, she’d call me, come and get me,
sonny boy, I’m done. And I’d go pick her up, spill her in
the car, spill her out the car, and then she’d straighten
me out.

First, I said that I -- you know, I tell
people this, that -- that when people have addictions and
when they’re alcoholics, there’s always three levels. And
it’s they’re -- they’re laughing, then they’re crying, and
then they’re hitting you. That’s kind of how it goes.
They’re laughing, then they’re crying, and then they’re
angry and they just want to fight somebody. And -- so
often, I just learned how to navigate those stages and I’d
have to get my mom home before she was going to explode,
you know? But I got her home and -- and so many times, I
would do that, and I started.

My -- my brother-in-law, now, who was my
pastor at the church, and he had a younger sister, and she
was moving out from New Brunswick, and they kept telling
me, they said, oh, you’re going to marry my sister, you
know, so they were bugging me at the church, and I thought,
man, she’s, like, seven years younger than me. Last time I
seen her, she was just a little kid, you know? I don’t
even know just who she is now. But she showed up in Fort
St. John, I said, my goodness, she’s just gorgeous, you
know? And I said, man, I think this is what God’s doing, you know? And so I remember calling her dad, and my cell phone was shaking, you know? I said, I -- I love your daughter, you know, I want -- I want to ask you of her hand in marriage, you know? And he said, are you sure? I said -- I said, sir, I said, I got a good job, I work in a saw mill, you know? I -- I got my own place and I -- you know, I’m doing really good in the church. I lead the song service, I play drums, you know, I’m pursuing the ministry, you know? And -- and he said, no, no, he said, you’re a great young man. He said, I’m not worried about you, he said, my daughter’s crazy. He said, are you sure you want to marry her, you know? And he was joking, and -- and so he gave me his blessing, I was going to get married.

But before all that, right before my mom went missing, she met my girlfriend. And my mom always hated my girlfriends. My mom would just tell them off on the phone, don’t you call here for my son again, hang up on them. She was always very, very rude to people and I hated that. I said, Mom, I’ve been lining up this girl for two weeks, don’t -- don’t scare her off, you know, I like her. But my mom said no, she said, I seen your wife before. She said, I seen her in a dream. She’s just like me, she’s short like me, she’s got dark hair, it’s about this long. She said, I seen a silhouette of her. I can’t quite see
her face, but, she said, I had dreams about your wife. It’ll know her when I see her. That’s how my mom was all the time. And so I hated introducing my girlfriends to my mom, and I knew that was just a fighting situation, so.

I was out and about with my girlfriend one day, we were having a date, and my mom called me. So this is the first time I introduced my -- my white girlfriend to my Native mom, who’s drunk, who I know is going to try to fight her or something crazy, so I said, well, we’ve got to go get my mom, and this is going to be a thing. She’s like, I love you, you know? I want to -- I want to spend the rest of my life with you or something, I don’t care, you know, whatever. Going out with your mom, you know, let’s go -- let’s go do it, let’s go pick her up.

So -- so we went to this party and picked up my mom and she got in the car and my girlfriend was like, oh, hey, you sit in the front and I’ll sit in the back. And my mom said, no, I’ll -- I’ll sit in the back, you sit in the front. I said, something’s horribly wrong. I think my mom’s going to kill her, you know? My mom’s going to strangle her from behind or something. I said, what’s going on? So I’m on pins and needles, I don’t know what’s going to happen. She’s sitting in the back seat of the car and she’s just dead silent. I said, she is mad. Like, Mom always went to freak out, my mom’s never quiet. I don’t
know why she’s not already telling her off and she’s all quiet. And my mom said, so you’re my daughter-in-law, she said. I started laughing and my girlfriend says, like, what is going on? You know, for -- there’s not even a how you doing or what’s your name or -- it’s just like, you’re the one, eh?

And so we get out of the car and my mom goes in the house and, you know, she doesn’t say anything. I get in the car and -- and my -- my girlfriend’s like, what was that about? I said, I don’t know. I said, I don’t know. She said, you know, your mom reached out and took my hand when I was sitting in the front. She held my hand all the way home. I said, really? I said, yeah -- she said, yeah.

And it was that -- it was that same week that I was home alone one night, it was about midnight, and I was getting ready for bed and the phone rang. And I answered the phone and it was my mom. And she was intoxicated, she was drinking. I said, hey, Mom, how are you doing? She said, oh, good. She said, I’m just calling you to tell you I love you. Which she had never done in the history of my life. I said, well, I love you too, Mom, do you want me to come get you? Are you -- are you at the bar or what? And she said, no, no. She said, I’m just calling to tell you that I love you. I said, I love you
too, Mom. I said, are you sure you don’t want me to come
to the house or something, visit with you? She said, no,
no. She said, that girl you’re dating, she said, is she
stubborn like your mom? I said, yeah, she is. She said,
that’s the one you want to marry. I said, okay, Mom. And
she said, I love you. I said, I love you too, Mom. She
said no, I love you. I said, okay, Mom, and she -- and
then she hung up.

And that was the last time I ever heard her
voice. It was like she knew, you know? It was like she --
she came -- just called telling me. And so my auntie was
-- lived a couple blocks away from my mom’s house, and my
dad was in camp and my mom would go and stay with my auntie
when my dad was in camp. And there was a guy across the
street, his name was [name redacted], and he has a history
of violence against women. He, I guess, has it in his
police file, a story where he picked up a -- a Native lady
and she was a prostitute and he took her in the woods and
raped her and he smashed her head with a big rock and he
tried to kill her and she crawled to the road and told the
RCMP what he did, and they didn’t believe her. I guess
there was something, they didn’t investigate it because of
her, you know, lot in life.

And so this guy had a history of being a
weirdo, but he was, like, a -- I never met him in my life,
but he was, like, a friend of the family. They knew who he was, like, a friend of a friend or something. He was having a barbecue at his house, and right across the road from my auntie’s house, they went over there and they were drinking and there were some people there and they were all, I guess, asked for a statement of what happened that night. But I guess the story goes that my mom was there with my auntie and then my mom started fighting with this guy, I guess, and -- the guy who owned the house, and he -- she was telling him on. Like I said, my mom’s a wolverine, my mom’s like a firecracker. My mom used to fight with my daddy, and he was really big, you know? She was not afraid of anybody.

And so I guess this guy offended her. My mom was always mad at somebody. If my mom didn’t like you, you knew right away. She would not beat around the bush about stuff. And so for some reason, she was nose to nose with this guy, screaming and arguing. My auntie had left, I guess. I don’t know what happened, but my auntie wasn’t there, and everyone in the -- everyone in the statement, in their stories, said there was a big, explosive argument and then they don’t know anything that happened after that. And my mom didn’t come home the next day, which was very shocking. That would have never happened. And my auntie knew right away something was terribly wrong.
And the guy detailed the trunk of his car, had it professionally detailed, and he redid all the drywall in his basement and he covered a rug, replaced the rug in the basement of his house the same weekend. And while all this is going on, my auntie, like, from 7:00 in the morning, you know, is calling the police and saying, my sister has been murdered. Like, my sister is in -- like, locked up in that house against her own free will. Like, there’s something terribly wrong and you need to come, come and investigate this situation. The RCMP said, oh, she probably just went to a different party, you have nothing to worry about, a person has to be missing for 48 hours before we investigate. And she said, like, this is a murder. Like, this is something you need to -- well, we’ll send a car by, you know. They never did.

And you know, I’m talking hour by hour, day by day, my auntie -- my auntie is, like, very, very belligerent and very, very -- she’ll cuss you out. My -- my auntie’s very vile. She’s very, very unladylike. I don’t know what you want to call her, but she was tearing them a new -- there was -- she was tearing a strip off the police. You know, obviously --

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** What’s her name?

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** -- maybe that’s why -- [Aunt 2]. [Eight lines redacted – ongoing investigation].
And so she’s freaking out hysterical, and they just, I guess, thought she was crazy or they wouldn’t listen to her, but again, this is the RCMP negligence I was talking about. And basically, this is, well, it’s just another Native lady, essentially, is what my auntie was getting, you know, from -- that’s what she felt like she was being treated like.

And so, you know, we’re all in -- all in shock, you know? Monday comes, Friday comes, and I’m getting phone calls from my sisters and my brothers and they’re saying, Mom’s gone, like, Mom’s missing and we can’t find her. I said, oh, she, you know -- and I’m in denial. The first thing that hits me like a freight train is, like, oh, she’s somewhere. Maybe she -- you know, I’m going to start saying, oh, she went up north, you know? Maybe she drove with somebody up north, she went to Telegraph Creek or she went -- she’s had a breakdown, she’s going to go get drunk, she’s going to go party, you know, she’s running away from the family or something. She -- and I’m just thinking, like, nothing. And I guess I would say, like, I froze again. I didn’t -- I didn’t care. I didn’t want to care. I just kept on pretending like it wasn’t true and -- and I didn’t talk to anybody about it. I just went to work and just kept on with my life and -- and I wouldn’t answer the phone.
Everybody’s freaking out, my Auntie [Aunt 1] is calling the police, Auntie [Aunt 1] is -- is very -- she was, I would say she was the one in our family that had it together the most. She didn’t drink or anything. And she’s -- she went to the police and she was just like, they had to drag her out of there. Like, she wouldn’t leave. She says, you’ve got to go, you’ve got to find out who killed my sister. Like, what is going on, like, what’s happening? And -- and then who’s doing what and what are you going to do about it? Where’s -- where’s the statement? Like, who do -- who -- who is doing the investigation and what’s going on? And it was always the same thing. Well, you know, we’ll let you know. Oh, it’s been passed to another investigator now in Prince George, a homicide unit, or now it’s this person or that person, and they just kept on changing the subject. They would just, you know, you would call that person and they would know nothing about it, and they were, okay, well, we’ll get back to you when we get that case in our hands and all this kind of stuff, and -- and you know, nobody was doing anything.

And the -- and the sad thing was, everybody in town knew what the police didn’t know, you know, and I think multiple people punched this guy out, broke his -- oh, my cousin, he went across the street, and he wasn’t in -- in -- he wasn’t in the ministry, so he -- he hit this
guy and -- and dealt with him the way he felt. And I had
friends calling me and they said, Brent, we understand that
you go to church now and all that, they said, but you just
tell us the go-ahead and we’ll go and kick the door off the
hinges and pull this guy’s fingernails, he’ll tell us where
your mom is. Because I used to run with some bad guys and
they all felt really bad for me. And I -- again, I was,
like, fought all of the temptation. Just, I said, no,
that’s not the right thing to do. The truth will come out.
You know, I don’t need to -- I don’t need you to do that,
and I appreciate your concern, you know? The story goes, I
guess my dad bumped into him in a bar in Fort Nelson and
half-killed him, and I guess they had to pull him off him.

[Fourteen lines redacted – ongoing
investigation]. So okay.

And I really had to come to grips with the
fact, the one thing my mom said. You know, that she wasn’t
always going to be here. She used to tell me, she -- sonny
boy, when I’m gone, she said, you have to live for your
family. Because I was the chosen one and I used to drive
my sister around wherever. My sister would call me, drop
of a hat. Hey, money, I want to go shopping, take me here,
take me there, drive me everywhere. I had to look after
her and I would always drive my sister around. And that
was funny that, when I got married, my mom always used to
say, you know, when you get married, then your wife has to come first. Your family has to come first. You have to tell your sister and everybody else that they -- they aren’t the priority anymore. And I remember telling my sister that and she was real angry, you know? Oh, she was mad, because I wouldn’t just go and pick her up and give her money anymore, you know? I had my own family.

And -- and so, like I said, I got that closure when God told me that she was in His hands and -- and it was none of my business, you know, at this point. And then I didn’t have to look for her anymore. I didn’t have to feel like she was going to pop up or I was going to have this, you know, nightmare the rest of my life. But my aunties, you know, they didn’t. Like, they got a psychic and they tried to find a place, and I think it was the Kiskatinaw Bridge, actually, they believe that that’s where the guy threw my mom over or something like that. That’s what the psychic told them, and I don’t validate that, I don’t believe that, but it’s definitely not far-fetched. And they -- they looked, I think, a lot of different places. They would go and walk in fields and the woods and different places, and they used to say, hey, you need to come, you know. I said, even if they find my mom, I don’t want to see her. I don’t want to see her like that. And so I -- I didn’t want to have nothing to do with that. I
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Brent Cletheroe
(Shirley Cletheroe)

just wasn’t strong enough, you know? I didn’t -- I
admitted it. I was just like, I’m not -- I didn’t look for
her one day.

I didn’t even -- I -- when she went missing,
I used to hate myself because I didn’t care, I didn’t try,
I didn’t do something. But to this day, I think that I
would do it again. That was -- that, for me, was the right
thing to do, because if I wasn’t going to go and -- and
shoot this guy or do something about it, you know, then.
You know, it’s to this day that sometimes I think, well,
what if she was in that basement, you know, tied up or
something? I could have saved her, you know, I could have
done something. And it’s so hard, because it’s like,
that’s not my problem, you know? It’s not my -- it’s not
fair. Not fair to do that to yourself. Whatever happened,
you know, I -- I think I’m justified before God in -- in
that life is what it is. And I never asked to be Native, I
never asked to be abused, I never asked to be
dysfunctional, I never asked to be born to somebody who
didn’t want me, and I didn’t ask to have a mom that went
missing. And so it’s not something that I need to -- need
to beat myself up about. It’s life and it is what it is.
And I just thank God that I had the strength to talk about
it and to be real about, you know, life and -- and stuff,
because I can’t help anybody else if I can’t look at the
ugliest part of who I am and see something good.

And I know a lot of people that, who go to our church and who are part of our ministry in Quesnel and it’s called Lifeline and we help people with addictions and different things, that I’m not just some perfect person that never had any problems and stuff. And people say, you don’t even look Native, you know, or something, and I -- I say, you know, it doesn’t matter what you look like. It doesn’t matter if you’re Native or not. Everybody has -- everybody suffers, you know. But when I’m real and I’m open, it’s actually -- it’s -- it helped so many people that I feel it’s an obligation to have the courage to tell your story.

And so all that being said, I’m trying to run away from this responsibility that I feel I have to -- to write a book. I’m not a really sit-down kind of a concentrated person. I’m always running around, helping people do things, and busy. But I’ve got to sit down and write a book. It’s called, Missing Mother, Finding Closure. And I think that if I was approached by a -- a First Nations publishing company and they said that -- that if I would ever write this thing, that they -- it would be a big deal, that they wanted me to -- to write a book with them so that would be in First Nations studies all across Canada, that they would have it in high schools and stuff
and they’d love our story, you know? Because she wasn’t just some, you know, and -- and I hate to say this and it breaks my heart, but some of the people just write off somebody who is on a street level or somebody who is --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLEThEROE: -- in the throes of addictions or that has some kind of a stereotype associated to their story. And it’s generational, and so it’s a -- it’s just a broken record, you know? And they don’t -- that doesn’t have -- resonate the same way as somebody who is just a unique individual. And the -- this idea that she knew, this idea that the last thing she told me, that, like, she knew, and -- and the way the story’s told and who I am now and -- and everything up from the beginning to the ending is -- is very unique. I think it’s a very special story. That’s why I didn’t want it to be categorized or filed away with just the fact that it’s a unified effort to change, you know, the -- the problem. Because I’m not a problem. I’ve been through -- you know what I’ve been through is -- is more than a problem. It’s more than a problem, and -- and it’s not going to go away any time soon.

And as long as people have free will, there will be -- there will be tragedy and there will be murder, there will be chaos and there will be, you know, these
social issues. But if we can find our father, you know, in
the storm, then we can -- then we’ll be protected and we’ll
be okay and we’ll be provided for. We’ll -- we can come
out of this, you know? And the answer is -- is -- to -- to
finding your father is -- is, you know, if you can be a
father. You know, that’s -- that’s the first step for a
lot of these -- a lot of these men that aren’t -- that
don’t have the power --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: -- to change, you
know? Is -- is accepting the responsibility to be a
father. And I think that’s the pathway to finding your
father. And so that’s what I -- I would say that, through
my whole story, was, anybody can be a father, but it takes
a real man to be a dad. There are false fathers and there
are false paths, false doctrine, you know? The Catholicism
aspect and all of that, it’s --

MS. KERRIE REAY: M’hm.

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: It’s -- again, it’s a
mask. It’s a false hope. And there is a -- there is a
real Christian Church, there is a real Jesus Christ, and
there is a real Judgment and Heaven and Hell. I believe
that. And -- and so that’s why I’m living the way I’m
living to tell everybody about it, but -- but you know, if
that message doesn’t resonate with somebody, even if they
could ever find a father, you know --

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm?

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** -- that would be the hope to whatever door opens, because we have a Heavenly Father and he has a way of laying a -- a trail, blazing a trail, you know? He’s the chosen one, and if we choose to be chosen, then we’ll find our father. I would say I’m finished. I think that it should be public and I -- I think that this is a great -- think this is a -- this is a phenomenal opportunity, and I want to thank you guys for being here. And the emotional toll it takes on you guys to do what you’re doing, my hat’s off to you, and keep up the good work.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** M’hm.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** Fighting the good fight.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** I just want to acknowledge the courage for you as a young Indigenous man to come here before -- before a camera, a tape recorder, and people that you don’t know to share.

**MR. BRENT CLETHEROE:** Thank you.

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** What you did today takes a -- a phenomenal amount of courage. It -- I’ll get you, then -- we’ll do this off-camera if you would like to be public, which is what you had said at the beginning, and so
we’ll --

MR. BRENT CLETHEROE: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: -- sign this off the camera. So it’s 6:28 and I’ll turn -- I’ll turn it off.

--- Upon adjourning at 6:28 p.m.
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

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

Jessi L. Sandham

November 9, 2018