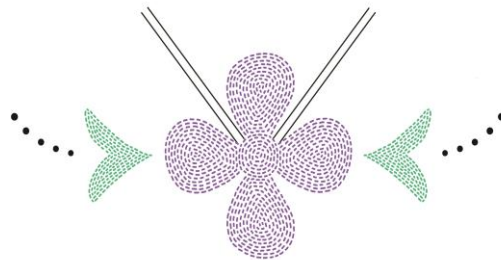


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



Enquête nationale
sur les femmes et les filles
autochtones disparues et assassinées

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part I Statement Gathering
Coast High Country Inn
Whitehorse, Yukon**



PUBLIC

Saturday November 10, 2018

**Statement - Volume 575
Hazel Buffalo Robe,
In relation to Emily Osmond**

Statement gathered by Kerrie Reay

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Whitehorse, Yukon

--- Upon commencing on Saturday, November 10, 2018 at 1:09 p.m.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay, this is Kerrie Reay,

I'm a statement taker with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. And today we are at Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory. It is November 10th, 2018, and the time is 1:09. Today I am speaking with Hazel Buffalo Robe. Buffalo Robe is B-U-F-F-A-L-O, capital R-O-B-E. And Hazel is with the Kawacatoose First Nation. I will spell that, that is K-A-W-A-C-A-T-O-O-S-E, First Nation, and is currently residing in Whitehorse here in the Yukon.

Hazel is here today to share about her Auntie, Emily Osmond. Emily is E-M-I-L-Y, Osmond O-S-M-O-N-D. Emily went missing from just north of the Kawacatoose First Nation in Saskatchewan, and she went missing on September 9th, 2007. Emily's maiden name was LaPlante. That's L-A, capital P-L-A-N-T-E.

Today Hazel is here, she has chosen not to have anybody here in the room with her, and that -- Hazel you are here voluntarily to provide your truth, and you agree to the videotaping and the audio taping?

MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: Yes.

MS. KERRIE REAY: And we'll talk about your choice as to whether you would like your testimony to be public or private when we come to the end.

1 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** Okay.

2 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Whenever you're ready
3 Hazel, the time and the space is yours. So when you're
4 comfortable.

5 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** I'm not sure how
6 much I can contribute. I've had a background of years of
7 working in the First Nation community, and HIV prevention
8 awareness, education when it first hit the scene, and that
9 threw me into a period of time where I knew there was a
10 lot, a lot of trauma that our indigenous people were at
11 risk, serious risk.

12 During that period of time there were
13 already women who were disappearing. We already knew there
14 were a lot of women being murdered and seemingly no justice
15 ever for them. It was just not ever taken seriously.

16 So this has, this has been difficult because
17 as an indigenous woman knowing the risk that our community,
18 and particularly our young women, have faced over the
19 decades, actually over the centuries, from contact -- right
20 back from contact when you go right down to it. It has
21 been -- it's still a difficult social environment to live
22 in.

23 I remember when we first had the -- it was
24 about three years ago now when -- it was a regional
25 gathering for MMIW, and it was like expressing the sense

1 that there's -- there's always the sense of fear, there's
2 always the sense of dread and anxiety that we, we live with
3 on a day to day basis. And particularly when someone in
4 your family has gone missing. And it's underscored that
5 the risk is there.

6 It's a reality check, and we know that there
7 still is a lot of work to do yet, in terms of equality and
8 countering the discrimination that this -- the society that
9 we live in is founded on.

10 I owe a lot to my Auntie Emily. She is the
11 older sister of my mother, and she herself was unable to
12 have any children. And I often wonder whether or not that
13 was a result of the sterilization process that was underway
14 also during the period of time she was a young woman. And
15 my other Auntie Helen, was also not ever able to have
16 children, so they adopted.

17 I never was able to have that personal
18 conversation with either of them, to find out whether or
19 not there was something a little bit more sinister about
20 why they were unable to have children, because that was
21 unusual for, for them to be barren.

22 But my Auntie Emily opened her home to a lot
23 of individuals over the years. She opened her home to
24 foster some of the children who were here in Whitehorse.
25 I'll back up a little bit.

1 She had married a man in the army, Jerry
2 Osmond, and Jerry was stationed here in the 60s. So when
3 they moved here they were childless here in Whitehorse, and
4 she had adopted -- actually she fostered -- she took in
5 seven of her brothers' children, who had been scooped in
6 the Sixties Scoop. Both her older brothers, the two eldest
7 brothers, were World War II veterans, as well as veterans
8 of the Residential School system.

9 So there was a double whammy, particularly
10 for the one uncle, Uncle Mike LaPlante. Now Sir Michael
11 LaPlante, he was knighted by the French Government. And so
12 she raised seven of those children here in Whitehorse.

13 And as a child I remember the old telephone
14 being on the wall where there was not even an arm's length
15 stretch on the cord, where she would be talking with her
16 sister. And we'd always be so excited to hear about what
17 she was doing. And that's when I first heard about this
18 Whitehorse, Yukon.

19 And over the period of years, my late sister
20 who also was interviewed on the APTN Taken, April, April
21 Buffalo Robe, left Ontario where we were residing at the
22 time and moved to Whitehorse. And of course she was my, my
23 role model and my mentor, and I followed her up a few years
24 later. And that's how, that's how we ended up here in the
25 Yukon.

1 She's touched my life in that way -- like I
2 came up and I spent some time here. I returned back to
3 down south, and just ended up having a heartache for the
4 country here and ended up coming back. I raised my
5 daughter here and I haven't left. So Whitehorse has become
6 my, my community. I've been living here for over 30 years
7 now.

8 So I want to acknowledge her impact on my
9 life because she, she went through her own challenges. She
10 was a professional, she was a cook. She started off as a
11 Candy Stripe nurse. She was a cook and I believe it was at
12 the hospital that she probably got her start with. And
13 then went onto the Alberta College and graduated, became a
14 professional chef. And that's how she supported her
15 family.

16 She was always working, she was a
17 businesswoman. She had a coffee shop downtown here in what
18 we call the old Quinlan Mall. She also had a coffee shop,
19 she ran the restaurant. Apparently there was quite some
20 time ago, I can't remember the name of it, but there was a
21 restaurant on top of what we call Two Mile Hill. And then
22 she would take on -- when she gave up those she took on
23 contracts for camp cook. So that's how she supported all
24 of us kids.

25 She went through a divorce and I believe the

1 divorce was what was her significant trigger and challenge
2 in life, because she came from, she came from the belief in
3 the era that it was until death do us part. But I believe
4 that the social discrimination, the pressures of the
5 society we live in, impacted that severely.

6 I know that her husband had become -- had
7 started drinking a lot, so I think there was a lot of
8 alcohol involved at the time as well. And regardless, she
9 would have stayed with that man and honoured her vow,
10 honoured her wedding vow.

11 I think that is one of the key pieces that
12 led to her mental health challenges. And as much as she
13 stayed strong after the divorce, she sold the house and
14 moved to Prince Rupert. And this photograph here is a
15 photograph of her that I took when we were in Prince
16 Rupert. And I'll leave this one, this one can stay with
17 the -- I'm not sure if it's already been submitted or not.

18 So she lived in Prince Rupert for awhile. I
19 remember my late mother and my late sister, my brother, my
20 daughter and I, spent the Christmas with her. So this is,
21 this is one of the rare photographs that I, I have of her,
22 that we have of her in this period of her life. So this,
23 this photograph is actually quite special to me. You can
24 see the Christmas lights from the tree in her, in her
25 glasses.

1 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Oh yes.

2 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** And her profile as
3 well.

4 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Yeah. And you said that
5 you'd like to leave this copy with me?

6 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** I can leave this
7 copy, yes.

8 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay, thank you. And that
9 would have been taken when, Christmas of?

10 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** I'm trying to
11 remember what year that was. My daughter would have been
12 about three. Probably 1980, maybe 1981. Probably within
13 that, within that period of time.

14 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** That was in Prince Rupert.

15 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** When I moved to
16 Whitehorse I recall a lot of discrimination. I was exposed
17 to a lot of discrimination. And I know that that has a lot
18 of pressure on the mixed marriages at that time. There
19 were not a lot of mixed marriages in those years, but --

20 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** When you say those years,
21 when would that have been?

22 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** That would have
23 been the early 60s.

24 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Early 60s, okay.

25 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** Yeah. I'm not sure

1 if my cousin Myrna submitted the photographs, but at this
2 Saskatoon hearing I collected family photographs from some
3 different family members, and we were really successful in
4 getting some really beautiful pictures of her. When she
5 was in her 30s, probably early 30s, and prime of her life.
6 And represented that successful -- the successful wife.
7 And she was just really beautiful. There's some really
8 beautiful pictures of her during that period of time.

9 We talk about the vulnerability, and I think
10 -- I think that discrimination and that social pressure at
11 the time -- because Jerry Osmond ended up marrying a non-
12 native woman after the divorce and left, left the
13 Territory. We didn't really have any further contact with
14 any of the children that he actually helped raise, that he
15 was in effect their, their father figure during that period
16 of time.

17 We talk about mental health, and she was an
18 extremely independent woman. She was so able to support
19 herself economically. But what we really forgot about
20 during that time was that she was a human being and was
21 going through her own grief with the loss of her
22 relationship, the loss of that marriage. And all of the
23 cousins pretty much scattered across the country. As
24 Sixties Scoop kids even -- they've had a really difficult
25 challenge maintaining their relationships. And I can only

1 imagine what they went through when they were scooped, and
2 the foster homes that they were placed in. I can't speak
3 to the truth of that, other than I know that they suffered
4 and had, had their challenges throughout that period of
5 time.

6 So we were all really young, and with her
7 living up here in the north, her closest relationship was
8 my mom, and even that was -- as sisters they had their
9 challenges as well with their relationship. So I think,
10 you know, as much as she presented as a strong independent
11 woman, that she did not really get the support that she
12 needed through that period of time. And as she moved into
13 her later years, she ended up caring for animals, and
14 particularly dogs and cats.

15 And I think that was one of the biggest
16 challenges her family had when she relocated back to
17 Saskatchewan, and was in that little place where she went
18 missing from, was the lack of resources, and the lack of
19 knowledge, and the lack of skills and awareness of how to
20 provide her the support and help that she needed. In spite
21 of her saying she didn't need anyone, challenging everyone,
22 and living that independent life. She even continued to
23 send parcels and gifts to her, her nieces and nephews
24 during that period of time.

25 So I think one of the pieces is the mental

1 health, the vulnerability of our elders, the isolation is
2 one of the issues I think we need to look as well. I think
3 we did a good job with the Saskatoon hearing in
4 representing her life in a visual context, and her -- what
5 she was known for. I believe those would be on record, the
6 contribution she made to, to people's lives.

7 And then with just vanishing and
8 disappearing, it was -- it's a shock, it still is a shock.
9 It's over 10 years ago, and people are saying well, you
10 know, with time you get on with things. But it doesn't
11 ever go away.

12 It creates suspicion, and doubt and fear.
13 There's rumours, there's -- everybody has their own theory
14 about what happened and who may have been involved with her
15 disappearance.

16 My initial understanding was that there was
17 a good relationship with the RCMP. And at the beginning of
18 the investigation -- I understand from my cousin Myrna
19 LaPlante, there was also a frustration where the people,
20 the community -- the family knew the country and the area,
21 but there was a restriction in terms of them being able to
22 step up and get involved, directly involved, right from the
23 beginning. And then when the investigation was done there
24 was nothing that could be any lead or determination of an
25 answer, or a lead to what might have happened and why she

1 disappeared.

2 There was no trace, they say there was no,
3 no signs of any kind of violent act on the site, there's
4 illusion to tire tracks in the mud. It's a question of
5 like what was that about? Perhaps it was just the
6 individual who had last see her on the ninth that had
7 unloaded the wood, it could have been just a wood truck.
8 But she definitely would not have left, we know that.
9 Because of her commitment to the animals that she was
10 taking care of on the property. So we know that there's --
11 it was unusual and it was suspicious as far as we're
12 concerned. Something went down, something happened.

13 I know there's been a lot of expert
14 witnesses over the while for the -- that have been
15 presenting at the National Inquiry. I know there has been
16 a lot of people who have spent a lot of time preparing and
17 delivering statements in terms of the vulnerabilities of
18 our indigenous people in this country. And it's pretty,
19 pretty hard for me to -- it would be pretty hard for me to
20 top any of that, other than my own lived experience as an
21 indigenous woman in this country, my own near misses, the
22 surprise every now and then when you're confidently walking
23 through your life, and then being -- walking right into a
24 blatant discrimination.

25 So I know those are, those are really,

1 really key pieces, and those are part of the bigger
2 picture. Part of the bigger picture is the international
3 sex slave trade that's going on as well. And those issues
4 don't necessarily touch the circumstance of my late Auntie.
5 I say late Auntie because we can't assume anything
6 different at this point. It's been over 10 years. But I
7 think those are still really important pieces that have to
8 be taken into consideration.

9 The law that we have today that allows a man
10 to be acquitted of an 11 centimetre gash in a woman's womb,
11 and her being left to bleed to death, and being basically
12 considered disposable because she was painted as a
13 prostitute and was paid for her services. That's just one
14 of the most recent stories. It doesn't mean it hasn't --
15 those kinds of situations have not been happening
16 throughout contact, from first contact.

17 It's a legacy that is carried over. The
18 disposability of our, of our beautiful brown women and
19 girls, and it's not just them, it's the men and the boys as
20 well.

21 The impact of Residential School. My late
22 Auntie Emily Osmond, her mother and father were Residential
23 School former students as well. Her older brothers and
24 sisters were also former students. The three of them,
25 Emily, Helen and my mother Evelyn, went to regular day

1 school, and that's because my grandmother Hazel LaPlante
2 refused to hand over her daughters to the Catholic priest.
3 So as a result they didn't go through that experience, but
4 they went through similar, similar experiences but in a
5 different context through the day schools and growing up in
6 the social environment of their time, of their generation.

7 The impact of the Residential Schools is --
8 again like I say, I'm sure there's many people who have
9 expressed it even more eloquently than I can right at this
10 moment. When I look at the HIV Aids work I did in the 90s,
11 and the number of our indigenous people who were on the
12 street, the sex trade, for their addictions, and having
13 left their communities so that they can escape whatever
14 trauma that they experienced at their community and their
15 family level. That, that stuck with me for many years.
16 And five years I did the prevention and education work in
17 that field.

18 And to this day, to this day the only way I
19 can explain it, it's like a tap that's been opened up, that
20 can't be turned off. And that's the grief. The grief, the
21 collective grief.

22 One of the conferences I attended as working
23 in the HIV Aids circle in those years, was for the sex
24 trade workers. And one of the significant differences I
25 heard from the non-native sex trade workers to the

1 indigenous sex trade workers was that the non-native sex
2 trade workers were there by choice. They wanted to be
3 there, they chose that life. The indigenous sex trade
4 workers were there as a result of trauma, and exposure to
5 trauma, and sexual exploitation. That is a legacy of
6 Residential Schools. And it was like about a minute
7 disclosure and then it was over. But that disclosure has
8 stuck with me throughout this period of time.

9 Learning how to repatriate our culture, our
10 language and our high values as indigenous people, I think
11 is really critical. The legacy of Residential Schools --
12 the actual -- it wasn't until the actual industrial schools
13 and the law that took the children and placed them in those
14 schools. Up until then the churches were not having a very
15 successful time in converting us to the Christian faith.

16 So that social experiment was one of the
17 most damaging acts human beings could ever conduct. The
18 atrocities -- I can't speak to my Auntie Emily's experience
19 as a young woman. But I know her brothers spoke of the
20 abuse rarely, but it was one of those secrets that came out
21 at a later -- many years later. But I can't speak to what
22 her truth was. But I know as an intergenerational
23 survivor, that she would have been impacted one way or
24 another.

25 And that promise of being able to be part of

1 the greater modern day society of our Canada through
2 marriage, being a successful businesswoman, and then facing
3 the challenges that she had to face, I believe contributed
4 to her isolation and her mental health.

5 So when we talk about the purpose of the
6 Inquiry, the bottom line is just how disposable brown
7 people have been to -- for others to get where they are
8 today. I have a granddaughter and I have a grandson, and I
9 still worry about them. My daughter, I worry about them.
10 My brother, I worry about my brother because I know just
11 how vulnerable they are.

12 And again I say it's like that sense of lack
13 of safety that at any given moment could act out that
14 discrimination and that historic legacy, acting on the
15 disposability of our people, of our community.

16 For my late Auntie, she made a significant
17 contribution to many in her life. And we were really
18 pleased with being able to speak at the -- the family was
19 really -- I wasn't able to attend, I was in the background
20 just again as I said, doing the research and searching for
21 the photographs that could tell her story. And we were
22 really, really grateful for that opportunity to give her
23 her dignity, to demonstrate just how vibrant and vital she
24 was, and how important she was in her time, and how
25 advanced she was in terms of her success, and how beautiful

1 she was. So we were really grateful to be able to give her
2 her dignity.

3 We have a long ways to go yet, a long ways
4 to go yet, for full recovery from the impact of the
5 destruction of our culture, and our values, and our beliefs
6 as a nation, as people -- as indigenous people of this
7 country. Thank you.

8 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Thank you for sharing. Is
9 there anything else that you would like to say, any
10 thoughts about how change could happen?

11 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** I would like to
12 share a poem if I can even read it.

13 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Would you like a break
14 first?

15 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** No. It was what my
16 late sister shared when we first heard the news.

17 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Your sister's name?

18 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** April, April
19 Buffalo Robe. It's a poem by Emily Dickinson, There Came a
20 Wind Like a Bugle.

21 "There came a wind like a bugle;

22 It quivered through the grass.

23 And a green chill upon the heat

24 So ominous did pass.

25 We barred the windows and the doors

1 As from an emerald ghost.
2 The doom's electric moccasin
3 That very instant passed.
4 On a strange mob of panting trees
5 And fences fled away.
6 And rivers where the houses ran
7 The living looked that day.
8 The bell within the steeple wild
9 The flying tidings whirled.
10 How much can come
11 And much can go,
12 And yet abide the world"

13 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** I want to share
14 that, because that's my late sister's contribution.
15 Solutions. Our culture in the 70s we already said it, our
16 culture is treatment. Being able to restore the high
17 values, the spiritual values, relationships and restoring
18 the health in relationships with the families and
19 communities.

20 Mental health is a major issue in our
21 communities. The trauma runs deep and the social
22 experiment is now to turn that around and find the
23 resources we need to provide that healing. There needs to
24 be ways to allow offenders to safely move out of offending
25 -- that offending pattern. Psychologists and other

1 professionals can talk a lot more eloquently than I can at
2 this point about once that's a learned behaviour, how
3 difficult it is to change that behaviour.

4 An elder I used to -- one of my old mentors
5 who's also passed on, said it takes seven years from when
6 an individual -- an offender begins their treatment through
7 the spiritual, cultural and ceremonial path, it takes seven
8 years for that healing. So it's not something that can be
9 done overnight, but it has to be started.

10 We're really fortunate that over the
11 centuries our elders saw fit to keep those ceremonies
12 practised and passed on. And I think those are -- those
13 have to be given an opportunity to be practised and to move
14 forward as part of the healing journey.

15 There's a lot of protocol involved with
16 that, a lot of sensitivity involved with that. And it's
17 also important to be able to know whether someone is
18 picking that up just to call themselves that, or whether or
19 not that individual, those spiritual practitioners were
20 trained and taught from a young age.

21 I think there's a language revitalization
22 that's going on right now. There's a lot of the culture
23 inherent in the language. Finding the resources to provide
24 our frontline workers with the training that they need,
25 because right now often there's resources to hire and

1 provide services, but not enough resources for their
2 ongoing professional development and education. We hear
3 from them from the frontline where they're saying well,
4 you're calling us support workers where we are counsellors.
5 And then not ever providing enough resources for them to
6 get the depth of the training that they need in order to
7 continue to do their work on a deeper level.

8 We keep hearing the words coming from their
9 young people saying we need our indigenous people, we need
10 our indigenous counsellors, we need our culture, we need
11 our ceremonies.

12 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Can I ask a question?
13 When you're talking about the support workers and the need
14 for resources, one of the things I ask is about the
15 sustainability. Sometimes we see a government put pockets
16 of money down and it sort of is short term. But do you
17 think that there needs -- if you're going to put those
18 resources in you have to make sure that they're sustained
19 over time.

20 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** We will be -- I'll
21 use the Aboriginal Healing Foundation as an example. I
22 think it was about 10 years that it was in operation and
23 there was technically no replacement of that program.
24 There was a lot of capacity built over those 10 years,
25 there was a lot of experience and knowledgeable and skilled

1 frontline workers that were basically cut loose at that
2 time. So when you talk about sustainability, there is no
3 resources within the communities' structured funding
4 sources at this time for long term sustainability.

5 That structure is -- goes right back to the
6 *Indian Act*, the way the Bands are funded, the way the
7 programs are funded, and the restrictions limitations that
8 they're bound by. So even finding creative ways to find
9 source funds within an indigenous community is, is a
10 discouraging endeavour.

11 I liken it to the system where a single
12 mother is on welfare with children, and it's cheaper and
13 more effective for her to stay on welfare and raise her
14 children that way, than it is for her to go out and get a
15 job.

16 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Or to further her
17 education.

18 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** Or to further her
19 education. She still has a volume of other expenses that
20 she has to cover, that just don't get covered.

21 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** And I know that we're in
22 the Yukon as opposed to British Columbia. In British
23 Columbia mothers that are trying to get their education, as
24 soon as they walked into the classroom, then the social
25 assistance stopped on time.

1 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** Yeah.

2 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** So there's always those
3 barriers that create those hoops.

4 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** Those are system
5 barriers.

6 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Yeah. And can I ask too,
7 with your experience, when you speak about the Aboriginal
8 Foundation, is that here in the Yukon or is that -- was
9 that a national -- I'm sorry, I'm not aware.

10 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** My brain is maybe
11 on tilt. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation, that was the
12 national program.

13 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** And was that part of the
14 funding then for the Yukon as the Territory, did that --
15 did you get resources and stuff here in Whitehorse?

16 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** They were projects.

17 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Projects.

18 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** It was a national,
19 it came out of the -- it came out of the Royal Commission
20 on Aboriginal Peoples I believe. And it's one of the
21 gathering strength, and then there is the, the HF. And
22 that was a national project.

23 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** And perhaps maybe the key
24 to that is the word project, because that implies -- when
25 you're talking about long term sustainability, and the

1 elder who spoke to you about seven years for one person
2 that needs to go through seven years of getting to that
3 point, it doesn't mean that everything stops.

4 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** Correct.

5 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Like you need to have it
6 like a lifetime.

7 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** Yeah, and then that
8 -- then again the dependency is on the government that is
9 elected into place and how long their term is, and the
10 policies that they implement.

11 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** M'hmm.

12 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** So again it's still
13 cyclic and dependent on the priorities of the government of
14 the day.

15 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Which loses sight of the
16 First Nation communities, or Inuit communities, or Métis
17 communities. Anything else you'd like to share, any
18 thoughts, any recommendations?

19 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** I'm not sure how to
20 phrase this, it's more of a concept than a recommendation.
21 But it's providing advanced training for addressing the use
22 of sex as, as a method of coping. So when we talk about
23 the impact of the Residential Schools in the legacy of the
24 rape -- it wasn't sexual abuse. We're always minimizing it
25 using the term sexual abuse. It was rape and torture. But

1 look both ways before they cross the street. If we start
2 teaching our children about sexual safety at an earlier age
3 and being more open about it, is part of the safety, and
4 learning respect. The respect of boundaries, healthy
5 boundaries.

6 In terms of people who are -- like we talk
7 about the Me Too, #MeToo, and the lack of reporting and the
8 lack of safety there is for individuals to even report
9 abuse to begin with.

10 Even as recently as a year ago I was
11 involved with a family where the youth, considered a child
12 who's under the age of 15, disclosed to his mother that the
13 father was inappropriate and she disclosed to me. And I
14 said well, we have to bring this forward. So I went with
15 her to Social Services to disclose. That night the
16 children were told that they can't return home until the
17 investigation was over. It was two, two young boys,
18 brothers.

19 The RCMP -- we asked can you please be
20 discreet, but no they weren't discreet. The RCMP went to
21 the school, took the kids out of school, and interviewed
22 them at the school. Did their investigation and the
23 results were there was not enough proof that charges could
24 be laid, and the children were told that they had to go
25 back and live with their father again.

1 So even there, there are gaps in providing
2 services and the believability. There was no alternative,
3 there was no social network in place for that mother to be
4 able to take her boys and get an alternative place to live.

5 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** And what strikes me with
6 what you've said, is that they took the boys into care,
7 which makes you wonder how they felt about perhaps maybe
8 they had done something wrong.

9 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** Well they put the
10 boys -- they told the boys they couldn't go back to their
11 home, so they had -- they actually were not taken into
12 care.

13 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Oh, they weren't.

14 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** They were housed --
15 they stayed at a friend's, friends of the family for this
16 period of about a week while this investigation went on.
17 And then when it was over, go home now. And because of the
18 separation that was in place and the legalities of that
19 were in place at the time, they had to go back and live
20 with their date.

21 So even there's discrepancies and gaps in
22 how our systems that are supposed to be in place to protect
23 our children have shortcomings.

24 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** You also mentioned when
25 you were talking about ensuring that the training was there

1 for the frontline workers, more in depth training. Are
2 they able -- like are you seeing that they're able to
3 connect with the people in the communities to share?
4 Because it's -- for so many the trauma has been a secret
5 for so long, sort of woven into the lifestyle that it's a
6 secret so it's just always there. Like are you seeing any
7 success in getting people to, to come forward and to share
8 for that journey, that healing journey to start, or are
9 people distrustful or still not willing to share that, that
10 trauma?

11 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** That's a mixed
12 answer. We've seen and still see instances where if an
13 individual openly discloses about an offender in the
14 community where the individual is shunned, the one that
15 disclosed. But we're also looking at 10 years of Indian
16 Residential Schools Settlement Agreement discussions and
17 the open public and private statement taking, and now the
18 intergenerational trauma that's being discussed. I think
19 there's a broader awareness in opening and a willingness to
20 have those conversations.

21 I still believe that there is still a lot of
22 challenges in the communities where loyalties, family
23 loyalties, could be barriers to broader and open -- I'm not
24 sure if the word reconciliation is the best word to use
25 considering how it's being used today in terms of the TRC.

1 But a more open restorative I think is the term I'm
2 thinking of.

3 Like even with the independent assessment
4 process, it was not a restorative process. It was not a
5 restorative process. And I think we missed an opportunity
6 on a national level as a result of that decision for
7 expedience and settlement, and get it settled, paid out and
8 done. A significant opportunity was missed there.

9 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Any thoughts how to avoid
10 missing those opportunities? Here with the National
11 Inquiry the Commissioners will be putting a report, final
12 report to the Government of Canada. Is there anything from
13 what you understand with this process and insight that you
14 have from your experience that concerns you about -- it
15 doesn't have to be positive or negative, I'm just -- I
16 think you've raised a really good point in terms of things
17 being done in expediency. Is there some opportunities you
18 think exist for the Commissioners in their report to
19 consider that we don't do the same?

20 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** There's the day
21 school stuff coming up.

22 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay.

23 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** The Sixties Scoop
24 and the abuse that occurred to the survivors of the Sixties
25 Scoop. Not all of them were impacted but I've heard some

1 horror stories from, from them. And I don't know, I have
2 not been following the legal proceedings involved with
3 those two, those two events. I don't know if there's any
4 recourse for after the fact now that the majority of the
5 independent assessments has been done. Particularly from
6 that generation a lot of the offenders are what, in the 80s
7 now or something like that? There's a lot of people that
8 are elderly, 70s and 80s. So I don't know if there's an
9 opportunity after the fact now, to open that up again.

10 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** And I think I was sort of,
11 sort of looking in terms of the Inquiry's recommendations
12 moving forward that we don't create -- you know losing that
13 opportunity to make sure that something isn't rushed in the
14 National Inquiry's --

15 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** I think, I think
16 there's -- I think the opportunity for restorative
17 processes needs to be considered as part of the cultural
18 healing approach and how that can be built in at this time.
19 When we talk about the murdered and missing, there is such
20 a -- there's no -- every story is unique, an individual
21 story.

22 The restorative process, particularly when
23 someone has been murdered and they know who the murderer
24 is, the anger and the rage that comes out of that. That
25 finding opportunities for healing for, for the individuals

1 who have been impacted and in many cases wouldn't be court
2 ordered healing for individuals who have offended.

3 I recall a woman, I can't remember her name,
4 but she was a psychologist and she worked out of the B.C.
5 Federal Penitentiary, and she worked with offenders. And
6 her over dinnertime having a conversation, picking her
7 brain, she said the indigenous offenders are willing to
8 look towards their healing and acknowledge their
9 wrongdoing, is what her experience was. There was remorse.
10 There's a remorse there that can be built upon.

11 I think there's a lot of experts out there
12 that could be brought together, that could think tank ways
13 of moving forward in that field.

14 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Or even for families who
15 have no closure that their loved ones are still missing, or
16 there's been no one of interest in terms of closure for
17 somebody who's been murdered. For that family to be in
18 that cycle because we see it. It's not just a year or two,
19 it can be decades.

20 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** It's decades, yeah
21 it can be decades. And its finding -- like we talk about,
22 you hear people talk about grief and -- like even for
23 myself, it's been 10 years for our family since our
24 Auntie's been missing. And we also have a young nephew
25 who's also missing, Cody Ridge Wolf, who disappeared as

1 well.

2 So there's -- there are no answers. So when
3 there are no answers there's a vague sense of -- I think
4 that's where a lot of the anxiety and suffering comes from,
5 is finding ways where individuals can find peace to be able
6 to move on in their life.

7 The anger and rage can come up at most
8 unexpected moments. The grief can come up at the most
9 unexpected moments. You might be -- I might be thinking
10 I'm fine now, I pretty much think I'm fine, but that's not
11 truly the case. There's still periods of time where the
12 memories come flooding back and the rage against the
13 unknowns, and the rage against the circumstances that set
14 up certain situations. Finding ways to, to manage it
15 because I think that's all it is, is finding ways to manage
16 it. And for some maybe we might find our peace in our
17 healing forward, but it's finding the day to day skills to
18 manage it so that it doesn't spiral, that I don't spiral
19 into depression, or I don't spiral into counter-abusive
20 behaviour out of anger.

21 So I think those kinds of healing
22 opportunities can be, can be explored. But again, it's not
23 a one solution fix for everyone.

24 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** No.

25 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** And I think that's

1 where I still go back to the culture and the ceremonies.
2 There's a lot of social ceremonies that can be encouraged.
3 There's other higher level ceremonies for healing, and
4 people have to make that choice, if that's the path they
5 want to take. But there needs to be the availability and
6 recognition in the value of those approaches.

7 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Anything else?

8 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** I think I'm going
9 to turn this little piece of Kleenex into a tiny little
10 ball here pretty quick, so I think I'm done.

11 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Well thank you, thank you.
12 It really does take a lot of courage, you to know come and
13 share the pain.

14 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** And like I say, I
15 wasn't really confident that I had anything more of value
16 to add, considering I know there have been a lot of
17 professionals an pro-activists making professional
18 presentations.

19 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** I found you provided a lot
20 of insight for myself in thinking, you know creative -- for
21 me to ask some questions. So yes, it's all valuable, it's
22 all valuable to hear.

23 So the last piece while we're on the record
24 is now that you've shared, would you like your testimony to
25 be public or to be private?

1 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** Public.

2 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Public?

3 **MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** I'll get downright
4 brave her and go public.

5 **MS. KERRIE REAY:** Well I think -- you know I
6 think a lot of what you've said offers the opportunity to
7 think okay, how do we move forward? A lot of things where
8 you've spoken today I think will really resonate for people
9 to think yes, those are the things we need to think about,
10 those are the things that -- you know culture and tradition
11 and some of the insights that you've been able to provide.
12 So I thank you for that. Okay, so it is 2:21 and we will
13 just turn this off.

14 --- Upon adjourning at 2:21 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Sherry Hobe, 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.



Sherry Hobe

December 18, 2018