National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part I Statement Gathering
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Whitehorse, Yukon

Saturday November 10, 2018

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

Statement gathered by Kerrie Reay

International Reporting Inc.
41 - 5450 Canotek Road, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 9G2
E-mail: info@irri.net - Phone: 613-748-6043 - Fax: 613-748-8246
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| Item 1 | Color photograph of loved one. |
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-SE, 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.
MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: Okay.

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

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

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

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

I remember when we first had the -- it was about three years ago now when -- it was a regional gathering for MMIW, and it was like expressing the sense
that there's -- there's always the sense of fear, there's always the sense of dread and anxiety that we, we live with on a day to day basis. And particularly when someone in your family has gone missing. And it's underscored that the risk is there.

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

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

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

But my Auntie Emily opened her home to a lot of individuals over the years. She opened her home to foster some of the children who were here in Whitehorse. I'll back up a little bit.
She had married a man in the army, Jerry Osmond, and Jerry was stationed here in the 60s. So when they moved here they were childless here in Whitehorse, and she had adopted -- actually she fostered -- she took in seven of her brothers' children, who had been scooped in the Sixties Scoop. Both her older brothers, the two eldest brothers, were World War II veterans, as well as veterans of the Residential School system.

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

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

And over the period of years, my late sister who also was interviewed on the APTN Taken, April, April Buffalo Robe, left Ontario where we were residing at the time and moved to Whitehorse. And of course she was my, my role model and my mentor, and I followed her up a few years later. And that's how, that's how we ended up here in the Yukon.
She's touched my life in that way -- like I came up and I spent some time here. I returned back to down south, and just ended up having a heartache for the country here and ended up coming back. I raised my daughter here and I haven't left. So Whitehorse has become my, my community. I've been living here for over 30 years now.

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

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

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

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

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

So she lived in Prince Rupert for awhile. I remember my late mother and my late sister, my brother, my daughter and I, spent the Christmas with her. So this is, this is one of the rare photographs that I, I have of her, that we have of her in this period of her life. So this, this photograph is actually quite special to me. You can see the Christmas lights from the tree in her, in her glasses.
MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh yes.

MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: And her profile as well.

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

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: That was in Prince Rupert.

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Early 60s, okay.

MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: Yeah. I'm not sure
if my cousin Myrna submitted the photographs, but at this
Saskatoon hearing I collected family photographs from some
different family members, and we were really successful in
getting some really beautiful pictures of her. When she
was in her 30s, probably early 30s, and prime of her life.
And represented that successful -- the successful wife.
And she was just really beautiful. There's some really
beautiful pictures of her during that period of time.

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

We talk about mental health, and she was an
extremely independent woman. She was so able to support
herself economically. But what we really forgot about
during that time was that she was a human being and was
going through her own grief with the loss of her
relationship, the loss of that marriage. And all of the
cousins pretty much scattered across the country. As
Sixties Scoop kids even -- they've had a really difficult
challenge maintaining their relationships. And I can only
imagine what they went through when they were scooped, and the foster homes that they were placed in. I can't speak to the truth of that, other than I know that they suffered and had, had their challenges throughout that period of time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So I know those are, those are really,
Hazel Buffalo Robe  
(Emily Osmond)

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

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

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

The impact of Residential School. My late Auntie Emily Osmond, her mother and father were Residential School former students as well. Her older brothers and sisters were also former students. The three of them, Emily, Helen and my mother Evelyn, went to regular day
school, and that's because my grandmother Hazel LaPlante refused to hand over her daughters to the Catholic priest. So as a result they didn't go through that experience, but they went through similar, similar experiences but in a different context through the day schools and growing up in the social environment of their time, of their generation.

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

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

One of the conferences I attended as working in the HIV Aids circle in those years, was for the sex trade workers. And one of the significant differences I heard from the non-native sex trade workers to the
indigenous sex trade workers was that the non-native sex trade workers were there by choice. They wanted to be there, they chose that life. The indigenous sex trade workers were there as a result of trauma, and exposure to trauma, and sexual exploitation. That is a legacy of Residential Schools. And it was like about a minute disclosure and then it was over. But that disclosure has stuck with me throughout this period of time.

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

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

And that promise of being able to be part of
the greater modern day society of our Canada through marriage, being a successful businesswoman, and then facing the challenges that she had to face, I believe contributed to her isolation and her mental health.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"There came a wind like a bugle;
It quivered through the grass.
And a green chill upon the heat
So ominous did pass.
We barred the windows and the doors
As from an emerald ghost.
The doom’s electric moccasin
That very instant passed.
On a strange mob of panting trees
And fences fled away.
And rivers where the houses ran
The living looked that day.
The bell within the steeple wild
The flying tidings whirled.
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the world"

**MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** I want to share that, because that's my late sister's contribution.

Solutions. Our culture in the 70s we already said it, our culture is treatment. Being able to restore the high values, the spiritual values, relationships and restoring the health in relationships with the families and communities.

Mental health is a major issue in our communities. The trauma runs deep and the social experiment is now to turn that around and find the resources we need to provide that healing. There needs to be ways to allow offenders to safely move out of offending -- that offending pattern. Psychologists and other
professionals can talk a lot more eloquently than I can at this point about once that's a learned behaviour, how difficult it is to change that behaviour.

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

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

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

I think there's a language revitalization that's going on right now. There's a lot of the culture inherent in the language. Finding the resources to provide our frontline workers with the training that they need, because right now often there's resources to hire and
provide services, but not enough resources for their ongoing professional development and education. We hear from them from the frontline where they're saying well, you're calling us support workers where we are counsellors. And then not ever providing enough resources for them to get the depth of the training that they need in order to continue to do their work on a deeper level.

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

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Can I ask a question?

When you're talking about the support workers and the need for resources, one of the things I ask is about the sustainability. Sometimes we see a government put pockets of money down and it sort of is short term. But do you think that there needs -- if you're going to put those resources in you have to make sure that they're sustained over time.

**MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** We will be -- I'll use the Aboriginal Healing Foundation as an example. I think it was about 10 years that it was in operation and there was technically no replacement of that program. There was a lot of capacity built over those 10 years, there was a lot of experience and knowledgeable and skilled
frontline workers that were basically cut loose at that
time. So when you talk about sustainability, there is no
resources within the communities' structured funding
sources at this time for long term sustainability.

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: Or to further her

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: And I know that we're in
the Yukon as opposed to British Columbia. In British
Columbia mothers that are trying to get their education, as
soon as they walked into the classroom, then the social
assistance stopped on time.
MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: Yeah.

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

MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: Those are system barriers.

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

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

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

MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: They were projects.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Projects.

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: And perhaps maybe the key to that is the word project, because that implies -- when you're talking about long term sustainability, and the
elder who spoke to you about seven years for one person
that needs to go through seven years of getting to that
point, it doesn't mean that everything stops.

MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: Correct.

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: M'hm.

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

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

MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: I'm not sure how to
phrase this, it's more of a concept that a recommendation.
But it's providing advanced training for addressing the use
of sex as, as a method of coping. So when we talk about
the impact of the Residential Schools in the legacy of the
rape -- it wasn't sexual abuse. We're always minimizing it
using the term sexual abuse. It was rape and torture. But
that behaviour and that trauma, that triggered the depth of how that becomes embedded in a person's experience, and how it gets acted out as an adult. Even as a young person and as an adult. Advanced training for counsellors to work with that at a deeper level. I think we're still just touching the surface.

And it's been 10 years now with the Residential Schools mental health services that have been available. I know -- I'm suspecting it's going to be at least another 10 years. Like right now we're seeing the intergenerational survivors speaking their story and their trauma and their legacy. I think it's going to be at least another 10 years.

But there needs to be better training and strategies for the support workers and the professionals to address the, the depth of how that -- the use of sexuality to cope is how it's being used and repeatedly the cycle of what we call sexual abuse.

We also need to talk about more openly how to be safe, safe touch. I don't think we do that enough. I think there was a period of time where that was a strategy, but I think it still needs to occur. Finding that social awareness education campaign on safe ways to keep safe.

Like we talk -- we teach our children to
look both ways before they cross the street. If we start teaching our children about sexual safety at an earlier age and being more open about it, is part of the safety, and learning respect. The respect of boundaries, healthy boundaries.

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

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

The RCMP -- we asked can you please be discreet, but no they weren't discreet. The RCMP went to the school, took the kids out of school, and interviewed them at the school. Did their investigation and the results were there was not enough proof that charges could be laid, and the children were told that they had to go back and live with their father again.
So even there, there are gaps in providing services and the believability. There was no alternative, there was no social network in place for that mother to be able to take her boys and get an alternative place to live.

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

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

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

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

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

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** You also mentioned when you were talking about ensuring that the training was there
for the frontline workers, more in depth training. Are they able -- like are you seeing that they're able to connect with the people in the communities to share? Because it's -- for so many the trauma has been a secret for so long, sort of woven into the lifestyle that it's a secret so it's just always there. Like are you seeing any success in getting people to, to come forward and to share for that journey, that healing journey to start, or are people distrustful or still not willing to share that, that trauma?

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

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

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

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

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

**MS. KERRIE REAY:** Okay.

**MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE:** The Sixties Scoop and the abuse that occurred to the survivors of the Sixties Scoop. Not all of them were impacted but I've heard some
horror stories from, from them. And I don't know, I have not been following the legal proceedings involved with those two, those two events. I don't know if there's any recourse for after the fact now that the majority of the independent assessments has been done. Particularly from that generation a lot of the offenders are what, in the 80s now or something like that? There's a lot of people that are elderly, 70s and 80s. So I don't know if there's an opportunity after the fact now, to open that up again.

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

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

The restorative process, particularly when someone has been murdered and they know who the murderer is, the anger and the rage that comes out of that. That finding opportunities for healing for, for the individuals
who have been impacted and in many cases wouldn't be court
ordered healing for individuals who have offended.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. KERRIE REAY: No.

MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: And I think that's
where I still go back to the culture and the ceremonies. There's a lot of social ceremonies that can be encouraged. There's other higher level ceremonies for healing, and people have to make that choice, if that's the path they want to take. But there needs to be the availability and recognition in the value of those approaches.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Anything else?

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

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

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

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

So the last piece while we're on the record is now that you've shared, would you like your testimony to be public or to be private?
MS. HAZEL BUFFALO ROBE: Public.

MS. KERRIE REAY: Public?

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

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

--- 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.

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Sherry Hobe

December 18, 2018