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Sharon Jinkerson-Brass,
In relation to Alvina Brass

Statement gathered by Terriea Wadud

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement Volume 551
Sharon Jinkerson-Brass
November 14, 2018

Testimony of Sharon Jinkerson-Brass ................. 1
Reporter’s Certification ......................... 61

Statement Gatherer: Terriea Wadud

Documents submitted with testimony: none.
--- Upon commencing on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 at 2:53 p.m.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** My name is Terriea Wadud and I am a statement gatherer with the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. Today's date is Wednesday, November the 14th and the current time is 2:53 p.m. We are in Vancouver, B.C. and I have the honour and privilege of sitting with Sharon Jinkerson-Brass who was also an elder supporting the Vancouver public hearings.

If you would go ahead and introduce yourself.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** Sure. I am Sharon Jinkerson-Brass here at my residence in Burnaby. And I'm a member of Key First Nations and I also have Ukrainian ancestry through my dad. I am a Sixties Scooper, a mother, a grandmother, a survivor, a family member.

My traditional name is [speaking in Indigenous language] which means White Thunder Bird Woman. That name was given to me by my Kokum Rebecca Brass. And what I've learned about thunder medicine is that thunder is what our people believed historically the thunder beings brought the ideas of the creator from heaven to earth. And
so that when a flash goes off in your mind or the flash
that is -- happens when we orgasm, those are the forces
that are creating new life and new energy and new being.
And that's just one aspect of my name but it's the one that
I really have taken about how do we bring the forces from
the universe to this earth to create change. So I would
say that's what I've taken on in terms of my name.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** That's very powerful.

Thank you. So anywhere you would like to start today.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** Well, I want to
-- I have a few -- a poem I want to share about finding
myself but I want to talk about the beginning of figuring
out my identity because I was an at-risk youth and tried to
commit suicide twice when I was 13. And was miserable.
And I never -- I had -- was punished and shamed for forces
that were bigger than me. I was such a child of trauma.
And the typical story when I came into puberty, all of
these feelings, being the good girl just wasn't in the
works for me and I couldn't even understand myself. I
loved to step out and create havoc. But even at the time,
my mind would go, "This isn't good for you."

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** "You're just
going to create a whole bunch of trouble." But I couldn't
stop myself. The force was bigger than me. And so I was –
- what I would describe at the end of the day was lonely. I had people around me but I was one of the loneliest people deep inside myself.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** And so that loneliness was a big part of my life. And in 1985 I met my partner in life and he said your grandmother will remember you. And so I wrote this little piece which is sort of a new beginning for me and who I am today, before I get more into my past. So ---

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** --- I'm just going to read this piece and -- and I wrote it in 2010 because I used to write a column in an art magazine but it's -- it really expresses what happened when I reached out for my culture for the first time.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** So this is called, "I See You." And you can hear that it's dated because it's a cultural referencing that it -- it talks about Avatar which was -- is so old now but...

Witnessing is an important part of Anishnaabe culture. The tradition can be described as beholding a person's essence and telling them exactly what you see and feel. And the reason Blockbuster film Avatar,
the hero is finally and totally accepted by the Na'vi people when Princess Neytiri says to Jake, the foreigner, I see you and she gently touches the center of his chest. This is what my people would call witnessing.

When I was young I was placed in foster care and later adopted, so when I met my grandmother 27 years later I was completely ignorant of my ancestral traditions. I was a little leery, even afraid, of meeting my people, so once I received information about my birth family, I put off contacting them for many months.

The first time I met my partner, Victor Rees (ph.), he said something that really struck me. "Your grandmother will remember you." I never thought about my granny before and this -- before this and the possibility intrigued me. Even comforted me enough to make the first call to my reserve.

I spoke briefly to my Chief who promised to make inquiries around the community to see if he could find my family. The next day the phone rang and I heard an elderly woman's voice on the line saying, "Is that you, Sharon?" My grandmother got straight to the point. She wasn't one for chit chat. She said, "I'm going to come and see you." My heart raced at the thought of meeting a blood relative for the first time. I felt terror and curiosity as I fumbled around trying to find my calendar to select an
agreeable date for her to visit.

"I'm leaving on the bus tonight at 5:00",
she said. I stopped looking for my calendar. Several
times I rearranged everything in my apartment while I
waited for her bus to arrive. Her journey took nearly a
day. The moment I embraced my grandmother, I knew
everything was going to be all right because she had a
natural warmth and gentleness about her.

We spent the evening getting to know each
other and I found conversation flowed easily as we shared
stories about our lives. The moment came for us to settle
for the night and I politely asked my grandmother if she
would prefer the couch or my bed for the night. My
grandmother looked at me and she said she'd been a midwife
for nearly 50 years. "I brought most of your relatives
into this world and I always slept with those babies on
their first night on this earth." I was emotionally spent
and tired and I had no idea why she was telling me this
story or where she was going with it. "I'm going to sleep
with you tonight because you were born far away from your
people." And that was that.

When I crawled into bed I was a little
apprehensive because we were never very intimate in my
adoptive family. This closeness was something I longed for
my whole life and now here it was. The connection with my
grandmother was so strong that it only took a few moments for me to settle in. My grandmother began to caress my face and she softly chanted in my ear, "You are so wise, so smart, so loving and kind." For the first time ever, I exist. I am truly alive and someone can see me. I weep.

My grandmother had a phrase for her impromptu witnessing ceremonies. She would say, "Come here. I want to love you up." This meant that she was going to praise you to the high heaven so your spirit would dance inside. My people understood the importance of seeing people for who they truly are and taking time to really behold the glory of every human being.

So that was my first awakening.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Wow. Wow.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Yeah.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Thank you for sharing that.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Yeah.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Amazing.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And this is about the personal, spiritual transformation that occurred maybe over -- I knew my granny for seven years, and afterwards it probably take about 20 years for the knowledge to go from here to here.

And this is called Silenced. I feel
silenced. I feel invisible. Unheard. Who am I? Who are you? Who are we? The empty space is filled with a character of my making. She doesn't really exist. No, she's not a ghost either. Just an empty shrine to something that once was. Is she summer dust? Is she winter snow? Is she crisp, dry, round leaves on the ground? She allows herself to question the cage, the roots, the dark earth, the dark night. What will the mask reveal? I'm a bird. I'm really a bird. Thunder I think. I feel my wings heavy. Dense feathers weigh me down. My wings haunt me. My talons squeeze time. I barely feel my fast beating heart. My beak chews on steel bars. Notches becomes visible. Dream begin. Jump into the air. Trust and you will fly. Just try to be you. The bent, awkward creature looks up, hears something beating, stretches her wings, and the first time dares to feel their power. She leaps towards the stars. Her talons release time. And her snowy, white wings lift her in the air. Her song echoes around the sky. She feels her strength. She honours her otherness. She flies from this world to that world. The place where beingness is inclusive, where stars glow, where magic is everything, where the light can burn and heal, where truth resolves, where hunger is fed, where the sky is endless and the nights make days forever.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Wow.
MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: There is another one.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: You wrote that too?

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Yeah.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Wow. You are gifted.

Thank you.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: So that -- essentially, that transformation of realizing I was in a cage ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- happened with my granny. And the scenario that unfolded was I was trying without realizing it to contain my granny who would send me out with medicines and say, "Go make a ceremony." And I'd be, like, "Well, what should I do? What do you want me to do? What time -- how long should it go on? What's the proper prayer?" And she silently would just look at me and just nod her head and not answer. And I'd be, like, "Okay." And I would storm out to the woods with an attitude thinking, "That old lady, she is going to tell me and I'm going to figure out the right way to ask her next time so that I get all the information."

And when my granny was still alive I sort of gravitated towards people that had rules and it was -- sort of made me feel belonged to kind of, like, understand which
hand to hold my tobacco in or all the rules of the red road
while my granny was doing the opposite with me. She was
trying to get me to fly and listen to my intuition. And
she was -- but where she would teach is in the laws of
nature.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And I realized
over a long period of time in my own journeying as an
artist that I was actually trying to have my granny meet my
comfort zone to have a container with rules and that I
actually, even though I had the ultimate master teacher I
still wanted to have rules to follow so I could be safe and
not have to be vulnerable and put myself out there.

And so over the years, that poem just is
where I suddenly started to be able to release time and
just be in the moment and not be so driven by a need, my --
my ache to fit in and belong somewhere is what drew me into
circles that were not very healthy and almost cult like on
the red road. And the more I'm in my power and the more
I'm compassionately doing what's good for me so that it
doesn't mean judging or being righteous about it but being
compassionate towards others and realizing they're just
like me. They need -- that want the rules and somebody has
run up to me and said, "Don't step there or touch that."
Or you know, an owl feather, oh my God, you know, I realize
that stuff is all so ridiculous. I've never seen anybody evaporate or somebody harsh to the ends of the earth or a limb drop off because they've made a mistake.

Like, and I realize, oh this is all so foolish. It's like the emperor has no clothes. What are we doing? And that was when, through again my artistry practice, that the real -- what my granny was really -- her message was to be sovereign within yourself and don't give your power away to needing approval or necessarily fitting in. And it -- but do it compassionately so that it's not like you're judging others but you're welcoming people around your fire but it's kind of like a -- it's putting yourself out there to be available which is very different from putting yourself out there to be another kind of bossy, art type that is righteous and knows the right way to go.

So that's what over these 20 years I think that poem speaks to, like, just being able to not manage and just be the past, the present and the future all at once. I said but when -- the greatest act of sovereignty for me is being in the moment and not sitting there going, "Oh, what's she think of me?" You know, "Oh, I'm going to hide that hat because I can see nobody's got hats on like that today." So -- and you know, when we're unbelonged children through colonization, we are so vulnerable to that
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**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Yeah.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** --- insecurity, so I totally get it today. And -- and mindful. I've learned how to nurture myself so that I -- I'm grounding my insecurity in goodness and in healing and light so that that's not my mode -- my mode anymore. So that poem I think is what decolonization is all about. Yeah.

So when I was -- the whole reason why I wanted to speak though before I talk more about my own journey is that I was in Standing Rock.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** And the cell phone went off and it was a CBC reporter wanting to talk to me because somebody had told her who I was.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** And she wanted to know if I was aware of Alvina Brass who was a 12 year old girl that was given alcohol by two farmers and the next day she was found dead in a ditch. And it's not said so much in the report of the day but if you read the subtext there was a real minimalization and not a smoking gun, "She was murdered." It's really weird how it was written in the 50s. It was like she was found dead the next day and then these young boys were hauled in but they don't call a spade
a spade. It's written in sort of this neutral language
even though the young boys were sort of called in for
questioning, it's -- it's such a -- just the article itself
is traumatizing because it's so -- that neutral language
just about killed me.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And I Googled
it today before you came and I see now that there's been
some more gaps filled in than what I knew up until today.
But I really wanted to -- I asked my aunties and none of
them knew about it. And my aunties who are alive today
were born about that time period. This took place in 1953.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And how -- it's
just another ghost that is unacknowledged. Because I know
how deeply our people care and love each other. We're
really wounded and we act out a lot but, boy, I know if I
was hurt I would have every clan member coming through the
woodwork to be helpful. So I know this to be true of my
people, as damaged as they are, so...

I remember my grandmother telling me a story
about her first day of residential school and speaking the
language. And her best friend from the rez talked her
language and the priest hit her with a two-by-four and she
died. My granny figured it fractured her skull. And
that's -- you know, from death there's light, not that I want to romanticize that but the point -- reason why I'm telling it is that my grandmother lived with this young girl. I used to feel like I knew her. I knew that this ghost of this little girl was travelling around with my grandmother. For the -- she was nearly 80 and she didn't -- in -- with words but just in her energy painted such a picture of the relationship that they had and my granny's feelings for her and how she never got over that.

So why was there so much silence? All I can think of is that maybe in the community there was a lot of Christian judgement that she -- even though she was 12 and raped that she shouldn't have been doing something. And I know that mentality is really -- the blaming the women and kind of if you're caught there's a lot of shaming behaviour. And so that is so tragic because she was -- and her last moments were traumatic. And her dignity was taken. And my people were so afraid and so damaged that -- and so challenged with feeling ashamed and not feeling their own dignity that I think it was just too painful to remember. It was easier just to pretend, you know, because she was sort of like a fallen angel or something and that was a bad thing because of all the twisted teachings in residential school.

So I just -- I just wanted to make sure that
we -- my aunt and I talked about it. And since that time when we've had [inaudible response] her because I want to bring her out of that dark place.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Because I think that that dignity and the woundedness of our people is -- it's time. And when I do that I feel -- I can't describe it. I feel something pass through me that's really, like, gratitude as if there is a force out there that's receiving that intention. And that's really beautiful.

Yeah, I think it's important for my community to move forward and heal.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: May I ask your grandmother's name?

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Rebecca Brass.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Rebecca Brass.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Yeah.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: And the residential school that she went to? If you know it. If you don't, that's fine.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: I don't because there were three.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Right.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: There were three schools that my reserve went to.
Statement - Public
Sharon Jinkerson-Brass
(Alvina Brass)

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: It's funny, I probably did know it. Like, I'm getting old enough now that my son was remembering a big birthday bash that I threw for his dad and it's really fuzzy today, so I probably ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Fair enough.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- did know it but I'm not sure. It might have been Gordon's (ph.) -- there was Gordon's, Phillip's (ph.) and the other one in St. Albert's ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- that various family members went to. Yeah. So but in terms of family violence, when I was young I was acting out. I had started to talk about that as a 13 year old. And I -- one of the things I was doing was running away from home. And so my mom and dad, in their middle class dysfunction, decided that I should go to private school as their solution. And prior to that, even when I was young I was so traumatized physically and I was already sexualized as a baby that I used to hold my breath until I passed out until I was six years old because the trauma had been so deep way back when.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yes.
MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: So I -- they're not conscious memories that I have. I don't even remember actually doing that but my family used to talk about it.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And my mom told me that the psychiatrist that I was -- whose care I was under said that I just wanted attention and to ignore me when I would hold my breath and pass out. And my mom said it was always at loud noises. So if an ambulance suddenly went off, a siren, or a bang or even music, she said, "You would just go blue and pass out." And I can't imagine -- it was so bad that I was doing that until I was six.

And I was so regressed in school. I was diagnosed as mentally retarded in Grade 1. And so I had all the things around not being good enough, not being smart. And I'll just -- I'll read you -- I just -- I'll read you one more little poem about ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Absolutely. Yes, please.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: "My First Day of School" this is called. And that's a picture of me when I was young. So when I was little ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Can I bring it up to the camera?

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- it was so
MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: It was obvious that I was mixed heritage. That was me in Grade 1.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Aw, gorgeous.

Beautiful. You're like a doll.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: My first day of school she called me up to the front of the class. It was my first day of school. I was six years old. I'm special. I thought. She must be noticing my new shoes, my red dress, the bow my mother lovingly placed in my hair. My heart beat like a drum as I walked passed all the other kids who looked at me with ravenous eyes. I smiled shyly. What did Mrs. Harter (ph.) have to say to me? Little old me. Confident because my dad always called me cuties, I waited for her to speak. "Why are you so dark and your brothers and sisters so blond?" I answered honestly, "I don't know." "Well, I'll tell you why", she snarled through twisted teeth. "You are not really a Jinkerson. You're an Indian in foster care." What was she talking about? I felt the red, hot blush of shame. My deepest pain exposed. Indian. Indian. Indian. Indian echoed in my head. Ghosts danced around me. Their shadows dark and cold. War cries howling. Thunder. I turned from fire to ice. Silence. I walked a trail of tears to my desk. At

obvious -- yeah.
the very back kids snickered. September 1964. My first day of school.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: So powerful. Thank you.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: So I lived a duality where I was -- my parents both were powerful people. And my mother an artist and my dad an executive for the phone company. So at home I was part of this powerful family and at school I was, like, the low squaw.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: In an elementary school where there were only white kids.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And so what that Grade 1 teacher did was to set me up to be picked on. So I know that I used to hold my breath until I passed out from trauma and then I must have just been getting over that and then I was in Grade 1. So needless to say, I had this duality of the girl at home and then the mirroring at school were so opposite.

And my family also had its struggles. My dad was a terrible rager and violent temper. And my mom was kind of -- stood up to him. She was kind of like a women's burning your bra kind of mom of the 60s. So at least I had that going on, it was sort of an empowered mom in certain ways.
But -- so when I was 13 and my hormones started to become a life giver, you start I think sub-consciously wondering about your mom. And I think when I was running away I was actually trying to find her. It was my way of -- misguided but I was really looking and searching for someone. And maybe even myself. So you start to run away because you just have very complicated needs all of a sudden as a teenager.

And so of course I was shamed and it was treated like a behaviour problem when it was actually going to happen. And I know that from my work with fostered and adopted people that -- that it's -- those hormones start as teens you start questioning your life givers.

So that set in motion -- I went to private school. And the good news was is that I met a friend there who is still my friend today. We don't share each other's worlds but thank goodness I always had Elaine. And so when I went to -- my mom and dad made me go to private school for two years so I went from Grade 8 to Grade -- I finished Grade 9 and then I begged to go to public school in Grade 10.

So then when I was in Grade 10 I was so insecure and afraid because I didn't -- all of a sudden I went from, like, 200 kids in a private school to, like, 2,000 kids in a public school and I was totally lost. I so
didn't know what I was begging myself to get into and so unprepared ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- for the big overwhelming high school. And so I guess, you know, to predators they recognize a vulnerable kid right away. So that's what happened to me. A girl befriended me and I was just so grateful to go on -- onto somebody. And her older brother was a predator. And so within two weeks of school, so this would be September 1972, she invited me to the bush ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- to get -- to have a glass of wine. And you're -- you're always -- you're just too -- you're stupidly just too cool at 15 so I acted casual and yet I'd never ever had a drink or done anything at that stage because private school was this tiny little cocoon which my mom and dad's goal was just to keep me safe but you are also -- are kept in this naive little world.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: So -- and I loved to still act out even though I was in that cocoon. I still caused a couple of riots at that private school and totally was mischievous and climbing out of windows and I
was precocious. They were so glad to see me go from the private school because I've always had leadership tendencies and I created quite a bit of a ruckus.

But -- so anyway, in public school my vulnerability was showing and this girl befriended me and invited me to the bush for a glass of wine. I basically slept for two days. So what -- it must have been one of the early use of sedatives because there's no way that that was normal.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** No.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** And I was gang raped. And it was her older brother, [R], who I know masterminded it. And [D], now that I know so much about sexual abuse she's probably getting some of the energy off herself by bringing -- bringing a -- bringing a ---

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Yeah.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** --- sacrifice to [R]. And so there were -- I'm not sure but I -- I was so blacked out I have fleeting memories. So there were maybe six boys there I think, about that. And what happened was I went -- came staggering out of the woods and a teacher or somebody saw me and reported it and the principal ended up calling my mom who picked me up. And I slept for two days. There was blood in my panties. My bra was undone. Like, it was so obvious something had
And my -- when I awoke -- I mean, I guess maybe even in those days they just wouldn't even think about sedatives but when I finally woke up, of course I was severely punished as if I had been bad. And when -- I did some personal healing and about 19 I called my mom to confront her and I know she just hung up the phone. She -- I just said to her, "Mom, do you realize what happened to me?" And she just -- she just was so terrified and she just hung up. And so that was sort of like trying to talk about it. Because for years I even presented it like this funny, light-hearted adventure where we got really drunk and the principal threw me -- like, I was myself in denial.

And about 19 was when I started -- when -- when I really was awake sexually, and in my power sexually I went, "What the fuck was that?"

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Yeah.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** And what did -- "What was going on? What was up with that?" And so I never ever charged them.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** I think the -- and even today, as strong a leader as I am, I just don't know if I can face them. I just don't know if I can. And the other thing I know is, I don't think it's a -- there's
[D] who was there as a witness but I don't know if she
would be honest and real. But I know that I was so
compromised because I don't -- I just have these fleeting
memories and things are evolving and changing.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Yeah.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** And there might
be something to it but that's only been happening today
when victims are more or less believed and then -- because
I just always knew. But I've always felt so guilty because
I don't know what [R] has done to other girls.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Yeah.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** And that's just
always killed me because I -- from what I know in the
system, I realize that he'd already, in Grade 12, he was in
Grade 12, he'd already had a practice, a chilling
methodology and a practice. And I know it didn't end
there. And that's the part that really gets to me.

And I know that [D] moved on. She had two
kids. I knew that -- I don't even remember anymore how I
knew this but she got married and she had two kids, living
in Victoria. And I still to this day, that's the only one
I would love to talk to her and say, "You -- what were you
thinking" ---

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Yeah.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** --- "that you
could just set me up like that?"

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: How old were you?

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Fifteen.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: You were 15.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Yeah. Just such a baby.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yes. A child. You were a child. Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Yeah, and it was September and so for that whole year those boys bullied me.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And made lewd, like, gestures at me to keep me and I lived in -- I don't know how I did it, went to school every day ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- with that kind of bullying going on that was so shaming and deeply just at the heart of who you are and together with that -- those experiences in elementary school, it was -- I was just -- I was just so traumatized. And so when I was in elementary school in Prince George, I was just the pariah.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Kids physically attacked me and made fun of me. And so when we moved to
Vancouver when I was 11 I thought, "I've escaped it. Nobody knows who I was." By then I was wearing makeup and I could hide my Indigeneity. And then as puberty set it got less and less obvious and people started saying, "Are you Italian? Are you Egyptian?" Like, it wasn't -- I could disclose if I wanted to.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And so suddenly to find myself back at square one was mortally wounding. And so I was extremely suicidal, extremely fragile.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Of course.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And thank goodness for my friend from private school, Elaine, who was from a different world. I could live a fantasy weekend with Elaine because she didn't know what was going on and I think we were so shut down I don't even know if I told her. I'm sure I didn't. And so I had that escape on the weekend, thank God.

And then in the summer of '73 I remember thinking, "I can't go back to that school." I just was deciding all summer either I kill myself, but I can't go back. And then in that year it was sort of the glam rock era and David Bowie and Alice Cooper, there were all these shape shifting icons out there. Lou Reed who was wearing an earring and lipstick and all these kind of gender
bending people that were taking on personas. And so I figured it out. I think I sort of became an unofficial performance artist and I kind of got my shit together. I rolled up my jeans and got some striped socks and found myself platform shoes and I kind of came back to school with this big scarf and people bought it. Like, I went from being this pariah to just somebody, like, being invited to parties and people -- it became another power for me. But a power that I kind of got lost in for a lot of years too ---

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** --- because then I -- I didn't know where my identity began. It wasn't an authentic self. It was a survival mask. And I became this big kind of trendsetting performance artist in real life with no authentic Sharon shining through, but it got me through that year and I actually even had clout and power because I was so good at become -- becoming this sort of I guess mystical, funny entity at school.

So that got me through and I actually can honestly say that I had some really amazing times in that persona. I -- it wasn't really me but it was amazing as a teenager and my -- my son and kids would ask me to tell them one more story about pranks we pulled or parties we had or things that we did. And thank goodness, but I guess
that that was my -- all I can think of is it was just as
stroke, a moment of genius where part of my -- I believe my
Indigenous spiritedness reached out and saved my life
because I took myself into another -- into a vision and
that saved me as a teenager.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And I think
there's something really empowering and healthy about that
too. And that's another one of the medicines when I've
worked with young people. I teach them the magic of
allowing forces and creative muses to become part of your
survival mechanism in a really creative and empowering way,
so...

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And that --
that just happened to me. So again, it -- there's always
light and darkness. My granny held onto her culture
because she what a monster the priest was right away by
killing that -- her friend.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And I began to
perform and understand. It was a ritual. I didn't call it
that but it was a ritual, a readiness of me putting on not
quite a -- a plastic nose, a clown face and big shoes but I
was putting on a -- a persona to get me through. And that
was -- that was something -- yeah, those avenues of empowerment I think are -- it's amazing. And when I know my cultures how we had sacred clowning and how being out in a vision quest not eating and drinking you have to almost find a persona to cope. Like, it forces you into some kind of superhero, "I can do this." And so imagine that I was so desperate it was, like, a vision quest. That rape was like a vision quest where I had to turn inward to -- to -- to live. And look -- and it gave -- something amazing happened.

And I always wanted to make a film because those performance artists were always playing with images of life and death. Like, David Bowie killed Ziggy Stardust and Alice Cooper talked about dead babies when he was really talking about child abuse and ---

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** --- only women bleed. And he would hang at the end of his performances but I always knew that what he was doing was killing the evil so that the good could be born again.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Wow.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** And there was something really powerful about and I just drank that stuff up. Like, I loved -- and I always as a film maker wanted to talk to them at that level because I get -- you know,
most of the films about those artists are just, like, "Oh, when did you get the idea for this and that?" It's like a linear exploration of their creativity instead of, "Did you realize that you were playing with these big, powerful, shamanic medicines? And what do you make of it?" So thank goodness that those kind of shamans were around. We -- they were rock stars but they're shamans to help me to set myself free. Yeah.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Wow.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** So yeah, I just think that that is -- is -- even just saying this, you know, part of the commission, I've never ever in any sort of official setting other than in healing circles and one on one therapy owned my story. And I can just feel that I'm really being my own best friend right now. And that's a really good feeling that I'm actually getting behind that 15 year old ---

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Yeah.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** --- in a way that I haven't before.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Yeah.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** Yeah.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** It's very powerful. I have one question. Were the police ever involved?

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** No. No. I was
never involved. It was like I packed it away.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** And when I -- at 19 I started to do healing and at various times I had confrontations with my mother. I don't think I ever talked to my dad about it but it talked to my mom about it. And she did get to a place of being able to not react and shut me down but kind of listen to me. But she didn't have any skills to -- and I didn't either. I didn't know how to shift that. But I do know that my mom -- it used to feel like she was almost getting sick.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** Like, the energy from her that, "Oh, here Sharon goes again with this story. Oh my God. I'm just going to weather myself through it and just not see anything." So that's as far as it ever went that I -- I felt that in my mom and I knew that she was hearing me even though she couldn't -- still always ran away. I knew that she was getting it ---

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** --- eventually. And that's all I ever did.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay. Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** Yeah. So yeah, I think that that's mainly it. And I don't know if the
statute -- I remember one time looking up the statute of
limitations and thinking it had probably run out but I
don't know if that's changed today.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: But the
agonizing thing with my work and the system is knowing that
[R] had to be -- is a highly skilled predator and people
like that don't stop.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Is that something you
would like to find out, if the statute of limitation is up?

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Yeah.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: I know -- I
thought -- I've obviously thought about it a lot because I
know my school records, if they still exist, will have that
incident in there. Because I was banned from school for a
couple of weeks. Kind of like the bad girl -- isn't that
horrible?

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: That is.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: That ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: And were you -- did your
mother ever take you to receive medical attention?

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: No.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: No. Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: No. And yet
there were bruises and I was really hurt and creeping
around the house and things like that.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And it was sort
of like out of sight, out of mind. Like, stay, retreat.
And then the way my family would deal with things was
eventually it'd sort of be forgotten. But I do know yeah,
that I was -- there's so many even pieces now about the
family dynamics that I'm really realizing now as a 61 years
old ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- I'm really
realizing how many -- there were so many strange dynamics.
But the biggest vibe that was around me was that I was a
fallen woman. Even similar to that -- why I suspect nobody
talked about Alvina because part of the lure around her was
that she was fallen, even though everybody knew she was 12
and given alcohol.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: I believe that
because -- yeah, everybody else gets a fond recall and
their precious -- especially trauma. I could -- there's so
many children who died in my family from trauma.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And they're
remembered in a treasured way, so why is there this big invisibility. Why doesn't she exist? It's because she was the fallen woman. So at some level they were actively engaging in blaming her. And that's what happened to me.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Yeah.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: It's weird. I never put the parallels until just now between -- I was 15 and she was 12 but it's the same -- that's chilling. I just only now realized why her and I are so connected.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: And you -- and you shared her today and -- and given life, you know. She's -- she's not a fallen girl. She was just a child.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: No. Absolutely not. And neither was I.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Exactly.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And so thank goodness I did some healing work. Starting at a really young age I -- I've done a lot of work on myself. And I was already starting to speak my truth at 19 to my mom as she's hanging up on the phone. But I started to really look at things. And kind of turn it around a bit because everybody -- because I've always been a bit of a maverick and kind of the notion that I am kind of the messed up one
in my family.

 **MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

 **MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** I know that I'm actually the most authentic one of my family. And that when you have that much trauma as a little kid and they plunk you with a middle class family that has high functioning expectations and rules and you're damaged, it's not going to work out. And that's another thing from working with kids that I know that. You can't put kids through a meat grinder and then -- and then expect that they're going to just adjust to normal life.

But you know what -- where I'm at today too, I am so grateful that I'm a coyote and that I was inspired by people like Lou Reed and Alice Cooper and I could see the bigger themes working in their art. And could understand how what I was doing and made the choice that that art was going to save me.

And so that is -- I'm so glad I'm not -- like, my sister in my adoptive family is so shut down and so righteous and so good all the time. To me her life is like a beige wall. I would never want to be that person. Not that I'm saying I think everybody needs drama and crisis and hurt, but as far as my family goes I'm just so glad that I'm not one of those shut down scaredy cats afraid to have passion and fire and to, you know -- and in
terms of public, I've made a point of talking about all of these issues.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Because I realized part of the privilege I had too was having access to resources and learning enough about life to have -- being well paid and being able to manage. And so I feel like the greatest legacy I could leave is investing some of the resources back into my community and with my people. And actually, I get such richness. So I started -- I've just done a lot of things to advocate for changes in the laws so that all kids could get access to their records. All of these things I've been a part of and the big secret is it's hard to tell who benefits the most because I've loved so much passing the light along to -- and the fire and in saying to kids, "You're not bad. You're not wrong. You've been given this hell hole to grow up in but there really is magic just over the mountain. There really -- that's true."

And so it's been -- I've been so fortunate. And today I have kind of like a little -- I have people going back to the 80s that still track me down and say, you know, I want you to meet my child or -- and Victor was like that too. We were like these two forces that met. And one -- one of the greatest stories I -- I have some of
them too, but Victor was down at the LAX airport, he'd been doing some storytelling for some tribes south of L.A. And in the -- in the early 80s Victor was living up in Prince Rupert and he rescued this kid that was living in a little Volkswagen. He was 13. And Victor -- Victor -- his name was J.T. and Victor brought him home and gave him a roof over his head. And Victor's best friend was a psychologist and got him help on multiple levels.

So Victor was down at the LAX and, I don't know, 25 years later, and he looks up the hallway and he sees this figure with a baby stroller coming towards him and he said, "That looks like J.T." And sure enough he got closer and it -- it was him. And here they were at the L.A. airport meeting each other and -- and J.T. introduced his wife to Victor and said, "This is Victor Rees. He's the one that found me in that Volkswagen when I was young and gave me a home and looked after." Because Victor -- although he was placed in care, Victor always was there. He was his go-to person until he graduated.

And then he join -- and Victor said, "So what are you doing now?" And he said, "Well, I joined the U.S. military."

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** "And I'm an aeronautical engineer." And ---
MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Wow.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- he was
telling his wife and then he said, "Victor, I'm so honoured
to meet you because my wife has heard all about you." And
then he said, "Victor, meet Victor." And he said, "I named
my son after you." And so yeah, I love that story because
it's just so ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Powerful.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- beautiful.
But -- but I have people in my life like that too that they
track me down and come to see me because yeah, whenever
you're able to say is jumping jack flash is alive and well
in you too, then it's amazing what happens to people.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Can you share more -- so
you spoke a bit about, you know, all of the wonderful work
you've done with kids in the foster care system. And off
camera we spoke a little bit about some of the wonderful
things that you've been involved with. And part of the
intention of this process is also to identify and hear from
family members and survivors what is working. You know,
what -- what can you identify through your vast experience
as -- as working and helpful to Indigenous people?

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Well, I think
the hunger and the journey is towards authenticity and
identity. And drumming and beadwork are part of -- like, a
physical manifestation of identity.

    MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

    MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: But where I see that identity even goes to the core of our being is through rite of passage. And rituals that reach down into the very genesis of our being. And because they're dramatic moments that are filled with all the joy, all the what happened and what might have happened and what could happen when those forces come together.

    And I'll just share a little bit about a ceremony that I -- so more and more I have been getting braver and more saying what it is that I'm doing even though I've been creating rituals like that for camps and encounters with people for years ---

    MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

    MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- but one of the things -- I was a speaker at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in a tent. And there was about 700 women.

    MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

    MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Mostly Indigenous. And that was after that big TRC walk from Georgia Street all the way to the PNE and they asked me -- and I was an afterthought by the way too because they realized they didn't have any women speakers.
MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: So this is 2013 and it was overlooked to invite a matriarchal presence. So myself and three other people were invited to speak. And they had to put up a tent because all the venues were taken. But needless to say, there was about 700 women. And before I shared about matriarchal wisdom and teachings I asked them, "How many of you had a rite of passage ceremony when you were born?" And of the 700, maybe 13, 13 women ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- put up their hand. So maybe there were some more that were somewhere shy, who knows, but that's appalling. Then I asked, "How many of you had a rite of passage when you got your first cycle?" Maybe seven hands went up. So half of from being born. And then I asked, "And how many of you here had a ceremony when you were -- became a crone or a teacher or a wisdom keeper? You were no longer able to give life but now you were a keeper of the ceremonies and a teacher and a mentor." Nobody. None of that was celebrated.

So I went home and thought about it and what manifested was the idea of -- it came to me in a flash. I put tobacco down and asked what to do about this and I
realized the only way we could have reconciliation for grandmothers is to repatriate their umbilical cords.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And how would we do that I'm thinking? And I've been -- I've done a big -- a lot of work with cedar bark so I got a friend's of mine, Avis O'Brien (ph.), and we figured out a way to twist cedar bark to make a coil like an umbilical cord naturally.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Wow.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And then we got crystal beads to put on the end to symbolize the water in a mother's womb. And then we wrapped a little copper wire around that for the blood of mother earth. And so Avis and I developed a template and then I went to Britannia Outreach School. And I worked there with the youth other years and the teacher said to me, "Sharon, these kids are not like the kids the other years." Like, she said, "There's the panic button if you get into trouble", and then she left me with these kids. And I am just, like, "Okay, kids, we're going to create some medicine for your grandmother."

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And the minute I said that these kids melted. They worked so hard. Because I just showed you it was a very simple technique.
And you could hear a pin drop because these kids were being asked to do -- to create some medicine for their grandmothers. I didn't have to worry. I could have had a nap and they would have been finishing -- finishing their work because that resonated with them. They were being asked to help.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Yeah.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** They were being cast as the -- the shamas making the medicine for grandma and I didn't -- like, when the teacher came back she almost passed out because she couldn't believe these were the same kids. They just loved it. And I brought a friend of mine and she drummed and sang to them and they were just purring like kittens.

And they made this big basket and then I had a feast at the Friendship Centre and I got some of those very kids and I put a veil over them to represent the spirit world and they brought these baskets into -- I darkened all the Simon Baker (ph.) room, which is a circular room, I darkened it and just had it lit by candles. And then in walked these glorious teenage girls carrying these baskets with the umbilical cords on and I put them in a veil to get them -- help them get into character and be spirits bringing in these umbilical cords. And I said to the women, "For some of your mother might be
really painful and so you might think of this as your connection to the -- your first holy mother, the earth. Or it could be a connection to the universe. Or it could be anything you want it to mean if mother is too painful."

But that was our first holy connection to beingness. And those cords go back and back and back all the way to the first one. "So some of you might want to bury them, some might want to put them in trees. Some of you might want to keep it in your bundles. Some might want to throw it in the water. It's up to you. And take this as your medicine and your connection."

And I just did a big ceremony, another one, out at the log house this past weekend and now in Kwantlen First Nation.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And now they want me to come and do -- do two -- they said, "Can you come back in -- in the spring and in the fall and do two ceremonies?" And one fellow there just wept and said he felt his mother right there with him. Because we have -- since that first ceremony we've evolved a bit, even more of a -- a ritual ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- around gifting people. They're really making it a big moment
whereas the first time the girls took around the baskets
but now we've evolved the process even more. And another
time in another time in another group on the downtown east
side there was this big biker chick and she had those kind
of glasses that tint in the dark, so for all the times
she'd be coming to the groups that I was running I could
never see her eyes.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And we did a
healing retreat out at Chehalis reserve in the summer and I
repatriated the umbilical cords there and we created this
whole river, like, with rocks to this blanket where they
stood to receive their umbilical cord and each woman that I
gave them to, I looked into them and I said, "You're so
creative and amazing and I can see that you love your
people and that your beauty is inside and out. And I can
feel what a good listener you are." And so I honoured
their essence just like my granny did when I first met her.
And this biker chick, that sounds so derogatory but I don't
mean it like that but that describes ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yes.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- her persona
to ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Yeah.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- you, when
she hit that blanket she took off those glasses so I could
look her right in the eye because she wanted all of that
medicine for herself.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And that
absolutely took my breath away that she trusted that much
and wanted -- her little kid wanted to just be seen and
that she would take down the barrier between herself and
the world for the -- a moment. And so that just describes
the -- I think that we need to do this rite of passage for
everybody.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: But I think for
women who have been so under sieged and been so given the -
- the slut/bitch labels, that we need to replace that with
empowered matriarch that's filled with the fires of a
thousand dances before we came to be here. And to have
that acknowledged that you are the result of thousands of
prayers over Turtle Island and thousands of rituals, you
carry that in each part of your being. And when it's --
when there's something really sacred and connecting like
that umbilical cord, there's a magic and that's what I
think -- where I know that the work that I've done has been
so compelling and helped me every step of the way and then
I know it's really working because I know I am learning
about my vulnerabilities and my shortcomings and owning
more of my dark at my light as a result of doing this work.
And so that tells me it's in balance.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay. Do you -- what
would you need? Are there any needs that you could
identify so that we could have more of these rites of
passage ceremonies?

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Just the
resources to ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- for the --
for the time it takes and the running it because I feel
like I'm just getting started. That there's lots of
variations and opportunities to develop sacred rituals.
And those primary times -- because right now, I mean, we're
so colonized that a lot of programs that are healing give
people certificates.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: That's right.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And what -- a
certificate is -- like, communication skills or post-
traumatic stress, all these tools that we use don't take
root because there's no identity. Like, we're dealing with
people that have been under siege and so it's our identity
and our sense of self and -- and separateness and
sovereignty that things like communication skills or post-
traumatic stress can anchor themselves in.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: So here we are with people under siege learning tools but they just kind of slip through you because -- because there's no grounding there. Or little is challenged I would say. Not -- not none but it's really challenged and easily -- it's fragile. There's a fragility around identity and most of us are filled with doubts about what Indigeneity is. And so I really believe that people who know who they are don't have to be taught communication skills or how to do post-traumatic stress like the colonizer's models. I think it comes naturally.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And that we'll -- we know what to do. And also, in the area of offenders, I think -- I've heard many -- you know, having worked with very powerful people, they've said to me, you know, "We really couldn't do much in certain villages. All the adults would go to jail."

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: That's the reality. And -- because of where we're at. So clearly the reconciliation and building up -- loving people up so that their default way of coping or having power begins to shift
and change. Because I do know too that in sexual exploitative relationships there's more going on than just the sexual abuse. There's real love. There's real relationships. There's even real goodness. And 20 years ago they would have marched me in front of a firing squad for suggesting that that might be true.

And so we need to really use these medicines to -- in those -- for the darker things that are going on in our community. But I really think by celebrating people's existence and where they're at in life, when your spirit knows where you are, it has a place inside itself and that's what rite of passage does. It gives -- it opens up the room for our spirit to be a more prominent part of our essence.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** Yeah. So boy, if I have -- you know, I also think too that on an -- even what we were preparing to do with Big Sky with the mass dance and dances that actually have some relevancy, because you can see colonization, and this is one of the beliefs Vic and I had that the mass dance had become almost stagnant and lost if you will, the power of it, because so many of the dances were minimal. And Victor really felt that some of the charisma and natural movement had been volume way turned down because of the overwhelming forces
that were -- were against it.

And so I would love to see our full on creativity with those things. And there's a lot of traditionalists that balk at those notions but I think it's really important. What's more important, saving grandchildren or honouring things that may not have even been true anyhow? And that's where -- where I am totally all for finding a -- a cultural container that is relevant that addresses urbanization and drug abuse and -- and sexual abuse and the diseases, AIDS and mental illness that we're faced with today.

And so that's where if we're practicing something just because that's the way it's been done, like, it's just, like, are you -- you know, like, I have no interest in a stagnant static reality because I know already on my -- like, on my own reserve I -- I have a bunch of friends that clowns with Cirque de Soleil and one of them a very talented clown had an anatomically correct buffalo built by brothers in the institution.

That's another thing, we used to volunteer to go in the institutions. So it was 18 feet long, which would be, I don't know, at -- from this wall to that wall and that much high. And it was this big, white buffalo and we brought a flatbed truck trailer to my reserve for the culture camp and inside was this glorious buffalo. And
when you put the -- her -- her outside coat and you light
it from the inside it looks like a giant, white buffalo
moon. It glows like moon -- like a moon.

And we brought it home and started to -- the
first thing that always happened at our culture camp is the
elders would start to talk about residential school and all
the kids would take off and go into the bush and get
mischief. And I thought, "I can't stand it." So that's
why I brought these clowns with this thing and I knew
better than to put up posters. What I did was one of my
friends had a bear regalia and we -- like, a full on bear
outfit with a mask, a bear mask that my husband had
actually helped carve, and she just jumped in and out of
the bushes when cars went by because we knew that getting
everybody's curiosity and excitement and starting rumours
on the reserve -- and the funny thing is that everybody
sort of knew that I was probably behind it, this bear that
was jumping out.

Anyway -- what was I going to say? So then
we had these kids walking stilts and learning some circus
skills.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Wow.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And pretty soon
in the -- what to me had become a very kind of -- not --
self indulgent sounds too harsh and too judgemental, but
people lost in their pain. The elders gradually started to come to our camp because we were -- and my uncle -- and this is where my uncle tried to say that it wasn't -- it wasn't good medicine, that what I was doing, it needed to stay traditional in the camp, so he was exerting his kind of red road powers to make what I was doing all bad and wrong.

But it didn't stop me one little bit. Like, I just kept going with the stilt walkers. And then another time my friend and I, we went around Calgary and got tickle trunks full of Elvis Presley paraphernalia and so we dressed -- one night we dressed all the kids up, their grandkids up in different, like, Elvis, the leather Elvis and the Las Vegas Elvis and they were going around the camps as these Elvis Presleys and that just got big laughs.

And I could see my people becoming in the moment. They were present. They wanted to share and all of a sudden when their grandchild was representing a direction with the regalia that we had for the stilt walking, the grandfather would start to share about the medicines and the self direction. So it -- it even sort of had this organic culture sharing where -- whereas normally because of residential schools, like, "Okay, shut the door", you know, and, "Don't tell anybody but here's some of the cultural teachings", but they just seemed to be
coming out and flowing as opposed to that other energy.  
And so my uncle and I, the sad thing is we
had a big falling out and he was kind of the spiritual
leader of the camp and -- but that's how much I believe and
had to find my own sovereignty separate from those red road
warrior mentality type thing that want to keep everything
how it was and -- and you know, and I know too, people --
when I go home, "Oh, you're the one that brought that big
buffalo." You know, like -- like, you get remembered for
being a bit of a maverick too.

So I'm really glad because I know some of my
cousins who are good little red roaders, they -- nobody
ever remembers anything because they're just so good. So I
think of myself sort of as a bit of a sacred clown.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: So I'm not
holy, always serious. But in those moments of needing to
hold holy light for people, to witness them, the essence of
my granny I feel just comes through me. Like, her energy.
But that's what -- that's where I would take our
programming because I think too when you create ceremonies
and you start to build community bundles, those bundles
represent our lives and our identity.

But those bundles can't be pipes that other
people can't touch or that you're made to feel ashamed.
They've got to be something that really you can embrace. They're ours. We've made this magic. This is our bundle. Like, that's the kind of empowering energy I think is missing. We -- I'm not saying throw away our pipes, but I remember my granny telling me about pipes being buried with people and I really rejected it and thought that that is a kind of colonizer idea but now I'm learning more about being in the moment, I totally understand why they did that, so we didn't have things that we coveted more than feelings and spirit. You had to be in the moment, you had to make your own bundles, which today makes sense to me.

So now that's what I'm saying, my granny said things to me but that at the time I was, like, "Oh, you're hurting my ears. Don't talk about burying bundles with people." But today I go, "Yeah, that makes sense." So that yeah, we have to be in the moment then. We can't be trying to emulate something that doesn't exist anymore.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: So anyway, that's -- I feel like I've said a lot and what I'd like to -- unless you have other questions.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: No, go ahead.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Because what I'd like to do is just close my session with a last bit of writing.
MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay. Of course.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: I'll read you this one poem first. This one's called "Lateral Violence."

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Okay.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: "Somewhere deep inside a truth bloomed that her hurt became my betrayal and my betrayal became her hurt. And so goes the story of mothers, daughters and granddaughters." Yeah, that one's called "Lateral Violence."

But here's the one I want to close with. And I want to thank you. You've been such a beautiful witness. And when I look at you and how young you are I see what a powerful matriarchal presence you're going to be. And you are going to change things for children and grandchildren. Yeah. I know that about you.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Thank you.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: This one's called "Turning."

"Into the vast plain of dark empty, my spirit explodes. Motion, movement, white light spins, spiral, turning around. A translucent sphere emerges. Delicate. Easily injured. Green grass. Fresh, sweet softness covers her ground with protective beauty. Where white strawberry blossoms bloom and gentle winds dance the grass. Where not need baby deer take their first steps."
In this place where the river flows with emancipating,
clear, holy water and red sparkling fire burns warm and a
gentle eagle feather wind lift the sparks skyward. In this
place where my younger self rests and my old one comes for
protection. Here is where I rise.''

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Wow.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Yeah.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: I just want to say thank
you so much. For me it is such a gift to witness and hold
space for everything that you've shared today and I really
feel like this is why we are told to connect with the
matriarchs and with the elders and with the grandmothers,
you know. Because there's such an infusion of love and
knowledge and wisdom to be had if we open ourselves to do
that. So thank you very much.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Well, it's been
an honour having you here. What a gift. And yeah,
hopefully we'll -- I know we'll see each other around the
community and I know, boy, if I had the opportunity to -- I
don't think it's bad to have a struggle but, boy, just
unleash me in a whole group of other sacred clowns that I
know and we would -- we would wreak havoc on the territory
and really shake things up because right now, what's going
on on the red road, although glorious in many ways, and I
love sweats and I love the majesty of our dances, there's a
real limitation to it too and not enough of our kids are there or see themselves as part of it.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: No.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And same with pot latches. And we have to realize that that's the road. And it's really important if we're great democracies like we say we always were, then they're voting and we better realize that that's the truth and we better find a way to have more of them counted in.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: Absolutely.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: And that's mostly why I'm doing what I'm doing because I see the -- how ridiculous it is for some of our mostly male elders but female elders too that are sticking to the hardcore this is the Olympics and you better get it right, and there's winners and losers and people who are ashamed and all that stuff that's going on right now.

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: And like what you're were speaking to earlier about that vulnerability and really wanting a sense of belonging, you know, so young people seeking out that with different communities and elders and ceremonies and - and are we doing it in -- in the best possible way for the future generation.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Totally. And there's a real place -- there's needs to be confident
leadership. And I think in fairness, the residential school and stuff has made people kind of cling to the status quo as a way to keep safe. But really, spirituality is about being in the moment. It isn't about reciting — like, that's what's so dead about the Lord's Prayer is that you're not -- you can be anywhere in your mind and recite it. You don't have to be connected to spirit. And -- but a lot of our ceremonies are getting to be recitations, repetitive and people are clinging to it almost like an -- you know, when I get to run sweats and do things my own way, they're creative and collaborative and anything could happen. I tell people that, like, anything might happen here in the sweat lodge so, you know, run out, beware.

And -- but they're the most magical things because it's so in the moment and natural. And there's enough form there that is still grounded in the ancient practices. So you don't throw the forms out and -- completely but you allow for people to see themselves in what's going on in the moment in a really collaborative way. That's really important.

So yeah, we've lost the fun. It's supposed to be fun. And that's how it was with my granny and I kept ---

MS. TERRIEA WADUD: So true.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: --- wanting her
to be more serious because that's what -- what my thinking was then, right. But she was a lot of fun. And see, my granny, she can have a glass of whisky if she wanted to. Like, she just was a sovereign person. She wasn't, like, "Oh, if you're this way then you got to wear skirts and you've got to, you know, no alcohol and nobody can" -- you know, it's almost like born again Christians or something. Like, it's a real sickness. And it's not like, "Oh, let me -- tell me -- let me hear who you are." It's all, "I'm going to hoist all my values onto you and you're going to do that." And I just -- yeah. It's really not -- not healthy.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay. Yeah. And just -- just to close, out of my own curiosity, you've mentioned sovereign and -- and it's in -- you speak to it in terms of, like, in relationship to yourself, right. What -- what does -- what does that mean to you to be sovereign within yourself?

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** It's like autonomy but with a greater sense of -- sovereignty to me implies membership in a nation.

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Okay.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** But also that I am listening to my spirit and actualizing all of my being in -- in an authentic and immediate way. And when I'm not
sovereign I'm afraid. I'm scared. I'm trying to fit in and survive. So to me, sovereignty is being, like, I know who I am and what I want in this moment. And of course it means too that you're part of fitting in and making — respecting everybody else's sovereignty in the room all at the same time. But yeah, when I'm not sovereign I'm afraid. When I'm not sovereign I'm compromising and losing my voice. When I'm not sovereign I'm not sure who I am. And I'm judging who I am as not being acceptable or presentable so I'm going to pretend. And I grew up without any sovereignty for years and years and years.

So that's what my granny was like, "I just love you", you know. And I'd be, like, "Well, tell me how to be." And she'd be, like, "Well, you tell me how you want to be." And I kept, like I said, just trying to cleverly trick her so she would give me the rules. Like, I just wasn't ready yet because -- because I was still young. But -- so sovereignty means that -- that -- yeah, and I believe any girl who knows who she is and is honoured for who she is is not vulnerable because you -- you're listening to your intuition. And most women have been taught, well, the rules are right, daddy's right, mommy's right, I can't be right. And that's what gets people into trouble.

And so now with sovereignty, when I get an
intuition, I really listen to it and honour that intuition and I don't make light of it or think, "Oh, maybe it's just me." And you know, "I'm kind of cranky today so it must be me." Like, I just listen to my intuition and whenever I don't I pay a price. I'll put it that way.

So that to me is what sovereignty is. Does that resonate for you?

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah, it makes sense with what you were sharing about the rites of passage ceremonies.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** Yeah, those things ---

**MS. TERRIEA WADUD:** To know yourself.

**MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS:** Yeah. So how can we possibly think that policy is going to change this? Rite of passage I guarantee is going to for -- for better or for worse, it's going to have an impact because it's intimate. It's like this. Policies are like that.

So -- but I know it's all done with the best of intentions but we have to get maybe on -- that's part of some of the medical research I'm working on is trying to scratch that itch that if we don't get in the moment and we're thinking it through, we're immediately abandoning something or someone. And it's really hard. That's a really difficult concept for people. Just as it was for
MS. TERRIEA WADUD: So planting that seed on -- on that note, thank you again. And the time now is 4:26 p.m. and we are finishing up with Sharon's statement.

MS. SHARON JINKERSON-BRASS: Perfect.

--- Upon adjourning at 4:26 p.m.
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

I, Ashley Robertson, 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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Ashley Robertson

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Ashley Robertson

December 18, 2018