

## UPDATE

September 8, 2017

On September 7, 2017 Chief Commissioner Marion Buller of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls drove a portion of the Highway of Tears to address the Annual General Assembly (AGM) of Carrier Sekani Family Services.

Chief Commissioner Buller began by acknowledging the territory of the Nadleh Whut'en First Nation. Nadleh Whut'en means "people who live where the salmon return" and lies north of the city of Prince George in central British Columbia.

Chief Commissioner Buller also acknowledged the dynamism and innovative work of Carrier Sekani Family Services, a holistic wellness agency that has been transforming service provision to First Nations in the region through culturally-based programming for 27 years.

"I have admired the work of the Carrier Sekani Family Services for many years," said Chief Commissioner Buller. "I am Cree and we embrace the same philosophy of taking care of our own children our own way."

Transportation along the corridor was one of the themes discussed. Many of the women and girls who have gone missing or been murdered along the Highway of Tears were hitch-hiking.

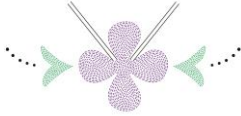
Mary Teegee, Director of Family Services of the Carrier Sekani Family Service organization, has been a staunch advocate for the provision of adequate transportation along the Highway of Tears so First Nations and non-First Nations people alike can have safe transportation.

It was recently announced however that the Greyhound bus service along the Highway of Tears might be cancelled.

Chief Commissioner Buller told the audience about a winter day in January 2016 when she saw two young girls hitch-hiking along the Highway of Tears. She pulled over and gave them a ride. She also gave them a piece of her mind about the dangers of hitch-hiking.

"I'm a grandmother. I lectured them in my grandmother voice," the Chief Commissioner told the audience, garnering laughter from the audience.

In March of 2006, Carrier Sekani Family Services was one of the organizers of the Highways of Tears Symposium, which led to the publication of a report the following June linking poverty and lack of transportation services in the area to the tragedy of missing and murdered First Nations and non-First Nations women and girls. The report also provided specific recommendations on victim prevention, emergency planning, team responses, and family counselling along the Highway of Tears.



The Chief Commissioner then provided an update to the AGM members and participants about the work of the National Inquiry to date. She explained the options people have if they wish to share their story about a lost loved one or an experience of violence. “Stories from families and survivors are sacred to us, and we treat them that way,” she said.

The floor was opened for a Q & A, with the Chief Commissioner taking questions and comments, including questions about cultural competency training for the RCMP and re-opening cases of missing and murdered loved ones.

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