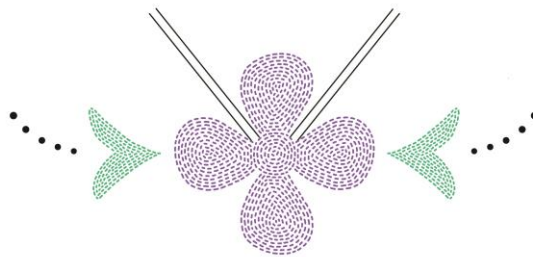


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1: Truth-Gathering Sessions
Maison de la famille
Maliotenam/Uashat mak Mani-Utenam, Quebec**



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Véronique André

Heard by Sheila Mazhari

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NOTE

The use of brackets [] in this transcription indicates that the certified transcription was modified to complete certain passages deemed inaudible or indiscernible by the original transcriber. The text was completed by listening to the original recording of the session. The modifications were made by Claudine Pelletier Paquin, research assistant for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Corrections were made by Ms. Pelletier Paquin on October 1, 2018, in Wendake, Quebec.

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Heard by: Sheila Mazhari

List of exhibits: none

1 November 30, 2017, Maliotenam, Quebec

2 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: OK. Hello, my name is
3 Sheila Mazhari. I'm with the National Inquiry into Missing
4 and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It's November 30,
5 2017. We are in Maliotenam, Quebec. I'm speaking to
6 Véronique from Maliotenam and the other person with us
7 is...

8 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: (*Indiscernible*).
9 *Laughs*. Is Kathleen.

10 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: And Véronique, your
11 testimony will be audio and video recorded. Do you consent
12 to this?

13 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Yes. ~~Entirely~~. [I
14 agree].

15 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Yes, OK. When you're
16 ready, you can introduce yourselves.

17 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: My name is Véronique
18 André. They use the name André on my cards [speaking Innu]
19 from the federal government. I'm André to the federal
20 government. And I'm *Wala* (*phon.*) to the federal government.
21 The provincial government calls me André. So I have two
22 names. My husband's name, which is *Wala*, and... I fought
23 for it, I fought for them to write my name André. I never
24 won. Because they say, "You're on..." in 1985, I think. I
25 got married before 1985. That's why my name is *Wala*. So I

1 don't know. Sometimes I sign André, sometimes I [sign]
2 Wala. It's confusing. Anyways, I tell myself it's not my
3 real name. It wasn't my name. They're the names that the
4 missionaries gave us. So when we were in residential
5 schools... I was in residential school for 11 years. '53 to
6 '65, I think. Anyway, I was there, a little girl. How the
7 [residential school] worked is that when we arrived they
8 gave everyone the same haircut. The bangs to here, and
9 here. It was very badly done; it was just meant to
10 humiliate us. Also, when we arrived at the residential
11 school, we all had to dress the same. We all followed the
12 same rules: prayer in the morning, morning prayer, prayer
13 before... There were never-ending prayers. Before eating,
14 after eating. Before class, and after. I don't know how
15 many times-we got together a dozen times to pray. So we
16 learned the stories of the saints that are supposed to be
17 in heaven. I told myself, "I don't want to go to heaven."
18 After leaving, I told myself, "I don't want to go to
19 heaven. I don't know those people and I don't want to know
20 anything about them." I was always a very rebellious
21 person. I was rebellious, so... They didn't... I wasn't
22 molested because I could defend myself. And my father was
23 Chief. And when my father was Chief, he's the one who
24 called his initiative, with the government. He's the one
25 who built the [residential school]. So I, even then... He

1 came to see us often, to see how things were going...
2 That's probably why I didn't get sexually abused by the
3 nuns and priests. Um, I was saying... They were afraid of
4 my father because he was very authoritative. So I felt
5 protected, just by his name. He never protected me. Just
6 his name, because he was very authoritative. So I spent 11
7 years there. Eleven years of following rules: get up,
8 pray... Always the same routine. When they started talking
9 about residential schools, I thought, "I don't remember any
10 of it. I know I went there, then it's a blank. I don't
11 remember." I spoke to a psychologist about it, and he said,
12 "You don't remember anything? You don't remember anything
13 because it was like being brainwashed: you wear this, you
14 walk like this, you eat like that." So that's how it was.
15 And with... What brings me here is... We were separated
16 from our siblings when we got there. We were born on my
17 father's ancestral land, close to the River Georges. It's
18 very, very far from here. That's where we were born. There
19 were 13 of us: nine girls and four boys. Thirteen of us,
20 born in the bush, with midwives. One of my sisters was born
21 in Tahamajesheratik (phon.). [Goose Bay.] The other was
22 born in the tundra. There are no trees at all there. So we
23 were on the edge of the tundra. As far as the Innu could
24 go, that was us. That's where my siblings were born. So
25 part of my family didn't go to residential school. They

1 were raised in the bush and continued to spend time in the
2 bush. They have been able to live without alcohol. There's
3 my brother, and [Sister 1] [Sister 2] and [Sister 3]. And
4 there's one of my sisters who was at residential school,
5 but she still drank. That's [Sister 4]. The others, no, we
6 all drank after we left there. It's the first thing when
7 you leave that place... Because our parents, you know...
8 When we came back from holidays, we went home for two
9 months. Not two months—a month and a half with our parents.
10 In 26 years, for 11 years you see your parents two, one-
11 and-a-half months, that's... You've spent less than two
12 years with them. And we couldn't even talk to them back
13 then, because the rule was: "Don't speak when an elder is
14 present." (*Indiscernible*), that's what they wanted to say:
15 "You're not allowed to speak to us when an elder is
16 present." And there was always an elder present. So we were
17 never able to communicate with our parents when we were
18 young. We had to go back. One time, my father showed up at
19 the residential school and his face was (*Indigenous words*).
20 He convinced my mother his name was Hugo. My mother was
21 probably pregnant and he came to get the woman who was
22 supposed to help with the delivery. She arrived at the
23 residential school, my father arrived at the school and he
24 called all his children. He forgot me. He forgot to call
25 me. And then, I don't know, he brought them home. The

1 children laughed at me. And I pretended that it didn't
2 matter. "I'll be leaving on Sunday anyways." Because at the
3 residential school, you couldn't show that you were afraid.
4 You couldn't show any weakness or you'd be done for. So I
5 said, "It doesn't matter. I'll go Sunday instead." And
6 that's what I did on Sunday... I went to my sister's who
7 had a big house. The midwife was there. They gave us dried
8 meat to eat (*indiscernible*) (*Innu word*). With bone marrow
9 from caribou legs. I was happy, because that was a treat
10 for us. And my father wasn't there when I got there. Then
11 he showed up... He said, "Who's this one who's eating with
12 such great appetite?" My sister, [Sœur 5], told him it was
13 his daughter. His daughter Véronique. He said, "Oh, I
14 forgot about you." Then he tried to hug me and I pushed him
15 away. That's when the conflict with my father began. I told
16 myself that when I was older, it's only good for... He just
17 uses my mother to make babies then runs away. As an adult,
18 I always had conflicts with him. (*Sobs*). Every time I
19 went... Every time I'd go see them, even then, after...
20 When I was married. I'd go see them. There was always
21 something negative. They don't tell me anything. All her
22 life, my mother never said a wrong word to me. So one time,
23 when we were (*indiscernible*), living in a... They moved us
24 often because the company was coming. We lived in tents,
25 cabins. They moved us to (*indiscernible*). That's where we

1 lived. There were cabins, hovels, what you'd call a slum
2 really. There was no hot water, no toilets. We had to get
3 water from a [lake] that wasn't [polluted]. So it was a lot
4 of work. One day, we were... We were about to have lunch.
5 We were about to have lunch and I served myself, and my
6 sister pushed me, and when (*indiscernible*) I got angry, and
7 I threw the plate in her face and said, "Here, you can
8 eat." And my father got upset. He was ready to whip me with
9 his belt (*Indigenous word*). "Don't touch me," I said, "I
10 forbid you to touch me and you will not touch me." I stood
11 up to him. That was very insulting to him, because we
12 weren't allowed to say anything about our [parents]. He
13 said, "My brothers, my parents died of starvation in the
14 bush. They died of starvation in the bush. And you do this
15 to your sister, the food." I said, "It's not my fault your
16 parents died in the bush." (*Laughs*). I was really hard on
17 him because of what he did to me. We were always at odds
18 with each other. I didn't consider him as... I didn't know,
19 to begin with, I spent 11 years in the [residential
20 school]. I didn't get to know him like we know our fathers
21 now, I think. (*Indiscernible*) [We] didn't get to experience
22 that. They were like strangers. So it was the same with my
23 sisters. We got separated, but... Based on the age, when we
24 got to the residential school there was a basket and a
25 place for the big kids, and a place where our little

1 sisters were kept, away from the medium group, which I was
2 a part of. And the boys, the big ones, we were separated
3 from them. So today, I can't say that I'm close to my
4 sisters because there was no bond... There's no emotional
5 bond.

6 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: You didn't really
7 grow up with them.

8 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: I didn't grow up with
9 them, I barely know them. I got to know them after, when I
10 got married. But that core that you're supposed to have as
11 a family, the bond, that was taken away at the residential
12 school. And that's always been something we've missed. I
13 see my sisters, we say hello, and... That's [it]. You
14 know... Whereas you see others all together, and...

15 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: Your emotional
16 bond?

17 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: My emotional bond was
18 broken. You could say there's no connection. With my
19 brother, I had a brother who was a year older than me. With
20 him, I had more of a... Because he was close, because he
21 was close. That's what happened. I'm close to my sister
22 [Sister 6], we're so close that we experience the same
23 things. We were both raised the same way in residential
24 school. And... When she experiences something difficult, I
25 know that it's going to happen to me two or three days

1 later. That happens a lot. Things with her children or
2 other things. It's rare that happy things happen, to say,
3 "It happened to her, so it will happen to me." No, never.
4 Happy events, you could say. That's the impact of
5 residential school... It has made us behave like robots. My
6 children often say, they'll tell me something or see the
7 hard things I'm going through and say: "You never cry."
8 [They're upset with me] because I never cry. But at
9 residential school, it was a defence mechanism. Everywhere,
10 because I knew that it would make the nun very happy if I
11 cried. If the children beat me, they would be really
12 happy... So that's why I learned not to cry when I was very
13 young.

14 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: To defend yourself?

15 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: To defend myself. I
16 could defend myself, but not cry. It was my defence
17 mechanism, like I didn't care. It was... When I think about
18 that time, I tell myself that it wasn't the bad clothes,
19 the bad haircuts, the teasing, the bad food, but the
20 relationships that were lost, with...

21 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: The family?

22 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: With the family.
23 Because we were "raised in the bush," it wasn't that.
24 Everyone took care of each other. (Sobs) Because I'm...
25 huh?

1 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Uprooted.—(*Speaking*
2 *Innu*).

3 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: (*Agrees*) They gave me
4 back, when I went to high school... After 11 years, I said,
5 "I'm not going back to residential school." I was old
6 enough, I said, "I'm not going back to residential school."
7 My father was very authoritative and he said, "[You're]
8 going back." I said that I wasn't going back. So he took me
9 and said, "Come, we're going to get the guy. The [Father]."
10 The [Father] was the priest who was very strict. [Then] the
11 Father, he... [Tried] to convince me to... I said "no,"
12 that he didn't scare me anymore than my father did. I said,
13 "No, I'm not going back. I'm staying here. That's enough."
14 So I didn't go back, I stayed in town, in
15 [Schefferville]... I was in [grade 9] and my education
16 would continue there. After that, when I stayed home, my
17 father would say, "You're not even speaking your language."
18 He used to say that to us. We didn't even speak Innu. "We
19 can't understand you when you talk to us." How could he
20 expect to understand us? There was no one there to teach us
21 our language. That's how people our age talked to each
22 other, so there was no one to teach us how to speak Innu.
23 But we understood each other, I understood (*indiscernible*),
24 but their language, which was richer, we didn't have that.
25 We didn't live in the bush, because it was the language of

1 (*indiscernible*). So it was like a rejection. I took it as a
2 rejection. "You don't even talk..." [It was] an insult,
3 too... And in town, you're not accepted either. The two
4 cultures, we weren't accepted either, because they called
5 us savages and... We found a way to feel better, and that
6 was drugs and alcohol. Use of [type of... Everyone
7 accepted]. I had to go to the hotel or things like that.

8 ~~MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: *Indigenous words.*~~

9 MS VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: ["Come on already!"] We
10 got together as a group and had fun. That's how I found
11 some peace. Peace because they accepted me and I had fun. I
12 sang and... Things were forgotten, the need to be loved by
13 my family, by Whites... I didn't [care]. So that's it. I
14 drank for 20 years. In the meantime, I got married. My
15 husband went to residential school too. There was violence
16 because he was abused at school when he was young and he
17 had a lot of anger. I got hit a lot. He hit me when we
18 fought, and the kids saw it. What made me, when I had my
19 first child, I didn't have... I had never seen a child, how
20 to raise it, dress it, how to... I had been in residential
21 school. There were no kids there, no babies, you know.
22 There you are with a baby, you don't know what to do, you
23 don't know what to do. And, anyways, I did my best. Since I
24 was given away. Going to residential school is like being
25 abandoned. I wasn't loved. That's why my child didn't mean

1 anything to me. I loved him very much at first, but
2 after... My mother and father kept him. I was free then,
3 and I told myself, "I'll never have another child." I
4 didn't have kids for five years. I said to myself, "Never
5 again." They kept him. Because parents ~~what they did~~, back
6 then, what they did: they took their child-even though I
7 wasn't giving him up-they took him and raised him.

8 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: The grandchildren?

9 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: The grandchildren. So
10 I did the same. I acted the same way that... They sent me
11 to residential school, they gave me away, I gave my child
12 away. I [had] a second one, my sister kept him-I didn't
13 give him away-my sister looked after him. At one point, my
14 husband was angry and said, "I'm going to get him." They
15 didn't want to give us our child back. So we tried taking
16 him and it took... They called the police, and I went to
17 jail because I wanted to see my child. I spend a night in
18 jail because I wanted my child. That's pretty bad. So I
19 managed to get my child back anyway and to bring him back
20 home to stay. After that I had a daughter, My Daughter, I
21 told myself, because I often got beat up in those days. I
22 told myself, "He's not going to..." Because with the
23 others, we often hid under the bed, the desks, in the
24 closets. I told myself, "I'm not going to let that happen
25 to my daughter." [I brought her to my cousin's, he] loves

1 her, and he says he loves his daughter. At one point, with
2 the comings and goings, they ended up keeping her and
3 [raising] her. So for the last one, my husband and I
4 started using less and we kept the last one. Residential
5 school had disastrous impacts on our family. Because my
6 children are upset at me for not keeping them, for not
7 being able to cry. I don't cry in front of them, when
8 they... My children, I have four children. And three of my
9 children have tried to commit suicide. Suicide attempts.
10 The first one, the oldest, he drinks, that's it. But the
11 other three have tried committing suicide. And each time,
12 I'm the one who had to rescue them. One time, I was out in
13 the bush, near here. I knew that one of my children had
14 been abused as a child. I could tell when he was doing OK
15 and when he was feeling down. And I saw them in front of
16 here, I saw him coming, and he looked despondent. So I
17 thought, "He's going to make an attempt." When he saw me,
18 he stood up tall, to pretend he was OK. So I went into the
19 bush with my husband. They came to get me to tell me that
20 he had shot himself near the heart, here. And it was my
21 youngest son who found him [outside]. And that's... We went
22 back. And right away, he was [conscious.] He said, "It's
23 not your fault, it's not your fault..." So that we don't...

24 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: (*Indiscernible*) all
25 of a sudden?

1 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: The other one wanted
2 to hang himself. And I'm the one who went to see him in the
3 cabin in the back. He was already up high. I couldn't see
4 anything, but I knew he was there because his shoes were at
5 home. Then I yelled and started to cry, and I was yelling,
6 "He killed himself, he killed himself." (*Indiscernible*) my
7 daughter also tried to commit suicide. Twice. I don't know
8 how many times the other one tried. One [day], I thought,
9 "He's going to do it." You're always expecting it, "When is
10 it going to happen?" That's... The evil. The evil we got
11 from the residential schools and that we passed on to our
12 children, that will be passed on to [my grandchildren]...
13 When will it end? I don't know when it will end. I did
14 everything I could, I'm doing all sorts of things to be
15 well. I've been a teacher for 44 years. I keep working
16 because I can't stop. When I try to stop, I feel like I'm
17 going to go crazy.

18 ~~MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:~~ [MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE:]
19 It's what keeps you going?

20 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: It's what keeps me
21 alive, and every year, maybe it's me who passed that
22 despair to them, because I've felt that despair for a long
23 time, too. I've never told my children that sometimes I'd
24 like to be on the other side. I've never told them that,
25 because it doesn't stop, this despair, this life that the

1 residential schools have left us with. It robbed us of our
2 identity, of our parents' knowledge, of the love we had
3 when we were young.

4 ~~MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:~~ [MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE:]
5 The love that you missed?

6 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: For the love that we
7 missed. I'm 71 years old now, almost 72. I look and often
8 think, "What is it like on the reserve?" I often say to my
9 grandchildren, "If you don't keep studying, you'll wander
10 around, wander around the reserve your whole lives." Doing
11 nothing because you can't handle feeling well. I know how
12 much well-being they have. If they know something they have
13 to pay for electricity, rent, food. There's no future in
14 that. And I wonder, why does that only happen to our
15 people? How come I watch YouTube and see so many talented
16 people playing guitar, and other musical instruments.
17 Talented singers. How come none of our people are like
18 that? How come there aren't people who seem [to be] doing
19 well? Why doesn't that happen to us? We're been destroyed.
20 And in other communities, like the Blacks, sometimes I see
21 on TV that there are people who want to help them, who love
22 them, and they manage to do it, to go to school and leave
23 the misery behind. But not here. A reserve isn't a place
24 for young people. If they want to survive, this isn't the
25 place. They have to live because there are too many

1 negatives: alcohol, drugs. Last week, my grandson was
2 admitted to the hospital. He had heart palpitations. At the
3 hospital, they asked him if he had taken drugs or smoked.
4 He said no. I said, "If you smoked, say it now, it'll make
5 things better and it'll go quicker." He said that he had
6 never smoked. It was obvious that he wasn't acting
7 normally. The analyses came back, and he had smoked pot and
8 hash, [according to the doctor]. After that, he had a lung
9 exam. They made us come back the next day to (*speaking an*
10 *Indigenous language*).

11 ~~MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:~~ [MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE:]

12 A scan?

13 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: (*speaking an Indigenous*
14 *language*).

15 ~~MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:~~ [MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE:]

16 [X-Ray?] (*Speaking an Indigenous language*). Nuclear
17 medicine.

18 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Nuclear medicine,
19 that's where they brought him. His lung was destroyed. A
20 part of his lung was destroyed, all black, and it's going
21 to stay like that. It won't regenerate.
22 It's going to stay like that. And he gets shots twice a
23 day, he has to get shots here twice a day, for six months.
24 And it's the grandson I was looking after, because his
25 mother couldn't look after him because of how she behaves.

1 ~~MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:~~ [MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE:]

2 How old is he?

3 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Thirteen years old. So
4 his mother left with him to try to convince him. I told her
5 (*indiscernible*), I won't take him. Because he's like, "No,
6 no, no, no. I won't do that, no, no, no, no." That's it.
7 And now the government is going to legalize it. [Our
8 people] are going to be even more at risk of disappearing
9 with all that. I don't know what's going on with that, but
10 it could have killed him. We wouldn't have brought him
11 there, with his damaged lung. So I don't think the
12 government's the one that's going to provide solutions. All
13 it has done is bring misery to our people for generations
14 and generations. What good has it done for us? It created
15 discord within us. I think... I'm... I'll tell you. I think
16 that the government, I suggest that the government take a
17 look at education. Everywhere, how it educates, how we [get
18 educated], in institutions, the people who can get their
19 certificate or skills in their field. We should educate
20 them in... I noticed people who had a lot of education, who
21 had a lot of people for others. Those who have a lot of
22 education, I've always noticed that they know how to live,
23 I have to say. Because they took... They went to school for
24 a long time. They'll never show us something that will make
25 us feel bad. Especially here, in Sept-Îles, there's a lot

1 of racism. One time, I was at the hair salon. I go all the
2 time, I go to the hair salon all the time. I've always
3 gone. I'd been there before and they had always treated me
4 well, but there was a new girl. There was a new girl there.
5 There were a lot of Whites there and customers, it was
6 busy. She looked at me like I had lice. I said, "I don't
7 have lice. I've never had lice." She said, "Some people
8 have them." And I said, "I don't have them." So I got up...
9 They were laughing. I got up and went to see the manager.
10 She said,
11 "Yes, some people come here and they have tons of lice. The
12 lice even move around."
13 "If there's lice moving around here," I said, "maybe that's
14 because you're not cleaning properly." I [said], "It's a
15 shame, but I'm not coming back here. I'm going to tell
16 everyone I know to stop coming here. You don't respect Innu
17 people." I spread the word and never went back. I think
18 that [there are fewer] people because their customers
19 were... So we were the ones who (*indiscernible*). But there
20 are fewer customers now. It used to be full. I spread the
21 word, I talked about it, and now people don't go anymore.
22 If they don't respect us, we won't go there. Like in [town]
23 the Innu weren't getting any respect. Stores shut higher,
24 the stores shut, for shopping. We don't shop where we
25 aren't respected. We don't go places where we feel the

1 racism. I had a business, I have a business. But I had it
2 because of the ships that came here, the big cruise ships.
3 I opened it because of that and they came to see me. I
4 didn't approach them; they came to see me. And they asked
5 if I was willing to welcome tourists. So I thought that
6 would be a good way to share our story with others.
7 Quebecers are a lost cause, [I told myself]. Forget
8 Quebecers, but with foreigners, it could help if they knew
9 our story, how we experienced it, and not what's written in
10 textbooks. That's what I told them when they came. I
11 presented the whole program: how we used to live, up to
12 today. A good program. There were legends, even traditional
13 signs. There was *métissage*, spirituality... An explanation
14 of how we used to live. I talked about the residential
15 schools. One time, a tourist asked me if there was racism
16 in Sept-Îles. I told him that there was a lot of racism.
17 But the tour guides were from Sept-Îles. The next year, I
18 was told I had to change my program. "You have to change
19 your program, you have to do it this way." I said, "No,
20 this is my plot, no one can tell me what to do in my *spâce*.
21 If you're not happy with it, I'll be fine without you. You
22 can stay where you are. I won't change my program," I said,
23 "the Innu aren't monkeys. If you want me to bring a bunch
24 of Innu, it's not to create a zoo. It's to share my
25 culture." The man who had written to me, the manager who

1 finds the cruise passengers (*indiscernible*) said, "If you
2 don't change your program, if you just want the customers
3 to come and only look at pictures (*indiscernible*)." I said,
4 "No, that's true." That was why. When I accepted, it was to
5 share my culture. If that doesn't happen, keep your ships,
6 I don't want them. I'll be just fine without your boats.
7 You don't have to empty my... Keep your boats. That's what
8 happened. They duped me. I had to start over. My husband
9 wrote, "When this person says no, stop trying. It doesn't
10 work like that. It doesn't work like that with her." So I
11 lost my ships. So my company is more or less profitable
12 now, but it doesn't matter. I get children, the communities
13 come. People from the community come to [the site] to
14 unwind.

15 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: That's what keeps you
16 going.

17 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: That's what keeps me
18 going. I can't give up because I'm convinced that the
19 children need that. I'm convinced that I was raised in
20 that, that's what saved me. I'm convinced that if they see
21 the good, they'll go further. It's to learn more. The
22 recommendation I would give to the government would be to
23 provide the funds to allow people to come here. Nowadays
24 youths and people our age are very interested in Indigenous
25 spirituality. Even doctors come from far away and we never

1 have enough money to bring them here. To bring them here
2 often to take care of our injuries, illnesses, because they
3 use medicinal plants a lot. I've never been to the
4 hospital; I've always used plants. I don't take any
5 medication. I'm 71, my husband is 73, we don't take any
6 medication. We take care of ourselves with what we learned
7 from our parents. He also says that we always go out into
8 the bush. On the land, to continue on the path of our
9 ancestors. We take the train and it takes 12 hours.
10 Schefferville to the land, it takes 10 hours. We take
11 snowmobiles. And my sons follow us. Two of them follow us
12 wherever we go. They're very, even [Son 1], he's good at
13 that, sharing the story of his people. To talk about the
14 land. The other, [Son 2], he's into songs, the drums and
15 legends. Because [Son 2] isn't very good with his hands.
16 [Son 2] has a good memory. Whatever you tell him, his
17 memory is phenomenal. So we had everything we needed for
18 our workshops: I had my brothers, I had my brother. I had
19 my sister, I had my cousin. It was a family thing, what had
20 been passed down to us. We were channelling my parents. It
21 worked for us, it worked well, and the young ones liked it
22 a lot. Nowadays, the issue in our communities is the loss
23 of our language. Young people tend to speak French a lot.
24 They don't have pride in their language. But there are many
25 openings, positions that could be available to them if they

1 knew their language. They probably think it won't be useful
2 in finding a job. But I once supervised Cégep interns. And
3 everyone who was there, most of them had a career in that
4 field. They are directors, they're doing very well...

5 ~~MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:~~ [MS. KATHLEEN
6 MCKENZIE:] Good jobs.

7 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Good jobs. They made
8 it, with their language and their culture. I'd like to see
9 that course offered in Cégeps again. And sometimes there
10 are summer jobs. Summer jobs for students. These students
11 should be paid to learn their language. Instead of picking
12 up paper, mowing lawns... That's what they should do.
13 Because our identity is based on our language.

14 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: With your plot
15 *(indiscernible)*...

16 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: With my plot...

17 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: They could learn a
18 lot.

19 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: *(Agrees) Uh-huh.*

20 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: Uh-huh.

21 *(Indiscernible)*.

22 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: They could learn a lot
23 because no one knows how to weave the...

24 ~~MS. SHEILA MAZHARI:~~ [MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE:]
25 Snowshoes?

1 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: There aren't a lot of
2 snowshoes. They're disappearing. There aren't many. It's
3 our only opportunity, now, to teach them. I approached
4 someone once. A white person. But he was married to an
5 Innu. The man had learned from his father-in-law. And his
6 father-in-law taught at a school. The children didn't care
7 about any of it. They just ran around. He was there,
8 listening to his father. That's who he learned it from. It
9 isn't because the other didn't want to teach it, it's the
10 children who didn't want to learn. But I'm sure young
11 adults would learn it. Young parents.

12 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: The language is Innu?

13 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Huh?

14 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: The Innu language,
15 yes.

16 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: The Innu language,
17 snowshoes and... The Innu language.

18 ~~MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: The Innu language,~~
19 ~~yes.~~

20 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: That's my
21 recommendation to the Commission. They should think about
22 it, because there has to be some (*indiscernible*).

23 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: We need to
24 distribute the money wisely; we need a guideline. (*Speaking*
25 *Innu*). In fact, (*indiscernible*) that money be well

1 distributed and that we invest in *inuindu* (*phon.*). She has
2 a plot where all the students come to learn about it. That
3 [injects] that.

4 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Because they received
5 a lot of grants. But it's just that...

6 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: They didn't use it
7 for.

8 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: It isn't long-term.
9 It's a day, like a picnic day. That's not cost effective
10 for the children. They like it, but they like being
11 (*indiscernible*), it isn't...

12 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: [Ms. André] would
13 ask, it's a job more than, living in a cottage with all the
14 camp sites. And the place for that, and what's special
15 about the plot that's there, at the Mauricie River, is that
16 her parents were there. They went fishing for salmon there.
17 They camped there. And what did you call it?

18 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: ~~(*Indiscernible*)~~. And
19 there's something, the Innu were there, but when I made the
20 site, they made me pay. Like the energy there, the land and
21 forests, they made me pay. I pay to use that site. I don't
22 pay anymore, but I'll keep using it. It belonged to the
23 Innu, [but] since I was going to make money, they made me
24 pay.

25 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: - [*(Speaking Innu)*]

1 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Yes. They made me pay
2 and... I get letters saying I haven't paid for this year. I
3 won't pay. I won't pay because I know that it belongs to
4 them. It was just a requirement for me to get a grant from
5 Indigenous Affairs. It's crazy.

6 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: And they would get
7 together... On that plot.

8 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: And it took time, and
9 it was our family plot.

10 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: They got together
11 there, they had nice meals. One day, you should go, go see
12 Véronique. Come back and we'll show you in summer. It's
13 beautiful.

14 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: And the impacts that
15 I'll call the invisible impacts of the residential schools.
16 Sometimes it's petty what they... For example, they'll have
17 more confidence in a white person doing the same job. Do
18 they have a diploma? We'll take the white person. Like in
19 (?). When you're having a hard time, going through things,
20 you don't feel like forcing yourself to speak French. It
21 happens all the time...

22 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: (*Indiscernible*).

23 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: It's always French-
24 speaking people who are in charge. And they haven't
25 experienced what we experienced. How can they help us? How

1 can they understand what we're trying to say? They can't.
2 But they get paid for that. We also see a lot of nurses.
3 Nurses. We have a lot of Innu nurses. But when you
4 (*indiscernible*) a white nurse. It always takes a lot. Go to
5 Sept-Îles and see where the Innu are working in Sept-Îles.
6 You won't find any. You won't find any Innu working in
7 Sept-Îles. They never get hired. There isn't a single Innu
8 working for the city. Or in the shops. It's serious,
9 serious racism. And I'm asking the government what is it
10 doing about the racism? Against its, how do you say, its
11 citizens. Is it in charge of them? Is it managing them?
12 What is it doing about it? It needs to educate them.
13 Educate young people. The ones who come are already a lost
14 cause. They've already been here. Literally coming onto the
15 reserve, trying to get people into the church.

16 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: And are things better
17 [in Maliotenam]?

18 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: There are no Whites
19 here.

20 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: No, but...

21 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: [In Maliotenam],
22 we're out of the way, like I said earlier. The people
23 within the discriminations there. Because us in town
24 (speaking an Indigenous language).

25 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Because it's like they

1 know who you can demean there. Who you can belittle. I
2 don't let them get away with it. If someone butts in front
3 of me when I'm in line, I say, "No, I was there first." If
4 someone else tries, I say, "No, I was there first, you wait
5 your turn." We defend ourselves. We may end up in jail, but
6 we defend ourselves now. And the young people are getting
7 more aggressive. They don't ignore anything.

8 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: And have you known
9 girls or women who have disappeared? Or were murdered?

10 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: In Sept-Îles?

11 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: And have you known
12 other girls or women who...

13 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: I didn't know any
14 women who have disappeared, but... My uncle disappeared in
15 the bush. With his wife. They never found him. But they
16 never really looked for him either. My uncle. With his
17 wife. They found their child.

18 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: What year was this?

19 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Oh God, that must have
20 been in the 1950s.

21 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: (Speaking an
22 Indigenous language).

23 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: And my father always
24 thought it was weird, because they found the child in the
25 tent. He was well positioned, but usually when you hunt

1 year-round, you have your pelt bag with you. They never
2 found the pelt bag and they never found their ropes.

3 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: The couple?

4 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Yes, they were a
5 couple.

6 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: So there was never any
7 investigation or anything?

8 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: No. That's it. I don't
9 know if the government will provide any solutions. I don't
10 really trust it. I don't trust it because all the
11 government does is pull out an envelope and say, "Here,
12 this is how much the Commission will cost. It costs this
13 much. The Inquiry Commission costs this much." It's going
14 to say [the amount]. But before that, it cut everything, it
15 cut the budget for health, education...

16 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: And infrastructure,
17 housing...

18 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Yes.

19 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: All the programs.

20 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: They were cut. That's
21 where it got the money to do this. They cut everything
22 else. Schefferville, I'm [in Schefferville] more [because I
23 work there]. It's really unique place. Weirdly, it's 350
24 miles from here, by train or plane. When there's no, there
25 aren't any specialists there. When they're sick, they have

1 [to go] to Quebec City or Montreal. To go to Quebec City,
2 they have to take a 12-hour train ride. By car it takes,
3 what, eight hours? Eight hours. They have their
4 appointments say one day, then they have to come back and
5 do the same thing. It used to be covered, now it isn't
6 anymore.

7 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: There were cuts in
8 transportation.

9 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Uh-huh, for
10 transportation. When I work there, I get a treatment for my
11 eye, and I'm not allowed to take the plane. I have to take
12 the train, then the car, get my treatment, come back, I
13 take the train to work, and that takes four days, but you
14 don't get many sick days. Imagine the others.

15 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: Imagine those who
16 don't work.

17 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: I witnessed some
18 injustice. They don't take care of drunk people. If you're
19 drunk, they won't take care of you. Even if you have a son
20 who's sick, they know you're sick. Not to go there, that's
21 not where you would go if you were drunk. You want to have
22 fun and... Those guys. One time, I saw a crowd there. They
23 were all looking at something. I asked a student what was
24 going on. They were standing in a half circle. I asked her
25 what was happening. She said, "They don't want to take her

1 in. The woman on the ground, she needs a respirator." They
2 didn't want to take her because she had drunk beer. At one
3 point, one of the people who were there went over and
4 brought the woman inside. But you could see the nurse
5 yelling that he didn't want her. But the other one got mad
6 and told him [to take care of her]. My sister lost two of
7 her children because they were alcoholics and they didn't
8 get taken care of. There's my sister, [Sister 4]. She had
9 already lost her husband. She had her two sons left. Both
10 of them drank. One had diabetes and had high blood
11 pressure. High blood pressure. High blood pressure. And he
12 went to the doctor's and asked if he could go to Sept-Îles
13 so that they could stabilize...

14 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: His diabetes.

15 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: His diabetes. [And his
16 blood pressure]. She said, "You'll go this summer, you'll
17 go this summer." [That was six months away]. [Nephew 1]
18 died. He died two months later. The same thing happened to
19 the other son. It was his leg. Since he was drunk, he
20 didn't receive treatment and he died.

21 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Because he couldn't get
22 to [the hospital], to the doctor's...

23 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Because he was always
24 drunk. It's not because he didn't have the means. [He could
25 have found a way]. He was too drunk. We had to fight, my

1 sister and I, to get them to treat him. But it was too late
2 and he died. That's what happens in our communities. He
3 isn't the only one, she isn't the only one. There are no
4 elders left over there. It's not normal. There's [a lack of
5 care] somewhere. Anyways.

6 MS. KATHLEEN MCKENZIE: It's a shock.

7 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: That's what I had to
8 say. The government has to find a way to fix what it did.
9 It destroyed everything, absolutely everything. It has to
10 give us means to rebuild. We do well when we spend time in
11 the bush with our family. But we can't stay there year-
12 round, we go for three months. Two months. One week. We can
13 afford to do so, but those who don't work can't afford to
14 go out to the bush. It's expensive. You need gas, you
15 need... Lots of stuff. We can afford to do it because my
16 husband works too. That's it. Sometimes we wonder what's
17 going to happen to our children. We lived like that. Our
18 children lived like that. When will it end? Why don't we
19 ever get some help? People who can give these children a
20 chance to rise up, play hockey, or learn to sing or dance.
21 When we were in residential school, it was music that saved
22 us. It was music that saved us when we were young.

23 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: What kind of music?

24 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: *Laughs.* You're going
25 to laugh: Elvis Presley. My husband knows all the albums

1 and all the singers from the 50s and 60s. Yes. It was
2 always music. I spent the year, my holidays, dancing,
3 dancing. I still dance when I'm alone. I still listen to a
4 lot of music, because it keeps me going. And I think it's
5 so unfair that... Those people can't be that talented.
6 Everything seems so easy for them, but here: nothing. None
7 of that.

8 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: Would you like to share
9 a message in Innu?

10 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: With all that the
11 Inquiry Commission is doing, I still believe. I believe
12 that the sun is rising for us. We have to keep believing.
13 Our children will rise up. I'm certain of that. If we stop
14 believing that, well... That's what I had to say, thank you
15 very much. I [can't] take my glasses off because I had
16 surgery. (*Laughs*) Sorry about wearing my sunglasses.

17
18 MS. SHEILA MAZHARI: I'm going to stop here.

19 MS. VÉRONIQUE ANDRÉ: Yes.

20

21 END OF RECORDING

22

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2

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE*

3

4

I, Félix Larose-Chevalier, hereby certify that I have

5

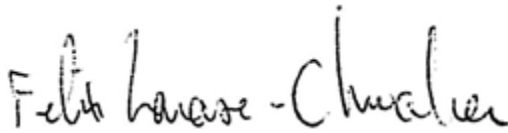
transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and accurate

6

transcription of the digital audio provided in this matter.

7

8

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Félix Larose-Chevalier". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

9

10

Félix Larose-Chevalier

11

August 26, 2018

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* This certificate refers to the original transcript in French.