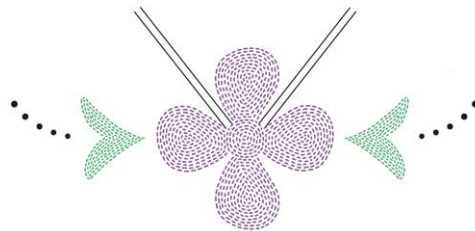


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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 Statement Gathering
Chateau Nova Hotel
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories**



PUBLIC

Thursday January 25, 2018

**Statement - Volume 216
Bernard Michel,
In relation to Yvonne Desjarlais**

Statement gathered by Kerrie Reay

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II

NOTE 1:

Where not required by other statute, redactions to this public transcript have been made pursuant to Rule 55 of the Commission's Legal Path: Rules of Respectful Practice, which provides for "the discretion to redact private information of a sensitive nature where it is not material to the evidence to be given before distributing the information to the Parties. The National Inquiry will consider the public interest in releasing this type of information against the potential harmful impact on the individual whose personal information is at issue."

NOTE 2:

The use of square brackets [] in this transcript indicates that amendments have been made to the certified transcript in order to replace information deemed inaudible or indecipherable by the original transcriptionist. Amendments were completed by listening to the source audio recording of the proceeding and were made by Maryiam Khoury, Public Inquiry Clerk with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ, July 31st 2018 at Ottawa, Ontario.

III

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement Volume 216
January 25, 2018 PAGE
Witness: Bernard Michel
Statement gatherer: Kerrie Reay

Testimony of Bernard Michel 1
Reporter's certification 42

Documents submitted with testimony: none.

Statement - Public
Bernard Michel
(Yvonne Desjarlais)

1

1 Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

2 --- Upon commencing on Thursday, January 25, 2018

3 at 1:11 p.m.

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Bernard, you are
5 ready to start?

6 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So for the
8 record, this is Kerrie Reay, statement taker with the
9 National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous
10 Women and Girls. Today we are in Yellowknife, Northwest
11 Territories, on January the 25, 2018.

12 And with me today is Bernard Michel who
13 will be speaking about the loss of his mother, Yvonne
14 Desjarlais. Ms. Desjarlais was murdered in Yellowknife on
15 December the 28, 2012. And in the room with us is Bruce
16 Handley, H-a-n-d-l-e-y, as health support. And Bernard,
17 you are here --

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: What is the date you
19 said?

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: I said January the 25.

21 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Twenty-eight?

22 MS. KERRIE REAY: No. Today is the 25.
23 Sorry. December the 28, 2012.

24 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. So that is

1 correct?

2 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: That's correct.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Good. That is
4 great to check. That is good. So Bernard, you have agreed
5 only to be on audio tape, and that is fine. We appreciate
6 you making that choice. So the Commissioners will listen
7 to the audio tape. And you have also acknowledged today
8 that you are here voluntarily and that your statement can
9 be public.

10 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Bernard, I know
12 this will be difficult, but go ahead and start where you
13 feel comfortable with your truth, today.

14 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Well, first, I heard
15 -- I was in Dettah (ph) with my friend, and my friend took
16 off to (indiscernible) [Yellowknife]. Early in the
17 morning, he phoned me and told me to phone his mom. He
18 said his mom wants me to do her a favour, so I phoned her.
19 His mom told me the story. Told me, "Your mom is gone."
20 It's early morning. I listened to nothing, so I just sat
21 back down. Just sat back down and tried not to say
22 anything about it.

23 And then the person who was in his house
24 (indiscernible). And I stay there once in a while. He
25 didn't want to tell me anything, so he told me to call his

Statement - Public
Bernard Michel
(Yvonne Desjarlais)

3

1 mom. He wants me to phone his mom. So more phone calls.
2 People knew I was there. And I stayed there for a while
3 longer this time. People keep on bothering the door. I
4 just ignore them. I never bothered phoning anybody. I
5 tried to hold back.

6 So finally I got tired, so I walk on the
7 highway to an ice road. I walked so far, and I caught a
8 ride. I went to a shopping centre. Just walking around.
9 People just stared at me, and say that -- so I go see my
10 brother. Just walking down, I ran into a few people. Just
11 saying hi and everything. Some parts I hardly remember
12 because it is kind of confusing and everything. I ran into
13 a few people, and I ran -- I was walking with my friends.
14 We see my brother, my oldest brother. He was traveling
15 around with his wife.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: What is his name?

17 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: [Brother 1].

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: [Brother 1].

19 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: He's the oldest one.
20 He stopped, and he gave me a hug. I didn't know what to
21 say to him.

22 MS. KERRIE REAY: Would you like some
23 tobacco to hold?

24 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: He gave me a hug. He
25 started crying when I told him what was going on. I said,

Statement - Public
Bernard Michel
(Yvonne Desjarlais)

4

1 "You wouldn't believe it." We went to my brother's house.
2 His name is [Brother 2]. My sister was there, [Sister 1].
3 And my nephew, [Nephew 1] was there. They're all sitting
4 around. [Brother 2]'s family was there. I sat around
5 there for a while, and I don't know what happened.

6 I took off. I didn't want to be around
7 anybody. I was walking around. I must have had high blood
8 pressure. My nose started bleeding. I had a garbage pail
9 that I filled up full of blood. So I end up in the
10 hospital. They were taking her body back to Lutsel-k'e,
11 and I lost the first flight because I couldn't make it. I
12 was in the hospital.

13 The last plane for the burial -- I went
14 back and made it in time there. That was in January. That
15 was in (~~indiscernible~~) [the community hall]. I never
16 looked at anyone. I went straight to my seat where my
17 brothers and sisters were. I sat beside them. I sat
18 there. There was my mom in a casket. I thought she was
19 sleeping. I sat and just stared at it.

20 We went to the burial ground, into
21 (~~indiscernible~~) [Yellowknife] river. They drove us all out
22 there, put her to rest. My nephew said something, and I
23 wasn't paying attention. I was kind of in shock and
24 everything. She wasn't only murdered. She was raped too.
25 I stayed there a few weeks after that. [Back to

Statement - Public
Bernard Michel
(Yvonne Desjarlais)

5

1 Yellowknife], I just started drinking again. Ever since I
2 was delayed, it's been five years now.

3 I've been getting involved with the law
4 and everything. I don't want to go home because there is
5 nothing there for me. There is nothing there for me.
6 There is too much memories [and pain]. My late mom was a
7 nice person. She would let anybody in the house. She
8 would feed anybody. She liked to joke around.

9 [The reason why I came out], I want to
10 talk about me because I've been getting into fights with my
11 brothers and sisters lately, getting involved with the law.
12 I don't do drugs. Just alcohol. And whoever I talk to, I
13 don't care if my mom visited them. ~~I can just buy a~~
14 ~~temporary pass~~ [I could lose my temper fast]. I don't talk
15 about -- I hated Eskimos because it was an Eskimo person
16 that murdered my mom.

17 (~~Indiscernible~~) [I was in a] day shelter.
18 I am day drinking. (~~Indiscernible~~) [Just drink and party
19 with anybody]. I just go in there and [freak out, flip out
20 and] flip over tables. I don't know how many times I did
21 that over the years. And one day I must have overdid it.
22 So I got [kicked out and] charged for that. I guess I was
23 [doing bodily threats] (~~indiscernible~~). So I get charged
24 for [bodily threats], assault and everything. I'm losing
25 my brothers and sisters, so that is the reason why I'm

Statement - Public
Bernard Michel
(Yvonne Desjarlais)

6

1 here. I want to talk because I don't want to lose them.

2 Right now it is hard to control my temper.

3 I went to Poundmaker's. It didn't work. The reason why it

4 didn't work was because they are accepting people from the

5 street, people who doesn't work, junkies. People on the

6 street, that is all they do. Popping pills and everything.

7 (~~Indiscernible~~) [Just want a place to stay --] they go for

8 ceremonies. They just laugh. They are not serious.

9 I talked to my counselor. I'm like,

10 "I don't belong here." So they shipped me back here. I

11 didn't want to deal with it. I even get mad at my parole

12 officer. I just lose my temper. I get mad at somebody

13 when they -- I get mad the whole day.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: Do you find being mad

15 has been more since your mom passed away? Or is that

16 something you felt before?

17 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Never was before.

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: That's part --

19 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: A lot of hatred.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: But grief is very

21 difficult. And part of grief is anger, as well, you know.

22 The hope of -- when you said that you still hoped to see

23 your mom walking, and so there is still a lot there that

24 needs to be supported for you for help. Because the anger,

25 from what you said, is starting to get you in trouble with

1 the law.

2 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: The thing is that I
3 am apologizing to people, to whoever I said something. A
4 few of them I said I'm sorry. But it comes back again.
5 The same person.

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes. But when we were
7 talking yesterday, you are very closed. You do not want --
8 it felt like you did not want to share. And I think it
9 took a phenomenal amount of courage to come back here today
10 to talk about your mom and your loss and the anger you
11 feel. Because it is talking that helps us cope better day-
12 to-day. And you have said that you are starting to lose
13 your relationships with your brothers and sisters; right?

14 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: So being in different
16 places --

17 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: People are close to
18 me, too. I am losing relationships with them.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: Are you losing them
20 because you are pushing them away --

21 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Anger. And I am
22 pushing them away. I have just been stubborn.

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: And how do you feel when
24 you are pushing the family away?

25 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: It doesn't bother me.

Statement - Public
Bernard Michel
(Yvonne Desjarlais)

8

1 I want to be alone. There is no caring in the world.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: And grief is different
3 for everybody; right? How you feel and how your brother
4 feels and how your sister feels may all be different.

5 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: They smoke, they do
6 drugs, there is a difference between alcohol and drugs. [so
7 I don't know] so I don't bother. Just cope with myself.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: And so are you living
9 here in Yellowknife now?

10 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: And where do you live in
12 Yellowknife?

13 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Live anywhere.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

15 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I'm most of the time
16 in Salvation Army.

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: You also were talking
18 about having a tough time with alcohol?

19 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: How are you doing right
21 now?

22 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Some days, like,
23 meetings [going] ~~doing~~ down. I just listen and stay away
24 from people uptown. I just hang around and cope with
25 myself just to get some ideas. This is pretty interesting.

Statement - Public
Bernard Michel
(Yvonne Desjarlais)

9

1 That is the reason why I am talking to you guys. It gives
2 me a lot of courage.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Yes.

4 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because I lost touch.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: And you are not alone.
6 You are not alone. Many people you have seen and heard
7 over the last couple of days are struggling in the same way
8 you are. It kind of makes you feel like you are not alone.
9 There are other people the same.

10 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: It's not the easiest
11 thing to get rid of.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: So would you like to
13 share what it was like growing up and what community -- can
14 you spell the name of the community that you are from.

15 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Lutsel-ke', L-u-t-s-
16 e-l-dash-k-e-apostrophe.

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: And whereabouts is that?

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: East arm of the Great
19 Slave Lake.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: East?

21 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: East arm.

22 MS. KERRIE REAY: East arm of the Great
23 Slave Lake.

24 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: And which nation are you

1 with -- from?

2 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Akaitcho (ph).

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: And how do you spell
4 that?

5 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I don't know. It's
6 Akaitcho. I don't know.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. But the Dene (ph)
8 First Nation?

9 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. Dene First
10 Nation.

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: Do you speak your
12 language?

13 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. I understand a
14 little bit (indiscernible) Slavey (ph).

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Would you like to
16 share with the Commissioners what it was like growing up?

17 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Well, actually, I
18 wasn't really raised by my parents. My stepfather. I
19 never really knew my real dad. So I was mostly raised by
20 my grandfather.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

22 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: So it was actually
23 like I was raised like an orphan. Going back and forth,
24 helping myself from elders to elders in the community.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: And where was your mom?

Statement - Public
Bernard Michel
(Yvonne Desjarlais)

11

1 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: In town.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: When you say "town," in
3 Yellowknife?

4 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Lutsel-ke'.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

6 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Ever since I have
7 known my stepfather, I was being drinking, making the home
8 brew.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Do you know if
10 your mom went to residential school?

11 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. I never did ask
12 her anything about it. She would never talk about it.

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: Did you hear anything
14 about what happened there from others? From your grandpa?

15 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Not really because --
16 I don't know how to say it. They would only talk when
17 they're drinking. I don't really acknowledge or listen to
18 them.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

20 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Most of the time I
21 was [raised] by myself. Even though I helped them raise my
22 ~~bothers~~ [brothers] and sisters as we were growing up, going
23 back and forth.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

25 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Most of the community

1 while I was growing up, there is a lot of (~~indiscernible~~)
2 [drinking] out there.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

4 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Sometimes -- most of
5 the time we had our own activities. So whenever there were
6 activities, I would always help them run. That is how I
7 was getting around, knew my way around. A few times -- not
8 a few times. So many times we were out in the land with my
9 stepfather and my grandfather. So I got to know my way
10 around that area and around the Great Slave Lake. There
11 were friends around. We got to travel and go hunting.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: Good memories.

13 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: [We did a lot of
14 things together]. There was lots of land, what is good to
15 burn. All the woods are good to burn.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: It sounds like those are
17 good memories for you when you were younger.

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. Good memories,
19 but you know. Like, I had Ski-Doo. I had a boat. It is
20 on the islands, so my uncle took my boat. So I just let
21 him have it. My Ski-Doo was there. I don't know what
22 happened to it. I didn't even bother. And today I don't
23 have anything.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: It is hard.

25 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I've got my daughter,

1 four grandkids. My grandkids don't even know me, because I
2 never raised my daughter.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: Can I ask who raised
4 your daughter?

5 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Her mom.

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And where is her
7 mom?

8 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Her mom is married.
9 It was a mistake. I was fooling around with a married
10 woman. And I am not mentioning her name.

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: No, no, no. Is your
12 daughter in Yellowknife?

13 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: No. Lutsel-ke'.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Does she know,
15 though, that you are her dad?

16 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. [We talk].

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And when you are
18 with her, do you feel good? Sad?

19 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I feel like a
20 stranger. Like I shouldn't be around.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: How old is she?

22 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: She's about 30, 31.

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: Do you spend -- do you
24 go back and forth between Yellowknife and your community,
25 or are you mostly here?

1 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Not for the longest
2 time. [Like I told you], for me, there is nothing there
3 for me.

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: So did most of your
5 family, then, move into Yellowknife?

6 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Most of them are in
7 town here. Just uncles, aunts are mostly back home.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. But your brothers
9 and sisters are here in Yellowknife?

10 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: And how are they doing
12 with the loss of your mom? Do you know?

13 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I don't really
14 associate with them.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: That is what you were
16 saying; right?

17 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: What?

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: I said that is what you
19 were saying earlier.

20 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. I'm fading away
21 from them.

22 MS. KERRIE REAY: And why do you think
23 that?

24 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because I am being
25 stubborn. I am not communicating with them, or they are

1 not communicating with me. I don't know. Just being
2 stubborn. We are not sharing.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. Those things are
4 hard when people are in pain. You know, it is a heavy
5 burden. That happens for lots of families. Sometimes
6 somebody makes the first move. You try, but it is hard.

7 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes, it is.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: So what other things did
9 you enjoy growing up?

10 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Mostly living on the
11 land. Going on the boat. Just being on the land. Nobody
12 bothers you. You have freedom. I went hunting, trapping.
13 Living in cities is like something new to me. I never used
14 to do that. I can't blame nobody. I blame myself.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: Sometimes things happen
16 in life that sometimes take us down a different path. And
17 the challenge is, how do we get back on the path? It
18 sounds like you are trying. It sounds like you are working
19 at trying with staying at the Salvation Army because they
20 don't allow you there if you have been drinking, do they?

21 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: They allow you there
22 when you are drinking. Most of the time you can't hardly
23 sleep because [too much] people argue, swearing, fighting
24 in the middle of the night. And sometimes the staff, they
25 don't care. They are just there for the money too.

Statement - Public
Bernard Michel
(Yvonne Desjarlais)

16

1 (~~Indiscernible~~) [Same thing everywhere too]. I don't deal
2 with them. Whatever we talk about, they laugh at people.
3 I overhear people talk about (~~indiscernible~~) [going to
4 meetings and stuff like that and they] talk about
5 something, and they just joke about it. I heard that a few
6 times. I wasn't eavesdropping. I just happened to hear
7 it.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right, right.

9 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Therefore, I don't
10 hardly go to the classes and stuff like that. I turn on my
11 probation officer. I swear at her. Sometimes words just
12 come out. I don't apologize.

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: So is this the first
14 time you have had a probation officer?

15 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: No. I don't like
16 following the rules.

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: It is a different world
18 than being out on the land, isn't it?

19 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: When you were at home,
21 did you go to school there?

22 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. I went to
23 school. It's called Tortor School (ph). I went to Grade
24 10. That's it. I didn't bother after that.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. So you didn't

1 attend residential school?

2 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: No.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: Did your older brother?

4 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: What?

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: Did your older brother?

6 Your older brother, did he go?

7 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: None of us did.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Good.

9 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I was about ten, ten
10 years old. I was staying with my parents back then. [Been
11 drinking too much for] ~~Not~~ too long, and one day Social
12 Services picked us up and took us to [Location 1]. We
13 spent a whole year there. Social Services must have come
14 [to Lutsel-ke'] and talked to them. We were out there for
15 six months or a year or so. They took us out back. So I
16 stayed in school [in Location 1] for a while there.

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: And how did you do in
18 [Location 1]?

19 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I would say pretty
20 good.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: How were the foster
22 parents?

23 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I was in a group
24 home.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Oh, you were in a group

1 home?

2 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. [*One line*
3 *redacted - personal information*].

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay.

5 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: And all the rest of
6 us were in a group home.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: So they kept you and
8 your brothers together?

9 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. My sisters and
10 brothers. My [sibling] was in a different place.

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: How did you find the
12 group home?

13 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: The group home was up
14 and down. I was watching my brothers and sisters.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: Did you feel safe in the
16 group home?

17 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: No.

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: Can I ask what made you
19 feel not safe?

20 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because some
21 supervisors were picking on my brothers and sisters.

22 MS. KERRIE REAY: Picking on them?

23 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. Picking on
24 them.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: What do you mean by

1 "picking on them"?

2 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because they liked to
3 play, around and the supervisors yell at them, put them in
4 their room, ground them.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: So pretty strict?

6 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. A few times I
7 saw them hit my brothers. I got freaked out. Somehow I
8 jumped on a table and kicked her head. So I got thrown in
9 my room for a long time there.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: It is pretty hard for
11 young children to be taken from their family.

12 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Most of the time I
13 wasn't raised with them, but I still protect them, though.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right, right. But you
15 were in the same community? From what you were saying
16 earlier, you may not have been in the same home, but you
17 saw your brothers and sisters in the streets, playing?

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Back home
19 (~~indiscernible~~) [is where I rather be]. Out there is
20 different.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: When you were back home,
22 did you feel safe there?

23 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. Because I knew
24 everybody, and everybody knew me. I would stay with my
25 grandfather or go sleep at a friend's.

1 MS. KERRIE REAY: When you were in the
2 group home, you went to school in [Location 1], as well.
3 And there was physical violence. Was there any other kind
4 of violence towards your family members or yourself?

5 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: They went to visit us
6 in [Location 1]. They would go to an old town. It's
7 called Old Town. They must have moved some friends out
8 there. They would go drink with them. Just forget about
9 us. They would see us when they are sober.

10 Drinking was a big issue in our family
11 when we were growing up. That is all we knew. Everybody,
12 alcohol in small communities. That's all they know.
13 Because the whole community drank a lot. And the younger
14 generation drinks.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: Sometimes, though, with
16 that kind of drinking comes some forms of violence, too.
17 Did you see much violence? Did you see any violence?

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I have seen lots.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: What kind of violence
20 did you see as a child?

21 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I have seen a lot of
22 physical torture -- like, hitting with a bat. I have seen
23 a big barrel for the garbage bin, to throw garbage in
24 there, flying through the door or window of the living room
25 window. And somebody shooting in a house. Top of the hill

1 is quite a ways. Someone was firing a rifle from the top
2 onto my late grandfather's house.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: Pretty scary.

4 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. It is a good
5 thing [everybody was still sleeping], nobody got hit.

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right.

7 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: And we know who that
8 is. The person got away with it.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: And so was there
10 policing in your community? Or did they fly in or drive
11 in?

12 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Most of the time --
13 like, I don't know. Most of the time, cops are out there.
14 There are two cops [over there].

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: They live in the
16 community?

17 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. Sometimes they
18 don't even bother going around. Driving around when it's
19 daytime. Just when I was growing up, [other than that], I
20 didn't hardly [remember]--

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: So when you are talking
22 about being younger, do you remember when you first tried
23 alcohol?

24 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: When I was 22.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Twenty-two.

1 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I was forced when it
2 was my 15 birthday.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: You were forced by who?

4 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: First birthday at 15
5 years, my late uncle [P.] forced me to drink. And that was
6 the last time I drank until I was 22. From there, off and
7 on, off and on until today.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: How did your uncle force
9 you to drink?

10 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Well, he's bigger
11 than I am. [Him and his friend] He was sitting beside,
12 like, how we are sitting right now. He wouldn't let me get
13 up out of the chair. He told me, "You're not going nowhere
14 until you drink." And my grandfather was there. He didn't
15 mind. He was drinking, too, with him. So they forced me
16 there. I had no choice.

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: But you made a choice
18 because you did not drink after.

19 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: What's that?

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: I said, you made a
21 choice because you did not drink after. So that was a good
22 choice.

23 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because I had seen
24 lots of what was going on, so I didn't want to drink most
25 of my life. Ever since my mom passed away, I am not caring

1 [anymore].

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: Well, people use
3 drinking to dull the pain, to try to make the pain go away.
4 It really makes you just not feel well.

5 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: It is a lot easier to
6 get around, too.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: A lot easier to get
8 around?

9 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: When you are drinking or
11 when you are not drinking?

12 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Drinking.

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: How does that work?

14 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because you are a
15 little bit braver. You can talk to anybody. You can score
16 your next shot or borrow some money.

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: Do you feel you are a
18 quiet person?

19 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Not really. I was
20 the kind of person that communicates. I don't know.
21 Sometimes I don't say nothing. My excuse is that I'm hard
22 of hearing.

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: Are you?

24 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: That's the reason why
25 sometimes I just keep quiet. I see their mouth moving, and

1 sometimes I can't hear, so I don't say nothing.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: So how old are you now?

3 Can I ask?

4 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Right now I'm 49.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: Forty-nine. Fifty is
6 around the corner for you.

7 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Around the corner.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: When will you be 50?

9 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: In September.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. This year coming
11 up?

12 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. I'm not getting
13 any younger anymore, so --

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes. None of us are.

15 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: [No]. So I want to
16 work on myself. I want to get to know my grandkids. I
17 want my grandkids to get to know me. That is what my goal
18 is.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: Right. And that goal
20 needs to have a healthy Bernard; right?

21 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

22 MS. KERRIE REAY: You need to be healthy.

23 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: And they never see me
24 drinking.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: They have never seen you

1 drinking? So you said you started drinking at 22. What
2 happened at 22? Why then?

3 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I must have hit the
4 wrong crowd.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: Was that here? Were you
6 in Yellowknife then?

7 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Lutsel-ke'.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: Still at home?

9 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: How many people lived
11 there, do you think?

12 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Right now?

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

14 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I think it is about
15 800.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: About 800. So still,
17 that is a pretty big community.

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Back then it was
19 about seven.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Is this formerly
21 known as Snowdrift?

22 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: Is there much industry?
24 Any kind of economic --

25 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Today is just that

1 they have a gym. They have an arena. (~~Indiscernible~~)
2 [that's all they have and a] baseball diamond. I'm not too
3 sure. I haven't been back home for a while. There is a
4 recreation coordinator that coordinates everything there.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: What do people do for
6 employment?

7 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: They go to the band
8 office and whatever is listed and contract comes to town or
9 whatever needs to be done.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: So sort of small jobs.
11 And band office jobs.

12 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: First come, first
13 serve. Seasonal jobs too, like, (~~indiscernible~~) [There's a
14 frontier] fishing lodge. It is about a mile away from
15 Lutsel-ke'. Or half a mile.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: So not really a lot of
17 opportunity to find employment in your community?

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Most of the time they
19 are selling drugs and booze. Sometimes they sell fish.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: How long have you been
21 back in Yellowknife, now?

22 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I don't know. Eight
23 years.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Eight years? Has it
25 been difficult to find work?

1 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: No. It is just me.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: Just you?

3 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because I am not
4 trying hard enough.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: Can you describe how it
6 feels when you think you should, maybe, go and get a job,
7 and then you say to yourself, "Not now"?

8 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I did have a job. I
9 wasn't really working on myself because I don't have a roof
10 over my head. And it was taking a while to get a roof. So
11 that is part of my main issue [and problem].

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: And still angry. That
13 is what you said; right? I do not want to put words in
14 your mouth. You were talking about the anger that you
15 still feel, the frustration. So you mentioned that you
16 were on probation. How long does that go for?

17 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I'm still on
18 probation. So maybe another year. I was told by my
19 probation officer, if you -- says they are going to charge
20 me. I said, "Go right ahead."

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: Do you see your
22 probation officer as somebody that might be able to help?

23 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: What is that supposed
24 to mean?

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Well, help you find a

1 path to wellness. To help you do more than just have a
2 check-in to see how you are doing, but rather, to encourage
3 you, help you get into counseling somewhere that works for
4 you.

5 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. They are trying
6 to put me in counseling, which I don't need counseling. So
7 that is the reason why I shut them right down.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: And can I ask why you do
9 not think you need counseling?

10 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because before I went
11 to treatment, I was taking counseling. And I go to
12 treatment, and all the counselors were (indiscernible) me
13 and stuff like that.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: So it did not work for
15 you?

16 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: [No]. It was so long
17 ago, the counseling.

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: Part of coming here and
19 talking about aftercare, if there was a way to help support
20 you to get into counseling, do you think that would be
21 something you could think about doing?

22 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Does it have
23 something to do with aftercare?

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Well, because today, you
25 say you want your journey to be healthier. You are 49.

1 You are turning 50. And you want to have a relationship
2 with your grandchildren and your daughter. So to do that,
3 to be healthy, sometimes it is very difficult to do it on
4 our own. You are also talking, today, about the hurt and
5 the anger that you are still coping with, with the loss of
6 your mom. And that is a pretty heavy burden to try to do
7 on your own.

8 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I've just been
9 stubborn, I guess.

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: You know, and that is a
11 decision. For you, those were some things to think about.
12 It is very hard to do it on our own, but also, it is
13 important to have the right person. And trust is a big
14 thing when you are talking about counseling.

15 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. That is the
16 thing. It is hard to trust people around a small area like
17 this.

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes. I understand,
19 totally.

20 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: You can be having
21 coffee in a restaurant and overhear people talking about --
22 somebody is talking about what they said in AA and stuff
23 like that, a program. And I didn't have to turn around.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: You knew.

25 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: No, I didn't know. I

1 don't want to turn around, and I don't want to know who
2 said. So part of the reason why I don't trust going to
3 these people is because they are just there for the money.

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: Well [some people --],
5 sometimes it takes a leap of faith to trust somebody. And
6 I think you did that coming back to speak to me today.
7 Because when we talked about it yesterday, you were pretty
8 sure you did not want to talk about it. But here you are
9 today, because you took a leap of faith to trust.

10 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because I want to let
11 it out.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

13 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because of the others
14 I was listening to, it gave me a lot of courage.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: And certainly, have
16 courage to come and talk about it. Absolutely. But it
17 took a leap of faith.

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: It did.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes.

20 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I wasn't too sure. I
21 was thinking, "Should I do it, or not," [that's what I was
22 thinking] when I first sat down.

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: It is scary.

24 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: No. It's just hurt
25 feelings. That's what it is.

1 MS. KERRIE REAY: But you did. And that
2 is a pretty big step to start talking because when we start
3 to talk like this, we start to feel a bit vulnerable. We
4 want to protect ourselves. We do not want to hurt anymore.
5 But often, talking is what helps us feel better. That
6 burden starts to lift, maybe just even a little bit. Does
7 your probation officer know about the passing of your mom?

8 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Can you repeat that
9 again?

10 MS. KERRIE REAY: Sorry. Does your
11 probation officer know about the violent death of your mom?

12 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I don't know because
13 I was never asked. So I'm not too sure.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: If I can just come back
15 a little bit, you said that they know who took your mom's
16 life?

17 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: Did they go through the
19 court process?

20 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: Were they found guilty?

22 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: They were found
23 guilty.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And do you know
25 what the sentence was?

1 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Twenty-five years.
2 He has to do 10 years before he gets parole.

3 MS. KERRIE REAY: Ten years before he can
4 apply for parole?

5 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: Were you involved in
7 talking with the police at all, or did you watch from afar
8 what was happening?

9 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: What do you mean by
10 that?

11 MS. KERRIE REAY: So did the police talk
12 to you at all? Did they interview you? Did they talk to
13 you about your mom?

14 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I'm pretty sure they
15 did. I'm not too sure, though. I was pretty intoxicated
16 most of the time, so I had time to listen to no one.

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: Can you share with the
18 Commissioners what your life has been like since your mom
19 was so violently taken from you? Because you talked about
20 it --

21 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: It is like I'm going
22 downhill. It is like I'm losing all my touch. I'm not
23 even myself. I don't want to live. I want to have a
24 reason to do anything. I don't know. I feel kind of lost.
25 That's how I feel.

1 MS. KERRIE REAY: It is hard.

2 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I'm too much ~~in a~~
3 ~~mind space~~ [on my mind]. It's hard to say right now. It's
4 up and down.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: When you say you have
6 too much on your mind, what sort of things are on your
7 mind?

8 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: (~~Indiscernible~~)
9 [Instead of a good way, I think negative]. So most of the
10 time, that is the reason why I help out my elders. Once in
11 a while I go to recuperate. Just, like, living on the land
12 and helping around on his place, her place.

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: So those moments make
14 you feel good?

15 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

16 MS. KERRIE REAY: Good.

17 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: It reminds me of my
18 grandmother, too.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: That is lovely.

20 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I don't know.
21 Whatever keeps me busy. That is all I need. I just don't
22 know.

23 MS. KERRIE REAY: And it is hard when you
24 do that self talk to yourself because you are only talking
25 to yourself; right? Sometimes when you can share with

1 somebody else -- what we talked about, you know, having
2 trust.

3 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: You talk to somebody
4 and you tell them a story or whatever to some people. You
5 tell them the truth, and they don't believe you. You tell
6 them lies, and they believe you. So it is, like, what is
7 the point of telling your stories?

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: But you said, "not
9 wanting to live" and "what is the point." You also said
10 you had grandchildren.

11 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes. But it would be
12 different if I was seeing them all the time.

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: A little jumbled.

14 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: [Yeah]. Most of the
15 time I'm not too sure what I should do today and this and
16 that. I don't hardly make plans. I just go with the flow.
17 But this was a plan. Thanks for asking, though.

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: So what has been your
19 experience this last couple of days being here at the
20 inquiry and listening to the stories?

21 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: It is a lot of touchy
22 feeling. I had a few tears, listening to them. It is
23 making me want to say something and whether I should talk
24 or not. I thought my uncle was going to say more
25 yesterday. I had some ideas, but I wasn't too sure.

1 MS. KERRIE REAY: How do you feel --
2 because you sat here with your uncle. When we finished,
3 how were you feeling?

4 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I felt all right
5 because it's over. I thought he was going to say more
6 about my late mom.

7 MS. KERRIE REAY: What were you expecting
8 him to say, or what were you hoping for him to say?

9 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: How she was gone and
10 everything. Explain how she was gone. (~~Indiscernible~~)
11 [That's about it]. But I'm proud of him, you know.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: It took a lot of
13 courage.

14 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Yes.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: What other things are
16 you seeing here that gives you something to think about?
17 What about the cultural -- people smudging and partaking in
18 a lot of the culture that is happening here?

19 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: To be honest, I was
20 never taught about stuff like that, so it doesn't bother
21 me. I go to a lot of sweats and things just to sweat. Not
22 for medicine and stuff like that. Even though I don't like
23 -- I don't smoke, but I love to light, to smell this. But
24 I just do it. It is not my prayer. (~~Indiscernible~~) [I
25 just go with it anyways, a prayer is a prayer]. That is how

1 I say.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: Watching, did you see
3 people who were smudging and the healing? Were you able to
4 see how people who were telling their truths -- sharing
5 their truths -- that burden was lifting? Did you see any
6 of that?

7 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: No.

8 MS. KERRIE REAY: No?

9 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: But I see a lot of
10 people smudge, though. Stuff like that. It never came
11 across me, though, even though I tried that and everything.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: And that is okay. As
13 you say, a prayer is a prayer. People do what it will to
14 help them.

15 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: They make their own
16 choices. Whatever they believe. There is nothing I can
17 say to them.

18 MS. KERRIE REAY: But in terms of your own
19 healing, have you given thought to what you would like to
20 see happen for yourself? That self talk that you were
21 talking about, being positive. What sort of positive
22 things are you thinking about doing for yourself?

23 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I want to get back on
24 my feet.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. And what do you

1 think that will take to do?

2 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I want to start
3 working on myself. Talking to people. I got to learn how
4 to respect people. I will work on my attitude, my
5 behaviour.

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: And where do you think
7 that, that could happen for you? It sounds like not in
8 your home community because it is too small. Can that
9 happen here?

10 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: No. I don't know. I
11 never thought of it.

12 MS. KERRIE REAY: Do you think it can
13 happen in Yellowknife?

14 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: It is hard to say
15 because I have no roof over my head. I cannot rely on the
16 Salvation Army anymore.

17 MS. KERRIE REAY: What about family?

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I don't want to
19 bother them.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: Do you think you would
21 be bothering them if you were talking about coming back
22 together as a family? Do you think that would be bothering
23 them?

24 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: That is going to take
25 time.

1 MS. KERRIE REAY: Baby steps. Small
2 steps.

3 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Even my [family
4 member] wishes I was dead.

5 MS. KERRIE REAY: Why do you think she --

6 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: She says that all the
7 time when she drinks. She is a nice person when she's
8 sober.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: Why do you think she
10 would say something like that?

11 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Because she has a
12 different attitude in her. I don't know. I can't speak
13 for her, so I can't answer the question.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: No.

15 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I want to speak for
16 myself. Their issues is their issues. I don't know what
17 they think. So I cannot answer your questions about my
18 brothers and sisters.

19 MS. KERRIE REAY: We were also talking
20 about looking at repairing those relationships that have,
21 sort of, fallen apart after the loss of your mom.

22 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I have to work on
23 myself first.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Good.

25 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: That doesn't mean I'm

1 ignoring them. I have talked to them and everything. They
2 say they have to work on themselves. I have to work on
3 myself. I have to think about me first now.

4 MS. KERRIE REAY: What steps do you think
5 you need to take so that you can start working on yourself?
6 Like, real steps.

7 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I think I should
8 start talking to my probation officer and apologize.

9 MS. KERRIE REAY: They could be very
10 helpful.

11 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I think I should just
12 go talk to counselors, like they said. I think I should
13 just do that.

14 MS. KERRIE REAY: I think that is the
15 beginning of a plan. That is the beginning of a good plan.
16 It takes trust, and it's not easy. Nobody said talking to
17 other people is easy.

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I have to work on
19 myself. Most times people are there for the money. They
20 want to take advantage of it.

21 MS. KERRIE REAY: Some people really,
22 truly are there to help people.

23 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: They have a funny way
24 of showing it, though.

25 MS. KERRIE REAY: And I don't know your

1 experience, but I know my experience working with many,
2 many people. It is about helping. Lots of people get into
3 different types of work to help people. It is not about
4 the money. They truly want to help. But it is finding the
5 right person for yourself, too; right?

6 And I think you have a beginning of a plan
7 there -- talking with your probation officer. And sharing
8 with the probation officer the concern about your privacy
9 and the right to privacy. That is your right to have what
10 you talk about to be private. It is not supposed to be out
11 there for sharing. That is a right you have. I am just
12 wondering, is there anything that we have not talked about
13 that you want the Commissioners to know?

14 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I spoke my mind.

15 MS. KERRIE REAY: You feel comfortable
16 with what you have said? Is there anything else you would
17 like to say on the record?

18 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I just want to thank
19 you for sharing my problems with you.

20 MS. KERRIE REAY: I hope it is the
21 beginning of a healing journey for you.

22 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: I would like to thank
23 this stranger beside us.

24 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. Thank you, Bruce.

25 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Oh, Bruce? Okay.

1 Sorry.

2 MS. KERRIE REAY: Yes? No? I can read
3 from a distance. If it was smaller, I would have to have
4 my glasses on. So how are you feeling now?

5 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: Feeling better.

6 MS. KERRIE REAY: A little bit of the
7 burden lifted? A little bit? Just one day at a time. If
8 you feel comfortable, I can turn the recording off, or
9 would you still like to say anything? I do not want to
10 rush you.

11 MR. BERNARD MICHEL: No. I think I said
12 what I need to say.

13 MS. KERRIE REAY: Okay. It has been tough
14 since your mom passed away for you, and there is hope.
15 There is hope. Okay. Alright. We will stop the recording
16 at 2:11.

17 --- Whereupon the statement concluded at 2:11 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best
of my skill and ability,
accurately transcribed from a pre-existing recording
the foregoing proceeding..



Jennifer Rotstein, Court Reporter