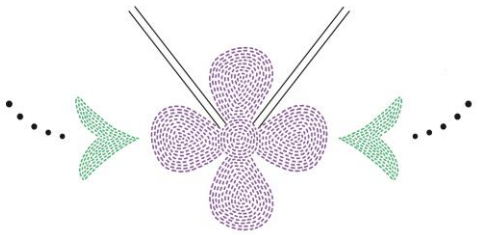
National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls

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 Public Hearings
Rendezvous Room, Four Points Sheraton
Moncton, New Brunswick



PUBLIC

Tuesday February 13, 2018

Public Volume 44(a)
Part I: Knowledge Keepers Panel - Elder Mii gam'agan, Elder Imelda Perley Opdahsomuwehs & Dr. Judy Clark;

Part II: Elder Mii gam'agan, Elder Imelda Perley Opdahsomuwehs & Dr. Judy Clark, In relation to Mary Jane Jadis & Donna Joe

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APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Julie McGregor (Legal Counsel), Stuart Wuttke (Legal Counsel)
Government of Canada	Marie-Eve Robillard (Legal Counsel), Tania Tooke (Paralegal)
Government of New Brunswick	Heather Hobart(Legal Counsel), Maya Hamou (Legal Counsel)
Eastern Door Indigenous Women's Association	(Non Appearance)
Gignoo Transition House Inc.	(Non Appearance)
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturviit Inuit Women’s Association, AnânauKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women’s Association and Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre, as a collective single party	(Non Appearance)
Government of Prince Edward Island	Ruth M. DeMone (Legal Counsel)

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13th, 2018: (8:30 a.m.)

OPENING CEREMONY

PATTY MUSGRAVE: Good morning everyone. Could I ask all the Elders to come up here and take a seat please. Imelda. Oh there she is. We're going to begin this morning by having our Inuit Elder Sarah Alana and her support person, Leona Mikinga-Simon, to light the sacred qulliq for us.

ELDER SARAH ALANA: As she said my name is Sarah Alana, there is no "K" at the end. I'm originally from Labrador but I have lived in New Brunswick for a very long time. I'm very honored to be here to light the qulliq. I, I understand that the sacred fire is Indigenous to all of us so I'm going to light the qulliq now. There's a teaching that goes with it. I needed that. All set? Thank you. I'll start all over. Good morning, my name is Sarah Alana and there is no "K" on my name. I'm an Inuk, which is singular of Inuit, originally from Labrador. I've lived in New Brunswick for a very

long time. I'm very very honored to be here with families and survivors and all of you. It's a real honor to be here.

There is a teaching that goes with the lighting the qulliq. The qulliq, at my grandfather's and grandmother's time, was a functional part of our Inuit way of life. It was, it was used to heat the igluvijaq (snow house). It's not an igloo, an igloo is a house. Igluvijaq is a snow house and it was used to heat the igluvijaq to dry your clothes over it because at 62 below zero hypothermia can set in very quickly, so we need to dry our clothes right away, and also it was used for cooking.

Now the functional ones were massive, our ceremonial ones are much smaller and we generally just use it as an opening ceremony. And we would use caribou fat tallow or seal fat but now, in 2018, we use extra virgin olive oil. Yeah. And today we honor it as more of a ceremonial way of life. It's more with spiritual illumination that, that we pursue and peace and harmony and balance amongst all of us.

As I, as I light the qulliq remember a sacred time that you felt so safe and so protected around that fire and flame and go to that place, that place of protection.

I'm going to share something, now I've been doing healing work for a, a very very long time on myself, along with my niece, who we fostered since she was 11. My late sister-in-law was raped and murdered by another man and my cousin, Henrietta Mylik, went missing in St. John's Newfoundland as well in 1970s and she's still missing. The hardest part of today is watching her very elderly mother still grieving and mourning. So in spirit I will honor their participation by spirit with us.

ELDER SARAH ALANA LIGHTS THE QUILLIQ

PATTY MUSGRAVE: I'm going to ask Elder, Brett Colfer, to come up and sing the calling in the spirits song while Sarah lights the qulliq.

BRETT COLFER SINGS AND DRUMS

PATTY MUSGRAVE: Good morning everyone. My name is Patty Musgrave. The name the Creator knows me by is She

Dances with Ancestors. My colours are white, pink, purple and yellow. I have a fox spirit and my warriors are the crow and the dove. I'm from the Turtle Clan. I'm very honored and humbled to be here to be your Emcee this morning. The gifts I carry are the gifts of listening to our ancestors and hearing them speak and carrying the truth that they have to say, by using my voice and courage, that the bear brings me to speak the truth, even when it's, it's not a good idea.

At this time I'm going to ask our Elder Peter Jadis, to come up and do an opening prayer for us.

ELDER PETER JADIS: I carry the spirit name of Ancient Grizzly Bear Man, and also White Buffalo Whistle Man. My colours are pink, yellow, white, blue and green. My warrior is the deer, protector is the brown buffalo and my gifts are the courage and strength for the life of the Mi'kmaq people. My friend is the black sea otter. I'm going to, I'm going to rattle for the, for the women because the grandmother, Big Church, she carries that too.

ELDER PETER JADIS OPENING PRAYER

PATTY MUSGRAVE: I will now invite Imelda Perley and Mii gam'agan for the traditional Territory welcome.

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: (S*peaks traditional language)*. Welcome. My name is Mii gam'agan and I'm from Oromocto Village. I'm a mother and grandmother here in my homeland and a sister and I want to welcome you here on the great land of our people. I'm forever grateful for our ancestors and because of, because of their way we have a opportunity to enjoy this wonderful homeland of my ancestors because that they had provided a way of balance and harmony and to live in rightful way with all of life and forever carried for our great mother, our sacred mother most people know as Mother Earth.

And it's because of that life way that we have the privilege now to enjoy the life that we have. Our prayers continually and thanking Peter for the, for the Ceremony because that sets, always the foundation of who we are as

a people. And a reminder that we have a, a responsibility and an obligation to continue carry the responsibilities of my ancestors in order to be able to make sure that there is life in a, and a good life for everyone, for all our children and our grandchildren and that we come back to living in that way where no life is harmed. Certainly the heart of that, women, the ones who are – hold the Mother tongue and taught us our Mother tongue. So wela'lin.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: (*Speaks traditional language)*. Thank you, my relatives, Mi'gmaq, for allowing me to stand in your Territory and bring my medicine, for all the hugs of welcome that I received as I came to your Territory. I will reciprocate when you come to my Territory. I'm Wolastoqiyik, Gale People of the River and People of the River is important, that's why I brought salmon with me, you know, because as our salmon swims it's looking for the healing that our families need.

We use water, you see tears, you know, that are being shed. I thank all of you for bringing many ears to hear, to

listen and many eyes to witness and your noses to see the sacredness of the smell of our medicines. This is our aroma therapy. I thank you for the hearts that you bring. Let go of the baggage and fill it with compassion that's needed here today and tomorrow and from here on in. I also want to thank you for the many hands, the circle we had here in this Elder's circle around the sacred blanket, the sacred things that are here.

Observe the four leggeds here in the moccasins we wear. Observe the winged ones and the feathers we carry. Observe the gifts of our earth Mother of all the different medicines you see. The water we drink today, take a drink for the ones who thirst for justice. Eat and feed our spirits as well as we feed our bodies.
I give gratitude to the organizers for doing this and Andrea.

I brought little red shawls as a symbol of something that we started in our Territory, because when I went out west there were many dresses hanging. They didn't need posters to tell you what they were for and what they were about.

When I came back to New Brunswick from the west I knew I couldn't do the red dress because there's already a Red Dress Campaign in New Brunswick for heart and, you know, breast cancer and all that and I didn't want to, I didn't want to step on any movement. So I remembered the shawls that we earn at puberty, that protect us, that surround us, that welcome us, that make us feel like our Elder from the north when she lit her northern fire, reminded us, go to that sacred place, go to that safe place.

And I always thought about the sacred fires at our fasting grounds, the sacred fires when we get ready for sweat lodges. Love to go there. That's where our safe places are and so how do we do that in society? Maybe we just light a candle in silence and offer a prayer and light a healing message for the grandmothers who have been waiting for their loved ones to come home. Do a blessing by your doors so that as you welcome your family home, know that there's families that are still waiting for their loved ones to come through that front door.

Eci-skewi-wonitahasit, don't forget. Kinuwaskutike, for not, you know, for the ones that have been stolen from us. Woliwon, for the many hearts here today. We are one heart today. Wela'lin.

PATTY MUSGRAVE: Thank you both. Thank you everyone. You can sit down. I'd like to welcome now, traditional Chief William Nevin, who is the traditional Chief of the eastern seaboard. He's also, he's going to welcome you to our Territory but also he has a song, a woman's song to sing for you this morning.

CHIEF WILLIAM NEVIN: Kind of caught me off guard but as the Chief you've always got to be ready. That's one thing we learned. The eastern people, the eastern Tribes 2080 – 1980, 2080 there ain't going to be Inuit there. But 1980 I went to my first Sun dance and being that we're the people of the east side, and I had to do a Sun dance, man, rough rough rough. The eastern people here, especially the Mi'gmaq people, are the ones that welcome the sun first. The first Sun dance in North America is the White Eagle Sun

dance. For 20 years, coming up, we're going to be doing this ceremony.

I've never drank in my life, never take drugs in my life. I'm not a perfect person by far. Thirty years working with alcohol and drugs, thirty years, there's nothing you can tell me that's not going to surprise me because I work with 2,000 people. Again, it's not a perfect world and there are no perfect people. The first person that says that, I'll put them on a pedestal and say God you're good. There's nobody.

In the ceremonial traditional way I was five years old when I first started pipes. That was in 1955. My father was very dedicated to bringing back the traditional cultural ways to the people. This is not, this is not a business. This is not a business this is my life. This is my life. And my life is swimming back to traditional cultural ways to all the people, especially to the ones that are having a lot of problems. Murdered and missing and the collateral damage that we write about is amazing. There's a lot of collateral damage happening, from the residential schools, first

encroachment 1949/1950. You can go through the whole thing.

This is not a business for me, this is my life. This is my life because it's the last time that they're going to be listening to us, we don't have much time to straighten out a lot of things with the Federal Government. It's not much time so I dedicate my life to, to suffer and some people, they say I'm a holy man but 38 years a person dragging, that's the only holiness about me, I got holes in me.

I want my sons to stand up and to honor – don't make the mistakes I made, basically is what I'm trying to tell them. We can't make mistakes. We've got to honor our women. If we don't honor the women we're in a whole bunch of trouble. I noticed that when I was in Government, I could see that all the males were Chiefs were sitting there, the women were sitting in the cars. Now it changed. We've got to have balance. You can't just see one side without looking at the other side. I don't want to lecture you, I do that twice a day. I don't want to lecture

you but we are going to welcome you to this Territory where it started.

Everything started here from the encroachment of the, of the non Native people started here. We're going to welcome you here so this is where everything is going to start to fix. To heal up. I want to thank Andrea for inviting me up here. I want to thank all you guys. Again, this is not a perfect world and there are no perfect people but we gotta get, we gotta go on. So we'll see.

CHIEF WILLIAM NEVIN, BRETT COLFER AND CHIEF AARON SOCK DRUMMING AND SONG

PATTY MUSGRAVE: Thank you. I'm going to invite Elsipogtog Chief Aaron Sock to come and welcome you.

CHIEF AARON SOCK: Good morning everyone. Apologies for arriving a little late. Also, I'm going to have to apologize, I'm a little under the weather I guess. So like you can imagine how hard it was for me to try to sing along with William and Brett.

So I just want to welcome you all this morning to Sikniktuk Territory, Sikniktuk Mi'gmaq Territory, also to Soegao which is part of Elsipogtog and it's about eight miles from here. So when I was asked to do the opening remarks for today's event I asked for, you know, some briefing notes. I did not get them in time so I'm kind of winging it. But - excuse me. On my drive up here I thought about it a little bit and you know, I'm not sure if most of you here have gone to a sweat lodge but for those of you have, the first round is always for the women and children and we honor them and we pray for their, their well being, you know, that the Creator watch over them. Because without the women none of us would even be here.

So we honor our mothers, our aunts, our sisters, you know, our daughters and we, we thank the Creator for them being here. So it's with that regard that I say, you know, it's great that we're having this event today and I just want to thank the people that put this together and I just want to welcome you all to Sikniktuk Soegao First Nation, Wela'lin.

PATTY MUSGRAVE: Thank you Chief. On behalf of the Honorable Roger Melanson, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I'd like to invite the Honorable Cathy Rogers to come up.

HONORABLE CATHY ROGERS: Thank you. Merci. Thank you to all of you here, Peter Jadis, Patty, thank you, and the Chief, Commissioner. It's just really an honor for me to be here among you for the opening of this very very important couple of days.

Let me begin by first recognizing and honoring the Mi'gmaq Territory on which this sacred gathering is being held. I would like to pass on my great respect to the families that have tragically lost their daughters, mothers, sisters, grandmothers, aunts, cousins with us today. It is indeed difficult but I'm so happy that there is the opportunity to share these experiences and stories.

My heart really does go out to each and every one of you that will take part in sharing your truth and your experience to the Commission of Inquiry. And it honors me, again, just to be here for

the opening. I want to thank again, the Commissioners and their team for undertaking this very very important and necessary work and for their presence in the Province to ensure the hearing of stories of those who are missing and who have been murdered from this Region.

I'm a sociologist by background. I did my phD listening to stories of youth who've had very tragic beginnings in their lives and I know I can relate to the importance of hearing stories so that we can remember them, honor them, help them to heal and learn how, so importantly, to collectively move on and do better so that these types of tragedies really do end. So I want to let you know that the Government of New Brunswick has been supportive of the call for an Inquiry. I'm very honored to have you here in this location. Our Government has committed its full participation and co-operation with the National Inquiry and we really do look forward to hearing the eventual conclusions of the work.

The Government of New Brunswick is committed to addressing the issue of

violence against Aboriginal women and girls and will continue to collaborate with Aboriginal leaders, with the New Brunswick Advisory Committee and Violence Against Aboriginal Women and the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. It's crucial that we respond and we prevent this going forward. So again, look forward to the final report and recommendations and from these we hope to move forward.

I would finally just point out that the New Brunswick family information liaison unit has a support room available here on site for the next two days. This will be available for support services in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner for the families and this is in addition to the support services offered by the National Inquiry team. And I understand there's going to be a special youth service as well so I'm very pleased about that.

So please feel free to seek out the services available in this New Brunswick Family Information Liaison Unit room here so you could require

them – should you require them during this time. So for now I would ask for all New Brunswickers to turn their thoughts to the families that have tragically lost their daughters, sisters, mothers, granddaughters, cousins, aunts. This will be a difficult couple of days for the families and for New Brunswick's Aboriginal community but as they open their painful experiences we also know there will be hope for the process of healing. So merci beaucoup. Thank you.

PATTY MUSGRAVE: Thank you Cathy and the Province of New Brunswick. Next I'm going to invite the President of the Indigenous Women's Association of the Wolastoquey and Mii'kmaq Territories, Jenna Herney to come up.

JENNA HERNEY: Good morning. I'm sorry, I'm, a little nervous today. My name is Jenna Herney and I'm from Eel River Bar. My mother's name is Rebeccer – Rebeccer, I'm sorry, Rebecca, the daughter of Margaret Le Doha. My father is Wayne Solomon and he's Elsipogtog. I'm the President of the Indigenous Women's Association of

the Maliseet & Mi'kmaq Territory. On behalf of our Organization I would like to extend a warm welcome and thank you to the Elders, families, Chiefs, Commissioners and Staff in to our First – in to our Territory.

I would like to take the time to recognize all of our sisters who we have lost, to the mothers and the fathers who lost their daughters, to the children who lost their mothers and to all those siblings lost their sister, and to all the people who were left behind. My hands are up to you guys.

I'm a young mother of two little girls and I foster my 15 year old niece. It is my deepest concern that they grow up in a safe and healthy environment and I want my daughters, nieces and sisters and community members to walk without fear. The culture of discrimination abuse and violence against Indigenous women must come to an end. Our women and children deserve equality and justice. We need to work collectively to walk in this healing journey together.

Thank you to the families and survivors of the violence for your bravery and courage in sharing with us. Thank you for participating in the National Inquiry. Thank you for sharing your truth. We are all here to listen and to give support and I would truly like to thank you all for allowing me to speak to all of you guys today. I pray for healing, I pray for our sisters and brothers and I pray for the families and I pray for our communities. Woliwon.

PATTY MUSGRAVE: Thank you so much Jenna. Dr. Judy Clark is the President of the PEI Native Women's Association and I would invite Dr. Clark to come up.

DR. JUDY CLARK: Thank you. And I would like to also welcome the invitation to come to your Territory. I am from Prince Edward Island, which we call Abegweit, and we are here today to share our stories. It is quite an honor to be here and to share these stories with, with everyone. Some of the topics that I am thinking about, it's really close to my heart. My aunt went missing, my mother and my niece

were survived an attack and for myself and for my children and all the women across Canada, we are survivors.

Survivors of the, what is our Indian Act Chiefs, I guess, they take their authority from, is the Indian Act. And that is what my story is about today, is how we survived. How we faced systemic racism, discrimination. But we are survivors and I am very honored to be able to tell the stories of a lot of why our women have gone missing and murdered, because they lost their connection to their home.

I pray for the families because this is a difficult time. It's reliving the stories and revisiting the memories of our loved ones that we cannot – that are not here today. It is hard on our hearts and one of my Elders said that we think – there's people that think with their brain and that's part of their lives, but for me, it's with my heart. It's what touches each and every one of us.

When I was born I was born an Inuu, a status Indian. Then I married, then the Government said I wasn't Indian

anymore. Then they changed the policies and the Constitution and they said, you're an Indian but you have limited rights and services. So my daughters were born, they were born not, not Indian, not Mi'kmaq and my grandchildren. Things are changing and they were, I was reinstated. My daughters regained, gained status as well as my grandchildren.

But for the many of our women across Canada, they died not connected to their community. They faced many challenges and I pray for them every day. I advocate for those women and I pray for our families to continue to support us. And I also pray that the people in authority, especially our Chiefs, that they support us and they look at us as women of First Nations, of Metis and Inuu. We are, we are the Aboriginal and Indigenous people of Canada. Again, I thank you and it's not a time to tell my story, I guess I could be here forever.

But anyway, thank you for this opportunity and for your support, and for the Province, and for our Province who sent us here and for the

Commissioners. I have a close connection with this Commissioner so my heart, she knows my story so that's half the battle.

PATTY MUSGRAVE: I think that Dr. Clark's story represents a lot of us and, and our mothers and grandmothers and – or in my case, father, grandmother. I, I'd also like to recognize some, some really important people in this Province here today. First of all, thank you Steve Roberge, from the New Brunswick Police Commissioner, for joining us today. He didn't want to be recognized but, you know. And near and dear to my hear is Beth Lyons, who is the Executive Director of the New Brunswick Women's Council, and her partner in crime over there, Jules Mitchel, the Executive Director of the YWCA Moncton.

You know, when we started to bring back the Sisters in Spirits vigil in 2012 here in Moncton, Beth and Jules were the first ones on board to help us and so I'd like to say a special thank you to you for that. I'd also like to recognize all of the women in this room that, that have a story because we all

do. We all carry our story here and they say the longest trip is from the head to the heart, so it's to carry our story in our heart and that's when the healing begins.

Our Commissioner, Michele Audette would like to say a few words and so I'm going to ask her to come up now.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: (*Opening comments in French)* So I don't want to repeat myself, I want to say thank you for the National Inquiry team for organizing this event. It might look like, yes we're here and listening, which is the most important for a Commissioner or for a mother like me, but there's so many people who got involved. People from this land who collaborate and participate to make sure that this historical event is the family and survivors' moment. It's so precious.

It's so important, so once again, I want to say thank you so much and tell your friends, colleagues, Canadians, people from New Brunswick are not far from here, come and listen. Come and understand where we're coming from, who we are, but the challenge that families

are facing every day. The challenge that survivors are facing every day.

And the solution, it's not for the Commission who will bring it, it's all of us. All of us, including the Provincial Government - thank you, of course the Municipalities are, and you, Monsieur, all of us are responsible and if we want to make a change, well the change can happen today. But, of course, with the recommendation, I hope you'll get involved right there. So merci beaucoup and family time.

PATTY MUSGRAVE: We have Pam Fillier joining us, who will speak on behalf of NFAC, the families of the women.

PAM FILLIER: Hi, my name is Pamela Fillier. My daughter's name was Hilary Bonnell. She was 16 years old when she was murdered. I'm a member of NFAC, which is National Family Advisory Circle. My goal in being a part of that is to try to have the laws changed because rapists and pedophiles don't nearly get what they should. And if you murder someone you shouldn't be allowed out.

The person that murdered my daughter, Curtis Bonnell, was a repeat offender. So being a part of this, what it means to me is to try to prevent this from happening to another child. They let him out even though his file said high risk to re-offend. We need tougher laws. We really need tougher laws and it wouldn't help just us. It would help all of Canada. We need tougher laws. That's what being a member on NFAC is to me.

I want to make a change to prevent this from happening to someone else. Cause it doesn't end when you bury child, it doesn't end there. It's just a beginning of another kind of pain. I don't want to see anybody else feel the way I felt and the way I feel. You don't get over losing your child. You don't. I've lost members in my family where it hurts so badly, but then when I lost my daughter that was a whole new paid, time doesn't heal that.

And for anyone to go and rape and murder another human being, you have no right to be in society with the rest of us. You should be kept in jail.

That's what my goal is. That's what I want to do. That's my main thing is, I want tougher laws. We need tougher laws. Thank you.

PATTY MUSGRAVE: When we listen to what Pam had to say, I think it's really important over the next couple of days to carry her message and for those of us that are advocates for women, no matter which culture you're representing, we need tougher laws. That's Pam's message and in order to honor the women and girls it's really important that we all speak up for tougher laws.

So as we – just before we go into break I have a couple of announcements. First off lunch will be served in the room outside beside the registration desk from 11:30 to 12:30 today. Health support people are in purple shirts. You can see some in the back. Purple lanyards. So they have purple on here. They have – we have Elders, spiritual healers and counselors if you want a one on one session please go to the registration desk and we'll arrange that for you. We have two registered nurses on site so please see the

registration desk if you need assistance.

Tear bags, you'll see the paper bags around the room – are around the room to gather your tissues. An Elder will offer them to the sacred fire at the end of the hearing ceremony. The Elder's room is located on the main level, Port Royal room number one. If anyone needs time to sit with an Elder, visit, have some tea, please feel free.

The FILU has a table in the main area and are there to provide information and support. They have a hospitality room as well where people can go to sit and visit. So now I'm going to ask Pete Jadis to come back up, as we honor our Territory we will – two Territories, we're going to have Pete sing the Honor song in Mi'kmaq and Wolastoquey.

Just one second. We have a little – we're going to do our little reverse there. Did I mention that I'm contrary? Maybe this is a good time to do that. We do have gifts and they are made by the artist Bernie Poitras. So are you going to……

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS: I just want to say haw'aa. My name is Skundaal. I'm from the Haida Nation in Haida Gwaii. I'm on the, way on, on an Island on the west coast of B.C. but I live in Vancouver. My traditional name is Gulkiit Jaad and I come from the House of the St'langng Laanas, the House of the Raven, and my name means the Golden Spruce Woman but I have a, I'm a heredity chief in waiting, I potlatch my name in August this year.

But, I want to say haw'aa to the people of this beautiful Territory, to land and to – a little bit cold but it's just, it's beautiful here. But, as part of my work that I do, is, is I carve and in my culture the Haida women are not allowed to carve but a few of us just kind of got, you know, rebels and so we carve. But one of the greatest gifts that I was taught as a hereditary chief in waiting, is to give the gift will of copper. The copper is the highest gift that you can give to another Chief or to respected Elders and to the Elders of this Territory, but especially to the family members. I see Pamela here and with NFAC and

that, that the – I'm also a family member too.

I lost my mother and my three sisters were murdered at the downtown east side of Vancouver where I work. So to the family members my heart, my love and – but to the people in this Territory, haw'aa again, for allowing us to do this, this work here. I'd like to call up Elder Pete Jadis.

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS PRESENTS A GIFT TO ELDER PETER JADIS

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS: And to Chief William Nevin. She told me to tell you he went to go pee. No.

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS PRESENTS A GIFT TO CHIEF WILLIAM NEVIN

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS: Mii gam'agan.

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: Mii gam'agan.

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS PRESENTS A GIFT TO ELDER MII GAM'AGAN

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS: And to Imelda Perley. Imelda Perley Opdahsomuwehs.

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS PRESENTS A GIFT TO IMELDA PERLEY OPDAHSOMUWEHS

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS: And to Chief Aaron Sock.

BERNIE POIRTRAS-WILLIAMS PRESENTS A GIFT TO CHIEF AARON SOCK

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS: I just want to say haw'aa again. Haw'aa. I apologize, Judy.

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS PRESENTS A GIFT TO DR. JUDY CLARK

ELDER PETE JADIS: I'm an Elder from Elsipogtog and I, I tend the sacred fire there every day. To light up the fire, that's the name of Elsipogtog, River of Fire. In times, I don't know how many thousands of years, it was, it was a fire at Doak Breakwater. It was lit but it was way back in 2500 years. There's an ancestral grave there. It might be around that period of time, and every day I do my pipe. I light the sacred fire up. These were the teachings of our ancestors, our grandfathers, our grandmothers. And the healing that we go through, I, I learned all the history off my side of my family. Judy is my sister, I'm from PEI and my dad was from Nova Scotia. My wife's a Passamaquoddy, so I'm a Maritimer.

It's a great honor to be an Elder and I'm a Sundancer, I had danced up in Winnipeg four years to get to who I am today, that's a healer. I carry these teachings and carry the bundles and every day I do the pipe, I did the pipe this morning at 7:00, from the east, to open that door up to the spirit world. It was a great honor and I seen stars in a dark room and that's where the ancestors are coming from. They're coming down today for the healing, for the ones that had lost their lives. In that spiritor door I sang today, Mi'kmaq, where the grandfathers come down and they, they go up a very narrow, narrow space. That's where they go, we carry a spirit name and your colours to the Creator.

That Mankind of four different colours, we have yellow, we have red, we have black and white. The Creator had brought us here to Mother Earth and, and to be strong, to work with Mi'gmaq Mother is a great honor to us as Mi'kmaq. So I'm going to sing a Mi'kmaq honor song, two verses. It's a great honor. All stand.

ELDER PETER JADIS DRUMS AND SINGS HONOR SONG

PATTY MUSGRAVE: So before we begin the, the community hearings I'm going to invite everybody to take a 15 minute break and if we could keep as close to that time as possible and come back in, we're all good.

R E C E S S

U P O N R E S U M I N G:

PATTY MUSGRAVE: If we could just have a reminder, when we come back if you could put your cell phones on vibrate that would be wonderful. Thank you.

HEARING #1 PART ONE

Witness: Elder Mii gam'agan, Elder Imelda Perley Opdahsomuwehs, Dr. Judy Clark
Heard by Commissioner Michele Audette
Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe
Grandmother, Elder: Bernie Poitras-Williams, Elder Sarah Alana
Interpreter: Joan Milliea
Part One: Mii gam'agan, Imelda Perley Opdahsomuwehs, Dr. Judy Clark,

Knowledge Keeper Panel
Registrar: Bryan Zandberg
Clerk: Trudy Mckinnon

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good morning. Good morning Commissioner Audette. Ahneen (introduction in her language). So I just introduced myself, again, just in terms of respecting the Territory we're in I took the time to introduce myself. I'm Christa Big Canoe, I'm Commission Counsel for the National Inquiry. My job is to assist the witnesses providing you their stories. I also took the time to be thankful for being on the Territory and for the Panel we have before us.

This morning's Panel is going to be a little different in terms of the, the, what we're going to hear. Each of these very strong women do have a direct tie to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. However, we're going to focus this morning, on contextualizing this Region and the various issues, based on all of the Panel members knowledge and their practice and their traditional knowledge. And then after lunch we

will be turning our attention to their connection to missing and murdered Indigenous women.

And so normally I wouldn't give a lot of information, I would simply ask them, each to introduce themselves but I do want to give just a touch of information so that anyone who's watching has the ability to understand who we actually have with us today. So we're very fortunate, the National Inquiry is very fortunate today, to have three very strong Indigenous women from this Territory who are all traditional knowledge keepers, who are all first language speakers and also have ties with academic institutions in the Region.

All of them are Elder in residence at various places, so I'm going to start with just acknowledging we also have a translator. A Mi'kmaq translator with us, Jane. Right beside her we have Mii gam'agan, who is the Elder in residence at St. Thomas University. She's involved in matrilineal culture research and focuses on women's role in history and reclaiming womens' knowledge through language.

Right beside her is Imelda Perley and I apologize because I can't say your name but – in Wolastoquey, which is Maliseet but the proper traditional name. She's from Tobique First Nation, St. Mary's First Nation and has ties to the Houlton Band of Maliseet. She's a University of New Brunswick's Elder in residence and professor for Maliseet language and Wabanaki world views.

She also is – she also co-teaches a Native studies module at St. Thomas University. She is the founder and co-ordinator of the Wolastoquey language and cultural centres situated in Tobique and St. Mary's First Nation.

And beside me – and these lovely women have also, were a part of our opening this morning. Right beside me is Dr. Judy Clark. Judy Clark is a Mi'kmaq woman. She's a member of the Abegweit First Nation. She's the University of Prince Edward Island's Elder in resident and the president of the Women's Association of PEI. She has an honorary doctorate from the law school of PEI and she holds certificates in conflict resolution from the University

and serves as a circle keeper with the Mi'kmaq confederacy.

Each of these women also have a direct tie. So when they speak today and when they share their stories it's tied in both their own knowledge, their traditional knowledge and the experiences of women who have experienced violence, witnesses violence or family members surviving violence.

We would kindly ask that first Jane be affirmed in. Sorry? I'm sorry, Joan. My apologies. That Joan is affirmed in for the purposes of translation.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: (Speaks in French)

JOAN MILLIEA AFFIRMED MI'KMAQ/ENGLISH

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I would also ask the Commissioner have the witnesses promised in for their testimony and that it carry over in the next Panel.

BRYAN ZANDBERG: Okay. Good, then on behalf of Commissioner Audette, I'll begin with Mii gam'agan.

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN PROMISE GIVEN
ELDER IMELDA PEARLEY OPOLAHSOMUWEHS PROMISE GIVEN
DR. JUDY CLARK PROMISE GIVEN

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And so at this time I would actually just like to provide the opportunity to each of the Panel members to do a little introduction of themselves and then we will be looking at maps of this Territory. And we'll start with Mii gam'agan.

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: Good morning. My relatives come from Gas Bay. And I am from Burnt Church and I am Mi'kmaq. Well I, I guess my introduction is where, where I'm at and what I'm doing. Currently I work at St. Thomas University as the Elder in residence and I also work with Indigenous women, Wabanaki women and Indigenous sisters who are residing here in the east.

We've worked in doing research and we're looking at righting relations for women in this area and so it's a program, it was being funded by the Katherine Donnelly Foundation and it's

a woman led initiative. It's for adult education on radical social change. So when we're looking at righting relations, it's one of the parts here in the east, with working with Aboriginal women, we started to look at what does that mean in righting relations.

Where that led us was to start looking at righting relations within, within our culture and with each other. So that led us to start to relook at our language and our ancestral systems and what does that mean, because we understand that in our culture before contact and decimation of our homelands and our families, that we were matriarchly and that we had a – we lived in, in good relations, which is where the grandmothers had called our movement abojula mawdutynedge. To return to the way how we used to be in right relations with each other to the land and to all life.

So I've had the wonderful opportunity to work with the grandmothers and with the sisters in doing work in this region. So I think at this time, I know we're now very limited time so

that will, that's where I'll just leave off as far as introductions go.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Imelda, can you please also introduce yourself?

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: (Speaks her language) My traditional name is Moon of the Worlding Wind and that name wasn't allowed to be used. I'm, I just turned 60 recently and I'm so proud that I was able to retrieve the name that was not allowed in our school systems. You know the place where education is supposed to be grounded and our educational experiences started to, you know, take away from us and so that identity is really important and so I'm so proud that I was able to do ceremony and have the name brought back to me to lead me in what I do. Because a blossom was one of the 13 moons and in our women's way of knowledge, that matriarchal way we, we honor those 28 day cycles and the responsibilities that go with it.

My other name in Monoqan'aluhk is Rainbow Cloud and my Elders that gave it to me, the late Gwen Bear and the late Elder Charles Solomon, his spirit

name, as a world war II victim, was Ama'gwan. And he was reminded when he went to war that don't forget you're Wolastoquey. Yes people call you Maliseet but don't forget that's a Mi'gmaq word that means you're the slow talker. And so – but remember, you're from the water, from the River Wolastoquey.

And so he took his identity with him. So when I perceive that spirit name he said you're Olog. You're, you're, you're the one that takes my – you're the one that's going to take my teachings like a cloud and the, the rainbow is your wisdom. It's not just for our people, I want you to share it with all peoples and so that's what that name means.

The other one is Grandmother Rain. There's two rains that we used to celebrate, one is called the Grandfather rain, and that's the one that makes the puddles for us to go in and play in. The other one is a Grandmother rain that I'm named of. That's the gentle one that you just put your face up to and say Grandmother, I need some healing today, bless me, let me honor every tear that I see. And so

those spirit names and my traditional name lead me to where I am today, and will continue to lead me as I learn from those names.

My favorite responsibility is I sing to the babies in the womb. I have a cultural program in my communities where we do placental burials and I've been able to do that for almost 15 years now. And it was one way for me to save the language by naming those babies but I would get them, you know, used to their language and I work with moms to say the first thing that baby should hear is not is it a boy or is it a girl, it's (phrase in her language), I've been waiting for you and here's your language that's been waiting for you.

And so that's one of the prides and for me the work that we do, if we're going to have strong women, if we're going to build that foundation we start with those babies, you know? And then of course I'm lucky enough to work with, and my First Nation communities, my Wolastoquey communities on bringing the, like Mii gam'agan said, bringing the culture back through language, you

know, the ceremonies we do. So we do puberty ceremonies, so it's important to help these young boys and young girls learn the responsibilities of how to leave childish behaviour behind and accept responsibilities to make it better for all our communities and all our people.

And I think that's the foundation we need to rebuild again and, and support, you know, as our families are going through a difficult time and how do we, how do we bring, how do we gain strength if we've lost our language and we've lost our foundational support systems through our culture. And so that's what guides me and, of course, the University work that I do is making sure that the entire University acknowledges their responsibility.

It's not just one part that's Indigenous that has to do all the Indigenization, it's the entire University that has to – especially for our – when we were up on the Hill, and I always say, if we were upon the Hill then we were the beacon. We're the beacon for the public. We're the ones that have to show what, you know,

decolonizing looks like and what Indian, you know, Indigenization looks like.

And – actually, initially when I went there as a mature student I actually pictured a totem pole that needed to be there and I thought how nice if our high school students would carve this totem pole but I didn't want the totem pole to represent our culture, I wanted it to represent the University culture where, you know, a faculty of nursing would have a totem, a faculty of engineering, law etcetera.

So I am actually still working on that. I've been there over 20 years so I think I'm going to get my wish before I retire. And – but that's important because University has to show evidence of that, what education are you teaching? What's the message to the public? What's the message to the rest of the world? So as Elder in residence we, we kind of have a little, a little say. I could say to, to make the movements that are necessary to send good messages to all citizens and not just Indigenous citizens. And, I'll

stop there and look forward to hearing from Dr. Judy. Wela'lin.

DR. JUDY CLARK: (Speaks her language) Thank you. My name Turtle Woman and my mother's name is Mary Jane and I am from Abegweit in PEI. Also, I just want a little story about my name, is that I'm named after my grandmother and I brought her picture here today because my mom always said, you should know your family, where you came from, where you're going and where you are today.

So my grandmother, her name was Judith and her last name was Snake. So when she, when the Missionaries came to our community they didn't like the last name being Snake. We call it jipijka'm. So the Missionaries changed her name because in 1610 the Mi'gmaq people, they were baptized with chief number two into the Catholicism, so a lot of the Missionaries that came to our communities, they wrote the dictionaries and they started to talk about change. And I think that's where the colonialism started too.

So by the time she finished her first communion and confirmation and got married you could see in her, the church records, she was Judith Snake in brackets Peters. And when she continued on receiving her sacraments she became Judith Peters with Snake in brackets. And by the time she got married and when she passed she was Judith Peters. There was no, no sign of the, the, her last name being Snake. But I just want to share that she, she died giving birth to my aunt Josephine and so she never lived to see her grandchildren and her great grandchildren.

So I'm very honored to be able to, to share this with you cause my aunt Josephine was the person that she gave birth to when she passed. So both of these ladies have gone and aunt Josephine was brought up as a young child with her relatives and from the communities and, and so she didn't have the mom. And women in our community are very important because we are the givers of life.

Our – they're surrounded with the water inside and when they're ready to

deliver the water breaks and the spirit comes. And that is so important to us. So that's some of the stories that we need to pass on to our communities and to our, our daughters and to everyone about our culture. This is my mom, my mom was five years old when her mother died and she – oops, I'm going to drop this. This is my mom.

EXHIBIT NUMBER 1: Cheryl Simon and Judy Clark "Exploring Inequities under the Indian Act", University of New Brunswick Law Journal, Volume 64, (2013), pp. 103-122

And she was a lady that grew up without a mother but she, she knew the way that she had to teach us. And one of the things right here that she has in her hands are May flowers. And part of our Treaties we are the – we have Treaties of peace and friendship and one of the ones that we can harvest, gather and have a livelihood.

So she taught me how to pick May flowers and they always said that you

harvest and you practice your Treaty rights because if there is ever a day that comes that you have to challenge your Treaty rights you can always say that every year I harvested, I collected and, you know, we did our Treaty rights. So those are very important knowledge that she passed on to me and I kept, and to this day we harvest. My family, my grandchildren and community, we're teaching the ladies in our community.

I'm also part of the Elder and resident and that was quite an honor to be asked at New - University of PEI. I keep forgetting where I am here. And it's a very new title and, and it was honored they bestowed. I got the honor, or a degree in May, I'm still not used to that title but I remember when people address me as Dr. Judy, I remember I go back and think of when I got married and I was always Judy. But, when I got married they said Mrs. Clark or Mrs. John Clark and I'm thinking, I don't have any ID that says I'm Mrs. John Clark or even Mrs. So, you know, when you're used to your name in one way it's getting used to that. So I just wanted to share that with you.

But the University of PEI is looking at Indigenizing the campus so I'm working with them on a lot of different committees and I have been working with them since my sister was teaching at University in 2001. She created, in education, the Indigenizing the program, and she brought me in and one of my first sessions, I guess, was making lusgnign, which is a bannock and telling my story. And my story of where I am today. I have done that story for a number of different years so I always, when I talk to somebody, I always go back to that story but.

And so we're looking at how can we bring that knowledge that we have, as one of my Elders said that, in order for people to understand who we are, where we came from and more about me as being a Mi'kmaq person, you have to share your story. We have to educate them in that, you know, where we, how we live, our way of life. And our way of life, it goes from picking the May flowers to when we celebrate life and when we also celebrate when our, our loved ones pass on.

And so that's what, that's what I do. I'm also the president of the Aboriginal Women's Association of Prince Edward Island and have been for a number of years. And with that we bring awareness. We bring how we can help people live in today's society that, that to be accepted as an Indigenous woman. We do our program where we are project driven and so a lot of our fundings come from the Government and from other organizations and Status of Women.

But we created a number of different gatherings where we talk about our roots, who we are, because I think that's very important, and where we're going. So – and bringing that knowledge. And just recently we created another organization, the Eastern Door Indigenous Women's Organization and that's of all the four Atlantic provinces. All the presidents and Councils come together to create something that we, we don't miss some of the women who are not part of our organizations. They need to have that knowledge too. They need to celebrate life and to be proud of who they are. And that's one thing that my parents

taught me, be proud of who you are. I never knew the word "discrimination".

I was brought up on an Indian day school, we never knew that word, it wasn't talked about. It wasn't until I went to school – we moved and we went to school in a non Aboriginal community, an urban and it was St. Patrick's Day and everybody was talking about who they were, were they Irish, Scottish because that's a lot on PEI. And I'm thinking, who am I? One of my classmates in front, she turned around and said, you're Indian aren't you? And I said, oh my gosh yeah I'm Indian. And I looked at that in a positive because everybody there was proud of who their ancestors were.

I remember thinking how come I didn't, my parents didn't talk about us being, you know, we didn't look at it as, you know. But I look back and I think every day it was a part of our way of life, that's why. It didn't make any difference, it was how we lived from the time we woke till the time we went bed. We always thanked Creator for giving us a new day and we also thanked him for what we have.

So, so that's just a part of my family. I have my, my mom had 14 pregnancies and out of the 14 pregnancies there was 9 that she gave birth to that survived. Two died at young so we had, I had 5 brothers and a sister that were, we were honored to have our parents because we were brought up in a home of security and love. My father made sure of that. He didn't want us to go to residential school and we knew he knew that they were always watching us in our home. So our Mi'kmaq language was, was spoken in our home but as soon as you went out the door you had to speak English and that was to protect at that time, because they were sending children to residential school and both my parents were fortunate enough that they weren't, didn't go.

So we had the opportunity of being raised with lots of love.

CHISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you. Because we're in New Brunswick I'm going to actually ask that we put up the map of First Nations of New Brunswick and start with that. Okay. And so obviously what we're looking at

is a map of New Brunswick, and if it's too small I'm going to pass one here as well so you can see it closer. Actually, sorry, I'm not going to pass you one.

Essentially though, I was going to ask one of the New Brunswickers if they could just contextualize for us, and you're going to see the colour coding there. The yellow is representing the Mi'kmaq and the purple is, I think it says Maliseet on there but it's, we know that that's not necessarily the right word. If you could maybe give us some contextualization of, well this is a map of a province. What was it traditionally?

EXHIBIT NUMBER 2: A folder containing 11 digital images displayed during the Panel testimony

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Wolastoquey, please remember that when Champlain came to explore, I think was the word that they used, and he didn't ask my ancestors what's the name of the beautiful and bountiful river. So he took it upon himself to just start

pointing and naming. We'll call this Louvre St. John. And then when the English started to come to our Territory, because they must have heard praises by the French of how beautiful our Territory was and how bountiful our Territory was, they said we can't call it Louvre St. John the Baptiste because it's too long of a name, let's compromise and say St. John. Again, no asking my ancestors.

So for a long time, until recently, it's still on the map as St. John. And when we were put into communities, all you'll see – actually, there's actually a Wolastoquey community in Quebec, it's called Kakoona. That's where my grandfather comes from. So it always offended me that in present day school systems, our children have to choose to choose speak in Wolastoquey or Maliseet or French. And I'm always saying maybe they don't want to learn English.

Why can't we learn French as well because I have French background and I think I deserve the right to learn both of those languages. So Kakoona is still there and I'm so proud of them. I go there annually and we started

doing ceremonies there too to bring back the part that's missing is the Wolastoquey language. So I started doing signage for them in the language, so there's actually language in that community now.

And, of course, Ugpi'ganjig Madawaska, the traditional Ugpi'ganjig literally means Our Little Falls, and Grand Falls, I think, was considered Ugpi'ganjig and so Madawaska is considered, Madawaska First Nation is considered – and there's a Mad, Madawaska River there and so they wanted to make sure that they were related to river as well. And of course Tobique is, it's Tobique, in our language means the place of the spring fed water but Maliseet Nation at Tobique Mactaquac, see it's not in our language there.

But Mactaquac literally means where the two rivers meet, where the Tobique, which is the spring fed water, and Wolastoquey where they meet. That's where our community lays there and it means, means where the current comes from the – because of the two rivers meeting and that's the community.

Woodstock, beautiful but again, they lost a lot of their Territory, you know, and lost all the medicines and, yeah. So they call themselves – I still wonder if it's Woodstock because of companies, you know, forestry companies and lots of wood there, you know, and stuff I'm not sure.

But Ekwpahak it's really important Kingsclear First Nation. The reason I'm so proud of their traditional name, Pilick, it literally relates, translates to Village. But it was called French Village because when the Acadians were being forced out of the Territory our people in Kingsclear said, you can hide here with us.

And matter of fact we honor, there's a burial site there of Acadian, there's no markers but we know where the site is. I was lucky to work with the Elder there, Elder Charles Solomon, and he told me, he says never forget that the Acadians are buried here as well in Kingsclear. And, of course, Sitansisk, St. Mary's, it's little St. Anne's and it has to do with the gathering place. But it's all of Fredericton. It's not

just where the Indigenous people live and so it, it takes care of all of the – but it means Little St. Anne, which is a reference to St. Anne Beaupre. And, and again, with that history of Catholicism and so Little St. Anne's Point, I think they call it that still in Fredericton but they just have a little park.

And, of course, the next one would be mulatomuwiycik, which means place of the deep waters and right next to Bays Gauge Town – and actually there's, it's not on there, there should be another purple one there in St. John. We called it metoqwiwsit, which means where the sea takes the land and, apparently because it's not recognized by the Government as having enough Indigenous peoples there's no marker there. But we know that it's still our Territory so.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Can I ask you a question? Just, when we're looking at this map, and I apologize, I don't……

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Umm-hmm.

EXHIBIT NUMBER 3: Digital folder containing four maps displayed during the Panel testimony

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: ……have a paper copy, but when we're looking at this map the purple all seem to be to one side, so was this like the traditional Territory?

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Against the, next to the river.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Yes.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Next to the river. And you known what's really interesting, because we have a, we were just saying that yesterday to tourism, about even though we're people of the river there's not too many of us that are on the river anymore. We have more condos, you know, especially in St. John. We just have one little place, we call it the old pow wow ground or the old St. Mary's ground. One little place, you know, that we have brought back and brought ceremony and we started burying placentas there as well. So that's why we're all one

sided, because we're people of the river.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And it's people – and thank you, I see that he just pulled up……

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Umm-hmm, okay.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: ……just the……

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Yeah.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Sorry, it's labeled Maliseet but.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Yeah.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And it's interesting though, cause in contrast when we look at the map these are communities that have been designated by the Government, if I understand.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Yeah.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And when you have the map up together you see all of the yellow are on the coast and all of the Maliseet are on the river.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: And actually that's what Maliseet really means, because if you listen to Mii gam'agan speak or – in our, you know, in our way of speaking, our manner of speaking, so it's not derogatory to call us Maliseet but it's not what our, what we call ourselves.

And so how do we, how do we heal from that when the river's still St. John and how do I tell my grandchildren you're Wolastoquey? What does that mean, you know. I say well the river's first name is Wolastoquey and St. John's the middle name. So that's how we deal with it.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Actually, yeah, Mii gam'agan, can I actually get some of your context on where we see the Mi'kmaq communities closer to the coast.

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: Okay. When – for me I get - what we're seeing here is the, the first violation of our people. You know I – this is not our actual way of looking at ourselves and so when we began to look at, yeah I appreciate the language is, our language and names of

our areas that are being identified, which is really good but when we're talking about (phrase in her language)……

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Right.

MII GAM'AGAN: ……we're talking about our, our Indian land and the people of the dawn, the place of the dawn. So when we're looking at our original way of how we looked at ourselves as a people prior to contact the, the map that everyone is looking at and identifying us and has closed us in, is, I really believe, the first act of a violation against us, primarily against the women. Because when we look at the land, we're looking at our sacred Mother and looking at ourselves as a people. And so the New Brunswick border is, is – it's a colonial border because we're Wabanaki, we're part of the Wabanaki confederacy and that it goes the way we would've looked at is it would go all the way down to south, south – north Carolina, all the way up to part of Labrador, Quebec, as far as, I think – it's just much more broader.

And right now, like the yellow markers, and Imelda talked about the, the, the purple markers which are still Wolastoquey Clans and land areas of homelands that we were caretakers to. So it really matters, like who's saying, telling the story. And the story has to be begun to be told through our eyes and so the voice have disappeared and no longer is being heard. And the stories when we talk about the translation, the language, it's so disconnected to who the language holds.

Like we talk about Mother tongue. Somewhere along the way Mother tongue is no longer used and that we're using language and it's been taken away from, from the women. We are the law makers. We are the life givers and we understand the land to be part of us. And so now we're operating from somebody's perspectives, someone's values, someone's principles and when I see that and then we're expected to explain who we are in the context of colonial lens it's such a violent act.

Like we're still being convinced to, to be, to be thinking in the colonial

setting. Like what we feel and what we think and what we believe and what we value doesn't hold weight. It's, you know, and – so we see – I see that and that's my passion is, like that's my driving force to continually to honor the, the language and to bring the voice of the, of our cultures forward. And they were held by the women.

And right now the women in the Reservations, these are not – when we talk about our homelands versus Territories that we've been – we're trying to accommodate and, and to develop a right relations with the western civilization, the new settlers to settlers. And, and we're working out in to an accommodation but at the expense of us disappearing in this process. And because we look at our homelands as a part of our responsibility and our obligation to those particular areas, caring for the river, you know, and we, we – Maliseet reclaiming that.

Maliseet, as an Elder talked about being on the river, they were taught and guided by the river therefore they spoke, like Maliseet Daweesotaject.

Like they spoke calm and they spoke – like they didn't have to, like they could, they could just gently flow in the current of the river and that's where their language comes from. And so many of us in the ocean front, we get our language there too and so we're really, like we move with the waves depending on, like how – and we welcome the, the wind and the fast, fast movement of the waves because that makes our journey faster to where we need to go historically.

But I just want to say that and so – and bring it back to Hautakenu dilaptamoot mawigi'aghan.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: What about us, how do we see our life?

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: And how do we, what do we think of women that speak our language. When we speak our language we regard women to be the highest source of life. And then so the women teach us, our mother's teach us how to connect to life. And so we need - this is a desperate cry for we need our ways back.

The recipe to warfare has not changed. Any military force that comes into any homeland kills their prey and it hits the heart, and the women are the heart. But the nation, we are, we hold the language and in the language is where we learn how to be who we are, why we are and how, how we are to be. How to live rightfully on our great Mother and with each other. I can't emphasize that enough, how valuable it is, how important really, to all of humanity that we start to begin to honor the female life. The feminine. I thank you and I'm sorry for the reason that we are here, for how we've been losing our women and their lives.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So before you pass the mic can I just ask one question? So you contextualized this is the colonizer's map and you discussed the wabinaki. So your world view wouldn't be in these provincial borders, they would be broader? This – it would include, it would be inclusive of your language families, of your cultural families?

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: Yes. And it's the, it's that imposed border by Canada

and the US that has split my family in half. My, my daughter, my children's father was born on the other side of that border and my grandchildren's father was born on the other side of the border. So they were considered on that side as Native Americans and so now Canada, both my children are, grandchildren actually, are – two of my grandchildren are not recognized as Native people. And my children of my children are not recognized as full native. So that's another act of violation on what Canada has done.

And so what is that doing to us, a very deep level, and that for us, when I hear stories about how Canada – and it's still very much legal in this country, to continually to practice capitol punishment against First Nation women. Because when you bring that statement what I just said in to my, in to our long house what you're, what you're saying and what you're doing for – when we deny a woman and her children through the Indian Act Legislation you are banishing, we are banishing our family members.

When you look at that in our language and in our understanding that – banishment is equivalent to capitol punishment. When you banish our, when you banish a person they cease to exist. And in 1985/86 I stood next to my sister who, at the age of 17, married a non native man and we standed, we stood in front of the Chief and Council, and witnessed by community members in Esgigeoag village and they said that my sister and my aunts ceased to exist. They were not recognized in my community.

And so that is a, that is a very very critical act of violence against us. So that's – when we – so we're talking about people talk about two I see and two world views we have an advantage because we know your, we know the system the Federal Government and the Provincial Government's views but they don't know, you don't know who we are and you don't understand about our way. So that's how, when you look at it on a human level for all of us, what would you, how would you look at it if a father and a mother ceased to recognize their child? That's what you're asking

us to do in these policies that are in place.

And so when you disregard a person, a human being and they cease to exist, that opens the door for the rest of the people to violate those individuals. So we're back to square one where the women and their children are not entitled to the same quality of life, same identity. And they're, that they are susceptible to all the forms of acts that's been enacted on them. And many of our sisters are not sitting here today. It went to that extreme that they were killed, their lives were stolen, taken. Now where are we going? I'm sorry.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: I just wanted to add to that, it's absolutely true because those dots that you see on this Provincial map, they didn't tell the salmon you can't swim past this dot. They didn't tell the four leggeds you can only walk to the end of this dot and so food security has become an issue and a health indeterminate for us

right now. That's the difficulty of seeing a map like this.

My mother stood strong in the State of Maine even though they were – the State of Maine was trying to say you Maliseet belong on the other side, and for a long time, and I have documentation of how they were misabused and mistreated. That's why I still teach in Maine, because it's still my community. My mother was one of the ones that stood against – you know when they were, I think they organized themselves as Aroostik Association of Indians where Pestmiquat is Penobscots, Mi'kmaq and Maliseets were trying to co-ordinate to stand as one, as a confederacy again. But the State did the usual, divide and conquer, they gave Passamaquoddy their first land claim and left the other ones out.

The next ones were Penobscot, the next ones were Mi'kmaq, the last ones were the Maliseets. In the 80s they finally established a "Reservation", they call it. It's actually called the Holton Band of Maliseet Indians on a potato field. But you know what, we, I'm so proud to be a member of there because

we finally have our heritage corn. We have our heritage muskrat root. We have our heritage sweet grass. We are really bringing back that foundation of food security that's going to be protected by us, not by the Government that says, no no we have to buy seeds from this company, we have to buy seeds from that company. So those dots are just dots, but we recognize, as she said, it's our Mother land. No borders. Wela'lin.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So Judy, before I actually – I think this is a good transition and I actually want you to be able to share your views on status too, but I'm going to ask to pull up the PEI map as well. The Prince Edward Island map because we're going to see the dots of – the Mi'kmaq community – well actually it's just one colour here where you can see the four dots.

So can you give me this – before we like go into how the Indian Act or the disenfranchisement of women being removed from community, can you tell me what these are and what's the difference between the dots and the traditional Territory.

DR. JUDY CLARK: First of all I'd like to say since Canada was celebrating 150 years all year last year of the founding of Confederation in Canada, it started off in Charlotte Town when European contact came and they took over. And at that time, 150 years ago, there was no dots on PEI because they didn't include the First Nations or the Mi'kmaq any land. So they made 164 lots but there was no lot or any land set aside for the First Nations.

And so it was through the settlers who had passed on, like in Lennox Island, they – when that went up for sale the Government then decided to put land set aside for the First Nations. So we all lived in Lennox Island First Nation and there was just one Band. Then in 1972 another Band was created with the Epekwitk First Nation which were my parents moved from Lennox Island to Scotchfort in 1968. So – and then from Epekwitk – cause our population is, is less than 1,300 Mi'kmaq people living.

But there's over – and not including the other Nations, we're well over like

2,000 or more. But for the Mi'kmaq they have – we have – my community is made out of three communities and one is Morell and Rocky Point and Scotchfort, and that makes up the Abegweit First Nation. And both First Nations are custom Bands so they created their own membership code and election code in 1987. So that's another story.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So thank you. So again, if we follow from what we heard these people would've been, say, part of the Wabanaki……

DR. JUDY CLARK: Yeah.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: ……and there wouldn't have been the borders we're seeing.

DR. JUDY CLARK: Exactly. We're part of the Territory and we're Abegweit, and our Territory goes into Pictou, Pictou?? Landings. Oh yeah.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So – but it's, it's helpful to contextualize the colonization and the impact it's had, sort of from that, that starting point

and you have also opened about how it impacts particularly women, culture, language but that those are the traditions we need to return to in order to actually move forward in a good way.

DR. JUDY CLARK: Umm-hmm.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So I know we're going to get there but I know, I would like, if you could, to please share a little bit about your story. And I'm actually, at this point, going to provide the Commissioner an article that you and your daughter wrote.

DR. JUDY CLARK: Oh yes.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So maybe you could tell us a little bit about your daughter and this particular article that ended up in a law journal.

DR. JUDY CLARK: In 19 – 2012 I was approached by the University of New Brunswick because I was President of Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI and they asked me if I would – they invited me to write an article, or submit an article first of all, on what

I thought about if the Indian Act was there. And I thought wow. And I have – my story is that, umm, I grew up being Mi'kmaq and then in 1975 I married. I married a non Aboriginal man and I lost my status. And where I was not considered Mi'kmaq or Aboriginal and I remember that feeling. And, and I just couldn't believe it.

My husband at the time, we were, he was in the military so it took me a long time to even answer when he asked me to marry him because I grew up, my dad was the Chief of Lennox Island First Nation. He as the Chief that had to, even his Council, they, when the Federal Government implemented that if you were not registered and if you were married to a non Aboriginal, connection to non Aboriginal you had to leave the community.

So my dad was Chief of Lennox Island in 1951. And so we grew up with the Indian Act pretty much on the kitchen table because how they were influenced by it and what they had to do. Our Band number was Band number 13 because that's when they were given Band numbers out and if you were in the

community you got a Band number where some of the people who were away hunting, fishing or away from their community they were unfortunate enough to be registered. So that was in 1951.

So I grew up knowing that if I married a non Aboriginal man I would lose my status and my intent at the time was no, I'm, I'm strong I'm not going to even think about it. But you know what, in our – love happens and when that, that bow and arrow, I guess it touches your heart and I married for love. And I look at the Indian Act and why I say that is the Indian Act looks and says, okay if you marry for love then you're not – if you marry a non Aboriginal you're not Indian. You're not, you're not status, and that was so important.

And I think a lot of our women today, if they had that connection to their community when they're going through the celebrations of life and the things that are happening – because you celebrate marriage, you celebrate that union of people, you celebrate when children are born, you celebrate when children have a lot of successes, like,

you know, universities and, and a lot of happy things.

But, you also come together as a community when your marriage breaks down or when there's somebody that passes or children that die and you have that connection to go back home. But until 1985 Aboriginal women couldn't come back home. And I remember, I was 20 years, and we moved, I moved with my husband, to British Columbia, the most farthest way you could ever move from a community.

For me, I went from the east coast to the west coast and it was hard, it was really hard because I didn't have my, my family. When I had my two daughters my sister came out to be with me but then she went back home after. And being in a military life I grew that connection of meeting other community members because when – you didn't just lose your status when you got married, you also lost it when you joined the military, when you became successful and a graduate of a, of post secondary studies, when you became a priest or a nun and you could give up your status, as in franchisement.

So, those things happened and that went on until 1985 when Canada, in 1982, looked at changing the Constitution and we were all – the Queen made sure that at that time that in the Constitution, they had to eliminate the discriminatory factors of women losing their status. So under Pierre Elliott Trudeau at the time, they signed that and I was reinstated. I remember that new word was reinstated. And I said, reinstated, I said okay. So I had to apply back to my Band and, and if you lost your – when you got married you, that was the connection I had.

So when I lost my status I automatically, when I was reinstated, it was the, the First Nation that I was, that took me off the Indian Registrar. So I got a new number. So I said, well why can't I have my previous number that I had? And I think it was like, it was, I think it was 65 at the time cause we moved. And they said because your records went into a dead file, Indian Registrar in Ottawa and those records cannot be opened up. I also found out that is where, when our children are adopted,

those records go into that dead file and they can't have access to it. Fortunately in the last few years most of the children who were adopted out can have access.

So, so that's what happened. So then I was given a new Band number and through that, my new Band number now was 161. So my children, I had two daughters, so they were born in the 70s so they were born not Mi'kmaq in the eyes of the Federal Government, so they didn't have a number. And so when – I had to apply for status for them and when I did they received numbers but it was like they were 62 and I was a 61. And I'm thinking, okay now what is a 61?

In the Indian Act under section 61 it says, it defines who an Aboriginal person is and because both my parents were Aboriginal that's the section I fall under. So my daughters, because they had a, they fall under 62 article because one of their parents is non Aboriginal. So when I got my, received my letter from the Federal Government saying that, congratulations and they welcomed me back and they gave me a new number, congratulations you're an

Indian again. And I'm thinking wow, for 10 years, you know, but I said what changed within myself, did my heart change? Did my blood change? No it didn't. So how they could turn that tap on and off was, I still don't understand.

Because even though I was reinstated I was never truly accepted back into the community because I'm a survivor. You survived out there so you don't need us, like you know, and you know more things than we do now so I got that stereotype, you know and, and I found a lot of that was with the administration. Because I would say, hey you know that, that shouldn't be, you know, and I would, I would help my family members to say, you know, different things like this, no you shouldn't be going through that.

But anyway I realized that later you had to, you had to, in order to survive in a community I think you had to live their rules. But like I lived two worlds and still today I live two worlds. I lived the world of my, my, my way of life, because when I returned it was like the spirits were pulling me

back. It's time for you to come home. And for me to get reconnected I, I went to my ceremonies, which I missed immensely and I tried to go – I was in Alberta for, for almost 20 years, I tried to go to ceremony there but it just didn't happen. And when I returned back home my Elder said it was because you're first ceremony had to be in your own district in your own home.

So I did my ceremonies there and I, the connection was so strong that I became, I did my Sundance in Elsipogtog and it was, it was something that – it's indescribable and even when I talk about it people like, you know, will say – I said everybody experiences it differently but that's the strength. And as a Sundance woman it was, we support the warriors and the power of prayer is there. And that's what got me through all those times being away, was that my connection my grandmothers, my ancestors, the women's connection was there.

And that's why I wear a skirt when I do ceremonies, because the connection of my grandmothers is with me and I respect them and they come to me. And

my daughter did a fast and she said, you know mom when you're fasting the fire, the sacred fire is lit and it's lit for four days. And, and my daughter was fasting by herself and you know you had to keep an eye on the, the fire and she said, you know mom when I was fasting she said it was just like somebody touching my hair and waking me up because I had to put another log on the fire. The spirits are so strong there and, and they're with me all the time and I could feel that.

But with her they were with her and she recognized that. I'm very proud of the fact that my daughters are in positions now where they're help the community. They're helping both in the justice area and I'm so proud of them. Even my grandchildren, I have grandchildren now, back in 2010 another Bill came out because in 1985 it didn't go far enough with the women about – it only went to first generation cut off, so it was only my children that got status. But women, strong women thought and they got it so that they revisted the Indian Act and it was they went to another generation. So now my grandchildren are status Indian.

And then now, Bill S3, which is a new Bill which was just passed, are looking at another generation of that to be reinstated or to be able to apply. So the journey of the article that I wrote was about my grandmothers, my mom's journey of when she had me, my journey and my life and what I experienced being away from my community and, and what I had to learn. And then my daughter, she wrote her, her article and when I read it it really broke my heart because she was saying that, you know, she was eight years old when she discovered that she was Innu and she was Mi'kmaq and it made me cry because when she was born I didn't tell her that she was native.

I, because it was better for her, my, my two daughters to go through their lives knowing that, you know, they were Canadians and they never really – we would visit mom and dad in the communities and that but we never looked at saying that you're not Aboriginal or you're Mi'kmaq. And it wasn't until they were eight and 10 that my daughters realized that they were Aboriginal. And you know, that in

itself is sad because it made me look at how colonialism and how the Government told me that I wasn't, I wasn't Mi'kmaq and that I couldn't tell my daughters.

And you know, I remembered the day that I got married, that day before you know, you walk down the aisle. My dad, he sure gave me away because he, before we walked down that aisle, he said Dous are you sure you want this. And I looked at him and I said, yes dad. So we walked down and I knew as soon as I said "I do" that I wasn't going to have my status. And some people said so what difference does it make, it's just a number, but it's also the laws of community.

It is the loss of your family because like Mii gam'agan said, they try to forget that you're there, that you're, you're, you're dead basically because if our marriage broke down I couldn't go back to my community. If my husband died I couldn't go back. I had to be able to survive and you know what, being a strong willed person, that's, that's what I did.

But over time – and so now I go and I advocate for these women. I know exactly what they're saying. I know that they have to survive out there and a lot of our women survive in a lot of different ways and some of them forget that heartache through drugs and alcohol. And that's their way of coping. That's their way of survival. They want to feel good inside when they're hurting and that. I'm very fortunate that I have the support of my husband and my family.

The day that the Government said that I wasn't Aboriginal anymore and my parents knew and my family knew, my in-laws always thought of me as Aboriginal and I wasn't accepted there too. I remember John saying, that's okay you're marrying me you're not marrying, you're not marrying them and it's just the two of us. And we survived and it wasn't until my daughters were born, my oldest daughter was born with a lot of the genes of my husband and she was accepted. And I don't know what they thought, that our children were going be dark, fair, I don't know. But children are children. You love them which ever.

So the article, when I was writing it and then when Cheryl added her portion, she said, mom even if I register Declan, who's my first grandson, she said, so what does he get? He gets an Indian Band number but our First Nation weren't accepted 62s as Band members. And I thought, when you get a Band number it's your registered for life. She said, so what good would it do for him because being a Mi'kmaq, being born and it's part of my, my heritage and my culture, you know, he is Mi'kmaq. He doesn't have to – you don't need the Federal Government to say he's Mi'kmaq when he is, and them to tell you that.

So I said you know what, you make a good point. Because of the fact what the Indian Act did, and still is, there still is, it's still doing this, and I remember talking to my MP when they were voting on changing the discrimination factor of the Indian Act, I said how come the Federal Government voted against it. And she said well we're going to change it, we need more consultation. I said why do you need more consultation, I live it every day. I live the sexism,

discrimination, I live that I am not fully accepted within my own community.

And you know, I look at that and I want to educate our women and our families, be proud of who they are, so I had heart surgery in June and when I went into that heart surgery, when I was just going in I had the most calming relaxing feeling because I knew that my Sun dance brothers and sisters, my family, my community were praying for me. That healing of that and the strong connection that my faith and my, my ancestors were there and you know what, I come back out and I thought, this is my life history. This is my way of life that I'm living right now, who best to challenge it.

Because there has been a lot of other strong women in Canada that have challenged it and I'm also connected to the Native Women's Association of Canada as a Board member and I've been there for like, since 2008. There women are challenging it. And when the Metis got their, their rights, their status and when the *Daniels* decision came out we all looked – and looked at it and I thought how does that affect

me? It affects me as a community person, as an Indigenous person that other recognitions were happening.

So I look at the Indian Act Chiefs, as I said, they get their direction from the Indian Act and why is it that they support that, it's a sex based discrimination. I don't understand that, why? Because all it needs is to have our – and you know what, when I speak and when we do the blanket exercise in our community everybody says how can we help you. I said you know how you can help me, lobby for us. I said advocate for us. I said you know each one of us has a Minister that, that represents us in Ottawa, talk to them to vote for the Indian Act to end the sex based discrimination. Because it has to come from them, because we're here and we're saying we're here today. And I've listened to and I've heard so many stories of being we're under valued, we're not respected, we're uneducated.

You know, hear all this negative about our people because their need to survive on and off Reserve. There is a big difference, a big difference

whether you live on Reserve and off Reserve because there's different supports. There's a different way of life. And, and that's what – that makes a big difference, you know. When I look at my children, my grandchild and my future great grandchildren hoping that, you know, that they will be able to carry on their heritage.

So right now my aunt died in 1968. She was born in 1926, married in 1943, lost her status, died before she was even reinstated to get her status and you know what, she never lived – she lived a life that is sad because when you don't have the qualifications in mainstream to support yourself with a good job you also have that factor of being Indigenous. So there's two barriers that she carried and that's why I encourage and I support the women, no matter what, where they live because just having, you know, a helping hand from somebody. I remember when the truth and reconciliation came out, 94 recommendations.

Do you know the R-CAP, they already did that Inquiry there so I don't know, and maybe this Inquiry is going to make

that difference because it's focused on the violence that happened with our Indigenous women, our sisters. And you know – so I advocate for all the women that were murdered or missing but I also advocate for the survivors. The survivors of violence now that is happening. I also advocate for them because that makes them stronger.

It doesn't, you know, they should not feel sad that they were, it was their fault, as some people would say. It's not their fault. They were there in the wrong place at the wrong time and for some it was tragic but we support them and we get – but we have to bring that knowledge and that's why I say we have to educate the people in saying, you know, that Indian Act, it, it's still law. It is still law and we have to change it and end this sex based discrimination. I don't know how many other ways we could say that.

And this Prime Minister and this, this Federal Government need to, like you know, look at that and that's one way they can change it is to end it and to include women that are born – that were married before 1951. Because that's

the biggest barrier that they have. It only comes into effect between 1951 and 1985 and I never knew why until I looked at my aunt's marriage certificate. I looked and when they, when they enforced the Indian Act was after 1951.

So my aunt – and so when I wrote the journal, we wrote, you write it then you submit it and the University of New Brunswick accepted it. And to that it's been a lot of discussion. So after my surgery, I'll jump back to that, after my surgery we challenged with the Band and said our Band, you have more 62s that are not Band members that are connected, than you do Band members. So you know what, in September 2017 all the 62s were Band members now officially of Abegweit First Nation.

But, there's a but, but it's not taking transfers and I still can't vote for my Chief and Council because I live off Reserve in unseated Territory of Abegweit. That, I still don't understand because we didn't surrender our land. And as, as a status or even as an Innu I still have rights under my

Treaties. And that is my right, but when they're talking, negotiating, I am not part of that because I live off Reserve and they don't think I know but I do. I do know that if there's, if there's things to come forward that is, you know, then I'll be there.

But that is something we have to educate our members, that a lot of the hardships that we are facing is that we are not connected, united as a, as Abegweitawage. Abegweit, all the people in the Abegweit, and I can speak for my Territory, that we have to come together. But as a person that's in this Country of Canada, we have to come together as Canadians, as whether – whatever nationality you are, we have to look at, why is there continuously discriminating against us, you know. So yeah, I'll leave it at that. Yeah.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So I was just, I just asked Judy if we can ask some clarification questions because, because this is public testimony, because you're providing this backdrop a lot of what you talked about, First Nation, registered status, non-status people. They understand this

conversation but a lot of other Canadians and people don't.

So if it's okay, I just want to maybe unpack it little.

DR. JUDY CLARK: Sure.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: But I'm going to start with your article so that anybody who wants to look it up can actually read it, understand your lived experience of this type of discrimination. So the article that I did pass up to you, was exploring inequalities under the Indian Act and it was written by Judy and Cheryl Simon. It's in parts so you get to hear Cheryl's story first, so born an Indian, not an Indian, and Indian again. And then you get to hear Cheryl's perspective too, as a second generation or what the Indian Act has defined the 62.

So at one point you did explain well, the difference between 61 and 62 but the question that I throw out, and any of the panel members can answer this is, you know, cause you all have stood

and talked about how, in your tradition, your inu'wi't'g……

DR. JUDY CLARK: Innu.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Innu and that you are from that space. Like do you become half Indian, like how does this happen, right? And how is it really, like we've heard you talk about how it's impacting women by removing them from communities and putting up barriers. But what we – you know, from your personal experience, can you tell us a little more about – cause I know you did talk about Dillon. So in the article she also talks about her grandson and the ability of whether he should register or not register.

And you said it doesn't matter, he's Mi'kmaq but – and we don't need to know that, but there's implications. What are those implications, specifically for women not by title, not by law, but if you cannot go back into a community, where are the implications for even your grandson or any of the women? Yes please.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Merci beaucoup, and four many of us across Canada and also I would say a big majority of Canadians, maybe don't know what happened to Canadian women who married our brothers and son. There's a big difference there.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Oh, oh yeah.

DR. JUDY CLARK: Oh, that's, that's something too. My brother, who has a son out of wedlock and she, the mother of his child is non Aboriginal, she's non native. But when he was born he didn't know he was native either. Because my brother's name is on the birth certificate, and a lot has to do with the birth certificate.

He grew up in a non Aboriginal life and he text me just even a few months ago and said he applied for Indian status and he received Indian status. For a male, prior to 1985 if a male had a son out of wedlock the son could apply for status and gain status. Would he have had a daughter she couldn't. And for my two daughters now, they are registered but their, like their husbands are not, and my husband didn't

get registration when I married him. But for a male, a male who married a non Aboriginal woman, she gained full status, and, and I said what's wrong with this picture.

And even after 1985 I was reinstated, so they gave me back my status but for the men who married non Aboriginal women, they didn't lose their status, they kept their status. And you know what it's full status. I was born at 61A which gave me full, full status. A non – a married – an Indian man, I'll use the word "Indian", I'm not offended by that term, married a non native woman, she became full status, a 6-1A.

So when I was reinstated the Federal Government said okay, we'll reinstate you but we can't reinstate you as a 61A. You will be now, under 61C and so the "C" indicates that my husband in non native. So my two daughters, they were 6-2s because they're, one of their parentage is a non Aboriginal. But, in 2010 when Bill C3 came into effect both my daughters had children. So my eldest daughter registered my two granddaughters. So they – my granddaughters now are 6-2s. But what

it did to my daughter, it elevated her from a 6-2 to a 6-1-C-1.

And I'm thinking, what? What? I cannot believe this. You know, and so – but – and that's Indian women. But you know what, for the non Aboriginal woman, she still became a 6-1-A and always stayed a 6-1-A and all their children until, like you know, until they married a non Aboriginal. So when you look at the classification, we're classified differently. And you know, that makes a difference and it also makes a difference whether you're on Reserve and off Reserve.

When I, before I was married, when the Indian Act, the law was to voting in your Indian Band election you had to be 21. I was 20 when I got married so I never had that opportunity to vote. When I was reinstated the Band, the Government gave the opportunity to every First Nation to change their membership code and their election code before we got our status back, so then they could make that change. So then if you lived – so they changed it so that if you live off Reserve you, you could be – and that's what a custom

Band is. There's an Indian Act Band where they have elections every two years, a custom Band it's whatever years and our, our Band is every four years.

So live even to bring this forward, you know, I still, I've never voted for my Chief and Council and I'm over, I'm in the, I'm over 60, I'll say that. So I never voted for my Chief and Council all these years.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So, just so it's straight, and thank you for the, the question Commissioner, because I think it narrowed the issue. So it's clear, so other Canadians understand this, prior to actually all Indian status originally was based on the man.

DR. JUDY CLARK: Yes.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So you were an Indian man as defined in the Act, the word "Indian" is a legislative term.

DR. JUDY CLARK: Yeah.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Not using it in a derogatory way, so you've got your

status or your registration based on maleness. Obviously a gendered……

DR. JUDY CLARK: Yes.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And gendered, and, and you had to be male specific. And as the law changed back and forth to recognize or to reduce discrimination, the question I have for you is, does this discrimination still exist? And, and so you're all saying "yes" nodding your heads. And when I say what are the implications, what about the implications that aren't just about benefits, about the dislocation from the community.

You told us when you started that your father was the Chief and you have male family members, so that disenfranchisement, that capitol punishment that pushes you away from the community, what happened over the years with people that lived in community and people that lived off? What's happened with their relationship?

DR. JUDY CLARK: It, it's very stressful. It's very stressed because

right now, even for the changes the Federal Government and our, our own Government said we don't have any money for housing, we don't have any money for extra for those programs and services so we'll accept you back for some but there's no benefits that goes with it.

In reality, all these years my Band knew that I existed but never allocated. But one of the things that we look at, because even with the fishery agreement, the marshal agreement within our own communities that is, that's extra revenue that comes in and extra revenue that comes in from the gas bars or whatever services that they have that is Band owned. But we don't, there's no allocation for money set aside for people who live off Reserve or those benefits.

For some communities, I can only speak about my community because there's, like we get, we do get one thing at Christmas time but for income tax purposes and that, they changed some of those laws too. So you have to be living on Reserve for some and for

housing and that there's a lot of issues with that. And – but then they came up with the matrimonial real property in 2010 to help with the on Reserve family members whether you're male or a female, whether you're status or non status. A family unit, if there's violence in the home that the matrimonial real property could help both, both.

They're looking at – and especially if there's children involved, that the children's caregiver is looked at so maybe some of the children don't have to leave our community, that they can stay in the community and, you know, in their home. And that was another issue that I, I advocate for in the women's, being Aboriginal Women president, is that advocate for the children who are part of the 60s scoop and also who were adopted and are in homes. They loose a lot of their culture so we're looking at cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural competencies because that affect us when you're not even part of a community. Double, I would say, because not only are you there to survive but you're also struggling with who you are.

And there's so much, when you look at the incarceration rate of our people and that and some of them, they can't go back to the community and, like you know, what is there? One of the things we used to be able to, to is hire a lawyer but now we don't. Like, you know, each individual we don't have the money for justice, you know, in some cases.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And if I may, I'm going to ask either Imelda or Mii gam'agan the same question, like, and I'm talking about the relationship now because I know in both your Indigenous cultures a lot has to do with relationship. So we kind of really talked about the difference between the colonizer and the Federal laws but what has this divide, what has this dislocation of Indigenous women even meat within the relationships of community and, you know, identifying some of the struggles that exist?

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Thank you for sharing your story and, and I see it as an education. Your story teaches and I want to thank you for that. Also, I

can't help but be emotional because I was one of those women. I married non Aboriginal man, he was in the navy living in Florida and when I gave birth to my first son my mother sent me a thing from Canada, oh you better register your son because Canada needs to have you register it.

No country is going to tell me my son isn't Indigenous, that was the wrong thing to do. It took me 40 years to finally give him status, and you're right it's not about what you get from it, it's this is what Mii gam'agan's talking about, we as women. The best gift we can give our children is who they are, where they come from and why they're here. There's a purpose for them.

And so just recently that 40 year old, well of course now he's almost 50, he lives in the States and when he said, mom guess what I'm finally going to have a baby. I went to New York, I had to fight the hospital to get my grandson's placenta because in New York State it's like, what do you want it for and I said I'm not leaving until I have my grandson's placenta. It needs

to go back to our Earth Mother not in your garbage bin.

And I had to stay two extra days but I was able to bury my grandson's, my youngest grandson's placenta. But what happens is, you know in the United States there's a person that wants to build a wall to keep the people they don't like, we already have those walls. Our Elder Albert Marshall said it, he said we've been living with those walls between our Nation and their Nation but we have to go through those walls, climb over them and, and, you know, not let them stop us by professing who we are and why we're here.

And so it's difficult, because like she said, I know. I, I – as a language speaker, that the reason the Government gave status to non Indigenous women and sometimes I know of stories where they paid a male Indigenous man to marry them, you don't have to live with me I just want the status, and I'll pay you. And then they divorce, she still gets the status, she brings her non Indigenous boyfriend to live in the community because of her house and

raising non Indigenous children. I mean that's – but they actually get status because she's been gifted by the Government with full status, with no interruption, no stipulations, no, you know, going from, you know 6-1A ever. But we do.

So we'll probably get to the "Z"s as Thomas King would say, you know by the time we're done – so I'm still dealing with it. I have a granddaughter, she's 21, living in the States, hasn't been able to come across Canada because of passport reasons. And, and not having status, there's a whole, a whole lot going on there. I haven't been able to apply for my social security because I wasn't able to prove why am I crossing the States and here. I work in both places but I'm still resisting. I don't want to sign those papers for the Government to tell me I can't cross the border because they're telling me they can.

But, because of that, I haven't been able to collect my, you know, my social security so I have to sign those papers, you know, I guess just to, you know, have that benefit before I retire

so I can having something coming in for all the years I worked on both sides. But I'm still, I'm still upset with putting my name on their document telling me where I belong and where I don't belong. So I'm still that, you know, resisting. So relationships are difficult because when we have our, our gatherings there seems to be a group of non Indigenous women living in the community that are actually against the ceremonies we do and would prefer, you know, that their not needed and so, so we have to struggle.

But I just want that – and like I said, I think those invisible walls are very much present right in our First Nation communities and I, I, and you know – and I know everybody's heard this story when we were growing up, we didn't have to lock our doors, everybody trusted everybody and the whole village raised us. I was one of those lucky ones, that I could go to anybody's home and it was my home too. But because of those non Indigenous values that came in and the Government, you know, giving that status to non Indigenous women, because they would be the ones to speak their language in the home.

So it really replaced our home in a way legislatively, you know. That they – it took our languages away because they were the speakers. We were sent off to places where there was no place for our languages and so that's why we're really coming back to use our language as a foundation to build on it again. And so again, you know, we have to, we have to break those walls down. We do have to go to our leadership and I always get encouraged when there's female leadership thinking. Good, there's a female who's going to change the rules in our community. You know.

And some of them have. Some of them have tried but, but we really need a united front when it comes to establishing our own traditional values, ILVA you know, recognizes us, who we are and, and don't let, don't let us have to fill out forms to prove who we are because it's how we walk, how we talk, how we love, how we procreate. That's what our purpose is and it shouldn't be, you know, limited, more dots added to our existence.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Ah Mii gam'agan, sorry, there's – just to maybe flow from, that, I don't want to interrupt what you may answer on that but you said something about reconciliation the other day and it's really jumped on me in terms of this conversation, like the harm the law has caused, the harms it's causing relations but going back to a part that you started with when you were first telling the Commissioner about, you know, life and language and this weird concept of reconciliation. We often hear about how western society has to reconcile. They have to recognize rights. But you contextualized this pushing out of Indigenous woman as like a death penalty because it severed the community.

And so when we talk things, like reconciliation, which is almost like a very popular word, right, it's a goal everyone has including what we've heard from Governments and other folks. You had said something about reconciliation and I want to ask you, what, how do we reconcile a relationship that may not have existed and can you tell me about the incapable partner?

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: Okay. Well I just, before I get to that question I just want to say that it's, this has been a well orchestrated scenario that was created and intentionally imposed against us. And this is such a violation against our longhouse ways because prior to this imposition we wouldn't have been looking at the "them and us" because our whole philosophy in the longhouse is about building relations, extending families and we're - we never have the opportunity to – and we have a Treaty right, an inherent right in a Treaty to be able to implement and practice our ways. So, we've never even had that opportunity.

So therefore, you haven't been in our long houses to understand who we are as a people. We keep trying to define and explain and build a relationship that's almost impossible when, when you can't – when it's – when you're incapable of understanding that, because you haven't lived in our long house to, to know that. And that we're operating from, from a hierarchal imperialistic model where we perpetuate that they're not them and us. And so our – the victims

that we're all co-creating are our children on all sides and our young people are suffering from what we've co-created.

You know I, I say "co-created" because partially we've kind of come into half to accommodate, I can't say accommodate but now we're accommodating because we remember, because we haven't really recovered from the wound of our relationship that it's your way or no way and we've experienced a no way. Therefore, you don't see our long houses and us as signatories to the Treaties. It's like a modern day marriage where the women in your society still have no equality. So you've brought us into that reality and now we are trying to recover from that, but we know better because we have a system and a remembering of who we are, and it's in our language.

So just, there's just so much hard history that we have had and they're – and to the point where you've even turned our language against us. Our language from the 400 year of colonial experience have become discriminatory, sexist and very oppressive. All of our

sacred words have been turned into evil, you know, from the, from the, from the Christian/Catholic dominance on our homelands where, where kiskum has become a male God. Where now, we understand kiskum is our great Mother. The heart, she is the heart and the bearer of fertility the eggs. Me junct, me junct, nijin junct, nijin jinct, these are all our, the eggs where we all come from.

And so kiskum is not bad. So every civilization has a creation story and ours has been severely altered to accommodate patriarchal systems. But we had a woman, a woman was center in our way of honoring. This is where we were able to honor and, women. Respect women to the greatest height because we understood them to be Creators. Ankeech, my mother. "Nucihtahsit" means my Creator. "Nooch" means the supporter. Mejahabonwit, the helper to my Creator. So the language is so important.

For my – so when we talk about – and I was sharing this with Christa last night and Judy, how can we begin to even talk about reconciliation, we have

no reference. Since the arrival of the Europeans, we've not experienced that so where, where, where do we even begin? What is that? We don't have a reference of a good relations. We can share with you. You haven't even heard our voices. And then further to that you attacked the heart of our Nations. Our mothers, our grandmothers, our ancestral – the women of our ancestors were just, were severed from our community.

This is not like a commodity that the Europeans have brought, we commodisized everything from food to, to tobacco, our sacredness of our tobacco. Water. So how do we begin to look at even reconciling our relationship to life? What are we teaching? What kind of pathways are we making for our children? How could we be the, the, the people of our ancestors and who taught our ancestors? It was the relations. So when we talk about, you know, who our Clans are, we name our children from my story.

I knew, I witnessed my aunts, my three aunts didn't marry but they had partners who were French, French

Acadian men and I had two other aunts who married, legally, to Englishmen. And the two aunts who married the Englishmen lost their connection to my community, and partly to the, to, to my family. My sister's, they're all sisters. They all remain close ties but the men in the family were trying to convince us, my uncles were convincing us that my aunt Gloria and Martina were not native and that our cousins were not native. So – and that, that we need to, we need to listen to the law and so that's my experience.

And so we – so I, for myself, I married – and when we say non native we need to be really specific because back then it's like just maybe French and English. Non native are also could be referring to Asians and black and the Arabs. And I have to say that they're much more closer to familiarness as far as our culture goes. They're people of culture. And – but I married, in our own custom, in our own customary ways, a native American from Miswapanague and so because he's not registered status or registered Indian in the Canadian

law he would be considered as non Native.

And my daughter, my eldest daughter married a Pueblo and because he's not registered in the Canadian law as a native then her children would be looked at as non native. So to this day I lived in the long house, I married according to our own traditions, I named my children in a customary way. I gave birth to my children in a customary way, and so – and named them. To this day my marriage is not recognized in the Canada and in the US and for 10 years my daughter was, my eldest daughter, I named her Naginiskuin, only one name and the system refused to acknowledge that. And so she was not registered for 10 years and so she was denied of every, what everyone is entitled to. Health services and a right to education. Simple stuff that we all take for granted, that she was denied of.

And unless she took on an English surname or at least give her two names. So I named all children according to our traditions, I gave them only one

name and in our, in my language. In our language. And we had that difficulty and it took us 10 years – and it wasn't so much that we were looking for recognition from the oppressor, but where would we go? In the Treaty, you know, our inherent right, we don't have our own registry where we can go register our own children. We don't have our health care systems that, where we can, we don't have to worry about being denied. We don't have our own educational institutions where we could teach our children the language and our, our own history and learn, learn their identity.

This is not about – it, it is about equality of life but more importantly it's about us being able to teach our children their identity. Our identity. We cannot take that – why – if, if we were to express ourselves in one language it's, it would be okay if it was in French or English but if it was mandatory that everyone had to speak Innu, the language of the people here we would, we would hear – so anyway, I could go on but I just want to say that we need to give, now as we move

forward, we need to have a model. Should we ever come to this crossroads again, should our children, all our children, all our future generations come to these crossroads again, if we can commit to each other and if you can begin to understand and get your, your countries or your Federal Government to start honoring its laws and understand and recognize our, the Treaty relations and the obligations then we can start to, we can thrive as people.

We can establish our own systems and then in the future, when we come to this place again where we've gone off astray, we would have, we will be able to say let's reconcile because we, we build, we have a reference. But other than that we haven't experienced that good relations yes.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you. And actually this is probably a good point to pause the panel. I know we went over but we started 45 minutes late too so I appreciate everyone's patience to have lunch. The panel will be reconvening. We haven't had a chance yet but we do want to turn to a couple of issues of traditional knowledge and

some of the particular teachings in this area. And, as well, contextualize the connections that these strong women have to missing and murdered Indigenous women, including their personal connections.

So I would ask that we now adjourn and we reconvene at 1:00 p.m.. So the Panel will reconvene at 1:00 p.m. and there is lunch available just outside of the room.

R E C E S S

U P O N R E S U M I N G:

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good afternoon Commissioner Audette, I would like to start with Part II of the Panel that we were with this morning and when we left off we had heard the lived experience of our wonderful participants, how it relates to Indian Act, status, being relocated from community. But where it started was talking about the importance of language and tradition and understanding Indigenous laws as part of being able to teach girls and families and men and generations about good ways of living.

And so this was a point that we'd like to start at when we recommence and there is pictographs, and I'm going to actually ask Judy just to contextualize the pictographs for us and what the first pictograph is. And then I'm actually going to ask the others to, to see what they say too.

EXHIBIT NUMBER 4: A digital folder containing two pictographs displayed during the Panel testimony

DR. JUDY CLARK: Thank you. This pictograph is a woman's bonnet and our ancestors left a lot of teachings behind for us. And I remember talking with Parks Canada and the settlers one day and they said, well you know they don't have, we didn't have Mi'kmaq people, we didn't have anything documented. There was nothing in the books or in the libraries. I said, well we even have better. I said our ancestors, at the time, they didn't have paper or books and they didn't know, we didn't know that's what the qualifications were.

I said what they did, they put it in the stones and in the carvings and in Mi'kmaqee we have a lot of pictographs that tell the story of our ancestors. This one here is, is of a Mi'kmaq, a Mi'kmaq cap, woman's cap and it tells the story, and there's one right here on the floor in front that we used to wear. And also this one is of a man and a woman. And, and these are just two, these ones were carved by a Todd Labrador from Kouchibouguac from Nova Scotia. But they are - sure. They are just a portion of what our ancestors left behind. They left the teachings behind for us and so that we could continue on with these teachings to our children and our childrens' children and for everyone to know. And Parks Canada has preserved these because you could go to Kouchibouguac, they're in the stones there but they preserved them and so they had copies of them and within our teachings in, in our communities there's a lot. I mean they even had some that looks like you could see the ships, the tall ships coming in. So they recorded, that's how they recorded it.

And so a lot of our artifacts are being bound and being exposed in our Prince Edward Island on a little island called Hog Island. There was a lot of - I went to dig, the archeologist and as we approached the island I said why are we picking this spot, this particular spot. And you could see the shell mittens exposed because the shoreline is being, through climate change and high water and washing away, I mean PEI, we lose a lot of our, our shoreline every year. And – but he said this is where your ancestors once had camp and inside we, we, we dug an area and the artifacts and the, and the things that were exposed were incredible.

And then Parks Canada took it and they carbon dated so we know exactly over 10,000 years ago, that this spot – and so that is incredible because when I can go back now and say, you know, our ancestors, they were thinking and protecting our culture and our history, our knowledge through the, and through the Treaties. But they protected them for generations and generations until eternity. They're there.

So that's what we now can go and we could share this and say, yes, this is our history. This is what we, you know, our findings are and, like the, the Mi'kmaq star, like you know, and how the grand council – there's so much out there, so it's, I'm so excited every time we find an artifact. But right now a lot of it's being discovered because the shoreline is being washing away. But it's a time for us now, I guess, to look at our history, record it and say yes, and how we existed, you know, it's amazing. I'm just so excited for that.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Absolutely. Just recently in, in our Territory near Oromocto, a few years ago, because the water was receding, a stone exposed itself on private property. And so, of course the owner said, oh my goodness this looks like there's some carving on it. So they did some research and it was a stone that was actually documented in the 1800s by the map maker, Gunagan and, and so anyways, I, I said we have to do a ceremony.

And like Judy said, it's when they show themselves again, it's time, it's a

message from our ancestors saying you're ready. We left this for you now is the time, tell the story. And so I, when I went there it was in April it was supposed to be cold. After I walked around seven times to honor the seven generations before me, I lit my medicine and I sang a song and I was so emotional because I was so grateful for those teachings. And I actually published a book called Stone Medicine People, and that's what I call them. I call them Stone Medicine People because they're the medicine we need.

And so they're not just stones or pictographs it's more than that, they're, they're medicine people. And so they're our ancestors that have, that were turned into stone to stay there in order for the future generations to keep growing the lessons, that's why they're showing themselves now. So after I did my song I, I touched and it was as if there was an oven beneath it or it was in a sweat lodge that had just the embers in it. It was so beautifully warm and anyways, I actually have it on my iphone and I'm going to have to do like what you did, but, but, but that's why we do that.

And it's – and your right, that was our writing system.

Our wampums are our writing system. We didn't have an alphabet in that, in their way but we were clever enough to write in stone and Moses gets the credit, but, but we were already doing it.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And, and while I have you too, I think it's fair to say that one of the part of the conversation that never happens when we talk about, you know, the spirits in stone or the ancestors in stone, or any type of wampum or writing I guess, the majority of new comers also were not literate. There might have been writing but the majority of populations actually themselves did not write or use paper either.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: That's right, and I think cultural literacy is always omitted from what literacy really means. It's not reading the words, it's, it's living the language that you're brought up in. That, that maternal language.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I think the Commissioner just said we could do the hash tag there.

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: So I was just going to say that, about the, if we're talking about language or culture, the language, I think, is another key, key area that we really need to refocus on. And when we're talking about capturing, capturing the authenticity of Indigenous world view, I think that a real key area too, to relook at - and we've heard it so much from, from the patriarchal and from the male perspective of it. But it's important to now widen that understanding of the language from a woman's perspective because it was, the language was taught by our ancestral grandmothers and so what were they thinking, how were they perceiving the world and what was their thoughts. This is where the language comes from so I think that's another key area to, to look at.

And when we're talking about repairing the relations and healing the, the women in our communities it's in the language. We need to start bringing the language and, and reintroducing

that to our daughters and to the women in our community because we – like, like any woman in the patriarchal system, we have to become the best men to be able to succeed. And so, therefor, putting our own nature and our own wisdom aside to accommodate capitalism and to, to survive or be successful in a capitalistic world. And I think that's – we're creating something that is, we all know now and I don't think no one can deny it, except the corporate leaders, that they're still in denial about how we're destroying ourselves and how capitalism is destroying humanity and all life.

I, I, I forget now what the question was, Christa.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: That's okay, no actually that's very helpful. One of the things is one of the Stone Medicine people, showed a cap and Judy referred to the cap that's here on the blanket, and you don't necessarily, I'm not asking you to detail……

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: Yeah, yes.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: ……what the ceremony or the specific significance, cause we know talking about our same ways and culture could take all day. But also, Imelda had talked earlier about the puberty ceremonies and the importance of certain things for women.

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: Umm-hmm.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So I'm wondering if you can contextualize, so this is something that was, in time……

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: Yes.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: ……that shows something that's still in use, and I think that goes a long way also to explain, like our cultures, our ceremonies, our laws didn't die. We still have them in practice.

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: Yes.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So can you just tell us a little bit about the cap?

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: And that's, thank you, because I was going – the cap, but I'm not that knowledgeable about - I

think that's probably because where my name comes from, and my name is Mii gam'agan and it's more like the ancient sun. So I'm more driven to – there's like a whole timeline in our culture is not, has never been stagnant. We've, we've been, we've evolved and we've adapted and it's a live in culture. And so I'm more driven to something pre-contact because it's, it's the – because I think that's where the Court systems continually bring us to that point where we need to prove to the system that our way was valid and that we were organized and we were civilized and we had a structure.

And so - because they deny us of that right to evolve, that right to be able to, to, to grow just like every other nation, every other civilization. And so – but for, for many of us the language is the key because when we look at the language right now we're being told that the bloodline went through the men but no word in Mi'kmaq that would tell us. We only have a word for, in our language to, to support that the bloodline went through the women.

And so – and that's a whole, there's a whole very wondrous information that will empower women and, and help our communities. Because we all know that when, when a mother, when a grandmother, when an auntie, when a sister is in, in a healthy and a secure setting and that she is not stressful and not in crisis, we can see immediately the influence and the shift of the children in the house. And the whole household shifts. So when she is feeling worthy and that worthiness can only come from if you have a secure solid cultural foundation and our identity, a positive identity about ourselves, then we have a sense of self, a sense of pride.

So coming back – and this is how our people – like because we didn't have beads, you know, this is a trade product. But the beauty, everything that our ancestors took, turned it into such beauty, such art, and used every tool that they ever had access to, to write, to tell us stories, to record history. So from carvings to paint on the rocks, to tools of beadwork, you know, and the way we dressed, all that

was all of stories about our identity, our history and who we are as a people.

So – and, and I just want to say that the word for how we – the evidence in our language that women, the bloodline went through the women was only the women can say ningun, my child. Only the grandmother can say nujij in my language and so this means my child or my grandchildren. But the men cannot ever use that word. They cannot say ningun or nijij. And so we, we asked my grandmother, because it was my grandmother that corrected the way we were speaking, one afternoon my brother and I was visiting and boasting about our children to her and my brother said da'hiny ningun, you know my children did this.

And so after we finished talking my grandmother, every so gently, you know, said to us that, said to my brother, son, grandson you cannot use that word. (Speaks in her language), and then I went to his aid and I said, dalgeze (sp) why not. And then she said, because he doesn't have, he doesn't carry eggs. He's not, he doesn't have an egg to be able to create a child.

And so, so my brother said, well what can I use to identify my children, they're my children, you know, you know. And then my grandmother said, you can say Nte'pitem Unjun, my wife's children. Because the men cannot – and it's never been in that way, that's what she was saying and historically she said one time, what stories that she used to hear, women would have maybe the very most was four children because women, there was a time when women owned their bodies. But after Christianity or after the colonization women did not own their bodies and they had no right to, to say no therefore many of us come from 13 to 15 to 17 children and that was such an imbalance in the, a hardness of, on a human body. On our mothers and our grandmothers.

And it's this kind of thinking that's still happening. You know we're expecting our Mother Earth to give and give and, you know, and that's not, it's not possible so.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Imelda did you want to touch on, maybe just help us

understand a little bit about the puberty ceremonies and rituals.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Well actually I was just was looking at this pictograph and especially the one with the male and a female, and you'll notice that there's, there's a plant that's standing as well and for me, the first thing that comes to mind is the standing ones. That's what we, that's another word we use for trees in our language. It's – we don't call them elikpeksit cause it's just a general trees. We actually honor them by calling them sakolikapuwicik, the ones who stand the strongest and our teachers among us.

And so they teach us how to stay rooted to who we are and so for myself I have a personal symbol that I try to walk the, the Treaty, the Treaty promise that my ancestors were hoping for and it was as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow. In our Territories, as long as the sun and the moon endures and the sun and the moon also, you know, it's grandmother grandfather. And so when I, I actually do traditional wedding ceremonies now

because I try to get the couple to get away from the English thinking of husband and wife because they're actually Scandinavian words where husband actually means housebound from now on.

It comes – I'm a linguist by trade that's why I was really curious about how English words come from. And wife is the one, it's supposed to mean the one that's always with you, you know. And that's what husband and wife mean. But, in our language nisuwihticik, two as one. That you're going to walk together. So you see in that pictograph they're walking in the same direction, their feet are in the same direction, they're rooted to the tree, you know. So it really has that essence of two walking as one and no – that's why we don't have a gender, you know, acknowledgement in our languages, because we don't have he and she in our, in our, you know, words.

And the difference between English and my language when I was doing my studies and comparing the two, as Mii gam'agan has always said, is how patriarchal it is because you take the word "human",

the word man is very prominent, three letters to two. The word woman, you know, M-A-N, three letters to two for the "wo", you know. And, and, you know, and it's very significant because in our language it's not like that. We don't, we don't need the man's word to make ourselves as women, you know, the one who walks upon the earth, and Agdid (sp) is the one who gives birth, you know, and stuff. The one who sits to give birth. And so it's so sacred.

So it's not gender specific and when they're - there's equality in that and that's what's missing, is that idea of equality that we don't have, you know, I forget the English word where the men were overpowering the women and stuff. And I think that's, and that's what this is. So when we do puberty, it's to get that young woman ready, not to be ashamed of her moon time, and that's when women would actually take the time to teach her how to earn her shawl, how to earn peaked hat. Because the peaked hat is the one that learns how to think beyond the physical. It's the spiritual.

And so when you're in a group and you see the peaked hats, those are the ones you go to for wisdom, for advice. And so Catholicism has adopted that by making, you know, their churches steeples, shaped like our hats. You know. And so, so I think they really got the idea from us because that way you can see those steeples from far away. Well we also recognize our hats when they're above the crowd and those are the ones we go to. And so we teach our young women how to honor their, you know, that special time. And that's when, you know, we were told that they had to learn how to be generous. So that's why there's a Strawberry ceremony, that's why they pick the berries but not eat them but learn how to make the jams, the medicines etcetera, and learn how to take it to an Elder and say, I made my first strawberry shortcake or my first pie or my first jelly, here.

And the complimenting a girl gets because she's not allowed to taste it, is the Elder saying, it needs a little bit more sugar but the next time you made me, you know. So it encourages her, that don't give up, it may not be

the best recipe yet but. So it starts teaching her responsibility, how to be, how to be community minded and not be selfish. And it's very important because we have a generation of young girls who don't want nothing to do with anybody, you know. And unfortunately, society has told them, here's your room, here's room where we were brought up in that long house style where we shared space and so we respected each others' space.

Now it's like you're not allowed in my room, you know, you have your own tv in your room, you have this, so there's a whole lot of isolation that we're doing in our families and so it's hard for us to have something together now. Because society has taught them you deserve, you know, your own space. So when they started to break up our, our, our bigger families by making sure, like when housing came into our community. I was brought up with my grandmother, or my grandparents, her brothers and sisters, three of them and also my, all my, all her 12 children, aunts and uncles that I didn't consider them aunts and uncles. We were brought up in the same home.

When housing came then they isolated what they call core families. So mother, father and their children lived in one, aunts and uncles had to move to – so they started to break up that, that idea of sharing, living with each other and respecting each others' space whereas today, we don't like getting close to each other because space has been, you know, abused. You know, and told that it's private space as opposed to shared space and, and that matters in society.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you. So, I mean, I think the Commissioner would agree with me, we could keep talking all day and learn and enjoy learning more but I know one of the really important things that this panel wanted to do too, was not just talk about the tradition, not just talk about the need to return to it but, specifically as it relates to missing and murdered Indigenous women and their own personal connections. And so, at this point, what I would like to do is I'm going to ask Judy to start to share her story and connection in relation to what her

families' experience and, as usual, it's at your comfort level.

You don't have to share every detail. Share with us what you're comfortable sharing with us in relation to your mother and niece and, and how it's impacted you.

DR. JUDY CLARK: Okay. It's very sensitive, I think, because we have a survivor so – and, and I'm going to be respectful for that. But I want to share that tragedy hit our community and our home. And I think what I'll, I'll start with is even my aunt because at the time she was homeless and she lived off the community. She lived in urban, my mom lived out in, on the, in the community and it's just like one day she just had this feeling, something's happened.

And like I said before, we have a strong connection to our, our spirit and we have what we call four runners that tell us that someone's in trouble or something in going to happen. And this is what happened when my aunt went missing and my mother had those feelings. And she went missing and she

was missing for two and a half months. And at that time the Indian agent was the only one that had the telephone. So mom would send one of my sister-in-laws up and phone but there was no, there was no, no word and her friends in the community and in the urban setting missed her. Like she said they were missing her, that she at present wasn't there. But two and half months later we moved from our community on Lennox Island to Scotchfort and – that was on a Monday, by Friday she was found and discovered. Her body was washed up on the shore.

And so her body was decomposed but she had enough items on her that they could do the identification. So mom was, was correct in her intuition, I guess some would say but now mom had peace, you know, she was found on Friday and my aunt was buried on Saturday. I checked the archives, you know, and they found, the body was found and they said what First Nation she was from but that's it. And later on my mom lived with that, at least we could have closure cause her body was buried. But she always wondered why, what happened

because we never knew why she was where she was that time of year.

And then tragedy struck my mom in the middle of the night and, and my niece. But you know through survival and perseverance they were able to get help. And they were able to get to the hospital in time and everything happened for a reason when we look that they survived. There's a whole lot that goes with that and because I'm going to respect my family's wishes in some the, the of details, but one of the things I would want, I want to share is that there was another woman involved that did the, the assault.

And we look at it that in our culture and our society three people were, I would say that they had a lot of – I can't even think of the word I'm looking for. Society let them down, I guess. Especially the one, the perpetrator because things were ignored in, in a way of life that this was a young woman - that things were over looked and no, no follow ups were done through the services of communities that were, would otherwise be right on

top of them. And no help for her was given.

And when I look at, it's very traumatic. When I look at when they were both taken to hospital, their lives – mom was - I think the mental health issues on this were number one, but also their health issues. There was no cultural awareness or sensitivity or even look at the competency of the non Aboriginal people that were involved. It's pretty hard for me to even not share the details, it's very traumatic. And – but we do have survivors and mom was a survivor and my niece was a survivor and the young girl was a survivor.

But the biggest thing is, where are they now? What happens after? Where do they get the help that they need and be heard from? One of the, the moms said that when people are incarcerated what information when they're released. Where is the follow up care that goes with that after and what happens? Like we're here today and we have supports, but what about when they're released from institution, where are the supports there and how do we help our

community members get re-established, or do we, I guess the biggest question is.

So – because they can offend again. And I think now we're hearing the mental health more frequently in our communities. Before, especially in the Aboriginal community, you never heard that word. Like you know, they used other derogatory words of when you were, had mental issues. But when we look at the medicine wheel, you know, it's mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and, and we could be hurt in any of those forms. And I think that's something again, that we have to look at. Where our women are, where our families are because basically that's, that's why we're hurting and we're off balance.

So once we have the – we're emotionally stressed in one area, you've got to balance that off and I think we need to have more support. For me, in our community, the Province did release some funds for support for on Reserve. But we have to understand that a lot of our community members, women and children, they leave the community to

get help. Once they get off the Reserve, where is the help, right? Because the line ups and, and the, I guess for these helps are not always there. So we need to have a non-political place where you feel safe, that we can go and what we do with that. Anyway, I thank you. I don't know if anybody understood what I was trying to say but it's……

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Okay. So I understand that you don't want to get into the details but what I would like to provide the Commissioner is a judgement of the decision so that, just so it's clear too for people. We don't get into details, but we do know that there was an assault. We do know that there was a break and enter and you have explained that your mother, your niece and a young woman, who obviously was under resource also, had an issue.

So I will be providing to you, Commissioner Audette, a decision of the Court in PEI where the accused was charged with attempted murder contrary to Section 239 of the Criminal Code, and two counts of break and enter, contrary to Section 348 of the Criminal

Code. It was found, and the decision was that the individual was found guilty of the first charge, attempted murder, but the other two charges were withdrawn. And that the events occurred May 3rd, 1994. Sorry, Tuesday, August 3rd, 1993.

I am going to submit this and actually ask that, that the name of the – so the, the niece was a child so we're going to submit it as part for the Commissioners to consider and look at but we're going to ask that the name of the young person be redacted from this judgement for our purposes. So.

NOTE: An application is made to redact the name of the young person involved.

NOTE: The Order is made.

EXHIBIT NUMBER 1: Sentencing trascript in the matter of HMTQ against Mary Agnes Olive Labobe, GSC-13152, May 16, 1994, Supreme Court of PEI

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you so much for sharing. I know it's not easy to share details and I think it takes a

lot of sensitivity to recognize although your family was hurt, there was someone else hurting. So I appreciate your sharing that story. And if there's nothing else you want to add on that, I was going to actually check if Mii gam'agan could actually share her connection and a story, her story of her, her one good friend.

ELDER MII GAM'AGAN: Yes, I think that just a quick reflection of most communities, at that time I know Donna Joe from my community, many of us at that age were not, were fluent in our language and that we didn't speak English too well. And so if there was an opportunity to leave our community or to go and experience a city or have plans to leave the community Fredericton was the place to go for us. And, and – only because that we had maybe community members, friends that was there and I was already travelling back and forth to Fredericton because I had a good friend who was living there.

And, and just like most, most of us back in the 80s when we had places that we knew who lived where and we, we don't even call, we just go and arrive

at their home and stay over at their place. And so that, that way of being was still very much the same as being at home. When we move out of the community for a short bit our house's doors remain open for family. And so our good friend, Barb Martin, who's also from Burnt Church, was living in Fredericton at the time and that was my go to place.

And I found out that Donna, who is also from my community, found her way over at her house and she was – my main connection with the family was that they were from my, they were from my community and the, the father, Donna's father married, met a woman and married in Elsipogtog and they lived there early part of their life and then when they returned back to Burnt Church Donna and her siblings were, they were teenagers. And so it was exciting to see a new family return, and the way it was in our communities, new, new family come in everybody's got to go and – it was very communal. I feel that, you know, and curiosity and so those values were still very strong when we were young.

I'm not – if, if what I - life in the community is hard and I know that Donna moved to Fredericton and she petit, very wonderful sense of humour and excited about the city. She was, I noticed that she was a little bit more excited than I was. I wasn't - my first experience in the city was not as pleasant. I was, I couldn't get used to the noise and the energy was just too much. I had triggered anxieties from me when I was.

But she was bubbly and she was ready to move on and she had plans and she talked about going to Ontario or moving. And her - I was admired, I admired her sense of confident and her - because she was so fluent. Of course most of the people in Elsipogtog were pretty fluent at that time and it was easy to engage with her. And I didn't know her as closely as some of the, our mutual friend, Barb, knew her very well. And so that summer went by and I contacted Barb and I, I was visiting and I asked her, have you seen Donna, is she still around. Barb, we never noticed, she just didn't visit or we didn't see her and then people asked

around and no one heard of her. And that was it.

You know I – in looking back I've seen all these pictures, art pictures, you know, where they draw a missing person but they don't have the actual, they don't know who the person is and you see all these at all these stores. And, and – but I knew, like it was a native woman and I just, the art, the art work wasn't that good so it just didn't, I couldn't - I didn't know it was her. You know I seen those pictures all over the city but I just didn't know it was her.

And that in itself, I can't imagine her family and her, her, her son, you know, what they had to endure and, and it's, it's, it impacts everyone. You know when we even hear stories, sisters that we haven't met but when we hear stories of other lives, we're so intrinsically connected and that we're, we have such a common history, that we have such a deep loyalty to each other. And I suspect it's the same way as the holocaust survivors, the residential school survivors and the Indigenous sisterhood. When something happens to

one we all feel that. We're just as deeply connected to each other.

So I thought about Donna that time when I was looking at her pictures and going to the public places. And second guessing, like I feel like, you know, I should have known it was her. How could I not feel it wasn't her, much like the same way how I lost my aunt, Marjorie. People in my community feel that it was, it wasn't accidental but no one talks about it any further. It was in November, I was coming back from town and I seen snow track car tires in the recently snow fallen. And there was, there was no tracks only one set of tires going into the wharf next to our community.

And I noticed there was, there was only, there was no tire tracks coming back. And I looked, I could see the, the wharf so clear but there was no car. I couldn't see no car. And I said, look there's a set of tire tracks going towards the wharf and I don't see a car there. And we kept going and that plagued my mind for a long time and, and before I knew it my Aunt Marjorie was missing. And nobody knew

where she was. They said that she just left her house, she didn't even take her wallet or anything that – and it was winter. No jacket and she left.

And her and my cousin went down, I guess they went over that wharf and we didn't find them until April. So there's a deep question about that so. That's why I thought, you know, those are the kind of things that when we reflect back about what, what happens in our own life and, and the amount of accidental highway hits in my community. We've been asking to change the speed limit of the highway going through my community and, you know, we wonder, like are those truly accidental hit and runs or what. Because they're all being labeled as accidental. You know, and we've lost four people on our highway and, and people saying that, I didn't see them, you know.

And just, those are all some of the – those are all now some questions that we keep reflecting back. Thank you.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Imelda.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: I – yeah. I think I just wanted to, just talk about how difficult it is to see abuse against women and then when it comes time for supposed justice it goes to the Courts but we have lawyers that will defend the abuser over the women. I've seen this more than once and I keep questioning why do we not have the same support, and it's only because, well she's a drinker. She's a partier. She does drugs. But not – no – none of that attention is ever given to the abuser. And, and that's unfair.

And it's our women, you know I look at that peaked hat and they all deserved that peaked hat. Thank you.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Actually, one of the things also, you know connections is not just to, I think many Indigenous women can tie either experience of survivorship or one of their loved ones or that Indigenous sisterhood to other Indigenous women. And – but another connection to missing and murdered Indigenous women that I know is important to all of you is the advocacy and helping women reclaim and find

voice. And also, ways to commemorate, memorialize and to honor tradition.

So I think it would maybe be really nice if you could share with us, and I know when you did the opening this morning you spoke for just a couple of minutes on the red shawl project. But if you could share some more about that and why it's important to do and why it's one of these things that will help community sort of re-center re-ground in a good way.

ELDER IMELDA PERLEY: Thank you Christa, for giving me that opportunity. I do puberty ceremonies, as I said but initially I didn't start with young girls, I started with grandmothers because I was a grandmother myself, before I had my puberty ceremony. And I'll never forget the fasting, you know it was a weekend, we fasted for one day and then you earned this amazing shawl to, to teach you how to be a, a brave woman. And I thought, oh my goodness, our young girls need this.

But when I came back from my ceremony I went right to my mom, and I said mom,

you had such a hard life being, you know, in day school. My mom was more dark complected than I, than I was and she didn't finish school, not because she didn't want it's because the nuns didn't like her colour. And when she would come to school they would take her to the bathroom and rub her face till it actually left pock marks because they wanted to make her lighter. So I went to her and I wanted to thank her for everything she went through, that she was still willing to have children.

So I started doing those puberty – I still do them and I was gift, gifted to me by me Elder Gwen Bear, the late Gwen Bear, who started these ceremonies. But seeing these young girls, you know I just got to remember this one young girl, her father told her, you'll never make it fasting are you kidding, you still sleep in our bedroom on the floor, you know. I know you're 14 I know you just started your moon time but you'll never last, you'll be calling me tonight to come get you from the woods.

So her and her mother both fasted and I told them both when they came, I said I can't put you together because you both have to have your solitude. So one, the mom went up to the north and the young girl stayed close to me by the sacred fire. And she come out and she goes, is it okay if I draw. I said absolutely because if that's the way for you to envision while you're fasting that's a good thing. So one of the things that happened while she was fasting was the confidence that she grew just in the two day ceremony. But that night when I was offering my tobacco to gift her with a spirit name the nex…..

But all of a sudden when I'm offering my tobacco going, (Indigenous phrase), you know, offering my tobacco for the name she's going to carry, I heard this owl. And I said (Indigenous phrase), so I'm acknowledging the owl and, you know, so I'm doing two things at the same time. But that owl was so insistent that I had to turn around. Oh my goodness, right above her, right above her lodge. Okay, you want me to name her after you.

So I called her wapi tihtokol sqehs, you know, White Owl Young Girl because the, the, the story goes when gliskap (sp) or gluskop (sp), we pronounce it, is when he left and he left the white owl as messenger along with moon. But in our stories it's the white owl. So the white owl is supposed to come back to bring back the ceremony. So I told her, your responsibility is to, you know, tell the young girls that they need to come to the ceremony as a journey towards womanhood. And she did and she has and she's come back and she's one of my helpers.

So that's why the Red Shawl Campaign, when I came back from out west I was so amazed at the silent, you know, message of red dresses hanging all over campus at the University of Saskatchewan. I, I, I was moved by it, that I wasn't going to come back to my Territory and not bring that message and send it to go the other way. So that's when we came up, I thought about that young girl and I thought about the young girls that don't have a chance to be honored when they become a woman, that I wanted to honor all young girls. So the red shawl came, became a symbol.

And so of course I agreed that we have red shawls. We didn't want to have to buy them so what we did is we just kind of put it out that anybody want to volunteer making shawls will get material. So we had a, a team of maybe four of us in the beginning and so somebody would go to – I forget the name of the store where you buy material in Fredericton, I should know it because I go there a lot. But they donated, they donated material and gave it to us at a, you know, discount price.

So, so then we just sent it to the communities and the communities started volunteering making red shawls. My initial – of course I wanted 500 but I thought even if I could just get, you know, 28 for the 28 day cycle of a woman. And so that first year we got our 28 and what was amazing was in the Mersey, I still haven't met those wonderful women from a church group, they heard my story CBC and they started knitting and crocheting shawls to gift us and to thank us for the work we're doing and that they were going to

be continuing to support us through calling.

So our idea of doing red shawls, I didn't want them hanging on hangers cause it's something in a closet. I wanted the strength of the trees as I talked about because sometimes we lose our balance because we're not rooted to who we are again. So we used red willow branches, we used twine to hang from the ceiling so that they're actually still moving as, as if the young girls are dancing. We brought in sacred objects, you know, a pipe, the medicines that you see here. We started to, you know, realize that for, just for the awareness.

So we started on campus and then I got this idea, well I should take this out to the public because, yes, this is a new, you know, university initiation. So, so the first year we kept it on campus but the second year the Atlantic Ballet, from Moncton, I should've invited her to come, you know, or the Atlantic Ballet. They've been travelling around the world with a ballet called Ghost of Violence. I'd heard about it, I didn't see it but

Susan Chalmers and I happened to meet at an education build and we got to talking.

And I said, would you mind if we have an annual spring pow wow at our, you know, our Epekwitk pow wow on campus, that we partner with St. Thomas, NBC, CNN,BCCD and it would be nice if you could showcase the Ghost of Violence. And maybe we can incorporate it into the red shawl campaign. So one of the nice things that happened is, it was a five minute hit and we partnered. But what I wanted, and thank goodness for our artistic director at the Atlantic Ballet because he already had it all set.

This is how it's – we played in Paris and Rome, wherever they went. I wanted it more Indigenous. I said I know your dancers can't wear shawls but is there anything I can do. Can I at least bless the ballet shoes that they're going to be dancing with because this message is spiritual, it's not just a performance. And so we got this idea to do artwork on the ballet shoes to give it more presence of our symbols.

So we put those symbols that you had on your pictographs on the ballet shoes. And the first year, you know, Claudia Gray did the beautiful artwork on the ballet shoes and actually I think they made posters of it. And I blessed the feet of the dancers and we performed in our language so we represented four generations - the young girl, the teenager, the mother and the grandmother. And so, so that's how it started and there's those – we just did our third year.

And out of the four initially that we started with I now have 30 volunteers. They mayor has actually, shines – the Mayor of Fredericton, this year, actually shone a red light on City Hall to symbolize for the public to say why are the lights red. Then he can actually say we're honoring murdered and missing Indigenous women. I went to priests and I said I need church bells rung in the middle of the day.

So north side would play, you know, do them at 11:00 in the morning for 10 minutes and people who heard the bells would ask the priest, why were the church bells ringing. That was, you

know, to ask people to stop and pray for the families of murdered and missing Indigenous women. On the south side 3:00 the church bells ring again, Christ Church Cathedral rang their bells, again, with the same message. Stop for a moment and as a citizen consider the pain of these families and what we have to do as a community of citizens to bring justice to that.

So it's been really growing and this year, the Lieutenant Governor always walks with us but one of the things, I think it's a good time for me to say because I never had a chance to go back to the Legislative Assembly in New Brunswick and Fredericton, we would do a march from Legislative Assembly and the first year we went to the church and then had priests bless the people there. And we had a little reception with the help of the Catholic Women's League. Then the second year when we did that the Legislative Assembly was – didn't come and join us.

You know we were there with our drums. We were there with our signs. And didn't they rush out and not stay while the drums were being played, and that

still bothers me. Because as a Legislative Assembly, even though there's a few members that march with us, and I'd be happy to name them but I don't know whether that's allowed and stuff. But I just want to thank David Cowen publicly for every year, he's marched with our women and, and of course Matt Decorcie also has marched with our women.

So I just want to thank them both because that's a, that's a big message. That carries weight when somebody from that Legislative Assembly can actually come out and march with us. But ironically, they're both men. None of the women came to walk with us, they were just leaving fast. So that's – I take offence to that. But - so this year we didn't bother them, the Legislative Assembly, we just asked Her Honor Lieutenant Governor, you know, Vienneau to walk with us and she has and she holds – as a matter of fact I gifted her with a painting of 13 red shawls hanging on a white birch tree.

And, and why the birch tree is significant is before Catholicism our – the, you know, we used to go to our

tree and ask the tree to take our burdens. You know, I want to stand as strong as you, just for today could you take this for me so I can walk away without that burden. So when Bishops came and they would ask my Elders, well before confession how did you guys get rid of your sins. And of course my Elder Charles Solomon would go, before you came we never sinned. So we didn't need confessions.

So the white birch tree is very symbolic and that's why I'm a tree, that's why I was excited to see the tree on the pictograph. Because that's what it is, it's that standing one. And so, so I gave her that painting as a gift of gratitude for her continuing, continuing open door policy that I can host events based on bringing awareness to red shawl campaign at the Lieutenant Governor's house of New Brunswick. And, and so we're still growing. Just yesterday, before I came here, that's why I didn't get to meet you last night, because the Beaver Book Art Gallery just did an amazing expansion called The Pavilion.

And in that pavilion, as you walk in, staring tomorrow, ah, I'm even emotional cause I, I was there hanging them up and they're not quite done yet, but there's going to be seven shawls hanging at the Beaver Brook Art Gallery for three months to kind of collaborate with, you know, our Cree Elder Alex Janvier's artwork that's coming to tell the story of residential schools. So both of those issues are going to be at the Beaver Brook and I'm going to call it because I wrote them a thank you and I said Beaver Brook Heart Gallery, thank you for showing heart in sending a strong message to all the visitors that come to visit a beautiful amazing place that's next to my ancestral river Wolastoquey.

And so our languages are going to be there. Mii gam'agan and I are translated so you're going to see Mi'kmaq colesteguay au francais and, of course, in English as well. And so that's reconcili-action.

It's not reconciliation, it's reconcili-action. And the word we use in my language is billowe (changing) weda'has (of mind) waus (walking and

living) that change, wa'agan. You know. It's, it's, it's changing of attitude but it's walking the truth of that attitude in the actions we leave behind and the tracks that are so deep that people can follow our tracks only if their heart is open. Thank you.

CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Wow. I think, you know, we could keep going all day but we do have a family that will be testifying. So I want to make an offer to the Panel that I know you've talked about some good ideas and recommendations and I'd be happy to work with you so you could put them in writing and submit them to the Commissioner. And, it's just with an awareness of time that we want to hear a story of another family and the panel was all aware of that.

So it was without offence and you know how much I respect all of the knowledge that you've shared with us today. At this point I would like to ask Commissioner Audette if she has any questions or comments for you.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Merci beaucoup metre Big Canoe. It was amazing and

not afraid to say that I was learning also, and very proud to learn. I'm from the Innu Nation and my dad is Quebequois. And you brought me 10,000 years ago where our ancestors made sure that you are here today to continue to share our laws, tradition, song, the beauty of our people and making us proud that we're so alive.

Struggling for many of us but I see hope, as a mother, new grandmother also, I see hope. And yes, I would love to see some, if you can share it all, the recommendation or some of it but Canada needs to hear. My other colleagues also need to hear or read the passion that I was able to witness and receive. So what an honor. And this is, for me, the continuation, the dialogue is not over. If I may be in your circle I would be honored, that we stay in touch and I see three beautiful mentors.

I know Judy was already mentoring me and another pair of moccasins not long ago. But to this mandate that I seriously take it with love and passion and dedication. I think it was meant to be, that we start the day with you

and I know you mentioned there's other families that we need to hear but you made sure that people understand that it's not an only a women issue. But, it's all of our responsibility so, yes, we need to hear from you and to read from you.

I hope you're going to stay this afternoon. The family is here. You know, as family members, how it's important to have the support when we share our truth. It's difficult and the best person to support us is a family member. I don't want to say anything about my colleagues who, you know, want to help. We need the help but if you can be there for them it's always important.

Would you accept a gift from us? A beautiful gift, a gift with also history and why it became something very important for us to share, to the people who took their time and shared their truth, their vision, their passion. So we have something for you and I would like to ask my grandmother, Bernie – I'm lucky I have a grandmother from B.C., Salmon people, speak English second language and because I speak

French I have a grandmother who speaks French from the Salmon, from where it's better, Atlantic Salmon. So I'll leave Bernie explain.

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS: I just want to say haw'aa to you incredible warrior women here. I just sat in silence here and I just really want to honor all of you for your teachings. I'm a young grandmother yet and I've learned so much here, I want to say haw'aa for your work and I want to explain about these.

These are some beautiful eagle feathers that started its journey from Haida Gwaii. The two matriarchs in my house, that they collected over 400 eagle feathers and it hit national. Then other family members from every Province started to donate and these are the one s that have come from Sea Sechelt from the Sunshine Coast, that sent beautiful eagle wings to my niece, Audrey Siegl, who is not here with us today but this is where they're from.

So I just want to say haw'aa for your work and for your commitment and your dedication. Haw'aa.

COMMISIONER AUDETTE AND BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS PRESENT GIFTS TO THE WITNESSES

Hearing concluded: 2:32 p.m.

R E C E S S

U P O N R E S U M I N G:

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HEARINGS CLOSED AT 5:30 p.m.

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NOTE: The day closes with a prayer, song and drumming from Elder Peter Jadis; a prayer and song from Elder Sarah Alana

FORM 2

Certificate of Transcript(Subsection 5(2))
Evidence Act

I, we Trudy L. McKinnon, certify that this document is a true and accurate transcript of the National Inquiry for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and, Girls held at the Rendezvous Room, Four Points Sheraton, Moncton, New Brunswick on the 13th day of February, 2018 taken from recording NIMNB20180213.

DATE: Wed., Feb. 28th, 2018

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Trudy L. Mckinnon