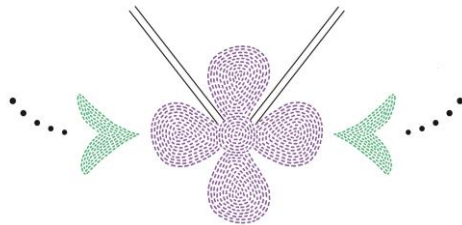


National Inquiry into  
Missing and Murdered  
Indigenous Women and Girls



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  
Hotel Bonaventure  
Montreal, Quebec**



**PUBLIC**

**Monday March 12, 2018**

**Public Volume 59:  
Cheryl McDonald,  
In relation to her sister Carleen Marie McDonald**

**Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller and  
Commissioners Qajaq Robinson and Michèle Audette**

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## II

### APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Jeremy Kolodziej (Legal counsel)
Assembly of First Nations Quebec- Labrador	No Appearance
Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle	No Appearance
Conseil des Anicinabek de Kitcisakik	No Appearance
Directeur des poursuites pénales et criminelles	Anny Bernier (Legal counsel)
Government of Canada	Anne Turley (Legal counsel) Sarah Churchill-Joly (Legal counsel)
Government of Quebec	André Fauteux (Legal counsel)
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami	No Appearance
Innu Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani- Utenam	Jean-Félix Teasdale (articling student)
Naskapi Nation of Kawawachi- kamach	Jean-Félix Teasdale (articling student)
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre	Beth Symes (Legal counsel)
Quebec Native Women Association	Rainbow Miller (Legal counsel)
Regroupement Mamit Innuat Inc.	Jean-Félix Teasdale (articling student)
Les Résidences oblates du Québec	No Appearance

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Orders: none.

Commission Counsel: Fanny Wylde

Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge-keepers: Melanie Morrison,  
National Family Advisory Council (NFAC), Sarah Nowrakudluk  
(NFAC), Laurie Odjick (NFAC), Sedalia Fazio, Louise Haulli,  
Audrey Siegl, Pénélope Guay, Kathy Louis, Oscar Kistabish,  
Évelyne St. Onge, Bernie Poitras Williams, Laureen "Blu" Waters-  
Gaudio, Martha Greig, Patricia Kaniente Stacey, Michael Standup,  
Elaine Kicknosway, Edouard Chilton, Sharon Tardif-Shecanapish,  
Winnie Bosum, Priscilla Bosum

Clerk: Maryiam Khoury

Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

IV

LIST OF EXHIBITS

NO.	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
<b>Witnesses: Cheryl McDonald</b> <b>Exhibits (code: P01P13P0101)</b>		
1	Five folders of digital images displayed during the public testimony of Cheryl McDonald; Folder 0 "Family" - eight images; Folder 1 "Sister" - nine images; Folder 2 "Healing" - 28 images; Folder 3 "Advocacy" - five images; Folder 4 "Cheryl" - 17 images.	73

1 Montreal, Quebec

2 --- Upon commencing on Monday, March 12, 2018 at 10:12

3 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Okay, good morning,  
4 Commissioners. I would like to introduce you to our first  
5 witness of this week of hearings in Montreal. On my left  
6 side, there is Cheryl McDonald, who is here to share her  
7 own story as a survivor and also the story of her sister,  
8 Carleen Marie McDonald, who died on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1988,  
9 after she went missing for several weeks.

10 So before I let her share her story, I'm  
11 going to ask Mr. Zandberg, the Registrar, to swear in the  
12 witness. And the witness would like to provide oath with  
13 her eagle feathers.

14 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Good morning, Cheryl.  
15 Cheryl, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you will  
16 give today will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing  
17 but the truth?

18 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Yes, I do.

19 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Thank you.

20 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So, Cheryl, I will ask you  
21 to introduce yourself; where you're from and also details  
22 about your sister's story.

23 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** [Speaks in Mohawk].  
24 My name is Cheryl McDonald. I'm a Mohawk from Kanesatake  
25 and Akwesasne Mohawk communities; I'm a Wolf Clan of the

1 Mohawk Nation. My sister and I were both born in Malone,  
2 New York.

3 Our parents -- there were four daughters  
4 born to our Kanesatake mother and Kanesatake father, who  
5 were living in Akwesasne at the time. And they left  
6 Akwesasne when I was one year old and Carleen was 14 months  
7 older than me; so we come from Mohawks who knew the land,  
8 they knew the rivers; they knew the Catholic religion.

9 I look back at photos now and I know that  
10 many of them were traditionalist, too. And they raised us  
11 in the Onondaga Nation, which is the heart of the Iroquois  
12 Confederacy; it's the Grand Council, south of Syracuse. We  
13 grew up with the Onondaga and Oneida children and Mohawk  
14 children that lived there.

15 We lived there all together; we went to the  
16 longhouse ceremonies. I grew up watching my peers and  
17 cousins dance. It was something that we didn't do as  
18 sisters, but we were always welcome to go in and I never  
19 knew what they were saying, because they were speaking  
20 Onondaga and Oneida.

21 Our parents, they left Akwesasne and  
22 Kanesatake because, like many other people who leave  
23 reserves -- there's no work. There's dysfunction between  
24 families. The more older I get, the more I start to learn  
25 about the dark side of our history and things make sense

1 now. But when you're a kid and you grow up, you're  
2 confused a lot of times because the people that you love --  
3 they don't give you affection or they're firm with you.  
4 They want to keep you safe, but you grow up sometimes very  
5 confused and how you see yourself is affected by that.

6 We didn't go to school on reserve, me and  
7 Carleen; we went to a public school in Lafayette, New York.  
8 And then our peers joined us at Grade 7.

9 That's a picture of my mom in Kanesatake;  
10 she went to day school, in English; when she grew up in  
11 Oka, in the Village of Oka, she was born and her 10  
12 siblings were born, like two houses next to the Oka ferry.  
13 So she spoke French when she played in the Village; she  
14 spoke Mohawk in the house; and she spoke English at school.  
15 And those are her first-cousins.

16 Carleen, she was -- she was a rambunctious  
17 little spirit; oh, God, she used to drive my parents crazy.  
18 She was defiant; you'd tell her to get off the table and  
19 she wouldn't; and she got a fly-sticker got caught in her  
20 long hair, she just had this thick, thick hair -- and she  
21 was rough. She'd get rough with me.

22 I mean, when I look back, I think, well, I  
23 was the baby that cut her little baby-stint short, so she  
24 made me tough. I had to hide my dolls from her, because  
25 she was a rough tomboy, and boy, she'd tell me, "If I find

1 your doll, you know, I'm going to cut her hair off," and I  
2 knew she'd do it. So I still have that doll; I kept her  
3 really protected.

4 So she didn't graduate; she got pregnant at  
5 age 16. She fell in love and I graduated; she became a  
6 young mother with an older man. He had just come out of  
7 the army; we both fell in love with army men who were  
8 mixed. One had a Mohawk mother, one had a non-native  
9 mother; and one grew up on the reserve there at Onondaga,  
10 that was Carleen's love of her life.

11 And my husband, he grew up in the City of  
12 Syracuse, so we kind of married our fathers, in a sense.  
13 Our father went to Korea in the US army when he was 17; he  
14 grew up in Akwesasne. His great-grandfather owned a 200-  
15 acre farm, and so I have pictures of that. They had  
16 cattle, they had fowl, they had fields of plants and  
17 animals and geese and turkeys, and they were well-off.

18 We have pictures, and you know, this is my  
19 great-grandfather, Peter John McDonald, and his daughters  
20 and sons. So my great-grandfather is in there; his  
21 sisters; so 'Old McDonald', I used to say at school when  
22 they'd sing 'Old McDonald', "Yeah, he had a farm and he was  
23 a Mohawk from Akwesasne." So I look back at him and I  
24 think, you know, as I hold my great-granddaughter: she's  
25 his seventh generation.



1           And so, you know a lot can happen in seven  
2 generations. A lot can change for the good, too. And I  
3 really believe that one day all this will be worth it, to  
4 talk about my truth in losing a sister to violence;  
5 physical, emotional -- it played out everywhere. It met us  
6 at home; we probably heard it when we were in our mother's  
7 womb; my parents were young.

8           They came from dysfunction; we know that  
9 that's the residential-school experience. Because they  
10 could live off the land, they could survive better than  
11 some of our brothers and sisters across this country that  
12 were put into reserves and had no freedom and nowhere to go  
13 and depended fully --

14           This is my father's grandmother. And his  
15 mother is the -- she's the third one from the right, inward  
16 -- and these were all sisters, nine sisters. So my dad, he  
17 comes from a line of long women; the last one to survive  
18 was 102 years old. She died about five years ago, and she  
19 was a nurse. She left Akwesasne, had a child at 40 and  
20 became a nurse in Rochester.

21           And so, I was blessed to have many women,  
22 whether they were related to me or not, they were aunties.  
23 They showed us a way of life: to be independent, to be  
24 strong, and to have a voice. I was born on my dad's  
25 mother's birthday, February 5<sup>th</sup>; I didn't get to know her,

1 she died at age 35. She wouldn't go to the doctor; she had  
2 pain and she wouldn't go to the doctor. So I picture her  
3 taking care of everybody and working the farm with her  
4 husband, my grandfather; and her appendix ruptured and she  
5 was gone. She left my dad and his three brothers orphans  
6 at age 15.

7 I remember my dad talking about his dad  
8 being so heartbroken and he turned to alcohol and women to  
9 try to heal. And he beat his sons, they had to run the  
10 farm with their grandfather, who was in his 70s by then.  
11 Eventually the farm fell and it stayed empty through most  
12 of my childhood. And I did know my dad's dad, he was the  
13 only grandparent that I ever knew. My mom's parents died  
14 before I was born, again to illness and probably lack of --  
15 just poverty, living in poverty.

16 But my grandfather, I remember him. And I  
17 see him in my -- when he's with our grandchildren. My  
18 grandchildren, I have three grandchildren and I have one  
19 who will be born at the end of this summer. So I hope the  
20 baby arrives before we have our Pow Wow in Kanesatake,  
21 because it will be a good time to hold my fourth  
22 grandchild; they mean the world to me.

23 And this is why I have been doing this, to  
24 heal. My healing journey began when I started to go to  
25 pre-consultation meetings, and I started to just show up at

1 places. I had left 23 years of working with First Nations  
2 and human resource development at the local, regional,  
3 national levels and I'd be sitting behind a desk and it  
4 just seemed like the same thing: meeting after meeting,  
5 after meeting. Why, why aren't we making a change?

6 And I would look out the window at Kahnawake  
7 and march, you know; Kahnawake and I'd go home to  
8 Kanesatake and there's two different Mohawk communities.  
9 You know, different levels of advancement; but they all  
10 share the same struggle. You know, I lived in four First  
11 Nation communities in my life and there's a lot of pain,  
12 there's a lot of trauma, there's a lot of violence  
13 everywhere.

14 So when I started to go to the Inquiry pre-  
15 consultations, I started to meet other families. And they  
16 shared; and it found its way into my heart, and I would  
17 just be so moved, and say, "Wow, like we experienced that,  
18 too." Losing a sister, not knowing where she is, what  
19 happened to her; finding her body by chance and then  
20 grieving and not knowing for sure what happened to her. So  
21 we didn't grieve.

22 So when they announced the Inquiry, the  
23 National Inquiry, the first thing I did was -- I beaded the  
24 dress, the logo. And I didn't know where I was going to  
25 put it, but I kept busy and I re-taught myself to bead. I

1 did beadwork as a child, I did it as a young woman, to buy  
2 bread and butter, whatever I needed; you know, money was  
3 always tight.

4 And so then I made the crown; and every time  
5 I made something, I would start to wear it. And then, I  
6 saw a friend from Kahnawake, Queenie McCumber (phon) and  
7 she showed this red dress, and I went, "It's mine!" And I  
8 went over and I bought it from her and it fit like it was  
9 made for me.

10 And I had this shawl from Tammie Bova (phon)  
11 from Kahnawake, too, and I started to just bead more  
12 dresses. And then I said, "Well, I need a belt. Now I  
13 need leggings; now I need cuffs; now I need a yoke; now I  
14 need a purse." And the last piece I did was the feather.  
15 And I started to wear this and go; I would be, my friends -  
16 - I would start making friends and they're dancing  
17 everywhere, and I said, "This dress makes me want to  
18 dance." This is the first regalia I've ever worn in my  
19 whole life.

20 My good friend Tess, who came into my life  
21 in Kanesatake, she helped add all the ribbons; she sewed  
22 all the cuffs; she's just a wizard with the sewing machine.  
23 And I've been blessed by so many people that came into my  
24 life in the last three years, that really, it's like I was  
25 meant to end one life and begin another. And this one is

1 on my terms.

2 And so this dress has taken me to places; I  
3 opened at the MSO in Montreal with Nagano. He gave me  
4 tobacco, he had tears in his eyes; I addressed an audience;  
5 I knew they were tourists coming into Montreal, and I said,  
6 "Look, we have to remember our sisters who are murdered and  
7 missing." And a lot of them don't know, and I'm surprised  
8 that a lot of people don't know about this Inquiry.

9 Even yesterday: "What, you're testifying?"  
10 You're on my Facebook, you don't know? Everybody knows; if  
11 I was to streak through Montreal, everybody would know  
12 before I finished. So we have to talk about this; I know  
13 it's painful to hear about, you know, what's happening to  
14 our sisters. But we have to; we have to feel to heal, and  
15 I tell you: I cried, a lot.

16 As a kid, I was a crybaby; I could feel and  
17 sense when people were holding emotions, and I would cry,  
18 to the point where I was told, "Stop crying, what are you  
19 crying for? Crybaby, I'll give you something to cry  
20 about." And so, this is the world I grew up with. And it  
21 wasn't just at home, it was everywhere; this toughness,  
22 that Mohawk women are so tough. "Well, we don't take shit  
23 from everybody."

24 Well, that's true to a point and I would  
25 tell people sometimes, who would be rough with me, I said,

1 "You know, if you kick a puppy long enough, it's going to  
2 come out and bite you. So, just check yourself." And I  
3 don't do that in an egotistical way; sometimes we need to  
4 be tough. But most times, I believe that being gentle and  
5 kind and loving is the greatest gift and strength we have,  
6 and to show our emotions.

7           So this is the parents of those sisters in  
8 Snye, Quebec; they refer to it as 'Sugarbush'. My aunt,  
9 the nurse, told me in her last years that Sugarbush was  
10 called Sugarbush because they used to make maple syrup; but  
11 they also used to make moonshine from the sap. So the  
12 French would come in from Saint-Anicet and boy, they were  
13 making money. Smuggling ain't new and all that stuff, call  
14 it what you will, people made money and they provided for  
15 their families.

16           And so you can see my dad's first-cousins  
17 and I'm not sure if my dad's in there, but there's a boy in  
18 there that kind of looks like my dad, so -- I see the  
19 regalia, I see the headdress and I know that there were  
20 traditionals in there. And they blended their lives  
21 together.

22           And I grew up, you know, watching my sisters  
23 all take Communion and go to church and I didn't go; I  
24 didn't go to church. I was taken to the Methodist Church,  
25 and I used to wonder, "Why am I different than all you

1       guys?" My dad liked it because he didn't have to go to  
2       church when his aunties came down, he'd say, "I'll stay  
3       home with Cheryl." So it worked.

4                So I would take my sisters' gloves from  
5       Communion and I would see the Bible laying around and I  
6       would kind of mimic what I was seeing the aunties doing,  
7       and I would always go outside and talk to God. You know,  
8       when I started to find out that he was called *Sakweodesuk*,  
9       (phon) or the Creator -- I still looked up at the clouds.  
10      Whenever I felt sad or didn't know what to do, He was  
11      always there. And He's still there and I won't deny being  
12      able to have both faiths with me.

13              Because I look back at my family and I go,  
14      "Those women, they believed in something they couldn't  
15      see." We all believe in something, you know, it's stronger  
16      than us. And you know, no matter what you call it -- I  
17      don't have time to argue with what word best describes that  
18      power, that energy, that love that ignites us all together.  
19      And I've seen many times, you know, in hopeless situations,  
20      that prayer was my greatest tool to grab, to comfort me  
21      when nothing else could. No human or thing on earth.

22              So, my healing journey started three years  
23      ago. I started to think maybe there's something else in my  
24      life. I've come to an end; I hit the ceiling, the glass  
25      ceiling in management, human resources management; it took

1 me across the country, took me to Parliament, took me to  
2 government and all trying to get more money. More money,  
3 we need more money, we got a lot of people that aren't  
4 working we've got to them the work.

5 So that was my life, until I got to the  
6 point when I walked away and I said, "If I have 20 years  
7 left in my life," I don't know if something happens when  
8 you turn 50, but I said, "I want to live the next 20 years  
9 on my terms and be close to my children and get to be a  
10 grandmother, whatever form that takes."

11 So I found myself -- the Quebec Native Women  
12 had a family gathering, the first one; they just launched a  
13 report on violence against women, Indigenous women. They  
14 invited me to a press conference, and like I always do,  
15 "Sure, I'll talk." So I did, and I went to the healing,  
16 and -- they cracked this hard Mohawk nut wide open.

17 And I cried. And I think to the dismay of  
18 my family, it was surprising to them, to see me cry,  
19 because I'm a strong woman and I'm tough and I'm determined  
20 and I'm successful.

21 And so, this picture right here is me laying  
22 in the grass in my backyard and I was just trying to figure  
23 out why my sister left in the middle of the night and was  
24 found on the forest floor. What was she thinking? Why did  
25 she leave us all? Why did she leave her children? Why did



1 she leave my parents? She snuck out when they were  
2 sleeping on the early morning of September 4<sup>th</sup>.

3 And so when I laid in that cold grass on a  
4 hot July day, it felt so good. Ohhh -- I could have never  
5 got up myself, that's how much energy Mother Earth has, and  
6 how comforting She is. And so I took that picture, it's  
7 the first time I showed it publicly; it reminds me of my  
8 sister, so I try to think of her as going out there in the  
9 middle of the night, knowing that she didn't want to be  
10 found. That she'd committed suicide. And I'm the only one  
11 that publicly talks about that as suicide.

12 Even though I would think that, "Well, maybe  
13 somebody took her out there, maybe she was involved in  
14 something and she was afraid and running." And these are  
15 the early days of all kinds of, I call it 'fast-money  
16 opportunities.' I looked at her common-law husband, they'd  
17 just broke up; I looked at him with suspicion. She was the  
18 last one to talk to him that night, they had broken up and  
19 he wasn't coming around to see her and the kids.

20 She'd moved in with the last child into my  
21 parents' home in Snye, Quebec. It was a house at the end  
22 of the road that bordered a field and the woods where they  
23 found her. So for 27 years I would go from suicide to --  
24 someone did this. Or it was the only way out, she was in  
25 trouble; or he did it; or he knew about it; then suicide.

1                   And so I went through this constant  
2                   churning, just set it aside and kept busy with work. I  
3                   started working in '92 --

4                   This is part of my healing too, the  
5                   Kahnawake Church; the Xavier-Francois Church, where Kateri  
6                   Tekakwitha, the Mohawk-Algonquin saint lies. My mom came  
7                   with me and we smudged and went on a vigil. My mom, she's  
8                   quiet about it; she said that she mourned and she did that  
9                   with God, and she's doing her best to carry on, but -- she  
10                  doesn't hold me. She doesn't hold me when I cry. She  
11                  doesn't know what to do.

12                  She can yell at me; she can tell me to stop  
13                  crying. And I had to accept that that is where she's at  
14                  and love her from a distance. But she doesn't come around.  
15                  And when she does, it's not to see how I'm doing; it's just  
16                  to tell me what's going on in the community. I guess  
17                  that's her way of getting by; I would love my family to be  
18                  here, but they aren't, and that's okay.

19                  When I started my healing journey, it took  
20                  me back to my sister's grave. I did an interview with the  
21                  Gazette; I told them, "I'll get you across the border,  
22                  don't worry about it," and they filmed me all over the  
23                  place. I said, "Cheryl gets to wherever she wants to go;  
24                  she's charming."

25                  And I took them to her grave and the name

1 that we once painted on it was faded, I wasn't even sure I  
2 was at the right cross; that's how painful it was: we don't  
3 go to her grave; we don't talk about her.

4 And so, I got the strength to go there; I  
5 laid tobacco; I cried; I looked around and it was so  
6 peaceful there. So if I'm in Akwesasne, I'll stop by, just  
7 to acknowledge her there, we've never bought a tombstone  
8 for her. I want to, but now, I don't have a job, so I  
9 don't have a lot of money now. But I know we'll get her  
10 one, and I would love for her children to design it. I  
11 would love to do that this summer.

12 In September it will be 30 years since she's  
13 been gone, so it's time; it's time. There's been all kinds  
14 of monuments for the murdered Indigenous women and stuff  
15 like that, but my communities don't ask me to speak. Maybe  
16 they're afraid that I'm not ready. But it hurts when  
17 you're not asked; I have so much to give. And I like to  
18 share.

19 This is walking with our sisters in  
20 Kahnawake; they came to Akwesasne first and I picked out  
21 those vamps for my sister. It says 'Mohawk', it's got the  
22 Confederacy, Hiawatha Bell on there. And I said, "These  
23 are hers." She was proud, she was proud to be Mohawk; we  
24 all were. We knew we were Mohawks before we knew probably  
25 our names, because the Onondaga kids would tell us, "Oh,

1       you're Mohawk," and we would say, "Yeah, sure, right on!"  
2       We were proud, so; we're still proud like that.

3                 And so I placed those there and I brought my  
4       red-dress regalia there. And I said, "I want to put it on  
5       a mannequin and I want it to be displayed." And so, when I  
6       went there to the opening, I took it to the Kateri chapel  
7       too, I put it over the crypt of Kateri Tekakwitha, and even  
8       her -- she's played such an important role in my life.

9                 You know, when Carleen was missing, we  
10       couldn't go on, it was seven weeks, and I know that there's  
11       so many families that are still waiting years and decades.  
12       But we couldn't go on; my sisters were losing their jobs  
13       because they'd miss so much time; our husbands were taking  
14       care of the kids. I was a little bit more freer, so I'd  
15       spend many weeks in between staying with my parents -- from  
16       Kanesatake to be with my parents in Snye and look out the  
17       window at night and just wonder: Where is she? Is she  
18       coming back? Why aren't they looking for her? Why are  
19       those cars, trucks going in the woods? What's in the  
20       woods, what's in the woods? And my suspicions would grow.

21                So I'll talk a little bit about her  
22       disappearance. In around July of 1988, she broke up with  
23       her common-law husband, the father of their three children.  
24       At the time they were four and seven and eight; she had her  
25       oldest boy and two daughters. By the time she moved up to

1 my parents, because the house they were renting, they  
2 probably stopped renting it. I don't know the  
3 circumstances but they had to move out.

4 So she came back to Akwesasne and he stayed  
5 behind. And then in those weeks leading up, he told her he  
6 had fell in love with someone else. So she was sad. And  
7 she cried, and she came to her sisters. And she said, "I  
8 feel like killing myself. I'm broken-hearted." He was her  
9 first love.

10 I think she loved him more than her kids,  
11 because one by one, my parents took them, to make it easier  
12 for them; but also to make sure that the kids were safe.  
13 But her and Wesley, they -- they lived the fast-money,  
14 quick-money lifestyle, to the extent I don't know. But now  
15 she's back at my parents' house with all three of her  
16 children and she's sleeping in the basement and she spends  
17 her last day, Labour Day Weekend Saturday, insisting that  
18 my mom -- you know, after they bought groceries, she bought  
19 a bottle of rum.

20 And she asked my mom to take her out on the  
21 river in Snye, in the channels, and she wanted to go on the  
22 river like we always did with our family. And no one ever  
23 thought of that, that day; my other sister was going to go  
24 over there and stop in to my parents. I was home, I had  
25 company, so I was home; and she called me and I was

1 surprised that she called me, because we weren't speaking.  
2 Because she would go hot and cold with me, and I got to the  
3 point where I just stayed quiet around her.

4 I didn't know if she was going to be  
5 laughing with me or laughing at me, and it would hurt me.  
6 So she called me, and I kind of -- she asked me how I was,  
7 and how my husband was and how the kids were, and I was  
8 listening to her, thinking, like, "What do you care? What  
9 are you going to do now, you know, what are you going to  
10 say?" And that's the last time I heard her voice.

11 I didn't know that she looked at me with  
12 envy; because it seemed that my husband loved and treated  
13 me better than hers; I don't know. Because I had an  
14 apartment, because I left Kanasatake; my husband and I, we  
15 had two babies when we left Syracuse and I was eight  
16 months' pregnant when I left Akwesasne, temporarily staying  
17 at my parents' and my sister said, "Hey, there's an  
18 apartment in Oka, why don't you guys just move up here?"  
19 And I did, and one month later I gave birth to our son.

20 So I think that she envied me. You know,  
21 jealousy is like, "Hey, I like your shoes, I bought the  
22 same pair." But envy is, "How dare you have what I don't  
23 have? How dare you be happy when I'm miserable?"

24 And there's that, "Be tough, be tough all  
25 the time; don't show that you're hurting like hell." And

1 so, when she told us she felt like killing herself, we  
2 said, "Ahh, be rid of him, you're not a doormat. The hell  
3 with him, you should be glad he's gone, he's abusive to you  
4 anyway." But she loved him.

5 And I really believe that her last  
6 conversation with him that night was begging him to come  
7 back, or telling him, "If you don't come back, you'll find  
8 me there." But we'll never know, because he never said a  
9 thing. He wouldn't answer my questions. And the more I  
10 asked him, the more I was being silenced.

11 His mother and my mother didn't like that,  
12 because I was saying -- my mom called us on Monday morning  
13 and she said, "She's not back, I'm getting worried." Like,  
14 "What do you mean, she's not back?" "Well, she went out  
15 and she's been gone, and we woke up and she was gone and  
16 now it's Sunday and I'm afraid."

17 My mom was afraid that he would call and she  
18 wouldn't be able to say where she was. And we were  
19 thinking, "Oh good, she's got a boyfriend, so she'll be all  
20 right." You know, we grew up with that; when women and men  
21 break up with infidelity -- get another man, get another  
22 woman, get over it. And you know, so we thought that --  
23 maybe we hoped that.

24 So when my mother called on Monday and she  
25 said, "She's not back." We knew, "Oh my God, she killed

1 herself; she's out there somewhere." And we left  
2 Kanasatake together on the Oka ferry and I could just tell  
3 by the clouds how dark and heavy they were. "Oh my God,  
4 she did it."

5 We got to my parents' house, it took about  
6 an hour and forty-five minutes to cross through the border  
7 and make that trip. And the helicopter from the QPF was  
8 there and they'd just flown over those woods. And landed.  
9 And when they did, the Akwesasne Mohawk Police took over  
10 jurisdiction and the QPF went away.

11 And so, we don't know the results of that  
12 helicopter sweep; they said they went over that area and  
13 there was nothing there. They found a body, it was dressed  
14 in a white shirt; it was September, early September. They  
15 should have saw something -- I don't know.

16 So at the time, the Akwesasne Mohawk Police  
17 were just, I believe, nine officers and the chief of  
18 police. And so they were conducting the missing-person's  
19 investigation; my dad was talking to them as the head of  
20 the family. We were all waiting and getting information  
21 through my dad. And then they interviewed -- then Wesley  
22 shows up out of the blue, in the morning; he wasn't  
23 supposed to be here, so why does he show up all of a  
24 sudden, and she's missing?

25 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** I'm sorry, Wesley is?



1                   **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Wesley is the common-  
2 law, and father of Carleen's children, so.... He shows up  
3 before we do and I'm suspicious: "Why are you here? You  
4 guys are broken up; you work in a restaurant. Why are you  
5 here?"

6                   And he said something like, "Well, they  
7 didn't have any eggs in stock so I left." So I go, "Well,  
8 don't you start working like at five in the morning? So if  
9 it's seven o'clock, how did you know at four o'clock?"  
10 Three o'clock, you know to leave from Syracuse to  
11 Akwesasne, to me it didn't jive, that he would know that;  
12 and does the cook order the food ahead of time? It was a  
13 popular restaurant, so I didn't believe his story.

14                   And so he kind of stayed away from me. My  
15 mom said he arrived with a lot of clothes in the car; bags  
16 of clothes. So I don't know whose clothes those were. So  
17 the police talked to Wesley, and he said that, "Oh, she  
18 always parties. She took off before, she takes off, she  
19 drinks; she always drinks. Not uncommon for her to drink a  
20 bottle." I'm like, yeah, a bottle of rum; she'd have a rum  
21 and Coke, like everyone else she'd go out and socialize,  
22 but she wasn't drinking straight rum.

23                   They believed him and he wasn't a suspect.  
24 And I suspected him; he started to change, the way he  
25 looked; the way he dressed; he didn't go out looking for

1 her with us; he stayed in the house. He was finding  
2 letters in places that we looked and looked and looked.  
3 And I just kept getting more and more suspicious of him.

4 And his mother was very outspoken, and she  
5 was a presence in that house. And she made my mother get  
6 quiet; and we got quiet; and slowly, everyone wasn't  
7 allowed to come into the house anymore. My mother didn't  
8 trust anyone. We had gone through a lot of, like seers and  
9 fortune-tellers and card-readers, and they just messed us  
10 all up. "She's going to come back. She's over here;  
11 someone's holding her. If you don't find her she's going  
12 to be dead."

13 And it was like, we got so scared, that we  
14 just stopped looking and we stayed in the house. And I  
15 would be doing the dishes for my parents and looking out at  
16 that field at night, in the same direction where they found  
17 her. And I would walk around along the swamps; I even  
18 walked along the reeds. Like I could have fell right in,  
19 and I was just bending them with my feet and walking.

20 And walking the roads by myself and looking  
21 for like -- trails, if someone walked in, I know what it  
22 looks like. My dad didn't have any sons but I went hunting  
23 with him and I knew how to track and hunt and stuff like  
24 that, and fire a gun. So I went in there like a detective,  
25 because I was always watching 'Quincy' and all these shows

1 with my dad, so I'm checking it out, I'm watching, and  
2 "He's changing his appearance."

3 And I had little babies and I'm trying to  
4 watch them and be there for my parents. It was a hard time  
5 to do all that. And then we came to the point where we  
6 just couldn't go on anymore. There were no calls, no  
7 leads, nobody coming over, nobody searching. And I  
8 thought, like when someone close to you is dead -- I  
9 thought I would feel that.

10 The night she went missing, I remember  
11 looking out the window at the stars and the cold air, and  
12 I'm listening -- everybody went to bed and I'm like, "I  
13 hear her crying, if I hear dogs barking, if I hear  
14 something, I'm going to know." And there was nothing. And  
15 you know, I would go to sleep and I would say, "Her  
16 spirit's going to come into my dream, I'm going to know  
17 where she is." And nothing, like just flat-lined nothing.

18 So we came to the Kateri Chapel two days  
19 before a deer hunter just accidentally came across her  
20 skeletal remains, two kilometres out there, next to my  
21 parents' house.

22 That's Carleen and me and my husband; and I  
23 cut everybody else out, just because they're -- I want to  
24 keep their privacy. Yeah, that was us, at a sister's  
25 wedding in Kanesatake. So that was the first time, I

1 think, Carleen wore a dress. So that's why I remember  
2 that, because she wasn't a dressy kind of girl. And we had  
3 fun at the wedding. It was a good wedding. And she  
4 danced; it makes me laugh when she danced, because she was  
5 usually jumping all over the place.

6 So those were the good days. And we had  
7 many fun days, you know; it wasn't all dark. Wesley was a  
8 wonderful man; you know, he was a good brother-in-law, he  
9 was knowledgeable, we would talk, we would -- like he'd  
10 start the crossword puzzle, I'd finish it. He was smart,  
11 he was smart, I'll give him that.

12 He was wounded, too; he came from a very  
13 abusive childhood. Being an Onondaga with a white mother  
14 in a traditional community, he was one of the families that  
15 got evicted. It was in the early '70s; the longhouse  
16 people said, "Okay, we've got some white people living  
17 here. You have to leave, your family can stay." So I saw  
18 white men moving out and their women and children trying to  
19 stay in the home. And in Wesley's case, they had to leave  
20 and they were packing up all their belongings, and their  
21 father's brother was pulling in, to move in.

22 And that's how deep evictions cut; and I  
23 remember his mother taking the board out of a doorway that  
24 had all her childrens' height markings. And that strong  
25 white woman, boy, I respected her; she was a nurse, too.

1 And she said, "Nobody's going to live in my house," and she  
2 burned it to the ground right in front of her. That was a  
3 woman, wow. I respect her for that strength that was in  
4 her.

5 And the evictions were horrible on many  
6 people that I knew, and children who had to leave because  
7 staying in there, they were beat by their peers; their  
8 cousins. As they became teenagers they would come back to  
9 the reserve and be drinking and be hanging out with their  
10 peers, and they would get beat. So evictions is -- I'll  
11 never agree to that.

12 You know, I come from Kanesatake, and -- my  
13 son's funny; he said, "Mom, in Kanesatake, status is just  
14 an option." Because everybody lives there; and that's  
15 Kanesatake, we have status, non-Native women living there;  
16 part of families; I knew a lot of non-Natives who spoke  
17 Mohawk. I don't speak Mohawk. But some of them learned,  
18 and the history of Kanesatake was, if you came to  
19 Kanesatake, you spoke Mohawk. It didn't matter if you just  
20 landed from Mars, you're going to learn Mohawk, you're  
21 going to speak.

22 So, the language was very strong there, and  
23 it was so strong that there's some Elders there that still  
24 don't speak English or French. So that tells me it's an  
25 old language. So there's a resurgence there, in

1 Kanesatake, to go back to a....

2 That was the last picture of Carleen in  
3 1988, in May; she went back to the orthodontist to get  
4 braces, again, for the second time. She had that Mohawk  
5 Nation shirt on and smiling and it was the orthodontist's  
6 dental records that they used to identify her skeletal  
7 remains.

8 Oh, that's how I remember her; she loved Rod  
9 Stewart and she tried to spike that hair up, and she was  
10 really, like -- she could make you laugh. She was  
11 something else, she had a lot of friends. She opened up  
12 her house to everybody to, you know, hang out and cook and  
13 we had really a lot of good times together. More than bad.

14 But when she started dating Wesley, I mean -  
15 - he was like, I think 10 or 11 years older than her. He  
16 moved in with us and -- I got up early for school and he  
17 was getting up early for work and I was in the shower  
18 getting dressed and I felt like, "Hey, I heard a noise at  
19 the door as I'm getting dressed." I moved back from where  
20 the door handle was, there was a slight crack and I backed  
21 over it, like I'm always on the defence all the time. And  
22 I looked around at the door hole and I saw an eye. And so  
23 I grabbed the lock -- and I opened it, and he was on his  
24 knees, he had been watching me dress.

25 And I woke the whole house up; and he denied

1 it. And Carleen got mad and my parents stood there, not  
2 knowing who to believe or what to do. So, nothing was  
3 done, and my sister said, "He's leaving, it's your fault."  
4 And there she was, 17, with her first child, and this is  
5 the side of him that I saw.

6 I remember running across the empty drive-in  
7 -- we lived next to a drive-in theatre -- so I ran across  
8 to my friend's house and I cried and told her, "He watched  
9 me. And he didn't even show any remorse. He laughed at  
10 me; he looked me in the eye and had no shame for what he  
11 did." And I think that's where my sister put that hate on  
12 me.

13 And so, in and out of our relationships, we  
14 were the best friends or I would avoid her, because she  
15 would, she would go there; without saying it, she would  
16 mistreat me. And so when I was in 16, I fell in love with  
17 a guy who was in the army, too. And he went to Korea; and  
18 no, he didn't find me there.

19 But when I met him, I felt safe for the  
20 first time. I felt perfect for the first time. He was so  
21 gentle with me and I felt so protected. He was big and  
22 beefy and handsome, too, but more beefy and my protector.  
23 And so I didn't hold that against -- I think because when  
24 that happened with Wesley and I stood up and I told  
25 everybody, I think I established myself as somebody who

1 will tell, and tell; and I think him and all his friends,  
2 they knew that. I think I've always had my voice in that  
3 kind of sense.

4 So you know, we were growing up together,  
5 having kids together; my parents moved out of the family  
6 home and Wesley and Carleen continued to live there for at  
7 least three or four years. And I lived in the city with my  
8 boyfriend, who then, we married and we had our first  
9 daughter. It's when you become a mother and a wife that  
10 you start to realize, "Wow, you're in this by yourself, as  
11 a woman."

12 And you're trying to cling on to the  
13 teachings of your parents, the good teachings. And you're  
14 trying to not continue the ones that you saw as a child, as  
15 a little girl, you know, my parents were -- they worked  
16 hard, they had a 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade education; my mom cleaned  
17 homes. My dad was an ironworker, when he worked, when he  
18 could get in a union. Because he was in the Montreal  
19 Union, so if he wasn't in the Utica Union or the Oswego  
20 Union of ironworkers, he had to wait.

21 So he didn't wait, he'd come home; he  
22 cleaned the house, he cooked, he hunted, he fished; he  
23 repaired things, he was a mechanic; he was a jack-of-all-  
24 trades; and there were me and Carleen always with him,  
25 because we were the youngest ones. And we learned all that



1 stuff. And I remember Carleen, one time he was fixing a  
2 car, and he asked her to hand him a wrench. And she handed  
3 him a screwdriver; and she was doing it on purpose, and I'm  
4 watching, and he's sweating underneath the car. And he's  
5 like, "It's a screwdriver!" and she giggled and ran away.

6 And I handed him a pliers, and he yelled at  
7 me; and he said, "That's not a wrench, that's a plier!"  
8 And I said, "Just tell me what it looks like then, and I'll  
9 do it." And I always could give it back to my dad. Like  
10 they would say that, "Cheryl, you're the son he never had,"  
11 and I think I had a lot of patience.

12 But I know that from my older sisters, my  
13 dad, he would lose it if they played too hard, or if things  
14 got too hard or something was bothering him. You know, and  
15 I watched my sisters get whipped with a belt. We all would  
16 get quiet when he raised his voice, that's the household;  
17 you know my mother would say, "Wait till your father gets  
18 home," and we'd behave.

19 So that's the kind of upbringing we had.  
20 They wanted us to have an education, we got an education;  
21 they went to work, we went to school; there was no not  
22 going to school. They wanted us to have a better life.  
23 They didn't want us dependent on the government or anyone.

24 My dad would always tell us, "You work for  
25 your things in life, no one can ever take that from you."

1 And he would also say, "Don't be a kiss-ass, or a brown-  
2 noser." And I try not to be.

3 But yeah, that's when I graduated high  
4 school. I was 18 and my aunt came over and she was always  
5 taking pictures all the time. And she said, "Cheryl, go  
6 put your cap and gown on, I didn't take your graduation  
7 picture." So, they weren't dressed; so we posed and some  
8 people say, "Well, Cheryl, you really look like your  
9 mother." And then they go, "Wow, you look like your  
10 father." So I'm somewhere in the middle.

11 But I know they were proud that I went to  
12 school. They wouldn't tell me outright, but when they  
13 talked to their friends, they would say like, "Oh, Cheryl's  
14 doing this and Cheryl's doing that," and it's not to be  
15 boastful or bragging, my mother would always say, "Don't  
16 brag and don't be boastful," but -- not saying something  
17 also is bad. You know? I grew up wondering, like, "Does  
18 anybody notice me?" But I know they did, I know they're  
19 proud of me.

20 And this me in my kindergarten class; I'm in  
21 the second row from the floor, second one in, on the left  
22 side. That's me, smiling. My teacher was a model and my  
23 dad saw her picture in the paper, he's like, "Hey, I think  
24 this is your teacher." And so he showed his brother. And  
25 so next parent-teacher, guess who's taking me to parent-

1 teachers' conference? My dad and his brother. So, they  
2 had the McDonald charm, so.

3 She was a beautiful teacher and I, when I  
4 walked into the school, it was like a whole world opened up  
5 to me. There were all kinds of things to do and books; ah,  
6 the kids; like I'm still friends with my high school peers.  
7 You know, and they're all over the country; I went to my  
8 30<sup>th</sup> year high school reunion. It's been probably like 35  
9 years now and they're like, "Cheryl, I thought you were  
10 Onondaga." And they're like, "What are you doing in  
11 Canada?" And I would tell them like, "This is how I got  
12 into my career." And we would laugh, because it was....

13 This is with the Human Resources Commission,  
14 the representatives of 29 First Nation communities and the  
15 regional staff. I was in the world of employment and  
16 training. And I probably can't go anywhere without running  
17 into somebody that knows me, so now I feel like I'm in the  
18 health sector now. I'm starting to meet people in the  
19 health sector and connect in to those.

20 I mean, I'm gifted and blessed to have known  
21 so many people and travel to some of these communities in  
22 Quebec and across the country, and just meeting a lot of  
23 women and men, who all want to make a difference. You  
24 know, we all want to make a difference for our people. And  
25 it's apparent that we want to leave this world better than

1 the way we found it sometimes.

2 So, ask me questions, because I can go on,  
3 I'm a story-teller.

4 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Okay, I just want to take  
5 a few steps back. You had mentioned that Carleen was in an  
6 abusive relationship with her common-law spouse, Wesley.  
7 Did she ever file a complaint regarding the violence she  
8 was living?

9 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Not to my knowledge,  
10 she didn't. But when I was living in the city after my  
11 parents left the house and she was living with Wesley now  
12 with their children, alone -- I would go and like, she'd  
13 pick me up and I'd spend the day at her house, babysit  
14 while they go to the grocery store or something like that.

15 I was in the house and all of a sudden the  
16 door flew open and the two kids, they were probably five or  
17 six, six or seven, they come running in the house and I was  
18 startled. And I see these kids running in the house, my  
19 niece and nephew; and he's chasing them. And I'm like,  
20 "What?"

21 So he chased one of them into the closet,  
22 and I ran right after him, and I swear, if I wasn't there  
23 he would have beat that kid. He would have kicked that  
24 kid. And I remember saying, "What the hell do you think  
25 you're doing?", and he stopped and he walked right out of

1 the house and he got into the truck; and Carleen was  
2 sitting in the passenger side; she never chased after him.

3 And I remember going out the door, yelling  
4 at her, "How can you let him do this to you? What the hell  
5 is the matter with you?", because I'm the tough one. In  
6 those circumstances, I can get real tough. And she just  
7 didn't say anything and they drove away. And so, I stopped  
8 seeing her, less and less, because their household was  
9 changing. And that's probably why my mother started to  
10 take the kids.

11 And it was only probably in the few weeks  
12 before she died that she was starting to talk and tell me  
13 stuff. And I was always on my guard with her. Like, she's  
14 confiding in me and she did tell me, "Remember that time I  
15 had that big hospital bill in Syracuse, I went to the  
16 hospital and now they're after me for it," \$40,000 in  
17 medical services, she had no health coverage. She said,  
18 "He beat me." And so I've asked the lawyer to go and  
19 subpoena the hospital because he probably beat her badly.  
20 Because she told me, "He beat me so badly I went to the  
21 hospital." And I know that often when women go to the  
22 hospital, the police will ask them and they may or may not  
23 press charges, and they walk back in to those situations.

24 So, she was a victim of abuse, you know, and  
25 she kept it hidden. And I could tell with those kids that

1 they just -- were quiet, they were quiet babies, they were  
2 shy. And you'd kind of hold them and they're just like --  
3 they were quiet. So they saw stuff; how much, I don't  
4 know.

5 But when I look at the pictures, you know it  
6 pains me to see these kids that aren't smiling. You know?  
7 It's really painful. And it pains me because I practically  
8 raised them. Because I lived in the house, so I would  
9 take the baby and I would love the baby and I would wash  
10 the baby and change the baby and feed the baby. And it's  
11 their baby and they're in bed. You know?

12 I remember one time the baby was crying and  
13 they wouldn't go to it, and I went right into the bedroom  
14 and took the baby out of the crib. And defiantly. And the  
15 next morning, Carleen told me, she said, "He was holding  
16 me, he wouldn't let me go get the baby. He said, 'She's  
17 spoiled, let her cry'." So he controlled her, emotionally  
18 and physically.

19 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So the children, as you  
20 mentioned, were living with your parents. Was Child  
21 Protection Services involved or was it your parents that  
22 took the children?

23 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** My parents took the  
24 first girl, the middle child, first. Carleen and Wesley  
25 were always -- he had an affair on her, he cheated on her,

1 she got mad, she retaliated. And one time she said that,  
2 "That girl's not yours." And from that moment, that baby  
3 was pushed aside.

4 And so my mom took that baby when they moved  
5 to Akwesasne. She took her, she was a three-year-old, put  
6 her in Head Start. And then maybe three years later, they  
7 took the oldest boy, because he was going to school but the  
8 house was changing. It just became a flophouse, that's an  
9 expression for a flophouse, where people can come and go  
10 into your house and drink and sleep and -- you know, it's a  
11 party-place house. And I started to see that and that's  
12 why I stopped visiting so much.

13 But you never think that those kids would  
14 have been in danger, you know? Sexual abuse wasn't talked  
15 about back then like it is now. And so when I look back, I  
16 go, "God, that house was full of predators." The same ones  
17 that would try to get me as a young girl. You know? But I  
18 had a mouth, but a lot of kids don't have that spirit, to  
19 say, "Hey, I'm telling." And to tell. It's two steps in  
20 that. So yeah, I'd like to explore that.

21 That's why I always suspected him, I think,  
22 because I saw that side of him that nobody else saw. The  
23 side he kept hidden, you know? And it confused me, because  
24 then he'd just have a nice side to him. "Hey, everybody  
25 know I'm a good guy." He had a big mouth, sometimes it got

1 him a punch in the face from somebody to shut him up; but  
2 it didn't stop him from being him.

3 And so, one thing too, is when -- I also got  
4 silent too, was after she was missing was -- that's the  
5 only parent those kids have. And I'm not going to put him  
6 down in front of them. Whether he's a good dad or not,  
7 that's their father. And when Carleen passed and they got  
8 older, he started to, they started to go on their own to  
9 visit him. And they needed to have their father. And they  
10 had their father for maybe 10 years before he passed,  
11 suddenly.

12 He died of an aneurysm and I was always  
13 waiting to see if I could ask him point blank, "Did you  
14 kill her? Tell us." Because there was one time when she  
15 was missing where he asked me and another sister, he pulled  
16 us aside and he was going to tell us something. And then a  
17 third sister came and opened the car door, and he didn't  
18 tell us.

19 I really think that he may have known that  
20 she was out there; that by telling us where she was, we  
21 probably would have -- he could have been charged with it,  
22 whether or not he did it or not. But I think he had some  
23 kind of fear or guilt, that, "She told me she was going to  
24 do it, and she actually did." And was going to come  
25 forward. So, I had to leave that in the hands of the



1 Creator. She's gone, nothing will bring her back. And I  
2 have no evidence.

3 I knew that; remember, I'm a detective in my  
4 head, I knew that: no evidence, no witness, no body, no  
5 charges. So unfortunately that's still the case for many  
6 families out there, struggling with the law. Because the  
7 law is the law.

8 So that's me testifying in Parliament; that  
9 was my second time being a witness. So yeah, I would just  
10 be so like, surreal when I would go to AFN things and  
11 technical working groups. And I'd be with people with PhDs  
12 and Masters, and they'd be like, "Okay, we're going to  
13 Parliament; who wants to go and speak?" And nobody wants  
14 to do it, and I'd be like, "I'll do it." And I would be  
15 just so amazed at where my ability to speak from the heart  
16 would take me. It's been amazing.

17 I had the opportunity to speak with Jack  
18 Layton. I had gone to the Parliament with the AFN QL  
19 chiefs, and there's Jack Layton, and I said, "Hey, Jack!  
20 You're from Hudson, I'm from Oka, like, we're neighbours!"  
21 And he looked me and he said, "Cheryl, your people have to  
22 partner; they have to partner with Oka, they have to  
23 partner with the surrounding areas. You guys could have so  
24 much if you would partner together." And that always  
25 stayed in my mind.

1                   When he passed away and I saw all the  
2 tributes to this man, I thought, wow, I looked him right in  
3 the eye; and partnering is something we have to do. We  
4 have to partner with Canadians; we have to partner with  
5 police, health providers; leaders have to partner with each  
6 other; we have to start to really partner. And to me  
7 partnering is -- you have something, I have something and  
8 we put it together -- we really have something.

9                   And it's not this, 'mine is mine and yours  
10 is yours', that's -- I've lived more than 50 years saying,  
11 "When are First Nations going to be who they say they are?  
12 Strong, proud, independent." Our parents lived half --  
13 most of their life -- as non-status Indians because they  
14 didn't know about the *Indian Act*. They left when they were  
15 young. They lived as Americans in a sovereign First Nation  
16 in New York State. And the ones that left the reserve  
17 every day and worked, their lives were a little bit better.  
18 And the ones who didn't, were dependent on their  
19 circumstances.

20                   And poverty; you know, we grew up -- I say  
21 we grew up poor -- because you know, we didn't have the  
22 luxury of going shopping and stuff like this, or having the  
23 best furniture or the newest car or the best house. I  
24 said, "And we had running water, but we had to go and run  
25 and get it outside and bring it in and heat it up, and you

1 know, do everything like that." So, we grew up off the  
2 land and my father was resourceful.

3 He was like the first person I saw that was  
4 already recycling and he would even take cans and press  
5 them down so they'd take less space; and using things until  
6 you really couldn't use them anymore. And I find those  
7 traits, too -- like my kitchen table, none of the chairs  
8 match, but I'm not going to get a new set; those chairs  
9 still are good. So I see the world changed from so much in  
10 the last 50 years, because I do have a good memory.

11 I remember being little in Onondaga, you  
12 know, before I went to school. I remember all the trips we  
13 took to Kanasatake and Akwesasne and the fishing that we  
14 did, the gardening, the family gatherings, the weddings,  
15 the funerals.

16 So you know, I want to pay tribute to Wanda  
17 Gabriel, who is not here today; she lost her husband and I  
18 just want to honour her for being a sister to me -- helping  
19 me to heal, helping others in Quebec to heal. You know,  
20 she -- one thing she said was, "When we go through  
21 traumatic situations, we do two things: we either re-enact  
22 that trauma on others and ourselves, or we detach."

23 And so, when I look at my life, and I look  
24 at pictures of me outside all the time, I was detaching as  
25 an early child and going outside and going into the woods,

1 and having this connection with God and the Creator and the  
2 animals; and walking along creeks and hugging trees, and I  
3 still hug trees. My friends call out, my cousins go, "Hey,  
4 you still hugging trees?", so every chance I get. And I  
5 just found so much peace and solitude away from people.  
6 And I can find so much energy with people, but I choose  
7 when. And so I'm a loner, but I'm also, like, "But you  
8 were just on the stage!" Yeah, sometimes I need to be  
9 around people. I even like to come into Montreal sometimes  
10 and just walk, like from one end of the city to another.

11           There's me and Ghislain Picard: this is  
12 before I left my job and I said, "Take a picture of this  
13 picture that's in front of my office," because one day,  
14 Ghislain Picard will have a picture of me, next to his  
15 office. So it was funny, he's very humble, and so I have  
16 like a big family of technicians and leaders that I got to  
17 meet, and had opportunities to talk at Chiefs' tables; and  
18 Ghislain would be chairing and I would just be there  
19 replacing my boss. And he'd say, "Does anybody have  
20 anything to say?", and I'd be like, "Anybody? Because I'm  
21 not a Chief, but, hey!", and I would be able to speak to  
22 the Chiefs. And sometimes....

23           And there I was in Hochelaga -- I started to  
24 do some acting, another thing I wanted to do. I said,  
25 "When I stopped acting in real life, I started to act in

1 life." And I've been -- this is my fourth film I'm in.  
2 And I'm just an extra, background; and I love it, I love  
3 the fact that we are now able to tell our stories more and  
4 more. We are getting an audience, I really could see some  
5 of these stories of families coming to the big picture-  
6 screen, and screenwriting and getting Canadians and  
7 Americans to really understand what has happened to our  
8 people.

9 I did a blanket ceremony at McGill  
10 University and I learned about the multi-generational  
11 abuses and the *Indian Act* and the moving us away and the  
12 generational trauma. And that's when everything clicked;  
13 and that's when I looked back and saw my upbringing and my  
14 parents, the way they were: It wasn't me, it wasn't me:  
15 they were just -- it was coming out of them, the way they  
16 behaved in those situations.

17 It was the alcoholism that our people  
18 struggle with. You know, my sister walked out with only  
19 taking a bottle of rum. I have to talk about alcohol and  
20 how it affects our people, how it's robbing our families of  
21 loved ones. How people use alcohol to forget painful  
22 experiences, or to celebrate wonderful accomplishments.  
23 But alcohol, your body starts to want it and need it and  
24 it's hard to let go of it. And it puts people in  
25 vulnerable situations.

1           I just, I'm so grateful that alcoholism in  
2 my life -- when Carleen, when we buried her, her life ended  
3 and then mine continued. And I look at it, and I go, wow;  
4 you know, my marriage had its own struggles too and alcohol  
5 was in it. And my loving husband would change into a guy  
6 who was hurting, and you always hurt the ones you love.  
7 And Carleen helped me to say, "No more, I won't bring this  
8 into our relationship. I'm ready to walk this path alone  
9 if you don't do something about your drinking."

10           And he stopped; my husband went to  
11 treatment. He's been sober, for like -- I always have to  
12 think about it, because it's been so long, but I think 25  
13 years. And sobriety doesn't bring overnight success; we  
14 had to learn to peel away all those behaviours and  
15 attitudes and opinions that we brought into our marriage  
16 from our own parents.

17           You know, that men and women -- the man's  
18 the lead and the woman's not, but in my case, the women  
19 lead. But I think I led too much, and we had to learn to  
20 balance and stand side by side. And I think that's what  
21 it's about. I went to the longhouse recently and I learned  
22 about the roles of the men and women. And I see that  
23 that's the root of it in many cases, that men don't know  
24 how to be men anymore and women are being like men and  
25 women, in the sense of being the providers and the

1 protectors, and the balance is out of shift. So, if the  
2 men and women don't know their roles, then they don't know  
3 their roles for how to help their families and communities  
4 and nations.

5 This modern-day life, we're all trying to  
6 figure out what that means to be *ougwahoway* (phon) and we  
7 can't just say that anymore. There was a time where we all  
8 lived our original way of life, but this is 2017 -- oh  
9 yeah, 2018, I went back. You know, we have modern  
10 technology, we have all these temptations of the modern  
11 world; and men and women now both work out of the home, so  
12 who's watching the kids? The Elders are in nursing homes  
13 now, if they're lucky to have lived to go to a nursing  
14 home.

15 So caring for our people has now become  
16 jobs; it shifted. I grew up in a time where the old auntie  
17 came and moved in and she babysat and she cooked and  
18 cleaned, and she helped the parents. Aunties and uncles,  
19 they had roles, they helped parents; teenagers, they helped  
20 the mothers. Now, teenagers, they want to run out the door  
21 at 13 and there's a lot of danger out there waiting for  
22 them.

23 We have to teach our youth about the  
24 vulnerabilities and risks out there in the world. And they  
25 enter the home now through a computer pad, through an

1 iPhone; they're looking for love, they're looking for  
2 attachment, they're looking for belonging. And they can  
3 easily be stolen and no one knowing where they went. I  
4 think we really have to look at who we are as a people and  
5 try to help and heal. Go ahead.

6 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** If we go back to the  
7 circumstances of her disappearance, Carleen's disappearance  
8 -- did she leave any note before she went out?

9 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Yes, when we were out  
10 searching we got called into the house with my sisters and  
11 my parents and Wesley, and he said, "There's a letter."  
12 And my mother did verify that in the day before, she was  
13 writing and filling envelopes; but there was just one that  
14 was read to us. It was in her handwriting, but they both  
15 liked to write like each other.

16 And she said that, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry,  
17 mom and dad, that I'm doing this, but I have to go away."  
18 She said something to the effect of, "You know, things are  
19 coming up and I'm going to -- I can't be in the spotlight,"  
20 and I just -- what's the 'spotlight'? What spotlight?  
21 What was going to be put on her that she couldn't handle?  
22 And so all those suspicions start to swirl.

23 She also said that, you know, "I'm sorry,  
24 don't have a funeral for me, just put me in a pine box,"  
25 basically because we didn't have money. A funeral is



1 expensive, and she wrote that in there.

2 Then she wrote that she wanted her kids to  
3 go to Wesley's sister and her husband, which was like --  
4 that does not make sense; these people were not in her  
5 life. Why did she write that? They -- my mother already  
6 had two; and so what they did was, Wesley signed the kids  
7 over to my parents. So there was no Family Service  
8 involvement, they came over and it was just a matter of  
9 signing custody to my parents.

10 And my parents, you know, I had a sister who  
11 didn't have children, and my parents weren't going to give  
12 them to her. They could have raised them. But my parents,  
13 that's all they had of Carleen, and they kept them and they  
14 did their best to raise them, but they were in their 50s  
15 and my dad was mourning my sister.

16 And so during those seven weeks, we'd be  
17 outside with his brothers and uncles and nephews and  
18 waiting and searching for Carleen, and my dad would be over  
19 there crying and I'd catch him. And I wouldn't even go  
20 over to him and comfort him, we weren't close like that; we  
21 were close like, "Hey, you know...", but not physically for  
22 support. We didn't do that.

23 Anyway, I'm going off-subject, but Carleen,  
24 after seven weeks' of looking, the deer hunter found her  
25 skeletal remains and when my mom called me and said, "Hey,

1 they found -- there's an ambulance in the woods; the cops  
2 are going there." And I said, "They found something, I  
3 heard they found a body, it's her, it's got to be her." So  
4 I called the chief of police.

5 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** And you said there was an  
6 investigation: what was the result of that investigation?

7 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** The police, to my  
8 knowledge -- we would call them and say, "Hey, we got a  
9 tip: somebody heard a girl crying down the road," and the  
10 cops came one time and we saw a footprint in the mud and  
11 some kid had told the children on the school bus, "Yeah,  
12 last night there was a woman screaming," and so we had the  
13 police go there and they wouldn't even get out of their  
14 truck. They said, "It's our lunch time and we're not  
15 getting our feet muddy." And you should have heard us, the  
16 way we treated those police. Like, we said, "How dare you.  
17 How dare you say that?"

18 They didn't go in the woods, to my  
19 knowledge; they didn't man patrols; it was my father and  
20 close family that did that. One woman came with hunting  
21 dogs during the seven weeks; and they didn't find anything.  
22 So all of a sudden, a couple of days later I look out the  
23 window at the kitchen sink, and there's the conservation  
24 officer's car flying by my parents' house and into that  
25 field.

1                   And again I called the police chief. And I  
2                   said, "Hey, what is that car doing? What's going on?"  
3                   "Oh, someone lost their dog." I said, "Someone lost their  
4                   dog and you're sending a car to look for them, and my  
5                   sister could be laying out in those woods?" Without  
6                   knowing it, I was frustrated with the police. And the  
7                   police chief would get my calls, I called him again for the  
8                   third time when the ambulances were there.

9                   I said, "I'm in Kanesatake and I will be  
10                  there in about an hour and forty-five minutes, do not move  
11                  that body, because I want to see it. I want to see it, to  
12                  know it's her, with the braces, and I want to see what's  
13                  around her." And by the time I got there, they had pulled  
14                  her remains out and put a rotting, skeletal corpse with no  
15                  flesh into an ambulance. And sent it off to Valleyfield.

16                  And we, me and my sisters and a brother-in-  
17                  law had to go to Valleyfield and try to trace that body;  
18                  and we traced it to Parthenais and we couldn't -- I wanted  
19                  to see it. I want to see with my eyes, my detective eyes.

20                  And so just recently I got all the articles  
21                  that were done and it talks about the police chief saying  
22                  that, "Yeah, a group of teenagers on four-wheelers helped  
23                  us recover the body." Teenagers on four-wheelers? The  
24                  four-wheelers that were riding back there at night when I  
25                  was staying with my parents? They didn't smell a rotting

1       corpse? Because a week after she went missing, the  
2       buzzards were flying in those woods, right over it. And I  
3       said, "Look, the birds, look," I know how birds are, I know  
4       how they act.

5                   And they still wouldn't go in those woods.  
6       "Oh, we looked everywhere, we looked back there, don't go  
7       back there." We could look around all of Akwesasne, and we  
8       did, asking people: Have you seen her? Asking her  
9       friends: Who is she with? Who is her friends? You know,  
10      we had suspicions that she was dealing with, I call it  
11      'fast-money people'. And nobody saw her, so we were going  
12      on foot through woods, through marshes, through cornfields;  
13      we'd start in Canada, end up in the US; start in the US,  
14      end up in Canada. We looked everywhere but that area,  
15      because they told us, "Nothing back there." There was  
16      something back there.

17                   So you know, for the longest time, some of  
18      my family don't believe that that's where she died. I've  
19      had to come to this conclusion, I had to follow my heart; I  
20      could be wrong. There's no body. The Parthenais told us,  
21      moments before they were going to let us see her, "Oh,  
22      sorry, you can't see her, her bones are soaking in some  
23      kind of solution, we couldn't get enough flesh."

24                   So we waited 10 days before they brought her  
25      body back to bury. And in that 10 days, we went out to

1 that place where they found her body. And we found a  
2 blanket that she was laying on; and on it was her whole  
3 scalp. They left her hair; we went with a priest; we went  
4 with a faith-keeper, one of my dad's aunts on a buggy, and  
5 the kids; we walked back there and watched my dad's nephew  
6 dig a hole and pick that blanket up with a pitchfork and  
7 drop it in there.

8 They left the crime scene; they left us to  
9 find her; to watch him pick up her hair like it was a dirty  
10 wig and just drop it in the ground. Her hair could have  
11 been tested. I know police don't get a lot of funding, but  
12 why didn't they call another police agency? To at least  
13 take some pictures? That still haunts me.

14 The smell; you never forget the smell of  
15 death. Now when I walk, if I smell something dead, I'll  
16 pull over or I'll go off-road and I will make sure it's an  
17 animal. Because it could be a human. It's horrible, it's  
18 horrible. Where's the bottle? Why didn't they dust it for  
19 fingerprints? Did they take it with them?

20 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** When you say 'the bottle',  
21 you mean?

22 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** A bottle of rum,  
23 that's the only thing she took; she didn't take any  
24 personal belongings, she didn't take any makeup, any  
25 jewellery; she took nothing. All she took was the bottle

1 of rum that she had a couple of drinks with the night  
2 before. And a note on the paper, "Be back tomorrow at  
3 noon." That would have been Sunday morning, the 4<sup>th</sup>, she  
4 would have been back.

5 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** That's what I, the  
6 information I was looking for, so the Commissioners could  
7 know: she had left a note saying that she was going to  
8 come back. Can you explain in detail?

9 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** My mom, when my mom  
10 woke up on September 4<sup>th</sup>, the littlest one, the littlest  
11 granddaughter, Carleen's youngest, she was four; she was  
12 sleeping in the basement with her mom. The other two had  
13 bedrooms upstairs with my parents. And my dad had opened  
14 the door and said, "Goodnight," and she said, "Love you,  
15 dad." And he went to bed.

16 And when they woke up, my mom said -- she  
17 was cooking breakfast for the kids -- and she said, "Hey,  
18 go downstairs and go tell your mother to come up for  
19 breakfast." And the little one said, "Mommy's not here,  
20 mommy's gone. Mommy's gone." She said, "What do you mean,  
21 gone?" And she went downstairs, she was gone.

22 And then when she cleaned up the table, she  
23 saw a note on the Indian Times paper, in her handwriting,  
24 Carleen's handwriting, said "Gone, be back at noon." So we  
25 thought, oh, she went out with cousins, friends, she left,

1 she went to go out, she's going to get over him somehow.  
2 And she didn't come back.

3 And the little girl kept saying, "Daddy came  
4 for mommy. Mommy with daddy, mommy with daddy." That's  
5 what she was saying. And that's all we had, that's why I  
6 was suspicious. Why did you come here? Maybe she  
7 threatened him: "If you don't come up here, I'm telling."  
8 Telling what? I don't know, these questions will always be  
9 with me. As much as I am at peace with my healing journey,  
10 sometimes I'll hear another story and it will take me back  
11 there. So only the Creator knows; but I know she's not  
12 hurting anymore.

13 I know she's at peace. I know when I put on  
14 that regalia, she dances with me. And I have to honour  
15 her, honour her for showing me how life ends or life  
16 begins; and she was my greatest teacher. And in our way,  
17 when someone dies, they say, "They came in our lives for a  
18 reason, to teach us." And so, she was my teacher; she  
19 showed me how to be strong; how to communicate if someone's  
20 mistreating me. How to love my kids when I didn't feel  
21 like it because I was grieving or I was angry.

22 She taught me to love them, and I did the  
23 best I could. And they're all adults now and my  
24 grandchildren are the greatest joy in my life. To see a  
25 fresh spirit, unbroken; these are our babies, this is what

1 we have to do, parents and grandparents, is keep those  
2 babies safe. Because kids hurt kids, too; abused kids grow  
3 into teenagers that are curious and injured, and they can  
4 hurt your babies. Trust me -- they can hurt your babies  
5 and you won't even know it. That's what happens; I found  
6 out my babies were hurt, sexually, and here I was at the  
7 top of the world and my babies never showed any sign.

8 And that's what me and my husband had to  
9 deal with, is helping those teenagers who are suicidal and  
10 drinking and drugging, and not telling us that they were  
11 hurt. And it took all our love and strength to get them to  
12 professional services, because they weren't going to go on  
13 their own. You know, I just thank the Creator that when we  
14 found out, we found out much later; but we were at a place  
15 when we could deal with it. Finally, as adults, our  
16 children made us become real parents. Because before that,  
17 we were just broken kids, with kids, trying to get a leg-up  
18 in the world, trying to get what other people have; and  
19 trying to hang on to the love that we had.

20 So you know, I dedicate this to my kids, who  
21 are also parents now. And I know, as a mother, I tell  
22 them, "Yes, it's hard, but just don't worry about the  
23 world; just love your kids. Just play with your kids."  
24 That's all life is about, teach them; I take my  
25 granddaughter with me, and she's singing now and -- oh,



1 that makes me feel good and proud.

2 And the baby, she takes a rattle, and she  
3 just goes, "Shuck-shuck-shookshookshook," because she's  
4 watching me and that's what it's all about. They need to  
5 be proud of who they are. And I tell people, "Stop trying  
6 to fit in, because -- just take your place, there's room  
7 enough for everybody."

8 I tried all my life to fit in and I felt  
9 rejection all the time and that I was never good enough, or  
10 didn't speak my language; my parents wouldn't share the  
11 language with us, because they learned not to speak it and  
12 not to share it. And they were punished for it, and they  
13 thought that, you know, by having our language we wouldn't  
14 get educated in English, or the Americans.

15 And so my mother still holds on to the  
16 language, and so I know I have to find someone else to  
17 teach me the language so I can pass it on. My parents use  
18 the language for their own private conversations, and with  
19 their siblings; you know, adult topics. So when we started  
20 to speak English at school, we stopped asking.

21 But I know a few words and they seem to be -  
22 - the most very important words is, how to say my name; and  
23 how to say 'I love you' and how to say 'thank you' and 'are  
24 you at peace' and 'welcome' and, that's the only words I  
25 ever learn or say; that's good enough for me. And I see my

1 grandchildren learning it, too. One time I said something  
2 in Mohawk and my grandson said, "Grandma, you speak  
3 Indian?" I said, *isoyo-keha* (phon), 'Yes, I do.' And he  
4 was -- and then they're shy, they're learning it in school.  
5 And they'll say, "Moms, speak to the kids," and it doesn't  
6 come out. So we really have to make our communities really  
7 nurturing and loving and have activities where we can get  
8 together and part of like a group of people; like go Pow  
9 Wow and get together, and we laugh, and it's my new family.

10 In the communities: it's all about money.  
11 It's all about power, it's all exclusion; it's all about  
12 privilege; one's privileged to work, others, black-listed,  
13 will never work. It's about protecting the land and then  
14 watching it being destroyed at the hands of our own people.

15 You know, it's a confusing time right now.  
16 I walk all over the place, and it hurts me to walk through  
17 our sacred pines and see it littered with cigarette stores  
18 and beer cans and drug bags, and burned garbage and junk.  
19 And people say, "Well, why don't you fight with Oka?" I  
20 live in Oka, I live in the Village of Oka on one of the  
21 last pieces of Mohawk land; you know, it's all Mohawk land,  
22 but all around me is people from Oka. I moved down and  
23 built a house from the Territory, main Territory, in '92.  
24 This face, in the Village of Oka; this skin colour in the  
25 Village of Oka; sure they looked at me. Sure they

1 wondered, "Is she a warrior?"

2 But I kept walking the streets of Oka, and  
3 walking and exercising and telling my kids, "You know what,  
4 respect your neighbours," and that's how I live in Oka. I  
5 live in peace with my neighbours. They go on holiday:  
6 "Cheryl, watch my house." You know, Quebecois and Iroquois  
7 equals allies, friends, neighbours, family.

8 I have a son-in-law that's Kahnawakehró:non  
9 and a son-in-law that's Quebecois. We're a family. We  
10 worry about titles and membership and blood-ism and all  
11 kinds of categories: we're mothers and fathers; we're  
12 sisters and brothers; we're sons and daughters; and we're  
13 lucky, we're grandparents and great-grandparents. We've  
14 got to start using those titles: those are our titles.

15 Not what we do, it's who we are -- we're  
16 kind, we're loving, we're peaceful, we're helpful, we're  
17 respectful, all the seven teachings I learned. I used to  
18 look at, all my life, the seven deadly sins. And I'd read  
19 them, and I'm like, oohhh; oh, it's scary, like it was  
20 more punishment-based. And then I learned the seven  
21 teachings, and I went, aaahhh, reward; positive reward.  
22 You know? I really believe that if you have positive  
23 reinforcements, you'll get more people to come toward you  
24 than if you're negative and punishing, and exclusive.

25 I'm an HR manager, you know? I think I

1 started being a manager when my kindergarten teacher had me  
2 go to the other kindergarten class and show them the book I  
3 wrote about this little -- it was a boy hunting with his  
4 father. I didn't even write that it was a girl hunting  
5 with her father, because that was the real story, but I  
6 made myself a boy, and illustrated it and went to the other  
7 class. I think that's when other kids started to get  
8 envious.

9 And that's when I started to go in to the  
10 library and read books; and I read a lot of books. Part of  
11 my healing was reading a lot of books from a lot of  
12 psychologists. A lot of Indigenous and Canadian and  
13 American thinkers and movers and shakers; and all that went  
14 in me. I think it's coming out now.

15 And I worry about the recommendations for  
16 our people. How do we reach them, when I know that  
17 literacy for Indigenous people is really out there; that  
18 access to internet and computers to even watch this  
19 webcast; how do you get someone to walk in their community  
20 health centre to see the mental health worker when that  
21 door is the heaviest door you'll ever open? When the  
22 person behind the desks don't walk the talk, everybody in  
23 the community knows that.

24 Are you going to see a doctor that has a  
25 record of, you know, like nobody survived his surgeries?

1 Are you going to go to him? I want our people who work for  
2 our people to know that it is a privilege and it's an  
3 honour, to say I work for my people. I don't care if  
4 you're the janitor or the CEO, it is a privilege and an  
5 honour, and we need to change our own systems to make sure  
6 that violence does not exist in there.

7 There are labour laws, there are policies;  
8 and nobody follows them. You take any organizational chart  
9 and look at all the authority lines and departmental  
10 breakdowns, and just picture if you flipped that page, and  
11 you see: Oh, those two are friends; Oh, those two are  
12 enemies; Oh, those two are family; Oh, those two, oh those  
13 two. And then you wonder why systems don't work.

14 When people are abused in the workplace,  
15 they go and tell -- and nothing is done. Or, they're  
16 ganged up on; now you're sitting in front of a panel of  
17 people, all saying you were the one that started it. This  
18 has to change. We lose good people because they can't  
19 fight back like some of us can, with the knowledge or the  
20 emotional integrity to see what nobody wants to see. And  
21 to say what nobody is strong enough to say.

22 Violence is there, and it leaves a trail;  
23 look at organizations that have high turnovers; where  
24 people leave jobs, and the same job is posted; the signs  
25 are all there. Nothing is happening. The more and more

1 money is spent on management, there is less money for the  
2 people they serve. Look, it's all there, the evidence is  
3 there; the footprints, follow the footprints.

4 We need the money at the grassroots level.  
5 In some communities, one person is handling: social  
6 assistance; post-education; education; employment and  
7 training. One person. And they probably make \$15 an hour.  
8 And they're all going everywhere; I've got a meet over  
9 here, there's a regional meeting, there's a meeting here  
10 there's a meeting here, I've got to go here I've got to go  
11 here. A client knocks on the door, "Sorry, I'm leaving for  
12 a meeting."

13 This is the reality of First Nations'  
14 structures because the government doesn't fund them,  
15 doesn't give them operational and maintenance. They'll  
16 build you a pretty building, and give you no means to keep  
17 it running. This has to change, it does. And so, who pays  
18 for that? The ones who need those services; the ones who  
19 are turned away.

20 When I look back at my career at Employment  
21 and Training, you know, we weren't seeing people entering  
22 the labour and Canadian labour-markets. They would go --  
23 go back to high school; go to vocation; get certified; find  
24 a job. And then they're back at your door: "I want to go  
25 back to this training." And I kept saying, "Why aren't

1       they succeeding out there?"

2                       It's only now when I take a step back -- and  
3       I've always told them -- they're not healed; we're  
4       investing in people that are not healed; they're dealing  
5       with trauma, alcoholism, sexual abuse. We all know this,  
6       I've heard testimonies. They're not ready to go back to  
7       school; they're not ready to take a trade certification;  
8       they're not ready to integrate into the labour market. And  
9       we're supposed to partner with our health and social and  
10      our economic development; we're all supposed to work  
11      together with education. And that's not happening; that  
12      should be the first level of partnership.

13                     When someone walks in the office, there  
14      should be somebody trained as an orientation counsellor  
15      that can do all kinds of testing on them, and refer them to  
16      where they need to go. Because some of them, yeah, you're  
17      ready to go back to school, but you just -- you need  
18      health, you need police, you need -- you need all kinds.  
19      Don't just think that going to school and getting a job is  
20      going to save you. Your trauma, you need to address it.  
21      You need to address it and we have to stop this stigma of  
22      people confiding their traumas and then nobody able to help  
23      them.

24                     Many people have gone to those doors, poured  
25      out their heart -- and the person behind the desk isn't

1 able to, for many reasons, help them -- and that person  
2 goes back out in the world, alone. Even more hearted; and  
3 we have to all work together, to make sure that our systems  
4 operate.

5 I used to say, I work for a commission where  
6 they said that we were helping others find meaningful  
7 employment. But 'meaningful employment' is knowing what  
8 gifts you have. Some of our people are academics; some are  
9 artists; some are musicians, some are helpers, caregivers,  
10 teachers. We all have skills. Those are really gifts, and  
11 when you put someone in to a position to use those gifts --  
12 that's not work, that's meaningful employment.

13 So this concept of thinking everybody's got  
14 to go back to school, everybody's got to get a degree,  
15 everybody's got to enter the labour markets of Quebec and  
16 Canada -- no. We need to invest in our labour markets. By  
17 helping, working with education and post-secondary and  
18 adult education, and the government funding these fairly --  
19 because they don't.

20 Schools in Quebec and schools in First  
21 Nations are still at a great financial deficit; they can't  
22 hire the teachers they need to get. They can't have the  
23 buildings to foster education; and so we're not going to  
24 get the results. We need to start working together so that  
25 the supports that we all talk about in this Inquiry -- the



1 professional health supports of psychologists,  
2 psychiatrists, all kinds of therapists, faith-healers: We  
3 should have those jobs as our main; not working for a  
4 mining company. Not working for a pipeline. Not tearing  
5 up Mother Earth.

6 Our kids should be going into the sciences,  
7 and saying, "You're good at math. What if you could turn  
8 the tar sands back to pure drinking water?" This is the  
9 change in employment and training that we need to see. In  
10 health; you know, when I go into a health centre, I want to  
11 look and see healthy people: emotionally, spiritually,  
12 physically, mentally; that's health. Not something on a  
13 tag that says, "I'm healthy." You know? We need to change  
14 the way we think and the way we act with each other.

15 I walk around and I'm a happy person; you  
16 say hi to people, and they just -- they don't even say 'hi'  
17 back. And you think, part of your job is to be friendly;  
18 what's wrong? And you start to think, like, WWhat did I do  
19 wrong? Was I too rough?" That just tells me people are  
20 hurting.

21 I've walked many miles in these moccasins  
22 and they've taken me to many places; and I look for people  
23 that come toward me, and I also see the ones that don't  
24 come towards me. It tells me a lot. I'm still watching,  
25 I'm still that little girl, just watching. And seeing if

1        what people say and what they do match; that's integrity,  
2        that's morality, that's ethic.

3                    This is my message. It should be all our  
4        mission statement. Organizations shouldn't have different  
5        ones, they should all be the same: Helping teach our  
6        people to care for themselves, to value themselves; to keep  
7        themselves safe. I want to see daycare staff, like kids  
8        running to them in the community when they're not at work.  
9        I want to see teachers surrounded by youth; I want to see  
10       leaders that involve the youth.

11                   Right now the situation is so drastic, I  
12       don't even go to Band meetings. Twelve people can decide  
13       the fate of my community, because people like me don't want  
14       to go in to those environments. Because I feel the  
15       negative energy, I feel the silence; I hear the jabs. But  
16       now, today, I know that everybody is hurting. And this is  
17       our environment, this is our culture. This is our culture.

18                   We talk about our traditional cultural ways,  
19       but this is our culture, and you find it everywhere;  
20       whether it's in the urban, on reserve, off reserve. It's  
21       everywhere, it's this way of being that we became. And if  
22       we're human beings -- how are we being human -- with each  
23       other? That's what I ask myself: what can we do?

24                   And so, my healing journey was all about me  
25       going inside and looking for the answers in here, nobody

1       could give that to me. Nobody could heal me; there have  
2       been many helpers and many teachers who let me cry. I saw  
3       traditional people cry and continue talking, and that was  
4       the first time I saw that in my life. Because I come from  
5       a world where Clan Mothers and Chiefs: "You've got 10  
6       days, you don't cry no more." That's our way, but that's  
7       not our reality.

8                       We need to cry. "I'll cry if I want to."  
9       And I don't take any shame in crying. We have to; and I  
10      laugh -- I even noticed that my laugh changed. It was a  
11      phony laugh before. I would make people laugh so they'd  
12      like me, or I wouldn't feel uncomfortable; "Oh, they're  
13      teasing me, but it's funny," you know?

14                      People used to always come up to me and go,  
15      "What are you?" I'm like, "Human." "No, what are you?  
16      Where are you from?" I'm like, "Montreal." "No, no, no,  
17      before." "United States." "Nooo." They want to know what  
18      country I'm from; they think I'm Asian.

19                      And it wasn't until this wonderful,  
20      beautiful woman from Kahnawake, Anootsk (phon) back there,  
21      she knows who she is. She said, "Cheryl, why don't you  
22      wear something Native so people know when they look at  
23      you?" And she was one of the first people that woke  
24      something up in me that said -- and this is like the final  
25      product -- to be proud to be an Indigenous woman; to carry

1       yourself with dignity; to know when situations are risky,  
2       and to not put yourself in them. Too many of our young  
3       women, they see like, Hollywood-lifestyle, so they want to  
4       go to the club, and go in to the clubs in Montreal. I've  
5       been in them; I've seen the men just watching them. They  
6       can disappear at any time. I've seen older women in there  
7       with younger women, rolling up their shirts in the  
8       bathroom.

9                    If you open your eyes, you will see how far  
10       our people have lost their way, for money. Recently  
11       there's men missing in Akwesasne; one was found, but  
12       there's still three men missing in Akwesasne. We're losing  
13       our men, our sons, too. And there's people asking the  
14       police, the Akwesasne Police, "Why aren't you doing  
15       anything? Why aren't you asking their friends where they  
16       are," because they know. Everybody knows what everybody  
17       does on the reserve.

18                   I don't care if you're selling cookies or  
19       cocaine: people know, it's apparent. The signs are there.  
20       Nobody works and people live in mansions. And the kids --  
21       who's watching the kids, when everybody's living like Miami  
22       Vice? I want my people to wake up. I want my women to  
23       stand up and fight for their kids' future. Because I can  
24       only fight for mine; and then my line will be gone. And if  
25       nobody else stands next to me, I can't pull them out of

1 their houses; I can't lift them out of their grief and  
2 their shame and bring them to healing.

3 All I can be is a face and a voice, and  
4 somebody that's a grandmother, trying to make a difference.  
5 It's never been more important to me than now, at this time  
6 in my life, to be an example for others. Because even when  
7 you think someone's not watching, they're watching. You  
8 know? They're watching; "Want to see Cheryl trip over  
9 there on that rug?"

10 Oh, there's me and Justin Trudeau; yeah, I  
11 remember when he came to the Inquiry and everybody was  
12 like, "Oh, that picture with Justin Trudeau." And I said,  
13 "Well, I have one at home." It's my son, he's a Justin.  
14 But I just watched him, before he came over to me; and all  
15 I saw was a young man with a wife and a family, in one of  
16 the top positions in the country. He can't change it;  
17 politicians can't change it; no one person can change this.  
18 It's us, standing together, as men and women -- to change  
19 Canada and make it what it is. By birth, I'm an American;  
20 I see that president, and trust me, I would love to go down  
21 and talk to Mr. Trump; and I would. As a woman.

22 So, I knew I was going to meet him, before I  
23 met him; I just felt that. All the things I've done, I've  
24 seen that I would do them. And you hear talk about  
25 manifest destiny and stuff like that, and visioning -- and

1 I just put it to the Creator. I just say, "Use me to speak  
2 to people; guide my steps, give me the strength to go  
3 through that storm, to face that conflict, to have a voice;  
4 to sit in this chair; to be calm. Because You put me here,  
5 You created this path, and I'm just going to take Your  
6 cues."

7 You know, something happens and, "Oh, it  
8 didn't happen, Cheryl." "It's all right, it wasn't meant  
9 to happen," and I go on. That's how we need to live our  
10 life. We need to stop over-thinking, and start listening  
11 to our heart. In our traditional way, fire is symbolic to  
12 love and light and energy that we need. And when we have  
13 death, it's like our ashes are scattered, so that's what  
14 happened when I lost my sister. That's what happened to my  
15 family. I had to gather my ashes and the embers that were  
16 in it, and the fire is glowing again.

17 And everybody has that ability. I was at  
18 McGill and one of the faith-keepers from Kahnawake said,  
19 "We have the ability to go inside our heart and call our  
20 spirit back." And so, when I think of myself as that  
21 little girl, getting out of the house because there was  
22 arguing and sisters bossing -- when I just got away from  
23 them, it was my spirit talking to me. And I found peace in  
24 the forest. And when Carleen's remains were taken away, I  
25 couldn't go in the woods anymore. When Labour Day came and

1 everything started to change and dry up, and I would get  
2 depressed; and when I healed, I go in the woods now. I  
3 love it; I love it, I love it, and her spirit is there.

4 We were always in the woods, me and her.  
5 One time she took my dad's gun, thought she was going to go  
6 hunting. She brought a rabbit that she had missed, grazed  
7 -- and she wanted me to finish him off. But my dad told  
8 her, "See, you want to hunt? You've got to be able to kill  
9 it and clean it." You know? He taught us that; I think I  
10 was about eight years old when I used to take his 22 and  
11 check his muskrat traps, and open them and take them, and  
12 have a gun. Because he taught us gun safety.

13 Respect fire, respect water, respect  
14 yourself, respect others. I had a great father; now I see  
15 he had traumatic stress from the army. He was grieving his  
16 mother, he was married, he had kids, he had pressures; he  
17 drank, he shouldn't have drank. You know, when I was a  
18 kid, I saw everybody drink and I saw people that would  
19 behave in different ways -- either sad, mad or passed out.

20 And I didn't know what alcoholism was; I  
21 didn't know. Until my husband went to recovery, to  
22 treatment; and then I started to realize: "Ahhh -- it's a  
23 disease; you can't stop if you don't have supports; and you  
24 won't stop till you hit bottom." And so we have to stop  
25 enabling and making it easier. You know, I look at my mom

1 and dad, I mean -- they saw their grandchildren suffering;  
2 who wouldn't want to take them out of that? But it taught  
3 me to talk to my children. And say, Hey - they're  
4 important; that behaviour, that's not going to work.  
5 Alcohol should have no role in our life. It's caused more  
6 destruction than anything. It's at the root of all the  
7 trauma of people hurting people; and blackouts; and rages.

8 I don't celebrate with alcohol anymore; it's  
9 just not part of our way. Neither is drugs. I pray for  
10 our youth when they legalize marijuana; when the ones who  
11 were arresting others for selling it are now going to  
12 operate some big plants. What are our youth going to  
13 think? They're going to tune out? Are we going to see  
14 more dropouts?

15 We have to pray for our people. We have to  
16 pray for them all the time; sometime it's the only thing we  
17 can do. I pray for things and then it appears, and I go,  
18 "Never doubt the power of prayer, no matter what faith you  
19 say your prayers in; no matter what language, no matter how  
20 you do it. Just do it." It's our greatest strength.

21 That's it for me, that's a -- I told you I  
22 could talk. So the next time, I'll have more to say, but I  
23 want to thank you so much. I've been waiting for this time  
24 and I really believe in all of you and what you do, you  
25 have my utmost respect. Because I knew when I went to the



1 Winnipeg Roundtable and I received this blanket; and Jeff  
2 Kelly was there, he put it on me. And I remember crying at  
3 one point; that pain came out of me, because I heard  
4 families talking about digging with their hands, looking  
5 for clues; and it just touched me and out came this wail of  
6 a cry. It was like, it just bent me over; and after I did  
7 that, I was fine, I felt good.

8 And I snuck in to this picture; this is at  
9 the National Inquiry; they told the families, there's a  
10 picture of all the leaders, but families can't be in it.  
11 And when you tell Cheryl that she can't be in something?  
12 She's on the far right. And I want to thank our Chief  
13 Perry Bellegarde for walking in late, and when he did, I  
14 was already inside and next to two secret service, but  
15 standing there quietly so then I wasn't at risk, and they  
16 walked away.

17 And then I went to the technicians, and I'm  
18 like, "Oh, you work for the ministers; oh, this is history.  
19 Can you take a selfie?" And then Chief Bellegarde came in  
20 and I said, "Yo, brother, can I get in the picture with  
21 you?" And he's like, "Follow me," and he took off way to  
22 the back. And I was standing at the end, and I'm like, "Oh  
23 no, I just blew my cover." And they put a chair down, and  
24 there I sit.

25 And when I joined the families, they went.

1 "You got in?", because they were loud so they shut the door  
2 on them. And I got in, and I said, "I told you I would get  
3 in that picture." And so I represent the Iroquois  
4 Confederacy, the Quebec First Nations, all the Canadian  
5 ones, Indigenous; American Indians; Americans and  
6 Canadians; when I put that hat on, I said I'm going to  
7 represent you all: I'm the sum of my parts, and I won't  
8 part with any one of them.

9 So thank you so much. Someone said, "Why  
10 don't you be a Commissioner, Cheryl, please." And I said,  
11 "I just left a career; I need to heal and I saw how hard it  
12 was going to be." And I've watched, and nothing -- the  
13 right thing will never be easy. So I commend you for being  
14 here. Know that you have my respect and my love. And that  
15 all you are doing is creating a space and an opportunity  
16 for people to come and tell their truth.

17 And the ones who have testified -- I have  
18 heard many, I've watched it form home on my computer and I  
19 cried and I rejoiced. We're going to do this together; we  
20 need everybody. So I thank you all for this opportunity.  
21 And I'll see you in Ottawa -- no.

22 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you, Cheryl,  
23 *migwetch*. I will now leave the space to the Commissioners,  
24 if they have questions or comments. Thank you.

25 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I don't

1 have a question: I just want to commend you for your  
2 courage and your strength and all that you have given to  
3 our people. And all you will give to our people, because I  
4 know you're not giving up. So thank you, Cheryl.

5 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Merci  
6 beaucoup. Merci, when you came to Montreal on February 15,  
7 the following day of the important march across Canada --  
8 where it started in B.C. -- oh, my grandmother is here.

9 And it was important that you, for us, to  
10 have you there in Montreal when we met with groups. It was  
11 powerful, and we saw your dedication -- I mean, way before  
12 the Inquiry, of course. And you have an impact not only in  
13 Quebec or this beautiful side of the country that they call  
14 Canada; there's a woman who said to me, "Can you say hello  
15 on my behalf." Mary Graham -- yes.

16 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Oh, Mary -- where's  
17 the camera? Mary, thank you, Mary. You make me stronger  
18 too, sister. I have many sisters across this land; and I  
19 lost one sister and I gained so many. That's amazing; my  
20 heart is in Winnipeg. I know they healed me there, they  
21 were so kind to me there. And I also know, to be part of a  
22 family when they're hurting -- we always hurt the ones we  
23 love.

24 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** Thank you,  
25 thank you for coming in Ste. Eustache last August -- to

1 guide us, to remind us why we're here, why we're part of  
2 this journey, to give us the love from your people. And  
3 most of all, to find your blanket.

4 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** I know, my blankie --

5 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** I worried so  
6 much, the hotel said they have it, so merci beaucoup. And  
7 I know our path will not end here. And yes, if we have  
8 another beautiful, important day in Ottawa, I don't know  
9 why you said Ottawa -- but I'm okay. We need you. Merci  
10 beaucoup, beaucoup, beaucoup.

11 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** Thank you.

12 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** I don't want  
13 to repeat what has been said. I just want to express my  
14 gratitude for all that you have taught us here today and  
15 shared with us, about your sister and about you. And about  
16 your journey. I was going to say 'your work', but that's  
17 not the right word. And thank you for the guidance that  
18 you have given us in our small encounters at rallies or in  
19 meeting spaces, and now here. Thank you, thank you so  
20 much.

21 **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** My honour; thank you.

22 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So I will ask the  
23 Commissioners to close this session.

24 **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Cheryl, est-*  
25 *ce que tu accepterais un cadeau de notre part?*

1                   **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** *Oui, avec Plaisir.*

2                   **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Moi je suis*  
3 *chanceuse, j'ai deux grand-mères. Une grand-mère qui parle*  
4 *français puis une grand-mère qui parle anglais. Je suis la*  
5 *seule qui a deux grand-mères. C'est comme ça, et Bernie*  
6 *dans son territoire ils ont été très très touchés par*  
7 *toutes les femmes autochtones qui osent venir ici*  
8 *rencontrer leurs vérités, partager leurs vérités. Alors,*  
9 *les femmes de Haida Gwaii ont décidé de donner des plumes*  
10 *d'aigle a toutes les familles qui viennent ici. Oui, et*  
11 *évidemment nous t'offrons ces plumes-là, une plume qui*  
12 *viens d'un autre territoire à Sechelt au B.C., ou l'a*  
13 *encore des femmes ont acceptées de nous offrir ces plumes.*  
14 *À travers le Canada, beaucoup de nations on répondu à cet*  
15 *appel. Donc, nous sommes fiers, nous allons vous donner*  
16 *du thé du Labrador, des petites graines pour faire pousser*  
17 *une plante.*

18                   **MS. CHERYL MCDONALD:** *Oui.*

19                   **COMMISSIONER MICHÈLE AUDETTE:** *Oui, puis*  
20 *envoyez-nous des photos de la plante, mais c'est une*  
21 *renaissance. Alors c'est ma grand-mère Penelope qui va*  
22 *vous l'offrir. Alors les gens dans la salle, si vous*  
23 *voulez donner de l'amour de et l'espoir, vous êtes la*  
24 *bienvenue. Merci beaucoup.*

25                   **MS. MOREEN KONWATSITSAWI MELOCHE:** *Okay,*

1       *Niá:wen*, Cheryl. For the others, lunch is ready in the  
2       room next door. Drink lots of water, please, we're going  
3       to come to our next testimony at 1:45. *Migwetch*, thank  
4       you.

5  
6       **--- Exhibits (code: P01P13P0101)**

7       **Exhibit 1:** Five folders of digital images displayed  
8       during the public testimony of Cheryl  
9       McDonald; Folder 0 "Family" - eight images;  
10      Folder 1 "Sister" - nine images; Folder 2  
11      "Healing" - 28 images; Folder 3 "Advocacy" -  
12      five images; Folder 4 "Cheryl" - 17 images.

13      --- Upon adjourning at 12:24

14  
15                   LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

16  
17      I, Shirley Chang, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I  
18      have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and  
19      accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this  
20      matter.

21  
22                   

23  
24      Shirley Chang

25      March 16, 2018