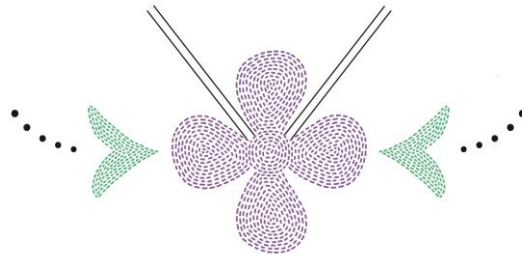


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
Holiday Inn Airport
Calgary, Alberta**



PUBLIC

Friday November 16, 2018

Statement - Volume 582

**Michelle Robinson, In relation to Janel Squirrel,
Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull, Joey
English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms**

Statement gathered by Bonnie George

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.

41 - 5450 Canotek Road, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 9G2

E-mail: info@irri.net - Phone: 613-748-6043 - Fax: 613-748-8246

II

NOTE

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

III

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement Volume 582

November 16, 2018

Witness: Michelle Robinson

PAGE

Statement gatherer: Bonnie George

Statement of Michelle Robinson 1

Court transcriber's certificate 57

Statement gatherer: Bonnie George

Documents submitted with testimony: none.

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 Calgary, Alberta

2 --- Upon commencing on Friday, November 16, 2018 at 1:04 p.m.

3 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** Okay, this is Michelle
4 Robinson and I am Bonnie George. I'm the statement taker
5 for the National Inquiry into the murdered and missing
6 Indigenous women, and we're in Calgary, Alberta. And today
7 is November 16th, 2018, and it's 1:04. Michelle?

8 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** Oh sure. I want to
9 acknowledge we're on the lands of the Blackfoot
10 Confederacy. To the south of the U.S./Canadian border are
11 the Blackfeet, north of the border are the Siksika, Kainai
12 and Piikani of the Confederacy. These lands are now Treaty
13 7, signed in 1877, with signatories that include the
14 Blackfoot Confederacy, the Stoney-Nakoda, Wesley, Chiniki
15 and Bearspaw Nations, and the Tsuut'ina Nation. I
16 acknowledge all First Nation Métis and Inuit status and
17 non-status across Turtle Island as the keepers of this
18 land. Oki, I'm mááhk ---

19 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** Can you spell that?

20 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** Sure.

21 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** Just for the record,
22 because we're going to have this transcribed.

23 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** Sure.

24 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** Okay.

25 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** What would you like

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 me to respell?

2 MS. BONNIE GEORGE: Your nation.

3 MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON: Oh, my nation on my
4 *Indian Act* Imposed Status Card is Yellowknives Dene, but
5 I'm Sahtu Dene.

6 MS. BONNIE GEORGE: Dene is D-E-N-E?

7 MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON: Yeah.

8 MS. BONNIE GEORGE: Okay.

9 MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON: And that's the
10 Canadian, but we are Sahtu Dene.

11 MS. BONNIE GEORGE: Sahtu, can you spell
12 Sahtu?

13 MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON: Yeah S-A-H-T-U.

14 MS. BONNIE GEORGE: Okay.

15 MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON: Yeah.

16 MS. BONNIE GEORGE: Thank you.

17 MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON: Oki, mááhk
18 ksiistsikom náápiáakii, or Red Thunder Woman in Blackfoot.
19 My spirit name is Red Thunder Woman, given to me in
20 ceremony. My humblest apologies to the Blackfoot Elders
21 and language keepers as I try to learn the proper
22 pronunciation.

23 I'm Michelle Robinson, I was born in Calgary
24 as Michelle Elliott, a very English name that has afforded

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 me great privilege in an English colonial world. My mother
2 is Slavey Dene or Sahtu Dene, but my *Indian Act* Imposed
3 Status card by the Canadian Government says Yellowknives
4 Dene. My father is Canadian, so Canadian that I'm a
5 daughter of the Mayflower and a daughter of the American
6 Revolution, while having an *Indian Act* imposed status card.
7 I acknowledge my Dene lineage, that I was born in Calgary
8 but my family is not part of the Treaty 7 signatories. My
9 Dene lineage roots me in the land of the Hare People, also
10 called the Great Bear Lake People in Treaty 11. I am
11 native to Turtle Island and my Dene Nation is a visitor to
12 this area of Klincho-Tinay-Indihay in Sahtu Dene, meaning
13 Many Horse Town, named after the Calgary Stampede.

14 I do not speak on behalf of my family or
15 community, I share my own perspectives and experiences. I
16 think I might start with what I said on November 2nd in a
17 conversation about Cindy Gladue.

18 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** Can you spell Gladue?

19 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** Yeah, G-L-A-D-U-E.

20 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** Just for the record,
21 thank you.

22 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** Sure. I am the
23 Indigenous Liaison for a 12 community safety initiative, a
24 committee member of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 Women Calgary Committee, Co-Founder of VOICES, a group
2 advocating for the two spirit and queer people of colour in
3 Calgary, and I am the National Vice-Chair of Membership and
4 Organization for the Indigenous Peoples Commission. I am
5 also the first First Nation to run for the City Council of
6 Calgary, and now have a podcast named -- called Calgary --
7 Native Calgarian.

8 I ask you to listen with your heart. There
9 are many times I have a hard time talking about these
10 issues as I'm keenly aware of the misinformation about
11 Indigenous people that has resulted in the dehumanization
12 of Indigenous people, our cultures and land ownership due
13 to Canada's longstanding history of propaganda against
14 Indigenous people.

15 The first issue I have to deal with is the
16 bias towards our people and myself. We are pan-indigenized
17 in the eyes of Canada. We are not seen for our distinct
18 nations, our rich cultures and intricate languages. So if
19 one of us makes a mistake, it's not only expected, but it
20 adds to the stereotypes perpetrated by the Canadian
21 Government about Indigenous and doesn't respect our rights.

22 I start my speeches to deconstruct negative
23 thoughts about acknowledging things like that I pay taxes,
24 I acknowledge I didn't get a free university education, and

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 that my contribution to society as a worker, as a geomatic
2 drafter, a former business owner, and as a past and current
3 candidate for City Council, along with my volunteer work,
4 is worthy of respect as it would be for anyone who doesn't
5 identify as Indigenous. I have to prove my humanity and
6 that I don't lead a so-called high risk lifestyle. A
7 stereotype that has been given in order to even begin these
8 conversations.

9 We don't see printed in media the structural
10 and legislative imbalances imposed by the Canadian
11 Government onto Indigenous people that result in poverty
12 related traumas, addictions and overall colonial violence.
13 When I say my mistakes are on me, I hope that you don't
14 look down on Indigenous people as a whole, or Indigenous
15 women, the Dene Nation or my humanity. But that's my daily
16 reality as an Indigenous woman just speaking before you.

17 On the flipside, structural racism
18 perpetrated by the Canadian people onto Indigenous has also
19 created structures of internalized racism and sexism. And
20 that many people call lateral violence. So when I say my
21 mistakes are on me, my hope is that the Indigenous in the
22 room don't look down upon the Dene, the Sahtu Dene,
23 Indigenous women or worse, themselves in any way. We are
24 proud people in a ridiculous situation in Canada, but the

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 normalized racism and segregation in Canada makes these
2 struggles invisible to non-Indigenous.

3 While those types of structures are in
4 place, I don't really care about those issues nearly as
5 much as I care about respecting Cindy Gladue's children in
6 this case today, and anyone in the Calgary area that I'm
7 going to speak of and their families, Cindy Gladue's
8 mother, her extended family, her legacy and her dignity as
9 the Alberta injustice system and all levels of government
10 have already perpetrated on her. The dehumanization is
11 rooted in the case of Cindy Gladue.

12 The facts are accessible for all to read in
13 reports. On June 22nd, 2011, she was found deceased. The
14 end of March 2015 was really hard on the Indigenous
15 community, particularly those of us affected by violence
16 against Indigenous women, with the not guilty verdict of
17 Bradley Barton, the white truck driver that was freed by
18 two ends of the court playing semantics on the method of
19 death used against Cindy Gladue's sacred sexual organs, and
20 used as talking points instead of honouring her life and
21 not giving her justice.

22 I want to give you a snapshot of this moment
23 from my perspective. Josie Nepinak, the Executive Director
24 of Awo Taan Healing Lodge and the Missing and Murdered

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 Indigenous Women Calgary Committee, had just had a
2 roundtable of family with missing and murdered loved ones
3 at the John Dutton Theatre and with the Indigenous Affairs
4 critic at the time, Caroline Bennett, in the crowd as a
5 witness. We were focussed on getting the report prepared
6 and wrapped up in a conversation to be presentable and
7 respectful, and in the manner to give to influential
8 politicians and policy people to honour those heartbreaking
9 truths.

10 When the verdict came out we were aware of
11 the issues of missing and murdered Indigenous women not
12 being on the radar of the current Federal Government, and
13 the atmosphere was one of disbelief that there wasn't more
14 outcry. At times it was so heavy it was suffocating. When
15 the call went out, Josie initiated the Calgary callout, and
16 that we must participate in that national outcry against
17 that verdict, because if we didn't it would just be used
18 against all of us my daughter.

19 So our team went to work. And I got a
20 friend, [R.R.] from CommunityWise, to lend us their
21 speaker, Angela Sterritt did the posters for all the
22 rallies nationally, Chantal Chagnon, a local committee
23 member, did a press release and we got our speeches
24 together.

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 The day of the rally was April 2nd, and
2 Cheryle Chagnon-Greyeyes was gifted tobacco and did the
3 opening prayer. The police were asked in advance and were
4 thanked for coming. We passed around journals, pens and
5 sticky notes to sign to give to the family. We said the
6 statement from the Gladue family, from Donna Gladue, the
7 mother of Cindy Gladue. We gave a moment of silence for
8 Cindy. I spoke about community building and thanked the
9 huge work of Idle No More, gave resources to 211, the
10 Distress Centre in Calgary and Lethbridge, and encouraged
11 all to reach out to those that had survived trauma. We
12 spoke of the injustices and turned to restorative justice
13 models of each native -- or of each Nation as suggestions
14 for answers. While originally we had a petition that day,
15 the Alberta Crown prosecution said that they would be
16 appealing the acquittal.

17 On September 25th of this year we had a
18 second rally for Cindy Gladue called Our Breaking Point at
19 the same location we had the first one, Hotchkiss Gardens.
20 We called it "a community conversation on the treatment of
21 Cindy Gladue and violence against Indigenous women in
22 Canada's criminal system". And the purpose was to centre
23 community voices in essential conversations about
24 transformative change in Canadian systems of justice, to

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 inform and empower communities to understand and respond to
2 the injustice faced by Indigenous women in the Canadian
3 criminal justice system.

4 I did the opening remarks, Josie also did.
5 We had Erin Salomons from Elizabeth Fry speak; Tyler
6 Makinaw from the Calgary Legal Guidance was asked to speak
7 but he couldn't come for whichever reason; Stephanie
8 English, the mother of Joey English, and Alice English
9 spoke; Tanya Crowshoe, the auntie of Colton Crowshoe; and a
10 mother of a daughter that had died spoke, and we wrapped up
11 by 4:30.

12 We gave out fact sheets prepared by Awo Taan
13 Healing Lodge, a few gift bags for our speakers, and
14 unfortunately there were non-Indigenous faces that had
15 recently had a violent death in their family right in our
16 backyard. Not in my personal backyard, but my community is
17 Abbeydale and it was in Marlborough Park, which is
18 literally across the street from my community. Of course
19 we know the facts about the case and we are still awaiting
20 justice in this case.

21 Today we have to -- today we have a change
22 in government, we have a National Inquiry which I'm lucky
23 enough to be giving a statement to at the moment, and lots
24 of talk about reconciliation. We are aware of other

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 unequally awful verdicts from Tina Fontaine to Colton
2 Boushie, and locally Joey English's body also not buried
3 whole, and her family left grieving.

4 Indigenous need to be seen as people,
5 Canadian society needs to change with anti-racism training,
6 Indigenous education and self-reflection, all listed in the
7 1994 Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation
8 Commission, and all listed in the over 400 recommendations
9 of the World Commission on Aboriginal People. Seeing all
10 the images of people dressed up as Indians for Halloween or
11 a logo on a sports jersey while our people are not even
12 allowed in with regalia in the court system shows the
13 continued dehumanization present today. No longer are the
14 excuses that resources aren't available, it's just a matter
15 of which medium do people prefer to learn from. Podcasts,
16 videos, articles, books, reports, documentaries, there's so
17 many available that I couldn't dream of as a child.

18 I looked up the definition of "humanize".
19 Oxford said, "To make something more humane or civilized;
20 give something a human character". I found that so telling
21 in a society that has been told in propoganda for over 400
22 years that Indigenous are savage, uncivilized and lack the
23 qualities of modern society.

24 I want to talk to -- oh, I was giving this

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 speech to future social workers, and I wanted to talk to
2 them more about the pipeline of child apprehension that
3 leads to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.
4 But sadly I know that their extreme biases and the
5 assumptions and stereotypes that they've been told their
6 whole life is impossible to even really comprehend the idea
7 of the child apprehension system being part of the issue of
8 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

9 Humanizing Indigenous people by a so-called
10 high risk lifestyle are not by choice, but are by a design
11 through the *Indian Act*. The hopes that Cindy Gladue's
12 death is properly honoured with some justice, and that her
13 death is known as an act of colonial violence, should be
14 obvious to Canadians, but it's not because of the lack of
15 education on these Canadian imposed systems.

16 The institutions act as barriers for
17 Indigenous, and that knowledge can be a part of the
18 solution of stopping the genocide of Indigenous that we've
19 faced ever since we've been so-called discovered, rather
20 than we discovered Christopher Columbus on the shores.
21 Humanizing us as people on our experiences will be a part
22 of the path of change.

23 So that's what I said just very recently
24 actually, about Cindy Gladue. We had done a conversation

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 to these young social workers about what it's like to be
2 Indigenous, and this report, Our Breaking Point, kind of
3 does violation of rights of life and death. It was
4 actually done by the Alberta Institute of Aboriginal Women.
5 They're -- let me just say that one more time. The
6 Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. That's
7 who put this together, and they're also the interveners
8 along with Women's Legal Education Action Fund on the Cindy
9 Gladue trials.

10 And it's incredibly important to talk about
11 these things because this is my reality today. I'm a
12 professional, I do volunteer committee work, and yet I know
13 that if my daughter or myself are at all murdered, that the
14 Canadian Government, the Canadian legal system, the Alberta
15 legal system and locally here in Calgary, we will not be
16 respected as regular people as if we weren't Indigenous.

17 So there was a few other things that I
18 wanted to remember to say, and that was that on February
19 27th, 2015, as a volunteer of the Missing and Murdered
20 Indigenous Women's Committee, we did a roundtable
21 discussion and we had centred on the lives of about four
22 families. And we came out with a report that talked about
23 the purpose of the roundtable, the events of the day, the
24 emphasis on our culture, we had acknowledgements,

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 statistics, stories, recommendations and references. And
2 all of these were given to not just Caroline Bennett, but
3 many other levels of Government, and our witnesses were
4 also influential people that were supposed to continue the
5 work of trying to advocate for our people.

6 I see structural racism and sexism and
7 colonialism everywhere, including this Inquiry, because of
8 childhood traumas and the continued micro-aggressions of
9 all levels of society and government. Trust is completely
10 gone.

11 Trying to put my thoughts together for the
12 National Inquiry -- you know my Facebook feed, my social
13 media, my Twitter, it's filled with missing and murdered
14 Indigenous women, girls and two spirit that have gone
15 missing right now. Last night my own husband was in a car
16 looking for a young girl.

17 White women's stories of family violence,
18 brown women's stories of family violence, the story of a
19 trans-teen named Ally Steinfeld -- how two countries built
20 on patriarchy, colonialism and religious Christian values
21 and the erasure of Indigenous cannot see the hate they've
22 spread. None of these gender crimes are considered hate,
23 even though they are clearly rooted this way. None of the
24 violence against Indigenous are considered hates in a

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 colonial state. Everything in Canada is colonial violence
2 against Indigenous people from the stolen land, the
3 genocide, the policies creating generational trauma, it's
4 all rooted in hate.

5 The book by Sarah Carter, "The Importance of
6 Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western
7 Canada" in 2015, helped me heal because somebody finally
8 put in a comprehensive way the forced patriarchy and the
9 erasure of two spirit LGBTQ2 plus, and the root of gendered
10 colonial violence through legislation. The *Indian Act*, of
11 course, being the Federal equivalent.

12 I am 41, almost 42. I was born in Calgary.
13 I know I was an unplanned pregnancy. I was made from love
14 unlike my mother was the result of rape. My first memories
15 of life are violence of my Dene mother and my white father.
16 I know she loves me unconditionally. She did then and does
17 today. But today is different than when I was a child
18 because of the brain injury that she got from my father.
19 Her head was smashed in according to her family and her, so
20 the side of her one temple was damaged. And at the time I
21 wasn't there for that one particular moment. But she was
22 hospitalized and there was no charges against my dad, and
23 he was able to get full custody of my brother and I through
24 that. He was white, it was the 80s, and my grandfather who

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull, Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 was white, his father, made a political phone call to make
2 sure that it was going to be safely in my dad's hands and
3 not ever my mother's. And because of that I was really
4 programmed, a lot of propaganda and hate about Indigenous
5 people.

6 I later learned of what parental alienation
7 was, and I spent a lot of my 20s in counselling, trying to
8 deal with the domestic violence that my dad had perpetrated
9 on not just my mom, but on me and my brother after she was
10 gone as well. Because of the racism and sexism within my
11 own family I didn't realize I was dealing with something
12 called self-hate for a long time. By the time I was in
13 Grade 10 -- I actually kept a writing that I recently dug
14 out where I was so disconnected from my mother and my
15 Indigenous roots that even in 1992, my older than hills
16 teacher was trying to explain in the notes what
17 schizophrenia was and wasn't.

18 And so in 1992 I was about 15, 16 -- 15, and
19 I had no idea who I was and I was not doing well, even
20 though I acted like I was. So it took from about that time
21 and then even into my 30s, when I had my daughter at the
22 age of 30. On her due date was the day that Jackie
23 Crazybull was actually brutally murdered, and that was here
24 in Calgary. And that's still an unsolved missing and

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 murdered Indigenous women's case.

2 So I've gone to the -- February 14th is the
3 Valentine's Day March as it happened actually, and October
4 4th are the Sisters in Spirit rallies that happen
5 nationally. And I've been going to those ever since I've
6 had my daughter. But it took me a long time to get there.

7 And I was trying to determine how to talk
8 about putting together my family tree, but it's very, very
9 difficult to do that right now because going down the red
10 road is the better way to explain my connection to my
11 Indigenous roots. And I think that a lot of the Sixties
12 Scoop people have gone through a similar situation where
13 they're dealing with all this colonial violence that has
14 happened through their entire life, but not until they're
15 older do they understand why.

16 So I wanted to talk a little bit about my
17 great-grandmother. Her name was Mary Bewule. I don't know
18 how to say it, but she actually had three husbands, and
19 that was the last name of her last husband. And her third
20 husband, her last husband, was my grandmother's father.
21 And apparently there was a father out there that wrote
22 about my, my grandfather [Grandfather 1]. And my great-
23 grandmother died when my grandmother was two, outside of a
24 cabin in Fort Franklin. At the time they were -- both my

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 grandmother and my great-grandmother were fighting
2 pneumonia. So my grandfather Malo went to Fort Franklin to
3 try to get a doctor, but there was no medicine. While he
4 was gone Alice was -- my grandmother, was in the care of my
5 great-grandmother Mary, and Mary died of pneumonia. Alice
6 was in a swing above her and she had to be nursed to
7 health.

8 She was sent -- she was born in 1933 and
9 sent to the school in Fort Providence, the Indian
10 Residential School, at the age of two. The way my mother
11 described it to me was that in those days the laws didn't
12 allow fathers, aunts, grandparents to care for the
13 children, so all of the children were sent to the nuns. So
14 my, my grandmother went at the age of two to Sacred Heart
15 Residential School in Fort Providence. She wasn't allowed
16 to go home, even in the summer, and she went to school
17 there -- she only got her Grade 8, but she stayed there
18 until she was 16. So she was there for 14 years at least,
19 from what I've been told.

20 She worked at a hospital in Fort Providence,
21 Fort Smith, and then moved to Yellowknife. While she was
22 babysitting she was raped, which resulted in my mother.
23 And that's where she met her future husband, my grandfather
24 [Adoptive grandfather]. And I didn't write down a lot of

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 the things that happened there, but at the time of my birth
2 and at the time of my brother's birth, my family was
3 fighting a lot, fist fighting each other. And I later
4 found out down the road that what was happening at that
5 time was that my grandfather [Adoptive grandfather], was
6 actually going -- getting charged and going -- the whole
7 family was going through the court system to put him in
8 jail for molesting my family, for all of my aunts and my
9 mom and my uncles.

10 And so because of that, it made more sense
11 when I was trying to unpack the parental alienation, why my
12 white father kept saying that all Natives are, are dirty,
13 are molesters, and that there's no way, over his dead body,
14 would I ever see my family again. But I didn't understand
15 that it was just my grandfather, I thought it was all
16 Natives, and I really internalized that we have sexual
17 deviancy and that was a big part of a lot of the healing
18 and hurt I had to get over, which was part of the reason
19 why I referenced that book, "The Importance of Being
20 Monogamous" by Sarah Carter, because she really broke down
21 how it was forced Christianity and forced erasure of any
22 ideals outside the European paradigm that helped me realize
23 that it wasn't my family that was like that, it was
24 actually Indian Residential Schools, and the sickness of

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 the devil and all of this stuff that was forced on my
2 people.

3 So I learned a lot by phone calls, and it
4 wasn't until 2013 that I actually learned that my Grandma
5 went to Sacred Heart Residential School in Fort Providence.
6 She went there from 1935 until 1951. And it didn't make
7 sense to me for a long time why she would be there and only
8 have a Grade 8 education.

9 So I really internalized the propaganda that
10 Indigenous people were dumb people, because I went well
11 obviously, my Grandma had to go there for how many years in
12 order to get a Grade 8 education. Not understanding
13 government policy was forcing her to stay there, and that
14 she had nowhere else to go because the government would
15 never let her stay with her father. So as it turned out my
16 real grandfather -- or my real grandfather I'll never know
17 because of the rape. And my mother was adopted by this
18 fellow named [Adoptive grandfather], who later was
19 convicted of molesting his kids.

20 And I was saying that I have attended these
21 marches, but I've also attended Jackie Crazybull's marches
22 as well, because she was stabbed to death at the Stampede
23 the same time that my, my daughter was born. She was
24 actually killed on July 16th, 2007, and that was my

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 daughter's due date. My daughter wasn't born until the
2 21st.

3 In 2014 I went to Montreal as a Liberal, and
4 I met Bridget Tolley, where I got to see all of the reports
5 that I feel like I have to put all of these issues that we
6 face that I never wanted. And at the time Harper was in
7 charge, and it was just hard and exhausting because the
8 Canadian media wasn't really talking about the gravity of
9 the violence against Indigenous women. And we had passed a
10 motion for this Inquiry to even happen as part of our
11 election platform. And it was unanimous and it was hopeful
12 at the time, that this would happen.

13 And it was really validating to hear from
14 Bridget Tolley. A lot of the things that I was
15 experiencing locally and in the past were things that
16 happened all over the country for decades. Stampede 2014
17 changed my life.

18 There were two white grandparents and a
19 white little boy on the front of the Sun every single day,
20 but Colton Crowshoe was missing at the exact same time
21 without any media attention. I was actually walking my
22 dogs when I see his face on a poster that was put up in my
23 neighbourhood, and we started searching for three weeks
24 until his body was finally found on July 24th. That

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 literally is just like two communities over from right
2 here. The police are on record about making mistakes, but
3 they repeated those same mistakes with Indigenous women in
4 the area, and denied that it was race-based. I have worked
5 with the family since. Supported them in their marches,
6 their vigils, media, anything that they need.

7 Dawns Echoes Baptiste was another violent
8 rape and murder in my area. Whitehorn is just a couple of
9 communities from here. She was a 31 year old mother of
10 four, and her body was found in a Whitehorn on February
11 12th, 2015. And I did the vigil at the request of the
12 community. And there was a bus that came down from
13 Maskwacis, which is her home community. Our committee was
14 just preparing for this roundtable at the time that she had
15 died, and we had done that on top of Cindy Gladue's trial.
16 That's why it was so hard and so exhausting at that time.

17 On November 3rd, 2015, Janel Squirrel was
18 tortured and beaten to death. And I actually had gotten a
19 phone call from her, her family, specifically from her aunt
20 who has now passed away. And her aunt asked me to come and
21 help do media with the family because they were in no
22 position to do that. Which really emphasizes the huge gaps
23 in the system that we had at the time, and I would argue we
24 still have.

Michelle Robinson**(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)**

1 Today, right now, we have [J.R.], and she's
2 an employee through the Province that helps now when
3 there's an emergency and people die. But up until then, I
4 was filling a huge gap where families were being portrayed
5 wrongly in the media, were expected to give media responses
6 by media, and their stories just -- not just -- their
7 stories weren't believed by police, they weren't recorded
8 by police, the police were rude and had bias against the
9 families, the police would not always take down missing or
10 acknowledge that the family would say this is easily a
11 murder because of this and this, they would label things
12 suicides that were not suicides. And it was repeating over
13 and over and over and over.

14 And I would come, and I would bring my
15 smudge kit because the police would never have the empathy.
16 And there's a huge gap there, that when there's an
17 Indigenous family in crisis, there's not a victim response
18 unit. Here in Calgary it's every two working days. So if
19 something happens on a Thursday and the family is just
20 finding out on Thursday night, Friday of course they're not
21 going to call Victim Services. The police don't initiate
22 that so that Victim Services come to the family. So I
23 usually get a cold call out of the blue to come to a family
24 and help them, because there's no service available for

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 that.

2 And because all of this was all happening at
3 the time the Inquiry was launched, I had put my name in to
4 give a statement knowing a lot of these peoples' families
5 would never have the opportunity to tell their stories.
6 Even though I had put my name in right away as a volunteer
7 to talk about gaps in services that I was seeing, I was
8 never considered to be professional or given standing to
9 speak at the National Inquiry about the gaps in services
10 that I was easily seeing here, and possible solutions from
11 having Indigenous elders and Indigenous liaisons be a part
12 of the Crisis Teams, trauma informed care if there's no
13 trauma informed care in Calgary, and certainly not by the
14 police. And these Victim Services that they do have are
15 not services that are trauma informed. So these were
16 things that I wanted the Inquiry to know that I was seeing
17 as just a volunteer on the ground, because it was out of my
18 scope technically with my job I couldn't be charging for
19 it.

20 English -- Joey English's body was reported
21 missing on June 10th -- or June 9th, 2016. Her body parts
22 were found on June 11th. I'll emphasize it again, her body
23 parts. The media and police crudely used the term
24 dismembered, and that stuck.

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 Joey English's sister Alice English died a
2 year earlier, but it was ruled a suicide, even though
3 Stephanie English, Joey and Alice's mom, does not agree
4 with that. I'm honoured to know Stephanie English, and I
5 knew just like others, the timing of having to register for
6 this Inquiry and the continuous loss of information would
7 not allow her time at this table. And I'm grateful to have
8 this eagle feather that she gifted me in the hopes that I
9 would be able to remember the important details that I know
10 would not be said on behalf of -- and if there's anybody
11 else that should be speaking at this, it should be her, but
12 apparently there's a registration issue which I found
13 interesting. Because I as a person, I put my name in
14 multiple times, and I even got a hold of a lawyer who put
15 me as part of a group to get standing, just in order to
16 make sure that I could have a moment here. Because even
17 two weeks ago I didn't think I would have this moment now,
18 today.

19 This one today is last minute, and how I was
20 contacted was by a Harper supporter. She contacted me
21 through Facebook, and I looked at her Facebook profile and
22 there she was with Stephen Harper. And for me -- he was
23 the man who actually did the cuts to prevention of violence
24 programs and the urban Indigenous supports that were

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 directly resulting in the uptick of all of the Indigenous
2 deaths that I was dealing with. So just to put that in
3 perspective, the urban Indigenous supports, there's an
4 organization that was here called KWAI (phonetic), and it
5 was completely gutted because of Harper's cuts.

6 Because at the time Rona Ambrose was the
7 Women's Chair or whatever it was, she cut all of these
8 programs of violence against -- violence prevention
9 programs. So between that and the urban Indigenous
10 supports, then we got this huge uptick of missing and
11 murdered Indigenous people in our area. And it was so
12 insulting to have the Inquiry that has already lost my
13 information multiple times, that won't allow these families
14 to be able to speak, that it was a Harper supporter that
15 contacted me through Facebook. It was just like another
16 instance of like more colonial trauma from this, from this
17 whole system.

18 So on March 21st, 2017, I actually gave a
19 statement in court for Janel Squirrel, because by that time
20 we had gone through multiple media instances, and vigils,
21 and court appearances, and it was the victim impact
22 statement that I made in court, how this crime had affected
23 me physically. I said that I had aged, I don't sleep well,
24 I cry. I know that racism and sexism has physical effects

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 on the body published through academia, which is called
2 racial battle fatigue, which I know is a huge contributing
3 factor, both on me and Janel's case. I've lost interest in
4 many things from dog walks to working out, so I have to
5 push myself to get over those challenges.

6 How has the crime affected me emotionally?
7 I get upset thinking about [Janel's three children] being
8 without their mother. I get upset thinking about Jonas,
9 Janel's partner, losing the mother of his children. I get
10 upset thinking about Fay Ann, the mother of Janel Squirrel,
11 not having her daughter or her grandkids. [*Seven lines*
12 *redacted - personal information*].

13 I get upset thinking about Thomas Squirrel,
14 the father of Janel Squirrel, losing a daughter and how it
15 impacted him in so many ways. The fact of distance
16 exacerbated the situation because Thomas doesn't live here,
17 he lives out in Saskatchewan.

18 This has impacted so many people that will
19 no longer have -- no longer get to have Janel in their
20 life, so Thomas won't get to see his grandkids, and the
21 grandmother doesn't get to see the grandkids. I feel the
22 impact and I'm not even in the family. I get upset
23 thinking about how I will need to give those answers to her
24 three kids down the road, or at least I hope to. It hurts

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 to know she is nothing more than a stat of a missing and
2 murdered Indigenous mother in the eyes of the bigger
3 picture of Canada. She was a mother, a partner, a
4 daughter, a niece and a light to so many people around her,
5 and now she's gone.

6 How this crime has affected me financially?
7 This is just one of the many families that I've supported,
8 and I've spent countless hours with Fay Ann about Janel. I
9 will never regret one second of that time. But in this
10 society time is money. And although my position is
11 Indigenous Liaison for a non-profit on crime prevention,
12 it's out of my mandate. I'm not compensated for calls that
13 would be at all times of the night or day. I would use my
14 personal gas and my vehicle to go over to her in her time
15 of need way outside of my mandate.

16 So this became a personal friendship with
17 the family, with Janel and her children and the best
18 interests at heart. It became spiritual which no money can
19 probably compensate. And Indigenous ways, when someone is
20 called upon when relationships are built, it has to be
21 honoured. So it's not something that I could just say no
22 to because it's out of my mandate. It was something that I
23 was asked to do, and we built those relationships of trust.
24 And because of their situation of trauma I had to honour

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 what they were going through. Since the time that this was
2 written, Janel's aunt who brought me in has died. So she's
3 now buried beside Janel.

4 So how has this crime affected my life? I
5 don't feel safe, I worry about my daughter in this world.
6 I felt mixed martial arts would be a good place for my
7 daughter, and thankfully she likes that. Janel's death
8 makes all the stats on Indigenous women more real to me,
9 making an atmosphere that is unsafe for Indigenous women.
10 After seeing the media and the Justice talk about this
11 case, I have lost faith in the justice system and the
12 reporting in the media.

13 And I'll just expand on that because what
14 happens is that the Crown wants to make a case. So they'll
15 just leave out details in order to make their case. And
16 vice versa with the defence. They can say whatever they
17 want to try to dispute anything. So it's not the truth
18 from either the defence or either the Crown, it's not a
19 complete picture. And the family is left in the, in this
20 gray area.

21 And to give you an example, what happened in
22 Janel's case was this fellow named Leo, he was supposed to
23 be her sober friend. She was forced to go into this
24 addictions services in order to keep custody of her kids.

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 She was forced to be there, she was forced to be with this
2 man. She was forced to live in a house with this man under
3 the Alberta Government's Addiction Program. And he killed
4 her. So the Crown made it sound like they were lovers when
5 they weren't lovers at all.

6 And it was so upsetting to her partner who
7 was -- like they were struggling with addiction, trying to
8 keep their kids, and then she gets brutally murdered. And
9 that story didn't come out in the media. The media and the
10 police just -- and the Crown wanted to make it they were
11 just lovers and it was a domestic violence situation and it
12 wasn't. It was court imposed by the -- in order to keep
13 her kids, so the Child Services. It was never properly
14 acknowledged in that way, that they were literally directly
15 responsible for those two being together. Because she was
16 just a mom trying to keep her kids. But that wasn't the
17 narrative that was in the media, that wasn't the narrative
18 that was in the -- by the Crown. Because they just wanted
19 to make the case to get Leo to be in jail. So they never
20 told that truth.

21 So her partner Jonas -- first of all, people
22 thought he killed her. So people were actually attacking
23 him, and he was like I wasn't the one who killed her, they
24 reported it wrong. And on top of that he not only lost his

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 partner and the mother of his children, but he didn't know
2 how to cope with it anyway. He didn't have proper helping
3 skills. So I was telling him to put his name in to talk
4 about this at the Inquiry. [*Five lines redacted - personal*
5 *information*].

6 So sometimes I'll see him on the streets,
7 sometimes I'll see him like at free events where you get
8 like free food. And yeah, I worry about him because
9 however he deals with this he deals with it, but the aunt
10 is gone, and grandfather's not in the picture, so there's
11 so many levels of these three kids never knowing the truth.
12 And I'm really -- I worry about him. Anyway, I didn't mean
13 to go so off the script.

14 I feel more distant about my role in society
15 because I'm an Indigenous woman too. Because I know that
16 it doesn't matter what happens, the Crown will say what
17 they want, the media will say what they want, and the
18 police will say what they want. But that's never the truth
19 anymore. So that's that disconnect.

20 Violence against women and Indigenous women
21 is right in my neighbourhood of Calgary. Only now it has
22 Janel's face to it as a regular reminder on my heart and
23 my spirit. Her family are so pained by this, and it has
24 resulted in very damaging trauma that has hurt many

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 relationships. Children now without their mother whose
2 name was so badly tarnished in the media and in the case.
3 These kids will never know the truth about their mother if
4 they just rely on the media.

5 And I personally feel very hurt by that,
6 because I know what it's like to read in the media, oh
7 Aboriginal people are supposed to be obese, and Aboriginal
8 people have addiction, and Aboriginal people have genetic
9 factors, blah, blah, blah.

10 We know that that's a colonial narrative,
11 not the truth. Never talking about legislative issues and
12 never talking about underlying intergenerational trauma
13 that causes addiction, that causes -- they never talk about
14 the health issues from, you know, starvation at the Indian
15 Residential Schools, the medical trauma and interventions
16 that they actually did on kids at the schools, never talk
17 about the extreme change in our diet that we had prior to
18 colonialism. Like these are never the factors they talk
19 about that cause so much trauma and pain. God, I hate the
20 media.

21 I have anxiety about how I'll talk to her
22 kids as adults, when the truth is about her passing,
23 assuming they even want to talk about it. I don't know how
24 to do this without furthering their feelings -- without

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 furthering their feelings either as an Indigenous woman.
2 Oh, because I'm an Indigenous woman I don't know if I will
3 be credible in their eyes. Because if I'm a person
4 contradicting the media and the justice reports, how will
5 they take what I'm saying seriously? Because I know how
6 many decades it took for me to break through that. So I
7 don't even know if that opportunity will work.

8 They will be told on true stereotypes of
9 Indigenous people and their mother, creating internalized
10 negative feelings. Or do I just literally let her legacy
11 go, which is not something I could have peace with. No
12 child or adult should be left wondering about the truth of
13 their mother, and I know that firsthand. I haven't got
14 into that, I will though.

15 Janel Squirrel was a beautiful soul who was
16 trying to do everything she could to have her kids back,
17 even if that meant being a program with her killer.
18 Regardless of what her kids' journey will be, their voice
19 is not present because they are kids. That silence hurts
20 me very deeply as a mother, but this is more trauma
21 inflicted on her kids, perpetrating intergenerational
22 trauma. It hurts me deeply knowing the greater impact on
23 my people and the boundaries of Canada, and how much harder
24 this will be on the future generations to heal because of

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 what I know they'll have to go through.

2 So I sang the Strong Women's Song in the
3 court and that felt pretty good. And I just -- it's a song
4 for all those who need it and call upon it. And it came
5 from the Kingston Prison for Women which was considered a
6 dungeon. I learned it from Chantal Chagnon, a Cree-Métis
7 here in Calgary, but the song became an anthem for
8 Indigenous women who had gone missing or murdered. I was
9 re-gifted the rights to sing that song at a gathering at
10 Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

11 Gaining the rights to sing that song is
12 important to all Indigenous people because we have to tell
13 our stories and the rights of how we can sing that song
14 before singing. So I sang that song thinking of Janel
15 being forced into her last moments of this earth into what
16 I considered a dungeon because she was beaten at the bottom
17 of a staircase in a basement, left to die. So that song
18 helped. It's supposed to help us heal, and I sang it and
19 it felt good to sing it.

20 But that's another gap in the system where
21 it should just be understood that when you're talking about
22 traumatizing things, that those -- like access to those
23 resources are available and they're not.

24 One of the bigger stories that I didn't even

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 get a chance to write was -- you know I wanted to make it
2 very clear that my, my story of even existing is only
3 because of violence that my great-grandmother, my
4 grandmother and my mom were able to get through in order
5 for me to even be here, because of what I know what they
6 went through.

7 I don't know how Alice lived at the age of
8 two with a dead mother under when she was sick too. Like
9 my daughter -- I have a little girl and I know 10 minutes
10 could be life or death, right? So how my grandmother
11 survived that, I have no idea. How my grandmother survived
12 Indian Residential School, I have no idea. Like I've read
13 stories of how they treated three year olds, four year
14 olds. I'm just glad they didn't throw her in a fire,
15 because I've heard stories like that took about babies.

16 I don't know -- I've been to Sacred Heart
17 Residential School grounds. The school isn't there
18 anymore, and before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
19 they put up a huge monument, bigger than this room, and it
20 just has all of the names of the people who died there.
21 And it's written in a really whitewashed way, where it
22 talks about all the people that died as if it was just
23 disease that killed people and not the bigger picture of,
24 you know, inadequate housing, inadequate clothes,

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 inadequate food, inadequate you know discipline measures,
2 inadequate culture, inadequate -- everything wrong with the
3 government policy of Indian Residential School.

4 I almost wish they would put up another
5 monument to acknowledge that, you know, there's more to the
6 story. But the monument is incredible, and it must have
7 been tens of thousands of dollars to get that one that was
8 up already. So I definitely honour the fact that at least
9 they did it.

10 But I've seen pictures of like little kids
11 being on boats from up the Mackenzie River, being forced to
12 go to Indian Residential School, and I just -- I don't know
13 how my grandmother lived, let alone my aunts and uncles
14 that also attended.

15 A funny story. So when my grandfather had
16 to go to jail my grandmother had all these kids, and some
17 of them had moved on, my mom being one of them. But my
18 aunt and uncle, the youngest ones, were forced to go to
19 Indian Residential School so that she could get education
20 and a job. So they were forced to attend as well. And I
21 can't imagine what that must have been like for her.

22 I know that my family, because they were
23 raised white, they've always talked about not fitting in,
24 Native enough. They haven't said lateral violence, they

Michelle Robinson**(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)**

1 haven't said internalized racism. I don't even know if my
2 family understands what internalized racism is. But I know
3 that they felt they didn't fit in at Indian Residential
4 School because they were white in their head. You know
5 they were raised white, thought white, acted white, but
6 they were not white.

7 So anyway, how they all lived I have no
8 idea. But to be fair, my Uncle [G.] has died since. He --
9 yeah, I don't know how to talk about his story. It's not
10 really my place to, but from my perspective I can say I
11 know that I was told by my dad all of the kids were
12 molested. And between that and you know him -- they all
13 drank, and I know him and my mom fought a bit, and he tried
14 to take off to go to China a lot. And when he came back he
15 needed to get dental work done, and the dentist didn't want
16 to do it, and he said no, I've got to get it done and he
17 died because he shouldn't have got it done because he was
18 obese, he was -- you know there's too many reasons why he
19 shouldn't have got it done, but it he did and my family
20 just -- well my grandmother respected his choice. But my
21 other aunt who's a lawyer wanted to actually sue.

22 Anyway, I should probably talk about my
23 story, which I've been totally avoiding because I wanted to
24 make sure I got out everybody else's story that needed to

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 be told, and what the atmosphere in Calgary was like --
2 well what it's been I guess, it hasn't stopped. Because
3 Dawns Echoes Baptiste's family, they just went through this
4 trial like a couple of months ago now, and the awful way
5 that she was raped and murdered was public knowledge now.
6 And it's been very hard.

7 Our community is so strong though. We still
8 bind together and we do these roundtables, we do vigils, we
9 do -- Walking with Our Sisters came here. That was an
10 incredible group effort from a lot of people. Hell yes,
11 there's so much internalized racism and all of these
12 things, but at the end of the day we need to do these
13 things to heal.

14 And before I get more into my story, I have
15 two eagle feathers. And one was given to me by Stephanie
16 English, helping her with Alice and Joey English's like
17 death -- I should talk about that.

18 The forms that you have to fill out are
19 inadequate, and they're traumatizing, and they're
20 expensive. And it's ridiculous to ask of marginalized
21 people to go through all of those things. There should be
22 a worker that helps them through it. I volunteered to
23 help. And huge gaps in services there, and you know to
24 expect things like case numbers and explicit details of

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 their child's death, and then to be denied. That was the
2 worst part, both were denied compensation in a lot of
3 things. And you know, expected to keep receipts and give
4 them to them, only to not be compensated. Not to be
5 compensated for their gas to go to Piikani, you know have
6 the wake and the funeral and that.

7 Like there were so many levels of this is a
8 disgusting travesty that I don't think white victims of --
9 would be treated in the way that they were treated. Again,
10 no smudge kits, no cultural healing at all. I just found
11 the whole process sickening. But I couldn't imagine making
12 a mother go through that alone while she's taking care of
13 not just her dead daughter's children, but her own
14 children. The system I can't believe is set up so awful
15 for people to be re-traumatized by the system.

16 Another death that I really wanted to shed
17 some light on was Cheyenne Toms. Cheyenne was found again
18 just in Marlborough Park, right across the street from my
19 community. So this is all in my community. And her death
20 was labelled an overdose suicide. And again, that's
21 incredibly unfair because she just aged out of the system.
22 She was apprehended by the system, not given proper skills.

23 And I went to her funeral and it was -- the
24 people who got up and spoke were all kids that were somehow

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 part of the child welfare system. And they all spoke of
2 how they were misfits, how they didn't belong in society,
3 how despite their misfit status they, you know persevered
4 and had fun. And they always talked about how I guess we
5 shouldn't talk about these things.

6 Each speaker said these things exactly.
7 They're the same age and they were white, they were
8 Indigenous, they were all different races. The system of
9 the Child welfare makes these kids feel like misfits, like
10 they don't belong, and they traumatize them every step of
11 the way. And the fact that these kids have fun stories
12 from like around this stupid system, just shows how
13 resilient they were. And I was sad leaving that funeral,
14 not just because she was gone and alienated from her mom
15 because of the system, but because all of these kids felt
16 too alienated as part of society. They don't have that
17 sense of community at all.

18 And of course the system, just like the
19 court system has at the Crown level, and the policing, they
20 did the same thing about the Toms family, mom to the kids.
21 That she was this, that she was that, and she wasn't any of
22 those things. They were trying to reconnect as a family,
23 but because of all the traumas that all of them had, they
24 just couldn't make it work and had to be separated. [Two

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 *lines redacted pursuant to Rule 55]*. Because she had just
2 aged out of the system, the family was trying to do some
3 kind of reconnecting, but with no support systems in place
4 and all of the trauma, there was no way that was going to
5 work.

6 So to say that there's huge gaps in the
7 system that are causing missing and murdered Indigenous
8 women is a complete understatement, and I cannot believe
9 that after all of the recourse that Bridge Tolley has shown
10 us, and here in Alberta there are nine different reports of
11 -- from each year that were never implemented on Child
12 welfare reform. Which just shows between that, cuts for
13 family violence prevention programs that Rona Ambrose cut,
14 and the cuts that Harper did to all Indigenous services
15 across the country including urban, like all of these
16 things perpetuated barriers against people who even want to
17 do good. There's no services available, the gaps are
18 extreme.

19 So it's not falling between the cracks, it's
20 like canyons. There's no community. The community is for
21 the upper elite, not for Indigenous. And that's the way
22 the *Indian Act* has always wanted it, that's the way all of
23 these legislative, you know barriers and policies have
24 always been. And that is taking away a generation of

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 mothers. Now all of these children have to deal without
2 these ramifications.

3 So I was gifted this eagle feather, and I'm
4 grateful for it, so that I hope somebody somewhere agrees
5 that there's more stories like Cheyenne's and that her --
6 she died on my birthday this year. And I took her mom to
7 the spot that she had died and we had some -- at all vigils
8 that's the song we sing to honour the women.

9 So my personal story, the reason why
10 obviously I try to help my community in any way I can is
11 that I was born into violence. My first memories are of
12 violence. So the day that I was separated from my mother
13 permanently was a day I'll never forget. Mom and dad were
14 fist fighting. We were actually at my dad's parents'.
15 They had figured that they were going to keep my brother
16 and I, and unbeknownst to my mom. So the fist fight broke
17 out in order for -- because she wanted to take us
18 obviously, and was not ready to be separated. My brother
19 was at that time 16 months old, so I was four.

20 And like I remember the smell, I remember
21 every little detail because he literally grabbed her by her
22 head and threw her into the car and would not let her out,
23 and just punched her until she wouldn't move anymore. And
24 I just seen her screaming in the passenger side, and they

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 took off. And I literally hadn't seen her for 10 years,
2 and I didn't know if she was alive. And my dad finally sat
3 us down and said your mother wants to get back into your
4 life. And to me I was like fuck, she's alive. And I
5 didn't even know she was alive for years of my life, years
6 of my childhood. This was the most influential person and
7 I was ripped away from her in a violent way, and never
8 allowed to speak about it again.

9 And my dad when he did start talking about
10 her, he claimed that she ran into an old friend and they
11 went to Vancouver together. And it turned out to be a
12 complete lie. So she did go to Vancouver, but it wasn't
13 with a boyfriend at all. And she went back to live with
14 her mom because my dad, when they got back to Calgary, he
15 had beat her so bad he smashed in her temple and she had to
16 be hospitalized from it.

17 So her mom obviously came down to look after
18 her and her brother -- brothers I should say. And she
19 moved with them to Edmonton. And her sister is a lawyer,
20 and at the time I didn't see my aunt as, you know, a
21 successful Indigenous lawyer, I seen her as a total awful
22 person who was really trying to break up my family.
23 Because my dad had reconnected with -- had connected with a
24 woman who I know call my stepmom.

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 And just the terminology. We weren't
2 allowed to call my mom "mom" anymore, it was -- my mom was
3 my stepmother. And whenever we talked about my mom, it was
4 my real mother as if you know -- like to always erase her.
5 So that parental alienation really was worked hard. Lies
6 about my mom, lies about Natives, lives about Indigenous
7 people, all of these things were always told to me.

8 So by the time I was in Grade 10 writing
9 about you know my life, it was like oh, but that's all
10 behind me, I'll never talk about my mom or anything like
11 that. And she -- and my aunt had worked really hard to try
12 to get visitation rights, and it was just painful. It was
13 a shitty, shitty childhood from that. And we had to go
14 through the court system, and you know I was really coached
15 about what to say, what not to say. A lot of that stuff
16 happened, you know -- and this was a white woman. There's
17 no way a political phone call from an old man to another
18 old man would have allowed status to keep the kids. Like
19 there was no, there was no fairness at all. Today -- in
20 today's day and age I hear women get all the rights. My
21 mom got zero rights when it came to trying to have custody,
22 trying to have visitation rights.

23 You know I tried to make peace with that,
24 because I don't know if I could be here right now if it

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 wasn't for the fact that all of that happened. And the
2 reason why is because I was raised white, and I have a
3 white sense of justice. So when I started to understand
4 all of the policies that happened against Indigenous
5 people, it was like this is the most unfair system I've
6 ever heard. And I've tried to convey that when talking
7 about it to anybody else. And so I don't have a lot of
8 that internalized racism when it comes to this anymore, I
9 healed from that from understanding the system, and
10 understanding the barriers that Indigenous people had to
11 face. And then understanding that, you know, the system
12 was cooked against my mom.

13 There was an Awo Taan Healing Lodge at that
14 time. Awo Taan is 25 years old and I'm 41, so it wasn't
15 even a thing at that time. So it's not like my mom had the
16 resources to run. They were screaming at each other, and
17 we were like in a townhouse type situation, so there's no
18 way none of the neighbours didn't hear what was happening.

19 But I remember those times and how it was
20 perfectly acceptable to beat your wife. Pierre Elliott
21 Trudeau openly did it in the House of Commons, joking --
22 made a sexist derogatory remarks about his wife and of
23 hitting people -- hitting his wife in the House of Commons.
24 It's on the records, in the minutes. And it's not funny.

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 But this is a time when Burt Reynolds was beating Loni
2 Anderson and that was normal. Sean Penn was beating
3 Madonna, and that was okay.

4 So it was a really -- like I knew at a very
5 young age I was really low on survival and having rights,
6 and you know, being spanked, being beaten, I thought that
7 was normal. And that was considered discipline. And it
8 was really hard for me when I wrote -- or reread this
9 statement that I made in Grade 10, because it was so
10 obvious it was so abusive.

11 So when I left my house finally as a
12 teenager -- my husband and I have been together since I was
13 16. So he's actually seen a lot of this insanity in my
14 life. And my dad was mad I left, which I think is insane.
15 But I think he was more mad that I left and I could start
16 thinking for myself and start understanding what abuse was.
17 And so for my 20th I was in a lot of counselling, I'm
18 learning domestic violence, I'm learning control. I would
19 argue I'm still codependent in a lot of ways, but it's all
20 part of that control and abuse that happens. And I was at
21 the very end learning what sexism was and realizing holy
22 shit, like this whole system is sexist.

23 And then when I had my daughter was when I
24 realized I've got to really deal with the racism that I

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 know is a thing. And I started walking down the Red Road,
2 and I got my name and I started to, you know, learn how to
3 make ribbon skirts and honour myself, and honour connection
4 to our ancestors. All of those things. Like so much has
5 happened since I had my daughter.

6 And then understanding the racism and
7 understanding the legislative structures that cause all of
8 these issues and barriers. And of course trying to honour
9 my -- what I knew was happening in my own community. So
10 that of course got me wanting to run, so I ran for City
11 hoping that a lot of these gaps that I see -- like you and
12 I know after this Inquiry is done, there's going to be a
13 whole bunch of recommendations. Most of them likely will
14 never be touched or looked upon, and they certainly won't
15 be implemented at the municipal level. Just like the TRC's
16 94 calls to action. The justice component, if that alone
17 was implemented at a municipal level, it could help
18 eliminate so many of these gaps that I see.

19 So for me I just feel really, you know,
20 overwhelmed and waiting for the next death, waiting for the
21 next march, the next vigil that we have to do. My house is
22 littered in posters that say you know "Stop Violence
23 Against Indigenous Women". I go out and I do speeches
24 usually for free, just to try to raise awareness.

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 I was at the University yesterday at Mount
2 Royal, and nobody knew what missing and murdered Indigenous
3 women were, no one. And nobody in the room identified as
4 Indigenous. And it was really a wakeup call. It's like it
5 doesn't matter how much work you do, people aren't going to
6 know what they don't want to know.

7 My daughter tried to give me a good
8 perspective and she said, "Mom, nobody, no kids watch the
9 news. Of course they don't know". So I'm like okay,
10 trying to have perspective. But it's that internalized
11 like sexism and racism that -- like being triggered and
12 manifesting itself again, knowing that no matter how much
13 we scream, how much marches we do, no matter how many
14 vigils we do, no matter how much information is out there,
15 there's just this disconnect.

16 And even with Cheyenne Toms' case, one of
17 the Executive Directors at one of the major domestic
18 violence shelters here, she and her daughter were somehow
19 connected, and she tried to get me to not associate with
20 her as missing and murdered Indigenous women. And I'm like
21 h'mm, guess what, not going to happen. So obviously, you
22 know, she's not going to stop me. But it just shows that
23 violence against us, that even you know people who should
24 know better, people who should be educated on this, they're

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 not only not educated on it, but they're actually the
2 perpetrators expecting me to cower when that's the last
3 thing I would ever do to somebody like that.

4 You know these truths needs to be spoken.
5 And just because society's not ready for them, doesn't mean
6 that they're not there. And to me they're obvious, but for
7 some reason people are so blind to this. And even after
8 all of this education through the Royal Commission on
9 Aboriginal People, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,
10 how many multiple reports from Amnesty International to the
11 U.N. that have talked about these things.

12 So I don't know if I've said everything I
13 need to say, but I kind of feel like I have. And I hope I
14 did it with enough professionalism that there's an
15 understanding it's not just about me and my personal case
16 in knowing that the police didn't charge anybody, nothing
17 will ever happen with that, it's that if that happened in
18 1980 in Calgary, and it is 2018 and I'm telling you the
19 exact same thing that happened to my mom has happened over
20 and over and over to other people, boy and girl, then this
21 is where we're at.

22 The reason that VOICES had to be made is
23 because there is so much racism, even in the gay and
24 lesbian community. Like they have APPs, dating sites, just

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 like heterosexuals do, only they'll say like no Asians, no
2 Natives, no -- and it's like that's racist and they don't
3 even know it. So if you're marginalized in a community --
4 and I should probably bring up I have two transgender
5 cousins, both Native, from my family. And because of the
6 taught homophobia, the taught transphobia through Indian
7 Residential School, they're at high, high risk, you know?
8 And I have had fights with my Catholic mother over these
9 things. Like if one of our cousins wants to use these
10 pronouns, use these pronouns. And my mom, she's like nope,
11 nope, nope. She's very Christian conservative, and this
12 way is the only way.

13 I can't even blame her, I can't even be mad
14 because she was beaten -- her existence is a miracle. She
15 should have died multiple times at the hands of my own
16 father, let alone her life experiences, you know? She was
17 a product of rape. I don't know, a lot of kids would have
18 been given up for adoption, maybe even killed on the spot,
19 maybe an abortion. But she was lucky.

20 I would imagine in 1956 up in Yellowknife
21 there probably wasn't a lot of options but to have a baby,
22 you know. But anyway, I guess it's that bigger, bigger
23 picture. I'm just bloody lucky to even be here knowing the
24 history of my own family, knowing the history of

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 colonialism, knowing Indian Residential School, knowing the
2 lack of understanding of violence against women, let alone
3 the cultural understanding of violence against Indigenous
4 women.

5 And even today my half brother and my mom
6 aren't really connected. And he's in frigging Thunder Bay
7 which is so racist, and he's even more visibly Native than
8 I am even though he talks white and acts white. I really
9 worry about him because I just -- he's the first one that
10 will get in a fight with someone over anything. If he can
11 fight he'll just fight because he's had a lot of trauma
12 he's never dealt with ever. So I worry, I worry about his
13 future. But I worry about my daughter's future most
14 because I know what's not available to her the moment
15 someone finds out she's Native.

16 And it was really hit home when I was at
17 Montreal with Bridget Tolley, because that was when Delilah
18 Saunders' sister Loretta had gone missing and everybody
19 thought she was white. So there was this national
20 spotlight on her until they realized she wasn't, and then
21 the media went silent. And when we realized that she was
22 Native, that was when we knew that's why the media quit
23 putting any spotlight on her.

24 And I later like got to know her sister, and

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 her sister actually ran away here, to get away from all of
2 that spotlight. And she came here and it was the first
3 time that she was going to speak and she couldn't. I said
4 you will speak more, and you will be given a spotlight. I
5 try to help families become strong so they can speak about
6 their, their situations. And even with her -- like she
7 confirmed it with me, that they got pulled over by the
8 police and that the police -- she said the reason why we
9 got away from this, Loretta said to Delilah, is because I
10 look white. If they would have known I was Native we would
11 not have gotten off so easily. Because she was working on
12 her MMIW thesis at the time.

13 And it's just too coincidental to have all
14 of these things that have happened in my life for me not to
15 be here telling you about them. We all know what's
16 happening to us, but we don't have any change in the system
17 and politicians with any -- they don't understand us so
18 they can't even make good changes. And I worry like with
19 Doug Ford -- I'm going to bring this up. There's an
20 anxiety that all Indigenous face because the future, we
21 don't know what that will be. And even for me as a -- I
22 know what Harper's policies did, and now I'm looking at
23 Doug Ford, you know, wrecking all that Indigenous education
24 curriculum that was supposed to be implemented. That's all

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 gone now.

2 And I was talking to university students, no
3 concept of what I was talking about until they read, you
4 know, Thomas King's book. And they still don't get it, and
5 they still don't understand MMIW at all. And I just see
6 that cycle perpetuating because Jason Kenney's likely going
7 to get, you know, in charge here. And as much as I like
8 Rachel Notley, I just know that these changes in the
9 curriculum aren't likely going to be implemented in time.
10 And you know federally, if Andrew Sheer gets in, like I
11 just have anxiety knowing what the future might be like,
12 not just for me but for the future generations.

13 How are you supposed -- I don't blame people
14 for people being addicts, I don't blame them for committing
15 suicide. There's a pretty strong history in case here, of
16 why the future doesn't matter. But I can't do that
17 publically, I have to encourage, I have to fight. Fight, I
18 have to fight all the time for policy change. Stupid
19 things like the Olympics came here. There's sports calls
20 to action that need implementation, it gave me a platform
21 to talk about that. It's pretty hard to talk about, you
22 know, sports implementation and new sports when we're still
23 focussing on, you know, housing and clean drinking water,
24 governance, language development. Those of course need to

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 be the priority.

2 But I needed to use this as a platform to
3 talk about if we gave kids sports, maybe that would give
4 them some hope outside of this ridiculous system that we
5 have with the *Indian Act* and shitty policies that are -- I
6 don't know why this is a -- it's funny. I talk about anti-
7 racism and anti-discrimination policies. This should be
8 nonpartisan. The irony is, being racist is a nonpartisan
9 thing. It's like you know, all of the parties are totally
10 on board with being racist towards Indigenous. So it's,
11 it's really hard, even as a Liberal to be talking within
12 the party, trying to educate the party on racism.

13 And it's so frustrating, it's so hard, to --
14 how do I give hope to the next generation, how do I lose my
15 anxiety knowing -- you know we all know what childhood
16 trauma does to the brain and that, so I may never lose my
17 anxiety. But I'd really like to stop that trauma for the
18 next generations. And I mean I think that the frameworks
19 have been there since 1996, and in the TRC, and hopefully
20 with this Inquiry there will be more conversations about
21 the huge cultural gaps, anti-racism training that needs to
22 be done, but I don't have hope for it because it's been
23 done, and it's been said. And Call to Action 57 is
24 Indigenous education for all public servants.

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 And I was at a different event and someone
2 told me I took courses at Bow Valley College on Indigenous,
3 and I learned more from your hour and a half conversation
4 than I did learning, taking those courses. That's how
5 shitty our institutions are right now. The institutions
6 need to change, the institutions need real education. And
7 I know Indigenous teachers that will never get hired
8 through the Calgary Board of Education, that will never get
9 hired from these institutions because they're Native.

10 And that's why I acknowledge Michelle
11 Robinson, Michelle Elliott. I'm only here because of these
12 stupid privileges. My light eyes, that's why I'm here.
13 Not because there hasn't been enough attempts to try and
14 get rid of my family and my lineage, but there have been.

15 So I guess that's my statement for sure.

16 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** No further --

17 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** No.

18 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** I want to thank you
19 Michelle, for sharing your truth. It's been very, very
20 informative and insightful. And the Commissioners will,
21 will review your transcript once it's transcribed. And did
22 you want to include those documents that you brought?

23 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** You know I was
24 trying to figure out how to do that.

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** Yeah you can, you can
2 provide whichever ones you want, but not the entirety if
3 you don't feel comfortable. Because I wanted to ask you
4 this question on camera.

5 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** M'hmm.

6 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** And so when the
7 transcribers come to transcribing, then they know what to
8 expect to accompany the truth.

9 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** Sure, if -- is there
10 a way to like photocopy maybe the covers of these things,
11 or anything like that? So that they can have a copy.
12 Because I can't give this.

13 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** Okay.

14 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** Unfortunately it's
15 my only one.

16 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** What we can do is, I can
17 ask the front desk. When I turn the camera off and we
18 close up, I'll get copies.

19 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** Sure.

20 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** And so it's 2:27 and I
21 will be turning the equipment off now if your satisfied --

22 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** I'm satisfied.

23 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** -- with the time?

24 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** I think so. Can I

Michelle Robinson

(Janel Squirrel, Dawns Echoes Baptiste, Jacqueline Crazybull,
Joey English, Alice English & Cheyenne Toms)

1 ask you maybe before you do, was there anything that maybe
2 was confusing that you'd like clarification on? Only
3 because I found especially when speaking at schools, that
4 sometimes people will be like you kind of said this, what
5 does that really mean? Is there anything like that?

6 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** Well everything was
7 pretty well clear flowing on what you explained, on how you
8 went into it. And the Commissioners are quite versed into
9 the issues.

10 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** Yeah -- yes.

11 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** Okay?

12 **MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON:** M'hmm.

13 **MS. BONNIE GEORGE:** So I'm turning the
14 equipment off, it's 2:28 on November 16th, in Calgary,
15 Alberta. We're at the Holiday Inn Airport. Thank you.
16 --- Upon adjourning at 2:28 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Sherry Hobe, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this matter.



Sherry Hobe

December 12, 2018