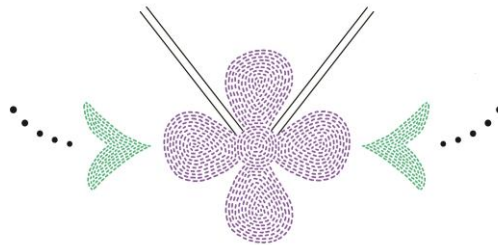


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel
Britannia Ballroom
Metro Vancouver, British Columbia**



PUBLIC

Thursday April 5, 2018

**Public Volume 90
Heiltsuk Women Community Perspective Panel:
Chief Marilyn Slett, Joann Green,
Leona Humchitt & Mavis Windsor**

**Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller
Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe**

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APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Julie McGregor (Legal Counsel)
Government of British Columbia	Sara Pye (Representative)
Government of Canada	Anne McConville (Legal Counsel)
Heiltsuk First Nation	Non-appearance
Northwest Indigenous Council Society	Non-appearance
Our Place - Ray Cam Co-operative Centre	Non-appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada	Beth Symes (Legal Counsel)
Vancouver Sex Workers' Rights Collective	Non-appearance
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation	Non-appearance

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Chief Commissioner: Marion Buller

Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe

Grandmothers, Elders, Knowledge-keepers: Kathy Louis, Penny
Kerrigan, Florence Catcheway, CeeJai Julian, Audrey Siegl,
Bernie Poitras Williams, Merle Williams, Deni Paquette, Donna
Dickison, Ruth Alfred, Harriet Prince, Gladys Radek, Louise
Haulli, Laureen "Blu" Waters- Gaudio, Reta Blind, Elaine
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Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

2 --- Upon commencing on Thursday, April 5, 2018, at 1:30 p.m.

3 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Good afternoon,
4 Chief Commissioner Buller, as -- I couldn't have done that
5 introduction without your excellent words and speaking your
6 language, thank you for introducing the panel that is
7 before the Commissioner today.

8 Before we actually start though, I would
9 request that the registrar promise each of the witnesses in
10 an on Eagle Feather. And I'd be happy to again introduce
11 -- if we could -- if we could please, start Mr. Registrar,
12 right now the lovely lady holding the microphone is Leona
13 Humchitt.

14 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Okay.

15 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Feather.

16 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Leona.

17 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Right.

18 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Leona, do you promise to tell
19 you your truth in a good way this afternoon?

20 **MS. LEONA HUMCHITT:** I promise.

21 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Thank you.

22 **LEONA HUMCHITT, Affirmed:**

23 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And beside her is
24 Joann Green.

25 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Do you want to pass it down.

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1 Sorry? Jo ...

2 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Joann Green.

3 MR. REGISTRAR: Jolene (sic), Jolene --

4 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Oh Ann Green.

5 MR. REGISTRAR: Joann, hi. Joann, do you
6 promise to tell your truth in a good way this afternoon?

7 MS. JOANN GREEN: I do, yes.

8 JOANN GREEN, Affirmed:

9 MR. REGISTRAR: You do, thank you. Okay.

10 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And this is -- the
11 next is Chief Marilyn Slett.

12 MR. REGISTRAR: Okay. Chief Marlane (sic).

13 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Marilyn.

14 MR. REGISTRAR: Okay. Chief Marilyn, do you
15 promise to tell your truth in a good way this afternoon?

16 CHIEF MARILYN SLETT: I do.

17 MR. REGISTRAR: Thank you.

18 MARILYN SLETT, Affirmed:

19 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And right beside me
20 is Mavis Windsor.

21 MR. REGISTRAR: Okay. Good afternoon, Mavis.
22 Do you promise to tell your truth in a good way this
23 afternoon?

24 MS. MAVIS WINDSOR: I do.

25 MAVIS WINDSOR, Affirmed:

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1 **MR. REGISTRAR:** Okay, thank you.

2 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And I believe that --
3 the reason the panel is here today and the important things
4 that they want to talk about, the introduction I believe
5 Leona, you're going to provide for us.

6 **MS. LEONA HUMCHITT:** I am, thank you.

7 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you.

8 **MS. LEONA HUMCHITT:** (Speaking Hailhzaqvla
9 language). Greetings hereditary Chiefs, Matriarchs, our
10 precious Elders, and children, people from this community,
11 and all our relatives. It's a real honour to be here
12 today. And I'm here to discuss how we got here.

13 We bring warm greetings, love, and blessing
14 from the Heiltsuk people of Bella Bella, B.C. We want to
15 thank the Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, Musqueam, and
16 Tsawwassen First Nations for allowing us to do this work on
17 your traditional unceded territory.

18 I want to start by remembering a beautiful
19 beloved Elder who's no longer with us today. As you know
20 Commissioner, our Nation, along with many other First
21 Nations, the language is at risk of being lost. And we
22 have been strategically working toward, you know, an
23 aggressive plan to ensure that we do not lose the
24 cornerstone of who we are. And so the reason I want to
25 remember this beautiful Elder, Granny Margaret Campbell

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1 (phonetic), she was one of our very fluent Heiltsuk
2 speakers and she always addressed our community in
3 Heiltsuk, so to speak Heiltsuk is to Hailhzaqvla. And we
4 were very blessed, you know, that she maintained that
5 fluency and that English was her second language. So to
6 convey something in English was difficult because you can
7 not translate one Heiltsuk word to an English word or vice
8 versa. For example, reconciliation in our language is --
9 sorry (Speaking in Hailhzaqvla), and in Heiltsuk that means
10 to turn anything around and make it right again. So our
11 dear beloved Elder, you knew in your heart when she
12 expressed in English, her second language, that something
13 touched her heart, something set her soul on fire when she
14 spoke and said, it's a big deal. It's a big deal to be
15 here today.

16 Last year we made application for standing
17 today and we're very blessed that -- to have that
18 opportunity to be here and it's a big deal for us. We made
19 the journey here from Bella Bella a couple of days ago.
20 Our -- our delegation, we -- we met upon our arrival
21 because we wanted to check-in, and about this special day,
22 and we sat and -- and intended on a -- a short debrief at
23 check-in. But it turned out to be three -- three hours
24 long. And it was a very emotional check-in.

25 And we talked and we -- the common thread

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1 from each and every one of us as individuals, we did not
2 feel qualified to be here. We didn't feel that our
3 individual pain was worthy and we didn't mean that to
4 minimize who we are. We mean that in terms of those
5 families that have lost their loved ones, that have not had
6 the opportunity for closure.

7 We're a remote isolated community. We're an
8 island on the northwest coast of B.C. And that, you know,
9 is a blessing in terms of being insulated from the
10 processes that some -- some families are going through
11 right now. We are mariners. We have an inalienable
12 connection to our waters. And sometimes by accident or by
13 act of nature -- act of God, those sacred waters can become
14 our burial grounds for our loved ones. So it is in that
15 way that we can relate, but it's difficult when you don't
16 have closure.

17 And we're so very blessed to be able to be
18 here today. I want to say it's a big deal to be here.
19 It's a big deal that we're blessed to be here today from
20 all the grassroots work of the frontline people that made
21 it possible for us to be here today. It's a big deal that
22 those families, that have not had closure, have an
23 opportunity to share their story, to feel like they've been
24 heard. It's a big deal, that it's an opportunity to
25 release some of the burden that they carry, knowing that

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1 their story is going to be documented, and it's a big deal
2 -- it's an opportunity to step out of darkness and into
3 light, so we're really blessed for the opportunity to be
4 here.

5 And when we talked about, you know, not
6 feeling qualified we recognize that -- that behaviour of
7 feeling worthless, or not cared about has been ingrained in
8 us for many -- many years through residential school, the
9 60s Scoop. It's been a really -- really difficult journey
10 for Indigenous people of Canada.

11 At the end of our -- our circle (Speaking
12 Hailhzaqvla language) reminded us that we need to *Gvi'ilas*.
13 We need to uphold the law of our ancestors. The teachings
14 that are been passed down since Creation. And her -- her
15 father reminded her that we all matter and it was that --
16 it was that message that brought us strength to be here to
17 sit before you and to share our story about violence
18 against women and girls from a Heiltsuk perspective. So we
19 all matter and that's why we're here.

20 Commissioner Marion, I was here for the
21 opening ceremonies, and it was really a blessing to be here
22 and to witness what took place and you know, the key sound
23 bite from your message was about pain. The Elder that said
24 that we're -- we're all different, but we're all the same
25 by being connected to pain. I want to offer us a channel

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1 that pain as women, as life givers, who know all too well
2 that the -- the pain, the birthing pain, the labour of love
3 of bringing a new loved one, a precious milestone, and a
4 beautiful miracle to life. If we channel the pain that we
5 share -- a birthing pain, to birth something new, to be
6 waiting in great expectation for something good to come
7 from standing together, working together, collaborating.

8 As an elected leader I've learned that it's
9 important for me -- I -- I never would have known that
10 becoming a grandmother is a whole new level of love. And
11 it's really important for us to personalize the work that
12 we're doing today to make it meaningful. So for me it's
13 important to put a new memory in the minds of my
14 grandchildren; Maggie (phonetic), and Cassie (phonetic),
15 Charlie (phonetic), and Addie (phonetic).

16 I heard that beautiful inspirational quote
17 that it came from an (Speaking Hailhzaqvla) Elder during
18 their land claims, and it really inspired me and I
19 encourage all of us to remember that quote, to put a new
20 memory in the minds of our children. It's a real beautiful
21 thing.

22 We are all here because of the pain that we
23 share, the history of the violence against Indigenous women
24 and girls has made each and every one of us feel less
25 deserving and at times like no one cares about us. But

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1 neutral are not. One would think something like the
2 Federal Fisheries Act, or the Provincial Environmental
3 Management Act are neutral towards women, but this is not
4 the case. These Acts exclude Indigenous interests, which
5 breaks down our family structures, our role as women within
6 our culture, and attempt to control our erase our
7 identities. Violence occurs where we can feel it, see it,
8 and hear it, but also invisibly through Canadian written
9 laws.

10 This Commission has been plagued with public
11 criticism and still faces significant challenges and that
12 to conduct regional hearings will require an extension of
13 time and budget allocation for a minimum of another two
14 years. I want to say that we were really blessed to
15 Indigenous people on this panel and I value and appreciate
16 the work that you and your colleagues are doing. I know it
17 hasn't been easy, but you keep on, and I know why,
18 *Gayaxsixa*.

19 We are cautious about the possibility of any
20 positive outcome through this process, but we have no
21 choice but to speak about the wrongs of violence that have
22 been visited upon our Indigenous women and girls, and let
23 it be known that we will fight back. What has happened to
24 women and girls and our families is not morally or legally
25 acceptable. We hope that our participation, and all the

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1 people who are participating in this Commission will prove
2 to create a positive outcome for all Indigenous people, but
3 particular -- in particular women and girls.

4 We have developed a Heiltsuk women's
5 declaration. The Heiltsuk women from Bella Bella passed a
6 resolution to adopt the Heiltsuk women's declaration in May
7 of 2016, which was later supported by Heiltsuk Tribal
8 Council by a resolution in February 2018. I will read it
9 at this time, the Heiltsuk women's declaration, "We are
10 Heiltsuk women. We are strong as cedar
11 trees. We are the mothers who give
12 birth to Nations. We are the mother's
13 who bring future generations into
14 being. We are the lifeblood of our
15 people. We are the daughters, the
16 grandmothers, and granddaughters, the
17 aunties and nieces, the sisters of our
18 Nation. We make our Nation rich. We
19 come from the matriarchy and our
20 womanhood is a blessing. We are the
21 heart of Heiltsuk ceremonies. We are
22 the heart of Heiltsuk families. We
23 have the right to health and wellness,
24 and the responsibility to ensure the
25 health and wellness of our children,

1 and of our families. This is a
2 principle of reciprocity. We have the
3 right to safety. We deserve lives that
4 are free of emotional, verbal,
5 physical, and sexual abuse. This is
6 the principle of respect. We have the
7 right to bless and care for our loved
8 ones and to be blessed and cared for in
9 turn. This is a principle of love. We
10 have the right to relationships that
11 are balanced and respectful, where we
12 have freedom of individuals. This is
13 the principle of equality. We have the
14 right to a community that is vocal,
15 aware, and supportive, with the
16 resources in place to support us and
17 uplift us. This the principle of
18 justice. We have the right to freedom
19 from fear and shame, to healing, and to
20 happiness. This is the principle of
21 joy. We are here through the strength
22 of our family ties. We are here
23 through the guidance of our Heiltsuk
24 Hailhzaqvla, the teachings that have
25 sustained our people since the time of

1 Creation. We are here with the hands
2 of our ancestors on our shoulders. We
3 are here with future generations before
4 us. We are sacred in mind, body, and
5 spirit. We are women of integrity who
6 have strengthened by our Heiltsuk
7 culture. We honour ourselves. We
8 honour one another. This is consistent
9 with the principles of our culture, and
10 the foundation of our work as Heiltsuk
11 women and as matriarchs. These are the
12 guiding principles that we exercise in
13 everything that we do to remind us that
14 we are worthy. That we are powerful.
15 That we are resilient. That we are
16 strong. And that we all matter. The
17 Heiltsuk Nation have been engaged in
18 reconciliation of its rights and title
19 with the Province and the Federal
20 government. This work is critical to
21 the wellbeing of women and girls, as
22 well as every person in our Nation.
23 Because self-government means a real
24 opportunity to restore our cultural
25 identity and re-establish the true

1 governance of our society."

2 At this time we'll see the video. That we're
3 going to present.

4 (VIDEO PRESENTATION)

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just have a quick
6 technical issue. We'll start it again in a moment from the
7 same spot. Our apologies.

8 (VIDEO PRESENTATION CONTINUES)

9 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So I believe Chief
10 Marilyn, you're now also be addressing a number of issues.

11 CHIEF MARILYN SLETT: Thank you. Good
12 afternoon everybody. I would like to thank everybody for
13 being here today, and all of my Heiltsuk sisters that are
14 here with me, and the Commissioners and the Elder, thank
15 you.

16 So Leona and Ayla gave a really good overview
17 of -- of Heiltsuk, and the context for who we are. And I
18 want to share a statement of sovereignty that we rely upon
19 as -- as a Heiltsuk Nation, and this is something that also
20 guides our work. And this is a -- a statement that was
21 made 105 years ago by Bob Anderson, and I'll just read it
22 out for you. It's a -- a short statement. "We feel we own
23 the whole of this country, every bit
24 of it, and we ought to have something
25 to say about it. We own it all. We

1 will never change our mind in that
2 respect and after we are dead our
3 children will hold the same ideas. It
4 does not matter how long the government
5 takes to determine this question. We
6 will remain the same in our ideas about
7 this matter."

8 And this was made by a young Heiltsuk Chief.
9 He was with in his early 20s at the McKenna-McBride
10 Commission in August of 1913. And this statement is
11 something that we share with -- with government, and it's
12 -- it's a statement of sovereignty. It's a statement of our
13 strength, and it's also a statement of the vision and the
14 ownership that we hold over our traditional territory.

15 I also wanted to share, for some context to
16 -- to Heiltsuk, more recently we -- with the guidance of
17 our -- our community and the guidance of our Heiltsuk
18 traditional Chiefs, our *Hemas*, we -- we declared a Heiltsuk
19 declaration over our title and rights and this was in
20 October 2015. And this builds upon the statements from --
21 from Bob Anderson.

22 We are the Heiltsuk people, descendants of
23 ancestors who exercise sovereign authority and ownership
24 over our land and waters for thousands of years. Today we
25 reaffirm the continued existence of Heiltsuk title and our

1 rights as a Nation to exercise jurisdiction and management
2 authority to derive economic benefits from the lands,
3 waters, and resources within our territory. The source of
4 Heiltsuk title flows from our historic ownership,
5 occupation, stewardship, use, and control of our territory.

6 Our title predates and survives the assertion
7 of European sovereignty. Each generation is taught the
8 history of our lineage and how it connected our people to
9 the ownership and responsibilities related to our
10 territory. Heiltsuk territory includes the (Speaking
11 Hailhzaqvla) encompassing 35,553 square kilometres on the
12 central coast of B.C.

13 We have never surrendered our title to our
14 homeland, ecosystems and resources, as they are essential
15 to our way of life.

16 For more than 14,000 years the Heiltsuk's
17 relationship and understanding of the land and waters has
18 been passed down from generation to generation. It has
19 formed a rich and cultural, social and economic fabric in
20 our community. And it builds upon our spiritual
21 relationship with our territory. This relationship extends
22 from the past and shaped both present and future of our
23 Nation.

24 We have developed our own systems of
25 knowledge and understanding of our territory, which is

1 representative of a living symbolic relationship with the
2 lands and waters. We're connected to -- to the land and
3 sea, our culture is intertwined with -- with our living
4 environment. Our history is passed down from generation to
5 generation and we rely upon the -- the land and sea for our
6 way of life.

7 We live in a -- on an island up on the
8 central coast of British Columbia, and the -- the way of
9 life we have, has sustained us for time immemorial, most
10 recently some archeological evidence pre-dates us back
11 before the -- the ice age. So we have a long history of
12 survival within Heiltsuk territory. And we wanted to -- to
13 share some of that context as we share some of our
14 presentation here today. Thank you.

15 **MS. JOANN GREEN:** Good afternoon. My
16 Heiltsuk name is (Speaking Hailhzaqvla language), my
17 borrowed name is Joann Green. I want to thank all of the
18 witnesses here today. We thank the Commissioners for
19 listening to what we have to share because we think it's so
20 important and we matter.

21 I'm going to be talking about our self-
22 government. Prior to colonization our Heiltsuk people
23 were always followed their -- *Gvi'ilas*, the laws of our
24 land. Our Nation worked together with our Chiefs and our
25 Elders that held our community together.

1 Self-government and reconciliation. Heiltsuk
2 are currently in exploratory discussions with the
3 Government of Canada and British Columbia on reconciliation
4 of our rights and title. Prominent in these discussions is
5 establishing our self-government. With the Federal
6 government we have spent many months exchanging ideas,
7 proposals, and working collaboratively to give shape to
8 what reconciliation may look like between Canada and our
9 Heiltsuk Nation.

10 To us this means recognizing our Heiltsuk
11 title, our rights and self-government. We have identified
12 five priority areas; self-government, housing, economic
13 development, language preservation, and revitalization in
14 fish and marine resources.

15 As a *Hemas* in our community I struggle with
16 the idea that our language -- our Heiltsuk language is so
17 close to extinction. In August of this year I conducted a
18 research project and was so disheartened because I realized
19 that our fluent speakers were only at one percent of our
20 entire population and that real broke my heart.

21 We refer to priority areas as priority house
22 posts. They are fundamental pillars required to build
23 reconciliation. (Speaking Hailhzaqvla language), a
24 traditional *potlatch*, term meaning -- term meaning to turn
25 something around and make it right again. That is so

1 important to us as a people.

2 Establishing self-government means that the
3 role of women and girls can take their proper place within
4 our modern traditions and not be subject to the resumptions
5 of colonization.

6 I will now speak to the government --
7 government structure. Heiltsuk leadership is a
8 collaborative exercise of traditional leadership lead by
9 the *Hemas* and political leadership led by Heiltsuk Tribal
10 Council. Together our Heiltsuk leadership governs the --
11 the Nation and the cultural wellbeing of its people. Women
12 are known to be the backbone of the community and play a
13 large role in Heiltsuk leadership. The majority of our
14 council members are women and the Chief counsellor, is
15 Chief Marilyn Slett. The *omucks* (phonetic) are a society
16 of women of high standing in the community who give advice
17 to our *Humas*, our Chiefs. Their advice centers on
18 maintaining the unity and wellbeing of the community
19 including advice on justice, family, and cultural
20 practices. *Gayaxsixa*.

21 **MS. MAVIS WINDSOR:** (Speaking Hailhzaqvla
22 language). My given name is (Speaking Hailhzaqvla
23 language), my English name is Mavis Windsor. I'm the
24 social development director in my community, and I've been
25 working in my community since 1996.

1 I'm going to make reference to how -- or make
2 reference to the historical colonialism and impacts on our
3 people and not -- not only the Heiltsuk people, but many --
4 many Indigenous Nations across Canada. The Constitutional
5 Act of 1967, and in particular Section 9124, the Indian Act
6 of 1986, and the National Projects of Assimilation.
7 Residential schools and cultural genocide, whose main
8 purpose was to take the Indian out of the child. And this
9 is made reference to in the Truth and Reconciliation
10 Commission to Canada's cultural genocide and is darkest
11 history. Thank you, Marilyn.

12 Cultural prohibitions. Our people were
13 prohibited from practicing their culture and our languages,
14 they were prohibited from speaking, and as a result our
15 language as -- as Joann made reference to, is near
16 extinction.

17 Discrimination with Band membership. I
18 remember growing up with our women being discriminated
19 against when they married a non-Indigenous man. And I
20 remember feeling so hurt for my aunt, and for many other
21 women who suffered the same discrimination.

22 In the 60ies -- in the 1960s large numbers of
23 Indigenous child were taken from their homes and placed in
24 foster care, and today it's referred to as the 60s Scoop.

25 Indigenous child are overrepresented in -- in

1 the foster care system, and as a social worker I know that
2 children from our own Nation -- or Heiltsuk Nation, have
3 the highest percentage of children in care.

4 There has been over incarceration of
5 Indigenous peoples in -- in Canada -- in the jails in
6 Canada, and tuberculosis was also a disease that was
7 transported to communities through the (Speaking
8 Hailhzaqvla language) and I remember my -- my Elders
9 talking about the canoes that were sent from Victoria to
10 Bella Bella, to our -- our Heiltsuk territories, and how we
11 lost so many of our people. So many that they amalgamated
12 into one community, and I believe that what they said to me
13 was that the population was decimated to just over a
14 hundred people, from about 20,000 is what they estimate,
15 that's how many of our people were lost.

16 The lasting impacts of colonialism, on not
17 only the Heiltsuk, but on all Indigenous people across
18 Canada and North America are; racism, inequality, suicide,
19 dependency, Indigenous women are marginalized, and
20 traditional roles are replaced by imposed patriarchal
21 systems. Traditional governments have been replaced by an
22 imposed electoral governing system. We've lost much of our
23 identity. We've lost much of our language, as Joann made
24 reference to. We only have one percent of our population
25 that speaks our language. Our women -- women across Canada

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1 are made to feel worthless in our society. The violence
2 against women is not addressed in an expedient manner and
3 more often than not women's lives continue to be in danger.

4 Many of our people, including our women and
5 our children live in poverty. Suffer from social
6 inequality, and breakdown of families, addiction, premature
7 mortality rates, and low levels of literacy and education,
8 and high levels of mental illness and physical diseases.

9 We are the legacy, despite the trauma, our
10 communities continue to live through we are capable of
11 addressing the violence again women in our communities; the
12 solution is within us -- within our communities.

13 However, we do have barriers. The barriers
14 to developing resources that are impediments as we try to
15 address these issues. We look at them as modern challenges
16 to our cultures that are thousands and thousands of years
17 old.

18 Our Nation, our Heiltsuk Nation is considered
19 to be one of the foremost, progressive communities, but we
20 face many challenges. We face many gaps in our services.
21 And over the years our membership have identified the
22 following health and mental wellness. Our people now
23 suffer from illnesses that are not known to our members in
24 years past. I remember as a child there was no -- I never
25 ever heard that someone was suffering from heart disease,

1 from diabetes, from gallstones, and kidney stones. From
2 having multiple sclerosis and fibromyalgia, cancer, and
3 severe allergies, and asthma, these are all diseases that
4 exist in our community today.

5 And for -- for me, as a social worker, who
6 has worked with families over the years one of the
7 challenges that I -- I've noticed in our community is
8 technology. Technology contributes to family breakdown.
9 It contributes to miscommunication, it contributes to lost
10 relationships. Children are spending far too much time
11 with technology and not spending time with their loved
12 ones. To me it's a -- it's a real strong barrier and a
13 challenge.

14 Other issues are child and mental health
15 wellness, and men's wellness. We have been -- as I said,
16 we're challenged with lack of resources. We have very few
17 women support services. We don't have as much Elders
18 programs as we would like. For instance, we don't have
19 enough services for Elders; homemaking services, home
20 improvement services, workshops.

21 Our challenges in education, as Joann made
22 reference to, is our loss of language. Culture and arts
23 program, music programs, leadership and life planning, and
24 in the social service area our lack of resources are seen
25 in the need for life skills and essential skills training

1 and for on-the-job training programs for our community
2 members, and connecting to our land and our seas, our
3 resources has -- has been an area where our -- especially
4 our community, professionals, resource professionals have
5 noted that there a real need to promote harvesting and
6 preparation of our traditional foods, to share our food, to
7 prepare food together, and to have large family gatherings,
8 and meals together, preserving our foods, harvesting our
9 medicines, and preparing them for use, and community garden
10 expansion.

11 I'll now pass it on to Marilyn, and she's
12 going to talk about resource development and violence
13 against women.

14 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** Thank you, Mavis. We
15 had one last area that we wanted to share that provides a
16 context to -- to our presentation here today and I just
17 wanted to share with you, I was looking at my note book as
18 we were making our presentation here, and I have note book
19 that I started when I was up in Haida Gwaii, and I was
20 there with many of the -- the women that are here with me
21 today, and I entitled it, Strong Resilient Heiltsuk. And
22 just gives me strength, and one of the things that we
23 talked about as women, when we were up in Haida Gwaii, is
24 that we're using our collective voices to give a platform
25 for action. And we're using our collective voices as

1 Indigenous women to strengthen one another across -- across
2 the sea that connects us. And resource development is
3 something that affects us as -- as a Heiltsuk community,
4 but any of the communities on the coast of British
5 Columbia.

6 And I wanted to share a bit about an
7 experience that we had in -- in our community. In October,
8 a couple of years ago -- October, we had a -- an incident
9 with -- a barge and tug, that's also called the Nathan E.
10 Stewart.

11 Living on unsurrendered land our people have
12 is felt immense pressures from extractive industries which
13 weigh heavy on our way of life and sense of balance with
14 our homelands. Heiltsuk territory is rich with resources
15 that have sustained our way of life of thousands of years.
16 We have stewarded our lands through principles. If your
17 family had a right to fish a river system you also have the
18 responsibility to maintain it for future generations.

19 Because of our relationship to the lands and
20 waters, our communities also face threats brought on by
21 climate change. The Federal and Provincial governments
22 approach to the extraction and allocation of resources
23 undermine the ability of Indigenous communities to maintain
24 their culture for Heiltsuk, the loss of land, or the
25 limitation and destruction of resources degrades cultural

1 values, family structure, and traditional practices.

2 On October 13, 2016, we had an oil spill in a
3 major harvesting area of our territory. It has been
4 incredibly stressful on our community. The full breath of
5 the impact is largely unknown. We are reaching a one-and-
6 a-half year anniversary of the oil spill, post spill we
7 have been very busy on every front with regards to health
8 impacts, environmental impacts, economic impacts, and
9 cultural losses. Members of our community also experience
10 post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the spill.

11 We have completed our own investigation
12 report because the Federal government would not discuss
13 their investigation with us. We have completed an
14 adjudication process made up of traditional leaders and
15 matriarchs. And their review -- their -- their process was
16 to review our investigation report through the lens of our
17 traditional laws and also record what traditional laws
18 would have been violated as a result of the Nathan E.
19 Stewart incident, so that report just being completed, or
20 completed now. It hasn't been made public yet, they're
21 just completing it. But we will be making that available
22 to -- to the public in the future.

23 Our community's recovery efforts are
24 undermined by government and polluters refusing to take
25 responsibility for the spill, and to cooperate in its

1 to stop the diesel from spewing into
2 Gale Pass, that was all we had, and all
3 we can do."

4 Tracey is a lifelong harvester, and her
5 mother was a commercial clam digger for 20 years. "When I
6 was younger my mom and I did a
7 restorative justice program where we
8 lived out in Gale Creek for a month.
9 Revealed Robinson, her voice breaking,
10 we had brought food, but we tried to
11 eat as much as we could off the land.
12 We ate mussels off the rocks, picked
13 seaweed and sea asparagus off the
14 beach. My mom pulled cedar bark, and
15 we would weave baskets in roses -- in
16 cedar roses trying to learn how to live
17 off the land. It was rejuvenating and
18 brought back the culture in me. Now I
19 feel so lost and I feel so sorry for my
20 kids. They're never going to
21 experience the full riches and the full
22 amazingness of Gale Creek."

23 Megan (phonetic) Humchitt is also a member of
24 the Heiltsuk Nation, and a lifelong harvester. Her father,
25 Harvey (phonetic) Humchitt, is a traditional hereditary

1 chief. Megan was one -- was on the scene in the morning of
2 the incident before the tug sank. "On the morning of
3 October 13th my husband, father, and I
4 heard that a tanker had run aground.
5 We left for the incident site about
6 7:45, 8:00 a.m. It was such a serious
7 incident, so there was no question
8 about going. I felt compelled to be
9 out there to witness what was happening
10 and to see if we could help at all. We
11 were one of the first boats at the
12 incident site. No one came over to see
13 us when we got there. We basically
14 just sat there and watched as the tug
15 and barge rolled into the swells. We
16 can hear the tug grinding onto the
17 rocks, at that time it was mid-tide and
18 going up. When the tug sank there were
19 tons of diesel everywhere. The tug
20 took seconds to sink. There was a
21 discolouration of the water. It was
22 milky. It looks like a herringbone."

23 And this quote is also attributed to -- to
24 Megan Humchitt, "It was really hard. Very heartbreaking to
25 watch. I have a connection to the area

1 as a Heiltsuk person. I have not spent
2 a lot of time, but -- I have not spent
3 a lot of time there as a kid, but I
4 have spent a lot of time in Seaforth
5 Channel around Ivory Island. We
6 harvest food from the affected area
7 such as (Speaking Hailhzaqvla
8 language),
9 salmon, halibut, clams. We also buy
10 food that people harvest there was
11 well, such as cod and lincod. My dad
12 harvested there for commercial purposes
13 from the affected area. This has
14 affected our family and community quite
15 profoundly. The fear for the future of
16 that area is immense. Increased tanker
17 traffic is very concerning. When our
18 environment is sick we are sick. I
19 feel like this has had -- this has made
20 our community sick. It effects
21 Heiltsuk traditional life, as Heiltsuk
22 people are so tied to places are so
23 tied to places, and if those places are
24 devastated then it will have an effect
25 on our traditional way of life in a

1 huge way. It has an effect on the
2 people who harvest and on the stories."

3 We felt that that was really important to
4 share with you, and it does tie in to what we're talking
5 about here today with supporting women in our communities,
6 and the impacts a resource development in our territories.

7 And we wanted to share with you some
8 recommendations that came out of our report from Amnesty
9 International called, Out of sight, Out of Mind. Amnesty
10 International has recognized the negative impact of
11 resource extraction and development on women's health and
12 safety. Their most recent report discusses how resource
13 extraction and development can degrade the role of women in
14 their societies, and introduce economic and social
15 instability.

16 Amnesty International makes recommendations
17 to counter those impacts. And I'll just briefly summarize
18 what those recommendations are. Apply the standard of
19 free, prior, and informed consent to all decision-making
20 processes related to resource development where the rights
21 of Indigenous peoples may be affected.

22 Increase the social service funding in
23 British Columbia.

24 Review and approvals of resource development
25 projects be informed by a gender based analysis conducted

1 in consultation with women's rights and Indigenous
2 organizations.

3 Work with Indigenous peoples to implement the
4 Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action,
5 including the application of the United Nations declaration
6 on the rights of Indigenous peoples.

7 And finally, to ensure that the Missing and
8 Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry leads to the
9 adoption of a comprehensive plan on violence against women
10 and girls, including specific measure to decrease resource
11 related risks.

12 We wanted to share with you our -- our
13 concerns around the -- the impact to our land and sea. We
14 heard from some of our -- our panelists here today -- we're
15 -- we're seafaring people. We live on the sea. On an
16 island on the coast, so the -- having a healthy ecosystem
17 is very important to -- to the Heiltsuk. It will ensure
18 that our survival is for another 14,000 years going
19 forward.

20 So I wanted to thank you for listening to the
21 contextual background of Heiltsuk, and who we are as
22 Heiltsuk people and Heiltsuk women, and I believe we have a
23 -- we have questions, okay.

24 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you very much.
25 Actually, Chief, if I might ask you a question first, I

1 think it seemed obvious as you shared this story about the
2 spill and how it impacted the community, the women, and all
3 of the resources that there's a tie between the health of
4 our environment and the health of women, but I was
5 wondering if you could maybe speak to you know, the concept
6 of resource extraction, or when there's an exploitation
7 where there's not stewardship, how that -- do you feel that
8 that -- that is representative of the way the environment
9 treated when it's exploited like that, or not taken care of
10 with steward, that also representative of the issues we're
11 seeing with missing and murdered Indigenous women and the
12 violence they experience?

13 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** It is. One of the
14 issues raised in the Amnesty International report was the
15 influx of people that come in when -- when there are big
16 resource development projects happening in or around their
17 communities, and you know, it comes with transient workers
18 that come in, and that does make it unsafe for -- for women
19 that live in that area and we see, you know, here on -- on
20 the north coast of B.C., and -- and other areas where
21 industry is very prevalent and -- and active, so it's
22 directly linked, thank you.

23 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Chief Commissioner,
24 at this time we would like to ask to have our 15-minute
25 break because the panel will continue following the break,

1 and we'll be moving towards contextualizing. Now that we
2 have sort of the context of the community, the context of
3 the colonial legacy -- I believe that the panel will be
4 addressing a lot of that, so modern initiatives, not just
5 the impacts, but initiatives the community is taking from a
6 place of leadership, from women leadership in community,
7 and also be providing recommendations, but at this point I
8 kindly ask for a 15-minute break.

9 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Sure,
10 let's take a 15-minute break. Thank you.

11 **(SHORT PAUSE)**

12 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Chief Commissioner,
13 if we could actually commence with the panel again. With
14 the -- the starting point before we actually transition
15 into the women leadership, and how they're taking
16 initiatives, I'm just going to ask the panel a couple of
17 clarification questions and if we could get a little more
18 information. The amount of information that every one
19 shared with amazing and the context was so important so
20 thank you for sharing that.

21 One of the things that was discussed in your
22 presentation was sort of the impacts of laws and policies
23 and the discussion of the Indian Act. I know that the
24 implementation of the reserve system, or who can be
25 registered as an Indian pursuant to the law has had an

1 impact on a number of women across the country, and I just
2 wanted to ask what that imposition of the reserve system,
3 or how women have status in law, has impacted your Nation?

4 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** Thank you. Part of what
5 we had mentioned in the earlier part of the presentation is
6 the size of our Heiltsuk traditional territory. We're made
7 up of five tribal groups that amalgamated, that make up the
8 Heiltsuk Nation, and our traditional territory is 35,553
9 square kilometres, so it's -- it's vast, and it's land and
10 sea.

11 We've spent a lot of time and -- and
12 financial resources on developing land use plans marine use
13 plans, stewardship plans, how we're going to steward our
14 territory, training people. We have coastal guardian
15 watchmen that are out on the water every day being the eyes
16 and ears of -- of the sea.

17 And as a part of the collective on -- on the
18 coast we work with seven other communities up and down from
19 central coast, north coast, up to Haida Gwaii. And between
20 all of us we all have stewardship departments in -- in our
21 territories, and we have a guardian watchmen network where
22 our guardian watchmen get together and -- and speak on an
23 annual basis and share information on -- on what they can
24 do to support each other.

25 So we have a lot of investment in our

1 communities, you know, to -- to protect our -- our way of
2 life, and -- but it's not reflective with the -- with the
3 Indian Act and the reserve system that the Indian Act
4 imposed on -- on the Heiltsuk Nation and placed us in these
5 little pockets of little reserves.

6 And one of the things that our Elders say you
7 know, and our people and our -- our women that we're
8 connected to the land and sea, we're one. And with that I
9 -- I always hear this in my -- in my head, with my late
10 Uncle Cyril (phonetic), he would say, When the tide goes
11 out the table is set. And -- and that's reflective of you
12 know, our connection, and our bread basket, which is --
13 which is the sea.

14 So the Indian Act has really oppressed our --
15 our Nation in terms of these reserves systems imposed on us
16 had you know, effected our -- our governance structures
17 that we had in place, had affected our -- our own economies
18 -- our economies, we were thriving communities. We were
19 self-sustaining communities with governance systems in
20 place. So certainly the -- the oppression of this -- this
21 Indian Act has -- has affected us with women in terms of
22 identity, and the Indian Act providing you know, their
23 rules, Canada's rules, on who is a Heiltsuk person.

24 As Heiltsuk people we know who Heiltsuk are.
25 You know, we can self-identify, and identify our own

1 people. And this Indian Act status registration system is
2 not something that is reflective of Heiltsuk identity.
3 It's very much been imposed on us.

4 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** If I might follow up
5 on one question because you had explained that you're a
6 matriarchal community, we know that you have hereditary
7 chiefs, and elected chiefs, chief counsellors that are
8 women, because women leadership important within your
9 traditions. The Indian Act, how has that impacted
10 historically, or even currently, the ability for women
11 leadership, and women guidance to correct a lot of the
12 issues that have been created by the laws and policies?

13 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** Well, certainly women in
14 our community have been marginalized with the Indian Act
15 and -- and the policies of the Indian Act. You know, with
16 the Indian agents, you know, coming into our community
17 aided by you know, the Government of Canada and the -- the
18 various churches took that power, you know, away from our
19 hereditary system and replaced it with an elected system
20 that was answerable to -- to the government, not to our
21 people. And you know, that has been you know, something
22 that you know, has had devastating you know, effects on our
23 community in terms of self-reliance and you know, our
24 inherent governance and -- and holding up our -- our own
25 governance structures. And it's really -- placed you know,

1 in its place a lot of dependency and -- and that's
2 something that we weren't, you know, we weren't a dependent
3 Nation. You know, we were very self-sustaining with
4 economies.

5 The Heiltsuk Nation has Supreme Court
6 affirmed right, it's call the *Gladstone* decision, and that
7 is based on our collective history of you know, having that
8 strong economy and -- and selling you know, our -- you
9 know, making a life -- making a livelihood, you know, in --
10 in our Nations. So you know, for us you know, that's --
11 you know been -- we hold that up.

12 You know, right now as we speak it's herring
13 season in our community, people are out there harvesting
14 today as we're sitting here, and they're harvesting --
15 their spawn on kelp.

16 And you know, one of things to -- to get a
17 better context to that, we -- we practice what we call a
18 non-kill fishery, so our -- our people will harvest kelp,
19 and they'll put it onto lines, and then they'll place it
20 into certain areas, and the herring will come and spawn on
21 it, and that's where we harvest, the spawn off -- off the
22 herring.

23 The commercial harvest is quite different.
24 They'll fish for the whole herring and only take the -- the
25 eggs you know, from -- from the -- that's why it's called a

1 kill fishery. So you know, our fishery is very
2 sustainable, and it's sustained our people for thousands
3 and thousands and thousands of years.

4 And in our -- in our traditional territory we
5 have stone fish trapped that are still in place, clam
6 gardens that are you know, still in place, and we have a
7 very rich history of -- you know, our connection to -- to
8 those harvests, and just to bring it back to herring, this
9 is our New Year. We -- you know, it's the start of our --
10 our harvest New Year.

11 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. I have a
12 question, and maybe Mavis might be in a good position to
13 answer it.

14 Mavis, when you were talking -- a couple
15 things, you had mentioned a large number of issues that the
16 Commission has heard from -- from across the country about
17 the colonial legacy of things like residential school, the
18 child apprehension and 60s Scoop, and then you gave us a
19 list of lasting impacts, and they went on and on, and you
20 also talked about the health impacts. Things that your
21 community didn't see, but now do see.

22 And so I wanted to ask you more specifically
23 you know, in terms of things like the laws and government,
24 things such as residential school or 60s Scoop, what has
25 the impacts been specifically on the Heiltsuk Nation?

1 **MS. MAVIS WINDSOR:** The impacts that we've
2 observed over time in our community is that families have
3 been severely impacted. Our parents didn't know how to
4 parent. My mother didn't know how to parent me. And so a
5 lot of what I learned about being a person, about being a
6 woman, came from my landlady, who was a white person. And
7 that's only example.

8 Relationships, the parent and child
9 relationships, as I just explained to you, is severely
10 impacted. Lack of parenting goes back to my grandmothers,
11 and has carried on, so we're slowly offering programs
12 through -- the Kaxla Child and Family Service Agency offers
13 parenting programs to families in our community, and you
14 know, the -- the impact is far reaching.

15 It hasn't only affected relationships, it's
16 affected you know, how we see ourselves as Heiltsuk women.
17 You know, it can be said over and over and over again
18 because it's very real for us and it's very real for -- for
19 women who feel that they're worthless. They feel that
20 they're not heard, and that's why something know like this
21 is so important is because this is a vehicle to give voice
22 for women who don't have a voice.

23 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. That
24 leads to sort of where we want to go down in talking about
25 women leadership and initiatives, but one of the things,

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1 before we sort of go down there, like everyone on this
2 panel is a leader, or is a frontline worker in a community
3 where you're trying to ensure wellness, health,
4 sustainability of your community, and I can't help but when
5 I was listening to you earlier, see all of the things that
6 you've had to address, and by and large those have not been
7 issues that you've brought or raised. They're not problems
8 that you created, it's often been external forces such as
9 law and policy, governments, other people that have brought
10 to your community, the way that way impact you now with
11 your health and wellness, but as women leadership in a
12 community now, you're charged, using those principles you
13 shared us with earlier, with the -- with the Heiltsuk women
14 declaration, you're now charged with kind of fixing or
15 trying to address all those harms that were caused, and to
16 me that seen seems like a large task, and I know you guys
17 are up for it because the way you're talking about these
18 issues you've already identified them. You've already laid
19 out the principles you want -- that you want to ensure are
20 put into place as you move forward in heal.

21 But to me it seems really apparent that a lot
22 of what's happened wasn't your doing, but now you're the
23 one that will be having to address it. That seems like a
24 pretty big task, and so my -- my question to you is how do
25 you start doing that as the leadership -- the women

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1 leadership in the community? How do you start making those
2 initiatives? What does it take -- what -- what are the
3 things that you have to consider on how to address these
4 impacts and these problems that weren't caused by you?

5 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** As women in -- in our
6 community, and we're not unique on this. I -- I think that
7 you know, I -- I've certainly witnessed it in other
8 communities, but women can mobilize, you know, they're the
9 backbones of our communities. The strength and -- and give
10 the life you know, to our communities so you know, for us
11 we have a long history of sisterhood in our community and
12 supporting women in our community.

13 And we were talking about it over the last
14 couple of days, going back to organized support with one
15 another, going back to the Native Brotherhood days. And we
16 had a Bella Bella chapter of the Native Sisterhood in Bella
17 Bella that provided all of the fundraising and organisation
18 for our men to partake with the Native Brotherhood. And
19 you know, at one point the women in our community, there
20 were two, Brenda Campbell (phonetic), and Kitty Carpenter
21 (phonetic) that said, "You know, we also want to vote. We
22 don't want just fundraise and organize for -- for you to go
23 down. But you know, all of these issues, you know, are --
24 are our issues too."

25 And they brought it into the -- the

1 convention and said, "Yeah, we'll -- we'll think about it."
2 And Brenda and Kitty got up and said, "Well, if we don't
3 get to vote we're not going to continue to fundraise and
4 organize for you to partake in this anymore." And they got
5 that vote.

6 And, you know, so you know going back to --
7 to that and -- and the Native Brotherhood, as we know, in
8 B.C. is you know foundational for a lot of the -- for the
9 -- Native movement, you know, that happens you know, across
10 our country and -- and British Columbia, you know.

11 And then after that we've had other social
12 networks that my grandmother, Florence (phonetic), used to
13 be a part of and -- and I know I was talking to our Aunt
14 Peggy (phonetic) about it, and they had a group called the
15 -- the Helping Hands (phonetic), and they used to fundraise
16 in the community to help families because they saw that you
17 know, that there were shortfalls you know, with -- with
18 families that you know, couldn't maybe get out for medical
19 or -- or you know, just were having a hard time. So you
20 know, we have a network of women that used to you know,
21 fundraise and -- and get together and help.

22 And going back probably to early -- that was
23 you know, the 70s and 80s and then going to about the year
24 2000 and onwards we had a Heiltsuk women's council, and
25 these were made up of primarily women that were working

1 within our communities, and we are very honoured and I know
2 that we're very privileged sometimes to be able to go out
3 and take training and go to places and -- and you know,
4 partake in -- in workshops and -- and that sort of thing.
5 And we knew that you know, our women in our community not
6 all of them had that opportunity to go out. So we got
7 together and -- and started fundraising to bring
8 professional development workshops within the community,
9 and we would have annual conferences to -- to provide that
10 to -- to women in our community. And most recently, and --
11 and it will be presented later on, is another group that
12 came together and developed that women's declaration that
13 was read by -- by Leona.

14 So we have a -- a long history of -- of
15 collaboration and strength in our community, and you know,
16 it's -- it's been there to address the inequalities that
17 our community is you know, has you know that oppression,
18 and that inequality of not being able to sometimes provide
19 you know, and that comes down to sometimes you know, the
20 access to resources. The policies that you know, the
21 Federal and Provincial governments had placed you know,
22 upon our communities for you know, making a living. You
23 know, that's -- that's really affected us dramatically.

24 You know, we have issues of what you know,
25 leaders you know, have, you know, brought forward in terms

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1 of you know, we -- we didn't also live this way. We -- we
2 had you know a thriving economy and you know, that's
3 something that, you know, we uphold and -- and know that we
4 can achieve that in a sustainable way going forward.

5 You know, and that's -- that's the vision of
6 our community, and it's also a vision of women in our
7 community around that sustainable economic vision that we
8 are have that we can be a thriving community. We're
9 thriving spiritually within our hearts, we're strong and
10 resilient people. You know, but certainly those outside
11 forces you know, still had its grip you know, and those are
12 the things that we do need to address.

13 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you. I
14 understand that you would like to talk about some of the
15 women leadership initiatives in the community. I'm not
16 sure who would you like to start with, but ...

17 **MS. LEONA HUMCHITT:** I just wanted to touch
18 on and provide context into the Heiltsuk women's
19 declaration. It was spawned out of the leadership of my --
20 my dear cousin, Louisa Jones (phonetic), she rallied our
21 people to -- to provide input into what the Heiltsuk
22 women's declaration can look like, and they had meetings
23 that were seeds of inspiration, and that beautiful piece,
24 I'm happy to acknowledge my Heiltsuk tribal council
25 colleague, Jess Houstee (phonetic), penned that -- that

1 piece, and it's so beautiful, and it's something that we're
2 really proud of. It is guiding principles for us as women.
3 It's guidance principles for us on a go forward basis. We
4 want to be strategic, we want to -- as I mentioned, put a
5 new memory in the minds of our -- our little ones, and to
6 do that you know we needed to demonstrate that we have a
7 foundation. That we have guiding principles going forward.

8 The Heiltsuk people have a -- a peace Treaty
9 with the Haida, and it's something that's been nurtured
10 over the last few years. We continue to exchange trips to
11 Haida, and this last visit -- last month, we had a women's
12 dialogue session, and it was very -- very beautiful,
13 inspirational.

14 The connections that we made with the Haida
15 women were natural, organic, it was like we knew each other
16 for -- for years and years, and we really want to build on
17 that and to be able to continue to nurture the good work
18 that we intend to do through these guiding principles, and
19 we've invited them to come back to Bella Bella for a
20 women's dialogue, and we invite you, Commissioner Buller
21 and Elder Kathy to come and join us, we'll be happy to send
22 you an invite for the continued good work that we're --
23 we're trying to build upon.

24 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** Thank you, Leona. One
25 of the other things that we've participated in is the

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1 British Columbia Assembly of First Nations has hosted some
2 dialogue sessions over the last couple of years, and the --
3 coming out of that has -- as women leadership with --
4 within B.C. we've developed an Indigenous women's
5 declaration and that was supported by the Chiefs of
6 Assembly on Women's -- International Women's Day, on March
7 8th of last month.

8 And you know, that's something that you know,
9 we're very proud of and that we've participated in as
10 Heiltsuk women and -- and leaders, for us you know, in
11 terms of that regional approach and that -- bringing it
12 back to -- to the -- the panel and -- and some of the
13 challenges that we have, the AFN has certainly been a
14 strong voice for pressing for the establishment of the
15 National Inquiry. And you know, we've supported through
16 resolutions that the Inquiry would support families to
17 ensure that all governments and policing servicing are met,
18 and their obligations to protect the fundamental human
19 rights of Indigenous women and girls, these are
20 foundational within the -- within the declaration for
21 Indigenous women as a regional context for that
22 declaration. And women from all over British Columbia came
23 to the sessions and provided their input to the declaration
24 and was supported by -- as I said, the Chiefs of Assembly
25 last month on -- on International Women's Day.

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1 We wanted to -- to take sure that B.C. women
2 also had a voice and you know, had a declaration and a
3 statement you know, of -- of our strengths you know, going
4 forward as women in leadership. There are 203 First Nation
5 communities in British Columbia, and of that 203 I think
6 the last count there were 47 First Nation elected female
7 leaders in British Columbia.

8 Part of the other foundational pieces, from a
9 regional perspective include the examination -- or we're
10 hoping that the examination will report on the systemic
11 causes. We've talked about some of that here today, behind
12 violence with Indigenous women and girls. And the
13 vulnerability that you know, that violence factors into --
14 into our lives. And it includes the historical -- the
15 social, the economic, institutional, and cultural factors,
16 and they also contribute to that continual risk that we're
17 talking about. We've -- we've shared you know, from a
18 Heiltsuk perspective, but it's very much from a regional
19 perspective as well.

20 So we -- we also recommended through a
21 regional body that, much like you're speaking with a
22 Heiltsuk panel here today, but there would also be panels
23 for institutional and expert witnesses to be able to
24 provide some contextual information to help us understand
25 you know, the systemic causes and these impacts that you

1 know, a regional level at a -- at a national level.

2 So we've also provided many resolutions to
3 support the -- the Inquiry. We'll continue to support the
4 -- the work of the B.C. Indigenous women's declaration.
5 It's new to -- to British Columbia, but it's also something
6 that woman felt was very important in a leadership -- in a
7 leadership role, being a woman, and it is -- it is hard.

8 You know, it's -- it's you know, we face some
9 challenges, and by supporting one another we can get
10 through them and you know, this declaration, we also know
11 that there's commonalties you know, in -- you know, across
12 our communities. And you know, some of those threats that
13 we talked about here today also you know, reach into other
14 communities, so you know, that is important that we -- from
15 a regional perspective, work together to -- to try to
16 address them in a way that we can you know, with that
17 collective leadership.

18 And I know Commissioner, that you've provided
19 reports to -- to the Chief's Assemblies, and I just wanted
20 to thank you for coming out and -- and providing those
21 reports because it's very important to -- to hear it
22 directly from -- from yourself and -- and the Commissioners
23 that assist you. And we know that there's been challenges,
24 you know, along the way, but we also have largely, in B.C.
25 supported -- fully supported the -- the Inquiry, so that's

1 something I just wanted to share with you.

2 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** May I ask a question.
3 Did you have anything to add to that point? Did you want
4 to add to that point? Okay.

5 We -- we -- you're talking about the women
6 dialogue sessions and that -- and that the declaration by
7 B.C. Indigenous women and if you're okay I'd just like to
8 ask a little bit more about this so that anyone watching
9 that's not from B.C., or other Indigenous women
10 organizations can maybe get a context of what the dialogue
11 sessions look like, or how they're being helpful. So the
12 dialogue sessions are part of this -- they're a part an
13 point for the leadership to get together and actually talk
14 about specific issues. Can you tell us just a little bit
15 about the dialogue sessions and a touch more about the
16 declaration? Like who was involved in making the
17 declaration by B.C. Indigenous women. And we know it's
18 new, but you know the hope for it maybe it's a good model
19 to look in -- in other jurisdictions.

20 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** Definitely. So one of
21 the things -- I'm also a member of the B.C. Assembly of
22 First Nations. I'm one of the board of directors, and also
23 the women's representative from B.C. for the National
24 Women's Council and you know, I've you know, attended
25 different forums throughout the years, and one of the

1 things that always comes forward from women in leadership
2 is we need some space for women -- women that are in
3 leadership roles to come together and talk.

4 You know, because we -- we were doing it, you
5 know -- you know, in -- in caucus rooms, you know, having
6 these conversations during lunch, you know, during some
7 regional sessions or you know, over breaks, in very
8 informal, but organic ways. But we -- we knew that we had
9 to create that space, so the -- the BCAFN sought resources
10 to be able to bring women together. So we got together in
11 a couple of different locations here in -- in the lower
12 mainland, and the sessions were a couple days in length and
13 they were -- the participation from women were from the
14 front -- frontline, Band administrators, executive
15 directors, female Chiefs, female elected Chiefs, hereditary
16 leaders, and so it was women that are participating in
17 leadership in their communities.

18 And we -- we talked about the -- the -- the
19 strength of our communities, but also you know, the -- the
20 challenges of our communities and how we can support each
21 other, so the -- the declaration speaks you know, from --
22 from that regional level, and it was written by the B.C.
23 women that participated. It was shared widely with -- with
24 the Chiefs in Assembly over the past couple of years,
25 before it was passed by resolution, and it was really

1 important for us to be able to do that, and we felt it was
2 really important that there was a declaration that talked
3 about the challenges that we have, but also the strength
4 that we have to be able to address that in a collective
5 way. And you know, we do face barriers in our daily lives,
6 and we wanted to also come from a place of strength as a
7 collective voice for women.

8 And you know, we shared our Heiltsuk woman's
9 declaration at this dialogue session and it supported the
10 B.C. Indigenous women's declaration. One of the other
11 declarations that were shared -- that was shared was from
12 the Nuu-chah-nulth people.

13 And Deb Foxcroft was there, and -- and she
14 provided that declaration that was created in -- I believe
15 the 1980s and you know, it -- it talks about how we want to
16 be -- it's about reclaiming our roles. The reclamation of
17 our roles in our communities. And the reclamation of our
18 voice in our communities, and we -- we had talked about you
19 know, some of the pressing factors that you know, our
20 community has gone through including you know, culture
21 being oppressed and -- and went underground.

22 And my father tells me about a story that --
23 it's a very short story. That he shared with me growing
24 up. He was at -- he would be at this grandmother's house,
25 sitting on -- on the stairs and watching his grandmother

1 have tea -- afternoon tea with ladies, and he said that
2 they'd be drinking tea out of these little -- big mugs and
3 bowls sometimes, you know, having tea. But he said that
4 they would sing, and they would sit in a circle and they
5 would converse with each other and they would use sticks to
6 you know, to replicate the drum and they would sing in a
7 circle, and -- and he said they were the ones that kept our
8 culture alive.

9 You know, they -- they kept it -- it was
10 underground, but they kept it alive and we practiced our
11 ceremonies you know, in our homes. So these are the things
12 you know, the strengths that we talked about during these
13 women's sessions largely you know, with the women all
14 across British Columbia.

15 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Did you want a turn
16 to (indiscernible) recommendation, okay.

17 **MS. MAVIS WINDSOR:** So before we move on I
18 just would like to expand on what Leona had to share about
19 the Heiltsuk and women -- Heiltsuk Haida women's sessions.

20 Over the last few years there's been some
21 discussion on -- on the two communities having a women's
22 gathering, and it did come to fruition at the end of
23 February, we all -- there was 36 of us all together that
24 went up to Haida Gwaii. We were so excited and they were
25 excited because many of us hadn't been there ever in our

1 lives, and it was one of our bucket list items, so we all
2 went up there, and as Leona said, it was very spiritual.
3 It was very organic.

4 We talked -- the goal was to discuss issues
5 -- common issues that affect the overall wellbeing of women
6 in our communities, and we all left there feeling like we
7 are now on another journey of -- as a group of women, and
8 hopefully in the very near future addressing some of these
9 issues will contribute largely to the wellness of women in
10 our communities and -- and start some healing for families.

11 But I wanted to read the coastal unity
12 declaration, or the coastal unity call to action. I think
13 they have a copy of it on your -- okay. It was put up on
14 the screen earlier, but I just wanted to bring -- to
15 highlight it. I have it on my phone, just hang on, it was
16 something that we as a group of women brought to the
17 gathering -- the very last day when we were acknowledging
18 -- when we were acknowledging our -- the work that we had
19 been doing with the Haida group of women and so we felt it
20 was really important to emphasize that it was coastal
21 unity, the coastal unity of women of our -- our two
22 communities, and we called it our commitment to action, "As
23 women, aunties, mothers,
24 daughters, and grandmothers,
25 together we will protect the land and

1 the waters and the culture. We will do
2 it in unity. This is our call to
3 action."

4 And you'll see the -- one of the words that
5 is on the screen is -- is (Speaking Hailhzaqvla language)
6 and in our language it is one heart one mind, *Gayaxsixa*,
7 thank you.

8 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** So we also come bearing
9 recommendations. And we'd like to go into that right now.

10 So recommendations that we have for -- for
11 the Commission, the first is the recognition of Indigenous
12 jurisdiction is an important step in addressing violence
13 against women and the need to provide resources and
14 assistance in this regard.

15 So one of the things -- and we talked about
16 it quite a bit today, is the -- the Indian Act, and their
17 jurisdiction that you know, the Federal Government still
18 has over -- that it asserts over Indigenous communities.
19 So the recognition of Indigenous jurisdiction is very
20 important as a step going forward to address violence
21 against women and the need to provide those resources as
22 well.

23 Also connected to that is Heiltsuk
24 recognition of our inherent right to self-government and
25 that we no longer be treated as wards of the State, but as

1 Nations with collective rights. We also shared earlier
2 today the strength of our -- of our Nation and the -- the
3 self-sustaining Nations that -- that we had, and this is
4 one of the visions behind that recommendation.

5 Another recommendation is a decolonized
6 Canada where Indigenous communities enjoy the same standard
7 of living as the rest of Canadians. And want -- it brings
8 to me a -- a comment that one of my colleagues, Pamela
9 Wilson (phonetic) shares with me. She's one of our elected
10 counsellors, and when we talk about reconciliation and
11 bridging the gaps she's really strong in saying our needs
12 are not our desires. And you know -- you know, so this
13 standard of living in equality is important but it isn't
14 reconciliation in itself, it's a part of it.

15 And the support for Indigenous communities to
16 develop their own domestic violence codes to reduce or
17 deter domestic violence. I think that there's -- not, I
18 think, I know, we have the solutions within our
19 communities. We know what we need to do and -- and we have
20 you know, the creativity and the courage and the capacity
21 to be able to do that. And we also -- you know, have the
22 benefit of looking at other communities to see what they've
23 done, and you know, others have developed domestic violence
24 codes you know, we've seen that example in the -- in the
25 United States with the Cheyenne and the Hopi, you know, so

1 there's examples to look at.

2 And supporting reconciliation to achieve
3 self-government which will address strengthening in our
4 community, and that really goes back to the video that we
5 shared earlier today and our vision around reconciliation
6 on Heiltsuk's terms. You know, and -- and you know, for
7 that reconciliation to be something it's really important
8 for us to be able to (speaking Hailhzaqvla language) to
9 turn something around and make it right again and those
10 priority house posts are symbolic of the house posts of our
11 -- of our big -- of big house, and it's foundational for
12 the strength of our community, and it will be foundational
13 for the healing of our community as well.

14 And I'll pass this to Leona, who will provide
15 additional recommendations.

16 **MS. LEONA HUMCHITT:** Thank you. A lot of our
17 recommendations are going to take commitment from Canada
18 and the Provincial Government, not just -- just to the
19 Heiltsuk but to Indigenous people from across Canada
20 realistically.

21 I had the opportunity to listen to former
22 Chief -- Grand Chief Bill Erasmus, and you know, back in
23 the day you know, he's instrumental in working the Royal
24 Commission on Aboriginal people you know, out of the Royal
25 Commission came the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,

1 and there's a lot of other good work yet to be completed.
2 And Canada has a role to play in truth and reconciliation.
3 They go hand in hand.

4 This opportunity for truth telling today, and
5 through the residential school work that was done we cannot
6 have reconciliation if Canada doesn't know the truth of
7 what happened.

8 And out of RCAP was the recommendation of a
9 healing foundation. It started, but they -- they
10 discontinued it. And we need to retrigger that process and
11 we need to look at you know, communities that are -- are
12 ready for self-governance, have been progressive in -- in
13 being able to use them to help other people across Canada
14 to get to that point, but realistically we will need high
15 fund transfers from the Federal Government to enact all
16 these recommendations.

17 The -- one of the recommendations we have is
18 bringing birthing back to the communities, midwifery and
19 bringing back birthing to the hospitals. As we mentioned
20 Heiltsuk is a very remote isolated community. We have a
21 small hospital with I believe, 12 beds and there's about
22 six of those beds that are dedicated to long-term care
23 because we don't have a long-term care facility.

24 But I want to say you know, it's for us as
25 First Nations people, and I know it's not -- not just the

1 Heiltsuk, again that you know, to not be able to witness
2 that beautiful, magical, miracle of birth -- for 25 years
3 my daughters -- my youngest daughter is going to be 25
4 that's when they started sending Heiltsuk women out to
5 facilities in the lower mainland to have their babies. And
6 it's been 25 years that you know, our people or missing
7 that most important part of the cycle of life, so we are
8 burdened with you know -- you know, the end of life, you
9 know, we -- we honour our loved ones, but we don't get to
10 see the birthing anymore, so it's really important you
11 know, that we bring that back to our -- our communities.

12 And so 25 years ago when I was ready to have
13 my daughter they -- they tried to send me out and I said,
14 No, I'm not going. I need my family to support me, and I
15 stayed. And then I have an 18-year-old boy and I refused
16 to leave as well. They couldn't make me, so I stayed, and
17 I -- I -- I had my son in our -- in our own hospital.

18 And it's -- it's a really beautiful thing and
19 we've -- we've been really progressive with -- in terms of
20 research. We have a -- a local physician who loves the
21 Heiltsuk people, who's done a lot of work with us, and has
22 done research with UBC on the importance of bringing
23 midwifery back to remote communications (sic) --
24 communities, sorry. And then I seen lately a communication
25 that, I believe, the Manitoba women -- that they brought an

1 Indigenous midwifery program for them so that they could
2 bring the birthing back to their communities, so it's --
3 it's good to know that this concern you know, goes across
4 Canada.

5 We also wanted to make some recommendation
6 about education. Two of our knowledge-keepers and former
7 teachers together they did education and capacity building
8 report so we have all the documentation about the different
9 -- the different jobs and careers that we need from our
10 Heiltsuk people in our community and we want to be able to
11 build on that. We want to be able to facilitate life
12 skills and employ -- employability skills, literacy
13 programs, and more importantly financial literacy.

14 We have -- over the years managed poverty, we
15 manage poverty through the programs and services that the
16 Federal Government has given us over the years. And I want
17 to highlight Minister Carolyn Bennett's statement about,
18 "We want to move away from delivering programs and services
19 and building institutions."

20 The Heiltsuk have done that. We have our own
21 institution for stewardship; it's called the Heiltsuk
22 Integrated Resource Management Department. We have a
23 business arm, the Heiltsuk Economic Development
24 Corporation. We own our school. We own our -- our -- our
25 health department, and we're very progressive in -- in the

1 way that we need to continue to enhance these institutions.
2 But once again you know, to be able to carry that out we're
3 going to need those high fund transfer agreements with the
4 Federal Government. We would like to see funding in place
5 for college prep, college and university.

6 One of the fathers and builders -- builders
7 of our Nation was a -- a -- a well respected community
8 leader named Cecil Reid, he was the Chief counsellor in our
9 Nation for many -- many -- many years. Cecil went to
10 residential school, but he was one of the -- the few that
11 were able to carry on and -- and acquire a career in
12 education. He taught down in the lower mainland for a
13 number of years and was called home.

14 Cecil, is that you? I love you.

15 But a very -- very well respected man, very
16 grounded in cultural teachings. His -- his mentor -- his
17 dear Aunt Gim (phonetic) was the one that -- that raised
18 him and that taught him traditional values and the
19 principles of being Heiltsuk.

20 We never shared earlier, but Heiltsuk means
21 to speak and act correctly.

22 And he had all that groundings from his --
23 his grandmother -- or his aunt, sorry. And she always
24 expressed to him you know, that we need to have *sala*
25 (phonetic), we need to have the ideal behaviour to know

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1 what our actions are going to entail. And -- one sec,
2 *bucula* (phonetic), he also expressed that we had to have
3 *bucula*, to be hard working, and that's really important
4 because over the years as -- as Marilyn has -- has
5 expressed, you know, through colonialism there's a real
6 dependency that we're trying to move away from. And we
7 know without a shadow of a doubt that our ancestors were
8 hard working, and that's a kind of mentoring that we want
9 to be able to do through some of these programs. We want
10 to have a girl power program, healthy male mentorship
11 program for young men.

12 We also want to acknowledge you know, that
13 this process for murdered and missing Indigenous women and
14 girls is very important, and that we're very holistic in
15 our -- in our thoughts in our minds, in our hearts, and we
16 want to remember the murdered and missing Indigenous men
17 and young -- young guys.

18 We have a loved one that had gone missing a
19 couple of years ago. His name is Max Brown (phonetic), and
20 -- and it's in that that we again that we recognize you
21 know, as a community we're all related one way or another
22 by marriage or bloodline, so when we lose a community
23 member we all feel it. And we just want to remember Max's
24 family today because they have had no closure.

25 We want to be able to teach Heiltsuk values.

1 We want to be able to have funding to develop our own
2 curriculum about Heiltsuk history, about Heiltsuk values
3 and principles in our schools.

4 So those are some of the things that you
5 know, we want to bring to light and recommend and -- and
6 again that it's going to take -- it's going to take the
7 government to work with us to meet these recommendations.
8 *Gayaxsixa.*

9 **MS. MAVIS WINDSOR:** Okay, so moving on from
10 what Leona was discussing.

11 We have -- we've had several discussions on
12 the healing centre for trauma and family violence, and part
13 of the programs that we would like to include and offer to
14 our community our men's wellness programs, a cultural
15 program for men, and *bucula*, as Leona mentioned, *bucula*
16 programs for our men who, over the years due to many --
17 many factors, including economical factors, no longer go
18 hunting. They don't go fishing. And many of our people
19 don't know how to prepare our traditional foods. Many of
20 our people no longer eat our traditional foods.

21 We also would like to have a women's centre.
22 And an emergency shelter program or emergency shelter
23 building, because more often than not we have homes in our
24 community where there are three or four families living
25 together in very crowded circumstances and that affects the

1 health and wellbeing of -- of not only you know, the women
2 in the family, but the men and the children and it can
3 create situations where there's tension and you know, just
4 it's not a very healthy situation.

5 We also would like to see an advocate program
6 for women and expanding our family support programs. I
7 know that they have offered parenting programs, as I said
8 earlier, through the Kaxla Child and Family Service Agency,
9 and certainly would like to you know, recommend that
10 parenting programs, not only in our community, but
11 throughout Canada be culturally appropriate because we all
12 have our -- what we call our -- our *Gui'ilas*, which is our
13 laws -- our laws of our ancestors, and -- and they were so
14 inclusive in the days of our ancestors that they addressed
15 things like domestic violence, they addressed things like
16 parenting, and that's no longer done in our traditional
17 houses anymore.

18 Drug and alcohol addiction programs and
19 single people -- single persons' advocate -- an advocate
20 for single people, and that's one of the longstanding
21 issues in our community is that our single people are
22 homeless, in many cases some of our single people are couch
23 surfing. And some of them have been on the emergency
24 housing list for 15 plus years. You know, so and I'm --
25 I'm sure many of issues are in many communities across

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1 Canada.

2 I'll pass the mic over to Joann and she talk
3 about some cultural recommendations.

4 **MS. JOANN GREEN:** *Gayaxsixa*. Again, I would
5 like to thank you for taking the time to listen to us.

6 Earlier you heard Marilyn -- Chief Marilyn
7 talking about her dad witnessing some of the earlier
8 singing and dancing. In the 1960s my grandmother along --
9 Gerti White (phonetic) was my grandmother, Hanna Hall
10 (phonetic), Beatrice Brown (phonetic), Mable (phonetic)
11 Humchitt, Johnny (phonetic) Humchitt, would all get
12 together in homes, and my grandmother would take me with
13 her, and they would -- it was the women that did all of the
14 singing and they would teach us how to sing and dance.

15 Today we are very fortunate to have a camp --
16 (Speaking Hailhzaqvla language) camp where our children go
17 every summer, where they learn about who they are, where
18 they find out about their identity through singing and
19 dancing, and to us that's very important. For many
20 families in our community all of that's been lost with the
21 residential school.

22 It's frustrating when you think about how
23 hard and how big of a job we're going to have to do all of
24 these programs in the community when colonization took all
25 of this away from us over 150 years ago. All the women in

1 our community are trying really hard to work together to
2 find ways to strengthen each other and strengthen our
3 cultural programs.

4 One of the things we see that's very
5 important is connecting our youth and our Elders together.
6 Our children continue to learn their singing and dancing.
7 Have family singing and dance programs on a weekly basis,
8 not just before *potlatches*, have a languageness program,
9 that so important. Language -- without our language we
10 don't really have a connection with our Elders.

11 Our Elders are our knowledge-keepers. They
12 have stories that connect us to our territory and those are
13 very important. It is our hope that we can have drum
14 making -- have a drum making program, cedar weaving.

15 Every summer our college takes staff and
16 students out to gather cedar, and for some of those young
17 people that we take out they've never been, and it's re-
18 connecting to our land and our resources and teaching them
19 how to strip cedar bark. It's overwhelming for some of
20 them.

21 Having art therapy is really important
22 because it's healing. Our -- our Heiltsuk art teaches our
23 children about who they are. Storytelling is really
24 important, bringing our Elders and youth together so that
25 they can reconnect. You know, with the breakdown of

1 families, you heard earlier than a lot of our grandmothers
2 and our mothers lost the ability to parent. I often think
3 about what my son said to me, "I wish I had the same kind
4 of relationship you had with your grandparents when you
5 were growing up," because there was a breakdown. You heard
6 Leona talk about how important it is to have grandchildren
7 and the feeling that you have. We need to bring that all
8 back.

9 Making regalia is another important part of
10 our Heiltsuk traditions, and it's making button blankets
11 and vests for *potlatching*. Many of our own community
12 members don't own those. It's something that we are
13 fighting to bring back and teach them about how important
14 it is to own those because it gives us strength.

15 When we have the regalia making, have
16 language and storytelling at the same time, this connects
17 our generations of families because our grandmothers and
18 our aunties and our uncles will be passing their knowledge
19 to their -- their grandchildren and their children.

20 Medicine gathering is such an important part
21 of who we are. It's local harvesting, and developing small
22 businesses. As I said, I work in the community college and
23 I have an Elder in residence who is 78, I believe, and she
24 makes traditional medicine. She prepares the medicine and
25 she distributes it to community members. You heard Marilyn

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1 say, "When the tide goes down our table is set." We open
2 our back door and we have our pharmacy. That's where we
3 get all of our medicine, you can walk up in the bush and
4 you can pick (Speaking Hailhzaqvla language). You can pick
5 Salal berry leaves, those are medicine. We pick -- you can
6 go up into the forest and you can get cedar bark, you go in
7 there and you get the hemlock branches for our
8 (indiscernible), we're very rich. We're very rich. And it
9 is our hope that you can take all this because these are
10 very important recommendations, *Gayaxsixa*.

11 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Did you want to do
12 the presentation, but then kind of before we close with a
13 song I'll ask the Commissioner (indiscernible) okay.

14 So at this point actually I understand that
15 there will be a presentation to the Commission to the
16 National Inquiry, it's an art expression, and I believe
17 that Chief Marilyn will be explaining it.

18 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** One of the things we had
19 reviewed when we were preparing for -- for this panel here
20 today was the opportunity to provide some of our stories
21 and strength through art expression, and this painting, or
22 paintings -- my sister here in the -- in the shawl, here --
23 that's my younger sister Nicole Carpenter (phonetic), and
24 she's joined with Jenna (phonetic), Mavis's daughter, and
25 Nicole painted this and she went through a couple of

1 iterations in terms of putting something together. But I
2 asked her to -- to paint something for the Inquiry, and to
3 -- so she said -- she didn't hesitate, and she said okay.

4 And my sister is very humble, she's -- she's
5 an artist from the heart. She does a lot of it for
6 -- with socializing with friends and -- and getting
7 together, so she's self-taught, and this is probably --
8 probably her fifth or so painting, yeah.

9 And I asked her to -- to paint something for
10 -- for today and she asked me, "Well, okay. What gives you
11 strength?" And I shared with her that our families give us
12 strength, our connection to the land and sea gives us
13 strength, our connection to the living world gives us
14 strength, our sisterhood gives us strength, and our
15 ancestors give us strength, so she -- she went back and --
16 and she painted this. And it is -- you can see the women
17 on the beach dancing, and she has my mother holding a
18 copper, and myself holding a feather, and that's actually
19 my blanket that she painted in, it's -- it's beautiful, and
20 my sister and my niece -- Tracey's (phonetic) -- Nicole's
21 daughter, Tracey, and you can see the -- the whale and the
22 eagle, and these ladies over here are our ancestors.

23 So this is Nicole's painting, and she wanted
24 to present it to -- to you today. And it represents the --
25 the strength of her -- of our women, and of our community

1 and she's named them, the first one here is called, Bella
2 Spirit, and on the bottom, Walk with Us.

3 So thank you. Did you want to look at that?
4 We -- we just wanted to -- to share that it's something
5 that Nicole has shared with some of the ladies that have
6 been coming out, and I've been sharing with our ladies from
7 our community, and just so proud of my sister and -- yeah,
8 thank you for -- thank you for listening, and thank you for
9 your attention to -- to everything that we're able to share
10 today.

11 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Chief Commissioner, I
12 -- at this point if you have any questions or comments the
13 panel would be happy to hear from you.

14 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I do have
15 some questions to start with. With your women's
16 declaration in particular, how do you give life to that?
17 How do you hold people accountable to that declaration?

18 **MS. MAVIS WINDSOR:** Well, historically our
19 women -- you've heard, our women are very strong. We come
20 from a matriarchal society, and so you know, I believe that
21 it will be our women that will -- will be the ones to take
22 action and to ensure that the principles that they
23 mentioned in their declaration, because it's their
24 declaration, they own it, and I believe that -- that's
25 where the ownership lies and that they will take

1 responsibility. They will take the stands that they need
2 to do to address the overall health and wellbeing of the
3 women in our communities.

4 Specifically for us, it's in our Heiltsuk
5 community, and the commitment -- the commitment that they
6 have to uplift each other and to make sure that the issues
7 that it -- that continue to impact their day to day lives
8 are -- are not -- are no longer pushed aside or shoved
9 under the carpet like they have been for many -- many
10 years, and that's -- that is to me what I -- when I listen
11 to the words that were penned. They came out of statements
12 that were made by our women, and the author who penned it,
13 she read everything that the women spoke to, and what she
14 felt they said is how she came to develop our declaration
15 -- our women's declaration, and so from my perspective you
16 know, I believe that it's time for the women in our
17 communities to stand up and say, no more. We matter, and
18 that our lives, and the health and wellbeing of our
19 children and our families are important.

20 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank
21 you. I'd appreciate your comments on some things that I've
22 heard from other communities across Canada who face similar
23 challenges because of geographical isolation.

24 I've been to your beautiful community several
25 times and I can see there are benefits of being isolated,

1 but also there are drawbacks to being isolated sometimes.

2 I've heard elsewhere in Canada that things
3 like when we have to go through a turnover in teachers or
4 nurses, or police, it's disruptive to our community, and
5 that effects the safety of our women and girls, and it also
6 effects the community because you have to constantly be re-
7 educating the -- the nurses, the teachers, and police
8 officers who come to your community, and they're not always
9 the same and in their ability to do their job, or they're
10 not always the same in -- in their philosophy about how
11 they do their jobs, so I'm just wondering if you have any
12 comments about -- if you've observed or experienced the
13 same sort of issues about women's safety when there are
14 turnovers in these types of positions, and then what you
15 might see as a way of remedying those situations.

16 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** Thank you for -- for
17 that question. You know, certainly one of the -- the --
18 well, it was embedded in many of the recommendations that
19 we had, the -- the lack of resources that our community
20 has, and to be able to address the -- the issues that we
21 talked about here today will take many people and
22 collaboration between the Province and Canada and Heiltsuk
23 talking and -- and collaborating, and also helping to
24 provide some resources to be able to address them because
25 these issues are -- are legacies of colonialism. So you

1 know, certainly for us some of the -- the gaps that we see
2 are -- are certainly with mental health professional
3 support within our community, and turnover is something
4 that definitely we've seen.

5 And one of the things that has helped to
6 provide continuity is providing training and support for
7 our own people to fulfill those roles and not to have to
8 depend on teachers and other professional resources to --
9 to come into town because really they only have a shelf
10 life of a couple of years before they leave, and that's, if
11 that.

12 So for us to -- to regain and -- and -- and
13 heal and go through some of those recommendations it will
14 mean that we need to have further investment in our
15 communities so our people -- because we have the solutions.
16 You know, we have -- you know, we talked about that
17 earlier, we have the creativity that the human capacity you
18 know, in terms of people that you know, are -- are going
19 out for that training, but you know, there -- there is some
20 gaps in that support and there is you know, more that we
21 can do.

22 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I hope I
23 don't put you in a difficult position by asking you this
24 question, I apologize in advance if I do.

25 We've heard from woman leaders elsewhere in

1 Canada about how they've coped with being leaders, about
2 the lateral violence that they've experiences because they
3 are women leaders in their own communities, also because of
4 really upsetting the status quo I suppose in some respects,
5 I don't know if being in -- or being a matrilineal and --
6 and matriarchal society if it's perhaps different, but I
7 just wonder if you would like to comment about the violence
8 that is -- is lateral in our own communities.

9 **CHIEF MARILYN SLETT:** You know, certainly the
10 challenges and the barriers you know, that we face -- and
11 going back to some of the dialogue sessions that we talked
12 back that the BCAFN had -- had hosted, there were women
13 that were -- were in the audience or -- or within you know,
14 participating, and when we were going the end of the
15 session and had you know, sort of an open dialogue, some
16 women were -- were getting up and saying, You know what,
17 I'm going to run you know, for council. I'm going to run
18 to be the Chief counsellor. I'm going to go home and form
19 you know, a women's council. I'm going to go home and
20 start these dialogue sessions at home.

21 And you know, the Haida people are an example
22 of that, they -- they went back and hosted a variety of --
23 of women's dialogue sessions in Masset and Skidegate, in
24 Queen Charlotte City, Port Clements, and -- and then their
25 last session they invited the Heiltsuk women up and we

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1 travelled two days to get up there by boats and by -- by
2 car and -- and you know, Mavis had mentioned there were you
3 know, 36 of us that went up, and some of our women from
4 Vancouver you know, made the journey up as well and you
5 know, but you know, certainly that network is a support for
6 women in leadership as well because it is -- we do face you
7 know, the -- the -- the lateral violence and we do face you
8 know, the challenges of -- of being a female leader.

9 I'm my entering my tenth year as the elected
10 leader for -- for Heiltsuk and it hasn't been without its
11 challenges and you know, it's -- but it's supportive, you
12 know, women supportive -- there are a lot of -- and I need
13 to say this, a lot of spectacular men in our communities
14 that support their -- their wives and support their mothers
15 and their sisters in their leadership roles and you know,
16 create that space you know, for us having that platform to
17 -- to use our voices. But it is something that is -- is
18 still in our communities and -- and it's a legacy of the --
19 of the oppression that, you know, we're -- we're still --
20 you know, living through and -- and you know, that still in
21 our communities and you know, but there -- there is a
22 movement you know, with women.

23 And I was thinking about that and I wrote
24 some notes, and this is from the Haida session, that we're
25 healing together and we're taking an intergenerational

1 approach and that our voices are our platform for action.
2 And we have many women who enact changes in our community
3 and we have a history of it.

4 So for us, you know, it's -- it's drawing on
5 that strength to get us through the challenges that are
6 still very much there today

7 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** I don't
8 have any other questions now because there's so much for me
9 to take in. I want to thank you all for being here. What
10 you've said this afternoon is very important to our work,
11 so I thank you for that. Also for me personally I'm so
12 grateful that you came and -- and talked to us today
13 because I've seen the -- the strength of the Heiltsuk women
14 firsthand, and I'm so glad to be able to share that with
15 the rest of Canada. So thank you all very much.

16 Also I -- I want to say that at times it's
17 been very difficult to remain in my chair because I wanted
18 to jump up and cheer for you.

19 I'm very grateful for your gift as well thank
20 you.

21 You know, I don't necessarily have to tell
22 you this, other parts of Canada I have to explain, but not
23 so much with you, we have gifts because we're so grateful
24 of the gifts you've given us today with your stories and
25 your recommendations, your history, very important gifts to

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1 us, we want to give you something back as best we can
2 today. We have Eagle Feathers for you to lift you up and
3 hold you up and -- and keep you flying high. To give you
4 courage when you need it, to give you comfort when you need
5 it as well. So we're very grateful and we -- we want to
6 keep you lifted up.

7 We also have some seeds for you. I think
8 they're the wild strawberry seeds. When we first started
9 this National Inquiry the Commissioners and I hoped that we
10 would help healing start and from healing new growth for
11 people. Well, it's already started, we're hearing back
12 from people about how they've re-claimed their rightful
13 positions in their communities, and women who have had the
14 -- found the strength after coming to talk to us to go to
15 the police and have their foster parents charged for
16 example, so there's wonderful growth happening, but we're
17 going to ask you to plant the seeds. I hope you have
18 better luck than I did in my backyard. If something grows
19 will you please, take a picture of it and send it to us for
20 a part of our legacy archive, but also it's a way to show
21 new growth because new growth is so important to have -- to
22 put new dreams in -- in the minds of our children.

23 As you said earlier, this is a big deal for
24 us too, so thank you so much for coming, it's been a -- a
25 real -- a real treat for me that you're here, so thank you

1 again, and I hope we do right by you by committing to a
2 thorough and -- and good report that's going to move all of
3 us forward. So I wish you a safe trip home to your
4 families. I thank your families for sharing you with us
5 today and -- and while you're here, and you've made a big
6 difference -- all of you. Thank you very much.

7 **MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Chief Commissioner,
8 once the gifts are given out -- okay. Once the gifts are
9 given out the panel has asked if they can finish with a
10 song.

11 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Oh, of
12 course, thank you, and after that we'll adjourn.

13 --- **CLOSING SONG**

14 --- **Exhibits (Code P01P15P0202)**

15 **Exhibit 1:** Folder containing 17 digital images
16 displayed on monitors during the public
17 panel's testimony.

18 **Exhibit 2:** Heiltsuk Women's Declaration, one-page text.

19 **Exhibit 3:** Video presented during the panel (106MB, 4
20 minutes 8 seconds, MP4 format).

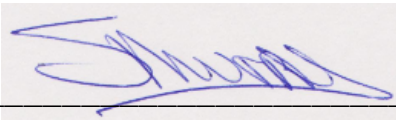
21 **Exhibit 4:** Declaration by B.C. Indigenous Women.

22 **Exhibit 5:** British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
23 Resolution 01/2018 "Support for BC
24 Indigenous Women's Declaration.

25 --- Upon adjourning at 5:09 p.m.

LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

I, Shannon Munro, 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.



Shannon Munro

April 14, 2018