

# Emails to/from Merlin Affleck and Michael Hassett re Burkinshaw and McChesney allegations

May 28

**WINGS Note:** This is a series of emails between Cynthia Liles, Merlin Affleck and Michael Hassett, with an introduction by Cynthia.

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Hello everyone,

As you may know, we've been working diligently behind the scenes to protect the community and expose wrong doings. Sadly, in many instances when we are advocating on behalf of survivors, our voices are not being heard **by those currently in authority**. We feel the pattern of stonewalling by leadership continues even today, as evidenced by the following email exchange. After two months of working on this crisis, it is evident that new leaders who are willing to be ethical, transparent, caring, and operate with integrity are necessary.

We need your help!

Please use your voices to demand accountability and change from leadership.

**Please note that as of 5/28/23 there has been no response from either Merlin or Michael.**

## Forwarded Conversation

**Subject: Walter Burkinshaw/Leanne McChesney**

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From: Cynthia Liles <email redacted>

Date: Sat, May 20, 2023 at 10:14 AM

To: Merlin Affleck < email redacted >, Michael Hassett < email redacted >  
Cc: Lauren Rohs < email redacted >, Sheri Autrey < email redacted >

Dear Merlin and Michael,

Merlin, as you know, the Walter Burkinshaw victims have been very distressed to learn that Walter is still allowed in meetings. There are criminal cases pending against him for pedophilia, which you are aware of. Last week I left a detailed message for Ben Collyer, who I understand is one of the workers in Walter's field, explaining how distressing it is to the victims to know Walter is in meetings. I have not heard back.

Society expects institutions to keep their communities safe -- especially the children. You may say, "Oh, he's an old man and he's in a wheelchair," or "he's not in meetings with children." To the victims, that shows you are standing with the perpetrator and not with them. In addition, I have worked on cases where perpetrators were still abusing children well into their 80's. Pedophilia is not something that goes away with old age.

Merlin, I also understand that you may have a written confession from Walter. Any and all written documentation from Walter admitting his crimes is key evidence and should be turned over to law enforcement as soon as possible. If it is true that you have such a statement from Walter and you haven't turned it over to law enforcement, it begs the question: Why are you protecting a pedophile?

I also understand Leanne McChesney is attending meetings. She also has criminal charges pending for sex crimes against children.

It is highly probable that Walter and Leanne have sexually abused other children that have not yet come forward. The friends have a right to know about the charges against Walter and Leanne. Please do the right thing and notify the friends in Canada and anywhere else Walter and Leanne have been.

Best,

Cynthia

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From: Merlin Affleck < email redacted >  
Date: Sat, May 20, 2023 at 6:23 PM  
To: Cynthia Liles < email redacted >

Hello Cynthia,

**I do not have any written confession from Walter. It was at my encouragement that he willingly went to the RCMP himself 2 or 3 years ago and spoke to them directly. Be assured that his case has been in professional hands for a long time already.**

Yours truly, Merlin

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From: Cynthia Liles [email redacted]  
Date: Sat, May 20, 2023 at 7:23 PM  
To: Merlin Affleck < email redacted >, < email redacted >  
Cc: Sheri Autrey < email redacted >, Lauren Rohs < email redacted >

Hello Merlin,

You state you encouraged Walter to turn himself in to the RCMP two or three years ago. He must have confessed to you? There are two NEW cases filed against Walter. Your account of his verbal confession would be key evidence. Will you agree to contact the RCMP in Vernon and Wainwright to give a statement?

You did not address the other subject of my email. Will you agree to notify the friends that Walter and Leanne have charges against them for pedophilia and remove them from meetings?

Thank you,

Cynthia

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From: michael hassett < email redacted >

Date: Mon, May 22, 2023 at 3:29 PM

To: Cynthia Liles < email redacted >

Hello Cynthia,

Our friends in the area where Walter lives are all aware of the accusations against him. They were informed when he first moved to the town.

Michael

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From: Cynthia Liles < email redacted >

Date: Mon, May 22, 2023 at 9:19 PM

To: michael hassett < email redacted >, Merlin Affleck < email redacted >

Cc: Lauren Rohs < email redacted >, Sheri Autrey < email redacted >, Darryl Doland < email redacted >

Hello Michael and Merlin,

I'm sorry -- there must be some confusion. I didn't ask if the friends in Walter's area were aware of the accusations against Walter. I was letting you know that it is very distressing to his victims to know that he is still attending meetings. Neither one of you have acknowledged in your replies that this news may be upsetting to the victims and neither one of you have asked what you can do for the victims. That tells me your focus is not on the victims. In fact, it tells me you could care less about the victims. If you cared about victims, you would notify the friends in Canada of the pending charges against Walter and Leanne and ask victims to come forward

Merlin, you say you had Walter turn himself into law enforcement a few years ago. I've read the minutes of your April 6, 2023 meeting in Kelowna, B.C. You acknowledge Walter committed crimes. I understand he confessed to you. Do you realize Walter denied everything to law enforcement? It dawned on me after our last email exchange that if he had truly confessed when you sent him to law enforcement, he would have already been charged and most likely entered into a plea deal. I've confirmed that did not happen because he denied everything.

So, again, are you willing to give a statement to law enforcement in the new cases that have been filed? If not, why not? Your actions are very confusing to me. I do not

understand why you would choose to stand by a pedophile instead of the victims who were innocent young children when they were sexually abused by their overseer -- the most trusted position in the hierarchy of the Truth. I also noticed in your minutes that you felt Walter's crimes were on the "low end" of the crime scale on a scale of 1-10. The actual act of sex abuse against a child has absolutely nothing to do with the trauma response. I have worked on hundreds of these cases and have witnessed this phenomenon many, many times. One child who is anally raped can have less of a trauma response than that of a child fondled by the same perpetrator. Again, the actual act has no correlation to the trauma response. It is not up to us to determine the severity of trauma inflicted on victims.

Cynthia ---

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