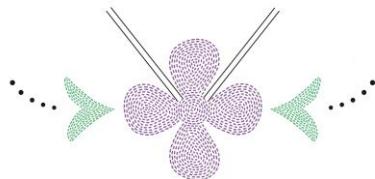


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process – Part 1 Public Hearings
Hotel Bonaventure
Montreal, Quebec**



PUBLIC

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

Public Volume 65:

**Sarah Birmingham & Barbara Sevigny,
In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham**

**Heard by Commissioners Qajaq Robinson,
Brian Eyolfson & Michèle Audette**

Commission Counsel: Fanny Wylde

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.
41-5450 Canotek Road, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 9G2
E-mail: info@irri.net – Phone: 613-748-6043 – Fax: 613-748-8246

II

APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Daniel Cunningham (Legal counsel)
Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador	No Appearance
Concertation des Luttes contre L'Exploitation Sexuelle	No Appearance
Conseil des Anicinabek de Kitcisakik	No Appearance
Directeur des poursuites pénales et criminelles	Anny Bernier (Legal counsel)
Government of Canada	Anne Turley (Legal counsel)
Government of Quebec	No Appearance
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami	Elizabeth Zarba (Legal counsel)
Innu Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam	No Appearance
Naskapi Nation of Kawawachi-kamach	No Appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre	Beth Symes (Legal counsel) Anne Curley (Representative) Karen Baker Anderson (Representative) Annie Arnatuk (Representative)
Quebec Native Women Association	No Appearance
Regroupement Mamit Innuat Inc.	No Appearance
Les Résidences oblates du Québec	No Appearance

III

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Public Volume 63: Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham	1

Heard by Commissioners Qajaq Robinson, Brian Eyolfson and Michèle Audette

Commissioners Eyolfson and Robinson spoke English and Commissioner Audette, French. The sequence of interpretation went from Attikamekw into French, then from French into English.
Commission Counsel: Fanny Wylde

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

Clerk: Maryam Khoury

Registrar: Bryan Zandberg

2 **Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny**
 In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham

1 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Good afternoon,
2 Commissioners. I would like to present to you our next
3 family. We have here Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny;
4 as well, in support, we have Barbara's husband, Paul, who
5 is here to support the family. The family today will be
6 sharing the story about Mary Ann Birmingham, who was
7 murdered in Iqaluit, Nunavut, on May 26th, 1986, when she
8 was 15 years old.

9 Before I let the family share their story, I
10 would ask Mr. Registrar to please swear in the witnesses.
11 And Sarah would like to provide oath with a Bible; and
12 Barbara, a civil affirmation. Thank you.

13 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Good afternoon, Sarah.
14 I will pass you the Bible, if you can take that in your
15 hand. Sarah, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole
16 truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

17 **MS. SARAH BIRMINGHAM:** I do.

18 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Thank you. Hi, Barb.

19 **MS. BARBARA SEVIGNY:** Bonjour.

20 **MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG:** Do you solemnly affirm
21 that the evidence you will give today will be the truth,
22 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

23 **MS. BARBARA SEVIGNY:** I do.

24 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you. So maybe we
25 could start. I would like to ask each one of you to

3 **Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny**
 In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham

1 introduce yourselves to the Commissioners, and what is your
2 relation to Mary Ann.

3 **MS. BARBARA SEVIGNY:** My name is Barbara
4 Sevigny. Mary Ann Birmingham was my sister; she was one
5 year younger than I was.

6 **MS. SARAH BIRMINGHAM:** My name is Sarah
7 Birmingham. Mary Ann was my daughter.

8 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So maybe we can start with
9 you, Barbara? Would you like to share today with the
10 Commissioners about Mary Ann?

11 **MS. BARBARA SEVIGNY:** It's been 30 years, so
12 it's been a long time. I'm a very private person when it
13 comes to my history. But I decided after listening to many
14 families and having worked as a trauma-addiction
15 counsellor, that we need to put a stop to the violence.

16 We need to break the silence of abuse; the
17 domestic abuse, the emotional, verbal, spiritual; you know,
18 women going missing; girls being murdered: we need to
19 start talking about them. Only then can we find a solution
20 as to how to prevent them from happening. Because I notice
21 there is not enough prevention work happening. That's how
22 I see my history. There was not enough prevention done to
23 protect my sisters and I, or my mother.

24 There seems to be a lot of crisis-workers,
25 but no prevention. When my mother was in Montreal with my

1 little brother, who was dying of leukemia, and I was asked
2 by Social Services -- she had left us, my sisters and I,
3 three of us younger sisters; and my older sister was in
4 Ottawa working at the time. Because it was rushed as I
5 made it back, that she left; and there was a -- I don't
6 know the whole story for that, so I will leave that with my
7 mother. But there was no one to care for us at that time.
8 Her boyfriend at the time was incarcerated for domestic
9 abuse, which happened quite often in the past.

10 So he was incarcerated and my mother was in
11 Montreal with my little brother. And I got the call from
12 Social Services to see if I wanted to go comfort my mother,
13 because they wanted, they were going to notify her that
14 there was nothing more the doctors could do for my little
15 brother. So they asked a 17-year-old girl to go comfort
16 her mother.

17 I was kind of appalled, but I'm excited --
18 I'm only 17, all right, I get to go out of town, right? So
19 I was excited to see my brother and my mother, as sad under
20 the circumstances -- it was sad, but I was excited to see
21 them. And being young, you know, I didn't really think
22 about, you know, what consequences, or should I be planning
23 anything.

24 They did ask if there was somebody to care
25 for my siblings, and I said, "Yes, we have a family friend

5 Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny
 In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham

1 that comes and goes." So I left it at that; because we
2 felt that, we were safer at home as opposed to being with
3 others, knowing what goes on behind closed doors back then
4 with other family members. We did not want to go to my
5 grandmother's, it was unhealthy there; so I did not want to
6 go there, and I did not want my younger siblings to be
7 going over there. We were safer and happier at home, so I
8 left it at that.

9 Because on the biological and adopted side,
10 they were both unhealthy: lots of addictions and abuse on
11 both sides. So I didn't want to, I didn't want to put them
12 in there -- or not put them in the system, knowing that
13 there's, you know, not a lot of good foster parents out
14 there that I was aware of.

15 And so I went off to Montreal and you know,
16 provided some comfort and was very happy to see my little
17 brother. But as I was going to the airport, my younger
18 sister, Mary Ann, she went to the airport with me. And you
19 know, we were 17 and I was open to trying marijuana at the
20 time, or hash at that time.

21 So we had a few puffs, and I'm giggling, and
22 I'm going off a little bit; but she was the kind of girl
23 who was very outgoing. She knew to have a good time; she
24 was a very bubbly girl, very smart girl. And, because we
25 were very close and it was just her and I, and just a few

6 Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny
 In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham

1 puffs, and that's all we need, we don't need the whole
2 joint as -- back then, that was enough for us. And that's
3 what it took.

4 So off I went and in Montreal, you know, got
5 to spend some time with my mother and brother. And you
6 know, I don't think my mother knows this to this day, so
7 this is the first time she's hearing this.

8 A family friend and I, who was in Montreal
9 at the time -- I trust him, he's been a family friend for
10 many years. He says, "Let's go to a bar," and I said, "All
11 right," you know, underage and I'm going to a bar. And, it
12 was a strip club; for women, and I said, "Oh, oh no, I
13 can't be here." And I got to drink underage, which was not
14 the first time.

15 So I had many stories to tell my little
16 sister. Because she, she like to party. But she was a
17 happy-go-lucky kind of party girl, and she loved laughter,
18 she loved telling jokes. So I was very much looking
19 forward to going home and telling her all my little
20 experiences while I was visiting my mother and brother in
21 Montreal.

22 And I had a lift home from a family friend,
23 and I couldn't get into the house. He said, "Would you
24 like me to wait?" I said no -- just in case, you know, she
25 was smoking cigarettes and maybe drinking or hung over or

1 something. And the family friend was very strict and he
2 really cared about us girls. And I didn't want him to see
3 if she had been smoking drugs or had a few drinks, out of
4 respect for my sister.

5 And I said, "No, you go on ahead, I'll be
6 fine." The door was locked. And I'm thinking,
7 "Something's just not right." I tried to pry open the
8 windows -- because I had a strong sense, I have to get in
9 there -- that was the only feeling I had, "I have to see
10 her, I have to get in."

11 I couldn't get in. Actually for a while, I
12 just, I had a little makeup case with a mirror, so I pried
13 the window open with the little makeup case; I was
14 determined to get in the house. Because I felt like, I
15 don't really have anywhere to go, it's just us at the time,
16 it was Mary Ann and I. So I went in and there was just --
17 awful -- something didn't feel right, but my mind is
18 saying, "But you have to go, something's not right."

19 When I turned to the living room, I saw her
20 body on the couch. And then I, I'm saying, "Mary Ann?"
21 I'm calling her out. I, some of it, I blanked out; and I
22 think I'm okay with that. It's just my mind protecting me,
23 but I thought, you know, I wanted her to wake up, but my
24 mind's telling me, "But there's a pool of blood, she cannot
25 wake up." And I think I just froze for a while, not

**8 Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny
In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham**

1 knowing, is this for real? Or what do I do? Or, what's
2 happening? And then I thought, "I have to go call the
3 ambulance." Because we had no phone in the house; with mom
4 being away so long with our little brother, there was just
5 no financial support to keep the phones in the house.

6 So I went door to door, checking to see
7 whose phone I can use. And I walked in to a poor lady -- I
8 walked into the house, and there's a bathroom, and the poor
9 lady's sitting on the toilet; and I said, "I just need to
10 use your phone." So I called her, I called the 911. And
11 believe it or not, I didn't know this until two years after
12 my sister was killed: My husband had answered my 911 call.
13 And I remember saying, "You have to come and save her.
14 She's dead, but you have to come and save her."

15 I didn't know what to do, so I went back to
16 the outside of our house, waiting for the ambulance or the
17 police to come by. And it felt like hours; I don't know
18 how long it took.

19 When they came by, they went upstairs to see
20 what was really going on. And then they came down, and one
21 of them stayed very close to me, you know, and apologized
22 for what I had witnessed, very sorry that I have lost a
23 family member. And that allowed me to start crying, to
24 say, you know, "It is what it really is." Because a part
25 of me was in denial and in shock.

**9 Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny
In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham**

1 And they didn't, I can't remember -- I don't
2 know if they questioned me right there and then. But I
3 know I was a little chaotic with my emotions, so he asked
4 if I wanted to go to the hospital. I said, "I'm not hurt,"
5 and he said, "That's okay, you're in shock, but it will be
6 good for you to see a doctor." So I agreed, not really
7 having heard, to go see a doctor when you're in shock.

8 It's like -- I'm not feeling sick, so I was
9 a little bit puzzled by that. So I went, and I think I was
10 with a doctor for about an hour, two hours, three hours, I
11 don't remember. But the officer had stayed outside the
12 door, the same officer that provided comfort to me when
13 they had arrived. And I think from there, I really
14 appreciated the support that he had provided me, not having
15 my mother in town and my father not living with us either,
16 and my older sister in Ottawa. So I really didn't have
17 anybody to provide comfort for me, I don't think anybody
18 knew at this point, of what I had discovered.

19 So he gave me a ride over to my
20 grandmother's; and I dreaded going over to my
21 grandmother's, because I knew it wasn't a supportive
22 environment. It's about them, it's not about what's going
23 on with the person. And I dreaded going there, but I had
24 nowhere else to go. I knew I couldn't go back to the
25 house, because my sister's body was still there.

1 So when I arrived there, I can't remember if
2 I informed them of what I had found -- of my sister's body.
3 And then, I don't think I was given the option, but I ended
4 up having to call my father, to inform him of my sister's
5 death. But I think we might have had a priest call my
6 mother, if I'm not mistaken. [Speaks in Native language].

7 It was the Department of Social
8 Services that informed my mother. At first I thought it
9 was the Anglican Mission I was supposed to call to notify.
10 It was a social worker from the children's hospital had
11 notified her, because she had been there long enough, they
12 had provided a lot of wonderful emotional support for her
13 when my little brother was going through chemotherapy. So
14 they had informed her of my sister being murdered, but I
15 had also notified my sister, my older sister, of my younger
16 sister being murdered.

17 So even when the family did come, and I'm
18 just going to speak about my experience -- because that's
19 all I can do, based on what I have been through after
20 finding my sister murdered. Of my well-being, because I
21 know that's the reality of our communities back then and
22 today. No one was there to do any counselling, to say
23 "This is what you might experience, based on what you have
24 found." You know, that was never -- sorry, to go back to
25 the doctor.

1 He did, I think, ask me if I want to see a
2 psychiatrist. And back in the 80s, when you see movies,
3 they are psychiatrist-psychologists, and I was afraid, you
4 know, they might just lock me up. And I thought, "I'm not
5 mental, I'm not...." I didn't know what their roles were,
6 so I thought, "I'm not mentally unstable, I'm not going to
7 go." So I turned their offer down, to see a psychiatrist,
8 not fully understanding what they can do for me.

9 Understanding now what they do for therapy,
10 I could have, you know, prevented myself from getting post-
11 traumatic stress disorder. Although I was never tested,
12 but when I took my training for trauma, when I look at the
13 PCL questionnaire? I had full-blown PTSD, I knew that;
14 because I was hearing voices, I was paranoid; I thought I
15 was going to be killed next. I was crying in corners and I
16 couldn't move.

17 Because right after my sister's funeral, my
18 mother had to go again. So that didn't give me a lot of
19 mother-daughter time, to grieve; to work through my shock.
20 It was just not an option. She's worried about her son who
21 is in Montreal and then her daughter being murdered, so
22 that was a lot for her. And me being who I am, I didn't
23 want to be a bother, so now I know where I get it, because
24 she's the same way. So I loved her being -- you know, she
25 needed to grieve, as a mom.

1 As Inuit, we were taught to respect and --
2 not just to know when someone needs help; but to take
3 actions, to not just sit back and watch when somebody's in
4 pain. We're taught to go and provide comfort, as it was
5 shared. So that I made sure mom was okay and our little
6 sister was okay. Because we had -- two of us older sisters
7 really kind of took on that role, to make sure the mother
8 and little sister was okay.

9 So once she left, I think that's when the
10 symptoms got worse: being afraid, not having security.
11 But we were still on our own; I don't know how that
12 happened. There was myself and my little sister at the
13 house. And I started feeling like I'm going to be next;
14 fear of being the next person to be killed.

15 So I would put myself in places I would not
16 normally go, to the pool hall where there's a lot of drug
17 dealers and a lot of people who are under the influence of
18 alcohol. Where fights often happen, just outside the
19 porch; but I didn't want to be alone. And I know I won't
20 get hurt over there, not from a family member, anyways. I
21 don't want to be scolded, I don't want to be made to do
22 many things; I don't want to be doing chores. I just want
23 to be safe and I just want to be okay. I just want time
24 alone.

25 And I was not thinking straight back then,

**13 Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny
In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham**

1 but that's where I went to make sure I was not alone. But
2 being there, too, didn't help. Because I was hearing
3 voices, my name being called out. And I thought, "Okay,
4 something's just not right here." I'm looking around, and
5 I know some of the people and they wouldn't be teasing me
6 the way I'm hearing my name; I wouldn't know what to do if
7 I'm going back home. I'm still in fear, so never really
8 talking about it; never talking about it to anybody for
9 that matter.

10 And it just kept going like that for a few
11 months. Where I was still hearing voices and paranoid;
12 that I was going to be next. And then keeping, remembering
13 my mother, that she's there with my little brother, who
14 they can't do anything for. And he was our adopted brother
15 and we loved him dearly like he was our own. I was so
16 happy mom was there for him, because I can't imagine being
17 three years old, four years old, five years old -- you're
18 sick and you don't have a mom there; they need their moms.
19 As much as we needed her, he was the youngest.

20 So I was glad she was with him. It was
21 tough not having any real good adult supports that I
22 needed. I know my sister had to take care of her own child
23 in Ottawa; she had her job, and you can't jeopardize that.
24 So I understand that as well.

25 But there was no system to say, to ask the

**14 Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny
In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham**

1 family, "How can we support you?" That was never, I don't
2 remember ever hearing any supports offered, to see how they
3 can help us when she's away. Or any financial help when us
4 kids are left behind; to make sure that we have a telephone
5 so that we can communicate with my mother. There was none
6 of that.

7 And it was -- I think it was on a Friday
8 night in August, three months after my sister was murdered:
9 my cousin and I went to the Sober Cutting & Dance in town,
10 it was the place back then. And there was a nice slow song
11 I really liked. And I said to my cousin, "Oh, I love this
12 song, I've got to dance to this." And he looked at me, I
13 said, "No, you go find somebody else. I'm going to go find
14 somebody to dance with, you go find someone to dance with."
15 And coincidentally, he was the one I asked to dance; and
16 we're still dancing till this day.

17 So that's over 30 years ago, that we started
18 seeing each other. And I think it was into the two weeks
19 where my symptoms really started coming out, when I started
20 trusting him. Because I think I talked, and talked and
21 talked, when we first met.

22 I trusted him, and after that, I could show
23 him what I'm going through. I was able to tell him what
24 I'm going through. Or even to cry. When I was at home,
25 I'd be crying in a corner and stuck in a corner, and I

15 Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny
In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham

1 could not move. And he was kind, somehow we got our phone
2 back on and he was -- he would usually come and physically
3 get me from a corner. It was that bad.

4 And most of the time I ended up sleeping
5 over at his house, because then I felt safer, I wasn't
6 alone. So I think, when I look back, I think I used him,
7 but I think now today: we were just meant to be. You
8 know, I had to teach him my triggers. For many years, it
9 was, "Oh, Barbara, would you stop crying about that. Are
10 you still crying about that? Get over it! I'm tired of
11 you crying."

12 And then the depression came later on in
13 years; you know, poor guy, he didn't know how to handle me.
14 A very strong, stubborn woman who was set in her ways. And
15 here's a guy trying to support his wife and he didn't know
16 how. You know, he doesn't know what PTSD is; he doesn't
17 know what the symptoms of depression is. But he's been
18 there for myself, my sisters and my mother, all the way
19 through.

20 But I know I put him through a lot too, and
21 he's never had support. To where he can say, "Well how can
22 I help?" Basically what he's experiencing, and how it can
23 impact our relationship, "How can I work on a relationship
24 when she's going through that," -- it's not there for the
25 spouses. When we have symptoms of post-traumatic stress

1 disorder or strong depression.

2 There's just not enough awareness out there
3 about the symptoms of PTSD and depression. Depression is
4 coming out, but the PTSD symptoms are not very well
5 educated to the public. And that needs to be changed.
6 Only then can we take care of ourselves. And once we
7 understand why we are the way we are, can we make the
8 changes.

9 I was very fortunate that I've always
10 listened to Elders talking, as a child. And we weren't
11 supposed to be listening, but I was around the corner,
12 listening. I understood why, because they were talking
13 about adult topics. About abuse being done to them. And
14 so they were sharing, but I didn't know. I was always
15 curious, "Why is it that we can't listen to them? What are
16 they talking about?"

17 And it turns out it's because they are
18 sharing and it's not meant for children to be hearing to
19 those kinds of stories, so that there's no secondary
20 transfers of trauma over to the children. So I appreciate
21 that now when I look back. But I think it would be good to
22 bring more awareness about, to parents, how -- yes, we have
23 a lot of disagreements as adults in a relationship; husband
24 and wife or partners; to be careful on how we communicate
25 our hurts around the children.

1 What impacts does it have on them? And what
2 symptoms can become if they do listen to these? If they
3 witness these? Because we do get impacted as children. I
4 share that because when I ended up with PTSD back then, I
5 had many layers of trauma before my sister was murdered.

6 I have survived sexual abuse; physical
7 abuse, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse; and you know, back
8 then, it was like, "Why me? Why am I always a target?" I
9 always questioned, "What is it that I do? Is it something
10 that I say?" And I've learned that it's because I was a
11 very quiet person back then, believe it or not; really,
12 really shy.

13 And I think that's why I admired my little
14 sister who partied more than I did. As much as I wanted to
15 party, I wasn't too sure about partying, because I was too
16 shy. And very quiet. She was so outgoing. But I think
17 that's why I was targeted, because I would not say
18 anything.

19 And that's why I choose to speak about my
20 sister and my past, that we need to break the silence.
21 Otherwise it will continue. And I have educated my
22 children, that because of my sister's murder and what I
23 have experienced as a child, that there may be things that
24 I have passed on to them, not knowing. And I have
25 apologized to them for that.

1 I have three wonderful children. Sometimes
2 my husband would say, "Why are you telling them that?" If
3 they don't know, how can they prevent themselves from
4 getting in to the same situation? If you can teach them
5 prevention, then there will be more awareness. Right? And
6 then they can think about the pros and the cons before they
7 choose to do something.

8 And my motto to them was always, "Have fun;
9 you go and have fun like you want to; be good so that
10 nobody can use anything against you. And be safe. You
11 watch your drinks and you watch who you're disclosing to."
12 So 'have fun, be good and be safe' was always my motto
13 since they were early teenagers.

14 And I taught them to -- you know, I think it
15 was when they were 15, 16, they were allowed to have one or
16 two beers, but they couldn't leave our property, because we
17 lived in the country. So that they can learn to socially
18 drink rather than hiding it. And letting them know if
19 they're going to use, always let me know or their friends
20 know, who they're with, where they're going.

21 And if they have any hurts -- whether from
22 me, my husband, or anybody from anywhere -- to talk to
23 somebody about it, anytime. That there's no shame in
24 talking about their hurts, whether male or female. Because
25 anger can be so strong that it can be used to hurt other

1 people, or they can use it very constructively. And so
2 I've taught them to be very verbal; and I've taught them
3 Inuit history as well at home. To be proud of their Inuit
4 history.

5 It was not easy for my children to live in
6 the country, about 70 kilometres south of Ottawa. They
7 were the only Inuit in school. And they did experience
8 racism in the school, but I think the majority of it was
9 from the principal. My middle son, my middle child, my
10 son, has ADHD; and I battled the school for months.
11 Because they kept sending him home.

12 He didn't want to do his work, and I said,
13 "You know, sending him home is really rewarding him." What
14 kid wants to go to school, if it's not a positive
15 experience? So I said, "Well, look at it as if -- try to
16 use figurines; he's into transformers. Use the
17 transformers if you're going to use numbers. How many
18 transformers did we have; 70 transformers, you want to take
19 away 60: how many transformers will you have? It will get
20 them thinking, right, just to capture their interest.
21 These are kids."

22 But they said they didn't have any time to
23 be able to do those kinds of things with children with
24 special needs.

25 And I said, "Well, it's your job to teach

1 him; I send him to school, it's your job to teach him. At
2 home I do the parenting and we teach him the family values
3 and we teach life skills at home. School belongs at
4 school." So I left it at that, but I think it was to a
5 point where, I was working in Ottawa and every other day, I
6 would be getting a call from the school to say, "Come and
7 pick up your son, because he doesn't want to work. He
8 doesn't want to do his schoolwork." I said, "Okay, this is
9 the last straw for me."

10 Because my employer can only put up with me
11 having my kid come every other day and me taking two hours,
12 one hour to get there and one hour to get back; two hours,
13 that's -- two, four, six hours a day from work. So they
14 were very, very flexible, I was very supported by my
15 employer. It was in the organization, I'm very thankful
16 for that. But I said, "That's it, I can't do this
17 anymore." I said, "I'm pulling him out of school."
18 Because he was at the point where he says, "Mom," I think
19 he was 11 -- "I don't want to live anymore."

20 That really caught me off guard, because I
21 didn't think it was -- I knew it was hard on any child, but
22 I never thought of the racial -- we kind of had an idea
23 there was some racial things behind it. But I didn't
24 realize how heavy it was for my little guy. And I said,
25 "That's it, I'm pulling him out." And the principal said,

**21 Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny
In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham**

1 "Well if you don't bring him back to school, I'm going to
2 call the Children's Aid Society."

3 And I said, "Well, by all means. You be
4 sure to tell them that you're telling me to pick him up
5 every two days, so you've been denying him that much
6 education. You tell them that when you call them." They
7 never did call.

8 But during the meetings for my son, I had to
9 have my sister-in-law come with me, because I was verbally
10 abused by the principal and the teachers. And not believed
11 in, to take actions. And I know there was other children
12 with ADHD, but I strongly believe -- it's because we have a
13 strong culture and our kids kind of taught their classmates
14 Inuktitut as well; teaching them to spell their names in
15 syllabics and such. And I don't think they appreciated
16 that too much; and I know because they were Inuit, they
17 were teased on.

18 But this one principal that did not seem to
19 like our children was the one that was giving us the
20 hardest time. So I would be calling around for board
21 members and I wasn't getting any results. So I pulled him
22 out of school for one month and then finally did I get a
23 call, one month later, to say they have a placement for him
24 with special needs; so that was good to hear.

25 I chose to share that because there's a lot

1 of, as it was mentioned earlier, a lot of single parents
2 now. But even non-single parents that have children with
3 special needs, that experienced racism and denied education
4 or denied the support as a result. It's really hard on the
5 parents, you feel powerless, and you feel helpless.

6 And you want to do whatever you can for your
7 children so that they are successful in life and achieve
8 their goals and their dreams. You know, my sister Mary Ann
9 didn't have that luxury. So I've been doing everything I
10 possibly can as a mother, to make sure my children are
11 successful.

12 It was tough for my mother to not be there
13 for us when she wanted to. And I think I try to go above
14 and beyond sometimes, and they go, "Mom, are you trying to
15 counsel me now?" But it's only because I know, I've lived
16 and experienced many things that they can learn a lot from.
17 And I know my daughter is very grateful to this day that
18 she and I are very close. And she's a very good supporter
19 of mine; but she also has some natural helping background
20 to her as well.

21 So she does a lot of self-care and massage
22 therapy so that's the treatment I get. So a lot of good
23 self-care, lots of support from families. And I think
24 that's something that not a lot of family members have, is
25 a lot of family support or any kind of support --

1 continuing support. Continuing support -- when you think
2 of continuing support, NIHB -- we're allowed, I could be
3 wrong, 13 to 15 free sessions a year with non-insured
4 health benefits; if approved. That's just clearly not
5 enough, when you have severe symptoms or you need ongoing
6 therapy.

7 And the majority, even for medical requests,
8 the majority of the time we've been denied, so we have to
9 appeal. And then, only then, will it be approved. And
10 there needs to be more -- and I'm going to say this to the
11 Inuit organizations: they need to fight. So that we as
12 urban Inuit don't lose any benefits when we leave our
13 Territory.

14 Because as an Inuk, I did not know when I
15 moved out of my Territory, that I lose some of my medical
16 benefits. They need to be aware of this. And when you
17 think about dental or vision, physical well-being -- I'm
18 still Inuk, whether I'm there in my Territory or not. How
19 come I'm losing my benefits?

20 I need to take care of myself, and that's
21 something I have had to do, to play catch up. I didn't get
22 it as a child, how to take care of myself properly; so as a
23 young adult, I started learning. And what is self-care?
24 Because we're not taught to -- we're taught to take care of
25 others. Sometimes as helpers, too, we forget ourselves

1 easily. So we have to be very careful and make sure we
2 take care of ourselves.

3 And with the minimal numbers of therapy,
4 it's just not enough. You know, when I was in the helping
5 field, at least once-a-week-a-session is sufficient in
6 order to continue where you left off. Once a month?
7 You're going to have to go, "What was I talking about
8 again? Oh, yeah." Half of it is just a recap, and then
9 half of it is just, "Okay, this is where I'm at." And then
10 it's over. It's just not enough, to be able to reduce the
11 symptoms of PTSD or depression.

12 And I share that, because when I had my
13 severe trigger a year and a half ago, after discovering
14 some details of my sister's murder that I was not aware of
15 -- and I can't share, because it's still an open case --
16 but it really triggered a lot of emotions. And I was doing
17 group therapy for trauma and addiction and I was becoming
18 emotional. So I knew I was not in a healthy place; I had
19 to remove myself and take care of myself for a while.

20 So I asked to see a psychiatrist. I know
21 myself well enough that, "Okay, it's time for me to ask."
22 So I went to the Family Health Centre and right away, I
23 think it took a few weeks for me to get an appointment,
24 which was pretty quick, I thought. So we had our initial
25 first getting-to-know-each-other appointment; because I was

1 very, very raw and emotional with my trigger, I was -- I
2 cried a lot first, and then I shared why, where my emotions
3 were coming from -- I think I know where they're coming
4 from.

5 And I know from what scene from where I'm
6 being triggered from; so I said, "I need to work with these
7 now, because if you don't work with me now, I will close
8 up." Because it's a learned behaviour, because I was not
9 cared for as a child after being hurt; or I've witnessed so
10 many things, I've learned to just hold onto it if it's not
11 addressed right away.

12 And when your emotions are not there, it's
13 hard to really get deep down inside and to address it; when
14 our hearts and our minds are together, that's when there's
15 that good flow. And that's when you know you're getting a
16 release. And I thoroughly explained that. And she goes,
17 "Oh, you know what you're talking about." I said, "I know
18 myself, I need to do this now. If I don't, then you're
19 going to lose me." She says, "Okay, so I'll give you a
20 call next week with an appointment."

21 Two months later, I said, "I give up." This
22 lady was working with the Royal Ottawa Hospital, that I
23 have the utmost respect for; because they're supposed to be
24 highly recommended. But that's the second time I've been
25 disappointed with their therapists, or the psychiatrist,

1 from Royal Ottawa Hospital.

2 I've never gone back, I will not see that
3 person again. Again, the trust has been broken. And it's
4 been broken too many times. I'm the kind of person, I'm so
5 private, I need to make sure I connect with somebody. I
6 will just not disclose for the sake of it; today I disclose
7 because you need help to give recommendations to the
8 government. And I share that it's Royal Ottawa Hospital
9 because Nunavut Government utilizes them to go up to
10 Nunavut as well, for contract work.

11 And I have a family member who was
12 struggling with a severe crack addiction who was -- who had
13 access to, unlimited access to substances and injecting
14 herself. And she had like about 40, 50 needle-holes on
15 each arm. And she had said, "I want to go to treatment."
16 And she was told, "No, you can do this on your own."

17 That's from a psychiatrist, telling her no,
18 you can do this on your own; it's just not right, it's not
19 right to tell somebody you can do this on your own when
20 they're asking for help. It's hard enough asking for help.
21 So these kinds of things are just not acceptable. When
22 they don't know the history, when they don't know the
23 Inuit; when they don't know how your mind works.

24 Yes, we're all human beings, all minds are
25 affected in such a way by trauma or depression. But our

1 history and our language has a huge impact on how we're
2 going to move forward. Without that knowledge, it's hard
3 for them to go forward with case planning; and that's very
4 important, to have that knowledge.

5 To study the Inuit history, the impacts on
6 the Inuit; there's not just the residential schools:
7 there's the dog-team slaughter, there's the relocation, the
8 inter-generational impacts from the family households with,
9 you know, multiple families, generations living in a house?
10 They're going to step on each other's toes, they're hurting
11 each other. So one person in the family that's impacted in
12 the house is impacting everybody in the house. And then
13 you have a household of people who have been traumatized.

14 And you know, we talk about the residential
15 school survivors, how they have hurt other students as
16 well. It goes the same way in the house, when one has been
17 impacted. So that whole family needs to be addressed, when
18 working on healing.

19 That's something I really admired yesterday,
20 with the big circle yesterday in here: like wouldn't it be
21 magical if it was in Iqaluit, in my hometown, and having a
22 lot of family there so that we can really share what it's
23 like in the home. And what's not working; what is working;
24 what are the gaps; and the recommendations, because there
25 are so many of us as family members, there's a lot of

1 family members that are struggling with mental health
2 issues; with addictions; and there's a cycle of going into
3 the institution.

4 And I share the institution, because I mean,
5 if my mother's boyfriend was not in the institution, he
6 would have been home with my sisters. If they could do
7 some prevention work in the institution, for those that --
8 for the men who abuse women? To look at, what is the root
9 cause of your violence? How can we prevent this from
10 happening? What would help you? These kinds of things
11 would be good for them to explore when they're in the
12 institution.

13 [Speaks in Native language]. Just making
14 sure she's okay. So yeah, those are the things that I
15 believe have led to, when looking at before my sister's
16 murder and shortly after -- but one other area too, is I
17 wanted to make sure that it was shared. I want to make
18 sure that we don't forget anything between my mother and I:
19 Is that when my little brother was -- three? He would be
20 crying, and you know that when there's children crying it's
21 maybe an ear infection or something, there's discomfort
22 there. And it was a hard cry, so she'd take him up to the
23 hospital. And get him checked. And they'd say, "I don't
24 see anything, but here's the tempeра." And they'd send him
25 home, and that went on like that for about a year.

1 For a long time, she'd be walking up to the
2 hospital, and every time she's sent home with tempera.
3 Until one day his eye could not move anymore. Then that's
4 when they shipped him out and then she followed him to
5 Montreal. That's when they found out he had leukemia. So
6 this little guy was feeling the pain of leukemia for months
7 before they even discovered it.

8 You know, that's something that the doctors
9 need to be aware of. It's not that -- some doctors think
10 we're complainers, but we know our bodies and our minds.
11 When our mind is not well, our physical well-being is not
12 well. And they don't seem to understand: we feel it.

13 You know, I asked a physician before if I
14 could get a prescription for massage therapy, because when
15 you hold a lot of tension, your body is sore and you want
16 some kind of way to relax your body. And he says, "No, you
17 can just do some stretches." You know, there are so many
18 things that the health care system is failing as well.
19 When you request something, it's hard enough to ask; you're
20 trying to take care of your physical-mental well-being;
21 you're denied that, it's very hard to take care of
22 yourself.

23 I'm very fortunate, I don't have any -- I
24 don't like to self-medicate; that I haven't turned to
25 alcohol to self-medicate, over the -- for a short period I

1 did, our marriage was broken apart for a while. It got too
2 heavy and then I started drinking; and I think it took us
3 about six months to work through things out. And then we,
4 we started talking things through and saying what's not
5 working. And then look at what is working, and then focus
6 on what is working.

7 But you still go back to what's not working
8 and how can we resolve that. But without that, I don't
9 think we ever would have repaired our marriage. And I
10 think that's something that couples need, to prevent them -
11 - as it was said so many -- our Inuit way is not to just
12 separate when we start struggling; we're supposed to be
13 there for one another. And when the parents are not in a
14 good place, a lot of the kids are being taken by the
15 system. There's no prevention work being done. So that
16 needs to change as well.

17 I think I've shared a lot, so I'm going to
18 pass this on over to my mother for now.

19 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So Commissioners, I'm
20 going to ask for a short recess so we can let Sarah stretch
21 her legs. So a five-minute recess, please? Thank you.

22 --- Upon recessing at 14:37

23 --- Upon resuming at 14:56

24 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you. I would like
25 to ask Sarah if she is ready to share what she wants to

1 share about her daughter, Mary Ann?

2 **MS. SARAH BIRMINGHAM:** [Speaking in
3 *Inuktitut*] I took my child to hospital and left my
4 daughters at home. I was supposed to leave the same day
5 that I was notified, to leave for hospital. I was there
6 for a long time and I was unable to leave my child.

7 Once I was told by the doctor to take my
8 child to hospital out of my community, I cried when I
9 heard. I didn't think it would be of any use. It was only
10 in the evening that I became able to cry. Not to anyone
11 else, but I was unable to leave Montreal Hospital when I
12 heard; it was strange to not be able to go home.

13 In the morning, in the early morning, I was
14 summoned; I was told that a social worker wished to see me.
15 It was then I would be told, as it turned out. I couldn't
16 cry. Mary Ann was so important to me and I couldn't accept
17 that she was gone.

18 It turns out even though she is far away
19 from me, she is still close; she has always been close to
20 me. Even here and now, even when I am old. People have
21 always been friendly and supportive, so I'm still here.

22 And I will be here as long as I need to be.
23 And I will keep moving forward as I have to. In spite of
24 the murder of my daughter. I was sad that I had to leave
25 my two girls behind to be in the hospital with my son, with

1 the youngest child in my family. I had no choice in the
2 matter.

3 I adopted my son; he stayed in hospital for
4 five months and he died of leukemia. He was three years
5 old. It was extremely difficult. I went home eventually,
6 but I have accused my son of causing the murder for my
7 absence. I figured it wouldn't have happened if I was at
8 home; if only he weren't ill with leukemia.

9 It was for his illness that I was away from
10 my home when this happened. I have never spoken of this in
11 all those years. I have never said that I blamed my three-
12 year-old son who had leukemia for my absence. That was not
13 the best way of thinking, I know now. That was not right
14 of me.

15 But it turns out that I should have
16 maintained my direction and I'm just letting people know,
17 who want to understand. I have never talked about it. I
18 have never dreamed about it; I have never had dreams about
19 her. I was asked, had I had such dreams, I would have
20 asked her, "What happened?" But I have never had any
21 dreams of such. This is a long waiting period for me. I
22 want to know: What happened?

23 This has come to pass, but I had to keep
24 moving, forward. We have a lot yet to live; we have time
25 left to live; and I have had support. And God helps me and

1 He helps us.

Sometimes I lose my patience, but I keep on living. It was meant to be this way. When there's a murder in one's family, you become blinded with blame; you become blinded with anger. We buried her in March. I didn't see her body. It was only when we said our prayers that I saw her. Just before they buried her into the ground.

I have never, ever talked of this before
now. I have had conversations with my Creator, but I could
not agree or, was I biding the correct time to agree
somehow, some way -- and I often thought, "What is this?
Why us?" And I did not know what to expect.

I, in a sense, gave up; be that experience I still lived and I have had to keep going for the rest of my family who are here with me today. And I thank them so very much for being there. I do tell them I am grateful, because I could not have made it without their support. I am so grateful; all my relatives and family members have been there.

21 I hope to go back to my community, but my
22 relatives are few now that are left. I have three
23 daughters who live in Ottawa and that is where I live now,
24 and that is fine with me. They treat me with kindness. So
25 I thank you for providing this opportunity to speak before

1 you.

2 I have been shut down, I have clamped down
3 my emotions for this long and at last I let them go before
4 you. I know there are others who feel the same way. We
5 still don't know who committed the murder. We have no
6 idea. I thank you so much for this opportunity to speak.
7 I would otherwise have never spoken about it, ever. But I
8 am looking forward to healing and helping others, too, my
9 precious fellow Inuit who are friendly with me, all the
10 time.

11 Let's keep moving forward together; I still
12 have life in me to live. With kindness and regards to all
13 of you. From a long time ago, it has been many years. I
14 feel now, from this point on I will be able to speak more
15 about it. I want to start healing too. It is not
16 something I need to be ashamed of, as it turns out; it's
17 not shameful to speak of: it is not my shame.

18 I need to cry. It's healthy to cry, let it
19 out. Yes, indeed; it's good to let it go, it's good to
20 lessen the burden. I, too, want to feel better; and I,
21 too, like you -- need to heal. Like my fellow Inuit. I
22 have always been welcomed anywhere I go by the Inuit. And
23 I am grateful for your kindness; I am weak now, much weaker
24 than I used to be.

25 Yes, let's -- we want to avoid any more of

1 these murders. Let's try to put a stop to this. We once
2 used to be called strong people. Even in my weakness, I am
3 still able to live and move forward. Being the case, we
4 have bypassed many things from the days of old and
5 sometimes the emotions come very close, they come back
6 again.

7 When I think about the memories; when I
8 think about who she was -- it's like getting to understand
9 one another and each other, and the pain that's there. If
10 I can understand the complete story of who committed the
11 murder, I think I can only get better if I do. But I still
12 don't know to this day who committed the murder.

13 And it's been many long years, and it will
14 never go away. Other people have gone through murder of
15 their loved ones. It is our job to find out what happened.
16 And that's my thought: we need to know.

17 I want to feel better now that I have spoken
18 about this. It is not something I ever talk about; I
19 can't. And I remember how welcoming and friendly a teen
20 she was. And we used to dress her up as a hunter and
21 pretend she was going out hunting when she was little; we
22 used to play with her, and she enjoyed it, in the days when
23 everybody was fine.

24 And we had other children who are okay
25 today. And we visit them regularly, the other grown adult

1 children. I do get up once in a while and -- I'm not sure
2 what else to add to this, in the circumstance.

3 My children have saved me a great deal,
4 being supportive of me. Especially the youngest daughter's
5 child, comes and sleeps over; she's such a capable woman.
6 And -- now the memories will never end. There are so many
7 memories, the things I remember about her. Seems so real,
8 seems so in-the-here-and-now.

9 I wish I had never left my home. I did not
10 know any better. You see, when we got to Montreal, she was
11 the only one who didn't come with us. We had three
12 children when I was here in Montreal. And it's true, it's
13 only when you get the real information that you start to
14 believe. Only then. I will not believe every bit of
15 gossip or talk about what happened, because I don't have
16 the facts before me. No wonder it's hard for me to trust
17 anything but the facts. I wish it was a known, but -- we
18 don't know. There is some information that is there, but
19 there still remains missing information.

20 I don't really have anything further to add
21 in my mind to the subject at hand. My memory seems to fail
22 me on the further details. I wanted to say a few more my
23 statement, but maybe another time, when I remember, I will
24 try to reach out once again, if I'm okay. If I am able to.
25 I will conclude my statements right now, then. Thank you.

1 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** All right, thank you,
2 Sarah. Do you have anything else to add for the
3 Commissioners?

4 **MS. BARBARA SEVIGNY:** One thing I did not
5 share; though I did share a little bit of it: When I went
6 for a medical at the age of 15 to Montreal, I did not have
7 an escort. And I was sexually abused at the medical
8 boarding home. And I think it's important, when anyone
9 travels so that they're not vulnerable, taken advantage of,
10 that they have an escort when travelling from their home to
11 the South, or anywhere. So that they are safe.

12 Another recommendation I would like to see,
13 is some more Inuit-specific grieving programs delivered in
14 Inuktitut and English. Often I see a lot of non-Inuit
15 hired to deliver Inuit programs, that don't speak Inuktitut
16 but are Inuit. But it's the language that really connects,
17 for those of us that do speak Inuktitut. We need to speak
18 our language when we are feeling.

19 I choose to speak in English, because I'm
20 comfortable with it, too, I'm comfortable in both. I chose
21 to spoke in English, but if I choose to share and work on
22 my healing, it would most likely be in Inuktitut. Because
23 I want to make sure that I am understood and I am not --
24 losing anything during the translation, so that's why I am
25 speaking in English. So more grieving programs in

1 Inuktut.

2 In the employment field, there's a lack of
3 Inuit therapists, and I would like to see more Inuit in the
4 therapy field. Counselling is very different from therapy
5 and in therapy you look into the root causes, not so much
6 just listening; and I find that really helps when looking
7 at the root cause. Because then we're not going back and
8 forth when triggered; you're learning grounding techniques,
9 coping mechanisms, and finding where things are stemming
10 from. So that would be very, very beneficial.

11 I have been very fortunate in that I have
12 had a lot of training from a very knowledgeable Inuk Elder,
13 Meeka Arnakaq in the Inuk traditional healing methods, and
14 then combining the trauma, how it impacts the mind and the
15 traditional teachings. That I've been able to educate my
16 fellow Inuit and looking at the core symptoms of their root
17 causes.

18 And changing the abusive behaviours within
19 relationships. Working with families, and not just the
20 individuals. Because often, they just look at, the Mental
21 Health Board, just the addiction; but for us, we're
22 connected mind and the heart. So they need to be combined,
23 very holistic programs. We need specific, holistic
24 treatment programs, would be very beneficial.

25 As it was mentioned with Manmay Salvek

1 (phon) that was recently closed, this -- and I'm going to
2 say, First Nations-Metis-Inuit healing services -- as much
3 as I appreciate them being under one umbrella, they don't
4 work that way. We need Inuit-specific treatment centres so
5 we know it's our teachings. I myself appreciate this much,
6 I know what the background is. But a lot of our people are
7 not comfortable with this now, because it's not on our
8 land. So there's very different teachings.

9 And for that, and the history is different
10 from First Nations-Metis, very similar, but there is some
11 difference there. And that's just not -- because I hear,
12 here I haven't heard the dog-team slaughter, or the
13 relocation. Or the suicide; the suicide rate is very, very
14 high. I haven't really heard that, but I know that for a
15 fact, that this happens a lot.

16 And for myself, because I battled with PTSD
17 and severe depression for a while, I had thought about
18 suicide myself. And you know, it's not a good place to be.
19 And luckily my daughter, who has in the natural health
20 field, educated her father about the depression so he is
21 able to work with me again on that piece.

22 So there is a lot of lack of awareness and
23 education about those to the families. And the family help
24 support programs, when they have a loved one experiencing
25 that? They need to be able to work with the families and

1 not just the individual experiencing that. So the families
2 know how to communicate around the trauma and the
3 depression.

4 So that, you know, it does a lot of
5 prevention work, when you're looking at the Health Care
6 Services; you're not going in and out to the doctors,
7 you're not going in and out to the psychiatrists. They're
8 not -- their kids will stay home if they're working
9 together as a family. They could do a lot of good
10 prevention work that way.

11 And when I speak of, you know, the 'kids
12 staying at home' -- and I want to share this, because
13 that's the reality of what I know. When I was a member
14 with the Children's Aid Society in Ottawa, there was a lot
15 of meetings about how can we recruit foster parents.
16 There's a lot of meetings about those; how can we find
17 adopting parents? Lots of meetings about those.

18 I said, "Why are we looking to see how we
19 can keep the children away from home? Why are we not
20 talking about how to keep the kids home? You're going the
21 wrong direction; we should be looking at how to keep them
22 at home. I don't want to spend any time working on how to
23 find foster parents, how to find adopting parents; they
24 belong with their family, their homes."

25 And I find there's a lot of work around 'how

1 can we find services', but they're not looking at 'how can
2 we keep the family together'. And I find, they need to --
3 like in the North, the social services are very holistic
4 and in the South, it's not that way. They need to work
5 more in the urban settings, work with the Inuit -- and I
6 say Inuit because like I said, it's different teachings,
7 different ways of doing things - and I want to be
8 respectful of that, the Inuit ways of how we parent our
9 children may be a little bit different from others.

10 I have a grandson, and I was so proud, my
11 very first grandson; and my husband may be a little bit
12 embarrassed but I'm going to say it anyways: I once nose-
13 kissed my grandson's little buttocks. It's just what we do
14 in our culture, right? Out of love. And I'm not ashamed
15 or embarrassed of that. And I was doing that outside, he's
16 running around naked and I grabbed him and put his little
17 buttocks on my nose and nose-kissed him; he said, "Stop
18 doing that." "Why?" "Someone's going to call CAS."
19 "Well, let them!" Right? Nobody's going to stop me from
20 kissing my grandson's buttocks; this is my grandson.

21 So he's learned the hard way, all the way
22 through, how to be married to an Inuk woman. And as a
23 grandparent, you know how the Inuit -- the first child goes
24 to the grandparents, right? And I'm sharing this because I
25 don't have access to my first grandson.

1 There was false charges laid against my son.
2 And I didn't believe this; I am a strong believer in
3 believing the women, because I witnessed a lot of my mother
4 being physically abused. So I have always believed the
5 women. Up until I met this one woman who was dating my
6 son, and I didn't take it to word, but she said, "They'll
7 believe me over you, because you're Inuk and I'm not."
8 And she proved me right.

9 And although I was an advocate for the
10 violence-against-women and I did what I can to support him,
11 and the system still believed the non-Inuk over my son.
12 And no investigations: with accusations. There needs to
13 be proper investigations when there's charges. Because
14 they didn't come asking me, because I had a role in some of
15 them: to say, "Go see your spouse, she has a newborn, go
16 check to see if she's okay." And she called the police and
17 said, "He's stalking me."

18 Which was not the case; and they failed to
19 come and ask me if I had suggested that he go there. You
20 know, those kinds of things that they should have asked.
21 The lawyers didn't ask; and when she decided she was going
22 to move out of the Province, we looked at shared custody.
23 I helped my son, tried to come up with an agreement so that
24 he has shared custody, as a father; because I'm a believer
25 that a child has to have a father and a mother, it takes

1 two to make one. And whether they're happy or not, the
2 styles -- the child is still entitled to both parents.

3 So I was trying to help him get shared
4 custody for his first son; and she left the Province before
5 we had a chance to complete the documents, the agreements.
6 And I brought it back to the lawyer's attention, that she
7 left, it's like we're not done with the agreements, I
8 thought she can't leave the Province also approves that he
9 can leave the Province.

10 And the lawyer told me, "Well, there was
11 nothing signed, so you can't do nothing about it because
12 he's not in the Province anymore." So I thought that was
13 just so wrong, with the justice system, when people try to
14 take good care of their children. You know, he was trying
15 to do the right thing; but when one manipulates the system
16 -- I didn't realize how easy it is to manipulate the system
17 until I met this individual. Man, she's good.

18 You know, abuse can go two ways: on women
19 and on to men. If a woman has been hurt, she will in
20 return hurt the men as well. Whether intentionally or not.
21 But I don't think -- there needs to be a proper
22 investigation when there is a shared custody battle going
23 on, to make sure that the child gets both of the parents.
24 The child is entitled to that for their well-being.

25 I say that because I grew up without my

1 father. And there was a custody battle; but we would go
2 visit my father without permission. But I needed him to
3 know, he's there, he's my father. And every child deserves
4 that. So I believe that there should be a proper
5 investigation, even when there's charges laid, to do a
6 thorough investigation just to make sure these stories are
7 absolutely true before they lay charges on anybody.
8 Because there was no investigation when there was that
9 false charge on my son. It doesn't happen just to the men,
10 but to a lot of the women as well. So I would recommend a
11 good, thorough investigation when there's reports on the
12 Inuit.

13 **MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you. Qujannamiik to
14 both of you. I will now ask the Commissioners if they have
15 any questions or comments? This is the time to do it.
16 Thank you.

17 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** [speaking in
18 *Inuktitut*] Hello Barbara, hello Sarah. Thank you.

19 **MS. SARAH BIRMINGHAM** [speaking in
20 *Inuktitut*]: You, too, to you too, any time. When I would
21 have any further thoughts to add to my statements, I would
22 be able to do that, even in Ottawa. I wonder if I would be
23 able to continue or say further things?

24 **COMMISSIONER QAJAQ ROBINSON:** [speaking in
25 *Inuktitut*] We're not going to be speaking further again, or

1 having another Hearing; but we will be able to meet
2 together so that you can say further things as you wish.
3 Thank you so much for being here, each of you. And your
4 husband, Barbara.

5 I lived in Iqaluit for 11, 12 years before I
6 moved to Ottawa and we know, I know that this is a need, to
7 have a Hearing in Iqaluit. I thank you. I would like to
8 recognize you. And you have done so much work to make sure
9 that family survivors are heard and supported in your
10 management role and with the Inuit team, to make sure Inuit
11 women have space. And you've been a teacher to me and an
12 inspiration for a long time, and I want to thank you.

13 **COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Sarah and
14 Barb, I also want to really thank you for coming here,
15 being here, and sharing and telling us about Mary Ann and
16 having the strength and courage to talk about all the
17 impacts. So I want to thank you, and Barb for all of your
18 recommendations, your very thoughtful recommendations.

19 I was really struck by some of the things
20 you said about prevention, various aspects of prevention
21 and the importance of that; and of breaking the silence and
22 speaking; part of what you are doing today here. So I just
23 really want to thank you for that.

24 **CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Thank you
25 both. I've learned a lot today, from both of you. And

**46 Sarah Birmingham and Barbara Sevigny
In relation to Mary Ann Birmingham**

1 Sarah, I hope this is the start of good healing for. Thank
2 you for sharing today for the first time, about your
3 daughter and the impacts on you.

4 Barb, thank you for your thoughtful
5 recommendations. I'm sure we will talk some more about
6 that. And Paul, men like you keep us together: thank you;
7 thank you for being a good man.

8 We have some gifts for you. And we're going
9 to break from tradition a little bit for you, Barb, but
10 it's going to be a bit of a surprise. I hope. So, we have
11 an eagle feather for you, Sarah, to lift your spirits and
12 hold you up. We have some tea, Labrador tea; and some
13 cotton as well for you.

14 And I'm going to ask the staff to join us.
15 Any National Inquiry staff, please come forward and
16 Grandmothers.

17 For the record, we will close this part of
18 the session.

19 --- Upon adjourning at 15:37

20

21

22

23

24

25 LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST'S CERTIFICATE

1

2 I, Shirley Chang, Court Transcriber, hereby certify that I
3 have transcribed the foregoing and it is a true and
4 accurate transcript of the digital audio provided in this
5 matter.

6

7

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shirley Chang". It is written in a cursive style with some loops and variations in line thickness.

8

9 Shirley Chang

10

March 26, 2018

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24