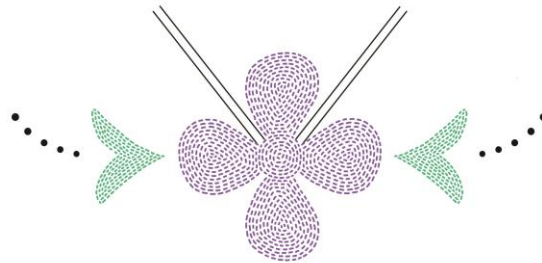


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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

**National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Statement Gathering
Chateau Nova Hotel
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories**



PUBLIC

Thursday January 25, 2018

Statement - Volume 215

**Martha Mercredi,
In relation to Janelle Mercredi & Shelly Mercredi**

**Statement gathered by Marie-Audrey Girard,
Commission Counsel**

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II

NOTE

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

III

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement Volume 215
January 25, 2018
Witness: Martha Mercredi

PAGE

Testimony of Martha Mercredi 1
Reporter's certification 19

Statement gatherer: Marie-Audrey Girard, Commission Counsel

Documents submitted with testimony: none.

1 Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

2 --- Upon commencing on Thursday, January 25, 2018,

3 at 1:43 p.m.

4 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: This is Marie
5 Audrey with MMIWG. We are in Yellowknife. The time is
6 1:43, and we are January 25. I will just ask everyone in
7 the room to present themselves, please.

8 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: My name is Martha
9 Mercredi. And I will spell it for you. M a r t h a,
10 Mercredi, M e r c r e d i.

11 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Thank you.

12 MS. RUTH MERCREDI: My name is Ruth. I'm
13 Martha's sister.

14 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Can I have your
15 last name, as well?

16 MS. RUTH MERCREDI: Mercredi.

17 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Mercredi, as
18 well. Okay.

19 MS. ELIZABETH SHEIN: And Elizabeth Shein.
20 So Elizabeth with a "Z." And Shein is, S h e i n.

21 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Excellent.
22 Okay. Thank you so much, Martha, for being with us this
23 afternoon and putting your trust in us. As I discussed
24 before putting the video recorder on, I will ask you my
25 first question like this: What would you like to share

1 with us today? What would you like the Commissioners to
2 know about your story and about your truth?

3 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: My daughter Janelle,
4 I would like to talk about her. She was murdered in 1986
5 between June the 3 and 4. How I found out was when she
6 didn't go to court for a month. She had a charge laid
7 against her -- no. A girl put a bottle to her eye and
8 pulled it out. So she had one eye. And the same girl,
9 Janelle was going to court for. She was a witness.

10 And she never came home for a month. I
11 was wondering where she was. So I went down to the
12 courthouse. They said she wasn't there. Then I went to
13 Grande Prairie. He didn't know what to do. And then
14 that's when my daughter phoned me, saying that they found
15 Janelle. She was in the bushes. There were animals, and
16 they ate her. I can still remember that.

17 They got the guys. Two brothers and a
18 sister. William Smoker (ph), Rose Smoker (ph), and what's
19 the third one? I forget his name. And then we had the
20 court date for that. And they got 25 years to life in
21 prison. What they did to her was terrible. They used a
22 baseball bat, a knife, a needle with air in it, a chair. I
23 read this all in the news. I never read the news. She was
24 in the wrong place at the wrong time, and she picked the
25 wrong people.

1 you, I would have gone crazy. She tells me the truth.

2 She does help me when she tells me the
3 truth. She just tells me things, and I listen to her
4 because she does a lot of this kind of work, and she knows
5 what I'm going through. So she has been helping me a lot.
6 I lost my daughter Shelly to drugs. She was a hooker too,
7 a prostitute, I should say. Both my daughters were in the
8 wrong place at the wrong time, you know. And I tried to
9 get them off the streets. I would go down there and pull
10 Janelle out, bring her home. Shelly, too.

11 I used to go down there and get Shelly to
12 come home. But they would end up right back out there. So
13 these girls had a hard life, even for how young they were.
14 I tried it -- to hook one night. You know what the guy
15 said? He said, "You don't belong here." He gave me \$40.

16 I thought, "Oh, my god. What am I doing
17 down here?" When I went back to the bar, I gave the guy
18 the money, and I left. I said, "I don't know how they do
19 it, but I couldn't do it." She was a happy-go-lucky kid,
20 Janelle. And Shelly. They were always doing something for
21 me at Christmas time. We would sit there, have a beer, and
22 decorate the tree. I miss those times around Christmas.

23 So when my sister comes in, she helps me
24 forget. You know, not really forget, but keep my mind
25 open. If I didn't have her, I don't know where I would be.

1 I got two boys. Patrick (ph) and Dwayne (ph) are their
2 names. I think the oldest one is spoiled rotten by me. He
3 is. He's spoiled rotten. Oh, my God. "Mom, mom, mom,
4 mom."

5 Since I lost my two daughters, I hang onto
6 them. And Dwayne too, my other son, my baby. He never
7 asks me for anything. But Patrick "Mom, I need \$30."
8 Something like that. All the time. He gets my whole
9 cheque. Thirty dollars is nothing.

10 When I get smart, I tell him, "I left my
11 money at home."

12 "Okay, mom." I just hang onto them
13 because I don't want to lose them. I have my grandson with
14 me too. He helps me out a little bit at home. I just hope
15 that nothing bad happens to them because it's my whole life
16 right there. I don't know what I would do if I lost them.

17 What I wanted to find out when I went to
18 court for the murder to Janelle, I wanted them to go to
19 jail for life. But two of them got off, and one of them
20 took the whole blame. So that is why they let the other
21 two out. He spent 25 years there. They were supposed to
22 get ahold of me if he came out, so I can go there and tell
23 them that he doesn't deserve to get out. But they never
24 did get ahold of me. That's the law.

25 I keep asking them. I phone them up. I

1 say, "When are you going to find out about William Smoker."
2 They don't give a damn. Sorry. It's just like they don't
3 care. And that's why I am trying to get someone to phone
4 for me to see if he's still in jail. Everybody loved
5 Janelle. She had lots of friends (indiscernible). They
6 all told me that she was a very nice girl, even with what
7 she was doing. I accepted it. For the longest time, I
8 couldn't. How can you sell your body like that? I tried
9 it. "Mom." She said that.

10 I said, "I wanted to see what you girls
11 liked that so much for." I never tried it again. No
12 chance. No way. He wasn't even good in bed, anyway. Yes.
13 I did lots of stupid stuff when I was younger. Just
14 talking here just makes you feel good. My heart was heavy.
15 Now it's not. I didn't know what to say when I came in
16 here. Hanging onto this whole thing has made me feel do
17 you have any questions for me?

18 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: If you want, I
19 can ask more questions. Maybe, I would like, if it is
20 okay, I would like to know a little bit more about
21 yourself. If you could tell a little bit about your story
22 personally. And then maybe I will ask a little bit more
23 questions about Janelle, if it is okay with you.

24 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: Okay.

25 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: If you can tell

1 me about your background. Where you are coming from? To
2 know you as well and to know where you are coming from and
3 what is your background, if you want to share that with us,
4 as well.

5 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: Sure. My name is
6 Martha Mercredi. I am from Yellowknife, Northwest
7 Territories. Yellowknife is my hometown. And I used to
8 live along the (indiscernible). My mother was a good
9 woman. She raised us well. I forget from a long time ago
10 because I had shock treatment because they thought I was
11 going crazy because I drank beer and Aspirin together. So
12 they sent me to Edmonton, Alberta, hospital. And they did
13 ten days of -- what do you call it? Shock treatment.

14 Then my dad came to visit me and he says,
15 "What are you doing in here? What the hell is going on?"
16 My sister took me out with her. My dad says, "You don't
17 belong in here. You're my daughter. This is for crazy
18 people. And you aren't crazy," he told me. And I started
19 to believe that. I was scared.

20 At night I used to put a chair there at
21 the door and a dresser so nobody would come in while I'm
22 sleeping. I would sleep on the floor with a pillow and a
23 blanket. I would sleep on the floor. I was scared. They
24 were doing those treatments. And people were walking
25 around in a daze just like they're drunk or something.

1 They're on pills. So I stuck up for myself. I told the
2 doctor. I said, "I want to go home." I said, "I don't
3 belong here. My mind is okay."

4 "You won't get into any hospitals out here
5 in Alberta, because you're going home early," he said.

6 I said, "I don't care. Just get me out of
7 here." So my sister got me out of there. It was a rough
8 road there. And I had four kids. Janelle, Shelly,
9 Patrick, and Dwayne. I had two miscarriages. I had
10 boyfriends that were mean to me, beat me up. I thought
11 that is what you're supposed to do. I didn't realize that
12 a man shouldn't be hitting a woman, because I loved them so
13 much. And I went out with the wrong men. Some were good.
14 The good ones I let go of, and the bad ones I kept. That's
15 just the way it went.

16 So what else can I tell about myself? I
17 went to school. I went to Cree Peace (ph) down in the base
18 of Mylin (ph). They had a school there for
19 (indiscernible). I went there. I passed. Then I went to
20 True Peace (ph). I got my GED. So it made me very proud
21 of myself. I was proud of myself for that.

22 I never drank for years, too. Now and
23 then I have a beer. I used to think I was bad every time I
24 did that, but I'm not doing anybody any wrong. I just have
25 my little beer with me, and people don't understand that.

1 "You can't drink. You can't drink. You can't drink." I'm
2 tired of people telling me what to do. "Martha, you should
3 do this."

4 Like, my friends now. That is my
5 business. This is my business. Why are they telling me
6 this? So I stopped hanging out with them. I have a friend
7 who says, "You shouldn't be drinking that."

8 I said, "Why?" I have to think. They
9 don't understand. Let's see what else.

10 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Martha, do you
11 mind if I take you back to when you mentioned that you were
12 physically abused by your boyfriends? I was wondering if
13 you ever reported this violence to the police or to an
14 institution?

15 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: I never did. I
16 always seemed to get away from them when they were getting
17 violent and everything. I would just stay away. Janelle's
18 dad and Shelly's dad, it was the same dad. He took a .22.
19 He wanted to kill himself. I was pregnant with Janelle and
20 choking me to death. If it wasn't for his mother running
21 next door, he would have killed me. He was, like, choking
22 me. Bill Smith (ph) came in. He says, "[Boyfriend 1] what
23 the hell are you doing?" And Bill would start fighting
24 with him and knocked him out.

25 So his mother said, "You better go home,

1 Martha. When he wakes up, he's going to start doing that
2 again." She warned me. So I took off. I never went back
3 to him. I never phoned the police on him. And today I
4 don't have a boyfriend or anything because I like the way
5 I'm living. I don't have to do this, do that for anybody.
6 My legs are buggered up and I don't feel like I don't
7 know. I'm just not ready for it. One day, maybe, I might
8 find a man who would be good to me and my kids. They got
9 to like my kids, too. Can I have a break, please?

10 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Of course. Of
11 course.

12 Whereupon break was taken

13 Whereupon recording resumes

14 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: The time is
15 2:13, and we are back with Martha. Martha, we were just
16 discussing -- sorry. I will be asking about your
17 daughters. If you can tell us a little bit about their
18 upbringing, how they were, and if you want to share good
19 memories that you have of your two daughters with us, as
20 well.

21 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: Okay. Janelle was
22 born in Yellowknife. Shelly was born in Yellowknife. I
23 gave up Shelly for adoption. Janelle, I kept. I named her
24 Priscilla Ann Marie (ph), Shelly, but they changed her
25 name. I named her after Elvis Presley's wife, but they

1 changed her name when she was adopted out.

2 Janelle was born here, and she went to
3 school. And then she was supposed to get a modeling job
4 when she first came to Edmonton. And I don't know what
5 happened. I think [Cousin 1] her cousin [Cousin 1]
6 brought her down to drag (ph). That's how it all started.
7 I told [Cousin 1], I said, "What are you bringing her down
8 there for?" I didn't know. But now, today, I forgive
9 [Cousin 1], too.

10 She was carnival queen in Fort Smith. She
11 wrote me some nice letters. I still have them. Sometimes
12 I think of her, and I just pray. I know she's okay. Her
13 and Shelly and Deanna, my niece. They all used to hang out
14 together. Deanna was the last one to see her. She didn't
15 want Janelle to go downtown. But she says Janelle wanted
16 to go, so she went. That was the last day Deanna says she
17 saw her or heard from her. We were wondering where she
18 was. And all this time, she was dead in the bushes,
19 covered with a rug. I don't know how people can be so
20 mean, because I couldn't be that mean. Not me. I try to
21 get mad, but I can't. But I never forgave them yet. I
22 thought I could forgive them, but I never did. All three
23 of them that murdered my daughter.

24 I thank the RCMP because they really
25 looked into it. And they are the ones that found out that

1 it was the Smokers that killed my daughter. The RCMP, the
2 police were pretty good with me. The newspapers weren't so
3 good. They published some piece about prostitution. The
4 police said, "We can't do nothing about it because that's
5 just the way it is. They show it on TV."

6 So I said, "That's okay. I can stand it."
7 A lot of people talk about Joanna Rathmus (ph). Do you
8 know Joanna Rathmus? She is a cousin to Janelle. I was
9 sitting there having lunch with her, and she knew all about
10 Janelle. Her age, her name. They're cousins. She is
11 telling me how they were and that. They were good
12 memories.

13 I said, "Thank you for talking to me, my
14 girl," I said, "because I don't talk about it too much." I
15 said, "My sister is there. I can tell her." I would cry.
16 But today, I don't know. I guess I am trying to feel
17 strong. You know what I mean?

18 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Yes.

19 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: She was going to get
20 married one time, Janelle. He was a nice kid. So we went
21 to look for wedding dresses. We went all over the place.
22 She was getting married, and I was really happy. She was
23 going to get away from down in the drag and that. At the
24 last minute, she changed her mind. She broke his heart,
25 broke my heart because I wanted her to get married to him.

1 He was a really nice guy. She says, "Mom, I'm not ready
2 yet."

3 I said, "Okay." What else can you say,
4 you know? Shelly, she lived in Saskatoon with her foster
5 parents. One time me and Janelle were at my place
6 decorating the tree. Janelle bought a case of beer, a 24
7 pack. We were putting up decorations. I said to my girl,
8 "How am I going to get your sister up here?"

9 And Janelle said, "Mom, I'll phone the
10 police in Saskatoon and tell them to look for Shelly Ridel
11 (ph). Tell her, her mom is sick." Oh, my God. I couldn't
12 believe it. So she did that. The cops from Saskatoon went
13 looking for her because they knew her. They went looking
14 for her, and they told her that. Two days later there was
15 a knock on the door. There was Shelly and her boyfriend.

16 I'm telling you, the things we used to do,
17 my daughter and I. That is the time she came back and she
18 stayed. She didn't want to go back. Shelly was with me
19 until she was 30. Not stayed with me, but she was always
20 phoning me, and she had boyfriends. Nice guys.

21 I don't talk about her very much because I
22 don't know. I just feel terrible I gave her up, and you
23 know. But I couldn't bring up two small babies. I told my
24 mom, I said, "I'm going to give her up."

25 My mom said, "Why?"

1 I said, "I can't look after two babies.
2 It's too much."

3 She says, "Okay." So when they took her
4 out of my arms, she was crying for me. I'll always
5 remember that. She was going to a strange place. But she
6 forgave me for that.

7 She says, "Mom, I'm so sorry. I did this
8 to you," she said.

9 I said, "No. You didn't do nothing bad to
10 me. Me, I did." I said, "I'm sorry." And a couple days
11 later she died. I couldn't get up there. I had no money,
12 nothing. I didn't know where to look for money for that.
13 But she had a good funeral, and that's all. She was only
14 30.

15 She needed a new lung, and the doctor told
16 her, "I put you at the bottom of the list because you did
17 drugs." That's what he said. "I'm putting you down on the
18 list, way at the bottom," he said. That's what her doctor
19 said.

20 "Holy smokes," I said to Shelly.

21 "That's what he said, Mom." I wanted to
22 know who he was, but he wasn't in town. People shouldn't
23 be doing that. He's a doctor. He should be helping her,
24 not saying things like that. That's about all.

25 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: I might have one

1 last question. Here at the National Inquiry, our main goal
2 is to see where the violence against women -- Indigenous
3 women and girls is coming from and what we can do to stop
4 this violence against Indigenous women and girls.

5 So I would like to ask you if you have any
6 recommendations or suggestions of what we can do to improve
7 the situation for the violence against Indigenous women and
8 girls to stop. If you have any recommendations for the
9 government, for the community, for the family, we like to
10 ask about that to know what can be done for this violence
11 to stop.

12 If you have, like, personal ideas or any
13 suggestions, and if you do not have suggestions, it is not
14 a problem either. But if you have any idea of what we can
15 do to improve this situation for there to be less violence
16 against Indigenous women and girls? What, in your opinion,
17 should be done?

18 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: Hang them. Hang the
19 son-of-a-bitch (laughter). No. Us women, too -- I mean,
20 the young girls, they stay with their boyfriends, and when
21 they touch them or hit them or anything, they think that is
22 love. That is what I used to think. It's love. But it's
23 not. It's not that way because they keep hitting you.
24 They said they're not going to do it again, but then they
25 do it again and again and again. They should go to jail.

1 They don't get much jail time. They should go 25 years, 30
2 years for doing that.

3 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: So what I am
4 hearing, maybe a little bit more education

5 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: Yes.

6 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: for

7 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: And they should go
8 to jail for a long time, too.

9 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: And jail. Okay.

10 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: And I'm hoping that
11 they're learning, the young girls, they don't have to stay
12 there in those conditions. That is what I thought. I
13 thought that is what I had to do. I used tiptoe around
14 [Boyfriend 1], Janelle and Shelly's dad. I used to tiptoe
15 around him so he wouldn't get mad at me. That's what I
16 would do.

17 File charges against them. There are
18 restraining orders, but that doesn't work. It should be
19 something more. Get them out of town or something so the
20 girls can feel safe with their kids. In a community years
21 ago, that's what they used to do is send somebody -- they
22 would kick them out of town. Kick them out and tell them
23 not to come back ever.

24 It is getting worse instead of better.
25 Maybe that's why I don't belong with anybody, because I'm

1 scared. I might get the wrong man again. But I know now,
2 today, what I have to do if I ever end up in a relationship
3 and that happens. I know what to do. I know enough to
4 leave him alone. Leave him.

5 I have boyfriends who are friends. I have
6 one of my exes here. He's phoning me all the time. "Let's
7 go for coffee."

8 "I know," I said. I went for a ride with
9 him one time. He tried to kiss me and I said, "No. You're
10 married. I don't go out with married men." He still won't
11 leave me alone. Today he still phones me. I'm home alone,
12 but I say my grandson is here with me.

13 "Oh. Okay, then."

14 So you know. I think that's about all.

15 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: That is good.

16 Well, those were all the questions I had for you today.

17 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: That's all? Okay.

18 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Yes. If it is
19 okay with you, if you do not have anything to add at the
20 moment, I do not have any more questions. So if it is okay
21 with you, I will turn off the recorder, and we will be done
22 with the session.

23 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: We're done?

24 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Yes. Unless you
25 have something else you would like to share with us, but if

Martha Mercredi
(Janelle & Shelly Mercredi)

1 not, I think we will be done for today.

2 MS. MARTHA MERCREDI: No. I am okay.

3 MS. MARIE-AUDREY GIRARD: Excellent. It

4 is 2:31.

5 --- Whereupon the statement concluded at 2:31 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I have, to the best
of my skill and ability,
accurately transcribed from a pre-existing recording
the foregoing proceeding..



Jennifer Rotstein, Court Reporter