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 Fort Garry Hotel Winnipeg, Manitoba



Wednesday October 3, 2018

**PUBLIC** 

## Statement - Volume 489

## Marie Mason, In relation to Donald Mason

## Statement gathered by Pamela Vernaus

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement Volume 489 October 3, 2018 Witness: Marie Mason	PAGE
Testimony of Marie Mason	1
Reporter's Certification	. 21

Statement Gatherer: Pamela Vernaus

Documents submitted with testimony: none.

II

1	Winnipeg, Manitoba
2	Upon commencing on Wednesday, October 3, 2018 at 4:02
3	p.m.
4	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Did you need tea or
5	coffee?
6	MS. MARIE MASON: I'll have coffee.
7	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Coffee?
8	MS. MARIE MASON: With sugar and cream.
9	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. That's for you.
10	So today is October 3rd, 2018, and I'm sitting here with
11	Marie Mason, and she's going to share her truth with us.
12	My name's Pamela Vernaus. I'm the statement gatherer. Her
13	file number is 1816 and we are at the Winnipeg, the last
14	hearing in Winnipeg for the National Inquiry. So, Marie,
15	whenever you're ready you can just
16	MS. MARIE MASON: Okay. I'm ready. So
17	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: So you had expressed
18	some some topics about your family in terms of some
19	intergenerational and violence that has taken place and
20	sort of what happened with your brother and that you would
21	like to share that with us today. So you're welcome to
22	just tell your story, or I can help you by asking you
23	specific questions.
24	MS. MARIE MASON: So you want me to tell my
25	story?

1 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 2 MS. MARIE MASON: And you sit there? 3 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. Is that okay? MS. MARIE MASON: No, that's okay. 4 5 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. MS. MARIE MASON: It's okay. Okay. My --6 do you want me to start my story? 7 8 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. Sure. MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. Okay. My name's --9 like she said, is Marie, and I'm a residential school 10 11 survivor for many years. I spent a lot of time in residential school. Quite a bit. Too many -- too much 12 13 time. And in that -- in that time, I was abused by a 14 people who were supposed to take care of us; the nuns and the priests. I was abused the nuns that were supposed to 15 care for us by getting slapped in the head, yelled at and 16 kicked. Especially this one, who was the head, Mother 17 Superior. She used to call us "Del" (ph) in French. 18 She used to call us Stitchy (indiscernible) 19 20 kind of a -- anyways, it meant bitch. So -- so anyways, that's what she used to call us, hit us -- hit us in the 21 head. I went through a lot of emotional drama in that 22 23 residential school. My mom was a widow. My dad died when I was six, and so my mother became a widow. There were 24 eight of us, so she had to leave us in residential school; 25

me, my two sisters, oh yeah, four sisters. One eventually 1 2 left. So because of her -- that stuff she had to deal with, being a young widow --3 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Μ′hm. 4 5 MS. MARIE MASON: -- she couldn't -couldn't take care of us. We'd go home in the summer. 6 7 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. 8 MS. MARIE MASON: And that's basically it. So it was the residential schools, oh yeah, quite hard to 9 deal with. 10 11 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. MS. MARIE MASON: There was one nun that was 12 13 very -- Sister Supreme, that was very abusive. So I still 14 carry that abuse within me. I eventually left the residential school and my mom had moved to her -- to her 15 original place where she was born, St. Theresa Point. And 16 she took me along and left my siblings in the residential 17 school. Lo and behold when I went back to the reserve, St. 18 Theresa Point, the community didn't accept me. 19 20 So again, I suffered a lot of abuse from the children kicking, being called down. They called me a 21 negro. Maybe because the year I went -- I went to the 22 23 reserve we had camped all summer --24 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. 25 MS. MARIE MASON: -- so I was very dark. So

1 they called me negro. And then when I reacted to the 2 abuse, the yelling you know, I said, "Don't tell me that. Don't call me that." 3 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. 4 5 MS. MARIE MASON: "Don't kick me," and everything; they started calling me the evil one. 6 7 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh. 8 MS. MARIE MASON: Maybe because I had reacted to the -- to the abuse. 9 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 10 11 MS. MARIE MASON: So it was hard living there, so my mom eventually let me go to high school in Guy 12 13 Hill. 14 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. MS. MARIE MASON: Which was okay. 15 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah? 16 MS. MARIE MASON: I enjoyed Guy Hill. 17 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 18 MS. MARIE MASON: But in the summers I still 19 20 had to go home so the abuse went on. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Hmm. 21 Yeah. MS. MARIE MASON: This was because I was 22 23 older, I wasn't -- I didn't suffer the physical abuse that 24 much from the -- from the -- from the reserve in (indiscernible) case. 25

1 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 2 MS. MARIE MASON: Instead it became verbal 3 abuse. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: 4 Oh. 5 MS. MARIE MASON: So the verbal abuse came in form of me being ugly. 6 7 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. MS. MARIE MASON: Me being dark or danum 8 (ph) 'cause at the time I went -- like I said, it was in 9 the fall and I had spent outside, went camping and 10 11 everything. They called me the negro. Oh, well, whatever. I didn't mind, but it was -- it came with you know, haunts 12 and slaps and everything; kicking. So the reserve wasn't 13 14 very, very good. So eventually I left, went to high school. 15 And I'd go by once in a while and they used to tell, say it 16 over the radio, the reserve radio, "Oh, she's back; the 17 evil one." So it was really very hard. So after a while, 18 I quit going to the reserve and I -- I -- I -- I worked in 19 20 -- did work and I worked and I took care of myself. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 21 MS. MARIE MASON: Lo and behold I met this 22 23 man that -- that we got together. 24 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 25 MS. MARIE MASON: And we were really good

1 together at first. He was a part Sioux and Ojibwe from 2 (indiscernible). 3 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. MS. MARIE MASON: He was very, very good. 4 5 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. MS. MARIE MASON: But then what happened was 6 when his family came in from the reserve and moved to 7 8 Winnipeg, he started drinking. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: 9 Oh. MS. MARIE MASON: So once again, the abuse 10 11 was there. So -- and I eventually left him. We had three girls. So I took my girls and we left. 12 13 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Where did you go? 14 MS. MARIE MASON: And eventually, I decided to go back to school. I went to university and mind you, I 15 didn't finish university. I got a few more credits to go, 16 which I've been laying off. I don't know why 17 (indiscernible). And I -- me and my girls, we lived 18 together, I took care of them and -- and they -- they grew 19 20 up. They grew up to be fine girls. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 21 MS. MARIE MASON: I had [Daughter 1], who 22 23 was -- who was really different. She was daddy's girl. 24 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. MS. MARIE MASON: And I had [Daughter 2] and 25

[Daughter 3]. So they grew up and [Daughter 1] eventually 1 2 moved on and unfortunately this girl couldn't cope. She 3 didn't do too good. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Which one? 4 5 MS. MARIE MASON: Then after a while she was 6 okay. 7 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah? MS. MARIE MASON: She just had to experience 8 you know, a little bit of hardship as my Auntie told me. 9 But I said that to her, they've got (indiscernible) here. 10 11 [Daughter 3] is -- has a lot of issues, emotional issues. And she has -- she has problems with alcoholism. 12 13 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. 14 MS. MARIE MASON: [One line redacted personal information]. 15 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Uh-oh. 16 MS. MARIE MASON: But she -- but she takes 17 care of herself. 18 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah? 19 20 MS. MARIE MASON: She's really good at taking care of herself. 21 22 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. 23 MS. MARIE MASON: But once in a while she goes with friends and they binge. 24 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Hmm. 25

1	MS. MARIE MASON: So I I just watch her.
2	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.
3	MS. MARIE MASON: And the other girls are
4	doing good. They've got children of their own and
5	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.
6	MS. MARIE MASON: and so I decided to go
7	to university and and but, I I didn't finish my
8	university. Maybe because I was having a lot of problems
9	with [Daughter 3] who was doing a lot of stuff. [One line
10	redacted - personal information]. I had to be there with
11	her. So and then when she got a little better, she went
12	on her own and I decided to work. I went to work, and I
13	did a lot of things.
14	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah?
15	MS. MARIE MASON: I didn't stay at one job,
16	and it was maybe because because of the lifestyle I had
17	when I was younger. I was always wanting to go, go, go.
18	So I had a lot of jobs.
19	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm.
20	MS. MARIE MASON: And I worked anywhere from
21	government to sweeping kitchen floors.
22	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.
23	MS. MARIE MASON: Like, it was a bit of
23 24	MS. MARIE MASON: Like, it was a bit of variety.

MS. MARIE MASON: And I -- I liked that 1 2 because it gave me a sense of you know, I can do this. I'll do this, do this and that, and that --3 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 4 MS. MARIE MASON: -- so -- so and make it 5 school. My kids are all grown up and I've got 6 grandchildren. My grandchildren are -- were a very, very 7 8 unique. Mainly because my kids were -- were -- they were -- they took care of their children, but one child, 9 [Daughter 3]; the one that has a lot of problems; I took 10 11 her son and took care of him; [Grandson]. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. 12 13 MS. MARIE MASON: He's a very unique kid. 14 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. How old is he? MS. MARIE MASON: He's now 11. 15 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: 11? Okay. 16 17 MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. And he's -- right now he's in foster care. 18 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. 19 20 MS. MARIE MASON: Mainly because [Daughter 3] decided she wanted him back. 21 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: 22 Hmm. 23 MS. MARIE MASON: [One line redacted -24 personal information]. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 25

1	MS. MARIE MASON: And (indiscernible). So
2	at that time I decided maybe right now it's not a good time
3	for me to take him [one line redacted - personal
4	information], and she was really angry with me.
5	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh.
6	MS. MARIE MASON: So I decided I was I
7	have been watching this it this my grandson of mine.
8	See how he's doing in foster care.
9	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: How's he doing?
10	MS. MARIE MASON: He's doing very good.
11	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah?
12	MS. MARIE MASON: The foster care he's in,
13	it's a very good foster care. Foster home. [One line
14	redacted - personal information]. So he
15	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: So you see him a lot?
16	Do you see him often?
17	MS. MARIE MASON: I he comes over often,
18	see how I'm doing.
19	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Aw.
20	MS. MARIE MASON: He's very unreal, very and
21	and fortunately he doesn't do that to his mom.
22	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Good.
23	MS. MARIE MASON: His mom lives way across
24	town you know? So
25	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Aw.

MS. MARIE MASON: -- so I'm his mom `cause I 1 2 took care of him. 3 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Aw. That's sweet. MS. MARIE MASON: I -- I raised him until 4 his mom decided --5 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 6 MS. MARIE MASON: -- she wanted him, and it 7 didn't work out. 8 9 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. MS. MARIE MASON: So, but he's -- he's very 10 11 -- he's really -- like, he'll come down and see --MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 12 MS. MARIE MASON: -- "How are you doing 13 14 granny?" And he keeps telling me when he's grown up and when I'm old then he can come (indiscernible) --15 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 16 MS. MARIE MASON: -- but whenever, he's 17 going to take care of me. 18 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Aw. 19 20 MS. MARIE MASON: And I look at him, "Oh yeah? Really?" Like -- and he's very sweet and very yeah, 21 22 giving. 23 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: You mentioned something 24 about your brother who's murdered. MS. MARIE MASON: Pardon? 25

1 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: You mentioned something 2 about your brother? 3 MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. My brother was murdered. And --4 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Can you talk a little 5 bit about that? 6 MS. MARIE MASON: Oh yeah. He was a -- he 7 8 was the youngest brother I had. And what happened to him was he was living on the reserve. And I guess that he -- a 9 lot of people didn't like him 'cause he had gone back to 10 11 St. Therese [sic], which wasn't his reserve and they didn't like him. 12 13 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. 14 MS. MARIE MASON: So nothing was said about They sort of hid it. his murder. 15 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: How -- when was this? 16 MS. MARIE MASON: About four -- six years 17 18 ago. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: And it was in St. 19 Therese Point? 20 MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. 21 22 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yes? Okay. 23 MS. MARIE MASON: And --MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: What was his name? 24 MS. MARIE MASON: Donald. 25

1 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Donald? 2 MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. Mason. 3 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Mason? Okay. MS. MARIE MASON: And but nothing was said 4 5 about his murder. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. 6 7 MS. MARIE MASON: It was considered that he just died a natural death, but it became known to me and 8 9 some members of the family that something was not right. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 10 11 MS. MARIE MASON: And I looked it up -looked what we call Kimuch (ph) in Cree. Like, it means 12 that I did it in a secret way. I sort of --13 14 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh. MS. MARIE MASON: -- looked in 15 (indiscernible) and I found out that there was murder 16 involved. 17 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. 18 MS. MARIE MASON: And so that they beat up. 19 20 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: So how did you find 21 that out? MS. MARIE MASON: Well, not off the files --22 23 I looked at. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: From the RCMP? 24 25 MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah.

1	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.
2	MS. MARIE MASON: And `cause I was working
3	at a nursing station. So I had a helper. But
4	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: And access.
5	MS. MARIE MASON: it it really say
6	where did he, it says possible.
7	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Hmm.
8	MS. MARIE MASON: murder (indiscernible).
9	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: And did they have
10	any did they have any possible suspects; the RCMP?
11	MS. MARIE MASON: No. None.
12	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: And they never did
13	they
14	MS. MARIE MASON: No, and they never
15	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: they never never
16	looked into it?
17	MS. MARIE MASON: it was never exposed,
18	never looked into. RCMP wasn't even called. Nothing.
19	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: So what was done with
20	the body?
21	MS. MARIE MASON: Huh?
22	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: What happened with his
23	body?
24	MS. MARIE MASON: His what?
25	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: His body? Like, they

just --1 2 MS. MARIE MASON: They just took him and buried him. So -- so as -- as it is right now he just 3 died. So I just left it -- let it go like that. Like, why 4 5 bother --MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. 6 7 MS. MARIE MASON: -- dealing with the system? 8 9 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. MS. MARIE MASON: I was dealing with it. So 10 11 -- so he's you know, so I just let it go 'til I -- like, I didn't want to get all -- everything all in the open and 12 13 get all you know, upset and everything. 14 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. MS. MARIE MASON: Meanwhile, everybody was 15 (indiscernible). And so I just leave it. And -- and I 16 know a lot of these things happen on the reserves. 17 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 18 MS. MARIE MASON: A lot. A lot of it. So I 19 20 said, okay. I'll let it go. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. 21 MS. MARIE MASON: Like, and -- and it was 22 quite hard to deal with. Sometimes I still think about it 23 24 and yeah. 25 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm.

1	MS. MARIE MASON: But it's been done.
2	Things that happened, and and I go my way.
3	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.
4	MS. MARIE MASON: Go my way and try and live
5	a good life as I could. So
6	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. Yeah.
7	MS. MARIE MASON: so and you know, how
8	I brothers and sisters are grown up too and everything.
9	Two of my my brother, oldest brother just died last
10	last summer. He was one of the reserve Elders. Yeah.
11	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: From which reserve?
12	MS. MARIE MASON: He was unreal. He
13	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: From which reserve?
14	MS. MARIE MASON: Norway House.
15	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Norway House? Okay.
16	MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. Like, we were we
17	were generally from Norway House.
18	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: You're from Norway
19	House?
20	MS. MARIE MASON: But when my mother my
21	father died, my mother moved back to St. Theresa.
22	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh, okay.
23	MS. MARIE MASON: And that was the biggest
24	mistake she made.
25	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: You should have stayed

1 at Norway House. 2 MS. MARIE MASON: Huh? 3 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: You guys should have stayed at Norway House. 4 5 MS. MARIE MASON: We should have stayed in Norway House. So --6 7 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. MS. MARIE MASON: -- a lot of stuff was 8 9 happening to us --MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 10 11 MS. MARIE MASON: -- 'cause we were different people. 12 13 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 14 MS. MARIE MASON: We were Cree. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 15 MS. MARIE MASON: So -- so anyways, that's 16 what happened and I -- I married a Sioux guy from Long 17 Plain. 18 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 19 MS. MARIE MASON: It wasn't a -- a marriage. 20 It was done in the traditions of the Ojibwe. 21 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Oh really? 22 MS. MARIE MASON: And it was -- so of 23 24 course, I once again you know, (indiscernible) upon. As if I never married him. But I just let it go, but what I --25

what am I supposed to do? Fight with the two nations of 1 2 Ojibwes and Cree? 3 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. Yeah. MS. MARIE MASON: So I said okay. These 4 5 things happen at the end of the day. MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 6 7 MS. MARIE MASON: But then he -- he -- he 8 died a few years ago. He -- we did really good. So when 9 his family moved to the reserve --MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: M'hm. 10 11 MS. MARIE MASON: -- he went to alcohol, so he became an alcoholic and eventually died because of his 12 13 alcohols. 14 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. MS. MARIE MASON: My girls are grown up and 15 doing okay. 16 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Good. 17 MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. They're doing good, 18 so they see -- come and see me once in a while. 19 20 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: That's good. MS. MARIE MASON: See if I'm still okay. 21 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. 22 23 MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah, but they're --24 MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Well, that's good. 25 Yeah.

1	MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. So
2	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.
3	MS. MARIE MASON: so I took some
4	university, but then I didn't finish.
5	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. You were saying
6	that.
7	MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. So then I said,
8	well, someday maybe.
9	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah, you should go
10	back.
11	MS. MARIE MASON: Yes. Go back
12	(indiscernible). But you know, me not finishing it doesn't
13	bother me. It's I I feel happy with it. Like, I've got
14	this unfinished business.
15	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.
16	MS. MARIE MASON: So like, one day I'll go
17	finish it.
18	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.
19	MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. So now, again, brag
20	about some unfinished business.
21	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah. Do you have
22	anything else you want to share with the Inquiry?
23	MS. MARIE MASON: Right now I'm doing okay.
24	My kids are grown up.
25	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay.

1	MS. MARIE MASON: I take care of my
2	grandson.
3	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.
4	MS. MARIE MASON: Until he went into care
5	and he's doing good.
6	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Good.
7	MS. MARIE MASON: And so I just I am
8	retired and I'm so happy. I feel you know, I earned it.
9	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Yeah.
10	MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. So
11	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: Okay. Well, I'd like
12	to thank you for coming today and sharing with us.
13	MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah. M'hm.
14	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: And I'm going to turn
15	this off.
16	MS. MARIE MASON: Yeah.
17	MS. PAMELA VERNAUS: It's I turned this
18	one
19	Upon adjourning at 4:23 p.m.

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

Anja Curuvija October 22, 2018