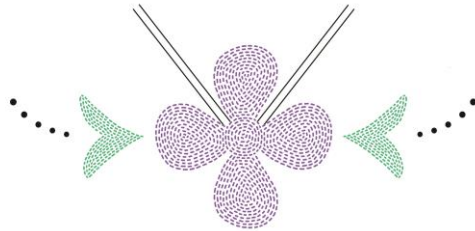


National Inquiry into
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls



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
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Explorer Hotel Ballroom**



PUBLIC

Wednesday January 24, 2018

Public Volume 42

**Ruby Firth & Irene Firth,
In Relation to Linda Firth;**

**Angie Sabourin, Grace Sabourin & Violet Sabourin,
In relation to Roberta Lynn Sabourin**

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II
APPEARANCES

Assembly of First Nations	Julie McGregor (Legal counsel)
Government of Northwest Territories	Jana Shoemaker (Legal counsel)
Government of Canada	Anne McConville (Legal counsel) Jennifer Clarke (Paralegal)

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Saturvit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, AnânauKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women's Association Inc., Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, Manitoba Inuit Association	No appearances
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Native Women's Association of The Northwest Territories	No appearances
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Note: For the purpose of establishing this record of attendance, counsel are considered present whether they attended one or all of the hearings held over the course of the day at the Explorer Hotel.

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Hearing - Public
Ruby Firth and Irene Firth
(Linda Firth)

1

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

1

2 --- Upon commencing on Wednesday, January 24, 2018

2

3 at 9:21 a.m.

3

4 **Hearing # 1**

4

5 **Witnesses: Ruby Firth, Irene Firth**

5

6 **In relation to Linda Firth**

6

7 **Commission Counsel: Wendy van Tongeren**

7

8

9 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Good morning

9

10 everyone, my name is Wendy van Tongeren. Welcome to the

10

11 first hearing that's taking place this day, on January

11

12 24th, 2018. We're in the Hotel Explorer in Yellowknife.

12

13 It's my pleasure to introduce the first
14 family that is scheduled to speak, and that is Ruby Firth.

13

15 Her sister is here as support, and that is Irene Firth.

14

15

16 So I'm just going to have them actually
17 put their names on the record as well as the others who are
18 sitting in support. So we'll start with Ruby.

16

17

18

19 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Ruby Firth, and I live in

19

20 Inuvik, Northwest Territories.

20

21 MS. IRENE FIRTH: Irene Firth, Ruby's

21

22 sister.

22

23 MS. MABEL BROWN: Mabel Brown, support,

23

24 from Inuvik.

24

25 MS. LILLIAN ELIAS: Lillian Elias, Elder

25

Hearing - Public
Ruby Firth and Irene Firth
(Linda Firth)

2

1 Support Worker.

2 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Thank you very
3 much. Welcome, everybody.

4 The first matter then is an affirmation,
5 and the two women are going to affirm and the sacred
6 objects that they would like to have presented to them are
7 the sweetgrass and the eagle feather.

8 THE REGISTRAR: Good morning, Ruby.

9 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Good morning.

10 THE REGISTRAR: My name is Gladys, I'm the
11 Registrar.

12 Do you solemnly affirm that the evidence
13 you will give today will be the truth, the whole truth, and
14 nothing but the truth?

15 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Yes, I do.

16 AFFIRMED: RUBY FIRTH

17 THE REGISTRAR: Thank you.

18 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Thank you.

19 THE REGISTRAR: Irene, will you be
20 affirming as well?

21 MS. IRENE FIRTH: Yes.

22 THE REGISTRAR: Irene, do you solemnly
23 affirm that the evidence you give today will be the truth,
24 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

25 MS. IRENE FIRTH: Yes.

Hearing - Public
Ruby Firth and Irene Firth
(Linda Firth)

3

1 AFFIRMED: IRENE FIRTH

2 THE REGISTRAR: Thank you.

3 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Can we just have a little
4 opening prayer please --

5 MS VON TONGEREN: Yes.

6 MS. RUBY FIRTH: -- Mable? Okay.

7 MS. MABEL BROWN: Good morning. I'll say
8 the opening prayer.

9 --- OPENING PRAYER

10 PRESENTATION BY RUBY FIRTH:

11 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Good morning. My name is
12 Ruby Firth. I was born in the bush. My father delivered
13 me from my mother December 19th, 1960. I lived out there
14 at our cabin for the first four years of my life, so it was
15 a wonderful wonderful time out there.

16 I still could picture it today just like
17 it was yesterday, how our cabin was situated and what a
18 good time we used to always have at East Branch(ph), at our
19 cabin. It was the most lovely time, the most peaceful
20 time, most serene time of my life.

21 But they put me in residential school when
22 I was four years old. When I got to residential school
23 when I was four years old they registered me as five years
24 old. So all of these years I thought -- I always thought I
25 was one year older than I actually was because of what they

Hearing - Public
Ruby Firth and Irene Firth
(Linda Firth)

4

1 told me and how they registered me in residential school.

2 While I was in residential school I went
3 through really really lots of abuse in Stringer Hall. I
4 was in residential school in Flemming Hall, Fort McPherson,
5 Northwest Territories; I was in residential school in
6 Inuvik, Stringer Hall, Anglican Residential School; I was
7 in residential school in Inuvik, Grollier Hall Roman
8 Catholic Residential School; and I also was in residential
9 school in Yellowknife called Akaitcho Hall, which I think
10 was nondenominational because in Akaitcho Hall I didn't
11 have to go to church.

12 But in Flemming Hall, Stringer Hall, and
13 Grollier Hall it was -- I had to go to church in those
14 residential schools. But I myself was in residential
15 school for 14 years because they failed me in grade 9 and
16 the next year I had to do that again, and they failed me in
17 grade 10 which the year after that I had to do again. So I
18 actually graduated from residential school -- I graduated
19 from Samuel Hearne Secondary School in Yellowknife in 1982,
20 so I graduated from there.

21 But in those younger years in Stringer
22 Hall I got really really lots of abuse. I had chicken pox,
23 which was really painful because they -- when I used to get
24 dried up scabs on my face they used to rip it off like
25 this, all the time, and I have really lots of scars on my

Hearing - Public
Ruby Firth and Irene Firth
(Linda Firth)

5

1 face from leftover chicken pox.

2 I had a lot of -- I have scabies scars
3 from my waist down to my ankles, because I had scabies for
4 so long in Stringer Hall. They never put me in the hospital
5 until it got really really bad, until I couldn't even stand
6 up. When it got so physically bad where I couldn't do my
7 daily activity, that's only when they put me in the Inuvik
8 General Hospital, because I couldn't even stand up anymore.

9 I had several boils under my arms that
10 they didn't take care of right away, and those boils got
11 really big. I don't know what a boil is from, but I got
12 boils under here. When they got so bad they put me in the
13 hospital then too.

14 So in my little tiny years growing up in
15 Stringer Hall Residential School I was in the hospital
16 quite often. In those years, my young years, I pneumonia
17 every single year from six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11 and
18 12. Every year at Stringer Hall I got pneumonia and ended
19 up in the Inuvik General Hospital. From having pneumonia
20 for all those years, my lungs -- both my lungs are 60 per
21 cent scarred up, and I have COPD and I'm always going to be
22 on an orange puffer and a blue puffer for the rest of my
23 life.

24 Also, I was sexually abused in Stringer
25 Hall for seven years straight, and I -- I don't talk about

1 that much. I hardly talk about that and I need to start
2 talking about that so I can recover my -- recover my
3 spirit. It felt like my spirit was ripped out of me and it
4 took me many many years to heal sort of like myself again.

5 Being Inuvialuit I was born a Métis, and
6 in 1986 the Inuvialuit people fight for my rights, so I was
7 able to get my rights back in 1986. So I finally became
8 Inuvialuit after being a Métis all my life.

9 Being a Métis, I had to pay for my own
10 dental work, my own prescriptions, my own education. So
11 when I went to college I paid for all that by myself
12 because I was a Métis. In those days no Métis ever got any
13 help such as Inuvialuit people or Gwich'in or Indians from
14 around. Métis never got that sort of help, so I was -- I
15 worked for Dome Petroleum for many years so I could save up
16 all my money and go to college.

17 I went to Nechi Institute on alcohol and
18 drug counselling, and I took it for four years and I became
19 an alcohol and drug counsellor because I had this yearning
20 in my heart to help my people. I always always wanted to
21 help my people. Even though I was suffering from a lot of
22 personal issues, my heart still went out to my people first
23 and I really wanted to help them recover.

24 There was a lot happened to me in Stringer
25 Hall: I had seven different broken bones; I had pneumonia

Hearing - Public
Ruby Firth and Irene Firth
(Linda Firth)

7

1 for eight years in a row; I had scabies; chicken pox;
2 boils; sexually abused for seven years; and all of -- like
3 being hit with a ping pong racket on the side. Ms
4 Skelton(ph), our supervisor, used to carry around a ping
5 pong racket.

6 We used to have to line-up to go
7 downstairs to eat breakfast, line-up to go downstairs to
8 eat lunch, line-up at suppertime. We all had to stand in a
9 straight line. If you looked this way or if your foot was
10 out of place, she used to come up to me and hit me on the
11 side with a ping pong racket. The ping pong racket is made
12 out of wood. I mean, the flat part itself has got some
13 rubber on it, but the side of the racket is straight wood,
14 and that's what she used to hit me with all the time.

15 I have a lot of lacerations on my head. I
16 have a lot of scars on my face and on my body from that
17 ping pong racket that she used to hit us with all the time.

18 I also used to -- being so young, four
19 years old, I also used to pee in bed a lot. She used to
20 always humiliate me by opening the sheets up and showing my
21 big pee spot on the bed and make me stand beside that bed
22 when all the other girls would go to the sink room to wash
23 their face and get ready for the day, brush their teeth.
24 She used to make me stand beside my bed and let all the
25 girls walking by look at me and look at the big pee spot on

1 my bed, and that was like humiliation at the best.

2 So I was always -- all my life I was
3 always feeling guilty and feeling -- like that feeling they
4 put in place, being assimilated -- that assimilation
5 feeling rather than this... When I was at East Branch(ph)
6 in the bush I had this awesome feeling of being loved and
7 being cared for -- and being a part of the family. But
8 when I moved into residential school there was none of
9 that.

10 They assigned me a big girl so that every
11 morning she would braid my hair and she'd pull and yank,
12 and pull my hair and braid it. After how many years of
13 pulling and yanking on my hair, my hair doesn't hurt
14 anymore. You could pull it out and it won't even hurt.

15 My pain threshold, I can go through a lot
16 and lot and lot of pain and I won't feel it. I have a
17 scenario. I could be laying on the side of the road and
18 I'd be asking people, can I help you? You know, sort of
19 like that's how much I can take the pain.

20 But the pain in my heart just like never
21 subsides and it never goes away. So in residential school
22 it was really really bad for me. I still have unresolved
23 issues from that. I mean, I've talked about -- a lot about
24 my issues, but that was with the physical abuse and ending
25 up in the hospital with these kind of conditions. But I

1 never really talked about the sexual abuse that I went
2 through. So I need a lot of work in that area.

3 I still have to share the story about when
4 I was being sexually abused. I find that a problem,
5 because I have a vague memory of who was sexually abusing
6 me, but I can't really put a finger on it, so I don't want
7 to name nobody because I don't know who actually sexually
8 abused me.

9 There was many different people that
10 sexually abused me, so I'm afraid to call out a name
11 because what if it was a mistake and what if that...? I
12 have a hard time with it because I don't remember their
13 names, but I still went through that experience.

14 I had a first husband and a second
15 husband, and it was very hard with intimacy with them
16 because of that experience in residential school, and it
17 caused me some trouble in my marriages because of that
18 intimacy, I couldn't know how to do it, you know. All I
19 knew how to be was a supervisor, because that was all that
20 I had as a teacher was a supervisor and stuff.

21 I myself had four children. In my younger
22 life I never drank and I never smoked dope all those years,
23 because my mom and dad were really strong individuals, and
24 my dad talked to me and my brothers and sister really lots
25 about education, about prejudism(sic) and about life and he

1 really talked to us good and strong.

2 So all me and my brothers and sisters have
3 a really strong family connection because of my mom and
4 dad, were so -- such strong individuals, even though my dad
5 went through residential school in Hay River and my mom was
6 in residential school in Aklavik, they were both
7 residential school survivors and then they had to send all
8 their 12 kids to residential school as well.

9 So that was a very very difficult time in
10 my life, and it caused my adult life to have difficult
11 times in it too. I ended up -- six times in my adult life
12 I ended up in a psychiatric ward for having a nervous
13 breakdown and can't even stop crying, and this was the time
14 I had my children.

15 When my daughter -- I have Morgan, Linda,
16 Vanessa and Leon. When Linda was two years old I was
17 working at the Action North Recovery Centre in High Level,
18 Alberta. Because when I went to college I went to become
19 an alcohol and drug counsellor to help my people, to help
20 the native people. When I was at work and my children were
21 at daycare, and my whole life was going really really good
22 and just like I had a grasp on everything, even though I
23 wasn't really talking about my sexual abuse, I'd talk about
24 the physical abuse that happened to me because it's evident
25 on my face and I'd share a lot about that.

1 But one time a big giant TV fell on my
2 daughter and she was only two years old, that I think
3 opened up a big can of worms, and after that I became
4 hypervigilant over my children and I couldn't even let them
5 out of my sight or anything like that.

6 So after that happened to my daughter,
7 Linda, I became very -- all my dysfunctions came back but I
8 didn't know that that was happening to me and it just like
9 kind of spiralled out of -- spiralled down into a circle.
10 But even though I was always depressed -- because I'm on
11 medication for depression and post-traumatic disorder, I'm
12 on medication for my heart, I'm on two puffers for my
13 lungs, and one other medication I'm on every day for my
14 allergies because I'm allergic -- me and my sister and --
15 like a lot in our family are really allergic to everything,
16 just like every-day allergies. So I take one of those
17 allergy pills every day.

18 So after I found the right medication for
19 my post-traumatic stress and my depression, it finally
20 levelled off like this. Whereas I used to be like
21 happy/sad, happy/sad, now it's just like -- just like this
22 every day where I don't have to emotionally react to
23 everything, I just could react -- or act instead of react.
24 So that, I'm grateful for that.

25 But we had a sister, Linda. This is my

1 sister Linda.

2 She passed away when she was 17 years old.
3 She died, she died of hepatitis and she died in Inuvik,
4 Northwest Territories of this disease called hepatitis. At
5 the time, it was called yellow jaundice. So when me and my
6 older sister talk about it we still say she died of yellow
7 jaundice. But today, it's called hepatitis.

8 I don't know if she passed from hepatitis
9 A, B or C, and all I know is that she passed away.

10 When I was very young we used to live in
11 Inuvik down by the river in a little shack, all of us were
12 in there, and it was really cozy. But we lived in there
13 and my sister Linda was sent away from Stringer Hall, she
14 was sent to Breynat Hall in Fort Smith and that.

15 Breynat Hall was a juvenile delinquent
16 centre for juvenile delinquents, which is just saying a
17 young offender I guess in those days when they called it
18 juvenile delinquency.

19 She was sent there from Inuvik, Stringer
20 Hall, to Breynat Hall in Fort Smith over several years
21 because they said she was bad, she was not following
22 direction, she was being bad. But they've never charged
23 her with any kind of criminal activity. They never -- she
24 never went to court for being bad, they just automatically
25 sent her to Breynat Hall. I don't know if it was called

1 that, but it just comes to mind that it is Breynat Hall in
2 Fort Smith for juvenile delinquent kids.

3 So she was sent there over several years.
4 But one of these years that she was sent there she actually
5 ran away from Breynat Hall and somehow she ended up in
6 Edmonton. But prior to being sent to Breynat Hall, I
7 remember being that little kid in our little shack beside
8 the river. We have a 45 barrel -- drum barrel for a stove,
9 and we used to live in that little shack.

10 But she used to bring us paddling on the
11 lake behind our house. Every time I was with her paddling
12 on that lake I would just stare at her all the time. To
13 me, she seemed so pure, so beautiful and so lovely.

14 Every time I used to stare at her it
15 remind -- it felt like it reminded me of staring at an
16 angel, and that angel was just full of love for us, full of
17 kindness, and just a real sweetheart towards me, and I just
18 really loved that about her. I really really loved that
19 about her.

20 When I think of her, that's what I choose
21 to think of, is that angel, and me and her were just
22 staring at one another with admiration and I loved her so
23 much and that. When I think about her, my sister Linda,
24 that's what I think about, and I don't think about that --
25 when she was ill in Inuvik.

1 But after she was ill, she must have been
2 ill for quite a long time before she was admitted to the
3 Edmonton Hospital, because when she ran away from Breynat
4 Hall she ran to Edmonton. I don't know how, she got a ride
5 or how she ended up in Edmonton, but we heard, so all of
6 the family heard she was living with a doctor, and that
7 doctor was not doing the right thing, and using intravenous
8 drugs. Linda was using intravenous drugs and that way, by
9 using intravenous drugs, she contracted hepatitis.

10 Probably -- maybe she didn't know she had hepatitis, but
11 when she was sick in Edmonton hospital and they couldn't do
12 nothing for her anymore they sent her back to Inuvik into
13 the hospital in Inuvik, and in that hospital she died.

14 But I remember prior to her death we, the
15 family, would go visit her. The family had to put on
16 slippers, gowns, masks, hats, just to go into her room to
17 visit her. I remember staring at her and with hepatitis I
18 remember her being really puffed up, like swollen eyes and
19 really really looking sick and having a hard time to speak
20 and that.

21 Just by looking in her eyes in the
22 hospital, just like I knew what she was saying and what she
23 was feeling to me, and I'd take that look, that look as a
24 positive thing, just like love going back and forth between
25 me and my sister Linda.

1 Then prior to her death the RCMP officers
2 and the medical person would come down to our little shack
3 and told my mom and dad, "Mabel and Malcolm(ph), you'd
4 better come up right away, come to the hospital right
5 away." At that time I went everywhere with my dad. Me and
6 my dad were really really close like this, so I went
7 everywhere with him. When the RCMP came down and said,
8 "Mabel and Malcolm, we've got to go to the hospital right
9 away."

10 So I started getting dressed so I could go
11 with my mom and dad to the hospital. The RCMP stopped me
12 from getting dressed. He told my mom and dad, "I don't
13 think she could -- I don't think she should come. I think
14 she's too young to understand."

15 That really broke my heart, because I
16 wasn't too young to understand, I was understanding what
17 was going on and I wanted to see my sister before she died,
18 and I couldn't because the RCMP told my dad, "You should
19 leave her at home because she's too young to understand."

20 When they left all I could do is cry and
21 cry and cry and cry. Because when I'm not with my dad I
22 really could cry hard and -- because we were so close.

23 After they got back from the hospital they
24 were crying themselves and they said, "Linda passed away.
25 Linda died." Then after that, she is buried in the

1 cemetery in Inuvik, we all went to her funeral and her --
2 the feast and all of that. But, yeah, she is buried in
3 Inuvik, whereas my mom and dad are buried in Aklavik.

4 I always have a kind of sorrowful feeling
5 for that fact, that Linda's buried in Inuvik and my mom and
6 dad are buried in Aklavik. Like, just because of that fact
7 I always feel like they're so far apart, and that gives me
8 some sorrow in my heart; to think that she's alone in that
9 graveyard and my mom and dad are in the Aklavik graveyard.
10 That always gives me some kind of sorrow for that fact.

11 But me and my family all remember Linda.
12 We all remember her just like it was yesterday. We don't
13 talk about the hepatitis and how she passed, but we talk --
14 always talk about the good times, the good memories. My
15 sister Linda had so many friends right across the north
16 that anywhere we go they'd mention, "Oh, are you Linda's
17 sister?"

18 Even today people still remember her as
19 that person, because she was so beautiful, she was so kind-
20 hearted, she was so giving that people from right across
21 the north always always mention her name. Even today they
22 still remember our sister Linda and I'm really grateful
23 about that. So I choose to have these positive memories of
24 her, instead of these ones where she was dying of
25 hepatitis.

1 When I think about her I always think
2 about that lovely time in the canoe and we're paddling
3 around and... Yeah, that was so good.

4 So when we first went to residential
5 school we were put in Flemming Hall Residential School in
6 Fort McPherson because our bush cabin was on the east
7 branch, not far from Fort McPherson, in Tsiigehtchic. So
8 when we were first put in residential school they put us in
9 Flemming Hall. On one side of the hallway the big girls
10 slept on this side of the dormitory, and on the other side
11 of the hallway the little tiny girls slept on that side.

12 Me and my sister Eliza(ph) and Linda were
13 in residential school in Flemming Hall. Linda was older, so
14 she stayed on that side with the big girls, and me and
15 Eliza were younger so we stayed on this side of the little
16 girls'. But every time the lights went out me and Eliza
17 would get out of bed and we'd go sleep with Linda, and
18 before the lights came on my sister Linda used to wake us
19 up and say, "Go back to your own bed," so we didn't have to
20 get caught.

21 Because in Indigenous families the
22 cohesion is much different than a Caucasian family. In an
23 Indigenous family we could -- we all sleep together and
24 we'd sleep with mom and dad for as long as we could. Then
25 all the brothers and sisters -- all the sisters sleep

1 together and all the brothers sleep together. So we're
2 like that closeness of that.

3 But in a Caucasian family I only can
4 imagine they put their baby in the crib right until they --
5 like, when they first come home that baby is put in a crib
6 and not to sleep with anybody else. So the cohesion, to
7 me, is very very very different.

8 So when we were all young we were all so
9 close because we all slept together and comforted one
10 another at night time and stuff. But when I got to
11 residential school I was put in my own bed and from there
12 the separate anxiety, away from my mom and dad and my
13 brothers and sisters, and the assimilation process just
14 really...

15 You know, sometimes I wish today that I
16 could -- I'm 57 years old and I'm still struggling with
17 this, being assimilated. Before we went into residential
18 school we had the Inuvialuit language, the Gwich'in
19 language, and our grandfather was Scottish so we had a
20 Gaelic language, and the English language. So all of us,
21 prior to going into residential school, we had four
22 languages. Those three other languages were beaten out of
23 us and we were only left with English.

24 So that's a sad fact too. Sad sad fact
25 that out of four languages now we only have one, and that

1 assimilation process just beat the other languages right
2 out of me, right out of my brothers and sisters. They even
3 beat that language right out of my mother, and my father
4 was luckily strong enough where he kept his Gwich'in
5 language and every time he sat with his sister and his
6 other brothers they spoke Gwich'in together and they never
7 spoke English.

8 So that language being beaten out of us,
9 being sexually abused, being majorly majorly physically
10 abused just left a big hurt on my heart, it ripped my
11 spirit out and I'm still trying to get that -- I'm still
12 struggling to get it back. I'm still struggling to deal
13 with some issues that I've never ever dealt with before,
14 never ever spoke with anybody about it.

15 Just recently in Inuvik at the warming
16 shelter for the homeless -- if they don't have any place to
17 stay they could go at the warming shelter -- but the
18 warming shelter in Inuvik started talking circles about
19 residential school survivors and these kind of different
20 meetings.

21 I just started attending them for the past
22 couple of months and I'm just starting to realize even in
23 this residential school experience I always felt like I was
24 alone, but going to those meetings it opened my eyes to
25 know that -- even though I shared the residential dormitory

1 with like six hundred other girls, it still felt like I was
2 alone -- but when I started going to those meetings and
3 hearing other residential school survivors' stories, it
4 really put it in perspective that I'm not alone anymore.
5 It happened to others and I can look at others now.

6 I know they've been in residential school
7 just like me, like all my brothers and sisters. I know
8 they were there. Now I could feel that, yeah, I'm not
9 alone, they were there too. That made a great difference
10 in my recovery. Feeling alone and finding out, no, I'm not
11 alone. Being here at this Inquiry, our family feeling
12 isolated that we lost our sister and it was so hard to live
13 with that sorrow within us for her, but coming to this
14 Inquiry knowing how many other missing and murdered
15 Indigenous women there are in Canada, again that reinforced
16 me, I'm not alone and I don't have to act like I'm alone
17 anymore. I can go seek help, talk to people.

18 I found out those support workers are
19 really there to support you. Whereas back in the 1970s,
20 1980s and 1990s it felt like even though they were support
21 workers, you were still separated from them. But now,
22 today, so much has changed, people got so much educated --
23 more education and more in touch with our feelings and our
24 culture. It feels like now when I go get support, that's
25 really support and I'm really grateful for that.

1 I was going to college and I was living in
2 Calgary, and I did my practicum work at Sunrise Residence
3 Treatment Centre. Sometimes I would be on the 8:00 to 4:00
4 shift, but this time they put me on the 4:00 to midnight
5 shift. So I used to get off at midnight and there was the
6 very last bus, I talked to the bus driver and I'm like --
7 I get off at work right at midnight, but his bus leaves
8 that station right at midnight, so I asked him to please
9 wait one or two minutes for me.

10 I always ran to the bus really fast
11 because I didn't want to keep him waiting. Right at
12 midnight I used to punch out and then run to the bus as
13 fast as I could, and then he'd get me on the bus and then
14 close the door. My house -- my apartment was downtown, so
15 the bus used to take me downtown and I used to get off at
16 the last stop. But my apartment was still three or four
17 blocks that way, and I used to always have to walk to my
18 apartment at night after midnight.

19 This one particular time I got off the bus
20 downtown Calgary and I was walking home, and there was this
21 carload of boys, I don't know if they were men, I could say
22 they were male occupants in that car. From where I was
23 standing I could see that there were six Caucasian guys in
24 that car.

25 I was walking down the road to go to my

1 apartment and this car came by, and I looked and there were
2 six white boys in there. Those six white boys were like,
3 "There's one! There's one!" They were pointing at me.
4 "There's one! Go get her! Go get her!" They were saying
5 to -- pointing at me and they were all in this car.

6 But fortunately, by the grace of God,
7 their light was green and then there was another car behind
8 them, so they had to go around the corner because the light
9 was green and this guy behind them was parked -- honking,
10 go, go, because it's green.

11 So they had to go around the block and
12 come around the block. When they came around the block,
13 their car was driving as fast as they can squealing around
14 the corner. I was looking back and forth to where I could
15 hide.

16 All of sudden there was this little
17 cubbyhole, and this little cubbyhole was a doorway, but no
18 door on it. An inside door was there. But that little
19 cubbyhole, I managed to go hide behind there. They
20 couldn't see me from the street, they didn't know where I
21 ran.

22 But when they came and they screeched on
23 their brakes and all of them jumped back out of the car
24 saying, "Look for her! Go get her! Go get her!" I was
25 hiding, I wouldn't say a word or a peep, and I was really

1 praying don't find me, don't find me.

2 That one guy was really cursing at his
3 friends, "Darn you..." you know, using the F-word and
4 everything, "...you let her get away! You let her get
5 away!" He was really mad at his friends and saying to his
6 friends, "You shouldn't have let her got away! We could
7 have had one tonight! We could have had one tonight! You
8 shouldn't have let her get away!"

9 That memory always sticks in my head, when
10 I was a young student in Calgary, that that happened to me.
11 Imagine if those six Caucasian boys caught me. Imagine
12 what they would have done. When I think of missing and
13 murdered Indigenous women my head goes right back to that
14 experience in Calgary, my feelings go right back to that
15 feeling of desperation, of hide me, hide me.

16 I'm like God must have provided me that
17 little cubbyhole so they lost me. I was in that little
18 hole and they lost me and that guy was really mad at his
19 friends, using the F-word, "F this, you lost her, you
20 F'in..." this and that. "We could have had one tonight!
21 We could have had one tonight!" They just kept saying
22 that.

23 When I think of missing and murdered
24 Aboriginal women, I go right back to that moment when I was
25 being chased by six Caucasian boys trying to get me, a

1 native girl, and being really mad at his friends because
2 they lost me. I'm so grateful that they lost me because,
3 you know, what would have happened? Who knows, who knows?
4 Only speculation, but... Yeah, who knows what could have
5 happened?

6 But I was really happy, given the
7 opportunity to speak about my sister Linda Firth, because
8 all my life it felt like I needed somebody to know
9 something about my sister. When the Inquiry came to Inuvik
10 and I got registered and there was lots of really good
11 support there.

12 When I got to the support, after they
13 finished asking me all these questions and said I could
14 come to Yellowknife and talk about my sister Linda, and I
15 was so grateful, saying she's finally going to be
16 registered in some kind of statistic in this way that she
17 can be recognized. Not -- never more being forgotten.

18 Like, who would think her picture would be
19 on TV looking at everybody in public? Who would think that
20 she would come this far and could talk about her in a
21 public form, openly and honestly. I would never think that
22 would have been possible to happen. But now that I'm here
23 and I'm talking about her, I'm so grateful for the Missing
24 and Murdered Indigenous Women's Inquiry in Canada. I'm so
25 grateful that they're finally talking over and above the

1 board about Indigenous plights in Canada.

2 There was a little statement that I wanted
3 to read that when I was a student studying and I found in
4 the archives. This statement, I mean I wrote it down very
5 quickly and it might not be word for word, but it was
6 written in 1860. So what I found is that:

7 "The Canadian Government uses
8 antisemitism, false racial theories and, with that, and
9 exploited the frustrations and the resentment of the
10 Caucasian race of Canada; telling the Caucasian race of
11 Canada, "Tolerate no opposition from these natives, and
12 demand complete obedience from these natives."" (As Read)

13 So, in doing that, the Caucasian race of
14 Canada was using antisemitism and false racial theory, such
15 as all Indians are drunks or all Indians are on Welfare.
16 Indians get this handed to them, they get their Medicare,
17 their dental and their education handed to them. But they
18 forgot that the Caucasian race of people got the land and
19 we got put off our land into reserves, and for that we get
20 a dental appointment and medication for our illness and
21 education paid for.

22 But prior to that I was a Métis, so I
23 paid for all my own education, becoming an alcohol and drug
24 counsellor. They said, tolerate to the Caucasian people.
25 Tolerate no opposition and demand complete obedience. So

1 this, allowing Canadian Government to dominate individual
2 Aboriginals and whole Aboriginal communities and the whole
3 of Aboriginal cultures by terrorism on Aboriginal opponent.

4 So if we are the opponent, we are not on
5 the same team. So two teams is opponent to one another.
6 So it's like the Caucasian were on one team and the
7 Aboriginal was on one team, and Caucasian were told, demand
8 complete obedience from your opponent.

9 So by terrorism on the Aboriginal
10 opponent, so assimilate at all costs. I always wondered,
11 if the Canadian Government has to assimilate at all costs,
12 then why wasn't all monetary costs put in to assimilate us?
13 Whereas when I was in residential school I was on a
14 starvation diet all my life, wore second-hand clothes all my
15 life in residential school. When I didn't want to eat my
16 corn, they force-fed it to me in residential school.

17 So it says, assimilate at all costs. So why
18 was not all costs put towards assimilation and no costs --
19 and because they tried to save as much money as they can on
20 the individual. We lived on a starvation diet. So I
21 always wondered assimilate at all costs, whereas we were
22 assimilated at no cost.

23 So there was some statistics that
24 Statistics Canada put out every year, and Statistics Canada
25 said, Aboriginal women die 14 years older than Caucasian

1 women. Aboriginal women died of hardship and poverty.
2 Aboriginal women died of hardship in their life and poverty
3 because of that. The Caucasian women lived in relative
4 peace and always always had their needs taken care of.

5 When your needs are always taken care of
6 you're calm and you have good attitude, but when you live
7 in poverty and that, so you're mostly like mad and, you
8 know, hungry and always on the edge of something, and so
9 they see us as -- like not on the same level, marginalized.

10 So there was another, native women are
11 more likely to suffer violence towards native women.
12 Caucasian women hardly receive any violence in their life
13 and live in relative peace in their households.

14 Also, there was this saying, traumatic
15 events stopped the normal growth of a child. So when I was
16 in residential school all of these traumatic events stopped
17 me from growing emotionally, mentally, and even physically;
18 on the starvation diet I wouldn't have grown as tall as I
19 was and stuff.

20 Traumatic events stopped the normal growth
21 of a child. Terrorism is traumatic. Whole Aboriginal
22 communities have been assimilated by terrorism, thus suffer
23 post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, an all of these
24 other symptoms of a traumatic upbringing.

25 Also, I would like to -- the establishment

1 must abolish this style and type of governance over the
2 Aboriginal First Nations, the natives, the Inuit, and the
3 Métis race of people in Canada, in North America.

4 The government must start abolishing these
5 kind of -- you know, when you have Indian and Northern
6 Affairs and they have all these policies to that, the
7 government must start to abolish this old way of thinking.
8 They must start adopting these new ways of thinking and
9 abolish these terms and stuff with the Indian and Northern
10 Affairs and stuff like that.

11 Democracy is supposed to be like with all
12 the people, and we are not -- how they democratically work
13 with their Caucasian people, they should democratically
14 work with the native people and like that.

15 The Caucasians have in Parliament caucus -
16 - the Caucasian people have in their Parliament building
17 and in the Senate, they call it the caucus. So that
18 wordage, that Caucasian people have their caucus, where is
19 the Aboriginals' caucus?

20 So there is a lack of enforcement because
21 there is a fiduciary process involved with the Aboriginal
22 people. The word fiduciary means take care of the
23 Aboriginal people the same as the would their Caucasian
24 race of people. But their fiduciary process is very lax,
25 they are not following this fiduciary process with their

1 native opponents on that level. They have made Indigenous
2 people of the world extremely and most compromised of the
3 world and in Canada.

4 The fiduciary process is not being
5 followed, so the native people of Canada are very very
6 compromised and very very -- it's like marginalized. So
7 the native people in Canada are 1.1 per cent of 100 per
8 cent of the population. Recent immigrants are 8.8 per cent
9 of the Canadian population. Caucasian people are 87 or 88
10 per cent of the whole population of Canada. So being 1.1
11 per cent of the people of Canada, even that small number,
12 we are always marginalized.

13 So with the fiduciary process, they should
14 -- when you cut up the pie and only find us 1.1 per cent of
15 the population, and marginalized, they should do some
16 equalization and make it more equal by some action that
17 1.1 per cent of the population are Aboriginal, 87.something
18 of the population are Canada(sic). They should make an
19 equalization chart where it would bring us in line with the
20 Caucasian people and in line with the recent immigrants of
21 Canada.

22 Because the recent immigrants get more
23 benefits than the Aboriginal people of Canada. They get
24 money to learn how to speak English, and we get nothing for
25 being assimilated and these languages beaten out of us and

1 only have English language. So I'm asking the Canadian
2 Government and the Justice Department of Canada to really
3 seriously look at their fiduciary process and really bring
4 us in line with every other ethnic group in Canada.

5 Because, up until recently, being
6 Inuvialuit -- the Inuvialuit people didn't have an ethnic
7 group in the Parliament building. We weren't even on the
8 shelf as an ethnic group. Italians, Greeks, and all those
9 other cultures are on -- they're acknowledged as an ethnic
10 group. Where as Inuvialuit people have never been
11 acknowledged in the Parliament building or in the Senate as
12 a specific ethnic group in Canada. All these things need
13 to be changed.

14 So, with that, I'd like to thank you for
15 listening to my story, and thank my sister Irene for being
16 a support. I do have six sisters and four brothers, and
17 they're all behind me saying: I support you when you go
18 talk about Linda; I support you when you tell them the
19 story that you remember; go do it, go do it.

20 So I'm really grateful for the Inquiry,
21 for sending me and my sister to Yellowknife from Inuvik to
22 speak on my sister's behalf, to let people of Canada know
23 that she did exist, she was a person, she belonged to a
24 family, she was loved and she gave love. Just the
25 acknowledgement of her can -- probably after this, I can

1 grow more in a healthy manner, I can come out of my shell
2 more and, with the help of my brothers and sisters, we can
3 move on in a positive way.

4 So I thank you very much for letting me
5 speak. That's all I've got to say.

6 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Thank you, Ruby.

7 Irene, is there anything you'd like to say
8 or add?

9 PRESENTATION BY IRENE FIRTH:

10 MS. IRENE FIRTH: My name is Irene Firth,
11 I'm from Aklavik, Northwest Territories.

12 I wasn't born when my sister passed, my
13 mother was pregnant with me. One of my very first memories
14 is of my parents arguing as to who's going to take
15 responsibility for the way she passed; would it be my
16 mother or my father?

17 This Inquiry is a good thing, because
18 we're only two of the thousands that were affected. There
19 are so many more thousands of families that are going
20 through this thing, so this is the beginning of a healing
21 journey for most of us.

22 But it also angers me that so many had to
23 pass for this to happen. You know, like why does it always
24 have to happen this way? Why does it always have to take a
25 tragedy for something good to come out of it? So I'm just

1 hoping that people learn from this.

2 You know, as Ruby said, we grew up in
3 residential school. I was born and raised on the land. My
4 birth certificate says Arctic Red River on it, because that
5 was the closest community to where I was born. Would we
6 have been left to our own devices and left on the land, it
7 would have been so much better for us.

8 My Parents were ripped away from their
9 families to go to residential school and, in turn, we were
10 ripped away from them. My father tried to renounce his
11 being native so we didn't have to go to residential school,
12 but they said my mother was Inuit, we have to go anyways.

13 There's a lot of sadness and anger that's
14 in me. This came up all of a sudden. I went back to
15 Inuvik on December 23rd, her son was supposed to come out
16 and be support for her, he didn't want to come. So she
17 asked me, and I immediately said yes.

18 So this is -- I didn't have a lot of time
19 to process all of this that's going on now. So, for me,
20 it's very overwhelming. All of my life I get, "You're
21 Linda's sister, you look exactly like her."

22 When the TRC was happening in Inuvik, in I
23 think it was 2011, I went and there was several people that
24 actually went to me and grabbed and said, "Oh my God,
25 Linda, Linda, Linda!" Then they look at me and say, "I'm

1 so sorry, I forgot she passed. I thought you were her."

2 So to have this story all of my life, I
3 never met my sister, I never knew my sister, I knew of her,
4 but... It's -- I can't explain it, it's like -- the rest
5 of my family had this hurt that they're carrying around
6 with them, and I never understood it until I lost my own
7 child. That was the only time that I realized, oh my God,
8 I know my parents paid. It's a thing you live with
9 everyday.

10 I'm hoping, like I said, that this, what's
11 happening here now, gets something done. I know it's a long
12 process and stuff, and I'm a very impatient person, and I
13 just would like to see something good come out of it.

14 Thank you.

15 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: Thank you, Ruby,
16 and thank you, Irene.

17 Madam Commissioner, do you have any
18 questions?

19 QUESTIONS BY THE COMMISSIONER:

20 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Thank you, both of
21 you, so much.

22 I do have a couple of questions and I
23 guess some comments too. I have an idea, sort of the
24 geography between where the residential school were in
25 Aklavik and in the Inuvialuit and Delta region.

1 if you know it, because when Linda was sent to residential
2 school and then they decided to send her to was it -- it's
3 in Hay River that --

4 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Fort Smith.

5 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Fort Smith, okay.
6 That again is -- we're talking hundreds of miles away from
7 your parents, even further than residential school.

8 MS. RUBY FIRTH: M'hmm, yeah.

9 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Was it year-round,
10 was it like jail or would they --

11 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Yeah, it was --

12 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: -- would she ever
13 get to go home?

14 MS. RUBY FIRTH: -- jail.

15 MS. IRENE FIRTH: Yeah.

16 MS. RUBY FIRTH: It's jail.

17 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: It was jail.

18 MS. IRENE FIRTH: It's like a place for
19 young offenders today.

20 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Okay. What years
21 was this? So this was in the 1970s, 1960s?

22 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Prior to that, it was in
23 like 1967, 1968 --

24 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Okay.

25 MS. RUBY FIRTH: -- and 1969, yeah, 1970s.

1 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Your parents had
2 no say in Linda being sent to this place?

3 MS. RUBY FIRTH: No, no. They only found
4 out after the fact --

5 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Any idea why they
6 characterized her as a delinquent?

7 MS. RUBY FIRTH: No, no idea at all.

8 MS. IRENE FIRTH: No. But in the stories
9 I hear, she's -- says what she says when she needs to say
10 it, and it was probably in the manner that she was saying
11 it, right?

12 MS. RUBY FIRTH: M'hmm.

13 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: She resisted --

14 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Yeah.

15 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: -- the
16 assimilation --

17 MS. IRENE FIRTH: Yes.

18 MS. RUBY FIRTH: M'hmm.

19 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: -- the oppression?

20 MS. IRENE FIRTH: Yes.

21 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Yeah.

22 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: I want to thank
23 you for the experiences and the knowledge you've shared,
24 and the wisdom. A lot of people sort of get confused that
25 the Inquiry is only about murder and disappearance.

1 MS. RUBY FIRTH: M' hmm.

2 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: You've shared with
3 us violence of all kinds. Denying your parents their
4 rights as parents, and denying your rights as children to
5 have parents, that's violence. Denying you your rights as
6 an Indigenous woman, that's violence, you know?

7 MS. RUBY FIRTH: I agree with that, yeah.

8 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Denying you
9 medical care, the fundamental rights as a human being,
10 that's violence.

11 I want to acknowledge that, because this
12 is what we need to be talking about. I think I've said it
13 before, it's not just about bruises.

14 So thank you, thank you for sharing that
15 and teaching us about this.

16 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Yeah.

17 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: I'm trained as a
18 lawyer, so when you start talking about fiduciary
19 obligations and policies, it gets me all excited. You're
20 speaking a language I know quite well. The 1860 quote or -
21 - where is that from? Do you remember what document?

22 MS. RUBY FIRTH: I remember I used to
23 always listen to CBC Radio, and on CBC Radio they had a
24 lawyer on there, and she started talking about the Canadian
25 assimilation process.

1 I'm a real writer, I write everything down
2 and I write -- I've got journals from when I was young
3 until today. So I really love writing everything down.

4 When I heard this, I just grabbed a pen
5 and I wrote word for word what she said really fast. I
6 even forget her name, because I even wrote it down in one
7 of my books, that if I need to reference her I could like
8 call her up and say this. But I forgot her name and this,
9 but this was way back in the 1980s that I heard this about
10 that.

11 It's either in the archives of 1860 or
12 1868. It's more likely 1868.

13 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: From what you've
14 experienced in your life, that made sense, that that was
15 what the government was trying to do.

16 MS. RUBY FIRTH: M'hmm.

17 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: I want to talk a
18 little bit and ask you a couple of questions about what the
19 establishment needs to do, what government needs to do in
20 abolishing this style of governance over Indigenous people.
21 A need to adopt a new style of thinking where the
22 obligations of fiduciary process has to be honoured.

23 If you could take Parliament, the way the
24 government is in this country right now and change it, do
25 you have ideas on --

1 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Yeah.

2 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: I thought so.

3 MS. RUBY FIRTH: You have to go to the
4 archives, go into the archives and take out the file, the
5 actual first file of Indian and Northern Affairs, take out
6 this file on assimilation and take out this file on the
7 fiduciary process of the government. Go right back into
8 the archives and pull out this file. Just like any other
9 office in Canada, when you are progressing something you go
10 back to the file and you pull out the file and you open the
11 file, and you read what is in the file. Then keep it in
12 the file, but also change the file, update the files to
13 this time and this generation.

14 Go back to that file that says assimilate
15 at all costs, and then change that Aboriginal opponent to
16 the Aboriginal people, not -- change the wording. We are
17 still their opponent. They are still treating us like we
18 are their opponent, and it's across the board, it came from
19 abroad. Abroad, meaning the Queen over there in England
20 started this process, it's abroad, it's across the board,
21 meaning it's all over Canada, across the same board, the
22 same platform they're playing with, the same dual action
23 lawyers fight against, like dual action in court.

24 We need that dual action to be on the same
25 playing level, on the same board, because we are no on the

1 same board, we are not on the same playing level. Go back
2 to the archives, pull out these files that state these
3 statements, and then change the wording in those
4 statements.

5 We're not your opponents, we're not -- and
6 take care of your fiduciary process, take care of it open
7 and honestly, not this old John A. MacDonald stuff, bring
8 it down to Justin Trudeau stuff. You know, because it's
9 2018, just like Trudeau said it, because it's 2017. Change
10 it because of that, because it's 2018.

11 Update your files, tell all your lawyers
12 in the government to go into the files, update them, and
13 then give it to the Justice Department. Give it to the
14 Justice Department, because there's a Canadian department,
15 Canadian Government department, and then there's a Justice
16 Department. Give it to the Justice and let Justice workout
17 this board. We need to be on the same playing level, be on
18 the same board, not it came form abroad. It came from a
19 board.

20 Let us be on the same playing field.
21 That's all we're asking for.

22 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Thank you. Thank
23 you both so much.

24 MS. IRENE FIRTH: Have to start with the
25 basics.

1 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Yeah.

2 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Yeah.

3 MS. IRENE FIRTH: In everything, we need a
4 starting point. Who knows where the end point will end up,
5 but you need a starting point. You need to start with
6 things people worry about, basic --

7 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Needs.

8 MS. IRENE FIRTH: -- housing, living
9 conditions --

10 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Food and security.

11 MS. IRENE FIRTH: Healthcare, that is at
12 par with the rest of Canada. You know, it's having -- you
13 walk into a health centre and they say, oh, there's nothing
14 wrong with you, here's some Tylenol, go home. Then months
15 later you're diagnosed with cancer sort of thing.

16 We need things that are at par with the
17 rest of Canada. Start with the basics, housing and
18 healthcare.

19 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Yeah.

20 MS. IRENE FIRTH: You know, that in itself
21 would take a lot of worries away from people, then they can
22 begin to focus on other things as their healing journey and
23 how to break this circle of violence and alcoholism and
24 everything else that comes along with residential schools,
25 missing and murdered, and these belief systems that we were

1 taught when we were in residential school, how to break all
2 of that.

3 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Yeah.

4 MS. IRENE FIRTH: Start with the basics.
5 That's it.

6 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Thank you.
7 Unless you have anything else you want to
8 add?

9 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: No, thank you,
10 Madam Commissioner. I believe that we're ready for the
11 next stage, because we've finished the dialogue aspect of
12 the hearing.

13 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Okay.

14 MS. WENDY VAN TONGEREN: So the gift
15 giving.

16 PRESENTATION OF GIFTS:

17 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Ah, I get to give
18 presents. We have a number of gifts for you, little gifts.

19 One of the things that we were taught
20 early on is the importance of exchanging gifts to
21 acknowledge. You've give us a huge gift; you've given us
22 knowledge, you've given us wisdom, you've given us
23 recommendations.

24 We've got little gifts that are from the
25 Inquiry. We have some Arctic cotton gathered, I believe

1 this one is from Nunavut, and then some Labrador tea that
2 was gathered in Nunavik. This is a small gift from the
3 Inquiry.

4 There is also, as this work has started,
5 the relationships from community to community have grown,
6 and communities we've been to want to give gifts to the
7 communities we're going to and to the families and to
8 survivors, and to acknowledge you, the matriarchs, the
9 strong women of the Haida Gwaii Nation want to gift you
10 eagle feathers from their territory.

11 The families in Thunder Bay and the people
12 of the Thunder Bay area made little beaded red dresses as
13 pins.

14 Then the Native Women's Association of the
15 Northwest Territories is giving a little blanket to each
16 family.

17 So I get to hand these gifts off to you,
18 but they're gifts from many different places acknowledging
19 your connection, honouring you, honouring Linda. So I'm
20 going to put the mic down and come see you guys with these
21 gifts.

22 MS. RUBY FIRTH: Okay, thank you.

23 MS. IRENE FIRTH: Thank you. Thank you
24 for having us. I believe things happen for a reason. Like
25 I said earlier, this just came up all of a sudden.

1 Something will come of it.

2 --- Exhibits (code: P01P09P0205)

3 Exhibit 1: Single digital image of
4 Linda Firth

5 COMMISSIONER ROBINSON: Thank you.

6 **Hearing # 2**

7 **Witnesses: Angie Sabourin, Grace Sabourin and Violet**
8 **Sabourin.**

9 **In relation to Roberta Lynn Sabourin**

10 **Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe**

11 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good
12 afternoon, Commissioner Eyolfson. I'd like to introduce
13 the next family that will be sharing their story of Roberta
14 Lynn Sabourin. Immediately beside me is Angie Sabourin.
15 I'm saying it wrong. Can you say it once for me?
16 Sabourin, is it?

17 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Sabourin.

18 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Sabourin. I
19 apologize, I'm wanting to over-pronounce something,
20 Sabourin. Right beside her is Grace Sabourin, and then we
21 have Violet Fabian(ph).

22 In support is Laureen "Blu" Waters Gaudio,
23 Max Mahoney, and we also have Cindy Harris.

24 We may be joined by Janice Sabourin, but
25 she just needed to step out. She may come back, and if she

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1 does she'll sit beside Violet.

2 Before we get started, the witness in the
3 front row here would like to promise --

4 THE REGISTRAR: Hi. My name's Gladys, I'm
5 the Registrar. So, Angie, Grace and Violet, do you promise
6 to tell your truth in a good way to day?

7 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Yes.

8 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Yes.

9 MS. VIOLET SABOURIN: Yes.

10 PROMISED: ANGIE SABOURIN

11 PROMISED: GRACE SABOURIN

12 PROMISED: VIOLET SABOURIN

13 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you. I
14 anticipate the family will be sharing the story of Roberta
15 Lynn. Roberta was a 42-year-old mother with five children,
16 she had four daughters and one son. Roberta died from an
17 apparent stab wound in the Mackenzie Place highrise in Hay
18 River, Northwest Territories on April 8th, 2015.

19 We want to start with Angie, who is
20 Roberta's mother. Angie was going to start by sharing some
21 of Roberta's strengths and some fond memories. Do you want
22 to tell us a little bit about Roberta?

23 PRESENTATION BY ANGIE SABOURIN:

24 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: My name is Angie
25 Sabourin and I'm from Hay River, NWT, and I have my

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1 supporters here with me, my daughter Grace, Violet, Cindy,
2 Max and Laureen.

3 My daughter Roberta, she's a fifth child
4 and she has a younger brother and a younger sister. Her
5 younger brother's name is William and her younger sister is
6 Nicole. As she's growing up she seems to be a very quiet
7 girl, but she's the youngest of the other older ones and as
8 she's growing up she's tried to be really protective of her
9 family.

10 She loved her family, and as she's growing
11 up she respected elders. That's the way I brought them up,
12 to respect their elders, all my kids, and to be smart in
13 school and respect their teachers and that.

14 She followed my discipline very well. As
15 she grew older she had a daughter, her first daughter, her
16 name Desirée(ph). She grew up to be a good mother to her
17 daughter, but of course she's young, she's outgoing and she
18 had a two-track mind at that time; she wanted to be a
19 mother or she wanted to go back to school.

20 Anyways, she went to B.C. Anyways so she
21 had Desirée then she had a boy, he was Tory(ph). At that
22 time she left and she went to B.C. to go back to school and
23 she wanted to be -- Aboriginal law, so she did that. She
24 want to B.C. then she got settled in, then she came back
25 and got Desirée, she has her son with her, so she left and

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1 she moved.

2 About -- Desirée was four and Tory was
3 about three, then I don't know what happened between her
4 and B.C. My younger daughter, Nicole, had to go pick them
5 up, but she stayed. Anyway, so after that she came back.

6 Like in her time, she did travel a little
7 bit, like with her cousins. She went to Ontario and that,
8 and from there she's been through to the States, out of
9 Canada for a while, and then she came back home.

10 Then she met Mark, and they had a little
11 girl, and then she left again, back to B.C. That guy, Mark,
12 brought her to Peace River, from there she took a bus.
13 Then she got lonely for the kids, so she came back to Hay
14 River. Then she got settled with Mark. But there's so
15 many powerful things out there that never works for you.

16 I like Mark, Mark's like her old man, like
17 he's pretty good to her and they had a little girl, plus
18 taking care of the two older ones. By then her daughter
19 had her first baby, so she became a grandma. Then, as time
20 goes on, she takes off, she goes on a trip or whatever.
21 Then Mark didn't like that, Mark wanted a quiet woman to
22 settle down with and take care of the kids. But Mark
23 mostly took care of her kids while she did what she wanted.

24 Then Mark had enough and told her straight
25 out that he couldn't do this anymore. But he kept the kids

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1 because her, she started going around looking for work.
2 Then she got a job with [indiscernible] Construction, they
3 were real big, she was doing that for a while.

4 Then she goes back to the restaurant,
5 waitress for a while. That's where she met all kinds of
6 elders from different communities and she loved the elders.
7 So the elders used to come from different communities to
8 get their taxes. She's working, she enjoys that.

9 Anyways, now what happens was she met
10 Brad, Brad Jacobs, and everything's going good for a while
11 again, and they had a little girl, her name was
12 Mykayla(ph), and then she had another one named
13 Kerissa(ph). But still, it's -- the guy she's with he's
14 more likely [indiscernible]. But they try to be together
15 for their kids.

16 Anyways, so she was still doing what she's
17 doing most of the time, goes to work and he goes to work.
18 Anyway, so I took her and I took kids to Edmonton to go
19 spend time with her daughter. We did that in spring break
20 or in the summertime -- yeah, in the summertime we went to
21 visit Desirée in Edmonton.

22 Then when we came back we ended up with
23 her kids, the two youngest ones, and did what she wanted to
24 do, we took care of her kids. We tried not to get mad at
25 her for doing what she's doing. Well, she's old enough,

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1 you know, like -- you know, she'll come home and pick-up
2 her kids, but -- she'll pick them up for a while and then
3 it happens again.

4 Anyway, so one day Social Services brought
5 them to us and asked if we could take care of them until
6 she decides what she wants to do.

7 Anyway, so we had the kids, and I think
8 they were four and two, four and three?

9 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Three, four.

10 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Yeah. Mykayla was
11 four and Kerissa was three. Anyway, so about a few years
12 later, just the year that she was going to get killed, we
13 went to Edmonton. I told her, "You and the kids come with
14 me and we'll take the kids for Easter break." Okay, so we
15 left for Easter break to Edmonton to go see her daughter.

16 We got to Edmonton on Thursday, and then
17 so it's Friday, Saturday, now she says she wants to go back
18 to Hay River. I told her, I said, "We're supposed to stay
19 for a week." "I'll take the kids back with me," she said,
20 "I'll bring them to Grace." I said, "Why you refuse, you
21 want to rush back for?" I said, you know, "We'll just
22 visit for longer time."

23 But anyway, so she left on the 7th. We
24 took her to the bus depot near my granddaughter and we
25 stayed around there until she went on a bus with the two

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1 She was -- my daughter Roberta was -- she
2 inspired a lot of people in her special way. She can be
3 mean, she can be nice, she can respect you, and she can
4 call you down. But best of all, she likes people. There's
5 no reason to say anything to her, she's okay. But she had
6 a lot of people I didn't know that was all there for her.
7 They said she was rare, very rare lady. She didn't inspire
8 only people in the community, but she inspired people all
9 over the north that knew her.

10 Then she -- she's really protective. That
11 night that we got there was on the 8th, and the word got
12 around that she passed on. The next day my niece phoned,
13 she messaged me. They may be cousins, but when they're
14 younger than her they call her auntie. She said, "Auntie,"
15 she says, "Auntie Roberta told you not to cry for her," she
16 said. That was her last breath, that's the last words she
17 said when they took her out of the highrise.

18 Anyway, so as time goes on -- that
19 happened in April, yeah. April, May, June, July, August,
20 September, October, November -- seven months later the --
21 was it the RCMP that called you?

22 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Wasn't seven months,
23 it was less than two months.

24 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Yeah. Anyway, so the
25 RCMP had called, told us they were going to have a meeting

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1 with us. So my daughter Grace and her boyfriend Max, my
2 sister Violet, myself, and my cousin Alex -- I just call
3 him my brother -- he came with us. So we got to the police
4 station and they put us in a room where there was an RCMP
5 prosecutor for the Crown --

6 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Investigators from
7 Yellowknife. I can't remember the dates.

8 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: There was a cop, the
9 Crown, prosecutor, investigator --

10 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: And a social worker.

11 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: -- and the -- yeah.

12 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: And the investigative
13 team.

14 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Anyway, so when we
15 sat there, want to listen to what they're going to tell us
16 about what happened to the girl that stabbed my daughter.
17 They told us that -- was that she pleaded not guilty. She
18 pleaded not guilty, because she said she did it in self-
19 defence. Since Lori had no criminal records, so she didn't
20 get charged.

21 When we went to talk to them the session
22 didn't take long. Just like they wanted to get rid of us.
23 None of us showed up in court, they never told us there was
24 a court. We didn't know nothing about it. After it's
25 over, then they tell us that the court was over.

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1 What did my daughter did to deserve this?
2 She fought on behalf of her sisters and cousins and
3 everything, but she never took a weapon to kill anybody.
4 She never used a weapon against no one.

5 While I sat there I heard different
6 stories, three different stories from the law. While she
7 was down bleeding, did she get up again to attack her? No,
8 because Shayda(ph) told me the minute the ambulance came
9 she said she never got up, she got stabbed and that was
10 that. But the law said she gets up and she go and run
11 against the knife or she was down bleeding already in self-
12 defence. While she was down she still fought. That is
13 bullshit. Because that's three different stories I heard
14 while I was in that session.

15 So until today, that's what really bothers
16 me.

17 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: We still can't get
18 answers.

19 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Nothing happened to
20 the person that killed her. Today she's still walking
21 around free while my daughter is gone.

22 That day before it happened she talked to
23 a whole bunch of friend that were in Hay River. She told
24 them that she got threat by her before and then she got
25 threat again that day, and she wanted to approach her, talk

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1 to her and why, you know, why she wants to kill her.

2 Anyway, so that was really bothering me,
3 was that Lori didn't get charged because they said she had
4 no criminal record. It's just -- that's when my daughter
5 promised that she was going to change her life. She talked
6 to me about it, and she was going to get her babies back
7 and stuff like that.

8 But until today we've still got the girls.
9 They were too young anyway to think about what happened.
10 Yeah, it was just -- it's the little girls that I'm really
11 -- no more hugs from the mom or presents or anything. That
12 is hard going through this life.

13 Thank you.

14 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Grace, can I ask
15 you a couple questions too? Did you want to start with
16 sharing some of Roberta's strengths? Then maybe I can ask
17 you some questions about what you remember from the
18 hospital and after.

19 PRESENTATION BY GRACE SABOURIN:

20 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Okay. Her strongest
21 strengths were her friendship. She got along with
22 everybody and anybody. She made friends very easily.
23 Every time you see her -- if we didn't see each other for
24 two days we still got a hug, all the time. If we seen each
25 other within 24 hours, every time we seen each other it was

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1 always a hug, everybody, every family member got a hug
2 regardless and a big smile and whatever kind of joke she
3 wanted to tell, she always told us jokes.

4 So anyway, she was a strong people person,
5 made friends very easily and she loved. She had a big
6 heart. If some people had no place to stay, she opened up
7 her home and her heart to them. That was just the way she
8 was. Very friendly, laughed all the time, liked to smile.
9 That's probably one of her strongest points. It's so hard
10 to say. I try to think about it sometimes, I try not to,
11 but once in a while it does hit.

12 Every time people seen her and I walking
13 together, they always, "Oh, here come the Twisted Sisters."
14 Like, we got along so well and we laughed a lot. We fought
15 too once in a while, we argued, but we always became
16 friends again within a short period of time. Never stayed
17 mad at each other for long.

18 She loved every single one of us, some
19 equally, some more. But it didn't matter, as long as she
20 loved us, and we loved her.

21 That's one of her strongest points, was
22 her personality; strong, friendly. She had lots of
23 friends. Everywhere we went she was always talking to
24 somebody, I'm standing on the side waiting while she's
25 always yapping and always greeting people, people I don't

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1 even know sometimes, so she'll introduce me to them. She's
2 more outgoing than I am, so she was more of a people
3 person.

4 So that's one of her strongest was that,
5 was her personality, her happiness. If she was down and
6 out and whatever, she always gave me a phone call. It was
7 so weird, because sometimes we'd look at the phone, either
8 I would call or she would call, and we knew exactly who it
9 was. I bet Roberta's going to call I'd be thinking, sure
10 enough the phone would ring within seconds. I'd pick it
11 up, "I knew it was you." I'd always say that. Or I'd call
12 her, "I knew it was you." That's how close we were.

13 So that's -- yeah, we had a big powerful
14 relationship together.

15 That day when that happened I was at my
16 daughter Misty's because Misty and her common-law husband
17 work at the mine, so I was watching my grandchildren, and
18 also Roberta's two daughters, her youngest ones. My
19 granny, when she was alive, she was there with us too, and
20 Max, and two of Sonia's friends. We had a whole trailer
21 full.

22 Roberta and Brad showed up 2:00 in the
23 afternoon, it was beautiful outside that day, April 8th.
24 We were sitting outside just with t-shirts, no sweaters or
25 anything, sitting around the -- well sitting outside on a

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1 deck anyway. We sat there for four hours, laughed and
2 joked around and teased each other.

3 Then they decided to leave at 6:00. So
4 she left first and then Brad -- it was her and Brad showed
5 up, her common-law. So after they left I got the first
6 phone call at 9:00 at night, said Roberta was involved in a
7 stabbing. Of course, I thought it was just a superficial
8 one or maybe she's got a little bit of stitches and stuff
9 like that. So I didn't take it seriously.

10 Then 11:00 I got a phone call again, and
11 demanding that I go to the hospital, I don't think my
12 sister's going to make it. Of course, again, I never
13 thought to take it seriously, never thought anything that
14 devastating or horrifying had happened.

15 So I got to the hospital and everybody was
16 -- of course made sure the kids were -- because it was
17 Easter long weekend, so there were no school so the kids
18 were still up when I left. So I walked in there, there was
19 people all around, nobody even gave me any warning.

20 So I walked into the emergency room and
21 there was -- she was laying on the whatever you call it,
22 the bed. There was a doctor in the middle and the two
23 nurses standing on the side and they just looked at me,
24 just shook their head. I understood what they meant and I
25 collapsed on the floor and I took my parka(ph) and I

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1 covered myself with it. I just screamed out loud, as loud
2 as I could. I still couldn't believe.

3 That's when Max came in and he walked me
4 out. As we were walking out my mom was coming in. I
5 couldn't even face her, I couldn't even look at her, the
6 hurt was -- I still couldn't believe it. So we walked
7 outside, went to the truck and regrouped a little bit.

8 Then I walked back in. By then my other
9 auntie was there -- my auntie was there already, Auntie
10 Violet. So I just stood there and I started rubbing her
11 arm because she was still warm. So I was rubbing for as
12 long as I can because she was still warm.

13 Then I just went home, went back to my
14 daughters. Brad didn't want to be by himself, so he came
15 there and slept. My mom also didn't want to be by herself,
16 so they joined us at my daughter's trailer. So we had a
17 trailer full of family.

18 Now try to explain that to her two
19 youngest daughters that me and my mom were bringing up
20 already. We already had them in custody with us. Still
21 today, me and my mom are still bringing up her two youngest
22 daughters, they're eight and nine now. Now they are
23 starting to recognize and starting to try understand what
24 happened to their mother.

25 I know it's going to affect them as they

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1 get older and older, because only now they're trying to
2 comprehend what happened to her. That they realize that
3 their mom's never going to come back. They really miss
4 her. They still -- they write little stories to her, they
5 make cards for her and stuff for Mother's Day. They still
6 do that. Once in a while I find little notes in their
7 little notebooks, their little journals, about how they
8 talk about their mom. They always call her, my mommy.
9 Mommy did this or mommy told me this and...

10 So it's kind of hard bringing up two
11 little girls who lost their mother. So I'm thankful me and
12 my mom are there for them, and the rest of the family.

13 But after that when I first found out that
14 Lori had got out on bail due to -- that was the first
15 session that we had with them was when they told us that
16 she was going to get out on bail, due to because she had no
17 prior charges or criminal history.

18 I can't remember if it was in May, but I
19 think she went to court in June for bail, and then we found
20 out after that, I don't know what day it was, because then
21 it was a blur.

22 Then what I did was I turned to alcohol of
23 course to try and kill the pain, grieving, and went through
24 a couple panic attacks, anxiety attacks, crying and
25 screaming for no reason at all. It's a good thing Max was

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1 there, because he grounded me. I didn't want to do it in
2 front of my family, so I just mostly did it privately.

3 To me, justice was not done, she got away
4 with murder. Just because my sister had - because of her
5 lifestyle and her previous history of assault and stuff
6 like that, but never once in those assaults has she ever
7 used a weapon, which my mom said is true.

8 Still today I'm still grieving. It's not
9 as hard as it used to be, but it's still there. I still
10 breakdown and cry once in a while thinking about her. Her
11 daughters too are getting closer and closer to me. I think
12 it's because now they realize that their mom won't be here,
13 so now I get the hugs and kisses that my sister should have
14 been getting. So it's a hard process to go through.

15 The grieving is not as bad as the
16 beginning, but it's still there. Sometimes I think she
17 should have been here, she shouldn't be where she is right
18 now. She's supposed to be here with us, not over there.
19 It's just really hard to talk about sometimes, but I'm glad
20 to bring it out. Still, it's a hard process to go through.
21 I still believe that she should receive justice.

22 What I really wish for is this case to be
23 reopened and her to be retried, and to let her know that we
24 did not forget what she did to our sister, my sister,
25 grandmother -- she's also a grandmother, an auntie,

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1 daughter. Like, all that was taken away from all of us
2 when she did that to my sister.

3 To me, no justice has been served thanks
4 to the prosecutors. Thanks to them, it's just like they
5 wanted just to close the case as fast as they could and
6 basically just forgot about her. It's like they didn't
7 even try hard enough. Is it because she was an Aboriginal
8 woman and her lifestyle? Just because she liked to party
9 and drink? That was no reason for her to die and for them
10 to just ignore her and close the case so quickly.

11 Not even four months, and then she got
12 away with murder, she walked scot-free. Meanwhile, my
13 sister's six feet under.

14 I just want people to know that if other
15 people are going through this, try fight for reopening the
16 case if you know that what happened to your loved one was
17 wrong. The court system, the criminal justice system,
18 failed her and us.

19 Thank you.

20 QUESTIONS BY COMMISSION COUNSEL:

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Grace, before you
22 pass the microphone, can I just ask you a couple quick
23 questions just to clarify?

24 You've read this article?

25 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Yeah.

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1 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: In the article --
2 there's an article that I'll be passing up to you,
3 Commissioner Eyolfson -- it's titled, "Murder Charge Stayed
4 in Stabbing: Crown says it can't prove the accused did not
5 act in self-defence." That's the title.

6 But the part I'm referring to, Grace, is
7 closer to the end of the article, because what you've just
8 shared with us is your frustrations at not understanding
9 how they couldn't even call the evidence. They didn't even
10 call evidence, it was a decision made, they brought you
11 into a space and just told you there wasn't enough
12 evidence.

13 In the article it says that you were
14 holding out hope, that maybe they'd find more evidence.

15 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Yeah, that's what I
16 was hoping for, yeah.

17 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: This article was
18 back in 2015, and so obviously there's been some time
19 passed. I think your biggest contention was the fact --
20 you had stated, in fact, "Grace Sabourin said, the family
21 was told her sister had walked into the knife." Can you
22 explain that to us a little bit more?

23 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: I can't remember -- I
24 heard it -- it might have been when we went for that --
25 that initial interview when they warned us that she's going

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1 to get out on bail, and I'm pretty sure that's when they
2 said that, that she walked into the knife.

3 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Yeah.

4 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Yeah, because you
5 heard it too, right, when they said that? Yeah.

6 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: [indiscernible].

7 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Yeah.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I'm sorry, just
9 one more question.

10 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Okay.

11 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So when they
12 announced the murder charge was being stayed, because that
13 actually happened in court, and the media touched based
14 with you, you spoke with some media to explain the family's
15 frustrations?

16 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: That was over the
17 phone, yeah.

18 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So you're the one
19 that...? I just missed the last part of your answer.

20 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Oh, they contacted me
21 over the phone that time.

22 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So you were just
23 responding to what happened in the news. But your mother
24 had said that you guys didn't go to court, so you didn't
25 even know that --

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1 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: We knew when the
2 court date was. You see, back then it was such a blur
3 because I went on a -- I went on a... I don't know if it -
4 - well, it's because the pain was still there and it's like
5 we didn't really want to face it. Because to -- it was
6 still too unbelievable and too fresh. Like, it was too
7 soon, how fast the justice system went and dealt with it.

8 Like, you know, other trials go for like
9 one or two years and stuff like that, but that one went
10 just like that. It was too quick even for us even to -- to
11 even try get beyond that. She just died and then we have to
12 go through the court process and stuff.

13 So when we heard that stay charges, I know
14 what that means, they wait for on year unless new -- new
15 evidence -- unless they find new evidence. Nothing was
16 forthcoming, waited a year and nothing. It's just -- it
17 was just too fast, too quick. It's like they just, poof,
18 let's get this over and done with and close it so we can
19 move on to another case.

20 They didn't treat her as a human being, as
21 a person. Just like a case, that was it, a file.

22 So thanks.

23 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I know Violet was
24 just about to add something.

25 PRESENTATION BY VIOLET SABOURIN:

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1 MS. VIOLET SABOURIN: I just wanted to
2 mention, on the day that the investigators had called in --
3 called us in for a meeting to discuss about the -- what was
4 going to happen, what happened in court. So that was the
5 day that Angie and I and Grace, and my cousin Alex and Max
6 was there also. Anyway, the investigators had talked with
7 us about what was going to happen to Lori. That's her
8 name, right, Lori?

9 They explained to us how she had pleaded
10 not guilty because she claimed self-defence. So then was
11 there anything else that you guys -- was there anybody else
12 that was interviewed at that time of the -- that -- when
13 Lori killed Roberta? He told me this, that she -- she
14 claimed not -- self-defence.

15 Then the second time he -- they were --
16 continued talking and then -- and then they told me that --
17 they told us how Roberta had ran into the knife -- or the
18 weapon. Then I said, "What?" I said, "I cannot see
19 Roberta running into a knife." I said, "I cannot see her
20 doing that." I said, you know, she can -- she will -- she
21 can defend herself. But to run into a knife is -- is not
22 what I see Roberta doing that at all.

23 I said, "She had the knife on her." I
24 said, "How in the world is Roberta supposed to run into a
25 knife?" I said, "I cannot see it happening." I said,

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1 "You're saying she's pleading not guilty or she's pleading
2 self-defence." I said, "Well, you guys, how do you know
3 that it's a self-defence? Roberta's not here to defend
4 herself. She's not here to speak. She's not here to tell
5 us what happened. The only one who was also there was
6 people that were in that same apartment."

7 Her little cousin, who happens to be my
8 granddaughter, was with her at that time. During that time
9 I spoke to the RCMP, that if they're to interview my
10 granddaughter, I wanted to be there. Because at that time
11 my granddaughter was going through a lot of things.

12 When she turned 12 years old she started
13 hallucinating and they said -- the doctor said that she was
14 psychosis. This is why I asked the investigators that if
15 they're to interview her, I wanted to be there with her
16 when that happened, I said, because she's not well, and
17 she's not going to remember a lot of things that happened.

18 But anyway, they did interview her and
19 they didn't -- they didn't even let me know or try to
20 contact me until I heard someone saying that the cops had -
21 - the RCMP had picked up my granddaughter. By that time
22 they were -- I found out it was already too late, they had
23 already spoken with her. I was really upset about that.

24 I tried talking to my granddaughter and
25 she wouldn't -- she wouldn't talk about it. I'm not sure

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1 what they said to her, because she was probably -- she was
2 15 that time, I believe she was 15 that time, and she's not
3 going to remember anything. She's -- that's because she
4 had mental problems.

5 Then they interviewed her what, two days,
6 maybe a couple days after that that Roberta passed away.

7 When we were in the RCMP station and it's
8 like telling us what was going to happen and how the
9 charges were going to be dropped, because she pleaded self-
10 defence.

11 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: There was another
12 thing too, was nowhere did we ever hear about, even from
13 the investigators or for the RCMP, if Roberta had even laid
14 a hand on her when -- that night when that happened. As
15 far as I know, that they were having words. There's
16 nowhere, come to think of it, that we heard about Roberta
17 even touching her, laying a hand on Lori.

18 After that happened, my cousin that she's
19 talking about, my Auntie Violet's granddaughter, she went -
20 - because this happened on the 7th floor, and Shayda went -
21 - went running down to -- through the stairs to the 4th
22 floor where Roberta's common-law husband was, Brad, and
23 told him that Roberta got stabbed. So he took off up the
24 stairs to the 7th floor. She was laying in the hallway.

25 By the time he got there, because he --

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1 she got her in the heart, by the time he got there the
2 blood was pumping out of her heart, and he had -- he
3 stanced his hand over her trying to stop the bleeding, but
4 it wouldn't because she stabbed the main artery, and she
5 died basically in his arm.

6 So I'm kind of happy that -- I'm glad that
7 he made it there so she didn't -- she didn't die alone.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Hello, I just wanted
10 to say another word, is that where was this guy, that it
11 happened in his apartment at the highrise? I heard that
12 she said he was in the bathroom and didn't witness
13 anything. Surely he must have did, because commotion and
14 that, you know, you've got to go check and see what's
15 happening? But why, was he scared and stuck in the
16 bathroom while these things were going on?

17 Lori's the one that started the -- with
18 Shayda, and Shayda is just a little girl, you know, and I
19 think that's what took place between Roberta and Lori,
20 because she tried to protect Shayda. Anyway, she got
21 Shayda out of the way and Roberta was trying to grab the
22 knife.

23 I think that's what Shayda told me on the
24 Facebook. She messaged me, she said, "Auntie, Lori had a
25 knife and she's going to Roberta, and Roberta tried to grab

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1 the knife away from her by grabbing her arm -- by grabbing
2 her arm, and then she had that knife up and she just
3 stabbed Roberta."

4 She stabbed Roberta by the door. Did
5 Roberta get up -- went against the knife after what
6 happened? She never got up after she got stabbed by that
7 door. That's where they got her -- well, the ambulance I
8 mean. Like, in all the meantime this guy, he's in the
9 bathroom or what? That's one thing that's really puzzling
10 me all the time.

11 Like, every time I see him around town I
12 want to approach him and ask him, but I don't want to start
13 nothing with those people. I just wanted to let it pass.
14 But coming to think of it, something has to be done about
15 this. Like, are they going to get away with murder?

16 You know, I know criminal record is a
17 really bad record, but from the day you stab somebody,
18 there's your criminal record. They say just because she
19 had no criminal record she -- they let her go free. We
20 didn't even get called for court, nobody told us anything.
21 We don't know what was going on. We thought the law will
22 handle it for sure, handle it like what...

23 I feel like freaking out at that session,
24 but I was held back, really held back.

25 QUESTIONS BY COMMISSION COUNSEL, CONT'D:

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1 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So the family has
2 now shared a couple of things. I want to kind of circle
3 back around and touch on -- one of them was coping, like
4 following the loss of your sister there were different ways
5 to cope. I'm just curious if there was any services.

6 So regardless of what was happening with
7 the charges and when they got stayed, did Victim Services
8 reach out to you, did you have --

9 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: No, nobody. Not, not
10 as far as I can remember, no, nobody even offered or...
11 Well, our family too, we kind of depend on each other.
12 We're kind of like a private family. Even how big we are,
13 we have a big extended family and we kind of use each other
14 for support. So that was our support system then after
15 that happened.

16 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: But you can't
17 recall specifically while --

18 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: No.

19 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: -- you're waiting
20 for the bail or while you were waiting for anything --

21 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: No.

22 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: -- whether the
23 family dealt with Victim --

24 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Nothing.

25 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So if there were

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1 things available, or now, would you want to access things
2 so that you guys can take that time to bereave and
3 potentially if you wanted counselling -

4 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: I don't know, because
5 like it's -- it's been -- this April will be three years
6 already. I don't know, it's so hard to say on my part, but
7 I'm just speaking for myself right now.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Was there anything
9 that would help after, when you first lost Roberta, would
10 there have been services or something that might have
11 helped you?

12 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Yeah, because like --
13 to me, like after I lost my daughter, like -- just like we
14 drifted apart. The family drifted apart, because we lost
15 our most favourite person there. I tried to talk for us to
16 stick together, so we just mourn all by ourselves, and that
17 didn't seem to help at all.

18 It took me about a year to a year and a
19 half to be back at what I'm doing. I enjoy - like, after
20 I retired, I enjoy sewing, go for my walks. It's no use
21 for me to do that. What do I want to live for anyway? You
22 know, I lost my girl, I don't want to live.

23 But then I didn't realize that I had other
24 girls over there who are not communicating as much as they
25 used to. Janice here in Yellowknife and Nicole was in

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1 Calgary, and William is in Calgary, Arnold's in Edmonton,
2 that we all drifted away.

3 So I had two girls, my girl Grace and Kim,
4 and just like sometimes we don't know what to say to one
5 another. We may -- we may love each other, but then the
6 one we lost was the most important thing in our life and
7 she's gone, and we had no use for anybody else. That's
8 what we -- it was all in our head.

9 But come to think of it, like Roberta had
10 other daughters and sons out there, granddaughters and
11 great-granddaughter, and that -- that kept me going.

12 My mother -- lost my mother too that same
13 year -- no, a year after.

14 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Same year, mom.

15 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: 2016 --

16 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Actually, maybe we
17 can have that family picture.

18 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: -- and then I lost my
19 mother 2016, yeah.

20 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Maybe we can have
21 that family picture pulled up and you can point for me.

22 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Yeah.

23 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Maybe can we ask
24 to have the one group family picture pulled up? See the
25 picture? So if we're talking about the three women in the

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1 middle that --

2 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: That's my mother,
3 right there, my daughter Roberta and my sister Irene. All
4 those three in a row like that, they're all gone. Yeah, I
5 lost my sister to cancer, the one in the back. Then
6 there's me, Nicole, Grace and Janice.

7 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So the family had
8 a hard time keeping connected without the person that kind
9 of connected you the most. So would there have been
10 something or is there something you would like, some type
11 of service or anything, counselling, that would maybe help,
12 that you would be interested in?

13 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: [indiscernible].

14 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Is there a type of
15 -- because you didn't get that chance, is there any type of
16 services or counselling or anything that you and the family
17 might be interested in doing?

18 So just so we're all on the same page
19 here, then the Commissioner knows what everybody's chatting
20 about. When I say is there anything that could help, like
21 self-care, some type of programming, counselling, not
22 necessarily today, but moving forward, that might help?

23 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: I'll probably have
24 to look into it to see which kind of program would probably
25 suit me. But I'll have to search and find out, because I

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1 haven't really looked for any help yet besides just certain
2 immediate family members.

3 I have -- I find it hard because I'm a
4 private person, it's the first time I'm actually sitting
5 here talking about this. Sometimes I think I can deal with
6 it on my own, but time will tell, I'll have to find out for
7 myself.

8 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: One of the other
9 things I wanted to ask, and whoever's in a position to
10 answer it, I understand both Angie and Grace take care of
11 Roberta's two youngest daughters. Their names again
12 were...?

13 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Mykayla and Kerissa.

14 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Kerissa?

15 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Kerissa.

16 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Kerissa and
17 Mykayla?

18 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: Mykayla's nine,
19 Kerissa's eight. Kerissa will be 10 at the end of February
20 -- no, Mykayla will be 10 at the end of February, Kerissa
21 will be nine at the end of March. So we've been looking
22 after them, probably a year before -- two years before this
23 happened, a year and a half. That year when Roberta passed
24 away they were working on getting the girls back, yeah,
25 because my mom and I we're still raising them right now.

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1 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So, you know, you
2 both had talked about the fact that they're going to grow-
3 up without their mom.

4 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: M'hmm.

5 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: But that they
6 sometimes do things like write Mother's Day cards. There
7 was something, Angie, you had told me about the girls
8 taking pictures of their mom. Can you tell us that, a
9 little bit more about that, what the girls do with pictures
10 of their mom?

11 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: What do the girls do
12 with pictures of their mom?

13 The used -- they take them to bed or they
14 hang -- they actually hang them all over the fridge with
15 magnets.

16 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: They sometimes
17 take them to bed, do I understand, and put them under their
18 pillows?

19 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: That's her
20 granddaughter.

21 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: That's her
22 granddaughter. So in that --

23 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: [indiscernible]
24 through her grandkids. That's my daughter, Roberta's -- my
25 daughter Roberta's granddaughter, Ember(ph). That was the

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1 last visit she had with them. Today she's seven. I
2 believe she was five right there, starting kindergarten.
3 Yeah, she just got off Head Start and today she's seven
4 years old. Her last visit to her daughter --

5 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So I understand
6 though one of the things her daughters do, and they both
7 live with you, is they take pictures of their mother
8 sometimes to bed with them and put them under the pillow.
9 Why do you allow that or why do you -- what's important
10 about that?

11 When they go to bed with the picture right
12 under their pillow, that you thought that's really
13 important because...?

14 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Yeah. Well, her
15 daughters -- well, they're still young, but they always
16 have their mom's picture under their pillow. That's
17 Kerissa, the last baby she had. I let them be, to have
18 their mom's picture under their pillow. But sometimes I
19 will get very upset because Mykayla will pick on Kerissa
20 right about now, and Kerissa will throw herself on a couch
21 or wherever she can - can be, and she'll be crying,
22 "Mommy! Mommy!" if Grace is not there.

23 She'll get that on Sunday only, like kind
24 of hard for me to calm her down. "I want my mommy! I want
25 my mommy!" That made me cry too. I told her, I said,

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1 "Mommy's picture up there, she's looking at you." I said,

2 "Mommy's an angel now," I said, "she's with you."

3 I told Mykayla, "Don't pick on her for
4 nothing. You're older, you're supposed to be protecting
5 her, not picking on her." Yeah, sometimes they get out of
6 hand by picking on one another.

7 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Typical sisters
8 then?

9 MS. ANGIE SABOURIN: Yeah.

10 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I just want to
11 make sure that I'm not missing anything that any of the
12 family members wanted to share before I ask the
13 Commissioner if he has any questions or concerns.

14 I may ask for just a brief break before do
15 get to your comments. But, first, I want to give you the
16 opportunity to add anything if we've overlooked anything.

17 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: I just wanted to
18 thank the Inquiry team for continuing this, and hopefully
19 to teach the RCMP and the prosecutors that they just can't
20 ignore cases like this. Because when that happens there's
21 a lot of victims at the end and it's lots of hurt and pain
22 that we all go through.

23 Them just to brush aside a case like this,
24 it's like they don't even treat the person as a person,
25 it's just a file, an number. Okay, that's closed, that's

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1 gone, that's it. Case closed. But, to us, it's never
2 closed.

3 I'd just like to than the whole team.
4 Thank you.

5 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I'm just going to
6 see if I could just have one moment, then I'm going to
7 actually see if you have some comments or questions as well
8 please.

9 --- Upon recessing

10 --- Upon resuming

11 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Commissioner
12 Eyolfson, did you have any questions or comments for any of
13 the family members?

14 QUESTIONS BY COMMISSIONER EYOLFSON:

15 COMMISSIONER EYOLFSON: I just have a
16 couple of follow-up questions.

17 Christa was asking you about, you know,
18 what services may be of assistance. I'm wondering if in
19 raising Mykayla and Kerissa without their mother are there
20 any resources or needs that might assist with that that you
21 can think of or recommend?

22 MS. GRACE SABOURIN: They were getting
23 counselling, but because right now they're still under the
24 foster care system and so me and my mom are basically
25 raising them under foster care, and they did -- they were

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1 going for counselling, the two little ones. But the only
2 thing we couldn't get was the proper resources to get a
3 ride to and from there. They said that we can use medical
4 travel.

5 But, to me, if they really want to be
6 involved, Social Services, and show that they care, because
7 they're actually under them, that I figure that they're the
8 ones that should be picking us up and bringing them --
9 bringing them there to the foster care. Like, it's 13
10 kilometres out of town. In the wintertime it's all the way
11 around -- or, no, wintertime we've got an ice crossing, but
12 in the summertime it's all the way around.

13 That's the only support I was trying to
14 ask them for. We never really got it, right, we had to
15 find our own way to bring them to counselling. Sometimes
16 they wanted to take them out of school. But, to me,
17 school's more important. Or may have some kind of
18 counselling services even on the reserve or have them bring
19 someone over or something. Just so they won't miss so much
20 school because of this.

21 But that's it, just the transportation,
22 there and back. So that's only my concern, because I would
23 like to get them back into counselling again. It's been
24 over a year. I think they really need them because they're
25 getting at that age now where they probably do need the

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1 help before they start -- before they get older and before
2 it starts affecting them more seriously.

3 Because there's only so much the family
4 can do, we can do. Yeah, it's only so much we can do.
5 Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER EYOLFSON: Thank you. I don't
7 have any other specific questions, unless there's any other
8 comments or recommendations you wanted to make before we
9 close this session.

10 MS. VIOLET SABOURIN: I just wanted to
11 mention about Mykayla and Kerissa. Last summer I got to
12 keep them for a few months because Grace and Angie needed a
13 -- they were going through a rough time. So Social
14 Services got me to watch Mykayla and Kerissa at that time.

15 The time that they spent with me Kerissa
16 would have -- when she was sleeping apparently I guess she
17 -- she would cry at night for her mom. Because I work in
18 the morning and I send them to bed early, it was my -- my
19 daughter heard them -- heard Kerissa crying in the middle
20 of the night, and she was crying for her mom, she was
21 calling for her mom at that time. So my daughter had told
22 me this in the morning after they went to school.

23 So then I called the social worker and
24 mentioned it to her, that the girls should get some
25 counselling, and because this is what the girls -- well,

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1 Kerissa was doing at night. She's the youngest one, who is
2 still crying for her mom.

3 I also heard that when she would spend the
4 nights over with her little cousins, and my daughter would
5 also hear her crying at night for her mother. She was
6 telling me this, that -- she also told me this, and it kind
7 of like really brought tears to my eyes. She said, "Mom,"
8 she said, "Kerissa was crying last night for her mom," she
9 said.

10 So I told Crystal(ph) that, "How many
11 times was she doing this?" She said, every time she comes,
12 like at night, with her -- one of her youngest daughters,
13 she said, she would hear her crying. So I said, I'm going
14 to have to do something and talk to the social worker, so
15 we can try to like do something for her.

16 I said, she's -- she's too young to be
17 like -- I know she misses her mom, I said, but we have to
18 always remember Roberta and, you know, we've still got to
19 tell her daughters and remind her daughters that you never
20 forget your mother, and your mother's going to always be in
21 your heart. I always tell her that.

22 So that at that time when I had them for
23 the two months I got them to go see a counselling, and I
24 brought them to go see the social worker, and she said she
25 was going to take them to go see counselling. I'm not sure

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1 if that's -- they were still trying to help them with that.
2 But then two months after that the girls went back home to
3 Grace and Angie.

4 I just wanted to mention this.

5 COMMISSIONER EYOLFSON: Thank you.

6 Angie, Grace and Violet, I just want to
7 thank you very much for coming and sharing with us today
8 and telling us about Roberta and contributing to the work
9 of the Inquiry.

10 So I just appreciate you coming and
11 sharing. We have some small gifts of appreciation for you
12 sharing your truth with us today. I'm going to ask
13 Grandmother Blu to help me with this.

14 PRESENTATION OF GIFTS:

15 MS WATERS GAUDIO: So, Angie, we want to
16 give you this scarf which was made by the Native Women's
17 Association, as a token of appreciation for your coming and
18 telling the story of your daughter and your family.

19 Also in there is an eagle feather for you
20 as well to help you with your journey, to help you with
21 your healing, and to help you with the work that you've
22 taken on with your grandchildren and doing that work. We'd
23 like to just offer you this as a token of appreciation of
24 hearing your story and bringing that information to the
25 Commission so they can come forward with recommendations.

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1 To each of you an eagle feather to help
2 you with your journeys with the work that needs to be done.
3 So we want to just offer this to you so that when you use
4 this you can be at peace knowing that that eagle flies the
5 closest, so your prayers will be taken up to there.
6 There's Labrador tea so you can make some tea and enjoy a
7 nice relaxing evening.

8 Thank you for your words.

9 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you. Thank
10 you again for sharing.

11 Chief Eyolfson, if we could actually
12 adjourn for today. The hearings will be in the main room
13 of the Nova commencing at 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning. So
14 if we could adjourn until then I would appreciate it.

15 COMMISSIONER EYOLFSON: Okay. Let's
16 adjourn for the day.

17 MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you. So the
18 hearings are adjourned for the day.

19 --- Exhibits (code: P01P09P0206)

20 Exhibit 1: Folder containing 15
21 digital images and one PowerPoint
22 presentation displayed during the
23 witnesses' public testimony

24 Exhibit 2: PDF of Hay River Hub
25 newspaper edition published December

1 16, 2015 (43rd year, No. 43), which
2 includes cover headline and article
3 "Murder charge stayed in stabbing" by
4 Paul Bickford (20 pages)
5 Exhibit 3: CBC article dated
6 December 11, 2015 titled, "Lori
7 Hansen stabbed Roberta Sabourin In
8 self- defence (sic), say lawyers," by
9 Mitch Wiles, last updated December
10 11, 2015 7:18 AM CT, print date
11 January 24, 2016 (one page)
12 --- Whereupon the hearing concluded at 6:24 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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jennifer Cheslock", written over a horizontal line.

Jennifer Cheslock, Transcriptionist