National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Public Hearings
Radisson Hotel, Ambassador B
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Friday October 20, 2017
Public Volume 16
Annie Bowkett

Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson
Commission Counsel: Fanny Wylde

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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 public hearings held over the course of the day at the Radisson Hotel, Ambassador Rooms A & B (i.e. the two main public hearing spaces).
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Opening Remarks

--- Upon commencing on Friday, October 20, 2017 at 11:32

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Good morning, Annie. Good morning, Commissioner Eyolfson. Before Annie starts to share her story, she would like to share a prayer.

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** (Speaking in Inuktitut). I'm going to pray in my own dialect. Ask God, the Creator, to help us and be with us. I'll pray. (Speaking in Inuktitut). Thank you.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you. So, Mr. Registrar, the witness would like to affirm oath on a Bible.

**MR. CHRISTIAN ROCK:** Do you swear that the evidence you will give today will be the truth ---

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** Yes.

**MR. CHRISTIAN ROCK:** --- the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** Yes. Thank you.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you. So, Commissioner, I would like to introduce you to Annie Bowkett. She's here to share her story as a survivor of different types of violence. Annie, I will leave you to introduce yourself to the Commissioner. Give me -- just give your name, where you're from, and also maybe to present who is here to support you today.
MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Okay. Thank you. My name is Annie Bowkett. And, I'm from Pangnirtung, Nunavut, but I live here in Winnipeg. I came here to tell my story as a survivor, and these are my supporters. And, I'll hand this to my husband.

MR. ROY BOWKETT: I'm Roy, Annie's husband, and I'm here to support her today.

MS. LEAH MACDONALD: My name is Leah MacDonald (phon), and I'm here to support Annie.

MR. FRED FORD: My name is Fred Ford. I'm a friend of Annie's, and I'm here to support her. And, I'm also the President of the Manitoba Inuit Association.

MS. BARBARA SEVIGNY: My name is Barbara Sevigny. I'm Annie's support worker.

MS. BETH SYMES: My name is Beth Symes. I'm here to support Annie. I'm here in my role as counsel to Pauktuutit, the Inuit Women of Canada, and of the Manitoba Inuit Association.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you. So, Annie, I'm just going to ask you an open question. What would you like to share this morning with the Commissioner?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Thank you. My experience from my childhood. I was loved, so loved by my parents when I was so small, living outpost of Pangnirtung before I was taken away. I was so loved by the whole
community. I remember the glimpse of like being the queen of this community, small community where we lived out on the outpost. How durable that was in my life.

And, when I had to leave, I don't know -- I don't remember because I was so small. Four to -- maybe between four and five. I don't remember how I got to Pangnirtung, who took me there. But, I remember the RCMP, and maybe another Inuk man came to pick me up, and I had no idea where I was going. Then, I remember ending up in a big building in Pangnirtung, which was hospital. I don't know how long I stayed there. I don't remember anything. And, I don't remember flying from Pangnirtung, my community, from the hospital to down south. I don't know if it was a plane. I don’t remember if it was a plane or a dog team. But, it's too far from Pangnirtung to down south.

Then when I got to down south, I remember that I went to a huge building. It's because I had TB. And, from there, from in the hospital, I started going to school, down in the basement in Toronto -- which was Toronto. And from there, I thought I was fine, well looked after, well washed, and our bed was made every day. But, I found out that nobody loved me, even though I was sick with my TB.

And then I don't know how long, I don't
remember how long I was in Toronto having TB. Very small. Then from Toronto, I remember I had to leave again. Somebody held my hand, and she had a veil. I can't see her face, her eyes, but I could see her mouth because I was speaking English -- speaking in English already.

I did not ask her. She was wearing all black, I remember. She took me to long, long car, or it was a train. So, we slept in the train. And, I was put again to go to school. And, I didn't know that place till I got bigger, which was Moose Factory. Moosonee and Moose Factory.

So, I start -- first of all, I used to have very, very long hair, right down to my ankles, even in the hospital. I got to the classroom in Moose Factory. They cut my hair right in front of the students, all the people, kids who I didn't know at all. And, the very first day when I got to the classroom, when we were finished, they put me to my bedroom where all the girls were. And, I had no idea who they were. They looked at me; no smile, sad faces. That's all I remember. And, I tried to figure out -- because they couldn't speak in English, I tried to figure out who they were.

And, I found one girl who was laying beside my bed. And, she could speak in English, little bit. So, I start asking her, "Where am I? Who are these
people?" Then she told me these are Cree people. I said, "What's Cree?" And she said, "You can call us Indians."
"Oh, okay."

As I continued to stay in school, I don't know how long. I don't remember how long I was in Moosonee and Moose Factory in residential school. We got so abused. We started to get so abused. I still can remember every single day they were bringing kids, new kids every day. But, the person who started to become my friend, she could talk to me, and I could -- I was able to talk with her.

One day, we didn't listen, and I started to get slapped in my ears. I don't have any hearing problem, but my ears can shocked right instantly. And then, I don't know how long, how many months I was there. We didn't listen again. We were put to another room. Here, our teacher slapped us, the three of us, with the belt. And, I have scars right through my legs to across with the knuckle of the belt. There was so much abuse. We were so abused. And, I totally forgot who I was in Moose Factory.

I don't -- I can't tell how long I was in Moose Factory. Then I had to leave again after being abused in that residential school. I had to leave again.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Annie, can I ask you a question? When you were at -- when someone came and picked you up from the camp where you were living with your
parents ---

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** Yes.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** --- I believe that you were transported up to Toronto Hospital. Were your parents accompanying you, or any members of your family?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** No, nobody. No, my parents were not there at all. Not even my mother. I can't remember anything of how I leave my camp. But, all I remember is the two men came to pick me up.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** And, when you were taken away again from Toronto Hospital, did you see your parents? Did you see any members of your family before you were brought to Moose Factory?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** No. No, they were too far away. My parents were too far away to be down there. No. No family members. Nothing.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Did you have any contacts with them as you were in the hospital?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** One time I met an Elder who had TB, which was across from the children's hospital to adult hospital. She came to me and had a letter. And, she read it to me in Inuktitut, my dialect. All I remember, it said -- my mother wrote and said, “I love you”. That's all I remember.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So, again you had to leave
residential school from Moose Factory. Do you know exactly where you were taken?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** I don't remember nothing at all leaving Moose Factory. How I got -- was it a plane or a train? Must have been in a plane. It's so far, from Moose Factory to Pangnirtung. But, today, I question myself why? Why me? Why was I put there?

And so, from Moose Factory, I realized I was in different people again, which is Inuit people in Iqaluit, capital of Nunavut. And, the person who looked after me was very nice to me. That's all I remember.

And, I can't -- and then all of a sudden, I went to another community, which is where I was born, which is where my parents are. And, when I got off, there was a man came to pick me up right then; hold my hands, took me down somewhere. And, I don't remember who he took me to the salt houses, which is hut houses, Inuit hut houses. It was a big family, and they were looking at me, staring at me every single minute. And, I couldn't say anything. I had no dialect, only in English. I couldn't ask to change my clothing, or wash.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Do you remember how old you were when you got back in Pangnirtung?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** No. I don't remember. I don't remember.
MS. FANNY WYLDE: But, you were not taken back to your parents’ camp?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: And then somebody made me a parka. Seal skin, or baby seal's parka. Somebody made me clothing. And, I don't know how long I was there in the salt house. But, a man entered the salt house before we -- as we were ready, about to go to sleep. A man came in so late. Looks like it was so late because I was so used to eight o'clock or nine o'clock, it seemed so late. A man came in. And, somebody said -- one of them said, "Your ataata (phon)." And, I asked what ataata means. My father, forgotten father. I thought my parents -- I forgot about my parents.

Anyway, he said to me with tears, "Daughter." And, I don't remember how we left from Pangnirtung. He came to pick me up. And so, I remember he was using dog teams. Why then they -- I don't know how many days I was on dog team alone with him. I was so scared. I prayed and prayed. I prayed and prayed asking not to be scared. Then we finally arrived to a small community. And, they were all huts, like little, we call them, (indiscernible) in Inuktitut. Salt houses.

And then I was -- my father took me inside, and there was my -- probably my mother. She kissed me with her tears. They lost me when I was in Moose Factory. No
letters, nothing. My parents lost me. So, I don't -- I
don't remember again how long I lived with my parents out
in the outpost.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** How was it to be living
once again with your parents?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** It was strange, very,
very strange. They eat raw meat. They taught me tiny,
tiny little bit of raw meat. I couldn't eat it. But, she
made bannock. I was living on bannock most of the time.
And, that was -- that was good. But, I don't know how long
I started to eat raw meat again. I don't remember. And,
it was warm. My mother, she couldn't talk to me because I
was English. We only had to communicate with our fingers.
Communicating with my fingers, with my birth mother.
Excuse me, I need water.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** When you were brought in
the hostel house in Pangnirtung, was there something
particular happening to you there?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** I can say this. I don't
remember again how I got to Pangnirtung from this community
where my parents were. But, when I was picked, they put me
to a little house in Pangnirtung. In a little house. And,
because I still didn't learn my own dialect, I couldn't
speak. And, there were two fosters looking out for us; he
and his wife in the little hostel. And, I start going to
school. And, there were bunk beds, handmade, wood bunk beds in that hostel. There were another girls, all girls. And, as I continued to go to school, but my parents were not there. I was just put to that little hostel. As I continued, I had no choice because I didn't know my own dialect. I just listened, listened; taken, taken.

One night, I don't know how long I was in school. I was very tired being moved around, knowing/not knowing where I was. I don't know how long I was in school. I don't remember. And then one night as I was sleeping, I used to cover my whole head inside the blanket, so that I won't be scared.

One night, a man started to touch me. I don't know who it was. I thought it was one of these girls who did this to me, but they weren't. It was a man who I couldn't recognize. A few months later -- a few months later as I continue to go to school, and being continued to be touched at night, I started to realize it was the man who looked after me, feeding me; the man who and his wife were looking after me. And, I couldn't understand what it was. I feel so dirty. I feel so dirty.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Did you ever talk to anyone when that incident occurred? Did you talk to an adult and tell them what was going on with you?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** No. I didn't have the
speech for it. I didn't understand what was going on. All
I felt was so dirty; so dirty. I didn't care about myself
anymore. I ran away from that home. I had no one. One
person from Pangnirtung who welcome me, I start going to
her house and lived in her house, because I had no parents.
I had no connections of these people. And then I was
picked to go back to school where my friend was. I had to
continue. They started bullying me. Kids started to bully
me. They called me English Girl, making fun of me. And,
here I was talking to myself, why are these people doing
this to me? Why was I put here?

It continued, continued, being bullied in
the school, until I realized they were my people. I
started to become homeless in that small community,
sleeping all over, once I got to know the kids in school.
I continued to get bullied, making fun of me. “English
Girl”; that's all I heard in the school. I just listened.

Every time I go out from the school, I
started to -- my life changes. From the school to outside
started to become sleeping everywhere, and following this
girl, this friend of mine. And, I don't know how long I
was in that school.

And then my parents -- an Elder came to me
and said my parents are here, which I had forgotten already
again. They moved to Pangnirtung from outpost, so that
they can be with me. They had a house. I stayed with them. I wasn't interested in school any longer. So, I start skipping school, going down to my friend's late at night without my dialect. And, one night as I was going home -- as I was going home, somebody grabbed me in my hair. I remember there -- it was a full moon. There was a moon, and I wasn't scared because it was light outside. Somebody grabbed me and raped me outside in the cold. Very, very cold. Took my pants off. I never knew that person until I got older. He ripped my pants. I walked home, bleeding. I was able to reach my home.

A few years back, I charged him when I was able to fight back. Over the years, I've been so angry. Angry, angry; drinking, drinking. Running away to Iqaluit. I don't remember. I don't know how who was paying me, or nobody paid me for the flights. Just continue, continue. I don't know how I survived. I don't remember how I survived.

A couple of years later, I charged him. I got so angry. He was a church man. I went to the church to kill him. If it wasn't for my husband who was there for me in the church, I could have probably killed him. But, I couldn't. I couldn't do it. I can't kill people. So, he talked to me and stopped it inside the church.

So, I was at the court. I didn't win. I
didn't win.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: He was acquitted?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Huh?

MS. FANNY WYLDE: He was acquitted? He was declared not guilty?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Not guilty. Not guilty.

So, okay. I said, “How come I didn't win again? Who am I?” No -- I had a lawyer. He didn't come to me. No information, nothing. Inside the court, the judge didn't even ask for me to talk to me. Nothing; nothing at all. I started to say why? Why? Why did I just show off him to the court, and not winning? No help. Nothing. Nothing.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: When you went through court, was there any support for you?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: No. No. There was -- everybody backed off me. Everybody. They didn't want to come near me. They don't want to see me. Nobody. Even when I walked, people backed off from me to walk on the other side. My relatives, they have the power and I'm powerless. They were not there for me. Nobody, except for my husband. He and I did support one another. That's all I have.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Can you tell me when or where exactly you met your husband?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: We met in Pangnirtung.
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Annie Bowkett

His -- we got married there, in Pangnirtung, my own community.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: And, I believe you currently are living in Winnipeg?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Yes.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Can you tell me how you got to be coming and living here?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: After we got married, we were both working, and we used to come down for holiday. And, we had the house here in Winnipeg. And, when we both -- when we both retired from schools, he decided that he was moving here. So, because he's my husband, I moved here with him. It's not easy, very confusing first to move down here where you came from, but I'm living here now.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Do you -- how many children do you have? I know you have children.

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: I got four birth, my own children from my first husband. And, we got nine between us -- eight, because we were fostering for so long, and we adopted one girl. And, she couldn't go back to the birth parents, so they just gave her to us.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: I believe you want to share some pictures to show to the Commissioner, so they're going to appear on the wide screen. Maybe you can describe what are the pictures? So, can you describe what this is?
MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Yeah. That is my tag that I carried around to different places. That is my Eskimo tag. How did I survive to carry that thing with me, and being so small when I was put to different places?

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Next picture?

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: This is Pangnirtung, where I was born and where I lived. But, outside of Pangnirtung, this community were my outpost.

This is my grandmother. The second time that I was taken away from -- from the outpost, she looked after me part of my life, my grandmother. She raised me partway through.

This is me and my late Aunt Ika (phon). She was there for me. That's my grandmother's beautiful daughter. She loved me when I wasn't loved. They looked after me partway through. Never said anything, but they were always there.

Today, this is my project with my business, here -- here in -- living here in Winnipeg. I always enjoyed being a business person. That was my dream, because I've got no education. I can't find my education. What else was I supposed to do in my life? I had to enter the Elders, so I was able to get back with my own culture.

Right now, I'm happy. I'm happy that I am able to bring back, as a business person, to bring back my
own culture. It is slow, but it keeps me happy, something
to do in my own life right now.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So, this is your own
craft, correct?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** Yes. Yeah. This is my
-- this is how we wear amongst our Inuit people. That's my
hand embroidering, too, in a duffle that we chew. We have
to chew the bottom for the feet with our teeth.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Looking back at your life,
all the violence that you have survived, what kept you
going?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** What kept me going was
to do something in my life. I don't know what I was
looking for over the years and years. It was to go out on
the land, spend time out on the land as much as I can.
And, to do the sewing in my house. I was always alone,
keeping my door locked, just being alone because there was
no help. And, it helped me. So many times I tried to
commit suicide with alcohol, killing myself, hating myself.
I couldn't do it. Because of all this rape I had.

I want to share this one man. I want to go
back to this one man who used to touch me. When I was able
to get stronger -- and the first one I charged and they
didn't do anything. Just before we left here to Winnipeg,
me and my husband, because everybody lives so close to one
another, and the person who used to touch me, I got so
angry. Angry. Without letting my husband know where I was
going, or what I was going to do, I just go out. And, I
got to tell him, and he was outside doing something.
"Look. Look. I'm going to charge you. I'm going to
charge you first thing in the morning."

The very next day, he shot himself. I need
water.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Commissioner, I would like
for a short recess of five minutes, please?

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Okay. Let's
have a short recess.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you.

--- SHORT RECESS

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you, Commissioner,
for that recess. Thank you. Thank you, Annie, for sharing
your story. This is a great act of courage. And, to
conclude your testimony of today, I'm going to ask you if
you have any final statements or recommendations to give to
Commissioner Eyolfson today.

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Okay. Thank you. Thank
you. I totally -- I apologize that I was going to show my
tag that I carried. And, I want everybody in here to pass
it around, how I carried my tag. My name is there, but
it's barely showing now. Thank you.
Moving here to Winnipeg, this is my real first time to get help with my life, my abuseness [sic] in my life. Eyaa-Keen Healing Centre had helped me for almost over eight years, and Returning of the Spirit Healing Centre have helped me too, but they moved me around.

But, right now, I don't have any continue who can help me, because there's a lot of me needs to do more healing. And, I ask you, for my own people, if there can be a long-term help available, wherever, in Nunavut, or down here, anywhere, because we who have been so hurt, it's living in us rest of our lives. That is my question and ask.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you, Annie.

Anything else you would like to add?

**MS. ANNIE BOWKETT:** Right now with my kids, they're all affected. They're really, really hurting. And, they never abused me. I know they love me, but as a mother who had been so -- such abused, and being hurt so much, it affects the whole family. Thank you. Thank you.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you, Annie. I would just like to advise, Commissioner Eyolfson, to finalize her sharing of story, Annie will light up the qu’liq because the flame is going down right now. It's a part of her culture. She has been doing this all morning here during the hearings in Winnipeg.
So, I don't know if you have any final comments or questions before we do go to the qu’liq?

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Annie, I just want to thank you for coming here and sharing your truths with us; for your strength and courage, and for making your recommendations as well. And, for helping us here at the National Inquiry with the qu’liqs. Thank you very much.

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Annie, Brian Eyolfson, Commissioner, would like to give you a small token of gratitude. And, he'll be giving you an eagle feather for you, for your continual journey of your healing, as well as some artic cotton for the qu’liq ---

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Oh, okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: --- to keep your fire burning.

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Mm-hmm.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To keep that want of healing, and that journey that you're on now.

MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Mm-hmm.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And, we thank you so much for sharing your story, so that your experiences can be included when the Commissioners compile their information to make suggestions and recommendations. So, we thank you very much.
MS. ANNIE BOWKETT: Can I light it?

MS. FANNY WYLDE: I believe that Annie prefers to turn it off as she concludes her testimony.

Thank you. That concludes the hearing of this morning. Thank you, Commissioner. We can adjourn.

--- Upon adjourning at 13:01
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

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

__________________________
Shirley Chang

January 18, 2018