National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Public Hearings
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Barbara Bernard, Kindra Bernard & Deanna Beaton, In relation to Mary Francis Paul

Heard by Commissioner Michèle Audette
Commission Counsel: Thomas Barnett
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OPENING CEREMONY

PATTY MUSGRAVE: Good morning everyone. Welcome to day two of the National Inquiry for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls here in Moncton, New Brunswick. Before I begin I’d like to extend a welcome to this City of Moncton on Mi’kmaq Territory from our Mayor, Dawn Arnold, who could not be with us yesterday or today. But she did message me this morning to ask that I be sure to extend a welcome to you all.

I’m going to invite our Elder, Pete Jadis to come up and do our opening prayer.

ELDER PETER JADIS: It’s a great honour to be here to help women and our children and how they lost their lives. And as we continue, as we
continue our road, red road, they call it, to the healing of four directions. It’s like they say, four directions are very strong. We all come from a four direction in our families, of all different kind of relations. We can be white, can be yellow, can be black, could be red. We’re all happy we’re connected to Mother Earth.

And this is very - I’m very happy, you know, to be - to honour these ways. I had come from a long way to be who I am as an Elder. To carry this responsibility I carry for the healing, the healing of man, of our Mi’kmaq people. That’s my gift and I’m going to honour, I’m going to honour it too. I’ll sing two verses of the Mi’kmaq Honour song, and it has been brought through here in New Brunswick by the Elders.

ELDER PETER JADIS OPENING PRAYER AND SONG
PATTY MUSGRAVE SINGS AND DRUMS
PATTY MUSGRAVE: I’m going to ask our traditional Territory Chief, William Nevin and Andrea Colfer if they would like to come up and sing a song for women.

CHIEF WILLIAM NEVIN: I’m a big guy so I’m taking my coat off, doesn’t mean we’re going to fight, cause usually when guys take their coats off, action. First of all I want to thank you. We’re going to sing a song, it’s a very old song. When we first started in our ways this was a woman’s song. It’s a story about this, this is not our first rodeo, okay. We, as men, have made a lot of mistakes, right. This is not our first rodeo.

So there was a time a long time ago that two young people were sent in the woods because of the abuse of the men towards the women. A lot of abuse. So they lost their ways. They were sent into this forest to find the true
meaning of what women offer and they were given a song. But before they got that song, as they were walking into the woods the first older guy, he didn’t listen to the rules, he seen women as an object not as a sacred being. Not the giver of life but the carrier of life, big difference. They carry the life of our children.

So he lusted for this woman because she was long braids, white buck skin. Her name was Buffalo Calf Woman, okay. That was her name. And he lusted for her. He was turned into a rock. The younger man bowed his head, I come to honour you, you sacred being, the carrier of life. And she said we’ll give you a song, and that song is the one I’m going to sing. But, before I do that, I want to tell my wife happy Valentine’s day.

She’s right there. 30 years, I’ll tell you something, 30 years we’ve been
together and I always say this, and I mean it, I’m not telling you crap, every time I see her it’s like meeting her for the first time. That’s my wife and I’ll not trade her for nothing, because I made a lot of mistakes in my life. I’m not perfect. Okay. So we’ll sing that song, you’re going to help me out right?

ANDREA COLFER: Yeah.

CHIEF WILLIAM NEVIN AND ANDREA COLFER SING AND DRUM

PATTY MUSGRAVE: That’s a very strong message for Valentine’s day. There’s forgiveness everywhere. I think the people that we have to forgive the most is ourselves.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE GIVES A GIFT TO CHIEF WILLIAM NEVIN

PATTY MUSGRAVE: That was really beautiful and it’s really beautiful that you took the opportunity to wife
your wife a very happy Valentine’s day,
on live television.

I also want to wish everyone a happy
love day cause that’s what we’re doing
here, sharing love with each other. No
matter where you come from we’re all,
we’re all sharing love and support and
respect with each other. So what
better day for day two than on February
14th. As well, across the country we,
we have the Women’s March today and so
before we break for lunch we’ll have a
moment of silence for the women that
are marching across the country today
for Missing and Murdered Indigenous
Women and Girls.

I’m going to invite Inuk Elder Sarah up
to, well she’s going to light the
traditional qulliq behind us here.
Sarah’s brought us the sacred fire from
her Territory and so I’m going to let
her speak.
ELDER SARAH ALANA: You don’t have to put it very far do you? I’m going to do both. All right. Being Valentine’s day if you look under my boots they’re hearts.

Once again it’s an honour to be with you this morning. I really missed my, my sisters in BNIWC for a long time now and it’s so good to be back in that circle. You’re all still very recognizable and just as pretty as ever. So I’m going to light the qulliq. The qulliq I have is a ceremonial one rather than a functional one and it’s made specifically for opening ceremonies. It’s not made to be lit all day but we do have ones that can be lit all day with those white cotton things that blow in the wind or heather or blackberry bush.

So the one I have with me is opening ceremony one and the, the teaching of the qulliq is that it gave us life
because in 60 below zero it heated up our iglувiаq and also it dried our clothing and our grandmothers cooked over it. There’s qulliqs that are coming back. I want to mention this, a very long time ago in the Kuluk Bay region in north coast Nunavut, my father was born 1888 and my mom was born 1912.

And my dad was from the Okak Bay region, there was a prophecy there many many many years ago, we’ve been in northern Labrador for about 6,000 years. And the prophecy was that the social ills that were coming to our society and to our culture will begin to diminish when the drum came back. The drum has come back but the, the strongest force in bringing it back has been the youth. That is deep and they’re also the ones who are bringing, bringing back the throat singing. Today the qulliq I have, like I said, is for opening ceremonies but I have
with me a very much smaller one. I want to share the story with that because we are told that a gift can be a story. I had done CPR and mouth to mouth a co-worker about five years ago, I suppose, and for his gratitude he had this made for me. It’s a man with a moustache, because he had a moustache, and he told me he’s carrying the qulliq for me to ceremonies. And if you wanted to touch, touch it after and get the, the message from it because we’re all receptive to messages from, from our ceremonial objects, you’re welcome to.

I have with me Labradorite, it’s a semi precious stone. The sun and the rain seen the northern lights encased in, in the rock so the shaman took his spear and released the northern lights up into the sky. But the sun and the rain seen it and they wanted some to stay in the rock, but with the release that is why we have the northern lights. And
the gift of Labradorite is that it is a protector and a shield. It protects your aura and it protects you in, in, when negativity comes around. That’s inevitable throughout life. There’s positive and negative always.

So thank you for allowing me to be part of this. The word “allow” is the wrong word, for including me. Yes. So I’m going to light the qulliq now but after that I have brought my Inuk drum with me - Inuk is singular of Inuit, and I will sing a song that I heard my mother sing out on the land from the time I was born until I started school. We always went out on the land and then she would always sing it in the morning and it’s the Morning song. But I’ll light the qulliq first. (Speaks in Inuit language). And the long standing message is, when you see the sacred fire start think of something very very deeply sacred and precious to you inside your very pour.
ELDER SARAH ALANA LIGHTS THE QULLIQ AND
SINGS THE MORNING SONG

PATTY MUSGRAVE: Before the day
gets too much underway I’d like to
acknowledge some really important
people that are here. And they’re
important because they’re here giving
of themselves from their heart. First
the Burnt Church First Nation Mental
Health. Before I go any further I want
to acknowledge why I have a passion for
missing and murdered Indigenous women
and girls.

There was a little girl who called me
to do this work, to ignite my passion,
to ensure that I could protect any girl
that came across my path and educate
them how to protect themselves. And I
do that every day and I’m honoured to
do it every day. But I would like to
acknowledge a little girl from Burnt
Church First Nation who I’m honoured to
have spent time searching for. So I’d like to honour Hillary Bonnell this morning.

I’d also like to acknowledge the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat, the Family Information Liaison Unit from PEI, the Family Information Liaison Unit from New Brunswick, Elsipogtog First Nation Health and Wellness and all of the Elders and traditional supports that are here in the room helping us all, debriefing us all, making sure that our spirits are strong to keep going all through the day. A special thank you to all of you.

Now I would like to – I’d also like to – they keep giving me notes, right, so. I’ve got them everywhere. The Youth Artistic Expression will take place at lunch time in the Port Royal one and two rooms. So you can get your lunch, go up there at lunch and take part I
that, we invite everyone, particularly the public to go up and take part. And, and help contribute to that artistic expression that the youth will be running up there. And now I do believe it’s time to introduce our Commissioner, Michele Audette, who would like to say a few words.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Thank you very much for taking the time and telling us the passion that you have and we need more people like you across this beautiful land. My mom would say what’s left of this land. (Thanks William, Peter and Sarah for their prayer. Also thanks her parents, her children, her partner and her family in French).

I want to say thank you before we begin to William and his wife, of course, Peter and Sarah for the beautiful prayers and song. It is our laws, our protocol and tradition for many of us
across Canada and some of us lost that. And each time we have an opportunity where the Inuit or the Metis or the First Nation will share to us or to me, their knowledge, laws and protocol it’s very sacred and very very dear to me.

I want to say also, I have a special thought and space in my heart and in my spirit to the sisters in spirit, our loved ones, our families and of course the survivors and the children left behind. So every day I wake up and I always say, of course, thank you for being on earth to my dad and my mom and being a mom and a grandmother. But every day I have that special thought for our sisters in spirit. So thank you so much. And quickly, yes, I’m one of the Commissioners but I’m also a mom, I’m also a partner but I’m also a woman. I used to be a militant. I’ll be back militant after this beautiful mandate.
One day my daughter said to me, you know mom - she was mad. She was mad, one of the twins, she said you’re never home so I hate your job. So she saw my reaction and I tried to stay strong and I remembered one of the teachings, we have to accept the emotion and welcome it and maybe share it. I didn’t have time to share it, she came back. She jumped on the bed so she, she can be taller than me. She loved to do that. And she said, you know I’m sorry mom that I said that, I know for you it’s very important so go share your love to the rest of Canada.

So you’ll see I give lots of hugs but in those hugs there’s my kids with you and my family. So this morning they were the first Valentine that I face timed, thank you for the technology because when I was young it was once a month I was able to call my dad, after six o’clock to save money. So today I can face time them, some of you.
understand I guess. I can face time my
kids when I’m with you so they’re with
me. Sometimes they’re even in the room
face time so, and of course, my virtual
partner, husband to be. So there’s a
lot of people behind or surrounding us.
We call, we don’t call it sacrifice
anymore. We call it we have to do it
and we do it for the family, the people
that we love but also people that we
meet every day. And to conclude, I
want to say that my feminism, my
feminist, the way I am, men are part of
the solution. I gave birth to three
beautiful boys and today one of them is
a parent and the other one very young
or still wandering, but beautiful boys.
Men, I have to say.

And with this journey I met Paul
Laseur, maybe some of you know him.
He’s from B.C. and he went hunting with
his beautiful daughter Raven on the
Highway of Tears. First moose for her
but first teaching from her dad saying
this highway has a long long sad history of the missing and murdered Indigenous, Indigenous women and girls. So he taught her, they exchanged together and from that came an initiative, the moose hide campaign. So I’ll ask my colleague to put the logo of this important campaign where men are involved. Where men are responsible or where men are saying no to violence. So Paul has a dream with his daughter and the dream is that on October 5th every year there’s men across Canada, Canadians, new Canadians, Indigenous, that will do a fast, is that what we say in English? No food. Because for many of us it’s part of the healing where you can fast one day, on that day and the goal is to have one million men.

So you cannot pretend that you’re not aware about this campaign. You cannot pretend that my neighbour will do it, we have to do it. So my three boys
will be part of this initiative, but at the end of the day why, it’s to say no to violence that women and girls are facing. Indigenous women. So thank you to Paul Laseur and I hope you will spread that information and get involved in, in our ceremony to remind that men are part of the solution and we need the men. And my mom always taught me, our feminist, we have to include them instead of blaming them or punishing them. I said that is hard mom but we have to, and she’s a great teacher. So Barbara, it’s your time, this moment is very sacred and you take the time you need and you forget the rest. Who’s here, who’s not here but you do this to honour your loved one and I’m humbled to be the one. Thank you so much. Merci.

PATTY MUSGRAVE: We’re going to take a quick break, 15 minutes. Oh, five. Five. That’s just five minutes. So you can run outside right quick.
RECESS
UPON RESUMING:

THOMAS BARNETT: Good morning Commissioner Audette. I am Thomas Barnett, I’m a lawyer with the National Inquiry. I’m a member of the Letheron Cree Nation, I’m currently living in Prince Rupert, British Columbia in the traditional Territory of the Senshean. I would like to thank the people of this Territory for letting us gather here. I’m truly honoured to be here.

This morning we’ll be hearing from the family of Mary Frances Paul. We have the granddaughter of Mary Francis Paul, Kindra Bernard beside me. We have the daughter, Barbara Bernard in the middle. We have Barbara Bernard’s daughter, Deanna Beaton on the far end and we also have a support person here for the family as well. If you could just introduce yourself please.
DR. JUDY CLARK: Hello. Judy Clark from the Abegweit First Nation, I’m Barbara’s sister in ceremonies.

THOMAS BARNETT: And Registrar, I’ve confirmed with the family that they would like to be sworn in promising on the eagle feather.

BARBARA BERNARD PROMISES ON THE FEATHER

KINDRA BERNARD PROMISES ON THE FEATHER

DEANNA BEATON PROMISES ON THE FEATHER

THOMAS BARNETT: So Barbara, if we could begin. If you could just tell the Commissioner a bit about yourself, about where you’re from.

BARBARA BERNARD: Okay. Again, my name is Barbara Bernard. I come from the Abegweit First Nation Mi’kmaq First Nation in Scotchfort PEI. I work as a CHR. I have three children, 10
grandchildren and that’s all I want to
tell about myself.

THOMAS BARNETT: Can you tell us a
bit about your community, where you’re
from?

BARBARA BERNARD: My community is
in PEI in Scotchfort. It’s, it’s a
small community so we know pretty much
everybody in our community. It’s a
strong community. Our community is, I
guess just like every other community.
They have grown and come a long way and
I know, I probably never got to tell
everybody about me coming here telling
my story and I know when my community
sees this they’ll, I know they’ll be
keeping me in their prayers because
they, they’re, they’re supportive in
that way.

THOMAS BARNETT: Can you tell us a
bit about your family?
BARBARA BERNARD: Well I’ll start with my, my own, my mom and siblings. I think I’ll start right from where my – I’ll just talk about my mom first.

My mom didn’t really get to see her mom because her mom passed away when, before, when she was born. So my mom didn’t get to be a part of a loving mom because she was always put in different homes and I think she was raised by her aunt and I, I feel sad that I can’t really tell you a lot about all that because I’ve never really received a lot of that information. Only bits and pieces from her friends or a few, few of the family members that, that were alive back in the day I guess.

So I, I know a lot of my mom’s growing up I really feel that she didn’t have that, what we have – were not grounded
as, as I am today with my, my culture
and my, my traditions and how I feel.
Like my strength inside, I don’t think
my mom had that because of being
exposed to alcohol. And it took a long
time for me to understand all that but
before I get into that I wanted to
share that she did have a few children
before, before me and they were — well
my oldest brother stayed in our
community and my two older sisters,
they were adopted earlier on because my
mom really never had a stable place.

She, she was living with the Knockwood
family who I’m grateful that they, that
Aunt Libbie and Uncle Teddie took her
in and I know Aunt Libbie because she’s
probably the most kindest person I’ve
ever met. So I know my mom got some of
her, her motherly teachings from maybe
the Elders in the community. Because
that’s where I got my teachings. Just
give me a minute. They have made me
stronger and the woman that I am today.
And so knowing and kind of understanding my mom’s past, I understand why alcohol was in her life.

So she had me and she had my younger brother. They tell me that because I was a little older that they wanted to keep me and, because my mom was living with Aunt Libbie and Uncle Teddy and they already had a, a large family of their own and so they couldn’t take in another child, which was my younger brother. And so when my mom, my mom had a few suitors, I guess, and so she had to make a decision that she wanted to get married I guess and she told the men that were interested in her that if they came sober the next day and asked her to marry, to marry her that they would, that she would marry the one that would come that next day.

And so my, my step father, who I take as my dad, was the lucky man that married my mom. With that they had
nine children, I think. I don’t want
to go through the list but anyway, I’ll
be counting all day. There was, like I
said, 14 of us so I think she had nine.
But they used to live in Lennox Island
and then they moved to Scotchfort and
as time went on I think the alcohol
really took a toll on my mom and my
dad. And during that time Social
Services were involved and at one point
we were taken to foster care. Some of
us came back and then my, my, my step
father died in a boating accident and I
think that was really hard on my mom.

When I think of them together now, like
I see how much that he loved her and,
and I knew that it must have been
really hard for her to lose that
person, that rock in her life. And
when he died we were all taken out of
the home and I don’t think it was much
longer than that and I was in foster
care for awhile, a couple of years and
then I came back when I was around 15,
I think. I just had enough. I got back to my community, I stayed in a few homes in my community and then I was like no, I want to go home with my mom and I stayed with my mom for that year.

And so – and, and she started to stay sober, like during that time but then they, she found out that if she stayed sober she could get her kids back so she worked at that and she did stay sober. Cause I would get my friends to go and keep an eye on her on the weekends when I – during the week when I wasn’t there, but I’d come home on the weekends to visit and I would ask them, well was she drinking. They’re like no no no she did really good. And so that was my, my way of finding out if she was doing what she was supposed to do so that we could come home.

And then I found out, because we’re all together in town with the social
workers and they were like buying us
clothes and stuff and my younger
brother told me, oh we’re, we’re going
to get adopted. And I’m like what,
that’s not right. I said we’re, we’re
– we should be going home and it was
funny because the, the two older ones
locked me in the elevator to tell me
this and we went upstairs and went
downstairs and then when I got home I
told my mom. I said mom I think my, my
brothers and sisters are going to be
adopted.

And so I think she may have went into
town to find out and – but I think by
that time they were already, they were
already adopted. And I think that,
during that year before she died was
when she was starting to drink a lot
heavier. She got back into drinking
and it was, it was a lot heavier than
what I’ve seen her do in the past.
So for some reason in all that, all that, what I was going through with my life, I was still able to go to school. I don’t know why that was so important to me but no matter how bad it was at home I would still get on the bus, I would still get as many siblings as I could get to school and that was almost like my, my safety net or something. Cause when you grow up in a family of alcoholism and you – there’s times you just want something that’s not as chaotic and school, for me, was that.

And so I guess now my mom – there are a lot of memories but I kind of, kind of closed that door. So I really – once I had to move on without her I think I just shut that door, I never really looked back. And it’s sad because my kids didn’t get to know their grandmother or even hear stories of her. This is probably going to be the first time they’ve ever heard me really speak a lot about my mom and it seems
so unfair, and I apologize for that.

Sometimes when you love someone so much it’s hard to really, to talk about things.

There are so many stories about her that — one of the things I love about my mom is her sense of humour. She always laughed and she was — I think a lot of people that knew her know her from her laughter. And her — no matter what she was going through in life you wouldn’t know it, you know what I mean. Cause she enjoyed love and and and laughter and I find like I’m a lot like my mom in a way because I’d rather look at life and love and the beauty around me and I have my, my beautiful children and my grandchildren, that I think being able to close those doors off of losing my mom was my way of coping. My way of staying strong for my family.

I think one of the stories I, I remember my mom and my brothers and
sisters were around and she was going on about how much she would love to have corn. And we had an Elder on the other side of the Reserve that had a little garden and she was probably the only one, her name is Auntie, we called her Auntie Agnes. And she had a garden of corn and vegetables and my siblings are probably as young as my daughters’ children now, and they heard mom saying this. They’re like okay, you know, you know when you’re kid you always want to do the best for your mom.

The next thing I know I come home and I see there’s corn and vegetables and potatoes and I’m like, where did this all come from. And my poor mom thought it was Auntie Agnes giving it to her. So mom was like cooking it up and the next thing I know there’s a knock on the door, Auntie Agnes was not very happy. Oh my goodness. So my mom invited her to eat. But anyway. Those are little stories.
And another time the frogs, we lived by a little gully and the frogs, the frogs were croaking, you know, pretty much all night long and my mom got up and she goes oh my God, she says I wish those frogs would just stop, you know, get rid of the frogs. So the next thing I know, the next morning or whatever, I heard my mom screaming Barbara Barbara get out here. I’m like what what and I seen all these frogs hopping all over the place and see kids with buckets going across into the field on the other side of the road and I’m like, what are you guys doing. And they’re like well mom don’t like the frogs so we’re taking them out into the field. And they’re like jumping and I’m screaming because I don’t like jumpy little things. And I’m like put them back in the the the water, they’re going to die.
I hear my mom’s like panicking in there. But it was just those funny little things, my siblings always trying to make her happy I think.

Other times I remember sitting on the steps with her and I’d be looking at her and then I grabbed her cheek and I told her, I said mom, I said, I just love you so much. And she looked at me and she said I love you too and I love you so much. And I’ve never heard that from my mom and, of course, a lot of us could probably relate to that because that was never really spoken because it was, I think it was known more than spoken. Nowadays we, we say it and we’re not afraid to say it.

But I always felt that from her, was her love. And I too, kind of got on the path of, of drinking and partying and I remember, with my mom, having a few drinks. I hate to say that but we did and we used to have these cigarettes and I had put one of those,
what do you call those trick cigarettes, those little things you put in and it blows up. So – and I kept telling, it was Deanna’s dad at the time, I was telling him, make sure you, you you don’t forget that this is on the side of the thing I said, because like I don’t want us to, I don’t want us to be tricked.

So of course when you’re drinking a few you kind of forget those things and my poor mother’s in the back, give me a smoke, give me a smoke. All right. And he gives her that cigarette and me not knowing, the next thing you know we look back and her eyebrows and everything were all black. Let’s just say she wasn’t very happy. But anyway, we didn’t – that was the only couple of times that her and I did that. But anyway.

Another time was when the lobsters. Her dad used to bring her crates of
lobsters and I remember her sitting in
the back of the step, nobody could
touch the lobsters, right. She was
back there in her glory, she had her
beer and her lobsters and she’d sit
back there for hours just eating her
lobsters and drinking her beer and she
was happy. But it’s, it’s how like her
dad made me see her in a different way.
Like not just somebody passed out in
the room and I used say, oh just leave
her there, she’s just, she was
drinking. He goes no, we’re going to
take her with us and we’re going to
tidy her up and you’re going to help
me. And I’m like okay.

But he really made me see my mom in a
different way because I only seen the
negative way. And it took me a long
time to, to feel her in my heart again
and remember all the good times,
changing the pictures in my head, that
they weren’t all negative. That we had
some really good moments and that I was
able to remember them now as I got a little older. But I wasn’t ready to share them with my, my kids. Yeah.

And I remember she used to always make bread and for, like holidays, like home made bread and my dad was a chef so Christmas time was a time that they would kind of be present and they would have lemon meringue pies. I remember them so much piled up on the counter and home made bread and we’d eat together as a family. And those are the kind of memories that I, I remember.

THOMAS BARNETT: Thank you for sharing those stories. If you could tell the Commissioner a bit about the circumstances surrounding your mother.

BARBARA BERNARD: Okay. Like I said, mom looked frustrated or fidgety or something the night before she, well before she was gone for a few days or a
week and before her death she was very, I don’t know, nervous and talking about having to talk to somebody. And, and, and I know it had something to do with the Social Services and I know she was upset about it. And I told her, mom don’t do anything, I’ll go into town with you tomorrow. And she goes no no no, I’m - cause she was also drinking so I knew whatever she was saying wasn’t really, she wasn’t making sense to me but in my heart I knew something was wrong that’s why I told her, just go to bed. When I get home from school we’ll go, I’ll go with you and she said all right.

And so - and my mom, from time to time, went out drinking and sometimes she would be with her friends that were on the streets and - but she would come home. Like I, I knew she would come home and I was never really worried about her. But this time I was worried. It’s almost like you, you
have a sense something’s wrong. And I, I asked a couple of my friends if they’d help me go into town and, and find my mom and they said sure. And we went and looked different places and we couldn’t find her.

And then I’d go home and I’d go to school and then a few, a few days went by and I, I always talked to Uncle Albert Knockwood. He, I think he was my, my, my replacement for my dad, my brother, my - he was my male role model and I always talked to him about everything. And then one day I was telling him about my mom and I was worried about her and he said all right, he said I’ll, I’ll look around and I said all right. And so a couple of days went by and she still wasn’t home and then we used to have this little store, it was run by Lucy Knockwood. And I went there and I was getting some bread, milk and stuff and I was - we were, I was talking to a few
of my friends and another elderly man come in. Another elderly man come in and he said we, we found somebody. (a phone rings) It’s probably my mom, I’m here. It’s okay.

So they said they found somebody on the waterfront and I just looked at him and I just took my bag and I walked out and I could hear Auntie Lucy tell him, don’t say that don’t say that, Barb’s been looking for her mom for a few days, you know. You don’t even know who it is, just don’t say anything. He’s like oh okay and then I just walked past and I went home. I started cooking something and Uncle Albert come in and he just looked at me. He didn’t even say anything and I just started bawling.

I really don’t remember much after that, I just knew I was at the hospital and that, I remember, I remember being, I remember being at the graveyard. I
don’t remember the ceremony, I don’t remember anything but I remember a social worker coming up to me right at the graveyard asking me what am I going to do with my baby. It hurt so bad because I had her, she - they already took my brothers and sisters and I went to go confront her and my brother was like no, this is not the time, you know. And I kept telling her I’m going to keep my baby.

And so I always heard that she fell and got a broken neck so being the age that I was I really never thought nothing of it. And then when the missing and murdered people started gathering together Judy, she used to live in our community too, Judy Clark, she kept telling me, Barbara you’ve got to share your story. You’ve got to speak for your mom and I’m like I don’t fit in that category my mom, I know where my mom is. And she goes no Barbara, you,
this is where you have to speak for your mom.

And I never really got it, like I didn’t understand because – so when I was 28 I think somebody else asked me to, to, you can find out what happened to your mom and I said really. So I went and I talked to a police officer and they were talking about the files and he said, you need to remember your mom for your happy memories he said. You don’t want to remember your mom stuffed in one of those drum cans. And that kind of like stuck with me. And I was like that’s, that’s not what they told me when I was younger.

And so I was just like, I was kind of a little shocked by all that but the police officer, I think he was friends with the Constables in Scotchfort and they never really, like nobody really ever told me anything that happened
with my mom and I think that’s one of the things that bothers me today.

So I never really connected this to mom, like these things that my mom could’ve been murdered or it was a suspicious death or anything like that. So when I started this process I still didn’t kind of understand where I fit. But when I did the interview and I was telling my story and the lady said that it almost looked like it was a suspicious death and that it wasn’t, it wasn’t, like, kind of like worth investigating.

That my mom’s death didn’t matter to them and that stuck in my head. When I left there I cried that whole week because I couldn’t believe that they wouldn’t have done something because they didn’t, it felt like they didn’t think my mom’s life was worth anything and that hurt.
And I think that’s what made me decide to come here and tell my story for my mom because my mom matters. My mom is a human being. And I just need to know, and I just need to be able to tell and to support the rest of my sisters that told their stories to be able to support that our First Nation women matter. We’re human beings. Our children matter. I think that’s why I was able to come here and be able to, to voice this. I look to poor Tom here to ground me.

THOMAS BARNETT: Barbara, are there some recommendations that you have to say to the Commissioner about what could’ve been done better and what should happen in the future?

BARBARA BERNARD: The one that comes to my mind right now is to, is to realize our First Nations people matter, we’re human beings and when we lose loved ones it’s just as important
to us as it is to other community members, other non native members.

We’re human beings and I think we need to start being treated as human beings and I think that’s one of the things that I want as a recommendation, is that we are taken seriously and that our voice is just as important, and our children and our grandchildren are just as important.

And I think that - and to have better communication with the justice that surrounds all this. To be treated as human beings is so important and I think, I don’t know, you guys do I need to say any more?

THOMAS BARNETT: Just one thing I wanted to clarify, you had mentioned that you were 28 when you found out about some of the circumstances surrounding your mother, how old were you when your mother was found?
BARBARA BERNARD: I was probably, I was just turning 17 so I would’ve been 16 when my mom passed away. And and I believe during that time too that it was probably my Uncle Albert that kind of stood up for me and took all that information that may have been relayed to me, that he may have, you know, got that information because that’s what the older people would do for me. You know when I was, when I was younger cause I would do it for someone else, not to protect me but just to be that, that adult to talk all this adult information and, and - but the RCMP at that time, never really told me anything other than, you know, my mom was found and and that her neck was broken and that was the cause of her death. And that was all that I knew.

THOMAS BARNETT: Since you talked to that Officer back when you were 28 years old......
BARBARA BERNARD: Umm-hmm.

THOMAS BARNETT: ......has there been follow up?

BARBARA BERNARD: Ah, no. I think I, I trusted him enough to, to realize that I didn’t want to see any of that information about my mom. I just wanted to remember her the way she was. But doing this, I think this is probably where I’ll get all my answers and I think I’m at a good place to be able to receive those answers now. And I know it’s important and I need that. That’s where I’m at right now.

THOMAS BARNETT: Thank you for your strength and coming to share your story. I think the Commissioner might have some questions for you Barbara.

BARBARA BERNARD: Okay.
COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Does your daughter want to speak?

KINDRA BERNARD: I’m Barbara’s granddaughter and I just want to say that coming here today and for my grandmother to have the courage to tell her story to a group of people that she doesn’t know is so encouraging, is that we’re moving in the right direction and that every life matters no matter your skin colour. My great grandmother’s life mattered and it still matters today.

I grew up, my mother grew up not knowing her grandmother which hurts me so badly because I got to grow up with my grandmother. I got to learn lessons from her and to watch her grow as a person too and to live – I got to know her mother through the actions that she has done, that she has taught me. I’ve got to see glimpses of her mother through her laughter and her humour.
that she admired so badly in her mother. And it’s, it’s so frustrating to know that there was no justice for her. Why wasn’t there justice for her? Why wasn’t her case looked into further? You know, why didn’t we have answers?

You know, and that goes back to the lack of communication. But even just the symbolic, the symbolic – her just being the way that she was found in this bin, basically, symbolized being disposable and she wasn’t disposable. She was a human being that had children that had a family who had loved ones who cared about her and yet that’s how she was found, that’s how she was treated. But she was a beautiful person and I am so disappointed in our justice system and I am so disappointed in our community members. And I’m so disappointed that my grandmother has not had the answers that she deserves and that she had to grow up and raise a
beautiful family without the support of
her mother.

Nobody deserves to grow up without a
mother. I had the privilege of growing
up with these beautiful women here
today who have raised me to be the best
person that I can be. Even though
she’s been through so much in her life,
she represents hope and strength. And
there may be three generations sitting
here today but there’s four because she
is watching down on us and she is
leading us in the right direction. And
she would be so proud of you for
sitting here today and telling your
story.

THOMAS BARNETT: Thank you Kindra.
Commissioner, if you have any
questions.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Merci beaucoup,
meegwetch. It is true, we are blessed
to grow up with our mothers and
grandmothers when we have that opportunity. And – but for so many of us it was taken away and that is why many women for many decades, and Judy is one of them, and you too, many women and men over the time, they joined our leaders to say that justice needs to happen.

I believe, Kindra, Barbara this Inquiry is one of the tools or momentum that can bring many things to the Federal Government, to the Provincial and, of course, to the Territorial Government. But I also am not afraid to say I, I come from Meleuxtenna, my First Nation community. Our own Government, the Indigenous Government, Metis, Inuit, First Nations, that if we, if we are able, because of your fight and your movement and your dedication that there is an Inquiry today, that will make sure that we bring recommendations to all the Governments that I mentioned
and also Band Council. That fight will have to continue.

We have a beginning and an end, this Inquiry, hoping that we will see a change because we’re not the first Inquiry also, we had the Truth and Reconciliation and, before that, RCAP and the list is long. Many recommendations so the justice should be changed and has to change. So I hope this one, but it’s a hope. We pray for that, we push for that and it will be, in the end, our leaders after. Leaders could be – and it’s you. It’s also people that are the members of Parliament, Ottawa or New Brunswick and so on.

And you say, Barbara, that you trusted that person when you were 28 years old when he, it’s a man I guess? When he shared to you what happened, but you have questions today and you have to have answers. I want to make sure I
get it right and it’s well written
because we share this to my dear
colleagues Qajaq, Brian and Marion
because they have to read your
testimony. And from that we have to
build recommendations or questions when
we will sit with the institutions.
What are your questions that you need
to have answered? I want to make sure
that it’s public and heard from, from
us.

BARBARA BERNARD: I want to know, I
want to know if they investigated my
mom’s death. I want to know if, if
they thought that it was a suspicious
death. I want to know why it wasn’t,
if it wasn’t investigated, then why
wasn’t it. And why didn’t they come
and talk to me. And, like I said, I
was young, maybe they did, I don’t
remember but I would like to know those
unanswered questions.
And maybe they did investigate it, maybe they didn’t but I think I would like to know that for sure. And the main thing is to, to find out if it was a suspicious death, was she murdered. And again, why she wasn’t investigated is, is something that’s really - because I feel like, like I mentioned earlier, that she wasn’t worth the investigation because she was First Nation and that really doesn’t sit well with me. And I think that’s why I want to be here today to be able to find out those answers for her.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Merci beaucoup. Merci beaucoup. Same for you, the same question. Merci. And I would like to ask you if it’s okay for you, we, we say in our vision statement or mission statement, I hate the word “mission” because of some of our history. So help me to find something better in our passion. I’ll say our women and girls
are sacred and I would like to add
also, that the women and girls matter.

So I’m asking you if we could add this
officially.

BARBARA BERNARD: Yes.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: And I know I’ve
heard it before but I’m asking you.

BARBARA BERNARD: Yes. I, I do
agree with that and I do want that
added. Yes. Cause it’s even hard for
- my granddaughter likes to travel and
I worry so much for her that I made her
promise me that when she’s going
anywhere, the minute she lays down in
her bed that she has to call me because
I won’t sleep. She’s pretty good at
it. I guess she knows I like my sleep.

And that goes for my daughters when
they travel I, I worry so much and, I
don’t know I just, I just want you to
know that, that I worry. It’s probably a worry I shouldn’t have but I do and that’s, that’s what I want to say.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Well thank, thank you for sharing that and I hope you don’t feel bad or you don’t have to feel bad because yes, we do worry. We do worry. Either because we, we went through that trauma and, and I hope you don’t miss that night if you forget to text her.

BARBARA BERNARD: Or I call her.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Yeah, it is true, it’s so important and I’ll tell you after, how much I understand how you feel. So I thank you so much and would you accept a gift, the three of you, the three beautiful generations, a gift from us. And there’s a beautiful history, maybe you heard it yesterday, but it’s special, it’s to you so I
would like you to understand where this
gift is coming from.

It’s from our bundle, one of the
bundles is travelling to Rankin Inlet
and we have a blanket that my mom did,
by the way, just between you and me.
So I’ll ask my grandmother to explain
and share to you where this gift is
coming from.

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS: I just want
to say Haw’aa to you Barbara and to
your beautiful family here. I just
want to give a little history of these
eagle feathers. They started their
journey from my village if Haida Gwaii
on the – I come from the rainforest on
the Pacific Ocean. It started there
and along for months and that, through
the provinces, family members, Sun
dancers, Elders have, have donated all
these eagle feathers that has made its
way out this way now.
And this lot comes from Sechelt from the Sunshine Coast between Vancouver Island and Vancouver and that so. And these are the gifts that have traveled here. So I want to say Haw’aa and our beautiful grandmother Elder here too, is the one that made these beautiful casings for it, our beautiful Andrea, her family so. I’m going to say Haw’aa to you again.

BARBARA BERNARD: I just, I just wanted to also let you know that my daughter Sheena is with me and she’s really emotional and – but I want you to know that she’s here supporting me too. Okay.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: I come to you or you come to me.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE AND BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS PRESENT GIFTS TO THE FAMILY
THOMAS BARNETT: Commissioner, if we could adjourn this session.

COMMISSIONER AUDETTE: Yes.

Hearing Concluded 12:00 p.m.

BERNIE POITRAS-WILLIAMS: I would like to announce too that it’s been a request to do the Strong Women’s song for the family here. For Barb and her daughter and her granddaughter.

CROWD GATHERS AROUND FAMILY FOR THE STRONG WOMEN’S SONG

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FORM 2

Certificate of Transcript (Subsection 5(2))
Evidence Act

I, we Trudy L. McKinnon, certify that this document is a true and accurate transcript of the National Inquiry for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and, Girls held at the Rendezvous Room, Four Points Sheraton, Moncton, New Brunswick on the 14th day of February, 2018 taken from recording NIMNB20180214.

DATE: MON., Feb. 26th, 2018

________________________
Trudy L. McKinnon