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Truth-Gathering Process
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Public Volume 50
Gordon Obed & Silpa Obed,
In relation to Katie Obed

Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson
Commission Counsel: Violet Ford

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Mr. Gordon Obed: (Speaking Inuktitut language) I am Gordon Obed. I am from Nain -- Nain, Labrador. First, I’d like to say thank you so much for those who helped to prepare for my wife and I to be able to come to this inquiry. I’m no good with names, but I’d like to thank those who called us, people like Jade and others who helped us to prepare us to come to this inquiry. Thank you so much.

Ms. Silpa Obed: My name is Silpa Obed, and I’m also from Nain. I’m happy to be here too and to be here in inquiry, and I’ll do my best to speak, but I always gets stuck, but I’ll -- I’ll press on. Thank you.

Mr. Gordon Obed: (Speaking Inuktitut language).

Ms. Silpa Obed: Before I -- before I came up here, me and my husband, my grandson, oldest one -- we got four grandchildren, four grand boys, got no -- got no parents. And the oldest one is living with us right now, and he suggest that I wear this shirt, which his mom loved the color. And I also got this heart, what she had left.

Now, it was hard after what all happened to our granddaughter -- I mean, stepdaughter, after what
happened. I was -- I was -- excuse me -- I was the first one
who had to go and pack everything that’s there. It was so
hard, and -- but I had full help from Edna Winters. I’ll
stop here right now.

MR. GORDON OBED: From -- from what we know
what happened was December 23rd, 2015, our grandson, the
oldest son who lives with us now that my wife said, he was
helping our daughter decorate the ceiling in the living
room for Christmas, like I said, December 23rd, the day
before Christmas Eve. Somewhere around 20 to 4, he left
our house, told my daughter that she (sic) was going to the
arena. Apparently, what happened was he had gone to his
mom’s apartment and ...

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Do you want to
take a break?

MS. VIOLET FORD: Do you want to take a
break?

MR. GORDON OBED: Anyway, our grandson had
gone to his mom’s apartment. That’s when he went to check
on his mom in her bedroom. She was covered in a -- with a
blanket, and she opened the blanket thinking she was
sleeping. She opened the blanket. She had a knife in her
heart, and obviously he lost it. He lost his mind, I
guess. He was living with our daughter, who lived quite a
ways up. He had left the apartment and ran up to my
daughter’s house. When he got there, he was bawling and
crying. He wasn’t making any sense to my daughter and
whoever was in the house until by about 20 minutes or so.

He finally told my daughter that -- that he
found her mom stabbed to death in her apartment, and that’s
when we had the call from our daughter, and that’s when the
world -- our world turned upside down. And it’s almost
hard to remember from there on what was really going on.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Do you want to take a 5-
minute break?

MR. GORDON OBED: If we could just take a
little break quick?

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Absolutely.
We’ll take a 5-minute break. Thank you.

MR. GORDON OBED: What happened prior to our
daughter-in-law’s death was her husband and our four
grandsons’ dad passed away eight months just before our
daughter -- grand -- our daughter-in-law was killed. He
passed away in St. John’s on April 4th.

And what happened there was he had some kind
of sickness which the doctors couldn’t find out what was
wrong since -- since early to mid-February. They sent him
back and forth to Goose Bay, didn’t know what was wrong
with him. His belly was bloated, and at the end of it,
they sent him to hospital in St. John’s just late March, early April, where he passed away on April 4th, like I said.

I wasn’t there. My wife and his wife then, Katie, our daughter-in-law was there, and they tell me that up to five doctors were taking care of him in St. John’s, but they could not figure out what was wrong with him. And they tell me that before he died, he had had up to five IVs on him. And -- and, again, before he passed away, one of the doctors told my wife and my daughter-in-law that they now have him on the strongest antibiotic they know, but he passed away anyway.

And the sad thing was the doctors could not figure out what was wrong with him. And after he passed, they asked for consent from his wife and my wife to do an autopsy, and after the consent, they opened -- they opened him up, and they found out that he died of TB. His liver, his kidneys were gone with TB, and that’s how he died.

And at that time, our oldest grandson, like we said, lives -- who is living with us now, was in Goose Bay doing a program here at the college, and the others were in foster care on the Island. So -- so after our son’s death, they sent them home for the funeral preparations, and we did all that, and obviously hard as -- as it was, we had to go through with it, and we did.
And this is where I think about how I feel Child, Youth, and Family Services failed us, failed my grandsons and our -- our daughter-in-law. Here they were, they just lost their father, our daughter-in-law just lost her husband, and I felt -- we felt that Child, Youth, and Family Services did not have no empathy on the family or even the boys. They did not think about what they were going through is what I was feeling, because not too long after the funeral the boys were sent back out to their foster homes.

There was no feeling or there was no thought, I feel, of how vulnerable their mother was at the time, and how I feel that they should have known or should have thought about how they should have kept our grandsons with their mother for a little while longer and not sent them back right away, early, earlier, because their mom was vulnerable and -- and the fact that the boys had to leave -- left their mom in a vulnerable state and pretty well all alone in her apartment.

And that situation escalated where we -- we called -- we called her Katie; her name was Katie -- where Katie was starting to isolate herself from us. She wasn’t visiting as much, and when family members visited her, she was distancing her -- us too, distancing herself from us. And the point I’m trying to make is she was -- she was
lost. The boys, her boys, was already gone back to foster
care, and she was pretty well alone and, like I said, not
visiting our home not as like -- like she used to and
isolating herself.

And that kept on till October where we -- we
had a big family -- where a close family member on Katie’s
side, our daughter-in-law, was just released from prison in
October. Having a good heart as she did, knowing that this
person had no place to stay, she took him in and had him
stay with her from October onwards. And the isolation and
keeping away from our home and distancing herself from us
escalated pretty much.

We started to learn that the relationship
got abusive. My -- our older children used to visit her or
see her on the road with bruised eyes, black eyes, and --
and that kept on. And I and the family were in a very
complicated situation. Like I said, this person was a
total family member to our daughter-in-law. Their parents
-- their fathers were brothers. Our daughter-in-law’s dad
and the man’s dad were brothers. That put us in a real
awkward situation.

The hard part was not knowing what to do.
Here we knew that this relationship was getting very
abusive. On one hand -- I’ll speak for myself anyway. On
one hand, I wanted to go up to that apartment, Hey, what’s
going on here; get the hell out of there. That was one approach I was thinking about. And on the other hand, I thought about -- what was it? I thought about how, It’s her life, it’s her life; shouldn’t we just keep out of it? So we were caught -- we were caught in two in that situation, whether to intervene more or just leave her be and because that’s her life. And that, obviously, escalated the abuse right to the point -- right to the point of where she got killed.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Gordon, you were mentioning earlier that this person that your daughter-in-law was involved with had just gotten out of prison. Can you tell the commissioner about his prison sentence and how he ended up going to prison to begin with?

MR. GORDON OBED: I’m not aware of how long the sentence really was. All is -- all I know is that she (sic) was released sometime in October for having abused, physical abused a previous relationship. That’s -- that’s -- that is all I was told.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Maybe I have a question for Silpa. Silpa, you said when you went into -- to their apartment, you noticed that she was getting involved in -- in drugs. Can you tell us a little bit more about that? Do you want to talk about that a bit more?

MS. SILPA OBED: Yeah. At the time, when I
Gordon Obed and Silpa Obed
(Katie Obed)

-- when I had to go and pack up the belongings of my
daughter-in-law apartment, I noticed that there were some
beer cans and -- what was the other one?

MR. GORDON OBED: Evidence of drug use.

MS. SILPA OBED: Yeah. Evidence of drug
use, and so it was hard, really hard to go and pack her
belongings and -- but we pulled through.

But I’d like to -- my daughter gave me a
note just before I left Nain. This note is from our
daughter Gwen, who was Katie’s best friend and sister-in-
law. Katie wasn’t allowed no pictures hung on wall of my
brother, son, and her son and her boys.

She had this one room full of pictures,
souvenirs, family treasures of Junior and her boy’s stuff.
That man didn’t want to see her own in her apartment. When
our family went to visit Katie, she would be silent, and I
would go into the room -- I’ll try again.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Okay.

MS. SILPA OBED: Okay. When our family went
to visit Katie, she would be silent, and that man would be
in the room mad until we leave. See her on -- see her on
the road with black eyes. She didn’t want to visit us
family anymore after she met that man.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Gordon, I have another
question. I have a question for you, Gordon. Going back to
the foster care situation that you were talking about, and
would you like to talk about what you told me earlier of
the impacts of the child welfare system had on your
grandsons --

MR. GORDON OBED: Okay.

MS. VIOLET FORD: -- and how’s it’s affected
your family and your future?

MR. GORDON OBED: I should first start in
the beginning of our foster -- our grandsons, their boys,
being taken into care. I had wrote a letter just days
after it started to happen to the Minister of Health and
Social Development at Nunatsiavut’s government. I forget
his name, but he -- he was a man -- he was a Minister of
Health and Social Development at Nunatsiavut’s government.
It was a very detailed letter, I remember, of what happened
and how we tried to intervene as a family to -- I know --
knowing that my son and his wife had -- had problems at the
time.

But, listen, we didn’t hear back from them.
There we sort of tried to ask for help to -- for them to
intervene and see if they can prevent -- help prevent from
our grandsons being taken out of town, but we did not hear
back from them. And eventually they were -- what do you

At the time of -- at the time before they
permanently -- permanent care, my son and his wife were called to court, and we were there to listen to their hearing. I remember us being there, their lawyer being there, and the lawyer for Child, Youth, and Family Services being there. I seen it, and I felt that -- that our son and his wife -- we were asked to speak, and I did speak. What we had to say or wanted to say did not seem to have an impact whatsoever. The lawyer for the Child, Youth, and Family Services was the only person who spoke with authority.

**MS. VIOLET FORD:** Do you want to take a 5-minute break?

**MR. GORDON OBED:** Anyway, the point I’m trying to make is that -- that pretty well continued and still is -- we feel still goes on today.

Our -- like I say, our oldest grandson lives with us while he is in Goose Bay doing a program with the college, and the other two are still in care on the Island. The point I’m trying to make is what we ask for, like, visitations, we’d like to have visitations to us at Nain. We don’t have a say how long they can stay. They have so much authority, as most -- as some people might -- in here might know, that it -- it can be overwhelming.

I’m not -- on one hand, I feel they failed at their -- their job and going by the book. Us indigenous
people, when we get into situations like this with our
grandchildren and children, we never -- well, we don’t seem
to have much say in what Child, Youth, and Family Services
does with our children, our grandchildren.

This is one of the big -- biggest points I wanted to make in this inquiry, and this really affected
our daughter-in-law more so than before after our son died. Like I said earlier, she was lonely. She missed her boys. She missed her husband, and she was in a heavy state of -- she was very, very vulnerable. And like I said earlier, we tried to reach out to her, but in a way she wasn’t reaching back like she used to before.

Anyway, I guess what I’m trying to say is if it comes to that at the end of this -- our session here, what I’d like to say is that this commission take note that in a situation like my son, our daughter-in-law, and our grandkids were in, needs to be -- what’s the word -- needs to be assessed properly, check out their situation in the event of a death in the family death, family, whether it’s the father or mother, that careful consideration be given by Child, Youth, and Family Services or that department whether if it’s a good idea to keep the children away from the mother or the father, who -- whoever is left behind, or whether it’s better -- I think it would be better that they start to be reconnected with the surviving parent.
If it came to that -- this is one thing I
would like to -- I would like to -- maybe like to -- for
the commission to consider to bring to someone who has
(indiscernible) too, maybe make changes in that cause it’s
hard. A lot of us care (indiscernible).

MS. SILPA OBED: I just want to share too,
like, I can’t remember what year it was. It goes way back
years, and my brother was stabbed at and in heart too. I’m
sorry to say, from the same family, it’s so hard that me
and my husband is, like, in between. But we do -- I do
love my family, I do, and my oldest son, Martin, is married
to Justine, and we’re still a family. We will be. We all
will be family together and just slow, just keep on a
little bit. After this, I hope I do feel better. Thank
you.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Is there anything else
you’d like to add? Anything else you would like to add?

MR. GORDON OBED: (Speaking Inuktitut
language). One of the hardest things for me and the family
as a whole is -- which I in some way is trying to deny,
deep down I’m trying -- I’m trying to deny, but deep down I
know it’s true, and I don’t like to say it. I don’t even
like to think about it.

Our four grandsons there in the bottom
picture, which is the last Christmas they had together in
2014, the four boys, the ones there, we’re hoping eventually authorities in Child, Youth, and Family Services will come to senses that children taken away from home and placed in foster care we all know will grow up much better at home.

In the years our grandsons here have been in foster care, we’ve noticed a big change in them. They’re allowed to visit one week at a time, sometimes two weeks at a time, and we notice that they’re not themselves anymore, right to the point where it’s almost like they don’t know us anymore. It’s almost like they can’t stay a week, two weeks. We feel and see that they’re more or less pulled to the foster home nowadays. This has to stop. It has to be stopped. We must let the Department of Child, Youth, and Family Services know that. This don’t help. We must let the Department of Child, Youth, and Family Services know that children, grandparents, grandchildren, it’s best when they grow up at home. It’s so hard.

And I -- I want to point out again that this situation with my son and our daughter-in-law with their boys played a big factor into what led to -- what happened to my -- to our daughter-in-law. Like I said earlier, missing a partner, missing children because they can’t come home is not good. Everyone knows that. And going back to what I tried to say earlier, which I know deep down is true
--- I tried to deny -- my poor grandsons inside the picture are orphans. They don’t have a mom and a daddy.

MS. SILPA OBED: And I just want to say this is for my four grandsons, who is now -- the oldest son is 20, Phillip is 18, Ames is 16, and Kyle is 14 now. And Kyle is the youngest, and he’s been Facebooking me he’s starting to miss his mom. He -- he -- and me and my husband are not there to hold him and say, We love you, Kyle. And they’re -- they’re so far away from us, and they need hugging and loving and -- from -- from their family who’s home.

MS. VIOLET FORD: We’ll take a break.

Taking a break?

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: We’ll take a five-minute break, please. Thank you. We’ll get started. Ready?

MS. VIOLET FORD: So we’ll get started again. Gordon, we would just like to ask you a couple more questions.

MR. GORDON OBED: M-hm.

MS. VIOLET FORD: The first question is: Regarding the prison of the abuser, prison -- when he came out of prison, was there any police investigation – do you know – regarding that abuse with the other person before he abused your --
MR. GORDON OBED: Previously?

MS. VIOLET FORD: Yeah. Do you know about any -- about any police involvement?

MR. GORDON OBED: No, not -- not fully.

Just that, like I said earlier, that he was released from prison in October, and, like I said, I -- we didn’t know what the length of the sentence at -- for that part of it, but we did know that it was abuse assault on a previous relationship.

MS. VIOLET FORD: The second question is sort of related to the first. Do you know the extent of the police investigation regarding the incident with your daughter-in-law? How -- how involved was the RCMP in the investigation of her death?

MR. GORDON OBED: I -- I was quite pleased with the police involvement, and the head person, the head officer, Sergeant Jonathan Kenney, I believe headed the investigation, and he did a good job, I believe, in -- in keeping us updated as to what was going on.

I don’t know if I said it earlier, before the investigation started when -- it was quite windy, and it took a couple of days for the investigators to come in, to enter the house, into the apartment, but during that time and afterwards, the sergeant did a really good job, I must say. He kept us updated as to what was going on, and
he -- he kept us updated. For example, like, it’s too windy today for the RCMP plane to come in. He -- he kept us updated as to after the investigators got into Nain and left with the body that they had sent it to St John’s and an autopsy was going to be performed.

He did that during work hours. I must say that the RCMP building and the residence is just two houses up from my house, and he -- he visited us during work hours and after work and always keeping us updated as to what was going on until the coroner told him that the cause of death was a stabbing to the heart, severing a main artery, and right up to the point where we were done with the funeral preparations and the funeral.

He -- he did -- he did, I must say, he did a good job keeping us updated. Even though -- me anyway, I didn’t really bother finding out what investigation at the apartment, how it was going, I didn’t really mind knowing about that, but the good thing was he kept us updated as to what was going on. To the extent of the autopsy report and all that, I was quite satisfied with that.

MS. VIOLET FORD: Those pictures you’ve seen on the screens that you brought, do you want to talk a little about her life, what kind of a person she was, what were her contributions, what type of a person she was? Good memories, what -- do you want to talk anything about
MS. SILPA OBED: She was a mother. She was a daughter-in-law and sister-in-law. She was so kind and loving and caring. She was everything. She was everything to my grand -- grandkids after my son died, and it -- and I start realizing, like, she -- after my grandsons left, they -- she -- she was all alone and she kept -- like, she kept coming to the house, like, every day and -- and it slacked off. And she couldn’t -- like, she used to ask if we were all right coming to the house and then she -- we missed her cause she was around Nain, but we missed her and she wouldn’t come to the house anymore, and it’s ...

Before this, everything happened or what happened and -- we do have a disabled daughter, who she really loved. My daughter, us, miss her now, and she used to take her out. They used to take her out and let her sleep over, and now she’s shutting, like, just been missing Katie and that, and I don’t know what I’m saying here, but it’s true. We really miss her, especially her boys, our grandsons. I just wish we was together. I just wish we were together like family instead of them being in foster care.

Yeah, daughter-in-law was loving and kind, caring. I missed her every day. And especially hard for my grandson who’s staying with us that -- I can’t ...
MR. GORDON OBED: I -- I can’t add much more what -- to what my wife said. Her boys was her heart after her husband died. I remember them before Child, Youth, and Family Services stepped in. They were a loving family big time. And mentioning -- like, my wife mentioned, our disabled daughter who is 30 years old, has cerebral palsy, and can’t walk. She was Katie’s heart. She loved her very much.

And from a while back, from way back even when they would visit, my son, the boys, and our daughter-in-law, she had a saying. For example, my daughter Geena (phonetic), who is disabled, would say when they would leave, Bye. She would point up to her saying, Not bye, sister; see you again. She always said that to her, Not bye; see you again.

I know what happened here today is, you guys and us, going to be memorable to us for some time and can’t appreciate how much help it’s -- it’s been or it is to us. Thank you all again to -- to those who helped prepare for us to come here. You know who you are. It -- we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

If I can just point out again what I said earlier that this inquiry would think about looking into -- I mean, pointing it -- pointing the points out -- points I made out like -- like, how I said in situations like this
where a couple and family, a family of six -- and it may happen again too, a situation like this -- that in the situation of our grandkids and my son and his wife that the people who have authority to intervene for families who have been ripped apart to maybe come together again, the sooner the better, should be pointed out to the proper authorities. So maybe that in this situation where a couple and four boys are separated to the point of death, either way, that whoever has the authority to try and prevent this, to try to keep families together is the best -- to me would be the best outcome.

It’s sad. Everybody knows it’s sad that this had to happen. Like I said earlier, maybe if my son and his wife and their boys were together and not kept apart, there might have been a better outcome. That’s my feeling.

And in situations where offenders are released into a community, they should be better monitored as to who they are with and how their life, his or her life, might be affecting the family they’re with, and the proper authorities should be able to intervene and -- and check it out, take action if they have to.

Like I said earlier, I’ll say it again here. Here was our daughter-in-law having lost her husband and her boys not being able to be with her, in a very
vulnerable state, was a target to an offender, which I believe proper authorities should have kept a better eye on. So I’m not -- I don’t know if I’m putting it right, but it’s something I -- I wanted to say to this inquiry, and it’s something to think about that I believe.

**MS. SILPA OBED:** I just want to say that for justice -- for justice system, for those men who are abusers, they should be in lock -- lockup longer so they won’t do it again, like they did with my daughter-in-law. Thank you.

**MR. GORDON OBED:** I just -- I just want to mention one more thing before -- maybe I should just ask if anyone else has questions maybe.

In the previous gathering we had here in -- in the same building here in Goose Bay I believe a year ago, maybe two years ago, when we had -- a few of us, a bunch of us were able to -- we were being -- talk in circles and share our stories. That was in -- I don’t know what was -- I was going to say. That was an -- that was a big help. And I remember one -- one person who was with us really described what I had thought about our -- about our daughter-in-law.

One person noted that we -- we knew, as a family knew that, as you can see in the picture, how -- how do you describe that -- how -- how healthy she was. And
during the process of her abusive relationship to the end where she was killed, it was pointed out that she lost weight, a lot of weight, compared to what she was like before her husband died and before she got into this relationship, and that was really true. We seen it, and we heard it. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you very much. If you don’t mind, I just have a couple of questions just to follow up, just to make sure I’m clear about what you have said to me, if that’s okay.

MR. GORDON OBED: Okay.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Okay. So you -- at one point you said the man who got out of prison and moved in with Katie, that happened in October.

MR. GORDON OBED: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: And then -- and -- and she was found on December 23rd. So was it just two months later? It’s the same year?

MR. GORDON OBED: Yeah, the same year, in 2015, just about two months.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Okay. Thank you. And -- and you just made a comment a few minutes ago that when someone’s released from custody, they should be better monitored and the proper authorities should be able to intervene, so in that approximately two-month period
when they were living together, do you know if there were any incidents where any authorities intervened? Was there any police involvement leading up to December 23rd, 2015? Are you aware of anything?

MR. GORDON OBED: With that situation with our grand — daughter-in-law, I -- I wasn’t aware that there was police involvement in, as we said earlier, in this abusive relationship. It was escalating. No, we weren’t aware of police involvement, just that it was happening. Like we said earlier, our daughter -- daughter-in-law was in a physical abusive relationship, like someone -- like someone says, she was getting black-eyed. No, we weren’t aware if the police got involved, just -- in any of that at all.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you very much for answering my questions and appreciate your comments and your recommendations about Child and Family Services and keeping families together. I just want to make sure before we close, are there any other recommendations you might want to share with the inquiry, or have you covered everything off?

MR. GORDON OBED: I don’t think I do, but before I finish off, I will see if my wife wants to say a few last words. (Speaking Inuktitut language).

MS. SILPA OBED: I just want to say thank
you. Nakumiik.

MR. GORDON OBED: And once again to add to my wife’s gratitude, thank you so much for introducing inquiry. Thank you so much to help us to prepare to come here. Like I said, I’m no good with names, you know who you are. The people who call me to make flight arrangements and accommodations, we appreciate you so much, and we appreciate how we’ve been given a chance once again to be able to say what we’ve been through, what we’re feeling, and that, as everyone might know, it takes a very big load off.

MS. SILPA OBED: We’re forgetting someone. Violet.

MR. GORDON OBED: Well, I’m -- I’m not. Violet too. Violet too. I’m -- I’m lost for words with -- with the gratefulness we have. Thank you so much.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: So if I may, before we close, Gordon and Silpa, I just want to thank you very much, both of you, for coming and sharing with us and telling us about Katie and providing your recommendations to the inquiry and for participating. Obviously, it’s a difficult thing, but I really want to acknowledge your -- your strength and resilience in coming here and sharing your story, your truths with us, so I appreciate that very much. And before you -- before we close, I have a couple
of small gifts for you of appreciation for -- for coming
and sharing that the inquiry has. And we also have some
gifts from -- that some organizations have provided to
share with people who are participating here today.

So we have some -- some gifts from Hautootid
(phonetic) and also from the Newfoundland Aboriginal
Women’s Network that they have provided to be shared with
you today. So before we close, we’re just going to take
care of that, so thank you very much.

MR. GORDON OBED: Thank you.

MS. SILPA OBED: Thank you.

--- Exhibits (code: P01P12P0102)

Exhibit 1: Folder of three digital images displayed
during Gordon Obed and Silpa Obed’s public
testimony.

--- Upon adjourning at 2:33 p.m.
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

I, Karin Proulx, 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.

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Karin Proulx
March 24, 2018