National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Public Hearings
Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel
Britannia Ballroom
Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

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Wednesday, April 4, 2018

Public Volume 81
Cynthia Cardinal & Bonnie Fowler,
In relation to Georgina Faith Papin

Heard by Chief Commissioner Marion Buller
Commission Counsel: Fanny Wylde

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Cardinal & Fowler
(Georgina Faith Papin)

Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

--- Upon commencing on Wednesday, April 4, 2018 at 16:36

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Chief Commissioner, good afternoon. I would like to present your next family. I have here Cynthia Cardinal and Bonnie Fowler. They’re here to share the story of their sister, Georgina Faith Papin, who disappeared in March 1999 and was found three years later. Georgina’s remains and DNA were found at the Pickton Farm, so they’re here to share their story.

And, before they do, I would like to ask Mr. Registrar to please swear in the witnesses, and both of the witnesses would like to provide oath with an eagle feather.

MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Good afternoon, Cynthia. Do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you’ll share this afternoon will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL: I solemnly swear.

MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Thank you. And, it’s Bonnie? Okay. Bonnie, do you solemnly affirm that the evidence you will share this afternoon will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

MS. BONNIE FOWLER: I swear.

MR. BRYAN ZANDBERG: Okay. Thank you.

MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL: I got a rock. She will hold -- our Elder will hold our feather. Thank you.
MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you. So, we will start with Cynthia.

MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL: First of all, I would like to introduce our Elder, Taz Bouchier, who we’ve become to know and love, and I’m so grateful that she’s here. Just letting you know who this beautiful woman is sitting beside us. I’m going to read my story, so just bear with me. I tried to do it -- I edited it about a hundred times, so here we go. Okay.

My story, my truth. We are a large family of nine: six girls, three boys, all born between 1960 and 1970. Our mother gave birth to our older sister, Deborah Bennett Rattlesnake, in 1960. I, Cynthia Cardinal, was born in 1961. Our brother, Richard, Rick Papin, was born in 1963. Georgina Papin was born in 1964, which was two days after our mother, Maggie Alice Papin married George Papin Senior. He was the father of Rick, Georgina and Tammy.

Our mother then gave birth to George Papin in 1965. Our sister, Tammy Papin, was born in 1966. Then, our mother gave birth to our brother, Randall Travis Knight, in 1967. Our sister, Elana Papin, was born in 1968. Lastly, our sister, Bonnie Fowler Papin, was born in 1970.

Our mother had joined the Canadian Army for
a short time after leaving the residential school in Hobbema, Alberta, which is now known as Maskwacis. I only know this because I saw a photograph of her in uniform once. My older sister and I were being raised by our kokum Clara May Lee (ph), and our (indiscernible) James Rattlesnake.

I clearly remember one fatal day. It was raining heavily, and my uncle, Richard, was driving, and we spotted my kokum walking on the side of the road. My uncle tried to pull over and stop to give her a ride; however, it was too slippery, and he accidentally hit my kokum. I remember her flying over the car. She passed away later in the kitchen of her home. She died with her arms around my sister and I. I was 2-and-a-half years old, but I remember it like yesterday.

My first memory of Georgina was when I was 4, and I was trying to give her a bath. I put her in the tub, and -- I filled up the tub and I put Georgina in it. She screamed, and I pulled her out. The water was too hot. Our mother had left us alone, and I’m not sure how long, but I recall an intoxicated man coming into our house. He pulled out his penis and started urinating everywhere in our living room. My sister, Deborah, and I grabbed Georgina and Rick, and we escaped by climbing out the window and up the backstairs to where people were living
We ended up in a children’s home somewhere in Calgary, Alberta. This is when child welfare separated Deborah and I from Georgina and Rick. That would have been around 1965. I reunited with Georgina on her 14th birthday in 1978. I was 16-years-old and pregnant. I couldn’t believe how pretty she was. She told me how she found our mother. Apparently, our mother, not knowing her, would catch Georgina staring at her and would give her angry looks. Finally, they talked, because Georgina said she felt that this was her mother, and she was right. A couple hours later, Georgina wanted to go meet up with her friends to celebrate for her birthday. She got up and said, “See you later,” and walked out the door. The next thing I heard, she had moved to Las Vegas.

When she was 18, she came back to say hello and to also pick up her trust fund from Enoch Cree Nation, where she is from. Georgina only stayed for about a week. She came to my sister, Deborah, and I, who I was visiting at the time, to say goodbye to us. She also mentioned that our sister, Tammy, was going back to Las Vegas with her. They got a chance to get to know each other as sisters.

In July of 1979, our mother passed away at the age of 37. She died of cirrhosis of the liver and cancer. She had been addicted to heroin and unable to look
after us. Our mother was well-known on the streets, even here in Vancouver. She had made many friends. She was kind to people, but she was also strong and never took shit from anybody. She was still so young and had experienced many hardships. There was a quote from a social worker in one of my sister’s files that read, “Finally, when Alice Papin kicked the bucket.” We couldn’t believe how she actually wrote these words in her file.

We were all part of the Sixties Scoop, so after suffering abuse in foster homes, we all ran away and grew up on the streets, the same streets our mother grew up on. Georgina moved back to Canada in 1985. She was 21-years-old with a beautiful baby girl she named Christina. This is the same year all nine of us reunited. It was awesome to see all my siblings for the first time.

In 1988, our sister, Deborah, passed away. She had been using cocaine and died of heart failure. I remember that because when she was born, she had a heart murmur. She was like a mother to me. She taught me a lot about how to look after myself, for example, hygiene and using condoms. Georgina and Debby got along well. Their personalities were a lot alike. Deborah often babysat for Georgina and vice versa. Deborah also had two children, Michael and April. They were great moms.

Like myself, Georgina had seven children:
Christina, Stewart, Leslie, also known as Alana, Dylan, Autumn Wind, Winter Star and Little Storm. Her last two were born twins in 1998, only a year before she went missing. Her last known whereabouts is on record. She was at St. Paul’s Hospital in Vancouver on March 21st, 1999. She had abandoned her IV pole there.

Kathleen Smith was a very good friend of Georgina’s and convinced my sister, Bonnie, that something was wrong, because she had never called her. It had been a long time. Georgina had been living with Kathleen for a while until Georgina began using again. Kathleen said she didn’t want her children to see that, and she would have to go, so Georgina asked for a ride to the Downtown Eastside. That was the last time Kathleen ever saw her.

In 2001, Kathleen Smith convinced my sister, Bonnie, to drive to the Mission RCMP detachment and reported Georgina missing. Six months later, our brother, Rick, called me and said Georgina was put on the missing women’s list. To me, it didn’t feel real. I never heard of this list. I was given a number for Victim Services when I called and gave them my name and told them Georgina Papin is my sister. They said, “Okay. We will put your name on the family member’s list.” There was no mention of keeping me updated or keeping in touch with me from thereon.
Georgina’s remains were found at the Pickton Farm. I found out by reading it in the Edmonton Sun newspaper. I remember that I couldn’t stop shaking and crying with disbelief. That was September of 2002. They had found fragments of her hand bones in the slaughter house.

The Pickton trial started on January 22nd, 2007 five years after Georgina’s remains were found. My life changed. I wanted to know more about what happened. It became overwhelming, so much so that my friends got tired of listening because it became so evil and disgusting. I realized then I was on my own. No one wanted to listen, so I became physically silent and painfully silent. No one seemed to care, and their lives would go on oblivious to what happened to our sisters and what still continues to happen. It makes me angry that the VPD in Port Coquitlam and the RCMP neglected their duties because of who are sisters were and their lifestyles. Our sister, Georgina, may still have been alive today have they listened and acted sooner.

I think about her children every day and how Georgina missed out on having a chance of seeing her beautiful grandchildren. Listening to the evilness of what Robert Pickton was doing to the women became even more disgusting when the witnesses involved came forward and
talked about what happened at the Pickton Farm.

Take for instance, Diana Taylor. She shot and killed at least three of the victims. She also lured women from the Downtown Eastside to meet Pickton, who would then drive them to his Port Coquitlam pig farm. So, why is she free and walking the same streets where family members look for their loved ones? She should be behind bars for the rest of her evil life.

Dave Pickton was also charged with sexual assault in 1992. He threatened his victim, and she was warned by a worker at her job site that she should get away if she didn’t want her body parts scattered everywhere.

Dave Pickton also lived on the farm. He knew what was going on. When the police finally went to search the farm, he called his brother, Robert Pickton, and warned him not to go home, that the cops were everywhere. Dave Pickton knew about his brother’s sick and demented habits. He should be charged for accessory for helping his brother cover up his evil deeds. And, Mr. Chubb stated as a witness that Dave Pickton had called him after Robert Pickton’s arrest, and told him, “If Willy goes down, everyone goes down.” Mr. Chubb stated that he was scared because Dave Pickton associated with the Hell’s Angels.

Lynn Ellingsen’s greed and addiction stopped her from calling authorities after she said she saw a woman
believing to be Georgina hanging from her feet in the
slaughter house. Lynn also lured women from the Downtown
Eastside to the farm. She was a heartless woman who was
blackmailing Robert Pickton for our sister’s murder.

Pat Casanova, another witness, who worked at
the Pickton Farm, he has known the Picktons for 20 years,
and he claims he knew nothing about the murders. He
admitted to buying sex from the victims. His DNA was found
on some of the remains.

Bev Hyancen (ph) was employed at the
Coquitlam RCMP detachment as a telecoms operator. She knew
the Picktons personally. She even attended Piggy’s Palace
and recalled seeing Don Cray (ph) there on New Year’s 1999.
Two weeks later, Don was reported missing. Georgina would
still be alive that day. Why did she not say anything
sooner? She even mentions that her son found bloody
clothing in the truck owned by Robert Pickton.

Towards the end of the trial, all the family
members were at the courthouse. Victim Services were also
there, and they had a lack of sympathy towards my sisters
and I. One day during the trial, they gave us a letter
saying we had to leave the Hyatt and move luggage to the
Metropolitan Hotel. Everyone had to be downstairs by 8:15
a.m., and my sisters and I got out at 8:15 a.m.

When my sisters and I got to the lobby at
the Hyatt, one of our bags fell off the trolley and spilled out all over the floor. We were embarrassed because it contained our feminine hygiene products. Victim Service worker, Elizabeth Murtagh, yelled out, “They need a garbage bag. Can someone get them a garbage bag?” We were even more embarrassed because people in business suits were looking at us. It was very chaotic, and we were very emotional from the trial.

And then one day, oddly, Victim Service worker, Frieda Anski (ph), gave me and my sisters a deck of cards and told us to go wait on the fourth floor of the New Westminster Courthouse. We thought they would be coming up to speak to us. We looked down later about an hour later and saw that the families were sitting down there eating KFC. We were never offered any, and no one ever did come up to speak to us.

But, by this time, we had the honour of meeting Bernie Williams, Poitras and Gladys Radek. Bernie had known Georgina. We could feel that these women cared about us because they never left our side, even to this day. During the trial, Bernie and Gladys opened their homes to us. We got the privilege to meet their families who, by the way, are all awesome.

Bernie and Gladys both witnessed how Victim Services were treating us. They segregated us from other
family members and told them that we were trouble and to stay away from us. This was told to us by other family members. On another incident, a Victim Service worker approached us with a family member who was sick from her addiction and asked us to look after her. Immediately, Bernie said, “Yes, we will look after our own,” but wasn’t that their job?

Victim Services had also neglected to tell us that we would be hearing the horrific way in which Georgina was murdered. They told us as we were walking into the courtroom. They warned us too late. My sisters and I left the courthouse, and I was extremely sickened by the details. The visuals I was having were of Georgina hanging upside down, her head decapitated, and her toes were painted red. What was ironic is that I had painted my toes red that day not knowing it would be mirrored in court.

We left the courthouse really nauseated, and eventually Bonnie, Elana and I made it back to our room and cried. Victim Services did not even take the time to see if we were okay. Again, if not for the support of Bernie and Gladys -- they helped us manage to stay grounded and they made us feel strong.

When the verdict was in, it followed with a press release. When it was over, Victim Services told my
sisters and I to go to the Spaghetti Factory in New Westminster and wait for them as they would give us our bus tickets back to the room in Vancouver. We waited there for a long time, and no one showed up. We kept phoning Victim Services. No answer. Again, if not for Bernie and Gladys who helped us get a bus, we would have been stranded in New Westminster. We found out later that all of the rest of the families were sent to another restaurant while they celebrated the outcome of the trial.

The National Inquiry with Wally Oppal was the most frustrating experience we have ever had. All the officers from the VPD and RCMP each had their own lawyers. Meanwhile, the families had the wonderful Cameron Ward and assistant, Neil Chantler. At first, we thought we had the support of the Indigenous organizations, then all of a sudden they all excused themselves from the Inquiry. It would have been more supportive had they sat with their families, instead they formed demonstrations of where the Inquiry was taking place.

Our lawyer, Cameron Ward, received documents that were so redacted it frustrated him. It was very difficult to make sense of them. No officers never have ever been held accountable for their neglect of duty to this day.

After the Inquiry was over, the family sat
and watched the lawyers giving each other gifts. How heartless of them. This was in front of families already felt helpless and defeated. It felt like I failed the children of the victims. They still suffer from the injustices done towards their mothers. Georgina’s children have not yet reunited. Her daughter, Christina, asked me if I could arrange it. I need help to make this happen.

In September of 2010, my sisters and I travelled to Vancouver to get Georgina and bring her home. The coroner at the time was Owen Court. He invited us to sit down, my sisters, myself and Georgina’s daughter, Christina. We listened to what he had to say, which was that he had looked after her remains with respect. He said he personally took her to the crematorium, but the person who does the cremating wasn’t around. He said he took it upon himself to cremate Georgina.

The reason I brought this up is because family member, Lynn Frey, sent Marnie Frey’s remains to forensics in Calgary because they could hear rattling in the urn. They were told that her bones may have been crushed, not cremated. So, did he just crush Georgina’s remains? After talking to the Freys, we found out he gave them the same story he told us. We also found out that he gave us fake death certificates, another negligent official.
When we brought Georgina to rest in peace, three of our siblings were incarcerated at the Edmonton Remand Centre. We called and spoke with a man in authority and requested that our siblings, George, Rick and Tammy, be able to attend Georgina’s funeral. They refused saying they were all high risk. Therefore, they have never had the closure they needed, and they struggle with that to this day. They never got to say goodbye to our sister, Georgina Faith Papin. Rest in peace.

I just want to ask my children for forgiveness and understanding. I had the same pattern as my mother, and I neglected my children as well, so I’m fighting so that it won’t happen to them.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Chief Commissioner, I would ask for a recess as the next witness would like a short recess of 5 minutes, please? Thank you. We will take a recess of 5 minutes, please.

--- Upon recessing at 17:01
--- Upon resuming at 17:13

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** We are ready to continue, Chief Commissioner. So, Bonnie.

**MS. BONNIE FOWLER:** Yes. I’m Bonnie Fowler, and I’m the youngest of nine siblings. I was born on April 30th, 1970 to Alice Margaret Papin, aka Maggie Rattlesnake, was her maiden name. I was in five different foster homes
by the time I was 5, and in those five years being in these homes, I was also being shuffled in and out of my mother’s life.

Life with my mother was rather chaotic. I have heard stories and have few memories, so I know life wasn’t a perfect one for a young child to grow up in. It was a life where you had to grow up awfully fast to survive it. I remember hiding a lot, and I thought of my older sister. I thought my older sister, Cindy, was my mother for the most part. She seemed to watch out for me a lot as she does to this day.

It was a struggle for me at a very young age and for anyone who was around and living this life back then. I remember the police coming in different homes that we had had to take my sister, Tammy, away numerous times, and I remember my mother fighting with them, yelling at them not to take her babies away. It was a scarier deal back then, and my mother really put up a fight. So, it was as pretty violent and nerve-racking as I remember.

I remember -- I recently received a file from child welfare, and I have been researching myself and trying to make sense of the whole ordeal. I am still dealing with some of the issues I endured during this time. I was saddened to read about my mother fighting for me in a letter she wrote to get me back. On the other hand, I was
so happy she did because the letters proved her love for me after all these years I had been told that she hated me and that she wanted me dead. I grew up fearing a monster and having my nightmares in my younger years. My foster home completely brainwashed me that my mother was truly evil and wanted to kill me, and I believed them.

All of us kids were taken at some point or another. We grew up as strangers for the most part. We were all put into foster care. I remember my sister, Tammy, and I being placed in a foster home together. The foster home said they didn’t want her and they wanted to keep me. I think it was because I barely talked, and I figured I was easier for them to mould to their liking.

I was taken to various places in Central Alberta. This family managed to take me to Williams Lake, B.C. I was so far away from my family now. There are papers in the file that state that I was to be severed from my sister’s first, and finally severed from my family for the rest of my life. From then on, I survived a multitude of scenarios of abuse from the foster home that took me to B.C.

I grew up as, what I called, a robot. I just did everything I was told and barely spoke. I was constantly in mental health buildings when I was young. I remember they would take my ponytails out all the time and
talk about what could have happened. To this day, I have
two places on my head where my hair doesn’t grow normally,
so a story we’ll never know. The foster dad always seemed
so nice to me, even though I seldom saw him because he
worked night shifts and jobs that took most of his home
time.

He was my bather, and I know now what he was
doing to me. He was my sexual abuser, and the mother was
my physical and psychological abuser. She would wait until
the dad left and come after me. She would tear the bedding
from me almost in a rage and started stripping my clothes
off. Then, sometimes, it was buckets of cold water on me
or the belt. Now, I put it together and I know it was
because she was jealous of me, because of the dad.

I remember being terrified every day. I had
two foster brothers in the home. One of them liked me and
the other one didn’t. The older one was always tattling on
me for something, things like I saw his dad with his
undershirt on or I looked up when I should have looked
down. I couldn’t really do anything. Whatever I did, I
got in trouble for it, even laughing, so I just didn’t.

The other brother was six months younger
than me, and we would get along all right. The main thing
I liked about this brother is that he would try to protect
me at times. He would actually jump on the mother and
start hitting her while she was beating me or pouring water on me. I knew he knew it was wrong, what she was doing. I think he was embarrassed as well since I was always naked, sitting on the kitchen floor while they ate breakfast and got ready for school.

I hardly went to the private schools they had me in, especially the one where I was the only girl. I was always too damaged to go due to swollen hands and pulled out hair, et cetera. I had to heal up first, and sometimes it would take a long time.

So, there are many odd and sad stories to this story. It would take a book to tell it all. I’ve started writing. Hopefully, I will be able to finish one day. I feel there are others that would benefit from the story they could relate to.

I ended up running away from the home when I was 12, and finally the social workers were on the case, and they immediately removed me from the home that psychologically, sexually and physically abused me. I remember seeing photographs of Native girls on the wall for all those years. They had headshots of these girls only. They were school pictures, I think. I would find myself wondering about them and wondering if they had to endure what I did. I remember wishing I was them because they were no longer there. I was forced to say I wanted these
people to adopt me for years. I feel the Creator or something was out there keeping that from happening, so I am so fortunate.

I heard there were investigations done on the family, but I never heard the outcome except that they were never allowed to foster again. I was terrified to say anything to anyone. I always thought I could get sent back, so I kept pretty quiet just like I had done already in my life. I remember social workers and family support workers trying to pry information out of me about this family. I couldn’t talk.

I was placed in another foster home for a short while, and then finally I was placed with the Fowlers. I was given the choice of where I wanted to live, and I chose the Fowlers. They seemed to be easy going and they felt safe for me. I had never felt this in my life before. The Fowlers wanted the best for me. They adopted me right away. They knew it was important that I be reunited with my biological family. I was not aware how much this family cared for me at the time. They went as far as taking me to Edmonton to find out who my family was. This was around the time when my sister, Georgina, phoned me. They must have been doing some searching.

Georgina introduced herself. She told me she was my older sister and that she loved me very much.
She told me I had a big family that wanted to meet me. I remember her voice was incredibly loving and nurturing. I believed that she loved me, another feeling I was not familiar with. Georgina made me feel like I belonged somewhere that day. I’ll always remember her that way.

I started to know my family. I didn’t start to know my family until I was 15 years of age. My sister, Georgina, was the first sibling to find me, and I will forever remember the way she talked to me. My brother, George, also contacted me through a letter and a picture he had of he and my brother, Rick, when they were young. I treasured those pictures for a very long time after.

My life changed from that point just to know that there are people out there who knew who I was. I was mostly happy with my new adopted family. But, in 1984, I ended up running away from Williams Lake, hitch-hiking to Prince George, and then started hitch-hiking Downtown Vancouver. I hitch-hiked a lot. Everywhere and anywhere looking for me, I guess.

Eventually, I made it to my hometown, which was Edmonton, and then started looking for my biological family. Another few chapters of my life went on. In 1985, I met all my siblings for the first time. It had been the first and, I think, the only time we were all together. We were happy to meet each other, but I don’t feel that we
were -- we knew what we were expecting. I felt we were pretty much strangers.

There were many struggles in this part of my life, trying to survive the cruel world of drugs and prostitution. The high-risk life I lived was scary, but almost comforting to me at the same time because I didn’t have to answer to anyone but myself. The abuse and pain I was already used to, and I would let everybody and anybody do whatever they wanted to me. I don’t really like to think about this part of my life, but it happened, just like it did to my sister, Georgina, and many others.

I ended up leaving Edmonton and returning to B.C. in 1992. I lived in Hope for a few years and found out that Georgina lived in Mission, which is very close to Hope. So, my boyfriend at the time and I started visiting her and her little boy, Dylan Skye. She was pregnant with Autumn Wind. She seemed to have a lot of friends. There were young mothers and teens that would come to her home, and she would help them out all the time, food, money, clothes, whatever she could do to help these people.

I grew to admire her and the way she reached out to so many the way she did. We had some things in common. I thought it was pretty cool that I had an actual sister that had some of the same ideas and beliefs that I had, along some coincidences, that we had just read the
same book, and it was an eye-opener for the both of us.
She gave me the follow-up book and inscribed it to me, and
I treasure it to this day, and this is the book she gave
me, and she’s inscribed it. It says, “Happy birthday,
little sister. Within my prayers, it seems I could but
only find love, peace and harmony. I am blessed to share
so much needed sisterhood. I love you, my little sis,
Bonnie. Through life we grow, we cry, and let your spirit
fly. You are so very beautiful, and I am so happy that
we’ve become closer. Love in sisterhood, Georgina Faith.
Dreams do come true.”

We all went on with our lives, and I moved
to Mission in 1998. I had started seeing less of Georgina
by now. My boyfriend had two kids, so they kept me busy.
I started going back to school, and I was also teaching at
a Montessori preschool, so my life was taking up most of my
time.

Georgina ended up having two more babies.
They were twin daughters, Winter Star and Little Storm.
These girls were adorable, and I was in their life for a
little while when they were tiny. I had asked Georgina --
I had noticed Georgina fighting with her boyfriend on
numerous occasions, and she ended up leaving him. And, I
think from then on, life for Georgina started to go
downhill.
I remember a time Georgina came and invited me to meet a guy at a restaurant. The guy had offered her a job driving a packer, and she said I could get hired as well. I was in for sure, and Georgina said she would try it too. I was really excited about it, so we went.

We had fish and chips and beers. We ended up leaving there and going to the Sasquatch Inn, a bar that’s on the highway. I don’t remember the guy’s name who invited us at all or any of the people we were with. It had bikers and a rough looking crowd, and we ended up drinking too much. I know I did. I was so drunk. We ended up driving to a dirty old trailer somewhere. I don’t know where I was, but I know now. Now, when I think of it, I really believe it was affiliated with the farm, or it may have been the farm. We were very close to that area anyways.

We ended up getting drugs from somewhere. I had never done heroin before, but Georgina said she would take care of me, and I believed her. So, we did the drug. I didn’t enjoy it at all. I was afraid all of a sudden and I wanted to leave. I found Georgina in another room, and I told her I had to leave right now. She did take care of me and immediately got me out of there.

I didn’t go out with her anymore. She asked me a couple times, but I was busy with the kids and work.
I would see Georgina at times. She had a boyfriend she was hanging out with and would often leave the kids with her friend to babysit. I would hear stories about what Georgina had been up to the night before, like getting into all sorts of trouble. I was sad that she wasn’t the healthy woman I was getting to know when she was being a mom.

Time went on, and nobody saw Georgina at all. She was hanging around Vancouver up to no good. Eventually, her friend who was babysitting was getting worried, and one day she told me she hadn’t seen Georgina for a while, that we should go look for her. When we couldn’t find her, her friend had gone back to look for her on various occasions in Downtown Vancouver. She convinced me that something was not right and went to the police station and we filed a missing persons report.

Georgina’s friend, Kathleen, was more concerned at the time than I was. This being because I had always thought of our whole family as being missing most of my life. We all were living in our own separate lives and never saw each other or talked to each other on a regular basis, and this was normal to me. The day we went to the police station to make a missing persons report, again I felt as if it wasn’t real because, to me, the police responded as if I was making a lost wallet report. I guess
I felt as if they didn’t take it seriously.

Time went on, still no news of Georgina’s whereabouts. Life was a confusing time back then. A lot had happened in my own life. I had left my boyfriend and the kids. I remember moving back to Edmonton once again, and I started another life. In this time, I personally had no follow-up from the police or anything. I don’t believe they had contacted any of our family for updates to search either. I know some family members, like our Auntie Parlene (ph) had contacted Georgina’s eldest, Christina, who lived in and still lives in Vegas to see if anyone over there had seen or heard from her, and there was nothing.

Yes, I was growing concerned now, but I still figured Georgina was just doing her thing and staying away. I had done this in my life, so it was, again, normal to me. I’m not sure exactly when, but police put Georgina’s picture on the missing persons list and posted it. I saw it a lot.

In this time period, I had lost my way as well. I ended up turning my life into turmoil. I was in Toronto living a very high-risk lifestyle. When I was there, I would see Georgina’s picture on the TV once in a while, and even still I was waiting till they would say, “We found her,” and that was pretty much the only response I ever -- that I thought I would hear. My brother, George,
found out where I was and told me to come home immediately. He was worried, so he bought a plane ticket for me to return to Edmonton.

It wasn’t long after that I got a call from my brother, George, and he told me the police were looking for me. I was afraid because at the time I had a warrant. I remember getting angry at him because he told me that he gave them the address I was at. George told me that the police did not care about the warrant and had to talk to me specifically about something very important. He said they wouldn’t tell him the urgency, that I was the only one they could talk to about this.

Two police came to the door, a man and a woman. They told me to get into their SUV and we were going for a little drive. They drove a few blocks and parked. They told me the news of Georgina. They told me they had reason to believe she was murdered by Robert Pickton, that her DNA was found on the farm. I was alone, and I was very nervous. I was still not believing what I was hearing. The police ended up dropping me off at the place they picked me up, and I started telling everybody, including George, and from then on, it was havoc.

I really don’t remember a lot of that time because the news was getting around to the family, and I remember us gathering more and realizing what had happened
and what was happening. I remember it was horrifying the more it was being talked about and becoming the reality. I don’t know why, but there seems to be such a gap in between us getting the news and the time I went to the pre-trial. From that day, most of our family had really come together as brothers and sisters anyways. We still didn’t know each other at all that well, but we seemed to have a closer bonding experience.

We have a brother named Randall. He was raised in the States that we had never met. I’m not sure how we got in touch with him, and I can’t remember if he heard the news from down there or where. He ended up telling us he wanted to be with us and he was going to move to Canada. We were all very excited about this. Our family was coming together, and it felt really good to all of us, I felt, considering the circumstances.

He came to Canada and started to get to know us. He was just as lost as we were, but we were all used to being lost, I guess. We all have a sense of humour, and we would tell each other how we were alike and compare ourselves to each other. I found this incredible and surreal.

I don’t recall too much from the police for a while. I remember the media having a hay day with us and our story. They insisted to twist it into some kind of
entertainment. I remember I was telling the media we
didn’t want to talk to them anymore. Our brother, Randall,
told them, “No more questions on updates or how we feel.”
He told them he was going to make a website, so they could
refer to it for information.

The very next day, an article in the
Edmonton Journal that stated, “Slain hooker siblings build
website.” We were angered by this and went to the Edmonton
Sun and made a complaint of them trashing our sister. The
Edmonton Journal actually apologized and rewrote Georgina’s
story in a respectful way and told of her children and the
love she had for them and the way she loved her culture.

A lot was happening with our family uniting
and getting to know each other. The media had calmed down,
and we just kept on living and surviving whatever was
happening in our lives. I ended up moving out of Edmonton
again, this time to Winnipeg. Then, not long after
struggling there for a while, I got a call from the same
police that had given the news of Georgina. They told me I
was to go to Vancouver and be a witness for the pre-trial
for Pickton. I was really unstable, and I felt very
vulnerable to these police or detectives. I just did
whatever they said with no question.

So, they flew me to Vancouver where they met
me off the plane. I was so nervous on the inside, but I
was trying to act like I wasn’t. They were trying to make me feel at ease with random jokes, and they took me out for dinner. This was so uncomfortable to me. They also had to get an adjoining suite at the hotel and told me they were going to be on the other side, but the door had to remain open, so they could keep an eye on me. I smoked back then, and even when I went for a cigarette, they would come with me. I didn’t get much sleep having two police in my room watching me. It was not pleasant.

The next day, they took me to the courthouse and told me to stand or stay in a couple of locations in the hall and told me not to look at anyone or talk to anyone. They told me when I go in the courtroom to testify, I wasn’t to look at Pickton’s eyes, so I didn’t. I did glance very quickly and saw him briefly. It was creepy. I remember Marilyn, Johnny and Frieda Anski being there to support me at court, which I was happy for even though it would have been easier to have family there. They gave me a medicine bag that made me feel a little bit better, maybe in a sense safer.

I lived at -- I was living in Winnipeg in another unhealthy relationship. I was addicted to drugs and using. I always worked and covered up the fact that I did drugs and managed to keep it together. I had the right mind to get out of my situation though, and I moved back to
Edmonton to be with my family that it seemed to get closer after we had the news of our sister, Georgina.

There was a short time period after hearing about Georgina I thought we had an actual family that loved and cared for each other. We had so much in common with each other, it was fascinating to be a part of this group of people. Time and circumstances changed things, and now we have almost become strangers again, except for Cynthia and I. We have a connection that I believe we always had even when I was very young, so I’m so grateful to our relationship and bonding that has taken place in the last 17 years. And, that’s what I have written on my life.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you to both of you. I just have a few questions. I’ll start with Bonnie. Can you tell us how you remember your sister, Georgina? What were her strengths, her personality, how she was?

**MS. BONNIE FOWLER:** She was so funny. She had such a sense of humour, and she just seemed to have this free spirit about her. Her kids always were laughing, and she was teasing them, and playing with them all the time, and she just joked around all the time. And, her smile, and she was so beautiful.

She played the guitar. She played for my birthday. She had -- she always made really good bannock, and she loved making it. She was always cooking for
everybody, cooking for people, and serving people constantly. The whole time I knew her, she always did that.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: And, she was a mother of seven children; am I correct? And, what happened to those children after she died?

MS. BONNIE FOWLER: All the children are separated. They’re living all over the place in foster homes, and -- well they’re getting older now. Most of them aren’t in foster care anymore, but they’ve all -- they’ve lost their way. Christina’s still doing good, and I think that has something to do with Georgina instilling a lot of her culture and her ways and her beliefs into Christina. I think that’s -- she was a good -- what do you call that? Influence on her.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: And, I don’t know if you would like to share some information about the challenges of Georgina as she grew up and the environment of her childhood, and what brought her to the path of leaving and running away from foster home?

MS. BONNIE FOWLER: I think that...

MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL: There was sexual abuse in the foster home that me and Rick had attended -- that were in, and that’s the home that she had ran away from. Apparently, our brother Rick witnessed her in bed
with the foster father so, yes, that was the time she ran away to Calgary.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** And, I have a question for you, Cynthia, as you mentioned earlier, the way the Victim Services -- the way they interacted with you during the trial. Can you explain why you were not included from the rest of the families? Do you know why?

**MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL:** I’m not really sure, but I think it’s because I’m Native. There were a few of the women that were Native that were murdered, but there was also a lot of other races, so I’m not sure why they segregated us and treated us the way they did. I have no idea, but that’s the only one I can think of, was because we were Native. We didn’t know them and they didn’t know us, so I have no other explanation.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you. I don’t have any more questions. I do believe you have recommendations and observations to provide to Chief Commissioner?

**MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL:** We would like to read a poem Georgina wrote while she was actually in BCCW down here. That was probably about 1994 or 1995, and it’s very gripping, so...

**MS. BONNIE FOWLER:** Okay. By Georgina Papin. It’s called, “I Will Fight”.

The look upon your face, innocent you are,
sentenced for a deadly crime. The system’s gone too far. I will fight for freedom in a positive way, I will fight for you, my people, because there is no other way. We hold the key to the missing link.

Taxpayers are hereby sentenced you to think. Take a good look at the white man’s liars, oppressive justice system, do you hear the nation’s cries?

The resistance continues, the Indigenous are strong. We lived in the right, white men lived in the wrong. I will fight for my people, feather in my hand. I will fight for the unjust judgments, the diseases upon our land. My brothers, my sisters, we must make our stand. Together we will fight, the truth is close at hand.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you. That was beautiful. Can I maybe have one last question, how do you keep going? What keeps you moving forward?

**MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL:** Her spirit. Her very strong spirit. And, also, getting to know about what was going on by these beautiful women behind us were so supportive and kept us up to date and let us know what was really going on, and that our sister had gone through all that pain and yet ended up a victim. So, we keep going.

We have -- she started an organization in honour of Georgina. It’s called Edmonton Sisters 4 Sisters Society. We are now in charge of the February 14th walks
that happen nationally. We’re very proud to have that position. We’re struggling. We still need some more members, so -- but we wanted to use it to help the families so that we could be -- we could speak among ourselves. We’re growing. We’re going to grow, and it’s going to be good.

We had a great round dance this year for February 14th, which I’m really glad of because we had to borrow insurance liability from another organization. And, that day of the round dance, it was really -- it was just ice outside, so I’m glad nobody had to walk on it. That was probably another Georgina sign. Yes, she’s very inspirational. She keeps us strong. That’s the only way we can keep going is through her, and women like these.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** Thank you. Any recommendations?

**MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL:** Mostly for the children. They really need to be looked after and they really need to be taught that this is wrong and kept educated as to how the Indigenous people are -- how we live and, you know, just -- I really, really want to encourage that the children are helped, that the children of these women are reunited with their siblings, with their families. You know, because family’s very important.

**MS. BONNIE FOWLER:** I agree with --
to have healing for the kids. I know from my own experience that they need it really bad, and they’re growing up really fast. Most of them are adults now. And, they’re still feeling the loss and the hurt, and they’re not knowing exactly who they are and who their mother was. So -- and it’s not money that’s going to fix that, it’s love and culture and us. So, that’s what we need to do.

**MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL:** Just having them -- like if you can’t be in one -- in a family, in a relative’s home, not a stranger’s home. They’re not going to find love in that stranger’s home, but you will find it with your family, with your relatives, because that’s yours.

There’s probably more, but I can’t -- I really wanted to show the video of Georgina at the park, which was so beautiful. It only took this lady here three days to get it done and it was all setup. She’s amazing. Amazing. All of them. These two. I don’t -- I have so much love for all these women behind me. I’m so grateful to have them.

**MS. FANNY WYLDE:** So, Chief Commissioner, if you don’t have any questions or comments, the family would like to share a tribute video of their sister.

**CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER:** Just one comment. Cynthia, based on what you just said, if something does come to mind that you would like to
recommend, please let Fanny know and she’ll get it to me; okay?

MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL: Okay.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Let’s see the video.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: Thank you. So, I would like to invite the technical team to show the video. Thank you.

(VIDEO PRESENTATION)

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Thank you very much for that. I just want to share a little story about how the Commissioners started our work. We were back in September of 2017, when we first met here in Vancouver, we were strangers to each other. We didn’t know each other, and we wanted to start our work in a good way, in ceremony. So, we went to the memorial at Crab Park, and that’s where we started this work.

MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL: You were there?

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: We were there with some flowers from my garden at home and some tobacco, and we -- that’s how we started our work with that focus. So, I just wanted to share that because it may -- in the video.

MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL: Wow, I wish we had known you back then, but I sure am grateful I do now.
CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Well, it -- we want -- we knew we had to start our work in a good way and that’s what we did. So, thank you for bringing that beautiful memory back for me of -- it seems like a lifetime ago now, but it wasn’t, and that was how we started.

What you’ve said today is very important to us and the work that we’re doing, so I want to thank you for that. Personally, what you’ve said to me has been a bit of a trip down memory lane because very early on, I issued search warrants for the Pickton Farm, so this is bringing back some memories for me too.

So, thank you for that, because it was a very moving time for all of us who worked in the Port Coquitlam Courthouse because we could see out of our -- one of our big windows, the machinery working to excavate the farm. So, it was a legacy that we lived with everyday, not in the same way you did, and it never will be, but we really felt as though we were there, so it was moving for us. So, personally, I thank you too.

MS. CYNTHIA CARDINAL: You’re welcome.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: We have gifts for you because you’ve given us so much. We were told by the matriarchs and Bernie that we had to give you gifts and -- to lift you up and support you because of the
pain that you have. So, we have eagle feathers for you, and I’ve learned all across Canada there’s slightly different stories and beliefs that they’re pretty much the same. We’re pretty much the same across Canada.

The eagle feathers will hold you up and lift you up when you need to be held up and lifted up. And, when you’re ready to take the next step and move on, the eagle feathers will hold you up and lift you up. So, in moments when you need that lift, please call on our gift to you to lift you up.

We also have seeds for you because what we’re seeing all across Canada is, out of this pain and grief is becoming healing and new birth and growth. And so, we’re going to ask you to plant the seeds, and if anything grows, will you please take a picture and send it to us for our archives? Because we want this to be about new growth as well. So, thank you both very much. As I’ve said, what you’ve shared with us today is very important, and I’m very grateful. So, thank you.

MS. FANNY WYLDE: So, may I ask, Chief Commissioner, to adjourn this session?

CHIEF COMMISSIONER MARION BULLER: Yes, this session is adjourned. Thank you.

--- Exhibits (code:P01P15P0104)

Exhibit 1: Folder containing x digital images displayed
1 during the public testimony of Cynthia
2 Cardinal and Bonnie Fowler.
3 Exhibit 2: Commemorative Video.
4 --- Upon adjourning at 18:00
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.

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Shirley Chang

April 12, 2018