National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Truth-Gathering Process
Part 1 Public Hearings
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Elmbridge Room
Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

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Thursday April 5, 2018

Public Volume 91
Myrna Abraham,
In relation to Sharon Nora Jane Abraham

Heard by Commissioner Brian Eyolfson
Commission Counsel: Christa Big Canoe

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Northwest Indigenous Council Society  Non-Appearance
Our Place - Ray Cam Co-operative Centre  Non-Appearance
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada  Non-Appearance
Vancouver Sex Workers’ Rights Collective  Non-Appearance
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak / Women of the Métis Nation  Non-Appearance
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**Witness:** Myrna Abraham

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Myrna Abraham
(Sharon Nora Jane Abraham)

Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

--- Upon commencing on Thursday, April 5, 2018 at 9:21

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good morning. Good morning, Commissioner Eyolfson.

I would like to introduce you to Myrna Abraham. Myrna will be sharing the story of her sister Sharon Nora Jane Abraham.

Before we begin I would ask that the Registrar please promise Myrna in with a feather.

REGISTRAR BRYAN ZANDBERG: Myrna, do you promise to tell the truth in a good way today?

MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM: Yes.

REGISTRAR BRYAN ZANDBERG: Thank you.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Good morning. So before we actually start talking about Sharon today, I was wondering if we could share a little bit about your family and your background. I know that you're one of many siblings, so maybe you could tell the Commissioner just a little bit about your family background, your parents, your siblings.

MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM: Hi. My name is Myrna Abraham. There was eight of us. Sharon was born to my mother, Irene Abraham and also my father, Norman Abraham. My mother was arranged marriage. Sharon is one of the youngest. Sharon and I, we never went to boarding school.
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The rest of my siblings have gone to a boarding school.
Yeah.

And then Sharon wasn’t raised with us. I think it was the last two years, maybe the last year of my mother's life before we got separated again.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: So maybe you can tell us where you're from too, because I understand that you're from Manitoba. So where does your family come from?

MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM: We're from Sagkeeng, Manitoba. That used to be Fort Alexander.

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: And I know that you do have a lot of fond memories and I was wondering if you wanted to share any of Sharon's strengths or memories you have growing up with her or spending time with her, even when you were adults, with the Commissioner?

MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM: Yeah. Sharon came to live with us for the last year or two years of my mother's life. We were separated when I was six months. I believe I was six months.

She ran away from home and like, she was raised with my grandmother and then she came -- and she ran away from home. She came to live with us for the past two years before we were separated again when my mom had passed.

And then I was living with my grandmother.
And then Sharon, I think she went to go live with my oldest sister Isabel. I'm not quite sure. And then I would see her at school. She was in high school; I was in probably grade school still, into junior high.

When I was growing up, there was like, lots of fights because I'm an Abraham. And there was like, a lot of disappointment, I guess, with Abrahams. And then I ran away at, I think, 14, 15, and that's when I really got to hang out with Sharon as much as I wanted.

And then I became pregnant. I think I was 15, because I had my daughter when I was 16. I gave her up for adoption and I ran away to Winnipeg.

And while I was living in Winnipeg I found out that something drastic happened to Sharon, which she was removed from Sagkeeng and she was transferred to my uncle who used to work in Alberta. He was OPP, I believe. And then Sharon went to go live with him.

And then my sister Agnes that lived here in Vancouver, she went to Calgary to pick up Sharon and she had brought Sharon here.

And then I think in '86 I came out here and I lived out here for maybe six months. Sharon used to babysit my son while I went to school at Native Education. And I guess we missed the snow, we missed the language.
And Sharon became pregnant. Well, she had Nicole. And then we had a friend named Desmond that used to come because my partner left me here in Winnipeg alone and then Desmond came to spend time with me. He was a family friend.

And then Sharon -- what do you call it -- started babysitting for me while I went to school.

And then I went back to Winnipeg because like I said, we missed everything back home. He had family down there and I was just being me, I guess. Yeah.

And then Sharon came back to Winnipeg with her two daughters. And I had quit drinking already. I have times where I quit drinking for five years, four years, and then I would go back to drinking. But I've been sober for, I think, six, seven years. I'm not sure. Seven years.

When the investigators came to tell me about Sharon, I was working two jobs because I became a single parent. No, no, not yet. I was working one job but I was working, like, 16 hours a day. And then when the investigators came to find me, I think I was still with my kids' dad. I'm not sure.

But when the investigators came to find me, I guess they came to my place about four times because I was too busy working. And then finally, I came home from
work and you know, when you know there is something not
good coming, and my legs got weak and I thought I was going
to pass out, right? Didn’t happen.

I went home and then I don't know how Agnes
-- I mean, Isabel came to my place or how she found out to
come to my place, and my Aunt Grace had come with her when
they told us.

And then I had a cousin that was alive
before he committed suicide, right? And with everything
that happened with finding out about Sharon's DNA -- and
then they lived, like, two streets down from us. And he
was on his way home and he had gotten beaten up and I had
to pay for his way to the hospital. They beat him up with
those things there that they use for construction.

So I'm walking home and I just started
crying and I just seen, like, stars and everything went
clear. Like, I didn’t see nothing but just bright light.

And then during this -- I mean, after this,
we found out that what happened with Sharon, we had a
memorial. But the memorial, that I asked the investigators
if I could get some mud, something from the farm so we
would have something and there was -- they said they
couldn't give us anything because it was all -- what is it
called when they -- evidence, yeah.

So when we had her service -- well, service
-- memorial, we had an empty baby casket. For us, we have a
fire for four days. I sat by the fire for the four days.
I went inside maybe twice to go sleep. My oldest son, I
think he was 15 at the time, maybe 16, yeah, he took care
of the fire.

I couldn't bring myself to come into the
house because I wasn't -- I'm still having a hard time
accepting the DNA findings, because I've heard two
different DNAs and the last one, I can't -- it's hard to
accept that they just found her fingernail.

So anyways, we had her casket and there is
my nieces that cut their hair and put their hair inside the
casket. Other people put tobacco, cigarettes, letters. I
didn't put anything. I didn't even go inside the house.

And then they took her to the Anglican
church because that's where my family is buried. But they
don't have her with the other siblings. They have her away
from the siblings. Although it was just an empty casket,
it would have been nice to have her laid beside my mother
or my other siblings because they're all in one row.

And then after the time that that happened,
I made a commitment of not eating pork. My family, my
children, have not eaten pork for a while and then I guess
they missed the taste. I don't know.

But I do have one son that doesn't eat pork.
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My son was only 12 years old, my youngest son. He was 6'2" already at 12. He was being harassed by gang members and whatnot, and being Native, it's kind of hard to be a young Native person because you're getting harassed by the police, you're getting harassed by your own Nation.

And he started getting paranoid so he went to jail for a while because he started carrying a knife because there was a carload of people that pulled up on him on his way from school to home. And they had threatened him so he started carrying a knife. And he went to school with the knife and he pulled out the knife at school so he ended up going to jail for a while.

So that's what happened with him. And today he still doesn't eat pork. He's home now. He's now 21 so he spent 9 years there.

And I ended up breaking up my relationship. I don't have trust with men, I guess. And I find that a lot of times there's, like, a lot of advances towards women. Like, it's not only men that make those advances, it's women too. It's like, when I grew up I was molested by male and female.

But when Sharon lived with us we used to sleep under the house when my mother would drink, have parties. We'd sleep with the dogs. There was one time we slept in a carpet. And my mom had woke up and she was
like, "Where's my children? Where's my children?"

And we crawled out of the carpet behind the house and she was happy, I guess, things like that.

Like, Sharon -- we never really found safety growing up. We used to sleep under the beds because nobody would be able to touch us under the beds. And then when she took us to start sleeping underneath the house with the dogs, that's where our protection was, right?

When my mom had passed, Sharon -- I woke up. Of course, I sleep under the bed because we were all drinking. My mother had gotten us all intoxicated. We had maybe a five, maybe six bedroom, and there was Sharon, my youngest sister -- she has a different dad -- and then my nephew which I called my brother at the time, and Sharon.

And when I woke up, I seen my stepdad because I went to go use the washroom. I seen my stepdad coming out of the bedroom. And my mom was breathing, like, really funny, like, a loud snore, right? And I seen Sharon sleeping beside my mother.

And it was early morning when Sharon came and told me, "Well, Mom's dead."

And I said. "No, she's not dead. She's sleeping."

She goes, "Well, come check her pulse."

And I didn’t know what pulse was because I
Myrna Abraham (Sharon Nora Jane Abraham)

didn’t know. So I checked and when I lifted up my mom's arm she'd just flop back on the bed.

And that was the last time -- my mom's birthday is February 16th, so that was the day. They were saying that she arranged that my oldest sister take care of us because she knew she was going to pass. She wasn’t supposed to drink because she had that liver disease.

Yeah.

And that's -- we used to go swimming and while my mom and my stepfather would go fishing. And there was this one time, my stepdad, he threw the hook out to go fishing and we were swimming in the water. Well, he ended up getting Sharon with the hook in the head so he had to -- whatever you call it when you pull the fish in. And I guess they had to cut the hook out to take the hook out of her head.

Yeah, just like, little things like that.

What else could I say?

MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: Thank you for sharing, particularly about Sharon. I know one of the things you had told me once though is she helped you understand what a birthday is. Did you want to share with the Commissioner that fond memory about how she would make you feel special sometimes?

MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM: Yeah, I never knew what
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a birthday was until my mom had passed. I was living with my grandmother and Sharon was walking down the road. And I didn’t know she was coming to see me, but she came with this necklace and it was -- because I'm a Libra, so it had that -- the scales. Yeah, so she gave me that scales and she told me it was my birthday. So I was surprised that I had a birthday because, like, friends at school had birthdays but I didn’t have birthdays.

So after I found out about birthdays, I was working at Polo Park. You might think I'm crazy. I was working at Polo Park and it was my birthday and I'm walking with my trays because I would clean up the area where people would eat. And I was carrying my trays and I went to go put it on top of the garbage but there was a birthday card that come rolling down. And it hit me right on my foot. And there was a crowd of people that were watching this card come rolling down and hit me on the foot. Like I said, Sharon was the only one that gave me birthday presents or anything. So that was from her again.

Like, because I have a hard time accepting that she is gone. So I got this birthday card. And then I went home from work and I got on the bus and there was a watch sitting there. And I figured it was from her again so I carried the watch for a while. I don't know where the watch is.
Like, I've worked a lot but somehow, because with -- you mess up your credit so I've been having a hard time to like, trying to find a place and whatnot.

And Christmas came and there was -- I think this all happened before the DNA thing came. I don't remember. But I'm positive it happened before all this DNA, before the investigators came.

I was sitting and having my lunch break with one of my co-workers and there was a lady -- well, Sharon liked to wear blue jeans. This lady had a blue jean jacket on and blue jeans. And she had a hoodie. And I'm having lunch with my co-worker and this woman come walking and she come walking towards my direction and it's a long walk. And she had no face but she looked directly at me.

And I said, "Well, it's too bad for that person because they probably don't have a soul," because my co-worker looked too.

I used to work at Polo Park again but this time it was night shift. I quit the day shift because I don't like being around too much bickering. So in February, I was cleaning the offices in Polo Park and I was cleaning the ABC. In this ABC, there wasn't much to do so I just went to go pick up the garbage and there was only one piece of paper in the garbage.

But before anything happened, there was
like, feathers, all tiny, tiny, little white feathers come
down and they fell towards the ground. And when I went to
go and pick up my garbage and when I stood up, I just felt
like a knife come right across my back. Like, I didn’t
have no pain or anything. But yeah, like I said, these
feathers came. And when I finally was able to move my legs
I felt nothing but excruciating pain. And I managed to get
to the other office, so I had to phone my supervisor. So
that happened there.

And I was going into my living room from the
kitchen and when I was going into the living room I had no
socks or anything. And there was, like, no dirt or
anything around, but I got a gush of ashes in my face.
Like, there was nothing there. And my kids had just looked
at me. I'm like, "Wow."

And then before the Inquiry in Winnipeg --
what was it -- registration at the Thunderbird House, I was
going to go register, and then because I work at the Ab
Centre and the Ab Centre is just, like, down the street, I
was going to skip. I was going to say, "Forget it."

But then the song there, where's there's a
memorial for murdered and missing, and once in a while I
put it on my Facebook. That song came on and then I said,
"Okay then." So I went into the Thunderbird House to go
register.
Like, we didn’t really get much time with Sharon to get to know her, but she's always sending me signals. Like, when we walked through Highway of Tears, I was going to quit because there was issues. And the day I was really going to quit, I seen her picture in one of the trees so I said, "Okay then." So I kept walking.

And I was thinking, I don't know what she wants me to do. Then I started thinking, well, maybe this is my healing of what she wants me to do. And I've always held on. I don't know if I was the only one in the family that has held onto her. See, she's calling. Yeah.

So yeah, I'm hoping that I get healing from this and I'm hoping that this will be a way of letting her go. They say when you hold on too long to a spirit, it cries. I've been crying.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you for sharing that. I know that you’ve told the Commissioner and us that you had some hard times growing up, that there was a lot of violence in your life. And I know there was a lot of violence in Sharon's too, not just like, family stuff but through relationships and times when she was out here.

I'm going to ask if we can turn to when she was murdered, just so we have a little more information in relation to her loss.

And so Sharon was actually one of Robert
Pickton's victims and we -- I mean, I know a lot of people out here are familiar with the case. But one of the things I know that you wanted to talk about was the fact that he was never charged with her murder.

So earlier you were talking about the fact that police came to collect DNA from family members so that they could check if it matched, and you said that you were having a hard time because it was so little DNA that showed up at the Pickton property, letting go. But there was a point when the investigators came to you and family to get different samples so they could confirm whether it was a match. And do you recall if they did advise you it was a match?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** When they came and did ask for DNA, they didn’t tell me they were looking for DNA. All they told me was -- oh, no, no, that's a lie. They did tell me that they were looking for DNA and Sharon, she was raped, why she left the reserve, and she was in the hospital for two weeks. So they were looking for a doctor and the doctor's named Sebal (ph). I'm thinking that was his name.

I gave him his name and then there was -- she had a funny character, I guess, because she had a doctor named Love and then she had a doctor named -- oh, I forgot what the doctor's name.
And then I just found out last year that they were looking for DNA for Nicole and Tikisha (ph).

And with her murder, like, it's hard to say that she was actually gone, because I had a hard time accepting with the DNA, with the fingernail, and then I was told earlier with the other DNA, that was easier to accept because it sounded so harsh, gruesome.

Yeah, it was really hard to -- what do you call it -- accept that she was Pickton's victim. It's hard to accept that if she was a prostitute -- I knew that she did drink a lot. We've never known her to do drugs. We did know that she was going to -- I think they called it Piggy Palace that time because she hung out with some people that went there.

She told us that she seen -- she saw a woman hanging and that they were coming for her, is what we were told.

What is really hard to accept from all this is -- what do you call it -- they came to us and told us about her DNA and told us that she was Pickton's victim, but yet he has not been charged for her murder and there will never be a charge for her murder, as far as I know. I got a death certificate. I don't know if any other family members got death certificates.

I paid my way to come to the trial. I asked
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Sagkeeng if they would help me. They did help me with 500. But I was working two jobs. I had to take care of my family. We were raised to be ashamed of Welfare.

I just had gotten off the plane and they took -- I think we were staying at the Hyatt. I just got off the taxi and they were just going to go to the trial again. And my nieces were there. And I didn’t know where I was going or anything. All I knew was that I was going to the trial.

And then they took me to the skytrain where we went to Old Westminster, I think. So we went there and they let me go into the courtroom where the investigators and that were. And Pickton was probably where the ladies are sitting back there from me. And I don’t sleep. I don’t sleep if I know I have to be somewhere because when I do sleep, I sleep like a log.

I didn’t sleep until I got here; I mean, like, until I got onto the plane because I didn’t want to miss the plane. So I was falling asleep and while I was in the trial I kind of like, jerked, went up with my hands, like, ready to choke. And I knew I could never be able to touch the person that had hurt my sister.

It’s really hard to accept that her life has been taken this way. Like, our lives were really violent. Like, when she gave birth to my second niece, the man she
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was with had taken off the doors because she had no
privacy. And he used to always beat her. And when she
went to the hospital she was hemorrhaging. She had to walk
to the hospital while she was in labour.

I guess she never really tried to deal with
the issues of growing up, where I, for myself, I've done a
lot of healing, because when I was pregnant with my
daughter, like, I had one of those pregnancies where they
have to take out your tubes so I accepted I couldn't have
no more kids. And then I became pregnant with my daughter
and I did a lot women's groups, a lot of working on myself
because I wasn't ready to accept -- like, I wanted to get
ready for her because I wanted a daughter. And I always
prayed that God would give me a daughter, right?

I used to tell my adopted brothers to go get
somebody pregnant so I can have a daughter. Yeah.

So I finally accepted I couldn't have a
daughter -- I mean, I couldn't have children any more
because I kept trying and trying. And I met “doh”. It's a
Homer joke because Homer's sperm got in there.

Yeah, I did a lot of work on myself because
I gave up my firstborn. She was a daughter. She was a
girl and I wasn’t able to accept or deal with my own issues
as a female and I didn’t want her with my family.

But I know her today. Like, Jessica, I
arranged for her family. I went to go make visits when I was pregnant with Jessica. I would visit the family and got to know them. And when I gave her up, I said that at 12 years old, she had to know she was adopted.

But then I was gifted a daughter when I did all my own healing and I got pregnant with a boy again.

But I just don’t know how -- like, I don't know where I'm going. Yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So with you being able to do some of your own healing, Sharon didn’t necessarily have that same opportunity. And you had explained how she had experienced a lot of violence. You referenced a rape in the community.

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** We don’t know anybody that had ---

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So and also that she was in abusive relationships because she never really had the opportunity to work on her -- come to terms with the violence she'd had earlier in life. Is that fair?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I want to return back if we can to you coming out. So you pay for yourself but with some support from your First Nation to actually go to a trial where the killer of your sister is not charged with her murder. Why did you want to go to the trial?
MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM: I felt it was important
to support Sharon because we have always -- we have come
into each other's lives but we were always separated. And
I wanted to go to the Pickton trial because I felt it was
important. Although I didn’t know whether or not if she
was really killed, because I don’t want to sugar coat it.
I'd say she passed or that she just died because it wasn’t
like that. A lot of people sugar coat it. She was killed
and it was torture.

And I've always been told you support each
other as family. And I guess I was supported because I
worked at the PLR as a housekeeper. They let me go for
four days so I could attend the trial. They helped me with
Sagkeeng with trying to get money from them to support --
to help me come to the courts. I managed to stay with one
of my nieces that came to the hearing too.

I guess you just want to look at the person
that has taken your family member but you know there's more
than just the one person. And I would like -- and I want
justice for her even though I know in probably my lifetime
and her daughters' lifetimes that he will never be charged
for her murder. But yet they gave me a piece of paper that
says that her death, that she -- they gave me a death
certificate and there's no saying on how she died on that
death certificate.
For a while I was thinking that she was in Seattle or somewhere more towards the other ocean. It's really hard to accept that, that her life has really been gone, been taken. I want this person, persons to face justice because she needs justice, I need justice. And that would be something that would help me to keep moving on, I guess, and yeah, closure, because we didn’t have a body. We had nothing.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** During the trial, so Robert Pickton was charged with six murders. But while you were there, there were other families there who also had sisters, mothers, daughters, that also were murdered by Pickton but he was not charged for those deaths either, those murders either. And during the process, like, he was convicted of the six murders.

But you said you know they’re not going to charge him. How do you know that they’re not going to charge him for all those other murders that, you know, the public, the media, and everyone through the trial knows that he did?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** At first he was going to be charged with, I think, about 26 murders, but I guess because there wasn’t enough evidence -- but there was enough evidence to give me a death certificate, right?

From 26 to 6, and I have a list of names
that have 49 women that he should have been convicted for, but only 6 because they found body parts, but they found my sister's DNA and it was enough for them to say that she's dead, that she was murdered.

How is that? How can he tell me that she's dead and not charge this person? How does materialistic things become more important than a life?

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And you came out for that trial. Normally, I guess, we could suppose if your sister's murder, if he'd been charged with that, you would have likely been entitled to have some of the funding to come out to participate. But your family didn't actually get to participate in the trial, they just got to watch and only because you paid for it or were supported from other sources; is that true?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yeah. I was working two jobs and well, one job I was casual so I can work whatever hours I was able to. Like, when I first started with them I used to work 160 hours in 2 weeks and I would work 80 hours with the other job. So PLR gave me four days off so I can attend the trial. And then they helped me with communicating with my reserve, Sagkeeng, which they helped me with $500.

And when I wanted to come to the trial, because her two daughters came to the trial and they said
only two family members were able to come, I paid for my
own airfare. And then the $500 was for food because they
did not support me with the food. But I was able to room
with one of my nieces. There is like, really no support.

And the only reason that the reserve helped
me is because I had to go through the Human Resources that
helped me with the PLR. I didn’t find out til maybe two
years ago that I was supposed to return my -- give them my
plane ticket which I paid for myself and I left my children
at home which I was lucky I didn’t have to pay for
childcare too. Yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** You mentioned there
was no support. So if I understand correctly, there were a
number of family members watching the trial that were not
participating in any way other than to observe it whose
daughters, sisters, mothers, aunts, nieces, were not the
victims that Pickton was facing the charges on. I
understand that you guys, the families, kind of created a
good support, but were there Victim Support Workers there
for families who were not part of those that Mr. Pickton
was facing charges on?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** I didn’t receive no
support, like, from when I went. But I don't know if there
was support for my nieces. But we did go for lunch and I
did sign a paper where they couldn't use my name on books
or on any stories that had to do with the Pickton because at the time I was afraid. I'm still afraid for my daughter because she's my only daughter, right? Like, I gave birth to another one but I still have contact with her. But this is the daughter I raised.

My daughter has a hard time. When she leaves the building there's always cars following her, males, men that follow her. She had just had my grandson. He's going to be two this year. She was going to school and I guess there was a man on the bus that started a conversation with her. And she just thought it was a man just talking to her. I was at work.

This man said to her, "I've been following you."

She didn't know if it was three days, three years, or three weeks. All she heard was "three" before she panicked. She was pushing my grandson. And we're lucky that cell phones exist today, right? She phoned her cousin to come meet her.

So she was on the phone with her cousin and the cousin had -- because we live in the same building, we did live in the same building. Our building is getting renovated. So she always had to have escorts when she would leave the building.

And just this past winter she had just gone
to 7-Eleven. We only live two blocks away from 7-Eleven.
A man in a silver car followed her from the building to 7-
Eleven. He made sure not to go into the parking lot of 7-
Eleven so he stayed on the street in the car. And she had
phoned me and told me that there was somebody following
her.

So one of my neighbours, she always talks
about sex trafficking and whatnot and I assumed that this
person would be willing to help me, to go and help my
daughter because I was taking care of the children and I
couldn't leave the children to go get my daughter home
safely. So my other neighbours, they know our issue. She
was out. And I was panicking. I wanted my daughter to
come home, right?

So the neighbour across from her had just
walked into the building and I told her that she was being
followed. So she went to go meet my daughter. And this is
a nice-size woman, right, and she's like, she's always been
there since we moved into the building. She walked with my
daughter from 7-Eleven.

They decided to use the main streets to get
back to the apartment. And the person that followed her
followed them right to the building. And one of the other
neighbours from upstairs had come down and she was yelling
at the guy, "Why are you following my sister?"
And the guy says, "I'm following the girl across the street."

There was no other woman across the street. There was just my daughter and the neighbour. So from one door to the other door he followed her right from 7-Eleven. Like, it's together it's maybe two streets, three streets. It's not far.

And my daughter has had issues like that so I stopped speaking to media. And when I was speaking to media, when I was more open about this, I had a lot of support. And then I had to take myself away from there so I could -- so my daughter would be safe, which she isn't.

My daughter is 200-something pounds, right, and you wouldn't think that a man would follow her at that size. But she's very beautiful and she's normally with her children all the time, which even makes it more scary.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So obviously, no, like, I mean, obviously there's lasting impacts, I mean, impacts from your own childhood and the healing you've had to do, but from the loss of Sharon. And I think you had explained to the Commissioner that you have a hard time letting go and that you're guided by her spirit, but that there's -- like, you still have a hard time accepting. So some of those lasting impacts, they resound past you, it sounds like, into your family.
We've briefly talked about this. There was a Commission of Inquiry here in B.C. in relation to Missing and Murdered Women. The Commissioner was Wally Oppal. You didn’t participate in that Inquiry at all, despite the fact that Sharon was one of the victims of Robert Pickton, did you?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** No, I didn’t even know of it. This is the first -- well, second time besides breakfast that I've heard of it. I don't know if we've heard of it. No.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So is it fair to say that, like, no one reached out to you in Winnipeg or otherwise to see if you could participate or be involved in that Inquiry?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Nobody has. Would be nice. Like, I think I've done a lot because the way they labelled Sharon, I don't know if she was a prostitute. It's still hard to accept that she was because she was educated. My grandfather had left money for her to go to school so she went to school. Yeah, it's really difficult.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So you may not know this. If you don’t know this, that's fine, you can tell me that. In the report -- so the Inquiry completed and in the report, Commissioner Wally Oppal actually lists 67 women missing from the Downtown Eastside and it includes a list
of the Pickton victims not initially on the missing women's poster or who he wasn’t charged with. Did you know that your sister Sharon is actually one of the listed people in that report?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** No, I didn’t. I didn’t.

Yeah, this just happened this morning that I found out about this. I had no idea of it.

Like, Sharon was loved, you know? We all loved and cared for her. And the way they -- like, yeah, we didn’t live in Winnipeg -- I mean in Vancouver here, B.C., but she had a lot of support for family, you know? She didn’t reach out for family, probably to the friends.

For me, like, not my biological family are -- I feel that are family, but I have healthy people that I consider healthy support me. I'm in a -- well, I was in a drum group with Alia (ph) and to me, they're my family.

Like, I do sun dance and I've done a lot of stuff to heal, for me, because I want health. I want to be a better person. I don't want sickness to take over me.

And I did it for my children and for my nieces, my nephews, even though, like, Sharon has children out -- had children out here and there was children in Winnipeg for a while that were raised in the system.

And Sagkeeng had come to me because I was with my partner at the time and they asked me if I could
Myrna Abraham (Sharon Nora Jane Abraham)

take care of her three that were here. And because I supported my partner, he said we couldn't take care of them because we already had our four. And without thinking, like, my relationship didn't even last two more months. I could have taken them. I don't know what kind of life I would have given them but they would have had family.

And I think that would have meant more to them than it does today because it would have been nice to -- I wanted to come here for my nieces. I wanted them to know that I'm here for them.

I've always kept them in my prayer. I always think of them.

They didn't have a mother. And the nasty stuff that was told to them, being raised the way they -- like, they must be really healthy girls today, like, strong minds because they've had to endure that negativity in their life so they must find some health. I came here for them and I came here for Sharon.

I didn't want it private because the way the media represented her -- like she was a prostitute, a junkie - it angers me. I still carry that anger because to me, she was a loving, kind, beautiful person, beautiful soul.

Yes, she liked to -- she carried that violence with her because that's what we were raised with.
And maybe that's how she only knew how to hold onto family. I lived here for not even a year til I started school at the Ab Centre -- Ab Centre, oh -- Native Education, yeah. But my partner at the time was really abusive too. Like, I came home from school one day and I was in the library. He was with my son. He had a pot of boiling water waiting for me. The only thing that saved me was the cushion on the couch. I used to go to school with marks all over my face. I used to use my hair to hide my face. My neck is very weak because of being dragged around the apartment by my hair.

Sharon ended up fighting his wife because of all the violence I went through and it wasn’t even her fault. Sharon used to fight a lot of people for me and I wouldn't find out til way later. Yeah.

Did I even answer your question? Am I answering your questions?

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** No, it's fine.

You're answering the questions and ---

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** --- you're welcome to talk more and expand on your answers at any time. I know it's not always a straight path to -- but we appreciate everything you're sharing with us.

I believe we have a couple of pictures, if
we could pull those up. I know that you want to share
pictures and I know one of the things that was important is
you're here for your nieces but you're also here because
you want -- I understand this is actually, I think, from a
quilt. But maybe as the pictures come up you could tell us
a little bit about the picture.

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** This picture, I don't
know where this picture has come from but the quilt,
Harriet and I -- it's Harriet's birthday today -- yeah, and
this was in Prince George. No, this was in Prince George,
yeah. This one was in Prince George and I came into the
room and Harriet was doing this for Sharon. And she asked
me if I would like to help. The tobacco tie came from me
but other than that, Harriet did most of the work, 99.9
percent.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** And I believe that
this then became part of a quilt that -- for in memory of
different missing and murdered Indigenous women?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** There are a couple
of other pictures and you may not know or have been the one
that took them, but could you guess about the age she would
have been in these?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** No, I don't what age.
Yeah.
MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE: I do know it was important, you had mentioned that it was important that you did want to talk about the way media and public characterized your sister and that you wanted to make sure everyone knew that she was really someone who was loved, and it was important that people see her and know her name and not just think she was whatever the media, whatever the reports thought she was.

If there were ways that you could carry her memory forward or like, find a way to commemorate her, what would that look like?

MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM: What I have been doing, I've walked in 2016 -- no, 2011 I've walked with Walk for Justice. I didn't finish it. I didn't complete the walk because like I said, I don't like being around negativity.

That was in honour of Sharon because she is a number of females, life givers, tree carriers, because I like to think of the female as a tree. We are root of life. We need earth for that life. We were supposed to be wearing skirts because you can't find a tree without bark. Our arms extend because of family.

Like I said of Sharon, I've walked for Sharon. I've gone to a lot of vigils, memorials. We're supposed to have a feast every four years in honour of the person's life, but we have not had a feast because there's
a lot of family bickering, issues in the family.

So it was 2011, so probably I came to court here in 2009, I think. I'm not sure. Like, I've blacked out a lot of things.

I've made a video recording for Sharon. They've edited it a lot so yeah. And then I've walked 2015, we walked the Highway of Tears. I've shared a lot for Sharon. I have gone to court hearings for Sharon. I don't know, because media likes to portray her as -- portray our trees, our trees of life as they would portray another person in a different country. They would like to take their life and do whatever they want with it, right?

I've worked with a lot of newcomers to Canada and they've told me if I've been to a different country I would see a whole lot worse there than you would see in Canada. I've been told when they do their Canadian citizenship that they're not allowed to communicate with Natives, Indians -- don't like the word "Indian" -- because they're told that we're dirty, we're lazy, we don't want to work, that we're alcoholics, that we're drunks.

That's one thing I would really love to change in that Immigration because seriously, I believe if I was in a different country, different state, it would be -- I don't know if other people treat their First Nation, I guess, like that because why I use First Nation is because
it will be the people that live there, right?

I forgot the question.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** No, it's okay.

Maybe to follow up on that last thought, like, you would like to see -- would it be a recommendation -- that some of the work that's done when people go through the immigration process, correctly identifies proper information about Indigenous people, proper respect for Indigenous people as opposed to some of the stereotypes and assumptions that have existed for a long time?

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** M'hm. Yeah. The only reason I knew that was because like I said, I worked with a lot of newcomers and I've asked her for the book because she said that it was right in the book. And I asked her for the paper. But because we used to work in different shelters, different hospitals, anywhere we were called, so that we never knew if we were going to work with each other that day. This is the only reason I knew that this exists.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Are any other -- like, we know -- thank you for sharing what you do and the walks, but is there something else that we could -- like, that we should be doing more, either as society, governments, or recommendations the Commission can make about how we memorialize the women and sisters that we've lost?
MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM: I don't know if there's an opening for -- if there's a proper way to help our life givers, our trees. Like, for a tree, you have to -- you need that earth, you need the rain, because it brings rain and it brings air. It cleans toxicity.

How I think that this would help is if you go into the schools -- schools are so important -- and you teach in school that our people are not what they claim to be. I've met a lot of educated Natives, a lot of strong women, a lot of strong youth.

The education in lower income, poverty, is way different than it would be in a higher society. In a higher society, you have children taking care of dolls, taking care of eggs, but in the poverty, you don’t have that. It would be nice to have some kind of things hit the children, because children are so important.

That's why I took my job is because I felt that children need this, because if you look in the news and then people say children have to respect the elders, but children don’t learn how to respect the elder when it's expected, when you don’t teach them respect. I always found that they were my teachers in life.

And that's why I think that it should help because there should be counselling as a female. Like, people become immune to -- and they think that we all share
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the same life, which there is some kind of form in it, but -- where am I going?

Yeah, it would be really nice to get to our children, some counselling in schools. Like, they have taken so much away from the education level. It takes a lot for a child to ask for help when they've never been given help. I would have liked to have help but I always felt like I was being judged. Yeah, our children need it.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Myrna, I just want to give you a chance in case we've missed anything that you want to share that if there was anything that you wanted to share with the Commissioner before I ask Commissioner Eyolfson if he has questions? If you want to add anything else, please do.

**MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM:** M'hm. I just want to make sure that everybody knows that we -- every person that has come to share their story is because of the media, the way they portrayed us, because it's not only their lives that are affected, it's our lives too because we have to carry that, and to try and clarify that our women, our young men, and our trannies -- is that what they're called -- yeah, our transgenders, they were loved and they're human.

And what is very important to me right now, there's a young girl from back home, and the media turned
around and used her like it was her fault that she got killed. It was her fault that why she was found in a river.

How do you tell a young girl that -- what was she, 14 -- 15 that it was her fault that she was given this sentence of life that she must be found in a river, she must be wrapped up in a quilt and thrown into the river with 25 pounds from a 70-pound young girl, that it was her fault why she was there? It's not her fault. It's not.

Like, yeah, I was coming home -- no, I was going to work when this all happened. I used to be in sweats, like, three or four times a week. I was smudging the crowd that came to represent this young girl, went to support the family, to support her life.

You know, it's sad that her life was taken like this, but it opens up Canadians' eyes on how -- and for the media to represent her the way they did and to tell society it was her fault that she had drugs and alcohol in her blood. She was a child. She could have given life, but life was taken.

And Colton, I give thanks for Colton too because again, our eyes, the media's eyes need to be open because this is somebody that was accidentally killed, is the way they took -- referred it on the news.

I don't know how you can "accidentally" pull
the trigger as many times as has. I don't know how Tina Fontaine ended up "accidentally" being in a river. These two young people sacrificed their lives for our lives, for Canada, for their eyes to be open.

They always say when you take an animal's life you have to give something for its life or for a plant, when you take it because it's thanks, right?

I was adopted into a Duck family but I'm a very stubborn person. How I was adopted into this family is because Marissa Duck was killed on her birthday. She would have been 16. The family had adopted me because I look like Marissa, apparently, forehead and eyes. So they adopted me.

But I'm stubborn. Maybe I should have started then to support murdered and missing. I do this because Sharon was not just what they claim. And I don’t even know if she was the way the media portrays her. I have asked for answers which I've never gotten. Yeah.

I would like to introduce and thank Brenda Wilson and Kelly White and Connie Juelz and then of course, my drum sister. I want to say Alia. I got a bunch of grandchildren with A, and Leah. I guess we've supported each other a lot, yeah. And then my beautiful cousin, which her birthday is today. She's 77, Harriet. And of course, Sharon.
Eyolfson, did you have any questions or comments for Myrna?

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you, Myrna. Thank you for sharing. You’ve touched on so many things this morning about Sharon, a bit about your life as well.

I do have a couple of questions, just follow-up questions if you don’t mind.

You mentioned a number of times, you talked about negative portrayal in the media in reference to Sharon and other Indigenous women. I'm wondering if you have any further thoughts on what could be done to change that, any recommendations for the media as to how they could go about changing that so that doesn’t continue to happen?

MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM: I went on the internet to look for if there was anything for Sharon, and I looked on the Vancouver Sun. And then there's a lot of videos about the Pickton and how they were all prostitutes and junkies.

It would have been nice if somebody actually contacted the family first so they can represent her and show that she wasn’t this person -- or she might have been that person, I don't know -- but it would have been nice if they contacted people, one of us or -- because her
daughters were underage or looked for a good friend, like. And then they could share their love and the kindness and all the pictures here to show Sharon smiling.

She was a happy person, a jokester. I used to call her Silhouette because she's always been so skinny, right, and yeah, skinny, tall. She always laughed with hahaha. She was a belly laugher.

It's too bad that they portrayed her like this and portrayed -- I mean, and made Robert Pickton to be a victim, although he wasn’t the victim. They said that he was uneducated, but then there was a book that was written. And how does he have this right to write a book when he was uneducated, when it should have been able to reopen another hearing because he wrote this book?

It should be able to be enough to start another hearing, to be able to share the stories that he has said. And there might not be stories. And he said there is more than one person that's involved. There might be names in that book. Why can't I see that book? Why can't I hear his side in this book?

I was -- I don't know if you were there -- there was something going on in Winnipeg anyways at the Delta. I don't remember what it was but it was the day before this happened. And I wanted to speak and I wanted to share something good about her, but I ended up crying
because I was angry about this book.

It should be more than enough to reopen another court hearing. There should be some more justice happening here rather than only six women out of how many women that were missing? Yeah. Oh yeah, National Roundtable in Winnipeg. Yeah.

And how can -- that's how it can happen, is if people look for the family members rather than just jumping to conclusions because it's not our murderers that are the victim, it's the life that has been taken.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Thank you.

And I just have one other question if you don’t mind. I'm wondering if you have any thoughts or recommendations about -- for people have lost a loved one, about what supports might help, for things that might -- that have helped you or things that weren't there that would have helped you or could?

MS. MYRNA ABRAHAM: Well, for me, because I follow my traditional ways, I've found my own support in different ways because there was offering of counselling, but then when I went to go meet a counsellor, he was crawling in his chair and it made me really uncomfortable and I haven't gone to a counsellor since. I've gone the one time and I don’t know what was wrong with this counsellor.
How you can help is if there was more support for extended family. Like, for when I came to the hearing for Pickton, there was only allowed two people. When we wanted to go to the -- where was that one in Prince George? Oh yeah, and for the family meeting that we came to in Prince George two years ago, we were only allowed three -- no, there was four -- three of us that came. It would have been nice that her other children were able to come, like, if we could all have been there for to support her because they have a limit because of budget.

If there wasn’t such a close notification of when, like, the hearings are going to start, like, this -- I just finished my walk and whatnot and I don’t even know how far that was towards the finishing of the walk.

And did I even answer your question? I'm just babbling.

But I feel that it's important, like, very important. If there was -- yeah, if we can extend the support, yeah. Brenda already lives in B.C. and we all came to support another family member but she found that I was here so it was nice. Harriet lives in B.C. My support had a job interview and the other one was out of the city.

And it didn’t dawn on me that I could have asked one of our elders to tag along with me and be a support. But I think why it didn’t turn out that way is
because maybe I needed to be alone, away from everybody.
That's what I'm thinking. I'm always trying to justify things.

COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON: Okay, thank you. So I really want to thank you for coming and sharing and I want to acknowledge your strength and your resilience for sharing some difficult things with us. But I also want to thank you for your recommendations. So thank you for that contribution to the Inquiry and for being here.

And I also want to acknowledge and thank all your supports for being here with you as well.

And before we wrap up, we have a small gift of appreciation for you sharing the gift of your truths with us. And I'm going to ask Grandmother "Blu" if she will address the small gift we have for you before we adjourn.

GRANDMOTHER LAUREEN “BLU” WATERS-GAUDIO:
We'd like to offer you this eagle feather here to help you with your continue of the healing and to be that helper for you. We know that Sharon was a gift from the Creator and you bringing her information to us helps others, the rest of Canada, know that she was a gift, that her life had value, it had meaning. And you speaking out this way, we'd like to honour you with this because it takes courage to stand before a lot of people and speak your truth.
So this will help you with your journey, as well as there are some wild strawberry seeds there. And when you plant them, you'll enjoy the sweetness and you'll remember the good times you had with your sister and with the rest of your family. So thank you.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** So before we adjourn, actually, one of our grandmothers is going to sing us.

**GRANDMOTHER EUNICE McMILLAN:** My name is Eunice McMillan. I'm from the Homalco Nation which is Campbell River. I lead the Murdered and Missing Women's March every year. So I thought I'd do the -- our song from the march which was given to us by Martina St. Pierre from the Mount Currie, the Women's Warrior.

--- **CLOSING SONG BY EUNICE McMILLAN**

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** I just ask that we take a short break before the next hearing starts, so 10 minutes?

**COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Okay, let's adjourn for 10 minutes.

**MS. CHRISTA BIG CANOE:** Thank you.

**COMMISSIONER BRIAN EYOLFSON:** Thank you.

--- **Exhibits (code: P01P15P0203)**
--- Exhibit 1: Folder containing four digital images displayed during the public testimony of Myrna Abraham.

--- Upon adjourning at 10:54
LEGAL DICTA-TYPIST’S CERTIFICATE

I, Karen Noganosh, 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.

_______________________________
Karen Noganosh

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Karen Noganosh

April 17, 2018